

# Impact of tourism seasonality on hrm in hotels tourism essay



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Seasonality has been recognised as one of the most typical feature of the tourism industry derived from the movement of people resulting fluctuations in the demand (Bulter, 1994; Baum, 1999). The phenomenon, its causes and impact on destination regions have been widely researched within the academic literature and often seasonality is perceived as a problem for the industry.

Seasonality affects the human resource practices in any hospitality and tourism business and it is often held responsible for the seasonal employment, underemployment and unemployment (Jolliffe and Farnsworth, 2003). The pattern is particularly influencing peripheral destinations which experience increased demand (Baum and Hagen, 1999). Due to the variations in demand, some resorts have a very short season lasting four to five months, which creates challenges for human resource managers.

The literature addressing the impact of seasonality on businesses located in peripheral regions is mainly concerned on strategies how to overcome seasonality or reduce the impact of it. There are few strategies focused on the HRM. In addition, little research has been conducted on the specific difficulties to HR managers in recruiting and training front office employees.

Tourism is one of the biggest and fastest growing sectors in the European community, greatly contribution to the European economy (CORDIS, 2008). The industry plays an essential role in the employment growth as Europe is the world`s number 1 destination (EU, 2010)

## **Aims and Objectives**

The dissertation aims at providing a better understanding of the impact of seasonality on HRM practices in relation to recruiting and training front office employees in resort hotels in Europe

The objectives to achieve the aim of this study are:

To identify and critically analyse the literature in regards to seasonality and its consequences to human resource management practices within the hospitality industry in particular front office employees in resort hotels in Europe

Investigate the current practices applied by different resort hotels in Europe and to what extent the seasonality affects the HRM

Evaluate the most popular approaches outlined in the literature

Provide recommendations

## **Dissertation Structure**

In order to achieve the outlined objectives above the work is structured as follows: starting with Chapter 1 establishing the rationale for ....., .

## **Research methodology**

This following section will be focused on the type of research methods used to complete the dissertation.

## **Research Approach**

### **Research Process**

The first step in the research process was to generate a research idea that would be interesting to examine. There is a range of techniques that can be used to find and select a topic and the process used for this dissertation, named as rational thinking (Saunders et al., 2003), involved consideration of author`s interests and taking into account past and current projects.

However, Altinay and Paraskevas(2008) suggest that applying more than one technique can only be beneficial to the project , thus relevance trees, a creative technique, has been used to ensure author`s interest and motivation will maintain throughout the research process(Saunders et al., 2003). Once a research idea was generated, in order to achieve author`s goals, objectives were established (Zikmund et al., 2010), which were amended a few times during the research process.

### **Secondary Data**

In order to achieve the aims and objectives of this study, the author has chosen to use only secondary research data. Secondary data is defined as ..... Literature review is the initial step, in order to gain the knowledge required to set the dissertation objectives(Veal, 1997). This allowed the author to review the existing literature and become more aware of the existing knowledge related to the research topic (Brotherton, 2008), and therefore identify a gap within then literature. Academic literature and journal articles have provided information about HRM practices and tourism seasonality

## **Primary Data**

## **Justifications**

## **Limitations**

## **Summary**

100 words max

This study aims at providing the reader with a deep understanding of the impact of seasonality on HRM. As mentioned above.... The topic has been chosen as the author .....

## **Chapter 2 Seasonality**

In order to be able to analyse the impact of seasonality on HRM practices in resorts for front office employees, it is necessary to understand the phenomenon seasonality. Hence, this chapter will critically review and evaluate existing literature by firstly providing a definition of seasonality, proceeding then to its causes and finally the impact of its occurrence will be assessed.

