

# TOURISM SEASONALITY – AN OVERVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

*Despite the fact of being the most prominent characteristic of tourism, tourism seasonality still remains a phenomenon. Almost all world destinations are facing seasonal concentration of tourist activities. The peaking of tourist demand in few hectic weeks or months is resulting in inefficient use of tourism facilities and pressure on the ecological and sociocultural carrying capacity. Strategies and policies to extend the main season and develop additional seasons are needed. The assumption is good understanding of tourism seasonality. The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of present tourism seasonality research findings. The research examines 64 literature sources classifying findings into four categories, namely: definition, causes, implications and strategies. The paper concludes that considerable gaps in the literature, as well as, in the understanding of tourism seasonality exist. The study contributes to the theoretical and practical knowledge of tourism seasonality.*

**Key words:** *tourism seasonality, causes, implications, strategies*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Seasonality is a universally recognized global tourism phenomenon (BarOn, 1975; Baum & Hagan, 1997; Baum & Lundtorp, 2001). Generally, indicates fluctuations of demand or supply in the tourism industry, caused by temporary movement of people due to factors such as climate conditions and public and school holidays (BarOn, 1972; Allcock, 1989; Cooper et al., 2005). In terms of natural factors, temporary movement takes place because every country has different climatic patterns (BarOn, 1973). The climate pattern act as pull factor in the receiving area, occurring in relation to a specific time of year, season, resulting in unevenness or fluctuation during the course of the year. Baum and Lundtrop (2001) highlight that tourism as an integral part of global business is highly dependent on seasonal changes in climatic conditions, economic activities as well as human behaviour and the society in general. The majority of tourism destinations are characterised with fluctuations in tourism activities throughout the year (BarOn, 1973; Yacoumis, 1980; Higham and Hinch, 2002; Jang 2004), whereby those fluctuations have a systematic and recurring pattern. Seasonality, i.e. seasonal fluctuations in tourism volumes over the calendar year, must be differentiated from longer-term business cycles and short-term changes related to weekly and daily travel patterns. Kuznets (1933) points out that the annual recurrence and the limited duration of the swing (e.g. tourism peak season) distinguish seasonal variations clearly from other changes in a time series, such as trend, cyclical and random movements. In case of Mediterranean sun, sand and seas destinations seasonality generally exhibits a dramatic tourism peak during the summer months. The tourist region has at certain times more tourists and visitors than it is able to accommodate, while at other times, there are too few tourists and visitors to the region. Manning and Powers (1984) are concerned that facilities and services may be underutilised, however, they also note the implications of facility overuse, suggesting that destinations and operators can face continual inefficiency as they grapple with the peaks and troughs of demand. In particular, such fluctuations in visitors and revenues are almost universally viewed as a problem by the tourist industry, which spends considerable time, money, and effort to modify these patterns through the development and implementation of strategies designed to extend the “shoulder seasons,” or to create “all season” destinations. Seasonality has become one of the most distinctive and determinative features of global tourism industry. Despite the fact that seasonality is one of the most prominent features of tourism, paradoxically, it is also one of the least understood. The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of current knowledge about tourism seasonality. The paper

attempts to contribute to tourism theory by aggregating the present knowledge with a critical review. The research results should be of interest to both academic researchers and tourism managers. The paper is divided into five sections. The next section looks briefly at the definitions of seasonality used in present literature, followed by a review of tourism seasonality causes. The third section is focused on the identification of seasonality implications. The fourth section gives an overview of proposed strategies to combat seasonality. The paper concludes with a brief summary of its findings.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A desk research was conducted. The study depends on the current literature and makes evaluation based on secondary data acquired from 64 published papers, over a five-year period of intensive topic research. A representative list of major databases and search engines were used in an academic setting for finding and accessing relevant articles. Some of the most must databases are: EconBiz, EconLit, Google Scholar, Science Direct, Scopus and Web of Science. An in-depth review was undertaken providing an amalgamation of relevant findings of tourism seasonality structured in five sections: definition, causes, implication, strategies and conclusion.

## **DEFINITION OF SEASONALITY**

Although, the concept of seasonality may be perceived to be familiar to many, however, there is no unique and precise definition of it. The most prominent definition was provided by Hylleberg (1992). He defines seasonality as the systematic, although not necessarily regular, intra-year movement caused by changes in the weather, the calendar, and timing of decisions, directly or indirectly through the production and consumption decisions made by the agents of the economy. These decisions are influenced by the endowments, the expectations and the preferences of the agents, and the production techniques available in the economy. As a pioneer in seasonality, BarOn (1973) stated that seasonality implies an incomplete and unbalanced utilisation of the means at the disposal of the economy, and this is similar to the imbalance of the business cycle, where the economy is either overheated or running under full potential at different phases of the cycle. Furthermore, BarOn (1975) defined seasonality as the effects

