

1. Projects



Tourism flows and visitor density in European destinations during and after the Covid-19 pandemic

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This report presents an analysis of cultural and nature tourism in Europe, utilizing an innovative, big data approach based on user-generated content from a leading travel portal. By moving beyond traditional data sources, the study offers deeper insights into the dynamics of the tourism sector, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The data collected will be available to other researchers upon request to the Mobile Lives Forum.

Research participants

- Karol J. Borowiecki

Research Scope and Methodology

The research leverages a vast dataset from a leading travel portal, encompassing ca. 7 million reviews, to understand changes in tourist behavior and preferences. Covering the period from January 2016 to March 2022, the study focuses on three key European countries: Denmark, France, and Spain. The research uses computer-science techniques and econometric methods, such as regression analysis, to dissect and interpret large-scale tourism data. The approach is validated in a comparison of the novel data used here with existing tourism statistics. Furthermore, the study also uses the Oxford Government Response Tracker to assess how trends in tourism were affected by national policies to limit mobility during the pandemic.

Key Findings

The study confirms shifts in European cultural and nature tourism noted during the Covid-19 pandemic. It documents and measures a pronounced preference for outdoor and less crowded destinations, signifying a substantial change in tourist behavior. During the pandemic when they were able to travel, tourists increasingly favored nature-oriented experiences and destinations off the beaten path, diverging from pre-pandemic trends that favored popular and often congested tourist spots. If these trends are sustained beyond the period studied, they may be indicative of broader changes in tourist behavior. In this report we show how big data can help us understand the magnitude and evolution of these changes. The research also sheds light on the popularity of various tourist attractions. This research is particularly adept at monitoring broad trends in tourism activity and provides insights at international, national, and regional levels, making the pursued approach a valuable tool for understanding large-scale changes in the tourism sector. Additionally, the study provides a unique perspective by leveraging big data from a leading travel portal. A comparison with official tourism data, such as Eurostat statistics, validates the reliability of the novel approach pursued here, highlighting its potential as a complementary tool for tourism studies. Limitations of the Approach

While innovative, our study acknowledges certain limitations inherent to using big data extracted from user-generated content. These include potential gaps in data where users (tourists) do not leave reviews for every trip, and the absence of detailed user demographics. Additionally, the study employs the Oxford Covid-19 Government Response Tracker's stringency index and categorizes attractions as indoor or outdoor, which, while effective for broad analysis, may not capture every nuance of some sites. However, these limitations do not significantly detract from the overall validity and value of the findings.

Conclusion

This research provides a nuanced understanding of the European cultural and nature tourism landscape, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. The use of big data from a leading travel platform offers a new perspective in tourism studies, albeit with certain limitations. These insights are valuable for comprehending the current state and potential future trajectories of the tourism industry in Europe.

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Mobility

For the Mobile Lives Forum, mobility is understood as the process of how individuals travel across distances in order to deploy through time and space the activities that make up their lifestyles. These travel practices are embedded in socio-technical systems, produced by transport and communication industries and techniques, and by normative discourses on these practices, with considerable social, environmental and spatial impacts.

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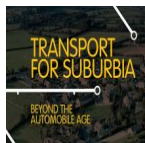
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