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**Project title**

Take Another Look

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**Category**

Museums, Galleries,  
Events and Visitor  
Attractions

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**Client company**

National Portrait Gallery

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**Design consultancy**

True North

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**Date**

June 2010

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**For Publication**

*true*North

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# UK visitors increase by 41%

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## 2015 targets hit within six months

High profile temporary exhibitions, an enviable location in London's Trafalgar Square and free entry. Despite this impressive CV, the start of 2009 saw visitor numbers at the National Portrait Gallery falling.

Like other major galleries, the National Portrait Gallery heavily promoted its temporary shows. This strategy put names like Annie Leibovitz, David Hockney and Mario Testino in lights, drawing impressive crowds and press coverage. However, could the fall in visitor numbers be a symptom of the Gallery being seen as a venue for visiting stars rather than a star attraction in its own right?

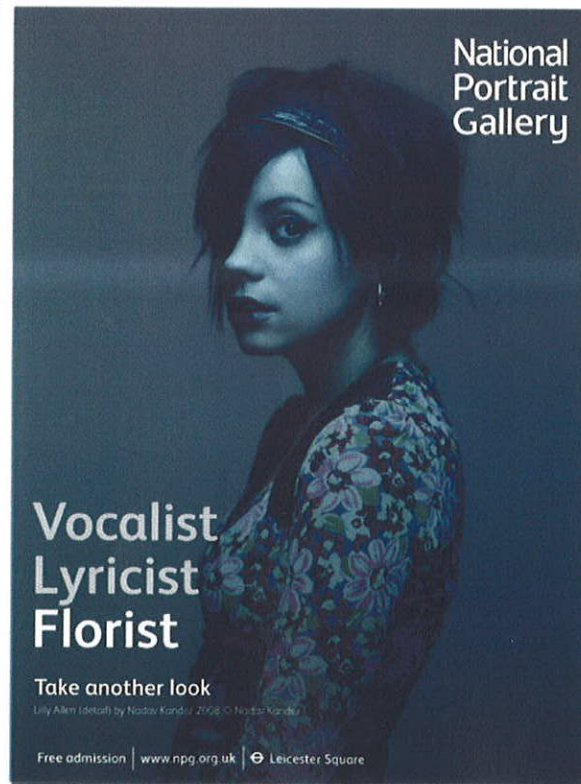
Local audiences were a particular problem. While still attracting overseas visitors, research showed that non-visiting UK residents, especially in London, struggled to find the Gallery relevant. They described it as sombre, serious, pompous, upper class and old-fashioned.

A dramatic repositioning of the overall Gallery brand was required, one that would shift existing perceptions and surprise and seduce new audiences, especially in the South East. Our brand idea 'Take another look' brought the Gallery's permanent Collections out of the back room and into the limelight. Importantly, it enticed new local audiences through its doors, the regular visitors that would be its lifeblood in the future.

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## Record revenue levels



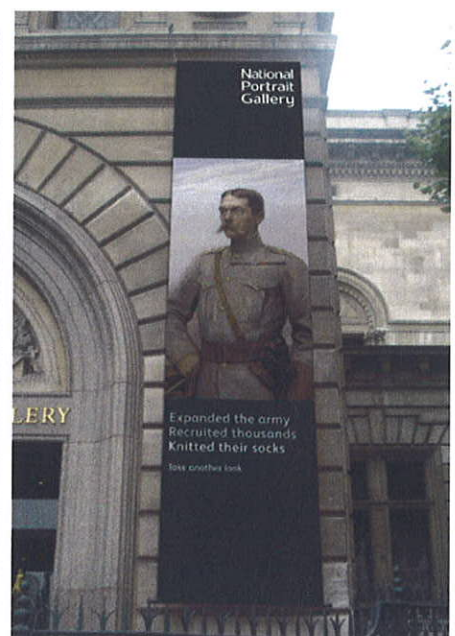
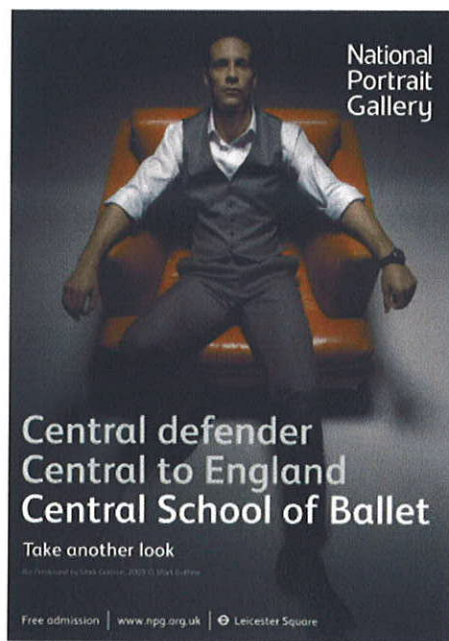
# Executive summary

