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**Cruise passengers' experience embarking in a Caribbean home port.
The case study of Cartagena de Indias**

Abstract

The success of the port of Cartagena de Indias, the city with the most extensive fortifications in South America, has rewarded the efforts made by the national Government and the private sector to bring the major cruise companies back to Colombia. This study aims to expand cruise tourism research by analyzing cruisers' experience and the economic impact of cruise tourism in the specific case of a home port destination. Survey data were collected from 402 passengers that embarked in Cartagena de Indias during the 2009-2010 season. A factor-cluster analysis was developed to segment cruisers and identify the factors that influence their perception and expenditure pattern. Three clusters were obtained, reflecting the differences in length of stay at the destination: passengers in transit, long and short stay passengers. Although the total impact for a homeport is expected to be higher than that for a port of call, in this study the evidence shows that most passengers in Cartagena stay for a short period of time before embarking and their contribution to the local economy is fairly negligible. Findings from an OLS and a censored-Tobit analysis on the same data highlight that first time cruisers, with a high education level and belonging to the "long stay" cluster, have a higher than average spending capacity. The findings have several policy, marketing and management implications.