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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SEASONALITY OF TOURISM: A MAJOR CONSTRAINT FOR THE GROWTH OF TOURISM IN THE
REGIONAL ECONOMY OF SIKKIM STATE, INDIA

*Praveen Rizal and R. Asokan

Department of Economics, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar, Chidambaram- 608002, Tamil Nadu, India

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has been often treated as a macro-level approach in several subject viz., economics, management, sociology and ecology, and it has different characteristics. Under different principle characteristics of tourism, the emphasis in the present study has been placed primarily on the seasonal characteristics of tourism and its impact on Sikkim's economy. This study is a pioneer attempt to find out the factors responsible for tourism seasonality through micro level observation, logical reasoning, and empirical study and to suggest some effective measures to mitigate the problem. Further, the study is based on the secondary data collected over a period of seven years from 2005 to 2011. Seasonal Index Method has been employed in the present study. Though tourism is one of the important industries, seasonality of tourism is a major setback in Sikkim state. Numerous factors that cause seasonality variation have been found in Sikkim. In extreme seasons, tourists are affected by bad weather, heavy rainfall, landslides etc. Findings highlight the entire natural and institutional reasons for tourism seasonality in Sikkim state. This will enable policy makers and tourism stakeholders to find out various alternatives to solve seasonality impediments and promote tourism in the state.

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INTRODUCTION

Tour and traveling has started along with the civilization of mankind. Travelling is a significant characteristic feature of human society and lifestyle since distant past. Every human settlement has a long history of visitors as traders and missionaries. Travel in the every time in synonymous with modern-day tourism (Kamra and Chand, 2004). World Tourism Organization states that tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries. In many countries it acts as an engine for development through foreign exchange earnings and the creation of direct and indirect employments. Tourism contributes five percent of the world's GDP and seven percent of employment worldwide. It accounts for six percent of the world's exports and thirty percent of the world's exports in services. In the developing countries, tourism generates forty-five percent of the total exports in services (Global Report on Women in Tourism, 2010). World Tourism Organization Report (2012) says that tourism is an important sector of the Indian economy and contributes significantly in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as well as in the Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE). With its

backward linkages and forward linkages with many other sectors of the economy, like transport, construction, handicrafts, manufacturing, horticulture, agriculture, etc., tourism has the potential of being not only the economy driver, but also an effective tool for poverty reduction and ensuring growth with equity as suggested by the Union Government in the 12th Plan documents. Tourism Contribution to Indian GDP is 5.92 percent, and 9.24 percent to the employment. The number of foreign tourist arrivals in India has grown from 4.45 million in 2006 to 6.29 million in 2011, an average annual rate of growth of 7.2 percent. Despite the global economic crisis, arrivals in 2011 were 8.9 percent up on 2010. Foreign exchange earnings from tourism rose from US Dollar 8.63 billion in 2006 to about US Dollar 16.6 billion in 2011, an annual average rate of growth of 13.9 percent.

Sikkim state is a small Himalayan state in the North-eastern part of India between 27° 00'46" to 28° 07'48" North Latitude and 88° 00'58" to 88° 55'25" East Longitude with only 7,096 square kilometers of total area and encircled by three international boundaries of TAR-China (Tibet Autonomous Region- China) in the North, Nepal in the West and Bhutan in the East and One national boundary of West Bengal in the south, is magnificently well flourishing in tourism sector. Sikkim's economy, since the rules of monarchy, had been largely depending on the forest and agriculture but now has slowly started shifting towards the tourism related activities, hydro power generation and service sector. In Sikkim, tertiary

*Corresponding author: Praveen Rizal

Department of Economics, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar,
Chidambaram- 608002, Tamil Nadu, India.

sector contributes about 48.37 percent in the total state Net-State Domestic Product (Indian Brand Equity Foundation, 2010). Tourism, transport and communication, hotels and power are identified in this sector in Sikkim. Among these, tourism has been identified as an important, suitable and feasible industry in Sikkim. Rich biodiversity, culture and tradition, beautiful mountains and valleys, lakes, flowers, monasteries and world's most endangered species, attracts tourists to Sikkim. Tourism provides income and employment to the local people in various tourist destinations. Though the inflow of tourist in Sikkim state is a continuous process, the industry faces the seasonality problem. Though tourists come to Sikkim throughout the year, the main rush is confined to summer months and autumn season; the autumn rush is considered to be more pronounced during the Dussehra festival (Joshi and Dhyani, 2009). This pattern of Sikkim tourism seasonality gives more income and employment during the main tourism season, whereas the other lean season, people face problems because of extreme weather condition.

