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Worldwide trends in online searches for the term SPA

Abstract. Online search trend volumes can provide free, quick, and relevant information about users' online interests. So far there has been no study of YouTube search trends related to the spa industry. The article explores online search volumes for the term "spa" with the most popular geographic search locations related to YouTube searches over between 2008 and 2021. In particular, the analysis is based on data from Google Trends for the beauty & fitness content category on YouTube regarding the term "spa" to determine search trends, regional interests, and related searches. During the reference time period, the number of searches for the word "spa" systematically increased. The highest freqency of searches was observed in Sri Lanka. The majority of related searches focused on relaxation and beauty. Results of regional and temporal variations in YouTube searches for the term spa can provide tourism/health professionals with useful insights into user search behaviours.

Keywords: spa trends, beauty and fitness, online searching, search volume index, Google Trends, YouTube

JEL Codes: I1, L83, Z3

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1. Introduction

Reporting tools like Google Trends have made it easier to analyse keywords and topics that Internet users search for. The site ranks topics people have googled

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within various categories such as image, news, shopping. There is a separate ranking for YouTube content, where one can explore traffic patterns over time, including geography, and compare the popularity of various search terms. This data is freely available to Internet users in the form of graphs showing the frequency at which specific words, phrases, or subjects have been searched for over time, making it a valuable tool for discovering the best insights.

Various studies have been conducted on health-related topics using the Google Trends tool. Previous studies have shown that individuals' online search behavior can be used to make inferences about the spread of diseases (Lampos et al., 2019). As regards methodology, studies on health-related issues based on information from Google Trends have made use of visualization and general time series analysis, seasonality, correlations, predictions or forecasting, modeling or other statistical methods. Relatively few studies have used Google Trends data to make forecasts concerning health-related topics, which means that there is a research gap when it comes to the application of forecasting methods (Mavragani et al., 2018).

This article focuses on spas, which are becoming an increasingly popular health-related subject. The International Spa Association[1] defines spas as "places devoted to overall well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body and spirit." "The term 'spa' became popular after it was first associated with other natural mineral water or hot springs and then adapted to describe businesses that provide similar ways to relax and rejuvenate" (Ellis, 2008, p. 68). Massages, body scrubs, hot baths, facials, waxing, and nail care are only a few of the wellbeing and wellness treatments available at a spa. Despite its development, the spa industry's concepts are still largely unexplored. This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by analysing trends in online searches for the term spa by focusing on changes over time and space and related search queries. In particular, the first aim was to explore Internet users' understanding of the term spa and their use of YouTube to search for spa-related content. The second aim was to evaluate trends in online searches for the word spa, particularly spa-related preferences of users and implications for businesses. The third aim was to use the search trend data to make forecasts.

2. Literature review

2.1. Online search trends

"As consumers become more dependent on the Internet for product information, their reliance on search engines as a gateway increases. This has opened

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[1] https://experienceispa.com/

a promising new avenue for tracking shifts in consumer interest by monitoring changes in the intensity of searches for various product-related keywords" (Du et al., 2015, p. 30). Nowadays, Internet users look for target goods or services using various web tools before making a purchasing decision. Health-related searches are the most common. "Over 70% of adults search the internet for health and healthcare related information. YouTube is one of the most dominant sources of online information, with over 2 billion users generating billions of daily views. The strength of YouTube, as compared with other social media platforms, lies in its judicious use of audio and visual communication, making it readily accessible to individuals from all demographic backgrounds. YouTube is a powerful educational tool that healthcare professionals can mobilise to disseminate information and influence public behaviour" (Li et al., 2020, p. 1-2).