occurring every year due to climate status, constraints of public holidays, special attractions (e.g. festivals), or personal lifestyle. Manning and Powers (1984) define seasonality as the uneven distribution of use over time (peaking) becoming one of the most pervasive problems with outdoor recreation and tourism, causing inefficient resource use, loss of profit potential, strain on social and ecological carrying capacities, and administrative scheduling difficulties. A regularly cited definition was provided by Butler (1994) who defines the concept of tourism seasonality as temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism, which can be expressed in the number of visitors, their expenditure, traffic on different forms of transportation, employment and admissions to attractions. Therefore, it implies that the seasonality phenomena of tourism affect all aspects of supply-demand activities including pricing, occupancy, human resource, supplies volume, offered activities and available attractions. Following Cooper et al. (2005) seasonality refers to the temporal fluctuations of tourism on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis. It should be noted that all these definitions stress out 'the systematic intra-year movement' as one of the crucial elements of seasonality, suggesting that seasonality can be described as some sort of visitor pattern that reoccur every year. Most definitions and concepts of seasonality describe the phenomenon only in general terms or relate to its causes. There is a lack of quantifiable definitions stating when tourism seasonality occurs, how tourism seasons can be differentiated, and how seasonality can be compared between different regions or years, as well as different forms of tourism. An example of a quantifiable definition of the appearance of tourist seasons is given by Lim and McAleer (2001), who define tourist seasons as 'months for which the corresponding average indices exceed 1.0, which means that the seasonal factors increase tourist numbers above the trend and cyclical components'.

Seasonality has been considered as a crucial problem for the tourism industry and has been held responsible for creating many difficulties faced by the industry as 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 (Butler, 2001). Conversely, it has also been blamed for the underutilization of these resources and facilities, often preventing tourism being accepted as a viable economic activity in many areas. Therefore, there have been considerable efforts made by both public and private sector to attempt to reduce seasonality in destination areas.

In Allcock (1989) view, who defined tourism seasonality as the tendency of tourist flows to become concentrated into relatively short periods of the year, the most significant aspect of seasonality is that it involves the concentration of tourist flows in relatively short periods of the year. This annual peaking of tourism activity during a few hectic weeks or months is likely to result in inefficiency within the industry and is a great burden on the physical and social resources of the destination area and therefore an important contributor to the carrying capacity problem (Mitchell and Murphy, 1991). It is important to know that the concept of tourism seasonality is largely a temporal and spatial issue, meaning that certain regions are facing an overuse of tourist facilities at a certain part of year.

Annual business operation, with regard to the seasonal pattern, can be classified into annual intervals, seasons. The following seasonal scenarios are possible. One destination might have an annual business cycle with one peak season, two peak seasons, non-peak season (Butler and Mao, 1997). The most regular example is the one peak season. Most destinations are facing this pattern, especially coastal leisure destinations with their peak in the summer months or winter snow destinations with their peak in the winter months. A one peak season destination is further classifying the annual business cycle into off season (January, February, November and December), shoulder season (March, April, May, June, October) and peak season (July, August, September). Empirical evaluation on the duration of tourist season intervals and the intensity of business operation within each interval was provided by Corluca, Mikiñac and Milenovska (2016). The authors classified tourist seasons as flowing low season (January, February, November and December), mid-season (March, April, May, October), high season (June, July, August, September). Example of a two peak destination would be a destination which managed to have beside a winter snow season an additional season in the summer months, for example due to the promotion of mountain nature and sport activity holidays. A non-seasonal pattern is unusual and meaning that the distribution of tourist activities is constant with smaller irregularities over the year. The non-seasonal pattern is mostly experienced in tropical destinations with small irregularity in climate conditions over the year, or in city break destinations.

Hartmann (1986) emphasises the reliable recurrence of the tourist phenomenon in the course of a year. BarOn (1975) is taken a similar view by explaining seasonality as the effects occurring each year with more or less the same timing and magnitude. Hartmann (1986) argues that the reliable and predictable recurrence of tourists has

formed the economic base for the development of the tourist industry and that tourism. The pattern is usually remaining stable over many years. This predictability of seasonality makes it possible for businesses, lenders and investors to anticipate many of its impacts. With this understanding, seasonality has become a natural tourism phenomenon, taken as grounded. This predictability of seasonality makes it possible for businesses, lenders and investors to anticipate many of its impacts.

Seasonality is one of the most salient and significant characteristics of tourism. Despite the wealth of research, there is a general feeling of lack of knowledge of the phenomenon. Due to the insufficient understanding, the managing possibilities to combat or mitigate tourism seasonality are reduced. A good understanding of seasonality in tourism is essential for the efficient operation of tourism facilities and infrastructure. Further examination of tourism seasonality is needed to ensure better understanding of the phenomenon in case of causes of seasonality, quantification of implications, as well as potential strategies to lower the pattern.

