



# Navigating Uncharted Waters via Web Search Trends: The Impact and Recovery of the Pacific Tourism Industry Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract** *The Tourists' regular leveraging of web searches on Pacific tourism industries in Fiji, indicates insights into macroeconomic behavior during and after the devastating pandemic lookout. In this research, the authors adopted a method of quantitative research to collect and analyze numerical data to identify patterns, relationships, and trends among web search results on accommodation bookings in the Pacific. Statistical examination of tourist web search trends transcends interpretation of tourist preferences, and decision-making processes in the travel and tourism industry. Web search trends during the pandemic have significantly dropped for accommodation bookings in the Pacific. The impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry in the Pacific has been severe, still, there are signs of recovery as Pacific countries slowly reopen their borders and implement travel bubbles with neighboring nations. The industry is expected to recover gradually, but it may take several months before tourist accommodation bookings and web searches return to a stable level. This paper highlights the severe impact of the pandemic on the Pacific tourism industry. It discusses prospects for recovery as countries work towards reopening and revitalizing tourism sectors by optimizing search algorithms and user experiences.*

**Keywords:** Web Search, COVID-19 Impact, Fiji Resorts

## INTRODUCTION

Allotting time for oneself or with the special ones in an oceanic tropical surrounding for vacation could be a memorable life experience in a country like Fiji. In pursuit of tranquility, away from the bustling life in the city, visitors seek to de-stress, rejuvenate, and reset life for a fresh new

beginning. That is where tourists' accommodation bookings with resorts and hotels through online portals are made for a certain period of the stay. Resorts and Spas comprise stunningly classically constructed buildings and bures encircled with oceanic water, embellished with plants with beautified surroundings. It has home-like settings full of entertainment and activities for retreat and relaxation. The

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users, especially the tourist actively interact through the web search browser or web-based travel agency portal most of the time for making bookings for reservations (Park et al., 2019). While users tend to be contingent on their favorite search engines, different search engines turn to produce different search outputs, demanding proprietors' websites to have links to major search engines (Ho & Liu, 2005). Some of the search engines include Google, Ask.com, Bing, Yahoo, Baidu, DuckDuckGo, AOL, Wolfram Alpha, Yandex, and so on (Ho & Liu, 2005). Different search engines also differ in terms of controlling website traffic, searching and extracting information using spider bots, graphical user interfaces, and the types of non-relational databases along with different features and functionalities (Sohrabi, 2019). The search engines enable the tourist to identify and book the Resorts via websites that best meet their selection desire and satisfaction. The accommodation stay of the tourist in Resorts and Spas is often a memorable souvenir of happenings that is taken by tourists upon their return. The Resorts and Spas, mainly use online resort management software (Resort Management Software | Epicor ANZ, n.d.) to design their dynamic reservation websites along with travel agency portals and further have provision for direct booking enabled by user-friendly interfaces. In addition, the resort management software manages all the rest of the online services of Resorts and Spas (Resort Management Software | Epicor ANZ, n.d.) which makes the task easy for the tourist to know the actual cost for a booked stay along with its availability for certain durations. The connectivity and availability of the network enable users to interact vigorously on these responsive websites (Foris et al., 2020). The most popular web search on the online travel agency portal determines the most occupied Resorts and Spas by tourists with better offers in terms of hospitality, facilities, and food and beverage services. It's the Bula smiles, friendliness of people and hospitality, respect for everyone, and traditions, that attract the tourists to accommodate booking and conduct a web search on the Resorts and Spas website of the volcanic island of Fiji. In the Pacific Island countries, Fiji Islands is one of the multi-cultural islands where the culture of every race is respected, and the specially marked days are celebrated with peace and harmony. The tourism industry has made a great contribution to generating revenue for its people, private and public sectors of Fiji (Pratt, 2022). It offers more job opportunities, enables businesses to develop market share, which provides a flexible flow for the transportation industries, motivates construction work in terms of maintenance or upcoming projects for the next visits of tourists (Narayan, 2004), whereby it also enables the local farmers or vendors to supply the fresh produces of vegetables and fruits and handicrafts to Resorts and Spas, contributing to the economy's gross domestic product (GDP) (Narayan, 2004; Pratt, 2022). Ever since, the strike of the global COVID-19 pandemic in Dec 2019 ("WHO

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard," 2020), the Pacific island countries' tourism industries have been greatly affected. From the onset of COVID-19, the restrictions placed on movements to control the spread of the novel pandemic and to break the chain of the contentious disease transmission began on 20th March 2020. Tourist accommodation booking and web searches slowly dropped due to the novel pandemic (Dioko, 2022) which led to the closure of borders for international flights. Businesses opted for work from home (WFH), and hospitality services slowly dropped which led to job losses for the individuals who largely depended on the tourism sector. With the placement of precautionary measures and control of the pandemic imposed by Pacific island countries like Fiji (Travelling to Fiji & COVID-19 Updates | Coronavirus Travel Info | The Official Travel Site of the Fiji Islands, n.d.), the tourist travel, businesses and hospitality services is back on track as new travel norm from 2022. Consequently, there has been an increase in tourist accommodation booking and web searches (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.) for the outstanding ocean views, realistic friendliness, and peace, a place where individuals have a great understanding of one's culture and traditions with a mixture of adventure and relaxation and also to recover from the pandemic. It is the online interaction with the third party online travel agency (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.) namely; booking.com, Agoda.com, Expedia.com, and Hotel.com that portrays all relevant information on the Resorts and Spas to tourist's doorstep within a few clicks. According to the booking.com portal amongst the Pacific Island countries, Fiji's Resort and Spas websites are the most widely interacted (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.). Specifically, this is Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay, InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, an IHG Hotel, Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort, Radisson Blu Resort Fiji Denarau Island, and Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa which will be reviewed in the following sections.

