Off-Season Tourism in India: Status & Way Forward

Anshu Mala Gautam
Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad – India

Abstract

The study is based on tourism seasonality and its impacts on the income and employment patterns. Secondary data has been used to analyze the pattern of seasonality as it exists in Indian Tourism. Mitigation strategies for this seasonality have been deciphered by reviewing relevant literature. These strategies have been tested for their impacts on preference of off-season travel based on demographic characteristics using primary data. The results indicate that significant difference exists in the way these strategies are perceived by the tourists belonging to different demographic groups. Recommendations have therefore been made based on the findings. Further research can also be carried out for different regions and also on the supply side of the industry.

I. Introduction

Indian Tourism industry has been flourishing and is rated as the second largest service industry in India (Indiagov, 2015). Figures for both the inbound and outbound tourism in India have been quite impressive over the years though the outbound market is much more developed than the inbound market. The potential of the outbound market has been forever increasing because of the enormous population of the country. The inbound market is although less developed than the outbound one, it was nonetheless reported that the total tourist arrivals for India in 2013 were 6,906,630 compared to outbound tourists numbering 11,555,790 (India Tourism Report, BMI 2015).

India’s potential as a tourism destination is visible from the fact that it has more than 450 airports, 24 out of which are international airports. Investments have also been made for increasing the number of airports in the country. It is targeted that by 2020 the number of operational airports in India would increase to reach a count of 500 (India Tourism Report, BMI 2015). It is therefore expected that the inbound tourism in India will also report a rising trend. The forecasts for the number of inbound travellers were expected to show a growth rate of 5% in 2015 over 2014 and of another 5% thereafter in the next year. The reported and predicted inbound travellers were reported as follows.

Table I Inbound Tourism in India (BMI, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total arrivals, '000</td>
<td>6,577.75</td>
<td>6,906.63</td>
<td>7,251.96</td>
<td>7,614.56</td>
<td>7,995.29</td>
<td>8,475.01</td>
<td>8,832.94</td>
<td>9,210.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total arrivals, '000, % y-o-y</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This increase in the number of travellers brings about the need for improving the services related to tourism like hospitality and travelling during the peak season as well as off season. Although the focus has been laid time and again on the former, no attention has been paid to the maintenance of the increased resources during the off-season. This problem can be solved by promoting off-season tourism in the country.

It can be seen through trends that seasonality in tourism is quite evident in the Indian context. The inbound tourists from 2001-2007 from various countries reported a variation for different months. Whereas April to June was seen as the worst season for the tourism industry, the time period of October to December was seen as the best. IITTM (2010) has shown the trends for inflow of tourists from five major countries, Australia, Canada, Singapore, United Kingdom and United States of America.

Thus, one can point out that for the countries mentioned above, October to December was the season of tourist outflux to India. This instills a fear of consequences of seasonality. As is known, tourism has various kinds of impacts, which can be categorised as economic, environmental, social & cultural, services, taxes and those on the community attitude (CBSE, 2015). Tourism has positive
effects on the economy in the form of improved infrastructure, increased employment and increased foreign earnings but its negative effects also cannot be ignored.

Tourism, as of October 2014, contributed to 12.4% of the total employment in the country (IBEF, 2014). Foreign exchange earnings from tourism also grew at a rate of 12.2% from 2012 to 2013 (from USD 18.13 billion to USD 17.74 billion). Also, tourism industry contributed INR 2,341.45 Billion to India’s GDP in 2014 (Makeinindia, 2015). However, it cannot be neglected that its impact in the form of employment generation is also negative. If resources (human of otherwise) are not employed, then it may cause a shortage in the supply of services (CBSE, 2015). On the other hand, the jobs in the tourism industry are low-paying which causes under employment and also unemployment during the off-season. primary data is collected by IITTM (2010) shows that for the Travel Agent/Tour Operators, seasonal, daily wages & contractual basis workers form 59.1% of the total workforce whereas regular workers are just 40.9%. Similar results were found for 1 to 3 star hotels, Lodge/guest houses etc. This shows that the employment in the tourism industry consists of more staff that can be picked out during the off-season unlike the regular workers.

