

Testing themes and titles

Responses to the V&A's exhibition programme

July 2006

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© 2006 MORRIS HARGREAVES MCINTYRE

50 Copperas Street, Manchester, UK M4 1HS

Telephone 0161 839 3311

Fax 0161 8393377

Email inray@lateralthinkers.com

www.lateralthinkers.com

The relative appeal of an exhibition depends on a variety of factors.

Understanding and **influencing** these factors will enable more effective exhibition planning.

The most appealing exhibitions offer an appealing **aesthetic** proposition, coupled with the opportunity to develop **knowledge**. The two go hand-in-hand.

Titles need to avoid jargon and to give a **clear** indication of the content of the exhibition, while marketing needs to denote the **scale** and **scope** of the exhibition.

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1 The brief



Morris Hargreaves McIntyre was commissioned by the V&A to test the appeal of a series of five proposed temporary exhibitions to be held at South Kensington.

The specific objectives of the research were:

- To quantify the instant appeal of proposed titles
- To explore the interest in and understanding of proposed titles and exhibition content
- To determine the likelihood of attendance by visitor type
- To explore the dynamics of a visit – how far potential visitors will travel, who they will visit with, willingness to pay.

The V&A sought to gain the reactions of its core audience to the proposed exhibitions. The audience types identified for the research were:

- Members of the V&A
- Regular visitors to the V&A
- V&A staff members
- Students.

The five exhibitions to be tested were:

- Surreal Things: Surrealism and Design
- The Golden Age of Couture 1947 - 1957
- Fashion and Sport
- Cold War Modern: Art and Design in a Divided World 1945 – 1975
- China: Design Now.

2 What we did

The following methods were used to fulfil the research objectives:

2.1 E-survey



An e-survey was used to generate the quantitative data required to measure the relative appeal of the proposed exhibitions and to profile the potential audience. The survey also used open-ended questions to generate qualitative responses from respondents.

The survey contained proposed titles, brief descriptions and a selection of images for the five proposed exhibitions, alongside profiling questions. A link to the survey was emailed out as follows:

- 3,000 Members of the V&A
- 3,000 V&A e-list subscribers
- 500 V&A staff members
- 1,500 students at the Royal College of Art and the Royal College of Music

The survey was hosted on Morris Hargreaves McIntyre's website from 30 June to 16 July 2006. Two cash prizes of £100 were offered as an incentive to complete the survey.

A total of 1,170 surveys were completed, giving a healthy response rate of 15%. The number of each visitor type completing the survey is given below:

- 325 Members
- 467 Visitors
- 195 Staff
- 183 Students

The results have been analysed by visitor type. The data has also been weighted by the relative proportions of Members, Students and Visitors in the V&A's audience, to provide an indicative profile for all V&A Visitors (see appendices for top line results).

It is pertinent to note that Staff, V&A Members and e-list subscribers have a closer relationship with the V&A than non-affiliated visitors. The results of this survey then represent the views of the V&A's core visitor base and not the total current and potential audiences for the Museum.

2.2 Focus groups

Three focus groups were moderated with the aim of exploring the views of visitors in depth, and to identify what visitors would need to engage with the proposed exhibitions.

The groups each contained between 8 and 10 people and were recruited using the following criteria:

1 Staff

V&A front of house staff members

2 Students

London-based higher education students studying visual arts, design or related courses

Had visited at least one temporary exhibition at the V&A in the past 12 months

3 Members / Regular visitors

50% London based current members of the V&A

50% London based regular visitors of the V&A, having visited at least twice in the past 12 months and having attended at least one temporary exhibition at the V&A during this time

The groups were shown a short presentation on each of the five proposed exhibitions and asked for their reactions to the titles and proposed content.

Responses were recorded and transcribed (see appendices for discussion guide and full transcripts).

3 The market for temporary exhibitions

3.1 Total market for galleries and museums



Research by Arts Council England¹ shows that 44% of the London adult population have visited a museum or art gallery in the last year, with 31% of the London population having visited an exhibition or collection of art, photography or sculpture in the last year. This is consistent with TGI data.

Based on these figures, we estimate the total Greater London resident market for art galleries in London is around 1.6 million adults.

However, not all the visitors to London galleries are resident in London. Previous research into visual arts audiences in London² revealed that a third of visitors to contemporary art galleries in London are not resident in the Greater London area. On-going research carried out by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre into temporary exhibition audiences at a major national museum in London has found that two thirds of temporary exhibition visitors are not resident in London.

We can therefore estimate that the total market for art exhibitions in London is broadly in the region of 2.4 million to 4.8 million people.

There will be distinct segments within this total exhibitions market, from a core of dedicated temporary exhibition visitors to general gallery visitors who might be persuaded to pay for a widely endorsed blockbuster. However, it is impossible to estimate the total market for temporary paid exhibitions in London without a survey to establish crossover visiting between venues and repeat visiting patterns.

3.2 The market for temporary exhibitions

Visitors decide whether to pay for an exhibition based on whether they perceive the exhibition will match their needs from a visit.

Based on extensive previous research with visitors, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre has identified the range of motivations that people have for visiting museums and galleries. The model below, the *Hierarchy of engagement*, is a

¹ Arts Council England (2004), *Arts in England 2003: Attendance, participation and attitudes*, Arts Council England

² Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2003), *Visual Arts Audiences in London: current profile and barriers to attendance*, Arts Council London

useful way of segmenting visitors by the type of engagement they need and seek from a visit. The model shows the needs that a visit can fulfil for different types of visitors: from a nice time with friends and family, to deep spiritual sustenance.

Hierarchy of engagement

See museum / gallery as a...	Have this driver...	And they seek this from a visit..
CHURCH	SPIRITUAL	Creative stimulation and quiet contemplation, they see museums / galleries as an opportunity to escape and recharge their batteries, food for the soul
SPA	EMOTIONAL	May have a personal connection to the subject matter, want to see facinating objects in an inspiring setting, seek ambience, deep sensory and intellectual experience
ARCHIVE	INTELLECTUAL	Keen to encourage their children's or their own interest and knowledge, may have professional interest in the subject, seek a journey of discovery, to find out new things
ATTRACTION	SOCIAL	See museums / galleries as an enjoyable place to spend time with friends and family, seek ease of access and orientation, good facilities and services, welcoming staff

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These drivers are hierarchical. In moving up the hierarchy, from *Social* to *Spiritual* motivators, visitors experience increasing levels of engagement with the museum and its contents. The further up the hierarchy visitors move, the more fulfilling and rewarding their visit. At each point on the hierarchy visitors have different needs, they are only able to move up the hierarchy if their needs at the lower end are met.

A temporary paid exhibition is therefore fishing to attract visitors motivated by different primary motivators. To attract the highest number of visitors, an exhibition would ideally satisfy the needs of all motivations. However, the market for an exhibition will depend on which types of visitors the content can satisfy.

Temporary exhibitions are therefore fishing in the pool of the total market. Different types of exhibitions – and the marketing campaigns they use to attract potential visitors – will catch different segments of visitors.

Besides overall motivation, many other factors affect whether visitors will attend an exhibition. For example: the intrinsic appeal of the title; how specialist the focus of the exhibition is; the inclusion of household name-artists; status as a 'must see' exhibition; positive reviews; competition from

other exhibitions on at the same time; contemporary relevance of the subject
– tied into a season or current climate; and popularity of venue.

3.3 Determining popularity

The table below shows a sample of paid temporary exhibitions in London in 2004/05³, illustrating the relative appeal of different types of offer.

Visitor figures for temporary paid exhibitions in London

Appeal	Name	Venue	Dates	Daily avg	Total
Mass 	Turner Whistler Monet,	Tate Britain	10.02.05 – 15.05.05	4,024	382,269
	Turks 600-1600 AD,	Royal Academy of Arts	22.01.05 – 12.04.05	3,358	272,000
	Frida Kahlo	Tate Modern	06.06.05 – 09.10.05	3,002	369,249
	Caravaggio: The final years,	National Gallery	23.02.05 – 22.05.05	2,752	244,955
	Edvard Munch by himself,	Royal Academy of Arts	01.10.05 – 11.12.05	1,486	107,000
	Mummy: The inside story	British Museum	09.09.04 – 09.01.05	1,052	129,336
	William Nicholson, 1872-1942	Royal Academy of Arts	30.10.04 – 23.01.05	976	82,000
	International Arts and Crafts	V&A	17.03.05-24.07.05	893	116,125
	Stubbs and the Horse	National Gallery	29.06.05 – 29.09.05	768	68,361
	Encounters: Asian and Europe	V&A	23.09.04 – 05.12.04	763	56,432
	Lee Miller: Portraits	National Portrait Gallery	03.02.05 – 30.05.05	540	63,182
	Open Systems: Rethinking art around 1970	Tate Modern	01.06.05 – 18.09.05	416	45,793
	Christopher Dresser, 1834 - 1904	V&A	09.09.04 – 09.12.04	382	35,116
	Universal Experience	Hayward Gallery	06.10.05 – 11.12.05	331	22,145
	Niche	Rebecca Horn	Hayward Gallery	26.05.05 – 29.08.05	246

An exhibition featuring famous names that appeals to visitors with a range of motivations and marketed as a blockbuster will attract the most visitors. On the other hand, an exhibition on a single less well-known artist or themes that will only appeal to visitors with certain interests will attract fewer visitors.

