
Reflections on the theme issue outcomes: How could the Republic of Cyprus reduce the impact of seasonal tourism on long-term sustainable development?

Reflections on
the theme issue
outcomes

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Theme editors Zanete Garanti and Galina Berjozkina share their reflections on the significance and outcomes of the theme issue with Managing Editor Richard Teare.

Overview

Small island states rely heavily on the income from tourism, which is also one of the largest contributors to pollution, overcrowding and instability in terms of seasonal income and employment. In 2021 (volume 13 number 6), the *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes [WHATT]* theme issue was on the following question: *What are the challenges and opportunities for the tourism sustainability in Cyprus?* The main conclusion was that the long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability of Cyprus depends on the nation's ability to find ways to tackle seasonal tourism, and so this follow-on theme issue explores this topic.

A list of the articles in this issue can be found in [Appendix](#).

Why in your view is your theme issue strategic question important?

For decades, Cyprus has been a well-known sun and sea destination, which means that there is a very busy tourism season in the summer months and very limited tourism in the winter months. The negative economic, social and environmental impacts of high seasonality are well known to private and public sector stakeholders, and this problem was highlighted in the 2021 theme issue (*WHATT* v13 n6, 2021) launch event where participants agreed that the main barrier to long-term tourism sustainability is the dramatic fluctuation in tourism activity. This can be described as over tourism in the summer months, followed by low levels of activity, a significant loss of income and challenges relating to workforce and resource planning.

Different policies and strategies have been developed over the years in an effort to address tourism seasonality but with little progress. The new National Tourism Strategy 2030 aims to find enduring solutions to seasonality problems and develop Cyprus as an all year-round destination. While public bodies have developed the necessary strategies, we sought to explore the perspectives of various stakeholders as to how to mitigate the effects of tourism seasonality and in so doing, providing complementary and in-depth perspectives on the possible solutions to the problem.

Thinking about your theme issue plan and approach, what worked well?

One of the major advantages we had was our experience with the prior theme issue in 2021 where we successfully planned, wrote and published an issue on opportunities and the



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challenges relating to tourism sustainability in Cyprus. This familiarized us with the process and learning from our prior experience, and we feel that we managed to plan this issue more effectively. The key point we learnt from the initial issue was that stakeholders might take months to respond to requests and that they are too busy to meet during the high season. Given this experience, we planned our practitioner interaction points with stakeholders well ahead of our publishing schedule.

As we reflect on the outcomes of this issue, it is worth noting that for this follow-on issue, we reduced the size of the writing team. Our smaller team members were all passionate about the topic and blended well together during our frequent meetings. These were usually informal gatherings in a friendly atmosphere, where we could discuss what we were learning and exchange ideas.

How did you engage with different stakeholder groups?

In planning this issue, we felt that we should aim to reach different groups of stakeholders in the most appropriate way. To do this, we sought the most convenient and suitable method for the topic, from those that we were consulting with our research and writing team. For example, young travellers participated in a focus group centred on the travel intentions and behaviours of your travellers, and so this provided accurate, in-depth data to build on our literature review related to this topic. Gastro-tourism cluster engagements took place mainly during the Gastro-tourism 2022 Conference held at the University of Nicosia. This provided an excellent platform for interactions with practitioners, industry professionals, policymakers, researchers, students and academics, all with specialized experience and/or knowledge on the topic. Our air industry research took another approach – FIRs with questionnaires were sent to a large number of stakeholders, followed by unstructured interviews with those stakeholders who said that they were willing to be interviewed.

All engagement was planned in a way that enabled diverse groups of stakeholders to be included; in so doing, each article uncovers something important and provides valuable insights on the issue of seasonality and its impact on the life and economy of Cyprus. Personal contacts are very important in Cyprus, and it was to our advantage that we were already familiar with many stakeholders due to our initial theme issue in 2021, so the response rate from stakeholders was much higher this time.

What were the highlights from stakeholder group interactions?

When we began our research on tourism seasonality in Cyprus and realized just how serious the problem is, we also discovered that this is an “old” and intractable problem. In fact, on-going efforts have been made for more than 30 years via an array of different policies and strategies with the aim of finding a workable solution to tourism seasonality. Nevertheless, we found that there are still passionate people that believe Cyprus has much more to offer than its sun and sea attraction. We heard this from diverse groups, ranging from young entrepreneurs in rural areas to the current Deputy Minister of Tourism, who is committed to finding innovative approaches and solutions to the seasonality problem.

Thinking about your peer review process: what went well and why?

The writing team consisted of confident, experienced researchers who were able to interact with industry professionals in an appropriate way. Further to this, we ensured that the outline and approach of every article was discussed during our frequent writing team meetings and then with our other stakeholders. The focus during the peer review process was

on securing constructive feedback and ensuring that we were generating practical implications for each article.

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What are the most significant outcomes of your theme issue in terms of the contributions to knowledge and/or professional practice?

Our writing team has explored the various in-depth causes and effects of tourism seasonality and provided approaches and strategies to tackle it. Fluctuations in tourism activity not only have short-term implications (such as loss of income and an inability to retain a skilled workforce), but they also have a long-term impact on overall development and sustainability. The longer it takes to tackle the seasonality and develop Cyprus as a sustainable year-round destination, the more significant the long-term impacts will be.

When addressing seasonality issues and developing strategies to extend the tourism season, there are both supply and demand factors to address. First, new tourism products and services have to be created to satisfy the demand of travellers and attract them in the low season. The possibilities include alternative, special interest, winter, rural, food and other types of tourism. For example, one of the articles in the theme issue proposes cluster establishment to develop gastro-tourism products and experiences. That said, although supply is significant, the main challenge is to generate demand in new market segments so that a more diverse range of visitors can be attracted throughout the year. In this context, our theme issue explores opportunities to attract growth market segments like technology savvy young travellers and people with disabilities.

