

Wired to Wander: Values in Digital Nomadism

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Abstract

Digital nomadism presents conflicting value judgments in existing literature, yet the sources of these conflicts remain underexplored. This study examines why conflicting valuations persist in digital nomadism using the values in digital phenomena framework. We conducted an interpretive qualitative study with 18 semi-structured interviews with digital nomads and analyzed 74 news articles from 12 international publications representing diverse cultural and political perspectives. Our analysis reveals three distinct sources of value conflicts: stakeholder perspective conflicts (different stakeholders applying different value systems), intra-value system conflicts (same value system yielding conflicting judgments), and object-dependent conflicts (same stakeholder generating different valuations for different aspects). Findings demonstrate that value judgments are fundamentally dynamic and multidimensional, requiring simultaneous consideration of the evaluated object, evaluating stakeholder, and applied value system. This research challenges assumptions of value homogeneity within stakeholder groups and provides a comprehensive framework for understanding value conflicts in digital nomadism.

Keywords: digital nomadism, values in digital phenomena, IS research, stakeholders

1. Introduction

Digital nomadism refers to the phenomenon enabled by digital nomads leveraging digital technologies to work remotely while maintaining a mobile lifestyle (Schlagwein, 2018). The digital phenomenon refers to a co-constitutive process and outcome between digitization (converting analog information to digital formats) and digitalization (the broader transformation of social processes and structures through digital technologies) (Baiyere et al., 2023). This digital phenomenon centers on the social practices of digital nomads as afforded by digitalization and digitization (Baiyere et al., 2023),

rather than focusing primarily on the digital technologies themselves. Unlike other digital phenomena that often center on the development, deployment, or implications of IT artifacts (e.g., platforms, algorithms, or digital infrastructures), digital nomadism is centered on social practices enabled by IT. Here, IT does not refer to an artifact, but to its use in social practice, inherent in and inseparable from the social element (Bozzi, 2020; Prester et al., 2023; Reichenberger, 2017).

Regarding the evaluation of digital nomadism, value judgments are always diverse and even conflicting. Economically, digital nomadism is considered to bring economic benefits to destination countries and geo-arbitrage opportunities to digital nomads (Andrejuk, 2022; Hannonen, 2023). However, local communities often complain about the increasing cost of living caused by digital nomadism (Jarrahi et al., 2021). Beyond economic considerations, value judgments from cultural (Bergan et al., 2021), social (Miocevic, 2024), and environmental (Foley et al., 2022) perspectives are also often at odds. Understanding these conflicting value judgments not only reveals the complexities of how digital nomadism is valued, but also sheds light on how valuation is constructed and configured within the digital phenomenon.

Hence, this research aims to address the following question: *What are the conflicting value judgments in digital nomadism, and why?* By exploring the nature and sources of these conflicting value judgments, this study contributes to a more pluralistic and practice-sensitive understanding of valuation in IS, moving beyond instrumental logics toward a richer conceptualization of how digital phenomena are contested, negotiated, and legitimized across stakeholder groups.

Through an interpretive qualitative research approach (Silverman, 2008) drawing on in-depth interviews and newspaper articles, we investigate conflicting value judgments in digital nomadism. Our analysis applies the values in digital phenomena framework (Redacted, 2025) to interpret value judgments in digital nomadism. Leveraging the

primary elements of this framework—"value of what (the object of valuation)," "value to whom (the stakeholder perspective)," and "value in which way (the mode of valuation)"—we analyze conflicting value judgments in digital nomadism in a structured manner.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a literature review on digital nomadism and the values in digital phenomena framework. Section 3 outlines our method. Section 4 presents preliminary findings on evolving digital nomadism value judgments. Section 5 discusses our findings and concludes by highlighting implications.

2. Literature review

2.1. Digital nomadism

Digital nomadism has emerged as a contemporary lifestyle phenomenon characterized by the integration of work and leisure through location-independent remote work enabled by digital technologies (Hannonen, 2020; Šimová, 2022). While definitional ambiguity persists across the literature, with the concept encompassing freelancers, remote workers, and independent entrepreneurs (Aroles et al., 2020; Cook, 2023), digital nomadism fundamentally represents a departure from traditional spatial and temporal work arrangements. The phenomenon exhibits inherent contradictions between aspirational freedom and practical constraints, as digital nomads navigate the tension between imagined borderless living and the realities of state bureaucracies, such as visa regulations, and infrastructure dependencies (Cook, 2022; Mancinelli and Germann Molz, 2023). This lifestyle is characterized by fluid, dynamic practices that blur work-leisure boundaries while requiring continuous identity performance through "journeying," "workliving," and "digital reassembling" (Prester et al., 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic served as both a catalyst and disruptor, simultaneously legitimizing remote work while constraining the fundamental mobility that defines digital nomadic identity (Ehn et al., 2022; Pita et al., 2022).

