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Michael Lang
National University of Ireland, Galway

Manik Lochan
National University of Ireland, Galway

Nanda Kumaran Unni Nair
National University of Ireland, Galway

Venkatesh Srinivasan
National University of Ireland, Galway

Ankith Kumar Makam Venugopal
National University of Ireland, Galway

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“Staycation” attitudes and experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic: an analysis of Twitter social media data across different international regions

Michael Lang*, Manik Lochan, Nanda Kumaran Unni Nair,
Venkatesh Srinivasan and Ankith Kumar Makam Venugopal

School of Business & Economics,
National University of Ireland, Galway, IRELAND

* Corresponding author: Michael.Lang@nuigalway.ie

Abstract

This study investigates public disposition and attitudes in various parts of the world towards staycations, based on analysis of social media data extracted from the Twitter platform for the period from March 2020 to March 2021. The findings reveal regional trends and variations amongst holidaymakers across the UK/Ireland, USA/Canada, and New Zealand/ Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analytical procedure involved sentiment and content analysis, using the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic modelling technique to explore similarities and differences between different regions of the world.

Keywords: staycations, social media analytics, sentiment analysis, content analysis

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The word “staycation” derives from a combination of “stay” and “vacation”, meaning a short leisure trip close to where one lives (hosco, 2020). The expression was first used during the global financial crisis of 2008 when the ability to travel was affected by higher costs, job losses, and economic slowdown. Subsequent events and trends such as terrorist attacks, concerns about climate change and sustainability, and travel restrictions caused by the pandemic have increased the popularity of holidaying at home (Ballard, 2019; Donnelly, 2020). The challenges faced by the international tourism and hospitality sector during the COVID-19 outbreak may resonate for quite some time to come, with business recovery to pre-pandemic levels still some distance away. However, the silver lining in the midst of this crisis is that many city dwellers have discovered the charm of the rural countryside, and demand for holiday escapes to tranquil places of natural beauty has never been greater. Domestic tourism and staycation packages are expected to drive growth strategies (Le & Phi, 2020). For small business and hotels, this represents an opportunity to enhance community engagement and local activities (hosco, 2020).

Tourism contributes to around 9% of world GDP and accounts for one in every eleven jobs (Cvelbar & Ogorevc, 2020). The COVID pandemic has curbed tourism, causing huge economic losses. Many countries have recognised the need to stimulate the domestic market. The Government of Slovenia, for example, introduced staycation vouchers which were a huge success in driving domestic demand in the short run. The measure offered discounts to travellers and was aimed at improving their quality of lives along with preserving natural resources.

James et al. (2016) used lifestyle analysis to develop lodging packages for staycation travellers. Their research involved investigating different lifestyle profiles of travellers based on opinions, hobbies, and interests. The study revealed that the average budget for a staycation was around US\$240 for a 2.6-day duration; even students were attracted to staycations and used their own savings.

Bracco (2013) found that many people chose to spend holidays close to their homes during summers to save money and avoid stress of long-distance travel. He also highlights that American families with a relatively weaker financial status prefer staycations.

Björk et al. (2021) looks at tourism in the Nordic region, emphasising that preparing for the post-pandemic “new normal” has become critical. In this regard, nature and outdoor activities along with gastronomy tourism provide opportunities. Similarly, Besson (2017) talks about staycation aesthetics (for example, the greenery of the countryside) and how it plays a crucial role in the restoration of mental well-being.

Studies also indicate that families having children with disabilities can benefit from staycation through inclusive activity participation (Coyne & Fullerton, 2014; Emira & Thompson, 2011). Weekends provide children with physical experiences and social opportunities, fostering a supportive environment, friendships, and nurturing physical and mental strength. Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), for example, generally have highly regulated daily routines depending on the child's requirements; these set routines can limit leisure experiences. When parents observe and join in, they are better able to view the world through their child's perspective and support their needs (Huff et al., 2003; Townsend & Van Puymbroeck, 2017).

