

# How Do Music Festivals Impact the Local Community's Quality of Life? A Case Study of Tisno, Croatia

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## Abstract

With the rapid increase in global tourist flows, environmental pressure on local communities is rising, while the quality of social interaction and overall quality of life are generally deteriorating. This is particularly evident in destinations hosting music festivals, as the intensity of these events on the local economy, environment, and social interactions is usually considerable and has recently been reported as predominantly negative. Consequently, the expected outcomes of tourism development often fall short of expectations. This study aims to examine the local community's perceptions of the impact of music festival-dependent tourism development on their quality of life. The primary research was conducted in Tisno (Croatia) using the snowball sampling method. In total, 75 valid responses were collected, providing only a preliminary insight into the research topic. The results indicate that although respondents recognise both the positive and negative impacts of music festivals on their quality of life, they have a predominantly positive attitude towards tourism development in their community. The reasons for this attitude most likely lie in the degree of the local community's dependence on tourism income, with greater dependence outweighing the negative social impacts.

**Keywords:** quality of life; music festivals; tourism impacts, locals' perceptions; Croatia

**Paper type:** Research article

**Received:** July 14, 2025

**Accepted:** Dec 15, 2025

**DOI:** 10.2478/crdj-2026-0001

## Introduction

It could be argued that no community in the world is not involved in some form of festival (e.g., Toraldo et al., 2019). This claim is not surprising, as the social identity of individuals and their desire for social belonging are the fundamental drivers of human activity (Jaeger et al., 2013). Although today's festivals differ from those of the past, the sociological motives for their organisation have remained largely unchanged. Hence, Stipanović et al. (2023:16) note that music tourism constitutes a niche and that music events can serve as a motive for tourist arrivals. The authors go on to state that the importance of music in tourism is reflected in its valorisation as a dominant factor in a destination's development.

Music festivals today, especially those based on electronic music, often have significant impacts on local communities, both positive and negative. Depending on one's level of involvement in tourism, i.e., if an individual has direct or indirect benefits from tourism, the level of satisfaction and happiness with tourism is changing proportionally (e.g. Rivera et al., 2016; Moghavvemi et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). There is also a strong link between tourism development and the local community's quality of life, which is the focus of contemporary tourism research (e.g. Ramkissoon, 2020; Hu et al., 2022; Yayla et al., 2023; Gautam et al., 2024). A study by Andersson et al. (2017) revealed that the economic impacts of festivals can be influenced by festival managers, who should carefully design, plan, and operationalise the festival, while DMOs should monitor the quality of publicly financed festivals and events. The authors emphasise the importance of quality standards and quality certification in increasing the economic impacts of music festivals. On a different note, a study by Baldi et al. (2022) examined the impact of music festivals on the agri-food value chain, revealing that major cultural events in a small town in central Italy can bring significant benefits to local development.

Furthermore, music festivals have a strong social impact. Participation in these events contributes to bilateral relations and to physical and emotional development (Meriç, 2023). They can also foster positive emotions and support the formation of social identity, thereby increasing young people's subjective well-being. However, the study by Özdemir et al. (2023) focused not only on residents but also on festival participants.

The focus of this study is therefore to analyse the impact of music festivals on the local community's quality of life. More specifically, the research question is: how do locals perceive the impact of music festivals on their environment, local economy and social interactions? The primary research was conducted in Tisno (Croatia), a destination that has hosted music festivals for several years. Using a snowball sampling, a total of 75 responses were collected. Although the sample size prevents generalizable conclusions, it nevertheless provides insight into the local community's perceptions of the development and impacts of music festivals within a relatively small community.

## Literature review

The specificity of the festival organisation stems from the impossibility of generalising, due to the particularities that distinguish the events and make them unique (Botti et al., 2018, p. 204). In the context of music festivals and the rapid growth of the industry, the organisation and management of a festival have become even more complex (Stadler et al., 2014). The authors emphasise the importance of applying knowledge management to event organisation, but also note that the proposed management method requires substantial resources and has limitations in the context of festivals. The limits lie, among other things, in the high staff turnover. Among visitors to music festivals, who are mostly younger tourists, an expansion of freedoms, an emphasis on human rights, and a sense of unity among visitors regardless of their country of origin are evident. This can be linked to a liberal worldview and attitude, as confirmed by existing research in tourism and other disciplines, according to which festivals are still perceived as a space where visitors are free from all the restrictions and conventions of everyday life (Skandalis et al., 2023) and a place where alternative lifestyles can be tried out (Brennan et al., 2019).

