

Research on Exhibition Participation Mechanism and Artist Brand Building Mediated by Art Derivatives: Based on the Perspective of Sustainable Cultural Management

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Abstract:

From the perspective of sustainable cultural management, this study explores the functional innovation and strategic value of art derivatives in contemporary art management, with a special focus on in-depth interviews and case studies of well-known Chinese galleries Line gallery and Tang Contemporary Art. Through literature review, comparison of international and local cases, interviews and questionnaires, it is revealed that art derivatives are not only a tool for economic gain, but also a cultural intermediary mechanism connecting exhibition interaction, audience relationship and brand building. The study finds that international institutions have achieved a high degree of synergy between the brand system and the audience mechanism through publishing, limited edition design and cross-border cooperation, while local institutions still have shortcomings in brand consistency, audience education and cultural intermediary mechanism. Questionnaire data show that young audiences have high interest but lack collecting education and psychological support. Based on this, this paper proposes a “sustainable cultural relationship model”, and proposes a systematic optimization path from six dimensions, including concept extension, interactive stimulation, collection mechanism, social communication and pre-curation, emphasizing the promotion of art derivatives strategy through innovative design and cross-border cooperation, cultivating long-term cultural relations and enhancing the sustainable development of art brand equity.

Keywords:

Art Derivatives, Exhibition Interaction, Experience Design, Artist Branding, The Continuation of Cultural Relations, Sustainable Culture Model, Cultural Influence, Arts Management

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of the art market and the diversified evolution of cultural consumption methods, audiences' participation in art exhibitions is increasingly changing from "viewing" to "immersion" and "interactivity" [2]. At the same time, due to their scarcity and high price, artworks are often only owned by a small number of people, which limits the in-depth interaction and experience between the public and art to a certain extent. As a result, art peripherals are not only consumer objects, but also assume the cultural function of "participatory art" in a sense [4,6].

At the same time, artist branding has become a key path to enhance their cultural influence and market recognition [5]. Art derivatives should not be regarded as a marginalized cultural and creative profit block, as a continuation of economic gains, but should pay more attention to its unique potential in shaping the visual identity, personality impression and cultural communication mechanism of artists, expanding the audience's interactive experience, and becoming a "long-term audience management tool" [3,8].

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of art derivatives in enhancing the interactivity of exhibitions and assisting in the branding of artists, and to further consider how this mechanism can trigger a paradigm shift in arts management. The core questions of the research include: how can art derivatives effectively enhance the audience's sense of participation in the exhibition? How does it serve as a brand communication tool for the construction of the artist's image? Furthermore, in the strategic planning of art institutions, can this lightweight art consumption method be a new mechanism to continue the efficiency of exhibitions and increase the stickiness of public culture?

In terms of research methodology, this paper uses a literature review combined with case studies, supplemented by in-depth interviews and questionnaires, and selects representative international artists and local Chinese galleries for comparative analysis. By constructing an analytical framework of "art periphery-exhibition interaction-brand building-management paradigm", this paper proposes a sustainable cultural relationship model, aiming to provide a strategic framework with reference value for art institutions, strengthen the cultural stickiness of audiences, expand the breadth of art brands, and promote the continuous dissemination of art and culture in the social context and the reproduction of cultural values [9,22].

2. Literature Review

2.1. *The Context of the Transformation of the Global Art Market*

In recent years, the global art market has undergone a structural transformation, most notably the rise of young collectors. According to the Art Basel & UBS (2023) report, the participation of collectors under the age of 35 in the global art auction market has increased from 6% in 2018 to 30% in 2023. This is particularly the case in Asia, where the share of millennials and Gen Z buyers continues to rise [1].

This trend of "market rejuvenation" has not only changed the scale and structure of art consumption, but also profoundly affected the path of art dissemination, sales and collection education. Forbes (2023) points out that the core issue of the future art market is no longer "who to sell to", but "how to get more people into the collecting mechanism", highlighting the importance of art institutions must build a low-barrier and lightweight participation path [10].