Against this background, the objective of our study was to investigate public disposition and attitudes towards staycations around the world based on social media analysis during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the global economy working around the crisis, and lockdown rules beginning to ease, staycations, the study

argues, can have a huge impact in the current world order (Narayanan, 2020). However, trends and motivations behind staycations need not be uniform throughout the world. Various economic, demographic, infrastructural and environmental factors, along with activity or destination-based attributes, and even the weather, play a crucial role in determining staycation preferences (Lu et al., 2021) – and such aspects can vary widely across parts of the world. It is in this light that we analyse trends and variations in different regions such as the UK and Ireland in Europe, USA and Canada in North America, and New Zealand and Australia in Oceania, highlighting similarities and differences between them.

2 Method and Analytical Procedures

2.1 Data extraction, cleansing and pre-processing

The Python Wrapper package for Twitter was used to extract tweets, allowing for highly customisable searches. Data for the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and USA, were extracted separately along with the rest of the world to analyse regional variations and trends. A total of 430,000 rows with 36 columns of data were extracted for the period covering March 2020 and March 2021, being Tweets that contained the keyword “staycation”.

Many tweets had neither geo locations nor geo tags. It was therefore difficult to obtain the origin of tweets. To circumvent this issue, we extracted data using a combination of words along with location names with the Python Wrapper package.

The pandas package was used to explore, clean, and process data. Furthermore, Ekphrasis, a text pre-processing tool, was employed for tokenization, word normalization, word segmentation (for splitting hashtags), and spelling corrections. It also helped with splitting hashtags. Regex was also used to remove http links, punctuations, and confounding characters (Singh, 2019).

In addition, the natural language toolkit (NLTK) – a platform for building Python programmes to work with human language data – was used to clean the dataset. With text processing libraries such as classification, tokenization, stemming, tagging, parsing, and semantic reasoning, NLTK was crucial for the analysis. Frequency distribution library in NLTK determined the frequency of each word in the text, removing common stopwords.

NLTK libraries such as `word_tokenize` and `TweetTokenizer` helped with tokenization – splitting phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or an entire text document into smaller

units each termed a token. TweetTokenizer was used so that hashtags were kept intact. The WordNetLemmatizer library from nltk.stem reduced inflectional forms and derivationally related forms of a word to a common base form.

2.2 Sentiment analysis

Sentiment analysis, also known as opinion mining or emotion AI, employs natural language processing, text analysis, computational linguistics, and biometrics to systematically identify, extract, and study affective states and subjective information (Mogyorosi, 2021). This study employs sentiment analysis to understand people's opinions, attitudes, and emotions on staycations from language used in Tweets. As discussions on public fora such as blogs and social media reviews, in platforms such as Twitter, have witnessed exponential growth, the analysis of "sentiment" is central to understanding human behaviour.

VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and sEntiment Reasoner), a pretrained sentiment analyser in NLTK, enabled quicker results, best suited for language analysis on social media. It helped with vocabularies, emoticons, and acronyms that are used to express one's emotion about a particular aspect or event. It, therefore, identifies the tone of consumer reviews and survey responses, determining the satisfaction levels of users. The output consists of three values: (1) Positive – Satisfied, (2) Neutral – Neither/Nor, (3) Negative – Not satisfied. For example, VADER classified texts, for example, with terms such as "brilliant journey" or "great experience" as having a positive sentiment whereas "expect to do a lot more" was categorised as a neutral sentiment. A totally dissatisfied response – such as having words "rip-off" – would automatically be a negative sentiment. Tweets that contained a mixed or a compound sentiment were also classified as neutral.

2.3 Content analysis

Content analysis is a qualitative technique used for analysing data and interpreting its meaning. We used topic modelling for analysing textual content. This approach identifies hidden topics and themes based on word co-occurrence, thus reducing the potential for coincidence or bias caused by researcher perception (Hagen, 2018).

Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) is an efficient and very useful data analysis technique to determine themes from large volumes of text, implemented in Python's Gensim module (Blei et al., 2003). Gensim helps in topic modelling, similarity retrieval, and document indexing within a large corpus of text.

Figure 1 depicts the LDA life cycle and processes in obtaining results from topic modelling. The first stage involved creating a word dictionary to compile the frequency of words. The second involved filtering minimal impact words removing the least recurring words from the process. Words that appeared in less than 15 tweets were omitted. In the third stage, a word frequency was created for each tweet. The final stage located the weightage of the words using the Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF) model. The TF-IDF model assigns a weightage to each term in the document. The higher the weightage, greater the importance of a word (Li, 2018).