## **Seasonality**

Seasonality, a key characteristic of the tourism, is a major issue for the industry as it can place a great pressure on businesses in all aspects: social, financial and environmental. There is a variety of definitions of seasonality within the academic literature, depending on the context (Butler, 1994, Baum, 1999; Butler, 2001, Bar-On, 1975, Hartman, 1986; Hinch and Jackson, 2000; Mitchel and Hall, 2003). Generally considered as a peaking of demand at different times of the year (Kennedy, 1999; McEniff, 1992; Krakover, 2000; Moore, 1989 in Baum and Hagen, 1999; Jang, 2004) and has a spatial <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-tourism-seasonality-on-hrm-in-hotels-tourism-essay/>

component expressed in terms of number of visitors, employment and hotel occupancy rates(Butler and Mao, 1997). Baron(1973; 1999) suggests that seasonality is concerned with as the effects occurring every year due to climate changes or national holidays, defined by Jolliffe and Farnsworth (2003: 312) as “ cyclical variations in tourism demand”.

The phenomenon is recognised as one of the most predominant and least understood features of tourism(Jolliffe and Farnsworth, 2003) causing major problems to the tourism industry (Krakover, 1999; Cooper et al., 2005;). It has been argued by Butler(1994) that seasonality can be measured in the number of visitors and employment, resulting fluctuation in demand and placing a great pressure on hotels located in peripheral resorts (Murphy, 1997).

Before proceeding to the causes of seasonality, it is essential to be noted that in this paper seasonality is referred to the phenomena, which has stable and well-established seasonal patterns (Witt and Moutnho, 1995).

Those hotels are usually located in the regional areas .....

## **Causes of Seasonality**

Seasonality occurs not only in tourism but also in a range of other sectors, and the causes of seasonality in general have been classified into three groups: weather, calendar effects and timing decisions(Hylleberg, 1992 in Koenig and Bischoff, 2005). Similarly the causes of seasonality in tourism have been categorised by various authors . Table xx presents a summary of the key authors and causes.

## **Causes of Seasonality**

### **Authors**

#### **Causes**

BarOn(1975)

Natural, Institutional, calendar, sociological and economic factors

Hartmann(1986)

Natural and Institutional factors

Butler(1994)

Natural and Institutional factors, social pressure, sporting events, inertia and tradition

Butler and Mao(1997)

Physical and socio/cultural factors in the tourism generating and receiving areas

Flechtling (1996)

Climate/whether, Social customs/holidays, business customs, calendar effects

Baum and Hagen (1999)

Climate/whether, Social customs/holidays, business customs, calendar effects and supply side constrains

Adapted from

It is generally established that seasonality can originate from two factors, “ natural” (physical) and “ institutional”(social and cultural) (BarOn, 1975) involving both the origin and destination region(Butler and Mao, 1997). There is a high level of interdependence between the two (Baum and Lundtorp, 1999; Hartmann, 1986), shown in figure xx below. Natural seasonality is the result of cyclical climatic variations such as rainfall, temperature and snowfall (Baum and Lundtorp, 1999; Butler and Mao, 1997). As every country has different climatic patterns (BarOn, 1975) some European coastal resorts located on the Mediterranean have higher demand in the summer compared to resorts in Alps where winter is the high season (Shaw and Willams, 1998; Andriotios, 2005). These causes affect businesses every year in the same way , yet there are some differences over the years as whether cannot be precisely predicted (BarOn, 1975)

Institutional seasonality, on the other hand, is the result of consumer decisions based on cultural, social and/or religious factors and therefore less predictable than natural (Butler, 1994 in Baum and Lundtorp, 1999, Hingham and Hinch, 2002). School and public holidays such as Christmas and Easter are playing an essential role in the volume of tourism demand as people have the time to go on holiday during those periods (BarOn, 1975).

In addition to the generally recognised natural and institutional factors of seasonality, Butler (1994) identifies other three causes: social pressure, sporting events, one of the newest form, and inertia or tradition. Inertia is a factor related to the tendency of people to take holidays at certain time of



the year besides the fact that it is no longer necessary, for example after children have left school (Butler, 1994). However, Hingham and Hinch (2002) imply that social pressure and sporting causes can be classified into “institutional” category. On the other side, Hinch and Jackson (2000) argue that “inertia” cannot be classified as a cause of seasonal demand. The identified causes of seasonality by Butler overlap to great extent with the work of Frechtling (1996), who identifies four main causes of seasonality in tourism demand, extended to five by Baum and Hagen (1997) and displayed in Table xx.