Briefly, this paper will delve into the literature review process, which is then followed by the research methodology, which outlines the various techniques applied in the research. Next, a discussion on the data analysis will follow and the last section contains the conclusion of the paper.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

One of its kind Resort that provides luxury hospitality services (Fiji Resort near Nadi | Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay, n.d.) for visitor accommodation, the five-star Fiji Marriot Momi Bay Resort is located on Savusavu Road at the Momi Bay in Nadi (Fiji Resort near Nadi | Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay, n.d.), which is 38 miles from Nadi International Airport and 36 kilometers or 41 minutes' drive from Port Denarau. The fully furnished luxury standalone

bungalow is built on an artificially created linear waterway over the ocean waters (Fiji Resort near Nadi | Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay, n.d.). The Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay boasts a stunning view of nature prompting tourists to book the accommodation stay for the perfect romantic gateway. The glamorous design of the resort was developed by Fletcher Construction (Fiji), which started the construction on 19th December 2014, according to the owner's and stakeholder's requirements (What We Do | Fletcher Construction, n.d.). The resort comprises 250 guestrooms, and 114 deluxe Bure Villas with 22 overwater bungalows, providing services like free WIFI, iPod docks, relaxation area, and cable TV. The amenities include swimming pools, a conference center, tennis courts, a Kids Club, Health Club, Quan Spa, lounges, watersports activities, a wide selection of restaurants, bars, food outlets, bakeries, and private sandy coves beaches (Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay, Momi – Updated 2023 Prices, n.d.). The resort offers accommodation to stay on the mainland as well. Its official operation began on 8th April 2017 (What We Do | Fletcher Construction, n.d.) and it has not only been positively contributing to the economy's GDP (Pratt, 2022) but also to landowners and local communities. It is one of the properties of the Fiji National Provident Fund (Guo, 2022), and is controlled by Marriott International Inc., which delivers approximately 500 job offers (What We Do | Fletcher Construction, n.d.) to the people of Fiji. The resort's popularity grew because of its captivating architecture over the water and its presence on the virtual platform along with third-party online travel agencies. Being in the Pacific Island Countries, Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay is one of the resorts that tourists browse for its prime facilities, services, and accommodation, via search engines along with online travel agencies (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.). The Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay uses its official website to achieve an online presence, bringing services to the customers' doorstep at an affordable cost. The resort's website utilizes user-generated content (Fiji Resort near Nadi | Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay, n.d.), such as visitor reviews and ratings to gain more exposure, build an assurance for the quality of services, and ascertain an element of trust to the potential customers. The website provides a convenient means to reach out to the customers, with multi-channel communication, responsive forms, and mobile application services built on Adobe Experience Manager content management system (Fiji Resort near Nadi | Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay, n.d.) backing-up with real-time experience of the resorts facilities and amenities with Adobe Experience Cloud with use international language "English" via applied hreflang tag (Fiji Resort near Nadi | Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay, n.d.). The responsive website supports viewing on devices with various screen sizes. Moreover, the website uses Akamai Bot Manager for smooth web search results (Fiji Resort near Nadi | Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay, n.d.), distinguishing between

legitimate and bot traffic and further improving website rankings. It also uses Adobe Dynamic Tag management (Fiji Resort near Nadi | Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay, n.d.) to enhance the visitor experience by improving the interactions and data circulation on the digital marketing platform. The resort uses booking.com, expedia.com, agoda.com, and hotel.com as the marketing and distribution channels for its reservation services. The online travel agency booking.com (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.) provides all relevant information to tourists about the Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay from booking stay to arranging transport services with updated reviews, availability of rooms, the types of rooms available, galleries of facilities, updated prices of services provided, the terms and condition policy and also provides the location map of the resort (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.). From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the occupancy rate dropped and many workers lost their jobs, whereby upon re-opening from COVID-19 impact, the 220 employees rejoined (Fiji Resort near Nadi | Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay, n.d.) the resort for normal operational duties. As of now, the occupancy rate has gradually improved, with COVID-19 precautionary measures imposed by Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay.

InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, an IHG Hotel is one of the finest resorts & Spa that has been facilitating accommodation services for more than 75 years across the globe (Luxury Fiji Resort | InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, n.d.). It is one of the five-star resorts (Luxury Fiji Resort | InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, n.d.) in the Pacific Island countries that is located on the mainland of Viti Levu in Natadola, Sigatoka settled along with Natadola white sandy aqua-blue beach. It is approximately 55- a minute's drive or 42 kilometers from Nadi International Airport. The resort offers a breathtaking view stay and provides an opportunity to enjoy world-class diving and swimming in the Natadola white sandy beaches. The resort has 266 guest rooms and offers 216 appointed resort rooms and 50 luxurious suites at Club InterContinental (Luxury Fiji Resort | InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, n.d.). The InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, an IHG Hotel accommodates club InterContinental lounge, beachfront rooms and suites with breath-taking views, lagoon view rooms and suites, pool view rooms, and garden view rooms (Luxury Fiji Resort | InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, n.d.). Some of the amenities include the spa, gym, restaurant, kids' clubs, kids pool, bar, hot tub, room services, laundry, and business services with the availability of free WiFi (Luxury Fiji Resort | InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, n.d.). More spaced out for relaxation along with the white sandy beach of Natadola that is beautified with tropical gardens and the resort is surrounded by palm trees. This resort is one of the properties that the Fiji National Provident Fund has invested in (Guo, 2022). The resort has immensely contributed to the local communities in education and in

providing job offers, mainly to the Sanasana community and nearby land-owning communities, fostering growth in the economy's gross domestic product (InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, an IHG Hotel - Guest Reservations, n.d.). The popularity of the resort is enhanced by the authentic hospitality provided with the elevated experiences of Fijian culture and traditions. The virtual online presence of the resort has empowered tourists for the regular web search on the resort's official websites to explore on physical design of the resort's facilities and services on the digital platform. The website, which is built with NextGuest custom Content Management System (CMS) (Luxury Fiji Resort | InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, n.d.) enables direct booking by clients and utilizes guest information to provide customized content, driving higher conversion rates. The resort's website is powered by a Nginx web server (Luxury Fiji Resort | InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, n.d.) that improves the security of contents and the accessibility of the website. The instant display of the requested contents, such as images of the amenities, related webpages, availability of the stay, and types of rooms, the website contents is delivered via Amazon CloudFront Content Delivery Network (Luxury Fiji Resort | InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, n.d.) without disruption and with low latency, it delivers the contents at the faster rate to the end-users. In addition, the website is designed to deliver content on various mobile devices with different screen sizes based on the browser's viewport (Luxury Fiji Resort | InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, n.d.). To provide real-time views of the special services, the website uses Vimeo, an online video platform (Luxury Fiji Resort | InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, n.d.), which further assists tourist in choosing their selection of stay. Moreover, the website is integrated with online travel agencies such as booking.com, expedia.com, agoda.com, and hotel.com, which provide the relevant information for reservation booking for the period of stay (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.). From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the resort exposes the precautionary measures to the viewers using the COVID-19 widgets on the website to enforce new travel norms.

Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort is the tropical oasis beachfront resort in the heart of the South Pacific, which is a minutes' drive from Port Denarau Marina, located on Viti Levu, Port Denarau, Nadi, Fiji. The modish zig-zag architectural setup of this five-star resort (Nadi Resort | Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort, n.d.) is near to golf course and a 25-minute drive to Nadi International Airport. The private white sandy beach of the resort facilitates tourists to enjoy full-day spa services. The surrounding of the resort is beautified all over with coconut trees and gardens. The stay at the Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort is enriched with warm Fijian traditions and culture along with activities and performances such as pop-up night market, 'Feet in Sand' ceremonies, local artisans and vendors, rotating art

installations, light shows, live music and many more (Nadi Resort | Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort, n.d.). The resort consists of 300 guest rooms with ocean and garden view rooms, free WiFi, great network coverage, and a supply of free water bottles (Nadi Resort | Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort, n.d.). Some of the amenities include an outdoor tennis court, swimming pool, children's pool, fitness center, day spa, spa tub, facial, hydrotherapy, kids club, restaurant, ATM banking services, library, parking available with meeting rooms and conference room along with computer stations (Nadi Resort | Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort, n.d.). The Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort property investment was largely contributed by the Fiji National Provident Fund (Guo, 2022) and it is providing employment opportunities to the nearby local communities and businesses which has contributed to the economy's GDP (Pratt, 2022). The resort's exceptional hospitality and friendliness of the staff, direct access to the beach, outdoor games, and services encourage tourists to book with Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort on their next visit to the resort. Bookings by tourists are possible through various digital platforms along with the resort's official websites. A well-designed graphical user interface enables tourists to browse with ease the website contents, interact on related pages, and check offer availability, which is built upon Adobe Experience Manager Content Management System (Nadi Resort | Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort, n.d.). The official website's webpage is represented in English language and Chinese with the use of English href lang and Chinese href lang tag attributes (Nadi Resort | Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort, n.d.). The contents of the website are easily viewable from any screen size using the viewport meta tag. The Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort's information on its facilities and amenities is reachable to potential tourists doorstep using Adobe Dynamic Tag Management (Nadi Resort | Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort, n.d.), which also supports delivering the content across multiple digital marketing channels. The website displays contents hosted on the Nginx web server (Nadi Resort | Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort, n.d.). Furthermore, the website accessibility is improved to deliver dynamic content by Web Accessibility Initiative-accessible Rich Internet Application (WAI-ARIA) (Nadi Resort | Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort, n.d.). The tourists are easily able to book for available days and to submit the reviews using MIME sniffing on the website. Subsequently, tourists also efficiently accommodate booking and conduct smooth web searches from the online travel agency portal, such as booking.com, expedia.com, agoda.com, and hotel.com. Due to the restrictions on mobility imposed by the global COVID-19 pandemic, there was a decline in accommodation bookings, resulting in the loss of jobs for many workers. About 600 employees were employed back to Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort in the new travel norm with upgrades in facilities and amenities. The resort had

brought awareness of COVID-19 precautionary protocols using widgets on its website.

Radisson Blu Resort Fiji Denarau Island is a tropical oasis luxury beachfront resort that is settled around blue lagoon swimming pools and tropical gardens on Denarau Island, which is in Nadi. It is one of the five-star Resorts with attractive waterfalls, a private white sandy beach, and private transportation service from Nadi International Airport to the resort (Radisson Blu Resort Fiji - Guest Reservations, n.d.). The family resort is 18 minute's drive from Nadi International Airport and consists of 270 luxurious garden view and lagoon view rooms, suites with free Wi-Fi, an on-site spa, gym, watersports provider, tour desk, Blu Bananas kids club, babysitting services, and access to the Denarau Island Golf and Racquet Club (Radisson Blu Resort Fiji - Guest Reservations, n.d.). The other amenities include world-class cuisine within six diverse dining outlets, meeting amenities that can accommodate up to 150 representatives, cater for the wedding sites and wedding planners, swimming pools, restaurant, housekeeping service, and ATM on-site service (Radisson Blu Resort Fiji - Guest Reservations, n.d.). Tourists do the booking for the hospitable services and the facilities provided by the friendly staff and the management of the Radisson Blu Resort Fiji Denarau Island. Other than that, the resort has provided many job opportunities to the nearby local communities, and local businesses and has immensely contributed to the economy's gross domestic product (Pratt, 2022). The resort's friendly, serene, and supportive local employees represent the charming art of Fijian culture and tradition, which connects the guests as one family of the resort (Radisson Blu Resort Fiji - Guest Reservations, n.d.). Upon the stay, the resort offers various fun-time activities like snorkeling, fishing, on-site entertainment, diving, canoeing, billiards and table tennis, and a tennis court (Radisson Blu Resort Fiji - Guest Reservations, n.d.). The resort offers booking through its websites apart from online travel agencies such as booking.com, hotel.com, fijitravel.com, and tripadvisor.com websites (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.). These online travel agencies display on their websites updated information on the availability of stay for the requested duration, display content all about the resort's services, amenities, and activities offered during the stay, COVID-19 updates, and protocols to adhere to, view reviews, locations of the resort and the type of rooms with special prices. Its robust website displays search results with instant clicks powered by AdsRole search engine optimization, (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.) which improves the tourist's online experiences. When browsing the website, the responsive web page contents are viewable from any digital device's screen. From the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the resort has implemented certain strategies, working from home, and executed short-term and long-term stays in one or two-bedroom suites into apartments (Radisson Blu Resort Fiji - Guest Reservations, n.d.). An employee

of Radisson Blu Resort Fiji Denarau Island operated with limited services, where the staff were on shift-based routine depending on the occupancy of stay and the resort offered special room rates during the pandemic (Radisson Blu Resort Fiji - Guest Reservations, n.d.). In the new travel norm, the resort's operational services slowly shaped, while adhering to COVID-19 precautionary protocols (Radisson Blu Resort Fiji - Guest Reservations, n.d.).

Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa is one of the French Luxury resorts and spas in the South Pacific countries that is located at Denarau Island in Nadi (Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa - Live the French Way, n.d.). It is one of the five-star beachfront Resort and Spa with a tropical garden that consists of 298 guest rooms and is a 17-minute drive from Nadi International Airport or 15 15-minute walk to Port Denarau and Denarau beach (Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa - Live the French Way, n.d.). It offers tourists access to the large lagoon pool, three restaurants, and a day spa with free WiFi (Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa - Live the French Way, n.d.). The amenities namely; night club, family pool, bar, facial facilities, business facilities, gift shop, fitness center, and ATM service along with English, French, Hindi, Korean, and Chinese language services (Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa - Live the French Way, n.d.). Tourists book with Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa to enjoy the outstanding facilities and services and to experience the ambiance of the Fijian culture, tradition, and the spirit of French Art. Some of the services the resort offers include outdoor entertainment and family services, cleaning services, safety and security services, spa service, fishing, canoeing, movie night, and water sports among other hospitality services offered by the resort (Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa - Live the French Way, n.d.). The resort also offers one of its one-of-a-kind conference spaces with multiple options for choosing meeting venues, reaffirmation of vows venues, and birthday and occasion setup (Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa - Live the French Way, n.d.). Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa has been providing job opportunities to the local communities, enabling vendors to supply fresh produce fruits and vegetables, and presenting opportunities for local businesses to supply services, which has contributed to the growth of the economy's gross domestic product (Pratt, 2022). The resort's official website enables tourists to make the booking for a certain period of stay along with an online travel agency portal (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.). The website presents information to tourists on accommodation, gastronomy, clubs and lounges, spas and health, meetings, and weddings along with updated galleries. The tourists can navigate through a full-screen slideshow of the contents of the resort and many of the blogs are managed with WordPress Content Management System and using Yoast search engine optimization plugins, TripAdvisor widgets, and WordPress plugins (Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa - Live the French Way, n.d.). The contents of the website are delivered in real-time using Amazon CloudFront Content Delivery

