

The Effect of Seasonality on Tourism in Darjeeling: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Tourism demand varies seasonally, affecting destination operations, business sustainability, and community livelihoods. In Darjeeling, this study examined stakeholder views on tourism seasonality, its economic and social/infrastructural effects, and preferred strategies to reduce harm while retaining benefits. A mixed-method approach combined primary survey data with secondary sources. Primary data were obtained from a structured three-point questionnaire completed by 76 stakeholders, including business owners/managers, tourism professionals, residents, officials, and community leaders, selected through convenience sampling between June and August 2026. The tool showed satisfactory reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.77$). Data were analyzed using SPSS-26, employing frequencies, percentages, and Pearson correlation tests. All participants recognized the significant seasonality. April, May, October, and November were consistently identified as busy months; March and June were noted, and January and February were not. The main drivers were pleasant weather (100%), holidays (85.5%), festivals (72.4%), and natural disasters that affected travel decisions (52.6%). Seasonality was linked to higher revenue in busy months (59.2% agreement; $r = 0.593$, $p < 0.05$), income instability across the year (59.2% agreement), temporary employment (50% agreement; $r = 0.388$, $p < 0.05$), higher prices, and living costs (cost of living: $r = 0.73$, $p < 0.05$). Overcrowding received the highest level of agreement (78.9%). Respondents preferred moderate visitor regulation, stronger off-season promotion, economic diversification, and community-based homestays, although views on infrastructure expansion and environmental enforcement were divided. Overall, community-focused policies are needed to balance the benefits and challenges year-round, while social and infrastructure pressures remain evident.

Keywords: Seasonality, Tourism Demand, Darjeeling, Stakeholder Perceptions, Economic Impacts, Community-Based Homestays and Off-Peak Promotion.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of seasonality is pivotal in tourism, as it significantly influences demand trends and global destination operations. Seasonality entails regular fluctuations in visitor numbers, often associated with specific seasons or months, and is shaped by natural, human-made, economic, and institutional factors. These fluctuations affect tourist flow and pose challenges to the sustainability and financial health of tourism businesses, such as hotels and local enterprises that rely on tourism revenue. The adverse economic and social effects of tourism seasonality, including income fluctuations, job instability, and environmental stress during peak periods, are well documented. These effects vary according to a destination's geographic and functional characteristics and influence the livelihood strategies of communities dependent on tourism. Furthermore, seasonality complicates the prediction of tourism demand, as pronounced seasonal trends often result in less accurate visitor number forecasts, thereby complicating planning and management. Darjeeling, renowned for its natural beauty, cultural significance, and status as a major hill station in India, exemplifies a tourist destination where seasonality significantly affects tourism inflow, local economic activity, and resource management. Understanding seasonal patterns in such areas is essential for maximizing tourism's economic benefits and ensuring sustainable development that considers environmental and social factors in the region. Given the substantial impact of seasonality on tourism demand, accommodation sustainability, and broader socioeconomic outcomes, this study explores and elucidates the effects of seasonality on tourism in Darjeeling. By examining seasonal tourism trends and their consequences, this study seeks to provide evidence-based insights to guide local tourism development policies and strategic planning to address the challenges of tourism seasonality while capitalizing on

opportunities for sustainable growth. This study aligns with broader academic findings that underscore the complex nature of tourism seasonality and its significant impact on destination sustainability, economic stability, and cultural dynamics. By focusing on Darjeeling, this study contributes to the growing body of literature that seeks to understand the interactions between seasonality and tourism at the regional and local levels, promoting a deeper understanding that supports targeted interventions to mitigate negative impacts while enhancing positive outcomes for both hosts and visitors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies have examined the different dimensions of the effect of seasonality on tourism in Darjeeling, conducted by various researchers and academics over time. The most pertinent and recent research on these topics was reviewed and incorporated into this study. A succinct overview of these studies is presented in the following sections.

Kholidarova (2025) investigated seasonal variations in tourism income in developing countries. The study emphasizes that tourism contributes to GDP, employment, and infrastructure development but is affected by natural, institutional, and social factors. Peak seasons raise demand, income, and employment but strain resources, while off-peak periods underutilize facilities and cause instability. It advocates for diversification, planning, and year-round tourism policies.

Verma and Arjun (2025) examined the impact of seasonal tourism on Himalayan economies, highlighting the challenges. Fluctuating tourist numbers create irregular income, off-peak underemployment, and harm community welfare and job stability. Seasonal variation pressures healthcare systems through inadequate funding and limited access during low-tourism periods. This study calls for year-round tourism, diversification, and sustainable practices.

Deshmukh (2025) explored the effects of climate change on tourism and its consequences for economic growth and jobs. Tourism generates foreign exchange and supports employment; however, climate-related challenges, including temperature, floods, wildfires, droughts, sea levels, and landslides, hinder tourism and hospitality. Using stakeholder and secondary data, the study found reduced destination attractiveness and shifting popularity, recommending resilient infrastructure, community engagement, policies, and collaborative governance for sustainable tourism.

