



Reducing the Impact of Seasonality on the Tourist Guide Profession by Studying the Model of the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative in the City of Jeddah

Dr. Afnan Abdulrahman Bahanshal
King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
Email: abahanshel@kau.edu.sa

ABSTRACT

Although the tourist guide profession is considered a pillar of a successful tourist industry, due to its effective role in introducing tourists to a destination's history, culture, local people, and community, it faces many challenges and difficulties. The seasonality of tourism activity is one of the most prominent of those challenges. This research aims to study this question by focusing on the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative in the city of Jeddah, one of whose objectives is reducing the impact of seasonality. To achieve the research aims and objectives, interviews were conducted with 20 licensed tourist guides and members of the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative, using semi-structured interviews. The research provides an overview of the association, defining its vision, mission, and goals as well as the services it offers to tourists and its tour guide members. The results show that, due to seasonality, tourist guides suffer from financial and employment problems on which the strategies, plans, and solutions implemented by the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative are having an impact. Several solutions to address financial problems are suggested, including diversifying tourism, establishing agreements with parties relevant to the tourism sector, improving member qualification and training, promoting the cooperative's activities and ensuring investment in both members and tourism. Employment problems can be tackled by reducing tourist guide fees, utilizing tourist guides at events and festivals and obtaining employment recommendations. The study calls for such cooperatives to be established locally in different cities and provinces in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as internationally.

Keywords: Seasonality, Tourism, Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative, tourist guide, tourist guide profession, City of Jeddah.



I. INTRODUCTION

The seasonality of tourism activity is one of the most prominent weaknesses of the tourism guidance profession (Dileep, 2019; Abd El Kafy, 2020) and it limits the ability of the tourism and hospitality industry to achieve its goals, leading to development difficulties (Gibson et al., 2011). Corluka (2019) recognizes that seasonality is a key characteristic of tourism and represents a major challenge for operators and workers in the industry, since it leads to labor shortages, unemployment, and seasonal employment. Dwesini (2019) adds that the biggest concern related to seasonality is not only the recruitment of full-time employees, but also the ability to retain them and prevent rapid turnover. Despite the trend for hospitality and tourism establishments to implement social responsibility activities with the aim of increasing employee engagement and reducing employee turnover (Low et al., 2017), the problem of seasonality continues to lead to job insecurity and consequently, a lack of financial and psychological stability (Pappas & Brown, 2020). As mentioned by Tesone and Pizam (2008), the pattern of tourism demand influences the pattern of job opportunities. Zhang and Chow (2004) mention that tourist guides can hold permanent, full-time jobs, or part-time jobs, or work as freelancers or as seasonal employees, but most jobs in the tourism sector are in fact seasonal, not permanent, especially in small countries that rely heavily on seasonal tourism. This type of employment significantly impacts on and has serious consequences for the unemployment rate at the national and regional levels. Kapa et al. (2022) explain that in South Africa for example, 58% of tourist guides work between 3 and 15 hours a month, highlighting the challenges they face due to seasonal employment, which limits their ability to negotiate employment. Due to the low hours on offer, they may resort to working part-time elsewhere, or on a self-employed basis, or work for multiple tourism companies or under contract.

Despite the abundance of research on seasonal tourism, there remains a severe lack of understanding of it, leading to limited management capability to combat or mitigate it. Corluka (2019) provides an overview of tourism seasonality, explaining that although seasonality is the most prominent feature of tourism, there are still large gaps in understanding of the phenomenon, and recommending in-depth studies of seasonal tourism that would contribute to better understanding, identification of its impacts, and mitigation strategies (Corluka, 2019). This paper will thus look closely at the methods and strategies that help to reduce the impact of seasonality on the tourist guide profession by studying the model of the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative in the city of Jeddah.

II. RESEARCH SCOPE

The scope of this research includes two elements explained below in more detail.

