Digital Nomad Tourists at the Egyptian Destination: Motivations and Challenges

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Abstract

Since COVID-19, remote work has become common, which has given rise to a unique tourist category named digital nomad tourists. They are location-independent workers who travel extensively for pleasure while continuing to work remotely via digital means. Today, tourism destinations are targeting this tourist market, promoting themselves as "digital nomad-friendly places" with great living and working conditions, such as Egypt. This study aims to explore the motivations and disadvantages of being a digital nomad. Moreover, it examines Egypt's strengths as an attractive destination for this unique tourist segment, while also highlighting the challenges and threats that may reduce the country's appeal to this market niche from the perspective of digital nomad tourists. Using a qualitative methodology, 23 semi-structured interviews were carried out with digital nomad tourists in Egypt. The results reveal that the digital nomads are motivated to adopt this travel-based lifestyle for a variety of reasons, such as the need for freedom, autonomy, and escape from routine life. While this lifestyle provides numerous advantages to digital nomad tourists, like flexibility and the chance to travel and see other cultures, it also has numerous drawbacks, including loneliness, and a lack of stability in jobs and income. The findings also highlight a number of challenges that digital nomad tourists face in Egypt, such as the internet connection, the visa system and the presence of uncomfortable behaviors such as harassment. Based on the previously stated results, the study also carried out a SWOT analysis of digital nomad tourism in Egypt. Finally, this study offers implications for destination managers and companies to maximize their marketing and product development efforts for this particular segment of tourists.

Keywords: Digital nomad tourists, Motivations, Co-working spaces, Egyptian destination.

1. Introduction

The digital nomad (DNs) term was first employed by Makimoto and Manners (1997), who depicted that people will be able to roam the globe and still stay in touch with their jobs thanks to portable technologies (Mourato et al., 2023). The Covid-19 pandemic and continuous ICT advancements have led to the development of digital nomadism phenomenon (Almeida & Belezas, 2022; Ehn et al., 2022), which encouraged the emergence of a new tourism model known as "Digital Nomads Tourism" (Rakhmadi, 2021; Zerva et al. 2022) or hybrid tourism (Bassyiouny & Wilkesmann, 2023). According to Jiwasiddi et al. (2022), digital nomadism could be seen as a unique type of tourism. Orel (2023) describes digital nomadism as a lifestyle which combines travel, business, and

leisure by utilising the capabilities of contemporary technology. Notably, the combination of business, leisure, and travel was originally referred to as "Bleisure travel" (a blending of "business" and "leisure travel") (Bassyiouny & Wilkesmann, 2023). People who work remotely from any location while also participating in extensive leisure travel without interruption from their jobs are known as digital nomads (DNs) (Mancinelli, 2020; Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021). Despite their transient movement, digital nomads were perceived as a more permanent category of tourists. Destinations' seasonality can be addressed by this growing market (McKercher et al., 2023). The primary motivation for embracing this type of travel-based lifestyle is the desire to break free from the restrictive structures of a traditional, location-dependent working life (Reichenberger, 2018).

The pandemic has brought attention to the value of working remotely, prompted a reassessment of conventional employment arrangements, and increased the attractiveness of a more adaptable, digital nomad lifestyle (Orel, 2023). Today, organizations are adapting their business strategies to accommodate more remote work, giving their (permanent) employees more freedom and flexibility regarding where, when, and how they do their job. As a result of the increased freedom in choosing where to work, many impacted individuals move their workplaces temporarily to (inter-)national tourism destinations (Bassyiouny & Wilkesmann, 2023). For instance, by September 2020, the pandemic had forced nearly 40% of those who were employed in the European Union to switch to full-time telework (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021). Based on Statista, the number of digital nomads in the US increased from 7.3 million in 2019 to 17.3 million in 2023 (MBO Partners, 2023; Zhou et al., 2024). Similarly, Hannonen et al. (2023) confirmed that the proportion of US workers who identify as digital nomads increased by 131% from 2019 to 2020. According to a recent poll conducted by the European Union, more than 60% of workers want to do their job duties remotely at least a few times every month (Eurofound, 2022). Additionally, it is anticipated that a greater number of employees will continue to work remotely in the post-pandemic period (Ozimek, 2020). Consequently, prior to COVID-19 and even more so in the wake of the pandemic, tourism-related sectors and destinations began marketing themselves as the perfect places for digital nomads (Hannonen, 2020; Almeida & Belezas, 2022). Because of its fascinating history, cultural, and natural characteristics, Egypt is one of the best-suited host countries for digital nomads in the Middle East (Abdelhady, 2021). It also offers several facilities for digital nomads, such as an affordable cost of living, and many great co-working places. Indeed, The Nomad List, a collective database, has classified a number of Egyptian regions as popular destinations for digital nomads, including Dahab, Cairo, Hurghada, Luxor, and El Gouna (https://nomadlist.com/egypt). Despite the growing importance of this hybrid tourism phenomenon for destinations, it is still a little-studied phenomenon in today's travel and tourism literature (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Bassyiouny & Wilkesmann, 2023; Hannonen et al., 2023). Similarly, the study of digital nomads is still in its infancy (Šímová, 2023). Following the

COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of tourism research has concentrated on health-related

issues and the identification of pandemic mitigation strategies to enhance tourists' feelings of safety and satisfaction. However, chances arising from the emergence of new market niches and products have received less attention. Therefore, this study seeks to close a significant research gap by discussing this unique tourist sector in Egyptian destination. Specifically, it explores the motivations, advantages, and disadvantages of being a digital nomad. Further, it explores Egypt's strengths as an attractive destination for this market segment, while also highlighting the challenges and threats that may reduce the country's appeal to this market niche from the perspective of digital nomad tourists. In particular, this article will add to the body of knowledge and research on tourism by providing answers to the following questions: 1. What motivate tourists to adopt a digital nomad lifestyle? 2. What are the strengths and challenges of digital nomad tourism in Egypt? 3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a digital nomad in Egypt? The literature review on digital nomad tourists is presented in the next section, which is followed by the section on methodology and findings. Finally, the discussion, conclusion, and directions for future research are provided.