The repositioning created an unprecedented buzz, showcasing the Gallery's Collection, transforming its image and taking it from the arts pages into the mainstream. Namechecks in Elle and Vogue and on Neighbours, among others, boosted its profile, kudos and relevance.

Visits by UK residents immediately increased by 30%. This represented a 41% increase in the proportion of British visitors to the Gallery compared with 2008. Revenues also reached record levels. It not only halted the pre-launch decline in visitors but hit 2015 visitor targets within six months. All at a time when visits by UK residents to London galleries and museums were falling.

(word count 300)

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**Unprecedented  
breadth of media  
coverage  
for permanent  
Collections.**



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## 01. Outline of project brief

The National Portrait Gallery briefed True North to reposition its brand with a fresh new look and feel that would dramatically change perceptions of the Gallery, boost visitor figures and provide a long-term platform for future communication and growth.

Specifically, our objectives were to:

- 1** Reposition the Gallery in order to increase total annual visits by UK visitors
- 2** Connect with and increase market penetration with new audiences, especially from lower socio-economic groups, to broaden the visitor base
- 3** Promote the permanent Collection
- 4** Provide a platform for long-term campaign and development

## 02. Description

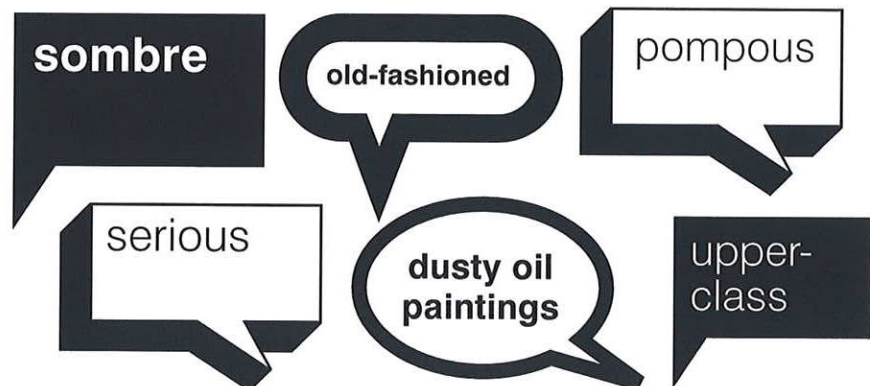
Founded in 1856, the National Portrait Gallery is one of London's most famous cultural attractions and the eleventh biggest visitor attraction in the UK with over 1.8 million visits in 2008. It holds the world's greatest collection of portraits.

Despite all this, not enough UK residents, especially those in Greater London, were visiting the Gallery. A government survey found that 51% of London adults had visited a museum or gallery in the previous 12 months. Only 13% of National Portrait Gallery's visitors were from this audience.

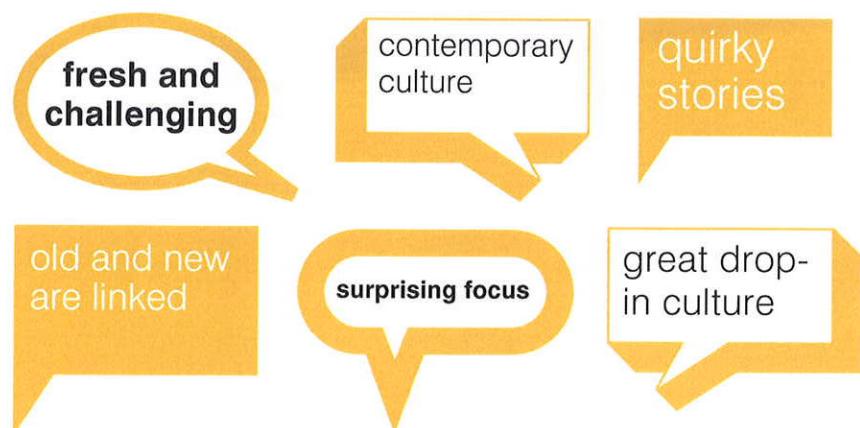
During 2004-2008, overseas visitors had been steadily increasing but UK visitor numbers, the source of future repeat visits and attendance at special exhibitions, were stable and had even declined in 2008. Visitors from lower socio-economic groups had also fallen from 10% in 2006/7 to 6% in 2008/9.