Tourism has been treated at the macro-level in the several studies such as Economics, Commerce, Management, Business, Sociology and others. Under the different principle characteristics of tourism and its theories, the emphasis in this work is placed primarily on the manner in which tourism has been influenced by the seasonal characteristics of it, as seasonality of tourism is one important characteristic of tourism industry worldwide. Seasonality is one of the important limitations of this industry. It is a major constraint in the growth of tourism sector in Sikkim region. Though the tourism in Sikkim, which is based on Nature and its beauty, is expanding day by day, there are some issues linked with seasonality. It is in this context, the present study is to examine the seasonal characteristics of tourism industry in Sikkim.

Overview on the Tourism Seasonality

The seasonality feature of tourism product and hence, tourism is one of its most widely recognized features (kamra and Chand, 2004). Seasonality means the tendency of tourist flow to become concentrated in a relatively short period of the year. Seasonality can be broadly classified as natural and institutional. Hartman (1986) expresses that tourism has been developed under seasonal auspices. Further, Jolliffe and Farnsworth (2003) have stated that as a fundamental characteristic of tourism industry, seasonality is recognized as a major factor which affects the contemporary tourism industry and it dramatically influences employment, leading to widespread seasonal employment, underemployment and unemployment. Seasonality of tourism is defined as a temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism, which may be expressed in terms of dimensions of such elements as number of visitors, expenditure of visitors, traffic on highways and other forms of transportation, employment and admission to attractions (Butler, 2001). Tourism as an integral part of global business is highly dependent on seasonal changes in climatic conditions, economic activities as well as human behavior and the society in general. Thus seasonality has become one of the most distinctive and determinative features of global tourism industry (Baum and Lundrop, 2001). The specific assumption in tourism is that there will always be fewer tourists in the off

seasons and with large during the peak seasons (Lundtorp *et al.*, 2001). Direct impact of tourism is from the direct spending of tourists in the region, is more on the main tourist season. As a result, seasonality of tourism in the state provides only a seasonal income and employment to the people who are linked with the tourism industry in Sikkim. Joshi and Dhyani (2009) has pointed out that the skewed pattern for tourist inflows promises more jobs and business opportunities only during the summer and autumn months, but not during the lean periods. Such situations underline the need for some other alternatives to supplement the income and employment requirements during the lean periods. Marshall (1999) defines seasonal job as a non-permanent paid job that will end at specified time or near future, once the seasonal peak has passed. Seasonal jobs are common for a number of industries besides tourism, for instance, agriculture and construction (Kolomiets, 2010).

Further, the seasonality of the high inflow also puts more pressure on the resources, local infrastructure, civic amenities, and the culture and environment of the tourist areas of Sikkim Himalaya (Joshi and Dhyani, 2009). The variation of tourism demand is often a challenging problem that complicates destinations' goals to maximize the efficiency of their tourism facilities, infrastructure and employment turnover. Many seasonal resorts experience wasteful excessive capacity during the lean periods of the year. This limits the opportunities for economic growth and has a restricting effect on permanent employment (Hopstadius, 2010). Seasonality of tourism in Sikkim not only provides seasonal income and employment but also hampers the growth of tourism sector, pressure on resources, difficulties in civic amenities and in local infrastructure, and traffic on different forms of transport but resulting in the shifting in the pattern of job or shifting in the pattern of livelihood from tourism related activities in tourism season to some other activities in lean and off-season.

Objectives

1. To probe into the seasonal trend of tourism inflows in Sikkim state.
2. To examine the seasonality impediments on the tourism industry in Sikkim state.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data sources

The present study is based on secondary sources of information. Data related to tourism and tourists' inflows in Sikkim state has been collected from the Annual reports, documents and records of Tourism and Civil Aviation Department of the Government of Sikkim. Tourist arrival data for seven years from the year 2005 to the year 2011 have been taken in the study. Regarding the nature of the data, it includes tourist inflows, climate and rainfall. The secondary data on rainfall has been collected from the Government of Sikkim, Water Security and Public Health Engineering Department's publication "Sikkim Action Plan on Climate Change - 2012-2030". Further, data on climate classification in Sikkim state has been taken from the "Sikkim Chronicle" (Chettri, 2010).

