

## Seasonality as a Challenge for Human Resource of Tourism Industry

Surbhi Shrivastava

### Abstract

Human resources are the foundation of every industry and Tourism & Hospitality industry exists with these resources. It is being observed by most of the countries that every third person is associated with this industry, directly or indirectly. Many countries have shown that tourism industry is a key driver of their economic growth. Economic growth means foreign exchange earnings and employment generation. Capacity building plays a crucial part in the development of any state and Seasonal means temporary. If this generated employment became temporary then it becomes a challenge for the whole industry as well as for the country.

This chapter analyses and studies the various dependent and independent factors of seasonality affected the human resource of the industry with the case of Rajasthan state of India. It evaluates the role of hoteliers and tour operators of seven famous cities of Rajasthan i.e. Jaipur, Udaipur, Ranthambhor, Kota, Bundi, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer. These people are directly associated with the industry. Their approach towards seasonality (as Rajasthan, desert area, is very hot during April to October) is recorded and analysed. Independent and dependent variables are summarized and assessed accurately.

**Key Words:** Seasonality, Challenges, Tour operators, Guides, tourism strategy, Hospitality industry

### INTRODUCTION

Seasonality is a not a new concept in the tourism literature. Almost all tourism enterprises and regions are affected by seasonality whether severely or slightly. Seasonality causes the fluctuation in tourists and visitor numbers to a destination. Therefore, some destinations at certain times have more tourists and visitors than they are able to accommodate, while at other times, there are too few tourists and visitors to the region. Seasonality is inextricably linked to tourism and the fact that tourism flows are determined by both transitory and seasonal nature factors.

Although, seasonality is widely perceived as negative impact as it had a link with a

reduction in revenue and fluctuation in the stability of employment. Seasonality and its related social, economic and environmental impacts is a major issue for the tourism industry. Previous attempts to address seasonality impacts have been complicated by the diverse range of causes and its effects across different locations. For example, seasonality can place immense pressure on remote or isolated tourism enterprises which often struggle to staff their businesses with available and appropriate staff, leaving them more vulnerable to lack of service consistency than enterprises located in more populated areas. Consequently, any strategies that have been employed to combat the negative effects of seasonality

(as well as those used to enhance its positive impacts) may not be transferable across the industry.

Seasonality is a seasonal fluctuation or cycle forming a progression or trend. The best-known seasonal progression is the outdoor temperature. The prices of goods are subject to seasonal tendencies as a result of natural processes i.e., harvest or cold weather periods occurring at various times of the year. Seasonality is an important factor in the tourism industry. Economically, ecologically and socially it can have many negative influences on a destination, but at the same time it may provide a time for both the environment and the host communities to recover from the stress of the peak season(s).

It has been viewed as a major problem for the tourism industry and has been held responsible for creating number of difficulties faced by the industry including problems in gaining access to capital, in obtaining and holding full time staff, for low returns on investment causing subsequent high risk in operations and for problem related to peaking and overuse of facilities.

### OBJECTIVES

Human resources are the asset of service industry. Keeping this in mind the researcher set following objectives

- To study the challenges of Human resource of Tourism industry.
- To analyze all the factors affecting seasonality as a challenge for tourism industry.

- To examine the role of the stakeholders of tourism industry during the peak and lean season.
- To suggest a model to evade the challenges of the industry.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:** In order to achieve above objectives, the researcher followed an observation method. Firstly the researcher understood the concept of seasonality through various research journals and books and then personal visits and discussion with the tour operators and Hoteliers, presents number of factors affecting seasonality and various challenges to evade those ill effects of seasonality.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Seasonality is, according to Butler (1994) as a *"temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism, which may be expressed in terms of dimensions of such elements as number of visitors, expenditure of visitors, traffic on highways and other forms of transportation, employment and admissions to attractions."*

As for the tourism industry Hartmann (1986) stated that the "reliable and predictable recurrence of tourists has formed the economic base for the development of the tourist

industry". Therefore, he argued, tourism is naturally seasonal. Additionally, the WTO (1984) argued that the more specialised a destination is, the more seasonal it is and that large urban centres experience less seasonality due to a diversified demand.

Baum and Lundtorp (2001, p. 2) indicate that "Seasonality is widely seen as a 'problem' to be 'tackled' at a policy,

marketing and operational level". Butler (2001, p. 5) indicates "Seasonality has frequently been viewed as a major problem for the tourism industry, and has been held responsible for creating or exacerbating a number of difficulties faced by the industry, including problems in gaining access to capital, in obtaining and holding full time staff, for low returns on investment causing subsequent high risk in operations, and for problems relating to peaking and overuse of facilities".