2. Literature review

2.1 Digital Nomads: definition and characteristics

Poulaki et al. (2023) claim that the term "digital nomad" originates from the combination of the words "digital," which denotes involvement in computer technology usage, and "nomad," which describes people who move freely between locations. As per Müller (2016), DNs are location-independent freelancers or entrepreneurs who can operate remotely and have great flexibility in juggling business and personal obligations. In a similar vein, Hannonen et al. (2023) describe digital nomads as a group of mobile professionals who use digital technologies to conduct their job responsibilities remotely from any location in the world. They benefit from the flexibility and autonomy of their job's digital nature and concurrently incorporate their job duties with international travel (Reichenberger, 2018; Thompson, 2019). In short, DNs employ digital technology and online connectivity to integrate business, leisure, and travel, with extended stays at their destinations (Reichenberger, 2018; Thompson, 2018; 2019). DNs are categorized by academics as digital nomad tourists, global travelers, mobile and flexible workers, and work tourists (Nash et al., 2018; Orel, 2019; Situmorang & Karthana, 2021; Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021; Hannonen, 2022). The nomadic behaviour of DNs is motivated by their desire for independence, rejection of the regular 9-5 office job, and defiance of social norms like getting married, starting a family, and retiring (Cook 2020; Jiwasiddi et al., 2022).

Prior studies identified the digital nomads' characteristics according to their sociodemographic profile as follows: The majority are white, single, male, millennials between the ages of 26 and 36 who originate from the Global North, and come from middle-class or upper-class backgrounds (Cook, 2020). Pacheco and Azevedo (2022) claim that DNs are characterised by high mobility, minimalism, digital storytelling, and social media experience sharing. Generally, they are highly educated professionals, self-employed with a moderate income, and working in different professions like digital

marketers, software engineers, financial traders, bloggers, programmers, web designers, journalists, travel vloggers, life coaches, teaching language remotely, podcasting, etc. (Reichenberger, 2018; Thompson, 2018; Parreño-Castellano et al., 2022). Typically, they prefer traveling to warm destinations with affordable living expenses. Usually, their journey lasts more than three months (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021), while the exact length varies greatly based on lifestyles and the existing visa regulations (Hannonen, 2020). Nevertheless, in addition to staying for long periods in destinations and relishing their freedom of mobility, DNs have a tendency to isolate themselves from the locals during their trips; they avoid local life and stay apart from local culture (Thompson, 2019; Cook, 2020).

2.2 Advantages and disadvantages of being a Digital Nomad

Several academics have criticized digital nomadism for a variety of drawbacks, including feelings of loneliness, excessive workloads, and instability (Cook, 2020; 2023), as well as the negative effects of gentrification on surrounding residences (Holleran, 2022). In a similar vein, Verma (2023) lists the following as disadvantages of being a digital nomad:

- Lack of stability: It could be difficult for DNs to get stable jobs or income.
- **Isolation:** When traveling alone, DNs may experience feelings of loneliness and disconnection from society.
- **Time zone differences:** When communicating with clients, coworkers, or family, DNs may find it difficult because of time zone discrepancies.
- **Financial uncertainty:** DNs may have irregular income or find it difficult to stick to a budget when they are away.
- Cultural barriers: When traveling, DNs may run into issues adjusting to new cultural norms or meet cultural barriers.
- **Limited social life:** When traveling, DNs may find it difficult to maintain a strong social life, particularly if they work lengthy hours.
- **Health and safety risks:** Visiting foreign nations may increase your chance of contracting new illnesses or being affected by natural disasters.
- **Absence of benefits:** The inability of DNs to access certain benefits like retirement plans or health insurance may be a drawback when compared to typical employees.

However, Winarya-Prabawa and Petriwi (2020) clarify that there are several benefits or advantages to being a digital nomad, such as freedom from the workplace, flexibility, personal escape, and convenience. Likewise, in line with Verma (2023), the advantages of being a digital nomad include:

- **Flexibility:** Working remotely with an internet connection gives DNs the ability to work from any location and set their own hours.
- **Networking:** When traveling, DNs have the opportunity to meet individuals from various sectors and backgrounds and expand their professional network.
- Work-life balance: Since DNs may work from any place and modify their work hours as needed, they can better balance their personal and professional lives

2.3 Digital Nomadism in Tourism Destinations

The term "digital nomadism" refers to the way of life of extremely mobile professionals, or "digital nomads," who work remotely while traveling around the world (Hannonen, 2020; Bednorz, 2024). According to Jiwasiddi et al. (2022), digital nomadism could be seen as a unique type of tourism. Tourism studies were based on the fundamental tenet that tourism is a collection of recreational activities undertaken outside of one's daily routine. In other words, individuals will take a quick vacation and then return to their home countries to work as their usual way of life. The opposite is true for digital nomads, who travel and work all year as part of their lifestyle and only come home for brief vacations (for example, to spend Christmas with family). As summarized by Parreño-Castellano et al. (2022), the digital nomadism phenomenon was developed as a result of different reasons, such as: the advancement of transportable computing and communication devices, as well as internet-based worldwide connectivity; the application of work organisation models based on goals or duties that don't need physical presence in a workplace and support remote work and flexible scheduling; reducing obstacles to people's travel, temporary lodging; and the growth of transportation and connection. In a similar vein, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has stimulated the rapid development of digital nomadism phenomena (Almeida & Belezas, 2022; Ehn et al., 2022). Working remotely, from home, or via a mobile device has become the norm for many workers since the COVID-19 pandemic (Bassyiouny & Wilkesmann, 2023). As the percentage of DNs are predicted to rise, more companies are creating goods to attract this segment (Richards & Morrill, 2021). The products and services designed specifically for this clientele include co-working and co-living spaces, recreational services and activities, conferences, and medical services (Richards & Morrill, 2021). In addition to online portals that created to help digital nomads obtain information on freelance work, reserving workspace, local lifestyle, and social interaction (Zhou et al., 2024). Furthermore, in an effort to attract more digital nomads, several nations have implemented special taxes, visa-free stays, eresidency, and visa-for-DNs (Hannonen, 2023). Similarly, Sánchez-Vergara et al. (2023) demonstrated that travel destinations across the globe have developed products and services tailored specifically for digital nomads. Digital nomad visas, which are aggressively promoted to draw in this traveler segment, are among the largest state-induced modifications (Sánchez-Vergara et al., 2023; Bednorz, 2024).

