

FESTIVALS AS AN IMPORTANT DETERMINANT OF DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS: A CASE STUDY OF SERBIA

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Abstract:

Festivals represent one of the fastest growing segments of tourism industry, and are often seen as a key driver of destination economy and important determinant of destination competitiveness. They have significant economic, socio-cultural and political effects on the local community as well as host groups. In Serbia, festivals are recognized as one of the key tourism products and instruments to enhance Serbian tourism competitiveness. The aim of this research is to analyze how festivals contribute to Serbian tourism competitiveness from the local residents' perspective, as the local community is an important stakeholder in tourism industry and organization of festivals. The results indicate that festivals improve the position of Serbia in the international tourism market in numerous ways, as follows: enhance image and improve promotion of the destination internationally; present the destination as special and unique; they are of great importance for exploring the local culture by visitors; they provide a variety of cultural experiences for locals and visitors *etc.* The findings contribute to deeper understanding of residents' attitudes towards the festivals and can be utilized by the government and festival organizers to increase the benefits generated by the festival and to improve the overall destination competitiveness.

Keywords:

festivals, destination competitiveness, Serbia, tourism.