Digital nomadism embodies competing value systems that reflect broader tensions within contemporary work and mobility paradigms. Advocates often celebrate digital nomadism as representing freedom, autonomy, and the pursuit of meaningful experiences over material accumulation, positioning it as a progressive alternative to traditional employment structures (Atanasova and Eckhardt, 2021; Matos and Ardévol, 2021). However, critics argue that digital nomadism perpetuates neoliberal

individualism and privilege, enabling primarily wealthy Western professionals to exploit global economic disparities while contributing to displacement and commodification of local communities (Bozzi, 2020; McElroy, 2019). The phenomenon reveals fundamental tensions between mobility and stability, work and leisure, individual freedom and collective responsibility, raising questions about sustainability, equity, and the societal implications of increasingly mobile knowledge work (Atanasova et al., 2023; Sanul, 2022). These normative debates extend to policy and regulatory domains, where governments struggle to balance the economic opportunities of attracting digital nomads against potential negative externalities such as housing pressures, tax avoidance, and cultural disruption (Amadeo, 2023; Foley et al., 2022).

Most existing studies explore the value of digital nomadism with the implicit assumption that digital nomads and local communities are the major stakeholders. On the one hand, digital nomads can travel and work remotely, seek professional, spatial, and personal freedom (Cook, 2022), achieve a work-leisure balance (Matos and Ardévol, 2021; Reichenberger, 2017), enjoy geo-arbitrage (Mancinelli and Germann Molz, 2023), and achieve personal fulfillment (Dal Fiore et al., 2014). In this conceptualization, digital nomads can manage risks via a fluid approach to avoiding solid consumption patterns (Atanasova et al., 2023). It can be argued that the nomad space also contributes to creating new economies for the local community (Jiwassiddi et al., 2024). On the other hand, digital nomadism is criticized for driving gentrification (Bozzi, 2020), material dispossession (McElroy, 2019), and historical forms of disruption to both local communities and digital nomads (Green, 2020).

However, the extant literature on digital nomadism presents two associated problems regarding value judgments: fragmentation and axiological limitations. First, value judgments in the literature are fragmented, appearing as piecemeal assessments that lack integration within a coherent analytical framework. Second, the underlying axiological foundations are limited, predominantly associating value with economic gains while prioritizing impacts on digital nomads and local communities. This narrow prioritization often results in overlooking the broader implications of digital nomadism. Hence, in order to understand the conflicting value judgments in digital nomadism, we used a values in digital phenomena framework (Redacted, 2025) to inform and sensitize our possible value judgments.

2.2. Framework of values in digital phenomena

The values in digital phenomena framework (Redacted, 2025) uncover the key elements of value judgments for digital phenomena. In this framework, value is defined from its practical function: justifying behaviors for common goods. To perform such a function, values do not operate in isolation, but in a value system which is based on a particular core value (valuable in green/sustainability value), and sufficient justification logics.

Build on insights from IS and axiology (the philosophy study of values), especially Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), the theory argues 1) values can only be defined from their practical role; 2) values are plural in nature and may be fundamentally incommensurate (Berlin, 2017; Nagel, 1987); and 3) values comprise three key elements: “value of what”, “value to whom”, and “value in which way”.

Value of what in values in digital phenomena framework refers to the ontological conceptualization of judged objects. The framework identifies that in digital phenomena, the judged objects are based on IT use where IT can be analyzed from three different levels: IT artifact, sociotechnical systems and digital phenomenon. For example, when the value of blockchain is being judged, such blockchain can refer to an IT artifact (e.g., proof-of-work protocol blockchain), or an IT use sociotechnical system (e.g., investors investing bitcoin for monetary benefits), or a digital phenomenon (e.g., blockchain use phenomena). Though all judgments use the same term “blockchain” and seem to talk about the value of blockchain, deep down, they are discussing different things which will naturally influence the value judgments.

