

The Experiential Economic Value and Implementation Pathways of Art Curation in MICE Events

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ABSTRACT

The experience economy has become the core driver of the consumer market, yet the MICE industry is trapped in a dilemma between homogenization and experiential upgrades. According to a 2025 report by Boyan Consulting, China's MICE market reached 386 billion yuan in 2024 (surpassing pre-pandemic levels), but exhibition homogenization has slowed upgrades. Art curation, through spatial storytelling, cultural immersion, and interactive innovation, emerges as the key to breaking through this bottleneck. Drawing from case studies: The "Shanghai Intangible Cultural Heritage Lounge" at the 6th CIIE showcased 117 intangible heritage projects, featuring over 30 sessions on traditional Chinese medicine, incense, and mortise-and-tenon interactive activities, attracting nearly 1,000 domestic and foreign media outlets and becoming the "traffic king" of the press center. At the 2025 Beijing International Fair of Trade in Services, the "Alcove Sky Sphere" digital exhibition and the "Central Axis Magic Cube" naked-eye 3D experience utilized C-shaped LED screens and VR to immerse audiences in traditional culture. The value of art curation is evident: The 5G+8K "Ultra-High-Definition Live" coverage at the Beijing Fair reached 80,000 people across 31 provinces, upgrading sensory experiences; the CIIE leveraged enamelware and velvet embroidery to bridge cultural differences; and the "Central Axis Light Tracing" installation transformed "viewing an exhibition" into "experiencing" through touch controls. The industry faces pain points such as misaligned goals between curation and MICE, talent shortages, and cost control challenges. I propose solutions from content integration, mechanism building, and ecosystem collaboration. Art curation is not merely a "decorative" element for MICE but a redefinition of experiential value through the fusion of culture and commerce, driving the industry toward high-quality, high-value development.

KEYWORDS

Art Curation; MICE Events; Experience Economy; Value Dimensions; Implementation Pathways.

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, China's exhibition economy is entering a "quality enhancement phase." The MICE industry has long transitioned from the traditional model of "venue leasing + basic services" to one centered on user experience value competition. The 2024 *China MICE Industry Development Report* by the China Exhibition Economy Research Association noted that in 2023, the market size recovered to approximately 90% of 2019 levels. Over 60% of exhibitors cited "homogenized experiences" as the primary factor affecting participation willingness, while demand for "culturally immersive experiences" has grown significantly, creating an urgent need for transformation. Art curation, which centers on cultural expression and spatial storytelling, has gradually integrated into MICE innovation in recent years: the Canton Fair established a intangible cultural heritage zone, attracting cultural audiences with Guangdong embroidery and Guangdong blue-and-white porcelain; the Hangzhou Digital Trade Exhibition showcased a "West Lake Magic Box" with naked-eye 3D and VR to

highlight technological appeal; and many enterprises have incorporated local art workshops into incentive travel to enhance employee engagement [1]. However, the current application of art curation in the industry mostly stops at "formal integration," failing to grasp its empowering logic and value. Some events even resort to "curation for curation's sake," adding costs without upgrading the experience. Therefore, clarifying the connection between art curation and MICE, uncovering core value, and identifying replicable pathways have become key to breaking homogeneity and enhancing added value. This paper reviews domestic and international research, combines typical domestic practices, and analyzes both theoretical and practical aspects, filling the theoretical gap in cross-border integration while providing concrete guidance for the industry. It helps MICE establish differentiated advantages in the experience economy.

