

Global Staycation Trends: A Comparative Analysis of Consumer Interest Across Time and Regions

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Staycations (i.e., vacations close to one's home) have surged in popularity recently, significantly impacting travel patterns and destination management. In line with Construal Level Theory, staycations uniquely satisfy the need for psychological distance while maintaining spatial proximity to home. This study uses Google Trends data to examine consumer search behavior related to staycations over 7 years from 2016 to 2022. Our analysis reveals a noticeable staycation interest increase, which began before the pandemic and grew exponentially during travel restrictions and lockdowns. A key finding is that staycation searches are highest in Asia, Europe, and the Americas, reflecting international travel patterns. However, staycation queries are a global phenomenon, with significant interest observed across multiple regions. As interest in staycations has surged, a new lexicon of search terms has emerged, offering insights into specific factors influencing consumer decision-making. Initially, the searches were more general, but they have become more targeted, focusing on travel products and services such as hotels, booking platforms, and discounts. This research uses a visualization-driven approach to analyze global, regional, and national staycation trends. The article concludes with implications for destination resilience, contributing to the growing literature on staycations.

Key words: Consumer behavior; Staycations; Online analytics; Search terms; Textual analysis

Introduction

Travelers often face difficult decisions about whether to stay close to home or embark on longer journeys, especially during times of crisis. Factors

such as economic downturns and the threat of infectious diseases heavily influence these decisions. Understanding how travel patterns and perceptions have shifted is essential for fostering long-term resilience and sustainability in tourism. Staycations,

a global phenomenon, offer local travel opportunities near home (Madsen, 2022), providing economic benefits to the industry and positive psychological outcomes for travelers (Wong et al., 2023).

Drawing on the value of phenomenon-based research (Belk, 2007; MacInnis et al., 2020; Von Krogh et al., 2012), studying staycation attitudes and behaviors offers critical insights that extend beyond established theoretical frameworks. Phenomenon-based research emphasizes the importance of exploring emerging, real-world phenomena that may not yet be fully understood through existing theories. Staycations, which gained significant attention following the 2007–2008 US economic downturn (James et al., 2017), represent a unique and evolving travel pattern that merits further exploration. Early research connected staycations to travelers' values (e.g., Molz, 2009) and well-being (e.g., de Bloom et al., 2017), demonstrating how local travel reflects broader shifts in consumer priorities and self-care practices.

The COVID-19 pandemic further amplified this phenomenon, as staycations surged due to global travel restrictions and heightened health concerns (Pratiwi & Novani, 2022). This shift presents fertile ground for phenomenon-based research, as it captures how consumers adapt to external crises and redefine travel behaviors in response. By focusing on staycations, researchers can uncover new insights into tourism resilience, consumer behavior, and well-being, contributing to both theoretical advancement and practical applications in tourism management.

Second, a deeper understanding of the psychological benefits of local travel emerges from studying why people choose to vacation at home. For instance, Pichierri et al. (2022) found that risk-averse travelers tend to have a stronger attachment to their local community, increasing their likelihood of choosing a staycation. Jacobsen et al. (2023) found that staycations reduce the mental burdens of long-distance travel, such as packing, navigating airport security checkpoints, and adjusting to unfamiliar places. These benefits have substantial implications for destinations, hospitality managers, and policymakers who can capitalize on staycationers during off-peak periods or in the aftermath of a crisis when demand is relatively low (Muritala et al., 2022). For example, a hotel manager may fill otherwise vacant rooms with local guests over the

winter months. A destination management organization might reduce tourist crowding in popular areas by promoting less-visited locations to local travelers at the destination who are already more familiar with them.

Third, understanding the nuances of staycations helps destination marketers develop targeted offerings and promotional campaigns aimed at residents as potential travelers. This approach not only expands the pool of potential visitors but can also increase the quality of visitors, as residents often have a stake in the success of the local tourism economy. Moreover, fostering a robust staycation model can help mitigate the impacts of tourist development, as the distinction between tourists and residents blurs when locals embrace staycations.

Unfortunately, tourism authorities often overlook the potential of their residents as a viable visitor segment. However, during crises such as the period from 2020 to 2022, local travel became a lucrative option for many destinations to promote. Residents increasingly opted for staycations as a safe way to explore their regions, providing a much-needed break from prolonged social isolation while promoting rejuvenation (Gonçalves, 2020). Moreover, staycations have helped the tourism industry manage pandemic-related impacts and build resilience to future crises (Cvelbar et al., 2021). Despite these advantages, research on staycations remains limited (Wong et al., 2023).

Beyond being a travel trend, how the term “staycation” is used and understood across different contexts significantly shapes traveler perceptions and behaviors. To explore this, we examine the sociolinguistic intricacies of the term and its semantic evolution across various English-speaking communities. Through a comparative analysis of how staycations are framed across different geographies, we aim to understand how the term both reflects and shapes perceptions of vacation possibilities, particularly in the context of crises such as the 2007–2008 global economic crisis or the 2020–2022 COVID-19 pandemic. We identify which topics generate the most interest by analyzing global search patterns using Google Trends data (Vargas et al., 2020). Examining related search terms provides insight into the products and services people seek during their staycations. This sociolinguistic approach will offer valuable insights into the following aspects:

- (i) the shift in travel search behavior toward domestic trips close to home, captured by the term “staycation”;
- (ii) the pattern of the staycation trend over time, both before and after the pandemic, and across geographic regions;
- (iii) the search terms associated with staycations offer insight into the types of products and services travelers are most interested in.

The findings suggest that travelers tend to choose destinations within a smaller geographic area during times of crisis, which has positive environmental impacts by reducing travel-related emissions. Furthermore, analyzing the language used in online searches and reviews provides valuable insights into consumer expectations, decision-making processes, and consideration set formation. These insights have theoretical and practical implications for the tourism industry and communication strategies, enabling more targeted and effective initiatives while offering a deeper understanding of how similar travel-related search behaviors may affect destination resiliency.

Literature Review

Defining Staycations

The term “staycation,” a blend of “stay” and “vacation” (Waszink, 2020), gained popularity following the 2007–2008 global economic downturn, as it allowed travelers to modify their travel plans instead of canceling them altogether (Bronner & de Hoog, 2013). Initially popularized in news stories, it was described as “a holiday that takes place either at or near home” and “the happy-face answer to high gas prices and the costs and miseries of air travel” (Wilson, 2008). Though first popularized in the US in the early 2000s, the concept soon spread globally, becoming a favored option for people worldwide. Travelers opt for staycations for various reasons, including saving money, avoiding travel hassles, relaxing, and exploring their local area.

Staycationing During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The concept of staycations regained prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic as travelers faced

limited options due to travel restrictions (Lin et al., 2021; Pichierri et al., 2022; Pratiwi & Novani, 2022). Travelers not only reconsidered safety across different regions (Lever et al., 2024), but many also took advantage of government-issued travel vouchers (Cvelbar et al., 2021). While prepandemic staycations were typically driven by the desire to save time and money, research during COVID-19 uncovered additional motivations. These included a need for behavioral control to mitigate health risks and a desire to escape daily routines and spend time with family and friends (Pratiwi & Novani, 2022).

Moon and Chan’s (2022) study of millennials’ hotel staycations in Hong Kong revealed a blend of motivations: the comfort of familiar place surroundings and the allure of creating an extraordinary experience within a local setting. Yan et al. (2022) found that staycationers were influenced by place attachment and psychological detachment, reflecting a balance of utilitarian and hedonic values—practical ties to one’s location and a desire for a mental escape. Further supporting these insights, Wong et al. (2023) surveyed local tourists in Macau following a staycation incentive program. Their findings suggested that short local excursions could bolster one’s psychological capital, enhancing travelers’ hope, confidence, optimism, and resilience during the pandemic.

