



# Reaching new audiences

**The Citi exhibition *Manga* at the British Museum**

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# The Citi exhibition *Manga* at the British Museum

## What is Manga?

Manga are Japanese comic books or graphic novels with a twist, serialised in newspapers and magazines. Originating in Japan, manga now has fans across the globe.

Manga is immersive storytelling through pictures, where images rule supreme. The Japanese characters for manga translate as 'pictures run riot' or 'pictures unbounded'. There is less reliance on text, and narrative is created through expressive line drawing along with the visual development of individual characters. It is manga's visually immersive quality that makes it so popular.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/an-introduction-to-manga/>



In summer 2019, the British Museum held the largest exhibition of manga ever to take place outside of Japan. The exhibition was a significant opportunity for the museum but also a risk.

The opportunity for us was to attract a new audience to our exhibitions and to change associations with the museum – demonstrating that we are contemporary and relevant, with a collection that spans the whole of human history, right up to the present. This could help counter the perception, particularly among non-attenders, that the museum is old fashioned and only focused on historical subject matter.

However, the risk was that we could fail to convert the high number of new visitors that we needed to meet our ticket targets and could potentially alienate our core audiences, who we know enjoy the museum's focus on historical subjects and can find contemporary subject matter off-putting. We could also fail to deliver the type of experience that new audiences want - one younger participant who was initially excited about the idea of a manga exhibition, qualified their enthusiasm with a quote which highlighted just what needed to be addressed.

**"I'm sure they'll make it come across quite boring with historical context that doesn't need to be there."** Focus group respondent



**Ella Lewis-Collins: Senior Marketing Manager, British Museum**

Ella Lewis-Collins is Senior Marketing Manager at the British Museum. She leads on the marketing campaigns for the Museum's major exhibitions.



**Sylvie Harding: Research Executive, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre**

Sylvie is a Research Executive for Morris Hargreaves McIntyre focusing on projects related to UK and EU Culture. Sylvie has specialised in working on various formative and summative exhibition projects, working regularly with the British Museum, to provide insight into their paid-for temporary exhibitions.

# An opportunity to reach atypical audiences

## Focusing on new audiences...

The British Museum wanted to bring in new audiences helping support a perception shift for the museum.

### Domestic young adults between 18-35 years old

Our main marketing objective was to bring new audiences to the museum, focusing primarily on domestic young adults between the ages of 18-35, who we thought would engage with the subject matter. Level of interest could range from those with a general interest in pop culture (who may attend exhibitions on contemporary subject matter at venues such as the V&A and Barbican), through to manga enthusiasts (who may not attend exhibitions but go to conventions and fan events).

### Families

Although a high proportion of families visit the free permanent displays, they tend to make up a small proportion of the museum's exhibition-going audience. We knew that this subject would be of interest, particularly for families with children from 8-15.

## Representing London's diverse population

We hoped that the new audiences coming to the exhibition would result in greater diversity. Gains from younger domestic audiences could make the overall audience more representative of London and the potential to convert international Japanese audiences could also ensure that the show had a higher proportion of BAME attendees.

## Stimulation and Entertainment Culture Segments

We identified the Stimulation and Entertainment Culture Segments as the focus for our young adult target audience. Whilst the Museum does attract some Stimulation visitors to its exhibitions, Entertainment usually makes up a tiny proportion of attendees. We saw an opportunity to engage Entertainment, given the pop culture focus of the exhibition, but formative focus group research indicated that converting them may be a challenge.

For more information on Culture Segments please visit [www.mhminsight.com/culture-segments](http://www.mhminsight.com/culture-segments)

## ...Whilst maintaining current audiences

Whilst the primary objective was to bring in new visitors to the museum, we didn't want to alienate our existing audiences. We therefore needed to ensure that we carefully tailored messaging to ensure that, even if we couldn't get current audiences over the threshold to see the show, we could at least ensure that they felt that the exhibition fitted with the Museum's brand and vision.



# Targeting marketing for different audiences

## Designing marketing for non-traditional audiences

The marketing campaign strategy was to focus primarily on acquiring new audiences, whilst also ensuring that core audiences would be aware of the exhibition.