Network (Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa - Live the French Way, n.d.), which is viewable from any digital device using the Viewport Meta tag. The Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa's website uses the Sitelink search box (Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa - Live the French Way, n.d.) to display search content on the website. The resort staff and management were greatly affected by the novel COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 where 166 staff including management were jobless from the closure of the international border and restrictions on the movements. Consequently, staff were supported via paid weekly relief packages from the day the resort was closed due to the global pandemic (Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa - Live the French Way, n.d.). During the time of closure, it was in a renovation process with the development of new rooms, amenities, and activities for new travel norms, including special package offers and job opportunities whilst adhering to COVID-19 protocols (Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa - Live the French Way, n.d.).

## ONLINE TRAVEL AGENCY

The online travel agency portals provide customer service on a global scale to tourists, facilitating ease of booking via portals, such as booking.com, expedia.com, hotel.com, agoda.com, and tripadvisors.com (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.). It is the internet-based all-in-one marketing program (Angeloni & Rossi, 2021) that assists tourists in exploring and booking their preferred resorts, flights, and travel services and supports the tourism industry through online marketing (Talwar et al., 2020) of the resort facilities and services (Ku & Fan, 2009). The widespread use of mobile devices provides a convenient means to search for and compare prices, facilities, and services of various resorts along with the help of customer ratings and reviews (Angeloni & Rossi, 2021). According to the scholars, the online travel agency is an innovative tool that supports one of the recovery plans of the tourism industry by promoting the special package deals of accommodation services of the resorts and connecting them to domestic and international customers during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Ku & Fan, 2009). Therefore, policies, terms, and conditions for marketing accommodation and travel products must be communicated to online travel agencies by the tourism stakeholders and the government (Ku & Fan, 2009). The online reservation services act as the tour operators that provide the leading edge graphical user interfaces (GUI), which enables the visitors to view resorts' latest blogs, check the available dates, prices, amenities, rating, geographical location, hotel policies and the types of rooms available (Ku & Fan, 2009) with hotel-related services application programming interfaces (API) (The Importance of APIs in the Online Travel Industry - SOLSYS, n.d.) that supports for smooth flow of tourism services. The API transfers the requested prices and availability

information from the resort's databases and servers to the online travel agencies' websites (The Importance of APIs in the Online Travel Industry - SOLSYS, n.d.), which provides rich functionalities in assisting guests to check their reservation status. The tourism industry's online services through online travel agencies are operational "twenty-four seven", and are globally reachable to travelers with different languages, stirring growth in the business (Angeloni & Rossi, 2021). The online travel agency provides customer services for searches and bookings and viewing booking services via Apache Hadoop (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.), which handles and arranges pre-set data models accordingly and acts as predictive analytics with the transactions made by the guests. Online travel agencies not only furnish guests with the required information but also manage the needed guests' confidential information. Online reservation services enable tourists to plan for their vacation with a cost-effective approach. Tourists can add reviews and comments without any difficulties with the widgets provided on the webpage of an online travel agency (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.). Very confidently tourism industry gains the potential customer's trust (Talwar et al., 2020) from the reviews posted by the former guests. Practically with zero programming skills, the resorts and spa directors are easily able to manage the contents on the backend of the websites along with online travel agencies and also the front where the guests interact (Talwar et al., 2020). From website tracking and analytics, studying tourists' online behavior and web search data, and using single and multiple linear regression techniques, the tourism industry effectively improves facilities and hospitality services (Bambang Winarko & Husna, 2020), significantly improving customer satisfaction. On the digital platform, tourist vigorously looks forward to high-quality customer service with the online travel agency in terms of reduced access time, effort, and cost. The travel agency booking.com is most widely used amongst the businesses and tourism sector and provides personalized customer service (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.). Its contents are created via bookmark.com Content Management System (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.) that offers better search engine optimization, advanced analytics, drag-and-drop editors, image editors, custom forms, and translations (Angeloni & Rossi, 2021). Also, booking.com provides a secure online platform for the tourism industries and guests to collaborate and conduct business for one's needs (Talwar et al., 2020) that acts as the travel distribution model, which connects with travel customers, destination management companies, retail travel agents, and tourism operators. Finally, online travel agencies provide beneficial support to the tourism industry in creating awareness globally of the resorts and spas' facilities, and services and consequently increasing the market share in the industrial sector, tourism sector (Bambang Winarko & Husna, 2020), and guest globally along with multi-lingual marketing strategies (Talwar et al., 2020).

## COVID-19 Impact on the Tourism Industry in the Pacific

COVID-19 is an infectious disease triggered by the novel Coronavirus, which spread out from Wuhan China, in December 2019, which results in serious fever, sore throat, and dry cough where the patients have difficulty in breathing and require special medical care attention in isolation (“COVID-19: Impact of Lockdown on Tourism & Hospitality Industry,” 2021). The strike of the global pandemic in the Pacific Islands region on 20th March 2020 affected all the sectors of the economy, mainly the tourism industry (Kumar & Patel, 2022), where hotel and airline bookings dropped significantly (“COVID-19: Impact of Lockdown on Tourism & Hospitality Industry,” 2021). Travelers had to abide by the national protocol after returning from infected countries and were required to self-quarantine for fourteen days and continue the self-quarantine if the swab result was positive upon checking with respective doctors (“COVID-19: Impact of Lockdown on Tourism & Hospitality Industry,” 2021). Consequently, the tourism sector was at high risk of losing economic growth in the Pacific region (Pratt, 2022), as the tourism industry provides multiple job opportunities to local communities, local vendors, and travel service companies (Narayan, 2004). Tourism sectors’ in the Pacific region generate revenue in the global currency market and improve the net income of the economy at a reduced cost (Kumar & Patel, 2022). According to scholars (Connell, 2021), tourism in the Pacific region is the pillar of economic growth and agricultural development that helps eliminate poverty in the local communities. To break the chain of the transmission of the contentious disease, the governments imposed travel restrictions locally and internationally by closing the borders, whilst abiding by COVID-19 protocols (Kumar & Patel, 2022). Resorts and Spas in the Pacific heavily rely on international tourists (Kumar & Patel, 2022; Narayan, 2004), which promotes sustainable development and economic activities of the tourism industry (Rahman et al., 2021). Tourist booking decreased as a result of the restrictions imposed on the movements, compelling individuals to stay within their bubble to control the transmission and the use of contact tracing applications, which created job losses for the tourism staff (Rahman et al., 2021). While the tourism industry in the Pacific region was undergoing a very challenging stage due to the novel pandemic (Connell, 2021; Ulak, 2020), the adverse changes in the weather conditions led to disruptions in the supply chain. Risk awareness for traveling tourists is one of the major concerns for the tourism industry during the pandemic (Zaman et al., 2022). The resorts and spas in the Pacific islands region implemented hygiene health practices and social distancing protocols along with hospitality services during the new travel norm (Kumar & Patel, 2022). Furthermore, the resorts and spas added information on COVID-19 and social distancing protocols on