What are the implications for management action and applied research arising from your theme issue outcomes?

The theme issue contains numerous implications for tourism policymakers, industry leaders and professionals and other stakeholders. Above all, it suggests new, innovative ways to expand tourism supply and demand in order to overcome severe seasonality problems. Yet, more applied research is needed to understand travellers' behavioural and motivational factors when visiting Cyprus and the ways in which new tourism products could attract their attention and create a willingness to visit.

We concluded during our research process that one of the most significant drawbacks of all previous strategies and policies has been the inability to take a stakeholder approach and involve various stakeholders (especially communities) in strategy, policy development and decision-making. For successful implementation, stakeholders have to find a way to focus on local communities, entrepreneurs, initiatives and decision-making at a local level.

Having served as a *WHATT* theme editor, what did you enjoy about the experience?

We felt that being part of a dynamic writing team was a stimulating and enjoyable experience. It was encouraging to realize that we could blend our experience, contacts and knowledge to conduct what we believe is meaningful and important applied research. We had frequent informal meetings, and our passion for the topic and common agenda for change meant that the friendship among a group of academic colleagues grew in numerous ways. This experience has encouraged us, and we will work together on future research, projects and other activities. Added to this, we had much support and encouragement from Managing Editor Richard Teare. It was a pleasure to get to know him and work with such a supportive person.

About the Theme Editors:

Zanete Garanti PhD is an associate professor and researcher. She obtained her PhD degree from Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies. She is also the head of the research centre at City Unity College Nicosia, promoting research activities in the college and organizing research seminars and workshops.

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Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (WHATT) aims to make a practical and theoretical contribution to hospitality and tourism development, and we seek to do this by using a key question to focus attention on an industry issue. If you would like to contribute to our work by serving as a *WHATT* theme editor, do please contact the Managing Editor, Dr Richard Teare via the Emerald website.

Appendix: Theme issue contents (WHATT v14 n5 2022)

Introduction: how could the Republic of Cyprus reduce the impact of seasonal tourism on long-term sustainable development?

Zanete Garanti and Galina Berjozkina

The study outlines the approach to reducing the impact of seasonal tourism on long-term sustainable development and introduces the contents of the issue: causes and effects of tourism seasonality, climate change, alternative and special interest tourism, future destinations and young travellers' behaviour, air transportation and gastro-tourism.

Tourism seasonality: the causes and effects

Anda Zvaigzne, Lienite Litavniece and Iveta Dembovska

Seasonality is a feature of tourism demand, and the literature suggests that it is caused by natural and anthropogenic factors that have a significant bearing on the geographical location of a tourist destination, as well as institutional and economic factors.

Climate change and tourism: a paradigm for enhancing tourism resilience in SIDS

Bharti Gupta, Sarath Pedapalli and Prachi Mahajan

The study examines how the changing pattern of climatic conditions is likely to impact tourism in small island developing states (SIDS). Further, the study suggests appropriate management practices that could help in tackling the consequences of climate change on the tourism sector in SIDS.

Tourism seasonality in small island developing states: evidence from Cyprus

Galina Berjozkina

The study draws on a qualitative approach by retrieving data from academic sources and official public documents from the Government of Cyprus. Thematic analysis is employed to provide information in relation to the numerical aspects of seasonality through statistics and the steps taken by official tourism authorities to alleviate seasonality.

Alternative and special interest tourism to mitigate the effects of tourism seasonality: the debate from Cyprus

Zanete Garanti

The study finds that for decades, policymakers and practitioners have been trying to create alternatives to traditional sun and sea tourism in Cyprus. Further, different programs, initiatives and projects have been undertaken to develop rural, health and wellness, wine and food, casino, religious, rural, sports and other types of tourism.

Mitigating seasonality in tourism by attracting young travellers: evidence from Cyprus

Sotiroula Liasidou, Galina Berjozkina and Kosmas Pipiros

The issue reveals that young travellers are attracted to technologically advanced destinations that provide multi-purpose experiences and argues that the consideration of needs and expectations of

young travellers is key to a destination's long-term survival and sustainability as the market share of young travellers is growing rapidly.

Air transportation and tourism interactions and actions for competitive destinations: the case of Cyprus

Sotiroula Liasidou, Zanele Garanti and Kosmas Pipyros

The issue finds that air transportation and connectivity are not fully integrated with tourism policy and planning and argues that in response, a stakeholder approach should be adopted to consider the needs of diverse interest groups and the airlines. This would help to frame a diversified tourism policy to establish Cyprus as year-round destination.

A sustainable destination is an accessible destination: examining the relationship as a remedy to seasonality

Sotiroula Liasidou, Cassandra Fella and Christiana Stylianou

The study advocates development to meet the needs of people with disabilities (PwD) not least because the PwD market offers a solution to the problem of seasonality. This requires the development of a sustainable framework for tourism, including facilities and activities for PwDs and extended travelling throughout the year.

Opening the path of gastro tourism cluster development: the case of Cyprus

Zanele Garanti and Christiana Stylianou

This study aims to identify stakeholders and dimensions of the gastro-tourism cluster in Cyprus in order to facilitate the creation of a network of unique culinary experiences for tourists and finds that geographic proximity and knowledge sharing are the main dimensions affecting gastro-tourism cluster development in Cyprus.

Reducing the impacts of tourism seasonality in the small island state of Cyprus

Zanele Garanti and Galina Berjozkina

The study summarizes the key points and outcomes from the theme issue question: *How could the Republic of Cyprus reduce the impact of seasonal tourism on long-term sustainable development?* This follows an examination of sustainable development in Cyprus published in *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes* volume 13 number 6 2021.