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## GLOBALIZATION AND NEW EMERGENT FORMS OF CONTEMPORARY LIVING: EXPLORING THE CONSUMPTION BEHAVIORS OF DIGITAL NOMADS

The generous Royal Holloway Travel Award was instrumental in enabling this timely and topical research that addressed the far-reaching forces of globalization which have facilitated the emergence of important new forms of contemporary living such as digital nomadism, van-life living, tiny-home living, minimalism and essentialism, to list a few. These new lifestyles continuously challenge familiar socio-cultural dynamics, consumption practices and marketplace structures, and thus call for the interest of academics and practitioners alike.

The funds from this award were put toward ethnographic research of the growing and still widely under-researched phenomenon known as digital nomadism — a post-consumerist lifestyle that have emerged as signature product of modernity. Described as a new breed of wanderers enabled by technology and cheap airfare, digital nomads serially relocate from one place to another in search of novelty and adventure while they work from their laptops wherever an internet connection is within reach. For many, the draw toward digital nomadism lies in the escape from the 9-to-5 in lieu of a more fluid work-and-play model, where remote work can be carried outside the confines of an office. With nearly one-third of traditional U.S. workers alone considering becoming digital nomads within the next 2-3 years<sup>1</sup>, digital nomadism represents a growing new form of contemporary living. While digital nomads predominantly hail from the developed Western world, increasingly individuals with diverse backgrounds find it feasible to adopt this way of living due to the growing popularity of flexible taxation and administrative havens (e.g. Estonia's e-residency program) and proliferation of freelancing platforms abundant with work across the wage spectrum, such as Amazon Mechanical Turk. As such, digital nomadism has evolved into an arena in which consumers embark on lifestyle projects of "hacking one's life" where the goal is to achieve high quality of living, sufficient income and ample flexibility.

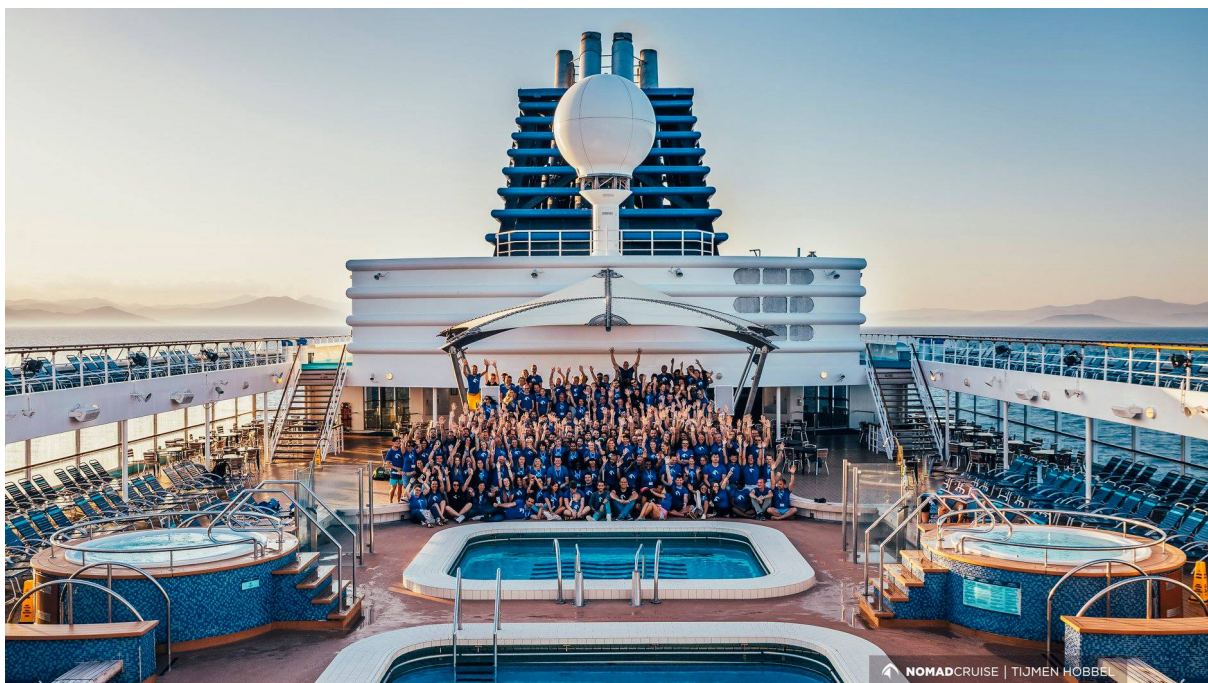
The data collection for this ethnography took place in one of the biggest and most popular events for digital nomads — a seven-day annual conference and community meet known as The Nomad Cruise. The eighth edition of The Nomad Cruise took place in April 2019; it began in Gran Canaria and finished in Lisbon. At the event, I conducted in-depth interviews and

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<sup>1</sup> Pofeldt, E. (2018, August 30). Digital nomadism goes mainstream. Forbes, Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com>

interacted with digital nomads in a native environment that attracted hundreds of novice and seasoned digital nomads in a single location. During the cruise, I was completely immersed in what was an intense bonding event for a collective of like-minded individuals who were seeking know-how for how to boot-strap financial success, as well as ways to establish deep emotional connections with one another. With their continuous mobility, preference for lightness, detachment from traditional roles, and pronounced dependence on consuming the conveniences afforded by a globalized marketplace, digital nomads emerged as particularly suitable context that elicits the dynamic changes across key constructs within the consumer research literature.

The abundant ethnographic data collected during this trip, made possible with the funds from the Royal Holloway Travel Award, is the foundational material for several research papers that will comprise my Doctoral dissertation and will be published in leading marketing journals. At the moment of this writing, the first paper, exploring the changing nature of materialism in contemporary modernity, is being finalised and submitted for review at Marketing Theory—a leading, critically oriented journal with reputation for challenging the traditional conceptualizations of marketing theory and offering alternative perspectives sensitive to the contemporary consumer environment. The Royal Holloway Travel Award was vitally important in enabling me to research a truly unique context and to collect high quality data which undoubtedly will contribute to generating new knowledge and advancing our understanding of topical consumption and socio-cultural phenomena.



Digital nomads attending the Nomad Cruise 8

Image copyright: The Nomad Cruise

## THE ROUTE OF NC8



The route of Nomad Cruise 8

Image copyright: The Nomad Cruise



Attending a walking tour of Lisbon with the nomads (the researcher is standing in white t-shirt)

Image copyright: Alex Atanasova





Digital Nomads taking selfies  
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Workshops at the Nomad Cruise  
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