Construal Level Theory

Construal Level Theory (CLT) explains how individuals’ thinking shifts from high-level abstract thoughts to low-level concrete thoughts based on their psychological distance from an object (Trope & Liberman, 2010). In the context of travel, this theory can help explain how temporal, spatial, or social distance influences how people perceive and plan their trips. Despite its relevance, CLT has not been widely applied in tourism research. For instance, a distant holiday may be considered more abstract, focusing on broad experiences like relaxation or adventure, while a shorter trip—such as a staycation—is often thought of more concretely, involving specific logistics like packing or daily schedules.

Recent studies have started to bridge this gap. Muritala et al. (2022) applied CLT to staycations, suggesting that individuals seek psychological distance from home even when they remain spatially

close. Filieri et al. (2023) expanded the understanding of psychological distance in travel by examining how distinctions between rural and urban accommodations and whether spaces are shared with a host influence travelers' perceptions. Wang et al. (2023) explored staycations taken by residents in Macau in the context of online short videos promoting resort brands, finding that a shorter psychological distance between the audience and the narrative structure can influence residents' attitudes toward these brands. These insights align with other tourism research highlighting how place attachment and psychological detachment can shape domestic travel behaviors (e.g., Wong et al., 2023; Yan et al., 2022).

The growing body of research on staycations suggests they are more than just a fallback option when long-haul travel is restricted or unaffordable. Staycations reflect evolving travel motivations, with survey-based research highlighting factors such as cost-efficacy, convenience, and sustainability. This aligns with broader shifts in tourism behavior toward domestic travel and increased awareness of sustainable tourism practices (e.g., Gössling & Peeters, 2015). Analyzing Google Trends data can further illuminate macro- and microlevel patterns in staycation behavior across different regions and over time, providing valuable insights into this emerging trend.

Trend Analysis

Trend analysis uncovers patterns, anomalies, and shifts in data, providing critical insights into market dynamics and consumer behavior. Google Trends, a widely used tool, tracks online search behavior, revealing how people plan vacations and make travel decisions. In tourism research, Google Trends has been applied to examine public interest (Dergiades et al., 2018), analyze consumer perceptions of brands and attractions (Bakirtas & Gulpinar Demirci, 2022), forecast tourism demand (Önder & Gunter, 2016; Wickramasinghe & Ratnasiri, 2021), and assess the impact of events on travel (Martins-Filho et al., 2022).

While its use in tourism is growing, Google Trends has been widely adopted in other fields, providing valuable insights that can be adapted for tourism. For instance, public health has used it to

track interest in disease symptoms, mental health conditions, and coping strategies (Fan et al., 2020; Hallinan et al., 2023; Hanna & Hanna, 2019). This suggests that Google Trends could also be used to map emerging trends in tourism, where consumer concerns like travel safety, service availability, and pricing are vital for destination marketing.

Moreover, Google Trends has proven helpful in exploring niche markets like cosmetic tourism, where travelers combine healthcare procedures with vacations (Dinis et al., 2019; Mangono et al., 2021; Murphy et al., 2022). Analyzing search trends in such areas can offer insights into tourism planning and consumer demand across various sectors. Google Trends is also a powerful tool for monitoring consumer interest and predicting tourism patterns. Analyzing search data related to destinations, public health regulations, and travel services allows researchers to deliver more accurate forecasts, particularly during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Events within a specific timeframe can also reveal crucial changes in tourism. For example, using Google Trends data to predict monthly tourist arrivals through econometric models can yield more precise forecasts (Padhi & Pati, 2017). During infectious disease outbreaks (e.g., coronavirus, MERS, monkeypox, norovirus), Google Trends helps monitor public interest and assess the impact of guidelines and interventions (De Araújo Rios & Silva, 2022; Demirel, 2020). Additionally, trends data linked to media coverage (Kostkova et al., 2013; Maurer et al., 2023), celebrity buzz (Tijerina et al., 2019; Ward et al., 2023), weather conditions (Rosselló & Waqas, 2016), and cultural events (Montoro-Pons & Cuadrado-García, 2021) provide a dynamic view of the decision-making context in tourism.

Methodology

Consumer online search activities, particularly in the travel industry, have become increasingly important as a source of market intelligence. With the rise of Internet 2.0, the ubiquitous use of search engines, and the proliferation of online booking platforms, consumers have increasing options to research and book travel arrangements and share their experiences (Agag & El-Masry, 2017; Li & Ma, 2020; Mulvey et al., 2020). Moreover, the growing availability and importance of user-generated texts

and analytics are progressively essential tools for understanding consumer attitudes, opinions, and behaviors and making informed business decisions (Berger et al., 2020; Boyd & Schwartz, 2021; Lam et al., 2022). This study uses Google Trends search engine data to gauge public interest in staycations globally over the past 7 years (2016–2022).

Analyzing geographic and spatial differences in tourism research is essential for effective market segmentation and targeting decisions. The local climate, ecology, geography, and culture can establish baseline preferences and expectations. For instance, retirees, also known as snowbirds, tend to migrate temporarily from colder regions with harsh winter weather (such as Canada and the northern US) to sunnier regions (including Florida, Texas, Mexico, and Central America) with warmer destinations during the winter months. Geography has played a crucial role during the pandemic, affecting inbound tourism based on a country's level of pandemic severity, dependence on foreign tourism, and whether it is an island nation or a country without land borders (Yang et al., 2022). Google Trends can generate country-level data, revealing patterns in diverse populations worldwide.

Google Trends provides researchers with a wealth of data, enabling cross-national comparisons to explore various tourism-related questions. Researchers can unearth valuable insights that transcend national and cultural borders by examining language trends and consumer search queries. Our contribution lies in harnessing Google Trends for tourism analysis and creating visualizations that empower researchers to scrutinize and compare global, regional, and national trends. This mapping approach significantly enhances our comprehension of the phenomenon of staycations and sets directions for future research.

In this study, we used triangulation to strengthen the validity of our findings. By drawing on multiple sources—including data visualizations, emerging academic literature on staycations, and industry news—we developed the most plausible explanations for the observed trends. This abductive approach ensures that the findings are grounded in a well-rounded, cross-validated body of evidence, enhancing the robustness of our hypothesis generation and inviting readers to engage critically and thoughtfully with the conclusions.

Trend Analysis using Google Trends

Our study examines consumer online search patterns using Google Trends (<https://trends.google.com>). While Google Trends offers valuable insights into online search patterns related to tourism, it is important to note its limitations concerning platform availability and language (Dergiades et al., 2018). Google search accounts for over 90% of search engine volume worldwide, including Asia. However, it faces competition from other platforms (e.g., Baidu, Bing, Yahoo! Yandex), notably in countries like China, where Google is blocked. Moreover, Google compiles the results by search language. Accordingly, researchers must be mindful that results are specific to the language selected (English in our study) and should not be generalized to other languages.