The most successful exhibitions at the V&A in recent years have been Art Deco in 2003, attracting a record 360,000 visitors, Art Nouveau in 2000, attracting 231,000 visitors, Vivienne Westwood in 2004, attracting 171,000 visitors, and the recent Modernism exhibition, attracting 160,000 visitors.

³ *Exhibition Attendance Figures 2005*, The Art Newspaper, No 167, March 2006

3.4 Summary

This is the context within which the V&A are promoting their temporary exhibitions. For the V&A, a blockbuster exhibition typically attracts around 200,000 people and, with the notable exceptions of Art Deco and Art Nouveau, this is threshold that the V&A find difficult to traverse. The ability to accurately predict the number of visitors to temporary exhibitions is vital to the success of the Museum's business planning.

4 Temporary exhibition audiences at the V&A

4.1 Visitor figures



Audiences for recent paying exhibitions at the V&A have ranged from 171,000 visitors to the blockbuster Vivienne Westwood exhibition, to 13,000 for the experimental audio exhibition *Shhh...*

While actual proportions vary depending upon the exhibition topic, broadly speaking around 10% of exhibition visits are made by V&A Members and around 15% are made by Students. The largest proportion of the audience is made up of paying adults and seniors.

4.2 Exhibitions drive visits

69% of all V&A Visitors stated that they make special visits to the V&A to visit temporary exhibitions. The incidence of intentional visiting broadly fits with awareness levels. Members, who are the most likely to be aware of all temporary exhibitions at the venue, are also the most likely to make a special visit (78%).

Students, who are the least likely to feel they are aware of all temporary exhibitions at the V&A, are the most likely to visit temporary exhibitions when making a general visit to the Museum. 39% of students visit temporary exhibitions when making a general visit to the Museum.

While exhibitions clearly drive visits to the V&A, with three in ten visitors opting to visit once inside the venue, on-site promotion to convert general visitors into temporary exhibitions visitors is also very important.

4.3 Blockbusters have appeal across the board

The top three most visited temporary exhibitions by respondents in the past two years were *Modernism*, *Vivienne Westwood* and *International Arts and Crafts*. These exhibitions each ranked in the top three for the four visitor types (with the exception of *International Arts and Crafts* for students, ranked fifth).

Pleasingly, Staff are the most likely to have visited each of the exhibitions, followed by Members. Students, with lower general awareness and greater price sensitivity, are generally the least likely to have visited each exhibition. However, there are exceptions, most notably *Between Past and Future* and

Anna Piaggi were both more likely to have been visited by students than by all V&A Visitors.

4.4 High levels of cross-over with other venues

Nine in ten V&A Visitors had visited a paid for exhibition at one of the major museums and galleries in London in the past two years.

Only 5% of Members had not paid for temporary exhibitions during this period. The top three venues for paid exhibitions by Members are Tate Modern (64%), the Royal Academy (63%) and the British Museum (58%).

The top three paid temporary exhibition venues for Students are Tate Modern (70%), Tate Britain (40%) and the British Museum (36%).

Visitors' top three are Tate Modern (60%), Tate Britain (44%) and the Royal Academy (43%).

The results demonstrate that the market for paid temporary exhibitions in London draws on a relatively limited number of people who are very high users of venues.

This was supported by comments made in the focus groups. During the groups it became clear that Members and Regular visitors do not restrict themselves to temporary exhibitions at one venue, but visit widely across different venues to cater for their eclectic tastes.

At the moment I am a Friend of the Royal Academy as well, which we go to quite a lot ...I have gone to see things at the Tate and I don't know where you draw the line at being a Friend, but probably the Tate will be the next one I think that I will go for being a friend of Member

We went to the Caravaggio and we went to see the drawings at the British Museum and that is quite recently Regular visitor

I went to see an exhibition at the Tate Modern and the exhibition on Modernism here as well and I enjoyed that... just wandering in off the street, somewhere like the Portrait Gallery or the National Regular visitor

4.5 Considerable competition for visitors' attention, time and money

With a large number of temporary exhibitions in the capital and a limited core of regular exhibitions visitors, the V&A operates in a highly competitive market. The Museum must compete for the limited time of Members and Regular visitors, and the limited funds of Students.

There seems to always be something new coming to mind and then all of a sudden I am going 'oh I missed that one...' Regular visitor

There are so many temporary exhibitions on in London and timing, and getting round them all Regular visitor

I do think you pay quite a lot for an exhibition Student

I really weigh it up when it is £8. Do I really want to see this and am I going to be remotely disappointed, and if I think that I am I won't spend it. If it is £5 I don't think about it so much, but when it starts going over that I really think about it Student

4.6 The core audience

21% of all V&A Visitors surveyed stated that they had a specialist knowledge of subject areas covered by the V&A, with only 7% stating that they had little or no knowledge. At 30%, Students were the most likely to feel they had specialist knowledge while Members, at 16%, were the least.

This compares with our museum and galleries norm of 15% with specialist knowledge and 20% with little or no knowledge.

In addition, 39% of all V&A Visitors stated they have a professional or academic involvement with the subject areas covered by the V&A. Again students (53%) were the most likely to have an academic or professional involvement while Members (28%) were the least likely.

This compares with our norm of 18% of museum visitors with a professional or academic involvement and 28% of gallery visitors. Together with the high incidence of specialism and temporary exhibition visiting, the results indicate that the survey sample is representative of a subset of visitors – the V&A's core audience.

Although not representative of the V&A's total market, the results do indicate that the audience for the V&A may be more specialised than that at comparable venues. This would need to be confirmed via a full visitor survey.

4.7 Summary

The V&A operates within a highly competitive market for temporary exhibitions in London. Understanding what audiences want from temporary exhibitions will enable the V&A to develop and promote exhibitions that meet their visiting needs. Ultimately this will increase visitor figures and, with satisfied audiences, promote word of mouth recommendations.

5 Overview

5.1 Headline results

Exhibition	Surrealism and Design %	Golden Age of Couture %	Cold War Modern %	China Design Now %	Fashion and Sport %
<i>Interest level from title alone</i>					
Very interested	33%	39%	31%	27%	16%
Quite interested	49%	38%	43%	46%	33%
Not interested	17%	23%	25%	27%	51%
<i>Exhibition content appealing</i>					
Yes	85%	79%	78%	76%	47%
No	15%	21%	22%	24%	53%
<i>Content matches title expectations</i>					
Yes	83%	89%	75%	77%	68%
No	17%	11%	25%	23%	32%
<i>Attitude towards visiting</i>					
[Would pay to visit]	[67%]	[60%]	[57%]	[48%]	[26%]
Would pay £8-£10	17%	19%	17%	12%	5%
Would pay £5-£7	50%	41%	40%	36%	21%
Would visit if free	26%	26%	28%	35%	35%
Would not visit	7%	14%	16%	17%	38%

5.2 Summary

In terms of a rank order of popularity, *Surrealism and Deign* is the most universally appealing exhibition, both in terms of content and willingness to pay. This is followed by *The Golden Age of Couture* and *Cold War Modern*.

China Design: Now comes a close fourth in terms of content, but scores more modestly in terms of willingness to pay, with only half of visitors willing to pay to visit. *Fashion and Sport* recorded by far the lowest levels of interest in the content of the exhibition and of willingness to pay to visit.

This report explores each exhibition in detail to determine why some are more appealing than others.

6 Surreal Things: Surrealism and Design

6.1 Headline results



Headline results

Surreal Things	% All V&A visitors
<i>Interest level from title alone</i>	
Very interested	33%
Quite interested	49%
Not interested	17%
<i>Exhibition content appealing</i>	
Yes	85%
No	15%
<i>Content matches expectations from title</i>	
Yes	83%
No	17%
<i>Attitude towards visiting</i>	
[Would pay to visit]	[67%]
Would pay £8-£10	17%
Would pay £5-£7	50%
Would visit if free	26%
Would not visit	7%

6.2 Appeal

Surrealism and Design has the highest level of intrinsic appeal of the five exhibitions tested – 82% were interested from the title alone, 33% ‘very interested’. Staff and Members were more likely than Students and Visitors to be ‘very interested’ in the exhibition.

I think Surrealism is very popular in terms of ‘isms’. I think it is a really popular one Student

Dalí is always very popular Staff

Surrealism appeals to visitors on an aesthetic level, with its immediate art and design associations.

One of the more visually entertaining periods in art history Visitor

Design and so there is going to be a lot of one offs and really very experimental and way out objects for everyday, but in a very extraordinary, in a surreal way Member / Regular visitor

It also appeals on an intellectual level, with visitors interested to add to their knowledge of the Surrealist Movement.