2. THE NATURAL FIT BETWEEN ART CURATION AND MICE EVENTS

Although art curation tends to focus on culture and MICE emphasizes commerce, the two are naturally compatible in terms of "revolving around the audience", "using living space", and "conveying the goal in place" - laying the foundation for cross-border platforms. First, let's talk about their respective cores: Art curation is about the curator focusing on the theme, selecting works, planning space, and engaging in interaction. Essentially, it is about spreading culture through experience, and the core is "culture is the essence, experience is the face"; MICE is a professional event organized for business communication, product display, brand building, and participation of specific groups of people. Its core is to "focus on the target and rely on service to support the event". This kind of fit can be seen in three specific aspects: taking the "Shanghai Intangible Cultural Heritage Living Room" at the Shanghai International Import Expo as an example, it does not simply display Shen Dacheng's intangible cultural heritage cake cakes and Lu's Heartwarming Fist cultural and creative works, but combines these with trade exchange scenes. The flow and display of exhibits are both thoughtful - when attendees walk in, they can not only feel the warmth of Shanghai style culture, but also naturally keep up with the pace of economy and trade. The feeling of spatial transmission and MICE goals are unconsciously intertwined. Looking at audience interaction again, MICE expects people to actively integrate into both product experience and conference discussions; Art curation is no longer just about 'watching without touching', now it loves to engage in interaction. For example, VR devices are set up in the digital exhibition area of the Beijing International Fair for Trade in Services, allowing participants to "drill" into historical scenes and simulate Su embroidery and cloisonné [2]. Having fun and getting involved, one can gradually realize that the China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) aims to use technology to facilitate cultural trade. This aligns perfectly with MICE's desire for everyone to participate and understand more. There is also complementarity in value transmission. MICE aims to attract orders and establish a brand, but simply saying 'our product is good' can easily lead to resentment; Art curation happens to fill this gap, relying on culture to speak softly without being rigid. Just like the autumn exhibition of Guangzhou Canton Fair, setting up a "lifestyle aesthetic nest" for the home appliance exhibition area: refrigerators and dishwashers are not placed alone, embedded and arranged according to the home scene, and then packaged with "how to make life more beautiful". Without hard selling, everyone felt that 'this thing is also suitable for my home' while strolling around, and unconsciously recognized its value - the smooth integration of commercial purposes and cultural experience. At the end of the day, art curation and MICE are not just two pieces of cake, but a natural synergy in terms of space utilization, audience interaction, and value transmission. This kind of fit can ignite the spark of '1+1 is greater than 2', and also upgrade MICE in the experience economy, laying a natural foundation.

3. ART CURATION EMPOWERS THE EXPERIENTIAL ECONOMIC VALUE DIMENSION OF MICE ACTIVITIES

Table 1. Comparison of Experience Differences between Traditional MICE and Art Curatorial Empowered MICE

Comparative dimension	Traditional MICE	MICE empowered by art curation
User role	Spectator (passive reception of information)	Participants (active immersion experience)
Scenario Design	Product display style, one-way speech style	Multi sensory immersive scenes (color, light and shadow, interactive installations)
Experience Memory Points	Product features, conference content (easily forgotten)	Artistic interaction, cultural symbols (strong memory)
User engagement	Low (one-way reception, prone to fatigue)	High (active interaction, immersive engagement)
Typical Case	Ordinary product exhibition (only displaying products), pure promotional event	2024 Shanghai Auto Show "Future Travel Art Exhibition" and Dali Reward Tourism Art Workshop

The core of the experience economy is to focus on user experience and create a personalized and moving sense of value. Art curation can integrate culture and commerce, injecting experiential economic vitality into MICE from three directions: sensory, brand, and industry, and revitalizing the relationship between users and activities. Traditional MICE focus on information transmission, with exhibitions showcasing only products and conferences featuring one-way speeches, which can lead to user fatigue. Art curation relies on color, light and shadow, sound, and interactive installations to create immersive scenes, transforming users from "spectators" to "participants", see Table 1. For example, the "Future Travel Art Exhibition" will be held in the new energy zone of the 2024 Shanghai Auto Show: blue light and shadow simulate low-carbon cities, and driving data will be transformed into dynamic patterns. Attendees can customize touch screen painting and project it onto the exhibition vehicles. No need for explanation, feel the concept of technology and environmental protection through hands-on experience, and the satisfaction with exhibiting is higher than that of traditional exhibition areas (according to feedback from the 2024 Shanghai Auto Show) [3]. There are also companies that reward tourism by choosing Dali, setting up tie dye workshops and Erhai Lake photography exhibitions, allowing employees to relax and take inspiration from art, thereby increasing retention rates. Nowadays, when users recognize a brand, it's not just about whether the product is good or not, but also about whether the culture is compatible. Art curation can implant cultural symbols and help MICE brand differentiate and spread. The "Sustainable Fashion Exhibition" at the 2023 Beijing International Fashion Week did not showcase eco-friendly clothing, but instead collaborated with the curator to create a storyline of "from fiber to ready to wear" - creating a "tree of regeneration" from old fabrics, showcasing the process of degradation through visual exhibitions, and having designers present their concepts on site. In this way, 'sustainability' is not just a slogan, but a manifestation of brand responsibility and values. Vogue also pays attention to it, and the brand exposure is deep and wide. The entrance of Huawei 2024 Developer Conference features the "HarmonyOS Ecological Art Wall", which transforms developer code into colorful light and shadow, showcasing the "technology plus art" tone and making developers feel that technology is seen and respected, and closer to the brand. Previously, the value of MICE was only limited to the event period, and art curation relied on communicable cultural content to extend its value beyond the event. The typical "Intangible Cultural Heritage+Trade" model of the Shanghai International Import Expo:

exhibitions such as Longquan celadon and Yixing purple clay attracted buyers through exhibition and production. Later, the organizing committee and local governments established a platform to incorporate intangible cultural heritage products into the MICE supply chain, which facilitated many collaborations in 2023. In 2024, the Baijiu culture and art exhibition will be held in Chengdu Sugar and Wine Fair. The bottles will be made into Sichuan Opera masks, and participants will share socially. The topic will be hot, the event will be more exposed, and the brand will continue to have traffic. This chain of "activity experience, subsequent dissemination, and long-term transformation" is precisely the core competitiveness of the experience economy injected into MICE by art curation.

4. THE INTEGRATION OF DOMESTIC MICE AND ART CURATION: PRACTICE AND PAIN POINTS

In recent years, the domestic MICE industry has broken through with art curation, with sporadic highlight cases. However, there are still many obstacles in the industry, making it difficult for the two to deeply integrate and achieve results.

4.1. Practical Exploration: From Sporadic Flashes to Localized Bright Colors

Art curation is mostly focused on large-scale exhibitions, brand conferences, and high-end incentive tourism, gradually shifting from "single point testing" to "partial breakthroughs". In addition to the "Intangible Cultural Heritage Living Room" of the Shanghai International Import Expo and the Digital Art Exhibition of the Beijing International Fair for Trade in Services, the Guangzhou Canton Fair will set up a "Exhibition+Art" section starting from 2022. Each section will focus on technology, folk customs, or environmental protection themes to plan the 2023 autumn exhibition. The section attracts many exhibitors and the conversion of intended orders is much better than traditional exhibition areas. At the brand conference, Huawei HDC's "HarmonyOS Ecological Art Wall" turned the code into colorful light and shadow, bringing the brand and developers closer together; In terms of reward tourism, Ctrip MICE's "Art Customization Line" is popular, with Dunhuang painting and mural painting, Jingdezhen pottery making itineraries, and many corporate customers repurchasing in 2023. However, these cases are mostly found at top exhibitions and large companies, and art curation for small and medium-sized MICE events is still rare and far from becoming a common practice in the industry.

4.2. Realistic Pain Points: Triple Obstacles on the Road to Integration

The most prominent feature is that the curatorial theme is disconnected from the MICE goals, often falling into the category of 'art for art's sake'. A new product launch event for a certain household appliance invited an artist to do an abstract sculpture exhibition, which has nothing to do with the "intelligence and convenience" of household appliances. Attendees remember the sculpture and forget about the product; A contemporary oil painting displayed at a food exhibition in a certain place has nothing to do with "food safety" or "local specialties", but has been met with dissatisfaction. The root cause is that the curator and the organizer did not have a thorough discussion and did not form a consensus on "culture as a platform for business". What's even more tricky is the lack of knowledgeable people. To blend art and MICE well, one needs to understand artistic storytelling as well as business goals and user needs, but there are too few such people. Traditional curators often only focus on culture, such as the stunning suspended installation of a certain exhibition, which blocks the flow of attendees; MICE executors often lack artistic sensitivity, and hanging a few decorative paintings is called "art curation", which makes it difficult to achieve an immersive experience [4]. Cost is also an unavoidable hurdle. Art curation, installation, and hiring curators all require spending money. A small technology exhibition plans to develop a 30 square meter digital art area, but the installation cost only accounts for 40% of the budget, which did not meet expectations; A small and