Therefore, the need for management strategies to manage the resources during off-season and of other strategies to promote off-season tourism is therefore felt. An efficient solution can be seen in the form of promotion of the country as off-season tourism destination. These promotion strategies will help the sufferers of negative aspects of tourism in dealing with their miseries. ACNielsen (2011) also states that seasonality aspects of tourism is one among the few things that must be focused upon by the planners to develop a sustainable tourism strategy. BMI (2015) has brought forward weather as one of the prominent reasons for the existence of seasonality in the tourism industry. Same is also proved through our data as shown above (IITTM, 2010).

Various destinations can be identified in India that need the focus of strategy makers to get out of their image of seasonal destinations. These are those destinations that are not contrained by weather and have the potential to come forward as all the year round destination. Goa is one such destination. As stated in the Solomon (2009), the tourism in Goa is highly seasonal. The resources that are built up for the peak season are wasted when during the off-season. Similarly, the tourism industry of North-East India also faces the wrath of seasonality. Rizal & Asokan (2014) have studied the Sikkim region of India and found that the seasonality is a major impediment for the tourism industry in the region. Bhattacharya (2008) has also studied the North-eastern region of India to conclude the importance of dealing with seasonality for achieving a more successful tourism industry.

The paper has been divided into 5 sections starting with the Introduction. In the next section (Literature Review), studies related to tourism seasonality will be reviewed. Studies that point out problems faced by tourism industry during off-season and otherwise will also be seen. Studies suggesting off-season management strategies will be discussed as well. Methodology section will follow the review which in turn will be followed by Results and Discussions. The paper in the end will conclude the findings and will recommend based on the research findings.

II. Literature Review

Seasonality of tourism is a characteristic of and a major drawback for the tourism industry in any region. A large amount of literature can be found that has studied this issue and has tried to address it. In this section, focus would be laid on such studies that have studied tourism seasonality and discussed the strategies that can be implemented to deal with the same.

Seasonality in tourism

Seasonality is an important aspect of tourism industry nationally and internationally. Time and again it has been proved that seasonality exists in tourism and exists to great extent. Ćorluka et al (2013) has stated that seasonality is one of the most striking features of tourism industry. Seasonality is one of the prominent causes that affect the inflow of tourists in the region. Butler (2001) also recognized the existence of seasonality in the tourism industry. It has been identified that seasonality causes temporal imbalances in the tourist influx in the region. Rizal &Asokan (2014) has also done a paper on seasonality in the Indian context. It has studied the state of Sikkim in North-east India that recognizes the presence and deterrent role of seasonality in tourism industry. Bhattacharya (2008) is another study done on the N-E region of India that has focused on the seasonality aspects of tourism.
and the importance of dealing with it to mitigate its negative consequences. Various studies have also been done on the Goa region of India stating the seasonality pattern in inflow of tourists in the region (Solomon, 2009; Sawkar et al, 1998; Ministry of Tourism, 2012).

The causes for seasonality have been classified into two categories, natural and institutional. Natural factors are the ones that arise out of nature. Climatic conditions of a region like rainfall, snowfall, sunlight etc. are out of control of humans and are hence categorized under natural factors. On the other hand, institutionalized factors are entirely human-dependent. School and institutional holidays, tastes and preferences of tourists, their preference for culture, art and sports, inertia & tradition and various other such factors affect the tourism preferences & figures and hence cause seasonality in the industry (Butler, 2001; Ćorluka et al, 2013). Classification of causes has also been done as ‘push and pull’ factors. Lundtorp (2001) has stated that whereas holidays, tradition and social fashion come under push factors, exotic climatic conditions at destinations and the availability of sporting and other events fall under ‘pull’ factors.

The effects of this seasonality in tourism have been enormous and mostly grave. These effects especially on income and employment will be discussed in the next section.

