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To cite this article: Christina Susanne Muhs, Dora Lúcia Miguel Agapito & Luís Nobre Pereira (04 Feb 2024): Understanding Vanlife: the current state of the art of a vehicle-based hypermobile travel phenomenon, Current Issues in Tourism, DOI: [10.1080/13683500.2024.2311148](https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2024.2311148)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2024.2311148>



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Published online: 04 Feb 2024.



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Understanding Vanlife: the current state of the art of a vehicle-based hypermobile travel phenomenon

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ABSTRACT

This article outlines the current state of the art on Vanlife from a tourism perspective, highlighting and summarizing definitions derived from literature. Hypermobile lifestyles, often used interchangeably with Vanlife, such as 'Digital Nomads', 'RVing', 'Backpacking' and 'Lifestyle Travellers', are reviewed by theoretically depicting the similarities and separating factors between the concepts. The literature section applies an integrative approach to advancing knowledge and producing a theoretical framework. Based on the literature review and identified research gaps, this paper develops the Vanlife segmentation research framework. The framework paves the way for future studies on Vanlife and its various segments. Lastly, a definition of Vanlife in a tourism context is provided to aid future research on the vehicle-based hypermobile travel style.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 13 May 2023
Accepted 23 January 2024

KEYWORDS

Hypermobile travel segments; segmentation of Vanlifers; motivations and travel behaviors of Vanlifers

JEL CLASSIFICATION

Tourism; hypermobile lifestyles; qualitative study

Highlights

- Vanlife is not clearly defined and distinguished from other hypermobile lifestyles
- Defining Vanlife will advance research and support the proper sampling of Vanlifers
- Researching Vanlifers will aid the investigation of various Vanlife segments
- The Vanlife segmentation framework proposes four vanlife segments

1. Introduction

Vanlife, as a form of short or long-term travel, gained popularity among Western countries in the last decades. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for vans and their conversions increased as travelling in an enclosed vehicle was considered a 'safer' form of travel (Chang, 2020).

Social media, particularly image-based platforms such as Instagram and Pinterest, travel blogs, films, documentaries, and books, significantly contributed to making the lifestyle a desired form of escapism. On the contrary, an increasing segment of Vanlife practitioners is quitting the lifestyle, with some blaming Vanlife influencers for over-glamorising the living conditions (Moore, 2022; Poulson, 2021). Contemporary content created by Vanlifers, news articles, and documentaries

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indicates that the lifestyle has changed while becoming more popular. However, little research has been undertaken on Vanlife, participants' motivations, and travel behaviours in a tourism context to confirm the Vanlife lifecycle.

Studies on Vanlife include Dorn (2015), who examined the motivations and values of the Vanlife community through a narrative literature review of blogs, photographs and Instagram accounts of Vanlife influencers with a large following. Redshaw (2017) analysed the usage of cars as homes and dwellings, work and living spaces to uncover user motivations. Bergstrom (2017) conducted a case study of the #Vanlife movement on Instagram to examine the community's lifestyle executions. Gretzel and Hardy (2019) developed a cultural understanding of the online phenomenon #Vanlife by applying a netnographic approach of Instagram hashtags related to the concepts, including the terms *RVing*, *camping*, *digital nomadism*, and *vehicle*. It can be noted that these studies (Dorn, 2015; Gretzel & Hardy, 2019; Redshaw, 2017) drew conclusions based on digital material, which excludes individuals carrying out the lifestyle solely in an offline realm. The presence of such individuals in the community was highlighted in Forest Stevens's Documentary, *The Reality of #Vanlife* (2018). Therefore, future studies should include findings from all segments of Vanlifers, not only those visible online. In this regard, Wegerer (2021) added offline-centric research by carrying out participant observation to determine the motivations and behaviours of Vanlifers and uncover social practices.

Another segment of studies on Vanlife focused on the vehicles utilized by, for instance, reviewing their (digital) setup (Zafiroglu & Chang, 2007). Rizvi et al. (2021) portrayed the technology used by Vanlifers, combining findings from a literature review across disciplines and semi-structured interviews with participants at Vanlife meetups, making it one of the first studies to include voices of Vanlifers from an offline setting. Showcasing a different side of hypermobility, Cohen and Gössling (2015) developed a literature review of studies in business and leisure travel, transport and network capital on glamorization and the negative consequences of mobility. Vanlife studies mainly focus on American (Burnett, 2002; Smith, 2020; Zafiroglu & Chang, 2007) or Australian participants (Rizvi et al., 2021). Further research in other Western regions and a global context is advised to understand the various nuances of Vanlifers.

A lack of awareness of differentiating factors between Vanlife and other hypermobile lifestyles, such as Digital Nomads, RVers and Backpackers, becomes apparent when reviewing studies on the subject. Subsequently, this study aims to reach a greater understanding of Vanlife in a tourism context, its subculture, and the community's motivations, a knowledge gap highlighted by several authors (Bergstrom, 2017; Gretzel & Hardy, 2019; Reichenberger, 2018; Rizvi et al., 2021; Thomas & Nieuwerburgh, 2022). Previous studies identify Vanlifers as having reduced material needs Gretzel and Hardy (2019) and rejecting the capitalist work-and-spend cycle (Burnett, 2002). Further, Digital Nomads are classed as primarily young working professionals taking advantage of location independence while working in an online environment with blurred boundaries between work, leisure, and travel (Reichenberger, 2018). On the other hand, people travelling or living in their RV value their vehicles as more extensively equipped homes (Hardy et al., 2013), allowing for a more comfortable and less minimalistic experience.

The lack of differentiation between the concepts mentioned above can partially be linked to the scarcity of publications on Vanlife and, thus, the need to revise studies on lifestyles with similar traits for insights. Reviewing studies on vehicle-based hypermobile lifestyles, such as investigating the lives of RVers to uncover motivations and behaviours (Hardy et al., 2013), can aid the understanding and research design for future studies on Vanlife. Applying various criteria and definitions in tourism research on mobile travel styles is no new phenomenon and has, for instance, been criticized in backpacker research. Several authors (Dayour et al., 2017; Larsen et al., 2011) suggest the need for more nuanced definitions to aid in clearly identifying the target audience in future studies.

Developing a definition of Vanlife and its characteristics will advance research and support the proper sampling of the target audience. Some studies on hypermobile travel segments are unclear on the target population and their selection procedure. In one study on RVing, the

authors state to distribute a questionnaire at various RV parks in Australia (Hardy & Kirkpatrick, 2017) while not providing further details on the reasoning behind choosing the campsites or characteristics identifying the surveyed respondents as RVers over following another hypermobile lifestyle. However, these factors are important as individuals travelling in a luxurious, fully equipped RV, compared to a small, highly customized van, only including partial sanitary appliances, exhibit different needs and behaviours. Only by setting definitions can future research examine Vanlife in a tourism context and uncover differences in lifestyle execution, motivations and impacts.

Defining Vanlife and its segments can benefit various stakeholders directly or indirectly impacted by the travel type. Understanding Vanlifers' behaviours and needs is crucial for destination marketers and municipalities visited (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019), as hypermobile travellers, such as Vanlifers, have been shown to exhibit different social and environmental behaviours than tourists (R. Caldicott et al., 2014). Additionally, various Vanlifer segments, such as full-timers or Vanlife tourists, are expected to impact a destination's economic, social and environmental factors differently. Hence, defining Vanlife will enable further study of the phenomenon and the impacts of its various travel segments.

This research follows an integrative review approach, which can be utilized to examine, critique, and synthesize the literature on a specific topic, allowing new frameworks to emerge (Shirazi, 2015; Snyder, 2019). The paper is structured as follows. First, a literature review outlines an analysis of separating and similar factors of various vehicle-based traveller types, exposing research gaps. Second, it provides a vanlife segmentation framework showcasing four distinct levels of vanlife engagement. Third, the paper proposes a definition of vanlife, distinguishing it from other hypermobile lifestyles to aid future research. Finally, implications for further research and the study's limitations are acknowledged.