"Ettredge et al. (2005), who focused on the U.S. unemployment rate, were the first to propose that web search data could be helpful in predicting economic statistics. Cooper et al. (2005) mentioned using Internet search data for health-related topics" (Choi & Varian, 2012, p. 3). Following these, numerous articles have focused on web search data in a variety of fields. For example, a study by Dinis et al. (2019, p. 1) reviewing studies from 2012 to 2017, found that the use of "Google Trends data in tourism and hospitality research increased dramatically, mainly for tourism nowcasting" and assessing the popularity of tourism attractions or locations based on user queries. "In 2009, Google began the release of its users' search queries through a publicly accessible interface. The rapid expansion of the Internet into all aspects of modern life together with Google's dominance in the search engine market give the company a central role in the collection of market intelligence. The publication of user search queries offers researchers the tantalizing possibility to observe the interests of society in real time without carrying out costly surveys" (Swallow & Labbé, 2013, p. 1).

2.2. Spa trends

Spas are relaxing and rejuvenating environments that combine aesthetic treatments with relaxation therapies and natural products (Loureiro et al., 2013). The word "spa" has been quickly embraced by related medical and tourism companies. The spa industry has expanded dramatically worldwide since its inception in the mid-twentieth century. Each with its own business model, spas of various types are contributing to this development, including day spas, hotel-based spas, resort spas, and destination spas. Regardless of their type, most spas provide massage and nutrition-related services (Tabacchi, 2010; Cohen & Bedeker, 2010). Shifting lifestyles, the growth of health tourism, and the dynamically growing

population aging rate have shown the importance of the spa industry (Kraftova et al., 2011). The global spa industry has seen recent growth (estimated to be worth 119 billion USD) due to consumer interest in health and wellness (Buxton & Michopoulou, 2021).

Interest in this niche health tourism category has increased in the new millennium. Limited studies on the subject "spa" can be classified as follows: experiences and attitudes of spa tourists (users, goers, etc.) (Nilsen, 2013; Lo et al., 2015; Choi et al., 2016; Trihas & Konstantarou, 2016; Szromek & Wybranczyk, 2019; Koskinen & Wilska, 2019; Anaya-Aguilar et al., 2021; Buxton & Michopoulou, 2021), segmentation of spa users (Mak et al., 2009; Kucukusta & Guillet, 2016; Guo et al., 2016; Dryglas & Rozycki, 2017; Han et al., 2019; Huh et al., 2019), spa management-marketing (Monteson & Singer, 1992, 2004; Mandelbaum & Lerner, 2008; Hodari et al., 2014), spa brands (Leeet al., 2014; Shin et al., 2018). Most of those studies have focused on the experiences and attitudes of tourists. There are also many destination-oriented studies.

3. Research method

Google Trends has been used in a number of previous studies. Their authors do not specify any restrictions on its use (Nuti et al., 2014). In the following study, searches for the term "spa" in the YouTube beauty-fitness sub-category were collected from Google trends between 2008-2021 and were converted into tables and charts. The search data include a 13-year time series from 1 January 2008 (starting date of available data) to 31 March 2021. Search data are normalized, which means that each data point representing a given location and time range is divided by the total searches to indicate its relative popularity. The resulting numbers are scaled on a range from 0 to 100 depending on the proportion of all searches in all topics, where 100 indicates the proportionally most popular search in a given location. The value of 50 indicates an area that is half as popular. A value of 0 indicates a location with low volume for a given search term. Places where the term "spa" was the most popular during a given period are also listed (Table 1).

Graphs and tables displaying the percentages of topic entities and users' searches were created using Excel. Linear trend/regression for nine months (from March to December 2021) was used to create a forecast for 9 months of 2021. The regression equation and R-squared value were calculated to check whether the regression model fits the data. Winter's additive method was used to calculate 9-month forecast estimates.

4. Findings

Interest in the term "spa" in YouTube searches in the beauty fitness category shows a linear increase between 2008 and 2021 (Chart 1). The highest interest was recorded in September 2019, as indicated by the value of 100. The mean percentage was 44.26. A comparison of search volumes over 5-year periods shows a regular increase. In the period 2008-2012 the average number of searches was 29 March, in the period 2013-2017, it was 53.65 and in the last four years (2018 – 31 March 2021), it was 74.56; based on this trend it was projected to increase in the remaining 9 months of 2021. To find the line of best fit, Excel employs the least-squares method. The R-squared was equal to 0.87, which means that the regression line is well fitted to the data. The closer the line gets to 1, the better it matches the results. The available data were used to predict the number of searches for spa in the last 9 months of 2021. Interest over time also was illustrated using seasonal trend averages.