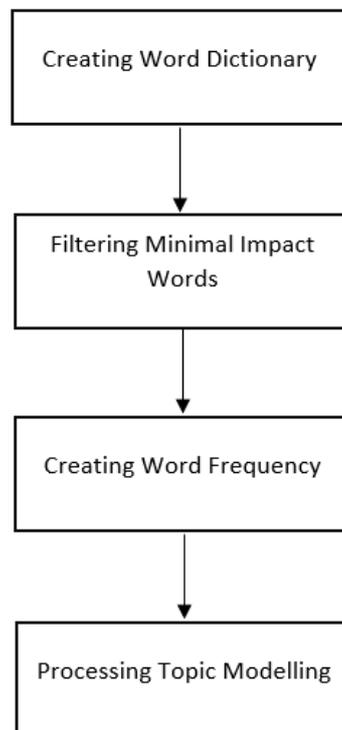


Figure 1: LDA Life Cycle

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Sentiment Analysis

Subsequent to pre-processing, sentiment analysis on 355,769 records yielded the following results: 209,269 were found to have positive sentiments; 113,334 records remained neutral; and 33,166 records were negative. This indicated that, overall, respondents around the globe were positively inclined towards staycations.

A majority of users (59%) demonstrated a positive sentiment with around 32% of them being neutral. Over 9% tweeted negative sentiments. This indicates that most users enjoyed staycations.

Region	Positive Sentiment	Negative Sentiment	Neutral Sentiment
World	209,269 (58.8%)	33,166 (9.3%)	113,334 (31.9%)
Australia and New Zealand	19,340 (62.1%)	2,551 (8.2%)	9,236 (29.7%)
USA and Canada	8,539 (62.6%)	1,027 (7.5%)	4,068 (29.8%)
United Kingdom and Ireland	48,873 (63%)	6,842 (8.8%)	21,909 (28.2%)

Table 1: Insights from Sentiment Analysis

Figures 2, 3, and 4 portray the distribution of user sentiments in the UK and Ireland, the USA and Canada, and Australia and New Zealand. It can be noted that positive sentiments are above 62% in all three regions. Negative sentiments show a slight variation with the least in the US and Canada (7.5%). Neutral sentiments also have very little variation with data from the UK and Ireland being the least (28%). These remain largely consistent with findings from the rest of the world.