In the same context, Mancinelli (2022) shows that well-developed digital nomad destinations provide excellent tech infrastructure, communities of other digital nomads, coworking spaces to keep work schedules intact, and a plethora of leisure options, including coffee shops and bars, for socializing. Mild weather, lower living expenses, the ease of obtaining long-term visas, a wide range of sports and wellness opportunities, a thriving nightlife and cultural scene, and closeness to nature are further draw factors. According to Zhou et al. (2024), social networking sites and interpersonal connections with other digital nomads are crucial for digital nomads. Zhou et al. (2024) illustrated that digital nomads are drawn to a particular destination based on seven primary factors, as shown in Table 1: culture and history, climate and nature, infrastructure, work facilities, service amenities, economic and financial aspects, and social/political features.

Table 1. Digital Nomad destinations attractors.

Categories of destination attractors	Specific destination characteristics	
Culture and history	Culture and history, food, and events.	
Nature and climate	Weather, landscape, temperature, and natural attractions.	
Infrastructure	Public transport and urbanity	
Work facilities	Co-working space, internet speed, and technology hubs.	
Service amenities	Accommodation, laundry, restaurants and pubs, leisure and recreational facilities, and nightlife.	
Economic and financial aspects	Cost of living and affordability.	
Social/political aspects	Political stability, safety and security, friendliness of local people, language, inclusiveness, and a digital nomad community.	

Source: Zhou et al. (2024:6).

2.3.1 Co-Working Spaces

Since digital nomads are aiming to combine work and leisure by traveling the world, the co-working space industry is expanding quickly in tandem with this market segment's rise (Orel, 2019). Gandini (2015) described coworking space as a shared workspace used by a variety of knowledge workers, most of whom are freelancers with varying levels of expertise in the knowledge business. Co-spaces that provide a community for both lodging and employment arrangements for DNs are becoming more and more common (Orel, 2019). Coworking spaces are seen as an essential component of DN infrastructure. While coworking spaces are not used by every DN, their emergence and development are clear and tangible evidence that digital nomadism is expanding (Cook, 2023). Moreover, as the digital nomad segment offered a chance to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic (Schalk-Nador & Rašovská, 2024), the hospitality industry has adapted its products to meet the demands of this market (Borges et al., 2022). Coworking spaces were integrated by the recently formed service office sector and the hospitality sector, which combined services from cafes, hotels, restaurants, and bars. Further, during COVID-19, numerous hotels provided "work-from-hotel" or "workation (work and vacation) " offers. Orel (2019) conducted research on DNs using coworking spaces and concluded that co-working spaces are perceived as locations for socialising and even well-being, and that they help address issues related to the balance between work and leisure. Lee et al. (2019) highlighted eight crucial geography-related aspects for DNs using coworking spaces: internet access, natural environment and weather, community, language, and culture, living expenses, ease of access, time zone, and safety. Moreover, Berbegal-Mirabent (2021) posits that coworking places are primarily located in downtown areas. Inner-city districts' vibrant atmosphere greatly appeals to millennials, who have a strong preference for walkable communities where they can live close to their friends and necessities. The desire to overcome loneliness and a lack of personal contact is a common reason for using coworking spaces (Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021). Moreover, Lee et al. (2019) added that the driving forces behind the selection of co-working spaces could also be the desire for a comfortable and wellequipped workstation, a clear separation of work and home life (or surroundings), socialisation opportunities, and professional teamwork.

Bouncken et al. (2018) classified coworking spaces into two categories: individual and corporate coworking places. Individual coworking spaces primarily cater to startups, freelancers, and local businesses, while corporate coworking spaces are owned by large enterprises and have a campus-like atmosphere (Bouncken et al., 2018). In the same context, Orel and Bennis (2021) classified coworking spaces into four categories, including: (1) the initial model, which is individual-purposed coworking spaces; and three substitute models: (2) coworking spaces for creation; (3) coworking spaces for groups; and (4) coworking spaces for start-ups. According to Orel and Bennis (2021), individually designed coworking places are rational expansions of hotel lobby areas and cafés. Nonetheless, they suggest that coworking spaces for creation, groups, and startups are new types of spaces that can be attractive to new groups of digital nomads beyond the conventional stereotype of digital nomads. They point out that coworking spaces with a focus on creation and group goals tend to target corporations and teams rather than individuals. Likewise, Fiorentino (2019) added that coworking spaces in urban areas primarily cater to the demands of the local market, whereas coworking spaces in popular destinations for digital nomads also target foreign tourists. The present research will concentrate on individual coworking spaces that cater to digital nomad travelers.

Today, Egypt is home to an increasing number of co-working spaces due to the country's increasing population of digital nomads. These areas provide a professional workstation and credible internet access for individuals who want to operate remotely (digitalnomadsinafrica.com). Egypt has several fantastic co-working places where DNs can operate on an hourly or monthly basis. Aqarmap Workspace is one of Egypt's most well-known coworking spaces. Situated in Cairo, this venue has a number of conveniences available, such as meeting rooms, printing services, and fast internet. Additionally, it provides flexible membership choices, which makes it simple for DNs to come and go as needed (digitalnomadsinafrica.com). Another example of big co-working places in Egypt is Consoleya in old Cairo and KMT House in Maadi.

2.3.2 Digital Nomad Visas

As the number of digital nomads began to rise, countries began to embrace the concept of digital nomad visas (Poulaki et al., 2023; Bednorz, 2024). As per Sánchez-Vergara et al. (2023) and Thompson (2019), enabling the worker to remain at the destination has been among the most successful approaches to fortifying an identity for both the destination and the digital nomad. Destinations are chosen by DNs based on factors including safety, residency laws, and visa requirements; so, nations are developing strategies to appeal to this niche market (Sánchez-Vergara et al., 2023). According to Sánchez-Vergara et al. (2023), countries began to grant remote work visas in 2020 in an effort to attract individuals to work during lockdowns on their territory. Further, several countries introduced many attractors like visa-free stays and visa-for-DNs (Hannonen, 2023). In terms of visa policies, governments have made an effort to extend the duration of stays for digital nomads in their own countries. The goal is to reposition these places as remote work

destinations rather than relying solely on standard tourist visas. This strategy aims to boost tourism growth and the host country's subsequent economic gains (Wang et al., 2019; Bednorz, 2024). Unfortunately, until 2023, Egypt did not issue a specific visa for DNs. Nonetheless, Egypt offers a variety of visa options, including business, student, work, and tourist visas, that may be appropriate for DNs (digitalnomadsinafrica.com/destinations/egypt-digital-nomad-guide/#visas).