Chart 1. YouTube search volume for the term "spa" over the period 2008-2021

Worldwide searches for spa in the beauty-fitness category

$y = 0{,}3936x + 18{,}104$

$R^2 = 0{,}8712$
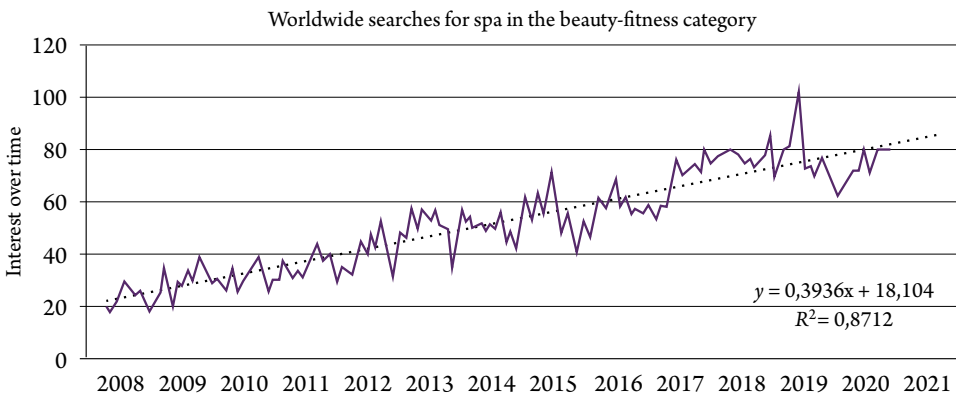
Source: own elaboration.

As can be seen in Chart 2, the volume of searches for the term spa increased in the months of summer and autumn and decreased during the months of November and December.

Charts showing seasonal means (Chart 3) also show overall increases for all seasons, with the exception of 2020, when the search volumes fell in spring, summer and fall.
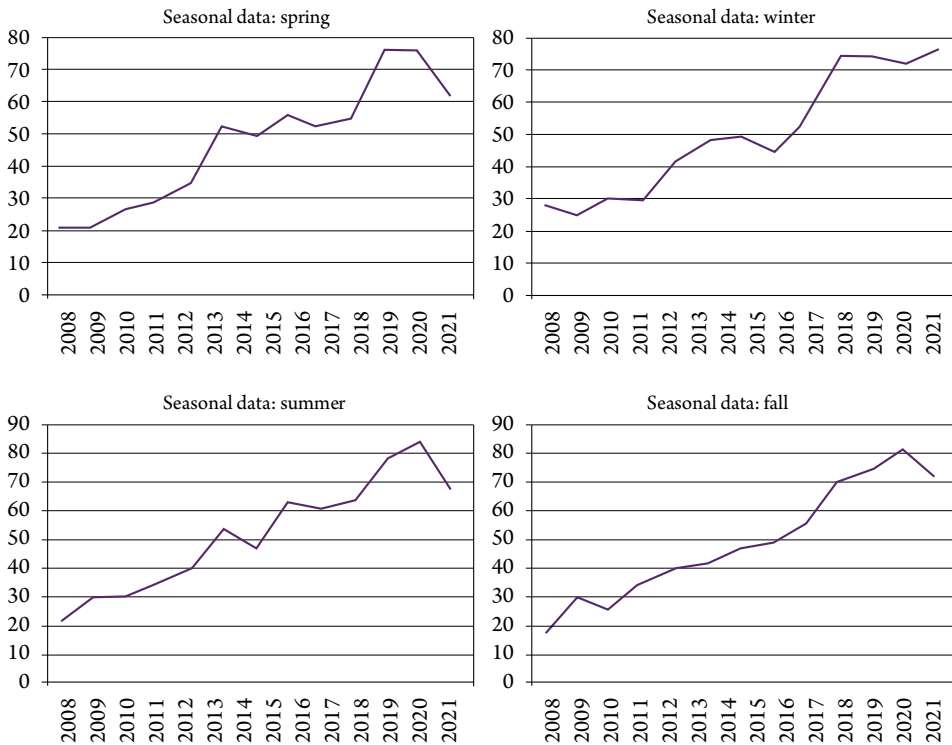
Places with the highest volume of searches for the term spa worldwide are listed in Table 1. Here, the value of 100 represents a location where the term spa