### A striking poster campaign

The striking creative, which employed black and white manga with a fluro-orange signature colour, was used across the campaign. Recall of posters was high demonstrating that the marketing was successful in cutting through in a busy marketplace.



Over a quarter of visits (29%) were driven by posters on the London underground, with 17% citing underground posters as the primary way that they found out about the exhibition.

## Using graffiti to draw in Entertainment

As well as traditional out of home advertising formats, which gave the campaign reach, we used a series of creative outdoor formats to try and position the exhibition as something different, playful and contemporary, whilst reaching key target audiences in the areas that they spend their leisure time. One of these placements was a takeover of posters on Commercial Street in Shoreditch, which included a manga inspired mural created by a graffiti artist.



The Shoreditch graffiti used as a marketing source drove 10% of visits from the Entertainment segment compared to 2% on average, highlighting the success of alternative methods of marketing to draw in non-traditional exhibition audiences.

## Reaching manga specialists through social media

Social media advertising was a key part of the campaign and we placed a higher level of spend in this area than usual in order to reach and convert target audiences, with a focus on manga fans. The evaluation revealed that this was a key marketing source for the Specialists cohort (who were likely to be manga aficionados).



Specialists were significantly more likely to be mainly driven to attend Manga by adverts on social media (15%) compared to average (6%).

## Partnerships with relevant organisations

Partnerships with other organisations and influencers were used to help to reposition the British Museum and give a 'stamp of approval' for the exhibition, from a brand or individual that non-attenders may trust. Partnerships were created with high street brands Uniqlo and Wagamama as well as specialist organisations to reach the manga fans – including Hyper Japan and Comic Con fairs.

There was good recall of the Uniqlo partnership in particular and several spontaneous mentions of Hyper Japan as a further source of information, indicating the influence that this had had on reaching and engaging specialist audiences.

We worked with a number of influencers in the manga/anime/cosplay community in London to promote the show. It is hard to measure the impact of this directly, though the relatively high number of visitors who said that found out about the exhibition through a social media account that was not the British Museum's (8%).



## Catering for specialist and general audiences

We needed to ensure that the marketing editorial content we produced to promote the exhibition catered to both new and existing audiences with different levels of knowledge. For core audiences it was important to introduce manga, explain the medium and explore its historical roots and the links with the collection.

We developed blog pieces including 'An introduction to manga', 'Hokusai: the godfather of manga?' and 'Narrative art through history', which helped to place manga in a wider historical context. For new audiences, including specialists, we developed more in depth and playful content, including a blog on Tezuka Osamu and YouTube tutorials on how to draw manga.

# Breaking records and visitor targets

## Manga successfully reached new audiences

The show delivered on its audience development objectives and broke many records in terms of non-traditional museum audiences when looking against previous exhibitions.

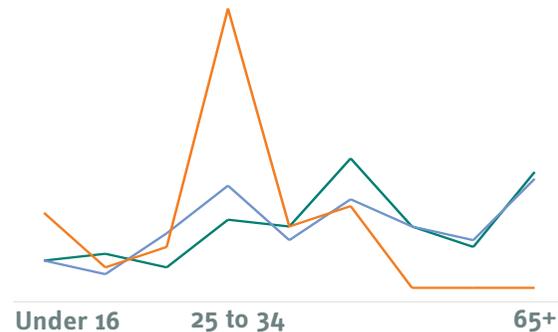
The audience was diverse in many ways, achieving high levels of visits from families, specialists and previous paid British Museum exhibition non-attenders of all ages, origins and ethnicities.