Pande and Bhardwaj (2024) investigated tourism-climate dynamics and environmental vulnerability in the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR). They examined tourism demand from increased domestic travel post-COVID-19 and winter tourism, which strained the infrastructure. Rapid, unplanned development has increased over-tourism and disaster risks. Using literature and case studies from Himachal Pradesh and Shimla, this study documents patterns and vulnerabilities. It advocates the use of Real-Time Systems, Intelligent Transport Systems, and Neural Networks to assess infrastructure planning feasibility and support sustainable development in the IHR.

Gupta et al. (2022) investigated over-tourism in Northern India's hill stations of Nainital, Shimla, and Mussoorie. Post-pandemic tourist numbers exceeded infrastructure capacity, straining accommodation, water, electricity, and waste management. Among 260 tourists, the research linked over-tourism to environmental, socio-cultural, and infrastructure impacts, recommending sustainable strategies and policy reforms.

Patted et al. (2021) examined foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India using secondary data from January 2003 to December 2018. It analyzes FTA trends, growth, and seasonality as India aims to become the third-largest tourism economy by 2028 and generate ten million jobs. December had the highest seasonal index (138.65), and May had the lowest (70.63). CAGR was 12.51%. Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu were the most visited states. It emphasizes infrastructure, security, marketing, and promotion.

Mandal (2021) investigated tourism seasonality in West Bengal, India, identifying climatic, sociocultural, and institutional influences on the peak and off-peak seasons. The study emphasizes the economic and infrastructural challenges faced by stakeholders and proposes leveraging festivals, craft hubs, and religious sites to attract

tourists during off-peak periods. It advocates for specialized tourism products, thematic circuits, innovative planning, and public-private collaboration to mitigate seasonal fluctuations.

Kumar and Singh (2019) investigated seasonal variations in India's tourism sector, highlighting its role in employment, foreign exchange earnings, and GDP. Using data from 2011 to 2016, the study found peaks in July and August and stability in November and December. It stresses infrastructure improvements during the monsoon and summer months to reduce fluctuations and support sustainable tourism.

Kumar et al. (2018) studied the growth and seasonal fluctuations in tourists visiting India from 1999 to 2015 and their impact on foreign exchange revenue. Tourist numbers rose at an average rate of 8.23%, with seasonal fluctuations; however, the adjusted data showed consistent long-term growth. This study highlights the need for planning to address infrastructure, workforce, marketing, security, and taxation.

Tamta (2016) investigated seasonal tourism in Nainital, Uttarakhand, India. The peak season from mid-May to mid-July brings short-term employment and economic benefits, but also traffic congestion, water and electricity shortages, pollution, littering, and infrastructure strain, affecting communities and the environment. Surveying 50 residents, the study identified gains and harms and proposed transport diversification, resource stockpiling, visitor regulation, shuttle services, and infrastructure enhancement for year-round growth.

Rizal and Asokan's 2014 study examined tourism seasonality in Sikkim, India, focusing on natural and institutional drivers. Using secondary data from 2005 to 2011 and the Seasonal Index Method, it shows that tourist numbers peak in favourable weather, especially from March to June and October to November, while heavy rainfall and landslides reduce arrivals. Seasonality causes income, employment, resource demand, and infrastructure challenges. It recommends off-season discounts, diversified offerings, infrastructure, insurance, and policy.

Research Gap:

The literature review identifies a research gap: the need for unified, strategic methods to address the issues caused by seasonal tourism changes in developing and fragile areas. Current research highlights the economic, social, infrastructural, and environmental effects of seasonality and excessive tourism but lacks integrated strategies combining tourism product diversification, sustainable infrastructure development, climate change adaptation, and advanced technologies such as Real-Time Systems, Intelligent Transport Systems, and Neural Networks. Region-specific policies are needed to balance economic growth, environmental conservation, community well-being, and tourism promotion in areas such as the Indian Himalayan Region and hill stations.

Objective of the Study:

This study seeks to (i) investigate the perception of tourism seasonality, (ii) analyze the economic and social impacts of seasonality on tourism, and (iii) offer an overview of strategies for managing seasonality in tourism in Darjeeling, India.

Significance of the Study:

This study greatly enhances the understanding of tourism seasonality in Darjeeling and suggests ways to reduce its effects. By examining local views on seasonality, studying its economic and social impacts, and assessing current management strategies, this research offers important insights for those looking to reduce the negative effects of seasonal changes. This study helps create practical and scalable models that include key elements to tackle seasonality-related issues, thus supporting sustainable tourism growth in the area. The findings can help policymakers, tourism planners, and community leaders develop effective strategies that balance economic benefits with social welfare year-round.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses both analytical and empirical methods by combining primary and secondary data. Primary data were gathered through a structured questionnaire administered during field surveys, using a three-point rating

scale based on previous studies. This research also includes secondary data from related research journals, articles, papers, academic publications, and online sources. The sample included local residents, business managers, business owners, tourism professionals, government officials, and community leaders in Darjeeling, chosen through convenience sampling. A total of 76 respondents completed the questionnaires with positive responses to all questions. The survey was conducted in June, July, and August 2026. This study examines several important variables and attributes related to tourism seasonality and its effects in Darjeeling. The reliability and consistency of the questionnaire were checked using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a satisfactory score of 0.77. Primary data analysis involved frequency tables, simple percentages, and statistical tools, such as a correlation test. The statistical software SPSS-26 was used to analyse the primary data and draw relevant conclusions.