The organisation of festivals and visitor spending in the destination lead to several economic benefits (Chiciudean et al., 2021; Botti et al., 2018; Mair et al., 2019; Liberato et al., 2020), such as: income of organisers and local entrepreneurship, creation of new jobs, reduction of unemployment of the local population, increase in the volume of work of existing companies, development of entrepreneurship, increase in visitor numbers, investment opportunities, increased tax revenues of the managing authorities and economic development at local level. The economic benefit to the local community is most easily illustrated by the example of a festival visitor who stays in a hotel or private accommodation owned by residents and whose consumption generates income for the owners and their employees (Zeba, 2024). Negative economic impacts occur when festival organisers are not guided by the principle of contributing to the local community or when they deliberately maximise their own profits and interests at the expense of the local population. The greatest economic benefit comes from party tourism (closely linked to, and to a certain extent interconnected with, festival tourism), which is generated by wealthy visitors (Mach et al., 2022). The additional negative impacts of organising a festival include increases in the cost of living, rents, and property prices (Han et al., 2017). According to some authors, affordable housing is one of the most pressing urban issues globally and is driving locals out of tourist destinations (e.g., Mikulić et al., 2021).

Music festivals can only have a strong social impact on both the local community and the visitors. Jaeger et al. (2013) argue that festivals can be a means of creating and belonging to a social identity that develops or reinforces a community's sense of place and belonging. The authors also note that social interactions arising from festival organisation contribute to individuals' health, as social connections reduce depression and feelings of loneliness. Chiciudean et al. (2021) note that many communities are culturally diverse, and therefore, this form of tourism has different impacts on them. In addition to the positive socio-cultural effects, the authors also see a positive

influence on cultural values and educational levels. The negative socio-cultural effects of the organisation of festivals are potentially diverse and numerous studies (Douglas et al., 2001; Han et al., 2017; Séraphin et al., 2018) outline several: conflicts between visitors and the local population, rising crime and vandalism rates, disruption of local community life, traffic congestion, excessive visitor numbers and overtourism, loss of identity, commodification of culture and destruction of cultural heritage, social instability, community alienation, and moral challenges and values scrutiny. There is also a concern about drug abuse during music festivals, which has been in the focus of various researchers (e.g. Eassey et al., 2024; Mosina et al., 2024) and the respect of various and different cultures during music festivals, especially from the conservative and religious perspective (e.g. Hothan et al., 2025).

Finally, environmental aspects of organising such events must be taken into consideration. With large numbers of visitors, the pressure on the environment can lead to numerous consequences, including increased waste disposal, noise and light pollution, water and air pollution, natural hazards, and the displacement or destruction of plant and animal habitats. Numerous studies have addressed these issues, including Bendrups et al. (2015), which established that the relationship between ecology and music in the context of the analysed festivals is nuanced and indirect, yet does exist in both practical and conceptual terms. Research by Collins et al. (2017) demonstrates that Ecological Footprint analysis can provide valuable information for festival organisers and policymakers on factors influencing the scale of a festival's environmental impact, and the types of strategies needed to reduce the effect of visitor travel. Festivals can also significantly impact eco-friendly and pro-environmental practices among both visitors and organisers (e.g. Alonso-Vazquez et al., 2021). In the contemporary environment, it is also important to address issues of extreme weather conditions and climate change, as done by Green et al. (2023), who outlined the threat of extreme weather to the Australian music festival sector and its benefits, with reference to climate science predictions compared to known festival activity, as well as a detailed overview of recent impacts.

The analysed impacts affect the quality of life of the host community and reflect a person's well-being, as well as their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their life. According to Eslami et al. (2019:1064), the definition of quality of life is psychologically based. It is conceptualised as a consciously perceived decision about life satisfaction, assessed using uni- or multidimensional measures of life satisfaction as a whole or in individual life domains. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines quality of life as a person's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value system in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, norms and concerns (WHO, 2012). Furthermore, it is explained that quality of life is a complex concept with a wide range of factors, encompassing a person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and relationship to distinct environmental characteristics, and that the above definition of quality of life reflects a subjective assessment. Taking into account the non-objective view, the authors note that quality of life cannot simply be equated with concepts such

as health status, lifestyle, life satisfaction, mental state or well-being; it assumes a much more complex approach.

