CultureCase

Entrance fees deter people of low socio-economic status from visiting museums

This research was conducted by **Volker Kirchberg** at the **University of Lüneburg, Germany**.

Summary

This paper used data from a survey of German adults who were asked about what motivated them to attend (or not attend) museums. The survey, carried out in 1995, randomly selected a representative sample of 1,080 responses from more than 31,000 German households. The research found that entrance fees were a significant subjective barrier to attendance and this was particularly the case for people of a lower socio-economic status.

This research focused on people's subjective perceptions

Around one in five of the survey respondents said that entrance fees were a barrier for a museum visit. On average, that group tends to make just under four museum visits per year. By contrast, those for whom entrance fees are not a barrier go just over five times per year (on average).

At the time of the research most museums in Germany were free or charged a small entrance fee

'The lower the income the more entrance fees are a perceived threshold to visiting museums.' The results of the survey led the researchers to conclude that 'in the mind of most Germans, museum visits seem to be more expensive than they factually are.' Socio-economic status (as measured through a

combination of income, occupation and education) also affected the likelihood of seeing entry fees as a barrier to museum attendance.

Visiting a museum is more than an economic decision; it is an expression of lifestyle

Respondents may have used entrance fees as an excuse rather than declaring their true reason: an actual dislike for museums. The paper states that 'conscious life style choices represent actual barriers to museum visits, not the amount of entrance fees.' Increasing museum attendance may therefore require a change in people's preferences and tastes and the educational and occupational factors that influence them.

This summary is by **Anna Kolliakou, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

museum **income** **survey** **Germany** **price**

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