Tourism Seasonality

Researchers have defined seasonality in many ways; in the field of tourism, however, it can be defined as “recurring changes in the rate of activity attributable to the



influence of climatic and conventional seasons” or the changes which happen temporally in tourism “expressed in terms of the number of visitors, traffic, and other forms of transportation, employment, and admissions to attractions” (Koenig and Bischoff, 2005: 202). The most famous definition of the concept of tourism seasonality though, is that of Butler (1994) who states that tourism seasonality is “temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism, which can be expressed in the number of visitors, their expenditure, traffic on different forms of transportation, employment and admissions to attractions” (p. 332). Seasonality thus refers to fluctuations in tourism supply and demands due to public holidays and climatic conditions, causing temporary movement of tourists, and it is a globally recognized phenomenon (Baum and Lundtorp, 2001). In response, Melia (2017) asserts that seasonality poses a problem not only for the tourism sector, but also for the tourist guide profession, since due to seasonality qualified and licensed tourist guides may decide to leave the work. Therefore, the lack of regulations around seasonality in the tourism guidance sector must be addressed, as it poses a significant threat.

Tourist Guide Profession

Rabotic (2010) indicates that the tourist guide profession is one of the oldest in history, dating back two and a half thousand years, and today, guides have become a key factor in the success of the tourism industry. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the definition of ‘guide’ is: ‘One who leads or shows the way, especially to a traveller in a strange country; spec. one who is hired to conduct a traveller or tourist (e.g., over a mountain, through a forest or over a city or building) and to point out objects of interest’ (p. 490). The Saudi Ministry of Tourism defines a tourist guide as “an ambassador of a country, inside and outside his homeland. He has a clear role in creating and leaving a positive impression on tourists visiting his country. This includes the development and promotion of tourism in the Kingdom, keeping in mind that this activity is as good as a salaried job with the added option for having holidays in the company of a variety of attractive tourist groups” (Ministry of Tourism, 2020). Pelit and Kabakulak (2019) state that the characteristics required for practicing the tourist guiding profession are enjoyment of teaching and learning, communication skills, good presentation, patience, a professional attitude, friendliness, fairness, tolerance, optimism and an extrovert personality. Based on the tasks they carry out, researchers have classified tourist guides into different types: walking tour guides, site guides, personal or private guides, trail guides, in-house guides, generalist guides, specialized guides, urban guides, business or industry guides and adventure guides, government guides, interpreters and ski guides and boat and open-top bus guides (Cruz, 2008; Aloudat, 2010). According to some researchers (Cohen, 1985; Zhang and Chow, 2004; Tsaur and Teng, 2017), tourist guides play an important role in tourist destinations as pathfinders, social contacts, mentors and communicators, and their role can be instrumental or interactional, possibly involving dealing with emergencies and conflict, looking after tourists’ physical and psychological needs and ensuring they are satisfied and building the country’s image. In addition, tourist



guides introduce tourists to a destination's history, culture and local people, and the nature of its community using interpretive, expressive, interactive, and entertaining communication methods which influence tourists (Overend, 2012; Látková et al., 2018). Guides can thus have both positive and negative impacts on the experience of tourists and the destination (Chang, 2014).

Recently, the importance of the tourist guide has increased for both tourists and destinations, and that has had a positive impact on the tourism industry. Moreover, tourist guides have become concerned with intangible issues such as sustainability, social interaction, authenticity, storytelling, education, knowledge, and an interest in creating memories for tourists that become part of their experiences and lives, and all of that has increased tourist interest (Zillinger et al., 2012). Despite the importance of the profession to the tourism sector, it is considered a somewhat undesirable profession for a number of reasons, as indicated by ITIC (2008:28) which comments that "the job is unattractive to many due to its seasonality, unsocial hours, relatively low pay and frequently very demanding working conditions and tourists". This current research is thus clearly important, as it specifically addresses seasonality in the tourism sector and its impact on the profession of tourist guide, and attempts to suggest ways of reducing its effects.

III. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

There are currently several gaps in the literature that this study seeks to fill. First, as pointed out by Khairy et al. (2023), although there are many studies that have addressed the negative and harmful effects of seasonality on tourism sector employees, there have been few studies on how corporate social responsibility contributes to mitigating and tackling those effects. This study is the first of its kind to look at the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative, established in the city of Jeddah by a group of tourist guides in an effort to reduce the impact of seasonality on the tourist guide profession. Second, Khairy et al. (2023) show that the literature dealing with seasonality in the tourism sector is limited to the practical aspect and lacks a theoretical grounding, which leads to a lack of empirical findings. In contrast, this study combines theory and practice and thus provides empirical results for tourism literature. Third, most of the literature dealing with the issue of seasonality in the tourism sector sees it as a secondary issue rather than focusing on it (Corluka, 2019) and in contrast this research focuses on the issue of seasonality in greater detail and depth. Finally, this is the first study of its kind highlighting the efforts made by some tourist guides to confront the threat posed by seasonality in the profession by establishing the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative. The importance of the research therefore lies in the fact that it introduces this cooperative and its work and presents results that can be generalized to the rest of the cities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to other professions in the tourism sector.



IV. RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The research aim of this study is to consider ways of reducing the impact of seasonality on the tourist guide profession and it does so by studying the model of the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative in the city of Jeddah. In order to fulfill this aim, the following objectives will be addressed:

1. Identify the meaning of seasonality and its impact on the tourist guide profession from the tourist guides' points of view;
2. Study the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative and its role in reducing seasonality in the tourist guide profession;
3. Explore, from the point of view of the tourist guides participating in the cooperative, the plans and strategies developed by the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative and their effect on reducing the impact of seasonality on the tourist guide profession.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

Seasonality has positive impacts on tourist destinations, as the tourists hosted by a tourist destination provide significant potential for financing the organization of complex and expensive cultural events (Figini and Vici, 2012). Despite those positive impacts however, there are also numerous negative economic impacts. Risk and volatility in economic performance increase with the shortness of the peak season and in addition it is difficult to determine the appropriate level of investment relative to the size of tourism infrastructure. The burden on a destination's environmental and social carrying capacity also increases (Figini and Vici, 2012).

Russell and Taylor (2011) state that the increased seasonality of tourism activity, coupled with the introduction of technology, has led to an increase in part-time jobs, both permanent and seasonal. Seasonal employees who are hired based on seasonal fluctuations in demand fall under the category of part-time employees. Part-time seasonal work has many advantages, one of which is that it enables companies to reduce the cost of full-time work and thus reduces business risks that arise from intense competition and recession (Vučetić, 2012). To cope with seasonal demand, travel agencies reduce fixed expenses throughout the year while trying to maintain a highly competitive advantage and productivity during seasonal work. However, seasonal part-time work is no longer limited to operational staff such as workers, tourist guides, drivers and ticket sellers, but also includes managers, agency representatives and those responsible for carrying out administrative tasks (Vučetić, 2012). Another advantage of part-time seasonal employment, this time for employees, is in providing flexibility (for example for young people), but the benefits and guarantees they enjoy are less than those of full-time employees, and this type of employment also weakens the power of labor unions (Vučetić, 2012). Vučetić (2012)



thus explains that seasonality negatively impacts unemployment in tourist destinations.