Applying this concept to tourism and assessing the quality of life of the local population in this context can be even more complex for both scientists and practitioners. This is because tourism has significant potential to impact the lives of local communities (Andereck et al., 2010). Woo et al. (2016) take a stronger position, arguing that the quality of life of residents in tourism destinations is significantly affected by the influx of tourists. The authors go on to state that local community support depends on the nature of tourism impacts and explain that positive impacts encourage the community to support politicians and public policymakers who promote tourism development. In contrast, negative impacts can lead to a lack of support for tourism development.

Some authors note that it is to be expected that populations living closer to the tourism area and to tourist activity concentrations are likely to have a more negative attitude towards tourism's impacts. In contrast, some authors take the opposite view, stating that community attitudes become less favourable with increasing distance from the tourism area (Han et al., 2017).

Increasing attention is being paid to the impact of music festivals on local communities' quality of life. Considering recent tourism boycotts in destinations around the world, existing development policies need to be reconsidered and adapted to the capacities of both the destinations and their inhabitants. Due to their unique characteristics, music festivals need to pay special attention to their impact on these communities. Several studies have addressed this issue from different perspectives.

A study by Laing et al. (2015) suggests that music festival organisers can contribute to social inclusion in areas of society - consumption, production, political engagement and social interaction (org *communitas*) – through factors such as providing opportunities for local participation, learning new skills and access to social justice education. However, it appears that, from their sample, the festival organisers tended to focus their social inclusion efforts on mobile communities, focusing on visitors but failing to reach out to the local population. Furthermore, Han et al. (2017) emphasise that host communities often readily embrace the festival as a new element in local society and culture, while being aware of its positive and negative aspects. As the music festival becomes localised, residents become accustomed to its recurring performances, and it can become a familiar, unobtrusive – or even valued – part of their lives.

However, based on our extensive literature review, we did not identify any studies examining the impact of festival tourism on communities that are simultaneously developing family tourism. The aim of the primary research is therefore to investigate this particular type of destination and explore the perceptions of the local community.

## Background

Tisno is located in Šibenik-Knin County, coastal Croatia, and was chosen as a study destination due to its size and dedication to organising music festivals during the

summer. Additionally, the organisation of the festival in Tisno is specific because, in addition to the festival visitors, it also hosts holiday tourists within a very small area. According to the 2021 Census, Tisno has 1,273 inhabitants (CBS, 2022). The origins of tourism in Tisno date back to 1922, when three students from the Czech Republic were the first to stay overnight in the destination. Significant tourism growth has been evident since the 1960s, with an influx of visitors from Western countries. Today, tourism is one of the main economic drivers of the Municipality of Tisno. Until 2012, so-called family tourism prevailed in Tisno, but with the introduction of the festival, the guest structure and tourism development changed significantly.

The first festivals in Tisno were held in the summer of 2012 and have been held continuously to this day, except in 2020. The festivals held in Tisno cover a variety of music genres, and some have been included on lists of the best boutique festivals in Europe, such as the Love International Festival (Wilson, 2019). The largest festival in terms of attendance is Defected, which attracts more than 5,000 visitors in a few days. The famous music brand has been present in Ibiza for many years, and the importance of travelling to Tisno is reflected in its standing alongside this world-famous party destination.

*Figure 1*

Tourist arrivals and overnight stays in Tisno during the period 2016-2024



Source: Authors' illustration based on the Šibenik-Knin County Tourist Board data (2025)

Figure 1 shows that the number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays is increasing steadily, with the exception, of course, of 2020. However, after the highest number of tourist arrivals in 2022, which exceeded pre-COVID levels, there is a slight decline in 2024. This can be attributed to the number and attractiveness of the festivals organised during the seasons, but the organisers express overall satisfaction with the tourism turnover generated by the festivals. Additionally, Table 1 provides an overview of the leading generating markets and their average length of stay in Tisno, which can be considered satisfactory, as the average length of stay in Croatia in 2023 was 4.3 nights

(CBS, 2024), while Slovenian tourists in Tisno registered almost twice as many overnight stays.

