



# AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN **PUBLIC RELATIONS 2022**

# Best Public Relations Event



Winterfest at the Guinness Storehouse, Christmas 2021.

## Campaign

Winterfest at the Guinness Storehouse

## Description of Campaign

The Guinness Storehouse set out to deliver a best-in-class customer event and land itself in culture as a must-visit destination in December 2021. “Winterfest” captured the spirit of Christmas by creating a one-of-a-kind experience for visitors to get together with friends and family in a magical setting.



## Public Relations Consultant

Wilson Hartnell



## Client

Guinness Storehouse

## Background to the Campaign

The Guinness Storehouse, Ireland’s number one visitor attraction and the Home of Guinness, experienced long periods of closure from March 2020 due to the pandemic. The gates finally reopened in the summer of 2021 and with increased positive sentiment in the domestic audience, plus desire for travel on the rise internationally, the Guinness Storehouse was perfectly placed to capitalise on this. However, not without internal and external challenges, which included:

- **Consumer context:** as restrictions eased, consumer demand for real life experiences increased. However so did competition from other visitor attractions. The Guinness Storehouse needed to ensure it was on every must-see list.
- **Industry context:** as with all hospitality businesses, the Guinness Storehouse had to make allowances for new operational considerations such as a visitor cap to allow physical distancing, indoor hospitality for those with a Covid Pass only, no live music and online booking only.
- **Travel context:** whilst there were no domestic travel restrictions as the Guinness Storehouse reopened, there continued to be controls around international visitors.



- **Timing context:** historically there has been an annual dip in visitor numbers around the Autumn / Winter seasons, so the festive period was seen as an opportunity to put the Guinness Storehouse on the map as a must-do in December.
  - **New vision context:** the new Guinness Storehouse vision of being a culturally vibrant hub that showcases the magnetic and inclusive soul of Guinness and its role
- 

## Statement of Objectives

The Guinness Storehouse set out to:

1. Be a must-visit Christmas experience, measured by a marked increase in visitor numbers, demonstrated by a growth in domestic visitor numbers by 25% vs December 2019 (pre-pandemic)
  2. Deliver an “only Guinness could, only Guinness would” experience, measured by customer satisfaction.
  3. Explode the Guinness Storehouse in culture, delivered by public relations and measured by talkability.
- 

## Programme Planning and Strategy

### *Last Christmas...*

After two years without international tourism, the Guinness Storehouse had hard-fought new-found success with a domestic audience, using the two years over the pandemic to develop campaigns, events and occasions for a domestic audience. However, as international tourism began to re-establish, the Home of Guinness didn't want to boomerang back to a space designed solely for international visitors, instead seeking to strategically grow in reputation as a champion of contemporary Irish culture – in line with the Guinness brand ambition too. While Guinness is synonymous with Christmas in Ireland, the Home of Guinness has never fully activated at this time. The team leveraged insights to identify Christmas 2021 as a unique seasonal opportunity to develop a domestic audience event, with significant ambition to build this into an evergreen year on year calendar high – a space for communion and celebration around Guinness each and every Christmas.

### *It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas...*

In normal years, the Guinness Storehouse attracts a broad domestic and international audience, across a range of ages, gender and nationalities. However, the core target audience for the Christmas campaign was a younger, narrower demographic, focussing on Irish based 21+ males and females, a group whose social habits and life (like many others) had been paused over the last couple of years. With ‘authentic tourism’, or ‘living like the locals’, also a key trend in international visitors, in addition this calendar event would also aim to attract international visitors too.

Christmas 2021 was a time when reunion and communion was more important than ever. Consumer research showed general optimism about Christmas and reuniting, with 49% expecting Christmas 2021 to feel traditional, while 19% thought it would be nostalgic.

Our goal was for our target audience to become advocates for the Christmas campaign through word of mouth and sharing across platform. This, in turn, would drive further talkability amongst their peers. In addition, our key media and influencers, responsible for driving scale and reach, had seen their work and social lives impacted. The Guinness Storehouse seized the opportunity to offer friends across the board a place to gather and enjoy Christmas togetherness over a pint of Guinness and some special surprises.

