

**EDUCATION DEPT,**

**SURVEY OF VISITOR RESEARCH AT  
THE V&A 1986-1996**

**Prepared by Sara Selwood  
for the Policy Studies Institute  
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## Symbols and conventions

Certain symbols are used in the tables:

	not available
n/a	no answer
	less than one per cent

Percentages have been rounded and many not add up to 100

## Social group definitions

		occupation of head of household
A	upper middle class	higher managerial, administrative or professional
B	middle class	intermediate managerial, administrative or professional
CI	lower middle class	supervisory clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional
C2	skilled working class	skilled manual workers
D	working class	semi-and unskilled workers
E	those at the lowest levels of subsistence	state pensioners, etc, with no other earnings



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## **SURVEY OF VISITOR RESEARCH AT THE V & A 1986 - 1996**

### **BRIEF FOR EXTERNAL CONSULTANT**

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#### **AIM OF SURVEY**

To provide a summary of ten years of visitor research which can be used by museum staff to identify the profile and behaviour of visitors to the V&A.

#### **PRIMARY OBJECTIVES**

- I To report on the range and purpose of research undertaken and its value in the collation of the following information.
2. To consolidate the data and present an overview of the visitor profile over ten years including:
  - socio-demographic and geographical details;
  - length of stay and type of group visit;
  - educational background or specific interests of visitors;
  - identification of any definite changes or trends over the period;
  - factors which have been influential in developing a new audience or altering the dominant visitor pattern.
3. To synthesize the information that we have on visitor behaviour in the Museum:
  - comments on the Museum environment and its affect on first time and return visitors;
  - visitor response to gallery lay out, design and orientation through observed physical use of the space and verbal comments;
  - enjoyment and use of specific methods of interpretation or display;
  - reaction to the level and amount of introductory and specific information provided;
  - preferred method of learning through observation of the visitor and verbal comment;
  - use of and response to objects, number and method of display, recall of individual items and information related to them;
  - what attracts visitors into a gallery or to an exhibit and holds their attention;
  - use and enjoyment of technological applications within galleries;
  - reaction of visitors with no prior knowledge of a subject; and
  - use and awareness of visitor services and education programmes such as tours, print room, talks etc.
4. To review the perceptions and image of the V&A held by users and non-users. Assess visitor motivation and barriers which impede non visitors including:

- reason for visit, expectations and satisfaction with galleries:
- what inspires a return visit;
- what discourages people from visiting;
- physical or intellectual barriers to visiting or enjoying a visit; and
- comparisons of the V&A with other cultural institutions or leisure facilities

To investigate how well the needs of artists and craftspeople are met by the Museum and what role they take in its programmes.

6. To suggest any other issues that arise from this research which may be valuable to staff embarking upon the planning of new facilities, galleries or services.

To identify where there are gaps in our information which if covered would help us understand our audience and non-visitors better.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The present *Survey of Visitor Research at the V&A* reviews nearly 60 pieces of visitor research produced about the V&A between 1986 and 1996. Its overall aim is to enable museum staff to identify the profile and behaviour of visitors to the V&A for purposes of future planning and development.

This executive summary focuses on two aspects of that review. It seeks to present the overview of the visitor profile provided by the research and to report on the range of research undertaken.

### **I. THE VISITORS STUDIES UNDERTAKEN**

I.1 Many of the visitor surveys produced for the V&A over a ten year period considered were concerned with procuring different kinds of information. They have had different objectives, used different sizes and types of samples, referred to different periods of time, asked different questions, and, are of varying quality. These issues have affected the comparisons made between the various visitor studies in the present review.

### **2. VISITOR PROFILE**

2.1 The V&A visitors' profile is largely considered in terms of visitors' socio-demographics; their place of residence; history of visiting the V&A, their educational background and specific interests; and, the types of groups visiting.

At another level, V&A surveys tend to categorise visitors according to whether they came to the Museum on their own, accompanied by friends, family or other adults, or whether they visited as part of an organised or educational group. In an attempt to provide a more sophisticated basis for planning new developments, Creative Research's research of the British Galleries (1997) sought to classify visitors rather differently. This study refers to them in terms of family groups; specialists; independent learners; overseas visitors: UK residents, and those who had planned or had not planned to visit the galleries. Other target groups include further and higher education groups; school groups; people from ethnic minorities; and, local residents.

2.2 The overall ratio of female to male visitors is about 6:4. Thus, the V&A visitor profile is made up of rather less males and rather more females than the British population as a whole.

2.3 Data for 1993-95 suggests a general fall in the percentage of visitors aged up to 24, and an increase in those aged 45 upwards. In 1994 and 1995, over 55s comprised the largest group of visitors. However, these statistics may not represent a fully accurate picture of V&A visitors, since the extent to which surveys attempted to capture all age groups is unclear. Several appear to have excluded children. MORI's research explicitly excludes educational groups.

2.4 All the available statistics show that the V&A attracts a disproportionate percentage of ABC 1 s in comparison with the GB population. Between 80 and 85 per cent of its visitors are ABC Is. and that between 10 and 19 per cent are C2 and DEs.

2.5 The V&A's visitor studies tend to disregard visitors' ethnic affiliations. Exceptions are those concerned with visitors to galleries showing non-Western artifacts ( the Tsui, Nehru and Samsung<sup>g</sup> Galleries) and the more recent research on the British Galleries (Creative Research, 1997). The vast majority of visitors to the these galleries were White/ European. Less than 20 per cent of visitors to any of the galleries were of Asian descent.

2.6 The majority of visitors to the V&A are UK residents. They represent a fluctuating percentage of its visitors - between 53 and 70 per cent in the period studied. Between 35 and 41 per cent came from London and the rest of the South East.

The majority of overseas visitors are from North America. They accounted for between 19 and 23 per cent of all Museum visitors. A slightly lower percentage come from Europe.

2.7 The percentage of visitors identified as first-timers appears to have been fairly consistent since 1989, at between 50 and 53 per cent of all visitors.

2.8 V&A visitors tend to be highly educated. A high proportion (67 per cent) had been, or were currently, engaged in higher education. Forty per cent had completed, or were taking, a first degree, and 27 per cent had completed, or were taking, a post-graduate degree.

2.9 A significant proportion of visitors to particular galleries claimed to have a special interest in the subject displayed. This accounted for 34 per cent of visitors to the Tsui Gallery; 31 per cent of visitors to the Samsung Galleries; and, 48 per cent of Nehru Gallery visitors. This was usually manifest in an interest in the art or objects displayed, or in visitors' own personal experience - visits to the country, or 'roots'.

2.10 While visitors to the V&A were likely to have visited other museums in South Kensington during the 12 months prior to going to the V&A, they were even more likely to have visited the National Gallery and the British Museum.

2.11 Between 26 and 31 per cent of people visiting the V&A do so on their own. Between 64 and 72 per cent were accompanied by friends or family. Visitor surveys suggest that 7 per cent or less came in organised groups. The Education Department's records of booked visits (including self-guided visits) suggests a rather higher percentage of visits by people in organised groups.

### **3. VISITOR LEARNING**

3.1 Learning is generally presumed to be implicit in visitors' museum experience. Various surveys asked visitors if the displays had made them more aware of particular subjects. These

tended to focus on four ways in which that new awareness might have been acquired: entertainment and enjoyment; reading the information provided and looking at the displays, using new technological applications, and touching. However, only one study specifically set out to examine learning (Creative Research, 1997). It used a broad definition of learning which included 'seeing things in a new light', acquiring 'new information', and 'gaining practical inspiration'.

The surveys have different understandings of what constitutes learning. Some considered learning and enjoying as distinct; others assumed that there is a necessary relationship between reading the information provided and learning.

3.2 Three surveys looked at the use of new technological applications. There was some evidence of learning through this medium.

3.3 The ways in which the various surveys describe learning outcomes vary. These include focusing on visitors' recall of objects and information related to them, their awareness of themes, increasing their awareness, and rating their own learning outcomes.

3.4 Surveys of individual galleries suggest some disparity in visitors' awareness of the themes underlying the displays. The report of visitors to the British Galleries suggests that their recognition of themes was relatively basic. Eighty-one were able to suggest one or more themes, the most popular were 'Britishness' or 'Englishness', and 'furniture'. Thirty nine per cent assumed the galleries were arranged chronologically. The same percentage identified no ordering principle.

3.5 A high percentage of visitors to certain galleries were immediately inspired to find out more. Seventy seven per cent of those surveyed in the Tsui Gallery claimed to be more aware of Chinese art and history than previously, and 71 per cent wanted to find out more about China and Chinese culture. Sixty two per cent of visitors to the Nehru Gallery had been prompted to speculate on the diversity of Indian culture. Sixty five per cent of visitors to the Glass Gallery said that they would have liked to find out more. Users of the electronic information systems in that Gallery were more likely to believe they had increased their knowledge about the subject than non-users.

3.6 Creative Research's (1997) survey of the British Galleries attempted to test learning outcomes more specifically. This survey asked respondents to rate how much they had learnt from their visits. Levels of learning were likely to be higher if visitors 'had a particular mission in mind'. Visitors who did not plan to see the British Galleries were more likely to say that they had not learnt anything new, as were some of those who thought they already knew a lot.

#### 4. VISITOR BEHAVIOUR

4.1 MORI's year-on-year surveys suggest that the average stay was between two hours 20 minutes and two hours 40 minutes. Between 25 and 30 per cent of visitors stay three hours or more.

4.2 The ways in which researchers assess how long visitors spend in individual galleries depends on different methods. These tend to be approximate, at best. At least two surveys suggest that the majority of visitors spent no more than five minutes in particular galleries.

Visitors to the Glass Gallery were estimated to spend considerably longer than that. The amount of time some visitors spent there was directly related to their use of computer terminals. Users were twice as likely to spend 30 minutes or more in the Gallery than non-users.

Creative Research's survey of the British Galleries relied on visitors' own estimates of how long they spent. Thirty seven per cent claimed to spend between 16 and 60 minutes on the lower floor, and 30 per cent between 16 and 60 minutes on the upper floor. Specialists and those who had planned to visit were more likely to spend longer in the lower galleries than other categories of visitor.

4.3 Researchers have used different sets of criteria to assess whether visitors find galleries attractive. Visitors' themselves suggested that the atmosphere of a gallery is a major factor, and that its contents, lighting, the organisation of displays and spatial organisation are less important. However, when asked why they stopped to look at a particular display, the majority of visitors cited the qualities of objects displayed and of the display itself. Visitors' previous interest in the subject matter was also a major factor.

4.4 The provision of information tends not to rank highly as a major reason for visitors' finding either the V&A as a whole, or individual galleries, attractive. However, the absence of information is, nevertheless, identified as problematic.

4.5 Surveys which consider visitors' use of information and interpretation tend to be those that focus on individual galleries or departments. They point to the difference between visitors' awareness of certain information, and their use of it. Assessments as to the percentage of visitors using the information provided vary - either because visitors' behaviour varies from gallery to gallery, or because of the different methodologies used to assess it. One survey suggested that over 80 per cent of visitors to selected galleries looked at some of the printed information provided. Another suggests that between 43 and 53 per cent looked closely at some of the information provided.

4.6 Visitors' use of new technological applications was studied in three galleries - the Tsui, Samsung and the Glass Galleries. In the case of the last two galleries, the majority of visitors were aware of new technological applications. Respectively, 64 and 63 per cent of visitors used them. Breakwell and Wright's (1995) detailed survey of responses to the electronic information system in the Glass Gallery, suggested that it was unlikely that the Museum could

convert most non-users to becoming users. But, it was estimated that non-users who had attempted to use the terminals might be converted if better instructions were provided.

-4.7 Only one survey considered how the presentation of information might affect visitors' responses. People who felt that the information was pitched at the right level, or lower, tended to find galleries more interesting than those who felt it was pitched too high. Visitors who had difficulty in sustaining their interest tended to be those for whom the information provided was too advanced.

**5. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS** 5.1 First-time visitors were less aware of public lectures, the library, and the availability of expert opinions, than those who had been before.

5.2 Between 1993 to 1995, the percentage of visitors who had heard of the free talks increased from 22 to 26 per cent. The percentage attending them also increased (from 2 to 6 per cent). The percentage who had heard of and attended courses and lectures fluctuated.

Qualitative research suggests that visitors' attitudes vary to the guided tours. While people who had participated enjoyed them, others had reservations about joining in.

**6. ORIENTATION AND INFORMATION** 6.1 This section considers visitors' attitudes to finding their way around the V&A and the information that the Museum provides.

6.2 There is relatively little quantitative information on these issues, although Heady (1984) and MORI (1993b; 1994 and 1995b) provide some hard data. This section, therefore, primarily draws on qualitative research. In particular, it refers to Daniels (1994); Grant (1987a); Market Behaviour (1991); MORI (1993a; 1995d); and NOP (1989). Visitors' comments from these reports indicate the range of opinions expressed. These studies tended to find out what visitors wanted, or how they thought things might be improved. Their comments may, consequently, appear negative.

These comments have been grouped below under three headings: providing an overview; clearer signage; and suggestions for improvement.

## **7. SHOPS, RESTAURANTS AND OTHER FACILITIES**

7.1 "There is relatively little hard data on visitors' use of these services. The review, therefore, draws heavily on qualitative research.

7.2 During the period studied in this review, between 59 and 75 per cent of visitors to the V&A, South Kensington, visited the Museum's shops, and between 21 and 31 per cent bought something.

The majority of visitors (83 per cent) who used the main gift shop between 1993-1995 consistently rated the range of merchandise as good. But, over the years increasingly fewer shop users considered the speed and efficiency of service good. Just half the shoppers thought it offered poor value for money. Visitors' comments often touch on improvements to the stock.

7.3 Between 23 and 33 per cent of 'visitors used the restaurant. Over the period examined, restaurant users consistently rated its cleanliness (between 89 and 91 per cent). An increasingly high percentage also thought well of the service (74 per cent in 1993, rising to 83 per cent in 1995). Opinion as to the range of food and drink and value for money also went up. Visitors' comments often refer to the management of the restaurant, the type, and cost of food.

## **8. HOW WELL THE NEEDS OF ARTISTS, CRAFTSPEOPLE AND DESIGNERS ARE MET**

There is very little data about the needs of artists, craftspeople and designers or how they are met. In fact, only three studies specifically refer to artists and designers. Moreover, references to these groups were made solely on the basis of their using the Print Room and the National Art Library - facilities which fall outside the remit of this review.

## **9. OTHER ISSUES ARISING FROM THE REVIEW**

9.1 This section considers the coverage of visitors' motivation in coming to the V&A, what inhibits visiting, influences first-time and return visits, and what would make visits more enjoyable.

9.2 The research broaches why people visit differently. Quantitative studies include investigations into its general appeal, the drawing power of its collections and displays, and the professional benefits to be gained by visiting. Qualitative research notes that visitors' familiarity with the Museum itself impacts on their reasons for coming.

Some research considered why non-visitors stay away. Some are put off by the Museum's reputation as élitist; others, by the sheer scale of its collections. They needed a 'handle' - a specific reason to visit. It appears that the Museum's size, the scale and breath of its collections, wield both positive and negative appeal.

9.3 Only three surveys sought to find out whether visitors' experience of the V&A matched (their expectations. It appears that the experience tends to exceed expectations. The scope and scale of the collections, the displays, the interest they hold, and improvements to the ethos of the Museum made visits better.

9.4 The most common reason why visits to the V&A matched visitors' expectations was because visitors had been before, knew what to expect, or expected it to be 'good'.

9.5 A major reason for visits being worse than expected reflected the fact that much of the Museum was under construction at the time of the surveys.

9.6 Surveys found that three quarters of visitors were likely to visit the V&A again, but few considered what encouraged or discouraged visits. Two surveys indicated that visitors were inspired to return by the size of the collection, study or work purposes, and the prospect of visiting London.

9.7 Only one survey investigated what discouraged return visits. Non visiting London again, living overseas, and only being interested in a specific section of the Museum were suggested reasons for not intending to visit again.

9.8 Qualitative research sheds more light on visitors' experience of the V&A. It covers the costs incurred; crowding; physical access in the Museum; its location and the difficulties of parking; visitors' dealings with staff, and the visiting hours. Comments also describe how visits might be made more enjoyable. These refer to the environment (temperature, layout, lighting, seating); exhibitions and displays; special provision for children, staff, information orientation, merchandise and catering.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

10.1 Much of the V&A's research is exemplary, and several pieces of research commissioned during the 1990s, including 'one-off' studies, have broached important qualitative issues. These include visitors' attitudes to learning in the Museum, the nature of their personal experiences, and their perceptions of the Museum.

10.2 It is unclear how existing research has impacted on planning and developments at the V&A to date.

10.3 No specific data has been compiled on non-visitors.

10.4 Gaps in the information about visitors reflects the variable quality of the surveys, in particular statistical inconsistencies, methodological differences in data collection, conceptual differences, omissions and insufficient detail. There has been no overall strategy for research.

10.5 One consequence of this is that there are certain gaps in the current state of knowledge about visitors. Given the present review of visitor studies the V&A is, however, now in a position to identify its visitor study needs. It can move to develop a comprehensive programme of research to underpin its development towards the millennium.

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## I. VISITOR STUDIES UNDERTAKEN

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This section considers the range and function of the V&A's visitor studies, the methodological issues involved, and the way in which data are presented.

### 1.1 THE RANGE AND FUNCTION OF THE V&A'S VISITOR STUDIES

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Nearly 60 pieces of visitor research produced about the V&A between 1986 and 1996 have been made available for this review. They are listed in Annex 1. The vast majority were commissioned by the museum itself, and consider its visitor profile and visitors' behaviour in the Museum. They also consider perceptions which visitors and non-visitors have of the V&A.

Two pieces of research which predate 1986 are also included. Both were published in 1984: Anderson (1984) which anticipated the imposition of charges, and Heady (1984) which arguably provided the most comprehensive analysis of V&A visitors to date. Whilst this research refers to 1979/80, it has been used to both establish a context for subsequent visitor statistics, and to illustrate the fact that particular issues have been investigated.

Similarly, two pieces of research from 1997 are also included: Creative Research's (1997) investigation into the visitors to the present British Galleries, which is a preliminary stage of the proposed redevelopment of the British Galleries 1500-1900; and, the Education Department's *Annual Report 1996/97*. This presents a summary of statistics pertaining to a large part of the period under review.

#### 1.1.1 The kinds of research carried out

The visitor studies' reviewed in the present report can be classified in four ways:

- Quantitative and qualitative research about current visitors based on interviews and focus groups;
- Research based on the observation of visitors' behaviour;
- Qualitative research into the attitudes of the general public, potential visitors and non-visitors about the V&A;
- Research concerned with marketing, targets and V&A development - in other words, research which deals with visitor potential rather than current visitors. Anderson (1984), for example, was primarily about developing revenue and only referred to visitors in terms of their possible spending. Schlackmans' reports (1988-1989) were concerned with the impact of the Museum's advertising campaigns. Market Behaviour (1991) and NOP (1989) were concerned with the potential of forthcoming exhibitions, and Daniels (1994) with long-term target audiences.

## I. I ' The subjects of the research

About half the reports focus on the V&A, South Kensington, as a whole. While some of this research comprises 'one-offs' (for example, Heady, 1984; Grant, 1987a; Mass Observation, 1989). it is dominated by the year-on-year surveys by MORI. These provide the only accurate time-series data available.

The other half of the reports focus specifically on individual galleries, displays, and departments. They cover the British Galleries; the Chinese Gallery; the Glass Gallery; the Nehru Gallery; the Samsung Gallery; the Silver Galleries; and, the Tsui Gallery.

Some reports consider the use of the Print Room and the National Art Library. But, like the studies of the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood (MORI, 1995d), these fall outside the remit of this review, and are only considered by way of illustrating particular points.

Although the V&A embraces the Theatre Museum, Apsley House, and the Wellington Museum no research on these was available for consideration in. the present review.

The majority of the research examined in the present review is by external researchers. Often, single organisations are responsible for several related studies, such as MORI and Creative Research. About one sixth of the studies were carried out internally by the staff of the Print Room, the Education Department, the Far Eastern Department, the Glass Department, the British Art & Design Team, the Metalwork Department, and the South East Asian Department.