**Effects on Income and Employment**

There have been evidences in literature and data that have shown both the positive and negative effects of seasonality. On the brighter side, it can be seen that the environment gets time to deal with the consequences of the peak season and to the industry to re-instill its inventories. On the darker side, it leaves the employees of the tourism industry with low or no pays to sustain through the off-season. Impacts of tourism seasonality are seen on both the supply (i.e. the providers of tourism services) and the demand side (i.e. the receptors of tourism services) of the industry. Major focus has been laid on the supply side impacts of tourism. These impacts have been put under three categories: economic impacts, ecological impacts and sociocultural impacts. Ecology of a region in the form temperature and climate, its economic indicators like prices & good availability as well as the society get affected by seasonality (Ćorluka et al, 2013).

Major effects have been seen on the income and employment scene in the destination region during off-season. The employment generated by this industry has been categorized as non-permanent job that is as soon as the season is off. This becomes a cause of unemployment and low or no income for the employees during this season (Rizal & Asokan, 2014; Solomon, 2009; Ćorluka et al, 2013; Rajeev & Shyju, 2008). In a study, Sawkar et al (1998) have acknowledged the seasonality that exists in the trends of income and employment. The employer might retain the employees to avoid the cost hiring & firing but the income in such cases is generally low. On the other hand, in the case of unskilled labour this consideration is also shunned off as the procedure of employing them is not much expensive. Therefore, both the income and employment were seen having seasonal patterns.

These effects on income and employment could be dealt with if attention is laid on tourism during off-season. To discuss the strategies for promoting off-season tourism, one first needs to understand the problems that are faced by both the suppliers and demand-makers during off-season. These problems will be discussed in the next section.

**Problems faced during off-season**

Tourists face a lot of problems in general at any tourism destination. Infrastructure underdevelopment, lack of cleanliness, safety & security issues and dearth of tourist friendliness are some of the major issues (Rajeev & Shyju, 2008). Ganesh & Chockalingam (2010) had identified 15 major factors that usually affect tourists and their choice for a destination. Infrastructure & transport facilities, safety & security and accommodation are among some of the identified factors. Specific problems have been identified that the tourists face during the off-season. On the one hand, peak season sees a hike in the prices of anything and everything due to the presence of inflationary tendencies. The hotels are unavailable due to excessive influx of tourists. On the other hand, during the off-season, unavailability occurs due to closure of establishments by the tourism service providers.

The tourism destination reports various other problems during the off-season that make the destination unattractive for the tourists. Whereas during the peak season the activities are going on in full-swing, one can rarely see the presence of such activities during the off-season. The absence of
such activities and certain other such factors are the cause of why tourists are not appealed towards the destination during off-season (Ćorluka et al, 2013).

Various studies have discussed strategies that can assist in mitigating the tourism seasonality. These strategies majorly focus on the development and promotion of the regions as even off-season tourism destinations. Next section will focus on the review of such studies.

**Mitigation strategies for tourism seasonality**

Policy-makers who are well versed with the issues faced by tourists during off-season and the key characteristics that the destination has to offer are the ones who make the most efficient policies. The most effective way to deal with the problem of seasonality is to focus on demand diversion and on the development of off-season tourism. If the area has more concentration of tourists due to some festivals or adventure activities then strategies must be so made so as to encourage these activities even during off-season (Higham&Hinch, 2002, p. 175-185). Product diversification (Becken, 2013) is therefore a vital strategy for promoting off-season tourism.

Focus should also be laid on the deals that are provided to the tourists (Commons & Page, 2001). A lot of attractive deals are provided by the tourism-service providers while in the peak season, but they get lost on the point that it is more important to provide deals during the off-season because of low inclination of tourists otherwise. Provision of group bookings (Jeffrey & Barden, 1999) and opening up of exquisite places (Goulding et al, 2004) are other key strategies. Places that are unique to a destination are opened up usually during the peak season accessibility to them during the off-season can be of great importance. This might further help in product diversification. Moreover, provision of group bookings can also play an important role in attracting the tourists.