Formulation of Hypothesis:

To achieve the research objectives of this study, eight hypotheses were formulated. These are as follows.

H1: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and seasonal tourism significantly increases business revenue during peak months.

H2: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Seasonal tourism creates employment opportunities, but these are mostly temporary.

H3: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and the cost of living rises for residents during peak months.

H4: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Seasonal tourism increases traffic congestion, causing delays for locals and tourists.

H5: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Peak-season tourism strains local services like water and electricity supply.

H6: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Tourism seasonality affects the migration of temporary workers to the area.

H7: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and diversifying the local economy to reduce dependence on tourism.

H8: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and developing community-based homestays to decentralize tourism from the town.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis and discussion section of this study is organized into six subsections: (i) Respondents' profile, (ii) Perception of Tourism Seasonality, (iii) Economic Impact, (iv) Social & Infrastructural Impacts, (v) Strategies for Managing, and (vi) hypothesis testing. These subsections are presented and discussed in the following sections:

Respondent Profile:

Type of Respondents:

Table-1

Type of Respondent		
Attribute	Frequency	Percent
Local Resident	8	10.5
Business Manager	15	19.7

Business Owner	22	28.9
Tourism Professional	15	19.7
Government Official	8	10.5
Community Leader	8	10.5
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 1 shows the stakeholder distribution: business owners form the largest group, while local residents, government officials, and community leaders are the smallest. Business owners accounted for 28.9% (22 out of 76) of the respondents. Business managers and tourism professionals each constituted 19.7% (15 respondents), totalling 39.4%. Local residents, government officials, and community leaders each represented 10.5% (8 respondents), totaling 31.5%.

Gender:

Table-2

Gender		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Male	46	60.5
Female	30	39.5
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 2 reveals that the respondent profile is primarily male, with men comprising the majority and women representing slightly less than 40% of participants. Specifically, 60.5% of the respondents, corresponding to 46 out of 76 individuals, were male, underscoring their predominance. Conversely, 39.5% of the respondents (30 individuals) were female, constituting a notable minority.

Age:

Table-3

Age		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
18Yrs-25Yrs	8	10.5
26Yrs-35Yrs	23	30.3
36Yrs-45Yrs	14	18.4
46Yrs-60Yrs	24	31.6
Above 60Yrs	7	9.2
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 3 shows the distribution of participants by age, with the largest proportions in the 46–60 and 26–35 age groups. The smallest segments were those over 60 and 18–25 years of age. The 46–60 age group was the largest at 31.6% (24 out of 76), followed by the 26–35 age group at 30.3% (23). Participants aged 36–

45 years constituted 18.4% (14), while 18–25 represented 10.5% (8), and those over 60 comprised 9.2% (7), making this the middle group, with 26–35 nearly equalling 46–60.

Duration of Staying in Darjeeling:

Table-4

Duration of Staying in Darjeeling		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1Yr	8	10.5
1-5Yrs	22	28.9
6-10Yrs	38	50
More than 10Yrs	8	10.5
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table-4 shows that most respondents have lived in Darjeeling for 6–10 years. This group comprised 50% (38 out of 76) of the respondents. In contrast, 28.9% (22 respondents) lived there for 1–5 years. Equal proportions of 10.5% (eight respondents each) were observed among those who stayed in Darjeeling for less than one year and more than ten years. Thus, both newcomers and long-term residents are equally represented but form the smallest group.

Tourism as the Primary Source of Livelihood:

Table-5

Tourism as the Primary Source of Livelihood		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Yes	45	59.2
No	31	40.8
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: The data in Table-5 show that most participants rely on tourism as their primary income source, while a minority do not. Specifically, 59.2% (45 out of 76) identified tourism as their main livelihood source, indicating that nearly three out of five participants in the sample depend on it for financial support. Conversely, 40.8% (31 participants) reported other primary income sources and economic activities.

Perception of Tourism Seasonality:

Experience Noticeable Difference in Tourist Activity between Peak and Off-Peak Seasons:

Table-6

Experience Noticeable Difference in Tourist Activity between Peak & Off-Peak Seasons		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Yes, Very Noticeable	53	69.7

Somewhat Noticeable	23	30.3
No Difference	0	0
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: The data in Table 6 indicate that all participants recognized substantial variations in tourist activity between the peak and off-peak seasons. A majority, 69.7% (53 out of 76), describe this difference as "Very Noticeable," while 30.3% (23 respondents) consider it "Somewhat Noticeable." No respondents selected "No Difference," indicating that the entire sample perceived at least some degree of seasonal fluctuation in tourist activity.

