

Seasonal employment in tourism sector: the example of turkey

[Literature](#)



This dissertation seeks to:

- * Define seasonal tourism

- * Identify the human resources management practices adopted by the sampled institutions: Defining the source of recruitment, average contract period, stating positions seasonally filled.

- * Investigate the profile of the tourism workforce: age distribution, educational status, skills acquired through experience, job seeking methods

- * Investigate the response to seasonality by both employers and employees: understanding of the behaviours of recruiting and job seeking, difficulties faced during the process

Rationale:

The reason why the dissertation has been written is to identify seasonal work in tourism industry in Turkey as a problem which limiting the potential benefits of the sector to Turkish economy, this work seeks to inform policy makers and decision makers within the industry. By doing so researcher hopes to be helpful in firstly methodoligaly identifying a serious problem and finding solutions to this problem.

Limitation:

This dissertation will try to identify seasonality in Turkish mass tourism sector and will not try to offer ready to use strategies to implement. This study confined to 1985-2004, Antalya region Turkey.

1. Introduction

1. 1 Objective

My project aims to examine the effects of seasonal character of tourism on human resources management practices and employees in Turkey. Because the sector is highly labour-intensive and for many countries- especially developing ones such as Turkey- tourism is an important mean of development and employment/job generation, studying the subject bares great importance.

Within this context my objectives are:

- * identify the human resources management practices adopted by the sampled institutions: Defining the source of recruitment, average contract period, stating positions seasonally filled.
- * elaborate patterns of seasonality
- * provide information about general profile of the workforce: age distribution, educational status, skills acquired through experience, job seeking methods
- * identify the problems faced by both employers and employees: rate of staff turnover, job insecurity, fluctuations of income, costs related to hiring staff.
- * investigate the response to seasonality by both employers and employees: understanding of the behaviours of recruiting and job seeking, difficulties faced during the process

* provide information about current policy adopted by authorities in response to seasonality: understanding of policy-making and planning, stating the awareness of official professional bodies.

The hypothesis to test in this project is that seasonality in tourism affects employer and employees - the latter being affected more- in respect to their performance at work.

In this project my case will be the Turkish mass tourism industry mainly based in Antalya region. Cycling demand creates seasonal working of the industry all over the world. However, example of Turkey is unique in a way that industry is quite young and still developing. Professional HRM policies and vocational education is emerging. Therefore it is not only nature of the industry that makes seasonal work common but the traditional attitude of the professionals and policy maker towards tourism.

To test my hypothesis, sample institutions from Antalya region -working on seasonal basis- will be compared to so called city hotels working all year around.

1. 2 Background Information/Literature Review

Labour-intensive character of tourism makes tourism related employment an important issue. Aktas and others argue that with its financial impact and employment possibilities the tourism sector has far-ranging effects on the national economy (Aktas&others 2001). The sectors close relationships with the labour market is addressed by Baum and Amoah. (Baum&Amoah 1997)

Seasonality is addressed in literature as one of the "universal themes" along with demography, skill shortages, and negative impact of the working within the sector in the eyes of society, cultural barriers stopping women working, education and strategic planning. (Baum 1997; D'Annunzio&Green 2000)

Seasonality in tourism defined as cyclical variations in demand (Jolliffe&Farnsworth 2003). As demand for service fluctuates employment capacity of the sector follows the changes. But it is different from other sectors such as manufacturing where stocking the output of production is possible if needed. In tourism there are slow and high seasons and these periods could be observed clearly during the year. Further, in other sectors this type of demand variations are likely to be firm specific but in tourism the sector follows the cycle as a whole. So impact on employment capacity is mass.

While seasonal employment in tourism is very dominant, little research has been done in this area (Jolliffe&Farnsworth 2003). There are few articles discussing the issue . According to Highman and Hinch (2002) seasonality is most predominant and yet least understood aspect of the tourism.

Jolliffe&Farnsworth addresses the impact of seasonality on the sector and identifies two possible responses to seasonality: embracing or challenging it. As a strategic human resources management method they develop a model to manage seasonality.

Krokovar, in his paper, analyses the employment adjustment trends in different tourism centres in Israel. Employing five variables-demand, rates of bed occupancy, expected monthly fluctuation and long term trend- he

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suggest that hotel operators are accustomed to move with the rhythm of the fluctuation but unable to synchronise labour to demand.

Ashworth&Thomas point out that tourism employment has grown rapidly but its seasonal character forced industry to make several attempts to lessen seasonality in tourism demand. Outcome of their econometric work using quarterly UK data series from 1982: 1 to 1996: 4 shows that seasonality has in fact lessened by this attempt.

Koenig examines the seasonal pattern for different types of domestic tourism demand in the UK during 1994-2000. The focus is on Wales, a region with particularly pronounced tourism seasonality. The characteristics of the Welsh seasonal pattern are identified and compared with other UK regions, notably Scotland. An overview of various different methods for quantifying these seasonal variations is presented. On the basis of his analysis, he discusses policy implications for tackling the seasonality problem is discussed.

Main reason for me to choose this topic goes back to my work experience within the industry. I observed some characteristic of seasonality while I was working in Antalya. Mass tourism in Turkey became very important after 1980's, following the country's serious attempts to adopt an open market economy policy. This new era of free foreign trade and financial liberalisation made Turkish economy more vulnerable than ever before to monetary shocks. With a high deficit of current account balance (CAB) only way out was to increase the export. Because Turkey has a vast and unused potential

it, tourism came into scene at this point. In mid 80's incentive policies were introduced to encourage investment in the sector.