Research revealed that there was a gap between perception and reality. When asked to describe the Gallery, the words used by those who had and hadn't visited couldn't be more different.

### Views of people who hadn't visited



### Views of people who had visited



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### 03. Overview of the market

The National Portrait Gallery is well-established with a high profile reputation, a good 'product', positive visitor experiences and high levels of satisfaction. Its strong programme of temporary exhibitions is complemented by a dynamic management team with a zest for and willingness to bring about change.

London, however, is a very competitive market, home to some of the world's leading arts, culture and heritage attractions. The National Portrait Gallery had to stake its claim as a world-class and relevant destination in its own right, as much as a fantastic host and venue for temporary shows, to a target audience of people in the South East. These people already had the pick of the capital's attractions and were feeling the squeeze on leisure and tourism from the credit crunch. The Gallery had to do this with a limited budget in the UK's most expensive media environment, competing with bigger players with bigger spends.

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### 04. Project launch date

June 2009

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### 05. Size of design budget

£20,000

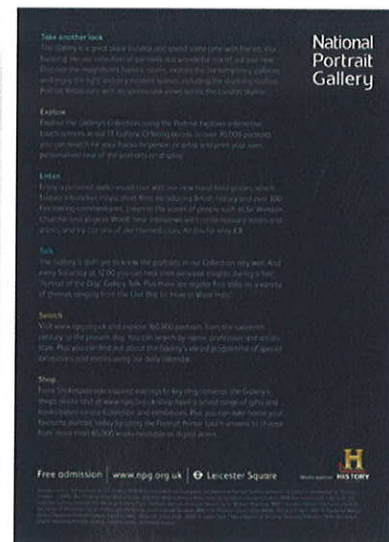
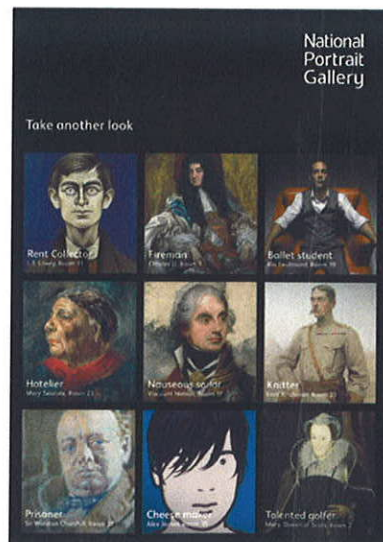
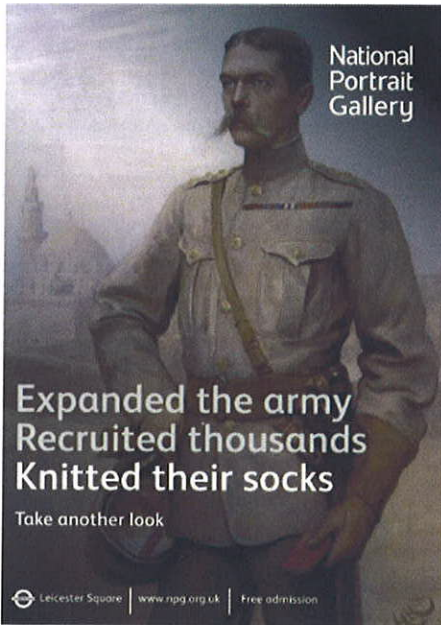
# Project overview

## 06. Outline of design solution

True North recommended 'Take another look' as the creative hook for the relaunch, and the platform for all future brand communication and development.

It was inspired by two insights. One was the gulf between perception and reality, between the perceptions of those who had and had not visited the Gallery. The second was that those who had visited loved "discovering something surprising about the famous faces on display". Capitalising on these insights, we created a concept that was true to the Gallery itself but powerful enough to transform perceptions and excite people to vote with their feet and visit.

For the brand relaunch campaign, 'Take another look' invites the public to take another look at the portraits and sitters featured in the permanent Collection and so at the Gallery itself. It features quirky and little-known stories about the most eclectic range of personalities we could find, from important historical figures to modern, populist icons. With names as diverse as Lord Kitchener, Lily Allen and Rio Ferdinand, it appealed to all tastes.