### 1.1.3 Omissions

Not all the research about the V&A which has been made available for this review has been used. Omissions include:

- Research which is out of date because the displays or services examined have since changed. For example, Heady's (1984) analysis of visitors' use of plans which were replaced in 1989 (see Annex 3);
- Research for which no final report was written, such as the Metalwork Department (1994). The review also bypasses one piece of research in favour of another which was initiated as a result of the first. Thus, where appropriate, Olsson's (1992) survey of the Print Room has been used in preference to Thunder (1992);
- Interim reports which belong to a series, such as the four successive waves of visitor research carried out by Grant (1986-87), summarised in Grant (1987a), and the various waves of research and computer tables which go to make up MORI's annual surveys (1993-1995). In such cases, only the final summaries are referred to; and
- Research which has only a tenuous relationship with the V&A. These include Richards ;111d Bonink's (1992) paper on older people and cultural attractions; the London Tourist Board's survey of overseas visitors to London (1995); and, Trevelyan's (1991) examination of 'non-attenders' to museums in general. This highlights practical and psychological factors which discourage museum visiting, and considers how museums can make themselves more attractive and accessible to the general public. In many respects its findings reinforce those of surveys specifically commissioned by the V&A,

which examine the attitudes of non-visitors, and which are referred to in the present review.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

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As one would expect, many of the visitor surveys produced for the V&A over ten year period considered here, were concerned with procuring different kinds of information. They had different objectives, used different sizes and types of samples, referred to different periods of time, asked different questions, and, were of varying quality. The following paragraphs elaborate on some of those issues.

### 1.2.1 Samples

The research reports about V&A considered in this review employ various sizes of samples, which are described in Annex 2. For example, samples used in research about the V&A, South Kensington, vary from 1,050 (MORI, 1994) to nearly 22,500 (Grant, 1987a). By definition, the samples used for the surveys of individual galleries are much smaller. McManus and Kahn (1992), Kahn and McManus (1992), and Harris (1994) each had samples of 100.

The only surveys that set those samples within the context of overall visitor numbers are those produced by MORE. In its annual reports (MORI 1993b; 1994; 1995d) MORI grossed up data to represent the actual numbers of visitors in the museum on the dates when interviews were in progress. For the sake of consistency, the tables throughout the present review refer to the size of the original samples. The annual number of visitors to the V&A are presented in Table I.I below.

Table I.I: *V & A visitors, 1988-1996*

1988	996,501
1989	952,992
1990	903,688
1991	1,066,428
1992	1,182,402
1993	1,072,092
1994	1,410,938
1995	1,190,747
19%	1,226,988

*Source: MORI surveys*

Not only are the samples used in the various pieces of visitor research different sizes, they were selected in different ways, at different times of the year, represent different things, and may have even been treated differently. Heady (1984) used counted samples (every 'n'th person), particular quotas (numbers of museum leavers in certain pre-specified categories, such as age, gender, visiting alone or with others) and weighted his results.

However 'representative' samples may appear to be, many of the visitors studies referred to in his review are not necessarily representative of all those visiting the Museum. Few reports consider children and MORI's reports exclude educational groups (see sub-sections 2.1 and 2.4).

### 1.2.2 Time covered

Several of the research reports (for example, Heady, 1984; Grant, 1987a; MORI, 1993b; 1994; 1995d) present data collected over a given year. These tend to be collated from a series of waves intended to show variations in attendances over the year. In the present review, however, these have been recalculated to present average findings for the whole of the year in question.

### 1.2.3

#### Questions asked

Even when surveys ostensibly cover the same issues, they may ask different questions. They, consequently, produce different sorts of data. For example, while Heady (1984) asked about 'general interest, reputation of museum' as a reason for visiting, other researchers offered as many as five categories to explore the same territory: 'visiting other sites in area'; 'part of sightseeing, part of planned schedule'; 'in London visiting, or on business'; 'for interest, wish to visit museum or art gallery, have an enjoyable day out'; 'a museum had not yet seen, heard about, wanted to see it for a long time, had not been for a long time'. Although they overlap, the categories from such reports do not match exactly.

Even in MORI's series of annual surveys, the questions vary slightly from year to year. Consequently, it is not possible to pursue certain issues over time. These include, for example, questions about which other museums and galleries V&A visitors had been to over the past two years, and whether they took advantage of the free guided tours.

### 1.2.4

#### Quality of data

The quality of data in the reports studies vary enormously. Some surveys are exemplary. What makes them so is the clarity of their questions, and large samples (which produce more accurate results). They include Grant (1987a), Heady (1984), and the various reports produced by MORI. These tend to be surveys most frequently referred to in the tables. Indeed, MORI's surveys are particularly useful in that they provide consistent data year-on-year.

Others pieces of research provide a rather less clear picture of visitors at the V&A for various reasons. These include the following:

- Some surveys fail to describe whether prompts were used in questions to respondents and, if so, what these were (NOP, 1989; Mass Observation, 1989).
- Some speculate about information which could have been requested from visitors. This includes 'broad assessments of visitors' age', the age at which visitors left full-time education, and visitors' nationality (see, for example, Barnard, 1989).

- While 'enjoyment' and 'satisfaction' play a major part in encouraging visitors to return, it is difficult to attribute meaning to these concepts. Nevertheless, many visitor studies commonly ask about these, and the V&A research is no exception. Several studies note that visitors 'found what they expected', although what this was, was rarely interrogated (see, for example, Creative Research, 1997).
- Answers to such questions as 'Is there enough or would you like more or less written information in the gallery?' tend to become meaningless with time especially since no indication tends to be given as to how much information existed at the time of the survey.
- Sometimes questions, prompts, or presentation are ambiguous. Neary (1991), for example, asked 'Have you been in here long enough to know what this gallery is about?' The same question was also asked by Kahn and McManus (1992) whose use of it was criticised in British Art and Design Team (1992).
- Several studies involved observations of visitors' behaviour. The methods employed tend to vary from study to study. The volunteers contributing to Kahn (1991), for example, used different ways of observing and recording visitors' behaviour. This resulted in what the author refers to as an 'impressionistic, rather than a definitive picture of the use of the gallery'.

### 1.2.5 Presentation of data

The way in which data are presented in this review occasionally departs from the way in which it was presented in the original surveys. Some statistical data have been recalculated to enable comparisons to be made.

Inevitably, some pieces of research present more detailed sets of data than others. Consequently, comparisons have occasionally had to be made on the basis of a 'lowest common denominator'. The great strength of this, however, is that it makes it possible to pull out the key findings across a range of surveys.

It should be noted that due to recalculations and rounding up, percentages in the tables in the present review will not always add up to 100. Moreover some surveys offer respondents numerous choices. By definition, these do not up to 100.

Given the differences in the composition of samples and methods of research used, it cannot be assumed that differences in the percentages shown in individual tables represent trends or patterns. The main exception to that rule is the year-on-year data collected by MORI which are consistently collected and analyzed in the same way.

The tables used in the present review cite the date of research and show unweighted bases wherever possible. References are made to the table numbers in the original source wherever possible. Details of weighted bases survey methods, and the time-scales to which surveys refer are given in Annex 2.

### 1.2.6 Comparing the research

The various surveys of individual galleries, displays, and departments are compared wherever possible. What makes them comparable is their use of similar, if not the same, methodologies. McManus and Kahn's (1992) survey of the Tsui Gallery; Kahn and McManus's (1992) survey

of the Nehru Gallery: and, Harris' (1994) survey of the Samsung Gallery provide one such grouping. Their findings are consistently compared throughout this review.

13v the same token, MORI's survey of Bethnal Green (1995b) was based on a similar methodology to the same organisation's year-on-year surveys of the V&A itself. As stated above, although this Museum is not a main focus of the present review, MORI's research is used occasionally to illustrate particular points.

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## 2. VISITOR PROFILES

This section comprises an overview of data pertaining to V&A visitors' profile with respect to visitors' socio-demographics; their place of residence; history of visiting the V&A; educational background and specific interests; as well as the types of groups visiting the Museum.

Various reports provide statistics about V&A visitor profiles. Those largely referred to in this section include: Breakwell and Wright (1994); Creative Research (1997); Grant (1987a); Heady (1984); Harris (1994); Kahn and McManus (1992); McManus and Kahn (1992); Mass Observation (1989); MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995b; 1995d). Needless to say, not all the reports focus on each of the socio-demographic characteristics described above.

### 2.1 VISITORS' SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS

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This refers to visitors' gender; age; social class; working status; and, ethnic origins.

#### 2.1.1 Gender

The gender of the V&A's visitors is shown in Table II.I. Overall the ratio of female to male visitors is about 6:4. Thus, the V&A visitor profiles (1993-1995) are made up of rather less males and rather more females than the British population as a whole. By comparison with the V&A visitors profile, there appears to be a higher female to male ratio at Bethnal Green.

**Table II.I Visitors to the V&A by gender, with comparisons to the GB population**

									percentage
source	Grant 1987	Mass Obs 1989	MORI 1993		MORI 1994		MORI 1995		MORI 1995
museum/ GB population	V&A	V&A	V&A	GB	V&A	GB	V&A	GB	Bethnal Green
male	39	44	38	47	40	48	43	48	30
female	61	56	62	53	60	52	57	52	70

*sources. Heady (1984: 2.1)*

*Grant (1987a: 3)*

*Mass Observation (1989)*

*MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995b; 1995d)*

base	3,081	1,219	1,103		1,150		1,078		520
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*sources. Heady (1984: 2.1)*  
*Grant (1987a: 3)*  
*Mass Observation (1989)*  
*MORI (1993b;1994; 1995b; 1995d)* 30

The gender of people visiting specific galleries is considered in Table 11.11. The figures for the 'Tsui, Samsung and Glass Galleries suggest a similar ratio of female to male visitors to that of the V&A, as a whole (Table II\_I). The Nehru Gallery appears to have attracted rather higher percentage of males at the time of the survey, and the British Galleries appear to have attracted an equal proportion of males and females

Table II.II Visitors to **particular galleries at the V&A by gender**

					percentage
source	McManus & Kahn 1992	Kahn & McManus 1992	Harris 1994	Breakwell and Wright 1994	Creative Research 1997
gallery	Tsui	Nehru	Samsung	Glass	British
male	38	45	39	40	50
female	62	55	61	60	50
base	100	100	100	1,002	252

*sources: McManus and Kahn (1992)*  
*Kahn and McManus (1992:1)*  
*Harris (1994)*  
*Breakwell and Wright (1994: Appl, 4)*  
*Creative Research (1997:1)*

### 2.1.2 Age

The surveys brought together in Table II.III consider the age of visitors to the V&A. In comparison with earlier surveys, MORI's data for 1993, 1994 and 1995 suggests a general fall in the percentage of visitors aged up to 24 and an increase in those aged 45 or more. The data also shows that in 1994 and 1995 the over 55s were the largest group of visitors.

The V&A visitor profile outlined in Table II.III suggests that in 1995 the percentage of those attending aged up to 24, and 25-44 was very close to that of the British population as a whole. The table only includes surveys using broadly compatible age brackets. Heady (1984), which is not included, identified the largest age group of visitors (28 per cent) as comprising people aged 21-30. This survey also found that 6 per cent of visitors were aged up to 10, and that 23 per cent were aged 11-20. Heady's quota-based samples of visitors' leaving particular galleries included children aged 11 and over in school parties. Count-based samples used were also weighted to compensate for low response rates obtained from children aged ten and under.

Heady's attention to children highlights a particular difficulty with those surveys included in Table II.III. These do not necessarily represent an accurate picture of V&A visitors, since the extent to which they attempted to capture all age groups is unclear. Grant (1987a), for example, groups visitors under 12 years in one category. Nobody under 14 was interviewed by Mass Observation (1989) or MORI (1993, 1994, 1995b), although MORI (1995d) provides a breakdown of the ages of children under 15 who visited Bethnal Green during the survey period. These apparent exclusions may, however, merely reflect the visitor studies' convention of only interviewing one person in every personal party of visitors, or adherence to a market research code of practice which mitigates against surveying children.

While Grant (1987a) includes educational groups, MORI explicitly excludes them, even to the extent of excluding school groups from the Bethnal Green survey (MORI. 1995d). Although 12 per cent of the Mass Observation (1989) sample visited the Museum because of their studies, no indication is given as to whether this survey included people visiting in educational groups.

**'Table II\_III Visitors to the V&A by age, with comparisons to the GB population**

	Grant	Mass	MORI		MORI		MORI		percentage
source	1987	Obs	1993		1994		1995		MORI
museum/ GB	V&A	V&A	V&A	GB	V&A	GB	V&A	GB	Bethnal
population									Green
up to 12	4								
12-24	28								
14-24		31		15		20		17	
up to 24 (a)	–	–	20	–	18	–	18	–	9
25-34	21	24	22	19	20	18	21	20	28
35-44	16	19	20	16	17	15	18	17	33
45-54	13	13	16	15	22	14	19	15	14
55 +	18	14	21	35	23	33	25	31	16
base	3,081	1,219	1,103		1,050		1,078		520

*sources: Grant (1987a.3)  
 Mass Observation (1989)  
 MORI (1993b;1994; 1995b; 1995d)*

*note: a) MORI (1993b) reports the GB figures for 14-15 and 16-17 as 'non applicable'*

The time of year when surveys are carried out might, in principle, determine the ages of those participating. The following list shows when the surveys included in Table II.III were carried out. All, however, appear to have included periods when school children would have been free to visit the Museum.

Grant (1987)                      April, May, June, 1986  
    July, August, September, 1986  
    October, November, December, 1986  
    January, February, March, 1987

Heady (1984)                      December 1979 - December 1980

Mass Observation (1989)	July - August November - December
MORI (1993a)	April-May (including week days, weekends and Easter) August - September (including week days, weekends and Bank Holiday) October - November (including week days, weekends and half-term)
MORI (1994)	March -April (including week days, weekends and Easter, and during the Fabergé exhibition) August (including weekdays, weekends and during the Pugin exhibition) November -December (including weekdays, weekends during the Streetstyle exhibition)
MORI (1995b)	April (including weekdays, weekends and Easter) August-September (including weekdays, weekends and the Genius of Wedgewood and Japanese Studio Craft exhibitions) November -December (including weekdays, weekends and during the Jain Art from India exhibition)
MORI (1995d)	January - February August - October

Table II.IVa identifies the largest proportion of visitors to the Tsui, Nehru and Samsung Galleries at the time of the surveys as being aged between 21-30. There is no evidence that Khan and McManus (1992), McManus and Khan (1992), or Harris (1994) interviewed any children under 15. While school children may have been free to visit the Museum during the course of the Khan and McManus (1992) and McManus and Khan (1992) research, it is less likely that they would have been available during the two week period used by Harris (1994).

Samsung	Harris (1994)	November 1993 - January 1994 (weekends and weekdays)
Tsui	McManus and Kahn (1992)	December 1991 - February 1992 (weekends and weekdays)
Nehru	Kahn and McManus (1992)	December 1991 - February 1992 (weekends and weekdays)

Table II.IVa Visitors to particular galleries **at the V&A** by age

			percentage
source	McManus & Kahn 1992	Kahn & McManus 1992	Harris 1994
gallery	Tsui	Nehru	Samsung
15-20	14	9	5
21-30	34	29	30
31-40	18	22	26
41-50	17	16	20
51-60	7	10	6
61+	9	14	13
base	99	100	100

*sources: McManus and Kahn (1992:3)*  
*Kahn and McManus (1992: 5)*  
*Harris (1994.1)*

Breakwell and Wright (1994) and Creative Research (1997), whose data for the Glass Gallery and the British Galleries, is shown in Table II.IVb, both found that the largest group of visitors were those aged between 25 and 34. The former have a category for visitors 'under 18'. The youngest interviewees recorded in the later were aged I6-I7.

Breakwell and Wright's (1994) research is described as having been carried out during a period which included one day in April and a five day period in September 1994. Creative Research's (1997) work was carried out between December 1996 and January 1997.

Table II.IVb Visitors to particular galleries **at the V&A** by age

		percentage
source	Breakwell & Wright 1994	Creative Research 1997
gallery	Glass	British
under 18	3	2
18-24	17	19
25-34	26	25
35-44	17	20
45-54	18	19
55 +	20	15
base	1,017	252

*sources: Breakwell and Wright (1994:3)*  
*Creative Research (1997:1)*

### 2.1.3 Social group

Data on the social group of visitors is given in Table I I.V. The findings of all the surveys for the V&A, South Kensington, are broadly consistent. They show that between 80 and 85 per cent of visitors are ABCs, and that between 10 and 19 per cent are C2 and DEs. The 1995 data from MORI suggests an increase in the percentage of ABs and a fall in C1s.

The 1995 V&A visitor profile comprises over twice as many ABs, and around a third more C1s than are present in the British population as a whole. By the same token, it is considerably under representative of C2s and DEs.

Table II.V Social group of visitors to the V&A, with comparisons to the GB population

									percentage
source	Mass Obs 1989	MORI 1993		MORI 1994		MORI 1995		MORI 1995	Creative Research 1997
museum/ GB population	V&A	V&A	GB	V&A	GB	V&A	GB	Bethnal Green	British Gallery
AB	41	41	18	42	18	48	21	36	47
C1	44	39	22	41	23	35	27	28	40
C2	7	10	28	8	28	4	23	16	9
DE	9	9	31	5	31	6	29	16	
n/a									4
base	552	582		620		1,078		520	252

sources: *Mass Observation (1989)*  
*MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995b; 1995d)*  
*Creative Research (1997:2)*

The only survey of an individual gallery which shows the social groups of its visitors is Creative Research's (1997) investigation of the British Galleries. As the table shows, it presents an even more disparate picture than that shown in the 1995 data for the V&A as a whole, or Bethnal Green.

### 2.1.4 Working status

Only one survey considered the working status of UK visitors (Mass Observation, 1989). It found that nearly half the Museum's visitors worked full-time (Table I.VI).

Table II.A<sup>1</sup> Working status of UK visitors to the V&A

	percentage
source	Mass Obs 1989
full-time	49
part-time	10
student	25
housewife	0
unemployed	6
hase	552

source: Mass Observation (1989)

### 2.1.5 Ethnic affiliation

In general, the only surveys which consider the ethnic affiliations of visitors are those concerned with visitors to galleries showing non-Western artifacts - the Tsui, Nehru and Samsung Galleries. Creative Research's (1997) was, exceptionally, also concerned with the ethnic profile of visitors to the British Galleries (Table II.VII). There is no record as to whether these galleries attract more ethnic minority visitors than the V&A as a whole.

The vast majority of visitors to all the galleries shown in Table II. VII were White/ Europeans. They accounted for between 67-89 per cent of visitors in each of the galleries shown in the table. Less than 20 per cent of visitors to any of the galleries were of Asian descent (including those listed under 'other' categories).

Table II.VII Visitors to particular galleries at **the V&A** by **ethnic** affiliation

				percentage
source	McManus & Kahn 1992	Kahn & McManus 1992	Harris 1994	Creative Research 1997
gallery	Tsui	Nehru	Samsung	British
White /European (a)	67	81	84	89
Black/ Afro-Caribbean	3	1	3	0
Black/ Asian (b)	3	10	6	1
American	11		1	
Chinese	6		-	1
other	10	8	6	7
n/a				4
base	100	100	100	252

*sources: McManus and Kahn (1992:3)  
Kahn and McManus (1993:4)  
Harris (1994:4)  
Creative Research (1996/97)*

*notes: a) Creative Research (1996/97) refers to 'White' b)  
Creative Research (1996/97) refers to 'Indian'*

## 2.2 VISITORS' PLACE OF RESIDENCE

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With the exception of Mass Observation (1989), the sources brought together in Table II.VIII show that the majority of visitors to the V&A are UK residents. They represent a fluctuating percentage of the V&A visitors year-on-year.

**Table II.VIII Percentages of V&A visitors resident in the UK and overseas**

							percentage
source	Heady 1984	Grant 1987	Mass Obs 1989	MORI 1993 (a)	MORI 1994	MORI 1995	MORI 1995
museum	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	Bethnal Green
resident in the UK	70	55	46	53	60	50	93
resident overseas	30	44	54	47	40	49	7
base	1,000	22,434	1,219	202,400	1,050	1,078	520

*sources: Heady (1984: 2.10)*  
*Grant (1987a)*  
*Mass Observation (1989)*  
*MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995b; 1995d)*

Tables II.IXa, II.IXb and II.X provide breakdowns of the place of residence of V&A visitors within the UK and overseas.