Yacoumis (1980) "*Seasonality in tourism as an almost universal problem, varying only in the degree of its acuteness from one country to another.*"

Murphy (1985) "*Seasonality is not necessarily bad for everyone.*" *It may not be totally negative for tourism destinations.*

Mourdonkoutas (1988) argues that unemployment is not caused by seasonal employment and that is the Greek islands a considerable number of employees choose seasonal tourism employment because it pays better than alternative work i.e. available, and also because it allows those who wish to pursue other activities during the off season to do so.

Ball (1989) Rural seasonal employment in fields such as tourism may offer relief, to urban unemployment, although such relief has declined considerably over the past 50 years.

Seasonality can be categorized into two primary types: *natural and institutional*. The first is caused by temporal changes on an annual basis in the natural world, such as the four seasons, and corresponding changes in temperature, precipitation, sunshine and

hours of daylight. These natural changes, which are primarily climatic in nature, increase in severity as one moves further from the equator. Much of the traditional temporal patterns of tourism reflect seasons in the Northern Hemisphere, because most of the world's tourism originates in the developed countries and are located there.

The second form of seasonality in tourism, institutional, is caused by human decisions and relates to what were often traditional temporal variations in the patterns of human activity and inactivity. This form varies much more widely across the world than the natural form, reflecting cultural diversity and beliefs. It is the accumulated result of religious, ethnic, cultural and social factors, and varies from patterns reflecting natural phenomena to historical inclinations. The most common form of institutionalised seasonality is the formal holiday, derived in most cases from holy days of rest, common in form if not in date to most of the world's religions. Such breaks from work are normally of short duration and occur at similar but not exact times each year. Of more significance for tourism are the long holidays which reflect more recent institutional decisions and subsequent legislation. The two major ones are school holidays, now enshrined in the concept of holidays with pay in most industrialised countries. Such holidays are normally in the summer season but increasingly are available at unspecified times during the year, thus reducing one element of seasonality which was extremely strong at the time of the introduction of industrial holidays in the late nineteenth century.

It is in human and hence cultural and social, terms that the greatest benefits of seasonal patterns of tourism, such as they are, may be identified. There is no doubt that the tourism can be disrupts the traditional social pattern in a community and have effects upon cultural activities. The off season often represents the only time that the local population can operate what to it is a "normal" manner and engage in social and cultural activities. While an off-season may be relatively inefficient way of operating in economic terms, it may well be preferable to some communities, particularly those which have alternative sources of income, and do not rely entirely upon tourism for their economic survival and have learned to adapt accordingly.

Tourism is no exception and in the decades ahead, climate change will play a pivotal role in tourism development and management. With its close links to the environment, tourism is considered to be a highly climate-sensitive sector. The regional manifestations of climate change will be highly relevant for tourism sector that demands adaptation by all major tourism stakeholders. In fact, it is not a remote future for the tourism sector since varied impacts of a changing climate are already evident at destinations around the world.

#### **FACTORS AFFECTING SEASONALITY**

After reviewing all the literatures about the seasonality on Tourism industry, following are the major factors are drawn:

1) Natural: Excessive hot or cold weather, where tourists demand will depend upon the climate of the place.

2) Cultural: where tourist demands are based on the customs, traditions and culture of the residents of the destination.

3) Regional: When any special event occurs to any particular region then only influx of tourists visits at a particular place.

#### **Case Analysis**

The Rajasthan is not merely a tourist destination, but it is a live experience of the glamour and the valor of the rulers of the ancient Rajasthan. This state has many places in the platter as the famous tourist destinations that it will take around a month to explore the heritage, monuments, traditions, cultures, landscape beauty and the wildlife of Rajasthan.

The major & targeted cities are Jaipur, Udaipur, Ranthambhor, Kota, Bundi, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer. In order to understand the effect of seasonality on human resource on tourism industry, the researcher had chosen four tourist destinations of Rajasthan, India. These seven cities received number of tourists at particular season which is purely depend on the climate and culture. The reason of choosing these destinations was to identify the discrimination of tourist's revenue in different months. The tour operators and hoteliers were targeted and interviewed.