## Project overview



### 06. Outline of design solution (continued)

We worked with the Gallery's in-house research team to unearth surprising facts and stories and with the Gallery's help managed to navigate the extremely choppy waters of copyright and permission rights which were a major challenge in bringing our concept to life.

The tone and content of the campaign broke all previous conventions for the Gallery. Previous marketing campaigns focused on a specific exhibition or on the merits of the specific art or photography. The Gallery had never promoted a broad cross-section like this or used quirkiness, warmth and humour in this way.

The campaign ran across all visitor touch points – underground posters, press ads, external banners, promotional print and posters distributed to and displayed in sites across London including galleries, theatres, museums, independent cinemas, cafés and bars.

Campaigns were also tailored for each execution to maximise impact. For example, the Lily Allen poster was sent to record shops, fashion outlets, creative colleges, hair salons and live music venues and the Rio Ferdinand posters were distributed widely in Peckham where he was brought up. The website was also updated and bespoke merchandise was distributed through the Gallery shops and handed out to the public at Spitalfields Market, Charing Cross Station and Southbank.

A 'Take another look' visitor trail was created and promoted through the Gallery and portrait labels were adapted to feature the sitter's inclusion.

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## Summary of results

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**24% increase in visitors within four months**

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**The Gallery achieved the target for visitors in its Strategic Plan five years early**

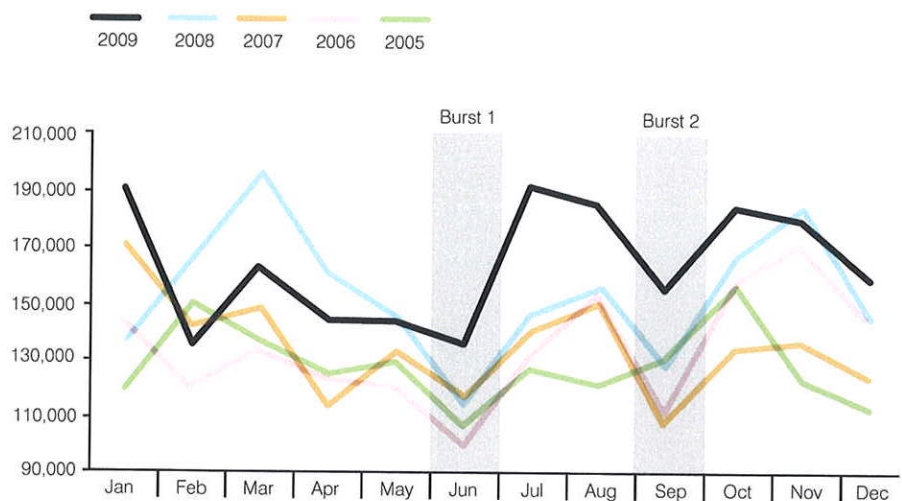
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**In 2009, other London attractions saw a 7.3% fall in UK visitors. The Gallery enjoyed a 28% increase as a result of repositioning**

### Immediate and continued increase in total visitors

After the June launch, July-September saw a surge in visitor numbers, up 101,065 visits – or 24% – on the same period in 2008.

From July-December 2009, National Portrait Gallery visitor numbers had increased by 14% compared with a 3.7% increase during 2009 for London's other top 20 attractions.

This is especially notable given the drop in visitor numbers from January-May 2009, a dip of 27,420 compared with the same period in 2008.



### 5 year monthly visitor totals

#### Increase in first-time visitors

The proportion and number of first-time visitors increased dramatically from July-December 2009. The Gallery recorded 79,265 extra visits from first-time visitors, a 14% increase on the previous year.

First-time visitors in 2009 accounted for 43% of the total, compared to 39% in 2008.

#### Increase in visitors from the UK

The overall proportion of domestic UK visits within 2009's total visits increased by 41% over 2008's total, an important strategic goal for the Gallery.

There was a 28% increase in UK visitors to National Portrait Gallery during the second half of 2009 compared with a fall of 7.3% in 2009 for visits to the capital's other top attractions.

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## Summary of results

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### 33% increase in adult visitors from new socio- economic groups

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### Increase in visitors from new socio-economic groups

Visitors to national arts institutions from social classes NS-SEC groups 5-8 are notoriously low in number. In 2009, the number of adult gallery visitors from these groups grew by 67,000 on the previous year and accounted for 10% of the total.