Table II.IXa Regional distribution of visitors to the V&A resident in the UK, as a percentage of all visitors

					percentage
source	Grant 1987	MORI 1993	MORI 1994	MORI 1995	MORI 995
museum	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	Bethnal Green
Greater London	26	22	23	20	60
rest of SE	13	14	18	15	26
<i>sub total</i>	39	36	41	35	86
rest of UK	15	16	19	15	6
total percentage (a)	54	52	60	50	92
base	22,434	1,103	1,050	1,078	520

sources: Grant (1987a)

MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995b; 1995d)

note: a) The percentages shown in this line relate to those shown in the penultimate line of Table II. VIII under 'resident in the UK'. Slight changes in percentages are due to rounding up

Table II.IXb Regional distribution of visitors to the V&A resident in the UK

		percentage
source	Heady 1984	Mass Obs 1989
Greater London	59	56
rest of South East	20	17
<i>sub total</i>	79	73
Yorkshire & Humberside	2	
North & North West	4	12
Midlands & East Anglia	8	16
Wales & South West	5	–
Scotland	2	
Northern Ireland	–	–
<i>sub total</i>	21	28
base	700	1,219

Sources: Heady (1984.2.9)

Grant (1987a)

Table II.IXa which examines the regional distribution of UK visitors as a percentage of all visitors, shows that the percentage of visitors to South Kensington from London and the rest of the South East fluctuated between 35 and 41 per cent between 1987 to 1995. (This is precisely the market that Daniels (1994) was concerned to promote.) These findings are in line with those shown in Table II.IXb which only refers to UK visitors. That table shows that visitors from London and the rest of the South East represent over 90 per cent of all UK visitors.

The data for Bethnal Green shown in Table II.IXa shows that more than twice as many (87 per cent) of all its visitors come from London and the South East, than go to the V&A, South Kensington.

Table II.X suggests that the majority of overseas visitors to the V&A are from North America, and that they account for between 19 and 23 per cent of all visitors to the Museum. A slightly lower percentage come from Europe.

Given the findings of Tables II.VIII, II.IXa, and II.IXb, it is not surprising that UK residents represent the majority of individual departments and galleries. Between 36 and 55 per cent of visitors to the individual galleries surveyed came from London and the South East.

**Table II.X Overseas residence of visitors to the V&A, as a percentage of all visitors**

					percentage
source	Grant 1987	MORI 1993	MORI 1994	MORI 1995	MORI 1995
museum	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	Bethnal Green
Europe	17	16	14	17	4
North America	19	23	20	22	2
rest of the world	8	8	6	10	2
total	44	47	40	49	8

*sources: Grant (1987a)  
MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995b; 1995d)*

*note: a) The percentages shown in this line relate to those shown in the penultimate line of Table II. VIII under 'resident overseas'. Slight changes in percentages are due to rounding up*

Table **11.XI** Visitors to individual departments and galleries at **the** V&A by place of residence

							percentage
source	Pearson 1995	Olsson 1992	McManus & Kahn 1992	Kahn & McManus 1992	Harris 1994	Breakwell &Wright 1994	Creative Research 1997
gal/ dept	NAL	Prints	Tsui	Nehru	Samsung	Glass	British
UK: London	64	43	38	32	21	-	21
within 40- 50 miles of London (a)	13		17	8	15	-	17
other UK	11	22	16	26	19		17
<i>Total UK</i>	88	65	71	66	55	64	55
Overseas: Europe	-	16	10	16	22	-	19
elsewhere	-	19	18	18	23	-	24
<i>Total o'seas</i>	12	35	28	34	45	36	43
base	606	139	100	100	100	100	252

*sources: Parson (1995)  
Olsson (1992)  
Gardiner (1989:4)  
McManus and Kahn (1992:3)  
Kahn and McManus (1992: 5)  
Harris (1994:3)  
Breakwell and Wright (1994: Appl, 6)  
Creative Research (1997:3)*

*note: a) Pearson (1995) refers to 'within a hour's travel from London' and 'more than an hour's travel from London', and Creative Research (1997) refers to the South East/ Home Counties*

## **2.3 VISITORS' HISTORY OF VISITING THE V&A, THEIR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND SPECIFIC INTERESTS**

### **2.3.1 Visiting the V&A**

According to Table II.XII the percentage of visitors identified as being first-timers appears to have been fairly consistent since 1989 (between 50 and 53 per cent of all visitors) with the exception of 1994. Visitors to Bethnal Green are more likely to have been before (62 per cent) than those going to South Kensington.

Table II.XII Percentage of visitors to the V&A who been before (a) and the number of visits made

							percentage
museum	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	Bethnal Green
Source	Heady 1984	Grant 1987	Mass Obs 1989	MORI 1993	MORI 1994	MORI 1995	MORI 1995
first time	47	35	53	51	45	50	34
been once	8	–	10	11	11	12	22
been 2-4 times	13		11	16	17	16	24
been 5 or more times	32		15	21	25	23	16
sub total	53	65	36	48	55	49	62
don't know			12				
average			3.95				
base	1,000	1,885	1,219	1,103	1,050	1,078	520

*sources: Heady (1984: 2.12)*  
*Grant (1987a)*  
*Mass Observation (1989)*  
*MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995b; 1995d)*

*notes: a) Heady (1984) refers to those who had 'visited before'; Grant (1987) refers to 'previous visits'; Mass Observation (1989) refers to visits in last two years; MORI (1993a;1994;1995b) refers to visitors having 'been before'; and, MORI (1995d) refers to visits made during the 'last two years'*

Heady (1984) suggested that the proportion of visitors who had been before increases with age (Table II.XIII). He found that 63 per cent of visitors over 41 had been before as against 27 per cent of those aged under 10. MORI (1993b), for example, confirmed Heady's (1984) findings. This survey also considered the likelihood of return visits by London residents (78 per cent) and by people accompanying children (58 per cent).

Table II.XIII Percentage of **visitors** to the V&A **who had visited** before, **by age**

age in years	percentage	base
up to R)	27	60
11-20	39	230
21-30	56	280
31-40	60	160
41+	63	270

*.source: Heady (1984.8.1)*

Relatively few pieces of research consider how often people had visited particular galleries previously. The exceptions include surveys of the Glass Galleries and the British Galleries. Not surprisingly, Breakwell and Wright (1994) found that the vast majority of visitors to the new Glass Gallery were first-timers. While Creative Research (1997) found that a high proportion of visitors to the British Galleries were first-timers (76 per cent). This report found that, on average, return visitors had been to the galleries five times (Table II.XIV).

**Table II.XIV Number of visits previously made to the British Galleries**

	percentage
first time	76
second visit	8
more than four visits	14
average no of visits	4.7
base	252

*source: Creative Research (1997:12)*

### 2.3.2 Visitors' educational background

Heady (1984) and Mass Observation (1989) found that a high proportion (55 per cent and 32 per cent) of V&A visitors had been educated to the ages of 20 and 21 (Table II.XV). They are likely to have undertaken higher education. Despite the disparities between the two survey's findings, both provide stark contrast to the figures for the general population from the General Household Survey (1980) cited by Heady, and shown in the table for the sake of comparison.

Table II.XV The terminal education age of visitors to the V&A

			percentage
source	Heady 1984	General Household Survey 1980	Mass Obs 1989
museum/ general population	V&A	GB	V&A
16 or less	30	79	7
17-20	25	13	
21 or over	45	8	
17-21			25
22+	–	–	38
still continuing	–	–	28
base	420		1,219

.sources: *Heady (1984: 2.8)*  
*Mass Observation (1989)*

Table II.XV1 The terminal education level of visitors to the V&A

		percentage
source	Grant 1987	Creative Research 1997
museum/ gallery	V&A	British
Secondary: completed still taking	22 4	33 ..
First degree: completed still taking	30 10	38
Post-Graduate: completed still taking	21 6	22 -
n/a	7	3
base	1,185	252

source: *Grant (1987a: 6)*  
*Creative Research (1997:2)*

Grant (1987a) and Creative Research (1997) describe visitors' educational background by the educational level achieved (see Table II.XVI). This report found that 67 per cent had been, or

were currently engaged in higher education. Forty per cent had completed, or were taking a first degree and 27 per cent had completed, or were taking, a post-graduate degree. Visitors to the British Galleries were found to comprise a slightly higher percentage who had completed their education at secondary and first degree levels (33 and 38 per cent respectively).

### 2.3.3. Visitors' educational specialisms

Heady (1984) found that 26 per cent of visitors who had been in full-time education at 17 or over had studied 'visual arts', and over 60 per cent had taken arts subjects.

**Table II. XVII Main subject of studies during last two years of full-time education by visitors who completed education at age of 17 or over**

	percentage (a)
visual arts	26
other arts subject	35
science	18
other or general studies	45
base	500

source: Heady (1984:2. 7)

note: a) The percentage column in this tables adds up to more than 100 per cent because some visitors named more than one subject area

### 2.3.4 Specialist occupations

Few pieces of research consider the occupations of visitors. Exceptions include Gardiner, (1986); Pearson (1995) and Olsson (1992) which examine National Art Library and the **Print** Room users. Although these studies fall outside the remit of the present review, their findings pertaining to artists, craftspeople and designers are considered in Section 8.

### 2.3.5 Specialist interests

According to Table XVIII, around a third of visitors to the Tsui and Samsung Galleries (34 and 31 per cent respectively) and nearly half of Nehru Gallery visitors (48 per cent) claimed to have a special interest in the subject displayed. Fifty nine per cent of visitors to the British Galleries were classified by researchers as 'specialists'.

Table II.XVIII Visitors to individual galleries at the V&A with special interests

				percentage
source	McManus & Kahn 1992	Kahn & McManus 1992	Harris 1994	Creative Research 1997
gallery	Tsui	Nehru	Samsung	British
yes	34	48	31	59
no	66	52	69	41
base	100	100	100	252

sources: *McManus & Kahn (1992:18)*  
*Kahn & McManus (1992:22)*  
*Harris (1994:22)*  
*Creative Research (1997:1, 8)*

Of all those visitors who expressed a 'special interest' in the contents of these galleries (Table II. XIX) the largest proportion of visitors to Tsui, Nehru and Samsung Galleries cited the art or objects, and their own personal experience (visits to the country, or their 'roots'). Creative Research (1997) describes the interests of visitors to the British Galleries rather differently citing 'amateur concerns' as the table shows

Table II.XIX Categories of interest of visitors to individual galleries at the V&A

				percentage
source	McManus & Kahn 1992	Kahn & McManus 1992	Harris 1994	Creative Research 1997 (b)
gallery	Tsui	Nehru	Samsung	British
art/objects	44	27	26	–
personal experience	22	52	23	–
study and teaching (a)	16	2	16	7
topics	9	15	16	–
professional concerns	9	4	16	8
amateur concerns				15
other		–	1	–
base	32	48	31	252

sources: *McManus and Kahn (1992:18)*  
*Kahn and McManus (1992:22)*  
*Harris (1994:22)*  
*Creative Research (1997:1, 8)*

note: a) *Creative Research (1997) refers to courses being undertaken*  
b) *This column does not add up to 100*

### 2.3.6 Wider interests

Only a very small percentage of those surveyed were found to belong to the Friends of the V&A or the V&A Club (Table II.XX).

Table II.XX Membership of the Friends of the V&A and the V&A Club

		percentage
source	Grant 1987	Mass Obs 1989
yes	5	5
base	1,885	1,219

*sources: Grant (1987a)*

*Mass Observation (1989)*

Friends are considered in other pieces of research. For example, Daniels (1994) profiles the Friends as they were in 1993, Creative Research (1997:13) sought to find out whether visitors (o the British Galleries were members of other organisations whose holdings or interests were related to those of the British galleries.

Inquiries into visitors' wider interests are presented in Table II.XXI. Visitors' most popular interests, according to Mass Observation (1989), included cinema, theatre, painting and sculpture, classical music and history. MORI's (1993b) interviewees also cited cinema, theatre, classical music and gardening. Other very popular activities included two options not offered by Mass Observation - international travel, and fine wine and food. The differences between Mass Observation and MORI can be partly explained by the fact that one survey presented interviewees with more options than the other.

Table II.XXI The wider interests of V&A visitors

		percentage
source	Mass Obs 1989(a)	MORI 1993
cinema	66	62
theatre	65	56
painting/ sculpture	64	29
classical music	51	41
history	50	–
design, craft	46	31
photography	45	–
fashion	41	28
pop	36	28
sports + fitness	57	36
gardening, home	30	39
jazz	30	15
ballet + dance	42	17
opera	27	20
contemporary dance	15	–
international travel		48
fine wine and food		39
none of these	–	5
base	552	1,043

*sources: Mass Observation (1989) MORI (1993)*

*notes: a) Mass Observation (1989) refers to UK visitors only*

While visitors to the V&A were likely to have visited other museums in South Kensington during the 12 months prior to going to the V&A, Table II.XXII suggests that they were even more likely to have visited the National Gallery and the British Museum. The Tate Gallery and the Royal Academy were also popular destinations. The figures in the table cover both UK and overseas residents, and are taken from different seasons.

Table II.XXII Visits to other sites in the last 12 **months**

			percentage
source	Grant 1987	Mass Obs 1989	MORI 1993 (b)
British Museum	44	47	34
Science Museum	22	21	15
Natural History Museum	25	27	12
Geological Museum	10	8	
National Gallery	50	52	35
Tate Gallery	–	55	32
Royal Academy	–	45	16
Design Museum	–	14	–
Harrods	45	40	41
Mme Tussauds	13	10	13
Design Centre	25	–	–
base	1,885	1,219	1,103

*sources: Grant (1987a: 18)*  
*Mass Observation (1989)*  
*MORI (1993)*

*note: a) in the month/s preceding the interview*  
*b) MORI was concerned with whether visitors had planned to go anywhere else in South Kensington or Knightsbridge 'today', or we planning to do so*

The vast majority of visitors to the British Galleries (68 per cent) claimed that they did not visit, and were not planning to visit, any other museums or collections with similar holdings to those of the British Galleries (Creative Research, 1997:13).

## 2.4 TYPES OF GROUPS VISITING THE V&A

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V&A surveys tend to categorise visitors according to whether they come on their own, accompanied by friends, family or other adults, or whether they visited as part of an organised or educational group. Creative Research's research of the British Galleries (1997) sought to classify visitors rather differently. This study refers to them as family groups: specialists; independent learners; overseas visitors; UK residents, and those who had planned or had not planned to visit the galleries. Other target groups were included within these overlapping categories, such as further and higher education groups; school groups; groups from ethnic minority communities (non-White); and local residents (see Table II.XXIII). This system is intended to provide a more sophisticated basis for planning new developments.

**Table II.XXIII Categories of visitors to the British Galleries**

	percentage (a)
specialists	23
independent learners	62
family groups	31
overseas	44
UK	56
planned visit	27
not planned visit	73
base	252

*.source: Creative Research (1996:6)*

*note: a)This column does not add up to 100*

Given the preponderance of the system used amongst the majority of the V&A visitor studies reviewed in the present document, the same system has also been used to describe visitors to the British Galleries below.

According to Table II.XXIV between 26 and 31 per cent of people visiting the V&A, South Kensington, do so on their own. Between 64 and 72 per cent were accompanied by friends or family. As can be seen, MORI suggested that no visitors came in organised groups in 1993, whereas 7 per cent came in such groups in 1994, and 3 per cent in 1995.

Table II.XXIV **Proportion of visitors visiting alone** and with different groups

							percentage
sources	Heady 1984	Grant 1987	MORI 1993	MORI 1994	MORI 1995	MORI 1995	Creative Research 1997
museums	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	Bethnal Green	British Galleries
alone	26		28	36	31	7	46
with friends	24						18
with family	38	–	–			–	30
with others in personal party	–	–	72	64	64	91	1
<i>sub total: personal parties</i>	88	94	100	93	95	98	95
with organised party of 10 or more	–	–	–	7	3	2	-
with school party	6	–	–	–	–	–	1
with organised party	6	1	–	–	–	–	-
with educational or school party	–	6	–	–	–	–	3
<i>sub total. organised parties</i>	12	7	0	7	3	2	4
average party size	–	–	2.4	2.2	2.1	3.4	-
base	1,000	1,885	1,103	1,050	1,078	520	252

*sources: Heady (1984) 2.13*  
*Grant (1987) 4*  
*MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995b; 1995d)*

*note:* a) excludes educational visits

The pattern of visiting is different at Bethnal Green, where less than 10 per cent of visitors were on their own, and over 90 per cent were with friends or family.

Despite the introduction of admission charges in 1986, the V&A has continued to provide free entry for educational groups. Table II.XXV summarises the Education Department's records of booked visits (including self-guided visits). With the caveat that the number who made bookings may not be the same as the number that actually attend it, nevertheless, appears that the MORI figures shown in Table II.XIV may misrepresent the situation. As stated elsewhere, this data appears to exclude respondents under 15 and explicitly excludes organised educational groups.

Table II.XXV Summary of group bookings by group type

						numbers
date	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97
Schools groups	734	864	957	1,321	1,087	1,381
individuals	-	-	-	46,721	41,390	41,390
Universities groups	389	157	516	341	256	485
individuals	-	-	-	9,438	6,519	11,807
Art colleges groups	-	-	-	179	102	159
individuals	-	-	-	7,041	4,113	5,029
FE colleges groups	-	207	-	333	174	419
individuals	-	-	-	9,241	4,706	10,203
Adult groups groups	158	180	-	251	183	345
individuals	-	-	-	6,296	4,714	7,669
Other groups groups	420	100	71	208	325	78
individuals	-	-	-	4,446	10,562	10,566
Total groups	1,710	1,613	1,744	2,753	2,127	3,182
Total individuals	54,000	51,000	55,492	88,852	75,774	93,814
Total visits to V&A (000s)	1,140	1,321	1,303	1,309	1,133	1,198
percentage of people visiting in booked groups	4.7	4.5	4.3	6.8	6.7	7.8

source: Education Department (1997)

## 2.5 NON-VISITORS

No specific data has been compiled on non-visitors. Some refer to members of the public who may or may not have been to the V&A, but these tend not to develop any investigations into their interests or motivations. For example, as part of a tracking exercise tracing the effectiveness of an advertising campaign for the V&A on London Underground, Elston (1998) identified people who had never visited the V&A. But, no cross tabulations were made in this study of this group's awareness of the V&A - whether the adverts had inspired them to visit the V&A, which places they had visited in the past year, etc. The same is true of other reports which touch on non-visitors.

Some reports, such as NOP (1989), Market Behaviour (1991), MORI (1993a) refer to potential visitors. But, it is sometimes unclear whether the detailed references and comments cited in these reports are by lapsed visitors or those who have never been to the V&A.

An idea of non-visitors profile can be gleaned from the profile of visitors presented in Section in particular their gender (Table II.10); age (Table II.III); social group (Table IIV); place of residence (Table II.VIII, Table II.IXa, Table II.IXb); and, their educational background (Table II.VXV).

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### 3. VISITOR LEARNING

This section considers types of learning and learning outcomes. Relatively few of the surveys addressed these issues. Those which consider visitors' learning include Breakwell and Wright (1994, 1995); Creative Research (1997); Grant (1987a); Harris (1994); Heady (1984); Kahn and McManus (1992); McManus and Kahn (1992). The subject is also raised in The Far Eastern Department (1987).

#### 3.1 TYPES OF LEARNING

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Learning is generally presumed to be implicit in visitors' experience. Nevertheless, each report approaches the issue of learning in a different way. McManus and Kahn (1992); Kahn and McManus, (1992); Harris (1994) and Breakwell and Wright (1994;1995) specifically asked visitors if their visit had made them more aware of the subject of the displays they had looked at. These reports tended to focus on four ways in which that new awareness might be acquired: entertainment and enjoyment; reading the information provided and looking at the displays, using new technological applications, and touching.

Creative Research's (1997) survey of the British Galleries was unusual in that one of its stated objectives was to examine learning in the galleries. This survey used a broad definition of learning which included 'seeing things in a new light', acquiring 'new information', and 'gaining practical inspiration'.