2. Literature review

2.1. Understanding Vanlife

Vanlife is not an extensively explored concept or study area in tourism research, with first publications on the lifestyle emerging in the early 2000s (Hardy & Gretzel, 2008; McKinnell, 2008; Petersen et al., 2010; Zafiroglu & Chang, 2007). Initial studies looked at the lifestyle from a social media perspective (Dorn, 2015; Gretzel & Hardy, 2019; Reichenberger, 2018). Scholars have not yet agreed on a definition of Vanlife, leading to related but different concepts, such as Backpacking (Redshaw, 2017), digital nomadism (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019; Loryn, 2021; Reichenberger, 2018) and RVing (R. W. Caldicott et al., 2022; Hardy et al., 2013; Wegerer, 2021) being referred to under the same umbrella. Table 1 provides an overview of terms and concepts referred to in publications on Vanlife or sharing similarities with the lifestyle.

Some hypermobile travel segments, such as Digital Nomads, have been analysed more extensively, uncovering different segments of full-time, part-time and occasional nomads (Hensellek & Puchala, 2021; Reichenberger, 2018) or types of RV travellers, as shown in Table 2 (Hardy et al., 2013). RVing shares several traits with Vanlife, such as being a vehicle-based hypermobile lifestyle. Therefore, examining definitions established for RVing tourism can guide research on the segmentation of Vanlifers. Table 2 highlights RV travel types that Hardy et al. (2013) identified, adding definitions retrieved from other studies. Based on previous studies on Vanlife and reviewing online content created by Vanlifers, it can be suggested that some segments, such as families, full-timers and independents, may apply to Vanlifers. However, research needs to probe this assumption and may uncover additional segments.

2.1.1. The importance of social media

Vanlife started when Foster Huntington, an American moviemaker and photographer, created the hashtag #Vanlife on Instagram in 2010 to document living and travelling in his Volkswagen Bus (Cottell, 2018; Mohabeer, 2021). Even though Vanlife was first implemented on Instagram, being

Table 1. Definitions of hypermobile travel typologies.

Hypermobile travel form	Definition
BACKPACKING	Relatively young, budget travellers, often in a transitional phase in life (Maoz & Bekerman, 2010), visiting hostels and low-budget local accommodations (S. A. Cohen, 2011)
CAMPER TRAVEL LOVERS	Emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, use motorhomes and camper vans for short holidays, which differ from Vanlifers and Gray Nomads in terms of trip length (Mundet et al., 2023)
DIGITAL NOMADS	Highly mobile professionals who combine work with (semi)-permanent travel (Bonneau & Aroles, 2021; Hannonen, 2020)
DRIFTER	Self-reliant but budget-conscious travellers without a set itinerary, timetable or purpose often linked to rebellious countercultural behaviour (E. Cohen, 1973)
FLASHPACKER	Technology-savvy Backpackers who utilize technology to plan, book and execute their journeys and to connect with their social networks (Hannonen, 2020)
FREEDOM CAMPING (ALSO WILD, WILDERNESS, DRY, EN-ROUTE, TRANSIT, OR STEALTH CAMPING)	Activity of overnighting in a car or van (not RV) outside of designated (or legal) parking locations. Practitioners seek to travel in unassuming vehicles and hiding practices by, e.g. leaving the parking spots in early morning hours (R. Caldicott et al., 2014)
GLOBAL/ NEO NOMADS	Highly mobile, information-age professionals (D'Andrea, 2006; Naz, 2016) from industrialized countries without a fixed residence (Korpela, 2020) or localized group of friends (D'Andrea, 2006)
LIFESTYLE TRAVELLERS	Individuals executing long-term travel as a lifestyle (S. A. Cohen, 2011)
LIFESTYLE MIGRANTS	Western citizens moving to a different country/culture to pursue a better quality of life (Benson, 2009; D'Andrea, 2007; Korpela, 2020; O'Reilly, 2002; Vogt, 1976)
OVERLANDING	Self-reliant adventure travel by vehicle (Bicycle, truck) to remote destinations for extended periods (months or years) (Thomas & Nieuwerburgh, 2022)
RECREATIONAL VEHICLE (RV) USERS	Highly mobile travellers motivated by a desire to experience freedom and escape the constraints of routine home life (Counts & Counts, 2001; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011; Onyx & Leonard, 2005)
VAN DWELLING	Individuals adopting Vanlife as a lifestyle choice, travelling in their vehicle for months or years (Wilson & Hannam, 2017)
WANDERER	Long-term traveller applying conscious decision-making with a will to learn (Vogt, 1976)

Source: Own elaboration.

active on the platform is not a prerequisite to calling oneself a Vanlifer. It is hard to estimate the active number of Vanlifers without an Instagram or social media presence due to their lack of visibility.

Many Vanlifers share their experiences online for educational purposes or a sense of connection. On the other hand, having a social media following and earnings generated by advertisements enables practitioners to fund the lifestyle partially. Based on the number of posts available, the platforms most utilized for experience sharing are Instagram (Instagram, 2022) and Facebook, with

Table 2. RV travel segments.

RV travel type	Descriptor
ANTI-RVERS	Individuals travelling in RVs that actively avoid 'RVing behaviour', e.g. not attending RV rallies or engaging in ritual practices at the campground
CARAVANNERS	RVer travelling in organized groups or clubs following a set itinerary
FAMILIES	Family travelling in one or more recreational vehicles (RVs)
FULL TIMER	Individuals pursuing RV travel as a permanent lifestyle
GREY NOMADS	Australians aged above 50 years travelling for at least three months, commonly North to South in summer and vice versa in the winter (Onyx & Leonard, 2005)
INDEPENDENTS	Those travelling individually, as a couple or informal friend/ family group curating their desired itinerary
SNOWBIRDS	North American long-term travellers moving towards warmer areas in the South in the wintertime, such as from Canada to southern US states (Onyx & Leonard, 2005)

Adapted from Hardy et al. (2013, p. 49).

400,831 (Facebook, 2022) and YouTube, with about 1,000 channels (Google, n.d.) in early 2023. Despite Vanlife content on various social media platforms, forums, Reddit boards and personal blogs, research on the overall online presence has yet to be conducted. Instagram, credited as the original platform to host #Vanlife content, has been used in a study analysing images of Vanlifers to understand the lifestyle (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019). However, since this study, the setup of Instagram has changed drastically, favouring short videos over images. It can be argued that additional studies on Instagram, also incorporating online sources, such as Facebook, YouTube, Reddit, TikTok, and online forums or blogs, are required to analyse the Vanlife community's online presence and draw possible linkages to the influence on practitioners offline behaviour and lifestyle execution.

2.1.2. Vanlife characteristics

Vanlife is characterized by adopting a hypermobile lifestyle and travelling in highly customized and accessorized campervans (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019; Mohabeer, 2021; Rizvi et al., 2021). Mobility is a component of economic strategies, self-identity and subjectivity formation (Kannisto, 2014) and adopting it as a travel form and lifestyle may impact an individual's behaviour and attitude. It is suggested that subgroups in the community are assigned based on the vehicles and brands used (Burnett, 2002; Gretzel & Hardy, 2019). Other sources advocate that subsegments among the community may be linked to the trip length, with those engaging in short-term travel being referred to as *Vanlife tourists* (Olito, 2021). Though indicated, research on the different Vanlife tribes and their signifiers has not been undertaken. It needs to be analysed if the highlighted separation per vehicle or brand is based on more significant differences between the modes of transport adopted by hypermobile lifestyles, such as fully equipped RVs and caravans, or whether subgroups among the Vanlife community are assigned based on the vehicle and brand.