Table 1

Tourist arrivals and overnight stays by the country of origin in 2023

Country	Arrivals	Overnights	Share of arrivals (%)	Share of overnights (%)	Average length of stay
Germany	6,435	52,446	18.18	22.89	8.15
United Kingdom	5,915	33,739	16.71	14.72	5.70
Slovenia	2,849	23,660	8.05	10.33	8.30
Austria	2,819	20,774	7.96	9.07	7.37
Netherlands	2,581	13,790	7.29	6.02	5.34

Source: Authors' calculation based on the eVisitor data

## Methodology

The primary research was conducted via Google Forms, chosen for its convenience and affordability. Responses were collected using the snowball method. The questionnaire was distributed via social media platforms in various groups of Tisno residents. It consisted of 23 statements about the impact of festival tourism on the destination of Tisno, to which respondents could select an answer on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating the least agreement and 5 indicating full agreement. The questionnaire also included four open-ended questions in which respondents could express their opinion on the synergy of the life of festival tourists and the local population, their opinion on the behaviour of festival tourists in Tisno, the degree of concern about the negative impact of festival tourism and their perception of the quality of life in 2020, when no festival took place due to the coronavirus pandemic. The survey participants also answered questions about their socio-economic characteristics, whether they work in tourism, and how long they have lived in Tisno. The primary research population consisted of the Tisno resident population. The survey was conducted from 15 May to 5 June 2024, and the final sample comprised 75 respondents.

Of all respondents, 44 were female (58.7%), and 31 were male (41.3%). More than 50% of respondents work in the tourism sector, and 45.33% do not. The dominance of employees in tourism is worth noting when interpreting the research results. Respondents indicated their age in an open-ended question. The average age is 32, which suggests that the younger age group predominates among the respondents. This could be because the younger generation is more likely to complete the online questionnaire. At the same time, the older population might withdraw from the research due to inexperience or discomfort with online questionnaires.

## Results

In the following questions, respondents were asked to express the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements made about festival tourism in Tisno. A 5-point Likert-type scale was used to measure attitudes, from I do not agree at all (1) to I completely agree (5). The respondents were given 23 statements, divided into five groups, to facilitate a simpler, more precise interpretation of the answers.

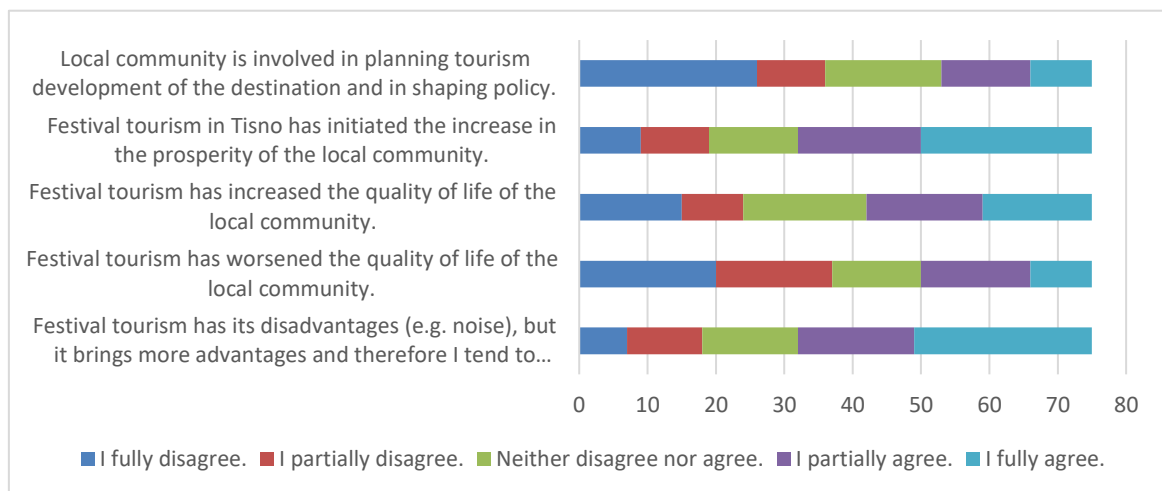
The first group contained several statements (Figure 2). Of the 75 respondents, 36% partially agreed that festival tourism in the municipality of Tisno brings more advantages than disadvantages. In contrast, the statement that festival tourism contributes to more investment has the highest level of agreement at 41.33%. The statement about the improvement in the destination Tisno's image under the influence of the festival was partially or fully agreed with by 57.33% of respondents. The statement with the highest percentage of neutral responses concerns satisfaction with cleanliness and waste disposal during the festival, with 17.33% of respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