##### 3.1.1 Enjoyment

Heady (1984:7.12) considered the relationship between visitors' finding individual galleries interesting and the importance they attached to learning. This research found that most people who thought that the galleries were interesting were also likely to have felt that they had learnt something from their visit. They regarded this as distinct from just having enjoyed looking. The same distinction between learning and enjoying looking is also manifest in Creative Research (1997). As one of that study's interviewees stated:

*I just wanted to look and appreciate, not learn.*

Other pieces of research assumed that the two activities could be separated. Comments by visitors to Bethnal Green (MORI, 1995d), in particular, suggest that many primarily viewed the Museum as a place of entertainment, although most felt that there was also an educational element to many of the exhibits:

*While they [the children] are having fun, they are educating themselves.*

*Absolutely. I think they [the children] like the surprises - things they recognize, things*

*they don 't recognize. Learning about things they don 't know about.*

### 3.1.2 Reading the information **provided, and looking** at the displays

Some of the surveys assume that there is a necessary relationship between learning and reading the information provided. For example, on the basis of observation alone, the paucity of visitors to the Chinese Export Gallery reading the 'main gallery panels', prompted the Far Eastern Department (1987) to conclude

*that a large number of visitors did not know what that were looking at in the broader sense.*

McManus and Kahn (1992:12) were less concerned with the fact that visitors were seen not to be reading plans. Despite the fact that over three quarters (77 per cent) of visitors had not read the Tsui Gallery plan and were, therefore, apparently not alert to the themed character of the exhibition as they entered the Gallery, by the time they were leaving, 45 per cent were aware of this characteristic (Table IV.VI)

Some pieces of the qualitative research also presented visitors as identifying that learning resides in reading. Grant (1987a), for example, quoted two visitors to the effect that they regarded the Museum as insufficiently 'educational' because of the paucity of information provided. One suggested that the Museum could be

*organised to create an educational museum, and less of a 'warehouse' of all the artifacts collected by the V&A.*

And, the other complained that:

*the exhibits lack educational value. Virtually no information is provided about the 'why's' and 'how's' about historical background, development, etc. In short, it turns out to be very much a nineteenth century museum.*

In other respects, the manner in which things were displayed was important. According to a visitor to the British Galleries (Creative Research, 1997):

*Some places you go to these days are so lively that you really appreciate how life was lived. Here you have to work it out for yourself.*

In effect, visitors were asking for more informative displays and more considered information. As one Bethnal Green visitor (MORI, 1995d) put it:

*It would be of interest to me to see how other toys are put together, and it would tell me more about the history of certain toys as well, and games .*

### 3.1.3 New technological applications

The 64 per cent of visitors to Samsung Gallery who used the video, found it easy to use - with one exception (Harris, 1994:20). In general, those volunteering comments about the video tended to be critical:

*I didn't find the videos informative. They are just visual. They give no real insight into peoples' cultural differences...*

*It would have been nice to have had someone talking on the video - explaining what was going on.*

The survey of the electronic information system for the Glass Gallery (Breakwell and Wright, 1995) found that between 20 and 32 per cent of people felt that they knew no more about various aspects of glass as a result of using the computer terminals; between 62 and 67 per cent knew some more'; and, between 5 and 13 per cent thought they knew 'a lot more'.

### 3.1.4 Touching

MORI (1993a) found that many existing and potential visitors to the V&A were disappointed that displayed objects could not be touched. Although realising the potential damage touching might cause, for some visitors the restriction appears to have diminished their experience:

*I think that it is important for everybody, because you like to get the sensation of touching things. I don't know about everybody else, but I like to feel the history. I don't think that there is any point in going somewhere that is all nice and pretty and you can't actually feel it.*

*But it is also dangerous too, because the thing can be wrecked. But, you do want to feel things sometimes.*

As Table III.I shows, McManus and Kahn (1992) found that 40 per cent of visitors to the Tsui Gallery were aware that there were touchable objects.

**Table III.I Visitors' awareness of touchable objects in individual galleries**

		percentage
source	McManus & Kahn 1992	Harris 1994
gallery	Tsui	Samsung
aware	40	36
base	100	64

*.sources: McManus and Kahn (1992:20)  
Harris (1994:9)*

Of those who were aware that there were touchable objects, three quarters felt that touching increased their appreciation of the object:

*It's not everyday that you touch something that is 500 years old.*

Slightly fewer visitors to the Samsung Gallery were aware of the existence of touchable objects. But, those who were tended to be excited by the prospect. As one commented:

*Hands-on is the most important aspect to learning.*

## 3.2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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The ways in which the various surveys describe learning outcomes vary. These include focusing on visitors' recall of objects and information related to them, their identification of themes in the galleries, increasing their awareness, and rating their own learning outcomes.

### 3.2.1 Visitors' recall of objects and information related to them

Several researchers tested visitors' recall of objects from particular displays. Such tests might be perceived as being more about visitors' ability to recall things rather than demonstrating the longer term educational value of the display. None of the surveys actually describe what proportion of the objects displayed visitors were able to remember.

Eighty three per cent of visitors to the Tsui Gallery recalled at least one object. These tended to be clothes and textiles, Buddhist objects, and ceramics. Visitors were also likely to identify these as their favourite objects (McManus and Kahn, 1992:10). All the interviewees in the Nehru Gallery recalled items. These were mostly fabric and clothing; paintings; jewellery and jewelled objects and one particular object, 'Tipu Sultan'. This selection similarly echoed visitors' listings of their favourite objects. It is unclear how many objects visitors to the Samsung Gallery remembered.

McManus and Kahn (1992: 12) and Harris (1994: 13) also considered whether visitors were aware of the themes which were used as organising principles in the displays examined. Over 70 per cent were aware of such themes in the Samsung Gallery, as were 45 per cent of visitors to the Tsui Gallery. However, in asking which themes visitors had attended to, McManus and Kahn (1992) wondered whether they were, in fact, alerting them to the very existence of the themes for the first time.

After their visit, 71 per cent visitors to the Nehru Gallery recognised the term Mughal (Kahn and McManus, 1992:18). However, only 37 per cent identified the period that the display covered correctly (Kahn and McManus, 1992:16). They constituted half the 74 per cent who attempted an answer to the question 'Can you give me a rough indication of the period of time covered by the displays in the Gallery?'

In surveying the British Galleries, Creative Research (1979) sought to find out what visitors thought the galleries 'were about', and were asked to identify themes. One in five (19 per cent) were unable to identify any themes (Creative Research 1979:29). However, 81 per cent suggested one or more themes. The most popular of these were 'Britishness' or 'Englishness' (identified by 32 per cent) and 'furniture' (identified by 35 per cent).

Visitors to the British Galleries were also asked to describe the organization of the galleries - something that would presumably influence what they learnt. As Table III.II shows, 39 per cent assumed that the Galleries were arranged chronologically. The same percentage perceived no ordering principle.

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However, the researchers observed that there were inconsistencies between the descriptions of the period covered in the leaflet-guide and the prologue section

Table 111.11 Visitors' *views* on the organization of the British Galleries

	percentages
chronological order	39
objects	8
historical period	6
series of rooms	4
designer	1
other	1
don't know	12
none	39
base	252

source: *Creative Research* (1997:30)

### 3.2.2 Increasing awareness

In general, the surveys which asked if visitors had increased their awareness of the subject displayed, found that most said they had. However, the questions asked were essentially leading these results, as the following, cited from McManus and Kahn (1992), demonstrate:

*Has your visit to this exhibition made you more aware of Chinese art and history?*

*Has the exhibition made you feel interested enough to try to discover more about China if you get the chance? If 'Yes', what would you like to find out?*

In response to these questions, 77 per cent of visitors surveyed in the Tsui Gallery, for example, stated that were more aware of Chinese art and history than previously (McManus and Kahn, 1992:14). And, 71 per cent wanted to find out more about China, in particular its treasures, history, culture, making things, religion and symbolism and artistic expression (McManus and Kahn, 1992:15-16). Sixty five per cent said that they would welcome access to more information:

*English people don't know a lot about foreign people and history.*

*Even a note to say there is more information available in the bookshop would help.*

By the same token. the same researchers found that 62 per cent of visitors to the Nehru Gallery had been prompted to speculate on the diversity of Indian culture:

*It raised my consciousness I had the picture of India as destitute, poor, unclean and full of beggars. This is very different.*

*One ends up smiling at the tomfoolery of people who came to instruct them on civilization.*

*Originally I wasn 't quite sure who followed whom in Indian history. Now I've been several times, the queries have been cleared up.*

*I had not fully understood the Mughal Empire before. The exhibition has made it clear.*

*I have British friends who are very surprised to see the wealth of Indian culture. It makes me feel proud to bring them here.*

When asked, 65 per cent of visitors to Glass Gallery said that they would have liked to find out more (Breakwell and Wright, 1994), and 49 per cent asserted that they would be looking out for glass exhibited elsewhere in the Museum. It appears that people who had used the electronic systems in the Gallery believed they had increased their knowledge about glass more than non-users (Breakwell and Wright, 1995).

### 3.2.3 Rating learning outcomes

Creative Research's (1997) survey of the British Galleries attempted to test learning outcomes rather more specifically than those surveys described above. This survey asked respondents to gauge how much they had learnt from their visits to those galleries on a rating of 0 -10 (the '0' indicating that they believed that they had learnt nothing, and the '10' that they had learnt a lot). This survey found that levels of learning were likely to be higher if visitors 'had a particular mission in mind'. As Table III.III shows, uninterested visitors - those who did not plan to see the British Galleries - were more likely to say that they had not learnt anything new. The same was also true of some of those who thought they already knew a lot.

**Table III. III Visitors' average levels of learning in the British Galleries, by category of visitor**

	average score
specialist	4.6
independent learner	5.4
family	4.5
overseas visitor	4.7
UK visitor	3.9
visitors who planned to see the Galleries	5.1
visitors who did not plan to see the Galleries	4.0
overall average score	4.3
base	252

source: Creative Research (1997:39)

Of those who gave the Galleries a rating of 5 or more, 25 per cent said they had learnt something about the rooms and the furniture; 22 per cent learnt about particular schools of art

or design styles: 16 per cent had increased their historical perspective, and 12 per cent described having learnt specific facts or topics.

Table III.III shows that on average, visitors gave the experience a 4.3 rating, indicating what lie researchers described as a fairly low level of learning. Their reasons for not learning more are outlined in Table III.IV.

**Table III. IV Visitors' attitudes to not learning more in the British Galleries**

	percentage (a)
came to look, not learn	44
went through fast / didn't look closely	23
knew a lot already	18
not presented in an interesting way	6
not enough information	6
other problems with information	3
not interested	4
only looked at what was of interest	1
no foreign language translation	1
no leaflets	1
should be multi-media	1
others	2
n/a/don't know	3
base	142

*source: Creative Research (1997:40)*

*note:* a) This column does not add up to 100 per cent

Creative Research (1997) categorised the responses shown in Table III.IV in three ways. The first category reflects a rather narrow interpretation of the notion of learning: 44 per cent of visitors who gave the experience a low rating (25 per cent of the total sample) did not consider looking and enjoying to constitute a form of learning (see sub-section 3.1.I). The second category includes the 18 per cent of the low scoring respondents (10 per cent of the total sample) who felt that they knew a lot already. They were likely to have been classified as specialists or independent learners. The third group of low scores reflected visitors who perceived the displays as not being sufficiently interesting or informative.

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## 4. VISITOR BEHAVIOUR

This section provides an overview of information about: the length of visitors' stay; visitors' responses to individual displays; and, visitors' use of information provided. Its intention is to consider the details of research which may have implications for planning.

Several reports provide qualitative and quantitative information about visitors' behaviour at the V&A. These include: Breakwell and Wright (1994; 1995); Creative Research (1997); Far Eastern Department (1987); Gardiner (1986); Grant (1987a); Harris (1994); Heady (1984); Kahn and McManus (1992); McManus and Kahn (1992); and, MORI (1993b; 1994, 1995b; 1995d). Not all touch on each of aspect of visitors' behaviour listed above, and many refer to them only obliquely.

### 4.1 LENGTH OF VISITORS' STAY

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#### 4.1.1. Time spent at the V&A.

The statistical surveys vary in how they present the amount of time visitors spend at the V&A, South Kensington (Table IV.I). Their findings are also different. Heady (1984), for example, suggested that 74 per cent of visitors spent less than two hours at the V&A. Later surveys, such as MORI (1993b; 1994, 1995d) suggested that the average stay was rather longer - between two hours 20 minutes and two hours 40 minutes. The MORI surveys found that between 25 and 30 per cent of visitors stay three hours or more. For the sake of comparison, the table also shows that at Bethnal Green visits tended to be shorter with 54 per cent lasting less than two hours.

Table IV.I Time spent in the V&A

						percentage
source	Heady 1984	Grant 1987	MORI 1993	MORI 1994	MORI 1995	MORI 1995
museum	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	Bethnal Green
up to 2 hours	74	52	29	33	38	54
2 or more hours						46
2 to 3 hours	18	–	41	37	38	–
2to4hours		33				
3 hours or more	8	15	29	30	25	
n/a						
average			2hrs 20mins	2hrs 41mins	2hrs 29mins	1hr 45mins
base	1,000	1,185	1,103	1,050	1,078	520



Some surveys have suggested that the amount of time visitors spend is related to their level of enjoyment and by whether or not they deliberately decided to visit (see Heady, 1984; Creative Research. 1997).

**4.1.2. Time spent in individual galleries.**

The ways in which researchers have considered the amount of time visitors spent in individual galleries depends on different methods. These tend to be approximate at best. The Far Eastern Department's (1987) survey suggested that :40 per cent of visitors spent less than a minute in the Chinese Export Gallery; that 40 per cent spent up to three minutes; and, that 20 per cent, spent more than 3 minutes. Most of the visitors to the Tsui Gallery (Kahn and McManus, 1991) were observed to stay less than five minutes.

Visitors to the Glass Gallery were estimated to spend considerably more time in the display. Thirty-nine per cent of visitors spent between 10 and 15 minutes in the gallery. As Table IV.II suggests, for some visitors, the amount of time they spent was directly related to their use of the computer terminals in the Gallery (Breakwell & Wright 1994; 1995). Visitors using these were found to be twice as likely to spend 30 minutes or more in the Gallery than non-users. No evidence was found to support the notion that video in the Tsui Gallery stimulated people to longer or more in-depth use of the Gallery (Kahn & McManus, 1991).

**'Table IV.II Estimated time spent in the Glass Gallery by whether or not visitors used computer terminals**

	time in gallery	time in gallery	time in gallery	time in gallery	percentage
	all visitors	all visitors	non-users	users	time at computer users
source	Breakwell & Wright 1994	Breakwell & Wright 1995			
1 min					13
5mins	5	2	5	1	51
10 mins	15	14	27	8	20
15mins	24	23	24	22	8
more than 15mins					8
20mins	19	23	24	23	
30mins	25	25	15	30	
60 or more mins	11	13	5	17	
base	1,009	513	157	356	358

*sources: Breakwell and Wright (1994: App 3 and 1995: App 3/26; App 5/20; App 4/26; App 4/3)*

The amount of time spent by visitors to the Samsung Gallery watching the video may also have added to the duration to their visits (Table IV.III).

Table IV.III Estimated time **visitors spent watching the video in the Samsung Gallery**

minutes	percentage
0.33	8
	27
3	39
5	14
longer	12
base	64

,source: Harris (1994:17)

The most detailed analysis of the amount of time visitors spend in individual galleries is provided by Creative Research's survey of the British Galleries (Table IV.IV). It depends on visitors' own estimation of how long they spent in the Galleries. Thirty seven per cent spent between 16 and 60 minutes on the lower floor, and 30 per cent between 16 and 60 minutes on the upper floor. Specialists and those who had planned their visit to the British Galleries were more likely to spend longer in the lower galleries than other categories of visitor. This was, however, not true of the upper galleries.

Table IV.IV Estimated time **visitors' spent in the British Galleries**

	percentage	
minutes	lower floor	upper floor
1-5	30	39
6-10	16	22
11-15	17	8
16-30	27	24
31-60	10	6
average	17.4	14.2
base	132	49

## 4.2 VISITORS' RESPONSES TO INDIVIDUAL DISPLAYS

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The following paragraphs consider the conditions under which visitors find displays attractive, MCI what prompts them to stop and look.

### 4.2.1 Finding **displays attractive**

In assessing whether visitors find galleries attractive, researchers have tended used different sets of criteria. Heady (1984: 6.5), for example, referred to: lighting; darkness; colour; spaciousness; realism; chronological sequence; lay out; building variety; tidy, bright, clean; eye catching; sense of excitement; restfulness; contents; information provided. The following paragraphs, however, focus on other, more recent studies which used different criteria.

Kahn and McManus (1992:8), for example, found that most visitors found the Nehru Gallery inviting and good to look at. Comments by just over 40 per cent of the sample suggested that this had to do with the atmosphere of the gallery, and to a lesser extent with its contents, lighting, the organization of displays and spatial organisation:

*Felt it was very restful.*

*Feels very peaceful.*

*Spectacular.*

*Overwhelmingly beautiful.*

*Elegant, stylish.*

*Inspiring.*

*Clean, easy to see, well laid out.*

*Lots of corners to explore.*

*Intimate and interesting detail.*

Similar views were expressed about the atmosphere of the Tsui Gallery (McManus and Kahn (1992) and the Samsung Gallery (Harris, 1994). Sixty three per cent of the visitors to Glass Gallery found it 'very visually pleasing' and 30 per cent, 'quite visually pleasing'.

### 4.2.2. **What prompts visitors to stop and look**

At best, several of the surveys considered in the present review provide a tangential view of visitors responses to the displays. According to the Far Eastern Department (1987) roughly 50 per cent of those coming into the former Chinese Gallery passed straight through. Heady (1984: 8.9) for example, found that the visitors were more likely to stop to look in more galleries if accompanied by family than if accompanied by friends or alone.

Because Kahn and McManus (1992:10) perceived the Nehru Gallery as partly functioning as a passageway between the café and exit, this report, exceptionally, sought to find out what

prompted people to stop there. Fifty five per cent were attracted by the objects and the quality of the display itself; and, 45 per cent, because of a previous interest. Those attracted by the objects and qualities of the displays, were most likely to be seduced by the atmosphere (see above) and the fabric and clothing displayed. Other features cited included the 'beauty' of the objects, the evident 'craftsmanship', the paintings, the art and history, the quality of the display and one particular work, 'Tipu Sultan'.

Visitors to the British Galleries were observed to be particularly attracted to certain objects, such as the 'Great Bed of Ware' (Creative Research, 1996).

#### 4.3 VISITORS' USE OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED

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The provision of information tends not to rank highly as a major reason for visitors' finding either the V&A as a whole, or individual galleries, attractive. Indeed, Heady's (1984:6.5) survey of visitors to individual galleries suggests that fewer than 5 per cent regarded the provision of information as a reason for finding galleries attractive. But, while the availability of information tends not to be considered as something which makes the V&A attractive to visitors, its absence is nevertheless identified as problematic.

MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995) found that well over half disagreed with the proposition that 'There is not enough information to explain the exhibits' (55 to 60 per cent). This suggests that the majority thought that there was enough information (see Table IV.V).

MORI also found that between 29 and 31 per cent of visitors agreed that 'There is not enough information to explain the exhibits'. Heady (1984: 6.12) also found that between 36 and 51 per cent of the visitors to the four individual galleries he studied would have liked more information. And, Grant (1987a: 23c) found that 9 per cent of visitors considered that what they regarded as a paucity of information had contributed to their visits being worse than expected.

**Table IV.V Visitors who agreed or disagreed with the proposition 'There is not enough information to explain the exhibits'**

			percentage
source	MORI 1993	MORI 1994	MORI 1995
agree	31	28	29
disagree	55	62	60
base	1,103	1,050	1,078

source: MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995b)

##### 4.3.1 Use of information provided in individual galleries

The surveys which consider visitors' use of information and interpretation tend to be those that focus on individual galleries or departments. They include: Breakwell and Wright

1994:1995); Creative Research (1997); Far Eastern Department (1987); Harris (1994); Heady (1984); Kahn and McManus (1992); and, McManus and Kahn (1992).

Assessments as to the percentage of visitors using the information provided vary. Heady (1984: 6.11) suggested that the majority of visitors to individual galleries (over 80 per cent) looked at some of the printed information provided. Other reports proposed that this is more likely to be true of a rather lower percentage of visitors.

The Far Eastern Department's (1987) survey of visitors to the Chinese Export Gallery found that less than 2 per cent of visitors read the 'main gallery panels'. The numbers reading the 'thematic labels' were higher. Most visitors spending up to three minutes in the gallery 'glanced at them', whereas all of those spending more than three minutes read more than one label - in some cases, all the labels provided. The authors concluded that the main factor governing whether labels are read or not is positioning, with those at waist or eye level being the most popular.

The use that visitors to the British Galleries made of the information provided is described in Table IV.VI below. It provides a consistent picture of around half the visitors (between 43 and 53 per cent) looking closely at some of the information provided.

**Table IV.VI Use of information by visitors in the British Galleries**

			percentage
looked at or read:	displays	information panels	labels
closely at most	4	6	4
closely at some	53	43	51
quickly at most	16	6	4
quickly at some	16	16	21
hardly at all	11	29	20
base	252	252	252

source : *Creative Research (1997: 23.24, 25)*

#### 4.3.2 Use of plans provided in individual galleries

Both McManus and Kahn (1992) and Kahn and McManus (1992) found that 77 per cent of visitors to the Tsui and 76 per cent of visitors to the Nehru Galleries were unaware of the gallery plans, which set out the thematic nature of the presentations (Table IV.VII). Not all of those who had seen them used them. In fact, respectively only 8 per cent and 14 per cent of visitors had used them.