I like the way it tells you about the history and how it developed and progressed Student

The comprehensive idea of where they come from and where they fit into the whole movement itself Student

This immediate aesthetic and intellectual appeal gives *Surrealism and Design* the broadest overall appeal of the five exhibitions tested.

6.3 Immediate expectations

From the title alone, V&A Visitors expect the exhibition to focus on the twentieth century, more specifically the 1920s to 1940s in Europe: principally England, Belgium and France, as well as the US. This geographical context of surrealism is an area of interest for the audience.

In terms of the content of the exhibition, it is anticipated that art and design in a wide variety of media will feature. This would include fashion, furniture, painting, photography, jewellery, textiles, architecture, interior design, theatre design, sculpture, ceramics, graphic design and advertising with unique pieces as well as product design. A small number of specific Surrealist objects were mentioned by respondents, most notably the furry cup, lobster phone, lips sofa, melting clocks and the signed urinal.

When I think about it I would like to know how much Surrealist painting there is as well and you know objects and design ... I really like seeing paintings as well and so I would probably hope that there would be some Surrealist paintings in there as well Member / Regular visitor

The audience would like to see actual objects featured alongside blueprints and models for designs that were never produced.

They are also keen that the exhibition contains performing arts, film, music, theatre, television, surrealist literature, magazines and poems.

Unsurprisingly Dalí was mentioned by numerous respondents. Other big names mentioned include Man Ray, Miró, Magritte, Schiaparelli, Duchamp, Buñuel, Sitwell, Breton, Arp, Ernst, Picasso and Gaudi.

While the audience expect the Museum to present a highly visually entertaining exhibition, reflecting the period, they are also very want to develop their own knowledge. They seek a comprehensive overview of Surrealism and how it influenced design. Rather than being presented with a collection of objects, they want a sense of coherence between the objects.

Paintings and Surrealism and maybe have it in context of the actual Surrealism movement as well, not just a bunch of objects Student

There is a very high demand for an understanding of the origins of Surrealism – the social, political, economic and cultural climate that gave rise to the movement. There is also interest in the philosophy behind Surrealism, notably Freud's work on psychoanalysis and Breton's manifesto, and in artist biographies.

As well as wanting to understand Surrealism's origins, the audience is very interested in its legacy and are looking for the exhibition to present the movement as a continuum from its early origins to the present day. This might include how Surrealism entered the mainstream and the legacy of Surrealism: how it paved the way for contemporary art and design including the work of Monty Python, Damien Hirst and Philippe Stark.

Visitors hope that the presentation will offer something unconventional, fitting with the concept of Surrealism. They want to be surprised and amazed, with high demand for a multimedia, highly immersive visit experience. This might include installations, special effects, interactivity, video projections, music, performances and recreations e.g. stage sets.

A few negative comments were made that it might be a repeat of the recent Hayward exhibition and the exhibition at Tate a few years ago. However, design offers an interesting new take on Surrealism as most associate the movement with art, literature and Dalí.

I know more about Surrealist Paintings and so I don't really associate it with design and so it intrigues me Student

it is quite a nice challenging thought because you might get something like a Dalí watch and things like that, but it might be objects that have been inspired by paintings. It is quite; well you think 'oh what will I see there'

Member / Regular visitor

6.4 Reactions to themes and content

Having read the brief description and viewed the selection of images, 85% found the proposed content to be appealing – making *Surrealism and Design* the most appealing exhibition tested.

Those with ‘specialist knowledge’ of V&A collections were the least likely to find the description appealing (81%), with visitors who had little or no knowledge of the collections finding it most appealing (93%).

The variety of media and historical context are areas of considerable appeal for visitors. Despite the title, many were pleasantly surprised that the exhibition will include fashion, decorative arts and 3D objects.

Well I have a real passion for fashion and costume and so straight away when I read the last two sentences I can visualise the most extraordinary hats, dresses you know, accessories, shoes, bags, costumes Member / Regular visitor

I think it is good that you are going to show lots of different areas of design Student

Of the 15% who found the content to be unappealing, for most it was a matter of personal taste – they are simply not interested in Surrealism as an artistic movement.

Others felt that they had seen too much Surrealism and that it is a somewhat a clichéd or safe choice and that the objects shown were too predictable or familiar. The exhibition must therefore offer a new take on Surrealism if it is to appeal widely.

The Magritte and Miró, I feel I have seen those a lot in my life Student

Get some new stuff in from abroad somewhere ...the V&A does rely a lot on stuff that is already in the collections Staff

83% of V&A Visitors felt that the content matched their expectations from the title alone, which is the second highest of the five exhibitions tested.

Of those who felt it did not match their expectations, most were not at all sure what to expect as they did not have any knowledge of the movement. Many found it more fun, more imaginative, more interesting, less weird and lighter than they initially expected.

Visitors want reassurance that the exhibition will also cover the broader aspects of performing arts, architecture and cinema (without which some feel it will be too narrow in scope), and that it will include the cultural, societal and political elements required for context.

Because Schiaparelli worked with Dalí didn't she. Will you show the relationship and how they influenced each other? Student

Only 7% felt that the description / images made them less interested in the exhibition; 62% were more interested.

6.5 Alternative titles

- 40% *Surreal Things: Surrealism and Design*
- 40% *Surrealism and Design*
- 20% *The Surreal Thing: Surrealism and Design*

There was an even split between *Surrealism and Design* and *The Surreal Things: Surrealism and Design*. Staff and those with specialist knowledge tend to prefer *The Surreal Things: Surrealism and Design*, while Members prefer *Surrealism and Design*. Students and General visitors are evenly split between the two.

It was felt to be important that the title should contain 'design' and possibly also 'art' to give an indication of the full scope of the exhibition.

[Surrealism and Design] I would expect it to be design at the V&A ...but it almost emphasises the point that I am going to see a lot of design and I am interested in design Student

[Surrealism and Design] It sounds more professional somehow Member / Regular visitor

I think it needs to be clear that it shows a lot of art. A lot of exhibitions in this Museum are design but with an Art exhibition people ought to point that out Staff

There was some debate in the focus groups regarding *The Surreal Thing* title. While some found it to be fun and quirky, others felt it was aping the Coke slogan and possibly a bit trite:

Straight off I don't like [The Surreal Thing] ...almost trying to be too clever

Student

I don't like the word 'things' very much. It just sounds very unspecific

Staff

It sounds a bit like Coke 'the real thing'

Staff

It is the play on words [The Surreal Thing] and people often use the expression that is it 'the real thing'

Member / Regular visitor

On balance *Surreal Things* was felt to be intriguing and fun, without the hackneyed feel of '*The Surreal Thing*', it adds an interesting dimension to the title.

what you need from a title is something that is actually going to grab your attention and actually draw you in, in the first place and I think 'Surreal Things' is a very strong title in that respect and it would stand out. You would think what is that all about then. It sounds quite catchy

Member / Regular visitor

6.6 Willingness to pay

Surrealism and Design recorded the highest level of willingness to pay (67%) and the second highest level of willingness to pay at the top end – 17% would be happy to pay between £8 and £10.

Unsurprisingly, students are the most price-sensitive; 38% would visit only if the exhibition was free.

Surrealism and Design has a broad appeal across the board and consequently feels the most like a 'blockbuster' exhibition.

It sounds pretty good. I would go

Student

I think the word Surrealism would attract a lot of non-art, just average people ...like my parents

Student

Well you know you are bound to learn something new and even if you think that you know about Surrealism you are bound to learn something new because of the exhibition.

Staff

I think that it will appeal to certain groups, definitely the young crowd

Staff

26% felt that the exhibition was either not aimed at them, or were unsure if it was. This was the lowest score of all the exhibitions tested and illustrates the broad appeal of the exhibition. These respondents felt that the exhibition might appeal more to art and design students, artists, those with an existing knowledge of the subject area, fashionistas, contemporary minded people, people interested in surrealism specifically, young people and those in the creative industries.

Only 7% of respondents felt that they would not visit the exhibition – the lowest level for all five exhibitions tested. Of those who would not visit, the main reason was a lack of interest in Surrealism – it is just not for them.

6.7 Key communications messages

- Contains art and design from a range of disciplines in a variety of media
- Offers a new take on Surrealism – design
- Famous names and pieces, as well as lots of new discoveries

In terms of brand values, Surrealism is associated with: fun, quirky, absurd, witty, bizarre, playful, unconventional, disturbing and humorous.

7 The Golden Age of Couture 1947 - 1957

7.1 Headline results



Headline results

The Golden Age of Couture	% All V&A visitors
<i>Interest level from title alone</i>	
Very interested	39%
Quite interested	38%
Not interested	23%
<i>Exhibition content appealing</i>	
Yes	79%
No	21%
<i>Content matches expectations from title</i>	
Yes	89%
No	11%
<i>Attitude towards visiting</i>	
[Would pay to visit]	[60%]
Would pay £8-£10	19%
Would pay £5-£7	41%
Would visit if free	26%
Would not visit	14%

7.2 Appeal

The Golden Age of Couture recorded the second highest level of intrinsic appeal of the exhibitions tested – 77% were interested from the title alone, and the highest level of visitors who were ‘very interested’ (39%). Again, Staff and Members were most likely to be ‘very interested’, while students were the least so.