The attractions of these cities are Forts and palaces, desert and its cultural activities. Winter season had always packed with the tourists and around 6 months, this city remains completely untouched with the tourists. The tour operators and Hoteliers have only 6 months to cover their expenses

and earn profits. Forts and palaces are visited by mostly Indian tourists but always less in number as the temperature of these sites is very high.

The study is based on the responses of the stakeholders like tour operators dealing only on those areas, hoteliers, tourists guides and souvenir shops.

Interpretation of primary data:

The study focused on the possible factors at its selected cities at peak and lean season. The researcher visited the attractions and met the tour operators. Open ended questions were asked to the Hoteliers, tour operators and tourist guides. Around 35 Hotelier (all category), 20 Tour operators and 40 guides were interviewed. They all belong to Rajasthan but located at different places.

In order to visit this state, it is better knowing about climate of this place and accordingly plan a visit. The four subdivisions' are-

- Monsoon
- Summers
- Winters
- Post-Monsoons

The hottest period experienced by this state is summers when the weather is too hot or dry. The temperature goes as high as forty five degrees. The whole state suffers from hot winds referred to as "loo" with an only exception of Mount Abu. This is the only hill station in this state which gets a breather from this mercurial madness. The temperatures in this city are comfortable; hence tourists can visit this destination even during peak summer season.

Temperature starts reducing in the month of July and continues till September, though humidity increases considerably during this time. Humidity level, in fact, set the tone for incoming Monsoon season. During this time, the tourist season reaches its crescendo. During this season, the state becomes all the more attractive and appealing. Cool, moisture laden winds lowers temperature and tourists find this time comfortable for sightseeing. This time is perfect from tourism point of view besides December till March. The coolest month experienced by this state is January when temperature drops as low as 0 degree centigrade in some areas of the state.

The winter season in Rajasthan normally starts from November and stays till February, and considered as the best time to travel in Rajasthan. During the winter season, the temperature varies from 10 degree Celsius to 27 degree Celsius in the daytime, which makes the weather very pleasant to travel and explore this beautiful land and its vibrant tourist attractions.

Jaisalmer, a most visited tourist place and an ultimate city amidst the desert, is the real delight in the winter season when the temperature is low and the weather is very pleasant. During the winter season, the camel ride in the desert and jeep safari amidst sand dunes is real bliss during the daytime, which can't be possible in summer season due to excessive heat. In the temperature that hovers around 22-23 degree Celsius, any tourist activity is a fun in this mild weather.

The nights are a bit colder for you to have a cozy sleep while the days are pleasant to

have fun and explore the place without any mess of the summer heat.

October to March is the time when winter season is at its peak. This season offers sunny days and is quite pleasant for sightseeing. Maximum temperature during winter time lies between 22 degrees to 28 degrees centigrade and minimum temperature range between eight to fourteen degrees centigrade. Peak summer season starts from April and continues till June. During the summer season, the temperature reaches its peak touching 46 degree centigrade. The minimum temperature hovers around 25 degree centigrade. Rainfall occurs during July, August and September that results in South West monsoon. 57.5 cm rainfall is registered in this state. Rainfall is meager in the western region of the state. Low temperature and high rainfall is seen in Aravalli region.

76% of *tourist guides* had a problem because of seasonality. They would not receive good number of tourists and among them 50% of guides became jobless. The tour operators placed double or triple number of guides in peak season with the contract of 3-4 months. These tourist guides had a hectic schedule from Nov to Feb and then just few guides remained in the office. 70% of the guides were dissatisfied with this seasonality but rest 30% young and enthusiastic guides were very happy and content as some of them shifted to other places and guiding their tourists. Many of them joined some diploma language courses within that period and try to enhance their attributes for better guiding.

Soaring temperatures in Rajasthan have hit tourist traffic to the state, famous for its forts, palaces, desert, culture and heritage.

Every year, especially during summer vacations, loads of tourists visit the state, but this time the numbers have dropped drastically — as the day and night temperatures have been 4-5 notches above the season's normal.

“During summers, especially during May and June, local tourists visit the state as majority of schools declare vacation and hotels offer discount and packages. But this year, even discounts by hotels have failed to attract tourists,” a travel agent, Karan Singh, said.

Hotels are reporting decline in check-ins and even the prominent tourist sightseeing places are reporting thin attendance, Singh added.

While interviewing, it had been observed that above 40 age group guides were becoming more frustrated as compared to younger age group. Senior guides have the pressure of the survival of their family and also they have less stamina. Many tour operators retained these senior tourist guides for whole year but may be in less remuneration.