Period of study

The period of the study is confined to seven years from 2005 to the year 2011. The rationale behind selecting this period is that there was a maximum inflow of tourists and the growth of tourism is significant after 2005, which left the region with more impacts viz., economic, socio-cultural and environmental, and the inflows thereafter shows a noticeable variations. Further, the magnitude of income and employment of people has also been increased noticeably.

Statistical tools

This study is an attempt to find out the both the natural and the institutional reason of tourism seasonality through observation, logical reasoning, and analytical study in Sikkim, and to suggest some effective measures. For the purpose of analyzing seasonality of tourism in Sikkim, seasonal index has been applied. The seasonal tourist arrival was tested by making use of the analysis of seasonal indices by the method of monthly average. This method is simple and suitable to express the monthly changes. The formula for the method can be represent as, $Seasonal\ Index = (Monthly\ Average / Average\ of\ the\ monthly\ average) * 100$. The simple percentage and averages has been used in the present study. To estimate the average annual growth rate of tourists' inflows, the following equation of multi-year percentage growth rate formula has been followed; $Average\ annual\ Growth\ percentage\ rate = [(value\ at\ end\ of\ period - value\ at\ beginning\ of\ period) / value\ at\ beginning\ of\ period] * 100$. Later, the value obtained is again divided by total number of years.

Moreover, observation and analytical study has been made together for the detailed understanding of reason of tourism seasonality in Sikkim and its impact on the region.

Limitations of the study

The present paper is confined to the study of tourism seasonality in Sikkim state. Only the trend of tourists' inflows has been taken under the consideration to see the seasonality impact and its fluctuations over a year. Further, the study has made an attempt to find out the reason behind this seasonality in tourism industry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tourism trend and seasonality in Sikkim

Tourism is identified as one of the most important industry in Sikkim with a potential of further growth of the state. Because of the geo-physical location of Sikkim, it is not possible to develop any heavy and mechanical industry but favorable for recreational activities, mountaineering, rafting, and many tourism activities. The topography and environment of the Sikkim is so located that the Government has focused on non-Mass tourism like, village tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism etc. The steps initiated by the Government of Sikkim, to develop the tourism in state, reflects the commitment towards its growth and sustainability. Table-1 states that the inflows of tourists are increasing every year in the tiny

Himalayan state. An increase in tourist inflows is because of several factors like Sikkim's abundant natural resources, rich Culture and Tradition, good people with peaceful social environment. Since Sikkim is Twenty-sixth Bio-diversity hot spot in the world, it has world's most beautiful streams, lakes and waterfalls and has a rich flora and fauna. Apart from the above places of interest for tourists, Sikkim has various other important places and interesting facts which draw more tourists. The state has twenty eight mountain peaks, twenty one glaciers, 227 high altitude lakes, including the Tsangmo Lake and Khechepuri Lake, five hot springs, and over 100 rivers and streams. Eight mountain passes connect the state to Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal. The river Teesta flows through the state from north to south (Sikkim Statistical Profile, 2004-05). As a natural corollary, Sikkim is gradually strengthening its place in the national and international tourism map as a hot spot for scenic beauty, and an ideal place for adventure tourism, ecotourism and spiritual tourism (Chakrabarti, 2001).

Table 1. Inflows of tourist from 2005-2011

S.No.	Year	Domestic Tourists	Foreign tourists	Total
1	2005	347650	16518	364168
2	2006	421943	18049	439992
3	2007	465204	17837	483041
4	2008	512373	19154	531527
5	2009	615628	17730	633358
6	2010	700011	20757	720768
7	2011	552453	23945	576398
	Total	3615262	133990	3749252

Source: Tourism Department, Government of Sikkim, 2012.

Table-1 revealed that the inflow of tourists has increased double during the period from 2005 to 2010. The total inflow of tourists was marked as 364168 in 2005 and increased to 720768 in the year 2010. In the year 2011 it decreased to 576398. The average annual growth rate is 8.32 percent in seven years from 2005 to 2011. Average annual growth rate is 16.3 percent from 2005 to 2010. From 2010 to 2011, it decreased to -20 percent, because of seasonality. This fall in the inflow of tourists in Sikkim in 2011 was because of the earthquake on 18th September. The table also indicates that the tourism in Sikkim state is dominated by the domestic tourists with ninety-six percent as compared to foreign tourists with four percent. It is clear that the annual growth rate of tourist inflow is different for domestic tourists and foreign tourists. Average annual growth rate for domestic tourists is 8.41 percent and 6.42 percent for foreign tourists. Though the tourists come to Sikkim round the year, the main rush is confined to summer and autumn seasons; the autumn rush is considered to be more pronounced during the Dussehra festival (Joshi and Dhyani, 2009).

