

Exploring the local community perceptions of socio-cultural event tourism impacts: A case of attendees to the Salalah Tourism Festival, Salalah city, Oman

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Abstract.

This research aims to explore the local community of Salalah (a popular tourist city south of Oman) perceptions of the socio-cultural impacts of the Salalah Tourism Festival, which is a famous festival within the Arab Gulf region (GCC). This research is expected to contribute to current literature by identifying the perceptions of a new developing country community towards event tourism socio-cultural impacts, developing a new measurement scale, investigating if there is a link between residents perceptions of the festival and religion (i.e. Islam), and identifying if the interaction between the local community and the festival tourists who share similar culture would have a major or minor effect on how they perceive the festival's socio-cultural impacts. An exploratory sequential mixed method approach is followed, utilizing both semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Initial results show that local residents of Salalah in general, had a more negative perception of the festival's socio-cultural impacts, where the negative perceptions were based mainly on tangible socio-cultural impacts and the less positive perceptions were formed mostly from intangible socio-cultural impacts. Moreover, religion (i.e. Islam) showed a strong influence on residents' perceptions of some socio-cultural impacts of the festival.

Keywords: Mixed methods; Islam; measurement scale; developing country; GCC tourist.