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MASTER'S THESIS

RECONCEPTUALISING THE POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL NOMADS TO TRANSFORM
COMMUNITY BASED AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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Abstract

Digital nomadism is a growing phenomenon within the travel sector in many countries. During the Covid 19 pandemic, numerous destinations have focused on attracting emerging remote workers and digital nomads. Although there is no universal definition for digital nomads, most studies highlight key characteristics, including adeptness with remote technology, mobility, lifestyle and self-fulfilment and identity. Sustainable tourism and community based tourism is a form of tourism that aims to provide tourism service by aligning with sustainability which consists of economic, socio-cultural and environmental pillars. The aim of this study is to determine if there is interaction between the two phenomena as digital nomads are predicted to grow. This research also thrives to determine how digital nomads challenge the host-guest duality norms and how this affects their integration. This research was complex and multilayered. Ergo qualitative research approach was utilised to supply and demand interact with each other. The results suggest that digital nomads have been participating in sustainable tourism accommodations, but also as other forms of long term travellers and short term tourists. Sustainable accommodations within urban cities have experienced them while projects based in more remote communities experienced them as other forms of travellers. The findings suggest that digital nomads and these organisations are connected within three themes: motivation and values; culture and authenticity; and government and partnerships. There is potential for both groups to connect together by building awareness of digital nomads participation towards sustainable tourism establishments and facilitating to grow their participation within destinations. Governments, networks and associations can assist in creating collaboration and knowledge sharing to embrace the new wave of travellers. They also need to reevaluate the definitions of tourists and begin to evaluate their importance of long term travellers beyond economic gains. More research has to be done to understand the role of digital nomads' economic capability, motivation in terms of culture and authenticity, and potential support of sustainability related projects and build better resilience for future tourism crises.

Keywords: Digital nomad, sustainability, Covid 19, long term traveller, community based tourism, partnerships, authenticity

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List of Abbreviations

ASEA – Association of South East Asia

DN – Digital nomad

RM - Remote worker

LTT – Long Term Traveller

HGR – Host Guest Relationship

KOPEL - Koperasi Pelancongan Mukim Batu Puteh Kinbatangan

NGO – Non Governmental Organisation

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

STD – Sustainable Tourism Development

UNWTO – United Nations World Tourism Organisation

Introduction

With a more digital world, digital nomadism has been a growing phenomenon in many countries (Hermann & Paris, 2020; Hannenon, 2020; Hermann & Paris, 2020; Bozzi, 2020; Reichenberg, 2018; Thompson, 2018). Due to Covid 19 pandemic lockdowns, many occupations have resorted to remote working (Möhring et al, 2021; Okubo, 2020). In addition to restricted movement, border closure by most countries to curb number of cases, had caused a major decline in international tourism (Aronica, Pizzuto & Sciortino. 2020; WTTC, 2020; Kour, Jasrotia & Gupta, 2021; Syaifudin et al, 2022); Akhtar et al, 2021). On the bright side, it began a new norm of working remotely that allowed more people to pursue work with travel, and redefined the workspace for the next generations (Bamieh & Ziegler, 2022; Okubo, 2020; Orr & Savage, 2021). Recent report by MB Partners, a US market research firm, the number of digital nomads in the US has increased by 49% and is projected to grow even more in the next decades (MB, 2021; Ehn et al, 2022).

To tap this opportunity, many countries took action to build their destination attractiveness and reduce barriers (Orel, 2021; ABD, 2021; Kowalczyk-Anioł et al, 2021). This is evident by numerous countries easing the regulations for travel duration by providing options to extend tourists visas and introducing digital nomad visa, a longer term visa (Sindico, 2021 pp 63). This was particularly the case with small island nations whose economy was dependent on a high number of international visitors (WTTC, 2020; Sindico, 2021. pp 62). Within the last two years alone, the number of countries with digital nomad visa options rose from 21 to 44 (Hannenon, 2020; Johnson, 2022). In the South East Asia region (ASEA) alone, Thailand and Indonesia offer digital nomad visas while the other nations offer e-visa option or visa free regime for select passport holders (Perrottet, 2020). For example, Malaysia took the earliest initiative in attracting high earning semi-nomads and retirees by launching ‘Malaysia my second home’ in 2002. This program and others target high earning travellers that can prove their financial and medical capabilities – an estimate of 67,000 USD deposit in a local bank is required (Ministry of Home Affairs, nd.). As of October 1st 2022, the Ministry of Immigration has launched a digital nomad visa ‘DE Rantau’, with remote workers only needing to prove an income of at least 24,000 USD per annum (Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation, 2022). The pandemic also allowed governments and tourism services to pause and reconsider their tourism management and impacts on the environment (Oberghassel et al, 2021; Mudzengi et al, 2022). With a possible explosion of long term travellers within the horizon, sustainable tourism projects may have the upper hand to attract digital nomads to their establishment.

Sustainability in tourism

Sustainability in tourism is about minimising negative impacts on the environmental (natural), socio-cultural and economic pillars of a given place (Mihalic, 2021; Sin & Minca, 2014). Sustainability as a concept is complex and vague to define, especially its connection in

tourism. As the largest industry in the world, tourism plays a major role in contributing to 17 UN Sustainable development goals (SDGs). SDGs have been essential in providing a vision and roadmap for policy makers and practitioners, even though they can be vague to interpret (Liburd, 2020). Sustainable tourism for development can be practised through various types of tourism including responsible tourism, ecotourism, community based tourism and volunteer tourism. Community based tourism initiative has also focused on ensuring all three pillars are fulfilled, with a particular focus on community ownership (Keskinen et al ,2020).

Digital nomads and their accommodation choice

Digital nomadism is a phenomenon of a new age of remote workers with the freedom to regularly travel. Although their definition has no universal consensus, they have four distinct characteristics, which include utilising technology, relocating, motivation or lifestyle and identity. Digital nomads participate in various forms of tourism including beach, adventure, city etc and there is literature on digital nomads with emphasis on the factors that influence their decision to choose a destination and accommodation as well as the psychological effects of the digital nomad lifestyle (Aroles et al, 2020; Chevtaeva, 2021. pp. 205; Mancinelli, 2020). There are emerging studies that digital nomads and their contribution to the social development of their host community has been limited and lacks meaningful connection. In fact, these co-working spaces and accommodations are a form of ‘bubbles’ communities (Orel, 2019). The bubbles emerged from travellers seeking common interests and to be connected to a support network. In contrast to these establishments, there are hints of 'alternative' sustainable accommodations in literature. This demand has led to coining a new term ‘digital slomads’ (Gill, 2022). These travellers are switching from the ‘normal’ and ‘commodified’ co-living setting to those who focus on sustainability and community impact. (Chevtaeva, 2021. pp 207; Mancinelli, 2020; Verra, 2022; Gill 2022; Tagliaferri, 2022; Puymbroeck, 2022).

To date, there has been no study on digital nomads participation in accommodations that practises sustainable tourism (Hannenon, 2020). There is also no study on the introduction of long term tourists in tourism establishments that participate in sustainable tourism development (Ferrari et al, 2022). This research attempts to address this gap. In case of community based tourism research, there is growing interest in co-creating with the host community and visitors (Dolezal & Novelli, 2020; Soares et al, 2021) but no existing concepts on how to incorporate long term tourists, with the exception of volunteers (Godfrey et al, 2020; Han et al, 2020). Therefore, I came up with the following research question.

‘To what extent can the introduction of remote workers and digital nomads potentially transform sustainable development in community based and sustainable tourism projects?’

This will also challenge the duality spectrum in tourism of host and guest; and when short term tourists are becoming less guests and more into residents (Ernawati et al, 2017; Sin et al, 2014; Dłużewska, 2019). It will also explore how the host projects perceive different forms of long term travellers and how digital nomads compare to, for example volunteers and slow tourism enthusiasts (Magrizos et al, 2021). This study incorporates this by reframing an existing long term traveller framework, sustainable volunteer tourism model to digital nomad and remote workers market (Lee & Zhang, 2020; Hardy, 2008; Lockstone-Binney & Ong, 2021); and exploring their potential for sustainable development and local empowerment. Some questions I

will address include whether digital nomads and remote workers are considered in the future pandemic resilience strategies at organisation level and national level.

Pertaining to the rise of slokids, there has been no research on digital nomads integration at destination scale (Chevtaeva, 2021. pp 207; Mancinelli, 2020; Verra, 2022). There is a rise of study on mental wellbeing and challenges in adjusting to co living spaces (Möhring et al, 2021; Stienmetz et al, 2020). The integrating nature of long term travellers has been explored for expats and volunteers but not for digital nomads (Waller, 2018; Bandyopadhyay & Patil, 2017; Godfrey et al, 2020; Mensah et al, 2021). Digital nomads are more independently driven to interact with day to day services and persons (Hannenon, 2020). Thereby, the extent and effect of digital nomad on the duality of host-guest relationship will be explored.

Leading on from introduction, Chapter 2 presents the concepts within the research question and previous research including the long term traveller, indicators to address the research question identity, awareness of sustainability, attractions and barriers of destination, integration, host and guest relationship. Then Chapter 3 discusses the methods conducted for inductive qualitative research including the samples collected, interview techniques, thematic analysis and tools used and justified. Chapter 4 describes the key findings with emphasis on long quotes from the interview. This is followed by Chapter 5, which discusses the final themes revealed from data, their implications to the research question and framework. The final chapters present the conclusion of the thesis, the limitations I experienced during data collection and processing; and possible opportunities for future research.

Literature review

2.1. Types of long term travellers

The terminology used in this study has been challenging to discern and explain in uniform fashion. The reason being that the framework around defining what is travel, traveller and tourists has been evolving, especially in the 1990s (Hunt & Layne, 1991; Masberg, 1998). From classical definitions, how we define traveller and tourist was seen from purpose of travel, distance from home and length of stay (Dilek & Dilek, 2018). Yet in literature and larger trends today, we find more and more labels surfacing that create an overlap to strictly fit the more rigid statistical definition. This is especially true with the growing phenomenon of remote working and digital nomading and new lifestyle trends that are becoming possible with new technology developments; thus blurring binary norms of work and stationary versus vacation and mobile (Mancinelli, 2020; Gray, 2020). These concepts will be further explored in the digital nomads section in this chapter.

The term long term traveller is a compound word of long term and traveller (Dilek & Dilek, 2018). In general sense, it is used in defining a specific group of travellers that travel away from their residence for the longer term (Kannisto, 2018). To address the research question, I choose to use this particular term as it is more broader and has an easier flow without confusing the reader. I analysed how the definition of these travellers are different from each other and the underlying concepts on distinguishing them and how they relate to the frameworks around digital nomads. This becomes paramount of the research outcome and what they mean to the existing literature and thought process.

Much research has been dedicated to how we define participants in tourism, as far back as the League of Nations debate in 1937 (Yu, X., Kim, N., Chen C. C., & Schwartz, Z. 2012). The concept of tourist, visitor and traveller tends to be interchangeably used. How one identifies as a tourist, visitor or traveller is also influenced by factors such as self perception, motivation, cultural interest, individualism and cultural norms in the traveller's environment (Hunt & Layne, 1991). For instance, a lot of studies have identified self fulfilment while stepping away from the traditional work environment, especially from those who come from highly industrialised countries, as a common motivation (Hermann & Paris, 2020; Hannonen, 2020). The United Nations World Travel Organisation (UNWTO), a global research institute, attempts to distinguish these terms based on time, purpose and geographical dimensions.

- a. A traveller is ‘someone who moves between different geographic locations, for any purpose and any duration’.
- b. A visitor is ‘ a traveller taking a trip to a main destination outside his or 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.
- c. A tourist is ‘a visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor), if his/ her trip includes an overnight stay or as a same day visitor (or excursionist) otherwise’

IRTS (2008) via UNWTO (2019)

Based on the above definition, we can see some boundaries and inclusions of the labels in tourism. All tourists are visitors; all tourists and visitors are travellers. These terminologies seem ambiguous and determine a clear focus for the topic of our study. They include digital nomads, remote workers, travellers who volunteer, remote students and travellers who slow travel and choose to engage with all the above (Dilek & Dilek, 2018). What is noteworthy is the visitor definition which states that the boundary of time is less than a year and the purpose of stay being other than being employed in a host country (Hunt, 1991 pp 23). By these parameters, travellers who do freelancing with a host company are not visitors (Pratt & Dennis, 2018). Yet they may be actively engaged in travelling during their stay. This also seems a grey area for volunteers who participate in projects (Lockstone-Binney & Ong, 2021; Magrizos et al, 2021). However they can also decide to use this opportunity to have a place to stay and work while travelling during the weekends. In this case we begin to see that participants can be considered more than one term and their classification is fluid and not rigid.

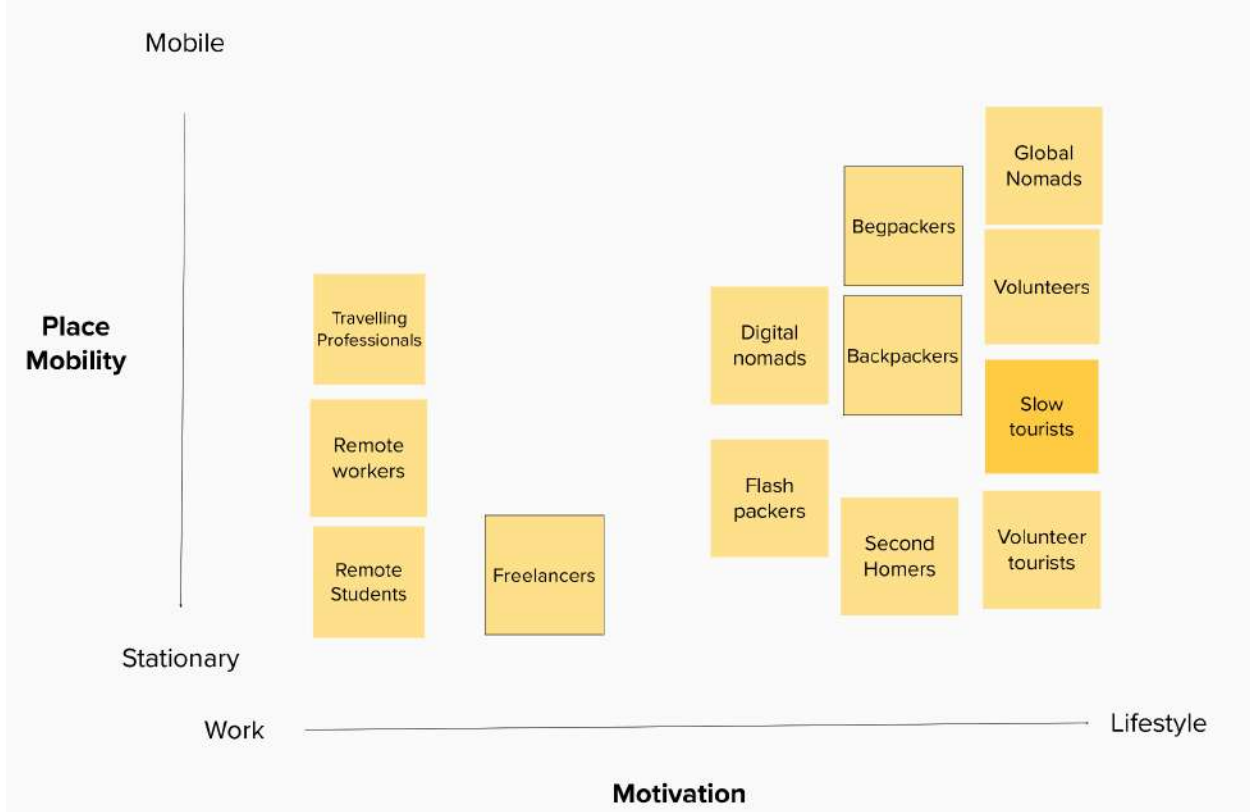
To address these gaps, researchers such as Hannonen (2020) Cohen et al (2015) used scaled based categories of level of mobility and motivation. They along with predecessor researchers identified these key variables that distinguish different types of travellers; although her original work focuses on what digital nomads are different from others. Cohen et al (2015) did a similar classification based on how different travellers in his study self identified themselves. Both researchers have two variables, mobility and motivation (work or non work). Using their framework, I created Figure 1 to illustrate the traveller’s classification (see next page).

Figure 1 illustrates the different forms of travellers based on their mobility and motivation (see page 17). Mobility can be the amount of relocation that an individual does in the long term outside of their routine place (Hannonen, 2020). Motivation can mean the purpose of their mobility, which can be about work or more towards a lifestyle choice such as self fulfilment, creating social impact or simply diverting away from the office work environment

(Han et al, 2020). For example, remote students and travelling professionals may relocate for the purpose of work or study, but they tend to choose to stay in a particular place to fulfil that purpose. On the other hand, Global nomads and backpackers are more mobile and choose to travel frequently (Masberg, 1998; Yu et al, 2012). This could be also due to their difference in motivation. Global nomads are travellers who tend to focus on experience of leisure as the reason to travel (Gray, 2020). They can choose to relocate in one town and decide to work only to support their original plan of leisure and self fulfilment. South East Asia is considered a popular destination for global nomads (Liu et al, 2020). Global nomads are no stranger to working, however illegally, and there are difficulties in regulating and monitoring their activities by the relevant authorities (Nghah et al, 2021; Masberg, 1998). SEA (especially Thailand), south and central Americas are popular destinations for hybrid volunteers and global nomads (Orel, 2019).