When the researcher talked with the *tour operators* it was clearly mentioned by the 65% of tour operators that they have only issues with the guides otherwise they are not getting the booking but they spent their time in liaison which is the backbone of their industry. They establish their relationship with the inbound operators, hoteliers and other service providers. Rest 35% tour operators were feeling disappointed with

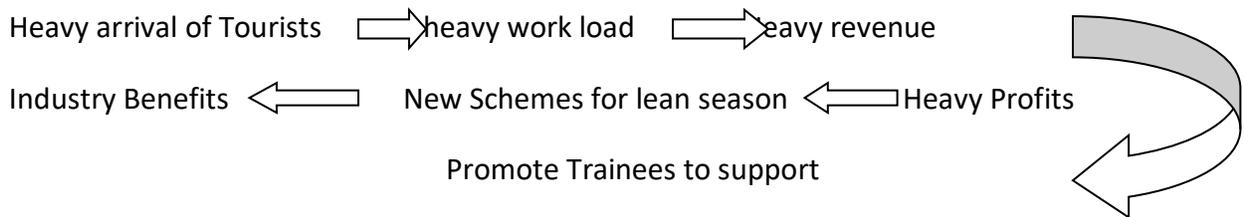
this drawback. They complained that their business almost stuck during summer season and it was becoming difficult to give salaries to the employees of their workplace.

All category hotels were included under this research work. There were 5 heritage hotels, 7 five star hotels and 13 three star hotels and 10 includes dharmshala/ guest houses/ low fare stay houses were covered. The researcher talked to the employers and the employees which projects the right direction towards the study. They had given their open views regarding seasonality as most of them were aware about this fact of hospitality industry.

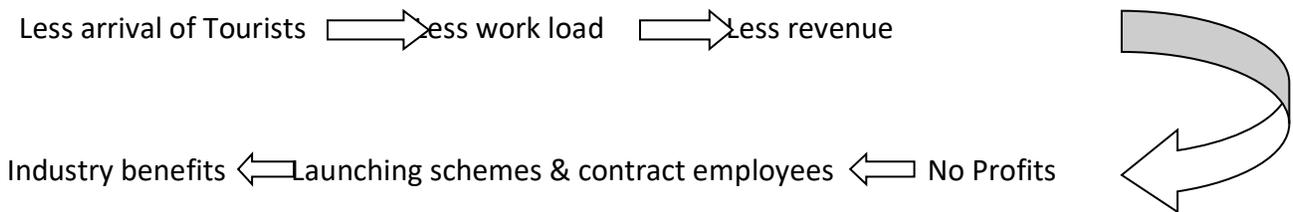
Heritage hotels and five star category hotels generally increase their work force during peak season and the permanent employees are secured even during lean season. They have no issues with this fact but they complaint of heavy work pressure but equally enjoyable. As employer usually recruit few personnel so it became easier for them to cope up. But in the case of small hotels sometimes employers gets in a terrible positions. They doesn't receive good number of guests but they have to pay to their employees so they were trying to target and launch new schemes for lean season. They told us that they faced this financial burden due to seasonality.

**Suggested Model:**

**Peak Season**



**Lean Season**



**Organizing seasonal festivals**

**Promote MICE Tourism**

**CONCLUSION**

The success of the tourism industry and ultimately of the destination depend on the

quality of employees. The real human resource challenge for the tourism industry

is recruiting and retaining employees with the right skills, knowledge and attitudes to their work.

Seasonality has been recognised as one of the most significant factor for the tourism industry which arises from the fluctuations in the demand. The phenomenon, its causes and impact on destination regions have been widely researched within the academic literature and often seasonality is perceived as a problem for the industry.

Seasonality affects the human resource practices in any hospitality and tourism business and it is often held responsible for the seasonal employment, underemployment and unemployment (Jolliffe and Farnsworth, 2003).The pattern is particularly influencing peripheral destinations which experience increased demand (Baum and Hagen,1999).Due to the variations in

demand, some stay houses have a very short season lasting four to five months, which creates challenges for human resource managers. The present research work successfully achieved its objectives to identify the factors affecting seasonality and to suggest the strategy to overcome this shortcoming.

The present study is the case analyses of the four cities of Rajasthan which are famous of its natural and cultural attractions. The researcher visited these areas and select the major three stakeholders for her study i.e. Hoteliers, Tour operators & Tourist Guides. According to their responses regarding seasonality the researcher concluded with model as a solution of the problem. This study provides a practical overview of seasonality in human resource of tourism industry.

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