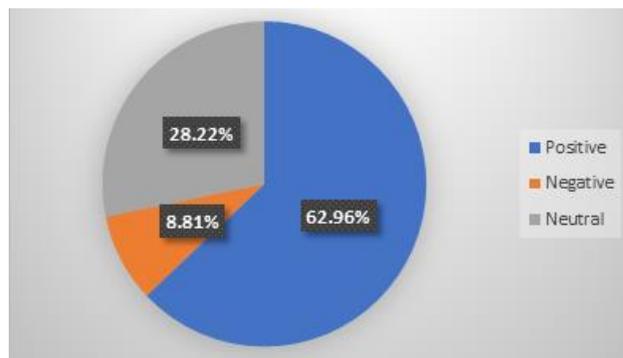


Figure 2: User Sentiments in the UK and Ireland

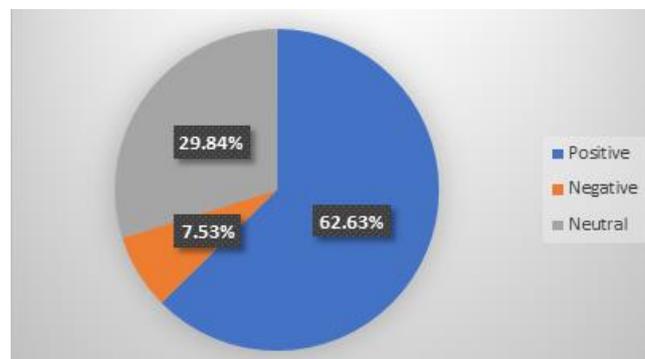


Figure 3: User Sentiments in the USA and Canada

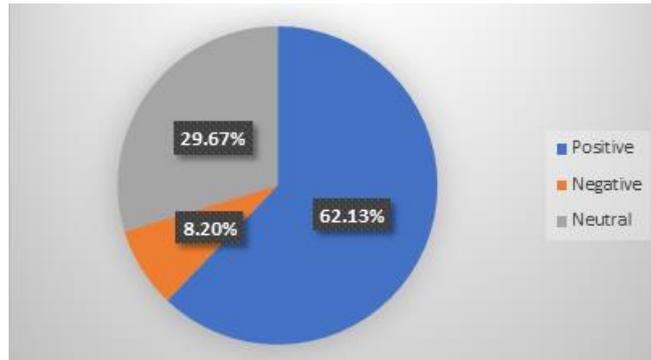


Figure 4: User Sentiments in Australia and New Zealand

3.2 Content Analysis

While respondents around the globe exhibited a positive disposition, it was important to understand their motivation towards embarking on staycations. Results from the LDA topic modelling reveal these reasons along with identifying whether patterns were uniform the world over.

3.2.1 Staycation World Dataset

```

Words: 0.020*"watch" + 0.017*"week" + 0.015*"play" + 0.014*"time" + 0.011*"game" + 0.008*"work" + 0.008*"movi" + 0.008*"tonigh
t" + 0.008*"video" + 0.007*"go"
Topic: 1
Words: 0.047*"need" + 0.045*"vacat" + 0.036*"like" + 0.030*"time" + 0.024*"break" + 0.021*"plan" + 0.016*"want" + 0.016*"feel"
+ 0.016*"year" + 0.015*"work"
Topic: 2
Words: 0.053*"look" + 0.024*"forward" + 0.014*"let" + 0.011*"like" + 0.011*"virus" + 0.010*"resid" + 0.010*"good" + 0.009*"foll
ow" + 0.009*"open" + 0.009*"giveaway"
Topic: 3
Words: 0.038*"hotel" + 0.030*"weekend" + 0.020*"room" + 0.018*"relax" + 0.016*"enjoy" + 0.014*"pool" + 0.013*"citi" + 0.012*"vi
ew" + 0.011*"stay" + 0.011*"luxuri"
Topic: 4
Words: 0.035*"travel" + 0.024*"summer" + 0.023*"plan" + 0.019*"lockdown" + 0.015*"local" + 0.014*"destin" + 0.013*"tourism" +
0.013*"support" + 0.013*"busi" + 0.012*"ireland"
Topic: 5
Words: 0.055*"week" + 0.033*"love" + 0.030*"work" + 0.026*"start" + 0.021*"good" + 0.021*"enjoy" + 0.020*"happi" + 0.020*"time"
+ 0.020*"today" + 0.018*"thank"
Topic: 6
Words: 0.041*"today" + 0.038*"summer" + 0.024*"enter" + 0.023*"chanc" + 0.016*"virtual" + 0.015*"tour" + 0.013*"onlin" + 0.011
*"shop" + 0.011*"gift" + 0.011*"sign"
Topic: 7
Words: 0.025*"beauti" + 0.023*"beach" + 0.022*"great" + 0.018*"place" + 0.017*"perfect" + 0.016*"look" + 0.016*"summer" + 0.016
*"idea" + 0.015*"enjoy" + 0.014*"famili"
Topic: 8
Words: 0.074*"book" + 0.027*"night" + 0.022*"stay" + 0.021*"offer" + 0.017*"hotel" + 0.015*"avail" + 0.012*"deal" + 0.012*"jul
i" + 0.012*"room" + 0.012*"special"
Topic: 9
Words: 0.115*"home" + 0.075*"holiday" + 0.057*"stay" + 0.026*"go" + 0.026*"peopl" + 0.021*"mean" + 0.017*"think" + 0.016*"count
ri" + 0.015*"year" + 0.014*"trip"

```

Figure 5: LDA Output for World Data

Figure 5 shows the LDA topic modelling output with clear and distinct topics for the whole world dataset. Each topic, further, includes a combination of words with the allocated weightage indicating the importance of the word or term. For example, topic 1 indicates that people are most likely looking for a vacation after a lengthy period of work. In topic 2, respondents are likely to have been in pursuit of an ideal place to stay owing to difficulties during the pandemic. That respondents are likely to spend time in a relaxed environment, such as a luxury hotel with a pool, is

indicated in topic 3. Topic 4 indicates that people wish to embark on staycation over the summer after lockdown in Ireland. This topic further highlights the presence of Tweets with “#supportlocal”. Topic 7 highlights satisfaction and enjoyment staying with family near beaches and Topic 8 showcases that respondents may have availed a good offer that is value for money. Topic 9 indicates that people were looking forward to vacations and holidays indicating a positive disposition towards staycation. Topic 6, appears to be biased by promotional advertisements owing to terms such as “shop” and “gift”.