Travelling professionals simply travel for work and may participate in leisure activities, but their priority is work and they tend to travel back to their place of origin after a short time (Richards, 2015). It is important to note that these labels are fluid and individuals can mix different labels. In the case of digital nomads, they may switch to the analog state and become global nomads or slow tourists (Puymbroeck, 2022).

Figure 1: Illustration of different types of long term travellers. Note that this is based on the travel frequency and duration in the long term and not short term trips.



Source: Own, Modified from Hannonen (2020)

There is also the ambiguity of place mobility and the scale of travelling (Hannonen, 2020). Some long term travellers may decide to stay over a year in one city and may relocate houses. Travellers who are seasonally travelling to their second home in a different country are also hard to classify as stationary or nomadic (Volo, 2011). Questions such as how long does someone have to leave a place before they become ‘nomadic’ is hard to answer. These types of examples make it challenging to design a framework. There is also the question of how to officially acknowledge them and also digital nomads. Malaysia has the ‘Malaysia my second home’ program, which allows travellers with a higher income to possess a second home in Malaysia and migrate there part of the year (Ministry of Home Affairs, nd.). To date, second homers are ambiguous to count in tourism nor residency (Volo, 2011; Ericsson, 2022).

For my study, I focused on the digital nomads category of travellers that are becoming more relevant to post Covid normalcy (Bamieh & Ziegler, 2022; Aronica et al, 2022). Other forms of long term travellers, remote workers, volunteers and volunteer tourists will also be discussed when relevant. In the chart, remote workers are specifically placed to be more likely to be stationary (Okubo, 2020). Both digital nomads and remote workers can work online and are not restricted to an office, but the majority of remote workers are working from their home (Bamieh & Ziegler, 2022). Digital nomads tend to take advantage of the freedom to work online and travel as a means of a lifestyle and self fulfilment (Hermann & Paris, 2020). In other words, all digital nomads are remote workers but not all remote workers are digital nomads. In the next part, I will be exploring the concepts behind digital nomads and remote workers. Volunteers will also be mentioned in this study because they participate in some the case studies selected and have relevance to the host guest relationship paradigm and sustainability in the upcoming sections.

2.2. Digital nomads

As mentioned previously, the definition of the term digital nomad has been a long debate in literature especially between different disciplines (Hannonen, 2020; Gray, 2020). There has been substantial literature dedicated to defining the phenomenon (Chevtavaeva, 2021. pp 207; Mancinelli, 2020; Verra, 2022). Till date, there has been no universally agreed definition but there are specific characteristics (Hannonen, 2020; Gray, 2020). For the purpose of this research, I choose to focus on the commons that authors identified that distinguish digital nomads from other travellers. These include utilising technology tools for work, mobility, lifestyle and identity.

The most common characteristic of digital nomads is that they are by-products of digital tools that enable them to work remotely, and thus work is their priority. Makimoto and Manners (1999) coined this term in their publication ‘digital nomad’ predicting their existence in the future due to the increasing technical development. They were a category of technology

professionals whom they predicted will have access to devices while free to choose their workspace location (Makimoto. & Manners, 1999). Innovation such as the world wide web, cheap and accessible wifi and applications have allowed more and more occupations to be location independent (Orel, 2020). It is safe to say that Covid 19 pandemic and resulting lockdown measures has forced many employers to accommodate remote working and in some cases, continue to allow it (Wang et al, 2020). This is the case for major companies such as AirBnB and Google announcing that they will continue to allow their employees to work from home (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2022). Digital nomads have the flexibility to work with different time zones and allocated times anywhere where there is internet access and their preferred working space (Bonneau & Aroles, 2021). This phenomenon has further blurred the line of job recruitment within the host country (Brusseau, 2021). Participants can hunt for jobs and companies can search for applicants alike outside their country of residence, as long as it is within the parameters of labour laws (Bamieh & Ziegler, 2022). In some cases, this is not legal at all.

The second characteristic of digital nomads is the freedom to relocate in the long term. The frequency of moving and length of stay depends on the individual, their interests, calibre to move and the pull of another destination that meets their requirements (Lhakard, 2022; Jang & Cai, 2002; Yousefi & Marzuki, 2015). Most studies estimate that digital nomads can stay between 1 week to 1 year. Although most countries officially allow tourists to stay up to 3 months, there is a growing number of destinations that are actively working to reduce the political and bureaucratic barriers for lengthening visit (Shi et al, 2019). Countries such as Costa Rica, Barbados, Portugal and Thailand have already introduced visas that appeal specifically to long term travellers by introducing visas for 1 year to 20 years (Johnson, 2022). The requirements to apply have a common rigid requirement, however, with the majority requiring visitors cannot engage in job insight and have to have a high level of income (Bonneau & Aroles, 2021). It can be argued that such attempts for attracting digital nomads is not only increasing digital nomads but also discouraging inclusivity in particular to aspiring remote workers and digital nomads with lower income. Digital nomads from countries with weaker economies and currencies are mostly excluded from participating (Thompson, 2019). The reasons behind these rules are perhaps a discouragement to not seek work and compete with the local populace. For example, Malaysia's 'Malaysia my second home' is open to all citizens but the financial requirements indicate contributing to the Malaysian economy as well as having a set job from abroad (Ministry of Home Affairs, nd.). With the advancement of online tools into creating virtual realms such as Multiverse, we have yet to witness how such technology will continue to evolve our lifestyle (Aroles et al, 2020); and whether it will enable us to unlock more tools for digital nomadism.

The third characteristic is lifestyle choice and self fulfilment. Digital nomads take advantage of the freedom to relocate to explore surrounding attractions and interests. The idea of

self fulfilment has been somewhat romanticised with the freedom from tradition (Liu et al, 2019). Hart (2015) defined it as a pursuit of 'alternative' and 'individualism' and 'right of self determination'. It has inspired travellers to paint images in the media of being on the beach with laptops. This is a pull factor that can fulfil the intrinsic needs such as the ability to pursue one's interest (Orel, 2019). This is particularly exacerbated by engaging and accessible platforms such as social media. Similar to Flashpackers, digital nomads are portrayed, perhaps stereotypically, as free to seek their interests. Gray (2020) found that this narrative of digital nomad lifestyle only shows from a limited perspective. He describes this disparity of reality and imagination as a freedom discipline paradox. The paradox is there is freedom in choosing where to work but there is a level of disciplining and routine work and free time. There are emerging studies that show that digital workers experience fatigue, stress, loneliness and burn out (Thompson, 2019; Aroles et al, 2020; Chevtaeva, 2021. pp. 205; Mancinelli, 2020). To cope with these ailments, they use routines, designing set schedules and calendars, dedicate time for rest and socialising and pursuing their interests. In some cases, choosing the destination is heavily dependent on whether they are existing digital nomads or expat groups to deal with these challenges.

Choosing a digital nomad lifestyle can be seen as social privilege reserved for the few. Bonneau and Aroles (2021) found digital nomad is a technology and capitalist enabled socio-cultural phenomenon that is the new 'leisure class' similar to 19th century high society. Mancinelli (2020) describes a critical argument that digital nomads' projects of self fulfilment are 'self-realisation project meets ideology of entrepreneurialism, allowing them to take advantage of privileged nationalities to navigate the global inequities of the capitalist system'. Based on a survey by MBO Partners (2020), the majority of digital nomads surveyed come from countries with stronger passports and stronger industrialised economies. The disparity of representation of international digital nomads is quite evident and majority are from global north and of caucasian background (Thompson, 2019; Mancinelli, 2020). This somewhat mirrors the official study of the market source of international travellers, where the majority originate from wealthy industrialised nations. There has been little to no study on inequalities of travelling as a digital nomad (Mancinelli, 2020). However the existence of accessible digital nomad support groups can be argued that the networks exist to help other travellers become digital nomads is addressing this problem, perhaps unintentionally (Chevtaeva, 2021).

This ties together to the forth and least researched characteristic, identity. While lifestyle is more extrinsic, identity is about the intrinsic attributes of individuals (Brusseau, 2021). Many studies had found that travellers that fall under the digital nomad definition actually do not know what it is and some downright choose not to be identified as one (Prester et al, 2019). Digital nomads label themselves tied around how their values, motivations connect to the social norms of digital nomad. How digital nomads connect to other travellers and connect to the local community is further discussed in the guest and host relationship. In some studies, digital nomads maintain distancing themselves from labelling as tourists and mass tourist stereotypes of

consumers. Brusseau (2021) holds an interesting argument about what he calls the dual reality of the digital nomad condition. On the one hand they reflect the particulars of pure nomads who stand for nonconforming with the single identity and non participation in systematic technologies that risk collecting their personal data. It is also about going ‘native’ and letting the road dictate what the self is moulded. On the other hand, digital nomads have to use technology for work, depend on the work hours and show expected behaviour (de Almeida et al, 2021). In other words, identity of the digital nomad is a condition of rebelling social norms, while utilising the economic system to support their travelling. Prester et al, 2019 found that digital nomads are continuously evolving their identities within professional autonomy or routine and keeping self-assured stability through technology (Ehn et al, 2022). In other words, digital nomads can utilise work patterns and communicating technology to react to relocating travel.

Yet today’s digital nomads and nomads alike use technology to discover their next journey; and travelling and living in new surroundings absorb the identity (Prester et al, 2019). This dynamic of integration and its effect on the host community is yet to be answered in literature. I attempt to address these complex questions on how digital nomads are defined and how they perceive themselves and interact with their environment.

Digital nomads and motivations to travel

What drives a traveller to choose a destination has been explored by numerous studies including Couch (2000), Lhakard P. (2022); Gede G.K., Marhaeni K.E., and Putrana I.W. (2020), Satterstrom (2019), Gray (2020). Similar to tourists, digital nomad motivation can generally explain pull and push factors consistent with the intrinsic and extrinsic nature. Push factors can be described as the intricately psychological needs of an individual drives them to travel while pull factors external physical qualities of a destination that attracts them there (Yousefi & Marzuki, 2015; Han et al, 2020). These attributes are fundamental to understanding a destination’s competitiveness to meet tourist demand. Many studies are also noting that push and pull motivations are varied based on nationalities, destinations, demographics and events. For example, Nural et al (2012) did one of the few studies on comparing tourist motivation differences between domestic and international tourists in Langkawi, Malaysia. They found that cultural difference affects motivation for travel. Similarly, Yousefi and Marzuki (2015) found that the majority of their participants travelled to Langkawi’s neighbour island Penang, with motivational differences between international and national tourists. Sangpikul (2009) identified that Asian travellers in Thailand were attracted to access to activity while European tourists were more interested in cultural attractions. This may be a similar case for digital nomads, where country of origin is a determinant of travel motivation.

The most commonly identified motivations are culture and or nature capital, physical and technological infrastructure, access to professional and non professional networks, travel

bureaucracy such as visas and taxes, cost of living, foreign community, safety and community attitude towards visitors (Lhakard, 2022; Postma & Schmuecker, 2017). With the pandemic decisions are further impacted by covid travel restrictions (Syaifudin et al, 2022). There are numerous websites for digital nomads research rankings. Nomad list is one of the most popular websites that ranks destinations based on these motivations (Nomadlist, nd.). There are little to no websites specifically catering to sustainability-conscious digital nomads, although there are hints in literature of alternative co-living spaces and digital nomad specialised villages appearing such as Madeira, Portugal (Chevtaeva, 2021). This research attempts to discover another factor that is not studied, the sustainability impact. I will explain each of these factors in the following paragraphs.

Cultural and or natural attraction is one of the most popular reasons to travel and cause for tourist demand (Han et al, 2020). Digital nomads are no different as they seek destinations that they can access tourist activities but they examine more factors pertaining to liveability and quality of life (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2022). ASEA countries are appealing for international travellers who are keen for new experiences (Jang & Cai, 2002). Lhakard (2022) conducted a case study on Chiang Mai, coined the digital nomad capital of the world and the effect of cultural and natural capital on digital nomad on their decision to choose a destination. Cultural heritage, whether tangible or intangible, provides a unique experience for the visitors and most sold tourist product (Guttormsen & Fageraas, 2011). In some cases, destinations can easily market the physical heritage rather than intangible.

Authenticity of intangible heritage is becoming a more and more important decision factor (Khanom et al, 2019; Guttormsen & Fageraas, 2011). Many literature suggest that tourist knowledge of authenticity is not objective nor rigorous but rather weighs more on uniqueness and value of the experience (Khanom et al, 2019). Cohen & Cohen (2012) propose that there is an inherent pressure of tourism to reflect the tourist's belief of 'realness' and meeting that demand through what Frisvoll calls the three forms – social representations, visual appearance and practice or ability to come off as authentic. 'Theoplacity' is what Edgar Morin's complexity theory describes the 'union of the tourist's beliefs, with the place and the activities' (Wall & Xia, 2005; Frisvoll, 2013). In some literature, authenticity in tourism is described as 'negotiated' authenticity; in other words, it is a negotiated outcome by a collection of tourism actors, their actions and the dynamics in their environment (Xie, 2011; Canavan & McCamley, 2021). For the most part, cultural heritage is evolving and proving authenticity is disadvantaged with the limited attention time for short term travellers (Shi et al., 2019) Digital nomads have an advantage of having a longer time to explore and uncover 'hidden' and 'untainted' by conventional tourism. The term 'Slomads' is emerging in popular blogs to describe nomads who choose to stay in places longer to enrich their cultural experience (Chevtaeva, 2021. pp 207; Mancinelli, 2020; Verra, 2022; Gill 2022; Tagliaferri, 2022; Puymbroeck, 2022). In some sources, slomads do not

only see authenticity but also sustainability in travel, with focusing on minimising their carbon footprint and choosing sustainable-based products and services.

Similar to natural tourism, digital nomads can explore the natural attractions and weather. Access to parks, green spaces and surrounding nature are not just considered by travellers with interest in nature, but also as indication of quality of life (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2022). Weather has been a major attractor for travellers. As triple S, 'sand, sea and sun' implies, weather has been frequently cited as a pull factor for tourists towards warmer climate destinations.

Physical infrastructure and cost of living are also an indicator of quality of life. The access to essential services such as electricity, water, sanitation, and telephone or cellphone is paramount (Nomadlist, nd.; Lhakard, 2022; Orel, 2020). The ease of the bureaucracy to enter and transition in the country is also paramount. These elements tend to depend on the condition and situation of the country's infrastructure, urban development and the familiarity of the law with foreigner's circumstances such as income tax requirements (Mancinelli, 2020). For digital nomads, the space to work, whether shared or not, is an additional criteria (Chevtaeva, 2021). Affordable and reliable internet for the long term are becoming more essential and minimum standard for travellers (Hermann & Paris, 2020). Noticeably, travellers who have to work remotely while travelling place emphasis on this requirement. Due to these situations, cities and urban areas tend to be popular choices for digital nomads.

Some literature suggest that there are alternative co-living spaces away for cities with all the necessary services, although there are hints that they are popular with the more 'conscious' travellers and travellers who prefer less crowded and socialising co-living spaces (Chevtaeva, 2021. pp. 205). There is one emerging village in Madeira, Portugal specialised for digital nomads (Puymbroeck, 2022). So far there has been no studies on how digital nomads participate in these alternative accommodations (Chevtaeva, 2021. pp. 206). In addition to amenities, access to socialising and support networks has been highlighted as an important requirement. This was listed as how most digital nomads cope with the mental health challenges from adjusting to a new environment and integrating (Orel, 2019). This process of integration is related to the perception and attitude towards foreigners. This will be discussed further in the next section.

2.3. Guest-Host relationship and Integration

Tourism at its essence is about interaction and relationships between relevant stakeholders, including tourists and local residents (Kwong & Li, 2020; Fan et al, 2019; Kallmuenzer et al, 2020). As previously discussed, constant relocation is one of the definitive

characteristics of digital nomads. Compared to short term tourists, they have more prolonged time to interact with the destination than short term tourists and possibility to interact with the residents (Reichenberg, 2018; Sin & Minca, 2014). This concept of interaction was coined as host guest relationship in literature (Chang & Hsieh, 2017). Interactions is an important aspect that has been given little attention in researching digital nomads and their impact on destinations. It is one of the major factors to attract visitors to a destination. Interactions between host and guest are closely linked to perception and attitudes (Alrwajfah et al, 2019); these are further linked to the impacts of tourism. This is a major focus in research because it affects tourism development, planning and understanding sustainability.