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### Highest retail sales in the Gallery's history

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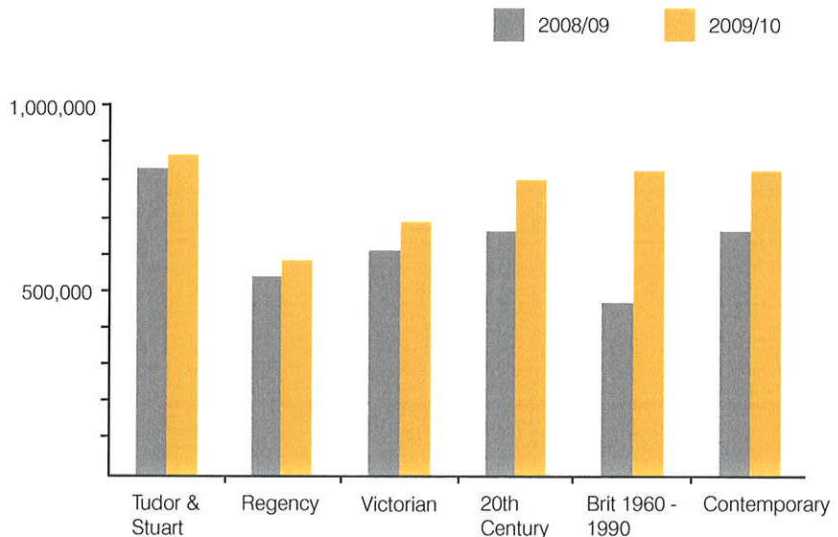
### Record revenue levels

The increase in footfall also drove retail performance at the Gallery. Financial year 2009/10 saw the highest retail income in six years and the highest sales in the Gallery's history. The number of retail customers grew by 14% and retail sales grew by 3% year-on-year.

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### Attracting visitors to the permanent Collections

Visits to all of the individual galleries increased.



## Summary of results

### Creating a media buzz and being seen in the right places

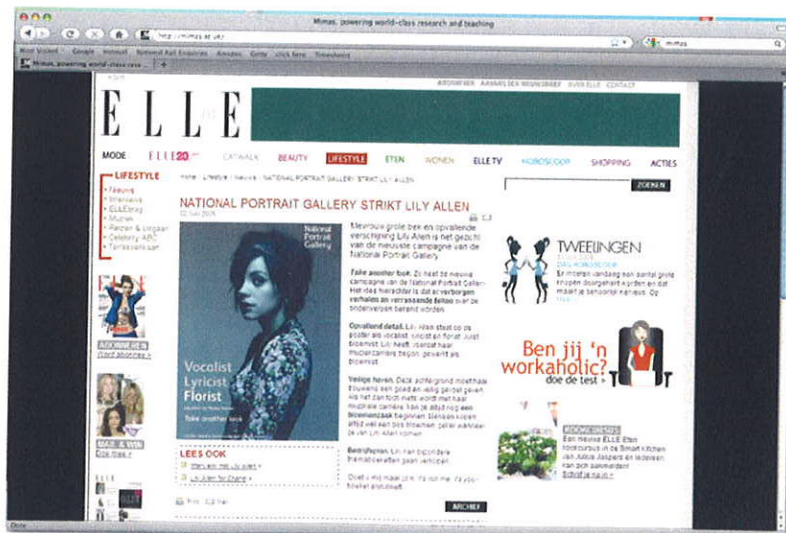
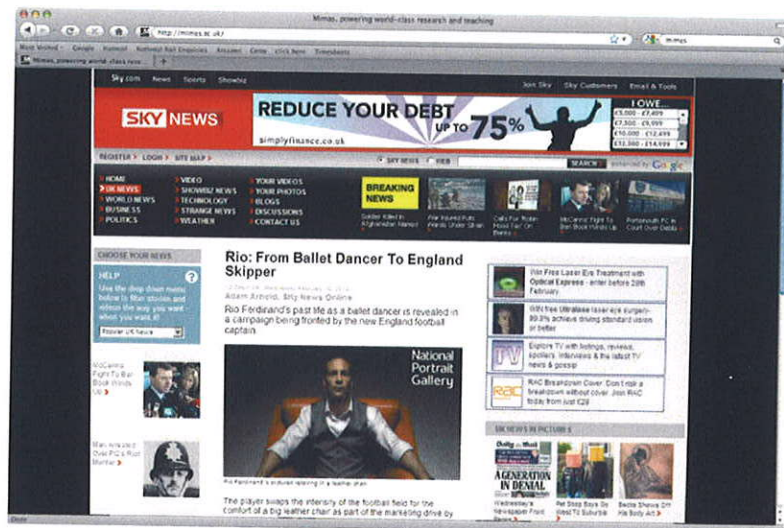
The campaign got the Gallery noticed and talked about in surprising places. From fashion mags to music radio stations, sports websites, red-tops and TV soaps, this helped broaden its appeal and generate excitement with new audiences.