Value to whom refers to the stakeholders in digital phenomena. In organizational study, stakeholders are defined as “any group or individual who is affected by or can affect the achievement of an organization's objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p. 5) such as individual users, organizational adopters, industry, society, or environment. The values in digital phenomena framework borrows this definition and contextualizes the definition in IS context. In IS literature, stakeholders are not based on the relationship between organizations, but between how they are affected by IT use. Hence, stakeholders in digital phenomena not only refer to those people or entities that directly use IT but also those people who are indirectly influenced by IT use via spillover effects.

Value in which way refers to what is considered valuable, such as economic value to increase firm performance or efficiency value to increase productivity. This element is built on the value

systems theory (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006; Thévenot et al., 2000). Eight value systems are identified (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006; Thévenot et al., 2000). By using value system theory as the methodological guidance and theoretical foundations, the values in digital phenomena framework identifies nine value systems that are used for legitimate value judgments and are included in the framework as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Nine value systems

Value System	Values	Justification Logics
Market	Economic, financial, and monetary	Centre on the competitive exchange of commodities for profit
Industry	Efficiency and productivity	Prioritize the scientific or technical control and efficient coordination of industrial production processes themselves.
Civic	Public goods, collective welfare, equality, and solidarity	Focus on universal human motivations and needs
Domestic	Tradition, family, and trust	Focus on interpersonal networks bound by norms, trust, and long-standing ties
Fame	Renown, fame, and social capital	Highlight public brand, name recognition and clout within multiple spheres simultaneously.
Green	Sustainability and renewability	Consider environmental friendliness
Project-oriented	Ability, network, and flexibility	Focus on the ability to be employable and network building
Inspired	Creativity and non-conformity	Highlight originality, transcendence
Autonomy	Self-governance, freedom, self-control	Highlight autonomy, independence and freedom

The framework is particularly suited to this study for focus fit and axiological assumptions alignment, and community recognition. First, this framework is proposed in IS discipline, which explains the complex value judgements in digital era. This approach specifically addresses digital phenomena's unique characteristics—the blending of physical and virtual spaces, technology-mediated relationships, and platform-dependent work arrangements that define

contemporary digital nomadism. Second, values in digital phenomena framework build on Boltanski and Thévenot's value system theory, which highlights the plurality of societal value systems, where people leverage to justify their behavior. Such theory challenges that in IS research, values are often interpreted in economic or efficient terms. Similar in digital nomadism phenomena, we can observe a number of different even conflicting values are used, judged, and assessed. Hence, values in digital phenomena framework is selected to help understand the conflicting value judgements in digital phenomena.

3. Method

Given our concern regarding conflicting value judgments in digital nomadism, we conducted interpretive qualitative research (Silverman, 2008) because this methodological approach allows us to examine the socially constructed meanings and subjective interpretations that different stakeholders attribute to digital nomadism.

Our research employs an abductive reasoning approach (Charmaz, 2006). Abductive reasoning, as distinguished from purely inductive or deductive methods, seeks to generate the most plausible explanation (or “best explanation”) for observed phenomena by iteratively moving between empirical observations and theoretical conceptualization (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). Rather than following a strictly linear logic of discovery, abductive reasoning allows researchers to draw upon multiple sources of insight—including theoretical knowledge, empirical evidence, and interpretive intuition—to construct coherent explanations that best account for the complexity of the data (Klag and Langley, 2013).

3.1. Data collection

Data collection employed theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 2017) designed to maximize diversity and capture conflicting value judgments regarding digital nomadism. To achieve this objective, we implemented three complementary approaches.

Drawing from digital phenomena framework insights, we recognized that different stakeholder perspectives (value to whom) often generate value judgments based on their relationship to the phenomenon. To capture this diversity, we employed two complementary data sources. First, we conducted semi-structured interviews with direct participants—digital nomads themselves—to capture “internal” perspectives. These stakeholders' value judgments stem from their lived experiences within the digital

nomad lifestyle, providing insights into perceived benefits, challenges, and personal impacts. Second, we analyzed publicly available news articles and media coverage to capture “external” perspectives from indirect stakeholders, including local communities, policymakers, and observers. These stakeholders' value judgments are shaped by the spillover effects of digital nomadism on their communities, economies, and social structures. This dual-source approach ensures comprehensive coverage of both participant experiences and broader societal impacts, enabling collecting varying—and often conflicting—value judgements in digital nomadism.