Months Considered the "Peak Season" for Tourism:

Table-7

Months Considered the "Peak Season" for Tourism		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
January	0	0
February	0	0
March	70	92.1
April	76	100
May	76	100
June	70	92.1
July	10	13.2
August	5	6.6
September	20	26.3
October	76	100
November	76	100
December	40	52.6

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation:

Table 7 shows a distinct, multi-phased peak tourism season, with April, May, October, and November being universally identified as peak months by all 76 respondents. March and June were also strong peak months, each identified by 92.1% (70 respondents). December was a moderate peak month, cited by 52.6% (40 respondents). The months with low recognition peaks were July (13.2%), August (6.6%), and September (26.3%). January and February received 0% recognition and were not considered part of the peak season.

Main Reasons for the Seasonal Patterns in Tourism:

Table-8

Main Reasons for the Seasonal Patterns in Tourism		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Pleasant Weather & Climate	76	100
School & College Holidays	65	85.5
Festivals	55	72.4
Natural Disasters	40	52.6
Lack of demand in off-season	30	39.5

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 8 presents several factors affecting seasonal tourism trends. Pleasant Weather & Climate were identified by all 76 respondents (100%) as the primary factors. School and College Holidays were cited by 85.5% (65 respondents), ranking second, and festivals by 72.4% (55 respondents). Natural Disasters influenced trends for 52.6% (40 respondents), deterring travel. Lack of off-season demand was noted by 39.5% (30 respondents) as a consequence, not a cause of the problem.

Economic Impact:

Seasonal Tourism Significantly Increases Business Revenue during Peak Months:

Table-9

Seasonal Tourism Significantly Increases Business Revenue during Peak Months		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Agree	45	59.2
Neutral	15	19.7
Disagree	16	21.1
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: As shown in Table 9, most respondents acknowledged seasonal tourism's positive effect on business revenue during peak months, although some were neutral or disagreed. Specifically, 59.2% (45 out of 76) agreed, indicating a clear but limited consensus on financial benefits. Conversely, 21.1% (16 respondents) disagreed, suggesting that gains may be offset by operational costs, staffing needs, or supply chain challenges. Additionally, 19.7% (15 respondents) remained neutral for some businesses.

Seasonal Tourism Causes Income Instability Across the Year for Households/Businesses:

Table-10

Seasonal Tourism Causes Income Instability Across the Year for Household/Business		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Agree	45	59.2
Neutral	23	30.3
Disagree	8	10.5
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 10 shows that most respondents acknowledged that seasonal tourism causes yearly income fluctuations for households or businesses, although many were neutral. Specifically, 59.2% (45 of 76) agreed that it creates annual income instability. This aligns with Table 9, suggesting that respondents recognize revenue increases during peak months and decreases during off-peak periods. Meanwhile, 30.3% (23 respondents) were neutral, higher than in Table 9 (19.7%), indicating a greater uncertainty or nuanced view. Only 10.5% (eight respondents) disagreed, indicating limited concern among them.

Seasonal Tourism Creates Employment Opportunities but Mostly Temporary:

Table-11

Seasonal Tourism Creates Employment Opportunities, but Mostly Temporary/Seasonal		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Agree	38	50

Neutral	30	39.5
Disagree	8	10.5
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 11 presents the divided opinions on whether seasonal tourism mainly provides temporary or seasonal employment. Half of the participants (50%, or 38 out of 76) agreed that it creates jobs, but mainly temporary or seasonal ones. This suggests that employment is generated but is neither stable nor year-round. Meanwhile, 39.5% (30 participants) were neutral on this issue, the highest rate across Tables 6–11, suggesting uncertainty or limited direct experience among the respondents. This may also indicate regional or industry variations in such jobs. Only 10.5% (eight participants) disagreed, consistent with Table 10, implying that few believe seasonal tourism provides stable, permanent employment.

Higher Prices for Goods/Services during Peak Season:

Table-12

Higher Prices for Goods/Services during Peak Season		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Agree	39	51.3
Neutral	15	19.7
Disagree	22	28.9
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 12 shows mixed views on whether the prices of goods and services increase during the peak tourist season. A slight majority (51.3%, 39 out of 76) agreed that prices rise during peak periods, suggesting that over half of the respondents perceive increases linked to demand, limited supply, or businesses capitalizing on visitors. Conversely, 28.9% (22 respondents) disagreed, the highest dissent across Tables 6 to 12, indicating that a substantial minority did not recognize significant price increases during peak times. Additionally, 19.7% (15 respondents) remained neutral, consistent with Table 9, possibly reflecting uncertainty or variation in price changes across goods, services, or locations.

The Cost of Living Rises for Local Residents during Peak Months:

Table-13

The Cost of Living Rises for Local Residents during Peak Months		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Agree	38	50
Neutral	30	39.5
Disagree	8	10.5
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table-13 illustrates a divided and uncertain perspective on whether local residents face increased living costs during peak tourist periods. Half of the respondents (50%, 38 out of 76 participants) agreed that

living expenses for locals rise during peak months, suggesting that perceived price increases affect daily costs. Meanwhile, overall, 39.5% (30 respondents) were neutral, the highest neutrality rate observed thus far and equal to Table-11, indicating uncertainty or lack of firsthand experience. Only 10.5% (eight respondents) disagreed, consistent with Tables 10 and 11, implying that few respondents believed that the cost of living remained stable during peak months.