Google Trends allows users to compare the popularity of a particular search term to all other search terms on Google. The Google Search Index is a number from 0 to 100, with higher numbers indicating a higher level of popularity for the search term. The score is normalized, scaling all observations relative to the specified period's maximum value based on the searches initiated within the selected geographic region and chosen language. For example, weekly search interest in “car rental” in France over 12 months peaked from July 31, 2022 to August 6, 2022 (=100). In contrast, the national search interest was 25% of the peak volume (=25) for December 4–10. Google Trends also benchmarks search interest by subregions, showing higher levels of annual search interest in Île-de-France (=100) and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (=96) than in Auvergne (=24) and Franche-Comté (=24). Crucially, Corsica (=100) holds the peak for the equivalent French search term “location de voiture.” This underscores a significant caveat: non-English queries may yield different outcomes (e.g., indicating preferred travel destinations by language) and implications, such as the necessity for bilingual staff.

Further, Google Trends lets users see how often related search terms and popular topics are entered into Google's search engine. For example, people who searched for “car rental” also searched for terms such as “Avis” (100), “rent a car” (57), “cheap car rental” (20), and Airport – Topic (20). Combined

with a focal term, the related queries and topics deliver helpful insights into the types of goods and services consumers are interested in, often revealing motives and brand consideration sets.

Data Collection

First, using Google Trends, we searched the English term “staycation” worldwide for the 7-year time range of January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2022, and downloaded aggregate and country-level monthly Google Search Index values. We then extracted geographic location, top, rising entities, and related query data for each of the 84 months. Next, to assess the level of interest in staycations over time, we created an indicator variable to select countries that earned a search index score of 1 or more (out of the maximum of 100) for each month. Accordingly, nations with a sum nearing 84 exhibited consistent interest, while those approaching zero held little interest in staycations.

We focused exclusively on the term “staycation” based on our initial observation that the phrase garnered significant attention in mainstream news media across English-speaking countries. This phenomenon has the potential to influence domestic tourism choices not only in Canada, the UK, and the US but also in other English-speaking nations, including those with a substantial English-speaking population influenced by historical and colonial ties (e.g., India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Singapore). In the later sections of the article, we explore opportunities for developing multilingual studies.

Entity Analysis

Our words and language usage can provide subtle clues about differences in what people pay attention to and care about (Boyd & Schwartz, 2021). Often, text analytic researchers are interested in classifying the entities (e.g., person, organization, country, event) consumers refer to better organize and understand the interrelated things in a specific body of knowledge (akin to a schema). Following the tradition of linguistic psychology, we think of words as occurring within nested concepts. For instance, a particular word appears within a wide-ranging discourse articulated by a person in a situation within a broad cultural–environmental context.

As such, users’ specific queries in Google Search may reflect categories that classify items with similar attributes. For example, the 1963 Beach Boys’ hit *Surfin’ USA* gives shoutouts to famous surfing spots (beach entities, such as Doheny, Haggerty’s, Swami’s, Pacific Palisades, and San Onofre).

Google Trends analyzes individuals’ queries and automatically classifies the terms as entities to measure relative interest in topics. Entity classification may follow different levels of abstraction, and researchers often classify Google entities into superordinate categories to detect patterns (Vargas et al., 2020). For example, a geopolitical entity such as Pacific Palisades is a beach in California on the southwest coast of the US. Accordingly, we conducted a content analysis of Google entities to group them into categories aligned with concepts commonly used in tourism management research.

Results

Rising Global Search Interest

Figure 1 shows a graph of worldwide Google Search Index monthly values for “staycation” for the period. As expected, consumer interest rose exponentially following the lockdown restrictions of the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a closer look also shows steady growth before the pandemic, with interest levels doubling over the 4 years from 2016 to 2019. Also, search interest exhibits seasonality, peaking in June, July, and August.

Geographies With Interest

In the map of Figure 2, we can see the relative search interest levels between countries. In general, results reflect macropatterns of travel and sector development by world region, dominated by Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Southeast Asian nations show consistent interest (large circle sizes illustrate many months with noteworthy search levels, and smaller circles indicate infrequent interest), as do countries in North America, the Caribbean, and Western Europe. In contrast, few nations in South America, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Oceania show interest in the topic, perhaps influenced to a degree by language, a limitation discussed later.

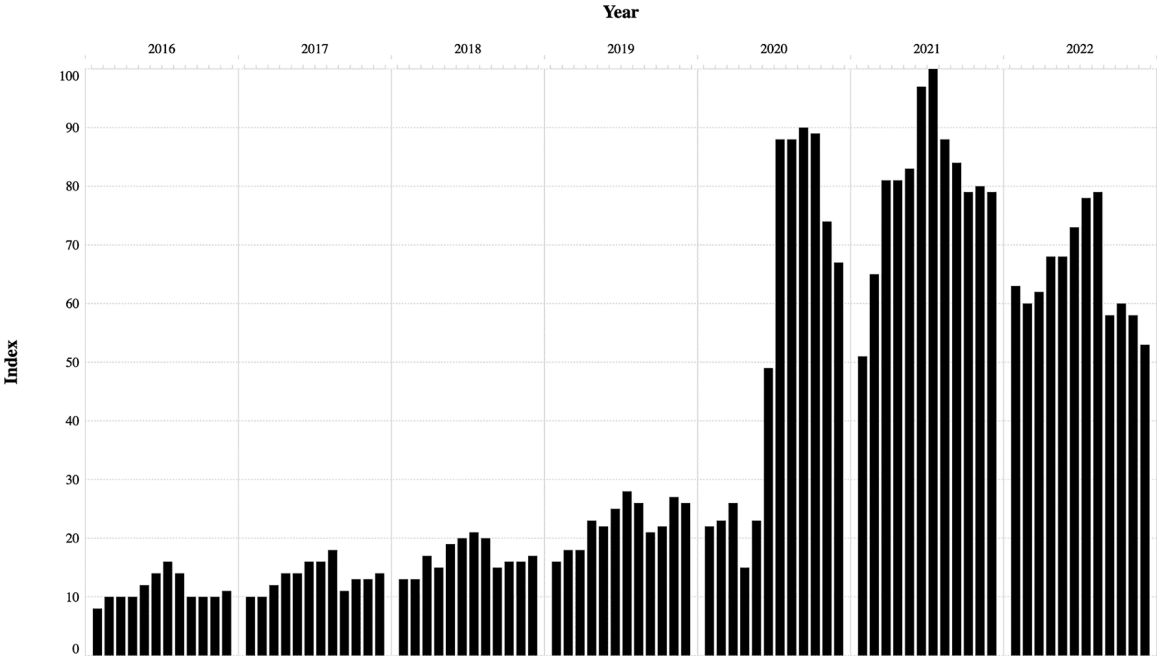


Figure 1. Worldwide Google Search Index for “staycation” (2016–2022).