We conducted interviews with 18 stakeholders in digital nomadism between October and December 2024. These participants were deliberately selected to ensure diverse perspectives on values within the digital nomadism community (see Table 2 for participant details). Using semi-structured interviews, our questions are surrounding three key themes: (1) how participants identify and assess value in digital nomadism, (2) what value conflicts they perceive within this lifestyle, and (3) their strategies for managing these conflicts.

Table 1. Summary of interviews

No.	Pseudonym Name	Job
1	Nin	Language tutor
2	Ale	IT developer
3	Des	Marketing specialist
4	Rob	Dating coach
5	Alic	Legal consultant
6	Kev	Language tutor
7	Yuli	Marketing specialist
8	Bob	IT developer
9	You	Music producer
10	Bre	IT developer
11	Ana	Social media manager
12	Mar	IT developer
13	Aus	Marketing specialist
14	Mar	Travel manager
15	Abd	Cloud engineer
16	Jas	Entrepreneur
17	Ste	Analytics
18	Ric	Researcher

Progressive/Left			
West	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ NBC News (USA)▪ Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)▪ The Guardian (UK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ China Daily (China)▪ The Hankyoreh (South Korea)▪ Asahi (Japan)	East
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Wall Street Journal (USA)▪ The Telegraph (UK)▪ The Spectator (UK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Times of India (India)▪ The Yomiuri Shimbun (Japan)▪ The Straits Times (Singapore)	
Conservative/Right			

Figure 1. Selected news publications and their political stance and cultural background

To maximize the diversity of value judgments regarding digital nomadism, we employed purposive sampling along two key dimensions. As (Hofstede, 1984) highlights, culture often plays an important role in values, hence, we purposively selected publications from different cultures (West and East). As (Haidt and Graham, 2007) highlights, political stance plays an important role in values, hence, we purposively selected publications from different political stances (Left and Right). We acknowledge that political stances are context-dependent and often debated. To ensure consistency, we adopt Ground News's media bias framework (www.ground.news), to categorize publications as progressive or conservative. Our focus, however, is not on validating these labels but on exploring what is considered valuable from different political stances in discussions of digital nomadism.

Follow this design principle, 12 publications are selected as shown in Figure 1. The sample includes newspapers representing conservative viewpoints from the East: Times of India (India), The Yomiuri Shimbun (Japan), and The Straits Times (Singapore); conservative views from the West: Wall Street Journal (USA), The Telegraph (UK), and The Spectator (UK); progressive views from the East: China Daily (China), The Hankyoreh (South Korea), and Asahi (Japan); and progressive views from the West: NBC News (USA), Sydney Morning Herald (Australia), and The Guardian (UK). The classification of each publication's political stance is informed by media which systematically aggregates reporting tendencies across media outlets.

This theoretically informed sampling approach ensures ideological diversity and enables a more nuanced analysis of how discourses around digital nomadism have evolved in different sociopolitical contexts. In total, our empirical data includes 18 interviews and 74 news articles from 12 newspapers.

3.2. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with the collection of interviews and news data. We iteratively reanalyzed the data throughout the empirical study. Data management and analysis were facilitated through NVivo and Excel.

Our analytical approach integrated concurrent data collection and analysis throughout the empirical investigation, employing a systematic qualitative methodology informed by both abductive reasoning and grounded theory principles (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). This iterative process allowed theoretical sensitivity to emerge as we moved recursively between empirical observations and conceptual frameworks (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Our analytical procedure utilized qualitative coding techniques inspired by Gioia (Gioia et al., 2013), though we diverged from its purely inductive orientation in favor of an abductive reasoning approach. Hence, our coding structure includes open coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding (Gioia et al., 2013).