Table-2 explains that the seasonality of Sikkim tourism can be analyzed with the help of monthly inflow profile of tourists in Sikkim over a period of time. As per the tourists season, there are two main season for tourists in Sikkim, i.e. season-I and season-II. Season – I is from March to May or sometimes till June and the season –II is from October to November. Since the inflow of the tourists is maximum in season-I, the tourists' spending is more in season-I and has a more impact on this season followed by season-II. January, February, July, August, September and December are the slack months for tourist

Table 2. Inflow of Domestic Tourists from 2005-2011 (monthly profile)

S. No	Months	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
1	Jan	14245	17787	22286	24035	30395	40160	42314
2	Feb	16100	18550	23465	26098	35883	48420	50652
3	Mar	26100	41593	51018	55965	60560	62438	45231
4	April	43702	61084	70684	76539	85669	87172	89238
5	May	70744	80052	86448	99625	108778	116641	124323
6	June	30480	32912	34025	35172	63905	68236	69784
7	July	13782	17268	19462	22010	26992	27021	29540
8	Augt	14382	20628	21428	22628	35826	37180	38964
9	Sept	22738	25028	25295	26910	41285	53624	13943
10	Oct	35396	39834	43218	49456	44865	59582	9682
11	Nov	33480	35899	38215	43018	43720	48764	8326
12	Dec	26523	31208	33213	35864	42345	52651	13249
	Total	347650	421943	465204	512373	615628	700011	552453

Source: Tourism Department, Government of Sikkim, 2012.

Table 3. Inflow of Foreign Tourists from 2005-2011 (monthly profile)

S.No	Months	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
1	Jan	721	789	866	910	696	984	1436
2	Feb	1082	1262	1286	1106	1053	1320	1065
3	Mar	2280	1981	2225	2406	2184	2605	2423
4	April	2198	3124	2386	2411	2544	3036	2615
5	May	1351	1445	1058	1857	1335	1593	2875
6	June	611	488	631	393	429	830	643
7	July	372	471	549	453	646	680	553
8	Augt	625	741	811	864	846	979	873
9	Sept	991	1372	1230	1330	1275	1678	1415
10	Oct	3053	2961	3106	3386	2925	2780	4286
11	Nov	2313	2198	2471	2867	2406	2410	3323
12	Dec	921	1217	1218	1171	1391	1862	2438
	Total	16518	18049	17837	19154	17730	20757	23945

Source: Tourism Department, Government of Sikkim, 2012

Table 4. Seasonal Variations in Tourist Inflows in Sikkim

Months	2005*	2006*	2007*	2008*	2009*	2010*	2011*	Monthly total for 7 years ©	7 years Average©	(%)©
Jan	14966	18576	23152	24945	31091	41144	43750	197624	28232	63.29
Feb	17182	19812	24751	27204	36936	49740	43750	227342	32477	72.80
March	28380	43574	53243	58371	62744	65043	47654	359009	51287	114.9
April	45900	64208	73070	78950	88213	90208	91853	532402	76057	170.5
May	72095	81497	87506	101482	110113	118234	127198	698125	99732	223.5
June	31091	33400	34656	35565	64334	69066	70427	338539	48362	108.4
July	14154	17739	20011	22463	27638	27701	30093	159799	22828	51.17
Augt	15007	21369	22239	23492	36672	38159	39873	196775	28110	63
Sept	23729	26400	26525	28240	42560	55302	15358	218114	31159	69.85
Oct	38449	42795	46324	52842	47790	62362	13968	304350	43504	97.52
Nov	35793	38097	40686	45885	46126	51174	11649	269410	38487	86.28
Dec	27444	32425	34431	37035	43736	54513	15687	245271	35038	78.55
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3746940	535277	1200
Average	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	312245	44606	100

Source: © Computed based on the secondary data * Secondary data available from the Department of Tourism, Government of Sikkim, 2012.

inflow in Sikkim. It is because of the heavy rainfall and landslides for the months of rainy season and extreme cold in the months of winter.