## **CAUSES OF SEASONALITY**

Causes of seasonality are located in the generating and receiving area, pushing and pulling tourist demand to behave seasonal. Hylleberg (1992) grouped the basic causes of seasonality into three different categories: weather (e.g. temperature, hours of sunshine), calendar effects (e.g. timing of religious festivals such as Christmas, Easter, Eid or Vesak) and timing decisions (e.g. school vacations, industry vacations, tax years, accounting periods, dates for dividend and bonus payments, etc.). Seasonality occurs due to multiple reasons which can be caused by natural and anthropogenic factors (Kolomiets, 2010). Therefore, seasonality takes forms natural and institutionalized forms. The most applied classification of seasonality classified causes into two categories, namely natural and institutional. Further investigations added a third category called additional causes. This approach of causes classification was accepted in further research. Seasonality does not refer to occasional irregularities within tourism, but instead is concerned with the seasonal patterns that are stable and well-established (Ferrante, Lo Magno and De Cantis, 2018; Witt & Moutinho 1995). Hylleberg (1992) points out that some causes are stable over long periods, some change at discrete intervals, some vary continuously but predictably, while others are unpredictable.

*Natural* seasonality, as the name implies, is caused by natural phenomena as a result of nature and its forces including parameters as sunlight, daylight, air temperature, water temperature, snowfall, ice cover, rainfall, wind, humidity, precipitation, cloudiness, visibility (Butler, 1994). Seasonality caused by natural factors is related to regular temporal variations in natural phenomena, associated with annual seasons (Allcock, 1989; Butler, 1994). Hartmann (1986), as well as Koenig and Bischoff (2005) emphasize that seasonal variations caused by natural factors are predictable as they are relatively stable in a particular destination, and recur with only small changes. Hartmann (1986) takes the view that these variations mean that tourist regions have different seasonal potential and resources and thus are perceived to have particular seasonal qualities. Natural causes are beyond the control of decision-makers (Cuccia and Rizzo, 2011). Tourists have specific preferences which makes it necessary to distinguish between different types of tourism as bathing, skiing, hiking or surfing (Bender, Schumacher and Stein, 2005). Therefore, tourists seeking for sunlight and water sports will prefer a beach resort with warm temperature, whereas tourists' eager to enjoy snow scenery and skiing will favour a ski resort with low temperatures and an abundance of snow (Butler & Mao 1997). In Europe, for example, the Mediterranean is popular for beach and summer tourism, while the Alps area is favourable destination for skiing in winter (Duro and Turrión-Prats, 2019; BarOn, 1999; Shaw and Williams, 1998). The beach destinations are popular during the attracting season and forgotten in the rest of the year. While most of the skinning destination have managed to encounter a second seasons in the summer months attracting tourists with outdoor recreational activities in natural settings. Higham and Hinch (2002) point out that, even though climate is particularly important in attracting visitors, it is often considered as a constraint to tourist development. Each region has different climatic patterns. Natural seasonality especially affects remote and peripheral destinations with big temperature differences between the seasons. Seasonality increases with the distance from the equator (Hartmann, 1986; Butler, 1994). The traditional temporal patterns reflect seasons in the Northern Hemisphere as the most tourism developed countries are located there (Butler, 2000). Although, the emerging Asian market is causing changes in the market structure. Destinations with warm and cold climate are exposed to seasonal changes, due to different offer of tourist products depending on climate and season. Problems caused by natural seasonality are most difficult to overcome at high-latitude destinations, particularly in the peripheral regions (Lundtorp et al., 1999), due to the fact that the majority of outdoor tourism activities rely on natural 'climate-dependent' attractions and the extent of tourist activity is dependent on weather and climate

conditions (Smith, 1990). Destinations relying on predominantly outdoor facilities are thus most likely to experience a pronounced influence of natural seasonality on their tourism businesses (Koenig and Bishoff, 2005). Examples are coastal resorts, and countryside attractions, where the actual pattern of tourist activities is strongly weather dependent (Smith, 1990; Grant et al., 1997).

*Institutional* seasonality results from religious, cultural, social, ethnic and organizational factors (BarOn, 1972; Hinch & Hickey, 1996). Variations in tourist activities are caused by holidays and other events at specific times of the year. Getz and Nilsson (2004) add business customs to institutional causes. The most prominent institutional causes of seasonality are Christmas, summer vacations of schools, universities and work places (BarOn, 1975). Institutional seasonality reflects the social norms and practices of a society (Hinch and Hickey, 1996), therefor depend on social factors and policies concerning specific costumes and legislated holidays. Institutionalised seasonality is more complex as it is based on human behaviour and consumer decision-making (e.g. deciding on the timing of holidays) (Lee et al., 2008). School and industrial holidays have the greatest relevance for tourism seasonality (Rossello and Sanso, 2017). Butler (1994) argues that the traditional long summer school holidays remain the largest single impediment to reducing seasonality. Having long vacations in summer, a family with school students is more likely to take a major trip in this season than other seasons (Chung, 2009). The author remarks that the scheduling of school holidays during the summer was originally based on the need for children and students to assist with busy agricultural periods. Work holidays also influence the acuteness of the seasonal peaking of tourism activities, especially since the introduction of paid holidays appeared and the closure of some industrial sectors for few weeks during the summer months took place (Murphy, 1985). In the 20th century, especially in the age of mass tourism, vacationing often depended on school, industrial and public holidays (Bender, Schumacher and Stein, 2005). About half of the population is creating their travel pattern in regard with school holidays. Due to the mass movement during school vacations the federal states of Germany and Austria staggered of the timing of school holidays over different regions, what resulted, to a certain degree, with lower concentration of tourist activities. Beside summer vacations of school and work places, one of the most common forms of institutionalised seasonality is public holidays. Butler (1994) points out those public holidays used to be single days, but these have been expanded into long weekends and have become longer off work breaks, with an increasing importance for tourist activities. Further, one of the most significant factors in institutional seasonality



