

Festival Tourism in United Arab Emirates: First-time versus Repeat Visitor Perceptions

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Abstract: United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been making incessant efforts to promote tourism in order to attain the avowed objective of economic diversification and growth. It has organized a number of events including the oft-quoted Dubai Shopping Festival to attract tourists in the UAE. The festival has been a prime mover behind tourism marketing, taking advantage of the perceived positive international business image enjoyed by the country far and wide. Using survey data, an attempt is made in this study to analyze the perceptions of the first-time visitors and of those repeating their visits to the festival and other related events and sites in the UAE. The results provide interesting insights into an assessment of festival tourism provided by the tourists for policymakers willing to expand the tourism sector in the vibrant and diversifying economy of the UAE. The study shows that tourist perception in the UAE is multi-dimensional in line with conventional wisdom and highlights that it is influenced by all the festival tourism-related facilities and environment.

Key words: festival tourism, UAE, visitor perceptions, policy.

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