Seasonality is also considered one of the global tourism issues that has a negative impact on several jobs that affect the success of the tourism sector, such as the tourist guide profession. This may cause tourist guides to lose passion, desire and enjoyment in their work (Chikuta et al., 2017), and without that the work cannot be carried out professionally, which may lead them to seriously consider changing their career path (Abd El Kafy, 2020). This corresponds with the findings of Kapa et al. (2023), who emphasize that the literature has described tourist guiding as an unattractive industry due to factors such as seasonality, low wages, and long working hours, all of which impact social life. Abd El Kafy (2020) studies the challenges facing Egyptian tour guides, identifies their needs and stresses the importance of the tour guide profession in the tourism industry, concluding that there are a number of difficulties and challenges facing tour guides. These include seasonality and part-time work, low wages in difficult working conditions, being self-employed or freelance, long working hours that affect social life and the arrival of technology (websites, electronic applications), which has led to a reduction in the need for tour guides. Khairy et al. (2023) explore the relationship between employees' and entrepreneurs' intention to leave the industry due to the seasonality of tourism, finding a strong positive relationship between the intentions to leave and tourism seasonality. They also demonstrate that internal corporate social responsibility (CSR) has no effect on moderating the relationship between employees' and entrepreneurs' intention to leave.

To gain a deeper understanding of seasonality and try to find solutions for it, its causes must be studied. Research literature has concluded that the main reasons for tourism seasonality are classified into three categories: weather, including temperature; calendar, including holidays and religious events; and finally, timing decisions, including official and school holidays (Hylleberg, 1992). Kolomiets (2010) explains that seasonality takes both natural and institutional forms, and this classification is the most applicable to seasonality in the tourism sector. Hartmann (1986) emphasizes that seasonality resulting from natural factors is relatively stable and predictable. Although climate is an important attraction for tourists, and water sports and beach activities typically draw tourists during the summer season, the level of attraction varies from country to country and from region to region due to the wide variation in temperature and its intensity. Baum and Lundtorp (2001) add that the climate pattern is a strong attraction for a country, occurring at a specific time of year, which leads to fluctuations and unevenness in tourism demand and supply throughout the year. Koenig and Bischoff (2005) believe that tourist destinations that rely primarily on outdoor activities are usually the most vulnerable to seasonal tourism. Figini and Vici (2012) explain for example that tourism in Rimini, which is one of the town's main economic sectors, is experiencing strong economic diversification and is investing in promoting various types of tourism not only during the summer season. Rimini has suffered from seasonality over the past twenty years, but has taken measures to address it, including implementing a redesign policy focused primarily



around cultural and business tourism, and although seasonality remains strong, it is steadily decreasing thanks to the tourism diversification policy put in place.

Among the strategies that can be implemented to combat seasonality, either during peak periods or off-season, as pointed out by Lee et al. (2008), are good and effective market diversification, diversification of attractions, diversification of products, pricing, and the facilities provided by the state. Hartmann (1986) shows that when the same number of tourists can be expected at the same time each year, the potential effects can be predicted by companies and investors and they can thus work to reduce them. Corluka (2019) explains that in general, the main focus of seasonality is on good and effective planning of resources and their use during the off-season.

VI. METHODOLOGY

A. Study Area: The city of Jeddah

The Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative was founded in Jeddah, an ancient city dating back to the time of Eve and known as the bride of the Red Sea. Located in the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Province in the west of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the eastern shore of the Red Sea, Jeddah is the second largest city in the Kingdom. Its geographical location on the Red Sea coast has influenced its climate, characterized by short, warm winters and extremely high temperatures and humidity in the summer, with temperatures ranging from 37°C to 52°C and humidity levels of 80% or more. The high temperatures and humidity have significantly impacted the demand for outdoor tourism activities, meaning that seasonality influences the tourism sector and tourist arrivals.

Jeddah is the largest Islamic port in the Arabian Peninsula, attracting pilgrims and Umrah performers from all over the world and it is the gateway to the two holy mosques of Mecca and Medina. Since ancient times, pilgrims and Umrah performers have flocked to the city to visit the holy Mosque in Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, and subsequently settled there. This has made Jeddah unique in its openness to many cultures and civilizations. The city possesses an architectural heritage site that has been protected under Saudi law since 1981 and historic Jeddah, the only intact historic city on the Red Sea coast, was the third heritage site listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014. In addition, it is a commercial capital, with goods arriving there from all over the world which are then distributed to other cities in Saudi Arabia. All of this has given Jeddah significant importance and distinction in comparison to other cities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as it boasts cultural, social, and civilizational diversity.