Table 3 explains the inflow of foreign tourists over a period of time, it is very uneven. As per the monthly profile, the inflow of domestic tourists are high in the season-I of tourists in Sikkim i.e. from march till May and second peak is on season-II. As per the monthly profile of tourist inflows, the inflow of foreign tourists marked high in the second tourists season from October to November. It is clear that the foreign tourists visits Sikkim especially during October - December. The inflow of foreign tourists is more in both the first and the second season but comparatively the second marks higher than the first one.

The pick is on the second season and another pick is on the first season. The study area has a different climate and weather condition throughout the year. During the summer months maximum temperature is 23-27 (in average) and minimum in winter is even minus in most of the places, especially in the North district. This results in the variation of tourist arrival throughout the year. It is analyzed through the seasonal indices by method of monthly average.

Table-4 indicates the tourist arrival changes in different seasons over the period of seven years from 2005 to 2011. According to the seasonal index estimation, during the months of rainy season and winter viz., July, August, September, December, January and February the index values have been

found as low as 51.17, 63, 69.85, 78.55, 63.29, and 72.80 respectively. During the summer months from March to June, the seasonal index value has been marked high with 114.9, 170.5, 223.5 and 108.4, respectively. The maximum tourists visit has been recorded in the month of May followed by April with 223.5 and 170.5 index values. The minimum tourist arrival has been recorded in the month of July with 51.17. It is clear from the above examination that the seasonality of tourism industry in Sikkim shows the variation throughout the year. The seasonal character of the tourism industry in Sikkim is because of many reasons and it has been discussed below in detail.

Discussion on Reasons for Tourism Seasonality in Sikkim

There are several polarized factors responsible for seasonality in tourism industry. The reason for Seasonality of tourism in any country, state or region can be divided into two specific broad reasons. The one is natural reason of tourism seasonality and other is institutional reason of seasonality. Koenig and Bischoff (2005) has stated that the Natural and institutionalized factors are generally recognized as the two major causes for tourism seasonality. In addition, Sangar (2006) has clearly pointed out that tourism is also a subject to seasonality of demand which may be because of habit, climate and tradition. Seasonal factors may also be because of institutional factors which are not under the control of the customer. These are school holidays, factory or annual vacation periods of office. According to Hartman (1986), the natural category refers to the variations in natural phenomena such as the climate, weather and seasons of the year. Variables include cycles or differences in temperature, hours of sunlight, levels of rainfall and snowfall. These variations mean that tourist regions have different seasonal potential and resources and thus are perceived to have particular seasonal qualities. Although natural factors can make a destination unattractive to particular markets, they are not the sole reason for variations in tourism demand (Baum and Hagen 1997). Looking into the various viewpoints on tourism seasonality and its reason, the study has been divided into two part viz., Natural and Institutional reasons.

Natural Factor

Some of the major natural reasons of seasonality of tourism in Sikkim state are as follows:

It has been found that the reason of visitation of tourists, both domestic tourists and foreign tourists, is one of the major reason for the seasonality of tourism in Sikkim state. If we compare the inflows of domestic and foreign tourists, the inflow of domestic tourists is higher in season-I whereas the inflow of foreign tourists is high in season-II. This differences are because of reasons of visitation of domestic tourists and foreign tourists. The reason for visitation of both types of tourists are totally different. Sightseeing, mountaineering, river rafting, trekking, bird watching, research, religious purpose, business purpose, and to meet friends and relatives are some reasons of visitation in Sikkim. The Tourism Department estimates that eighty percent of the visitors to Sikkim come for general sightseeing, principally to see its nature and the spectacular mountain views, and for many domestic visitors

from the hotter states of India to experience snow (Department of Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management, Government of Sikkim, 2009). They are especially the domestic tourists. Whereas, foreign tourists visit Sikkim especially for river rafting, trekking, mountaineering, and research, this is mainly possible in the winter season. Since the constructions of the dams and hydro projects, the rivers are dangerous during the monsoon season and do not provide strong enough rapids during the winter season for rafting.