## The youngest audience on record

**43%**

of visitors aged 25-34, making it the **youngest audience on record** for a paid exhibition at the British Museum

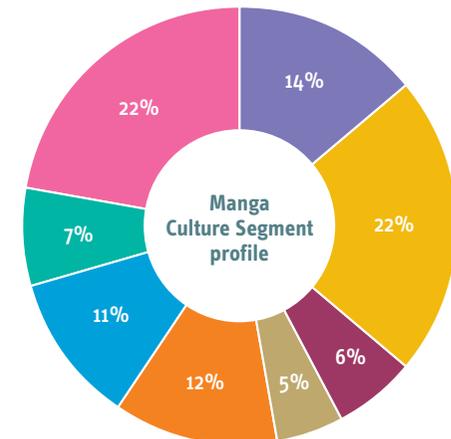
*Manga*  
*I am Ashurbanipal*  
*Rodin*



## The most Entertainment visits on record

**22%**

The **highest ever levels of Entertainment** at a paid exhibition at the British Museum - five times higher than the typical average at a British Museum paid exhibition



## Drawing in local ethnically diverse visits

**34%**

A considerably higher proportion of BAME visitors than previous shows

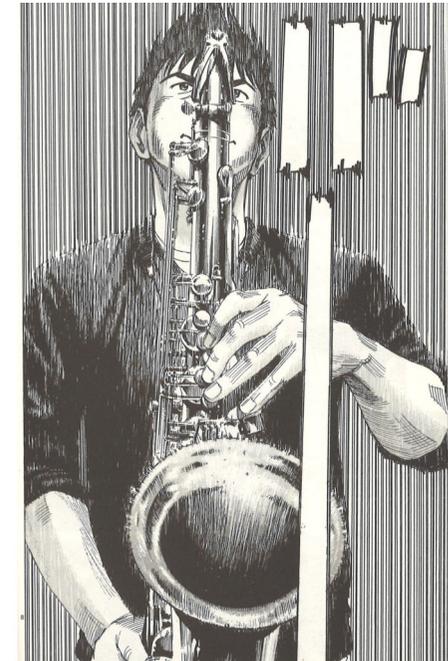
Londoners who visited Manga were more likely to be BAME than average, suggesting that the show was successful in reaching a broader cross section of the capital's population than other exhibitions.

## Tourists visited the paid exhibition despite the free offer

**41%**

A high proportion of international visitors that attended the exhibition

The exhibition ran over the summer months when the numbers of international tourist visitors to the British Museum are higher, however the proportion of international visitors was still considerably higher than seen for other paid exhibitions that have run at a similar time of year. The increase of international audiences was therefore likely due to the popularity and broad appeal of the subject matter as well as the fact that the exhibition featured objects that were not on public display in the permanent collection.



Ishizuka Shinichi, Blue Giant Supreme, 2016 onwards. © SHINICHI ISHIZUKA/SHOGAKUKAN. INC.

# Shifting perceptions of the British Museum

## Non-traditional audiences introduced to paid exhibitions

The exhibition was successful in opening the British Museum's doors to new audiences. These audiences were significantly more likely to have had their expectations of the exhibition exceeded, with the design, interpretation and exhibition experience all very positively received.

50% of first-time visitors had their expectations exceeded, compared to 32% of current visitors.

'I went in with low expectations but I was blown away by it all.'

## *Manga* changed perceptions of the British Museum

The exhibition also changed perceptions of the museum. *Manga* was perceived as a contemporary and relevant experience, challenging the sometimes-negative perception that non-attenders can have of the museum as old fashioned and without contemporary relevance.

Our challenge now is to consider how we continue to engage and build a relationship with these new audiences in the coming years and develop the museum's reputation as a dynamic place with contemporary relevance that can shine a light on ideas, issues and human creativity both past and present.

A third of those who visited said that their perceptions had been changed (33%), significantly higher than previous exhibitions, indicating that the exhibition succeeded in repositioning the Museum for a new audience and opened the market for the future.

'It made me feel that the museum was modern and innovative, that it wasn't afraid to explore topics that are historically significant but not based around historical events and artefacts.'

‘Never knew British Museum would do exhibition related to manga... It kind of showed me that it is thinking outside the box.’



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**'A poignant mix of drama, humor  
and art.'**

Essence, Self developers

**'Manga has grown from the  
niche entertainment genre from  
when I was child to a globally  
recognised art form, and I can't  
be happier to see this change.'**

Entertainment, Experts

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