Chart 2. Prediction for 9 months of 2021
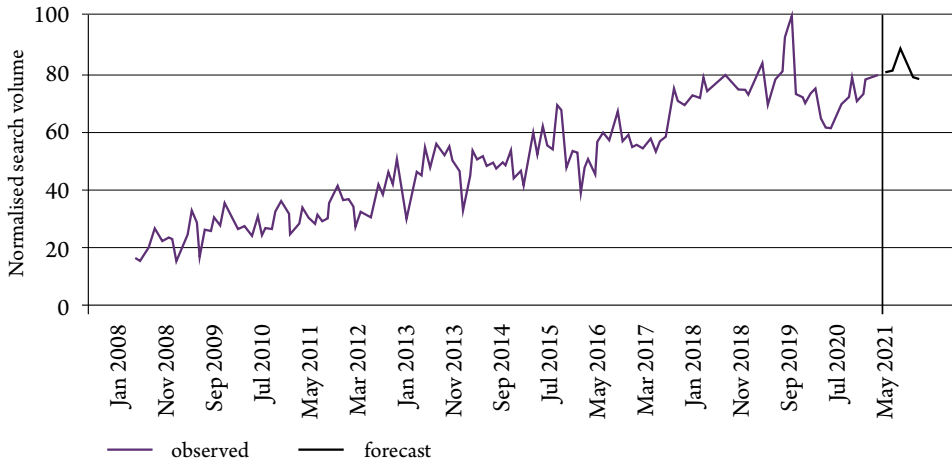
Source: own elaboration.

Chart 3. Seasonal trends (2008-2021)

Source: own elaboration.

Table 1. Searches for "spa" by country & city in the period 1.01.2008 – 31.03.2021

Country	Highest	Spa (volume)	City	Spa (volume)
Sri Lanka	**May 2016**	**100**	**Howrah** (India)	**100**
Singapore	Apr 2017	70	Mumbai (India)	70
India	Mar 2013	64	Chandigarh (India)	64
UAE	Mar 2016		Ahmedabad (India)	53
Canada	Mar 2020	62	New Delhi (India)	52
Bangladesh	Nov 2009		Pune (India)	51
Estonia	Dec 2011	51	Bengaluru (India)	42
United Kingdom	Sept 2019		Quezon City (Philippines)	38
Philippines	Jan 2014		Jakarta (Indonesia)	34
Malaysia	Sept 2008		Chennai (India)	34
Indonesia	Aug 2008	48	Surabaya (Indonesia)	34
South Africa	Sept 2008		Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)	31
Hong Kong	Jul 2013		London (United Kingdom)	31
Australia	Sept 2019	43	Hyderabad (India)	31
Norway	Sept 2020		Indore (India)	30
Ireland	Aug 2019	40	New York (United States)	30
United States	Mar 2021		Raipura (Bangladesh)	22
Qatar	Nov 2008	37		
Puerto Rico	Apr 2009			
Lithuania	Jan 2020			
Switzerland	Sept 2019			
New Zealand	Jul 2020	32		
Sweden	Jul 2015			
Slovakia	Sept 2019			

Source: own elaboration.

was proportionally the most popular one of all searches made from that locatio. The value of 50 indicates aa location where the term was half as popular. 0 indicates a place where there was not enough data in the Google database.

When searches are analysed by country and city, the three countries with the largest number of searches are from the Asia-Pacific region. It is striking that no search volumes were recorded for China. This is because not enough data were available from China, where the Baidu search engine is much more popular than Google. All countries in the table, except Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, are located in the northern hemisphere. The first three cities with the largest volume of searches are all located in India.