are big religious events like pilgrimages (Allcock, 1989; BarOn, 1993). Unlike the natural seasonality, dates of institutionalized seasonality can be established more precise, as it often corresponds with school or public holidays, religious events or pilgrimage, celebration or conduction of various events and festivals (Kolomiets, 2010). Within institutionalized causes of seasonality some are with fixed and some with variable dates. For example, some public holidays, such as Easter or Eid, have variable dates and therefore may cause differing effects on certain months from year to year (BarOn, 1975). There are also certain events that recur regularly over a period. This is the case for some festivals, celebrations or sports events in specific destinations (e.g. the Olympic Games, UEFA EURO and FIFA World Cup) contributing to seasonal concentration of tourist demand in particular years (Frechtling, 2001).

Butler (1994) suggests that social pressure or fashion, the sporting season, and tradition/inertia are significant *additional* causes of seasonality in his article. More specifically, social pressure refers to participate in specific activities at certain destinations at particular times of the year, mostly seen as imitation. This includes socialising in some capitals at certain times, taking holiday s at spas or spending the winter season at certain fashionable destinations (Koenig and Bishoff, 2005). Sporting season as an additional cause of tourism seasonality is regarded to the hunting, skiing, surfing or golf season, namely sport activities which can be undertaken in certain conditions at a certain part of the year. These activities require a combination of climatic and physical factors, along with the necessary infrastructure. Inertia is also one of the seasonality factors, which means that some travellers tend to take trips at a specific time of the year even though they no longer have to (Higham and Hinch, 2002), for the reason they have always done so, and old habits tend to die hard (Butler, 1994). The market segment senior citizen, or also called the golden oldies are a given example of seasonal behaviour due to inertia and tradition. They take their summer holiday in July and August, although aren't restricted to this particular period by work or school holidays. Calendar effects have been identified by Frechtling (2001) as another important additional cause of tourism seasonality. Such effects may, for instance, be due to the variability of the number of days in a month or to the number of weekends in the month, quarter, season or year (Koenig and Bishoff, 2005). Leisure tourism is mostly concentrated on weekends, the distribution of weekends and the interaction of weekends with holidays crating the popular phenomenon – long weekends can influence tourist behaviour. The supply side is also a potential cause of seasonality, such as cases where constraints in labour availability and the alternative uses of facilities lead to

closures or altered target markets Getz and Nilsson (2004). Butler (1994) added inertia at the supply side to the list of causes, referring to the tendency of business operators to accept the status quo. In the case of family businesses, many owners might actually prefer to close for part of the year, taking the peak season as given circumstance to maximize the earnings and enjoying the fruits in the resto of year. Goulding, Baum and Morrison (2004) put efforts to identify additional supply side constraints as alternative use of touristic resources, activity opportunities, physical attractions, licensing restrictions, tourism operating as secondary source of income and trading patterns of other business. Further causes of seasonality arising from supply side limitations are destination accessibility, accommodation structure, wet-weather facilities and destination promotion.

Lundtorp et al. (1999) summarized all causes of seasonality, and categorized them into pull and push factors. Seasonality takes place in both – receiving and generating area and creating pull and push-factors, affecting tourist flows (Kolomiets, 2010). In the generating area act institutional, calendar, inertia and tradition, social pressure or fashion, and access as push factors of leisure travellers, while in the receiving area climate, sporting seasons, events, alternative use of touristic resources, activity opportunities, physical attractions, licensing restrictions, tourism operating as secondary source of income and trading patterns of other business, accessibility, accommodation structure, wet-weather facilities and destination promotion indicate pull factors. The push and pull-factors create tourism seasonality, they are not independent of one another, but they interact when creating the seasonal character of destination.