their websites (Best Hotels Fiji, n.d.). The sudden disruption in the flow of income in the tourism industry affected the decision-making process of the industry (Connell, 2021). Also, with zero income in return during the pandemic till the new travel norm (Connell, 2021), due to the changes in the psychological behavior of the travelers, additional costs were incurred in maintaining the standard well-being of the resorts and spas, paying off debts, and the staff salaries. This projected an overall financial loss for the tourism industry from the novel pandemic (Abbas et al., 2021). The reports from World Tourism Organization UNWTO, 2020, suggested a complete closure of the hospitality services or 6 rooms cleared off with guests from 10 rooms of the hotels (Zaman et al., 2022) to control the spread of the contentious disease. Additionally, due to the closure of resorts and spas, the tourism industry in the Pacific region had lost many highly skilled and experienced staff (Connell, 2021) because the staff who were, are the sole proprietors of the catering services in the local market had moved on. Particularly, the Pacific islands like the Fiji Islands, highly relied on the tourism sector (Connell, 2021) whereby the majority of Fiji’s citizens were job less directly and indirectly from the closure of the resorts and spas, which had been affected by COVID-19 pandemic. Different tourism stakeholders were impacted by COVID-19, generally, emotionally, and economically (Abbas et al., 2021). According to scholars (Zaman et al., 2022), COVID-19 pandemic risk awareness when booking stays in resorts and spas affects the choices of the tourist (Ulak, 2020), as there is no definite means to measure the COVID-19 pandemic risk for a specific journey’s stay. As a consequence of employees’ behavior change from isolation (Abbas et al., 2021), the resorts and spas have conducted workshops to train the employees and create more personalized digital platforms by COVID-19 hygiene measures and social distancing to ensure the safety of the guests and staff. The tourism industry in the Pacific supported the Ministry of Health and worked hand in hand with Government authorities together with the World Health Organization (WHO) during the novel crises, as they gave out the resorts for special cases of quarantine from the infectious spread of COVID-19 (Connell, 2021). The resorts and spas in the small islands developing states, implemented strategies in adherence to COVID-19 protocols to welcome elite travelers, who their own cost of hiring a private jet to escape from the terrible outbreak of the global pandemic (Connell, 2021). With the limited economic development from the crises, the tourism industry proposed the “Tourism Crises Response and Recovery Plan” for future sustainable growth in tourism in the Pacific (Connell, 2021).

## METHODOLOGY

In this research, the authors adopted a method of quantitative research to collect and analyze numerical data to identify

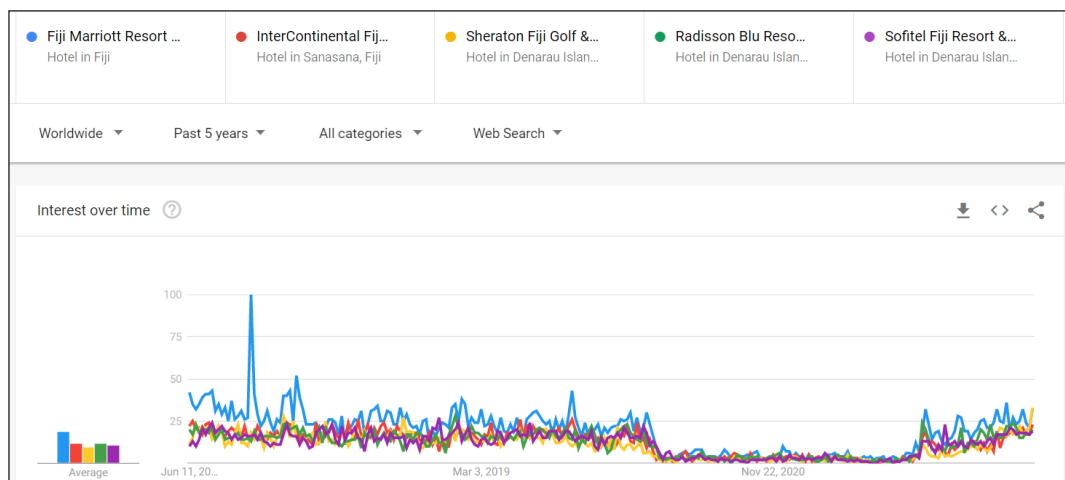
patterns, relationships, and trends among web search results on accommodation bookings in the Pacific. The main objective of quantitative research is to establish a relationship between the variables (web search and COVID). For statistical results, the dataset was collected from Google Trends and the Tableau Data Visualization tool was utilized to achieve greater insights on the data. One of the key reasons to utilize quantitative methodology is that it allows for precise and objective measurements of the variables being studied, which can lead to more reliable and accurate results. However, it also has some limitations, such as a potential lack of depth and understanding of the complexity of social phenomena which was overcome with the use of visualization tools for better insights. This research uses a systematic approach to answer research questions and test hypotheses. One of the key features of quantitative research is its use of numerical data. This data can be collected

through various methods through experiments where the data was then analyzed using statistical techniques to identify patterns, relationships, and trends. The results were presented in the form of illustrations focusing on objectivity and generalizability. This methodology aims to collect data that is representative of a larger population and use statistical analysis to draw conclusions that can be applied to the population. This allows for a greater level of confidence in the findings. Quantitative research is a systematic approach to collecting and analyzing numerical data. Its focus on objectivity and generalizability allows for precise and reliable results. However, its limitations include a potential lack of depth and understanding of complex human experiences. Despite these limitations, quantitative research is an important method for understanding and addressing various social, educational, and business issues.

