

How tourism impacts on performing arts attendance

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This research was conducted by **Marta Zieba** at the **University of Limerick, Ireland**.

Summary

This paper examines the effect of domestic and international tourism on theatre attendance in Austria. The paper takes data from 20 theatres over a 39 year period (from 1972 to 2011). The number of theatre attendees over that time did not change very much, but the number of tourists doubled. Foreign tourists to Austria are often there for the culture, and there are three times as many foreign tourists in Austria as there are domestic tourists. International (especially non-German-speaking) tourists were one segment that had an increase in the number of theatre attendees, especially for more 'highbrow' material like opera where language proficiency isn't necessarily a barrier to appreciation. It is thought that these tourists have kept theatre attendance numbers steady.

The study used a complex formula to understand the relationship between tourism and theatre attendance

The variables accounted for in the paper included the number, genre and quality-level of performances, ticket prices and availability, the spending power of audiences, what else they might spend their money on, etc. It was comprehensive.

Are the results Austria-specific?

Culture seems to be a relatively small part of the reason why domestic tourists make their travel plans (less than 10%) but it's a feature in the decision of

around a quarter of international tourists in Austria. Other research indicates that when Austrians are abroad they like to visit cultural attractions in a way they do not while at home. Not all people behave like this, other research shows that Italians do the exact opposite: maximizing their cultural engagement at home.

Increasing audiences in the future

The research has an important message for tourism officials and theatre venues in Austria: that to increase audiences they should do more to advertise the cultural assets of Austria to in-bound tourists: a group with the greatest potential to engage more.

Keywords

theatre **Austria** **attendance** **tourism** **opera**

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