3.2.2 Ireland and the UK

```

Words: 0.033*"travel" + 0.031*"tourism" + 0.021*"trip" + 0.018*"tour" + 0.017*"covid" + 0.016*"vacat" + 0.016*"check" + 0.015
*"busi" + 0.012*"need" + 0.010*"sit"
Topic: 1
Words: 0.043*"yorkshir" + 0.028*"trip" + 0.019*"tour" + 0.013*"north" + 0.013*"ireland" + 0.010*"today" + 0.009*"world" + 0.009
*"park" + 0.008*"morn" + 0.008*"week"
Topic: 2
Words: 0.027*"trip" + 0.022*"book" + 0.016*"look" + 0.013*"edinburgh" + 0.012*"glamp" + 0.012*"camp" + 0.011*"summer" + 0.010
*"break" + 0.009*"devon" + 0.009*"weekend"
Topic: 3
Words: 0.036*"trip" + 0.025*"devon" + 0.022*"plan" + 0.016*"summer" + 0.016*"beach" + 0.014*"famili" + 0.012*"perfect" + 0.012
*"book" + 0.012*"holiday" + 0.011*"road"
Topic: 4
Words: 0.017*"book" + 0.017*"travel" + 0.016*"luxuri" + 0.015*"stay" + 0.014*"summer" + 0.014*"offer" + 0.011*"enjoy" + 0.011
*"trip" + 0.010*"hotel" + 0.010*"london"
Topic: 5
Words: 0.074*"tour" + 0.072*"vacat" + 0.071*"travel" + 0.056*"liverpool" + 0.055*"anim" + 0.054*"uktour" + 0.054*"southern" +
0.054*"bucketlist" + 0.053*"alan" + 0.053*"stew"
Topic: 6
Words: 0.054*"trip" + 0.015*"year" + 0.015*"week" + 0.015*"like" + 0.013*"love" + 0.011*"want" + 0.009*"thing" + 0.009*"go" +
0.009*"day" + 0.009*"road"
Topic: 7
Words: 0.147*"holiday" + 0.045*"home" + 0.032*"stay" + 0.028*"cottag" + 0.024*"go" + 0.017*"abroad" + 0.017*"year" + 0.015*"peo
pl" + 0.014*"mean" + 0.010*"think"
Topic: 8
Words: 0.018*"travel" + 0.018*"great" + 0.018*"england" + 0.017*"lake" + 0.015*"visit" + 0.014*"district" + 0.014*"place" + 0.0
12*"summer" + 0.012*"post" + 0.011*"tour"
Topic: 9
Words: 0.044*"hotel" + 0.042*"london" + 0.021*"stay" + 0.016*"holiday" + 0.013*"travel" + 0.011*"summer" + 0.011*"night" + 0.01
0*"book" + 0.010*"citi" + 0.009*"best"

```

Figure 6: LDA Output for Ireland and the UK

Figure 6 looks at the LDA output from the UK and Ireland. Here, Topic 0 highlights peoples’ inclinations to embark on vacations even during the pandemic. Topic 1 is about people heading to the north for holidays, both in Britain and in Ireland, which can be explained by the fact that the north of both islands are areas of outstanding beauty where wilderness can be found. Topic 2 indicates that camping and glamping are preferred activities for a weekend staycation to places such as Edinburgh and Devon. Topic 3 relates to holidays with family to coastal destinations during the summer. Topic 4 may be noise, possibly advertisements by London hotels owing to key words such as “book”, “luxury”, “offer”, and “hotel”. Topic 5 indicates that a staycation is planned for Liverpool (a former European Capital of Culture) as part of a bucket list for a UK tour. Respondents were probably looking at a road trip in Topic 6. Topic 7 highlights the preference for a home stay or residing in cottages, whereas Topic 8 showcases that England’s Lake District is a popular destination among

respondents of staycation during summer. Going by the key words in Topic 9, people look forward to spending time in London for an overnight stay.