**Table 1: Statistical Comparison Parameters Table Snip**

Week	Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay: (Worldwide)	InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, an IHG Hotel: (Worldwide)	Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort: (Worldwide)	Radisson Blu Resort Fiji Denarau Island: (Worldwide)	Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa: (Worldwide)
6/11/2017	42	22	11	20	10
6/18/2017	35	25	15	17	13
6/25/2017	32	20	23	23	10
7/2/2017	35	21	20	18	14
4/24/2022	27	19	17	24	20
5/1/2022	23	19	19	21	17
5/8/2022	25	19	22	15	18
5/15/2022	32	21	17	15	18
5/22/2022	24	17	19	18	18
5/29/2022	21	17	21	17	17
6/5/2022	32	23	33	20	19

## EXPERIMENT VISUALIZATION



**Fig. 1: Shows Web Search Results for 5 Years and It Shows a Sharp Decline in Search During COVID Period**

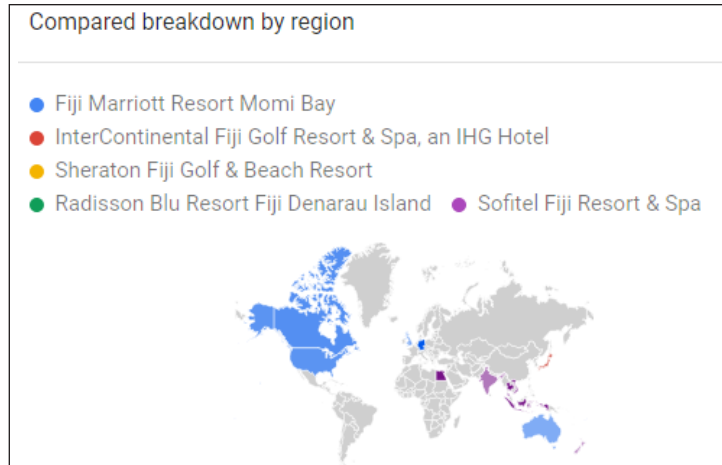


Fig. 2: Shows Compared Outbreaks by Region Search for the Top 5 Resorts

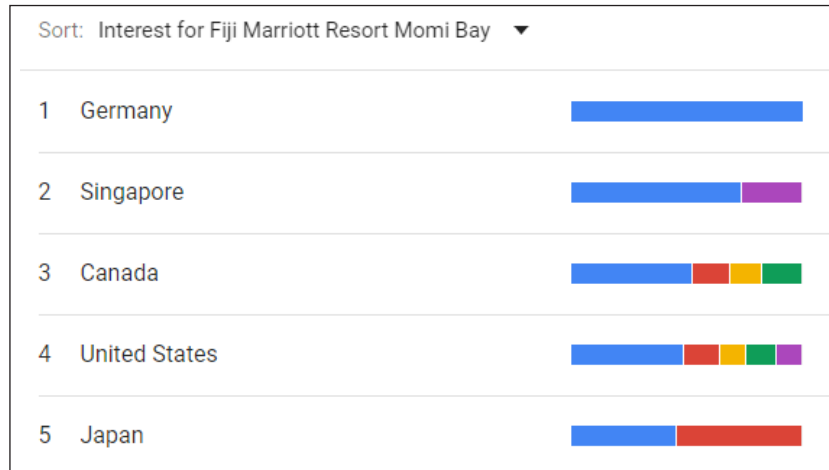


Fig. 3: Shows Countries Searching for Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay

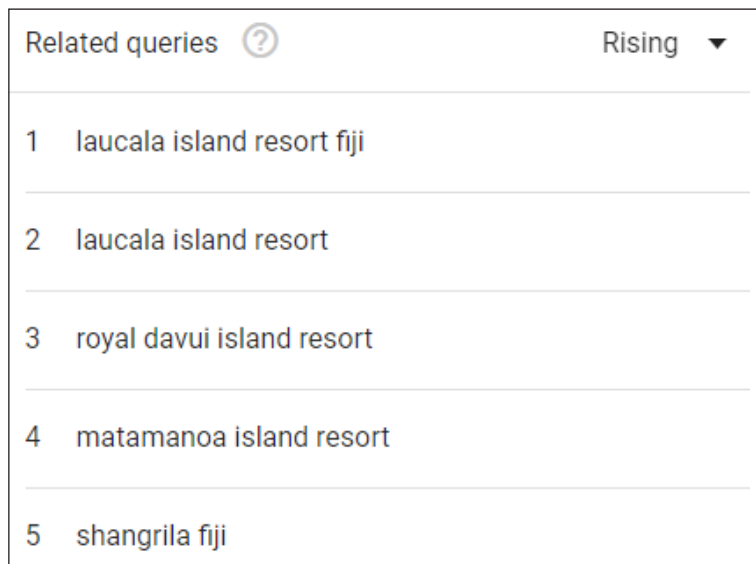
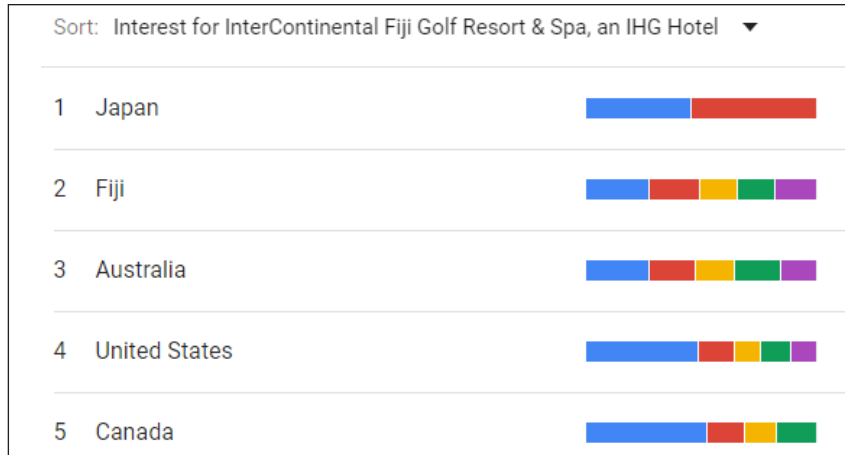
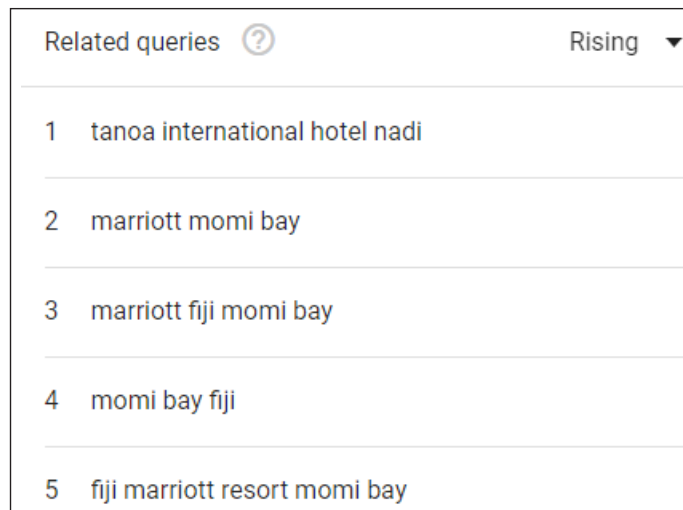