However, there are obstacles to the development of tourism in Sikkim. Mountaineering has great potential but is restricted to just five peaks, as several of the more famous peaks were closed some time ago. Rafting was possible in the past on the two main rivers, but most water-based activities have stopped because hydro projects have affected water flows along the Teesta river and Rongit rivers. According to stakeholders, there is little chance that this activity can be revived. Since the construction of the dams, the rivers are dangerous during the monsoon season and do not provide strong enough rapids during the winter season. Boating on the majority of Sikkim's lakes is not allowed because most are considered sacred (Department of Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management, Government of Sikkim, 2009). Tourism season in Sikkim is broadly divided into three seasons, i.e., Peak season (Season-I), Season-II and lean-season (Season-III). Season I and II are two main tourism seasons for tourist inflows in Sikkim state. Season-I is from March to June and season-II starts in the month of September and continues to November. All other remaining months are subject to the lean-season for tourism industry in the state. The seasons are generally dictated by weather patterns and children's school holidays in the domestic market. Recently there seems to be a shift in demand. Since winter in Sikkim is dry and not so harsh, the number of tourists visiting Sikkim during the winter months is growing as they are attracted by snowfall and the desire to spend their Christmas and New Year vacation in a different environment.

They are especially foreign tourists. Maximum visits of foreign tourists will be during this season and for domestic tourists, it is the season-I. As winter also coincides with the marriage season in other parts of India, a good number of honeymooners come to Sikkim (Department of Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management, Government of Sikkim, 2009). The high rush of tourists in season-II is also because of the main festival seasons of Sikkim. It starts with the Dashara in October and last till X-mass. Sikkim's culture and tradition are especially famous in this regard attracting tourists from various corners of the globe. The state of Sikkim possesses all kind of climate right from the tropical to the tundras and arctic with considerable variation. Choudhury (1998) has classified the climate of Sikkim into six broad types and it is given in the following Table-5.

Table 5. Climate in Sikkim

1	Sub-Tropical Humid	1500m above mean sea level
2	Semi-Temperate	1500 to 2000m above mean sea level
3	Temperate	2000 to 3000m above mean sea level
4	Alpine Snow-Forest	3000 to 4000m above mean sea level
5	Alpine Meadow or Tundra	Above 4000m above mean sea level
6	Arctic	Above 6000m above mean sea level

Source: Chettri, 2010.

Climate is another main reason for the seasonality of tourism in Sikkim state. The climate of Sikkim changes throughout the year. The climate in Sikkim range from tropical to Alpine and clothing necessary is light woollens during summer and heavy woollens in winter (Dorji, 2008). The inflow of tourists is low in the months of January and February. It is because of the extreme freezing winter in the region. Some of the main tourists' destinations like whole North Sikkim, Tsomgo Lake, Nathula Pass, and Pelling, will be in extreme icy phases, so normal visitors cannot sustain in such conditions. Sikkim is one of the few Himalayan states in India to receive maximum and regular snowfall. The snowline ranges from 6,100 meters (20,000 ft) in the north Sikkim to 4,900 meters (16,100 ft) in the south. The north region is snowbound for four months every year, and the temperature drops below 0 °C (32 °F). The average annual temperature for most of Sikkim is around 18 °C (64 °F). In north-western Sikkim, during winter season, temperatures in the mountains can drop to as low as -40 °C (-40 °F) because of the high altitude. During the monsoon, heavy rains increase the risk of landslides. The longest period of continuous rainfall recorded was for 11 days in Sikkim. Many parts of the state get affected by the fog, especially in the months of winter and in monsoons season, making the transportation more perilous.

The concentration of demand from families and groups of people travelling in tour coaches during the main holiday period is likely to contribute to seasonal variations (Halpern, 2007). Domestic tourists love to visit Sikkim in the summer season. It is because the summer temperature in the other part of India, other than Himalayan states, will be very high. So, people prefer to come to Sikkim and spend their time/summer vacation in the peace and chilly climate of the Himalayan region. And these months are also vacation period of schools and Offices in many state of India. Therefore, the tourists rush will be in the season-I. Heavy rainfall is another important natural reason causing seasonality in tourism in Sikkim state. Sikkim as a whole enjoys more than average rainfall due to its proximity to Bay of Bengal. The monsoon starts usually in the month of June and continues upto the month of September. The rainfall varies from place to place due to variation in the altitudes (Chettri, 2010). The lean season of tourists is from June to September and January and February. But due to heavy rainfall tourists are coming less numbers from June to September. Table 4 shows the rainfall distribution in Sikkim state.