Vanlifers predominately come from Western countries and choose to execute the lifestyle in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand (Anderson & Erskine, 2014; Rizvi et al., 2021). However, the underrepresentation of Vanlifers from non-western countries has been highlighted (Walpersberger & Gretzel, 2023). In North America, three million people are estimated to belong to the Vanlife community, living, travelling, and working in their vehicle (Rizvi et al., 2021). However, due to a lack of data and definition of the concept of Vanlife, no accurate numbers are accessible.

The motivations to dwell in a van may differ among countries or regions. With the US housing crisis, some adopted living in a van to prevent homelessness (Trujillo, 2021). Furthermore, increasing rent and stagnating wages make housing in urban areas in the US unaffordable for many workers, especially those in the service and tourism industry (Warkentin, 2020).

According to Gretzel and Hardy (2019), community events and offline meetups are rare among Vanlife practitioners, and exchange mainly stays within the digital realm. On the contrary, (Rizvi et al., 2021) attended offline Vanlife events in North America as part of the fieldwork for a study and found an active offline exchange among the community. A discrepancy in the findings regarding offline events between the two mentioned studies may be based on the different methods applied. Gretzel and Hardy (2019) focused solely on Instagram images and posts for their research, whereas Rizvi et al. (2021) also conducted their study at offline community events. Although Vanlife events experienced difficulties, with some terminating operations due to the pandemic, numerous are scheduled for 2023 in the US, Europe and Australia. Cross-country or regional studies are needed to understand the differences and commonalities in motivations and behaviours among Northern America and other Western Vanlife practitioners. Further, the discrepancy between the offline communal interaction via, for instance, events should be researched.

Vanlife promotes minimalism due to the limited resources travellers can carry in their vehicles. However, Vanlifers are not the first to pursue reduced materialistic consumption while travelling with only essential material belongings for an extended period. Backpacking is a better-understood travel segment, and compared to Vanlifers, individuals undertake their trips with fewer amenities, limited by the size of their backpacks (S. A. Cohen, 2011). S. A. Cohen (2011) introduced the

concept of *Lifestyle Travellers*, describing Backpackers who travel continuously and reject returning to a more stagnant existence of pursuing a long-term career or work stability. It needs to be explored if similar differentiations between Vanlifers undertaking travel for a limited time and those choosing to make it a way of life can be observed.

The professional choices of Vanlifers have yet to be explicitly studied, but digital work (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019), nomadic work, and adventure or international tourism careers (Rizvi et al., 2021) are named as sources of income. A study on overland travel, which includes prolonged travel, showed it is mainly undertaken by wealthy individuals who self-fund the experience and do not hold a job while travelling (Thomas & Nieuwerburgh, 2022). It can be argued that Vanlife is a temporary travel decision for a segment of practitioners that does not require an employment choice. Many vehicle-based travellers engage in the lifestyle as part of their retirement, such as Grey Nomads in Australia (Hardy & Gretzel, 2011) and Snowbirds in Northern America (Onyx & Leonard, 2005). Vanlife studies need to explore if a similar distribution of retired individuals is present or if mostly younger individuals travel in smaller, less autonomous vehicles. Furthermore, the financial support structures, such as retirement funds (Hardy & Gretzel, 2011; Onyx & Leonard, 2005), employment of long-term Vanlifers (Rizvi et al., 2021), and additional funding options must be examined.

2.1.3. Travel behaviours and impacts

Understanding the travel behaviours of the Vanlife community is crucial for destination marketers and municipalities visited by this type of traveller (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019). It is indicated that hypermobile travellers behave differently from tourists at destinations by showing social and environmental attitudes similar to the ones of mobile travellers as opposed to tourists (R. Caldicott et al., 2014).

For many practitioners, Vanlife becomes part of their identity, with some even making it part of their personal brand to benefit from the positive connotations. Finding meaning (Orel, 2019), seeking transformation (Anderson & Erskine, 2014), and self-fulfilment (Chevtavaeva, 2021) are themes raised in publications on hypermobile lifestyles. Vanlifers' expression of their authentic self through their travel choices and lifestyle execution can be linked to experiencing existential authenticity, described as a stage of being one's true and authentic self (N. Wang, 1999). In a tourism context, authentic experiences are motivated by the search for the authentic self and entail stepping into roles contrasting one's everyday lives by being freer, simpler and more spontaneous (N. Wang, 1999). Such experiences are reported to induce transformation in participants (Brown, 2013). Vanlife as a tourism experience displays the mentioned authenticity-inducing characteristics of freedom and spontaneity while allowing practitioners to move away from the usual constraints of society and everyday life and toward authentic self-expression. It needs to be uncovered how existential authenticity, self-fulfilment and self-actualization play a role in the motivations and lifestyle executions of Vanlife.

Vanlifers are more interested in nature activities than cultural exploration at a destination (Mohabeer, 2021), which could create tensions as the local population is not a primary concern for practitioners. S. A. Cohen and Gössling (2015) concluded a *cost of hypermobility* at a community level due to decreased time for a co-present social life at home and locally. Individuals no longer feel socially connected to their home country and also do not foster connections with the local community at the places they visit (S. A. Cohen & Gössling, 2015). Reasons include the short time spent travelling a country or continent in a specific location. It may also be caused by the rural, off-the-grid area's people park their vans, making connecting with the local community harder. Furthermore, language barriers may decrease possible interactions between the Vanlife community and locals. Once the shortcomings of Vanlifers' interactions with the local community are understood, measures can be developed to minimize the adverse effects and initiate meaningful encounters between both groups.

Currently, no studies explore the positive and negative impacts of Vanlifers on a tourist destination and the local community. Hardy and Gretzel (2011) mention that more research is needed on

making vehicle-based travel beneficial for the tourism industry and the destinations they frequent. With some Vanlifers perceiving themselves as following a lifestyle rather than a product choice, advertising and catering to their needs come with unique challenges (Hardy & Gretzel, 2011). However, some tourism boards of destinations highly frequented by van tourism have already identified the need to act and better accommodate such visitors. Research on the Vanlife segments can aid destinations in amending their tourism offer to cater to the Vanlife segments they prefer to attract.

2.2. Overview of hypermobile lifestyle typologies

Table A1 provides an overview of prominent hypermobile lifestyles and showcases their features on an individual and community level, highlighting critical characteristics, lifestyle execution and motivations of Vanlifers, RVers, Digital Nomads, Backpackers and Lifestyle Travellers.

2.2.1. Hypermobile lifestyles typologies

This section explains the inclusion and exclusion factors applied to determine five Hypermobile Lifestyle Typologies in the *Overview of Hypermobile Travel Typologies* (Table A1).

This paper aims to provide a unified definition of Vanlife as a tool to guide future research with the Vanlife segmentation framework and thus exclude terms not commonly adopted in the nascent academic community.

Such terms include vehicle-based travel forms coined for a specific demographic or region, such as *Grey Nomads* (Onyx & Leonard, 2005), *Snowbirds* (Onyx & Leonard, 2005), *Overlanders* (Thomas & Nieuwerburgh, 2022), or *Camper Travel Lovers* (Mundet et al., 2023) are excluded from the overview in this paper due to their determinate definitions. Terms applied as overarching definitions to classify travellers, such as *Neo- or Global Nomads* (D'Andrea, 2007; Korpela, 2020; Naz, 2016), *Wanderer* (Vogt, 1976), or *Drifter* (E. Cohen, 1973) are similarly not used in the comparison as they have not been widely applied in academic studies. A showcase of definitions, as applied by academic scholars, is previously presented in Table 1.