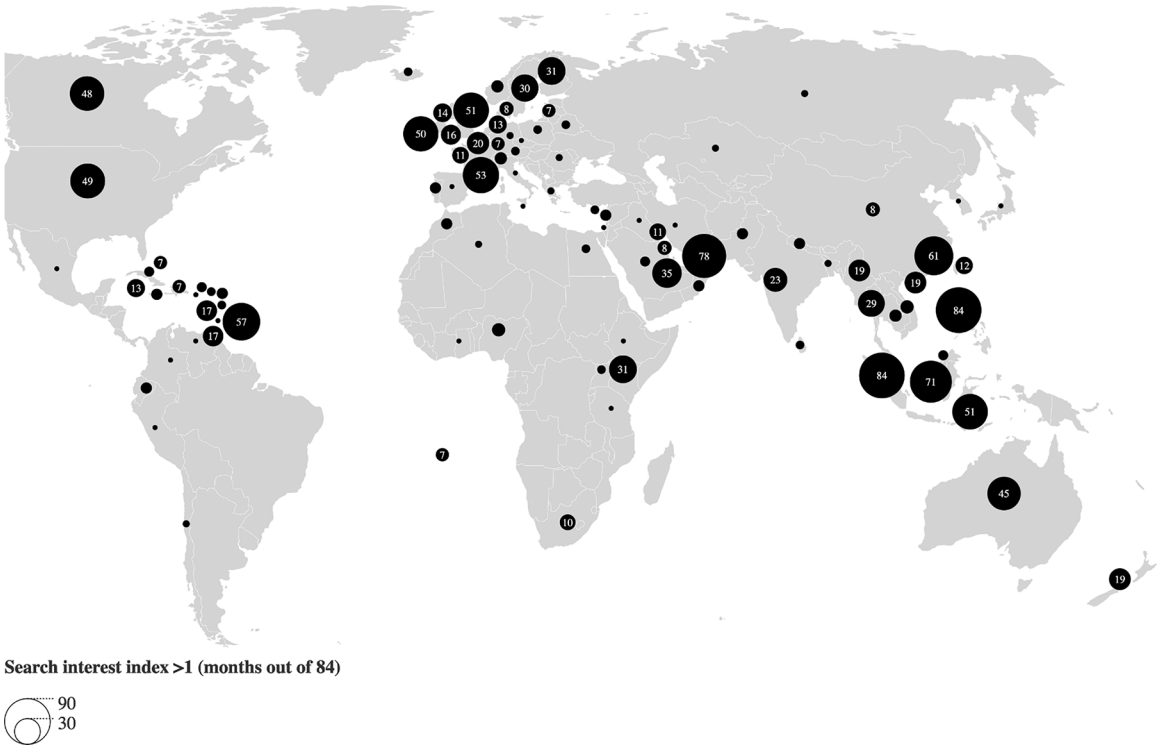


Figure 2. Worldwide Google Search Index (>1) count by country (84 months, 2016–2022).

Regional Leaders and Laggards in Search Interest

Figure 3 identifies the timing and level of search interest by region. Each dot on the graph indicates a country registered a search interest index value of at least 1 in the given month. For instance, many Asian nations demonstrated search interest in 2016 (54 instances), but Africa barely attended to the topic (5 cases). Furthermore, Asia shows steady, gradual interest in staycations over time, with several nations exhibiting very high interest levels (indicated by darker dots). In contrast, only some European travelers used the search term in 2016. Still, they realized growth over time, a spurt of interest in 2019, and a substantial increase in interest in the months following the pandemic lockdown beginning in 2020. Interestingly, the Americas consistently include one or more countries with high search interest, whereas countries in Africa and Oceania do not achieve such interest levels. A

few American countries marked peak index scores, but none reached such interest levels during the pandemic.

While the dominance of Asia, the Americas, and Europe at the world level reflects international patterns in terms of travel volume, zooming in on country-level trends shows different patterns. In some regions like Europe, the top destination is also the most popular country for staycation searches (e.g., France). For other regions like the Americas, a small country like Barbados ranks above the US and Canada in terms of relative staycation search interest. This calls for a region-by-region analysis.

Asian Search Interest

Figure 4 reveals that staycations captivate travelers' search engine activity in several Asian countries, led by the Philippines, Singapore, United

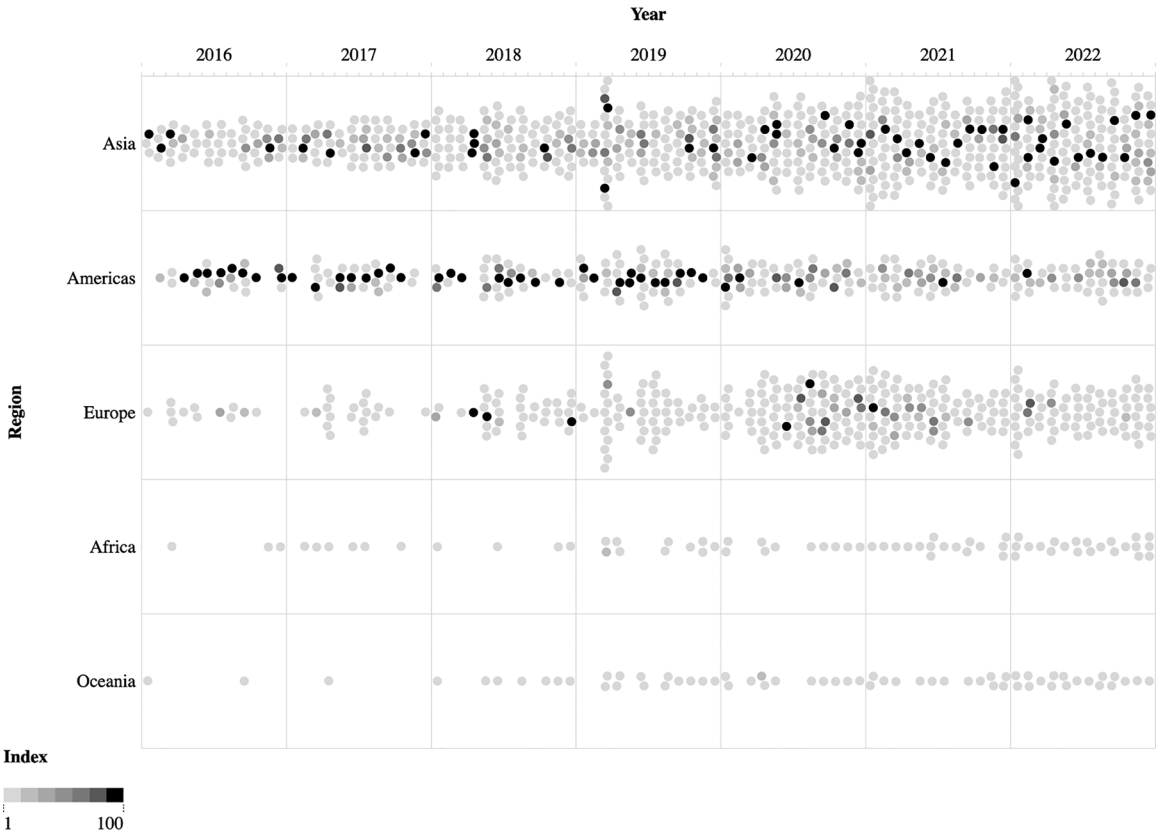


Figure 3. Google Search Index (>1) of countries by region.