Table 6. Long period Average Rainfall in Sikkim (in mm)

S.No	Months	Long Period Av Rainfall in mm (1957-2005)	Av. Deviation in rainfall in mm between 2006-2009 LPA rainfalls (%)
1	January	32.6	-73
2	February	62.6	-19
3	March	135.5	-25
4	April	270.3	7
5	May	523.9	-26
6	June	630.9	-8
7	July	658.0	-10
8	August	578.9	0
9	September	464.6	2
10	October	175.6	-40
11	November	40.0	-24
12	December	21.2	-39

Source: Sikkim Action Plan on Climate Change (2012-2030), March 2011.

It is clear from the table-6 that from the month of June till September Sikkim experiences heavy rainfall. It always damages the roadway. The only means to Sikkim is roadway and heavy rainfall causes landslides in the region and stops the inflow of tourists in the state. Rainfall is heavy and well distributed during the months from May to early October. July is the wettest month in most of the places. The intensity of rainfall during south-west monsoon season decreases from south to north, while the distribution of winter rainfall is in the reverse order (Dorji, 2008).

Institutional Factors

Specially, in the months starting from June to September Heavy rainfall leads to landslides in hilly region which affect the transport as a whole in Sikkim. Since road transport is the only important means of transport in the state, both for local and for the purpose of tourism transport, frequent landslides has negative consequences on the tourism industry. The conditions of the roads are quite variable: the vast majority is narrow, winding two-lane country roads, often running at a steep gradient. These are frequently prone to landslides and falling rocks, especially during the monsoon season (Department of Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management, Government of Sikkim, 2009). The road transport sector is also at risk due to climate change in Sikkim, as the roads may be exposed to increased incidences of landslides (Sikkim Action Plan on Climate Change 2012-2030, 2011). Apart from landslides, the sub-standard surface of road in many far-off destinations is not upto date. It is true that tourists' destinations in every corner of the state need proper road facilities. But it is equally true that there is need for better road infrastructure.

Sikkim Tourism face problem in National Highway 31A because of socio- political conflicts in the neighboring state of West Bengal, especially Darjeeling District of West Bengal, which is another reason for blockage of tourists' inflow in Sikkim in the main tourist season. Tourists have to cross West Bengal to reach Sikkim. In July 2009, an indefinite strike was declared in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, which caused the blocking of roads (National Highway NH-31A) and tourists are very difficult to enter into Sikkim state. Sikkim tourism is Eco-tourism which is nature based one. Hence, the nature itself will give the seasonality to the industry. The other types of tourism form or pattern are needed to substitute or as an alternative to Eco-tourism pattern of the state. But it should be within the frame work of Eco-friendly and sustainability (Environmental, Economical, social, cultural). Lack of specialization in other tourisms like winter tourism, Helicopter-tourism, education tourism, local tourism sports and so on. If so, then we can promote other tourism also to solve the seasonality upto some extent. Another important institutional reason behind the seasonality of tourism and the different seasonality as per the types of tourists is that the demands of the domestic tourists and the foreign tourist are different. The purposes of visitation for the foreign and domestic tourists are different. Their interests in the Himalayan region are totally different, which results in variations in selection of months to visit Sikkim Himalayas. With this reason the inflows differs throughout the year and give seasonal nature to the industry.

Feeling of insecurity among the tourists is another reason. Since Sikkim is earthquake zone and some time landslides, because of heavy rain, results in loss of life and properties. Along with that, the roadway to Sikkim and the road network within Sikkim is very narrow and dangerous. Therefore, the security assurance to the tourists is the most important task to be accomplished. Due to global slowdown, terrorist activities, H1N1 influenza pandemic etc, there was a slight decrease in the foreign tourists during the year 2009 compared to the year 2008 (Annual Report, Department of Tourism, Government of Sikkim, 2009-2010). Research in the tourism field is insufficient. Lack of proper well defined laws for tourists, limited permit to tourists etc are also some reasons. Further, lack of the tourism related workshops, seminars, conferences and exhibitions also causes slow tourist inflow. It should be organized as per the different tourists season is concerned, within state and later for inter-state. Inter-state exhibitions will not only help to encourage participation in tourism sector but also increase the tourist inflows along with advertisement or promotion of tourism of the state.