In order to tackle tourism seasonality, it is important to realize where seasonality is generated. Although considerable efforts within the tourism industry to modify seasonal patterns, the understanding of fundamental causes of seasonality was lacking (Hinch, Hickey et al., 2001). The tourism system was developed and modelled with tourism seasonality as a standard characteristic of the industry. Higham and Hinch (2001) highlighted that the organised mass tourism in destinations, as the Mediterranean, have demand mainly motivated with sun, sea and sand. Tourists in order to choose destinations with the most favourable weather conditions that allow them to enjoy the elements of their preference. Social framework in terms of school holidays and paid holidays is organized in such a way that the big masses of population that constitute the organised tourism are mainly directed during the summer peak season, which is considered the time period where work permits are given. At the same time the tourist supply has been created territorially and

functionally in such a way and with these specifications that corresponds almost exclusively in the needs and pleasures of leisure summer tourism. the lengthening of tourist period is concerned.

Thus, the problem of tourist seasonality is real and becomes more intricate. Confrontation of tourism seasonality presupposes awareness and mobilisation from all involved institutions in order to plan the lengthening of the tourist season. In coastal summer destinations climatic and institutional causes are considered as the main driver of seasonal concentration. Case Croatia, most destinations suffer under extreme peaking of tourist demand, having more than 2/3 off their overnight stays in July and August. Despite favourable climatic conditions for at least four months, as well as, tourist demand trends indicate more frequent traveling, change of market structure having young individuals living traveling without family obligations till the age of 35 and the third age segment which is booming. Concluding, the number of tourists depending on school holidays, as the major cause of institutional seasonality is rapidly decreasing. The questing is, why does those Croatian summer destinations suffer under extreme seasonal concentration? Global warming will have an effect on the natural tourism seasonality (Butler and Mao, 1997), as well as the ageing of the population will change institutional tourism seasonality because the elderly population is less constricted in the timing of their holidays. The seasonal patterns will considerably change. Lundtorp *et al.* (1999) point out that little research has been done about which is the more important, the desire to travel at certain times of the year or the restrictions. This question should be a subject of consideration. Further research of the real causes of seasonality related to certain destination is needed. The common scheme of identified causes is insufficient in addressing the problem. Research has to be related to the type of destination and participated forms of tourism. Focus has to be put on demand side push factors motivating demand to behave seasonal, but as well on the supply side identifying limitations causing seasonal attractiveness.

## IMPLICATIONS OF SEASONALITY

Just as the causes of seasonality are diverse and complex, so are its impacts (Koenig and Bischoff, 2005). Not surprisingly, most researchers pointed out that a seasonal pattern is an uncontrolled situation resulting in a number of negative effects (Chung, 2009). With the growth of mass tourism, impacts of tourism seasonality have become greater (Wall and Yan, 2003). In fact, the implications arising from

seasonal concertation are progressive proportional to the growth of tourism. This is due to the fact that the number of enterprises depending on tourism has increased and tourism businesses have expanded in size, to satisfy the high season demand and to maximize seasonal revenues, and thus the ability to adapt to changes in demand has been reduced. Baum and Hagen (1999) point out that the impacts of seasonality vary considerably with the location of the destination and the location of the tourism enterprises within a destination, reflecting in part the variety of physical conditions and the nature of the attractions. Almost all destinations are facing tourism seasonality, even London, a destination with all-weather attractions and year-round events, for example, still records a summer peaking and a winter low. There are few tourism destinations that are not affected adversely in some way or another by the effects of seasonality (Fernandez-Morales, Cisneros-Martinez and McCabe, 2016). Regarding WTO (1984) analysis the most specialised destinations are usually the most seasonal and that tourist destinations supported by large urban centres, due to a more diversified demand, experience a less pronounced degree of seasonality. For example, a peripheral summer destination focused on bathing tourism will have the most pronounced summer peaking, while the same profile of destination close to an urban region will be able to reduce the peaking. Although, in general, the main concern about seasonality focuses on the effective planning and use of resources during the off-peak period, the peak period which is taken as granted also needs particular attention, because the facilities during the peak period may become too crowded and this may cause difficulties in terms of maintaining service quality and satisfying tourists (Koc and Altinay, 2007). The majority of the academic literature dealing with the issue of seasonality identifies these systematic demand fluctuations as a problem, which has to be modified and reduced in effect (Butler, 1994). Goeldner and Ritchie (2003) stress out seasonal patterns in demand cannot be eliminated, they can be reduced. The implications have been explored from both the supply-side (i.e. tourism operators, employees and residents of the destination locale) and the demand-side (i.e. tourists) perspectives of seasonality (Lee et al., 2008). Three major implications of tourism seasonality can be classified as economic, environmental and seasonal employment (Koenig & Bischoff, 2005; Chung, 2009). As seasonal employment affects the economy, the employees and the local community is therefore considered separately from the other impacts. Findings indicate benefits from running a business on a seasonal basis (Hartman 1986; Goulding, Baum & Morrison 2004). The implications of tourism seasonality are the result of excessive use of resources in peak season and underutilization of capacities in the off-season. Impacts are manifested at enterprise and destination level.