Seasonal Tourism Encourages New Investments:

Table-14

Seasonal Tourism Encourages New Investments		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Agree	23	30.3
Neutral	23	30.3
Disagree	30	39.5
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 14 reveals negative opinions regarding seasonal tourism’s impact on new investments. Most respondents disagreed that seasonal tourism promotes investment. Specifically, 39.5% (30 out of 76 participants) disagreed, which was the highest disagreement rate across Tables 6–14. This suggests that many do not view seasonal tourism as a driver of investment. In contrast, 30.3% (23 respondents) agreed, and 30.3% remained neutral, indicating that while some recognized investment potential, an equally large group remained uncertain.

Social and Infrastructural Impact:

Seasonal Tourism Leads to Overcrowding in Public Places:

Table-15

Seasonal Tourism Leads to Overcrowding in Public Places		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Agree	60	78.9
Neutral	16	21.1
Disagree	0	0
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Data in Table 15 reveal a strong consensus on seasonal tourism’s impact on overcrowding at public venues, with 78.9% (60 out of 76) agreeing and 0% disagreeing. This is the highest agreement across all tables (Tables 6–14), showing that crowding during peak periods is widely recognized. Meanwhile, 21.1% (16 participants) remained neutral, suggesting that experiences of overcrowding may depend on the location or time of day. Along with Table 6 (Seasonal Difference), this table alone recorded 0% disagreement, underscoring the clear impact of seasonal tourism on public area overcrowding.

Seasonal Tourism Increases Traffic Congestion, Causing Delays for Locals and Tourists:

Table-16

Seasonal Tourism Increases Traffic Congestion, Causing Delays for Locals and Tourists		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Agree	45	59.2

Neutral	15	19.7
Disagree	16	21.1
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: As shown in Table 16, most participants acknowledged the impact of seasonal tourism on traffic congestion and delays for residents and visitors. Specifically, 59.2% (45 of 76) agreed that seasonal tourism worsens congestion. This aligns with Tables 9 and 10 on revenue increase and income instability, indicating a consensus. Conversely, 21.1% (16 participants) disagreed, matching the disagreement in Table 9 regarding revenue increase. This suggests that over one-fifth of the respondents do not view congestion as a problem, possibly because they live in less congested areas, travel during off-peak times, or use alternative routes. Additionally, 19.7% (15 participants) remained neutral, consistent with Tables 9 and 12, reflecting uncertainty shaped by location, time of day, or tourist attractions.

Peak-Season Tourism Strains Local Services Like Water and Electricity Supply:

Table-17

16Peak-Season Tourism Strains Local Services Like Water and Electricity Supply		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Agree	31	40.8
Neutral	29	38.2
Disagree	16	21.1
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: The data in Table 17 elucidate the perceptions of the impact of peak-season tourism on local water and electricity services. The plurality of respondents, 40.8% (31 out of 76), agreed that peak-season tourism pressures these services. However, as this is less than half of the respondents, the concern is not universal. A substantial minority, 38.2% (29 respondents), remained neutral, the second-highest neutrality rate among the tables, after the 39.5% in Tables 11 and 13, suggesting uncertainty or limited direct experience with utility strain. Conversely, 21.1% (16 respondents) disagreed, consistent with Tables 9 and 16, indicating that over one-fifth did not perceive significant peak-period strain.

The Influx of Tourists in Peak Season Hurts the Environment:

Table-18

The Influx of Tourists in Peak Season Hurts the Environment		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Agree	30	39.5
Neutral	31	40.8
Disagree	15	19.7
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 18 reveals divided and uncertain opinions regarding the environmental impact of increased tourist activity during peak seasons. The largest group, 40.8% (31 of 76 participants), remained neutral. This was the highest neutrality rate across all tables, exceeding 39.5% in Tables 11 and 13, and suggesting uncertainty,

limited firsthand experience, or context-dependent effects. A similar 39.5% (30 respondents) agreed that tourist influx adversely affected the environment. This was the second-lowest agreement rate among all tables, above only the "encourages new investments" category at 30.3%, indicating that environmental concerns exist but are not predominant. Meanwhile, 19.7% (15 respondents) disagreed with this statement.

Tourism Seasonality Affects the Migration of Temporary Workers to the Area:

Table-19

Tourism Seasonality Affects the Migration of Temporary Workers to the Area		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
Agree	16	21.1
Neutral	30	39.5
Disagree	30	39.5
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 19 reveals the division and uncertainty regarding the impact of tourism seasonality on temporary worker migration to the region. Equal proportions of respondents were neutral and disagreed: 39.5% (30 out of 76) were neutral and 39.5% (30 participants) disagreed. This is the first instance in which neutrality and disagreement are equally prevalent, showing a lack of consensus. Only 21.1% (16 participants) agreed, the lowest agreement across Tables 6–19, suggesting that few participants perceived a clear link between the two.