Perception is defined as a subject's viewpoint based on a collection of facts, opinion and their attitude towards a phenomenon (Tung et al, 2021; Jóhannesson & Lund, 2019). Attitude is about the feelings towards something (Ghaderi et al, 2020). In literature, perception studies focused on the host's perception of tourism while the tourist's perspective was about perception of the hosts and services (Kim et al, 2020). Perceptions can be positive or negative. For the tourist, positive perception of a destination is crucial to their decision to travel there (). On the other hand, negative perception leads to lower visitors. Perceptions and attitude of hosts towards guests is strongly tied to how they see the impacts of tourism. Literature identifies two types of factors that affect host and guest perceptions. First is extrinsic, temporal and larger scale including level of tourism development, forms of tourism, level of seasonality and political stability and development of the country (Henderson, 2008). Second is the intrinsic factors, which at an individual level. These include economic dependence on tourism, attachment, distance from tourist active areas, local resident's attachment to each other, level of interaction, personal values, behaviours experienced, and socio-economic variables (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Meimand et al, 2017).

Perception and attitude studies have used various frameworks to explain their findings including social exchange theory, social representation theory and Butler's model of tourism lifecycle and Doxey Irridex and place identity theory (Kwong & Li, 2020). Throughout the history of travelling, the very focus of interaction between host and guests has been evolving. Interactions can be varied from more one way speculation or observation to creating relationships that continue even after the visitors leave the destination. Many studies have identified factors that influence the level and depth of interaction including scale, setting, form of tourism development, how tourists and hosts behaviour and the social dynamics of the local community (Pearce, 1994; Kwong & Li, 2020). Some studies also suggest the perception from the host is affected from the continuous impression from tourists from planned and unplanned encounters. Hence frequency and manner of interaction has an effect (Kwong & Li, 2020).

Interactions are classified as one way to two way. One way is as the name implies and too limited to what Urry (1992) calls the 'tourist's gaze'. This was about observing and encapsulating the hosts as part of the attraction. The use of media and visual recording such

photography was the most common way to develop a view of the society. The images of cultural performances and ‘staged’ and ‘negotiated’ authenticity are used as a way for tourists to remember the experience (Frisvoll, 2013). This was and continues to be a one sided interaction between tourists and the host community. These collections in forms of media play a powerful role in shaping the image and reputation of the destination. Within this setting, exchange between host and guest is shallow and loses the deeper meaning. Host and guest interaction creates a different experience when both are connected in dialogue and equal footing. These opportunities are becoming normal as tourism is used as an opportunity to learn each other’s cultures.

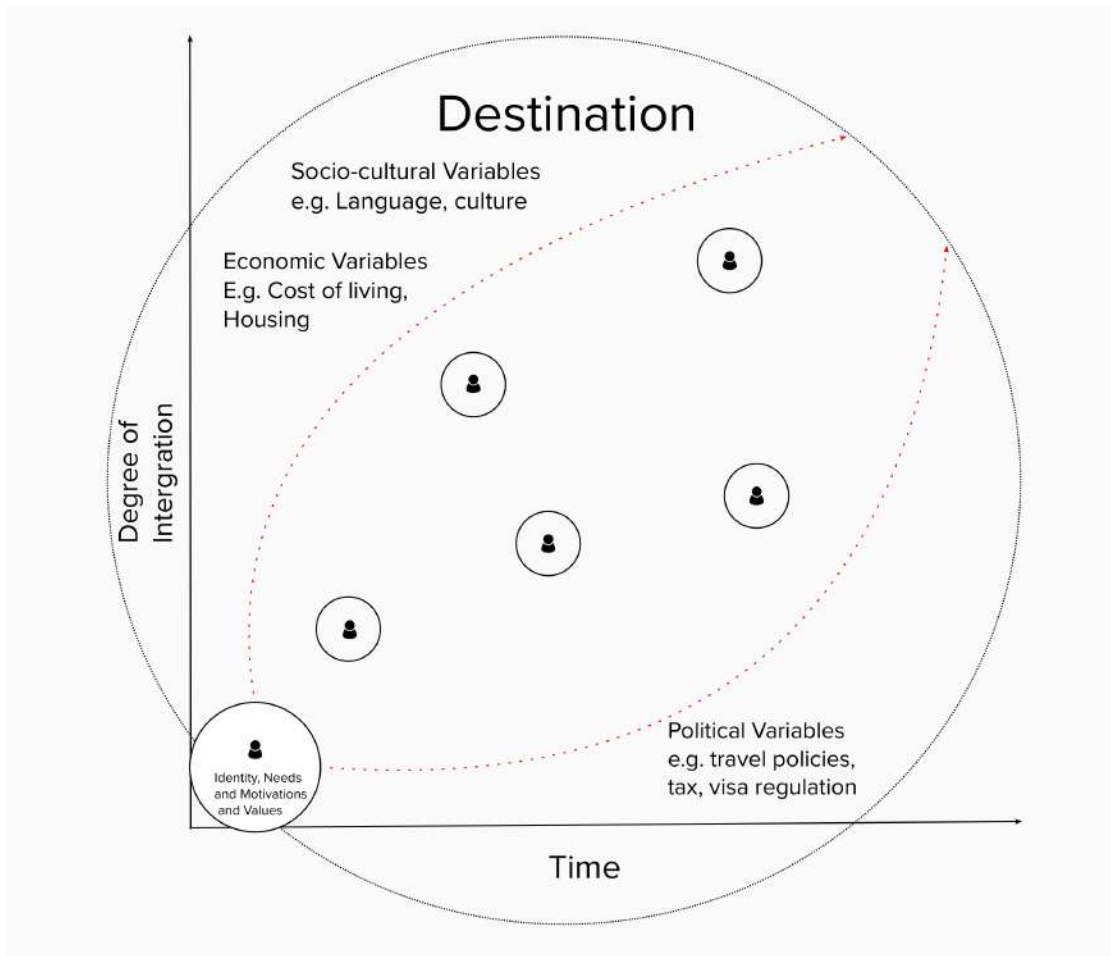
Two way interactions are usually within the means of verbal communication (McKenna, 2016). Motivation behind interactions can be explained by social exchange theory. SET is about exchange of resources to meet mutual benefit of parties involved (McKenna, 2016). In tourism, this is evident in tourists paying for an experience while service providers gain economic gain (Stienmetz et al, 2020). This comes down to each party's motivations, behaviour and values that bring them to the table of negotiation (Liu & Li, 2018). However, residents who are not part of the economic gain of tourism may report problems with tourism negative effects such as overcrowding, vulgar behaviour of tourists or lack of cultural sensitivity (Scherrer & Doohan, 2013). In context, there is a loss for the party and little to no benefit.

Conversing between individuals is dynamic and exchanges of each other’s attitudes, mood, emotion and perspective in a mutually spoken language (McKenna, 2016). It contributes to the larger impression on larger identities, representations. These are opportunities to learn about cultures of both groups. Language, familiarity and length of stay have a significant effect on the level of interaction (Yang et al, 2017; Godfrey et al, 2020). According to Yang et al, 2017, they examined the perception of people of Lijiang on a long term British traveller called Rock. Initially, Rock’s interaction was limited to taking photographs and his photo subjects saw the relationship as a commercial transaction. For 20 years, Rock began to learn the language, cultural etiquette and having personal dialogues. This changed the perception of the residents as more emotional and mutual connection.

Although perception is a fundamental aspect to explore for long term travellers, there is limited study on their social integration in a destination. For volunteers, integration is more relevant to their stay as their work is directly linked to the host community (Kontogeorgopoulous, 2017; Kwong & Li, 2020). This tied their motivation which can be altruistic and promoting positive cultural exchange (Lee & Zhang, 2020). This means that their experiences have to go beyond ‘the staged setting for visitors’ and towards ‘seeing where people live their lives’ (Brown, 2005). Similarly, digital nomads stay longer but more importantly, may not have the support that volunteers and volunteer tourists have with adapting to day to day services and systems (Frilund, 2018). It can be argued that digital nomads are more independent

travellers that adapt to new environments, similar to experience as expats and temporary workers (Waller, 2018). It is not clear if digital nomads strive to integrate and pursue that sense of belongingness within the host environment. It is possible that it depends on the individual's interests. Social integration is predicted to be an important component to their stay that could depend on their motivation, needs and their desire to adjust to their environment (Chevtaeva, 2021. pp 208). It can be predicted that length of their stay may also influence their adaptation. I aim to address this gap with this study.

Figure 2: portrays illustration of the integration of an independent long term traveller in a destination. The smaller circles are individuals with their own intrinsic characteristics. The larger circle is the destination and consists of socio cultural, economic and political systems that affect the individuals. The red lines parameters the space of integration of an individual over time. It is important to note that the probability of meeting local residents changes increases over time. Barriers and resulting resistance produced by the individual's interaction with the systems and people changes the rate of integration within the space of two arrows. Despite these dynamics, there is an accumulative rise of integration over time.



Source: Own

Barriers for integration are similar reasons as barriers of attractions including language, duration of stay, drastic difference in physical or bureaucratic infrastructure; culture shock; lack of interest and friendships, attitudes towards tourists; status and power dynamics; unable to leave familiar social enclaves (Waller, 2018). Integration is also affected by the level of acculturation or how similar the host's culture becomes more like the guest's culture (Lehto et al, 2020; Ward, 2008). As the guests passing through communicate their motivations, values and norms, the host subjects adapt to match them. Even so, the host wellbeing must be considered in tourism management to create enriching experiences for guests and hosts alike (Lehto et al, 2020).

Social Integration is defined as the extent of newcomer to be included in a society. It is a highly researched phenomenon in sociology and anthropology and most popularly used in understanding migration. Penninx, Berger & Kral (2006) found that an individual's intrinsic state and the nature of their relationships with members of the environment are critical to how they adjust and integrate. Similar to perception, the individual's intrinsic state can be psychological variables including their values, motivations and their cultural identity (Lhakard, 2022; Yousefi & Marzuki, 2015).

Figure 2 illustrates the adapted version of the elements and dynamics revolving on an individual's level of integration over time. The large sphere represents the destination consisting of its systems of politics, economics and social cultural norms. These elements are fluid and influence individual members that exist within them. The smaller circles are individual members. The circle to the left is an individual (guest) entering the destination. Within the individual, there are internal variables that affect the nature of their interactions. Values can align with the environment and create an easier adjustment. If not, they have to change and adapt to bring back their optimum state. In the case of digital nomads, Needs refer to an individual's psychological and physiological necessities that they seek to fulfil from their interaction with their environment. One of the main characteristics of digital nomads is self fulfilment (Lhakard, 2022).

Host guest integration can be explained by typology formulated depending on the purpose of stay and reaction. Gudykunst (1983) designed the range below. Digital nomads would appear between visitors and residents.

Figure 3: illustrates the range of words and accumulative reaction a stranger (guest) receives when joining a place. Compared to Figure 2, the middle column relates to the degree of interaction depending on the interaction with systems of governance and individuals.

A Typology of Stranger-Host Relations

Host's Reaction to Stranger	Stranger's Interest in Host Community		
	Visit	Residence	Membership
Friendly (Leaning to Positive)	Guest	Newly Arrived	Newcomer
Ambivalent (Indifference)	Sojourner	Simmel's Stranger	Immigrant
Antagonistic (Leaning to Negative)	Intruder	Middle-Man Minority	Marginal Persons
General Area of Research	Sociology of Tourism	Intercultural Adjustment	Acculturation/Assimilation

Digital Nomad
Zone of integration
labelling

Source: Gudykurt (1983)

Motivations connect to the pre- departure motivations, pull and push factors that attract a traveller to a destination. Kontogeorgopoulos (2017) found that finding authenticity to be one of the main motivations for volunteers. Digital nomads can be of similar interest and prefer to look beyond the staged visitor's experience. Identity for digital nomads can refer to how they connect their lifestyle culture. The two red lines encompass the degree of integration over time. Individuals would move within this sphere depending on how their relationships and internal dimensions connect with the environment. The longer they stay within a place the higher the possibility to meet people who can connect with their motivations, needs and values, whether with other foreigners or local residents (O'Reilly, Caldwell & Barnett, 1989). Digital nomads are temporary residents and exit this system and begin again in a new place.

This model along with the dualistic nature of host and guest paradigm brings up many questions on their validity in the digital nomad context. Questions such as how does the host and guest duality change with digital nomads? Is the line clear between them? Similar to the case of Brook the British traveller, integrating challenges the definition of a host. It leads to inquiring whether the members of the host community continue to perceive the guests the same way over time and frequency of interaction. Are their barriers that influence the perception of the host? Due to the scope of my research focused on specific members of the host community, I attempt to address these questions based on these parameters.

2.4. Sustainability in tourism

The concept of sustainability has been forming and evolving for the past two decades (Liburd, 2018; Liburd et al, 2020). Its conceptualisation began in 1977 when the United Nations was tackling a crisis of global development. They decided to establish three independent commissions - The Brandt Commission (1977 and 1983), The Paine Commission (1980) and The Brundtland Commission (1987). They introduced some key findings that first brought the concept of preserving for the future generation, closing the gap between the rich north and poor south and futility of the arms race. Brundtland (1987:49) further builds the holistic framework we know today ‘...Meeting the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs’. This was the start of a paradigm shift for one-sided economic policies to more inclusion of social and environmental aspects of development; since then there has been more strategies and global collaborations to forward sustainability and the concept of sustainable tourism for development (STD).

Approaches to sustainability in tourism has been repeatedly reexamined and redefined. Initially, sustainability in tourism is more about maintaining and managing resources in the tourism system (Sharpley, 2020). This way, the economic, social and environmental needs are met. However, this idea lacked to address the growing concerns of host communities and its overall contribution to alleviate global issues (Hughes & Morrison-Sauders, 2018). In the case of the recent UN Agenda 41, the UN identified 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to fulfill by 2030. Many studies suggest that sustainable tourism as an approach is not holistic enough. Goals to achieve sustainability are too complex and cannot be solved through managing resources alone (Liburd, 2018). These issues are not only complex but also dynamic and evolving (Sharpley, 2020). Ergo the solutions we design to tackle have to continuously adapt. With consideration to these thoughts, sustainable tourism development was reformulated to what the UNWTO use today.

‘Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social (socio-cultural) and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities’ (UNWTO Commission, 2018).

As the definition implies, sustainable tourism strives to meet the needs of both guests and hosts while addressing its effects on socio-cultural, environmental (natural) and economic pillars (Towner & Milne, 2017). Economic pillar in sustainability is about providing long term economic operations, while ensuring the benefit to all stakeholders, promoting equality and opportunities in employment, and improving poverty levels (Mihalič & Kuščer, 2021). From the national policy standpoint, this pillar has received the longest focus compared to the other pillars. It is also more measurable (Mihalič, 2021). In national cases such as Cambodia, tourism benefits are further stimulated by the growth of foreign investment and infrastructure development

(Carter et al, 2015). In addition, national government policies have endorsed sustainability principles (Towner & Milne, 2017). Whether sustainable tourism businesses receive guidance and support is unknown. From the tourism accommodation scale, they can contribute to this pillar through ensuring they provide optimum wages, benefits and promote equality, inclusion values and higher ratio of locally hired employees. Other common practices include ensuring employers have better skills, access to daycare for their children and language courses.

Socio-cultural is another critical pillar for sustainable tourism (Meimand et al, 2017). It is about maintaining the socio-cultural practices of the host community by protecting their heritage and values (Guo et al, 2019). In some countries, sustainability has been part of national tourism policy and planning (Tseng & Huang, 2017). For example, Malaysia has created a national tourism planning guidelines for sustainable tourism guidelines for homestay programs (Kasim et al, 2016; Kunjuraman, 2022; Yusoff, Rashid & Abd Halim, 2021). This program was initially launched to promote poverty alleviation. It helps a given community to design their own fully owned homestay experience that promotes their positive cultural exchange.

Environment or Natural pillar for sustainable tourism ensures using natural resources without depletion, thereby projecting the ecological processes and biodiversity (Meimand et al, 2017; Tekalign et al, 2018). This can be addressed from different levels. From a national level, destinations can ensure switching to renewable energy, protecting and conserving natural spaces, limiting the number of visitors, promoting recycling, beach cleanup programs, ban single use plastic and control pollution (Ferrari et al, 2022). Tourism services can independently do their own action such as limit the use of chemicals, efficiently use water and electricity, reduce waste and sort out recycling (González-García et al, 2022).

Ecotourism is a form of sustainable tourism that emphasises tourism as means to support conservation (Kunjuraman, 2022). There is no set definition or ways ecotourism is practised however there are distinct traits that literature mentioned; I will discuss three. These projects tend to be located in pristine, natural settings, such as parks, deserts and savanna (Mudzengi et al, 2022). They tend to be small-scale to reduce environmental pressure (Volo & D'Acunto, 2021 pp 274). The project must build awareness of environmental concerns amongst the local people and in some cases, involve them in leadership and planning (Nair & Hamzah, 2015). These are a few examples of measures by ecotourism projects. The global ecotourism society and many accreditation centres have numerous guidelines and indicators to help project designers and share knowledge (Mudzengi et al, 2022).