I am particularly interested in fashion and so I like to see anything I can
Student

That is me. Actually there was something on that period a few months ago
and so yes definitely, because of all the names I think Member / Regular visitor

As with Surrealism, *The Golden Age of Couture* has a strong aesthetic appeal, with people associating the period with beautiful gowns.

Well I can remember Norman Hartnell. Well it was sort of post war wasn't it. It was being able to sort of wear things that you now were pretty and weren't square shouldered anymore, yes. I would be interested to see it absolutely. Member / Regular visitor

Yes it had a profound effect on me and I can remember seeing somebody in that New Look and I was absolutely blown away by the prettiness of it after all those war years. Yes I would be very interested. Member / Regular visitor

While there is some appeal on an intellectual level, in terms of the broader climate that engendered the New Look, this intellectual appeal is more limited and there is a perception that the exhibition, in looking at fashion, will lack context.

When I go away I feel that I have learnt from it and obviously there is a great level of appreciation you can have, but I feel that the fashion exhibitions that I have seen it is really nice to wander through, but then you kind of think are you taking anything away Member / Regular visitor

I want to know more about couture, not just gawp at garments Visitor

With a more intellectual appeal, *The Golden Age of Couture* has a less broad appeal overall than *Surrealism and Design*.

7.3 Immediate expectations

From the title alone, V&A Visitors expect the exhibition to contain lots of clothes and accessories for men and women, although mostly women. This would include ball gowns, cocktail wear, theatre costumes, high-end tailoring, suits, high fashion, clothes from the royal court, the New Look and catwalk styles. With hats, coats, shoes, jewellery, handbags, hairstyles, make-up and perfume completing the picture.

Respondents anticipate that the 3D objects will be supported by photography, especially fashion photography by Beaton and Parkinson and their contemporaries, cinema, Vogue covers, posters, advertising and reportage, comment and newsreel from the era. These could be presented alongside original sketchbooks, patterns, toiles and illustrations.

They hope to see designs from the big fashion houses of London, Paris, Milan, Rome and the USA, with the work of famous designers including Dior, Cardin, Chanel, Balenciaga, Givenchy, Amies, Yves St Laurent, Hartnell, Schiaparelli and Ricci featured. Respondents wanted key trends and comparisons between

the different houses, as well as an understanding of the influences and background of the designers.

They would also like to see images of the muses, models and film stars of the period and how they influenced designers. These could include Jackie O, Grace Kelly, Audrey Hepburn, Sofia Loren, Queen Elizabeth and Marilyn Monroe.

Again, there is a very high demand for rich contextualisation. Visitors want the fashion to be situated in the social, political, economic and cultural climate of the time. They seek understanding as to how the post-war climate influenced the fashion of the time, with the changed position of women, the end of rationing and the movement from austerity to extravagance.

Perhaps how it evolved ...and so just before all this happened and so people see a contrast. And perhaps to see what influences still lasted, and what caused it to die out and things like and so perhaps its whole history, before and after Member / Regular visitor

I mean I don't know anything about the topic ok. But I mean it is 'The Golden Age' and I don't know what made it 'The Golden Age' ... you know what was so great about the clothes and the fashion then you know I would be more inclined to go I think Student

They would like to know why it was the Golden Age – what happened next? There is a strong interest in how design entered the mainstream, from haute couture to the development of prêt à porter and the mass market. Respondents wanted information on how the New Look influenced the fashion industry as we know it today, including designers such as Westwood and Gaultier.

There is also an interest in the production side and the working of the fashion houses. This raised questions including what were the technical skills required? Who made the clothes? What were the textiles available? How much did the outfits cost? Who wore the clothes?

They seek an exhibition that will inform and instruct, rather than merely offers something pretty to gawp at.

Visitors were impressed with the V&A's Westwood and Versace shows and hope for a similarly creative approach to display, with 360 degree viewing of clothes, mannequins to display them on, catwalk shows and short films showing people moving in the clothes.

It became apparent during the focus groups that not everyone understands the term 'haute couture'.

Excuse my ignorance, but define 'couture' Student

Is that fashion? Staff

7.4 Reactions to themes and content

Having read the brief description and viewed the selection of images, 79% of V&A Visitors found the proposed content to be appealing – second highest to Surrealism. Specialists were the most likely to find the content appealing (86%).

Of those who did not find the content appealing, the majority do not have an interest in fashion or clothes and so would be unlikely to attend an exhibition dedicated to this. Other are not interested in fashion of this particular period or feel that it has a solely female appeal.

Some felt that the exhibition seemed narrow and lacking in the wider social, cultural and political elements they are interested in.

...it would be quite nice to see how it filtered down to the high street, or even to men and children's clothing ...how it turns up in the high street

Member / Regular visitor

I would like to see some aspects of its construction, because those dresses were more or less sculptural and so complex ...there was such an art in producing them and the backstage people were actually there creating.

Member / Regular visitor

And maybe some indication of how much those people were paid for making those things. How much they cost to buy. Member / Regular visitor

There was also some confusion as to whether the exhibition would contain actual objects, or whether it was limited to photography. Having both has broadest appeal.

I would prefer to see original pieces than just photographs. Visitor

If the poster looked like that with a fashion photograph I think maybe you wouldn't expect to see gowns there ...the recent exhibition which was quite small and didn't have that many clothes in and people were quite surprised when they arrived and it was mainly photographs and drawings Staff

Is this going to be costumes or photographs? Staff

I think from the images it seems like there isn't going to be that many actual dresses. Student

A small number of respondents did not like the language used or what such an exhibition stood for, with words such as luxury, exclusive, expensive, global and business giving connotations of elitism and snobbery.

89% felt that the content matched their expectations from the title alone – the highest of the exhibitions tested. Several felt it was better, more glamorous and more aesthetically pleasing than they had imagined.

I think it sounds interesting because I don't really know much about that period of fashion necessarily and there are still designers that are around and so it is kind of the early years of those designers, which I think is interesting Student

Only 8% felt that the description / images made them less interested in the exhibition; 52% were more interested.

7.5 Alternative titles

- 23% *The Golden Age of Couture 1947 - 1957*
- 22% *The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London 1947 - 1957*
- 13% *Haute Couture: Paris and London 1947 - 1957*
- 12% *Couture in the Golden Age: Dior and his contemporaries 1947 - 1957*
- 10% *Haute Couture, Paris and London style in the 50s*
- 9% *The Golden Age of Couture: Haute Couture in the decade of Dior, 1947 - 1957*
- 6% *The Golden Age of Couture*
- 5% *The Age of Couture*

The Golden Age of Couture 1947 - 1957 and *The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London 1947 - 1957* are very close, although each received less than one quarter of the vote.

The inclusion of the dates and phrase the 'Golden Age' are felt to be essential.

I would probably go for 'The Golden age of Couture and the dates' because I think that you might look at the dates and be interested in that time period and you might not necessarily know when the golden age is, or what the golden age is, but when you see the dates Student

The dates really do something for you because it tells you where you are doesn't it? Member / Regular visitor

The inclusion of Dior or fashion also adds to understanding, especially for those who are uncertain of the significance of The Golden Age, or the meaning of haute couture.

I prefer it with Dior in the title; because that makes it sound more glamorous and exciting and I think if you don't know what couture means you know what Dior means Student

I think mentioning Dior is probably advantageous ...names Staff

I would like to add onto that the word fashion, so that people would know, especially young people, would know what you were talking about Staff

7.6 Willingness to pay

The Golden Age of Couture recorded the second highest level of willingness to pay (60%) and the highest level of willingness to pay at the top end – 19% would be happy to pay between £8 and £10.

Again, students are the most price sensitive with 39% stating they would only visit if the exhibition was free.

The Golden Age of Couture has a very high appeal amongst a certain subsection of the audience, notably women of a certain age and fashion students, it has a slightly more limited appeal for other visitors.

30% felt that the exhibition was not aimed at them or they were not sure if it was or not. They felt it was aimed at women, fashion students, those interested in fashion or working in fashion, fashionistas, those who lived through in the era, an older generation and wealthy people.

As it feels narrower in scope to some respondents, there is then the perception that the exhibition would be smaller than Surrealism, possibly even at a similar scale to the free fashion exhibitions mounted at the V&A.

I would have thought that it might be in the free fashion because they always have fashion exhibitions and it is free and it doesn't seem enough to do a whole big thing. Student

If it was a substantial exhibition I would imagine that it might be a bit more ...But if it is just a bunch of photos I don't know about £3. Student

Surrealism is a more massive topic with art and design and all sorts and films as well, and this is like a little fashion exhibition ...even though it might fill the same space, it seems more limited Staff

...I think to draw me into a fashion exhibition I would probably want to see a couple of pounds less [than Modernism] Member / Regular visitor

14% of respondents felt that they would not visit the exhibition, largely because they do not have enough interest in fashion. This is the second lowest of the five exhibitions tested.