3.2.3 Australia and New Zealand

```

Topic: 0
Words: 0.129*"travel" + 0.060*"tour" + 0.054*"vacat" + 0.038*"tourism" + 0.031*"check" + 0.015*"sit" + 0.015*"websit" + 0.013
*"recommend" + 0.012*"book" + 0.012*"holiday"
Topic: 1
Words: 0.018*"supportloc" + 0.017*"plan" + 0.016*"book" + 0.016*"weekend" + 0.015*"hotel" + 0.012*"need" + 0.011*"sydney" + 0.0
10*"road" + 0.010*"visit" + 0.009*"citi"
Topic: 2
Words: 0.021*"tour" + 0.019*"stay" + 0.016*"summer" + 0.016*"night" + 0.015*"famili" + 0.014*"enjoy" + 0.013*"travel" + 0.010
*"hotel" + 0.010*"vacat" + 0.009*"free"
Topic: 3
Words: 0.062*"vacat" + 0.061*"tour" + 0.061*"anim" + 0.061*"liverpool" + 0.061*"travel" + 0.060*"southern" + 0.060*"bucketlist"
+ 0.060*"uktour" + 0.060*"alan" + 0.060*"stew"
Topic: 4
Words: 0.024*"camp" + 0.023*"plan" + 0.021*"summer" + 0.015*"tour" + 0.015*"idea" + 0.015*"adventur" + 0.015*"look" + 0.013*"ro
ad" + 0.012*"perfect" + 0.011*"famili"
Topic: 5
Words: 0.030*"tour" + 0.013*"look" + 0.011*"plan" + 0.011*"travel" + 0.010*"famili" + 0.009*"road" + 0.009*"state" + 0.008*"gre
at" + 0.008*"boat" + 0.008*"time"
Topic: 6
Words: 0.025*"road" + 0.022*"plan" + 0.017*"week" + 0.016*"year" + 0.014*"cancel" + 0.013*"summer" + 0.012*"love" + 0.011*"beac
h" + 0.010*"famili" + 0.010*"friend"
Topic: 7
Words: 0.036*"tour" + 0.023*"plan" + 0.022*"book" + 0.014*"supportloc" + 0.011*"summer" + 0.010*"visit" + 0.009*"onlin" + 0.008
*"enjoy" + 0.007*"holiday" + 0.007*"link"
Topic: 8
Words: 0.022*"holiday" + 0.017*"go" + 0.016*"time" + 0.014*"week" + 0.013*"like" + 0.013*"year" + 0.012*"home" + 0.012*"take" +
0.011*"think" + 0.010*"book"
Topic: 9
Words: 0.041*"tour" + 0.025*"stay" + 0.023*"home" + 0.020*"hotel" + 0.015*"supportloc" + 0.014*"holiday" + 0.009*"melbourn" +
0.009*"famili" + 0.008*"luxuri" + 0.007*"overnight"

```

Figure 7: LDA Output for Australia and New Zealand

Figure 7 shows the LDA output for Australia and New Zealand. Topics 0, 2 and 7 are likely to be noise caused by commercial advertisements and are therefore ignored. Topic 1 seems to be related to weekend trips to or from Sydney and peoples' interest in supporting local businesses. Topics 4, 5, and 6 suggest that respondents are likely to travel with family or friends over the weekend on road trips, boat rides, camping, and beaches. Topic 8 contains key words that are too general and, therefore, has been omitted from the analysis. Topic 9 suggests people are interested in spending time in luxury hotels with family in Melbourne. It can be noted that the term support local appears in a few topics. Topic 3, it can be noted, lists out "UKtour"; this was found to be a geo-coding error (Liverpool is a city in England, but it is also the name of a suburb of Sydney, Australia).