Ecotourism is becoming a popular form of tourism, especially in the global south region (Volo. S. & D'Acunto, 2021). For example Thailand, Cambodia and Malaysia have national policies that acknowledge its presence and encouragement (Kunjuraman, 2022). Some of these countries have ecotourism as a priority area in national tourism policies (ADB, 2021). There are grants, networks and advice programs designed for private individuals, organisations or rural communities.. Although ecotourism is noble endeavour, claiming to be practising it can be

subjective and difficult to regulate (Volo. S. & D'Acunto, 2021). Some companies resort to gaining certification for private institutions or accreditation bodies such as the International Ecotourism Society. However they can be expensive and challenging for small businesses to pursue..

Community based tourism (CBT) is an initiative that has been come from the pro-poor tourism (Dolezal, 2015; Dolezal & Novelli, 2020). It aims to alleviate poverty, diversify income and ensure the community receives and retains economic gains from it (Soares et al, 2021). The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation tourism chapter states that tourism is an important contributor to generating businesses, spreading economic benefits and a driver for more public-private partnership (Nair & Hamzah, 2015). Trevor Sofield (2011) raised an interesting criticism about the approaches and lethal pitfalls projects to sustain the long run. Projects are planned from top down, copy and paste way often fail (Dłużewska, 2019; Dolezal & Novelli, 2020). Each site is unique and must be designed with the community's need in mind (Fan et al, 2019; Nair & Hamzah, 2015). The subjects have to be part of the design process and see the vision they want for themselves (Kunjuraman, 2022). Another important factor is to correctly identify the vulnerable and below the poverty line. Tools such as value chain analysis would help tourism planners to identify and effectively strategise around the stakeholders and their needs.

Southeast Asian nations have numerous CBT programs that model sustainability values, strategise community participation and self dependence (Nghah et al, 2021; Dolezal, 2015). In Malaysia for example, it's national tourism plan and thereby a focus and positive attitude from government and to instruct communities to start their own and acquire useful tools (Henderson, 2003; Amir, et al, 2015; Kasim et al, 2016). The framework has allowed numerous projects to launch within remote and indigenous villages. Nair & Hamzah (2015) used examples from such projects to create a common framework of CBT models. Push towards self reliance and less from funding are one of the biggest hurdles stated in literature.

In summary, this chapter has presented the up to date major concepts surrounding digital nomads, sustainable tourism and host-guest relationships. With these frameworks, five indicators are identified to evaluate host's or supply side response and four indicators were found relevant for the digital nomads or demand side. To ensure flow of text and structure, I will use these indicators to answer the research question in the findings and discussion section. The next section will discuss my underlying school of thought and approaches to collect and process this research's data.

Methodology

As seen in the literature review, digital nomad research has focused on conceptualising the phenomenon, the state of digital nomads' wellbeing and their motivation for travel at a destination level. The current and potential participation of digital nomads in sustainable and

community based tourism projects has not been researched (Chevtaeva, 2021. pp 207; Mancinelli, 2020; Verra, 2022. The aftermath of Covid 19, the predicted rise of digital nomads and sloadms (Gill 2022; Tagliaferri, 2022; Puymbroeck, 2022), has made it an ideal opportunity to examine the perspectives from the supply (sustainable community based accommodations) and demand side (digital nomads). Further literature review shows that the notion of digital nomads is fluid and complex. In other words, digital nomads are not stationary and set labels but they can transform to other forms of travellers (Hannenon, 2020). Moreover, there exists little to no research on what affects digital nomads self identify, their relationship, how sustainable accommodations perceive them and the digital nomads overall integration with their environment. To effectively address these research gaps, I choose qualitative research design. Qualitative research designs are more ideal in studies on human perspectives and allow flexibility to explore what causes what (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The method used was both in-depth and semi-structured interviews of 12 subjects from the supply and demand side located within the South East Asian (ASEA) region. In addition to interviews, I also included observational study and secondary data collected from previous interviews and published material.

Study setting Malaysia, Cambodia and Thailand – background on covid 19 impacts

SARS-COV-19 or commonly known as COVID 19 had the most prolific impacts to the globe in modern history (UNWTO, nd.; Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2020). In tourism alone, economic revenue saw a loss of 71% in 2020 and recovered only by 4% in 2021 (UNWTO, nd.). South East Asian countries have suffered tremendous losses in the tourism sector (Abhari et al, 2022). To reduce the strain on the healthcare system, all countries had taken strict measures of border closure and in some cases restricting travel between interstate borders (Mudzengi et al, 2022). Each country took a stage to stage reopening process, with less and less requirements, such as PCR tests and quarantine measures (Mensah & Boakye, 2021). With 91% of adults already vaccinated, Cambodia began to fully open its borders for international tourists as early as November 2021. Thailand and Malaysia partially opened to create travel bubbles to specifically popular island destinations including Thailand's Phuket Sandbox program and Malaysia's Langkawi Island program (Nghah et al, 2021). Their requirements still had strict measures in the initial stages. For instance, tourists are still required to fulfil 14 day quarantine at delegated hotels; some would argue it was to target higher spending travellers and less the usual backpacking crowd (Lockstone-Binney & Ong, 2021). Later in 2022, Thai authorities began to ease restrictions by partially opening international travel with pre-departure and quarantine measures (Klinsrisuk & Pechdin, 2022). After 2 years of closure, Malaysia officially opened their borders to international travellers in May 2022 (Arokiasamy et al, 2022). Thailand followed suit by July 2022 (Klinsrisuk & Pechdin, 2022). Even with these actions, the rate of recovery did not increase as expected (Asian Development Bank, 2022; pp xi). Tourist motivations changed to include health and safety as well as financial restraints (Arokiasamy et al, 2022).

The Malaysian government implemented the movement control order (MCO) to restrict travel and lockdown during the initial outbreak phase (Abhari et al, 2022). With shocking halt and adjustments, it was reported tourism lost an estimated 750 million USD, with employers

laying off over 17% of their workers and at least 30% of hotels permanently closing their doors (Arokiasamy et al, 2022). Later, the conditional movement control order (CMCO) was implemented and the government devised strategies such as worker's insurance payments and delaying loan payments (Abhari et al, 2022).

Likewise, Cambodia reported a loss in tourism GDP, with a record decline of 25% and employment loss at 18% from 2019 to 2020 (Asian Development Bank, 2022). According to an ASD report, international tourists account for 80% of tourism spending. This implies that there is heavy reliance of the economy on international tourism, with the majority within the informal sector. The Government of Cambodia took some commendable actions to support recovery and resilience in the tourism sector. In December 2021, they already launched the Roadmap for Recover of Cambodia Tourism During and Post Covid-19, one of the few countries to do so (Ministry of Tourism Cambodia, 2021). Actions they took include supporting tourism employees with a minimum salary and promoting sustainable tourism through start up competition and funding.

Thailand has the largest revenue from tourism compared to its neighbours and it experienced a growth decline (Klinsrisuk, R., & Pechdin, 2022). With over 60% of tourism from international travellers, Thailand took a dive not only in tourism but also sectors such as agriculture that heavily relied on tourism services as a major buyer (Adams et al, 2021). As the highest tourism revenue country amongst ASEA countries, Thailand took cautious pace to easing travel restrictions (ADB, 2022; pp 11). During recovery stage, the ministry of tourism in Thailand promoted environmental protection and recovery strategies including 3 month closure of all national parks from 2021.

In summary all three countries had been affected by the reduced tourists and have begun to focus on high spending tourists and long term tourists such as remote workers and digital nomads (Orel, 2021) These attempts can stem from the effort to stimulate pandemic recovery and resilience (ADB, 2022).

3.1. Research Paradigm

Before conducting this study, I had to contemplate the appropriate paradigm for this topic. Paradigm is about the worldview and school of thought of the researcher and affects how knowledge is acquired and interpreted. Understanding the paradigm is fundamental to academic study because it helps set the tone of the research and how the aim is achieved (Lincoln et al, 2015). It also helps us to reflect the reality and limitations of gathering knowledge. The paradigm is characterised by three parts – Ontology, Epistemology and Research Method. Ontology is defined as the nature of knowledge or reality. Epistemology is about the relationship between the researcher and the reality studied. Research Method consists of how knowledge is attained and which research approach is utilised.

As this research is on social phenomenon, the paradigm of constructivism was chosen as appropriate. Constructivism dictates that realities are not universal and objective, but rather we as humans or actors construct them (Jennings, 2015). Thereby these realities with diversity of the actors, come in multiple constructs. With tourism as a social science phenomenon, we construct models and concepts to aid us to understand experiences (Berbekova et al, 2021). In the case of digital nomads and sustainable accommodations, I intend to collect their interpretation of realities. This paradigm and research methodology is ideal for this topic as it allows exploratory research to dig into actor's motivations, values and experiences their diverse realities (Clark et al, 2021). In contrast to positivists and post positivists, constructivists believe that there is no one set truth, rather there are collections of truths that the participants are providing (Jennings, 2009). As a result, the epistemology is subjective in nature (Deterding & Waters, 2021). It is important for me as a researcher to be mindful of the way I receive and interpret the results because as a researcher I am influenced by my background, experiences and values. I addressed this bias by using a variety of methods of data collection, as suggested by (Decrop, 2004). Due to this a collection of multiple perspectives using qualitative research methods seemed most appropriate. This includes mainly semi structured interviews and observation data gathering. To increase precision and reliability, Secondary data from websites and published material as well as pilot interview and follow up emails were also utilised.

3.2. Data collection

The research question is 'To what extent can the introduction of remote workers and digital nomads potentially transform for sustainable development in community based tourism projects?' To address, I have two aims. First, to determine the perspective of the digital nomads and remote workers on social impact and their attitude towards integration; second, to find out from the host stakeholders: how their operation involves sustainable tourism development and community empowerment; and their attitude towards their current market and potential to host digital nomads. Semi structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data. Research interviews are simply conversing with subjects to address a problem in an organised or systematic fashion (Schmidt, 2004; Gray et al, 2020). It has been numerously merited as an effective way of gaining deeper understanding subjects' perspectives (William, 2015. pp 498) There are two types of structure of the interviews – supply and demand versions. The supply side questions are targeted to sustainable accommodations and consist of 5 parts.

This study attempts to understand the existing dynamics between sustainable accommodations on the tourism supply side, and digital nomads on the tourism demand side. The questions for supply side are divided into 5 sections with each indicator identified from literature review and leads to answer the research question. These include questions about sustainable development, resilience plan for the pandemic, experience hosting long term guests, efforts to attract long term guests and integration with guests. The questions on demand side are divided into four categories, namely Identity, Awareness of sustainability and participation, attraction and barriers of destination and Integration with the host community. All questions, with the exception of bio questions, were open-ended and allowed the participants to expand their answers (Jennings, 2015; pp 14;). Based on the participants' choice, some interviews and follow up interviews were conducted in-depth and did not follow any structure. This allowed

flexibility for participants and interviewers alike to discuss difficult and complex topics such as integration and identity at ease (Schmidt, 2004; Deterding & Waters, 2021). William (2015) suggests that in-depth interviews are more advantageous to deal with topics that are sensitive and need time to dissect interviewee's responses and develop a deeper picture. Therefore, I did an in-depth interview during a follow up interview with some subjects.

All participants choose to be interviewed in English. From 13 interviewees, 5 were conducted by Zoom call, 6 were in person and 2 were conducted through email. All participants had follow up communication via zoom or email to reconfirm their responses. Although in-person interviews are normal in research, zoom interviews are acknowledged for providing participants convenience, saving time to travel and accessible with different devices (Gray et al, 2020; Johnson et al, 2019). Prior to starting the interviews, the participants were made aware of disclaimer, their anonymity or confidentiality. With the exception of two participants, all interviewees had agreed to full disclosure of their names. There were also feedback sessions through email and meetings to follow up and increase reliability of the data (Decrop, 2004. pp 162). This was further verified by site evaluation and speaking to other managers when possible. All participants were also given a copy of the completed study for verifying their responses and goodwill sharing of knowledge.

3.3. Data sampling

The subjects of this study belong to particular niche, digital nomads and; sustainable and community based tourism accommodations, respectfully. Initially, a large list of sustainable accommodations within the region were quantified. I specifically targeted to speak to higher management who has access to decision making and goals of the organisation. Luxury based sustainable accommodations were excluded due to their main marketing target being high spendings (Volo & D'Acunto, 2021 pp 281). The website of each site was evaluated for sustainability practices. For digital nomads, I inquired about their travel habits and ensured they are working online and travelling majority of the year. All digital nomads had experienced living in ASEA before. I attempted to collect a diverse group with different professions, nationalities and current locations. After filtering out the unqualified candidates, I was left with 13 participants. Based on these parameters, purposive sampling was done among sustainable tourism and community based tourism sites in ASEA region. I conducted interviews in person from May 2022 - July 2022 while virtual and email interviews were completed between March 2022 and June 2022. Table 1 illustrates the location of companies and individuals. Initially, I planned for a questionnaire to collect data from digital nomads. After doing pilot questionnaires and receiving feedback, however, I switched to semi structured interview. The following table lists the interviewees, company and occupation, location and method of interviewing.

Table 1: lists the interviewees of this study including their profile

Interviewee	Name	Company and/ Or Position Or Nationality	Location	Method of Interview
1	Tom	General Manager, Juara Turtle Sanctuary	Tioman Island, Malaysia	Zoom
2	Katrine and Simen	Founders and managers, Babel Guesthouse	Siem Reap, Cambodia	In person
3	Anonymous	Founder of Entrepreneurship Association; Former owner of Co-living space	Chiang Mai, Thailand	In person
4	Anthony	Owner and CEO, Frangipani Resort	Langkawi, Malaysia	Zoom
5	Jenn	Manager, Best Society under Sukau Ecolodge and Borneo Adventures	Sukau, Sabah, Malaysia	In person
6	Jai	General Manager, Tungog Ecocamp under KOPEL	Laha Datu and Kompong Puti, Sabah, Malaysia	In person
7	Jewel and Keith	Founders and Managers, Eco BnB	Johor Bahru, Malaysia	In person
8	Julie	Limetree Ecohotel	Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia	Email
9	Jane (Digital Nomad)	NGO worker, Singaporean	Ko Tao, Thailand	Zoom
10	Piyush (Digital Nomad)	Course designer and freelance astrologist, Indian	Phnom Penh, Cambodia	In person
11	Anonymous DN 1 (Digital Nomad)	Social marketing manager, Columbian	Copenhagen, Denmark	Zoom
12	Anonymous DN 2 (Digital Nomad)	Volunteer and English teacher, Brazilian	Kotor, Montenegro	Zoom

	Nomad)			
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Source: Own

Majority of accommodation participants were based in Malaysia, two in Cambodia and one in Thailand. Each respondent held a management position or higher and observations were completed in 4 of the 7 sustainable accommodations. Due to time constraints, I was unable to attend all on-site tours and had to depend on materials shared by the participants and published online. Furthermore, I was unable to interview more than one subject per site, including stakeholders that are not in the decision making circle nor benefiting from tourism.

3.4. Data Analysis

As previously mentioned, the data gathering was carried out by interviewing managers in sustainable tourism projects and digital nomads. For the analysis, I choose to use Thematic Analysis. It is a type of qualitative data analysis that allows extracting common themes and concepts from a collection of data (Walters, 2016). Thematic analysis can follow an inductive or a deductive research process (Clark & Bryman, 2019; Clark et al, 2021). Inductive attempts to find the common patterns in the data to produce concepts while deductive uses the data to validate existing theories (MacCarthy, 2021). Due to the lack of existing concepts, I followed an inductive research approach. Thematic analysis particularly appropriate for analysing responses related to the subject's perspectives on a social phenomenon. In this study, I attempt to address the questions about participation of digital nomads and sustainable accommodation, topics such as integration.

Thematic analysis has a more flexible approach to process data of a more complex and intertwining nature but it is also a type of analysis without common guide steps (Clark et al, 2021). I decided to follow Castleberry & Nolen (2018) five comprehensive steps for an effective and accurate outcome. First step is compile audio to transcribe into raw data. I used software Otter and Zoom built-in transcript to acquire the raw transcript and personally reviewed each script. Second step is dissembling, which means I categorised all the data into two 5 groups for sustainable accommodations and 4 groups for digital nomads. Groupings were determined from the research question and preexisting topics in literature (Deterding & Waters, 2021). This helps to effectively organise large raw data and increase trustworthiness of the analysis process (Decrop, 2004; Walters, 2016). Third step is reassembling. This is about labelling and connecting grouped data to identifying common themes connected to the research objectives. Themes are, as Vaismoradi et al (2016) describe, themes as the abstract terms that the researcher extracts from the meaning behind the speaker's words. For effective visualisation of thematic relationships, I used NVivo software to graph participants vs categories matrices. Step four is interpreting and

redefining the themes, sub themes and branching out to the abstract concepts that will tell the story.