Therefore, there are several vital issues and strategies, those if addressed and implemented can improve and change the outlook of people towards a particular tourism destination during off-season. The first objective of this study will be to see the seasonality patterns of tourist inflow in India. This objective will be achieved with the help of secondary data analysis. Second objective will be to see the adequacy of different strategies for different demographic groups. This will testing will be done with the help of primary data. The hypotheses for the same are as follows:

H$_{10}$: There is no significant difference in the impact of Product Diversification on preference for off-season travel based on demographic characteristics.

H$_{20}$: There is no significant difference in the impact of Infrastructure Facilities on preference for off-season travel based on demographic characteristics.

H$_{30}$: There is no significant difference in the impact of Tourism Packages on preference for off-season travel based on demographic characteristics.

The above drawn research framework (Figure 1) depicts the relation that will be tested in this study with the help of primary data. Three hypotheses will be tested, as stated above, based on three different types of strategies for mitigating seasonality, namely, Product Diversification, Infrastructure Facilities & Tourism Packages.

### III. Methodology and Data

This research is an exploratory research. It is focused on studying the concepts that haven’t been given much attention before. Seasonality in tourism industry is a much researched topic but
majorly all the research has been done on regions outside India. None of the research done in Indian context has tried to give solution to the problem of seasonality.

Therefore, this study will be first aiming to show the existence of seasonality in tourists’ inflow in the country. These trends would be seen through general trend analysis as well as statistical concepts of Gini coefficients and Seasonal Index. Gini Index is the best expression of inequality. It’ll help in getting a concise view of the data and to see if seasonality does exist in for the country or not. The value of Gini coefficient is given in percentages and a higher value corresponds to more seasonality and vice versa (Ćorluka et al, 2013). Seasonal Index is another measure that will be made use of. This measure also helps in gauging seasonality shown by a data (Rizal & Asokan, 2014).

Secondary data for the variable ‘Month-wise Foreign Tourist Arrival (FTAs)’ for performing these analyses would be collected from official reports of Ministry of Tourism. Primary data collection will also be performed to judge the perception of people about factors, namely, Product Diversification, Tourism Packages & Infrastructure Facilities regarding off-season tourism. Preference for off-season tourism will also be assessed through the same.

Analysis on the data collected through primary survey will be done by using the statistical techniques of t-test and ANOVA. This will help in determining if or not the preference for these variables differ with respect to the demographics and thereby assist in making suggestions for policy decisions.

IV. Results and discussions
Secondary Data Analysis

From the report of Ministry of Tourism on ‘Indian Tourism Statistics’ for different years, data was collected for the number of foreign tourist arrivals month-wise. This data was collected for the years 2007 to 2014. An analysis of this data provided an understanding of the trends that are followed. The observed trends showed that the inflow of tourists to India is lowest in the month of May and September. The influx is quite high in the month of January and increases a little till February before it starts falling. After it hits the trough in May it again rises till July after which it starts falling. Finally, after hitting another trough in the Month of September, the trend starts rising to reach the peak in December. The graph shown below depicts these trends accurately (figure 1). This trend can also be seen through the monthly average for the years 2007-2014 (figure 3a).

Figure 2 Trend lines for foreign tourist arrival in India over the months (2007-2014)

From the data it can also be seen that the foreign tourist arrival has been the highest during the year of 2013 compared to preceding years. The average for 2014 was although less than 2013 but it should be kept in mind that the data for 2014 was available till the month of June and not thereafter. Therefore, 2014 is expected to be the highest grossing year in terms of the arrival of foreign tourists.