Conclusion

The development of tourism in Sikkim state is attracting more tourists in the region. Tourism is one of an important means of livelihood to the people of Sikkim. Nevertheless, the tourism in the small Himalayan state faces problem of seasonality of tourism industry in the state. Though the inflow of tourists is regular throughout the year, the most important seasons are season-I and season-II. As per the types of tourists, i.e. domestic and foreign tourists, the inflows are different. This differences are because of reason of visitation. Sightseeing, mountaineering, river rafting, trekking, bird watching, research, religious purpose, business purpose, and to meet friends and relatives are some reasons of tourist visitation in Sikkim. The Tourism Department estimates that 80 percent of visitors to Sikkim come for general sightseeing, principally to see its nature and the spectacular mountain views and snow. They are especially the domestic tourists. Whereas, foreign tourists visit Sikkim especially for river rafting, trekking, mountaineering, and research, this is mainly possible in the winter season. Since the constructions of the dams and hydro projects, the rivers are dangerous during the monsoon season and do not provide strong enough rapids during the winter season for rafting.

Heavy rainfall in Sikkim is another reason of seasonality in tourism. The month from June to September is a period of dull tourist inflow and it is because of heavy rainfall during this period. As a result of seasonality of tourism in Sikkim state, there is a seasonality of income and employment to the people who are linked with the tourism industry in Sikkim. The steps should be taken to overcome this problem of seasonality and to have a sustainable tourism in the state. Though the seasonal nature of tourism in Sikkim results in fewer employments and less income in the off-season and lean season but the local people are earning sufficient income in the main tourist season-I, which helps in sustaining their living throughout the year. Along with that, if we could check or come out with some solution to seasonality, it will definitely boost the economy of the region.

Suggestions

There are some firm solid natural reasons of seasonality which we cannot overcome. But there are some institutional reasons that we can study, and improve with which the seasonality problem can be solved upto some extent. Keeping in view the above reasons and examining them thoroughly, the suggestions are here keeping in view the institutional reasons of tourism seasonality in the region. Since the natural reasons for seasonality are beyond our reach, the institutional reason itself will help to find out some measures to solve the problem to some extent.

- i. Lack of specialization in other types of tourism, but it should be within the frame work of eco-tourism and sustainability. If it is so, then we can promote other types of tourism also to solve the seasonality upto some extent.
- ii. Since roadway is the only means of transportation in Sikkim, a better surfaced road is needed for tourism development, as well as business and local transportation purposes. More than fifty percent of the tourists have complaints in this regard. So, road should be maintained in standard sub-surfaced way.
- iii. Apart from road transport, to meet the increasing demand of tourists, there is need for other means of transportation in Sikkim and the others means to reach Sikkim. The road is the only means of transport in and to reach Sikkim. Therefore, the provision should be made in this regard to improve the more and better means of transportation in the state.
- iv. Government and private sector come together forward to provide different packages during every season as per the need and necessarily of the seasons, to attract tourists, especially in lean and off-season. The PPP (Public Private Participation) will help in this regard.
- v. Apart from the infrastructure development, a development should be made regarding the tourism law. The proper well defined laws can be framed to give them security, facility and homely atmosphere.
- vi. Festivals are the factor which attracts tourists in every season, throughout the year. Festivals, of all kind, i.e., Cultural, historical etc will motivate tourists. Therefore, festivals should be organized and celebrated as per the seasons. According to Getz (1991) festivals have been recognized as one of the fastest growing forms of tourism. Further he mentioned that the celebration of more and more number of festivals is the main motivation for tourists. Murugan (2002) also stated in his work that "over the past decades, festivals and special events have substantially increased in number, with various purposes including enhancing domestic culture and history, providing domestic recreation opportunities and contributing to the domestic economy by stimulating domestic tourism businesses.
- vii. Proper infrastructure facilities should be developed like, transport system, all kinds of hotels for all classes of people, sanitation, cafeterias, internet zone for tourists, etc.
- viii. To provide more security and assure tourists about their safety, the step should be taken by the Government. In

this context, tourism insurance/ tourist insurance is the better solution.

- ix. Off season concession in travelling and tour packages should be provided to tourists to attract them in off-seasons too.
- x. To take care of tourist health, medical camps should be established in the tourist spots.

Scope for further research

The detail study in the impact of seasonality on the regional economy of Sikkim state has been not covered fully. Since the seasonality has its serious effect on the income and employment of local community people in the region, a thorough study is needed and this is a gap to be filled in research.

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