B. Study method

The primary objective of this research is to shed light on the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative, one of whose objectives is to reduce the impact of seasonality on the tourist guide profession. It also aims to identify the plans and solutions the cooperative has implemented to mitigate the financial and employment problems that tourist guides face due to seasonality. To meet this objective it was necessary to



understand the perspectives of tourist guides and it was determined that a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews was the most appropriate. Tourist guides were selected using the snowball technique, which is one of the most popular techniques for sampling in qualitative research. As Parker et al. (2019) mention, researchers often start with a small number of initial contacts who are good candidates to fulfill the research objectives and become participants in the research. Those participants are asked to recommend other contacts willing to participate and fitting the research criteria. Polit-O'Hara and Hungler (2006) add that the snowball method not only takes less time, but also gives the researcher a better way to communicate with the sample due to their relationship with the first participants in the research. This study therefore included 20 licensed tourist guides and members of the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative. Although the researcher developed a set of questions that allowed for a deeper understanding of the research topic, the use of semi-structured interviews with tourist guides provided space for additional questions. As Perry (2005) states, "the interviewer has a set of predetermined questions, but the interviewer is free to follow up a question with additional questions that probe further" (p. 119). All tourist guides participating in the study were men (the table below provides the detailed demographic information). Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to discuss their experiences before and after joining the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative, and whether joining the cooperative had benefited their profession in general and reduced seasonality in their profession in particular. All interviews were translated from Arabic to English, then coded and analyzed based on the responses of the study participants. Merriam (2009) explains that analysis is a process of making meaning, and data analysis is thus a very important step for understanding all the participants' responses and linking them to previous studies to find solutions to reduce seasonality.

Gender	Age	Marital Status			Education Level	Employment			Experience (years)	
		Married with children	Divorced	Single		Full-time	Part-time	Freelancer	16-20	<5
Male	27-60				University					
20		12	2	6	All	2	8	10	14	6

VII. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative will be introduced and then the findings and results obtained will be discussed.

The Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative

The Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative was established in 2015 and thus has over 10 years of experience serving local and international tourists. Its vision indicates the significant role for which it was established: highlighting the heritage and culture of



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the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as the country's natural diversity, by offering informative tours that leave a positive impression on tourists. This can only be achieved through the presence of a tourist guide who is passionate about their work, well-qualified, highly competent, and highly experienced. The cooperative was founded by 55 tourist guides from Jeddah, later increasing to 64 licensed and qualified tourist guides. Since its creation it has provided a variety of tour services in various languages and in various fields, including culture, history, art and entertainment, to 45,000 visitors and has conducted 3,000 successful tours. The cooperative's logo highlights its vision and mission as well as the role it provides for tourists and its member tourist guides (see Image 1). It consists of two integrated icons: the historical Jeddah wall and the connected dots (see Image 2), symbolizing protection and security (the walls), and development, openness, and departure from the norm (the gates). The connected dots in the logo represent cooperation and connection between tourist guides and visitors, while the historical Jeddah wall was built thanks to cooperation and connection between the people of Jeddah. The green in the logo symbolizes peace, development, and the identity of Kingdom Saudi Arabia, while the purple symbolizes the generosity and royal hospitality of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



Image.1

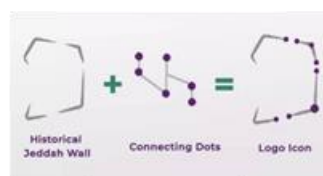


Image.2

The Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative is a for-profit association licensed by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Ministry of Tourism. Its members were keen to establish a cooperative with capital united by a common profession, serving as an umbrella and link between them and decision-makers in the tourism sector. It also aims to provide additional income by enabling members to obtain projects from both the private and public sectors. It is easier for these sectors to engage with the cooperative instead of dealing with individuals, especially in light of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's move to align all businesses with institutional boundaries and make them subject to governance, rather than being based on individual transactions.