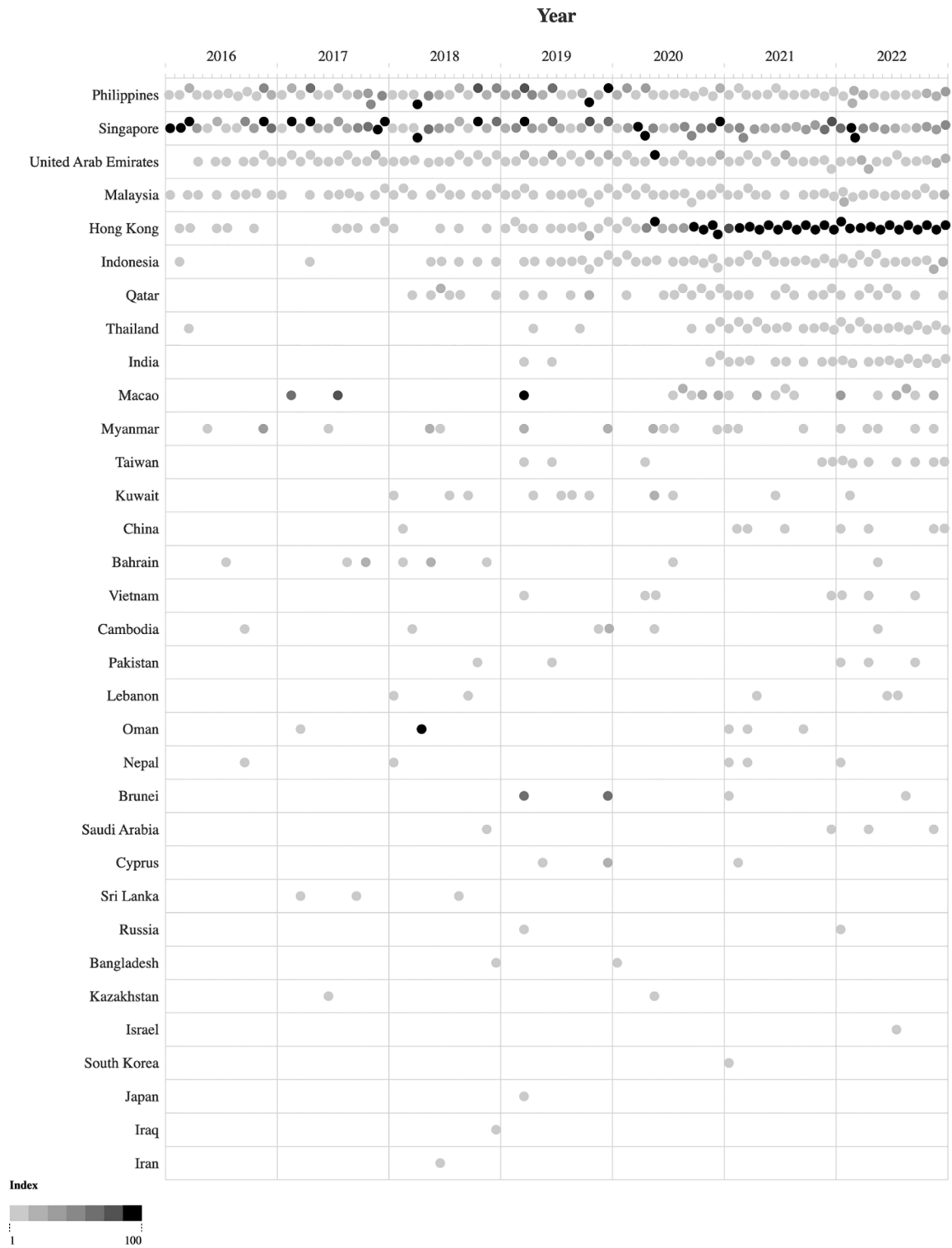


Figure 4. Asia: Google Search Index (>1) by country.

Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Qatar. Singapore exhibited elevated levels of interest beginning in early 2016 and continuing through 2022. More than any other country, Hong Kong shows a dramatic increase in search interest in staycations, perhaps in response to China's harsh COVID-19 zero restrictions on travel. The density of dots increases as we move into 2021 and 2022 for Qatar, Thailand, India, and Macau, signaling a similar rise in interest. This finding may help support the link between staycation behaviors and travelers' well-being, as de Bloom et al. (2017) depicted. Here, the increase in search interest may relate to the harshness of the restrictions, in that the fewer opportunities for residents to travel long distance, the more interested they may become in traveling locally and maintaining their well-being through alternative means. This may also support the typology of travel safety perceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic by Lever et al. (2024), which described the localized travel cluster as the largest group in their analysis and characterized by a willingness to travel close to home but increasingly hesitant as the distance from home increased. Perhaps this hesitancy was influenced by harsh travel restrictions that increased their perceptions of risk related to long-distance travel.

American Search Interest

The US and Canada showed a steady rise in interest over the seven years and registered scores in all months in 2022. Barbados and Saint Lucia stand out in the Americas, holding early, consistent, and high search interest in staycations (see Fig. 5). Curiously, travelers in Saint Lucia registered very little interest once COVID-19 hit, while Barbados sustained it. Conversely, the Cayman Islands exhibited a profound rise in search interest in staycations during the pandemic, indicating differences in attitudes toward staycations across the globe.

European Search Interest

For the most part, European countries showed growing interest levels during the pandemic years (see Fig. 6). Prepandemic, travelers in Ireland and Lithuania demonstrated some interest in the topic,

but the Irish grew more consistently interested in it while Lithuanian interest waned. Furthermore, the high index scores of Guernsey, the Isle of Man, the Netherlands, and Jersey in 2020–2021 stand in contrast to their European counterparts.

Search Term Usage

The use of more search terms accompanied the global increase in staycation search interest (see Fig. 7). Over time, the number of search queries and topics doubled in 4 years before plateauing during the pandemic. The aggregate totals are telling but do not convey the whole story. For instance, the search index results cannot answer the reasons for these trends. However, the results surface patterns of regularities in data that persist over time, points of inflection where trends change course, and anomalies that indicate deviations from the norm. Together, trends, inflection points, and anomalies help identify changes in search interest that call for further analysis to understand the patterns.

Top Query Terms

Over 84 months, Google Trends identified 2,595 records of top and rising query terms, reduced to 1,506 unique words or phrases. Figure 8 shows a word cloud of the 250 most frequently used terms, providing an intuitive qualitative depiction of the main queries. For instance, “staycation” is widespread and often appears in compound phrases such as “best staycation Singapore” or “staycation deals.” Notably, the word cloud also features non-English terms using Chinese characters, indicating the global reach of staycation interest. The mix of languages in consumer searches reflects globalized consumer behavior and the increasing prevalence of multilingualism online. Rather than signaling poor data integrity, this linguistic fluidity reveals how consumers switch languages across international markets, offering insights into cross-cultural dynamics and the impact of language flexibility on search patterns.

Top Entity Comparison

Next, we compared 2016 search entities to those used in 2022 (see Fig. 9). Again, points of similarities and differences yield answers to earlier