Definitions used interchangeably with Vanlife, such as *van Dweller* (S. Wilson & Hannam, 2017), are consulted for insights into Vanlife characteristics and may aid the development of Vanlife segment typologies. *RVing* is also chosen due to the various similarities in execution with Vanlife, a vehicle-based hypermobile travel form carried out by individuals travelling solo as a couple or family (Hardy et al., 2013). People travelling in RVs have been researched more extensively than Vanlifers (Counts & Counts, 2001; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011; Onyx & Leonard, 2005), and thus, learnings and characteristics to explore and probe can be drawn from previous studies.

Digital Nomads and *Backpackers* are defined and broadly studied areas in tourism research. They show some similarities in behaviours with Vanlifers and may aid future investigation into aspects such as the importance of work or means to fund the lifestyle. Including more established travel forms, such as Backpacking, indicates a changing travel behaviour of practitioners over time, i.e. *Flashpackers* splitting from the backpacker segment (Paris, 2012). New travel execution of the same travel type may develop once a travel style has reached mainstream acceptance, as can be observed with some former Backpackers adopting Anti-Backpacking attitudes due to disagreeing with the drift away from non-conforming travel behaviour (Welk, 2004). Future Vanlife research needs to consider the possibility of subgroups developing once the travel form has reached mainstream acceptance, which may trigger an *Anti-Vanlife* segment.

Lifestyle Travellers are a segment of Backpackers showing specific variations in travel behaviour by adopting it as a way of life. The form was included in the *overview of hypermobile lifestyle typologies* due to similarities with an expected segment of Vanlifers seeking to engage in the lifestyle full-time. Research is needed to discover if the term *Lifestyle Traveller* is transferrable to a segment of Vanlifers or if an amended name is required for a more accurate description.

Various segments have been defined for hypermobile travel forms that are researched more extensively, such as RVing (Hardy et al., 2013), Digital Nomads (Reichenberger, 2018) and Backpackers (Uriely et al., 2002). These segments are not mentioned as individual points of comparison but are included under the *community segments* section. As the Vanlife segments are not yet defined, comparison with other hypermobile travel segments does not yield valuable insight for academic research. Future studies could focus on comparing the Vanlife segments to be defined with segments of other (vehicle-based) hypermobile travel types.

2.2.2. Set of characteristics

Each of the five chosen hypermobile travel typologies is compared by fourteen characteristics, leaving an additional section for crucial details not included among these criteria. Table A1 highlights the results of studies on Vanlife, RVing, Digital Nomads, Backpackers and Lifestyle Travellers. The overview provides a comprehensive summary of key characteristics of the travel forms while highlighting research gaps. Sections marked N/A (not available) indicate that no information on these characteristics could be found in scientific literature. The characteristics chosen for the overview are age, country of origin, occupation, motivations to adapt the travel choice, community interactions, community segments, importance of vehicle, vehicle used, travel behaviour, participants' attitudes and beliefs, opinions about the community from outsiders, level of mobility, level of autonomy and importance of work.

Essential characteristics, such as *age*, *country of origin* and *occupation*, are easiest to compare and have been collected in most studies. Comparing these factors allows a first basic comparison between individuals following each lifestyle.

The *motivation to adopt the travel choice* has been studied in greater detail for travel types, Backpacking and Digital Nomads. Research shows motivations vary based on the sub-segments of each typology, such as motivations of *Grey Nomads* (Onyx & Leonard, 2005) differing from those of *Independent RVers* (Hardy et al., 2013). The motivations for adopting Vanlife have not been fully understood and must be examined in further studies.

The characteristic *community interaction*, though not explicitly referred to as such in studies, is prominently discussed in the literature on hypermobile travel styles. Backpackers exhibit a feeling of membership (Prester et al., 2019) and engage in information sharing (C. Nash et al., 2018; Stumpf et al., 2022; B. Wang et al., 2018), and Digital Nomads share rituals and common vocabulary (Hardy et al., 2013). The Vanlife community engages in online and offline meetings (Rizvi et al., 2021), with some arguing a primary focus on online exchange (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019). Studies on the community interaction among Vanlifers need to probe the existence of a shared sense of membership and related behaviour.

The *community segments* are included to showcase the subtribes defined for RVing (Hardy et al., 2013; Jobs, 1984), Digital Nomads (Reichenberger, 2018) and Backpackers (Uriely et al., 2002). The only travel group without subgroups are Lifestyle Travellers, which is unsurprising as it was created to identify a split group of Backpackers. Though not yet identified through empirical research, Vanlife is expected to be split into sub-segments or tribes.

The characteristics *importance of the vehicle* and *vehicle used* are added due to their significance for Vanlife research. Studies on vehicle-based hypermobile travel styles often include individuals travelling in an RV, van or camper under the same umbrella. However, Vanlifers travelling in highly customized vans (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019; Mohabeer, 2021; Rizvi et al., 2021) are expected to differ from individuals using a caravan or motorhome. Future research on vehicle-based travel forms must consider the vehicles used as a determinative factor.

The section *travel behaviours* highlights the travel group's consumption patterns and activities. Carrying out work in a suitable environment is a focus for Digital Nomads (Chevtaeva, 2021; C. Nash et al., 2018; Orel, 2019; Schlagwein, 2018), whereas Backpackers prioritize authentic travel experiences away from mainstream tourism (O'Reilly, 2002). Vanlifers are more interested in nature activities than the cultural exploration of a destination (Mohabeer, 2021). Behaviours

exhibited by individuals travelling in vehicles that may apply to Vanlifers include searching and finding preferred parking locations (Hardy et al., 2012) and socially and economically behaving closer to residents than tourists (Hardy et al., 2013). The behaviours exhibited by Vanlifers have yet to be evaluated.

Participants' attitudes and beliefs may change over time, as the turn to mainstream devalued the Backpacking experience for some practitioners (D'Andrea, 2007). Lifestyle Travellers show no intention of returning to *normal* life (S. A. Cohen, 2011) and aspire to permanent travel. Some RVers exhibit environmental values but, conversely, fail to consider the adverse effects caused by travel (Hardy & Kirkpatrick, 2017). Attitudes and beliefs of practicing Vanlifers need to be examined in detail.

Comparison with the other hypermobile travel forms shows that *opinions about the community from outsiders* vary and may change over time. Backpackers are seen as 'cultured' and 'cool' (O'Reilly, 2002) since their adoption into the mainstream. RVers report being negatively viewed by the tourism industry and outsiders (Hardy et al., 2013; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011). Negative attitudes of residents towards Vanlifers could be observed (Haun, 2020), but a scientific investigation has not been undertaken.

The *level of mobility* is another characteristic mentioned in studies on hypermobile travel style and can be particularly interesting to investigate for those travelling in their own *home on wheels*. Backpackers' willingness to travel to more distant and exotic places increases with experience (Richards & Wilson, 2003). Digital Nomads, though focused on freedom of movement (Hannonen, 2020; C. Nash et al., 2018; Orel, 2019; Stumpf et al., 2022), adjust the location change frequency based on personal preference (Hensellek & Puchala, 2021). The travel patterns and level of mobility of Vanlifers have yet to be studied.

The previously discussed level of mobility may directly influence the *level of autonomy*. Digital Nomads are often obliged to obey a fixed work schedule (Thompson, 2018) compared with Backpackers travelling for a limited time without responsibilities, such as fixed employment. It must be understood if external factors, such as employment, bind Vanlifers. Additionally, factors restricting autonomous movement, such as lack of essential sanitary equipment, should be considered regarding their influence on travel behaviour.

The importance of being employed differs significantly between hypermobile travel segments. Digital Nomads see it as a significant feature of their lifestyle (Makimoto & Manners, 1997; Orel, 2019; Reichenberger, 2018), while Backpackers and Lifestyle Travellers merely as a means to fund (S. A. Cohen, 2010b) or continue their lifestyle (Anderson & Erskine, 2014). The attitudes of Vanlifers towards employment have not been identified.