At the same time, digital communication and the widespread use of social media are also reshaping the consumption of art. Platforms such as Instagram and Xiaohongshu have significantly expanded the visibility and dissemination radius of art information, making the art experience highly social and fragmented [2]. Although this “decentralized” communication increases the exposure of artworks, it also exacerbates the superficial tendency of the experience, and lacks a continuous path of cultural identity construction and re-engagement [13].

2.2. Functional transformation of art derivatives

Against this macro background, the role of art derivatives is undergoing a profound transformation. Traditional museum souvenirs mostly emphasize “memory preservation” and “tourism consumption”, mainly focusing on landmark images and classics in the collection. On the other hand, the art derivatives of contemporary expression pay more attention to the artist’s brand identity and the emotional connection of the audience, emphasizing “visual language communication” and “cultural resonance” [15].

Contemporary art derivatives are not only the reproduction carriers of artistic images, but also gradually evolve into “cultural mechanism platforms”. Through image translation, media recoding, and social platform communication, they realize the continuation of artistic narratives and the reconstruction of public cultural cognition. This shift reflects the transition from content-centric to relationship-centric management of art institutions.

Several studies have highlighted the need for art institutions to redesign the circular mechanism of “exhibition-participation-continuation-reproduction” as audiences’ consumption habits become lighter, socialized, and identified. Due to their possessive, usable, and shareable characteristics, art derivatives can trigger the audience’s personal memory and cultural identity, and become a channel for re-engagement after the exhibition.

2.3. Theoretical Perspective: Participatory Art and Relational Aesthetics

As part of the interactive mechanism of the exhibition, art derivatives can theoretically draw on the framework of Participatory Art and Relational Aesthetics. Claire Bishop [4] proposes that participatory art should be centered on “co-creation” or “cultural intervention”, expanding the audience’s expression path and action power, and transforming artistic practice into a “social relationship field”.

Similarly, Nicolas Bourriaud (1998) argues in “Relational Aesthetics” that art curators should design an environment of cultural interaction that can be triggered, participatory, and sustainable, breaking the binary opposition of “audience-work” and turning to social interaction and community sharing [6].

These theoretical perspectives suggest that art derivatives should not only be regarded as an appendage of the exhibition, but should be incorporated into the overall narrative system and interactive design of the exhibition, and become an important mechanism to trigger participation behavior, deepen cultural identity and continue the vitality of the exhibition.

2.4. Learning Behavior Models and Cultural Consumption Psychology

In addition, John Falk and Lynn Dierking’s [9] “Free Choice Learning Model” points out that the audience’s learning and memory in the art space is not passively

received, but highly autonomous, motivated and socially context-driven. Audiences engage selectively based on their personal interests, social background, and immediate emotions. This means that art derivatives are not only external consumer goods, but also become “triggers of action memory”, perpetuating emotional experiences and social communication paths through their possessive and shareable properties.

Consumer psychology also reveals the underlying drivers of derivatives consumption. Belk’s [3] concept of “possession as self-extension” explains the mechanism by which people construct identity and a sense of belonging through the collection of art derivatives. Donahue’s [8] model of collecting motivation based on scarcity, effort, limitation, and delay is helpful to understand how limited-edition art derivatives stimulate users’ desire to collect and community participation through psychological scarcity design.

2.5. Deficiencies of existing research and implications of this study

Although the research on art derivatives continues to be enriched, the existing literature is still deficient in several aspects. First of all, most of the research focuses on the success paths of large international institutions or star artists, and there is a lack of research on the mechanism of small and medium-sized local art institutions in the context of limited resources. Secondly, although there are some discussions on the economic attributes, brand extension and financialization potential of art derivatives, there is still insufficient systematic theoretical construction and empirical comparative research on art derivatives as a “cultural management tool” [22,19].

Therefore, this study attempts to fill these gaps, combining literature review, international case studies and local interviews, and proposes a framework of “sustainable cultural participation mechanism driven by art derivatives”, aiming to provide art institutions with actionable strategic ideas in exhibition interaction, audience relationship and artist branding, and respond to the management challenges in the local cultural context.