- **Tourist Visa**: The majority of tourists can visit Egypt using a tourist visa, which can be acquired at the airport. This visa is only valid for one month; however, the tourist can extend it for an extra thirty days by going to the closest immigration office.
- Work Visa: This visa will be required for those who intend to work in Egypt. The Ministry of Manpower and Immigration issues this visa, which has a one-year validity period. You will require a letter from your Egyptian employer in addition to other documentation to be granted a work visa.
- **Business Visa**: This type of visa is appropriate for those who are going to conferences, meetings, or doing business in Egypt. The validity period of the business visa is 90 days and can be extended for another 90 days.
- **Student Visa**: A student visa is issued for those who intend to study in Egypt. The validity of the student visa is one year and can be prolonged throughout the length of study. The issuance of this visa requires an acceptance letter from the educational organization that the student plans to attend in Egypt.

3. Methodology

The qualitative approach, which relies on interviews, was selected because it can provide a comprehensive understanding of the participant's perspective, experiences, and knowledge on the motivations, challenges, and strengths of digital nomad tourism in Egypt. According to Veal (2018), the qualitative strategy proved to be an appropriate method for compiling an extensive amount of data regarding the study subject and answering the research inquiries. In general, qualitative research is suitable when the main goal is to explore, describe, or explain (Leavy, 2022).

3.1 Sample and data collection

The targeted population was digital nomads in Egypt. A total of 23 semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data. According to Lepkowska-White and Parsons (2019), a sample size of 23 may seem small in quantitative research, but it could be deemed substantial in qualitative investigations whereby one to four interviews are conducted. Interviews were conducted online through Zoom Cloud Meetings and video conferences (such as Facebook video chatting and WhatsApp video calling) between October and December of 2023. The interviews took place in English, with a 35-minute average. It was hard to determine the population size. Therefore, a variety of non-probability sampling techniques were used in this study, including purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is a method where appropriate situations, individuals, or events are selected on purpose to obtain important data that cannot be obtained from other options

(Taherdoost, 2016). Further, purposive sampling is important when a researcher wants to create a historical reality, explain a phenomenon, or develop an idea about which there is not much knowledge (Kumar, 2014). Leighton et al. (2021) mentioned that snowball sampling techniques using social media were a successful and efficient recruitment strategy. While sampling bias is still a possible drawback, they discovered that using social media for snowball recruiting was a workable way to reach a large sample of study participants. The first interview phase in this study was conducted with some digital nomads in Egypt, who were already admins of the Facebook groups named "Digital Nomads in Egypt" (https://www.facebook.com/groups/digitalnomadsegypt/) and "Dahab Digital Nomads" (https://www.facebook.com/groups/422218075880729). Subsequently, additional participants were added to the qualitative survey who were suggested by the initial interviewees. This procedure was repeated multiple times to incorporate additional digital nomads in the sample. The interview guide is provided in Appendix 1. The characteristics of the participants are displayed in Table 2.

3.2 Data analysis

Regarding data analysis, this study employed inductive thematic analysis to extract significant and pertinent themes from the data (Ezzy, 2002). This analysis includes the process of data familiarization, coding, and gradual data reduction as the coded comments were grouped under related order themes (Afifi et al., 2023). All interviews were recorded, transcribed, documented, and coded. Throughout and following the data analysis, various codes were produced and others were canceled; certain data segments were recoded, and some were decided to fit better under a different theme than the one they had been allocated initially. The final result of the analysis is a narrative account that includes the author's analytical explanation along with verbatim quotes from the interviews (Gill, 2014).

Table 2. Interviewees' characteristics

ge | Country of | Current | Marital |

ID	Gender	Age	Country of	Current	Marital	Occupation
			origin	location	status	
1	Female	35	Belgium	Cairo	Married	Sales
2	Female	27	United States	Cairo	Single	Programmer
3	Female	33	Germany	Dahab	Married	Video editor
4	Male	31	United	Dahab	Single	Employer
			Kingdom			
5	Female	26	Moldova	Dahab	Single	Voice over
6	Male	33	Russia	Sharm	Single	Digital creator
				Elsheikh	_	-
7	Male	30	Italy	Dahab	Single	Graphic Designer
8	Male	35	Spain	Dahab	Single	Data scientist and open-
			_			source developer
9	Male	28	Russia	Hurghada	Single	Blogger
10	Male	30	Germany	Luxor	Single	Software Developer

11	Male	30	Russia	Dahab	Single	Entrepreneur
12	Male	28	Italy	Hurghada	Single	Technical/content
			·			writer
13	Female	28	United	Dahab	Single	Online Business
			Kingdom			Manager
14	Male	27	Russia	Sharm	Single	Blogger
				Elsheikh		
15	Male	34	Italy	Hurghada	single	Digital marketer
16	Female	37	United States	El Guna	Married	Entrepreneur
17	Male	32	Spain	Dahab	Single	Online sales
18	Female	31	Germany	EL-Guna	Married	Designer
19	Male	30	Italy	El Guna	Single	Programmer
20	Male	28	Spain	Cairo	Single	Digital Entrepreneur
21	Male	29	Russia	Cairo	Single	Software Developer
22	Male	30	Switzerland	Dahab	Single	Travel writer/blogger
23	Male	28	Poland	Cairo	Single	Voice over

3.3 Findings

3.3.1 Respondents' characteristics

Table 2 presents the characteristics of the participants. Most of the participants were between the ages of 30 and 38, with the youngest being 26. Sixteen of the participants were male, and seven were female. Only four respondents were married, while the vast majority were single. All interviewees, except for two Americans, were of European nationality. The majority of participants had jobs relating to information technology, such as digital marketers, programmers, and software developers. The majority of NDs in Egypt are situated in Dahab (9), followed respectively by Cairo (5), Hurghada (3), El Gouna (3), Sharm El-Sheikh (2), and Luxor (1).

3.3.2 Motivations for Being a Digital Nomad

Nearly all interviewees agreed that the primary motivators for becoming digital nomads are their desires to escape from routine life, the need for autonomy, and a rejection of the traditional 9–5 office work.