Additional important details for the study design on Vanlife discovered in studies on hypermobile typologies are identity confusion (S. A. Cohen, 2010a) and a destabilization of the concept of *home* and *away* caused by years of Backpacking (E. Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Paris, 2012; White & White, 2007).

Table 3. Vanlife lifestyle execution segment division.

Level	Segment name	Definition
0	Vanlife Tourist	Individuals travelling in a rented or lent van for a short term (less than four weeks)
1	Vanlife Travel Lover	Individuals travelling in a lent or owned van for several short trips (e.g. weekend trips of holidays less than four weeks) per annum
2	Vanlife Voyager	Individuals going on an extended trip (of a minimum of six months) in a lent or owned van
3	Full-time Vanlifer or Lifestyle Traveller	Full-time living, travelling (and possibly working) in an owned van

Source: Own elaboration.

Vanlife Segmentation Research Framework

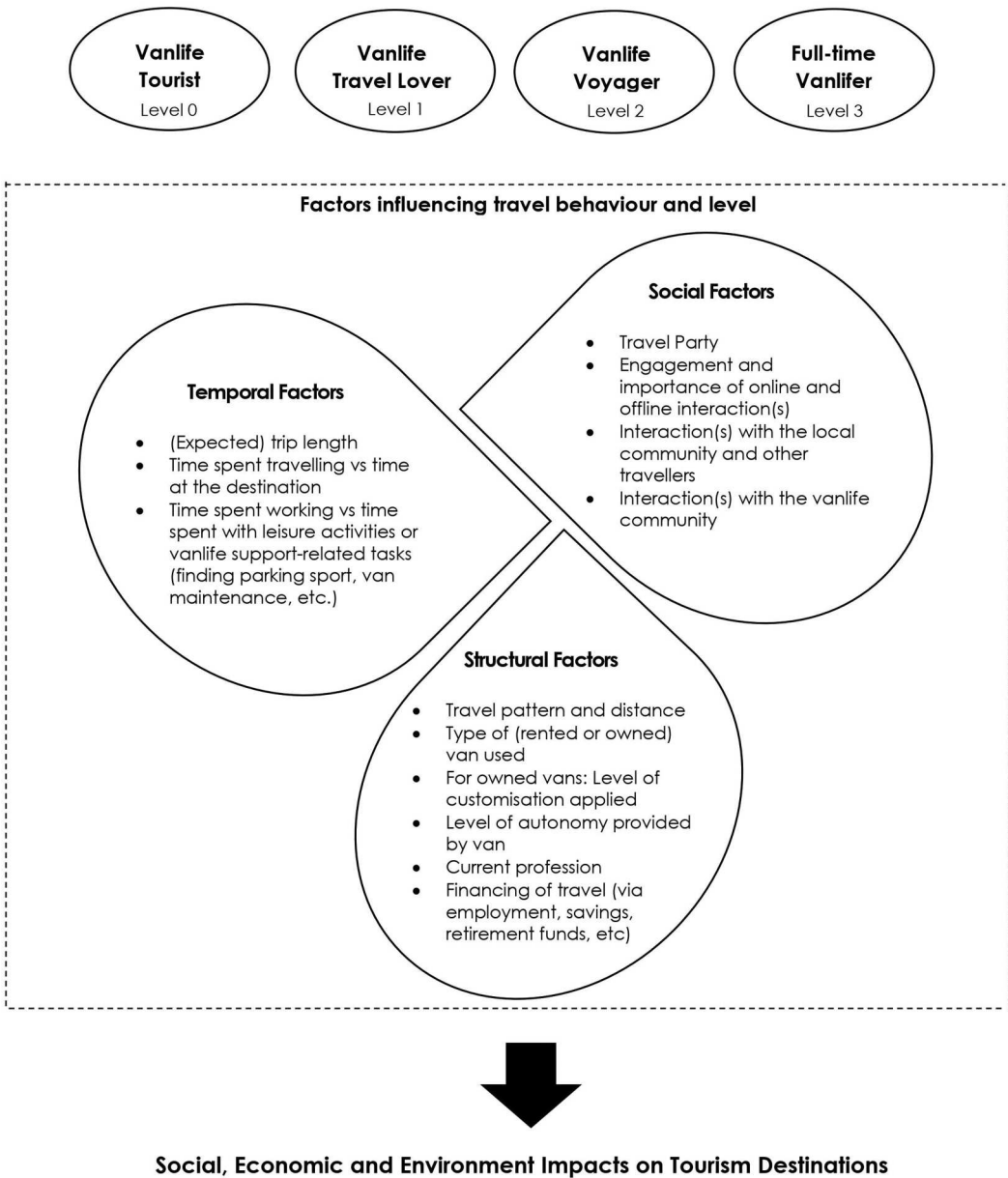


Figure 1. Vanlife segmentation research framework. Source: Own elaboration.

3. Results

3.1. Vanlife segmentation research framework

Based on the previously discussed literature analysis, a research framework was developed to aid future research on Vanlife (Figure 1). The framework aims to support scholars in advancing research on the various Vanlife segments proposed as belonging to four categories: *Vanlife Tourists*, *Vanlife Travel Lovers*, *Vanlife Voyagers* And *Full-Time Vanlifer* (Table 3).

3.1.1. Vanlife segments

The Vanlife Segmentation Framework (Figure 1) proposes four Vanlife segments (Table 3). The division into four levels is motivated by a study on digital nomad typologies (Reichenberger, 2018), which identified groups based on *behavioural segmentation* (Dolnicar et al., 2018) ranging from basic adaption (level 0) to full-time execution (level 3) (Reichenberger, 2018). Level 0 describes the basic requirements to be classified as a digital nomad, whereas level 3 includes complete location independence. Research must probe the suggested number of four Vanlife lifestyle execution segments (Table 3).

The proposed names of the Vanlife typologies in Figure 1 and Table 3 are influenced by sources reviewed in detail in the literature review section of this paper. The term *Vanlife Tourist* is inspired by a news article on the discrepancy between the Vanlife depicted on social media and its real-life execution (Olito, 2021). *Van Travel Lover* is chosen to acknowledge the recently introduced *Camper Travel Lover* archetype (Mundet et al., 2023). The authors created the term *Vanlife Voyager* to express the sabbatical, or gap year, like undertakings of level 2 Vanlifer. The *Full-Time Vanlifer* segment is assigned based on the description of level three Digital Nomads (Reichenberger, 2018), including constant location independence.

3.1.1.1. Factors influencing travel behaviour. The Vanlife research framework defined temporal, structural and social factors as the key elements influencing travel behaviour and the level of lifestyle execution.

The temporal, structural and social elements are applied in the mobilities paradigm (Mavric & Urry, 2009), which seeks to understand the interrelations between an individual's travel patterns, timings and people. The mobilities paradigm was only applied in a few tourism studies on hypermobile travel, namely RVers (R. Caldicott et al., 2014; R. W. Caldicott et al., 2022; Hardy et al., 2013) and campers (Espiner et al., 2021). It has not yet been adopted for Vanlife.

The new mobilities paradigm was introduced to combat the assumption that travel factors are carried out linearly while not being able to be executed simultaneously (Sheller & Urry, 2006). As exhibited by the hypermobile typologies in this paper, simultaneous execution of travel, time, and social factors has become the norm, with, for instance, Digital Nomads working while on the move. The elements of the mobilities paradigm are essential for the Vanlife research framework while considering the learnings of the new mobilities paradigm of constant interconnection between each element.

The RV camping framework's theoretical core includes temporal, spatial and social elements from the mobilities paradigm to show the interconnectedness between people, place and time (R. W. Caldicott et al., 2022). Given the similarities between Vanlife and RVing, learnings and definitions of the RV camping framework were reviewed for suitability for the Vanlife research framework. The Vanlife framework applies temporal, structural and social factors as core features influencing Vanlifers' travel behaviour and segment. *Spatial* is amended to *structural factors* to include additional factors influencing Vanlifers' trip choices, such as their financial background and occupation.