The *economic* impacts of seasonality relate mostly to problems in the off-peak periods, particularly the loss of profits due to the inefficient use of resources and facilities (Sutcliffe and Sinclair, 1980; Manning and Powers, 1984; Williams and Shaw, 1991) and are manifested on an enterprise level. BarOn (1975) stated that seasonality generates cost losses called “seasonal loss”. Economic problems are related to the loss of profit due to the inefficient use of resources. Murphy (1985) states that businesses and the community need to attain sufficient revenues from a few hectic weeks in the summer in order to ensure success for the whole year. Cash-flow discontinuities can arise due to seasonal attaining of revenues, forcing owners to seek credit or alternative income sources. Tourist demand fluctuations may lead to a shortage of hotel rooms in the peak season, while tourism resources always have high risk of under-utilization in the off-season (Sutcliffe and Sinclair, 1980; Butler, 1994; Jang, 2004; Koenig and Bischoff, 2005; Chung, 2009). Especially, seasonality affects physical facilities which have a greater portion of fixed cost than other service providers (Chung, 2009). The management question is to close during the off-peak season or remain open to obtain sufficient income in order to cover the fixed costs. Tourism is an industry of intangible products, in case products are not sold on the day, they cannot be kept in a storage room for the next month, whereas, if hotel rooms, flight tickets, or festival tickets are not sold at a designated day, their economics value would be exactly zero (Cooper et al., 2005; Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003). Another serious problem of seasonality is low annual returns on capital (Butler, 1994; Cooper et al., 2005). Consequently, due to low returns on capital it is difficult to attract investors or lenders (Mathieson and Wall, 1982). Maintenance work on buildings is seen as a positive economic effects of seasonality.

The impacts of seasonality on *employment* are mostly related to the off-peak periods and are expressed on an enterprise level. The implications are in the main seen as negative, affecting employer and employee. The most important issue in relation to seasonal employment is the difficulty in recruiting and retaining full-time staff (Yacoumis, 1980). As there is a disproportion of job demand in an off and peak season, prospective workers are likely to leave a destination in order to get a stable job so that the population of employees at the location becomes smaller (Chung, 2009), resulting in difficulty of maintaining a certain economic status at a destination (Szivas et al., 2003). As result of lack of employees the level of payment at a specific job position will increase during a peak-season (Chung, 2009) and if employees are recruited on a seasonal basis, companies repeatedly spend fixed costs for training the workers every peak season (Cooper et al., 2005). Both is

contributing to higher operational costs. Seasonal work is often seen as less 'meaningful' and tends to attract those on the periphery of the labour market, who are less educated, semiskilled or unskilled (Mill and Morrison, 1998; Mathieson and Wall, 1982). Murphy (1985) emphasises that only little training is usually provided for temporary employees, therefore staff relations and skills remain minimal. This makes it particularly difficult to maintain product and quality standards (Baum, 1999). Positive aspect of seasonal employment is the opportunity of temporary jobs to some people, such as students and housewives (Koenig and Bischoff, 2005). Seasonal work provides an opportunity for employee recuperation during off-season (Commons and Page, 2001).

*Ecological* impacts are related to the peak season period, largely synonymous with the negative effects occurring due to the concentration of visitors during the peak season at a destination. These include, for example, congested rural lanes, wildlife disturbance, air pollution, sewage disposal problem, physical erosion of footpaths and litter problems (Grant *et al.*, 1997; Bender *et al.*, 2005; Chung 2009). Butler (1994) considers intensive visitation in fragile environments as the main environmental problem of seasonality. Manning and Powers (1984) emphasise the strain of tourism activities on the ecological carrying capacity of a particular destination, due to the heavy usage during the peak season. Butler (1994) specify that the intensity of the pressure on fragile environments caused by overcrowding and overuse during the summer peak is often seen as one of the main environmental problems of tourism seasonality. Hartmann (1986) states the off-season, the lengthy 'dead' season, is the only chance for the ecological and the social environment to recover fully.

*Socio-cultural* impacts are connected to the peak season period as a result of the concentration of tourists during the peak season at a destination. Socio-cultural impacts include not only the effects of seasonal fluctuations on the host community but also on the visitor (Koenig and Bischoff, 2005). Negative implications for local people arise from the dramatic increases in population during the summer months, which place a strain on regular infrastructure and services (Murphy, 1985) and include, for example, congestion, crowded streets, slower traffic, lack of parking, queues for services, higher prices of services, significant increases in the costs of community services, overcrowding at attraction sites, pressure on the infrastructure (Chung, 2009; Koenig and Bischoff, 2005; Common and Page, 2001; Krakover, 2000; Allcock, 1989). Mathieson and Wall (1982) draw attention to the link between