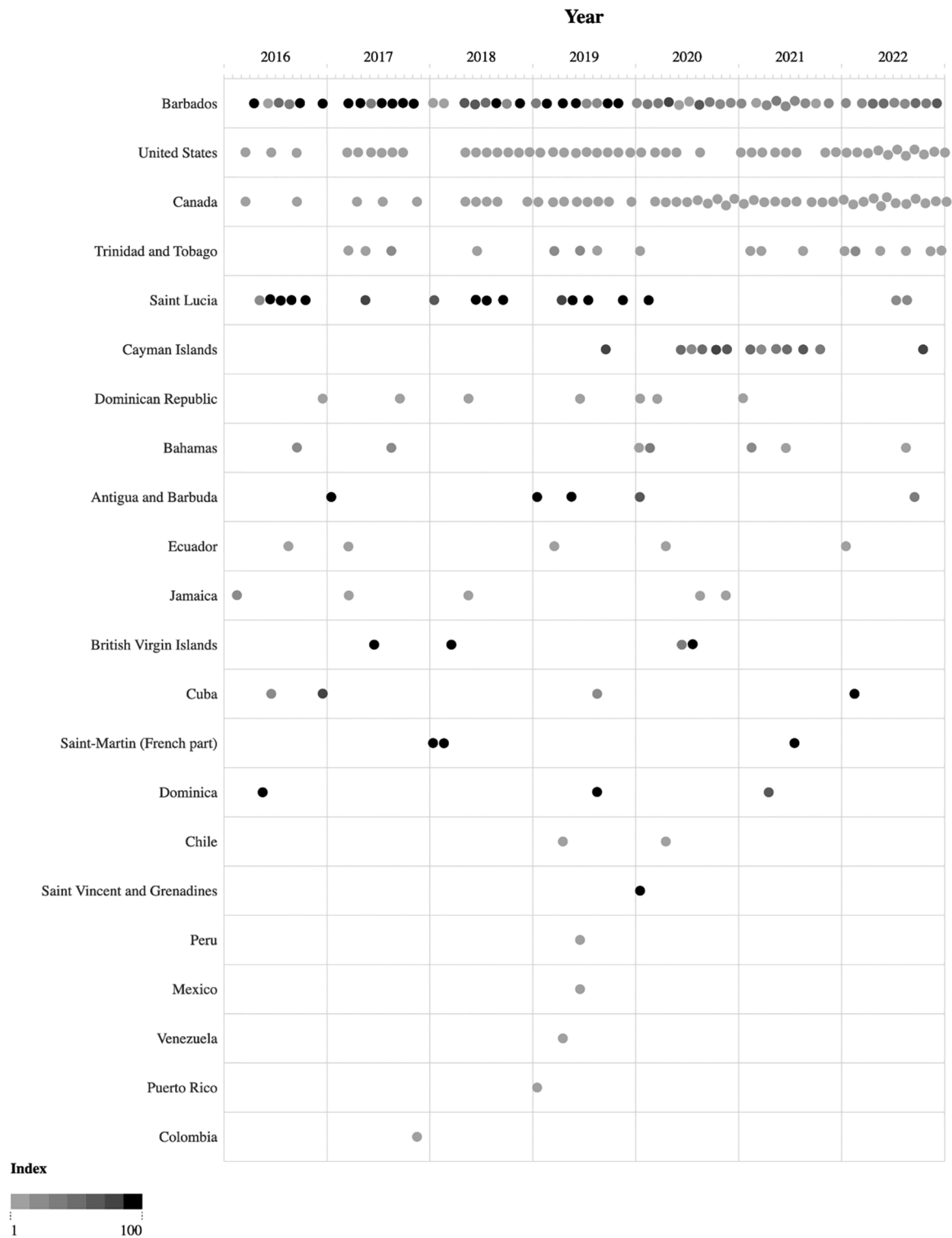


Figure 5. Americas: Google Search Index (>1) by country.

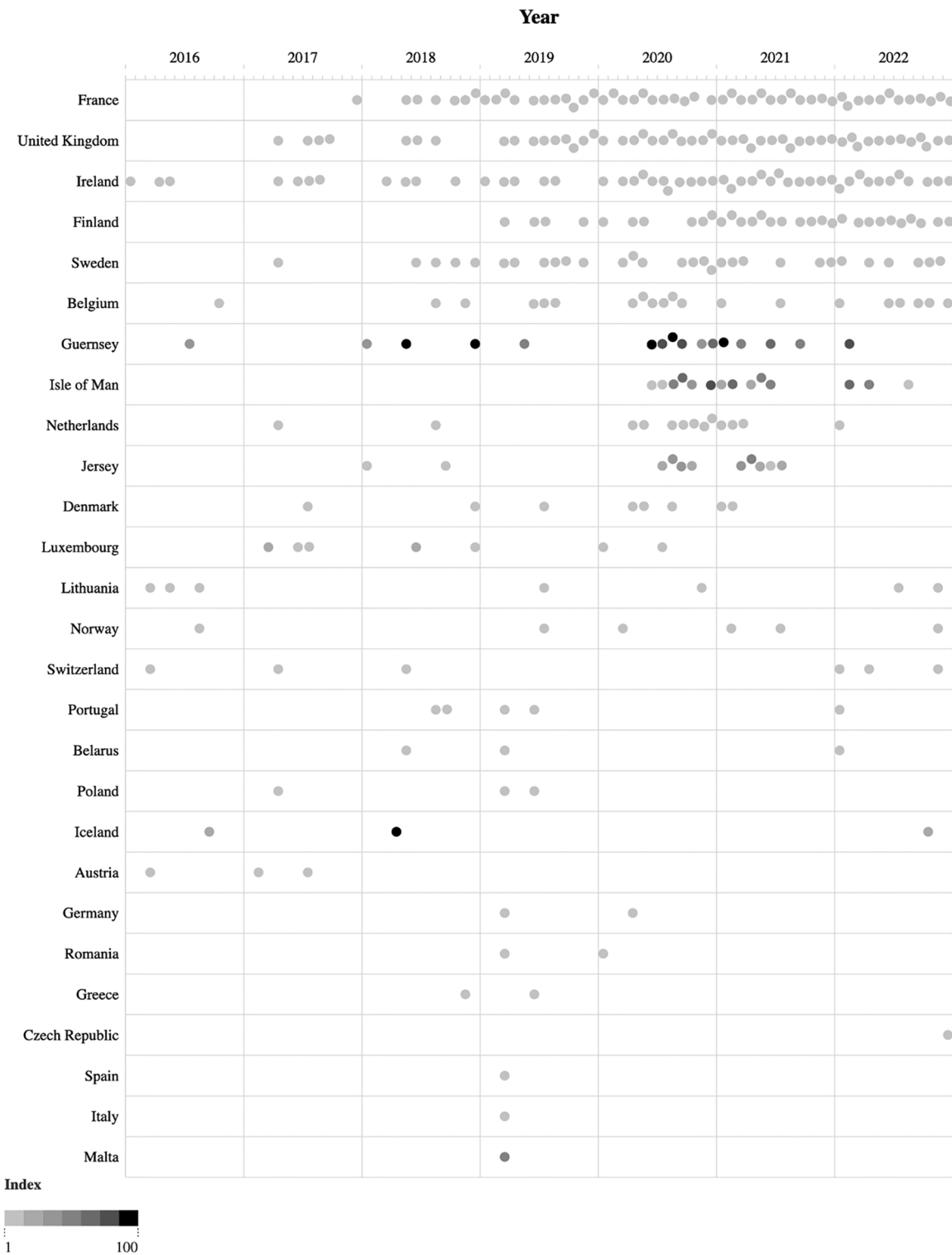
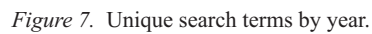


Figure 6. Europe: Google Search Index (>1) by country.