### *Deck the Halls...*

With a goal of harnessing consumer nostalgia and putting magic back into Christmas at the Guinness Storehouse, we set about creating a truly festive, immersive consumer experience, which showcased the attraction as a must-visit for those at home and coming home in December. In November 2021, the Home of Guinness announced “Winterfest”, an exciting five-week Christmas experience. From 27 November to 2 January, the Guinness Storehouse was transformed into an immersive festive spectacular under the creative direction of the inaugural lead curator, Dublin-based designer Annie Atkins. Annie Atkins is the graphic designer behind visually stunning films including Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *The French Dispatch* and Steven Spielberg's *Bridge of Spies*. For Winterfest 2021, Annie transported her unique style from her Dublin studio to the Guinness Storehouse, creating an immersive winter wonderland that proved to be a feast for the eyes.

The must-see curation, inspired by iconic advertising retrieved from the Guinness archive, was brought to life across all seven floors of the Guinness Storehouse with bespoke, intricate décor and twinkling lights, while the famous Guinness gates were adorned with snowy wreaths for a picture-perfect backdrop for all Winterfest visitors.

The showstopping pièce de résistance was a 15-metre modular tree installation in the Guinness Storehouse atrium comprising multiple Christmas trees embellished with beautiful graphics designed by Annie and Guinness-inspired black and gold decorations.

### ***Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree...***

Throughout Winterfest, the Home of Guinness hosted a line-up of live musical performances for visitors to enjoy throughout the building. Artists included DJ Aonair, A&S Productions, D. Cullen & Sinead McConville, DJ Pique, R3D (DJ), The Fundamentals, The Main Event, Pio Hartnett, Ian Blake, DJ Dilly (aka Wastefellow) and The Tiny Quartet.

On launch day, visitors comprised of consumers, media and influencers, were also transported to the scene of the much-loved Guinness Christmas ad, with the soundtrack to the ad performed by Glasshouse Orchestra, a music ensemble and arts organisation based in Dublin.

### ***Walkin' in a Winter Wonderland...***

A spectacular streetscape of light displays from Crane Street to the Guinness Storehouse was designed, with a sensational focal point at the iconic Guinness Gate on Crane Street. The lunar themed projection above the gate was visible after sunset, creating an impactful visual experience for all last Christmas.

### ***It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year...***

An enthused customer service team welcomed visitors back to the Guinness Storehouse and while all tickets to the attraction included a pint of the Black Stuff, the Home of Guinness also served up some festive food specials throughout Winterfest including a traditional Christmas feast with all the trimmings at 1837 Bar and Brasserie. For something new for the season, visitors could indulge in a Baileys hot chocolate or a festive mulled Guinness, or try the experimental Plum Pudding Porter brew, available at the recently extended Gravity bar. Winterfest delivered a full 360 degree 5-week Christmas campaign across visitor experience, retail and online. It harnessed the domestic occasion and delivered on the new vision of the Guinness Storehouse.

### ***Christmas is A-Comin'...***

A phased communications plan was designed to maximise talkability and drive mass awareness for the event and its components, from the influencer partnership with Annie Atkins (the perfect pick as a celebrated Irish based artist, with a highly engaged domestic 'tastemaker' following) to the impressive line-up of local musicians (programmed to attract a large volume of visitors at a time when live performances were heavily restricted).

## **Phase 1: Build Momentum and Announce Activity**

The customer experience was launched with a national PR sell-in and supported by comprehensive paid media across all touchpoints (paid, search, radio, OOH, media partners). Earned media interviews with Annie Atkins were also secured.

## **Phase 2: Activity Launch and Tree Unveiling**

Key media and influencers were invited to the Guinness Storehouse to enjoy the festivities and drive talkability across social media. Launch imagery was captured and shared with picture desks. Annie Atkins shared content recounting the story of her inspiration, and Guinness Storehouse media channels continued to promote the event.

## **Phase 3: Continued Momentum and Consumer Engagement**

Whilst earned and paid media continued to run, selected influencers and media were gifted with Guinness treats and sustainable Christmas cards featuring Annie's artwork to share with loved ones and turn into a festive decoration for use in future years.

The Guinness Storehouse captured the spirit of Christmas by creating a one-of-a-kind experience for visitors to get together with friends and family in a magical setting. The attraction drew large numbers of visitors, delivered an "only Guinness could, only Guinness would" customer experience, and positioned the Guinness Storehouse as a must-visit last Christmas.

## Measurement

### 2020 – 2021

Domestic visitors increased by 62% domestic growth vs previous year

### 2021 – 2022

Domestic visitors increased by 23% domestic growth vs previous year

**ruepoint**



**Onclusive**

**PARAGON**  
Customer Communications