

The public's perception of museum admission fees

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This research was conducted by **Marine Le Gall-Ely** and **four others** at **four different research centres in France**

Summary

This paper explores the perception of audiences in relation to museum entrance fees. The data consists of individual interviews, focus groups, observations and a survey of almost 600 people in different parts of France. The people who provided data were either regular visitors, occasional visitors or non-visitors to museums in France. The study showed that people's perceptions of free museum admission were tied to their wider attitudes to money and price, meaning the subject was more than just a cultural issue for them.

For some, the concept of free admission does not exist

Some participants understood that the cost of a free entrance museum is embedded in their taxes. The study also notes that when free admission is considered, sundry expenses such as transportation and accommodation become a greater consideration in the decision of whether or not to attend a museum. Free museums also can have non-monetary experiential costs (such as the crowds and noise such museums attract). Regardless, the act of paying at the museum entrance increases the attendance commitment, leading some museum-goers to make the most out of their visit. The research shows, however, that 63 per cent of people agree that museums should always be free. The likelihood of them holding this belief is correlated with having attended free museums.

Payment of entrance fees is related to feelings of empowerment and freedom

The act of purchasing a ticket for a museum represents an individual contribution to the upkeep of a collective heritage, an enterprise that is endorsed by nearly all the people surveyed. For some, the payment of entrance fees enhances the quality of the exhibition, visitors feel like they are seeing something of value and often feel empowered to fully explore the places they have paid to enter.

This summary is by **David Kohan Marzagão, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

interview **focus group** **museum** **survey** **France** **visitor**

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