"I genuinely feel as though I am imprisoned, and I want to feel freedom." (ID2, ID6, ID14)

"I've chosen to break away from the norm since it doesn't work for me. I left my 9-to-5 job as a translator to pursue my ambition of being a digital nomad because I like independence and prefer traveling alone to feel free." (ID17)

"I enjoy having no set schedule because I dislike routines. When I get up in the morning, I can get a little more sleep and work later in the day. I want my requirements to dictate precisely what I do and where I go, and I simply carry it out." (ID13)

"I wish to become independent in my personal and professional life." (ID5, ID22, ID23)

Another frequently cited motivation for being a digital nomad was the urge to travel and discover new things. Participants said that they enjoyed traveling to other places because it gave them the opportunity to socialize with people from all backgrounds.

"If I travel for a few days, I won't be able to experience new things, meet new people, learn about different cultures, and make new friends." (ID 18, ID 20)

"My regular attendance at co-working spaces allows me to swiftly establish social and professional relationships in case I have no one else to spend time with. Yeah, we truly feel like a single family." (ID1)

Some of the interviewees added that digital nomadism is a chance to work remotely due to private issues.

"I wish to get away from my personal issues and social constraints." (ID6)

3.3.3 Disadvantages of being a digital nomad

In order to gain greater insight into the disadvantages of being a digital nomad, interviewees have been asked about the challenges they encounter. Nearly all respondents confirmed that social issues are the major obstacle. While most nomads do it deliberately, they essentially cut themselves apart from their support system, which includes friends, family, etc. So, they suffer from isolation, particularly when they travel alone.

"Feeling lonely because of being away from my family and friends." (ID7, ID14)
"The difference in time zones makes it challenging for me to keep in touch with my family and friends." (ID4)

"Personally, I enjoy the power of relationships, but having to say goodbye and begin again may be exhausting." (ID19)

Along with social issues, some interviewees mentioned that cultural differences presented another challenge. Digital nomads are more likely to experience culture shocks frequently. The need to adjust, which is generally seen as a positive thing, turns into a significant source of stress when it occurs frequently.

"It's really challenging for me to adapt to new cultural customs." (ID3, ID5)

"Cultural constraints often prevent me from living a free life." (ID18, ID23)

Most interviewees believed that the absence of financial stability was a major obstacle. Digital nomads should make sure that their remote income is consistent before quitting their jobs and engaging in this lifestyle.

"I don't feel stable; my work and salary are unstable." (ID9, ID15)

"In the future, I could prefer long-term employment because it offers assurance and stability." (ID5)

3.3.4 Egypt's strengths as a digital nomad destination (why you choose Egypt) Participants chose Egypt based on a number of criteria, some of which were stated repeatedly.

• The cost of living in Egypt is very cheap:

Many participants noted that the cost of living in Egypt is cheap compared to many other destinations, mainly due to the depreciation of the local currency.

"The less expensive it is, the less I need to work; besides, when living expenses are modest, it is simpler to maintain a high level of living." (ID21, ID23)

"The Egyptian pound is extremely inexpensive considering the current high exchange rates. Compared to numerous countries, Egypt still has substantially cheaper living expenses." (ID7)

"It all depends on your lifestyle, but you need between 1300\$ and 1500 \$ a month to live well." (ID2)

• Culture:

Many interviewees claimed that one of Egypt's main advantages over other countries in luring digital nomads is its rich cultural heritage.

"Kindness, hospitality, and family-centeredness are just a few of the many aspects of Egyptian culture that fascinate me. It also has a plethora of subcultures, which I find quite admirable, including Bedouin and Nubian." (ID7, ID22)

"The Egyptian lifestyle is extremely admirable." (ID8)

"Locals are very friendly." (ID6, ID9, ID21)

"Hmm, I'm obsessed with Egyptian history and archeology." (ID10)

"There are countless food options in Egypt, and I really enjoy Egyptian cuisine. I really am a foodie, haha." (ID17)

Safety

According to many interviewees, Egypt is one of the safest destinations for digital nomads.

"In Egypt, you are safe wherever you go." (ID12, ID15, ID13)

"Egypt seems more secure to me than most US cities." (ID2)

"I can wear whatever I want, especially in coastal communities. Contrary to the popular belief that Sinai is dangerous, it receives additional security measures." (ID5)

• Climate

The *climate* is a key factor in attracting DNs. Most interviewees confirmed that Egypt has beautiful weather, particularly in the winter.

"Egypt has nice sunny weather." (ID12, ID15)

"Egypt is always hot, but in coastal places, at least you can always take a bath in the sea; in Cairo, however, that is not an option." (ID6)

"Egypt enjoys warm summers and moderate winters due to its desert climate. The climate around the shore is more temperate, with higher humidity and colder temperatures." (ID9, ID16)

Co-working spaces

Based on respondents' views, besides many cafes and restaurants, Egypt has many amazing co-working spaces where digital nomads can work. For example, Consoleya in old Cairo and KMT House in Maadi.

"I worked from Consoleya for a few months. It's a pleasant location. Sometimes the internet can be a little sluggish. Nonetheless, the locals are really friendly. Consoleya's wifi is ok." (ID23)

"In the Maadi neighborhood, KMT House is a pleasant coworking space. The stability of the internet is quite good. The employees are friendly. The free Wi-Fi was really decent. However, it's an open place, and the temperature is high. Additionally, they close around ten or eleven p.m." (ID20)

"There are numerous coworking cafes and restaurants in Dahab and Sharm el Sheikh that provide free WiFi" (ID3, ID14, ID11)

"One excellent place for working from Hurghada is GSpace coworking." (ID9)

Which tourist areas of Egypt are ideal for digital nomads to settle in?

Nearly all interviewees confirmed that Egypt has plenty of fantastic spots where digital nomads can stay and work. For many digital nomads, coastal cities are the best tourist areas to live because they can work while still taking advantage of the peace, gorgeous scenery, beaches, and sports. Based on respondents' views, the most popular tourist areas are, respectively, Dahab, Cairo, Hurghada, Luxor, and El Gouna. All of these destinations are ranked in The Nomad List, a collective database, as popular places for digital nomads (https://nomadlist.com/egypt).