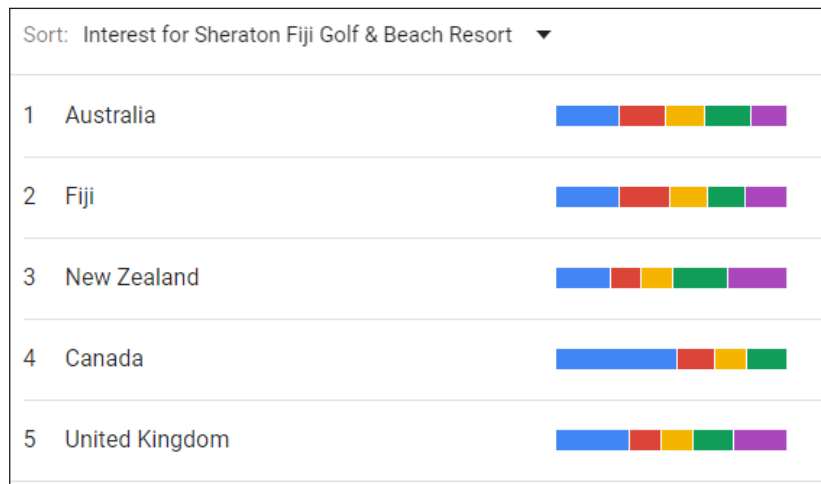
Fig. 3.1: Shows Related Queries



**Fig. 4: Shows Countries' Interest in Searching InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, an IHG Hotel**



**Fig. 4.1: Shows Related Queries**



**Fig. 5: Shows Countries Interested in Searching for Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort**

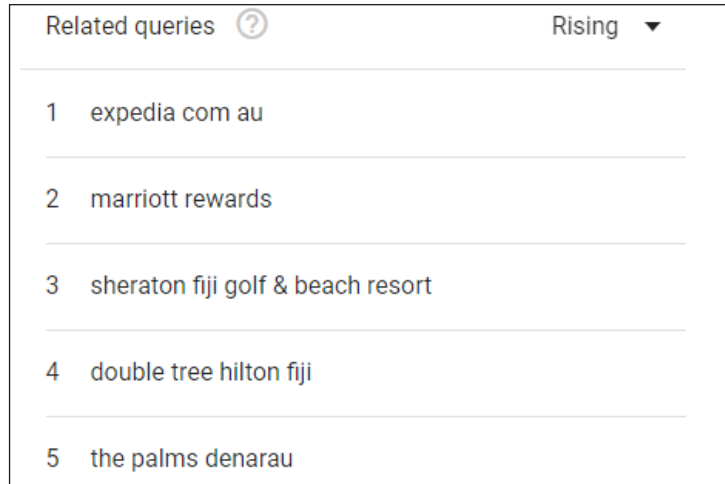


Fig. 5.1: Shows Related Queries

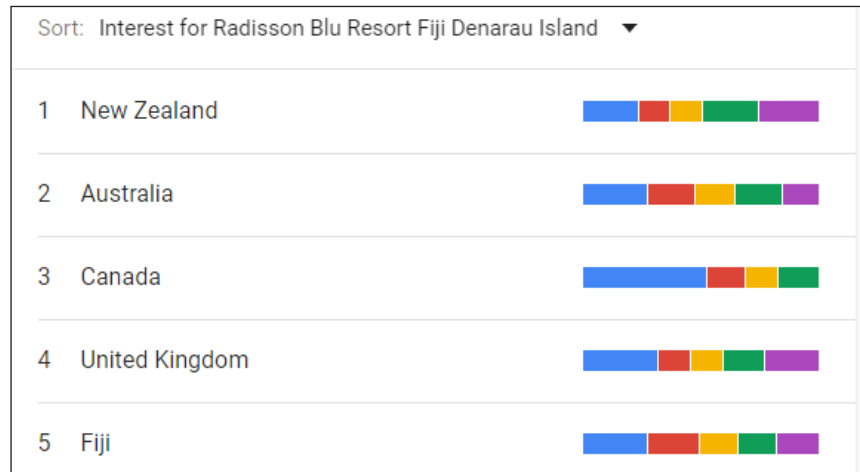


Fig. 6: Shows Countries' Interest in Searching Radisson Blu Resort Fiji Denarau Island

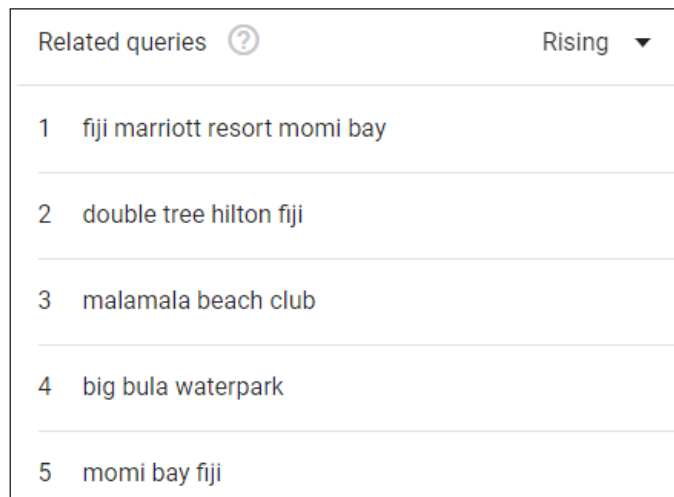
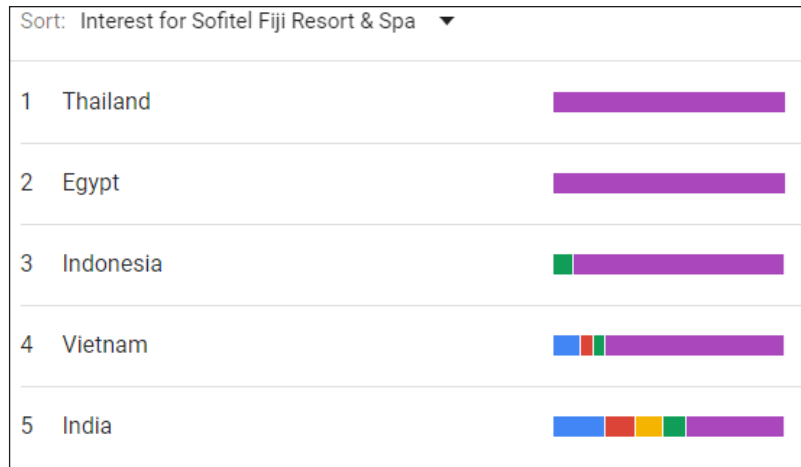
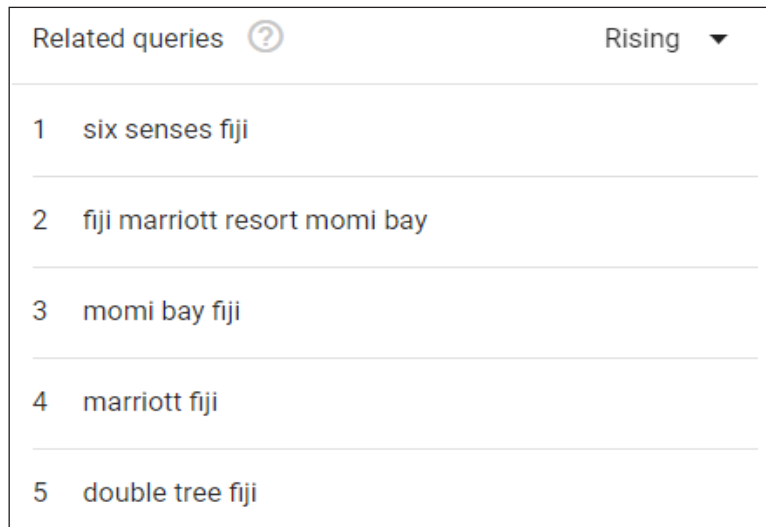