The next section discusses the results of the given choice of methods. Extracts from interviews, field notes and published material were used to illustrate major findings. Deterding & Waters (2021) described these quotes as the textual ‘aha’ moments where the speaker was especially articulated and their response was particularly resonating and hold meaning to the data interpretation.

Results

This chapter reveals the findings pertaining to the research question ‘To what extent can the introduction of remote workers and digital nomads potentially transform sustainable development in community based and sustainable tourism projects?’ In order to address the question, I started with the following indicators that will connect the supply side of the conceptual framework. These indicators allow us to understand the current state of their operation and how digital nomads can fit as a segment. The first indicator is sustainable development or how do they practice sustainable tourism and what are their methods of practising it. The second indicator is Resilience plans and actions during the pandemic. In other words how has the Covid 19 pandemic impacted them and coping strategies. The third indicator is experience hosting long term guests explores questions such as how has their market profile changed and whether they experienced digital nomads. The fourth indicator is the efforts to attract long term guests discusses how they attract their customers. The fifth indicator is integration, which includes their responses on how the host perceives them. Once all the relevant findings are presented, the discussion section will tie them together to explore their meaning, emerging themes to address the research question and what it implies to the current state of literature.

4.1. Supply side - Sustainable tourism projects

4.1.1 Sustainable Development

As previously explained, the participants selected in this study come from various forms of sustainable and community based tourism. When it comes to most projects, interpreting sustainable practices have to be uniquely designed to fit the needs of each setting. In other words, solutions to sustainability do not follow ‘one size fit all’ logic. One of the common responses I

received about the success of a project is its origin. The foundation of any project starts with the creators understanding the motive. That will build the core foundation and drive the project through to the next successive phases. Let us take the case KOPEL, which stands for the community based ecotourism initiative. As their name implies, their goal is to promote community based tourism, a project by the four villages to use tourism as a vehicle for sustainable development and conservation.

‘It (project) is nothing without giving something, la? If we don't have a bottom-up process. So we started the initiative on the idea that the program is empowering the local communities sustainable alternative economy, sustainable alternative economies, alternative economic, alternative economic means in concept is equal to results and also conservation in origin and ecotourism. Yeah, that's what we call community based ecotourism.’ [KOPEL, 2022]

As is evident with Batu Puteh Community Tourism Cooperative or KOPEL for short, each project attempts to address and define their work that they evolve to make it self sustainable. Like most community based tourism, they had to focus on learning from other projects that tried to create a sustainable tourist project but ultimately failed.

‘Those are foundational. From bottom up is our process, not top down. The government launched a similar project in the 70s, and 80s, with a top down planning, they launched this new village, but people just get it and the community just empty with nothing to do. In one to two years, it closed, the end, and they gave the grant but they do the wrong way. Ask them (the community) what they want, don't force them to do what you want. Because this top down government, you as a planner didn't know that before, maybe good, but you don't know what he (local) wants, what he can do. That's very important. We had like a five year study beforehand, we do some research, because we want to dig into what we as a community want, what we have, what we can get, what the impact is, that's really important. We don't simply like we do the hiking, rafting, rafting here cannot get to the higher tier look’ [KOPEL, 2022]

In this case, building a tourism operation that is self sustaining has to follow operations that involve the community from the designing stage. Best society had a similar perspective and found that sustainable tourism has to start from empowering the locals by involving them in the design and implementation of a project. Without this aspect, the possibility of conflict and power struggle affects the continuation of the project.

‘There were a lot of concrete projects, a lot of projects were failures. There was one community that we don't, we don't work with this. I'm not gonna say which communities but this is one community in particular. One, we saw an opportunity there to help them create a community based tourism place and their place is really nice. Because it has a culture towards an area where it is situated is just really, really pretty. We're here when we were doing an agreement, a five year

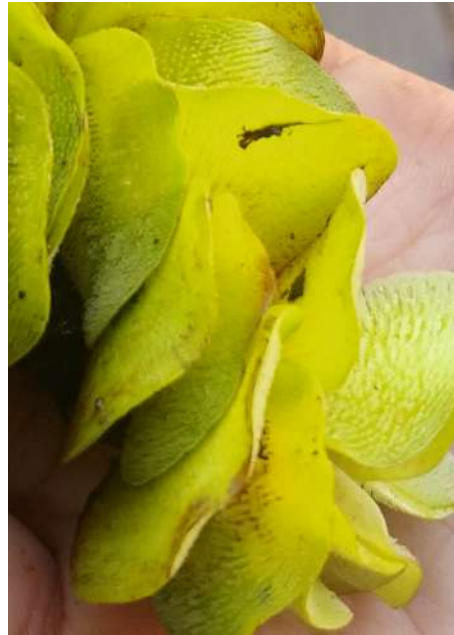
you're supposed to be a five year project. But it was down to like two or three because not our involvement with the community. Real quick, one person, I guess, main point of contact arranger, something like that. And then disagreements within the community themselves. And all this. So we can help them to feel like we are responsible for creating that conflict. Our approach was not so correct. That's just, that's just an example. So we need to approach situations in a more holistic, holistic way. Sometimes it's not. It's not the right way to just go directly and tell them like this. Here's why we're not getting them on board. And so I think that initial stage is really important. Getting the whole community on board. Sometimes if there's any conflict between them, and we create problems, the ideal situation is we want to help but only if they want it.' [Best Society, 2022]

This was evident based on the observational data collected within each site and will be discussed further on this section. With exception of community based tourism projects, all projects were run by small business owners (one to two). Although only one had modelled it, each operation has elements of the three sustainability pillars, environmental, socio-cultural and economic. The larger operations (Frangipani) or those located in urban cities tend to focus on the environmental and quantitative based variables as their core key performance indicators. In the case of community based tourism projects, their measure of progress tends to rely more on the community's benefit and conservation. The economic gain has less significance due to financial streams connected to grants that support conservation efforts. In some cases, the measuring process becomes vague and difficult to quantify. Both Best Society and JTP report that they can only calculate how many projects have succeeded based on the yearly state of affairs. Best society looks at the number of projects that receive funding, gain training and are able to self-sustain. This can take multiple years. JTP aims to increase the population of turtle species by rescuing turtle nests and eggs. However this proved tricky due to the nature of factors that are in play.

'A tricky one, because of the life cycle of sea turtles. So sea turtles take about 25 to 30 years to reach sexual maturity. So the turtles that we release won't come back to nest themselves for another 25 to 30 years. So the project's been in place for this is its 15th year now. So we've got another 15 years before we actually see any return on our outputs.' [JTP, 2022]

With longer and arduous efforts, conservation projects that have been more time consuming to produce visible results. In the case of Kopel, they help to maintain conservation of their sites through lake restoration (MESCOT, nd.).

Figure 5: photo of the invasive species *Salvinia molesta*, growing around Kinabatangan river and ox bow lake adjacent to it (Mescot, nd.). This is one of the activities by volunteers and employees during covid 19 closure.



Source: Own

All participants had different levels of collaboration with each other or public bodies. In some cases the collaborations were focused with academic institutions for the purpose of networking, clients, research, or occasional interactions with researchers like me. For some participants such as Babel, they were a prior market that they evolved from to their current focus. With the exception of two subjects, all participants have little to no relationship with public authorities. In other words, they were of little to no significance to their operation nor planning. Some participants actively engage and would like to engage with tourism governing bodies, although it has taken rigorous work to be noticed.

‘There has been no support (from the government), no support, because they don't understand. So luckily, I have some moral support from some university, who understand and who manage to get it sort of chair of the session to get it recognized and approved. And now the finance ministry supports it because we save money and save energy. Because we are a capitalist society. People don't want to use it because they cannot make money because all the things come from the environment. There is no capital input.’ [Frangipani, 2022]

of some companies, they assisted their employees with health benefits for all them and their dependents as well as education benefits. KOPEL had the highest benefit with the university tuition deduction program and Frangipani also included salary, accommodation and meals. In addition to health insurance benefits, Babel gave all their employees free access to daycare and free English classes with a native speaker. The extent of benefits heavily depended on ownership, the scale of the operation and level of affordability for the management. The extent of the support has changed drastically during the pandemic and all managers had different ways of dealing with the pandemic. I will discuss this in the next section.

4.1.2 Resilience Plan for Pandemic

Similar to all businesses, all organisations were negatively affected by the pandemic. One of the major reasons is that the majority of their guests are international visitors, or at least a different region for the national portion. Travel between provinces within each country was also restricted. Starting from March 2022, the international travel ban was enforced and borders of most countries in SEA were closed for 2 years (Klinsrisuk & Pechdin, 2022). This is with the exception of Cambodia. Malaysia and Thailand opened small corridors from February 2022 and fully opened by April 2022. Due to the high vaccination rate of their citizens, the authorities allowed international travel as early as November 2021 (Nit et al, 2021). To survive the pandemic, participants relied on strategies on savings, cutting cost, applying for government grant relief, and fund-raising campaigns (Abhari et al, 2022; Klinsrisuk & Pechdin, 2022). One of the participant businesses that catered to digital nomads and promoted positive impacts actually closed down. As I travelled to the cities and islands that this research subjects are based, there were many boarded up businesses all over the island and cities. This was especially true for heavily tourism dependent destinations Langkawi (Malaysia), Tioman island (Malaysia) and Siem Reap (Cambodia).

‘In Langkawi, we lost 30,000 workers. We have 120,000 30,000 left the island because of no business for shops for car rental, or Airbnb for restaurants or handicraft for both operators for tour operators. Yeah. So to get back is not so easy. Imagine you lost 20% of your population. Yeah. 30,000 120,000 is 20% of the population. You just cannot snap your finger. We are open. You know, you just press they're not doing that. Yeah. Because Langkawi's economy depends 90% on tourism...As you go around you see, as you will see some shops now open on the island, some, probably about 20 to 30% of businesses are permanently closed. Or they will have to have new owners and things like that’ [Frangipani, 2022]

Most organisations experienced some level of domestic tourism traffic, especially when the interstate borders were opened. The impact of tourism on destinations that depended on

international tourism and economically dependent on leisure tourists were especially devastated. This was especially the case with JTP and Frangipani.

‘I would say probably about 90% of the island's inhabitants are working in the tourism industry. So yeah, for there to be almost no visitors for the biggest part of 18 months, nearly two years, as has had a real impact on the island. It's made it a very quiet place, probably depending on who you talk to. It might have been quite a nice thing for the island's inhabitants being able to sort of take a step back in time to pre tourism where sort of the island is, is existing kind of how it would have before. But obviously, people have become dependent on that kind of income and that lifestyle. So yeah, there's definitely been some people who have found it really quite difficult this last certainly this last year.’ [JTP, 2022]

From all 8 supply subjects, only 2 managed to keep all their staff after they resumed operation. In the case of those organisations whose financial stream depended on guests, they cut staff size drastically and found it compensated for the labour shortage. The reasoning mentioned was to keep the business afloat until the traffic begins. Others such as KOPEL resorted to accessing external funding or investment to relieve the loss of revenue and reassign to conservation projects, including removing invasive reed from one of the lakes. They also created a new product for independent traveller experience, tree planting.

‘Pre COVID, I used to have staff from about 130 to 140 from my 115 room resort today. Today, most staff are new, maybe only four or five, all staff, everybody multitasks and we are able to operate at the same level even better. With 50% of the staffing. That means with 60 Odd staff instead of 130 to 40 we can operate the resort, but investing in electric vehicles we got six electric vehicles, we got machines, whatever we can mechanise we mechanise but everybody multitasks.’ [Frangipani, 2022]

For organisations like Limetree, they resorted to keeping their staff from the administrative department by allowing them to work from home.

‘In the social (sustainability) aspect, we were determined to retain all our staff members with salary payments during this difficult time, by participating in the government wage subsidy scheme. We are also pleased to inform you that the majority of the staff members are still with us today and our management truly appreciates their dedication with our hotel. Some administrative employees are still on work from home arrangements, allowing them to save on transportation costs. We have also donated masks and sanitizers to a local orphanage, something we wish to do for the underprivileged children.’ [Limetree, 2022]

This was a similar case for Best Society and affiliates Sukau Rainforest lodge, who also let go most of their staff and applied for government aid on their behalf. In all cases, the

governments of the respective countries helped to give supplementary income for all employees. Most managers said that was better than nothing and helped the employees survive the expenses at the very least. Some participants reported the immediate after effects of closure had caused work pileup, short staffed and challenging to find new staff.

‘I think the team was overwhelmed for the first few weeks (coming back from lockdown), until now, at least not for most people that still kind of kind of pick up things like there was last time it was much bigger than the team. Just like the sales and reservations team alone. It was like almost 30 People with now. So that was like in full capacity. Volunteer now and it's only like this. We're still recruiting 15 people to imagine trying to catch up with what it was like to put a lot of pressure on us. No income for a long time. You're waiting. But good to finally be back. We were like this for the last two years. Because our company is so called the scariest in its life.’ [Best Society, 2022]

In some businesses like Babel, they took a unique approach compared to other subjects. Government subsidies for employee salary was not enough to keep their staff. The owners resorted to online fundraising campaigns, by reconnecting with their previous guests and asking for donations. In exchange for donations, they hosted virtual tours, stays and interviews with respective staff and their families. The owners themselves already had savings and rent relief from their landlord. During the pandemic, the city authorities launched major construction projects around their city Siem Reap. Their street was reconstructed and this caused new challenges. They had to be innovative to adapt to their new norms.

‘‘We had major construction projects in one year during covid. The road next to us was run down and it got expanded and we lost 5 m of our garden. So we were forced to renovate and build a new bar, ensuring the road and our place was on the same level. In order to reuse the materials we built a whole new nursery for our kids and staff's kids. We hired our staff to work on the construction, instead of the hotel because there were no guests. Government did compensation for everyone during Covid. 40 dollars per month They suspended licence fee in tourism businesses’ [Babel, 2022]

Figure 7: Babel guest house renovated bar and lounging section. Due to road expansion projects, the hotel lost over 5 meters of their garden, which forced them remodel the entire section. This created project for employees to participate during Covid 19 closure.





Source: Own

For one of the participants, Limetree, the pandemic has reduced the operations of their sustainability project partners. In response, they adapted by sorting and separating potentially infectious waste such as latex gloves and masks. Once the recycling stations become operational, they intend to collectively send them. They also reduced consumption of energy and water by at least 75%, although the reason stated was both to reduce cost, lack of guests, and sustainability.

‘Our waste recycling collection almost stopped completely because our recycling partners were not operating, which was very unfortunate. For infection control, regrettably we are still using disposable medical masks which we deem to be not eco-friendly. In addition, our council does not have a special waste collection mechanism for these masks, however our small effort is to collect all masks and dispose of these potentially infected waste separately so they are not mixed with other waste.’ [Limetree, 2022]

4.1.3 Experience hosting long term guests

One of the difficulties of the interview was asking the participants to discern between digital nomads and other long term travellers. Due to the fluidity of terminology and mobility of travellers (see figure 1), digital nomads are usually grouped with remote workers or people who travel for business. As a result of this ambiguity, I asked them specifically about visitors who worked while they travelled as a lifestyle. The remaining types of long term travellers they experienced included volunteers, volunteer tourists, hybrid remote workers and relocated workers. The type they experienced is determined by who their target is and what they can offer to the respective categories. Ecotourism and conservation related projects hosted the most volunteers and volunteer tourists. The focus of volunteers vs volunteer tourists depended on the type of project, duration and type of groups (educational or non educational) attended. In all cases, their focus was also because of financial and labour support.

‘Pre COVID volunteers were the main income stream. So we operate an accommodation platform by which people can pay to come and stay with us as we were talking about earlier volunteer tourism. So they're able to come to holiday destinations and be involved in the conservation activities that we do. We provide accommodation and food in exchange, they are essentially extra manpower, people power for the nightly patrols and the relocations and the other aspects of the project of recycling the coral rehab program. As well as practical things around the compound, if there's maintenance work that needs doing, people can pick up a paintbrush or however they can be of use. The idea is that it's not it's not a hotel. And it depends on individual schools of thought. Different volunteer projects have different opinions on how volunteers should, should be. Some people think that volunteers shouldn't have to pay, which is yeah, if you are going to volunteer, perhaps you should do so. For free if you're you know, the best thing you can give anybody is your time. But running a conservation project isn't without expense. So by finding this balance of providing an experience that people are willing to take away as a holiday, but also that their time being there is of benefit to the project and the causes that these projects work for then for me, that's always been kind of a nice balance.’ [JTP, 2022]

In addition to volunteer tourists coming more organically, both JTP and KOPEL received volunteers in large group tours. KOPEL in particular, receives student groups from educational institutions, specialised tour groups from nature companies and university researchers. These groups tend to be long established relationships and clients that are essentials source of income.

