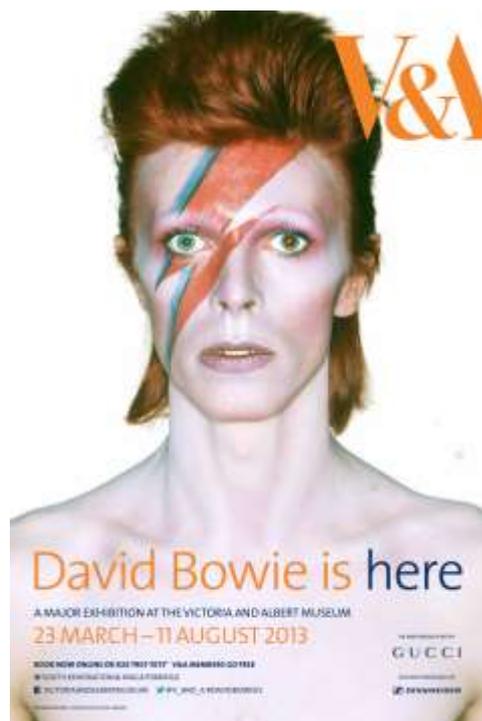


Case study

# ***David Bowie is* exhibition**

**Victoria and Albert Museum**

Charlotte Wood, Marketing Manager, V&A



*David Bowie is* exhibition poster at the V&A © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

This case study was produced as part of CultureHive, a free knowledge hub where you can discover and share best practice in cultural marketing. Visit [www.culturehive.co.uk](http://www.culturehive.co.uk)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/uk/).

Supported by



Created and managed by



In partnership with



***David Bowie is at the V&A***

*23 March – 11 August 2013*

*In partnership with Gucci*

*Sound experience by Sennheiser*

## Background

The V&A is the world's leading museum of art and design with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity. It was established to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, the V&A's collections, which span over 2,000 years of human creativity in virtually every medium and from many parts of the world, continue to intrigue, inspire and inform. The V&A is home to the National Collection for the Performing Arts.

The V&A was given unprecedented access to the David Bowie Archive to curate the first international retrospective of the extraordinary career of David Bowie - one of the most pioneering and influential performers of modern times.

*David Bowie is* explored the creative processes of Bowie as a musical innovator and cultural icon, tracing his shifting style and sustained reinvention across five decades. More than 300 objects were brought together for the very first time, including handwritten lyrics, original costumes, fashion, photography, film, music videos, set designs, Bowie's own instruments and album artwork.



Installation shot of *David Bowie is*, at the V&A © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

## Marketing campaign objectives

### Primary

- Achieve an exhibition visitor target of 230,000

### Secondary

- Position the V&A as a world-class venue for performance exhibitions
- Attract new music, fashion and performance fans who haven't been to the V&A and/or are non-museum going audiences
- Aid sponsor objectives

### Target audience

- Core V&A exhibition visitors
- Adults 50% female, 50% male, 40+
- David Bowie fanatics
- Music professionals, enthusiasts and concert/gig attendees
- Film buffs and theatre goers
- Students 18+ particularly fashion, textiles, product, film, photography, graphic, interior design, theatre and performance

### Process

The campaign incorporated both above and below the line activity to ensure the widest possible reach amongst the target audience.

Activity was planned to capitalise on the opening period after the extensive press coverage with further coverage throughout the exhibition and a last chance burst to drive attendance in the final weeks. This initially included national press advertising throughout the campaign and last chance to see National Rail 4 sheets. However, due to all advance online tickets selling out within the first month of opening, we no longer needed this additional advertising for the exhibition.

Outdoor activity focussed coverage around London and the South East to target in proximity to the exhibition, however press, radio and online extended nationally to reflect the stature of the exhibition and drive domestic tourists.

International visitors were reached via a major promotional partnership with Eurostar, including editorial, lead feature on David Bowie driving the Eurostar Plus culture programme, 2 for 1 ticket offers travellers and staff and social media competitions.

### **Pre-opening: September 2012**

- Tickets went on sale to coincide with the press launch and exclusive announcement. Social media activity began by drip feeding V&A and David Bowie fans exclusive content about the exhibition.
- An exhibition special e-newsletter was sent to over 90,000 subscribers detailing forthcoming events, competitions, behind-the-scenes photos and more Bowie content.

### **Opening period: w/c 18 March – April 2013**

- A blogger outreach campaign was launched to coincide with initial press activity, identifying the most influential bloggers to spread the word. The V&A also worked closely throughout the campaign with the manager of DavidBowie.com and Bowie social media channels for joined up announcements.
- Poster distribution to promote and drive visitors to the exhibition gave the exhibition wide coverage across London focussing on high cultural areas such as Kensington & Chelsea, South Bank and Islington, as well as focussing on younger cultural areas such as Shoreditch, Hackney and Camden, reaching a music crowd
- Focused to capitalise on the opening period, London Underground 16 sheet posters provided the necessary impact, stature and coverage for a blockbuster exhibition
- The exhibition was taken out of the Museum and into the Underground through the use of LCD screens, bringing the presence on the London Underground to life with animated adverts. Targeted to run over two weekends, these screens highlighted the buzz and conversation around the exhibition with Twitter comments updating over the campaign period.
- Absolute Radio created special programmes focused on the exhibition to whet appetites and build excitement - three hour-long programmes were broadcast on Sunday 7, 14 and 21 April 2013, accompanied by a series of short online films containing additional material. The Absolute Radio activity proved so popular that the station increased promotion of the programmes, delivering 27m additional impacts

- Enhanced editorial features in print and online ran alongside exclusive competitions with key fashion, music and national press titles.