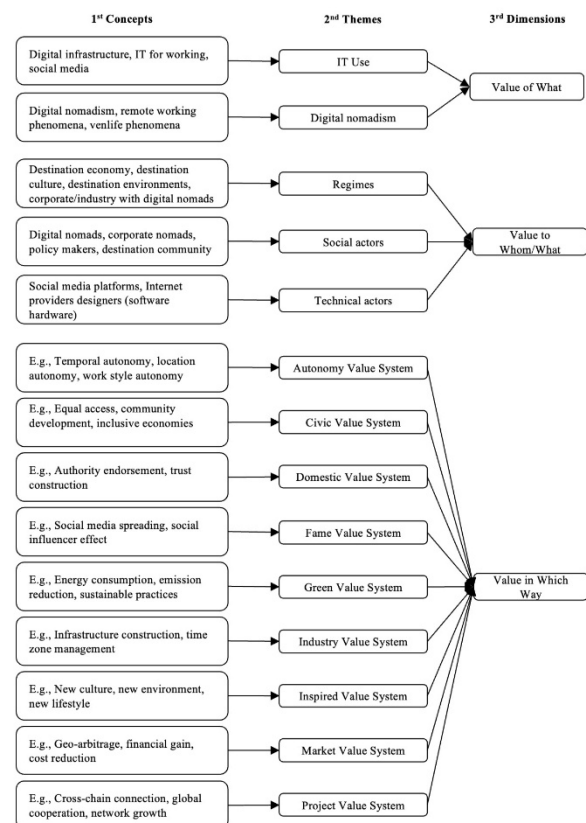


Figure 2. Data structure

In the open coding phase, we analyzed interview transcripts line-by-line, identifying value expressions across three constructs of our framework of values in digital phenomena: “value of what” (distinguishing level of analysis), “value to whom/which” (capturing diverse stakeholder perspectives including developers, users, regulators, and organizations), and “value in which way.” During this process, we noted recurring expressions that could not be fully explained by the meta-theoretical framework, values in digital phenomena. We were particularly struck by statements emphasizing temporal dimensions, such as references to weeks, months, or periods “before being a digital nomad”.

During focused coding, we synthesized related open codes into thematic categories that revealed patterns within each value judgment, such as “technical efficiency values” (industrial value attributed to the technology) or “democratic governance values” (civic value attributed to the broader ecosystem). We constantly compared thematic categories with the constructs of the values in digital phenomena framework.

In the first-order analysis, we used refined codes (Gioia et al., 2013) (i.e., close to the terms used by interviewees and in news articles). For the second- and third-order analyses, we used terms from the values in digital phenomena framework as codes when they were well-aligned with raw data to maintain consistency. In short, we identified 105 open codes (first-order concepts). Through several iterations, 14 second-order themes emerged. Three third-order dimensions were identified, of which three dimensions are the same as our framework constructs (value of what, value to whom, and value in which way) The data structure is shown in Figure 2.

4. Findings

Through data analysis, we identified that value conflicts in digital nomadism arise from three distinct scenarios: 1) different stakeholders adopt different value systems, 2) even within the same value system, different stakeholders generate conflicting value judgments, and 3) even when the same stakeholder holds the same value system, they may generate different value judgments when shifting focus between different objects of evaluation.

4.3 Object-dependent conflicts

Our data analysis reveals that IT use is the foundational enabler of digital nomadism, with participants consistently emphasizing three critical technological elements: digital infrastructure, work-

specific technologies, and social media platforms. Yet, while these elements collectively sustain the nomadic lifestyle, they also become objects of judgment that can generate tensions and conflicts when valued differently by nomads, local communities, or other stakeholders.

Participants consistently described digital infrastructure as a non-negotiable prerequisite for their mobility. As one digital nomad explained:

“IT definitely enables it [digital nomadism]... Let’s assume you work in a company, but you don’t have to go to the office—you can work from wherever. But you still need to have meetings with your colleagues or your clients or whoever you work for. So, if we don’t have Zoom or if we didn’t have Zoom or Teams or any other online platform where we can communicate and actually have meetings, I think that wouldn’t be possible.” (17-Ste)

This centrality of digital infrastructure frequently shapes destination selection, with nomads prioritizing locations that guarantee stable connectivity: “I feel comfortable staying in Japan because it offers good digital infrastructure.” (Negi, 2024) “Before I go to a country, I’ll look up—you know, make sure if I go to Airbnb and make sure they have strong Wi-Fi.” (8-Bob).

However, when destinations are judged primarily for their technological convenience, tensions may surface. For instance, what nomads see as “good infrastructure” may strain local systems or reinforce inequalities between tech-enabled spaces and underserved communities.

Work-specific technologies—the second critical element—provide the specialized tools that make location-independent work viable. Their rapid evolution has expanded the range of professions that can be practiced remotely: “A lot of the technology to do it — document sharing, collaborative meeting software, services like 15Five, Google Drive, and Google Hangouts — just didn’t exist five years ago,” said Shapiro, who runs the company while traveling the world for lengthy periods with his wife and two children. “Today it’s novel,” he said. “Ten years from now, this will be normal.” (NBCNEWS.COM, 2014).