As discussed for the new mobilities paradigm, each factor is interconnected (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Hence, the temporal, structural and social factors of the Vanlife research framework influence one another. Each Vanlife segment is expected to showcase specific travel behaviours recognized in the factors of the framework. The interrelation of the factors per Vanlife segment will lead to different impacts on the destination and local population the Vanlifer visits.

3.1.1.2. Temporal factors. The *temporal factors* relate to the (expected) trip length, time spent at the destination and time spent driving, working, enjoying leisure activities or carrying out support-related tasks such as finding suitable overnight parking locations or van maintenance. The trip length and time spent per activity segment are expected to differ significantly between part-time

and full-time Vanlifers, with those travelling for shorter periods foreseen to dedicate more time to leisure activities.

3.1.1.3. Structural factors. The *structural factors* are related to uncovering travel patterns, distance and financial details. This includes the type of vehicle utilized, its features and the degree of autonomy it provides, such as the ability to sustain off-grid. The financial means directly influence vehicle choice, preferred parking locations and travel patterns. Individuals working while practicing Vanlife may have less time to travel long distances or engage in leisure activities than those on a Vanlife holiday. It is expected that those undertaking the lifestyle for an extended period are better equipped to survive autonomously in their vehicle while having a reliable source of income through employment or retirement funds. Vanlifers undertaking a journey for a limited time in a rented vehicle might travel long distances in a short period while spending their savings.

3.1.1.4. Social factors. *Social factors* to unveil include the travel party, i.e. whether people travel alone, with a friend, partner or as a family. Furthermore, the connections individuals sustain with their family and friends at home, tourists, other Vanlifers and the local community must be researched. Short-term travellers are expected to engage more with tourists, whereas full-timers might exhibit stronger community bonds with other Vanlifers. It needs to be clarified which of the Vanlife segments engages more with their family and friends at home, as trip sharing might be essential for individuals on the Vanlife tourist end of the spectrum and maintaining meaningful connections with family and friends for longer-term travellers. Research is also needed to understand which segment(s) engage more frequently and to what degree with the local population.

4. Discussion

This paper highlights the current state of the art on Vanlife from a tourism perspective. It concludes that several definitions are often applied interchangeably between various hypermobile travel forms. The inconsistency of clear definitions and sampling methods leads to a lack of proper understanding of niche segments of new nomad typologies, such as Vanlife.

This paper addressed this issue in several ways. Firstly, it collates the names applied to hypermobile typologies and highlights the definitions. Afterwards, the travel styles of RVing, Digital Nomads, Backpacking and Lifestyle Travellers were reviewed in more detail while comparing their characteristics in fourteen points. The comparison highlighted differences between each travel style and showcased Vanlife research gaps.

4.1. Vanlife definition

This paper concluded the need for a solid definition of Vanlife to aid vehicle-based hypermobile travel style research. The following definition of Vanlife is proposed to fill this research gap.

Vanlife is characterised by individuals travelling (solo or with others) in a rented, borrowed, or owned self-propelled van or camper with limited sanitary equipment and amenities. The vehicle serves as the primary accommodation choice while travelling.

4.2. Vanlife research framework

Based on the discussion of characteristics and patterns exhibited by RVers, Backpackers, Digital Nomads and Lifestyle Travellers, under-researched areas of Vanlife are uncovered. The identified research gaps motivated the development of the research segmentation framework to aid future Vanlife research.

5. Implications for further research

The research on Vanlife as a tourism or travel lifestyle is still in its infancy. Future research must probe the definition of Vanlife and the four Vanlife segments proposed in this paper. This includes understanding the motivations and travel behaviours of the Vanlife segments and the social, economic and environmental impacts on tourism stakeholders, municipalities and the local population at destinations. Lastly, verifying the adequacy of the developed Research Segmentation Framework by applying it in empirical studies of different contexts, considering the diversification of samples, including non-Western participants, is advised.

6. Limitations

The limitations of the study include the following aspects.

1. The low production of academic literature on Vanlife travel does not allow for a profound comparison between studies. Thus, this paper refers to findings and best practices of other hypermobile typologies to depict the state of the art on Vanlife accurately.
2. An inconsistency of classifications among hypermobile travel styles in academic literature was identified. Future research is encouraged to draw on or challenge already developed concepts and definitions rather than adding further definitions without clear justification.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This paper is financed by National Funds provided by FCT- Foundation for Science and Technology through project UIDB/04020/2020 with DOI [10.54499/UIDB/04020/2020](https://doi.org/10.54499/UIDB/04020/2020) (<https://doi.org/10.54499/UIDB/04020/2020>) and also through the PhD Scholarship UIDB/01350/2023. Segmenting Vanlifer And Understanding Their Impacts On Destinations.

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Appendix

Table A1. Profile of hypermobile travel typologies.

	Vanlife	RVING	Digital nomads	Backpacker	Lifestylele travellers
Age	Across all age groups (Burnett, 2002; Gretzel & Hardy, 2019)	All age groups (Hardy et al., 2013; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011)	Young professionals (Reichenberger, 2018)	Relatively young, budget tourists on a moratorium as part of a transitional phase in life (Maoz & Bekerman, 2010; Simpson, 2005)	Early 20s-30s (Anderson & Erskine, 2014)
Country of Origin	Traditionally dominated by white upper-middle-class males (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019)	<p>Grey Nomads (Hardy & Gretzel, 2011) or Snowbirds (Onyx & Leonard, 2005)(people over the age of 50) are a subgroup of older people engaging in RV travel in Australia and Northern America, respectively.</p> <p>In Northern America, the majority of practitioners are baby boomers belonging to the middle class, though ownership among younger generations is rising (Hardy & Gretzel, 2011)</p>	Working-age groups (approx. 20-45years) (Orel, 2019)	<p>An increasing number of middle-aged or elderly Backpackers (Kannisto, 2014) exhibit time constraints due to family or work not present while undertaking trips earlier in life (Paris & Teye, 2010)</p> <p>Students or graduates travelling while or after obtaining a degree (Pearce, 2007; Richards & Wilson, 2003)</p> <p>Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and North America (Maoz, 2007)</p> <p>Belong to the white middle class from Western and Northern Europe (UK, Ireland and Scandinavia) and Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Israel and Canada (O'Reilly, 2006)</p>	Developed nations (Anderson & Erskine, 2014)
Occupation	Digital-, gig-, or nomadic work or adventure and international tourism careers (Rizvi et al., 2021)	Retirees (Hardy et al., 2013; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011)	Freelancers and entrepreneurs (Reichenberger, 2018)	No specific professions followed as ad-hoc jobs are undertaken to continue travelling (S. A. Cohen, 2011)	N/A
	Retirees (Rizvi et al., 2021)		Some use online services and technologies to sell craft and other offline-created goods, e.g. via Etsy (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019).		
			'Digital work' (Hensellek & Puchala, 2021; Thompson, 2018; B. Wang et al., 2018), Programmer, Developer, and content creator but also		