Most of the participants have experienced a variety of long term travellers. All except two host interns and long term volunteers, depending on their level of expertise. Digital nomads and remote workers were very common sites that were in or near cities.

‘Yes we had many remote workers. Especially after Covid. One time we had a woman here who called herself a digital nomad. She stayed a couple of months. And wrote one or two articles about us. They are always easy to work with! They sit in our restaurant the most with their computers. Our wifi is normally strong there. But also the rooms have strong enough internet for people who work from the room (like phone calls)’ [Babel, 2022]

Frangipani reported long term digital nomads who happen to stay longer because they were also stuck travelling out of the island. In both cases, digital nomads stayed for a longer term.. For Eco BnB, they experienced digital nomad entrepreneurs that were repeat customers and shorter duration per visit. However in all cases, digital nomads constitute a small portion of their overall guest profile.

‘(Our frequent customer) He was a currency trader. So he just has to mention you just need a very stable WiFi connection. Yeah. So he was actually moving between Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand. So every like two weeks, two weeks, two weeks, and then he will come back.’ [Eco BnB, 2022]

Subjects from conservation and ecotourism related said they have not noticed digital nomads nor remote workers being guests. They suspect it is due to their remote location or the guests simply did not ask for accommodating facilities.

‘I fear that that's something (hosting digital nomads) that if we can do something like that I think that's the main thing that we can do. Only problem is the internet connection and coverage is quite poor. So even like line calling for 4g, not just 5g but just line calling is quite difficult to get a stable connection. But basically if you have the internet you can work anywhere in the world.’ [Best Society, 2022]

Figure 8: majority of the sustainable tourism businesses had strategies for recovery, increasing innovation and expanding revenue streams. Eco-BnB designed their signature mocktails (non alcoholic cocktails) using hibiscus flowers grown in their garden.



Source: Own

Some of the participants retained many repeat customers, both short and long term due to their ability to accommodate dietary restrictions and other customised needs. In the case of Eco BnB, some travellers have particular needs that smaller and personalised hotels can help and trust.

‘The Buddhists vegetarians will have very strict diet requirements. Like from the cutlery, crockery they use, you have to tell them you have to prepare a different set for them. You have to tell them that you know, this bowl has no meat and has not been served on it. You didn't use the crockery or the cutlery has not touched any meat before. For Muslim guests, they will insist on halal (no pork) food. So, we had to be very careful, I served them drinks right even the crockery they use. If I serve alcohol, I will use a wine glass. If I serve the halal Muslims, they will be using Kubla they will be taking mocktails instead of cocktails. For Jewish, kosher salt is used.’ [Eco BnB, 2022]

Majority of the interviewees indicated that their preferred ideal customers are people who

stay long and are easier to meet customer's needs and help their project. Babel also prefers people who are aware of their social and environmental impact.

'Ideal guests are the ones that are here because of our reputation as focusing on responsible tourism and the fight against plastic pollution. That is not so many backpackers, but more "grown up" people. From solid jobs who don't bargain and give staff or tuk tuk drivers some tip' [Babel, 2022]

For Anonymous with Chiang Mai Entrepreneurship Association, long term travellers like digital nomads are an essential key to building economic and future sustainable growth for tourism. Backpacker sector should also be encouraged to participate, as they can also be a source of future opportunities for local benefit and social entrepreneurship.

'I think that's how politics generally works. Right? You see, you know, to me, there's this whole obvious issue of how we need to transform the immigration process in Thailand, to make it easier for people who want to be productive in the economy, who want to be entrepreneurs, who want to be taxpayers here, right. People for whom it would actually be a benefit to pay income tax in Thailand rather than to their home country where they're no longer living, right. That's a hard sell. It's hard to explain that, I think, to people in the government much less to the average...And so they only want rich people even though the Thai tourism economy is so dependent on mass tourism. They're just like my Oh, we get like they don't want backpackers. And I'm just like, that's totally ridiculous. Because you know what, like, I know so many incredible business owners in Chiang Mai. And a lot of them started out as backpackers. It turns out that if somebody falls in love with the place and is 19 they can like to get their degree, go out into the workforce, start becoming an entrepreneur, move back to the place that they fell in love with, and provide a lot of value. So they didn't see that potential yet' [Anonymous, 2022]

In the next section, I will be describing the state of current efforts to attract tourists and long term travellers by the research subjects.

3.1.4. Efforts to attract long term visitors

As previously mentioned, the majority of the participants relied on international guests. The majority are from Europe, Australia and North America. During post-Covid all companies reported an increase in domestic tourism, with the exception of Eco BnB, which maintained hosting majority domestic tourists from prior to the pandemic.

'Before COVID. We've gotten a lot of travels, maybe from third party agents that have already liked us. So they'll sometimes come in like a group of 10 or 15 people. But yeah, but that doesn't mean we have like, we call them FIT - Free Independent Traveller.' [Best Society, 2022]

Focus depends on what interests domestic vs international tourists. Volunteering in conservation seems more popular with foreign visitors.

'We also get a lot from Australia and New Zealand compared to European countries. We get

Americans too. We get more from the UK, maybe from countries from Germany. We do get a few American tourists but they mostly come in bigger groups mostly I would say mostly here also Australia and New Zealand because when you're when it comes to eco tourism, just wildlife nature based products mostly interested by Western, normally we have tourists from China and Korea and Japan but not as much not as much as Europe.' [Best Society, 2022]

For conservation related projects, the interest to attract volunteers and volunteer tourists heavily relies on the intentions of the visitor and how their skills match with the needs of the project. JTP tends to focus on attracting volunteers that want to stay at least a week and help the team as much as possible.

'It takes a certain type of person for that to work. And generally speaking, the kind of people who would do well in that situation are the kinds of people who want to volunteer at a turtle project for a month. So that kind of works out. It does occasionally happen that you get someone who is there to be on holiday. And as I said earlier, there is a balance that needs to be had there that they are paying to stay with us. So if they don't want to go out and pick up trash, they'd rather lay on the beach and work on their tan, then there's a grey area and whether you can say yes or no to that....if someone was willing to come pay and stay to be at JTP, they'd be working with open arms. If someone is looking to come for a prolonged period of time, or they're interested in something like an internship, then there is a little bit more scrutiny. When we're looking for either an educational background that matches the work that we do, or previous experience in a conservation project, preferably if it's set out are related.' [JTP, 2022]

When asked if they were willing to host digital nomads, all organisations were open to them. Some that were focused on the conservation and volunteering part were willing to negotiate so long as they gained some form of support whether their time or monetary gain. For some organisations that are more remote based Best society and KOPEL, they expressed that they are willing but the internet may not be reliable to ensure digital nomads receive signals. They emphasised that this is a matter of time as telecommunication infrastructure is rapidly expanding in the region. When it comes to targeting digital nomads and longer stays, none of the organisations specifically mentioned digital nomads as part of their future marketing strategies.

3.1.5. Integration

For most digital nomads, interaction with their host is influenced by the individual's and host's needs. For most organisations, the interactions are focused on positivity and ensuring overall good service. The nature of the interactions change from shallow tourist gaze to more frequent exchange and mutual exchange of cultures. All projects reported that guests interact with their host environment at different levels. In the case of the larger hotels such as Frangipani, guests have exchanges with staff and the local businesses while community based projects were more interactive, with project runners coming from neighbouring villages and tourists volunteering to work side by side within the conservation projects.

'Interaction between our guests and locals seems positive. We have a lot of activities where our guests can experience Khmer culture. But to meet locals and connect, it depends on the

individual.' [Babel, 2022]

Figure 8: Babel developed a plastic free initiative for all its guests with refill stations for personal toiletries and water. They also feature over 40 different local and sustainable based businesses merchandise. They also have educational booklets about which volunteering projects visits can support. Babel is one of the few accommodations that experienced digital slomads.



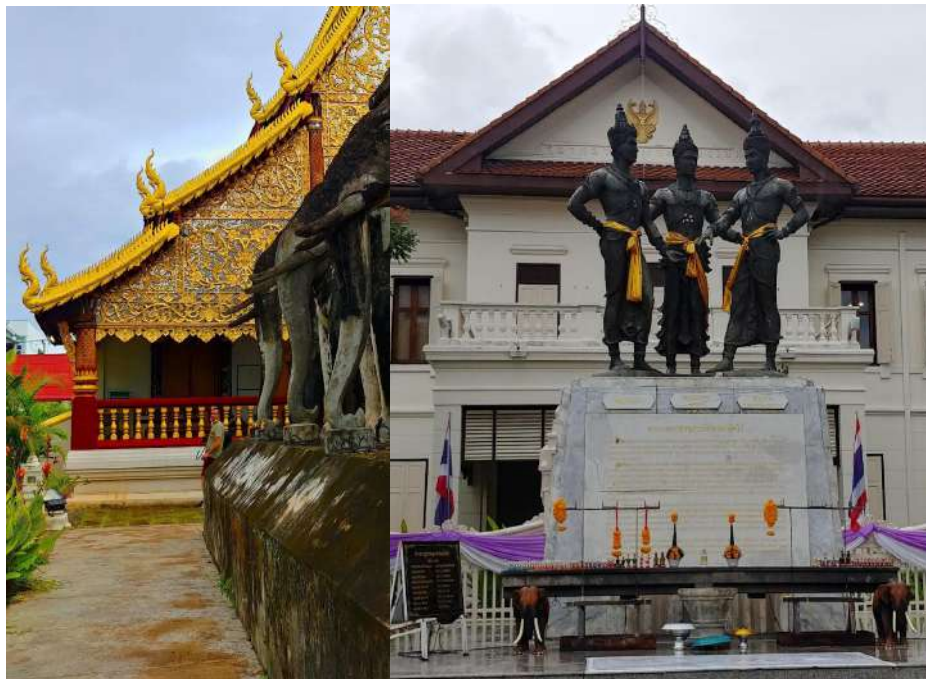
Source: Own

As Babel implies, some organisations approach integration as more secondary benefit and focus on the positive cultural experience. The individual's intention and effort will affect the depth of interaction with the staff and local residents. During the tour, I schemed through the information booklet for types of activities tourists can participate in, especially to support sustainability and local projects. Within that context, visitors can interact with more focus on cultural experience and impact. The volunteering aspect was rarely offered. The reason was not clear but it can be that as almost all visitors are short term visitors. The other reason is more related to the volunteer tourism activities found by Babel that were not deemed sustainable in Babel's interpretation. There may be little to no opportunities for visitors to interact with residents at a deeper level than a business setting. For the case of digital nomad's social interaction, one of my participants felt that online communities of similar experiences are an easier integration than starting from making friends within the host community.

'I'm just gonna hold this thing. Just walking around was hard to interact or not interact, integrate and part of that's a function of language. But if you think about it, it's also just like different, right? Like, you know, if you live in a place and you've grown up there, you have roots, you have connections. So digital nomads basically have rooted themselves. But then if you plant yourself in a place where other people like, you know how often you make new friends and adults, just kind of, don't usually like you make friends. You have to keep the friends you have. And you make new friends at work and maybe you have a slow process of creation. But we usually don't. It's not normal for us to make completely new sets of friends as adults, right? So no matter if there's a whole like an epidemic of loneliness in this community, because of that factor, right?

Because people have their work but they don't have friends. That's why it's so important within the digital nomad community that you have this community aspect. People want to know that they can have a social life, of course. Yeah. So if you have like, Who is it easier to make friends with somebody who's also uprooted themselves and needs friends or somebody who's like, I'm good, like, I have my friends and have a job and you're nice and they'll say hello to you' [Anonymous, 2022]

Figure 9: Some of the cultural attractions of Chiang Mai, Thailand, one of the popular destinations for digital nomads in the world. Cultural attraction is considered one of the major motivations by visitors to the ancient city. First photo is one of the mediaeval temples while the statue of three men represents the three king founders of Chiang Mai.



Source: Own

With the resorts and urban based hotels, interaction is a more professional setting. Volunteering is also more close up but the conservation focus also allows interaction of volunteers with staff from the community. Rescuing turtle eggs may not always have the favour of the local residents who may want to obtain the eggs. For that, JTP mentioned that the exchange with the local staff and residents is positive but their project directly competes with resident egg hunters. Within the context of sustainability, residents may not be in agreement with the project and the people in turn. Community awareness was mentioned to help mitigate this divide by JTP and Frangipani. The gap in awareness is also exacerbated by lack of management action.

‘As far as the volunteers go, I don't think they're treated or viewed any differently than any other tourist visiting team. And I certainly don't think there's any stigma or anything that we are going to have to tread carefully here. We have in the past had issues with not necessarily all but some

of the local community. Essentially, because we're there to put a stop to the poaching and consumption of turtle eggs. Which is something that some people on the island and generally people wherever there are sea turtles, the local communities do eat the eggs. And anybody coming into that community and saying, oh, yeah, by the way, you need to stop doing that is always going to be met with maybe not necessarily hostility, but a questioning stance, shall we say? the argument always is, well, our ancestors have done this. It's part of our culture and our heritage.' [JTP, 2022]

For some organisations, issues such as cultural sensitivity, visitors' lack of awareness and even intentional ignorance of cultural norms are also barriers of positive interaction. The tourist's intention and awareness of negative impacts of tourism have an effect on the overall impression it leaves with the host residents and their possible reaction to future guests.

'I think tourism, certainly, when it's not managed properly, can be quite negatively impactful. The one that sort of springs to mind is the Western girl walking down the street in her bikini. Something that as a Westerner, you would think it's not a problem. But if it's a devout Muslim community like tmn, where girls are all wearing hijabs or in some some cases, even coverings, then you have to kind of read the room a little bit and see that you know, how your your actions affecting the people around you. And I think something like volunteer projects definitely. Definitely make those kinds of observations a lot easier to see. That if you are kind of surrounded by it and a part of a community, rather than being there as a visitor, you can kind of see how you should be behaving and, and why you should be doing that in the first place. And I always think that that's a much more beneficial way to travel as well. It's not only more beneficial for the people that you're visiting, but for you as a person experiencing that, that you can go to Bangkok and go to Khao San Road and drink a bucket and then form it in the streets. Or you can go to a remote mountain village, you know, somewhere on the Burmese border and talk with refugees, Karen people, and both of you have been to Thailand. And you could argue, from both perspectives that one has seen Thailand and one has experienced Thailand, that depends on what you as an individual want out of it.' (JTP, 2022)

For one of my participants, the length of stay can affect the level of interaction but it can also be ingenuity and self validating interests of the visitor that is a product of socio-cultural phenomenons that are emerging in everyday life, especially on inequality, privilege and human rights.

'I just fundamentally don't think that's fair. I don't think there's a moral like there's not a moral pressure in my mind. Like, because I think a lot of that culture right now comes from this moment of like- 'wokness' that we're in, which is well intentioned, but not necessarily authentic. I think a lot of and so I kind of have an issue with, I think like, from so I sort of asked this question, are you trying to like to make friends? Are you trying to maximise the tourist experience? Because there's some sort of cultural messaging going on, that says that when you travel, you're supposed to find authentic sharing. You're supposed to like not doing the tours. And I'm just like you are living in like, delusion of like you're perpetuating like, you are choosing to go to a country as a tourist. And yet you're somehow insisting that you're being robbed of authenticity. If you go through the things that have been curated by the market, to serve your needs and desires.' [Anonymous, 2022]

As Anonymous explained above, authenticity was characterised as a form of motivation for interaction with residents at a higher degree. There is a sense of socio-cultural challenges influencing the integration factor. This will be further discussed in the discussion section.

4.2. Demand Side

4.2.1. Identity

DN is defined by participants in various ways. The most common characteristics are being mobile, working and in some cases, it is a lifestyle. The labelling of DN has been challenging to say the least for some of the participants. Some identify themselves as DNs while others believe that the term does not resonate with their values.

‘Digital nomads move around alot, that's the difference. And they are fast and their lifestyle is different. How we behave and travel matters on how you identify. We need a better category on how we are, especially if you stand for longer stay and are conscious.’ [Jane, 2022]

In this case, Jane is referring to an emerging term, slomad, which she says she resonates with more than digital nomads. Slomad are possibly a form of digital nomads who travel not just for hedonistic pursuits but also their sustainability impact. Other participants did not mention or were not familiar with this term but rather they also felt that digital nomad was how they identified to a degree.

‘I identify as a mix of both digital nomad and remote worker right now, because I'm not moving all the time. But I'm also not not moving all the time that cannot just work from home. So I definitely say like, kind of in the middle.’ [DN1, 2022]

For some participants, the frequency of travel and duration of travel depended more on demands of their main occupation, bureaucracy or if another location was stronger pull than the current destination. For someone who is also studying, they will be mobile only when they are allowed to remotely attend classes. At the same time, they are still remotely working. Therefore they identify not just as full time digital nomads, but other forms of long term travellers.

Similar to Jane, other participants identified themselves based on the distinct motivations of travel they have compared to the short term travellers they encounter while travelling. For digital nomad lifestyles, they feel that values of most travellers are more hedonistic and miss the lifestyle elements of self fulfilment, growth and focus more on the de-stressing that meaningful connection.