"Dahab is Earth's heaven; it is the ideal city for a digital nomad's lifestyle." (ID3, ID4, ID5, ID13)

"There are many tourist spots in Egypt that are ideal for digital nomads, such as Sharm, Dahab, or Hurghada, where I can experience the perfect combination of a city and the sea! Given their incredible history, Luxor and Cairo are also unquestionably must-visit destinations!" (ID8)

"I think Dahab is the greatest. Egypt's most liberal location, with a decent blend of international and local residents. Making friends with Egyptians and expats is, therefore, simple. There are no traffic jams like in Cairo. However, you could become bored if you don't enjoy diving or kitesurfing." (ID17)

"Cairo is a grim, crowded city that is rife with pollution and dirt. When you wake up, you see people who are irritated with life, cars crashing into each other, and crazy traffic. In contrast, in Hurghada, you wake up to sunny, pleasant weather, cheerful people and tourists, a clean, well-organized city, and the opportunity to engage in activities like diving." (ID12, ID15)

Even with Cairo's extreme overcrowding and pollution, a lot of digital nomads still find Cairo to be their favorite city since it offers all the amenities and services they require, in different qualities and in large quantities.

"I like busy places, so Cairo is my preference. Large malls, plenty of people, a place that never sleeps essentially. That appeals to me. Bad internet, immoral individuals, poor services, dirty, chaotic environments, rats, street dogs, etc. are things I dislike." (ID21, ID23)

Because of the affordable lodging options there and the allure of civilization and antiquity for some digital nomads, as well as the natural scenery and green spaces, Luxor draws visitors despite its limited service.

"I enjoy being in the country, so I live in Luxor. There are many foreigners in the village where I live, and I use a mifi pod as a backup. Monthly rent is also reasonably priced." (ID10)

Participants were asked to list the advantages and disadvantages of each place. Table 3 presents participants' views.

Table 3. advantages and disadvantages of Egyptian tourist areas for Digital Nomads

City	Advantages	Disadvantages
Dahab	• Has a very large nomad community.	No advanced medical care.
	• Is significantly more social because it is a local	• A lack of the amenities and
	town rather than a resort.	cutting-edge technology that
	• Among the most inexpensive regions in Egypt to	found in larger cities.
	reside.	• Remote locations lack
	• Has wonderful nature.	coverage.
	• The best place in Egypt for diving,	• There is no airport.
	• Incredible cultural diversity (indigenous	• Sometimes the internet
	Bedouins, Egyptians who relocated from other	connection may be a little slow
	places, and foreigners).	
	• Eco-friendly city.	
<i>C</i> •	• Very safe with an extremely low crime rate.	** 1
Cairo	• Reliable internet.	• Very chaotic.
	• Has many things to do (several historic sites,	• An extremely swift city.
	malls, nightlife, cafés, restaurants, etc.).	• Traffic jams, many pedestrians,
	• A reasonably priced city appropriate for all	lack of adherence to directions,
	budgets.	excessive speed, etc. • More polluted than other
	Many Co-working spaces.Good healthcare.	• More polluted than other Egyptian cities.
Hurghada	Pleasant weather.	• It offers little to explore or
Hurghaua	The amazing Red Sea nearby.	things to do, so eventually you
	Improved internet.	will grow bored.
	• Co-working spaces.	g
	 A higher proportion of foreign visitors. 	
Luxor	• Rent is inexpensive.	• Sometimes the internet access
	• The rural areas.	may be a little slow.
	• lots of sites and history.	• Elevated temps.
	• West Bank is pleasant and peaceful.	1
El Gouna	• Full of nature.	• Insanely expensive.
	• All things are of high quality.	_
	• Trustworthy healthcare.	
	• High speed fibre optic internet.	
	• A lot of events are held there all year long.	
	 Amazing workspaces. 	
	• Too quiet.	
	• Very safe.	
	• Environmentally friendly city.	

3.3.5 The challenges of being a Digital Nomad in Egypt

• Internet connection

The majority of respondents confirmed that the internet in Egypt is sometimes a bit slow. Participants were asked to identify the superior internet service provider in Egypt. Orange was rated as the best by 46% of interviewees, followed by Vodafone and Etisalat, both with 21% of the vote, and We, with 12%. The interviewees suggested that digital nomads should try several Egyptian service providers and choose the best one for their new location.

"I've spent the last 12 months traveling around Egypt as a digital nomad. I adore it to pieces! One piece of recommendation is to examine the internet connection before deciding to settle anywhere in this region." (ID10)

"In Egypt, the Internet isn't always accessible. We must be truthful. The four providers are Vodafone, WE, Orange, and Etisalat. Basically, everything depends on where you are. You can use an Egyptian SIM and bring your MiFi from overseas." (ID21)

"This is the way of life in Egypt. Thus, I need to try a few different service providers that are available to me in my area." (ID12)

• Visa system

Until now, Egypt has not issued a special visa for digital nomads. However, Egypt has a range of visa choices that could be suitable for digital nomads, including business, student, work, and tourist visas.

"Egypt should have a flexible visa system so that nomads can enter the country and remain without any difficulty." (ID5, ID14, ID30)

"I dislike bureaucracy, the visa system in Egypt is confusing and complicated." (ID2)

Harassment

The majority of digital nomads in Egypt suffer from harassment. They usually encounter these uncomfortable behaviors more in tourist areas, which are primarily found in or close to slums. Furthermore, digital nomads are obvious and simple targets because of the way they look and dress.

"Lots of touts and harassment." (ID13)

"Regretfully, there are two kinds of harassment in Egypt: the first is sexual harassment, and the second has to do with haggling with merchants in popular tourist areas. Unfortunately, I cannot dispute the existence of both." (ID5, ID9)