3. Research Methodology

This study uses qualitative content analysis, combined with open coding and thematic abstraction strategies, to systematically reveal the logic of art derivatives in the interactive mechanism of exhibitions and artist branding, as well as the strategic differences in different institutional contexts. Firstly, through a literature review, this paper reviews the new paradigm transformation of the global art market, participatory exhibition theory, brand building research and art derivatives, and clarifies its cultural communication and brand continuation functions in contemporary art management.

Secondly, the study uses a multi-source data collection approach, including:

- Semi-structured interviews: 5 interviews with local galleries, cultural institutions, e-commerce platforms and practitioners in China, covering development strategies, brand management, audience relationships and challenges;
- Case Studies: Comparing international and local typical paths, including teamLab, Yayoi Kusama, Takashi Murakami, Gagosian, as well as large and medium-sized galleries in China (Magnolia Hall, Tang Gallery, Hi Shop) and cultural institutions (UCCA Lab, West Bund Art Museum, Rockbund Art Museum);

• Audience Survey: 100 valid questionnaires were collected for young people aged 18-34 to understand cognition, purchase motivation, participation experience and brand identity behavior.

In the analysis part, the study annotated the verbatim transcripts of interviews, exhibition documents, and social media UGC data through open coding, extracted keywords (such as “interaction”, “purchase motivation”, “art IP”, etc.), and then summarized the preliminary coding into high-level themes (such as “brand dependence psychology”, “interactive experience mechanism”, and “lack of cultural mediation”). In order to improve the reliability of the interpretation, a triangulation strategy was used to cross-compare the interview data, literature, UGC content and questionnaire results [22].

Table 1. Six-dimensional cultural value coding system for art derivatives.

Dimensio	Explanation (Scoring Reference)
Narrative Strength	Refers to whether the exhibition possesses a coherent narrative structure,with interactive mechanisms and thematic consistency that guide audiences into immersive experiences. It also considers how art derivatives or related channels extend the narrative beyond the exhibition.
Brand Continuity	Assesses whether the institution or artist maintains a consistent visual language and cultural storyline across exhibitions, publications, derivatives, and cross-sector activities, thereby shaping an identifiable and sustainable brand system.
Audience Engagement	Evaluates the presence of systematic audience interaction mechanisms,such as community building, membership systems,and UGC-based communication design,which help foster continuous relationships and co-creative cultural pathways.
Product Innovation	Measures whether the art derivatives are conceptually original,artistically expressive, and distinctive, avoiding generic replication or homogenized production models.
Cultural Assetization Potential	Determines whether the derivatives possess attributes of light assets, mechanisms for value recognition,and market liquidity, allowing them to enter secondary markets and function as cultural financial instruments.
Cross-sector Collaboration	Refers to the institution's ability to actively collaborate with sectors such as fashion, technology, design, and entertainment to expand artistic content into broader semantic and industrial contexts.

In order to carry out systematic comparison in the context of different institutions, the study further proposes a “six-dimensional cultural value coding system for art derivatives”, covering exhibition narrative power, brand continuity, audience relationship construction, derivative innovation, cultural capitalization potential, and cross-border collaboration mechanism, and qualitative evaluation is carried out using a five-level scoring scale for each dimension (see Appendix). In addition, the study proposes a “Pathway Model of Sustainable Cultural Participation Mechanism Driven by Art Derivatives” to depict the strategic path of art derivatives to achieve cultural continuity and value reproduction in the four links of “exhibition-participation-brand identity-management mechanism”.

4. Case Study

This study adopts the theoretical sampling method and selects cases with typical differences in the development of art derivatives and the construction of cultural relations, so as to ensure a structural comparison of the mechanisms in different resource structures, institutional scales, and cultural contexts [12]. Four representative

cases were selected, including Gagosian, a representative of a large international gallery (a model of high-end art brand closed-loop management and highly integrated derivatives strategy); Representatives of local cultural institutions, UCCA Lab, West Bund Museum and Rockbund Art Museum (reflecting the interactive expansion of exhibitions, and the practical exploration of derivatives to help cultural continuity and institutions); Representatives of China's local medium-sized and large-scale galleries, such as Magnolia Hall, Tang Contemporary Art, and Hi Shop (to show the dual challenges of art peripheral development and brand building in the context of limited resources); and Bubble Mart and Pokémon, as a non-art system but a comparison case of trendy IP that has built a mature cultural interaction mechanism. This paper compares the similarities and differences between different types of institutions in the development of art derivatives and the construction of cultural relations, and explores their internal logic.