<p>blogging, graphic, design, translators, digital marketing, YouTube, and financial or business consulting (Nash et al., 2018)</p> <p>Professions in technologically advanced areas such as web/graphic designers, translators, and customer service agents (B. Wang et al., 2019)</p> <p>Escape constraints of routine home life (Counts & Counts, 2001; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011; Onyx & Leonard, 2005)</p>	<p>blogging, graphic, design, translators, digital marketing, YouTube, and financial or business consulting (Nash et al., 2018)</p> <p>Professions in technologically advanced areas such as web/graphic designers, translators, and customer service agents (B. Wang et al., 2019)</p> <p>Escape constraints of routine home life (Counts & Counts, 2001; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011; Onyx & Leonard, 2005)</p>	<p>blogging, graphic, design, translators, digital marketing, YouTube, and financial or business consulting (Nash et al., 2018)</p> <p>Professions in technologically advanced areas such as web/graphic designers, translators, and customer service agents (B. Wang et al., 2019)</p> <p>Escape constraints of routine home life (Counts & Counts, 2001; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011; Onyx & Leonard, 2005)</p>	<p>blogging, graphic, design, translators, digital marketing, YouTube, and financial or business consulting (Nash et al., 2018)</p> <p>Professions in technologically advanced areas such as web/graphic designers, translators, and customer service agents (B. Wang et al., 2019)</p> <p>Escape constraints of routine home life (Counts & Counts, 2001; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011; Onyx & Leonard, 2005)</p>	<p>blogging, graphic, design, translators, digital marketing, YouTube, and financial or business consulting (Nash et al., 2018)</p> <p>Professions in technologically advanced areas such as web/graphic designers, translators, and customer service agents (B. Wang et al., 2019)</p> <p>Escape constraints of routine home life (Counts & Counts, 2001; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011; Onyx & Leonard, 2005)</p>
<p>Crises, such as failed relationships, career disruption, the divorce of parents or drug dependency, can be catalysts for the initial and continuing execution of lifestyle (S. A. Cohen, 2011)</p> <p>May differ per country or region (not yet understood), as homelessness caused by the financial crisis in the US let some to move into their van</p>	<p>Crises, such as failed relationships, career disruption, the divorce of parents or drug dependency, can be catalysts for the initial and continuing execution of lifestyle (S. A. Cohen, 2011)</p> <p>May differ per country or region (not yet understood), as homelessness caused by the financial crisis in the US let some to move into their van</p>	<p>Crises, such as failed relationships, career disruption, the divorce of parents or drug dependency, can be catalysts for the initial and continuing execution of lifestyle (S. A. Cohen, 2011)</p> <p>May differ per country or region (not yet understood), as homelessness caused by the financial crisis in the US let some to move into their van</p>	<p>Crises, such as failed relationships, career disruption, the divorce of parents or drug dependency, can be catalysts for the initial and continuing execution of lifestyle (S. A. Cohen, 2011)</p> <p>May differ per country or region (not yet understood), as homelessness caused by the financial crisis in the US let some to move into their van</p>	<p>Crises, such as failed relationships, career disruption, the divorce of parents or drug dependency, can be catalysts for the initial and continuing execution of lifestyle (S. A. Cohen, 2011)</p> <p>May differ per country or region (not yet understood), as homelessness caused by the financial crisis in the US let some to move into their van</p>
<p>Motivations To Adapt Travel Choice</p>	<p>Rejection of the work-and-spend cycle (Burnett, 2002)</p>	<p>Freedom to travel with one's pet (Gretzel & Hardy, 2015)</p> <p>Retirement alternative (Counts & Counts, 2001)</p> <p>Fulfil the need for freedom (Onyx & Leonard, 2005) and flexibility (Hardy & Gretzel, 2011)</p> <p>RV provides a feeling of 'home' while travelling in unfamiliar environments (Hardy & Gretzel, 2011)</p>	<p>Professional freedom (Reichenberger, 2018)</p> <p>Pursue self-development (Reichenberger, 2018) and self-fulfilment (Chevtava, 2021)</p> <p>Explore new places, activities and individuals (Reichenberger, 2018)</p> <p>Find meaning (Orel, 2019)</p>	<p>Escape a traditional, location-dependent working existence (Hensellek & Puchala, 2021; C. Nash et al., 2018; Reichenberger, 2018; B. Wang et al., 2019)</p> <p>Motives vary among groups (S. A. Cohen, 2011; Maoz, 2007; D. Nash, 2001; Sørensen, 2003)</p> <p>Authentic experience, Novelty and action, social motives, achievement and learning (Moscardo, 2012)</p> <p>Experience, relaxation, sociability, and contribution to the destination (Richards & Wilson, 2004)</p> <p>Physical challenge, responsible sociability, relaxation, and time with friends (Newlands, 2004)</p>
<p>Self-imposed rite of passage (Cohen, 2003; Maoz, 2007; Sørensen, 2003)</p>	<p>Initial travel motivation grounded in childhood tourism experiences (S. A. Cohen, 2011)</p> <p>Aim to transform oneself and one's identity is often especially applicable to younger practitioners (D'Andrea, 2007)</p>	<p>Initial travel motivation grounded in childhood tourism experiences (S. A. Cohen, 2011)</p> <p>Aim to transform oneself and one's identity is often especially applicable to younger practitioners (D'Andrea, 2007)</p>	<p>Initial travel motivation grounded in childhood tourism experiences (S. A. Cohen, 2011)</p> <p>Aim to transform oneself and one's identity is often especially applicable to younger practitioners (D'Andrea, 2007)</p>	<p>Initial travel motivation grounded in childhood tourism experiences (S. A. Cohen, 2011)</p> <p>Aim to transform oneself and one's identity is often especially applicable to younger practitioners (D'Andrea, 2007)</p>

(Continued)



Table A1. Continued.

	Vanlife	RVING	Digital nomads	Backpacker	Lifestylele travellers
	Personal & social growth are more critical motives for inexperienced Backpackers than returning ones (Richards & Wilson, 2004)			Discover new places, escape from daily routine, broaden one's knowledge and have a good time with friends (Niggel & Benson, 2007)	
Community Interaction	Online gatherings via Facebook groups and in-person Vanlife meetups (Rizvi et al., 2021)	Fellowship and safety feeling for RVers travelling in groups (Hardy et al., 2013)	Seek transformation (Anderson & Erskine, 2014)		
	Community events and offline meetups are rare among van life practitioners, and exchange mainly stays within the digital realm (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019)	Highly social (Hardy et al., 2013; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011)	On- & Offline information sharing with the community (Nash et al., 2018; Stumpf et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2018)	Individuals seek to maintain uniqueness among Backpacking groups (Wilson & Richards, 2008)	Networks among travellers supported by social media and social interaction via accommodation spaces (hostels or CouchSurfing) (Anderson & Erskine, 2014)
		Intense feeling of fellowship (Hardy et al., 2013)	Feeling of membership (Prester et al., 2019)	Intense interaction, communication and passing on of information (Riley, 1988)	
		Shared rituals and private vocabulary (Hardy et al., 2013)	Reciprocity and social sharing (Prester et al., 2019)		
		Travelling in a group gives practitioners a strong sense of identity (Hardy et al., 2012)	Online networking with the community eases loneliness and allows for connections before arriving at the next destination (Jarrahi et al., 2019)		
Community Segments	Sub-cultures and tribes may be assigned within the community based on the vehicles and brands used (Burnett, 2002; Gretzel & Hardy, 2019)	Not a homogenous group but consists of subtribes with distinct features (Hardy et al., 2013)	Categories range from having a home-based but enjoying digital work in varying locations to having no permanent residence and travelling the world while working remotely (Reichenberger, 2018)	Subgroups are suggested to be split by form-related attributes such as travel time and mode of travel and the attitude towards travel (openness and level of planning involved) (Urieli et al., 2002)	No sub-groups identified
		RV user segments identified include families, snowbirds, Grey Nomads, full-timers, independents, and caravanners (Hardy et al., 2013)			
		RVers form communities and support one another (Jobs, 1984)			
		RVing exhibits traits of neo-tribes recognized through their mobility, travel jargon, rituals of behaviour and the use of the campground as a 'scene' (Hardy et al., 2013)			