4- Discussion and conclusion

Digital nomad tourists have received great importance as a brand-new, distinct consumer segment. Travel destinations all over the world have developed goods and services, especially for digital nomads, in response to this trend. This study aimed at exploring the

motivations and disadvantages of being a digital nomad. Moreover, it examined Egypt's strengths as an attractive destination for this unique tourist segment, while also highlighted the challenges and threats that may reduce the country's appeal to this market niche from the perspective of digital nomad tourists. To achieve this aim, the study used a qualitative approach. A total of 23 semi-structured interviews have been conducted with digital nomads in Egypt. The study results show that Egypt's tourist areas are home to a large number of digital nomads from different countries. The majority of digital nomads in Egypt are settled in Dahab, Cairo, Hurghada, El Gouna, Sharm El-Sheikh, and Luxor. This is in line with the findings of Chevtaeva and Denizci-Guillet (2021), who reported that digital nomads favor traveling to warm destinations with a cheap cost of living. Nearly all respondents are millennials. Most of them are single, male, European, and have IT-related jobs. These results came to agree with several previous studies (e.g., Reichenberger, 2018; Thompson, 2018; Cook, 2020; Parreño-Castellano et al., 2022), which referred to the fact that the majority of digital nomads are single, male, Millennials or Generation Z, from the Global North, and working in digital professions like software engineers, bloggers, programmers, web designers, travel vloggers, etc. According to Šímová (2023), millennials find working with modern technologies to be far simpler because they have been surrounded by them since childhood. Moreover, the study findings proved that digital nomads are motivated to adopt this travel-based lifestyle for many reasons, including the need for freedom, autonomy, and escape from routine life and the traditional 9–5 office work. This agrees with previous studies (Reichenberger, 2018; Thompson, 2019; Winarya-Prabawa &Petriwi, 2020; Jiwasiddi et al., 2022; Verma, 2023). Additionally, some respondents say that social and cultural concerns are their motives for being digital nomads. They are eager to learn new things and interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. This is consistent with the studies of Stickel (2020) and Situmorang and Karthana (2021), which illustrated that digital nomad tourists are interested in new cultures, so relationships and cross-cultural communication are crucial concerns for them.

The findings also revealed many of Egypt's strengths as a distinguished tourist destination for digital nomads. Egypt is a safe country with a pleasant climate, a low cost of living, friendly locals, and a rich natural and cultural heritage. Moreover, Egypt has a variety of co-working spaces that provide digital nomad tourists with the necessary tools they need to work while also giving them the opportunity to socialize and collaborate with other professionals. As per earlier research (Lee et al., 2019; Orel, 2019, 2021; Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021), co-working spaces have been identified as a basic requirement for digital nomad tourists. In addition, these results came to agree with the findings of Zhou et al. (2024), who identified the destination attractors for digital nomads as follows: culture

and history, climate and nature, infrastructure, work facilities, service amenities, economic and financial aspects, and social/political features.

Regarding the disadvantages of being a digital nomad tourist, the study findings show that social issues are the major disadvantage. DNs suffer from loneliness because they are away from their families and friends. Additionally, the difference in time zones, cultural constraints, and lack of stability in jobs and income are other disadvantages of being a digital nomad. This result came to agree with Cook (2020; 2023) and Verma (2023), who reported that loneliness, instability, and cultural issues are drawbacks of digital nomadism. Finally, the results highlight a number of challenges that digital nomads encounter in Egypt. One of these important challenges is the internet connection. Respondents acknowledged that the internet can be a bit slow sometimes, so they had to bring their own MiFi from overseas. As mentioned earlier, the two most essential things for digital nomads are a portable device and an internet connection. Bozzi (2020) named digital nomads "Internet-enabled remote workers." In a similar vein, Šímová (2023) indicated that having fast internet is crucial when picking a destination or workspace. Thus, the findings of this study validate these arguments and emphasize how crucial the internet is to digital nomads' lives. Another challenge that digital nomad tourists in Egypt face is the presence of uncomfortable behaviors such as harassment in certain tourist areas, which are mostly located in or near slums. The last challenge is the visa system. Despite having a variety of visa options that would be appropriate for digital nomad tourists, Egypt has not yet introduced a special visa for digital nomads. As per earlier research (Hannonen, 2023; Sánchez-Vergara et al., 2023; Bednorz, 2024), this study shows that the visa is a key theme for digital nomad tourists. According to Sánchez-Vergara et al. (2023), digital nomads choose their destinations depending on a variety of criteria, such as safety, residency regulations, and visa requirements.

Based on the aforementioned results, Figure 1 presents a SWOT analysis of digital nomad tourism in Egypt.