Coverage appeared in The Times, Independent, Evening Standard, Metro, Mail online, Express.co.uk, Skynews.com, Sport.co.uk, Daily Mirror, LBC online and London Lite. Lily Allen's blog talked about the honour of featuring in the campaign for a week and the news also featured in Elle and Vogue. Alex James was asked about it during an interview on XFM and when Lily Allen guested on TV soap Neighbours she was asked about it on the show.

The History Channel approached National Portrait Gallery to produce four 30-second films, bringing the campaign to life, over at least 100 targeted spots and featured it in their regular e-newsletters. The History Channel also produced a 'Take another look' microsite.

The value of the editorial coverage generated is estimated to be well in excess of £100,000, 30% of the Gallery's total advertising spend.

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Value of editorial coverage equated to an additional 30% on the Gallery's media spend



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## Summary of results

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### Transforming perceptions of the Gallery brand

Visitor feedback at the end of July 2009, following the first burst of the campaign, showed that it had quickly changed perceptions.

**61%**

agreed 'strongly' that the campaign...makes National Portrait Gallery feel less stuffy

**64%**

agreed 'strongly' that the campaign...is more contemporary than I would expect from National Portrait Gallery

**64%**

agreed 'strongly' that the campaign...makes me more likely to visit the National Portrait Gallery

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**1 in 20 visitors attributed their visit to seeing the campaign**

One in 20 visitors spontaneously attributed their visit to seeing the campaign. This was unheard of. Front-of-house staff also described visitors coming into the Gallery and asking to see the portraits featured in the campaign.

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### A platform for the future brand development

With over 1,000 portraits in the permanent Collection, the campaign has lots of mileage, working well over short-term bursts with executions that can be re-used and added to cost-effectively. With relatively small budgets, this was especially important to the Gallery.

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### New product/service development

**Learning** – 'Take another look' was adopted by the Gallery's 2009/10 Primary and Secondary Schools Programme and used as a powerful way of teaching children how to evaluate art.

**Fundraising** – 'Take another look' inspired an innovative series of fundraising events. Corporate, individual, event, trust and foundation prospects, as well as existing supporters, were invited to curator-led tours of the Gallery's Collections.

**'Late Shift'** – 'Take another look' helped revitalise the Gallery's late nights. Relunched in May 2010 on the back of the campaign, it quickly attracted the culturally aware, after-work crowd of 25-45 year old London/SE professionals it was so keen to attract. A record 3,000 visitors attended in one evening.

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## Research resources

Taking Part Survey 2007  
National Portrait Gallery Visitor Analysis 2008  
Morris Hargreaves McIntyre. "Delving Deeper: National Portrait Gallery Non Visitor research 2007/08"  
Morris Hargreaves McIntyre. "Through the keyhole. National Portrait Gallery Visitor research 2006/07"  
London Key Statistics 2009  
National Portrait Gallery Visitor Analysis 2009  
National Portrait Gallery Visitor Research Summary 2004-2010  
National Portrait Gallery Annual Visitor Research 2009/10  
Visitor feedback survey conducted by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, July 2009  
Visit London Key Statistics 2009  
Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, Visit Britain, Visitor Attraction Trends England, DCMS  
Visit Britain; Headline UK Tourism Trends 12 months to December 2009. 23.2.2010.  
Nielsen, Competitive Activity

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## Other influencing factors

### **Q. Did the Gallery spend its way to success?**

National Portrait Gallery advertising spend in 2009 was 10.4% lower than in 2008 and accounted for 5% of the spend of London arts institutions and museums.

The total media spend supporting 'Take another look' was approximately one third of that spent promoting 2009's four major exhibitions, yet visits to exhibitions accounted for a smaller share of a growing number of visitors.

### **Q. Did the sector enjoy the same growth?**

Other London galleries and attractions recorded a far smaller (3.7%) increase in total visits in 2009 and they had actually had a decline (7.3%) in visits by UK residents.