7.7 Key communications messages

- Famous names from fashion
- Dresses – not just photographs
- A large-scale fashion exhibition
- Understand the climate that engendered the New Look

In terms of brand values, The New Look is associated with elegance, extravagance, fun, beauty, glamour, feminine looks, style, classic, sumptuous and expense.

8

Cold War Modern: Art and Design in a Divided World 1945 - 1975

8.1 Headline results



Headline results

Cold War Modern	% All V&A visitors
<i>Interest level from title alone</i>	
Very interested	31%
Quite interested	43%
Not interested	25%
<i>Exhibition content appealing</i>	
Yes	78%
No	22%
<i>Content matches expectations from title</i>	
Yes	75%
No	25%
<i>Attitude towards visiting</i>	
[Would pay to visit]	[57%]
Would pay £8-£10	17%
Would pay £5-£7	40%
Would visit if free	28%
Would not visit	16%

8.2 Appeal

Cold War Modern slightly less popular than *The Golden Age of Couture*, with 74% of visitors interested from the title alone, 31% 'very interested'. Students and Staff were slightly more likely to be interested than other visitors.

I quite like the idea of seeing protest art and design and films. I would love to see that Student

It would be interesting to see what was happening in the countries behind the Iron Curtain at that time. We all know what happened here, but there is not much evidence of what happened there. Member / Regular visitor

Cold War Modern has a highly intellectual appeal for visitors, who are interested in understanding the socio-political impacts of the Cold War on design.

'Cold War' brings connotations of relationships and trying to deal with the differences... there would be something about if they borrowed, of relationships, of the nature of the divide and how they interacted Student

Hopefully it is going to set out some sort of a contrast ...It is almost like you have kind of separate evolutions isolated from one another Student

The exhibition has a narrow aesthetic appeal, principally to those who appreciate Communist design.

I would find it very educational, and also the aesthetics Member / Regular visitor

I mean yeah I think you are going to get fairly austere like Russian space ships style chairs like that, which I quite like, because I quite like that style of design. And I expect that you would get a lot of communist style ...especially posters and quite strong imagery. A bit of James Bond maybe.

Member / Regular visitor

This highly intellectualised appeal coupled with narrow aesthetic appeal limited the overall appeal of *Cold War Modern*,

8.3 Immediate expectations

From the title alone, Visitors expect a wide-ranging survey of art and design from the period with a broad mixed media approach. They expect it to feature designs, motifs, typography, art, fashion, furnishings, architecture, cars, sculpture, poster art, interiors, music, graffiti, photography, painting, consumer products, film, literature and packaging. Supported by propaganda materials, news footage, newspapers, political art / satire, personal accounts, details of daily life and writings from the time.

Key images and themes mentioned include Checkpoint Charlie, the Berlin wall, CND, Mao jackets, concrete buildings, Trabant cars, Festival of Britain, James Bond, Dr Strangelove, Warhol, Pop art and the swinging 60s. Elements from the Space Race, including space designs, spy gear, army uniforms, aviation, weapons and technical developments were also mentioned.

Many expect the exhibition to be limited to Russia and America, while others feel it will only cover Eastern Europe. Other countries mentioned include East and West Germany, China, UK, Vietnam, Cuba and Spain.

Visitors anticipate the exhibition will explore the social, economic, political and cultural climate of the cold war era and how the effects of war and the fear of war shaped art and design. They expect it will cover the differences and similarities in art and design on either side of the Iron Curtain, as well as how both sides saw each other and how they responded.

I don't know much about it. But if it does contrast between the West and the art and design in the West and the art and design in the East then what sort of thing then fine. Student

They hope it will give insight into the competing ideologies of the time, with references to key people and events. It was noted that the exhibition has the potential to encompass a range of different ideologies and their impacts: Modernism, Bauhaus, Brutalism, Realism, Utilitarianism, McCarthyism, Futurism, Capitalism and Consumerism.

Some feel that the title presents a wide ranging, vast project covering a long time frame, range of countries and movements, they anticipate there may be an issue in finding a focus within this.

It is quite a long time span though isn't it. It is 30 years. Member / Regular visitor

In terms of presentation, visitors feel that it will be very similar to the recent Modernism exhibition.

First impression it seems quite like the Modernism exhibition ...it just seems very similar Student

That is what is on now Staff

A number of visitors have no existing knowledge about this period. Furthermore the title leaves them confused with some anticipating that the exhibition will be about modern art, because of the term 'modern' in the title.

I still don't really understand what it is about. I mean am I going to see something war related. Am I going to see some bunkers or something? Student

8.4 Reactions to themes and content

Having read the brief description and viewed the selection of images, 78% of V&A Visitors found the proposed content appealing. Again this places it in the top three, at a similar level of appeal to Couture.

75% felt that the content matched their expectations from the title. Of those who did not feel it matched, the majority found it to be a more appealing idea than they had imagined. The themes were broader in range and scope and the content was much more interesting, more diverse, more and exciting, and less gloomy than expected.

Several did not expect the exhibition to be about the space race and many did not anticipate the cultural elements, films, the creative response, architecture or the technological elements. They were pleased to discover that it is about the West as well as the East and that it incorporates the socio-political elements they are interested in.

For some, the exhibition does not appeal simply because they have no interest in this particular period of history, or they do not understand the subject area. Several others felt it was too dry, academic, political, negative, depressing, worthy, serious, dreary and stark a subject for them to enjoy. Preferring lighter, more aesthetic subjects.

There is a fear for these people that the exhibition lacks aesthetic appeal – that it is ugly and focused primarily on 2D, with a limited range of objects. Presently it is perceived to be too dense, like a ‘book on the wall’, and therefore appeals primarily on an intellectually level, to those motivated by research or self-improvement.

An issue for the interpretation in the exhibition will be one of providing introductory information, alongside depth.

Yes because it does sound interesting, but it is also not a common topic that everyone is going to know anything about. ...you need to try and hold people's hands a little bit. Otherwise it is just a total turn off and it is esoteric and it is not really very interesting Student

I think it would definitely be good if there was something to maybe give a context to these things ... Because, I will be honest that I am a complete heathen with this kind of stuff Student

A small number feel that the subject area is too close to the present, and that it was a very negative period. One person felt that they did not want to relive the era so soon, having lived through the events of the period.

There is general feeling that this period is too broad to cover in one exhibition.

It seems such a vast subject in one go Member / Regular visitor

I still wonder how well or whether the Eastern Bloc countries wouldn't just stand on their own as a very interesting exhibition. The comparison would overwhelm us Member / Regular visitor

I think it is such a really long period of history and then it doesn't seem to be broken up in another way. ...Because from the 40's to the 80's there are just so many strands of art like almost isms ...I don't know how you could tie it together without focusing on something a bit more specific than just art and design from that period. Student

Some visitors feel that the exhibition sounds too similar to the Modernism exhibition. They would be looking to the V&A to come up with a new angle and presentation techniques to prevent it from becoming formulaic.

It does sound like a follow on from what is on now Staff

...but I also see that title and think it is quite a V&A tried and tested style exhibition and you would know what to expect and some artworks, some photographic representations and maybe chairs, tables and household objects. I feel like I don't know the objects that I am going to see, but I can kind of predict the format Member / Regular visitor

A lot of this stuff it seems like they have other exhibitions like this. I just saw it as being quite similar to the Modernism one. But I think if it did follow an angle like that it might seem like they were addressing something new that people hadn't seen so much. Student

10% felt that the description / images made them less interested in the exhibition, while 51% felt made them more interested.

8.5 Alternative titles

- 45% *Cold War Modern: Art and design in a divided world 1945 - 1975*
- 25% *Art and Design in the Cold War 1945 - 1975*
- 17% *Cold War Modern: Design in a divided world*
- 9% *Design and the Cold War*

- 4% *Cold War Modern 1945 – 1975*

Cold War Modern: Art and design in a divided world 1945 – 1975 is preferred across the board.

There was some confusion about the meaning of the term '*Cold War Modern*' and the scope of the exhibition. Some interpreted 'modern' as meaning modern art, while others were confused as to why 'modern' was included in the title at all.

'Cold War Modern', I still really don't understand that as a statement Student

I am a bit confused by the three words together 'Cold War Modern', because they are all like it doesn't make sense. It doesn't seem like they fit together. ... it is three random words Student

The inclusion of a strap-line featuring the dates and the term 'a divided world' was felt to be essential in adding meaning to the title.

[Cold War Modern: Art and design in a divided world 1945 – 1975] explains more Staff

I like the ones that mention a divided world Staff

I mean the Divided World does give you some thing so that you are going to be able to make this comparison, which I think I would find interesting, ...it will be quite interesting to see the contrasts Member / Regular visitor

8.6 Willingness to pay

Cold War Modern recorded the third highest level of willingness to pay (57%) and the joint second highest level of willingness to pay at the top end – 17% would be happy to pay between £8 and £10, equal to *Surrealism and Design*.

Cold War Modern has a high appeal amongst those looking for a primarily educational experience, but a more limited appeal for others.