'Table IV.VII Visitors' awareness and use of plans **provided in** individual galleries

		percentage
	Tsui	Nehru
	1992	1992
aware (use)	23 (8)	24 (14)
not aware	77	76
base	100	100

*sources: McManus and Kahn (1992:11)*  
*Kahn and McManus (1992:15,24)*

#### 4.3.3 Use of panels provided in individual galleries

The vast majority of visitors in the Nehru Gallery (86 per cent) and half of those in the Samsung Gallery were aware of the panels (Table IV.VIII). A total of 56 per cent of Nehru Gallery visitors used them, compared to 32 per cent of Samsung Gallery visitors.

**Table IV.VIII Visitors' awareness and use of panels in individual galleries**

		percentage
source	Kahn & McManus 1992	Harris 1994
gallery	Nehru	Samsung
aware (use)	86 (56)	50 (32)
not aware	14	50
base	100	100

*sources: Kahn and McManus (1992:15,24)*  
*Harris (1994.8)*

#### 4.3.4 Use of labels provided in individual galleries

Around 90 per cent of visitors to the Tsui, Nehru and Samsung Galleries read the labels. As Table IV.IX shows it was generally felt that these labels provided the right amount of information. However, 28 per cent of visitors to the Nehru Gallery felt that not enough information was provided. Labels in the Nehru Gallery were considered more easy to find and to be written in a more friendly tone than those in other galleries.

Table IV.IX Visitors' **attitudes** to labels **in individual galleries**

			percentage
source	McManus & Kahn 1992	Kahn & McManus 1992	Harris 1994
gallery	Tsui	Nehru	Samsung
not enough information	19	28	12
right amount of information	69	68	60
too much information	2	4	0
friendly and conversational	14	65	10
too academic	4	11	0
easy to find	20	78	18
difficult to read	4	17	0
base	90	90	87

*sources: McManus and Kahn (1992:21)*  
*Kahn and McManus (1992:19)*  
*Harris (1994:15)*

Seventy five per cent of visitors to the Glass Gallery read the case labels, and 93 per cent of these were satisfied with them (Breakwell and Wright, 1994).

#### 4.3.5 Use of new technological applications provided in individual galleries

There was almost unanimous agreement amongst volunteers observing visitors in the Tsui Gallery (Kahn and McManus, 1991) that the video in the Gallery was 'exhaustively' used by a range of ages, nationalities, groupings and genders. Some visitors are reported to have spent ten minutes or so watching.

The survey of the Samsung Gallery (Harris, 1994) and the first survey of the Glass Gallery (Breakwell and Wright, 1994) - shown in Table IV.X - found that the majority of visitors were aware of new technological applications and that respectively 64 and 63 per cent of visitors to those galleries had used them. However, their comments suggested that at least some of them would have appreciated clearer instructions:

*Some instructions would have been helpful.*

*I didn't realise touching the screen would turn it on.*

Table I\ .X Visitors' awareness and use of videos/electronic information systems in individual galleries

		percentage
source	Harris 1992	Breakwell & Wright 1994
gallery	Samsung	Glass
aware (used)	(64)	65 (63)
base	100	999

*sources: Harris (1994:16)  
Breakwell and Wright (1994:30; 32)*

The most detailed examination of visitors' use of such applications is Breakwell and Wright's second survey of the Glass Gallery (1995). This research surveyed responses to the electronic information system and the CD ROM, 'The Story of Glass'.

While not considering whether the terminals made the Gallery more attractive, this report found that computer users were more likely to find the terminals themselves attractive than non-users (Table IV.XI).

**Table IV.XI Whether visitors to the Glass Gallery found the computers attractive**

			percentage
Attractive:	all visitors	users	non-users
yes	61	70	40
no	22	17	33
don't know	17	14	27
base	483	342	135

*source: Breakwell and Wright (1995: App 3/11; App 4/4; App 5/6)*

Seventy five per cent of the sample had accessed the electronic label information. Of those 88 per cent liked the amount of information, and 90 per cent liked the type of information available. However, 12 per cent were unhappy with the speed of the programme and considered it too slow. This resulted in frustration and boredom with the system. Moreover, only 53 per cent of the users had accessed the interactive CD ROM programme, 'The Story of Glass'. Breakwell and Wright (1995) suggest this was probably because the information about what the terminals had to offer was inadequate.

Over 90 per cent of the visitors who had not used the system, had at least noticed the terminals. Most had no strong aversion to using them, although one in five said they did not want to. Non-use was largely identified as having to do with visitors' limited time in the Gallery, their reasons for coming, their knowledge of glass, and their general reactions to computers. Breakwell and Wright (1995) considered it unlikely that the Museum could convert most non-users to becoming users. But, they thought that those non-users who had attempted usage might be converted if better instructions were provided. The report suggests encouraging people to touch the screen and explaining that it is responsive to pressure rather than heat.

#### 4.4 VISITORS' RESPONSES TO THE INFORMATION PROVIDED

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Table IV.IX (above) suggests something of visitors' responses to the design, contents and quantity of information in the Tsui, Nehru and Samsung Galleries.

Heady's (1984, 6.22-23) was the only survey to consider in detail how the information provided affects visitors' interest according to how it is pitched. He found that most visitors interviewed (60 per cent plus) judged the information provided to be for people like themselves, rather than for people who knew less or more. People who felt that the information was pitched at the right level for them tended to find galleries more interesting than those who felt it was pitched too high. People who thought the information was pitched below them, however, found the galleries just as interesting as if it had been pitched at the right level. In short, visitors who have difficulty in sustaining their interest in galleries tend to be those for whom the information provided is too advanced. Although Harris (1994) found that at least one visitor to the Samsung Gallery objected to the tone of the panels - 'a bit patronising' - no attempt was made to consider the impact this might have on visitors' attitudes to the V&A.

## 5. VISITORS' AWARENESS OF, USE OF, AND RESPONSES TO, THE V&A'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS

### 5.1 VISITORS' AWARENESS OF, AND USE OF, THE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS

Various surveys considered the V&A's provision of education programmes and events. Heady, for example, looked at whether visitors were aware of the V&A's public services (Table V.I). As might be expected, first time visitors were less aware of public lectures, the library, and the availability of expert opinions, than those who had been before.

Table V.I Visitors' awareness of the V&A's public services before the start of their current visit

		percentage (a)
Visitors who were aware that the Museum:	first-time	others
put on public lectures	28	77
had a library open to the public	16	41
had expert staff who give opinions	21	59
base	496	534

*source: Heady (1984.10.6)*

*note: a) These do not add up to 100*

MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995d) considered whether visitors had heard of, or attended, the free guided tours, the free gallery talks, or the Museum's courses or lectures (Table V.II).

Around half the visitors to the V&A were not aware of the existence of any of these (50 per cent in 1993; 46 per cent on 1994; 54 per cent on 1995). Nor were they aware of the Friends of the V&A or the South Kensington Museums Ticket either.

MORI only asked about the free guided tours in 1993. However, as Table V.II shows from 1993 to 1995, between 22 and 26 per cent of visitors had heard of the free talks, and between 24 and 32 per cent had heard of the courses and lectures. Moreover, an increasing proportion of visitors who had heard of these talks used them. In 1993 it was one in ten, and, in 1995 it was one in four. The proportion of visitors who had heard of the courses and lectures and who attended them was the same in 1995 as it was in 1993 - one in five. Mass Observation (1989) found that 5 per cent of visitors had attended courses and talks.

Less than a third of visitors to Bethnal Green had heard of the audio-guide (27 per cent), and less than half (46 per cent) had heard about the programmes for children.

Table V.11 Whether visitors had heard of (and attended) the V&A's educational programmes and events

				percentage (a)
source	MORI 1993	MORI 1994	MORI 1995	MORI 1995
museum	V&A	V&A	V&A	Bethnal Green
free guided tours	36 (9)			
free gallery talks	22 (2)	22 (3)	26 (6)	–
courses or lectures	24 (5)	32 (4)	24 (5)	–
none heard of	50	46	54	
audio-guide				27
any programmes for children	–			46
base	1,003	1,050	1,078	520

source: MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995b; 1995d)

note: a) These do not add up to 100

## 5.2 VISITORS' RESPONSES TO THE V&A'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS

There is very little information about visitors' responses to the educational programmes and events. Qualitative research suggests that attitudes vary (MORI, 1993a). People who had been on guided tours enjoyed them.

*'...Let's go on a guided tour to get the feel of the place'. And it was very useful because a lot of the exhibits you look at and are not totally aware of what they are about, and so it was nice to have some of them pointed out and told the history...*

However, others had reservations about joining a guided tour.

*I feel that personal discovery has got a lot to do with walking around this place. And not having to be hanging on to someone's every word to learn something. That is far too arduous, having to listen to someone, and I don't particularly want to do that when I come for the day out.*

Some visitors felt that they would like the option of making more personal arrangements - either by having a more private or personal tour, or being able to ask staff in the gallery about the things that interested them:

*It would be nice to have someone you could go to and say 'could you come with me and*

*show me this'. That would be a real luxury.*

*But if you have questions, there is no one who can answer them... If you really want to go into depth you need a person with knowledge...*

The presence of tours was even said to intrude on visitors making their own way around:

*That why I dislike it , because when I go to a gallery there are 35 people around one painting. And somebody lecturing at the top of their voice, and you can't get near the picture.*

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## 6. ORIENTATION AND INFORMATION

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This section considers visitors' attitudes to finding their way around the V&A and the information that the Museum provides.

There is relatively little quantitative information on these issues, although Heady (1984) and MORI (1993b; 1994 and 1995b) provide some hard data. This section, therefore, primarily draws on qualitative research. In particular, it refers to Daniel (1994); Grant (1987a); Market Behaviour (1991); MORI (1993; 1995d); and NOP (1989). Visitors' comments from these reports have been selected to indicate both the range and types of opinions expressed. It should be noted that many of these studies sought to find out what visitors wanted or how they thought things might be improved, and that in many respects their comments appear negative.

### 6.1 ORIENTATION

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**Table VI.I Visitors who agreed or disagreed with the proposition 'Is it difficult to find the way around' the V&A**

			percentage
	MORI 1993	MORI. 1994	MORI 1995
agree	48	49	58
disagree	44	39	40
base	1,103	1,050	1,078

*sources: MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995b)*

Visitors were often critical of the various forms of V&A's orientation. As one put it:

*I think some of the sign posting is extremely misleading, and it is not clear what exactly is in there.*

But, for some the difficulty of finding their way around positively added to the enjoyment of their visits, not least because it enabled them to discover the unexpected:

*Finding your way round, although it isn't exactly simple, that is part of the fun really. You can miss so much if you knew exactly which way you had to go.*

*It's quite nice to be somewhere without signs everywhere.*

*That is one of the excitements of coming to a museum, finding your way around. It's a*

*personal opinion, but I wouldn't want to see it changed. I enjoy that bit. I have the map*

*in my hand if I really want to find something, but it is too much hard work to follow the map. It is a sense of discovery.*

Other comments were more specific about visitors' requirements. They have been grouped below under three headings: providing an overview; clearer signage; and, suggestions for improvement.

### **6. 1.1 Providing an overview**

Some visitors' primary concern was to get a grasp of what was available so that they could plan their visits:

*I wasn't quite sure whether I had a good comprehensive look at what was on view.*

Others called for:

*Greater clarification when certain museums [galleries] are not open.*

or

*A more comprehensive, illustrated guide so that you know what you would find.*

*Signs to indicate what floor [you] are on.*

*Better and more 'You are here' types of map.*

*A big board with 'What's on where in the Museum', and perhaps a five minute video show about its collections and layout.*

### **6.1.2 Clearer signage**

Visitors' comments refer to various ways in which the Museum might help them orientate themselves better. Some refer to their failure to get to particular parts of the Museum. Other comments made more general points about signage; the provision and quality of maps; and needing more help from staff.

*Labelling the rooms. It was difficult to follow the plan.*

*Better signing to find my way out - I lost my friend. I*

*never found my way to the second floor.*

*A clearer signposting system. The ariel maps are not very easy to follow. It is wearisome to spend 20 minutes trying to find something.*

*Clearer and more directional signs. The map didn't help us at all.*

*The ability of wardens and senior staff to direct us. We were misdirected to such an inefficient and bewildering degree that it took us three quarters of an hour to get from **the** restaurant to the Textile opinion centre. Only the last of the seven people [we asked] really knew where it was.*

The call for clearer signage also applied to Bethnal Green.

*It's not easy to find your way and see everything.*

*I think all too often you seem to go into these exhibitions and you are left wondering which way to go next.*

Some of the visitors to Bethnal Green were unable to recognize the orientation signs as such: *I*

*didn't actually realize they were signs. I thought they were part of the ceiling. . I*

*though they were drape's and flags.*

### **6.1.3 Suggestions for improvement**

Several visitors' suggestions about ways to improve orientation involved the use of colour:

*I think a more coherent use of colour. Perhaps areas where they have carpeting down, or walkways should be a different colour.*

*I think also some of the signposts are difficult to follow... there is this little notice somewhere. Alright, you don't want to detract from the object, but they are in black and white and they are nondescript. Perhaps the toilets should be in green or whatever and the restaurants in a different colour.*

## **6.2 PROVISION OF INFORMATION**

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Many comments by visitors about the provision of information at the Museum reflect their concern to acquire knowledge as a result of visiting the Museum. Their remarks range from the conceptual nature of the information to pragmatic matters about its legibility. The following sub-sections cover the basic requirements that visitors have of information, its tone, presentation, and suggestions for improvement.

### **6.2.1 Basic requirements**

*It's as if it's only a catalogue of a museum - not a good learning experience.*

*A more general introduction about each exhibit... as it's an introduction to what you are about to see.*

### **6.2.2 Contents and presentation**

Several comments are about visitors' experience of using the information provided at the time of their visits:

*It's not enough to assume that the exhibits speak for themselves. It*

*feels like being thrown in 'at the deep end'.*

*Labels written for the non academic visitor.*

*Rather pretentious and dogmatic explanations for various exhibits.*

*What I found difficult too is reading some of the labels...*

*Printing could be larger - would help.*

*Recorded telephone information - they were not working.*

Other comments comprise visitors' suggestions about improvements:

*Update it.*

*Explain themes and motifs, etc.*

*More of an interest in the subject .*

*More effort to develop ideas behind the display.*

*More information.*

*More explanations.*

*Better descriptions.*

*More imaginative labelling with less code numbers, and visually more attractive.*

Up to 60 per cent of Heady's (1984: 6.I3) sample thought that the presentation of information could be improved. Their preference was for information which would set the exhibits in context, give the origins and history of the exhibit itself, and provide background information about the times in which it was made. As one visitor put it:

*So much of the history has to be incorporated to understand. The whole lifestyle is incorporated into the work.*

Some visitors wanted to know more about why things were made, how they were made, and what they were made of. Visitors to Bethnal Green, for example, asked for a more informative and technical approach to certain exhibits:

*We have noticed in exhibitions in the States they have people actually working in things. It would be nice to see someone making shoes, or watch a blacksmith. It would keep a lot of people interested.*

### **6.2.3 Suggestions for improvement**

Several visitors thought that the V&A might introduce new forms of information. Suggestions include:

*Multilingual signs explaining the exhibits.*

*Videos explaining some exhibits, some hands-on items... to... make it more interesting for the young in particular.*

*Suggest you consider renting taped guided tours. Guides*

*in particular rooms informing us about displays.*

Some compared the information available at the V&A with that provided by other museums.  
Comments touched on the provision of a narrative and detail:

*... not enough narrative. It could be made more attractive and easy to understand. Take a /c.c.s on from the Science Museum.*

*Clearer, more detailed notes with presentation concerning background of some items - have seen much more detailed descriptions in many other museums.*

## 7. SHOPS, RESTAURANTS AND OTHER FACILITIES

This section considers visitors's attitudes to the shops, restaurants and other facilities at the V&A.

There is relatively little hard data on the use of these services, with the exception of Grant (1987a), Heady (1984), and MORI (1993b; 1994;1995b; 1995d). This section, therefore, draws heavily on qualitative research. In particular, it refers to Daniel (1994); Grant (1987a); Market Behaviour (1991); MORI (1993; 1995d); and NOP (1989). Visitors' comments from these reports have been selected to indicate both the range and types of opinions expressed.

### 7.1 SHOPS

During the period studied in this review between 59 and 75 per cent of visitors to the V&A visited the Museum's shops. Between 21 and 31 per cent bought something. By comparison, 51 per cent of visitors to Bethnal Green had bought something from the shop.

**Table VII.I Visitors who went into a giftshop at the V&A during their current visit**

							percentage
source	Heady 1984	Grant 1987	Mass Obs 1989	MORI 1993	MORI 1994	MORI 1995	MORI 1995
museum	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	Bethnal Green
visited any gift shop (a)	59	64	60	75	75	69	-
bought something	21	-	30	36	31	25	51
base	1,003	1,885	1,219	1,103	1,050	1,078	520

*sources. Heady (1984:10.10; 10.13) Grant (1987a:16)  
Mass Observation (1989)  
MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995d)*

*notes: (a) The statistics from Grant (1987a) and Mass Observation (1989) refer to the percentage of visitors patronising' the main museum shop*

According to the MORI data for 1993-1995 (Table VII.II), visitors who used the main gift shop ,at the V&A consistently rated the range of merchandise as good (83 per cent). However, over the years increasingly fewer shop users considered the speed and efficiency of service good (55 per cent in 1993 falling to 43 per cent in 1995).

Table VII.II also shows that although between 50 and 52 per cent thought that the shop offered good value for money, between 15 and 17 per cent thought it offered poor value for money.

Heady (1984) - not shown in the table - found that 39 per cent of shop users suggested improvements. in particular more space, better layout and more varied stock.

**Table VILA How visitors rated the gift shop at the V&A**

			percentage
	MORI 1993	MORI 1994	MORI 1995
rated as good:			
range of merchandise	83	83	83
layout of shop	78	-	-
speed of service	55	51	43
value for money	51	52	50
rated as poor:			
range of merchandise	5	6	6
layout of shop	6	-	-
speed of service	2	3	2
value for money	15	17	15
base (a)	827	662	453

*sources. MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995d)*

*note: a) all visitors who used the main gift shop*

Qualitative research suggests that visitors were quite explicit about their view of the shop - either in comparing it to other museum shops, or in terms of what they wanted from it.

*It's much the same as any gift shop really. It is nice if you want to buy a beautiful card for somebody or, a coffee table book*

Specific criticisms tended to cover the size of the shop, its management and, in particular, improvements to the stock.

*Larger bookshop - two levels.*

*Wider selection of postcards.*

*They could do with more postcards of what is actually here.*

*Availability of posters.*

*Better selection of prints.*

*Basic artists 'materials.*

*Finding what I wanted - not a good selection of reproduction ornaments.*

*All extensive selection of reproductions of the cast court collections with English sculpture.*

*Things to take away relating to tile exhibitions.*

*Not enough tills manned in shop.*

The shop at Bethnal Green came in for particular criticism from the point of view of its size, stock, and staff attitudes:

*You couldn't really walk around the shop. You couldn't walk in... It's stuck in the middle of two alleyways really, and what's on offer seems to be fairly limited.*

*I don 't think they have got enough things for kids.*

*The boy [staffing] the shop could have been more helpful. I'm sorry, but he could have been.*

## 7.2 RESTAURANTS

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Over the period for which data are available, between 23 and 33 per cent of visitors to the V&A used the restaurant. In comparison, about twice as many (59 per cent) visiting Bethnal Green in 1995 used the café there (Table VII.III ).

**Table VII.III Visitors who went into the restaurant at the V&A during their current visit**

							percentage
source	Heady 1998	Grant 1987	Mass Obs 1989	MORI 1993	MORI 1994	MORI 1995	MORI 1995
museum	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	Bethnal Green
used restaurant	23	37	32	33	33	30	59
base	1,003	1,885	1,219	1,103	1,050	1,078	

*sources: MORI (1993b; 1994;1995d)  
Grant (1987a :16)*

Over the period covered in Table VII.IV, restaurant users consistently rated the cleanliness of the restaurant as good (between 89 and 91 per cent). An increasingly high percentage thought well

of the service (74 per cent in 1993, rising to 83 per cent in 1995), opinion as to the range of food and drink and value for money also went up.

"Table VII.IV How visitors rated the restaurant at the V&A

			percentage
	MORI 1993	MORI 1994	MORI 1995
rated as good			
cleanliness	90	89	91
quality	79	-	-
staff service	72	76	83
range of food and drink	74	76	81
value for money	55	59	67
rated as poor			
cleanliness	2	2	2
quality	4	-	-
staff service	7	9	6
range of food and drink	9	9	5
value for money	23	22	13
base (a)	364	345	330

sources: MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995d)

note: a) all visitors who used the restaurant

Visitors' comments about the catering at the V&A cover a range of issues. These touched on its management, the type and cost of food. Some also commented on the lack of somewhere where they might eat their own food. While some are positive, like the following citation about the ambience of the restaurant, the majority of comments are, by definition, negative.