Table 2 shows specific searches related to the term "spa." The frequency of searched topics is represented on a scale from 0 to 100, where 100 indicates the most frequently searched term, while 50 represent a query searched half as fre-

Table 2. Related queries

TOP Related Queries	Volume	RISING Related Queries	Volume
Spa hair	100	Spa music	Breakout
Spa music	70	Spa relaxation	Breakout
Spa massage	65	Relaxation spa music	Breakout
Massage	65	Home hair spa	Breakout
Home spa	52	Hair spa at home	Breakout
Spa relaxation	50	Spa asmr	Breakout
Spa at home	50	Spa for hair	Breakout
Relaxation spa music	49	Loreal hair spa	Breakout
Spa day	42	How to spa hair at home	Breakout
Home hair spa	41	Hair spa cream	Breakout
Hair spa at home	39	Ga spa	Breakout
Spa asmr	31	Full body spa	Breakout
Body spa	27	Hair spa at parlour	Breakout
Spa treatment	21	Massage asmr	Breakout
Relaxing spa	15	Full body massage spa	Breakout
Spa for hair	14	Hair spa treatment	Breakout
Facial spa	14	Acne treatment	Breakout
Spa salon	12	How to do hair spa	Breakout
Spa body massage	12	How to do spa at home	Breakout
Foot spa	10	Loreal hair spa at home	Breakout
Loreal hair spa	10	Spa music relaxation long	Breakout
Galvanic spa	9	Spa music relaxation long playlist	Breakout
Beauty spa	9		
Spa hot	9		
How to spa hair at home	9		

Source: own elaboration.

quently. Queries with the most significant increase in search frequency over the previous year are known as rising search queries. The number of searches marked with the word „breakout" increased dramatically, as they were relatively recent and had seldom been searched for before. Top related searches featured in the categories of body care, beauty products and relaxation. Spas are also increasingly hiring dedicated retail staff and opening online shops, using YouTube, as well as expanding their product offerings beyond skin care to include food, home furnishings, clothing, music, drinks, handicrafts, and gift items. They recommend products, as evidenced by their use of YouTube videos.

Users searching for the term spa also searched for topics listed in Table 3. The frequency of searched topics is represented on a relative scale from 0 to 100,

Table 3. Related topics

TOP Related	Volume	RISING	Volume
Spa – Topic	100	Parlour	Breakout
Day Spa – Topic	54	Hotel	Breakout
Relaxation – Topic	20	Foot spa	Breakout
Day –Unit of time	11	Thai massage	Breakout
Resort –Topic	6	Relaxation	+1.000%
		Day spa	+450%
		Day	+300%
		Resort	+200%
		Spa	+200%

Source: own elaboration.

where 100 indicates the most frequently searched topic, while 50 represent a topic searched half as frequently. Topics with the most significant increase in search frequency over the previous year are known as rising search topics. The number of searches marked with the word "breakout" increased dramatically, as they were new and had seldom been searched for before. Related topics mainly include hair, face and body care, massage and music searches used for relaxation. Manicures and massages are examples of treatments offered by day spas, such as Elizabeth Arden's Red Door Salon, considered to be the first day spa, that opened in New York in the early twentieth century.

Hot tub spas, also known as jacuzzis, are now widespread in hotels, fitness centers, health spas, and swimming pools. The topic "parlour" refers to beauty parlour-salons, which is used for beauty routines, mostly by female consumers. Thai massage is another rising trend, which is an attractive branch of spa industry for job seekers.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Search trends provide usefule information for researchers and businesses all over the world. In line with previous studies (Little, 2013; Dimitrovski & Todorovic, 2015; Marwiyah, 2018; Koskinen & Wilska, 2019; Harwiyati, 2019), it was found that the term "spa" is related with beauty, relaxation, body care, and wellness. Generally, the term spa includes body care before or after a shower. According to Ellis (2008, p. 68), "while some people still feel that any definition of spa must include water-based therapies, this is unlikely to be a winning argument in the future. Studies show that consumers in many parts of the world no longer consider water therapies to be a component of their defintion of spa."