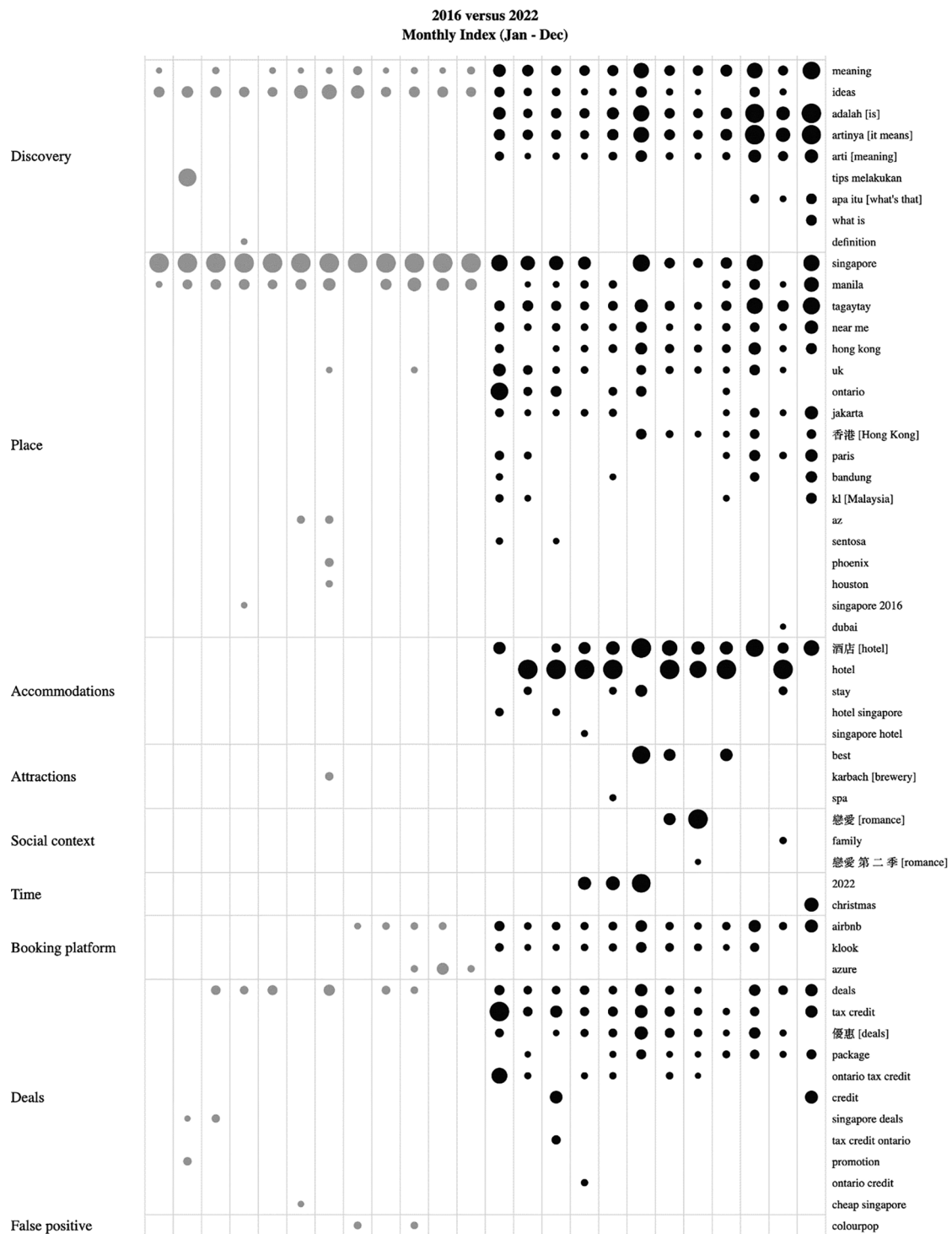


Figure 9. Monthly comparison of top search entities: 2016 versus 2022. Illustrates entities with an index ≥ 10 .

questions while raising new ones. Each circle on the figure indicates the search index for entities listed at the right. The monthly values for 2016 are on the left, and 2022 is on the right. The number and density of circles to the right verify that travelers in 2022 entered more staycation-related queries with greater prevalence; by comparison, the 2016 data are sparse. The results illustrate the breadth of terms consumers use in online searches worldwide.

In the final step of our analysis, we sorted similar entities into codes that reflected conceptual affinities. Next, we review these themes and temporal patterns and consider research implications.

The Meaning of Staycation

Remarkably, many use Google to discover the meaning of the term staycation. English users ask about meanings, definitions, descriptions, and ideas for staycations. However, the term staycation is also prevalent among non-native English speakers who use Indonesian qualifiers (e.g., *adalah*, *artinya*, *arti*, *apa itu*) or Chinese characters (酒店, 美利酒店, 半島酒店) to learn about the topic. Destination management organizations (DMOs) should note the importance of the interplay of primary demand for the product category with brand alternatives within the competitive space (Batra et al., 2010; Padgett & Mulvey, 2009). In addition, social linguistics impacts the globalization of tourism, travel, and culture, creating both barriers and opportunities for companies that serve international and domestic markets (Heller et al., 2014).

Places to Stay

Singapore and Manila dominated staycation searches in 2016 (Fig. 9), with minor flourishes in Arizona and the UK. However, in 2022, it is clear that global interest increased as evidenced by the inclusion of other countries (Dubai), states and provinces (Hong Kong, Ontario), towns and cities (Bandung, Godalming, Houston, Paris, Phoenix, Sentosa, Tagaytay), and the ever-adaptable “near me.” Suppose one assumes that staycation searches originate from people in the local vicinity. In that case, one should go beyond the global results and delve into regional search indices to monitor and assess consumer interest or

the success of marketing campaigns to increase demand. Equally, we recognize that staycations could be part of a two-step travel planning process for extended stays. For example, exploring the possibilities of place first, then activity: summering in Saint-Tropez, sojourning in Seoul, or snowbirding in Sarasota.

Parameters of a Staycation

The search entities reveal considerations and circumstances surrounding a staycation. For example, though staycations often use one’s residence as a home base for activities, many travelers explore options at nearby hotels. Related search terms expose the relevance of nearby attractions, the social context of the trip, and the timing. Interestingly, Figure 9 shows the contrast between general searches to discover staycations and places in 2016 and the addition of more product-related searches in 2022, notably hotels, booking platforms led by Airbnb, and deals. This observation reinforces our view that DMOs can realize returns by conducting localized research to determine related queries for their particular market. Alternatively, DMOs might benefit from studying established and upstart players in the market.

Travel Booking Systems

Travelers also search for booking platforms that can assist with planning a staycation (Fig. 9). The results show the growing presence of Airbnb in facilitating short-term homestays and rentals; perhaps these users are also seeking particular amenities or group capacity. In addition, Hong Kong-based Klook Travel rose to the fore in 2022, helping travelers explore destinations and find things to do. However, the conspicuous absence of online travel agencies such as Expedia, Booking.com, Tripadvisor, and VRBO invites the question: why? It would seem that these brands are not associated with staycations, which has become the market domain of Airbnb.

Incentive Seekers

Travelers sought deals, discounts, and other travel incentives, especially in 2022 (Fig. 9). For

example, the Ontario Staycation Tax Credit (Canada) was a temporary incentive program designed to help the tourism and hospitality sectors recover from the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, many Ontarians went online to ponder the possibilities of a government-subsidized stay involving short-term or camping accommodations. By implication, the government agency nudged the concept of staycation out of the comfortable confines of one's hometown, expanding the geographic boundaries to anywhere in Ontario (a province larger than France and Spain combined). Looking ahead, it will be interesting to see how DMOs worldwide leverage staycations within their defined local boundaries.

A False Positive Finding

Overall, Google Trends yielded excellent results with plenty of insights into consumer search behavior. Text analytic algorithms deal with letters and words, spotting literal meanings accurately. For example, we discovered that a Staycation cosmetics brand offers products for use on vacations. One might dismiss this late-2016 outlier as irrelevant; alternatively, it could be a catalyst for drawing attention to the category or enhancing brand meanings that amplify the possibilities of romantic or self-care staycations.

Discussion

This study demonstrates consumers' rising interest in staycations worldwide and the query language and entities they submit to an online search engine. It highlights the steady increase in staycation searches prepandemic and their exponential growth during the pandemic across geographies. While most common in the dominant travel regions of Asia, Europe, and North America, staycation searches are vital in many pockets of the world. Furthermore, the search phrases express consumer needs and priorities as they move from initial interest to purchase (Li & Ma, 2020), revealing popular terms like "deals" and "best" to specific destinations, as well as notable product searches like Airbnb. As such, our study builds on recent research aimed at gathering online data to chart consumers' websites and search engines and the phrases they use to acquire information and

form preferences, offering a complement to travel information collected from social media and conversations in online communities, such as Reddit (Mulvey et al., 2023).