‘I just think a lot of people are not interested in discovering that part of themselves while travelling. And so it's like, it's, I just feel like, you know, especially with a lot of groups who've travelled together, just partying and things like that, for them. It's just like, whatever. Like, I

think it's, it's not that I don't think there's anything valuable for them to share with me, I'm sure their life story is very worthwhile, like listening to them to see just that they are not travelling for that purpose. They're travelling for the purpose of meeting and connecting and sharing their life stresses or, you know, or wanting someone to hear that. They're just moving for somebody to just try to drown or escape their sorrows, or just like whatever. Or they could just be like, a rich kid with a lot of money to spend and just an existential crisis and not wanting to know what to do and just throwing themselves around from city after city party after party. Like it could be anybody right? Not to make a generalisation' [Piyush, 2022]

4.2.2. Awareness of Sustainability and Participation

All participants were aware of the term sustainability. Their interpretation was varied but more similar in terms of minimising the impact on the environment and benefiting the communities. Access to sustainability options was not mentioned as the motivation to travel to a destination. Rather other factors had more significance such as price.

'Definitely more often, but like involving myself in the volunteering, definitely not I haven't done that in a while. I'd say yesterday there, but I'm not looking for a place like that. It's sustainable itself. Like, yeah, if it's sustainable, it's fine for me. But like it's a plus. But I'm definitely going to stay somewhere and just look for a [good] price. The beginning is cheap. Its price is a more important factor.' [DN1, 2022]

For one of the digital nomads, sustainability choices are more individual based and not necessarily in choosing sustainability based accommodation. By giving time rather than monetary contribution, elements of sustainable goals can be supported.

'For me I did some volunteering for hostels and tried to help with making sure to follow recycling and other things. But the problem is there is no system of collecting recycling in the town.' [DN2, 2022]

Barriers such as budget restrictions and lack of a system for sustainability initiatives such as waste sorting and recycling were described by various participants. For more urban settings, participants mentioned that recycling systems are usually in place but more remote locations may not have processing facilities. In case of some remote locations that specifically focus on minimising pollution, they repurpose, recycle or even incinerate the waste. Participants mentioned that if they encounter such accommodations, they would review how plastic is handled. Despite these circumstances, one of the subjects argues that choosing sustainability is hindered for travellers because of the lack of budget options for sustainability conscious travellers.

'I guess if even if you want to be sustainable, like a lot of things, like work against being sustainable as an individual prices? Yeah, well, I'll just tell you prices is like the biggest thing and people are always going to choose the cheapest thing. If they're in a budget. Yeah, so that helps not to be really worse against being sustainable. Even if you want to be one, like more sustainable. Like I try to tell expires and everything but sometimes I really like right now. For

example, I would never have taken a flight to a concert in another continent. But everything was sold out in Europe.’ [DN1, 2022]

For some participants, their occupation is already focused on creating community impact and they feel that choosing sustainable accommodations is not essential nor do they feel they need to pursue more sustainability initiatives.

‘I rarely get access to community owned projects because I stay quite a long time and rent airbnb. But I work in an NGO remotely that focuses on community impact, I am engaged through that. If I get an opportunity though I am open to supporting projects like that as I travel.’ [Jane, 2022]

Choosing green for some participants affected socio-cultural challenges. Besides the clear line in travel being concentrated to specific regions of the world, sustainability was not about inclusion and reveals the underlying privileges of society.

‘I remember I was in Indonesia, we went to the Komodo islands in Indonesia. And we were talking about this and he said like sustainability is a rich people problems. Like the poor will never never covered sustainability when they just have to worry about pretty much surviving. that's a that's actually a good point she has because yeah, we can't be choosers.’ [DN1, 2022]

Digital nomads, similar to travellers, come in different nationalities, backgrounds and capacities. Motivations and values for travelling are influenced by a person's priority factors. Their choice to support projects depends on the combination of other facts including price. The setting also matters, whether it is urban or rural, on how flexible they are to choose sustainable conscious accommodations.

‘I do mean like environmental. I mean, I'm saying that, for example, when I lived in Indonesia, I was doing like these tours, whenever I have to do something that has to do with nature, I choose the most sustainable thing. That's definitely, for example, as to see orangutans in Indonesia. And I really wanted to see them like in the most like, natural way possible. And I'd like to see them in a zoo because I don't really like zoos. So I wanted to like find a guy that was like, super sustainable, and a company that was super sustainable. And that wasn't really like touching the animals and things like that. And in the end, I found it. And the hotel that I stayed was also the super sustainable place. So yeah, those are the times when I look for sustainable things. But if I'm staying in a city, I really never look for like a sustainable place. That's very rare.’ [DN1, 2022]

Political and bureaucratic factors were also considered stronger factors than sustainability for choosing accommodations over others. During Covid, many digital nomads were stuck within countries they were visiting and surviving the stress and meeting travel regulations took precedence over being eco-conscious. One of the participants described their experience as exceptionally difficult due to the changing circumstances surrounding Covid 19.

‘For me the attraction to one place depends on the price and visa requirements. If it is in the EU it is usually more because of currency exchange, and you have to do paperwork with embassies.

During covid wave I was banned because of my nationality, there is a variant they want to contain, but I have never been home in 3 years' [DN2, 2022]

4.2.3. Travel pattern and Attraction and Barriers of destination

All the subjects in this study had different reasons for travelling to their respective destination. In most cases, there were common attractions nor barriers mentioned such as safety, access to reliable transportation, access to nature and culture and other personal interests. Even so, each participant had their own individual reasons to choose a destination. One of the participants had decided to travel in ASEA region only and described her reasons on cultural familiarity.

'I didn't feel at home when I lived in Europe, and I felt alienated, like not even a foreigner but a second class citizen. And when I am in Asian countries its the way I look and they treat you as asian and feel better by the general community.' [Jane, 2022]

For some DN, cultural familiarity or even language barrier was not a significant challenge. For some destinations, they faced difficulties in finding short term accommodation. This was especially the case of areas with strict rental rules and experiencing housing shortage.

'Difficulties? I guess, I always like finding accommodation that doesn't want you for a short term, because most of them are looking for a long term. So that's annoying, that yeah, I get that. So other than that, I'm fine. I don't really mind the language. Because there's no problem. There's always a way to communicate with people without language, even if there's a completely different language. I mean, I've lived in Asia for so long, and never spoken a language. So it's fine.' [DN1, 2022]

Other factors that attract a destination are personal interest and beliefs. For one of the participants, pilgrimage opportunities were the most important reason for choosing a destination.

'What is important factor for choosing trip, so I read somewhere by one of my spiritual teachers, in one of his books he had written about the difference between a tourist and it was, like he says, A tourist is somebody who takes pictures with a bit of everything, their senses and then leads directly is looking at everything with a sense of sacredness like this is all the making, of creation. And somebody didn't make that they're made by nature or God or nature, whatever we come up with, they're, they're created, right, they're not creations. And so today, I'm just like, overwhelmed the sacredness of the world. And I think that really struck me because before I read that book, I don't know that maybe I was more interested, just seeking the Yeah, just going through the checklist, like going into this country, this but like, I think the pupil privileges I've done have been the most profound travel experiences. And so I try to make everything as sort of, like, whenever I'm in a place, I can make it a point to visit the most holy sites in that place, right? Places considered sacred by like culture or community. Or, like, if there's nature, wherever I go spend some time in nature really connected to the magic, that sense. Nature itself is a secret. [Piyush, 2022]

He further elaborated that the variety of options at a destination is most important. In some cases, he may want isolation to pursue personal growth goals. However, he may need to access more social hotels or hostels when he desires to socialise.

‘All of those, all of the above, budget, community and privacy? I just tried to make a balanced decision on all those things. Enough privacy like I was like, at the last place, I was at a private room in a hostel to socialise and that it was comfortable and not very expensive’ [DN 1, 2022]

All participants have reported covid 19 affecting their travel plans. In some cases, they reported stress and strain to their mental health. During these events, they depended on support from other stuck travellers and DN alike. When asked if they would consider opportunities to stay in sustainable accommodations with other DN, they were all willing to give it a try.

‘It was really drastic for me and my colleagues in teaching. A lot of people were told to leave not just their job but the country they settled in because of Covid. And when this happened I was visiting friends in Europe and got stuck and had to relocate every 3 months in an unfamiliar region. It was really draining for your mental health’ [DN2, 2022]

4.2.4. Integration guest and host community

The digital nomads interviewed had varied opinions about integration. Compared to being a short term tourist, they described the digital nomad experience as much more immersive as they have more time and chance to live among local residents. The motive and what interests them was a more driving factor than pursuit of authenticity.

‘I find myself feeling like people who are interacting probably have very similar backgrounds, Telugu speaking competition everywhere that they're urban educated, Cosmopolitan. Right? So it's like the internet, I seek them out. But yeah, I would love to interact with anyone and meet like that can tell you a little bit more about their country, their culture, their history and see their perspective. But also don't treat it as the singular authentic perspective because I think a lot of people do that when they meet a few locals and they are just seeking somebody's perspective, that country, right? But there are so many diverse perspectives within that country. You can never get all these perspectives without or unless you're really making a case for just visiting. You will in some ways still be an outsider. Oh, yeah. And so like, there's no way to get that insider perspective just by interacting with.’ [Piyush, 2022]

For one of the participants they perceived destinations as already having cultural barriers between local and foreigner residents. Depending on the region, crossing that barrier is not due to time but rather new residents joining groups that they can easily assimilate with foreigners. Most participants mention that they socialise both in person events and online communities.

‘In Asia it felt that there was a clear line between caucasians and asians, kopagan for example it is more than 90% from south east asians and most of the workers are from Myanmar, Thai ppl there do good business with them. There is definitely the language and culture barrier...Interacting with locals is not as important to me. It is more of how we relate as people. You get affected by the language barrier, usually it is easier to get connected to expats.’ [Jane, 2022]

Some participants are more selective on who they socialise. They intentionally choose not to pursue meeting nomads in particular. The reason can be their difference in values between what digital nomad culture stands for and their values as individuals. Rather they focus to meet local residents through major events, through friends of friends and language exchange programs.

‘To be honest, I don't really meet a lot of nomads when I'm travelling. Like if I meet them, it's fine, but I'm not looking for them. Definitely not.’ [DN1, 2022]

One of the barriers for integrating that digital nomads mention is language. In order to operate day to day, most nomads choose to learn specific words, especially if the people they meet in service do not speak their language.

Participants who had interest in the local culture and learning the language were making friends with local residents. The desire to put effort to bridge language and culture depends on how they feel about social inclusion. For some participants, locals may not be willing to adjust for foreigners, while other participants believe that nomads should put the effort.

‘Language is definitely a factor in making friends because for example, if I'm just talking with one friend, I'm just going out with one friend. That's right. Or two friends, they usually like yeah, that's fine. We can all speak in English, but when it's a big group, it's just annoying for six of them to change English just because of one person. And I understand that so it's making it way harder for me to communicate if I don't speak Danish. So yeah, I think the effort is very, it's very necessary therefore to learn the language’ [DN1, 2022]

In the next section, I will connect the findings into the common emerging themes within the two groups of findings. Within each part, I will also discuss the existing knowledge on the stated indicators and answer the research question.

Discussion

In the previous section, I highlighted the key findings that were contributed from both groups, supply and demand; and their response within each indicator. Some results were complex and intertwined to the theme that they link with each other. In the end, I found three main themes that were indicated by all indicators within the research question. I will present them from micro to macro scale; First is motivation and values, Second is culture and authenticity and lastly is governance and partnerships. I will discuss each theme within the order of defining them, why they are important with the findings, what they mean to our current frameworks and their outcome to the research question.

5.1. Motivation and Values

For both suppliers of sustainability and digital nomads alike, motivation and values are a powerful driver of their development, and how they interact with each other. Sustainable and community based tourism accommodations design their practices with sustainability pillars and their intentions revolve around each pillar, some more emphasis than others. For projects based on community initiated and conservation focused projects such as KOPEL, social and environmental pillar is more pronounced than small to medium businesses. Small to medium businesses owned by individuals sometimes prioritised economic subsistence or gain over environmental damage to trade off certain practices. With the crisis from Covid 19, most of these businesses had little to no safety net and had to self-rely on previous funding. For organisations that have had conservation projects, they had more diverse streams of income from donations.

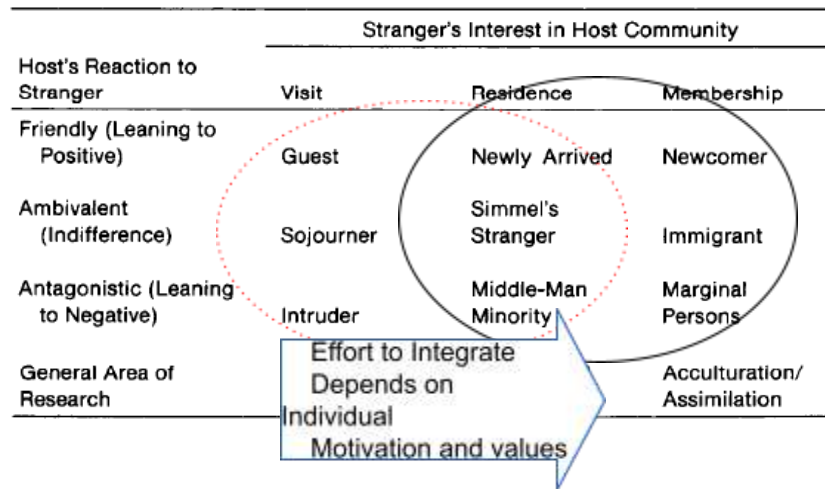
Digital nomads within this study had some level of awareness about sustainability and, whether monetary or non-monetary, all have participated to support it. Despite the similarities, there are distinctions in depth of knowledge about it and degree of effort. With the exception of slokids, none of the participants identified sustainability as their pull factor to destination or even an accommodation for long term stay. Push and pull factors are the barriers and motivations that influence a tourist to travel. With all our participants, they all identified the typical intrinsic and extrinsic factors that tourist studies mentioned such as attractions (culture and nature), weather, cost of living or price; and infrastructure. In addition, digital nomads identified the pull factors of cost of living, accommodation options and bureaucratic services (Lhakard, 2022; Shi et al, 2019). For only some of our participants, meeting like-minded people and other nomads was not a priority at all. This was completely an individual based decision, although some studies imply that presence of a large expat or foreigner community is a pull factor for digital nomads (Hannanon, 2020; Chevtaeva, 2021. pp. 206).

The motivations and values depends on the organisation and individual, as per existing literature (Couch (2000), Lhakard P. (2022); Gede G.K., Marhaeni K.E., and Putrana I.W. (2020), Satterstrom (2019) and Gray, 2020). The awareness and ability to connect depends on a larger impression of culture and identity of the category of travellers. In other words, the intention of the supplier and demand have to align to build the common ground and effort to connect with each other (Waller, 2018). For most participants, digital nomads connect with such programs but under a different category as tourists or volunteers, especially when the projects are conservation related. What this implies is that both phenomenon are aware of each other but unless it is hotels within urban settings that are used to hosting a variety of working people, the direct interest in digital nomad state by suppliers all depends on whether their values align with each other (similar to sustainable volunteerism study by Lee & Zhang, 2020). Within the digital nomad identity, the importance of sustainability has grown and it is led to digital slomads as a niche. However there is little to no mention of sustainability in the larger digital nomad mainstream identity, with the exception of a few slomad articles such as Verra (2022); Gill (2022); Tagliaferri (2022) and Puymbroeck (2022). Ergo it is not surprising that fewer suppliers have reported marketing nor targeting them in any form.

Host and guest relationships have been framed as one way or ‘tourist gaze’, transactional and more interactive mutual exchange of personal and meaningful conversations (Urry, 1999). For digital nomads in this study, they mentioned their interest and barriers in integration in a given destination are affected by time to some extent; but not as significantly as their motivations and values. In past studies on the case of expats, interest in local culture and language was an important factor to bridge socio-cultural and socio-economic barriers that exist between local residents and the ‘strangers’; the second was creating meaningful connections (Waller, 2018; Frisvoll, 2013). Referring to Gudykunst (1983) model of the Typology of Stranger-Host relations (see modified Figure 3 into Figure 10 below), expats' interest is membership while digital nomads are between visit and resident. Depending on the state of the existing expat or digital nomad community, they can navigate the existing community structure. As a result, they will be enclosed in the larger attitude that the host community feels about its expat communities.

Figure 10: illustrates the typology of a stranger to host relationship for a stranger. For digital nomads, the interest in the host community combined with the host community’s general reaction creates the climate for those newly entering the system. Based on the findings, digital nomad’s interest in host’s culture and effort to integrate affects their level of integration. In some destinations, residents are marginalised from the host community due to socio-cultural and economic barriers. In this case, those digital nomads without motivation to integrate with the host's community will join the existing group. This will perhaps result in the same host reaction to digital nomad that they give existing expats and other foreign residents. Lhakard (2022) explored the attitude aspect of residents on their assessment of digital nomad motivation to come to Chiang Mai. What was found was that most local residents did not have different attitudes towards different groups of foreigners including tourists, digital nomads and expats. They mostly held a general attitude towards all non-locals. This attitude might change over time.