Strategies for Managing Seasonality:

Regulating Visitor Numbers during Peak Periods:

Table-20

Regulating Visitor Numbers during Peak Periods		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
High	15	19.7
Moderate	46	60.5
Low	15	19.7
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 20 indicates that most participants recognized the need to manage visitor numbers during peak periods. Most respondents (60.5%, 46 out of 76) supported a moderate level of regulation, indicating a consensus on regulation without support for stringent measures. In contrast, 19.7% (15 respondents) favored high regulation, and 19.7% (15 respondents) supported low regulation. This split at the extremes suggests that, although a balanced approach is generally preferred, a minority holds divergent views on visitor regulation levels.

Promoting Off-Peak Tourism Events and Offering Discounts:

Table-21

Promoting Off-Peak Tourism Events and Offering Discounts		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
High	30	39.5

Moderate	38	50
Low	8	10.5
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 21 shows the consensus on promoting off-peak tourism events and offering discounts. Most respondents supported at least a moderate level of these initiatives, with little opposition. Specifically, 50% (38 out of 76) supported a moderate degree of promotion and discounts for off-peak tourism, showing a preference for a balanced approach. Furthermore, 39.5% (30 respondents) advocated a high level, suggesting that nearly two-fifths viewed aggressive off-peak promotion as vital for addressing seasonality. Conversely, only 10.5% (eight respondents) favored a low level, indicating that few respondents opposed or saw little value in off-peak promotion.

Diversifying the Local Economy to Reduce Dependence on Tourism:

Table-22

Diversifying the Local Economy to Reduce Dependence on Tourism		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
High	38	50
Moderate	23	30.3
Low	15	19.7
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 22 reveals that most participants advocated diversifying the local economy to reduce dependence on tourism. Precisely 50% of the respondents support a high degree of diversification, while a minority favor moderate or low levels. Specifically, 50% (38 out of 76) endorsed a high level of economic diversification, the highest support for "High" diversification across all policy-related tables (Tables 20–22). Half of the participants viewed diversification as crucial for mitigating tourism dependency. Meanwhile, 30.3% (23 respondents) supported a moderate diversification. Finally, 19.7% (15 respondents) favored low diversification, indicating support for maintaining the current tourism-focused economic model.

Developing Community-Based Homestays to Decentralize Tourism:

Table-23

Developing Community-Based Homestays to Decentralize Tourism		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
High	46	60.5
Moderate	23	30.3
Low	7	9.2
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 23 provides evidence supporting community-based homestays to decentralize tourism, with most participants favoring extensive development and little opposition to it. Specifically, 60.5% (46 out of 76) endorsed a high level of development, the highest "High" support across policy-related tables (Tables 20–23),

indicating that nearly two-thirds view homestays as crucial to tourism. Additionally, 30.3% (23 respondents) favored moderate development, suggesting a cautious approach to development. Only 9.2% (seven respondents) supported low development, the lowest "Low" support across policy tables, implying that very few respondents oppose or find little value in community-based homestays.

Strengthening Infrastructure (for example, Roads, Parking) to Handle Peak-Season Pressure:

Table-24

Strengthening Infrastructure (for example, Roads, Parking) to Handle Peak-Season Pressure		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
High	23	30.3
Moderate	30	39.5
Low	23	30.3
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 24 reveals polarized views on prioritizing infrastructure enhancements, such as roads and parking, to meet peak-season demands. A plurality, 39.5% (30 out of 76), favored moderate development, indicating support for balanced improvements. In contrast, 30.3% (23 respondents) support substantial development, while an equal 30.3% (23 respondents) favor minimal development, showing significant disagreement over the importance of infrastructure enhancement, with respondents split between stronger and weaker priorities.

Stricter Enforcement of Environmental Regulations:

Table-25

Stricter Enforcement of Environmental Regulations		
Attributes	Frequency	Percent
High	23	30.3
Moderate	31	40.8
Low	22	28.9
Total	76	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: Table 25 shows divided but somewhat favorable views on stronger environmental regulations. The largest group, 40.8% (31 out of 76 participants), supported moderate enforcement, indicating a preference for enhanced but balanced measures. In contrast, 30.3% (23 respondents) favor high enforcement, suggesting that nearly one-third prioritize stringent regulations to mitigate the environmental impact of tourism. Meanwhile, 28.9% (22 respondents) preferred minimal enforcement, indicating concerns about the potential negative effects of stricter regulations on tourism and business or a perceived limited necessity for them.

Hypothesis Testing:

Correlation Test: Correlation refers to the association between two variables. When changes in one variable correspond to changes in another, they are correlated. This bivariate analysis assessed the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables. The correlation coefficient ranges from +1 to -1 and quantifies the strength. A coefficient of ± 1 indicates a perfect association, whereas values near 0 indicate a weaker association.