The study showed that between 2008 and 2021 interest in the term spa around the world kept increasing, especially in Sri Lanka. "Following the end of the civil war in 2009, the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) started more serious steps to grow the country's tourism business by offering a variety of tourism products, including spa and wellness tourism. This has resulted in a tremendous increase in the spa-wellness tourism industry in Sri Lanka, which has grown from 447,890 in 2009 to 2,333,796 in 2018" (Sivanandamoorth, 2021, p. 5). "Minor Hotels opened its third Sri Lankan property at the end of 2015, while Shangri-La has just revealed a 145-acre (59-hectare) resort in Hambantota boasting a signature Chi, The Spa. Other global operators are looking to make their mark this year too. Onyx is introducing its Amari brand in Galle, with the 172-room resort featuring a branded Breeze Spa; Riu Hotels is unveiling a 500-room property featuring a Renova Spa in Ahungalla, through a joint venture with Aitken Spence; and Sheraton is arriving with two properties (both incorporating spas) in Colombo and Kosgoda" (Spa Business, 2016). As a result, Sri Lanka is reclaiming its place on the world map. The country has a lot of promise as a new therapeutic destination, which is where spas fit in. Sri Lanka's renewed tourism landscape is attracting new spa brands. Effective tourism-spa management and strong spa procedure techniques are the foundations of Singapore's spa industry.

Another remarkable case is that of Estonia, which has a long history of providing spa and wellness services (Koskinen, 2019). "The country's spa traditions date back hundreds of years. One of the reasons such resorts developed here was the local mud famed for its therapeutic qualities. Pärnu, Haapsalu, Kuressaare and Narva-Jõesuu have been fashionable resorts since the 1820s, while Värska, Kubija, Pühajärve, Toila, Viimsi and of course Tallinn also boast excellent spas" (Health Republic, 2013).

Another striking result is that China is not included in the list of countries showing search results for the term "spa." This is because China, Iran, and North Korea are not included in search data.

Considering the seasonal effect, it has been determined that there is a slightly more interest in spa searches in the spring season. It is thought that pre-summertime people preparing to start socializing more and spend time outdoors is essential in terms of beauty and fitness. Except for the winter season, there was a decrease in interest in all three seasons after the 2019-2020 period. The reason for this is thought to be the COVID-19 outbreak. The graphs show a relatively small increase in the winter season that started in the 2019-2020 period.

Another key finding of the study, which is conistsent with other studies (Piccoli & Watson, 2008; Lo et al., 2015; Guillet & Kucukusta, 2016; Sheng et al., 2022), is that growing personalisation of goods and services is a significant trend in the spa sector. Customers can easily purchase products and services that are directly in front of them thanks to Youtube videos by searching for keywords. They obtain

information and experience. Customers looking for a premium experience do not want stereotypical treatments; instead, they want something more personalized. According to Silvia Angeloni and Claudio Rossi (2020), in today's environment, internet exposure is determined by search engine marketing, which includes daily Google searches. Generic search phrases may have a spillover effect on a future branded search, perhaps resulting in purchase decisions.

The spa industry is now focused on providing customized spa therapies or services in order to provide successful spa treatments to their clients. These services would allow them to improve their treatment outcomes even more. Customers are asked to identify particular skincare issues or body parts they want the therapy to focus on. They can also choose from various body treatments such as soothing, wellness, balancing, or rejuvenate. Spas are focusing on improving their brand positioning to support premium prices in addition to personalized services. "Because the global spa industry is highly fragmented, marketing plays an essential role in differentiating one company from the next. Some spas are simple facilities with not much more than a massage table, while others are luxurious destinations that draw travelers from around the world. Spas cater to a wide variety of clientele who are looking to unplug and find stress relief. Some premier health spas have designed multi-day wellness boot camps for executives with regimented diet plans, physical evaluations, and personalized treatments. Spas have also become a popular alternative for bachelorettes who want to relax and be pampered rather than go clubbing. Others seek out spas in order to attend retreats that focus on mindfulness, or to receive anti-aging skincare treatments" (Market Research Blog, 2021). As Angeloni and Rossi, (2020) points out, with the growing number of online intermediaries and platforms, tourism and hospitality businesses are forced to develop a channel strategy that is both efficient and discriminating. Optimizing the mix of distribution channels by prioritizing the most promising online channels and, as a result, choosing among competing possibilities, could be an effective method. Despite the fact that a multiple online channel strategy may appear to be the more successful technique for increasing online sales volume.