One of the cooperative's missions is to train and develop its members to ensure they are highly competent and professional, enabling them to provide exceptional services and experiences for tourists. This is achieved by providing a six-month training program that balances practical and applied knowledge, with a focus on skills required for the profession, such as risk management, public speaking, and storytelling. The cooperative is keen to ensure that its members do not simply receive a seven-day training program from the Ministry of Tourism licensing them to practice



the profession, as this period is insufficient to achieve the desired goal. In addition, it works in cooperation with governmental and private entities to develop content for events, festivals, and tourist, historical, cultural, and artistic sites in Jeddah, ensuring that that content keeps pace with the city's ongoing development. However, the cooperative faces challenges due to lack of financial resources, and a higher income would allow it to seek assistance from private entities, bodies, and institutions.

The cooperative also focuses on reducing and controlling the cost of tourist guides' wages. Initially, the cost of hiring a tourist guide ranged between \$250 and \$400 per four- to eight-hour tour, in a context where there was a scarcity of tourist guides, especially those speaking foreign languages, and a small number of tourists due to the lack of tourist visas. This led to a limited number of tours and, consequently, a limited number of days and hours of work for tourist guides. For those reasons, at that time, the high fee charged was considered justifiable and acceptable to ensure an appropriate profit for tourist guides. However currently, with the issuing of tourist visas, the increase in the number of tourists, and consequently in the number of tours, and the availability of tourist guides who speak different languages, tourist guides can now give several tours per day on multiple days and hence this fee has become unjustifiable and unacceptable and will put people off working with tourist guides. Since the high cost of a tourist guide was likely to discourage those seeking their services, thus reducing the potential benefits of promoting the heritage, antiquities, history, and culture of Jeddah in particular and the country in general, as well as having an impact on the local economy, it was necessary to reduce and control tourist guide wages to ensure sustainability in the use of their services. Reducing tourist guide fees has significantly contributed to providing daily work for tourist guides, and thus has reduced the likelihood of a tour guide being unemployed for many days. increasing their income and reducing the pressure they face to leave the tourist guide profession due to having little or no financial return. The cooperative has adopted an hourly rate of approximately \$50 for tourist guides, a practice common in many professions and countries around the world.

The importance of the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative in reducing seasonality in the tourist guide profession

Seasonality is a natural, globally recognized phenomenon in all countries across all services and goods (Baum and Lundtorp, 2001). As previously mentioned, Helberg (1992) states that seasonality in tourism is caused by a number of reasons including weather/temperature and the calendar (holidays and religious occasions for example). In Jeddah for example, the main reasons for it are the high temperatures, especially in the summer, which can last for three to five months, and the specificity of some months, such as Ramadan and Hajj. This means that seasonality cannot be completely eliminated and the solution lies rather in mitigating its impact, which the cooperative studied here has aimed to do. Lee et al. (2008) indicate that when seeking to reduce seasonal challenges the main focus has to be on good planning and diversification of existing resources and using them in an optimal manner. Therefore, in this section, we



review the measures taken by the cooperative to reduce the financial and employment problems faced by tourist guides.

Through semi-structured interviews with tourist guide members of the cooperative, the data of this study has been categorized under themes, some of which have been divided into sub-themes to view the perspective of tourist guides on the problems caused by seasonality and solutions that the cooperative implements to mitigate them.

Solutions to reduce financial problems

Financial problems were divided into the following sub-themes: diversifying tourism, working agreements with parties relevant to the tourism sector, member qualification and training, marketing the cooperative's activities and investment in members and tourism. The following section is a detailed review of each sub-theme.