The sign of the coefficient indicates the direction: positive for a positive relationship and negative for a negative relationship. In statistical analysis, correlation is commonly measured using Pearson's correlation, and Pearson's r is the most common statistic for evaluating the linear relationship between variables. In the current study, correlation tests will be conducted between noticeable differences in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons and: (i) a significant increase in business revenue during peak months due to seasonal tourism; (ii) employment opportunities created by seasonal tourism, mostly temporary or seasonal; (iii) the rise in the cost of living for residents during peak months; (iv) increased traffic congestion caused by seasonal tourism, leading to delays for locals and tourists; (v) strain on local services such as water and electricity supply during peak-season tourism; (vi) the effect of tourism seasonality on the migration of temporary workers to the area; (vii) diversification of the local economy to reduce dependence on tourism; and (viii) development of community-based homestays to decentralize tourism from the town.

Hypothesis-1

H_0 : There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and seasonal tourism significantly increases business revenue during peak months.

H_1 : There is a correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and seasonal tourism significantly increases business revenue during peak months.

Table-26

Correlations		Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Seasonal tourism significantly increases business revenue during peak months
Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Pearson Correlation	1	0.593
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	76	76
Seasonal tourism significantly increases business revenue during peak months	Pearson Correlation	0.593	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	76	76

(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Interpretation: In the above table, the bivariate correlation test has been applied to test the correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and seasonal tourism significantly increases business revenue during peak months. In the above correlation matrix, Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.593, and the P-value for the two-tailed test is 0.000, which is less than 0.05 at the 5% level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and seasonal tourism significantly increases business revenue during peak months.

Hypothesis-2

H_0 : There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons, and Seasonal tourism creates employment opportunities, but these are mostly temporary.

H₁: There is a correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons, and Seasonal tourism creates employment opportunities, but these are mostly temporary.

Table-27

Correlations			
		Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Seasonal tourism creates employment opportunities, but these are mostly temporary/seasonal
Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Pearson Correlation	1	0.388
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
	N	76	76
Seasonal tourism creates employment opportunities, but these are mostly temporary/seasonal	Pearson Correlation	0.388	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	76	76

(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Interpretation: In the above table, the bivariate correlation test has been applied to test the correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons, and Seasonal tourism creates employment opportunities, but these are mostly temporary. In the above correlation matrix, Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.388, and the p-value for the two-tailed test is 0.001, which is less than 0.05 at the 5% level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons, and Seasonal tourism creates employment opportunities, but these are mostly temporary.

Hypothesis-3

H₀: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and the cost of living rises for residents during peak months.

H₁: There is a correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and the cost of living rises for residents during peak months.

Table-28

Correlations			
		Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	The cost of living rises for residents during peak months
Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Pearson Correlation	1	0.73
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	76	76
The cost of living rises for residents during peak months	Pearson Correlation	0.73	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	76	76

(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Interpretation: In the above table, the bivariate correlation test has been applied to test the correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and the cost of living rises for residents during peak months. In the above correlation matrix, Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.73, and the p-value for the two-tailed test is 0.000, which is less than 0.05 at the 5% level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and the cost of living rises for residents during peak months.

Hypothesis-4

H₀: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Seasonal tourism increases traffic congestion, causing delays for locals and tourists.

H₁: There is a correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Seasonal tourism increases traffic congestion, causing delays for locals and tourists.

Table-29

Correlations			
		Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Seasonal tourism increases traffic congestion, causing delays for locals and tourists
Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.503
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	76	76
Seasonal tourism increases traffic congestion, causing delays for locals and tourists	Pearson Correlation	-0.503	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	76	76

(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Interpretation: In the above table, the bivariate correlation test has been applied to test the correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Seasonal tourism increases traffic congestion, causing delays for locals and tourists. In the above correlation matrix, Pearson's correlation coefficient is -0.503, and the p-value for the two-tailed test is 0.000, which is less than 0.05 at the 5% level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a negative correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Seasonal tourism increases traffic congestion, causing delays for locals and tourists.

Hypothesis-5

H₀: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Peak-season tourism strains local services like water and electricity supply.

H₁: There is a correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Peak-season tourism strains local services like water and electricity supply.

Table-30

Correlations			
		Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Peak-season tourism strains local services like water and electricity supply
Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.431
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	76	76
Peak-season tourism strains local services like water and electricity supply	Pearson Correlation	-0.431	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	76	76

(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Interpretation: In the above table, the bivariate correlation test has been applied to test the correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Peak-season tourism strains local services like water and electricity supply. In the above correlation matrix, Pearson's correlation coefficient is -0.431, and the P-value for the two-tailed test is 0.000, which is less than 0.05 at the 5% significance level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a negative correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Peak-season tourism strains local services like water and electricity supply.

Hypothesis-6

H₀: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Tourism seasonality affects the migration of temporary workers to the area.

H₁: There is a correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Tourism seasonality affects the migration of temporary workers to the area.