Analytical methods like Seasonal Index, Lorenz Curve and Gini Coefficient have been used on the secondary data to measure seasonality. Seasonal index (equation 1) is a measure whose calculation and analysis helps one to conclude about the seasonality of a variable in the given time period. Rizal & Asokan (2014) have made use of this method in their paper to calculate gauge seasonality in tourist inflow in Sikkim region of India.

\[
\text{Seasonal Index (SI)} = \left( \frac{7 \text{ Seven Average}}{\text{Percentage}} \right) \times 100
\]

(1)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>7 Seven Average</th>
<th>Percentage (SI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>588782.1429</td>
<td>120.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>593229.2857</td>
<td>121.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>526867.4286</td>
<td>107.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>396546.1429</td>
<td>80.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>342002.2857</td>
<td>69.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>382710.7143</td>
<td>78.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>457027.5714</td>
<td>93.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>413446.1429</td>
<td>84.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>375244.8571</td>
<td>76.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>510677.5714</td>
<td>104.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>616955.4286</td>
<td>125.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>676805.5714</td>
<td>138.12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A higher seasonal index value (%) indicates a higher influx of tourists. Therefore for the latest data (2007-2013) it can be seen that the maximum number of tourists flow in from November through February, the highest being during December (138.12%). On the contrary, summer months report the lower inflow of tourists, lowest being during the month of May (69.79%).

\[1\] Till June 2014
The Lorenz curve which is a measure of inequality has also been used as a method of depicting seasonality whereas Gini Coefficient is a measure of the area between Lorenz curve and equality line. Ćorluka et al (2013) has used these measures to see the existence of seasonality across the time period of their study. It can be seen in Figure 1 that the line drawn for tourist arrival differs from the equality line. The value of Gini Coefficient (70.27%) as calculated for the secondary data was found to be high indicating that there exists high amount of seasonality in the foreign tourist arrival in the country.

**Primary Data Analysis**

For the analysis of the primary data we have taken three independent variables and 1 dependent variable. The independent variables considered by us are Product Diversification, Infrastructure Facilities and Tourism Packages. On using the statistical technique of ANOVA, it was analyzed that the all the demographic characteristics have a significant impact on the independent as well as the dependent variables.

Product diversification is one of the techniques that can be followed by the strategy makers to enhance people’s interest in off-season tourism. By opening up an exquisite tourist place, by organizing a festival or special parties and by providing the services of unique to the place adventure activities during off-season one can hope to attract more number of tourists. The attraction of such activities differs in between different groups based on age, gender and income. Whereas the age group of 26-35 years (3.96) is most appealed by such activities, it attracts more females (3.92) than males (3.86). It can also be seen that usually with an increase in income, people are more enticed by such provisions. Therefore, $H_{10}$ is rejected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>&lt;18 years</th>
<th>18-25 years</th>
<th>26-35 years</th>
<th>36-45 years</th>
<th>&gt;45 years</th>
<th>F stat</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product Diversity</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diversification</strong></td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Facilities</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilities</strong></td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Packages</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Packages</strong></td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for off-season</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>travel</strong></td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3 ANOVA table for different age groups*
‘Infrastructure Facilities’ is another important component that is highly important to charm tourists towards any particular destination. When in an unknown environment, nobody wants to face issues regarding stay, travel and safety. Therefore, there is an immense need of adequate infrastructure facility. However, the prominence of the effects of these facilities on preference of a tourist towards the destination differs. Whereas the youngest (3.54) and the oldest (3.5) age group are most concerned about these facilities, their provision is more alluring to females (3.59) compared to males (3.35). Youngest and the oldest age group as well as the females category is highly vulnerable and therefore, their concern is justified. Similarly people belonging to low income groups have to manage their budget well and are therefore concerned about the availability and cost. Also, people belonging to the highest age group (3.59) are affected by the provision of these services because their choices are high-end and specific. Therefore, \( H_{20} \) is rejected.

