

Showcase Salzburg: Results of a survey on young people's understanding of cultural heritage

The CreativeCH showcase in Salzburg focuses on “World Heritage Cities: Experiences of local people and visitors”. Therefore Salzburg Research on the occasion of the local Science Night 2012 conducted a first questionnaire survey with young people. The focus was on their understanding of cultural heritage and how they want to learn about such heritage.

39 questionnaires have been received, filled mostly by respondents in the age range 15 to 18 years, with an almost equal participation of females and males. In terms of educational background, most attended an upper secondary school (22) or university (9).

The first question was “What do you spontaneously associate with cultural heritage in Salzburg?” This was an open question, i.e. the participants were invited to write down their own ideas. Most respondents mentioned built heritage. The Dome of Salzburg (and churches in general), the Fortress Hohensalzburg and the historical city centre received most attention. Furthermore museums were noted quite often. In the categories of performing arts, the famous Salzburg Festival was mentioned two times, behind general terms such as theatre and classical music. Mozart was noted 8 times.

Another open question was “How would you personally define the term Cultural Heritage. Which aspects do you associate with it?” Here the historic dimension and the need to preserve and pass on heritage from generation to generation were noted most often. This included statements such as “buildings and things that are very old and typical for a region”; or “the passing on of culture and customs over generations”. Notably intangible cultural heritage such as local traditions, stories, knowledge and language were mentioned several times.

The third question was “How would you like to be informed about cultural heritage?” Here respondents could select from a given list up to three options. 17 selected film and video (e.g. documentaries), 15 visiting museums, exhibitions or performances, 14 social media (e.g. to share experiences with friends) and 12 information on a mobile device.

The next most wanted ways were contemporary witnesses (11) and lectures and guided tours (9). Websites (e.g. Wikipedia) and reading of books were on a par with 8 times mentioned. Only two wanted to learn about cultural heritage through games (e.g. scavenger hunts).

Overall the most surprising result has been that in the responses to the first question the status of the historical centre of Salzburg as World Heritage (since 1996) was ignored almost completely. Quasi as counter-point, the importance of intangible cultural heritage such as local traditions and stories was noted by several respondents.

Also the interest in traditional forms of information (e.g. films, museum visits, guided tours or contemporary witnesses) was rather surprising. They were selected almost twice as often than online social media, websites and mobile devices. The CreativeCH team in Salzburg will investigate these results further in workshops with students.

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