In addition, field research and interviews are conducted specifically for the local gallery system in China. The interview focuses on the current situation and challenges of the art derivatives mechanism, the construction of audience participation paths, the strategic planning of artists' brands, the development strategy of institutions, the extension strategy of exhibitions and the issues of market cognition, aiming to supplement the structural dilemmas and future development potential of Chinese art institutions in the construction of the derivative mechanism. All interviews were conducted in a semi-structured, open-ended format, lasting approximately 45–60 minutes, online or face-to-face, with informed consent prior to recording, in strict compliance with the UAL Code of Ethical Conduct for Research and verbatim [19].

Table 2. Details of the interviewee.

Participants	Company	position	Years in Industry
P1	Line gallery	Stockholder	10
P2	Hiartstore	Stockholder	10
P3	Tang Contemporary Art	Former Sales Director	7
P4	Gene Gallery	Co-Founder	5
P5	Chiwan N0.1 Art Center	Coo	5

4.1. Practical Paths and Challenges of Local Galleries

4.1.1. Magnolia Tang and Hi Shop: Brand Integration and Differentiation

As a local medium-sized and large-scale gallery in China, Line gallery has tried to achieve a two-line development of “original sales + limited prints and life derivatives” through cooperation with the Hi Shop platform. At the beginning of the cooperation, brand complementarity and emerging audience expansion were realized, but with the expansion of business, due to the divergence of the main brand line and the pressure of resource allocation, it finally chose to split and operate independently.

According to the interview, Hi Shop focuses on young artists' prints and small derivatives, but faces challenges such as single category, inventory management, and insufficient market education. This cooperation experience reveals that medium-sized institutions are often constrained by the balance between development costs, brand consistency and audience education when integrating lightweight consumption paths.

4.1.2. Tang Gallery and Art Focus: Independent Sector and Low-Risk Model

As one of the largest international galleries in China, Tang Gallery demonstrates a more mature brand management strategy. Through the establishment of an

independent sub-brand, Art Focus, it is responsible for limited edition goods, IP development and public project promotion, and adopts the “outsourcing development + internal supervision” model to reduce production and inventory risks.

The interview pointed out that Tangren's derivatives business is more regarded as a VIP customer relationship maintenance tool than a profit purpose. This model has advantages in brand tonality maintenance, risk control and resource efficiency, but it still has limitations in audience relationship development and cultural education functions.

4.1.3. Summary of key challenges

Through interviews and coding analysis, this study identifies four major challenges in the development of art derivatives by local galleries:

- a. Price level design problem: it is necessary to avoid the price of derivatives affecting the value system of the original work;
- b. High development and maintenance costs: hidden costs such as logistics, inventory, and after-sales restrict investment willingness;
- c. Lack of product innovation and cultural continuity: most products are still in the stage of “reproduction stationery”, lacking the extension of the artist’s concept; The cultural function is weakened, and the focus is too much on high-net-worth customers, and there is a lack of cultural education and participation mechanism for the public.

These questions all point to the fact that in order to achieve the sustainable development of art derivatives, local galleries need to break through the short-term sales logic and pay attention to the audience relationship and cultural continuity mechanism.

4.2. International Successful Experiences and Participation Mechanisms

4.2.1. TeamLab: Experience-Creation-Dissemination Interactive Cycle

TeamLab's immersive exhibitions in Tokyo, Shanghai, Beijing, and other places have designed interactive areas such as the “Sketch Factory”, allowing visitors to transform the images they create on site into badges, handkerchiefs, and other merchandise. This chain of “experience-creation-possession-sharing” greatly extends the time and space boundaries of the exhibition.

