

Children can be key decision-makers in whether or not families visit museums

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This research was conducted by **Kai-Lin Wu, Kirsten Holmes and John Tribe** at the **University of Surrey, UK and Curtin University, Australia**

Summary

This paper reports the findings from research into how and why families decide to visit museums. The research is based on interviews with museum-goers in Taiwan. The interviews unpicked their collective decision-making processes and the role of children in these dynamics. They found four types of decision-making process in which children play a key part.

The research developed a model for the stages in a family decision-making process

The stages are: need arousal (where the initial desire to do something is identified); information search and share (where various options are identified); purchase suggestion (where a family member nominates a preferred option); alternative evaluation (where those options are compared); and finally a purchase decision.

37 families of between two and six people were recruited and interviewed at four different museums

By speaking to both children and adults the researchers were able to reconstruct the decision-making processes from the interview transcripts. 23 of the families made a planned decision to visit the museum, whereas for nine it was an impulse.

There were four types of joint planned decisions

Either the child requested (sparked by the school curriculum or recalling a previous visit) and adults decided; or adults asked children from a list of options and children decided; or adults asked children and adults decided (approving or disapproving of the child's suggestion); or adults gathered information and both children and adults decided together (the family took a vote).

Adults were more likely to consult children when they were short of ideas and less familiar with the proposed visiting options, but less so when traveling far from home (as the children were not expected to appreciate distance). Older children had more influence than younger siblings in the decision-making process.

Keywords

decision-making Taiwan museum families interview children

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