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SEASONALITY IN TOURISM

All types and forms of tourism have seasonality as a component. There are peak seasons, lean seasons, or off seasons for a destination or a tourist generating market. If one were to analyse tourist arrivals at any destination, one would observe monthly fluctuations. In case of individual services, the seasonality concept can be further applied to demonstrate weekly or hourly fluctuations. There is more rush on weekends and public holidays in a museum or at a resort. There may be more rush in morning or evening flights in comparison to afternoon flights. Such analysis is extremely important from the marketing point of view as it helps in deciding the marketing mix.

Seasonality refers to variations in the demand for tourism products which makes it difficult for providers of tourism products and services to sustain business all year round. Demand for tourism products such as accommodation, transportation, etc. is seasonal. Tourist resorts experience a fairly high degree of seasonality, with demand peaking during vacation periods and in summer months.

Products can be designed, rejuvenated, or dropped as per the seasonal requirements. Separate prices may be charged for lean seasons along with a different promotion policy. Manpower requirements would be higher in peak season and lower in lean season. This may affect recruitment patterns adopted by the employers. Sometimes even capacity utilization is affected. Goa is a typical example of seasonality. Seasonality in tourism does not only mean climate of the seasons of the year. Seasonality is of different types and the tourists' seasons emerge because of different reasons. These are as follows:

Climatic seasonality This is related to the natural climatic seasons in a year. Tourists move from hot climatic regions towards cooler destinations in summer months like the hill stations which experience peak season.

Non-climatic attractions Non-climatic attractions or institutionalized seasonality in tourism emerges out of religious, cultural, ethnic, and social aspects of human life. Festivals, pilgrimages and fairs, public holidays, industrial holidays, and school vacations dictate seasons which are decided by humans.

Social pressure Social pressure or fashion is another aspect which brings about or affects tourism seasonality. This has been termed as social seasonality. The rich and famous class of society sets certain trends wherein it becomes socially necessary to participate, for example, travelling abroad for honeymoon.

Sporting season This is another aspect which has resulted in tourist activity. Winter sports such as skiing and water sports such as surfing are examples of this type. There is a lot of tourist movement during major sporting events such as the Olympics, cricket World Cup, Commonwealth Youth Games, etc.

Tradition This also plays a role in seasonality. Many people take holidays at peak seasons because they have always done so and old habits are difficult to change, for example, a family plans a holiday when schools are closed for long durations. Even when children are grown up, the family still takes a holiday during those months because they are habituated to taking a break during that time.

Seasonality is an important issue because seasonal fluctuations create certain problems for both the destination as well as the producers of tourism services. During the peak season, carrying and serving capacity is exceeded and there is a shortage of trained labour. The lean or off-season brings in a different set of problems such as:

- (a) a decline in profits;
- (b) high maintenance costs and underutilization of infrastructural facilities;
- (c) unemployment; and
- (d) shutting down business.

In fact, both off seasons and lean seasons in tourism are always seen as a problem because of a reduction in the volume of the business and subsequent reduction in profits. Investors hesitate to invest in business as the returns on investment are low.