medium-sized enterprise had to give up its annual meeting due to the cost of the "employee art exhibition" exceeding the budget. The core is that there are no ready-made standards for curation, and the cost of customization is high. The organizers find it difficult to evaluate the return on investment and dare not try lightly.

5. THE INTEGRATION OF ART CURATION AND MICE: BREAKING THROUGH FROM CONTENT TO SCENE

Table 2. Dual dimensional landing strategy of "content scene" integration of art curation and MICE

Integration dimension	Core movement	Case studies in the text	Implementation effect
Content end	Set MICE targets (selling goods/branding); 2Provide cultural symbols; String "target symbol experience"	New Energy Product Fair, Beijing Fashion Week	Record product attributes and brand to gain attention
Scene end	Exhibition route: Art flow → Product display → Interaction; Meeting Details: Sign in/Rest Area Planting Art	Beijing Furniture Fair, Tencent Conference	Increased consultation volume and decreased fatigue

To untangle the knot between art curation and MICE integration, the key is to start from two points: "content" and "scene" - to intertwine cultural expression with commercial goals, no longer let curation become an empty shelf, and truly help MICE elevate the experience, see Table 2. The curation theme cannot be set arbitrarily, it must follow the MICE goals. First, think carefully about what you want to do: sell goods at exhibitions, promote your brand at conferences, or reward employees for staying in tourism? Find the right cultural symbols for taste, such as using "natural ecology" for environmentally friendly products and "digital art" for technology conferences. Finally, string the "theme symbol experience" together, with each step revolving around the goal. A new energy company is holding a product launch event and wants to talk about "low-carbon travel". The curatorial theme is set as "Green Energy Art Chronicles": using waste batteries as installations, and also engaging in interactive activities such as "riding a bike to generate electricity and light up art lights" - participants can light up their car lights as soon as they ride, not only understanding the energy properties of the product, but also keeping "low-carbon" in mind, which is very practical [5]. The space of MICE is not only a place for placing things and holding meetings, but also a bridge for conveying experiences. The exhibition follows the "storytelling" approach: first, it attracts interest through art installations, then showcases artistic products, and finally uses interaction to deepen impressions, allowing everyone to naturally move from "knowing" to "liking". At an international furniture exhibition in Beijing, the smart furniture area is set up according to the theme of "future life". Sofas and dining tables are embedded in artistic homes, and the lighting can simulate day and night. Visitors can unconsciously understand how to use furniture, and the consultation volume is much better than when displaying products by light. Meetings can also focus on details, with themed art walls in the check-in area and small installations in the rest area. Tencent held a game developer conference and set up game character sculptures in the rest area. Everyone can take photos and tie their hair in circles, which not only fits the theme, but also reduces fatigue. Don't make the interaction too complicated, otherwise no one will play and you have to take the path of "low threshold, interesting". Scanning a code to play at an exhibition is great. For example, at a wine exhibition in Chengdu Sugar and Wine Fair, attendees can scan a code and answer three questions to get their exclusive "wine art image", which can also be matched with corresponding wine styles. Many people are willing to try it out and it also drives inquiries. Rewarding tourism is simpler, as local products can be used for artistic interaction - a

company went to Xiamen for team building and asked employees to use sand and seashells to assemble the company logo. No professional tools were needed, and all employees could participate. After taking photos, they could also post them on social media, achieving high participation at a low cost.