Based on the findings of the key authors and taking into consideration the spatial component of seasonality (Butler and Mao, 1997), Lundtorp et al., (1999) classified all the causes into pull and push factors shown in diagram xx

Source: Based on Baum(1997), Frechtling(1996), Butler(1994), Butler and Mao(1997)

This dissertation will be focused on the seasonality caused by natural factors, which are predictable and recur relatively at the same time of the year. The climate in the receiving area will be the pull factor of seasonality.

Based on the variations in the demand, seasonality is presented in three different patterns identified as single peak, most of the summer destinations in Europe(e. i. Mediterranean destinations); two-peak, often evident in mountain resorts, for example in the Alps, where there are two seasons-summer and winter; and non-peak seasonality mostly happening in urban areas(e. i. London, Paris) (Butler and Mao, 1997). Despite the fact of knowing <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-tourism-seasonality-on-hrm-in-hotels-tourism-essay/>

the patterns of seasonality as well as the origins, the phenomenon is still seen as a complicated feature of tourism (Butler, 1994), as the factors influencing seasonality are highly interrelated in both origin and destination regions (Butler and Mao, 1997), which brings a number of issues for management of businesses located in peripheral areas, such as resort hotels.

The difference in demand generates seasonal variations such as peak, shoulder and off-peak season (Kennedy, 1999). MORE

## **Impact of Seasonality**

Much of the literature on seasonality recognises that the phenomenon can have significant impacts on hospitality businesses and it is often viewed as a challenge (Jolliffe and Farnsworth, 2003) . Taking into consideration the identified causes of seasonality above , it has become clear that the causes are often unmanageable by any hospitality business, although this is not always the case (Butler, 2001; Witt and Moutinho, 1995). The impact of seasonality can vary significantly based on the location of the hotel (Baum and Hagen, 1999).

## **negative impacts**

Seen as a major problem by most authors in the tourism sector, seasonality is often perceived as bringing a number of disadvantages to the business itself as well as to the public and region, in relation to employment, costs and facilities and recently raised environmental aspects (Buler, 1994; Hartmann, 1986 ; Witt and Moutinho, 1995).

From an economic point of view, seasonality can defer any investments into the business due to the short duration of high season and the instability of return on income (Commons and Page, 2001; Goulding et al., 2004; Jang, 2004;). Furthermore, there is a high risk of under- and over- utilisation of resources. It is essential to mention that there is a need to cover annual fixed costs throughout the high-season and generate profits in a limited time (Adler and Adler, 2003; Duval, 2004), which requires a good quality cash flow management (Cooper et al., 2005; Commons and Page, 2001). As a result, businesses are forced to increase prices during peak seasons (Commons and Page, 2001) and reduce rates in shoulder periods to attract customers (Koenig and Bischoff, 2005). This is particularly affecting small businesses, for which seasonal closures would be the most cost-effective solution (Getz and Nillson, 2004).

Another serious problem of seasonality is the effect on employment (Ball, 1989; Krakover, 2000). Seasonality creates seasonal employment, underemployment and unemployment (Jolliffe and Farnsworth, 2003). The irregular variations in the demand, creates pattern of employing people on a seasonal basis, which leads to a repeatable cost of recruitment and training (Cooper et al., 2005). The high recruitment costs caused by seasonality (Mourdoukoutas, 1988, Krakover, 2000) leads to reduction in remuneration packages (Commons and Page; Goulding et al., 2004). In addition, the effects of seasonality upon employment in the tourism industry have been further explored and it is argued that employees lack sufficient training and career opportunities as well as commitment (Jang, 2004; Krakover, 2000), which

leads to problems in quality service (Shaw and William, 1997; Baum and Lundtorp, 2001).