*It is spacious, especially the canteen. It is not busy and cramped like the Tate, for instance. It is quite roomy, there are nice tables and a nice floor.*

*If the family come here for lunch, you are talking about £30 for lunch. I think that is horrendous. And it doesn't really matter what your budget is, that is a ridiculous amount of money to be asking for a snack for kids who are getting a bit bored and you want to settle them down for a while.*

*Better organised restaurant.*

*Hot food is pointless if you have to wait for minutes to pay.*

*More wholefood snacks.*

*Cheaper food, less queuing.*

*An uncrowded coffee bar.*

*Like you say, calling it a restaurant, some people will think 'that is a restaurant and I can 't just get (1 cup of coffee in there'. So they would be cutting off their nose to spite their face, and turning people away because it said 'Restaurant'.*

*Less .smoking permitted.*

*Indoor snack areas for eating own food.*

### 7.3 TOILETS

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As with other facilities, visitors' comments were made in response to questions about what would make their visits more enjoyable. Those cited here refer to their location, quality and the conditions in which visitors' found them.

*Not having to walk miles to find a toilet.*

*More working toilets.*

*Better toilet facilities.*

*More bins.*

*Cleaner toilets.*

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## 8. HOW WELL THE NEEDS OF ARTISTS, CRAFTSPEOPLE AND DESIGNERS ARE MET

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There is very little data about the needs of artists, craftspeople and designers or how they are explicitly met by the V&A. In fact, amongst the body of research reviewed in the present document only the information they provide is considered here, despite the fact that research on the Print Room and the National Art Library actually falls outside the remit of this review. Only three studies specifically refer to these constituencies: Gardiner (1986), Olsson (1992) and Pearson (1995). These studies' references to artists, craftspeople and designers were made solely on the basis of their being users of the Print Room and the National Art Library.

### 8.1 ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS AS USERS OF THE PRINT ROOM AND THE NATIONAL ART LIBRARY

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Table VIII.1 provides an overview of artists and designers as users of V&A services. It suggests that they represent 22 per cent of Print Room users, but no more than 7 per cent of National Art Library users. Craftspeople are not referred to in any of the three studies described above. The statistics provided by these sources can, however, only be used with certain caveats which are described in the footnotes to the table. Art college students are also referred to in the table, although it was only Gardiner's (1986) report which distinguished between art college and other students.

**Table VIII.1 Artists, craftspeople and designers (and students) as a percentage of the users of the Print Room and the National Art Library**

			percentage
source	Olsson 1992 (a)	Gardiner 1986 (b) (c)	Pearson 1995
department	Print Room	National Art Library	National Art Library
artists	12	2	}
designers	10	4	} 7
art college students	-	15	-
base	189	6,755	624

*sources: Olsson (1992)  
Gardiner (1986:6)  
Pearson (1995:2)*

*notes. a) According to Olsson (1992), this data may not be accurate, because 'people who were students may have described themselves as artists or designers'.*

b) Respondents may have ticked two boxes on the survey questionnaire thereby describing two occupations.

c) Gardiner's survey reflects visits to the National Art Library rather than visitors. Her sample include repeat visits. Survey respondents may also have ticked two boxes on the survey questionnaire thereby describing two occupations.

## 8.2 PROFILE OF ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS USING **THE PRINT ROOM AND THE NATIONAL ART LIBRARY**

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While Gardiner (1986), Olsson (1992) and Pearson (1995) identified artists and designers amongst those using the Print Room and the National Art Library, their tables provide no detail as to the particular concerns or, attitudes of these groups. So, there is no hard data on the various aspects of artists and designers' visits - how their needs were met, their use of the indexes and catalogues, the frequency of their visits, and so on. Moreover, whilst the reports provide some qualitative details - such as, visitors' comments about what they thought of the service provided - none of these are attributed to any particular group of users.

Gardiner's (1987) text, however, provides some insight into the behaviour of artists and designers using the National Art Library. She described them as follows:

*Artists and designers... were the most infrequent users of the library. 49% were making their first visit and only 2% visited more than once a week. 81 % of those who had visited before, visited less frequently than once a month. They were the most likely group to combine a visit to the Library with one of the main galleries. They tended to be more concentrated in the 31-40 age group than other groups. They consulted general reference works most often, but periodicals are also much consulted by this group. They were the least likely group to read library material in another language, or to hold a library ticket... They were more likely than art historians or art related professionals to make photographs or photocopies of the material consulted, and they were particularly likely to find the copying service unsatisfactory... They were unlikely to use other libraries regularly when compared with other groups... They were about twice as likely to have made a phone enquiry before their visit. Among those who knew about the Archive of Art & Design the percentage of this group who claimed they would use it was the highest of any group, at 93% of those who had heard of it.*

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## 9. OTHER ISSUES ARISING FROM THE REVIEW

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This section brings together issues arising from the review of visitor research at the V&A not addressed elsewhere in the present document. It considers, in particular, the coverage of visitors' motivation in coming to the V&A, what inhibits visiting, what influences first-time and return visits, and what might make visits more enjoyable.

The coverage of these issues draws on a number of reports: Creative Research (1997); Daniels (1994); Grant (1987a); Harris (1994); Heady (1984); Kahn and McManus (1992); Mass Observation (1989); and MORI (1993a; 1993b; 1994; 1995b; 1995d); McManus and Kahn (1992); NOP (1989). Not all touch on each of the issues listed above, and many refer to them obliquely. They encompass both quantitative and qualitative data.

### 9.1 REASONS FOR VISITING THE MUSEUM

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#### 9.1.1 Quantitative research

Table IX.I shows the findings of three surveys into why people visited the V&A. They suggest that visitors are most likely to visit the V&A because of its collections, displays and, to a lesser extent, out of general interest.

Other pieces of research carried out for the V&A have broached the question of why people visit rather differently. Heady (1984), for example, considered whether visitors perceived there to be professional benefits in visiting the Museum (Table IX.II).

Table **IX.1** Reasons for visiting the V&A

			percentage
source	Heady 1984	Grant 1987	Mass Obs 1989
time and convenience		30	8
its location		33	20
general interest: sightseeing, casual visit, day out	9 21	3 6	- 17
curiosity, not been, not been for long time	5	6	13
recommended by friend	-	-	6
recommended by travel guide	-	-	4
V&A collections/displays: previous visits	5	7	-
to see specific collections	26	-	24
to see special exhibitions, new exhibits	-	13	-
interest in contents/ special exhs/ collections	25	13	-
research: for study or work purposes	7	8	12
to have objects identified/ use facilities	5	1	-
services: lectures, study days, talks, etc	-	5	-
shop or restaurant	-	4	5
bring/meet friends or relatives	11	4	-
no particular reasons, other reasons	12	7	-
no answer	-	2	-
base	1,000	1,433	1,219

*sources: Heady (1984: 3.1)*

*Grant (1987a: 13)*

*Mass Observation (1989)*

*note: Heady (1984) and Mass Observation (1989) both asked about visitors' priorities, while offering different options, whereas Grant (1987a) offered multiple choices.*

Table IX.II How going to **the V&A** would **help visitors** with their jobs

	percentage
broaden understanding	59
prepare visit with pupils, party, or provide knowledge to pass on	27
provide practical ideas	17
help in other ways	4
base	70

source: *Heady (1984:3.19)*

note: a) Those who said it would help with their job, namely 7 per cent of a sample of 1,003

Creative Research's (1997) examination of visitors to the British Galleries took a similar line (Table IX.III)

Table IX.III Why people visited the British Galleries

	percentages
personal interest	49
relationship to course being taken	12
professional interest	9
not been before	3
other	1
don't know	24
base	67

### 9.1.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research carried out amongst existing and potential visitors by MAORI (1993a) provides a more detailed illustration of why people chose to visit the V&A in particular. This research noted that there appeared to be a continuum based on visitors' familiarity and experience of the Museum, which impacted on their reasons for coming:

*I have been coming here a long time now, and I just know it is here and there is always something new going on or something I haven't seen or I walk through and there is such a wealth of information.*

*I think, the most impressive [thing] is the range it has. Most museums you go to or art galleries, they have a particular sphere, but this seems to cover everything... there is a tremendous range.*

MORI (1993a) and NOP (1989) both considered the other side of the coin, why it is that non-visitors do not go to the Museum. Their research suggested that non-visitors - people who currently visited other major museums and galleries in London, but not the V&A - required a specific reason to visit:

*...There's so much there. That is the main thing I have against it. It is unbelievable.*

*I just think I feel it is too broad. If there was one thing that I was really interested in going to see, even if I went and didn't see it, at least I would know it was there. That would be my reason for going. I would know if I could go and see the mummies in the British Museum. Quite often I would go to the British Museum and not go to that section for my entertainment. But I know it's there. I don't have a feeling about the V&A like that. I feel I might be wandering around lost for two hours trying to find something*

*At the Tate you are going to the Turners or something specific. At the V&A you are going to rummage.*

*There is such a mish mash, so much and it is so eclectic, and there are all these different things. You can't get a grip on what is there and what isn't.*

Even Grant's (1987a) survey of visitors revealed similar findings: *It*

*doesn't seem to have a sense of identity. It hasn't got a*

*'handle' if you know what I mean.*

Juxtaposing some of the reasons why people visit the V&A and why they do not, suggests that the same characteristics - the Museum's size, and the scale and breath of its collections - are perceived as both positive and negative attributes.

NOP's (1989) research amongst potential visitors found that even teachers who were not current attenders, were put off by its reputation. It seemed to them to aim for 'up-market, intellectual and very specific, even scholarly, tastes', and they regarded it to be 'stuffy and old-fashioned'. Indeed,

as MORI (1993a) revealed, one of the greatest barriers for non-visitors was the V&A's image:

*The V&A... has still got that rather elitist, rather precious, rather any, slightly fussy and slightly dowdy image. I think despite all that they have done, it is rather intellectual and elitist in many peoples' view.*

## 9.2 VISITORS' EXPECTATIONS AND WHETHER THESE WERE MET

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### 9.2.1 Rating of visit against expectation

Relatively few surveys consider the relationship between visitors' expectations and experience. Some, such as Elston (1988); Schlackman (1989); NOP (1989); and, MORI (1995c) considered what people who had not visited the Museum expected of it. Others examined what visitors expected. Heady (1984: 3.10-3.13) explored whether visitors came to see something specific and what that might be. MORI (1993a; 1994; 199d) asked which exhibitions or displays visitors' were looking forward to seeing. And, qualitative research such as that carried out by MORI (1993a, see also Daniel, 1994) and MORI (1995b), considered visitors' own personal agendas:

*I often look to see if there is any special exhibition on... then you make an effort to go to that place at that time.*

*I came to see if there was anything new.*

*I was hoping that the little one [child] will see something different.*

Only three surveys, however, sought to find out whether visitors' experience of the V&A matched their expectations. These were Grant (1987a), Mass Observation (1989), and MORI (1994). Creative Research (1997) and MORI (1995b) considered visitors' expectations and experience of the British Galleries and Bethnal Green.

The surveys used in Table IX.IV suggest that visitors have tended to regard their visits as exceeding expectations. These surveys also investigated the degree to which visits were considered better, the same, or worse than expected.

Table IX.IV Rating of visit to the V&A against expectations

						percentage
source	Grant 1987	Mass Obs 1989	MORI 1993	MORI 1994	MORI 1995	MORI 1995
museum	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	Bethnal Green
better:						
much better	21	25	29	22	26	28
somewhat better	14	24	25	24	25	28
<i>sub total: better</i>	35	49	54	46	51	56
about the same as expected	46	42	41	44	41	37
worse:						
worse than expected	13					6
much worse than expected	4	7	–			1
<i>sub total: worse</i>	17	7	5	9	6	7
net 'rated better'	18	42	48	37	45	49
base	1, 451	1,219	1,103	1,050	1,078	520

sources: Grant (1987a:22)

Mass Observation (1989)

MORI (1994; 1995b; 1995d)

*note: Strictly speaking, the surveys used in this table should not be compared. Grant (1987a) offered respondents more options than Mass Observation (1989) as to why visiting the V&A was better than expected, as expected, or worse than expected. Grant also provided multiple choices, whereas Mass Observation draws on a single options. Indeed, in the present review, Mass Observation's findings are spread across three other tables - Tables IX. V, IX. VI and IV. VII.*

### 9.2.2 Visits that were better than expected

Several first-time visitors, whose comments about the V&A were elicited in the qualitative research, were gratified by the experience. Many described having previously had the wrong impression of the V&A (MORI, 1993a):

*I had an impression before I came of a sort of imperial treasure trove... It might be quite a dusty and stuffy atmosphere. And its name evokes the British Empire and all that... I was very surprised when I arrived how pleasant it was. It was quite easy to look round. It is not a case of feeling daunted.*

*My impression was that it was a museum about Victorianism... I was very surprised to find out what was actually here.*

Qualitative research also revealed what made visits better for return visitors. The following comments cited by MORI (1993a), emphasise the importance of the scope of the collections and improvements to the ethos of the Museum:

*It is getting more lively, [ and' it is getting far more accessible, it seems to me. I think it has improved over the years... the whole atmosphere feels much lighter than it was before.*

*All that lovely silver, you couldn't see it [before]. And, that medieval section was really depressing. It is not depressing anymore.*

*I suppose the staff attitude has something to do with it....*

Other reasons why visiting the V&A, South Kensington, was better than expected are examined in Table IX.V. Based on two surveys - Grant (1987a) and Mass Observation (1989) - it suggests that visitors attributed the success of their visits to the extensiveness of the collection, the display, and the interest it holds.

**Table IX.V Why visiting the V&A was better than expected**

source	percentage	
	Grant 1987	Mass Obs 1989 (a)
museum and collection larger/more extensive	28	26
well displayed/ laid out	11	10
interesting / inspiring	8	10
better than expected	4	3
quality of museum and collection	8	3
all sorts of things	3	3
improvements	11	2
building	3	—
items in the collection	8	
special exhibitions	6	—
restaurant/shop	5	—
staff	1	
lectures, etc	2	
other	9	—
no answer	12	—
base	507	1,219

*sources: Grant (1987a:23a)  
Mass Observation (1989)*

*note: a) Does not add up to 100. See note to Table IX.IV*

### 9.2.3 Visits that were as expected

The most common reason why visits to the V&A matched visitors' expectations was because visitors had been before, knew what to expect generally, or expected it to be 'good' (Table IX.VT).

"Table IX.VI Why visiting **the** V&A was as expected

		percentages
	Grant 1987	Mass Obs 1989 (a)
knew it from previous visits	40	12
knew what to expect	9	11
expected it to be good	9	8
heard/read about it	9	
came to see specific things	3	–
had no expectations	–	4
big variety of exhibitions	–	2
some exhibitions not as good	–	2
not changed much	4	2
did not expect much	–	2
no particular reason	10	–
no answer	20	
base	641	1,219

*sources: Grant (1987a:23b)  
Mass Observation (1989)*

*note: a) Does not add up to 100. See note to Table IX.IV*

#### 9.2.4 Visits that were worse than expected

Both Grant (1987a) and Mass Observation (1989) sought to find out why visits were worse than expected (Table IX. VII ). Despite the differences in the questions asked in the two surveys, the fact that much of the Museum was under construction at the time was a major factor (Grant, 1987a):

*It was astonishing and inexcusable that such important material was not available.*

*Too many [galleries] are shut.*

*The most distressing aspect of the Museum is the constant closing of galleries without prior notice... Even one day's advance information would be a great help.*

As the Table IX. VII shows, 20 per cent of Grant's (1987a) sample blamed the layout, organisation and directions. Visitors' attitudes to information and orientation in the Museum are considered in Section 6.

Table I\ .VII Why visiting **the** V&A was worse than expected

		percentage
	Grant 1987	Mass Ohs 1989 (a)
so much under construction	34	2
criticism of amount of information	9	2
criticism of special exhibition	7	1
criticism of collection	16	
criticism of layout, organisation, directions	20	1
criticism of displays	14	1
criticism of lighting	7	1
dull/boring	6	–
crowded	3	–
not live up to reputation	4	–
criticism of donations	3	
other	7	
no answer	4	
base	248	1,219

*sources: Grant (1987a:23c)*  
*Mass Observation (1989)*

*note: a) Does not add up to 100. See note to Table IX.IV*

### 9.3 FACTORS WHICH INSPIRE RETURN VISITS OR DISCOURAGE VISITS

#### 9.3.1 Likelihood of a return visit.

Various pieces of research considered what percentage of visitors surveyed were likely to visit the V&A again. Table IX.VIII suggests that this constitutes the vast majority of visitors - 75 per cent or more.

Table IX.VIII Likelihood that visitors would return to the V&A

						percentages
source	Grant 1987	Mass Ohs 1989	MORI 1993	MORI 1994	MORI 1995	MORI 1995
museum	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	V&A	Bethnal Green
likely to visit again:						
definitely	59	58	58	59	51	75
probably	24	25	30	27	33	20
<i>sub total</i>	83	83	88	86	84	95
don't know/ undecided	10	9	8	9	11	2
unlikely to visit again:						
probably not	6	8	3	—	4	2
definitely not	*	*	*	—	*	*
<i>sub total</i>	6	8	3	5	4	2
net 'likely'	77	75	85	81	80	93
base	1,885	1,219	1,003	1,050	520	520

sources: *Grant (1987a) 27*  
*Mass Observation (1989)*  
*MORI (1993b; 1994; 1995b; 1995d)*

### 9.3.2 Factors which inspire return visits

Few surveys considered precisely what encourages or discourages visits. Surveys tend to examine visitors' enjoyment and satisfaction ratings, without exploring whether these influence visitors' decisions to return. Such reports include, for example, Grant (1987a: 19, 25); McManus and Kahn (1992: 6); Kahn and McManus (1992: 7); Harris (1994:23) and MORI (1993a; 1994;1995d).

Heady's (1984: 12.9) is the only report which analysed whether first-time visitors wanted to return by how much they had enjoyed their visit. Other reports looked for rather more precise factors which visitors' said had inspired return visits. These are shown in Table IX.IX. Despite the differences between the two surveys used in the table, both indicate that visitors would be most likely to return because of the size of the collection, study or work purposes, and visits to London.

Table IX.IX Why visitors would return to the V&A

		percentage
	Grant 1987	Mass Obs 1989 (a)
unable to see all collection/revisit/always something new	21	43
interesting	5	3
use library, research	3	–
use the collections for study, work purposes (b)	10	9
special exhibitions (b)	9	2
regular/ committed visitor	7	–
if and when in London (b)	10	11
enjoyable	7	6
like museums	2	
bring friends, relatives, visitors	2	3
location convenient	2	
lectures, study days, gallery talks	1	–
other answers	5	–
a favourite place (b)	–	7
interest in the arts (b)	–	4
no answer	10	
base	1,227	1,219

*sources: Grant (1987a: 27)*  
*Mass Observation (1989)*

*notes: a) taken from a table which also suggests why visitors were undecided about a future visit or why it might be unlikely b) Mass Observation (1989) responses here are from UK visitors only*

Objects are central to visitors' interest in the V&A. Thirty six per cent of Grant's (1987a) sample said they would return because of the collections (lines 1, 2, and 4 of Table IX.IX).

Qualitative reports touch on other aspects of the V&A which inspire return visits, some of which only become apparent as a result of return visits (MORI, 1993a): *I like the place. Its very calm. It is very nice to come in out of the bustling world.*

As cited above, even the difficulties visitors' encounter in finding their way around is regarded by some as contributing to its charms (see also Section 6):

*I think is part of the enjoyment. You can walk into a room and see things you weren 't going to look for.*

### 9.3.3 Factors which discourage visits

Factors which discourage visits are rarely directly interrogated. Most visitors to the British Galleries found them interesting (a net 86 per cent). They particularly liked the furniture and furnishings (44 per cent); period rooms (25 per cent), and decorative art and objects (20 per cent). Those who found the Galleries uninteresting were asked to explain or describe why (Table IX.X).

**Table IX.X Why visitors to the British Galleries found them uninteresting**

	percentages
dark/gloomy, etc	39
boring/dreary/dull	17
nothing brings it to life/dead	17
not lively/too quite/too static	11
similar to stately homes	6
others	6
don't know	28
base	18

source: *Creative Research (1997.33)*

Mass Observation (1989) was the only survey about the V&A as a whole to investigate which factors discourage visits directly. Eight per cent said they would definitely not, or probably not, revisit the V&A. This was as a consequence of not visiting London, being resident abroad, and only having an interest in a specific section of the Museum.