According to Beth McGroarty, Director of Research and PR at the Global Wellness Institute, "The demand for spa services is connected to personal income, tourism, and other demographic trends, but the hectic pace of modern life may also increase the need for these wellness services. What's driving this trend is today's state of unprecedented stress: being connected 24/7, the lack of boundaries between work and life, and the fact that by 2030, 80% of the human population will live in urban, nature- deprived areas. Spas are 'oases' where people can detach from the chaos of daily life, enjoy quiet time, connect to nature, and find a sense of balance" (Market Research Blog, 2021). Spa demand, on the other hand, is rising globally, not just in the United States. "According to Global Information Service Co, the global medical spa market is expected to increase at a compound yearly

growth rate of 13.8 percent in the future, reaching a value of 33.9 billion dollars by 2026. Furthermore, an increase in the number of beauty treatments is likely to be a significant driver of growth" (Liu, 2020, p. 32).

These data can be used for value creation for costumers. Louise Buxton & Eleni Michopoulou (2021, p. 212), points out, "The customer centric view progresses beyond simply being customer oriented, it requires organisations to collaborate with customers, learn from them and adapt to their individual and dynamic needs. The term value co-creation represents an evolution in marketing thought, as it positions consumers as active players in their experience, rather than passive audiences, thus, value is co-created for consumers, through their interactions and customisation of their experiences."

The forecast for the remaining 9 months of 2021 based on the trend line indicated that interest in spa would continue to grow. As Milka Baryakova (2019) indicates, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and other social media platforms actively encourage a healthy lifestyle.

This study was limited to YouTube searches for the term spa in the beauty-fitness category. The author intends to conduct similar analyses for other categories and search methods.

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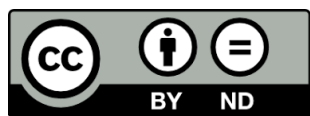
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Światowe trendy wyszukiwań
hasła SPA w Internecie

Streszczenie. Obecnie istnieją możliwości uzyskania szybkiego i bezpłatnego dostępu do danych na temat liczby wyszukiwań w sieci. Do tej pory nie przeprowadzono żadnych badań na temat wyszukiwań dotyczących branży spa w serwisie YouTube. Opisane w artykule badanie dotyczy liczby wyszukiwań terminu „spa" w serwisie YouTube w najpopularniejszych lokalizacjach geograficznych w latach 2008-2021. W badaniu przeanalizowano dane z całego świata dostępne w serwise Google Trends w odniesieniu do treści publikowanych w YouTube w tematycznych kategoriach urody i fitnessu w celu określenia trendów wyszukiwań, regionalnych zainteresowań i wyszukiwań powiązanych. W badanym okresie liczba wyszukiwań słowa „spa" rosła liniowo. Największą liczbę wyszukiwań tego słowa odnotowano na Sri Lance. Większość wyszukiwań powiązanych dotyczyła relaksu i piękna. Zmiany w liczbie wyszukiwań w zależności od regionu i czasu stanowią istotne informacje dla osób pracujących w branży turystycznej/zdrowotnej pozwalające lepiej zrozumieć zachowania użytkowników serwisu YouTube.

Słowa kluczowe: trendy wyszukiwań terminu spa, uroda i fitness, wyszukiwania internetowe, indeks liczby wyszukiwań, Google Trends, YouTube