The second part consisted of five statements. The percentage of respondents who fully agree that festival tourism in Tisno brings more benefits than disadvantages to the local population is 33.33%, and the same result is recorded for the statement that festival tourism contributes to higher consumption than family tourism. More than 60% of respondents agree that festival guests are good consumers. The attitude is less positive towards friendliness towards the local population and respect for local customs, rules, and culture: 41.33% of respondents partially or completely agree with this statement. Only 16% of respondents believe that too many festival tourists come to Tisno, while 24% expressed a neutral opinion.

The next group focused on examining the economic impacts of tourism on the Tisno destination. Only 12% of respondents fully agree that festival guests in Tisno do not harm the environment and preserve nature, yet over 70% of respondents welcome festival tourists in Tisno. 12% of respondents believe that festival tourism has not created new jobs for the local population, and 32% fully agree that it has contributed to an increase in the cost of living in Tisno. The same number of respondents partially or fully agree that festival tourism has influenced the increase in real estate prices in the destination (30.67%).

Figure 2

Residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism development on local prosperity

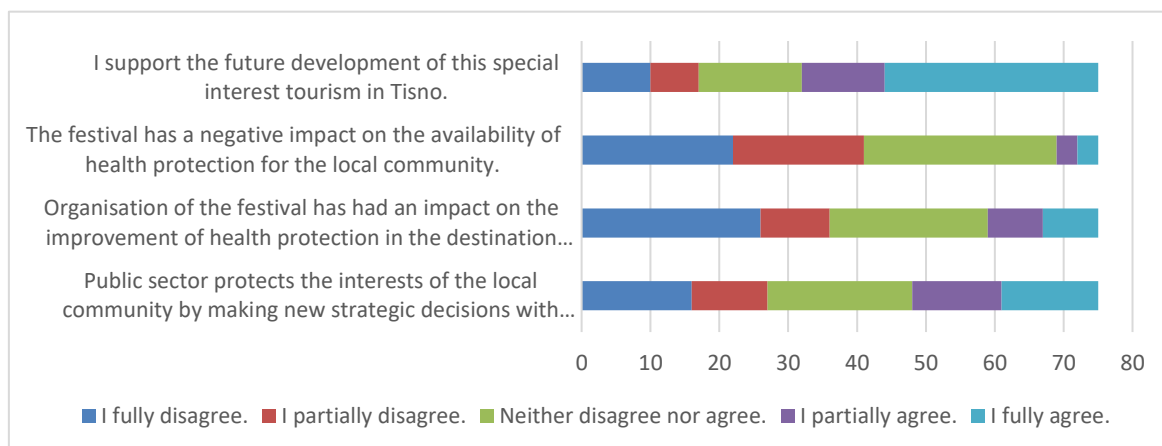


Source: Authors' illustration based on the primary research results

The fourth group consisted of five more statements (Figure 2). More than 50 % of respondents fully or partially agree with the statement that they overlook the disadvantages of festival tourism because it brings them benefits. Only 12% of respondents believe that the local population's quality of life is affected by the arrival of festivals, and 24% are neutral about improvements in quality of life. On the other hand, 33.33% of respondents fully agree that festivals contribute to economic prosperity. The statement about community involvement in tourism development had the highest percentage of respondents who fully agreed (34.67%).

Figure 3

Residents' perceptions of the impact of the music festival in Tisno on the destination ecosystem



Source: Authors' illustration based on the primary research results

Finally, in the fifth group (Figure 3), respondents were asked to express their attitude towards the organisation of festivals for health protection. According to the results, respondents do not believe that the organisation has had an impact on improving

healthcare at the destination (34.67%), nor that the availability of healthcare for the local population has decreased due to the festival (29.33%). This result differs from that of a study by Jaeger et al. (2013), which found that the organisation of festivals can have a positive impact on health, among other effects. The statement about the public sector protecting the local community's interests by adopting new strategic decisions to improve the quality of life of the local population received the most responses, with neither agreement nor disagreement (30.67%). In comparison, 41.33% of respondents expressed their full support for the future development of this form of tourism in Tisno.