Yet, this normalization of technologically mediated work can foster conflict when different professional needs compete for attention. Highly specialized workers may prioritize secure, enterprise-grade systems, while lifestyle-focused nomads may value more accessible, low-cost tools—leading to diverging expectations within co-living or co-working environments.

Finally, social media platforms emerged as the third pillar of IT use, supporting community formation, networking, and identity construction. As

one participant reflected, “Social media definitely helps to stay in contact.” (16-Jas).

Others emphasized its dual role as a promotional and professional tool, allowing nomads to disseminate lifestyle content (10-Bre) or cultivate professional visibility to secure new work opportunities (11-Ana). Yet, this visibility can also provoke conflict and criticism, particularly in contexts where local communities perceive nomads as outsiders benefiting from privileges not equally accessible to residents.

Our analysis indicates that digital nomadism is not merely a work arrangement but a complex digital phenomenon (Baiyere et al., 2023) that reflects—and reshapes—broader socioeconomic systems. It operates as a technology-enabled social movement with far-reaching implications, from business models to policy frameworks. For instance, increased mobility has boosted demand for longer stays on platforms like Airbnb and Vrbo (Patton, 2021), while Chinese media highlight its potential to revitalize rural economies by redistributing opportunities through digital connectivity (chinadaily.com.cn, 2024).

However, these developments also surface conflicting judgments about the objects of value at stake. For some, digital nomadism symbolizes innovation, flexibility, and global connection; for others, it reflects privileged mobility and economic disruption. As Fowler (2024) noted: “The phenomenon certainly feels like the 2023 version of getting all up in developing countries’ business with some obvious advantages for the rich and few for the less rich.”

These divergent or conflicting valuations—whether of infrastructure, technology tools, or social visibility—underscore how digital nomadism can simultaneously create opportunities and exacerbate tensions, both within the nomadic community and between nomads and the local ecosystems they inhabit.

4.1 Stakeholder perspective conflicts

Digital nomads stand at the center of these value judgments, navigating a lifestyle filled with both opportunities and frictions. From the nomads’ perspective, the journey often begins with idealized expectations: “Life as a digital nomad seemed like a utopia when I resigned from my full-time journalism job last May” (Fowler, 2024). Many report personal growth and enriched cultural awareness through cross-border interactions: “you become more open. [It] makes you become kinder because you look at people with other eyes, you’re more curious... quicker in making friends. Yeah, the depth of the friendship is another question...” (16-Jas). Yet, these perceived

freedoms are tempered by moments of isolation and the difficulty of forming lasting social ties: “It is true that there’s the kind of isolation” (16-Jas).

However, what nomads see as personal liberation often conflicts with the realities experienced by host communities. On one hand, digital nomadism stimulates local economies, as media narratives emphasize: “host countries get to boost their economies, create new jobs and increase trade turnover” (Innes-Smith, 2023). On the other hand, the benefits are unevenly distributed, intensifying social and economic divides: “While foreigners have reaped the benefits of cheaper housing as they spend money on the local economy, some critics say it’s created more inequality for local Mexicans who are feeling priced out” (Herrera, 2022).

Local infrastructure strains add another layer of tension. Residents and urban planners voice concerns about the pressure on essential services: “Portugal wasn’t really equipped for the huge influx of digital nomads... if the hospitals can’t handle more people getting sick or whatever, then they’re going to be negatively impacted” (18-Ric). These structural challenges often amplify frustrations among locals who feel their needs are deprioritized in favor of catering to transient populations.

Critics further frame digital nomadism through a lens of inequality and neo-colonial dynamics: “Laptop-fueled imperialism is the term I use. Foreign gentrification is a toned-down version” (Fowler, 2024). In contrast, policymakers frequently highlight the economic upside while downplaying tensions, presenting nomads as non-competitive contributors: “[digital nomads] would not be competing with New Zealanders for local jobs” while bringing valuable foreign spending (Corlett, 2025). This tension between economic optimism, local resentment, and the nomads’ search for belonging underscores the complex—and often conflicting—value judgments surrounding this mobile lifestyle.

4.2 Intra-value system conflicts

The coexistence of multiple value systems within digital nomadism generates significant tensions and conflicts in how nomads justify their choices and navigate competing demands. These conflicts, following Boltanski’s understanding of value judgments, reveal the inherent contradictions between different value systems that digital nomads must constantly negotiate.