In addition, teamLab’s highly unified visual packaging and social media communication design encouraged the audience to spontaneously share UGC content on Instagram, Xiaohongshu and other platforms, forming an interactive ecosystem of “exhibition as social field”. Its strategy emphasizes “behavioral trigger mechanism” and “social feedback loop”, which provides a model for local institutions to learn from when designing derivatives chains.

4.2.2. Yayoi Kusama: Symbolic Extension and Emotional Embedding

Kusama’s solo exhibition uses her iconic polka dot symbols for a wide range of installations and merchandise, including handbags, silk scarves, keychains, and even NFT digital collectibles. In collaboration with Louis Vuitton, the counter is transformed into an immersive installation space, allowing the audience to complete the deep cognition and emotional participation of artistic symbols in “consumption”.

Through contextualized symbolic communication and limited edition strategies, Kusama not only strengthens brand consistency, but also realizes the continuous maintenance of the audience's emotional identity, proving that art derivatives can become a core tool for brand narratives.

4.2.3. Takashi Murakami: Mass production of symbols and global linkage

Through his highly recognizable symbol systems such as “Sunflower”, Murakami has collaborated with brands such as Louis Vuitton and UNIQLO to expand the artistic vocabulary to the realm of clothing, dolls, home furnishings and other goods. He adopts the strategy of continuously launching limited series and cross-border cooperation to achieve the “collectibility” and “circulation” of art IP, and create a global brand ecology.

The model shows that artist brand building is not only the commercialization of visual symbols, but also the strategy of building long-term audience relationships and cultural influence through cross-cultural and cross-platform collaboration.

4.3. Comparative Implications of Cross-border IP Mechanisms

4.3.1. Bubble Mart: Psychological drive and community resonance of collection

Through the limited blind box mechanism, combined with scarcity design and series collection logic, Pop Mart accurately captures the collecting psychology of contemporary consumers. Its products are not only consumer goods, but also cultural carriers for community communication and identity expression. The study found that Pop Mart is not simply commoditized, but systematically injected with artistic concepts and visual symbols through cooperation with designers, forming a cycle of “artistic expression-collection-driven-community co-creation”. This suggests that art institutions should pay attention to the collection mechanism, scarcity design, and community operation.

4.3.2. Pokémon: Multi-level collection and cultural experience integration

Through the slogan “Gotta Catch 'Em All”, Pokémon has established a multi-level participation model with collection, exchange, and battle as the core. From card collection to the AR game “Pokémon Go”, we have built an experience system that integrates education, emotion, and socialization. Its success shows that the collecting mechanism is not only an economic behavior, but also a process of cultural learning and social identity, which provides a reference for the construction of a “multi-level participation path” for the development of art derivatives.

4.3. Gagosian Gallery: A Complete Brand Closed-Loop Mechanism

Gagosian is one of the most influential international galleries in the global art market, demonstrating the high level of integration of art derivatives strategy and brand management. Its operation model revolves around blue-chip artists (such as Takashi Murakami, Yayoi Kusama, George Baselitz, etc.), and builds a closed-loop brand system covering artist agency, exhibition planning, publishing, derivative retail, and member community management.

Gagosian's Gagosian Shop is not simply an exhibition annex, but a continuation of the exhibition's narrative, selling a wide range of derivatives including limited edition prints, art books, sculpture reproductions, art furniture and more. The product highly emphasizes the consistency of the artist's image with the brand's visual system. In addition, Gagosian continues to produce content through its online publishing

platform (Gagosian Quarterly) and its membership programs to deepen the cultural memory of audiences and maintain community relationships. Interviews and literature analysis show that this model has three main characteristics:

- a. The integrated strategy of exhibition-publication-commodity ensures the coherence of the brand narrative;
- b. Cross-media and global communication paths to expand the market influence of artists;
- c. Long-term audience relationship building, and strengthening the transformation of cultural capital through membership and knowledge production.

Although Gagosian's resource allocation is difficult to replicate, its model provides important inspiration for local art institutions: art derivatives strategies need to be integrated into exhibition planning to form a systematic layout of audience relations, brand building and cultural asset management.