3.2.4 United States and Canada

```
Topic: 0
Words: 0.072*"florida" + 0.022*"miami" + 0.020*"hotel" + 0.016*"book" + 0.016*"night" + 0.014*"washington" + 0.014*"stay" + 0.013*"need" + 0.013*"vacat" + 0.011*"time"
Topic: 1
Words: 0.042*"travel" + 0.034*"austin" + 0.028*"florida" + 0.028*"vacat" + 0.021*"georgia" + 0.014*"weekend" + 0.014*"miami" + 0.013*"destin" + 0.012*"beach" + 0.012*"texas"
Topic: 2
Words: 0.013*"stay" + 0.013*"canada" + 0.013*"seattl" + 0.013*"diego" + 0.012*"home" + 0.011*"resid" + 0.010*"plan" + 0.010*"texas" + 0.010*"time" + 0.009*"best"
Topic: 3
Words: 0.060*"chicago" + 0.035*"colorado" + 0.029*"texas" + 0.024*"summer" + 0.020*"travel" + 0.015*"adventun" + 0.014*"alberta" + 0.012*"februari" + 0.012*"outdoor" + 0.011*"famili"
Topic: 4
Words: 0.029*"plan" + 0.023*"time" + 0.022*"vacat" + 0.018*"travel" + 0.018*"summer" + 0.017*"florida" + 0.015*"vega" + 0.014*"place" + 0.014*"visit" + 0.012*"perfect"
Topic: 5
Words: 0.025*"hotel" + 0.022*"chicago" + 0.019*"vancouv" + 0.018*"citi" + 0.015*"stay" + 0.014*"vacat" + 0.013*"downtown" + 0.013*"best" + 0.012*"travel" + 0.012*"want"
Topic: 6
Words: 0.021*"florida" + 0.019*"travel" + 0.015*"romant" + 0.014*"keywest" + 0.013*"ticket" + 0.012*"famili" + 0.012*"diego" + 0.011*"stay" + 0.011*"summer" + 0.010*"hotel"
Topic: 7
Words: 0.060*"vega" + 0.028*"vacat" + 0.022*"weekend" + 0.016*"week" + 0.014*"state" + 0.013*"like" + 0.012*"go" + 0.012*"need" + 0.012*"summer" + 0.012*"trip"
Topic: 8
Words: 0.045*"resid" + 0.037*"livingthedream" + 0.032*"properti" + 0.031*"provinc" + 0.030*"sale" + 0.030*"realest" + 0.030*"type" + 0.029*"agent" + 0.029*"forsal" + 0.029*"holidayathom"
Topic: 9
Words: 0.020*"love" + 0.017*"great" + 0.016*"best" + 0.014*"texas" + 0.013*"beach" + 0.012*"weekend" + 0.011*"day" + 0.011*"visit" + 0.010*"place" + 0.010*"vacat"
```

Figure 8: LDA Output for the United States and Canada

Figure 8 shows the LDA output for the United States and Canada. Topics 0, 1, and 4 highlight peoples' preferences for overnight stays in southern destinations as Miami (Florida), Austin (Texas) and Georgia. Topic 3 suggests that people from Chicago (Illinois), Colorado, and Alberta are likely to embark on adventurous activities during their staycation with families. Topic 5 indicates the preference of some travellers to enjoy staycations in downtown areas of attractive cities such as Vancouver and Chicago. Topic 6 suggests that Key West in Florida is a likely destination for both families and couples. Topic 7 indicates that respondents may visit Las Vegas over the weekend during summer. Topic 8 is a potential advertisement owing to keywords such as "agent" and "sale". Topic 9 indicates a preference for weekend breaches to Texas beach resorts.

3.2.5 Regional Variations

Respondents in Australia and New Zealand tend to undertake staycations even during the pandemic. Some of the most popular staycation destinations include Melbourne and Sydney. Most staycation goers prefer overnight stays with their families – a likely indication that respondents are of a slightly senior age demography. Younger demographics are less likely to undertake staycation compared to overseas travel. Also, trends rise during summers and consists of weekend trips. Road trips and charter boats are also popular in this region.

The observed trend in the UK and Ireland was slightly different. Staycation travel with family may not be as popular compared to Australia and New Zealand – an

indication that it appeals to people of all age groups including younger demographics. Popular locations include Devon, Yorkshire, Edinburgh, Liverpool, London, and Northern Ireland. Staycations rise during summers with a high preference for hotels with swimming pools and self-catering cottages. Some of the most popular activities include camping and “glamping” (that is, glamorous camping). Holidaymakers are also more likely to visit areas with beaches and are not as particular about road trips as people from Australia and New Zealand (which is not surprising, given that Ireland/UK is geographically much more compact than Australia/New Zealand).