An additional area impacted by seasonality, environmental protection and safety, has been investigated by Witt and Moutinho (1995). The variations in demand can harm the local environment by creating high level of air pollution, noise and increased possibility of crime and terrorism due to overcrowding (Butler, 2001; Jang, 2004). It is also discussed in the literature that the high demand at certain times of the year puts a pressure on transport system, heavy traffic and exhaustion of the infrastructure (Commons and Page, 2001; Ashworth and Thomas, 1999).

### **positive effects**

Undoubtedly, the literature provides an impression that seasonality in tourism is a major difficulty, seen as a “ ‘ problem’ to be ‘ tackled’ at a policy, marketing and operational level” (Baum and Lundtorp, 2001, p. 2). However, some authors have noted that besides the limited research on the advantages of seasonality to destination areas, there are certain benefits of the pattern (Butler, 1994). One area of emphasis is the environmental side, as only the off-season allows the environmental pressure to be reduced (Nilsson and Getz, 2004) and resource to be recovered (Witt and Moutinho, 1995). Further benefits are recognised in relation to employment (Krakover, 2000; Commons and Page, 2001). The seasonal demand provides a need for casual and part-time work allowing locals to earn some extra income (Krakover, 2000).

The local community can consider seasonality in a positive manner (Lundtrott et al., 1999) as low-demand seasons provide residents with time to rest (Goulding et al., 2004) and this is essential for small “family businesses” where owners` contribution is high (Nilsson and Getz, 2004). In addition, the pressure from over-crowding in the high season on transport system (Commons and Page, 2001) is reduced, allowing time for reconstruction on the infrastructure if needed.

### **Seasonal work**

Seasonal work is characterized as being short term (Lautsch, 2002) recurring on an annual basis depending on the demand and it will end usually at a specified time (Marshall, 1999). Often seen as unskilled, highly pressured and underpaid (Lee-Ross, 1999), seasonal work tends to attract less educated workers (Koenig and Bischoff, 2005). The seasonal labour market in the tourism industry consist of high proportion of young workers (Joliffe and Farnsworth, 2003;). According to Lee-Ross(1995 in Lee-Ross, 1999) seasonal employees are often expected to work long “unsociable” hours. However, despite all the existing research on seasonal work there is still debate over the definitions and differences between contingent, temporary and non-standard employment(Ainsworth and Purss, 2008). Those terms will be used interchangeably throughout this paper.

While seasonal work is precarious, it has been acknowledged the possibility of seasonal re-engagement (Ainsworth and Purss, 2008). Besides the fact that contingent workers have been characterized as being less motivated, less reliable and less committed (De Gilder, 2003), it is very realistic to

assume that due to the cyclical nature of seasonality, employees might  
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develop an implicit expectation towards the organisation(Ainsworth and Purss, 2008)

The nature of seasonality creates unstable demand for hospitality and tourism services which makes the industry unattractive to potential employees (Pizam, 1982 cited in Krakover, 2000)

## **HR Implications**

As noted earlier, hospitality and tourism employment is influenced by seasonality, supported by various authors in the academic literature (Ashworth and Thomas, 1999; Flognfeld, 2001; Krakover, 2000). Jolliffe and Farnsworth(2003) argue that seasonality has a profound impact on the industry employment leading to high fluctuations. As a result high levels of short term employment and high level of off-season unemployment are evident (Baum, 1999). Krakover(2000) looks at the adjustments of labour to variations in demand researching the trends in eight tourist centres in Israel . His study indicates that besides the fact of knowing the patterns of seasonality, hotel operators are still unable to match their recruitment and dismissal procedures to the demand.