The following paragraphs focus on visitors comments about their experience of the V&A. They cover (in alphabetical order) the costs incurred; crowding; physical access in the Museum; its location and the difficulties of parking; their dealings with staff and the visiting hours. These might all be construed as factors which discourage visits. Whilst, as the final sub-section 'Blaming themselves' shows, many visitors felt that they were responsible for not being quite up to the experience, this ultimately also serves to inhibit visiting. These comments are largely drawn from Grant (1987a); MORI (1993a) and Daniel (1994).

**Cost**  
*Cost is quite a factor really, or it is for inc.*

### **Crowding**

*in the summer I am very put off by the number of tourists in these places. I tend to avoid it in the summer... Often I just drop in for some solace during the Winter in the West End*

### **Lifts and physical access**

Visitors who were less mobile (including those with pushchairs) tended to be concerned about the lack of lifts and other aids to physical access around the Museum:

*Needs ramps for pushchairs and wheelchairs.*

*More lifts that work. Several were out of service and difficult to find. I*

*cannot use the stairs very well. A lift was hard to find.*

### **Location and parking**

*I think another thing you might say about the V&A... if you go on the Underground, all well and good, but car parking around there is a nightmare.*

*It is very difficult to park and it costs a fortune, and it puts one off slightly. I think there is a great deal of choice. Almost too much choice in a way, being in a city like this. That is what makes it difficult maybe. We have a plethora of very good things to see but... it is sometimes difficult to either afford them or get to them*

### **Staff**

*[Galleries have] been closed and the staff at the entrance didn't know.*

*More organisation [cooperation] between the Friends of the V&A and the information desk and the Ceramics Department.*

*...more gracious, helpful friendly staff.*

*An accurate response to our telephone enquiry.*

### **Visiting hours**

*Open slightly later*

*Need more time to linger over exhibits.*

### **Blaming themselves**

Typically, many visitors blamed themselves rather than the institution for not having enjoyed themselves to the maximum:

*I usually have to ask as I get lost.*

*Better knowledge of the collection.*

*Better ability to learn to navigate the Museum planning on my part. To be a little younger.*

*Not being so tired - my own fault.*

*I should have telephoned [to find out if particular galleries were open].*

*More time, that's our problem.*

*Being rather poor sighted, I found the lighting very poor.*

#### **9.4 MAKING VISITS MORE ENJOYABLE**

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Rather than looking at what actually deterred visits or what members of the public regarded as barriers to visiting. Many surveys looked at what visitors liked least. Mass Observation (1989) found that as many as 62 per cent of visitors disliked something about the V&A. This tendency was higher amongst UK visitors (66 per cent of whom disliked something) than amongst visitors in general.

Grant (1987a) considered what might make visits more enjoyable. The most frequently cited problems were the directions and sign posting, and the fact that so much was closed or under construction (Table IX.XI).

Table IX.XI What **visitors liked** least about **the visit**

	percentage (a)
directions and sign posting poor	12
so many things closed/ under construction	11
disappointing special exhibition	9
lighting poor	5
not enough time	3
cash tills intimidating	3
food and drink expensive	2
too little seating	2
too hot, lack of air conditioning	2
presentation unanimated	2
base	51

source: *Mass Observation (1989)*

notes: a) *This does not add up to 100 per cent. Other suggestions proposed by 5 per cent of visitors or fewer pertained to seating, staff, crowding, opening hours, facilities for children, merchandise, restaurant, changes to the collection, presentation and display, temperature and air conditioning, and the lighting*

Table IX.XII highlights the kinds of suggestions visitors made most frequently. They concur with the desires of potential visitors (see, for example, NOP, 1989).

Table IX.XII Most frequent suggestions about making visits more enjoyable

	percentage (a)
more information, interpretation, participation	10
galleries not being closed, better indication of which are closed	12
better directions, signposting, maps, layout	16
more time	11
no donations	10
base	1,433

source: Grant (1987: 29)

note: a) These do not add up to 100

Visitors' comments about how their visits might be made more enjoyable, cited here, refer to the environment (its temperature, layout, lighting, seating); exhibitions and displays; special provision for children; staff. Comments about other aspects of the Museum are considered elsewhere in the present review (those about the education programmes and events are considered in Section 5; those on orientation and the provision of information, in Section 6, and those about services, in Section 7).

Visitors and non-visitors interviewed for qualitative research reports often compared the V&A's facilities with those provided by other cultural organisations. Some of those comparisons are cited here. They are largely drawn from Grant (1987a), as well as MORI (1993a), and Daniel (1994). While some are positive, others are essentially negative because they were made in response to a request for suggested improvements. The comments cover **the** Museum environment, exhibitions and displays, merchandise, and provision for children. In some cases, visitors references to other museums have been added for the sake of comparison.

#### 9.4.1 Environment of the Museum

Comments about the environment are categorised in three groups - temperature, layout, lighting.

##### Temperature

*A little less drafty.*

*Less stuffy (very tiring).*

*I found it rather cold (due to renovation).*

*Turn the bloody heating down.*

*Air conditioning very uncomfortable.*

*La<sup>y</sup>out*

*Less higgledy-piggledy atmosphere - it all feels rather amateurish.*

*More logical chronological arrangement of exhibits.*

*Less ground floor devoted to Islamic and Indian arts, while important English collections are in obscure corners of the Museum and difficult to find.*

*Less confusion (workmen, noise, barricades).*

## Lighting

*Can the lighting be improved?*

*Did someone forget to pay the light bill?*

*Better lighting on exhibits with fine detail. One person with us had been warned about the dim lighting and took a torch.*

*The lighting... was nearly unbearable.*

*Some areas too dark to enjoy. Better*

*light to read the information.*

The fact that is not purely a matter of keeping light-levels low for reasons of conservation is illustrated by the reference to 'Burnt out bulbs'.

Bethnal Green visitors also wanted more light, particularly to animate the displays:

*There doesn't seem much use of light here. It would be nice to see some of the magic lanterns actually working.*

### **9.4.2 Provision for children at the V&A**

*I don't go because there isn't any specific attraction for little children... such as the dinosaurs at the Natural History Museum or the hands-on in the Science Museum. There isn't one small focus that would probably get me there and allow me to walk around and find out more.*

Some visitors to Bethnal Green felt that even there, there was insufficient in the displays to inspire children compared to other venues:

*There is no contest between things like here and Thorpe Park is there?*

*When we come here, I am watching him.... half the time he is looking, but he is passing a lot of them [the exhibits! very quickly. The other museums... he is 15 or 20 minutes on some of them.*

#### 9.4.3 Seating

*More places to sit down.*

*Some where to sit and collect one's thoughts whilst looking at the exhibits. A few chairs on which older visitors can relax from time to time.*

#### 9.4.4 Exhibitions and displays

*Better exhibitions.*

*More exhibitions.*

*Disappointed in the topics for special exhibitions.*

*Bring back the Boilerhouse exhibitions.*

*Larger [exhibition] gallery.*

*Less people.*

The exhibitions were considered by some to be:

*Very traditional and unimaginative on the whole.*

*The costume section is brilliant, but it only shows one side of life. It would be well-rounded if the 'average' person's outfits were also there.*

*Less empty show cases.*

*... very dusty.*

*Better labelling (see Section 6).*

*labels need to be larger so they can be easily read.*

*The Museum has a real problem with glass and reflections.*

*The lights reflected [in the glass on paintings] and ruined them.*

*Modernisation of display.*

*Rather more space for exhibits.*

*More accessible [exhibitions].*

Visitors to Bethnal **Green called for the displays to be more animated:**

*It is a fairly static experience, the fact you walk around a series of exhibits. I could imagine it could be animated more.*

They also wanted to be able to touch and interact with the displays to a greater degree: I

*think it would be nice to have things you can touch and listen to.*

*I think anything where you can push a button and see it move doubles the value of a visit. If you can see it doing something... then a child can see what you can make out of it.*

Several visitors compared the displays with those in other museums:

*Interpretative exhibitions as... in the Natural History Museum or... the Science Museum.*

*The only way it fails in a sense is the difficulty of seeing the actual paintings because of the awful reflections in the glass... But, if you go to the Tate Gallery or the National Gallery you don't have that problem. There you can see all the paintings immediately, but here the lighting is appalling.*

*You can't help but see what's on at the Royal Academy. Everyone is aware of it. But, to be honest, if you asked me what the last exhibition was at the V&A, I wouldn't be able to tell you... It hasn't been put over in a way that's unmissable.*

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## 10. CONCLUSIONS

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The se conclusions consider three aspects of the V&A's visitor studies: observations on the information about visitors and non-visitors; gaps in the information about non-visitors, and visitors and how the V&A might address these.

### 10.1 OBSERVATIONS ON THE INFORMATION ABOUT VISITORS AND NON-VISITORS

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The present review of visitor studies for the V&A has sought to enable museum staff to identify the profile and behaviour of visitors to the Museum for the purposes of future planning and development. In doing so, it has examined the research undertaken; produced an overview of the visitor profile over ten years; synthesized the information provided about visitor needs and behaviour in the museum; considered users and non-users' perceptions of the V&A, and look at visitors' motivation as well as barriers which impede visiting. It has suggested other issues that arise from this research; and, identified gaps in the current intelligence about visitors and non-visitors, and will now turn to how these might be addressed.

It is evident that the V&A has commissioned and carried out much research over the years, some of which is exemplary. The year-on-year MORI reports, for example, which provide accurate time-series data, are invaluable to those planning developments. Several pieces of research commissioned during the 1990s, including 'one-off' studies, have broached important qualitative issues such as visitors' attitudes to learning in the V&A, the nature of the experience that they bring with them, and their perceptions of the Museum. These are discussed below.

What is unclear about the research reviewed in the present document is what impact it has had on past planning and development at the V&A. Research is only as good as the action prompts. No plans, strategies, or reports have been included in the body of visitor studies (Annex 2) which allow any assessment of them.

### 10.2 GAPS IN THE INFORMATION ABOUT NON-VISITORS, AND HOW THE V&A MIGHT ADDRESS THESE

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As Section 5 states, no specific data has been compiled on non-visitors. How the V&A might address these depends on why it might want such information and how it would seek to use it.

### 10.3 GAPS IN THE INFORMATION ABOUT VISITORS, AND HOW THE V&A MIGHT ADDRESS THESE

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As the Introduction to the present review notes, the various visitor surveys produced for the V&A have been concerned with procuring different kinds of information: they have had different objectives; used different sizes and types of samples; referred to different periods of

time; asked different questions; and, been of varying quality. There has been no overall strategy for research - one consequence of that is that there are now certain gaps in the current state of knowledge about visitors.

The gaps are the result of statistical inconsistencies in the data; methodological differences in data collection: conceptual differences between researchers; straight omissions and insufficient detail.

It appears that certain types of information were rarely sought in the visitor studies reviewed. These pertain to certain types of visitor; aspects of visitors' behaviour and visitors' learning. Other gaps pertain to details about visitors' orientation in the V&A; factors which inspire visitors to return; and, discourage them from visiting. There are several gaps in the V&A's intelligence about non-visitors and visitors perceptions of the Museum. These apply to its image, as well as the experience of people finding their way around, factors which inspire and discourage visiting, and the relationship between visitors' expectations and their experiences.

### **10.3.1 Inconsistencies in the data**

Because of inconsistencies in the data across the various pieces of visitor research, answers to certain questions cannot easily be found or compared over a specified period. There are, for example, difficulties in interrogating something as supposedly simple as the ages of V&A visitors (Section 2).

Other inconsistencies are manifest in researchers' use of particular concepts. For example, various surveys refer to visitors with a `specialist' knowledge of given subjects. However, the defining features of a `special interest' in the research on the Tsui, Nehru and Samsung Galleries (McManus and Kahn, 1992; Kahn and McManus, 1992; Harris, 1994) appears to be very different to the qualities attributed to `specialists' visiting the British Galleries (Creative Research, 1997).

#### **Addressing the issue**

The V&A might address these issues of inconsistency by ensuring that data is collected on a consistent or easily comparable basis, and that standard meanings are attributed to particular concepts.

### **10.3.2 Insufficient data about visitor profile**

As Section 2 suggests, various categories of visitors are excluded from the V&A's visitor research. These include people below a particular age, or those visiting with an educational group (for example, MORI's year-on-year surveys). Moreover, little effort has been made to consider the ethnic affiliations of visitors.

These omissions cast some doubt on the degree to which the surveys of the V&A or of its individual galleries and departments are fully representative of the visitors to the Museum. This impression is reinforced by such studies as Heady (1984) and the Education Department's (1996) annual report which made deliberate efforts to represent children and organised groups within the overall sample.

### Addressing the issue

The V&A might address these insufficiencies by ensuring that all visitors across the board are included in surveys, or that special surveys are commissioned of excluded groups.

#### 10.3.3 Insufficient data about visitors' behaviour

The V&A's understanding of visitors' behaviour is determined by the ways in which visitors are categorised. Conventionally, this is according to age, gender, place of residence, social group, or whether they came on their own; with friends, family or other adults, or if they have visited as part of an organised or educational group (see Section 2). This typology is not sophisticated and the data produced may provide little assistance for staff targeting other groups, or planning new developments. Alternatives exist. Creative Research (1997), for example, sought to classify visitors rather differently by referring to them as: families; specialists; independent learners; UK and overseas residents; visitors who had planned or not planned their visits. It also introduced other overlapping categories, such as schools, further and higher education groups; groups from ethnic minority communities (non-White); and, local residents (those living within walking distance).

One particular example of visitors' behaviour about which little is known is how long visitors spend in particular galleries at the V&A. Estimates are generally based on researchers' or the visitors' own observations, but tend to be approximate at best.

### Addressing the issue

Given that the V&A's understanding of visitors' behaviour is determined by how visitors are categorised, the Museum might wish to expand its understanding by considering more, or other categories of visitor. Examples might include groups about whom there is currently little information or whose attendance they wish to encourage - such as, artists, craftspeople and designers (Section 8) or, people under 24 (Section 2).

More accurate ways of measuring how long visitors stay in the Museum as a whole, or in particular galleries, could be devised depending on why the Museum was interested in this aspect of their behaviour. The duration of visits might reflect visitors' engagement in the displays, their pleasure at being in the V&A, confusion brought about by displays or the Museum's lay out, and whether they perceive the Museum as a good destination for a day trip. Timing and tracking visitors' movements through the Museum could be followed by interviews in which visitors were asked to describe and explain their actions.

#### 10.3.4 Insufficient data about visitors' learning in the Museum

Learning is generally presumed to be implicit in visitors' experience (although, not necessarily by the visitors themselves). Few, if any pieces of research, specifically address the concept of learning, consider how visitors learn, examine what they have learnt as a result of their visit, assess how much learning engenders loyalty to the Museum, or peoples' desire to revisit.

At a basic level, various surveys have, however, sought to find out how many objects visitors' recalled and if they liked them, whether they were aware of the information provided, whether they read it, how much information they absorbed, and how stimulated they were by what they had seen. But, these points have not been pursued systematically. Visitors are only surveyed on leaving the gallery or the Museum. No research has attempted to test visitors' subsequent recall or find out whether they had maintained an interest in the subject.

#### Addressing the issue

If the V&A is concerned to investigate the effectiveness of its displays and information in stimulating visitors' interest, retrospective or longitudinal research should be carried out. This would assess their subsequent recall, or find out whether they had maintained their stated interest in the subject.

Relatively few pieces of research suggest that displays have been designed or selected with the explicit intention that visitors should acquire particular knowledge or learn things. Such concerns have, however, determined displays in other Museums, such as the National History Museum. This suggests that the objectives for displays should be made more explicit, and that research should test whether these are being met.

#### **10.3.5 Orientation at the V&A**

Although many visitors have commented on the failings of the orientation systems, no detailed examination appears to have been made of this or how it might be improved.

#### Addressing the issue

A detailed examination could be made of the V&A's orientation system and how it might be improved, in various ways: by observation; by asking warding staff about visitors' movements; and by in-depth interviews with visitors.

#### **10.3.6 Factors which inspire visitors to return or discourage visiting**

Very few surveys have evaluated visitors' actual experience of the V&A as a whole, or individual galleries and departments. At best, they consider why the experience was worse than expected, as expected, or better. None investigated visitors' personal agendas in detail.

Little research has explicitly considered which factors within the V&A's control inspire visitors to return, or which discourage visits. In general, this has to be deduced from visitors' comments about what might improve visits.

#### Addressing the issue

Focus groups with visitors who attend the V&A with varying regularity could be used to explore what inspires visitors to return or discourages visiting. The Friends could be used as a 'control' group. These might not only refer to factors within the V&A's control, but might investigate visitors' personal agendas in detail.

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## ANNEX 1.

### ALPHABETICAL LIST OF VISITOR STUDIES AT THE V&A, 1986-96

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This list is classified alphabetically by researcher, date and title. Unless otherwise specified the reports are unpublished and were commissioned by the V&A. In those cases in which the research was published or commissioned by an external body, details are given.

Research referred to in the present review, which is described in Annex 2, is indicated here with an \*.

- \* Arthur Andersen & Co (1984) *Review at the V&A Museum*
- \* Barnard, N (1989) *Chinese Gallery Survey . Survey of visitors to the present Chinese Gallery to determine attitudes towards the display and towards proposals for redisplay in the new TT Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art.*
- \* Breakwell, G M and Wright, HM (November, 1994) *The Glass Gallery. Final Report*
- \* Breakwell, G. M & Wright, H.M (May 1995) *The Glass Gallery, Supplementary Report, Electronic Information System, including The Story of Glass'*  
*Report of a meeting to discuss audience research relating to redevelopment of the British Art & Design Galleries*
- \* British Galleries Team (1992) *Audience Research for The British Galleries. Stage 1 Research Findings*
- \* Creative Research (1996) *Audience Research for The British Galleries Quantitative Research Findings. Volumes 1 and 2*
- \* Creative Research (1997) *V&A Research & Development of the London & South East Market for the V&A Museum*
- \* Daniels, S (1994)  
Elston, F for Schlackmans (December 1987) *Project Monarch. Presentation of Findings*
- \* Elston, F for Schlackmans (.January 1988) *Project Monarch. Presentation of Findings*  
*Annual Report 1992/93*
- Education Department (1993) *Annual Report 1993/94*
- Education Department (1994) *Annual Report 1994/95*
- Education Department (1995)

Education Department (1996)	<i>Annual Report 1995/96</i>
Education Department (1997)	<i>Draft Annual Report 1996/97</i>
Far Eastern Department (1987)	<i>Sitting in the Chinese Export Gallery</i>
Gardiner, C (1986)	<i>Report on a Survey of Visitors to the National Art Library, V&amp;A Museum. July 1985 - June 1986</i>
AY Grant Ltd (Spring 1986)	<i>Attitudes/Opinions, &amp; Demographics. Visitors to the V&amp;A Museum. Spring 1986</i>
AY Grant Ltd (October 1986)	<i>Attitudes/Opinions, &amp; Demographics. Visitors to the V&amp;A Museum. Summer 1986</i>
AY Grant Ltd (January 1987)	<i>Visitors to the V&amp;A Museum. Attitudes, Opinions, &amp; Demographics. Fall 1986</i>
AY Grant Ltd (May 1987a)	<i>Visitors to the V&amp;A Museum. Attitudes, Opinions, &amp; Demographics. 1986/1987</i>
Heady, P (1984)	<i>Visiting Museums. A Report of a Survey of Visitors to the V&amp;A, Science and National Railway Museums for the Office of Arts &amp; Libraries. London: HMSO</i>
" Harris, J (1994)	<i>The Samsung Gallery of Korean Art. A Visitor Survey</i>
* Kahn, N and McManus, P (1991)	<i>Through the Eyes of Strangers: Observations in the Tsui Gallery. September/October 1991</i>
Khan, N and McManus P (1992)	<i>The Nehru Gallery. A Visitors' Survey</i>
London Tourist Board & Convention Bureau (1995)	<i>Survey Among Overseas Visitors to London - Summer 1995</i>
" Market Behaviour Ltd (1991)	<i>Japan in Perspective. Qualitative Research to Assess Potential Among Family and Education Target</i>
McManus, P and Khan, N (1992)	<i>The Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art: A Visitor Survey</i>
Mass Observation (1989)	<i>Visitors to the V&amp;A</i>
The MET Studio (1989)	<i>Reviving the World's Finest Victorian Cast Collection. Masterplan &amp; Design Proposals for a New Exhibition</i>
Metalwork Department (1994?)	<i>Silver Galleries Project Questionnaire &amp; Analysis</i>
Metalwork Department (1994?)	<i>Silver Gallery Survey 1993-94</i>

Metalwork Department (1994)

*Silver Gallery Questionnaire . Gallery 66. January 1994*

- MORI (1993) *Visitor Research at the V&A Museum, Wave 1: Computer Tables. April - May 1993*
- MORI (1993) *Public Awareness of the V&A Museum. Computer Tables. Spring 1993*
- MORI (1993) *Visitor Research at the V&A Museum, Wave 2: Computer Tables. August - September 1993*
- MORI (1993) *Views of the V&A. Qualitative Research Among Existing and Potential Visitors. Draft Report. September/October 1993*
- MORI (1993a) *Visitor Research at the V&A Museum, Wave 3: 1993. Computer Tables. October - November 1993*
- MORI (1993) *Survey of V&A Visitors. April - November 1993*
- MORI (1993b) *Survey of V&A Visitors. Wave 1. March and April 1994*
- MORI (1994) *V&A Visitor Survey. Wave 2, Computer Tables. August 1994*
- MORI (1994) *Survey of V&A Visitors, 1994. March - December 1994*
- \* MORI (1994) *Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood Visitor Survey: Wave 1. Computer Tables. December - February 1995*
- MORI (1995) *Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood Visitor Survey: Qualitative. August 1995*
- MORI(1995a) *Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood Visitor Survey: Wave 2. August - October 1995*
- \* MORI (1995b)
- \* MORI (1995c) *Public Awareness of the V&A Museum. April 1995 Survey of Visitors to the V&A, Wave 1: 1995. April 1995 Survey of Visitors to the V&A, Wave 2: 1995. October 1995*
- MORI (I995)
- MORI(I995)
- MORI (1995) *Survey of Visitors to the V&A, Wave 2: 1995. Computer Tables - Special Exhibitions. October 1995*
- MORI (I995) MORI *Survey of Visitors to the V&A, Wave 3: 1995. Computer Tables. November & December 1995*
- (May I995) \* MORI *Getting the Best Out of Market Research. Seminar papers presented at World Heritage & Museums Exhibition & Symposium*
- (I995d) *Survey of V&A Visitors, 1995. April - December 1995*

- NOP (1989) *Renewal of the Chinese Gallery: Qualitative Research Amongst Potential Visitors*
- Neary, DG (1991) *China: Myth & Reality: Detailed Programme. Quantitative Survey Results*
- Olsson, T J (1992) *China: Myth & Reality: Detailed Programme. Qualitative Survey Results*
- Pearson, D (1995) *A Survey of the Print Room of the V&A Museum*
- Richards, G and Bonink, C (1992) *National Art Library Usage Survey*
- Richards, G and Bonink, C (1992) *Cultural Visits and Older People*. London: University of North London, Centre for Leisure and Tourism Studies
- Schlackmans (January 1989) *V&A Advertising Tracking Study*
- Thunder, M (1992) *The Development of the Print Room, Questionnaires and the Use of and External Consultant*
- Trevelyan, V (ed) (1991) *'Dingy places with different kinds of bits'. Attitudes Survey of London Museums Amongst Non-Visitors*. London: London Museums Consultative Committee

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## ANNEX 2.