A fundamental tension emerges between pursuing cost-effective destinations and seeking meaningful cultural encounters. While geographic arbitrage presents compelling justification—“taking advantage

of differences in prices between various places — to live in cities with better environments but lower living costs while earning a salary from a company in a tier-one location” (Yan, 2023)—this economic logic often conflicts with the pursuit of authentic experiences and aesthetic beauty. Digital nomads find themselves torn between financial optimization and genuine cultural enrichment, as one participant acknowledged: “the cost is important, but it's not the primary motivation” (8-Bob) (market vs. inspired value systems).

The celebration of self-determination and location independence creates friction with obligations to local communities. While digital nomads embrace their ability to “create the day that I like” (16-Jas) and pursue unrestricted mobility, this individual freedom potentially conflicts with civic duties and community welfare. “Many countries are now offering specific digital nomad visas” (Page, 2024) to harness nomadic economic benefits while implementing “protections” for local populations (18-Ric), highlighting the ongoing struggle between personal mobility rights and collective community responsibilities (autonomy vs. civic value systems).

Digital nomads face moral dilemmas between environmental responsibility and lifestyle consumption demands. While some romanticize climate-based location selection, others recognize the ecological contradictions: “they develop an entire economy around the digital nomads... which will come with a carbon footprint of some kind, which could negatively impact those areas” (18-Ric). This creates ongoing tension between environmental stewardship and market-driven nomadic consumption patterns (green vs. market value systems).

The pursuit of lifestyle visibility and reputation conflicts with genuine interpersonal connection development. Fame-oriented platforms promote destinations based on superficial criteria (Skulthorp, 2024), while authentic nomadic experiences require building trust and cultural familiarity with local communities (16-Jas). Digital nomads must navigate between performative lifestyle branding and meaningful relationship cultivation (fame vs. domestic value systems).

Maintaining work productivity creates ongoing friction with embracing cultural exploration and unexpected encounters. The need for “accommodation and a productive work setup” (16-Jas) conflicts with the desire for novel experiences and spontaneous cultural immersion. Digital nomads struggle between meeting professional standards and embracing the unpredictability that makes nomadic life fulfilling, recognizing that remote work “requires more discipline” (8-Bob) while simultaneously seeking

inspirational experiences (project vs. inspired value systems).

Discussion and conclusion

Our analysis reveals three fundamental reasons why conflicting value judgments emerge in digital nomadism. Unlike traditional IS research that assumes value homogeneity within stakeholder groups, our findings demonstrate that individuals invoke different value systems for the same digital object depending on contextual factors. This discovery challenges the prevalent assumption that stakeholders within similar categories share uniform value orientations.

The dynamic quality of value systems represents our primary theoretical contribution—value judgments cannot be predetermined from single-dimensional analyses such as stakeholder categorization alone. Instead, as values in digital phenomena suggested, comprehensive understanding emerges only when all three analytical elements are considered simultaneously: “value of what” (the object of evaluation), “value to whom” (the evaluating subject), and “value in which way” (the applied value system). This multidimensional framework explains why value judgments frequently conflict in digital nomadism phenomena, as different contextual configurations inevitably produce contradictory value assessments.

Furthermore, our research reveals that value conflicts in digital nomadism are not merely theoretical constructs but lived experiences that require constant navigation and justification. Digital nomads must continuously reconcile competing demands across multiple value systems. This ongoing negotiation process highlights the fluid nature of value conflicts—they are not static disagreements but evolving challenges that require adaptive responses as circumstances change.

While our study provides valuable insights into value conflicts in digital nomadism, several limitations suggest directions for future research. First, our current sample, while diverse, primarily represents the perspectives of digital nomads themselves. Future research should expand the scope to include diverse stakeholders—local community residents, local community business, policymakers, employers, and service providers—to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how value conflicts manifest across different stakeholder groups.

Second, our analysis treats individuals as representatives of broader stakeholder categories, potentially obscuring important individual-level variations. Future research should examine value conflicts at the individual level, recognizing that

personal histories, cultural backgrounds, and life circumstances may create unique patterns of value system engagement that cannot be captured through group-level analysis alone.

Third, we aim to conduct deeper analysis of our existing data to identify instances that may not be fully explained by current value conflict frameworks. This analysis could potentially contribute to extending theoretical frameworks for understanding values in digital phenomena, offering both theoretical and practical contributions to the field.

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