4.4. Exploration of derivatives of local cultural institutions

4.4.1. UCCA Lab and West Bund Museum: Cross-Border Collaboration and Cultural Communication

UCCA Lab and West Bund represent an active exploration of art derivatives strategies by local cultural institutions in China. Different from the sales-oriented logic of galleries, the development of derivatives by such institutions focuses more on lowering cultural thresholds, expanding non-professional audiences, and achieving narrative extension through cross-border cooperation.

UCCA Lab's large-scale exhibition concept is transformed into limited edition prints, daily necessities and brand co-branded products, trying to make the artist's visual symbols and concepts "everyday", and enhance the audience's emotional recognition and memory of the exhibition content. The West Bund Museum combines local culture and lifestyle design, through themed product collections and art shops, so that the exhibition experience can continue in daily life, and gradually cultivate the public's cultural consumption habits.

In the interviews, the two institutions generally emphasized that lowering the barrier to entry through derivatives is not only a commercial revenue channel, but also a part of the public education and cultural communication strategy. Rather than simply pursuing sales, they are more inclined to learn from the experience of international museums (such as Tate Modern and MoMA) to systematically build audience relationships and brand ecology.

4.4.2. Rockbund Art Museum: Institutional Innovation of "Noura Economy"

The Rockbund Art Museum is exploring the frontier at the level of art management system. The "Noura Economy" experiment was launched by the company, which attempts to establish a new institutional mechanism for the exchange of "non-monetary resources" for artistic experience**. Visitors can accumulate "Noura Banknotes" through volunteering, multiple participations, event contributions, etc., which can be redeemed for lectures, performances, workshops or derivatives.

This experiment not only expands the path of cultural participation after the exhibition, but also promotes the sustainable interactive logic of "time investment, action participation, and cultural relationship regeneration" in concept. Although it is

still in its preliminary stages, and the interviews reflect the challenges it faces in terms of operation, participation and mobilization, and sustainability, it represents an institutional exploration of local art institutions that goes beyond a single commercial exhibition and merchandising model.

4.4.3. *Contrasting revelations*

The case comparison in this study shows that top international galleries (such as Gagosian) have achieved a high degree of integration of exhibition planning, publishing content, product design and member communities in the development of art derivatives, and have built a complete closed-loop brand management. International artists and teams (teamLab, Yayoi Kusama, Takashi Murakami) have achieved global communication and deep cultural identity through the consistency of symbolic systems, interactive experience design, and cross-border collaboration. In contrast, local Chinese galleries (Magnolia, Tang Gallery, Hi Shop) are often constrained by price hierarchy, development costs, and insufficient audience education due to limited resources, resulting in limited product innovation and cultural functions. Although local cultural institutions (UCCA Lab, West Bund Art Museum, Rockbund Art Museum) try to expand audience relationships through cross-border cooperation and non-commercial mechanisms (such as the Nura economy), they lack a systematic collection mechanism and brand continuation strategy. The success of cross-border IPs such as Bubble Mart and Pokémon emphasizes that art derivatives are not only economic transaction tools, but also an integrated mechanism for scarcity design, collection psychology, community interaction and cultural narrative. For local art institutions, the key is to break the one-time consumption mentality and incorporate derivatives into the strategic system of brand management, audience education and cultural communication, so as to achieve a sustainable cycle of cultural participation.

4.5. *Summary of six-dimensional comparative analysis*

In order to systematically summarize the mechanism characteristics of different art institutions in the development of art derivatives and the construction of cultural relations, this study compares and analyzes the main case objects based on the six-dimensional coding criteria proposed above, namely exhibition narrative power, brand continuity, audience relationship construction, derivative innovation, cultural capitalization potential and cross-border collaboration mechanism. Through combing and horizontal comparison, we can more clearly identify the differences and potential improvement paths between local and international institutions in the deployment of mechanisms.