Importance of vehicle	VW Bus as a symbol of movement (Burnett, 2002)	Enjoyment is taken from spiritual experiences in nature enabled by vehicle, not RV as a mode of transport (Hardy & Kirkpatrick, 2017)	No vehicle owned	No vehicle owned	No vehicle owned
Vehicle Used	Highly customized and accessorized campervans (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019; Mohabeer, 2021; Rizvi et al., 2021)	RV is a home on wheels (Hardy & Gretzel, 2011) or a mobile residence (R. Caldicott et al., 2014)	No vehicle owned	No vehicle owned	No vehicle owned
Travel Behaviour (Consumption Patterns, Money Spent On Lifestyle And Other Activities)	Rejection of the work-and-spend cycle (Burnett, 2002)	Camper trailer, van conversion, fifth wheel, slide-on camper, caravan or motorhome (Hardy & Gretzel, 2011)	Visit co-sharing workspaces at destinations (Chevtvaeva, 2021; C. Nash et al., 2018; Orel, 2019; Schlagwein, 2018)	Similar practices applied among practitioners in terms of trip length budget and transportation used (S. A. Cohen, 2011; Sørensen, 2003; Uriely et al., 2002)	Backpacker tourism as a way of life (S. A. Cohen, 2011)
	More interested in nature activities than the cultural exploration of the destination (Mohabeer, 2021)	Park at campgrounds or car parks (Hardy et al., 2012)	Sightseeing and independent exploration of destination (Reichenberger, 2018)	Keep to themselves and do not mingle much with the local culture (Kannisto, 2014; J. Wilson & Richards, 2008)	Hypermobility of lifestyle travel became so internalized that staying in a fixed home location was a rarely attained ideal (S. A. Cohen, 2011)
	Avoid rigid structures and people rather than interact with them (Mohabeer, 2021)	Travel independently or in groups (caravanning) (Hardy et al., 2012)	Pursue self-development activities, such as furthering skills in hobbies (sports, arts), and spiritual and intrinsic self-development (yoga, meditation) (Reichenberger, 2018)	Travel for touristic or lifestyle reasons without the need to work occasional jobs to fund their journey (Mouratidis, 2018)	Avoid tourist facilities (Noy & Cohen, 2005)
	Utilize technology and the internet to make everyday tasks more manageable (Rizvi et al., 2021).	Socially and economically behave more like residents as opposed to tourists (R. Caldicott et al., 2014)	Differentiation between full-time, part-time and occasional digital nomad lifestyles (Henselekk & Puchala, 2021; Reichenberger, 2018)	Want to experience authenticity away from mainstream tourism (O'Reilly, 2006)	Seeks to engage with the local community and their way of life at destinations visited (S. A. Cohen, 2009)
		Take pride in being highly visible on the road when travelling as a group (Hardy et al., 2013)	Primarily rely on sharing economy of coworking spaces and coliving accommodations or Airbnbs (Kong et al., 2019; O'Reilly, 2006)	Prefer spontaneity and often do not pre-book itinerary features such as accommodation (O'Reilly, 2006)	

(Continued)



Table A1. Continued.

	Vanlife	RVING	Digital nomads	Backpacker	Lifestyle travellers
Participant Attitudes and Beliefs	Dislike influencer Vanlifers who only show the 'perfect' side of the lifestyle (Moore, 2022; Poulson, 2021)	Willing to pay for preferred camping places (Hardy & Kirkpatrick, 2017)	Thompson, 2018; B. Wang et al., 2018) Value exploration of destination and its tourist attractions (Reichenberger, 2018) Willing to spend to acquire a suitable working environment at the destination (Hensellek & Puchala, 2021; C. Nash et al., 2018; Naz, 2016) Sharing mindset (Kong et al., 2019; Thompson, 2018; B. Wang et al., 2018)	Budget-oriented (Maoz & Bekerman, 2010; O'Reilly, 2006; Simpson, 2005)	
Opinion about Community from Outsiders	Not explored in research; however, negative attitudes and actions of residents towards Vanlifers have been reported in some destinations, for example, Portugal (Haun, 2020)	Strong environmental values, RVing acted as a means to promote Environmentalism (Hardy & Kirkpatrick, 2017) Many do not take into account the adverse environmental effects caused by travel (Hardy & Kirkpatrick, 2017) Practitioners may be negatively viewed by outsiders or the tourism industry (Hardy et al., 2013; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011)	N/A	Move to mainstream made Backpacking an 'acceptable' travel choice making practitioners appear 'cultured' and 'cool' (O'Reilly, 2006)	N/A
Level Of Mobility	The importance of travel and frequency of location change is not explored in research	N/A (The frequency of location change is not mentioned in detail in the reviewed studies)	Travel is a prominent or constant part of life (C. Nash et al., 2018; Reichenberger, 2018; Thompson, 2018) Freedom of movement (Hannonen, 2020; C. Nash et al., 2018; Orei, 2019; Stumpf et al., 2022) Location independence (Hensellek & Puchala, 2021; C. Nash et al., 2018; Naz, 2016; Reichenberger, 2018; Schlagwein, 2018; Stumpf et al., 2022; Thompson, 2018) and spatial freedom (Reichenberger, 2018)	Hypermobility is the ideal way of life over a fixed and singly-bound home (S. A. Cohen, 2011) Tend to visit distant and more exotic destinations with growing travel experience (Richards & Wilson, 2003)	No home base but rather problematizing of such (S. A. Cohen, 2011) Mobility as a way of life (S. A. Cohen, 2009) Individuals will move locations as soon as a 'home-feeling' starts to establish itself (Anderson & Erskine, 2014)

<p>Location change frequency depends on personal preference and age (Hensellek & Puchala, 2021)</p> <p>Physical relocation for a job is a personal choice, not an employment requirement (Hannonen, 2020)</p>	<p>Highly autonomous in planning and execution of travel choices while not following fixed employment (S. A. Cohen, 2011)</p> <p>Through spontaneous in their planning practices still dependent on accommodation facilities (O'Reilly, 2006)</p>	<p>The lifestyle requires competence, resourcefulness and endurance (Cohen, 2003)</p>	
<p>Level Of Autonomy (How restricted are practitioners by factors such as employment or fulfilling basic needs)</p>	<p>More extensively equipped home on wheels, including bathrooms and kitchen facilities (Hardy et al., 2013)</p> <p>Vans are equipped based on personal needs but do not provide the same level of independence as RVs (e.g. no inside shower) (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019; Mohabeer, 2021; Rizvi et al., 2021)</p>	<p>Technology dependent (Hensellek & Puchala, 2021; C. Nash et al., 2018; Naz, 2016)</p> <p>Need to obey a (somewhat) fixed work schedule (Thompson, 2018)</p> <p>Prefer cities as they offer the required infrastructure to support lifestyle (coworking spaces and a stable internet connection) rather than rural areas (C. Nash et al., 2018; Orel, 2019; Thompson, 2018)</p>	
<p>Importance of Work</p>	<p>A large group of retirees (Hardy et al., 2013; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011) that execute lifestyle and thus not of importance</p> <p>The importance of holding a (specific) job needs to be understood. It needs to be researched if Vanlifers treat jobs more like Backpackers to fund their lifestyle (S. A. Cohen, 2011) or if the work has a high value, as exhibited by Digital Nomads.</p>	<p>(Flexible) work as a significant feature of lifestyle (Makimoto & Manners, 1997; Orel, 2019; Reichenberger, 2018)</p> <p>Not an activity of social identification but utilized to fund lifestyle (S. A. Cohen, 2010b)</p>	<p>Disregard favourable job opportunities to continue living a mobile lifestyle (Anderson & Erskine, 2014)</p>
<p>Additional Details</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Years of Backpacking can lead to identity confusion, or a feeling of being lost due to the cultural disconnect (S. A. Cohen, 2010a)</p>	<p>Destabilization of the concept's 'home' and 'away' (E. Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Paris, 2012; White & White, 2007)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.