26% felt that the exhibition was not aimed at them, or they were not sure – this is the joint lowest of the exhibitions tested. These respondents felt that the exhibition was aimed at an older generation, those aged 40-60 years, historians, academics, curators, history / politics / sociology students, art students, designers, architects, those who lived through the period, those with a special interest in the period, men, politically minded people, those

interested in war or conflict, those born after the period and those who are interested in modern art.

16% of respondents felt that they would not visit the exhibition. For most it is simply not a subject area of interest to them – although they accept that many others would enjoy it. Others felt that the exhibition needed a clearer focus.

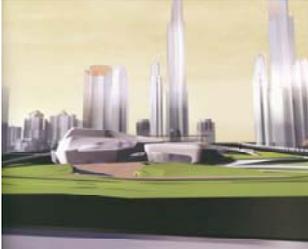
8.7 Key communications messages

- Has a unique style and presentation – it is not a follow on from Modernism
- Offers a new take on the Cold War
- Specialist knowledge is not required
- Features aesthetic elements and a range of media – not just 2D

In terms of brand values, the Cold War is associated with darkness, fear, bleakness, depressing, grey, serious, tension, hope, utopia, desolate, utilitarian, propaganda, science, art, space, distrust and James Bond.

9 China: Design Now

9.1 Headline results



Headline results

China: Design Now	% All V&A visitors
<i>Interest level from title alone</i>	
Very interested	27%
Quite interested	46%
Not interested	27%
<i>Exhibition content appealing</i>	
Yes	76%
No	24%
<i>Content matches expectations from title</i>	
Yes	77%
No	23%
<i>Attitude towards visiting</i>	
[Would pay to visit]	[48%]
Would pay £8-£10	12%
Would pay £5-£7	36%
Would visit if free	35%
Would not visit	17%

9.2 Appeal

73% of visitors were interested in the China Design: Now exhibition from the title alone, with 31% 'very interested'. This places it a close fourth in terms of intrinsic appeal. Members and those with a specialist interest in the subject areas covered by the V&A's are the most interested in this exhibition.

The Chinese are actually coming very forward now ... and they are going to become more prominent as a nation so you could be onto a winner Staff

Oh huge interest I would imagine because China is such an emerging interest Member / Regular visitor

The intrinsic appeal of the exhibition is predominantly an intellectual one. China is a subject of considerable interest, in light of its opening up to the

world, consequently visitors anticipate that the exhibition will explore this angle.

I think that just based on the title I expect it to be something about globalisation in China with the remnants of communism and kind of how that affects design. That is kind of what I would be expecting from the title.

Student

I would go to be educated **Member / Regular visitor**

Talking about China, I realise how little I know about China. ...it would be educational as far as I am concerned. **Member / Regular visitor**

Without this broader Chinese context, the exhibition has a limited aesthetic appeal.

You can't look at that and think 'oh that is showing certain traits of Chinese design'. I mean it could be anything. There is nothing that is telling me that this is uniquely Chinese **Student**

whether we would pick up on the China thing from those images, well I don't think that I would. Then you know there is a kind of Chinese feel to it, but I wouldn't know that it could be China, even America or France or Britain. **Member / Regular visitor**

Although the immediate appeal of *China Design Now* is intellectual, the content is primarily aesthetic. However, without intellectual context, visitor struggle to engage with the aesthetic aspects of exhibition, this limits the overall appeal of *China Design: Now*.

9.3 Immediate expectations

Most feel that the exhibition will focus on the period since Mao, other feel that it will cover the post Tiananmen Square period or the twenty-first century. The overwhelming majority of Students assume that the exhibition will be contemporary in focus, covering at most the last 15 years.

Visitors anticipate that the exhibition will offer a comprehensive review of all aspects of contemporary art and design in modern day China, encompassing a wide range of media. This might include consumer goods, architecture, fashion, textiles, product design, music, fine art, food, calligraphy, applied arts, furniture, technology, animation, packaging, graphic design, photography, electronics, jewellery, publishing, advertising, craft, illustration,

interiors, ceramics, sculpture, cars, video art, plastics, industrial design and advertising.

Respondents expect to see a review of the work of major established and emergent artists and designers supported by biographical information on them. They want the exhibition to showcase the 'movers and shakers' in Chinese art, media, architecture, fashion and design.

There is considerable interest in modern day China amongst the V&A's audience, especially in light of its emergence as a consumer power. The majority of respondents expect the exhibition to place the art within this broader political, social and cultural influences.

You feel that it is going to be modern and Chinese design now and China is kind of up and coming. Student

Visitors hope that it will explore the dual influences of communism and globalisation on contemporary Chinese art and design. With references to the rural past and urban future, the rise of consumerism, rapid technological advancement, designers in exile, the size of the population, mass production, Chinese lifestyles and regional differences, to determine what makes Chinese design Chinese?

Again, visitors want the topic presented as a continuum. They would like to see contemporary design interpreted in the context of the past, potentially contrasting contemporary objects with more traditional designs and tracing the movement away from 'stereotypical' Chinese design. The exhibition could also include indications of where Chinese design is going in the future.

From the title alone there was some confusion as to whether it would be about the China country, or the porcelain.

9.4 Reactions to themes and content

Having read the brief description and viewed the selection of images, 76% of V&A Visitors found the proposed content appealing, making *China Design: Now* the fourth most appealing exhibition in terms of content. Members and those with a special interest were the most likely to find the content appealing.

Of the 24% who found the content unappealing, the reasons given were a lack of interest in Chinese design, or in contemporary art and design. Others feel that this subject area has already been sufficiently covered by the V&A in its recent China exhibition.

77% felt that the content matched their expectations from the title alone. This is a similar proportion to *Cold War Modern*, but less than *The Golden Age of Couture* or *Surrealism and Design*.

Of those who did not feel it matched, the largest proportion found it to be much more interesting, more varied, more exciting, more contemporary and more about the creative impact than the title implies. However, others were expecting an even wider range of design styles, with more object design and less graphic design than the images indicate.

. Is it going to be the gaming and the fashion and the hairstyles and street fashion and that kind of thing, or is it going to be art and design and photography? ...I just don't know if you can cover all that Member / Regular visitor

Having seen the images and description, some felt that the exhibition is to resolutely modern and lacks the historical and cultural perspectives that they are looking for.

...it would be interesting to see where they are going and where they have come from in the last few years Student

I think is it a bit narrow with today. It could focus on the past and sort of what it was like before. ...I can't see any continuity really Student

The China exhibition would be interesting if you did ancient Chinese alongside quite current Chinese and that would then... it would also add to the exhibition I think as well and give it a context. Member / Regular visitor

The exhibition does not seem to cover the broader contextual issues that make China's situation today a unique and interested one.

I assume there is not going to be a lot of rural China at all, which hasn't really changed since Communism and they are still very poor, it is going to be focused on the urban middle class upwardly mobile population. It made me feel that it was slightly only one side of China Member / Regular visitor

When you are looking at design, are we looking at design for the home market, or are we looking at export, which is very different Member / Regular visitor

...it is a vast unique situation in that country that has been so held back and so dominated by leaders and it has all of a sudden exploded in every way ...Yeah, I mean you can't possibly cover it all, but give us some indication Member / Regular visitor

Potential visitors to the exhibition cannot then see what makes the art so different, exciting or even uniquely Chinese.

It is not communist art and it is art that could probably have come from any country. Member / Regular visitor

46% felt that the description and / or images made them more interested in the exhibition, while 12% felt it made them less interested.

9.5 Willingness to pay

At 48% of visitors, *China Design: Now* recorded the second lowest level of willingness to pay and the second lowest level of willingness to pay at the top end – 21% would pay between £8 and £10. Again Students are the most price-sensitive with 43% stating they would only visit the exhibition if it was free.

This is going to have to be the lower end. ...The other one was at the lower end and they couldn't get them Staff

Probably again less than the Surrealism and that would be the incentive to draw people in a bit more then, because they might not know what to expect
Member / Regular visitor

China Design: Now has a limited appeal, with people feeling that they ought to visit more out of a sense of duty to understand more about China.

Just to learn because I don't really know much about what the design in China is like now and only really about the history of China Student

28% felt that the exhibition was not aimed at them, or they were not sure, a similar proportion to *Cold War Modern*. They felt that the exhibition is aimed at younger people, students, design students, designers, business leaders, China watchers, those with a commercial interest in China, politicians, economists, those working in the creative industries, people interested in China and people interested in contemporary design.

17% of respondents felt that they would not visit the exhibition. For most it is just not an area of personal interest to them. Others felt that, for them to visit the exhibition, it would need to relate back to history and to explore the political issues as well as the broader social, political and cultural influences that impact on contemporary Chinese design.

I think it could draw in a big crowd if it is offering some education into what China is becoming. ...But I think at the moment it is a bit impenetrable and I don't think people would draw from that and it doesn't sound as if they would find out much. Staff

A small but significant number of respondents would object to visiting the exhibition on political grounds. They are very uncomfortable with China's poor human rights record and feel the V&A should not be endorsing the regime. There is also the perception that it seems like a PR exercise to tie in with the Olympics, that the exhibition is a contrived, dull and worthy, staged in an attempt to get into bed with an emergent economic power. However, other respondents felt that the Olympic link keeps things current.

