CultureCase

How do people decide whether or not to visit a museum?

This research was conducted by **Christine Burton, Jordan Louviere and Louise Young** at the **University of Technology, Sydney, Australia**

Summary

The paper outlines an experiment conducted amongst museum visitors in Australia to discover how people made decisions about what actions to take and (in this case) whether or not to visit a particular museum. In this case the results suggested that frequent (rather than one-time) visits could be encouraged in some way through discounts or other perks, that bundle offers with other local attractions were attractive, and that the benefits to children were uppermost in the minds of parents when deciding between different leisure activities.

Museums tend to think of themselves as offering educational and improving experiences

However, the modern museum visitor considers museums as one of many possible leisure activities competing for their constrained free time. They may indeed prefer to visit a museum as part of a general suite of leisure activity in one outing. There is a general lack of understanding amongst museums about consumer behavior and preferences in this new context.

The research was conducted at two major museums in Australia using a choice modeling questionnaire

Choice modeling identifies the properties of the things that appeal to people in their decision-making. The following properties (examined in a subsequent questionnaire) were arrived at through 40 interviews with museum visitors and refined in workshops with museum directors: logistics (such as transport), time (in terms of competing demands on a limited amount), and cost (and impressions of value for money).

An online survey was completed by 82 visitors at one museum and 92 visitors at the other

The questionnaires contained a series of paired scenarios about aspects of the museum (such as opening times or pricing options) and asked whether either scenario would lead to more visits, fewer visits or make no difference at all.

Keywords

decision-making **museum** **Australia** **choice modelling** **interview** **visitor** **survey**

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