Regarding diversifying tourism, the cooperative has leveraged seasons, events, festivals, and tourist sites to expand its tour offerings to include various types of tourism, not just traditional cultural and heritage tours in historic Jeddah (Al-Balad). The cooperative benefited from the experience of the city of Remi Figiniand Vici (2012) and adopted a policy of diversifying tourism, expanding seasonal tours, events and festivals, cruise ships, rally racing, Ramadan and Eid seasons, which led to a decrease in seasonality.

Instead of waiting for demand to operate tours, the cooperative accommodated demand during several seasons, including National Day, Founding Day, Formula One, and the Red Sea Festival (Tourist guide 4).

Concerning working agreements with parties relevant to the tourism sector, tourist guides mentioned that the cooperative had entered into agreements with companies that organize tours and employ tourist guides and those agreements had enabled tourist guides to work multiple days instead of being forced to stop work for 3 to 5 months due to the hot weather in Jeddah or because of occasions such as Ramadan and Hajj. As was mentioned previously, tourist guides in other countries encounter similar problems, one study indicating that in South Africa 58% of them work between just 3 and 15 hours a month (Kapa et al., 2022).

Thanks to the cooperative's initiatives and cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, we have been able to conduct, for example, two to three paid tours during the Ramadan season for 15 days. This has made work more accessible, easier, and financially profitable. While it used to be very difficult to organize tours during Ramadan (Tourist guide 17).

The cooperative helped us secure tour opportunities during seasons when it was difficult to work in the morning, the traditional time for tours, such as the holy month of Ramadan, due to the nature of fasting (Tourist guide 6).



With regard to member qualification and training, the cooperative ensures that tourist guides are fully prepared and qualified to conduct tours at different seasons and for different events and festivals on various tourist sites. It has trained its guides on the policies, regulations, and laws relating to each of those circumstances and has created content appropriate to each one, utilizing the tourist guides' skills in explanation, introduction, and presentation.

The cooperative provided us with training when we participated in the *rally racing* event and also provided us with the content for the event (Tourist guide 15).

As for promoting the cooperative's activities and members, the cooperative does so by highlighting their training and professionalism. This has contributed to increased demand from companies in the sector, which in turn has had a significant impact on the number of days tourist guides work and thus accordingly increased their income.

The cooperative has helped us greatly in providing job opportunities through its marketing campaigns, which focus on the competence of its members (Tourist guide 1).

On the subject of tourism investment, members have increased their income through profits from investments in the tourism sector which are distributed at the end of the year, and supplement their income from work obtained through cooperation with organizing companies. For example, some tourism companies and event organizers find it difficult to purchase certain equipment due to its limited use and high cost, so the cooperative has purchased audio equipment and tour buses to rent to them. It therefore plays a significant role in providing this equipment and other services, which in turn improves the efficiency of tourist guides in particular and that of tourism companies and event and festival organizers in general. This ultimately benefits the tourism sector in Jeddah in particular and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in general.

My membership in the cooperative increased my annual income by receiving profits at the end of the year as a result of the cooperative's investment initiatives (Tourist guide 19).

Because of the cooperative's initiatives, my income as a tourist guide has increased by approximately 30% (Tourist guide 10).

Solutions to reduce employment problems

Employment problems were divided into sub-themes as follows: reducing tourist guides' fees, utilizing tourist guide members in events and festivals and employment recommendation.



Seasonality has led to a large number of tourist guides leaving the profession, due to their inability to practice the profession on a daily basis and the impossibility of relying on it as a source of a fixed monthly income and a rewarding financial return. This is consistent with the findings of Khairi et al. (2023) who find a strong positive relationship between employees' intention to leave the work and tourism seasonality. They demonstrate that, bearing in mind internal corporate social responsibility, it is incumbent upon companies to seek to modify this relationship. Taylor (2011) points out that increased seasonality in tourism has led to an increase in part-time jobs compared to full-time jobs. This prompted the cooperative to take several measures to address the problem, including, as mentioned earlier, negotiating with its tourist guide members to reduce their fees, thus facilitating more tours and allowing them to work more days.