9.6 Key communications messages

- A highly contemporary exhibition
- Showcasing the best of Chinese art and design
- An exploration of what makes it uniquely Chinese

In terms of brand values, China Design: Now is associated with innovation, contemporary, cutting-edge, consumerism, capitalism, topical, westernisation, globalisation, reproductions, traditional, high-tech, colourful, emergent, development, evolution and modernisation.

10 Fashion and Sport

10.1 Headline results



Headline results

Fashion and Sport	% All V&A Visitors
<i>Interest level from title alone</i>	
Very interested	16%
Quite interested	33%
Not interested	51%
<i>Exhibition content appealing</i>	
Yes	47%
No	53%
<i>Content matches expectations from title</i>	
Yes	68%
No	32%
<i>Attitude towards visiting</i>	
[Would pay to visit]	[26%]
Would pay £8-£10	5%
Would pay £5-£7	21%
Would visit if free	35%
Would not visit	38%

10.2 Appeal

Fashion and Sport recorded the lowest level of intrinsic appeal of the exhibitions tested by some margin. Only 49% of visitors were interested in the exhibition from the title alone – 16% ‘very interested’.

I am not excited because I don't like sport Student

It sounds a bit technical, in a kind of sports clothes way. I am not too interested in how you make swimming costumes Student

It's a bit boring Staff

In focusing on contemporary sports wear, the exhibition is felt to have a limited aesthetic appeal.

Looking at that there is no way she could do anything actively in that way. She has got high heels on. Member / Regular visitor

I don't think that it seems fresh or interesting enough to go and see. It is just sort of what is around anyway Student

As well as limited aesthetic appeal, the exhibition is also felt to have limited intellectual appeal, notably lacking in context or historical review.

...it just makes me think it would be an exhibition on Stella McCartney's Adidas designs. Member / Regular visitor

Just a designer just working for a sports company. It seems a bit limited. ...These just seem to be like collections from a couple of years ago and I mean it just seems a bit mundane to be honest. Student

10.3 Immediate expectations

From the title alone visitors expect the exhibition to cover a broad period, from 1800, or 1900 to the present day, presenting a historical review of the development of male and female clothing for sport. While a small proportion feel that it will be restricted to the past 25 years, others feel it will stretch back as far back as the ancient Greeks.

Respondents expect the exhibition to include sports clothes, trainers, equipment and accessories through the ages, featured alongside photographs, portraits, video, ephemera, posters, adverts, designs and hairstyles, as well as items worn by famous sportspeople and spectator attire. Cult sports items mentioned include shell suits, Dunlop Green Flash trainers, plus fours and frilly tennis knickers.

It is also felt that developments in smart fabrics, trainer designs and materials including Lycra will feature.

Respondents expect the exhibition to cover a wide range of sports, including tennis, football, rugby, golf, gym wear, riding, cycling, athletics, ice-skating, yoga and swimming, as well as representations of the major sporting events such as Royal Ascot, Olympics, Wimbledon and the Henley Regatta.

Well sport of course there is new sport today and you could say like all the sports like hunting, tennis, shooting and all sorts of sports and so it could be water sports and... It could be very, very wide and some sort of extraordinary sort of sets likes plus fours. Member / Regular visitor

There is an expectation that the exhibition will cover famous sportspeople and their influence as style icons, including Björn Borg, Fred Perry, George Best, Beckham, Agassi and the Williams sisters. Incorporating the growth of sponsorship, ad campaigns, branding, celebrity endorsement of labels and the rise of the logo and 'chav' culture.

Labels mentioned include Fred Perry, Adidas, Nike, Lacoste, Puma, Speedo, Ralph Lauren, Juicy Couture, Reebok, Stella McCartney, Chanel, Prada and Y-3.

I can see it as a sort of competition between all the big names in sports wear and how they market it as the best and I don't know if that is going to be Nike and Puma having their designs in the show. I don't think it seems that interesting **Student**

Visitors tried desperately to intellectualise the exhibition. Anticipating that it might explore the changing attitudes of society and its impact on sportswear, including the role of women in sports and leisure culture.

... you could go back to Fred Perry years and years ago and the clothing that has been worn by the Mods more recently as well ...modern youth culture at the moment, but with tracksuit bottoms and trainers, rather than smart

Member / Regular visitor

An area of interest would be the cross-fertilisation between fashion and sport, how they continue to influence each other. Another appealing aspect is the trickle down from the sports field to the high street, exploring the crossover to everyday wear, the rise of the label and the emergence of 'leisurewear'. Bringing it up to date with references to rap and hip hop culture and urban labels, as well the current fashion for top end designers, such as Stella McCartney and Prada, to create sportswear.

I wonder if it would be interesting to know if it was to do with just the influence that they have had on one another, or really if it is just sportswear **Student**

How sport was often a kind of focus point for a fashion that was perhaps youth or perhaps general and it would filter its way from the sports field into the general high street. **Member / Regular visitor**

Will the aspiration aspect be featured... because they think that they buy the image to a certain extent with the brand and that is often exploited **Member /**

Regular visitor

In terms of display, visitors expect to see mannequins, reportage, interviews, adverts, fashion shows, materials to feel and video footage of sports clothes 'in action'.

10.4 Reactions to themes and content

Having read the brief description and viewed the selection of images, over half (53%) of V&A Visitors did not find the proposed content appealing – this is by far the lowest of the five exhibitions tested.

The main reason given for the lack of appeal is a lack of interest in sport, sportswear and / or fashion.

68% felt that the content did not match their expectations from the title alone – the lowest of the exhibitions tested. While a small number felt the images and descriptions were more interesting, more contemporary, more exciting and more unusual than they expected, the majority found the content less appealing than they had expected.

Many visitors felt that the exhibition is far too narrow in its scope as it does not touch upon the progress or development of sports fashion over time and the wider context of how fashion has influenced sportswear and vice versa. It is felt to be purely about fashion not sport, style not substance.

'Fashion and Sport' is really just about fashion and a bunch of models looking good ...If it was actually sport then it might make it more interesting
Student

This is kind of urban sportswear becoming more popular, rather than people being banned from wearing stuff when they are playing at Wimbledon and being too out there, which I think Fashion and Sport that is what it says more to me. **Member / Regular visitor**

Yes I think like what also would be more interesting was if they show the evolution and how sportswear became more commonly worn outside of sport **Student**

Visitors felt that it is much more contemporary and narrow exhibition than they had envisaged. It has limited appeal because it is too current and too everyday: you can see this everywhere on the high street. Consequently visitors are not interested in visiting a museum to see it.

I think this is like how I can see internet fashion show on the internet, or we can see them in stores and so maybe I am not interested Student

As it is, V&A visitors see the exhibition as a thin, unsubstantial, weak and bland concept and perceive that they won't learn anything from visiting.

You could get that looking in the back of a magazine really and it is just a bit bland Student

There was also some resistance to the exhibition because it is perceived to be contrived, commercially driven and looks too much like product placement.

24% felt that the description / images made them less interested in the exhibition; 28% were more interested.

10.5 Alternative titles

- 50% *Fashion and Sport: From track to catwalk*
- 13% *Fashion and Sport*
- 7% *Sporting Fashion: The complex relationship between sport and fashion*
- 7% *Fashioning Sport*
- 7% *Keeping ahead of the game – on the track and the catwalk*
- 6% *Sporting Fashion*
- 5% *Fashioning Sport: The complex relationship between sport and fashion*
- 4% *Backward Looking, Forward Thinking – connecting fashion and sport*

Fashion and Sport: From track to catwalk is the clear favourite and is preferred across the board.

There is a feeling that the title needs to more clearly state the limited scope of the exhibition.

I mean it doesn't explore the complex relationship at all really. Student

I think that they are all a bit misleading Student

I think maybe; I don't know 'Fashion Design or Designing for Sports Labels', because I mean it is just one thing and it is not as broad as that Student

I like Sport in Fashion but it needs an explanation after it and I don't like that because it is very long. It is so long and it doesn't look that complex so perhaps 'From Track to Catwalk'. Student

I prefer 'Sport in Fashion' ...I think that I prefer that to having the two polars of Fashion and Sport and it doesn't look like it is going to be dealing with sports Member / Regular visitor

10.6 Willingness to pay

Fashion and Sport recorded by far the lowest level of willingness to pay. Only 26% are willing to pay £5 or more, with only 5% willing to pay at the top end.

Fashion and Sport has a limited appeal across the board, beyond those with a special interest in fashion, or sports fashion.

I don't think this modern thing will bring a lot of people in. All these period things they are a lot more interested in them than all these things because sometimes they say it is just like going to the High Street Staff

It doesn't have a very wide appeal ...I think that this will attract some of the fashion people and the people who are interested in high-end design Student

I am only moderately interested in fashion and I am not interested in sport and so I don't think that I would want to pay Student

57% felt that the exhibition was not aimed at them, or they were not sure – this is the highest of all the exhibitions tested. They felt the exhibition is aimed at younger people, those aged 15-25, art, design and fashion students, fashion designers, fashionistas, brand obsessed people, sportspeople, celebrity obsessed people, the 'youth' market, people interested in sport, wannabes, cultural commentators and trendy people.