6. ART CURATION EMPOWERS MICE: BUILDING A LONG-TERM PATH THROUGH MECHANISMS AND ECOLOGY

To truly integrate content and scenes, creativity alone is not enough. We also need solid mechanisms and ecological support - starting from the three obstacles of shortage of people, high cost, and scattered resources - to make art curation normalized and help MICE upgrade, without always relying on "sudden inspiration". Let's talk about talent first. The lack of people who understand both fields is an old problem. We need to work hard from both the school and the industry: on the school side, let the exhibition major partner with the art major, offer some courses on "exhibition art curation", integrate MICE planning and curation practice, and then invite people from the industry to bring practical experience. For example, Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts has added this module to the exhibition major, so that students can have early exposure to real needs; In the industry, it is simpler for MICE companies and art institutions to train each other, so that curators can understand some business logic, exhibition personnel can understand artistic value, and the entire professional certification standard can gradually fill the talent gap. Talking about costs again, they are so expensive that they deter small and medium-sized activities, so we need to change our mindset. Don't rely solely on customization anymore, try the path of "standard module+flexible adjustment": for common needs such as "brand building" and "interaction", prepare ready-made curation modules in advance, such as digital interactive components that include functions such as scanning codes to generate posters and data visualization. The organizer can choose the module to modify it. One company has made this module, which is 60% cheaper than full customization, and it is widely used in small and medium-sized exhibitions; In addition, a MICE art resource library can be established in various regions to integrate the resources of art museums and art schools, provide art rental and shared curator services, and eliminate the need for everyone to buy repeatedly. A platform set up by a convention and exhibition association in Hangzhou has done just that, saving more than 30% of costs for small and medium-sized activities [6]. Finally, we need to rely on ecology to connect, don't go our separate ways. A tripartite cooperation circle of "organizer+art institution+service provider" can be established: the organizer specifies what they want, the art institution is responsible for curation and creation, construction, and technology company management. For example, the Shanghai International Import Expo often collaborates with local art museums and construction companies to meet demand three months in advance, so that curation will not deviate from the exhibition goals; It can also extend the value, such as turning the curated IP into derivative products, or developing art tourism routes. For example, the Beijing Service Trade Fair authorized the digital art exhibition IP to cultural and tourism companies, creating an exclusive tourism route that allows the exhibition IP to be monetized in the long term; Organize more forums and share successful cases, so that more people can see the benefits and gradually cultivate the ecosystem of "MICE+art".

7. CONCLUSION

In the era of experience economy, the essence of competition in the MICE industry is the competition of experiential value. Art curation, with its cultural narrative, immersive scene, and interactive innovation, has become the core means for MICE to reconstruct the experiential value chain. Research has shown that there are three major coupling points between art curation and MICE in terms of spatial narrative, audience interaction, and value transmission. Their empowering value is concentrated in three dimensions: sensory experience upgrading, brand value strengthening, and industry extension. It is not an additional decoration, but a key link in promoting MICE's

transformation from functional services to value creation. The current practice of art curation empowering MICE has made partial breakthroughs, but still faces pain points such as the disconnect between curation themes and MICE goals, a shortage of professional talents, and imbalanced cost control. It is necessary to explore paths from the perspectives of content and scene integration, mechanism and ecological construction. The content and scene side ensures the core goals of art curation services MICE through theme customization, spatial artistry, and interactive lightweighting; The mechanism and ecological end promote the normalization of integration by addressing industry pain points through talent cultivation, cost control, and ecological collaboration. The development of digital art and AI technology in the future will enable art curation to present more innovative forms such as metaverse art curation and AI customized art experiences in MICE, but the fusion logic of "culture as the core and commerce as the use" will always be the core. Only by adhering to the MICE goals as the guide and user experience as the center, can art curation unleash its empowering value and promote the development of the MICE industry towards high-quality and high added value. The industry needs to strengthen practical exploration and theoretical research to accumulate replicable cases and experiences, making art curation a universal choice for improving the quality and efficiency of the MICE industry and injecting new momentum into the high-quality development of China's exhibition economy. There are certain limitations to this study, as it does not provide a detailed analysis of the differences in art curation between different types of MICE such as conferences and exhibitions. Further in-depth research can be conducted on various sub fields of MICE to provide targeted practical guidance.

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