CultureCase

The difference between online and in-person visits to a museum

This research was conducted by **Yves Evrard** and **Anne Krebs** at **HEC Paris** and the **Musée du Louvre, France.**

Summary

This paper looks at the profile of visitors to the Louvre in Paris and compares them to those visiting the museum's website. The research revealed that while the website and social media channels are able to reach many more people outside of France, the socio-economic profile of website visitors is not substantially different to those who physically visit the museum. The researchers asked whether people visit the museum's online presence instead of going to the physical building. They tend not to. All of the people surveyed value authenticity as a key part of the museum experience.

'In 2015, the Louvre welcomed 8.53 million visitors; its website reached 16.1 million visits'

The study used data from online and in situ surveys of just over 6,000 respondents, asking about their attitude to the Louvre and art museums more widely. Fewer than five per cent of respondents visited the Louvre but not its website, 27 per cent had only visited the Louvre website, while 69 per cent had done both.

'Nothing can replace the direct contact with artworks'

The researchers found that there is universal agreement on importance of authenticity for the museum experience, and that this was true for all types of consumers (those that visited the website, the museum, or both). In the words

of the researchers, ‘authenticity constitutes a strong, universal and dominant value which is – still – unchallenged.’

Online engagement still has social barriers for some people and some museums

Museum websites tend not to reach different socio-economic groups to physical museums. A broader consideration is that not all museums have the resources of the Louvre. The authors are ready to point out that a gap exists ‘between rich and poor museums in terms of means and access to technologies.’

Keywords

survey **visitor** **museum** **France** **online**

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