The tourism industry as a general and in particular resorts depend on the seasonal employment as it is a prerequisite to deliver customer service (Ainsworth and Purss, 2009). The high level of human involvement in the delivery of services places a great emphasis on the role of human recourses as through the right attitude of employees quality can be improved (Baum and Lockstone, 2008). As the seasonality causes workforce instability, the pressure on the operational standards is greater, requiring sufficient training

of employees(Baum, 1995), often insufficient for seasonal workers(Baum, 1999) and short in time (Krakover, 2000). Furthermore, the greatest issue being recruiting (Adler and Adler, 2003), seasonality is undesired by quality employees as they prefer year-round employment(Getz and Nilsson, 2004). However, Adriotios(2005) argues that seasonality has created a seasonal balance in the employment in combination of jobs in tourism and agriculture based on his research of seasonality in the island of Crete.

It has to be noted that the success of HR practices in highly seasonal businesses is dependent on company`s business strategy. Jolliffe and Farnsworth (2003) suggest that some companies respond to seasonality by “embracing” it meaning that the business accepts the patterns of seasonality, whereas others “challenge” the seasonal nature of their sector trying to extend their season. Getz and Nisson (2003) identify similar strategies based on research in family businesses on the island of Bronholm, Denmark . Their study suggests that businesses can adopt either coping or combating strategies, where coping involves actions such as closing the business, while the latter approach is characterized by staying open all year round.

HR practices are based on the chosen strategy presented in table xx

## **Embrace seasonality HR practices Challenge seasonality**

Focus on temporary workers

### **Recruitment and Selection**

Focus on full-time core workers

Limited training on the job, brief introduction

## **Training and Development**

Continual development and training, formal appraisal techniques

Source: Adapted from Jolliffe and Farnsworth, 2003

## **Labour market features**

The labour market in tourism industry is with limited skills and issues such as formal education and training are often evident in the sector(Baum, 2008). In peripheral regions where hotels are highly influenced by seasonality, there are numerous challenges in terms of employing staff able to deliver service quality(Baum and Lundtorp, 2000). The impact of seasonality on employment has been further investigated by Baum and Hagen(1999) in the environment of small islands.

There are several characteristics of the tourism labour market mainly related to the role of labour in the delivery of services summarized by Shaw and Williams(2002). One of the most common strategy in labour market is the one referring to the theoretical framework of Atkinson, who distinguished the workers between core and peripheral and seasonal workers belong to the latter group. The core workers are functionally flexible full time employees with job security and high salaries, willing to move between departments. The Peripheral workforce, on the other site, is a secondary labour often recruited on a part time, temporary or short-term contract as a response to increase in demand. This group is numerically flexible. The model of Atkinson, " flexible firm", is strongly linked to the theoretical framework of Doeringer and Piore (1971 in Shaw and Williams, 2002; Krakover, 2000) of internal and external labour market.

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## **Resort hotels in peripheral regions**

### **The Concept of resorts**

Resorts can be defined as “ complexes providing a variety of recreations and social settings at one location” (Gunn, 1988, p. 108) Similar to Destinations

Limited research has been carried out

Metelka (1990, p. 46) defines destination resort as “ generally a large property offering a wide variety of facilities, services and activities”. A resort hotel is the most common form of resort development, often located in areas with beautiful natural characteristics, such as mountains and beaches(Mill, 2001).

For the purpose of this dissertation the term resort hotel will be used meaning....

The resort industry is characterized by seasonality causing fluctuations in the numbers of customers and guests expenditures (Adler and Adler, 2003)

Seasonality creates several implications for the tourist destinations limiting the business demand and therefore profitability of hotels (Getz and Nillson, 2004).

Europe , hospitality and tourism industry; current figures and trends

The Summer Resort hotels, the winter resort hotels

It is clear that seasonality causes

the degree of seasonality varies within the resorts, reflecting on the physical conditions (Butler and Mao, xxx) and depending on the form of seasonality (Appendix-forms of seasonality-one-peak; two-peak; non-peak)Examples.

It has been suggested that hotels in regional areas are greatly affected by seasonality compared to hotels in urban areas as the transportation links are better and the pool of potential talented employees is greater (Butler and Mao, 1997)

The impact of seasonality (McEniff, 1992);

Baum(1999) points out that all aspects of the hospitality organisations are influenced including the finance and labour turnover.