### DESCRIPTION OF VISITOR STUDIES AT THE V&A

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This annex describes each of the visitor studies referred to in the present review. It considers whether they refer to the V&A as a whole, or individual departments, galleries or branch museums. It outlines their objectives, the methodologies used and, the size and nature of the samples surveyed. Wherever possible, an attempt has been made to identify which groups were included or excluded from the surveys.

Arthur Andersen & Co (1984) *Review at the V&A Museum*

Considers the V&A's revenue engendering potential; the organization of commercial activities and revenues; management information; and, management structure.

Barnard, N (1989) *Chinese Gallery Survey. Survey of visitors to the present Chinese Gallery to determine attitudes towards the display and towards proposals for redisplay in the new Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art*

Research carried out in Chinese Gallery prior to its redisplay as the new Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art during the Spring and Summer 1989. It was intended to determine visitors' attitudes towards the display and towards proposals for the redisplay

It was based on a 'simple visitors questionnaire' which elicited 176 'sets of answers' :112 (64 per cent) on weekdays; and, 64 (36 per cent on weekends and bank holidays. It is not clear what proportion of visitors were surveyed, or who they were. No exclusions are apparent.

Breakwell, G M and Wright, HM for the Department of Sociology, University of Surrey (November, 1994) *The Glass Gallery. Final Report.*

An evaluation carried out from July-September 1994 to examine whether the Glass Gallery was achieving the objectives set out for it by designers and users.

The survey included a systematic observation of visitors' patterns of movement throughout the gallery over a five day period; interviews with 71 visitors; and, self-completion questionnaire administered to 1,019 people visiting the gallery over a five day period, who were representative of the population visiting the Museum during this period.

Breakwell, G.M & Wright, H.M for the Department of Sociology, University of Surrey ( May 1995) *The Glass Gallery, Supplementary Report, Electronic Information System, including 'The Story of Glass'*

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess visitors reactions to the Glass Gallery's electronic information system. Data were collected over a six day period in April 1995 using self-completion questionnaires from 520 visitors. This included 361 who had used the system, and 159 who had not.

*British Art & Design Team (1992) Report of a Meeting to Discuss Audience Research Relating to the Redevelopment of the British Art & Design Galleries*

The report of a planning discussion about a prospective survey. It was concerned with: identifying the British Galleries' target audiences and calls for research into visitor responses to the existing British art and design galleries (see Creative Research , 1997).

*Creative Research (1996) Audience Research for The British Galleries. Stage 1 Research Findings, and Creative Research (1997) Audience Research for The British Galleries Quantitative Research Findings. Volumes 1 and 2*

A report on the findings of the first stage of visitor research which constituted part of the redevelopment of the British Galleries 1500-1900. The survey took place in December 1996 and considered visitors' awareness of the galleries, their reasons for visiting, and their expectations and experience. It also examined their behaviour in the gallery; their likes and dislikes; their areas of special interest; and, their preferred learning style.

The methods used included headcounts at five minute intervals; tracking; and interviews. Where visitors were part of a group, the activities of all group members were noted and the group was interviewed together.

The size of the total sample was 252. The youngest interviewees were aged 16-17.

*Daniels, S (1994) V&A Research & Development of the London & South East Market for the V&A Museum*

This was intended to research the London and South East visitors market for the Museum's marketing department. It draws on the extensive qualitative and quantitative research carried out by MORI in 1993 (see MORI, 1993a and 1993b).

*Education Department (1997) Draft Annual Report 1996/97*

Description of the Department's activities over the year, including statistical summaries since 1990/91.

*Elston, F for Schlackmans (1988) Project Monarch. Presentation of Findings*

An update of Elston, 1987 (see Appendix I). It reports on three waves of surveys of 200 people - before, during and after a London Underground campaign for the V&A. Quotas were applied to the samples as follows: 50 per cent males and females; 50 per cent London residents workers and day visitors/ tourists; 50 per cent ABC Is and C2DEs; and 50 per cent 16-34 years of age and 35 plus. People under 16 year olds were excluded from this survey.

Fa [astern Department (1987) *Sitting in the Chinese Export Galley'*

Carried out over a fortnight in November 1987, when members of the Far Eastern Department staffed a table in the new Chinese Export Gallery to monitor public response by observation and answer enquiries. Their presence in the galleries was restricted to weekdays.

It is stated that a party of 8 year olds were excluded from the survey.

Gardiner. C (1986) *Report on a Survey of Visitors to the National Art Library, V&A Museum. July 1985 - June 1986*

This profiles National Art Library users, and describes their use of the library. It is based on a year long survey (July 1985 - June 1986) which focused on visits, rather than individual visitors, and which consequently includes repeat visits by the same readers.

27,339 visits produced 6,755 returns (a return rate of 25 per cent). Given that more returns were received in the first six months than the second, and that it was assumed that regular users were under represented in the second half of the survey the figures for the last six months of the study were weighted.

A week's worth of interviews in March 1986, explored users' attitudes to the Library's facilities and service and voluntary charges. The results of this were also weighted.

No exclusions are obviously apparent.

AY Grant Ltd (1987a) *Visitors to the V&A Museum. Attitudes, Opinions, & Demographics. 1986/1987*

This summarises Grant's four quarterly surveys carried out between the end of March 1986 and March 1987 (listed in Appendix 1). It is based on a sample of 22,343, collected over a total of 72 survey days and divided equally across the four quarters. Although this survey was carried out in quarterly waves, and discerns seasonal differences, its findings has been recalculated to show the total sample over the year.

The survey was carried out by interview, with a postal questionnaire intended to collect in-depth information about visitor profiles, attitudes and opinions.

No exclusions are obviously apparent. Visitors under 12 are grouped together in a single age band, and education groups are referred to.

Harris, J (1994) *The Samsung Gallery of Korean Art. A Visitor Survey*

A survey carried out between November, 1993 and January, 1994 to assess and evaluate the Samsung Gallery. It sought to ascertain visitors reaction to the presentation and pin-point any problems with the installation so that adjustments could be made to maximize visitors' satisfaction.

Based on the methodology used by McManus and Kahn (1992) and using a sample of 100. No children under 15 were interviewed.

Heady, I' (1984) *Visiting Museums. A Report of a Survey of Visitors to the V&A, Science and National Railway Museums for the Office of Arts & Libraries*. London: HMSO

Refers to data collected between December 1979 and December 1980. At that time, the V&A had recently opened a new entrance on Exhibition Road which not only created a new access to the main body of the museum, but to the new Boilerhouse Project and to the Henry Cole Wing. The research refers to the V&A as a whole, but it also highlights visitors and visitors to four galleries: Art of China and Japan; British Sculpture; Tudor Art; and, Continental 17th Century Art.

Three sets of samples were used. The first comprised 891 count-based samples (every 'n'th person) of museum leavers 16 days during the survey year. Short interviews. Since Heady (1994) was concerned to capture a representative sample of visitors, the results from the count-based sample were weighted to prevent differences in selection probabilities biasing information, and to compensate for low response rates obtained from children aged ten and under.

The second sample comprised 1,003 quota-based museum leavers in certain pre-specified categories. They provided details about their visits which could not be obtained in the short exit survey. This sample included people defined in terms of certain categories - age, gender, visiting alone or with others. Children under ten were excluded.

Quota based samples of people leaving specified galleries, as given above plus children aged 11 and over in school parties.

Kahn, N and McManus, P (1991) *Through the Eyes of Strangers: Observations in the Tsui Gallery. September/October 1991*

Observations by volunteers and staff of people in the Tsui Gallery, carried out over a week, September-October 1991. It refers to 'head counts, identifies the number of East Asians'; notes how many visitors touched objects and used videos. Staff members recorded the events taking place around them. The volunteers used different methods - giving an impressionistic, rather than a definitive picture of the use of the gallery'.

This does not include a visitor profile, and inclusions and exclusions cannot be assessed.

Khan, N and McManus P (1992) *The Nehru Gallery: A Visitors' Survey*

Survey of visitors to the Nehru Gallery a year after it had opened. Its aims were to consider how visitors responded to the design of the Gallery which was intended to 'evoke' the atmosphere of a Moghal Court'; assess how well tuned British visitors were to Indian Art; and discover whether the presentation of British Empire was sufficiently sensitive.

Based on an exit survey of 100 visitors to galleries, data was collected over a 7 day period (including weekdays and weekends) between December 1991 and February 1992. It employs the same methodology as McManus and Kahn (1992), which was carried out simultaneously. The first visitor about to exit was surveyed, a process which was repeated so that visitors leaving the gallery by two exits were alternatively

interviewed. Beyond that, the selection of visitors was random. Although not specified, children under 15 were not interviewed.

Market Behaviour Ltd (1991) *Japan in Perspective. Qualitative Research to Assess Potential Among Family and Education Target*

This research explores the likely potential amongst two target groups - families and educational groups - for the forthcoming 'Japan in Perspective' exhibition. It explores how the exhibition could be 'communicated', and assesses responses to the proposed pricing structures.

Two focus group discussions were held with parents of children aged 6-16, resident in London, who frequently go on outings to places of interest. Two more were held with teachers - primary teachers and secondary teachers.

McManus, P and Khan, N (1992) *The Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art: A Visitor Survey. December 1991-February 1992*

Part of the assessment and evaluation plan for the Tsui Gallery. It had a dual purpose: to ascertain visitors' reactions to the new presentation; and, ascertain any possible problems which visitors might encounter in the new installation so that adjustments could be made.

It was based on a survey of 100 visitors over a 7 day period (December 1991 - February 1992). It employs the same methodology as Kahn and McManus (1992), which was carried out at the same time.

Although it is not specified; children under 15 appear to have been excluded.

Mass Observation (1989) *Visitors to the V&A*

An exit survey, carried out in two waves (July-August and November-December) with 600 people interviewed in the Summer, and 699 in the Winter - producing a total of 1,210.

Although it is not specified, children under 14 appear to have been excluded. Although 12 per cent of the sample came because of their studies, no indication of whether attendances by educational groups were specifically included is given.

MORI (1993a) *Views of the V&A. Qualitative Research Among Existing and Potential Visitors. Draft Report*

This report considers findings of six group discussions with 40 visitors to the V&A and two group discussions with 15 potential, but currently non, visitors.

The research sought to find out about people's perceptions of the V&A; their reasons for visiting; the nature of their visitor experience; and, to explore what would encourage more visits.

The six groups of visitors comprised: UK residents 18-24; UK residents 25-34; UK residents 35-44; UK residents 45 +; European visitors 25-34; overseas visitors, with

English as a mother tongue, 45 + .The two groups of potential visitors comprised:  
London residents 25-40; and, London residents 45 + MORI (1993b) *Survey of V&A  
Visitors*

Reports the findings from three waves of visitor research conducted at the V&A in 1993: April/ May (including Easter); August/September; and, October/ November (including school half-term holiday).

The aims of the research were to establish the profile of visitors; understand their motivations in visiting the Museum; examine their expectations of the V&A; monitor their attitudes to and evaluation of the Museum and their visits. The three waves show seasonal variations in visitor profiles. For the purposes of this study, however, these variations have been disregarded and data has been reanalysed to prove an overall figure for the year (see Grant, May 1987a).

Representative samples of visitors were interviewed as they left the V&A. In addition short profile interviews were carried out with visitors selected at random. No more than one interview per personal visitor party was undertaken. Organised educational groups were excluded.

A total of 1,103 full interviews were carried out. MORI grossed up the data by day of the week to represent actual visitor numbers. Thus, the total number of visitors shown for all three waves is 202,356.

MORI (1994) *Survey of V&A Visitors, 1994. March - December, 1994.*

As with MORI (1993b), reports the findings from three waves of visitor research conducted at the V&A in 1994: March/April (including Easter) during the Fabergé exhibition; August, during the Pugin exhibition; and, November/December, during the Streetstyle exhibition.

The aims and methodology were the same as MORI (1993b). A total of 1,150 full interviews were carried out. MORI's analysis grossed up the data by day of the week to represent actual visitor numbers. Thus, the total number of visitors shown for all three waves is 235,400.

MORI (1995a) *Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood Visitor Survey: Qualitative. August 1995*

A qualitative study which was intended to establish visitors' expectations of the Museum; and whether it lived up to them; examine factors which influenced their visits; assess how the Museum is viewed in comparison to other attractions; and gain their views on specific areas of museum activities in particular: exhibitions, facilities, information, staff etc.

The survey drew on six in-depth interviews with visitors mostly comprising couples, grandparents and grandchildren.

MORI (1995b) *Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood Visitor Survey: Wave 2. August - October 1995*

Presents the two waves of research carried out between January/February 1995 and August-October, 1995. The study was designed to monitor the profile of visitors: understand their image of the museum and find out how they reacted to it once they visited; monitor the existing provision of visitor services and consider future improvements; inform future marketing strategy.

During wave I, a representative sample of 241 visitors were interviewed and during wave, 2, 279. In total, 520 visitors were interviewed. The data were grossed up to represent the actual numbers of visitors in the museum on the dates when interviews were in progress.

MORI (1995c) *Public Awareness of the V&A Museum April 1995*

A survey of the general public to ascertain their awareness of the V&A and recognition of its logo. It follows a survey carried out in 1993.

A nationally representative sample of 2,054 British adults aged over 15 were interviewed in their own homes.

MORI (1995d) *Survey of V&A Visitors, 1995. April - December 1995*

This reports findings from three waves of research. The first was carried out in April 1995 (including Easter); the second, in August/September during the Wedgewood and Japanese Studio Craft exhibitions; and the third during November/December during the Jain Art from India exhibition.

The aims and methodology were as for MORI (1993b). MORI interviewed a representative sample of 1,078 visitors - 360 in wave I; 364 in wave 2, and 354 in wave 3. At the analysis stage, the data were grossed up to represent the actual numbers of visitors in the museum on the dates when interviews were in progress. The total number of visitors shown is 135,724 - 41,072; 46,524; 48,128 for the three waves respectively.

NOP(1989) *Renewal of the Chinese Gallery: Qualitative Research Amongst Potential Visitors*

This was written in anticipation of the inauguration of the new Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art. Its aims was to discover the needs and preferences of particular groups of potential visitors, in particular children, in relation to various alternative techniques of the presentation and explanation of Chinese culture. To this end, a series of five discussion groups were held with: 15-16 year old boys, who were 5th-formers studying Art/Design; 15-16 year old girls, who were doing religious studies and history; teachers of 15-16 year olds in these subjects; parents of primary and middle school children aged 7-12; and, Chinese adults and teachers

Participants in the first four groups had visited at least one of a set list of museums and galleries in London in the previous 12 months. The discussions were held in Woking and Esher. Participants in the fifth group were recruited by the V&A using a list of contacts with Chinese 'saturday schools'.

Neary, DG (1991) *China: Myth & Reality Detailed Programme. Quantitative Survey Results*

Its aim was to present aspects of China (culture, history, customs language and politics) in order to clarify areas of common misconception in anticipation of events to be held at the V&A.

The quantitative survey drew on a sample of 185 people, representing three groups: sixth-form colleges; university staff and students; and, museum and gallery visitors and staff.

Olsson. TJ (1992) *A Survey of the Print Room of the V&A Museum*

This was based on the experience of an earlier piece of research carried out by a member of the Print Room staff (Thunder, 1992). Olsson (1992) formed the basis of a thesis for an MA in Librarianship, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield.

Research was carried out over two and a half weeks, between May and June 1992. It was based on a self-completion questionnaire and subsequent interview. The sample comprised people who were making active use of the Print Room collection and facilities - people who sat down to study, approached the desk, or used the catalogues. Those specifically using the opinions service were excluded. The questionnaire was designed to be completed both during and after people's visits to the Print Room.

Approximately 48 per cent of visitors to the Print Room (189 people) contributed to the survey. Although one third of the sample were students, those at school only represented a negligible percentage (2 per cent of the students).

Pearson, D (1995) *National Art Library Usage Survey*

A survey of library users intended to ascertain readers' views on the quality of the National Art Library stock and its acquisitions policy.

The survey was carried out over an eleven week period between October 1994 and August 1995 using a self-completion questionnaire. It was hoped to capture all types of reader using the library. A total of 610 questionnaires were returned. An analysis of requisition slips was also carried out to check the types of books requested during the period of the survey.

Schlackmans (1989) *V&A Advertising Tracking Study*

A sample of 200 people interviewed in three waves in relation to two poster campaigns and a TV campaign between Autumn 1987 and December 1988 (see Elston, 1988, for methodology). A booster sample of ABCs, I6-34s and London residents/workers was applied to the third wave. The youngest respondents to the survey were I6. Those under 16 were, thus, excluded

References in the present report are only made to the third wave which was undertaken once all the campaigns were underway, if not completed.

Thunder, M (1992) *The Development of the Print Room, Questionnaires and the Use of an External Consultant*

The first of two surveys carried out in the Print Room in 1991-92. This was carried out over a six month period in Summer 1991, and achieved 234 responses. Olsson (1992), the second of the surveys, has been used in the present review.

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ANNEX 3.

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1986	CHRONOLOGY. SELECTED KEY EVENTS AT <b>THE</b>
1987	
1988	V&A <b>1986-96</b> Voluntary Donations introduced
	20th Century Gallery opened
	New programme of guided tours
1989	V&A Club - Wednesday evenings late view introduced
	New events programme launched
1990	
1991	New advertising campaign started (ace caff)
	Charges introduced for special, temporary exhibitions (£2.00)
	Launch of new map and guide and new signing system Nehru
	Gallery opened
1992	Tsui Gallery opened
1993	New temporary exhibition hall opened
	With Visions of Japan charges for special temporary exhibitions double (from £2.50 to £5.00)
1994	With Sovereign exhibition changes for special temporary exhibition at record level of £6.00
	Samsung Gallery of Korean Art opened
1995	Summer poster campaign for permanent collections
	20th Century Gallery opened
1996	Glass Gallery opened

Fabergé, Pugin and Streetstyle exhibitions

Received Charter Mark

Family trails available free of charge

Wedgewood, Jaon Art and Japanese Studio Art exhibitions Compulsory charges introduced