A Typology of Stranger-Host Relations



Source: Gudykunst (1983); Own

Participants who put in the effort were exposed to local residents while those who had other priorities and preferred other expats or digital nomads felt integrated. This raises questions about universal morality of the host-guest dynamic. The derivative of an inherent belief that a host is expected to provide a hospitality role and guest centric support (McKenna, 2016). Pitt-Rivers (2012) discusses this in his essay ‘the law of hospitality’, in which he proposes that there are elements in social morality that the newcomer and receiving resident’s engagement is layered by the power dynamic of how far the stranger and resident body languages and actions are translated within the expected host and guest. Within the context of tourism, the dynamics are layered with transaction, host’s perception of their community’s reputation and their expectation of the guest act towards them (Dolezal & Novelli, 2020). Yet strangers may not be motivated to consider these dynamics because the role of the guest depends on the individual’s interpretation of the guest's role (Ernawati et al, 2017). This ties to why socio-cultural pillar is becoming important in the sustainable tourism development conversation (Dłużewska, 2019). The sustainable tourism development definition by the UNWTO evolved from 1995 to 2019 to focus the attention from the guest’s wellbeing to the host's wellbeing.

With these findings, the following questions has been asked in terms of sustainability in host and guest: How far do local residents have to mould themselves to play hospitality role to the guests, if they are not benefiting from tourism (Liu & Li, 2018). In other words, can digital nomads include integrating with community as a socio sustainability obligation and reduce the existing gap of the dual framework host-guest relation. There is also an argument that infrastructural and economic barriers may be immovable barriers to blur the line between host and guest (Fan et al, 2019). Similar to the attitude study on expats by Waller (2018), foreigners may be able to afford a gated community with better houses than hosts. Therefore the success of

motivation and interest to learn the host's culture depends on the conditions of the host versus the capabilities of the guest.

Considering these arguments, how does motivation and values of digital nomads contribute to sustainable and community based tourism? The findings suggest that it is still limited due to the lack of direct connection and identification of commonality between the two groups. The numbers are just too small of sustainability motivated digital nomads (slomads) that the managers rarely recognise them. It is also possible that digital nomads switch modes to other traveller categories and managers are not aware of their 'dual' traveller identity. With that being said, all participants on the supply side were open to adapt and host digital nomads, especially slomads. For some, the condition is that these adjustments are within their capability, does not conflict with their values and the guests fulfil their role to support the organisation in some form. Similarly, all digital nomad participants were also interested to stay and work in these establishments; so long as the barriers (such as price) are reduced and their needs (infrastructure) are met. In that sense, there can be steps to connect these groups by bottom-up approaches. For most establishments, digital nomads are not their specific market group, with the exception of co-working spaces that specifically target remote working travellers (Orel, 2019).

Despite these circumstances, we begin to see a growing number of digital slomads having common ground with sustainable establishments. It is possible for these organisations to campaign ahead and let the guests know they have the amenities they need while providing eco-conscious choice. They can then study the upcoming traffic and find out the long traveller's identity (see figure 1) is also a digital nomad and their motivation. If price is an initial barrier for targeted digital nomads then they can address this with discounted rates for long term guests, especially in the low season and, perhaps, future pandemics.

The challenge to some of these approaches is that digital nomads identify other nomads as important to motivation to choose a destination (Hannenon, 2020; Chevtaeva, 2021). Therefore connecting with an existing community is also important to be more attractive to incoming digital nomads.

5.2. Culture and Authenticity

Most digital nomads believe that staying longer in a location also means seeing staged authenticity or negotiated authenticity (Frisvoll, 2013) and have the opportunity to experience living as residents. However, authenticity was not as important to most of them as they identified that is the general expectation of short term travellers (Yu et al, 2012). They are aware that authenticity is something that exists and that a 'realness' of a destination is not experienced within a short period of time. Even so it is not a priority to them as I would have predicted based

on existing literature on tourists (Xie, 2011; Canavan & McCamley, 2021). It was hard to say whether they are aware that authenticity is not objective but developed for their experience; or if they believe it is a new form of traveller's experience that feels distinguishing the mid-centric profile focused, mainstream tourist packaged experience and the placity. Most participants described that they hold more opportunities for two way connection as they build more connections with a destination.

Authenticity for most of the participants was not so much as experiencing elements of the place's culture but about having a meaningful connection with whomever they meet on their path of socialising with people (Guttormsen, T. S., & Fageraas, 2011; Canavan & McCamley, 2021). To what extent this is the case for digital nomads depends on motivation and values; and other factors such as how familiar is the experience towards one's own culture and identity. For example, elements of one's identity such as sexual orientation may not align with the socio-cultural norms of the destination (Ghaderi et al, 2020). It is still hard to conclude this as some destinations have their own micro cultures that align with that person's identity. From the perspective of community based tourism, slomads have the potential to connect since the genuine programs are focused on meeting community members and learn about their intangible culture and day to day life.

In previous studies, authors such as Frisvoll (2013) attempted to frame authenticity has also transformed with time to match the intrinsic and extrinsic cues that tourists expect for a more singular image. These elements are made up of various physical attractions and activities that Frisvoll and Canavan & McCamley (2021) and the collaboration of tourism actors create what is called negotiated authenticity. Some digital nomads may challenge this process to access more events over time and some may drift away from the tourist path. It is possible that digital nomads have the time and interest to access the day to day lives of local people and are more exposed to social issues. With staged and negotiated authenticity, negative images of the destination may be concealed, unless they are the tourism product (Mancinelli, 2020; Yang et al, 2017; Godfrey et al, 2020). The idea of integrating through accessing more day to day systems that may cater to residents living there. The makeup (definition) digital nomads is intrinsic by identity tied to rebelling tradition and an extrinsic being lifestyle that supports self fulfilment (Prester et al, 2019).

The conjecture above may not apply for digital nomads who feel already integrated when they travel to a destination. The authenticity factor is not as important as how familiar digital nomads feel towards a destination's culture to their own (Yang et al, 2017; Canavan & McCamley, 2021). One of the participants felt that her place of belongingness and hospitality of the community is dependent on her being accepted as a foreigner. As someone from Asia she felt more comfortable and open to the surrounding culture and integration when she travelled to countries in the Asian region than in European countries. This somewhat contradicts the

motivation of digital nomads travelling for newer experiences and the authenticity of living like a local (Sin et al, 2014). Referring back to figure 2, cultural familiarity and a person's cultural background and whether they experienced prejudice in a region, can be a factor at the speed of integration in a given destination. Time is not necessarily as important for integration as whether digital nomads choose to repel or embrace the existing socio-cultural and political dynamics.

Based on these findings, it is possible that digital nomad's integration in the culture can depend on the digital nomad's individual perception, perhaps even prior perspectives from online research and seeking advice from other nomads, of how that host community treats foreigners (Ghaderi et al, 2020). These notions also connect back to motivation as a theme. One of the other travellers was from Asia but he was drawn to cultural background, sometimes completely geographically unrelated to his background. His motivation is spiritual places and connecting with people for 'deeper connection'. In other words, integration can also be entirely individual-oriented, based on the person's set of values and beliefs. On the grander scale, incoming cultures to a place may evolve the evolution of a place identity. As culture is not stationary, digital nomads possess the flexibility of what Brusseau (2021) calls the dual reality; they do not conform to the single culture and are flexible enough to share their culture with their environment.

Referring back to our research question, culture and authenticity affect how digital nomads contribute to sustainable and community based tourism. Based on these findings, it is possible that digital nomads with interest of authenticity based on community based experiences such as homestays are a possible market. Digital nomads have a special position to seek social and supportive people around them and their motivation to seek meaningful connections with like-minded residents can led to a more sustainable authentic experience. With those that motivations of sustainability match with the sustainability projects, digital nomads and slomads can align with their values, support their projects and possibly, promote them within the digital nomad communities. It would be even more relevant for the digital nomads with a motivation around local culture and supporting preservation of certain cultural heritages. This is hindered by some particular variables such as infrastructure. This will be explored in the next theme – Governments and partnerships.

5.3. Governments and Partnerships

Governmental interactions have been mentioned in all indicators, in particular on the supply side. During Covid 19 pandemic, all participants emphasised governmental action has a significant role in influencing the rules and regulations for domestic and international travel (Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2020; Abhari et al, 2022). This was also highlighted in their role in the support and recovery process (Perrottet, 2020). Governmental role in travel is a major factor for

businesses to survive the pandemic and recovery (Kowalczyk-Anioł et al, 2021; Mensah & Boakye, 2021). Some of my participants mentioned that some travellers were forced to stay at their facility long term due to border closure. All participants received some level of governmental funding for employees, postponing rent and business loans. Based on the KOPEL case, governmental roles go beyond ordinance and are important in facilitating partnerships between organisations, creating policy plans and sharing guidelines, good practices, and perhaps indirect, infrastructure development (Guo et al, 2019; Perrottet, J., 2020; Scott, 2011).

Within the context of tourism, partnerships with the public and private sector was mentioned as important for the conservation oriented and community based tourism (UNWTO, nd). Within Best Society, the goal is to harness these relationships in order for remote communities to access knowledge on creating tourism products. These particular projects are focused specifically for short term, group travellers. Free independent travellers is the new segment that some organisations were ready to expand to, though they originally did not refer to digital nomads within this category. One or more digital nomads mentioned that they become short term tourists or volunteers in order to be part of the program. When asked what stops them from working, the digital nomad I interviewed specifically mentioned that they do not see the sign that remote working is reliable in remote and or rural locations. They also felt that it was an opportunity for them to digitally disconnect. In other words, the pull factor for the location is hindered by possible infrastructure challenges (Han et al, 2020). In order to accommodate, some organisations mentioned that internet access is being expanded around the area and not necessarily reliable. When the internet becomes reliable is when they are open to work with long term travellers who need to work. This implies that governmental role can help to build a bridge between infrastructure developers and sustainable tourism projects in remote locations (as per Nair & Hamzah, 2015).

Travel policy is one of the motivational factors for travellers and governmental organisations hold a strong role (Lhakard, 2022). More and more countries are beginning to create visa policies that cater to remote workers (Johnson, 2022). With some countries, this is a response for stimulating recovery from the pandemic (Sindico & Randall, 2021). The requirements to acquire these permits depend on the country's foreign policy and fees can be steep and exclusive to high earning digital nomads. For participants in this study, digital nomads described price and travel bureaucracy as an important motivator in choosing their destination. For one of the interviewees who has actively advocated entrepreneurs and digital nomads alike, governments are cautious to allow all digital nomads because they may compete for jobs with local residents (Hermann & Paris, 2020). In most requirements for digital nomad visa, it specifically bars any freelance or work engagement. In this perspective, tourism authorities see the economic benefit of digital nomads, especially as high spending long term travellers.

There are no digital nomad policy plans nor mention of their participation for recovery in destinations within this study. This is a part that governmental authorities in tourism can begin to re-evaluate the definition of a tourist and who are the long term travellers and their potential to create a positive impact on their tourism sector. Considering slomads in particular, such visitors can be encouraged to be part of the tourism policy and gain more recognition. They are more conscious travellers and can be potential facilitators for sustainable tourism participation and beyond (Verra, 2022; Gill 2022; Tagliaferri, 2022; Puymbroeck, 2022).

To the question the research question how can governments help digital nomads contribute to the sustainable and community based tourism, they can become the liaison to building partnerships, facilitate best practice guidelines for digital nomad market and encourage top-down leadership (Scott, 2011; Saufi, et al 2014; Kim et al, 2020; Kunjuran, 2022). Collaboration between tourism actors that share a goal is common, with national ecotourism associations (Mudzengi et al, 2022). This can be done from the regional standpoint and building awareness of sustainable organisation between each other, guidelines to market themselves, and some modifications they can do to facilitate long term travellers. This was already done with Covid 19 cleaning and hygiene recommendations at a national level (Perrottet, 2020). Also this can be expanded to the regional level. Destination competitiveness is important for short term as well as long term tourists (Jang S. & Cai, 2002). Governments can collaborate with academia to facilitate studies on digital nomad's economic importance (MESCOT, nd.); perhaps it can extend to their sustainability and learn from other destinations impacted by long term travellers.

Conclusion

Digital nomadism is a growing phenomenon and predicted to be the future norm of work culture (Bamieh & Ziegler, 2022; Okubo, 2020; Wang et al, 2020). Just as mainstream tourism is emerging as a niche focused on sustainability pillars, digital nomads with interest in sustainability are branching to develop communities (Towner & Milne, 2017). Sustainable and community based tourism organisations have been experiencing such travellers but most have not specifically focused to match their motivation and needs (Alrwajfah et al, 2019). Although this seems the case, individual identity of the long traveller is not stationary and these individuals can adjust their identity into other forms of traveller, whether tourist or volunteer or both. This study challenges the host-guest duality and the standardised definition of a tourist and participants of tourism (Ernawati et al, 2017; Sin et al, 2014; Dłużewska, 2019). Integrating in a host community is not about how much time they spend but rather the motivation and interest they have with the local culture and effort they bridge the barriers of language, socio-economic and physical participation with local residents. It is critical that governments facilitate knowledge sharing and collaborate between sustainable tourism projects within the region; in order to build destination competitiveness, create an attractive digital nomad image, especially within ASEA and beyond. With the predicted growth of digital nomads (MBO Partners, 2020), governments and destination managers can break barriers and build bridges between the now and the future of

travel and work culture.

Limitation and Future study

This study attempts to explore the dynamics of sustainable and community based tourism and digital nomadism. Although I attempted to investigate their interactions from the supply and demand side, the findings have revealed complex, layered and dynamic at play at different scales in the tourism sector (Liburd, 2018). There have been limitations that I cannot address due to time and resource restrictions. My focus of the study was targeted specifically on international travelling digital nomads, not domestic digital nomads. This was purely by chance and time constraints, as sampling digital nomads was random and selective based on their initial responses. I also found limitation problems when applying the chosen method. Initially, I completed questionnaires with digital nomads. There were many layers of in depth responses that were not encapsulated in survey based responses. Due to the feedback from digital nomad participants, I switched from surveys to semi-structured interviews. Terminology was difficult to clarify and I had to deal with individual interpretation by asking how they define specific terms. In some cases, they did not know what specific terms were and I had to describe it to them in order to reduce misunderstanding.

The most evident limitation with my study is that my subjects were all managers of the organisation. The chances of bias are higher as they have something to gain from tourism (Weed, 2008). In order to gain perspective of local resident's perception of tourists, most host-guest researchers interview community members, especially those that do not benefit from tourism (Dolezal & Novelli, 2020). This can be a potential future study, where researchers can interview more members of host communities, especially the members of council (Coroş et al, 2021). This can also be a possibility to learn about the morality of hospitality and the resident's perspective on the host's role in their environment. Collecting viewpoints from authorities within policy planning can also bring a deeper insight on the perspective around digital nomads (Chang & Hsieh, 2017).

Research on authenticity as a motivation for long term travellers is also a potential area. Although I was able to establish authenticity has a strong connection for a meaningful connection for long term travellers, it is not clear whether long term travellers interpretation of authenticity is different from short term travellers. So far there is little to no research of authenticity for long term travellers. Therefore, completing a comparative study on authenticity between short term and long term travellers is a possible future study. From my findings, time was not as important a factor for integration for digital nomads. On the other hand, cultural familiarity was mentioned as a potential factor to assimilate within a destination. This is connected to a traveler's belief, values and motivation, however a study can be conducted to

understand how those beliefs are developed and how they perceive key regions in order to understand the reputation and competitiveness. There are ranking websites such as nomadlist.com. To read between the lines and explore governmental support, recognition and bureaucracy from the macro level can be possible research projects to supply to policy planners. It would also be an interesting angle to study the impact of domestic digital nomads and their choice of specific destinations within their own country.

As mentioned in the discussion, culture is not a stationary phenomenon but evolves and also creates a subculture (Frisvoll, 2013; Guttormsen & Fageraas, 2011). There is little to no research on how digital nomad culture is affecting popular digital nomad destinations. Such destinations can have varied and different settings. There are isolated villages in Portugal and city of Chiang Mai (Thailand) and Bali (Indonesia) (Chevtaeva, 2021. pp. 206). Similar to perception and attitude studies in short term tourism, researchers can focus on digital nomads as a new subject within these highly concentrated areas. Digital nomads and remote workers are predicted to be growing and revolutionising the work space to more mobile travellers building a new norm (MBO Partners, 2020; Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2022). Their practice in sustainable tourism will become more and more relevant to the pandemic prone world. The development of research in this field is a paramount to understand how they will evolve and ensure their participation in the sustainability of tourism.

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