Fig. 6.1: Shows the Related Queries



**Fig. 7: Shows Countries' Interest in Searching Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa**



**Fig. 7.1: Shows the Related Queries**

## DISCUSSIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the tourism industry worldwide. The travel and tourism industry is one of the largest and most important sectors of the global economy, and the pandemic has severely disrupted it, causing significant losses to economies. The findings show that before the pandemic the search results associated with Fiji were significantly high. However, during the time of the pandemic the results had depreciated very poorly. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have had a significant impact on the tourism industry worldwide. With restrictions on international and domestic travel, the industry has experienced a sharp decline in web search results for resorts. During the lockdown, many tourist attractions, hotels, restaurants, and other tourism-related businesses

were closed, resulting in significant job losses and economic hardship for those employed in the industry. Moreover, many people who had booked trips or were planning to travel had to cancel or postpone their plans, leading to a surge in refunds and cancellations. This entire process showed a significant drop in web searches of resorts and hotels in Fiji. The lockdown also impacted the supply chain of the tourism industry, as many businesses that relied on the tourism sector, such as transportation, food and beverage suppliers, and souvenir shops, also experienced significant losses. The impact of the lockdown on tourism was not limited to the industry itself, it also had a ripple effect on the broader economy. With fewer tourists, there was less demand for goods and services, resulting in a slowdown in other sectors such as retail and entertainment. Overall, the COVID-19 lockdown had a severe impact on the tourism

industry, but with the gradual lifting of restrictions and the implementation of safety protocols, there is hope for recovery. According to the stats generated from the finding it was seen that resort booking and resort search for Fiji slowly

picked up its pace and is at a stable level now. Moreover, after post-pandemic the web search results regained their popularity and now are back in the game of expanding the tourism economy in the Pacific.

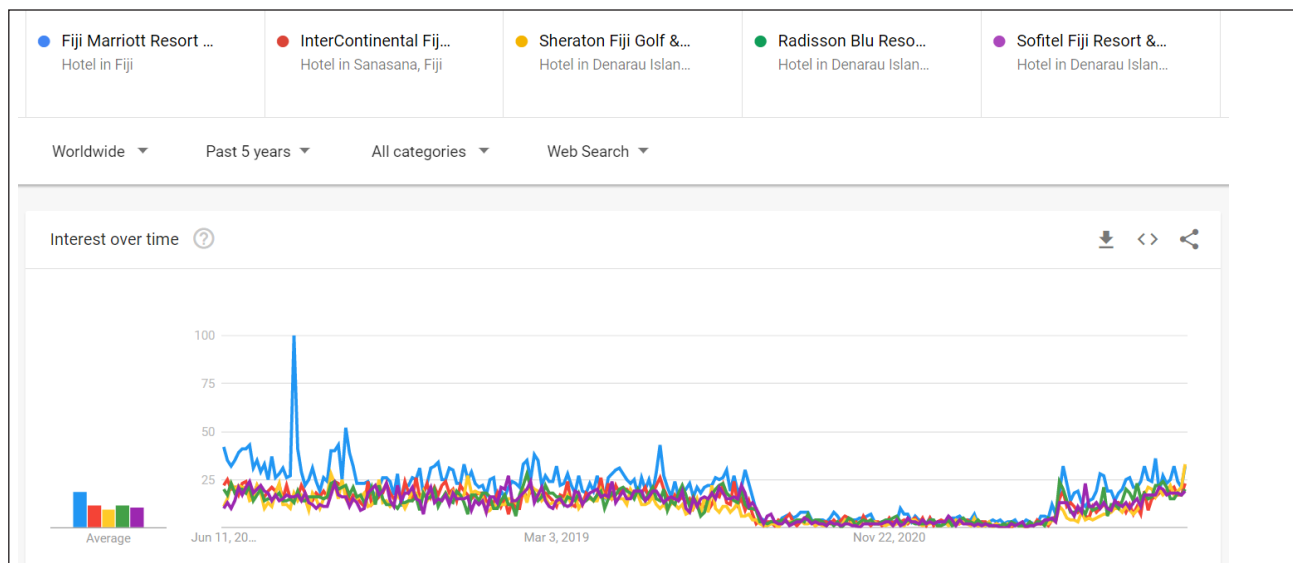


Fig. 8: Shows the Web Search Results Over Time

## CONCLUSIONS

The tourism industry in the Pacific has traditionally been a significant contributor to the region's economy, with its stunning natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and diverse attractions drawing visitors from all over the world. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the industry, with border closures and travel restrictions resulting in a significant drop in tourist numbers and revenue. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on web search trends, as people's online behavior changed due to the various restrictions and changes brought on by the pandemic. This provided a limitation on web search about resorts in Fiji providing diminution website searchers on Fiji Resorts. Moreover, with the closure of businesses and restrictions on travel, there was a decrease in web searches related to tourism in terms of resort bookings. People's search for entertainment options such as online traveling and engaging in activities in the Pacific also faded. Overall, the pandemic has had a significant impact on web search trends, reflecting the changing needs and priorities of people during this challenging time. As the world continues to adapt to the pandemic, web search trends will likely continue to evolve to reflect the changing needs and behaviors of people in the post-pandemic world. Ever since the post-pandemic, there has a significant stability on web searchers, and it is expected to significantly draw its line back by the end of 2023.

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