## Discussion

The results of this primary research indicate that the local community in Tisno has a positive overall opinion of the organisation of music festivals in their municipality. This finding aligns with the results of a study by Han et al. (2017), which emphasised that the localisation of a festival leads locals to become familiar with both its positive and negative aspects. An interesting aspect of this study, which can also be considered its scientific contribution, is that the respondents expressed their opinions on the coexistence of family tourism and music festivals in a small area of Tisno. As for Tisno's carrying capacity, it exceeds the limits: in the most visited years, there were almost 30 tourists per inhabitant. Moreover, the area of Tisno is only 38.23 km<sup>2</sup>, which increases the pressure on all aspects of daily life in the destination. It is therefore important to note that the respondents in this study expressed a predominantly positive attitude towards festival tourists, with 25 fully agreeing and 20 partially agreeing with the statement that festival tourists spend more than family tourists.

Another interesting result is that respondents agreed that the music festival affects property prices and contributes to the rising cost of living in Tisno. This finding aligns with the studies by Mikulić et al. (2021) and Han et al. (2017). At the same time, however, they do not believe that the music festival has worsened their quality of life. On the contrary, most respondents disagree with this statement. The logic for such statements lies in the fact that most respondents either work in tourism or rent out their property to tourists, i.e., they benefit directly or indirectly from the tourists who visit their destination. For this reason, they are most likely willing to neglect some of the negative impacts associated with festival tourists. It is therefore not surprising that most respondents support the future development and organisation of music festivals in Tisno, confirming a result of a study by Han et al. (2017), who claim that residents tend to become accustomed to the organisation of music festivals within their communities and embrace the positive impacts brought to their communities by this model of tourism development.

The limitations of this study include the fact that not all age groups were equally represented in the sample. With a more even distribution, the research results would certainly provide a more accurate and detailed insight into the local community's views. However, these results are preliminary and should be considered for future, more comprehensive research. Another limitation was the timing of the research, as the tourism season was already in full swing and many residents did not have enough time

to devote to it. For future studies, the research's time component needs to be tailored to the community's needs.

## Conclusion

The research conducted for this study suggests that music festivals have a significant impact on the everyday lives of the local community. However, the extent of this impact seems to depend on the degree of local involvement in the organisation and the proportion of benefits from such events. The greater the benefit, the greater the support, one could argue. Even if such reasoning seems obvious, the potential consequences of such an attitude often lead to a deterioration in long-term quality of life. This conclusion is that the balance between the positive and negative impacts of tourism development in a destination must be carefully monitored and guided by a development policy. If this is not the case, destinations often experience a range of negative impacts that directly affect residents (e.g. Godovykh et al., 2021; Mathew & Nimmi, 2022; Liu et al., 2022).

This study was based on the following research question: How do locals perceive the impact of music festivals on their environment, local economy, and social interactions? In Tisno, the local community seems aware of the positive and negative impacts of music festivals. Although noise and concerns about socio-cultural impacts make up the largest proportion of respondents' answers, they are much more positive about the future direction of the music festival. This attitude shows that the municipality of Tisno has succeeded in creating a balanced offer for both festival tourists and so-called family tourists. However, it is of utmost importance to pay attention to the development policy so that such results can be registered in the long run.

In the next phase of this study, the perceptions of both festival and family tourists in Tisno will be analysed to determine the level of satisfaction on both the demand and supply sides of the market. More precisely, future studies should examine residents' motivations and expectations when starting tourism businesses, thereby identifying potential factors that may lead to dissatisfaction with economic performance. More importantly, these studies should examine the impact of music festivals on the local community's subjective well-being, preferably using the Irridex model (Apollo & Cheer, 2024). These results would enable more detailed knowledge, on which future measures could be developed. For the time being, the results of this study could be used by policy makers and civil society organisations to improve the quality of life of the local community in the destination of Tisno.

**Acknowledgement:** This paper is based on a master's thesis written by Nikolina Zeba and mentored by Vanja Krajinović. The thesis was entitled The Impact of Festival Organisation on the Local Community's Quality of Life: The Case of Tisno Destination.

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