Discussion of the implications of seasonality to human resource management in resort hotels in the literature is very limited, yet there are some evidences. Few authors, Baum and Conlin(1994) and Conlin and Baum(2003) have focused on the issues faced by tourism businesses in remote areas in terms of the impact of seasonality and the limited talent workforce within the local market, concentrating within the context of small island locations. Similarly, Baum and Hagen(1999) address the impact of seasonality on employment in peripheral, cold-water tourism regions, mainly but not only within the environment of small islands. The most comprehensive study on seasonality and the management of flexible workforce in resorts is by Adler and Adler(2003). They explore the employment of workers within a hotel in Hawaii, looking at the contingent workers employed in resort hotels as a solution to seasonality.

## **Peripheral regions**

A peripheral, remote and insular areas have been defined as the one in a distance from urban regions, being hardly reachable to and from the markets (Brown and Hall, 2000; Buhalis, 1999). In this context, peripheral places are also characterized with certain qualities such as natural beauty such as beaches. Often if developed and not managed well, peripheral destinations suffer from overcrowd and environment pressure. Botterill et al.,(2000) research some of the key issues that surround the context of periphery in the Welsh tourism industry identifying key differences between core and peripheral areas. Seaside resorts are typically located in peripheral areas (Botterill, 2000) attracting tourists with summer heat, sun and beaches (Bramwell, 2006). However, whether influences the coastal resorts and restricts the length of season (Wanhill and Buhalis, 1999). For example, Mediterranean seaside resorts in Greece have more than 70% of their tourists between May and October forcing hoteliers to close down for rest of the year(Buhalis, 1999). However, there are number of businesses that stay open all year round, for example in Costa del Sol, Spain . Islands are considered as peripheral destinations and Konstantinos (2000 in Bramwell, 2000) have analysed the island tourism in Greece suggesting that those destinations suffer from isolation and scarcity of sources supported further by Buhalis(1999). As the seasonality is strongly influencing such locations, businesses are faced with human resource challenges.

## **Chapter 3 Human Resource Management**

### **HRM**

Definition

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HRM no clear definition; as a competitive advantage

HRM is it the same as Personal Management (Legge, 2005; Worsfold, 1999)

Differences in appendix (Guest, 1987; Baum, 1995, Storey 1990 and 1995 Lashley,).

Practices associated with HRM and how they differ (Enz and Siguaw, 2000; Redman and Mathews, 1998; Guest, 1997 ; Viney and Tyson, 1997 and Schneider, 1994)

The problems of labour turnover (Torrington, 2005)

(Keltner and Finegold, 1996) no quality investment in training

HRM plays a key role in the service quality (Haynes ad Fryer, 2000)

## **HRM in the hospitality and tourism industry**

### **Recruitment and Selection**

### **Training**

Training as a form of human capital investment(Becker, 1975 in Tuers and Hill, 2002)

## **Chapter 4 Analysis and evaluation**

### **Strategic HRM in seasonal employment**

In recent years, it has been widely recognised the benefits for businesses when human resource policies are formed on the basis of the corporate strategy(Michie and Sheeten, 2005). This is defined as Strategic human resource management (SHRM), enabling the firm to achieve its goals, by

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employing people who will provide the source of competitive advantage(Writhg and McMahan, 1992 cited in Jollife and Farnsworth, 2003).

It covers all HR strategies in a firm and the way they impact on the performance(Boxall, Purcell and Wright, 2007).

HRM practices (Jolliffe and Farnsworth, 2003)

Recruitment and selection

Training

Internal and external labour market (Krakover, 2000; Connell and Burgess, 2002)

Temporary workers and core employees; similarities, differences(Koene, 2005; Shaw and Williams, 1994)

## **HR challenges**

Using temp – the relationship(Burgess and Connel, 2006); the commitment; motivation (Lundberg, Gudmundson, Andersson, 2008; Ainsworth and Purss, 2009); service quality

## **Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendations**

1000 words

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