tourism and increased crime by cause of the increased number of people present during the peak season. Manning and Powers (1984) point out the problem of the social carrying capacity of the destination, which might result in resentment from the local community towards all tourism activities. Positive aspect of seasonality is manifested as the chance for residents to make full use of local amenities and facilities in the off-peak periods (Murphy, 1985). The off-season allows the community relief from stress, to have a normal life, helps preserve its identity and provides them with a time for preparing for the next peak season (Butler, 2000). Butler (1994) therefore, stresses out strategies to lengthen the main season or to attract more visitors outside the season need the full support of host communities. The concentration of visitor activities during the peak season produces similar effects on the tourists themselves (Koenig and Bischoff, 2005). Visitor enjoyment and satisfaction might be reduced due to overcrowding at attraction sites, lack of capacities during the peak demand periods, pressure on the infrastructure, perceived price gouging in the peak season, with a negative impact on consumer perceptions of value, lack of quality as a result of overcrowding (Jang, 2004; Common and Page, 2001; Krakover, 2000). In contrast, in the off-peak season, many facilities might be closed and the full range of services may not be available (Butler, 1994).

Implications arising from seasonality are well established. Future research has to focus on the quantification of implications. Information about the relation between capacity of usage and degree of certain implication are requested, i.e. the minimum/maximum number of tourists before the negative effects of tourism activities overlap the positive.

## **STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS SEASONALITY**

Seasonality is concerned with patterns that are stable and well-established rather than occasional irregularities (Witt & Moutinho 1995). As there is an element of predictability associated with seasonal fluctuations of tourist demand, it is possible for managers to anticipate impacts and to implement strategies to adjust business operation to any negative effects (Getz & Nilsson 2004). McEnnif (1992) points out that even though seasonality will never be totally eliminated, there are numerous ways to even out the peaks and troughs. The prerequisite for a successful strategy implementation is the matching of tourist market segment needs and destination products. Calantone and Johar (1984) pointed out that there

is a difference in groups of tourism benefits sought across tourist seasons. It is necessary to understand tourists specific benefits needs within each season and fully satisfy them during the period when destination marketers want to attract more tourists. Establishing alternative off-season marketing strategies, matching seasonal motivation with tourism products and services offered, is needed to increase the number of tourists in off-season (Spotts and Mahoney, 1993). BarOn (1975) highlighted that tourism expansion often means an expansion of the main season. Attention should be focused on the off-peak season and strategies to spread tourism, as even as possible, throughout the year when overall tourist numbers are relatively stable (Butler, 1994). Destinations with well-established tourism industries are the most successful in their attempts to reduce seasonality (Butler and Mao, 1997). Business's response to seasonality might vary according to the nature of seasonality and the potential to develop off-season tourism. The private and social cost of tourism seasonality can be reduced only by common strategies involving the public and private actors (Capo Parrilla, Font and Nadal, 2006). Cellini and Rizzo (2010) indicate mutual accusation from private and public bodies. Private subjects complain about the lack of public initiatives aiming at reducing seasonality of demand. On the other hand, public initiatives do not consistent answers by part of private forms. The development of strategies has to be related to the geographical, as specific spatial characteristics of location, and to the socio-economic patterns of destinations. Remote and peripheral destinations may encounter difficulties when trying to develop an all-year season tourism product (Allcok, 1989), due to the dependency on physical constrains and on rigidity in supply patterns. The destinations ability to develop off-season tourism is depending the ability of tourism enterprises and infrastructure to individually overcome the problems associated with seasonal demand fluctuations, further the desire for collaboration between tourism enterprises and public bodies within destination and tourism system.

There are many strategies that are used to address the effects of seasonality, at both the enterprise and destination level. Lee et al. (2008) remark four general strategies: pricing, diversifying the attraction, market diversification and facilitation by the state. Witt and Moutinho (1995) had a similar view and state that the most commonly advocated strategies are diversifying the product mix, diversifying the market, price differentials and state-initiated measures. Baum and Hagen (1997) suggested four main forms of initiatives to counter seasonality: events and festivals; market diversification; product diversification; and structural and environmental responses. Butler (1994) indicated following approaches to counteract seasonality:



diversifying markets, differential pricing and tax incentives on a temporal basis, staggering on holidays, encouraging domestic tourism in off season, and providing off-season activities such as festivals and conferences. Further, Butler (2001) highlighted differential pricing and taxation, new attractions and events and market diversification as management strategies. Measuring seasonal fluctuations accurately, extending peak-seasons by developing a tourism product irrelevant to seasonality, promoting a pricing differentiation model, and multiple use schemes are strategies suggested by Cooper et al. (2005) and Goeldner and Ritchie (2003). Weaver and Oppermann (2000) identify six basic supply/demand matching strategies: increase, reduce and redistribute demand, and increase, reduce and redistribute supply. A specific and common strategy to reduce supply during the off season can be the closure of part of the tourism enterprises in order to overcome the problem of underutilization of resources and facilities (Cannas, 2012). Regarding Weaver and Oppermann (2000), this radical measure for reducing costs is generally employed when it is not possible to increase demand outside the peak season.