As most cities mentioned in the output are in Britain, we can safely infer that staycations are more popular in Britain as compared to Ireland. However, the population of around 66 million in Britain is far greater than that of the entire island of Ireland (7 million) so this is likely to also be reflected in the number of tweets.

In the USA and Canada, staycations are popular during the summer – a trend observed in other regions as well. Popular destinations include Florida, Georgia, Chicago, Washington, Las Vegas, Colorado, Texas, Alberta and Vancouver. A striking feature is that most of them have beaches which may be popular for staycation goers. Topics suggest that staycation may not be as popular in Canada as it is in the USA, with Vancouver and Alberta being the two regions highlighted, both lying at the US border. However, the population of the US at 331 million greatly exceeds that of Canada at 38 million. Also, the US, Canada, and Australia being larger countries have major population centres and highly developed roadways. Smaller cities in the region may, therefore, not receive mentions.

4 CONCLUSION

This project investigates staycation trends around the world in addition to looking at patterns and business opportunities in Ireland. In doing so, it analyses data from social media platforms, primarily Twitter using the Python Wrapper for Twitter. Subsequently, Natural Language Processing (NLP) was used to pre-process the data. Sentiment and content analyses were both employed to investigate whether respondents the world over were favourably disposed towards staycation and identify trends and opportunities. The analyses revealed that a majority of people (almost 59%) were positively inclined towards staycation whereas negative sentiments were expressed by less than 10%.

For content analysis, it was decided to employ LDA within topic modelling and extract ten topics out of the data. The results were instrumental in identifying

regional variations, for example, in UK and Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, and the United States and Canada. It could be noted that, across the globe, people were interested in identifying an ideal place for staycation during the pandemic. Our study also reveals that respondents were likely to spend their time in relaxed environments such as luxury hotels or even beaches. The tendency to embark on staycation activities particularly rises during the summers. An interesting insight is that during the pandemic people increasingly took the initiative to support local businesses and contribute to the local economy.

Coming to regional variations, we find that trends in Australia and New Zealand, US and Canada, and UK and Ireland exhibit differences. While respondents in Australia and New Zealand were more interested in road trips as they turned out to be economical, data from the UK does not suggest such a strong interest. Also, staycation goers in the UK and Ireland were more inclined towards activities such as glamping and camping with a preference towards staying in cottages whereas data from Australia and New Zealand suggest a bias towards road trips and boat rides. Most people in the UK and Ireland who undertook staycations belonged to a younger demography compared to ones in Australia and New Zealand who belonged to a slightly older age group. However, in both cases, beaches were widely preferred, and staycation activities were more prominent during summers. Data from the United States and Canada also highlight destinations with beaches as being very popular especially during summer.

In an era that has witnessed lockdowns and economic crisis around the world, staycations have the potential to contribute to economic growth.

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Author Biographies

Michael Lang is an Associate Professor in Business Information Systems at the School of Business & Economics, National University of Ireland, Galway. He obtained his Bachelors degree from University College Dublin, Higher Diploma and Masters degree from NUI Galway, and PhD from University of Limerick.

Manik Lochan is a Business Intelligence Analyst with MiFinity. He obtained his Bachelor of Technology degree from Jaypee Institute of Information Technology, India and his M.Sc. in Business Analytics from National University of Ireland, Galway.

Email: maniklochan@gmail.com

Nanda Kumaran Unni Nair is part of the global analytics team at Dataminr. He holds a Masters degree in Business Analytics from the National University of Ireland, Galway and a Masters degree in Media Management from Cardiff University.

Email: nair.unni86@gmail.com

Venkatesh Srinivasan is a Data Analyst with Spanish Point Technologies. He obtained his Bachelors degree from Sri Venkateshwara College of Engineering and Technology, India and his M.Sc. in Business Analytics from National University of Ireland, Galway.

Email: vickyvenkat3019@gmail.com

Ankith Kumar Makam Venugopal is a Service Delivery Engineer with SAP. He obtained his Bachelors degree from SJB Institute of Technology, India and his M.Sc. in Business Analytics from National University of Ireland, Galway.

Email: ankithkumar349@gmail.com