38% would not visit it even if it was free, again the highest for all the exhibitions tested. For many there was nothing to interest them in a subject of this nature, others would need to see more of a historical context and intellectual rigour before they would consider visiting.

10.7 Key communications messages

- Highly contemporary fashion exhibition
- One-off pieces by famous designers

Testing themes and titles

- What can they learn?

In terms of brand values, *Fashion and Sport* is associated with contemporary, commercial, high-street, style, narrow, designer, branded and contrived.

11 Suggestions for future exhibitions



Respondents were asked to make suggestions for exhibitions they would like to see at the V&A in the future. As might be expected, there was a wide range of suggestions, based largely upon areas of personal interest. Suggestions have been grouped together under broad themes.

Architecture and urban design

Wartime; RIBA drawings / photography; Country houses; Comparisons of cities; Architectural response to environmental concerns; Garden / outdoor / landscape design; Urban design; Workplace design; English town and country; Modern homes; Gaudí

Design

Car / bike design; Computer generated design; Globalisation and design; Boutique / hotel design; Lighting design; Food design; 1920s design; Design futures; Design partnerships; Earlier periods in design history; 1960s/70s sci-fi inspired space age design; Exhibitions of specific graphic designers e.g. Vaughn Oliver, Rick Poynor; Advertising, branding and packaging; Furniture design; Specialist design e.g. for living in a cold climate

Fashion and textiles

Pattern-cutting; Specific designers e.g. Balenciaga, Chanel, Paul Smith, Prada; Up and coming designers; Accessories; Materials in fashion; War / Post-war fashion and society; Punk and Post modern influences; Religious dress; Fashion icons e.g. Madonna; 1920s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s; Streetwear; Men's fashion; High St. vs. catwalk fashion; 18th Century; Links between sport and fashion; Cabaret/Burlesque; Weddings; Developments in textile technology; Tartan; Lace; Denim

Art and photography

Specific artists e.g. Van Gogh, Frida Kahlo, Gauguin; Colour; Illustration; Animation; 60's fashion photography e.g. David Bailey; NYC buildings; Documentary photography; Political / war e.g. Goya; 20th sculpture; Ecclesiastical / religious art; Pop Art

Countries

Scandinavian design; Asian arts and crafts; Indian art; Japanese design; Korean art; East India Companies / Colonialism; China; Islamic art; African art;

Nepalese and Tibetan art; British contemporary culture; Northern culture; North American culture; Caribbean culture; Contemporary Turkish art; Iraqi art and design; Latin America; Ireland; Polish art and design; Venice

Film, media and performance

Video games; Early 20thC film; Set design; Film Noir; 1950s/60s cinema; Art of science-fiction; Opera; Musical history; Ballet; Musical instruments; Cultural impact e.g. Brecht; Costumes / memorabilia; Vaudeville; Circus / fairground art; Hollywood

Applied arts and crafts

Chinese ceramics; 17th, 18th and 19th century ceramics; Contemporary ceramics; Wedgwood china; Tiles; Stained glass; Perfume bottles; Woodcarving; Basket weaving; Knitting / crochet; Quilting; Embroidery; Miniature painting; Silver; Toys; Cutlery; Tunbridge ware; Jewellery / Gemstones;

Print and books

Book design/covers; Calligraphy; Bloomsbury group; Comics and comic characters; Manga/anime; Children's books/illustration; Manuscripts; Shakespeare

Periods and movements

1950's; Georgian arts and crafts; Victorian arts and crafts; Renaissance Europe; Industrial revolution; Prehistoric/Tribal art; Postmodernism; Byzantine; Tudors and Stuarts; 30s/40s America; Dadaism; Art Deco; Medieval; Georgian/Louis XVI; Roman; Greek; Surrealism; Communism; Elizabethan

Contemporary themes and other

Fetishism; Sex; The Body; Gay culture; The Internet and design; Influence of Cool Britannia; Drug/dance culture; Women and society; Christmas; History of the V&A and its collections; Museums; Rock music subculture

12 Conclusions

12.1 Audiences for temporary exhibitions at the V&A

Although we did not survey across the entire audience, there are strong indications that the V&A presently draws from a more specialist-interest subsection of the broader temporary exhibition audience in London. The audience for the V&A clearly includes a high proportion of students of design, people with professional or specialist interest in design and individuals who are looking for experiences that are sensory, immersive and aesthetic.

The research and visitor figures indicate that the market for temporary exhibitions at the V&A is somewhat more limited than for comparable venues and that it could therefore be further developed.

The reasons for this limitation may be that the V&A, as a museum of decorative arts, (with some notable exceptions) does not have exhibitions with the same blockbuster appeal as exhibitions of, for example, household-name artists. Lack of familiarity with the V&A and existing perceptions of the collections and exhibitions programme may be confused or constrained amongst the broader temporary exhibition visiting audience. Further qualitative research exploring perceptions and brand responses amongst visitors and non-visitors to the V&A would be needed to test this hypothesis.

12.2 Marketing and communications

The research indicates that the V&A's audience relies on publicity material and press coverage to provide them with advance knowledge of the exhibition; it is on this basis they make the decision whether or not to attend. It is possible that the communications messages for V&A exhibitions make assumptions that the audience is already familiar with the subject matter and familiar with the V&A's treatment of exhibition. This again may be limiting the size of the potential audience for temporary exhibitions at the V&A.

It is clear from this research that the communications messages are going to be vital in maximising the number of visitors to each exhibition. In most cases clarity, in the form of a by-line, was needed to make sense of the exhibition title and provide some indication of the scope and emphasis of the exhibition.

The choice of image and descriptive copy are also vital in relaying the range of objects to be displayed in the exhibition: in the case of *Couture* an image that indicates that the exhibition might consist entirely of photographs would

attract fewer visitors than an image that communicates a wide selection of real objects and images.

Testing alternative marketing messages, print and titles with audiences at a reasonably early stage would enable the Museum to communicate with audiences in the most effective way.

12.3 Intrinsic appeal

There appears to be two broad levels on which potential visitors assess the desirability of a V&A exhibition. The first is whether the exhibition offers the prospect of a deeply satisfying and immersive aesthetic experience. This seems to be the major benefit with which V&A exhibitions are associated and exhibitions, such as *Surrealism and Design* and *The Gold Age of Couture*, which hold this promise are automatically considered a very attractive proposition.

For those exhibitions where the theme has to be interpreted intellectually before any aesthetic expectations can be formed, then the decision to visit is based largely on any potential intellectual benefits. This is the case with *China Design: Now* and *Cold War Modern*: with the absence of a clear idea of what they might see and experience, potential visitors weigh up the value of attending through the intellectual or self-improvement benefits they may derive from seeing the exhibition. Any aesthetic benefits will be an additional pleasant surprise. As they have to be more proactive in realising the intellectual benefits, the decision to attend might not be as automatic and unconditional. For this reason both *China Design: Now* and *Cold War Modern* will have to use very iconic images that hold strong aesthetic promise.

12.4 Meeting visitors' needs

It is clear from the responses that, whilst visitors largely expect their aesthetic needs to be met in V&A exhibitions, they are nevertheless hungry for a deep of intellectual context. There is a need for rich, layered context in order to fully appreciate the aesthetic elements.

Although people can have a deeply satisfying experience that is purely aesthetic, research finds that this satisfaction is deepened further by the provision of contextual information that makes them feel better informed, and offers greater insight into and understanding of the works. This level of satisfaction generates positive word of mouth recommendation and we know from years of research findings that personal recommendation is generally the most powerful influencer of visits.

The indications from this research are therefore that attendances to these exhibitions will be maximised through the development of deep contextual information that can be read within the exhibition and taken away to read later, or accessed via a web-site.

12.5 Value for money

The research also indicates that value for money is an important factor amongst students and regular exhibition visitors. Communications must clearly indicate the scale of the exhibition. An exhibition that is small scale and/or is comprised of two dimensional works is expected to be free; two rooms and limited number of objects that are largely drawn from the collection, no more than £5; three or more rooms, with a diversity of objects, images and text with items especially sourced for the exhibition, between £8 and £10.

12.6 Summary

We feel that V&A would benefit from a research project that segments the audience for the V&A and for temporary exhibitions in London, and explores the degrees of cross-over between the V&A and other museums and galleries. This would help refine target setting, development of interpretation approaches and materials and would inform the approaches to communications. The cost of this project could be shared between a number of venues in the capital.

It would also be beneficial to undertake further qualitative research amongst less frequent visitors to the V&A and non-visitors who do attend other museums and galleries to explore perceptions, brand awareness and expectations of the V&A exhibitions programme.

A programme of formative testing of concepts, interpretation and marketing messages with current and potential visitors to temporary exhibitions at the V&A would also provide useful insight.

The more information the V&A has on its audiences the better it can plan exhibitions, displays and services.



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