



SEASONAL TOURISM PEAKS AND THEIR IMPACT ON VISITOR INFLOW IN MAHABALESHWAR AND PANCHGANI

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Abstract:

Tourism in Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani has grown steadily because of their scenic beauty, pleasant climate, and cultural importance. This paper examines how seasonal peaks such as summer holidays, winter festivals, and the strawberry season influence tourist inflow. The study is based only on secondary data from government reports, municipal records, and tourism publications. Results show that summer and winter are the busiest seasons, while the monsoon attracts a smaller but unique group of eco-tourists. Seasonal peaks generate employment and revenue for local businesses but also create challenges like traffic congestion, sanitation issues, and shortages of accommodation. The discussion highlights the need for better planning, eco-friendly tourism, and improved facilities to balance growth with sustainability.

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Introduction:

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries in India and plays an important role in local development. Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani, two hill stations in Satara district, are among the most popular destinations in Maharashtra. Together they attract around 10–15 lakh visitors every year because of their natural landscapes, cool climate, and historical sites. Mahabaleshwar is well known for viewpoints like Wilson Point and Arthur's Seat, natural attractions such as Venna Lake and Lingmala Waterfall, and cultural landmarks like Pratapgad Fort. It is also famous for strawberry farming, which has become a tourist attraction in itself. Seasonal peaks are very clear here: summer brings families and students,

monsoon attracts nature lovers, and winter is popular for festivals and the strawberry season.

At the same time, the rise in tourist numbers has created challenges such as traffic jams, sanitation problems, and pressure on local resources. Efforts like declaring Mahabaleshwar an Open Defecation Free (ODF) city and organizing the Maharashtra Tourism Festival show how tourism and community development can go hand in hand. This paper focuses on analysing seasonal tourism peaks and their impact on visitor inflow. It also discusses how sustainable tourism strategies can help Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani remain attractive destinations while protecting the environment and supporting local communities



Research Methodology:

This research is based only on secondary data. I did not collect new surveys or interviews. Instead, I used published research papers, government reports, census data, tourism statistics, and articles related to Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani. The information was organized into tables and compared to identify seasonal peaks, visitor profiles, and satisfaction levels.

Result and Discussion:

Table 1: Seasonal Tourist Inflow in Mahabaleshwar & Panchgani.

Season	Climate & Attractions	Tourist Inflow & Behavior	Impact on Tourism Infrastructure
Summer (Mar–Jun)	Pleasant climate, sightseeing, boating, horse riding.	Highest inflow; families and students dominate.	Heavy demand on hotels, transport, and recreational facilities.
Monsoon (Jun–Sep)	Heavy rainfall, waterfalls (Lingmala, Venna Lake), lush greenery.	Moderate inflow; niche visitors (nature lovers, honeymoon couples).	Road congestion, landslides, but eco-tourism opportunities.
Winter (Nov–Feb)	Strawberry festivals, fog, Christmas & New Year celebrations.	Strong festive peak; youth, honeymoon couples, and families.	Seasonal crowding; high demand for accommodation and event spaces.

Source: Compiled from secondary data

(Municipal Council Reports, MTDC publications, and tourism articles).

The table shows that tourism in Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani follows a clear seasonal pattern, with peaks in the summer and winter months. These two seasons attract the largest number of visitors, while the monsoon season, although smaller, still plays an important role in shaping the tourism profile of the region.

During the **summer season (March–June)**, the inflow of tourists is at its highest. This is mainly because of school and college holidays, which encourage families and student groups to plan vacations. The pleasant climate, combined with opportunities for sightseeing, boating, and horse

riding, makes summer the most popular time to visit. As a result, hotels, restaurants, and transport services experience maximum demand.

Objective:

- To examine seasonal tourism peaks and their impact on visitor inflow.

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The **monsoon season (June–September)** records a moderate inflow of tourists. Even though heavy rainfall discourages some visitors, the lush greenery, misty valleys, and waterfalls such as Lingmala and Venna Lake attract eco-tourists and honeymoon couples. Monsoon tourism is special because it offers experiences not available in other seasons, like trekking through rain-soaked forests and enjoying waterfalls at their peak. At the same time, challenges such as landslides, slippery trails, and road blockages affect accessibility and safety. Despite these problems,



monsoon tourism creates opportunities for promoting eco-friendly travel and diversifying the tourist calendar.

The **winter season (November–February)** brings another strong peak in tourist inflow. This period is marked by cultural and festive events such as Christmas and New Year celebrations, along with the famous strawberry season. Mahabaleshwar's strawberry plantations, supported by the GI tag, attract agro-tourists and food lovers who enjoy farm visits and strawberry-based products. Youth, honeymoon couples, and families are the main visitors during this time, creating a lively festive atmosphere. The demand for accommodation and event spaces rises sharply, and local businesses benefit from increased sales of food, handicrafts, and souvenirs.

Overall, the **seasonal pattern highlights both economic benefits and infrastructure challenges.**

On one hand, summer and winter peaks generate high revenue for hotels, restaurants, transport operators, and local farmers. Festivals and agro-tourism activities add cultural and agricultural value to the tourism economy. On the other hand, these peaks also create stress on infrastructure, leading to traffic congestion, sanitation problems, and shortages of accommodation. The monsoon season, although smaller, offers a chance to balance tourism across the year by promoting eco-tourism and adventure activities.

Conclusion: The study shows that tourism in Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani is strongly influenced by seasonal peaks. Summer and winter bring the highest inflow of visitors, while the monsoon attracts a smaller but special group of eco-tourists and couples. These seasonal patterns create both opportunities and

challenges. On the positive side, tourism supports local jobs, businesses, and agriculture, especially through festivals and strawberry farming. On the negative side, the same peaks put pressure on roads, sanitation, and accommodation facilities, leading to congestion and resource strain.

Overall, tourism in these hill stations is dynamic and continues to grow because of their natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique attractions. To make this growth sustainable, there is a need for better planning, improved infrastructure, and eco-friendly practices. Promoting monsoon tourism, managing traffic more effectively, and strengthening sanitation facilities can help balance tourist inflow across the year. If these steps are taken, Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani can remain attractive destinations while also protecting the environment and supporting the local community.

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