All in all, tourism is one of the most important sectors in Turkey and it has a seasonal character. My research on this topic can help filling the gap in the literature and provide results that will help identifying a major problem. It is also possible that my work can ignite the development of new policies to challenge the problem.

2. Discussion of the Research Question

2. 1. Tourism in Turkey

As outlined in the previous section, tourism industry is crucially important for Turkish economy. Today's most popular tourism destinations were quiet coastal towns and villages twenty years ago. Economical transformation in 1980's brought country's tourism potential into daylight. What discovered was that sandy beaches and hot summer sun was the best export of Turkey. History, culture and natural resources were free goods and with relatively little investment they were at disposal. Said investment is mainly on human resources and return of investment is quite fast. Therefore, this opportunity was seen by the government and incentives and subsidiaries were deployed. At that time prime minister himself had a personal interest in the matter. Required legislation passed by the parliament and five star hotels started to bloom on the Mediterranean and Aegean coasts. The expression 'industry without smoking chimneys' was very popular in those days. Evidently official

policy wanted to use tourism as a strategy to promote development and employment.

These policies proved to be successful. In twenty years Turkey has experienced rapid tourism growth in term of volume and value.

(Tosun&Timothy 2003)In 2002 number of foreigners visited Turkey exceeded 10 million a year. In same year total revenues of the sector was about \$ 10 billion. However, it is argued that this figure do not represent an evenly distributed development throughout country and the society.

(Tosun&Timothy 2003)Despite this argument it is clear that is an important source of employment and contributes the national economy.

2. 2. HR Management Policies

The tourism industry in Turkey is relatively young and still developing.

Because of this HRM and its recognition professionally is recent. Managerial posts in the industry were- and still are- mainly filled by professionals from other sectors. Recent developments in tourism education are changing this situation rapidly. Mid-level positions are filled by " traditional youth pool"(Baum 1997) Nearly 80% of the workforce is educated on secondary or higher levels and common ways personnel acquisition are direct application, recommendation and transfers between institutions (Aktas 2001)

HR policies are well adapted to seasonality. It is taken as a natural aspect of the business and not questioned most of the time. This is very interesting when the invested resources are unemployed/underemployed for a long period of the time.

2. 3 Profile of the Workforce

Apart from the managerial level employees it can be said that workforce is provided by young people. They are mostly vocationally educated and trained in the industry. Trainees make up a considerable proportion of the total employees. The sector does not rely on local sources and recruits people from every corner of the country.

Tourism education in Turkey is well established on both secondary and university level. One of the common problem of the tourism education is foreign language teaching. Some of the general lycees are more successful than tourism education institutions.

Because labour turnover is quite high most of the workforce is instable and this has an effect on their lifestyle and income. This effect is absorbed by being young and flexible. Professional development is an important issue amongst employees but opportunities of career development is limited by the nature of the work. Working shifts and irregular hours makes it hard to live a planned life and make room in that life for personal development.

2. 4. Tourism Policies

Governmental bodies are still enthusiastic about tourism but it can never be the as same as it was in the past. Main authority is the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. It is organised provincial level. As a result of centralised nature of Turkish state organisation decisions are made in capital implemented locally. Tourism investments have tax immunity and offered allocation of

free land. All tourism institutions are inspected by the ministry to keep up with the standards.

Tourism was introduced in Turkey as an economic growth strategy and significant process has been made in terms of growth. But the outcome of this growth is not evenly distributed between the regions and the layers of the society (Tosun 2003) Tourism investment concentrates on coastal regions and few desired areas.

2. 5. Effects of Seasonality

Seasonality in tourism is a marked characteristic of the industry. It is described as variation in demand from high season to low season. Result of this variation is hiring and firing staff seasonally.

My project deals with the effects of seasonality an HRM and employees. Hypothesis of this study is that seasonality has a negative impact on HRM and employee performance. It can be argued that working for a limited period of the year makes people to feel disattached to their profession and establishment. They study and train themselves to master some skills but the nature of their work gives a sense of impermanency. This stops the creation of a stable professional community. High turnover of labour is the best indicator of this argument. Furthermore, seasonal work affects average earnings resulting in low-income workers.

Evidently expected result of this picture is unsatisfied, low-income workers, who are not dedicated to their work and their establishment. Because

tourism as a service sector depends on quality of its workforce, simple result will be the bad business.

3. Methodology

3. 1. Method

In this project I will adopt the methodology suggested by Tutuncu (2000) for tourism sector. Because of the nature of the subject quantitative methods will be used in a conclusive research design.

Because there are not enough previous studies on the research question, secondary research will be limited to using national statistics database on tourism. The focus will be on primary research gathering information on the field.

3. 2. Data collection

In data collection a structured questionnaire will be used. Open and closed ended question will be used to test the variables determined by the theoretical frame. For the closed ended questions nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio scales will be used. Open ended questions will be placed at the end of the questionnaire to get personal opinions from the participants.

There will be two different questionnaires one for employees and one for the HR managers.

The population data will be collected from is quite big. Therefore, it will be necessary to use a convenient sampling method to define representative

sample of the population. I will use non-probability sampling technique. My experience in the sector convinces me to choose Judgement Sampling. However, I will use some expertise from local academics.

I am planning to pre-test the questionnaire to insure and maximise its validity of my method and employ test-retest method to insure reliability of the method. I anticipate some problems because of my inexperience on the methods: such as creating questionnaires, question wording etc. Especially question wording needs careful attention to avoid response and non-response bias. In order to overcome this anticipated problems it will be necessary for me to use some expert help and proof-read my questionnaires.