### **During the exhibition: April – July 2013**

- An experiential distribution campaign was launched in order to impel audience interaction and promote organic uplift on social media. Activity included face-painting, Twitter competitions and word-of-mouth leaflet hand outs. Over 40 faces were painted in London hot spots, with the majority of volunteers then sharing pictures on their social networks. Over 1,200 interactions were made during the campaign and 3,000 pieces of print were distributed via the hand-to-hand service.
- Silence Media digital advertising extended the conversation online, allowing creative with multiple images, videos and a live Twitter feed to provoke engagement. This activity was focused on sites such as the Evening Standard, Independent and Shortlist to build awareness amongst the target markets.

- The V&A collaborated with Selfridges department store on Oxford Street, London to launch an in-store concept shop and David Bowie window display for additional exposure and reach. This also ran alongside a high street promotion with Benugo coffee shops featuring branded hot drink cup sleeves.



*David Bowie is* window display at Selfridges © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

- A Spotify campaign provided the opportunity to bring Bowie to life through one of the media he is best known for. For broader reach we created a Facebook app driving users from Spotify to enter their track for a Bowie playlist for a chance to win prizes.
- Working with EMI and Bowie's management we launched a digital guestbook for fans to share their experiences and favourite sections from the exhibition
- A dedicated social media campaign updated on ticket sales, competitions and new content online. The exhibition title *David Bowie is* fed throughout this.
- An online competition hosted on the V&A offered visitors the chance to win a Bowie inspired trip to Berlin.

### **Final weeks: August 2013**

- Messages were adapted for all social media and digital advertising activity to reflect ticket sales.

- The #Bowiequeue hashtag was launched on Twitter to engage with visitors waiting for tickets. They were encouraged to take photos, give live queue updates and tell us what they were looking forward to about the exhibition. One fan had visited 16 times!



**pen&pudding** @penandpudding

David Bowie is... more than an exhibition, it is a complete experience - @V\_and\_A has outdone itself #DavidBowieis

## Outcomes

The V&A sold over 67,000 tickets prior to the exhibition opening, more than three times the advance sales of any other V&A exhibition, including the extremely popular Hollywood Costume show.

- The V&A website had the highest traffic it has ever seen during the opening week. On Thursday 21 March there were 152,247 visits. Of these, there were 7,000 visits in one evening to Tilda Swinton's exhibition opening dinner speech direct from a single Facebook post.
- 2.3 million people have viewed the Bowie content on the V&A website since January 2013.
- Over 5,000 people entered the main David Bowie competition to win a trip to Berlin.
- The exhibition closed on Sunday 11 August 2013 with 312,000 visitors.
- 27% of people attending *David Bowie is* were first time visitors and 24% were from overseas.
- 35% of visitors were male and 20% of all visitors were 35-44 years and 27% 45-54 years.
- The V&A ran regular late night openings to cope with demand and the exhibition was open until 22.00 every night for the final two weeks.
- V&A Membership also saw a positive rise during the exhibition run with over 10,000 people joining and V&A Membership is now at an all time high with approx 58,000 Members.
- The V&A Shop made £42,000 on Bowie product between January – March 2013, before the exhibition opened. Over 46,000 exhibition books have been sold to date and 500 collector's editions of the book, signed by David Bowie, sold out in 14 minutes online and in store. In addition 20,000 tote bags, 36,000 guitar picks, and 93,000 postcards created to accompany the exhibition have also been sold.
- During the campaign period the V&A social commentary increased by 155%
- The exhibition hashtag #DavidBowieis was included in over 11,000 tweets between September 2012 – August 2013 with 66.866M impressions. David Bowie was tweeted about over 1 million times during the same period with 4.844B impressions.
- The queue hashtag #bowiequeue was tweeted 359 times in the last two weeks of the exhibition.
- Key promotions running alongside major editorial included an exclusive competition with The Observer running online, on Twitter and Facebook with 17,756 entries for the competition – the most they've ever had. Other promotions included a Sunday Times+ competition online, Facebook, e-newsletter and Twitter with over 14,000 entries.

- To give people one last chance to see the exhibition in the UK, the V&A also commissioned a special film that was transmitted live to over 200 cinemas across the UK on 13 August 2013. *David Bowie is happening now* was a cinematic, behind-the-scenes tour of the exhibition. Over 23,000 tickets were sold to cinema goers across the country. There was an additional sold-out VIP event for 275 people at the V&A and an online competition was hosted with over 5,000 entries and 3,000 new subscribers to the V&A e-newsletters.

### **Key points for effective practice**

- Importance of clear brand guidelines and coherent visual identity for a campaign when working with multiple third party promoters and a brand/name that is more well known worldwide than your own
- Don't be too rigid in your approach and media plan and be open to adapting your campaign.

### **Campaign costs (% of marketing budget spent or planned):**

- 7% spent on distribution and print
- 25% on outdoor advertising (15% spent, 10% planned)
- 15% planned for press advertising
- 16% spent on online advertising
- 19% spent on radio advertising
- 2% spent on promotions
- % not spent was diverted to the cinema screening campaign and other projects

### **Conclusion**

- The exhibition achieved 36% over the visitor target
- Achieved marketing objective of attracting new Museum visitors with 27% of people attending *David Bowie is* having never been to the V&A before
- Set clear parameters for your objectives working with all third party stakeholders and promoters.
- There is a need to be flexible to adapt both media channels and messaging to deal with a fast changing situation.

### **Additional information**

Closed exhibition webpage:

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/exhibitions/david-bowie-is/>

Digital guestbook on Facebook:

[https://www.facebook.com/victoriaandalbertmuseum/app\\_133975916795066](https://www.facebook.com/victoriaandalbertmuseum/app_133975916795066)