Attempts to combat seasonality, within the available literature, are directed to product and market diversification. Diversified products should meet the need of diversified markets. Product diversification means development of new products for new market segments, while market diversification means new segments for new or existing products. Promotion activities and facilitation by the state are seen as supporting measures for successful implementation of develop strategies. Product diversification measures have to meet diversified market needs. Effective market diversification into shoulder and off-season periods must be accompanied by the recognition that different seasons create demand for different products, with alternative presentation, packaging and, indeed, pricing Baum and Hagen (1999). Marketing activities are crucial in order to implement counter-seasonal strategies successfully, as it is important that consumers are aware of the advantages, and availability, of off-peak season holidays (Koenig and Bischoff, 2005). Facilitation by the state through investment in infrastructure such as transportation to increase accessibility to the location does help make any location more attractive to visitors Goulding, Baum and Morrison (2004). Further, stresses that product development strategies must be placed within the context of the overall development strategy so that the new products complement and support one another Butler (1994). A recapitulation of strategies aimed to combat seasonality is given in Table 1.

Table 1 Strategies to addressing tourism seasonality

Author	Strategy	Activity
Goulding, Baum and Morrison, 2004; Baum and Hagen, 1999; Baum, 1998; Witt and Moutinho, 1995	Introduction or development of festivals and events	Traditional or artificially created events, festivals, special celebrations in order to boost demand during off-peak seasons. Movement of well-established events and festivals can from main season and to shoulder or off-peak periods.
Jang, 2004; Jeffrey and Barden, 1999; Witt and Moutinho, 1995	Diversifying into niche products	Special interest weekends, getaway breaks, health, sport and activity-based holidays, culture and heritage tourism, educational, rural or ecological tours.
Jeffrey and Barden, 1999	Offering off-season holiday packages	Special occasion packages for accommodation, restaurants, activities to encourage greater visitation, repeat visitation or to lengthen stay in order to sustain and expand expenditure to compensate for low seasons.
Lundtorp et al., 1999	Business travel	Meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions since business travellers are usually not influenced seasonal pattern.
Cooper et al., 2005; Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003; Witt et al., 1991; Sutcliffe and Sinclair, 1980; BarOn, 1975	Multiple use schemes	Ski resort used as trekking course or Mediterranean beach resorts sell accommodation to long-stay, generally elderly Northern European visitors during the off-season.
Allock, 1994	Circuits' attractions, twin attractions or two-centre holidays	Circular tours or shifting of stay - one week spent at the seaside and one week in the countryside.
Jang, 2004; Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003; Commons and Page, 2001; Weaver and Oppermann, 2000; Jeffrey and Barden, 1999; Witt and Moutinho, 1995; Allcock, 1989; BarOn, 1973	Special price offers - seasonal pricing	Discounted prices are offered during off-peak seasons, while high price in peak seasons. Introduction of entrance fees to protected areas

continued Table 1

Author	Strategy	Activity
Jeffrey & Barden, 1999	Group booking offers	Discounting packaged holiday activities. Align with tour operators or travel agents to sell product/service
Witt & Moutinho, 1995	Marketing campaigns to attract different markets in different season	Awaken consumer awareness of the availability and advantages of off-peak season holidays.
Goulding, Baum and Morrison, 2004; Batchelor, 2000; Witt & Moutinho, 1995	Staggering of holidays over a longer period	Change in the UK school system from the traditional three-term year to a five-term year.
Goulding, Baum and Morrison, 2004	Improved and expanded regional infrastructure	Roads, signage, amenities, air services, utility infrastructure.
Goulding, Baum and Morrison, 2004; Baum and Hagen, 1997	Development of local business networks and partnerships	Developing, marketing (e.g. branding) and promotion of new attractions and venues.

Different strategies to combat seasonality were proposed. The literature is missing empirical studies with evaluation of the outcomes of applied strategies. The accent of future research has to be put on the empirical evaluation of proposed strategies. Findings about the relation between type of destination and successful strategies are essential. The key question is under what circumstances and to what extent can strategies that are effective in one place be transferred to another.

## CONCLUSION

As illustrated on the preceding pages tourism seasonality is a prominent topic in the tourism industry and drew great attention in literature. However, in recent years most papers analysing tourism seasonality have a secondary issue, relying on previous findings. The review clearly indicated the lack of theoretical framework of tourism seasonality. The knowledge of tourism seasonality is based on practical evidence, rather than being based on theoretical models. Empirical findings, based on scientific research methods are needed. The literature defines seasonality, indicates causes and implications of seasonality and propose strategies to address seasonality. Future research should focus on in-depth and longitudinal research to underpin tentative finding which have emerged. Findings about quantification of seasonal concentration, linking of causes of seasonality with demand and supply profile, quantification of implications, as well as, linking of proposed strategies and destination profile are essential for better understanding and managing tourism seasonality.

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