The cooperative explained the importance and benefits of reducing tourist guide fees (Tourist guide 13).

The cooperative also entered into agreements with tour operators and relevant government and private ministries and agencies to utilize its tourist guide members in their events and festivals. This, in turn, led to an increase in the number of tours and working days for tourist guides.

The cooperative played a major role in my work as a tourist guide for several tours and days at various events and festivals (Tourist guide 2).

The cooperative also promoted its members, emphasizing their high level of competence and professional training, and recommended that tour operators and relevant government and private ministries and agencies employ its members full-time rather than just as part-time or seasonal staff.

The cooperative works to promote the work of tourist guides and recommends the employment of a number of tourist guides in tourism companies (Tourist guide 16).

The cooperative seeks to provide jobs for tourist guides and to make the tourist guide profession a full-time job (Tourist guide 20).

Additional benefits of Jeddah Tour Guide Cooperative

Jeddah Tour Guide Cooperative and its tourist guide members also benefit companies and organizations responsible for organizing events and festivals. It acts as an information center for the organizing body, meaning that the presence of a tourist guide office at the entrance of an event not only informs visitors about the availability of tourist guides, but also helps the organizing body compile statistics on the number of visitors, their nationality, visiting times, and other relevant statistics. This report is then submitted to the organizing body. Given the importance to the organizing bodies of the information provided by the cooperative and its part in improving the quality and development of services provided to visitors, continuity of cooperation between



the cooperative and organizing bodies has been ensured. Tourist guides also conduct tours within events, significantly increasing the number of visitors and promoting the event, and that has increased organizers' desire to further work with the cooperative.

The cooperative cares about the community, to which it gives 10% of its income through the provision of non-profit volunteer services. This has contributed significantly to the expansion and spread of member guides, greatly helping in their recognition by government and private entities and their use in the future.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

This research has aimed to seek solutions for reducing the impact of seasonality on the tourist guide profession by studying the model of the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative in the city of Jeddah. A qualitative study with semi-structured interviews with 20 tourist guides was used. The research has highlighted the importance of the strategies, plans, and solutions implemented by the cooperative to develop the tourist guide profession and raise awareness of their importance. It has also sought to make this profession sustainable and year-round, which has significantly contributed to reducing seasonality. One of the findings of this research is that the cooperative's efforts have reduced the financial problems that tourist guides face, particularly due to seasonality, and specifically in Jeddah due to its hot, humid climate during the summer months. The research has also found that seasonality has reduced but still has a significant impact on determining job types and that there is only a few tourist guides who get full-time jobs with companies, agencies, and institutions operating in the travel and tourism sector. So, the problem of seasonality has been mitigated but can't be fully solved. This has had a significant impact on tourist guides' attitudes to the profession.

The cooperative's procedures are very important for the success of the tourist guide profession and this study therefore recommends that support for this cooperative be increased and that similar cooperatives be established in other cities of the Kingdom by the Ministry of Tourism and other governmental and private bodies, organizations, and companies in the tourism and travel sector.

There are several limitations to this research, as it focused on a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews with tourist guides, but it could be expanded in the future to include questionnaires, a quantitative approach, and statistical analysis of the extent to which the tourist guide profession and the guides themselves have benefited from the goals and activities of Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative. It would be possible to combine the quantitative and qualitative approaches (mixed methods approach) to provide a clearer understanding and attempt to generalize the cooperative's experience to other cities in the Kingdom. This study was also limited to the Jeddah Tour Guides Cooperative in the city of Jeddah, as it is the only cooperative established to develop the tourist guide profession and look after tourist guides. The research results therefore recommend applying the cooperative concept to other cities



in the Kingdom, as it could serve as a nexus for any city's tourist guides and a link between the authorities, the tourism sector, decision-makers, and tourist guides.

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