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, the study contributes to our understanding of staycations, a largely understudied concept. Advances in travel theory on staycations require system perspectives, comparative studies, and case studies to develop a comprehensive account of the motives, variants, and emergent types of staycations. This study supports the findings by Muritala et al. (2022) regarding the tendency to psychologically distance oneself while staying spatially close to home, such as by staying at a nearby hotel to mimic the feeling of being far away while removing everyday routines and chores. In alignment with CLT, our findings demonstrate that searches for accommodations, attractions, and deals may be part of how people psychologically distance themselves from feeling "stuck at home." In this way, staycations can be seen as unique experiences, meeting psychological needs for the distance away from home while maintaining spatial proximity to home (Muritala et al., 2022). Indeed, this juxtaposition of needs was relevant during COVID-19 and will likely be relevant during future crises. But it may also apply to segments of travelers who are relatively risk averse, cautious, health conscious, sustainability conscious, or otherwise inclined to staycation.

This article demonstrates the increasing popularity of choosing to stay closer to home to travel. As in the study by Wong et al. (2023) regarding local tourists in Macau who used staycations to fortify their psychological capital, this paper reveals the power of meeting one's need for psychological distance without traveling long distances. Our results also support Yan et al.'s (2022) findings that staycations empower travelers to detach from their ordinary routines and gain a practical connection to where they live. Here, we demonstrate that staycations offer a valuable alternative to long-distance travel during periods with strict travel restrictions, as was the case for residents of Hong Kong who dramatically increased their search interest in staycations during China's zero-travel policy at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Implications for Destination Managers

The analysis supports the idea that Google Trends generates data at different levels of analysis, allowing researchers to explore global, national, state/provincial, and city-level trends. Effective strategy development often benefits from a broad, macroview of patterns worldwide. Furthermore, cross-national or cross-regional comparisons can be instructive by identifying and benchmarking best practices from locales that pioneered staycation campaigns. For instance, travelers in non-English-speaking countries in Asia led staycation search interest, as did a few small island nations in the Caribbean. Building on the findings by Muritala et al. (2022) that staycations may act as a temporary increase in tourism demand during off-peak periods, a hospitality manager based in the Caribbean could use the popularity of the term staycation in online searches to increase visitation during such times. In Barbados, for example, many businesses have embraced staycations as an opportunity to generate additional revenues from local travelers during the less busy July and August months. The Sea Breeze Beach House in Christ Church includes a tailored staycation package that offers a reduced price available only to Barbadian guests (Sea Breeze Beach House, n.d.). This has spurred competitors to follow suit, such as the nearby Savannah Beach Club Hotel & Spa, who offer similar discounted rates for local travelers (Savannah Beach Club, n.d.). The positive staycation atmosphere in Barbados has resulted in the *Barbados Today* newspaper referring to 2020 as the “year of the staycation” and even creating the social media hashtag #vacationwherewelive for Barbadians to use while traveling locally (LuovaSupport, 2020).

Moreover, the results of this study confirm that domestic travelers are searching for nearby products and services, such as hotel accommodations in their area and unique local destination attractions, such as spas, to recreate the travel experience while staying closer to home. This supports the findings by Moon and Chan (2022) in their study on millennials’ hotel staycations in Hong Kong, where they found that their motivation to staycation was based on a mixture of ordinary (i.e., by staying somewhere familiar) and extraordinary (i.e., by actualizing their travel fantasies).

Notably, the rise of staycations positively impacts destination sustainability and resiliency beyond the individual psychological benefits of staycations. The European Commission recently approved a ban on short-haul flights between cities linked by a train or train journey of less than 2.5 hr. This move, designed to reduce CO₂ emissions, will likely alter the complexion of getaways and day trips, leading to more significant opportunities for innovative staycations to benefit our environment. And while expenditures of staycations are typically less than long-haul vacations, what is spent is more likely to stay local, equalizing tourism expenditures that have traditionally favored prominent destinations and international chains.

Limitations and Future Research

Interestingly, while staycation is a decidedly English word, the results indicate that travelers in other countries, from the Philippines to the United Arab Emirates and points between, have adopted the term. Nevertheless, do French, German, or Spanish consumers have native vocabulary for staycations? Though the results speak to the power of the term, a limitation of this study is that staycation is not the only way to describe vacations near home. Future research should explore local language variants and a more nuanced analysis of the language travelers use to understand staycation experiences. We uncovered some promising leads in the academic research to guide future studies, including Google Trends analyses of search terms used by Croatian (Juric, 2022) and Romanian migrants (Avramescu & Wiśniowski, 2021), Russians exploring tourism products in Italy and France (Kostynets et al., 2020), and Portuguese, Polish (Strzelecki et al., 2020), and Arabic (Alshahrani & Babour, 2021) conversations related to COVID-19. In addition, this study focuses on examining the term staycation about global tourism trends and does not consider the broader literature on symbolic boundaries and sociolinguistics that could enrich our appreciation of how the product category of staycations evolves. Future research may explore consumers’ roles in creating and sustaining interest in short-term vacations, possibly uncovering conceptual kin such as microadventures.

The findings of this study also provide some unique opportunities for researchers who are interested in examining staycations through the lens of the

diffusion of innovations theory (see Rogers, 1962) to determine who the innovators and early adopters of staycation travel are and under which conditions a staycation may be adopted by the majority of travelers as a viable alternative to long-distance travel, particularly during times of major crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. If travelers must cancel their plans, will staycations ever become a worthy alternative versus outright canceling all plans and waiting for normalcy to return? What is the interplay of innovation among the open-minded, adventurous pioneers who draw attention to and interest in staycations from the imitation mechanism that follows as travelers decide to join the trend and try it for themselves? The continued use of social media to share travel experiences is likely to play a crucial role in driving acceptance and speeding the adoption rate in the general population. It is also a valuable area of inquiry for future researchers to explore. Savvy entrepreneurs (or DMOs) would take these theoretical perspectives to the workbench to accelerate the adoption rate by tailoring staycation offerings to segments and devising communication plans encouraging others to staycation.

We acknowledge the limitations of Google Trends, including sampling bias, lack of demographic data, and ambiguous search intent, which may affect representativeness. However, we ensure our conclusions are grounded in reliable evidence by using abductive reasoning (Belk & Sobh, 2019) and triangulating data from visualizations, literature, and industry reports. This approach enhances the plausibility of our findings and supports hypothesis generation, contributing both theoretically and practically to tourism. Future research is encouraged to test these findings in expanded contexts, temporally and geographically.

Conclusion

The findings of this study align with the goal of phenomenon-based research, which seeks to explore real-world behaviors and generate new theoretical insights. By focusing on staycation trends, we uncover patterns in tourism behavior that demonstrate how consumers adapt during times of crisis. The visualizations enhance this analysis by highlighting key trends and supporting hypothesis generation, making complex data more accessible.

These insights contribute to theoretical development and practical applications in improving destination resilience and adaptability.

Through a comparative analysis of the social construction of “staycations” across different geographies, this study shows that search usage grew steadily between 2016 and 2019, surged in 2020, peaked in 2021, and remained a popular search term in 2022. The results also show that its usage varies by country and is the most popular in English-speaking nations. However, the use of staycations as a search term in several non-English-speaking nations also grew after 2019. The findings from this study offer researchers and destination managers insights into the types of products and services people are most interested in when designing a staycation. Tourism is significantly impacted by constant changes that make it essential for destinations to be resilient to change and prepared for the next major shift by better understanding many travelers’ desire to vacation closer to home.

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