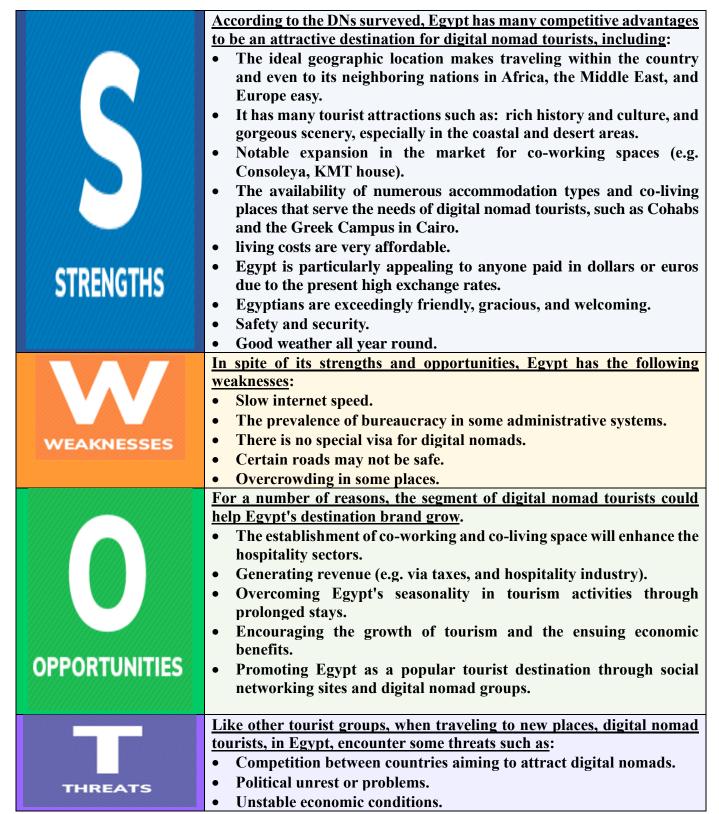


Figure 1. A SWOT Analysis of Digital Nomad Tourism in Egypt

5. Implications

Due to technological advancements and the COVID-19 pandemic, a greater number of individuals than ever before are combining remote work with travel. The rise of remote work has significantly altered the travel and tourism sectors, developing new travel trends and types of tourism. Indeed, digital nomad tourists are a rapidly growing tourism segment. The growing influx of digital nomads will cause transformative changes in host destinations. Their expenditures on hospitality, leisure services, co-living, workspaces, and other amenities will positively impact the receiving destinations. In conclusion, it is clear that digital nomads form a new tourist segment in which Egypt ought to invest. The results of the present study have significant implications for theory and practice. Theoretically, this research enhances our conceptual knowledge of this unique tourist market. Firstly, it reintroduces digital nomads as a topic for tourism and hospitality research. There is a dearth of literature on this topic in travel and hospitality (Hannonen, 2020; Mancinelli, 2020; Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Hannonen et al., 2023). To the best of our knowledge, the current research is the first comprehensive investigation of this niche segment in Egypt from the perspective of digital nomad tourists. Specifically, it provides new insights and opinions regarding the digital nomad concept, motivations, and required services. In addition, it highlights the advantages and challenges that digital nomads face in Egypt. Practically, in light of the growing popularity of remote work and digital nomads, the destination's governmental organizations and planning authorities should develop a set of objectives and planning strategies to overcome challenges and take advantage of possibilities to attract more digital nomads. Therefore, the study recommends the following major implications:

- It is important to pay attention to the important services for digital nomads, such as reliable internet access, healthcare, cozy co-working spaces, language translation, and recreational options.
- Improving the infrastructure of technology to facilitate internet access, increase connection speeds, and make technology services more widely available.
- Egyptian governmental bodies should establish laws and policies that facilitate digital nomadism and remote work, such as those pertaining to immigration and visas that encourage remote workers to live and work abroad.
- Government authorities and tourism boards should conduct competitive analysis and benchmarking, which are essential to identify the unique selling features that each nation employs to entice digital nomad tourists and adjust marketing tactics accordingly.
- Ensuring the reduction of bureaucracy by digitizing services needed by digital nomad tourists, such as residence, taxation, etc.
- Egypt should issue digital nomad visas, which include legislative support and tax breaks. This will send a strong message, identifying Egypt as an ideal hub for digital nomad tourism.
- With the increasing inflow of digital nomads, destination management organizations must guarantee sustainable practices to protect the environment and cultural heritage while offering opportunities for digital nomad tourists to engage in unique experiences.

6. Further research

This study paves the way for additional research on the travel experiences of digital nomad tourists in Egypt. Although the number of digital nomad tourists globally is increasing quickly, the problem of long-term stays has not yet been resolved through special visas and programs for digital nomad tourists that would meet their needs, for example, people who are restricted with a tourist visa. Therefore, additional studies are required to look into these aspects of digital nomadism. Further research is required to understand their travel habits and co-working space preferences. It would be fascinating to investigate how co-working spaces impact Egypt's attractiveness to digital nomad tourists. Additional research is needed to determine the possible social, economic, and environmental impacts of digital nomad tourists on Egyptian destination. Finally, sustainability and environmental issues should also be thoroughly investigated. Specifically, particular attention should be paid to assessing the ecological imprint of digital nomads and taking into account variables like waste production and consumption patterns.

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Appendix "1" interview Guide Participants' Profile:

Motivations

What are the factors that motivate you to travel and work remotely?

Disadvantages

In your opinion, what are the major disadvantages of the digital nomad lifestyle?

Strengths of Egypt

In your opinion, what are the strengths that make Egypt a distinguished destination for digital nomad tourism?

Which tourist areas of Egypt are ideal for digital nomads to settle in? Tell me about your experience with staying in coworking spaces in Egypt?

Challenges

What are the challenges of being a digital nomad in Egypt?

Once again, I appreciate your participation. Do you have anything more to add?

سائحو البداوة الرقمية في المقصد السياحي المصري: الدوافع والتحديات د. هبه صلاح زكي

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الملخص:

منذ انتشار فيروس كورونا (COVID-19)، أصبح العمل عن بعد أمرًا شائعًا، مما أدى إلى ظهور فئة سياحية فريدة تسمى السياح الرحل الرقميين. إنهم فئة من العاملين الذين يسافرون كثيرا من أجل الاستجمام والترفيه وفي نفس الوقت هم مستمرون في مباشرة أعمالهم عن بعد باستخدام الوسائل الرقمية الحديثة. واليوم، تستهدف العديد من المقاصد السياحية -بما فيه المقصد السياحي المصري- هذا السوق السياحي، حيث تروج لنفسها على أنها "أماكن صديقة للبدو الرقميين" تتمتع بأوضاع مميزة للمعيشة والعمل. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف دوافع و عيوب البداوة الرقمية. علاوة على ذلك، فهي تدرس نقاط القوة في المقصد السياحي المصري كوجهة جاذبة لهذا القطاع السياحي الفريد، مع القاء الضوء أيضًا على التحديات والتهديدات التي قد تقال من جاذبية المقصد السياحي المصرى لهذا السوق المتخصص من منظور السياح الرحل الرقميين. باستخدام المنهجية النوعية، تم إجراء 23 مقابلة شبه منتظمة مع سائحي البداوة الرقمية في مصر. اثبتت نتائج الدراسة أن الدوافع الأساسية للسائحين البدو الرقميين لتبني هذا النمط من الحياة القائم على السفر هي: الحاجة إلى مزيد من الحرية، والاستقلالية، والهروب من الحياة الروتينية اليومية. أثبتت الدراسة أيضا انه بالرغم من أن نمط الحياة هذا يوفر العديد من المزايا لهؤلاء السائحين مثل المرونة والفرصة للسفر واستكشاف الثقافات الأخرى، إلا أن له أيضًا عيوب عديدة مثل الشعور بالوحدة، وعدم الاستقرار في كل من الوظائف ومستوى الدخل. كما كشفت نتائج الدراسة أيضا أن هؤلاء السائحون في مصر يواجهون مجموعة من التحديات مثل ضعف الاتصال بالإنترنت ونظام التأشيرات بالإضافة الى وجود بعض السلوكيات غير المريحة مثل التحرش. بناء على الدراسة النظرية والنتائج السابقة تم عمل تحليل رباعي لنقاط القوة والضعف والفرص والتهديدات (SWOT) لسياحة البدو الرقميين في مصر. أخيرًا، تقدم هذه الدراسة مجموعة من التوصيات للمقاصد السياحية والشركات لتعظيم جهودهم في التسويق وتطوير المنتجات التي تستهدف هذه الشريحة المميزة من السائحين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: سائحو البداوة الرقمية، الدوافع، مساحات العمل المشتركة، المقصد السياحي المصري.