TABLE 4 ANOVA table for different income groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>&lt; $5,000</th>
<th>$5,000 To $9,999</th>
<th>$10,000 To $14,999</th>
<th>$15,000 To $19,999</th>
<th>$20,000 To $29,999</th>
<th>$30,000 To $39,999</th>
<th>&gt; $40,000</th>
<th>F stat</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product Diversification</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructural Facilities</td>
<td>Mea n</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mea n</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mea n</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mea n</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Packages</td>
<td>Mea n</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mea n</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mea n</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mea n</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for off-season travel</td>
<td>Mea n</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mea n</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mea n</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>Mea n</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sig</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Provision of exciting Tourism Packages could be another effective strategy to help in the development of off-season tourism. Next to the youngest age group i.e. those between 18 to 25 years (3.63) are most affected by the provision of such packages. The youngest age group i.e. <18 years (3.07) are usually children that are travelling with their parents or guardians. Therefore, cost or packages is really not their concern. But the youth are usually low-earning and hence their preference is most altered by the delivery of such packages. Similarly, usually females (3.47) are considered as low earning compared to their male counterparts. Therefore, the importance of packages is also more realized by them. Therefore, \( H_{30} \) is rejected.

TABLE 5 ANOVA table for different gender groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>F stat</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product Diversification</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.624</td>
<td>0.108567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Facilities</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.575</td>
<td>3.101613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Packages</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.637</td>
<td>0.958669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for off-season travel</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Var</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.139</td>
<td>1.940744</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can also be seen that the preference for travelling during off-season is also high among the generally vulnerable groups i.e. females (3.88), younger age group of 18-25 years (3.74) &<18 years (3.96) and lower income group of < $5,000 (3.86). The high preference among high income groups like > $40,000 (3.89) could however not be caused due to vulnerability but due to the comfort that they will experience. Therefore, above analyses emphasizes on the importance of having group specific strategy instead of a common strategy for all. This will help in attracting more number of tourists than otherwise.
Conclusion and Recommendations

This study focuses on tourism in Indian context, the existence of seasonality & its impact on income and employment, the concept of off-season tourism and the methods of achieving the same. Literature has been reviewed that studies seasonality of tourism in international context although many studies don’t exist on the same in the Indian context.

Seasonality has been identified as an important and chief characteristic of tourism industry. Although it has its pros but its cons cannot be neglected. The worst effect of seasonality in tourism can be seen in the skewed income and employment patterns. These effects point out towards the need of devising solution to treat seasonality. Promoting off-season tourism is one such solution.

Various studies have pointed out ways that can help in promoting off-season tourism. In this study we have used questionnaire method to see the effect of demographic groups on these measures. It was found that the effectiveness of these measures in promoting off-season tourism varies across age, income and gender groups. These findings implied that the strategies that are to be formed should be customized and should focus on various groups differently.

On analyzing the result of this study, it is recommended that major focus should be laid on providing services to low income groups, females and younger age groups, particularly between 18-25 years. This should be so done because they are the most vulnerable groups. Attention should also be given to high income groups because they tend to be very specific and are also a good source of income for the industry. Also, out of the three strategies Product Diversification is the most valuable service because the mean preference for this service has been found to be the maximum.

Čorluka et al (2013) stated that modern tourism is marked by the presence of selective tourism. The tourism destinations should keep in mind their key characteristics and make tourism deals accordingly. Various kinds of tourism like cultural tourism, eco-tourism, nautical tourism etc. can be promoted based on the characteristics of the place. Čorluka et al (2013), through the technique of Lorenz curve has found these various types of tourism to be highly effective in improving the condition of tourism seasonality.

Khare&Khare (2010) has laid emphasis on the role of internet in promoting off-season tourism. Internet is an effective medium of communicating the key features of a destination to the prospective tourists. It also helps in sharing with them the initiation of any new scheme and the improvements that are being made to what the destination has to offer. In today’s era where the trips are planned and booked over the internet, a prospective tourism destination cannot afford to miss out on the benefits of internet presence.

Therefore, tourism seasonality is a key component of tourism but there are ways in which it can be dealt with. The execution of these methods can help tourism industry in any country to curb down the effects of seasonality and hence, achieve high tourist inflows even during off-season.

Further studies can be done on the different regions of the country. The conditions, climatic as well as otherwise, therefore region specific strategies would be more effective in the context of this industry. Any industry works in the presence of both demand and supply side factors. Therefore, studies can also be performed focusing on the supply side problems and methods can be devised to solve them as well.

References