Table-31

Correlations			
		Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Tourism seasonality affects the migration of temporary workers to the area
Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.464
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	76	76
Tourism seasonality affects the migration of temporary workers to the area	Pearson Correlation	-0.464	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	76	76

(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Interpretation: In the above table, the bivariate correlation test has been applied to test the correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Tourism seasonality

affects the migration of temporary workers to the area. In the above correlation matrix, Pearson's correlation coefficient is -0.464, and the p-value for the two-tailed test is 0.000, which is less than 0.05 at the 5% level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a negative correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and Tourism seasonality affects the migration of temporary workers to the area.

Hypothesis-7

H₀: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and diversifying the local economy to reduce dependence on tourism.

H₁: There is a correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and diversifying the local economy to reduce dependence on tourism.

Table-32

Correlations		Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Diversifying the local economy to reduce dependence on tourism
Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Pearson Correlation	1	0.256
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.026
	N	76	76
Diversifying the local economy to reduce dependence on tourism	Pearson Correlation	0.256	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.026	
	N	76	76

(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Interpretation: In the above table, the bivariate correlation test has been applied to test the correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and diversifying the local economy to reduce dependence on tourism. In the above correlation matrix, Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.256, and the P-value for the two-tailed test is 0.026, which is less than 0.05 at the 5% significance level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and diversifying the local economy to reduce dependence on tourism.

Hypothesis-8

H₀: There is no correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and developing community-based homestays to decentralize tourism from the town.

H₁: There is a correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and developing community-based homestays to decentralize tourism from the town.

Table-33

Correlations			
		Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Developing community-based homestays to decentralize tourism from the town
Experience a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling	Pearson Correlation	1	0.47
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	76	76
Developing community-based homestays to decentralize tourism from the town	Pearson Correlation	0.47	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	76	76

(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Interpretation: In the above table, the bivariate correlation test has been applied to test the correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and developing community-based homestays to decentralize tourism from the town. In the above correlation matrix, Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.47, and the p-value for the two-tailed test is 0.000, which is less than 0.05 at the 5% level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between experiencing a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak & off-peak seasons and developing community-based homestays to decentralize tourism from the town.

Findings of the Study:

The findings of this study are as follows:

- Most respondents perceived a noticeable difference in tourist activity between peak and off-peak seasons in Darjeeling, with key peak months identified as April, May, October, and November.
- Pleasant weather and climate are the primary reasons for seasonal tourism patterns, followed by school holidays and festivals.
- Seasonal tourism significantly increased business revenue during peak months, with a positive correlation (Pearson's $r = 0.593$, $p < 0.05$).
- Seasonal tourism creates employment opportunities, but these are mostly temporary or seasonal, supported by a positive correlation ($r = 0.388$, $p < 0.05$).
- The cost of living for residents rises during peak months, showing a strong positive correlation with seasonal tourist activity ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.05$).
- Seasonal tourism increases traffic congestion and causes delays for locals and tourists; however, a negative correlation was found ($r = -0.503$, $p < 0.05$), indicating the complexity of this relationship.
- Peak-season tourism strains local services, such as water and electricity supply, with a negative correlation observed ($r = -0.431$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting varying perceptions or experiences among respondents.
- Tourism seasonality negatively affects the migration of temporary workers to the area ($r = -0.464$, $p < 0.05$), indicating limited consensus on this impact.

- ix. A positive correlation exists between experiencing noticeable seasonal differences and diversifying the local economy to reduce dependence on tourism ($r = 0.256$, $p < 0.05$), reflecting support for economic diversification.
- x. Developing community-based homestays to decentralize tourism from the town is positively correlated with seasonal tourism perceptions ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.05$), indicating strong support for this strategy.
- xi. Overcrowding in public places during peak seasons was widely recognized, with the highest agreement among respondents.
- xii. Mixed views exist on whether seasonal tourism encourages new investments, with a plurality of researchers disagreeing.
- xiii. Opinions on the environmental impacts of peak-season tourism are divided, with a large neutral group indicating uncertainty or varying experiences.
- xiv. Strategies favored by respondents included moderate regulation of visitor numbers, promotion of off-peak tourism events and discounts, high support for economic diversification, and strong endorsement of community-based homestays.
- xv. Views on strengthening infrastructure and enforcing environmental regulations are divided, with moderate support prevailing.

CONCLUSION:

These findings highlight that, while seasonal tourism significantly contributes to economic growth, it also introduces social and infrastructural challenges that require balanced management strategies. To mitigate negative impacts and ensure enduring benefits, effective plans must prioritize the diversification of tourism activities, actively engage communities, and follow sustainable development principles. Addressing these challenges through comprehensive policies will amplify the positive effects of seasonal tourism while preserving the social fabric and infrastructure of the host locations. Ultimately, managing the dual effects of seasonal tourism requires a strategic focus on expanding tourism options, fostering community involvement, and incorporating sustainable-development principles. Such comprehensive policy strategies are crucial for aligning economic benefits with the preservation of social cohesion and infrastructure resilience in host areas, thereby ensuring lasting advantages from tourism activities.

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