Table 3. *Six-dimensional scoring of cases.*

Institution/Project	Exhibition Narrativity	Brand Continuity	Audience Relationship Building	Derivative Product Innovation	Cultural Asset Potential	Cross-Sector Collaboration
Line Gallery (HiShop)	3	2	3	2	2	3
Tang Contemporary Art (Art Focus)	4	4	3	3	4	3
teamLab	5	5	5	5	3	5
Yayoi Kusama	5	5	5	5	5	5
Takashi Murakami	5	5	5	5	5	5

Yoshitomo Nara	5	4	5	5	4	3
UCCA Lab	4	3	4	4	3	4
West Bund Museum	3	3	4	3	3	4
Rockbund Art Museum(Nula Economy)	4	TBD	4	3	TBD	5
Gagosian Gallery	5	5	5	5	5	5
Pop Mart	3	5	5	5	5	5

From the results of the comparison Table 3, it can be seen that the top international institutions (Gagosian, teamLab, Yayoi Kusama, Takashi Murakami) show a high degree of synergy in six dimensions, forming a closed loop of "brand system-audience relationship-cultural assets". Gagosian scored the highest in brand continuation and capitalization through publishing, exhibitions, derivatives and community management; Takashi Murakami and Yayoi Kusama strengthened the innovation and brand consistency of derivatives with symbolic recognition and diversified communication.

In contrast, homegrown galleries are in the exploratory phase. Although the cooperation between Yulantang and Hi Xiaodian has initially laid out the surrounding development, the potential for innovation and capitalization is still weak; Tang Gallery's Art Focus has advantages in brand maintenance, but audience relations and product innovation are still limited. Although the exhibition-oriented institutions (UCCA Lab and Rockbund Art Museum) are not sales-oriented, they show another path of cultural publicity in terms of audience relations and cross-border cooperation.

In summary, the effectiveness of art derivatives lies not only in product design, but also in the structural synergy between the brand system, audience relationship and cultural capital transformation.

4.6. Questionnaire survey data analysis

In order to further understand the audience's perception of art derivatives and their motivation to purchase them, this study designed and distributed a targeted questionnaire (see Appendix 1), mainly for young people aged 18–34, and collected a total of 100 valid questionnaires through online (WeChat, Xiaohongshu) and offline (exhibition site).

The results show that the participation rate of art derivatives consumption is relatively high: 88.64% of the respondents have purchased related products, and more than 60% will actively search for or buy peripherals after visiting the exhibition, reflecting good market acceptance and demand for extended experience. The information acquisition channels mainly rely on Xiaohongshu, Moments and friend recommendations, showing the characteristics of high socialization and private domain communication.

In terms of consumer preferences, more than 70% of respondents attach importance to "whether the visual style is unique", nearly 60% value whether it reflects the artist or exhibition concept, and generally emphasize emotional value as the motivation for purchase. Among the decision-making factors, 52.27% paid attention to product design and concept adaptation, and about one-third said that the brand influence of artists was the main consideration, indicating the importance of brand recognition in the purchase decision.

At the same time, the survey also revealed the barriers to the transformation from interest to behavior: 47.73% were interested but thought the threshold was high, and 34.09% were “very interested” but lacked collecting education, reflecting the lack of awareness and psychological threshold of art collecting, which hindered the potential consumption conversion.

5. Discussion and Suggestions

5.1. *Redefinition of art derivatives in management strategies*

For a long time, art derivatives were often seen as ancillary income items of exhibitions or store profits. However, with the diversified development of cultural consumption scenarios and the strengthening of the logic of art brand building, its role in the art management system is changing.

Under the framework of contemporary art management, art derivatives should be redefined as an important part of the audience participation mechanism, the continuation mechanism of cultural relations and the brand strategy. It is not only a means of economic gain, but also a catalyst for transforming the short-term exhibition experience into a long-term cultural identity relationship.

This study emphasizes that the core value of art derivatives is not craftsmanship or price, but whether it can effectively continue and expand the core concept of the artist, and establish a sustainable cultural touchpoint between the audience, the artist, and the institution’s brand. Through limited edition, narrative, design consistency and interactive mechanism, art derivatives can strengthen the brand image, expand the scope of audiences, and become an important node to promote the continuous cycle of cultural ecology.

5.2. *Proposal of a sustainable cultural relations model*

Based on the results of literature review, case analysis and questionnaire survey, this study proposes the “Sustainable Cultural Engagement Model” as a theoretical framework for the future strategic design of art institutions.

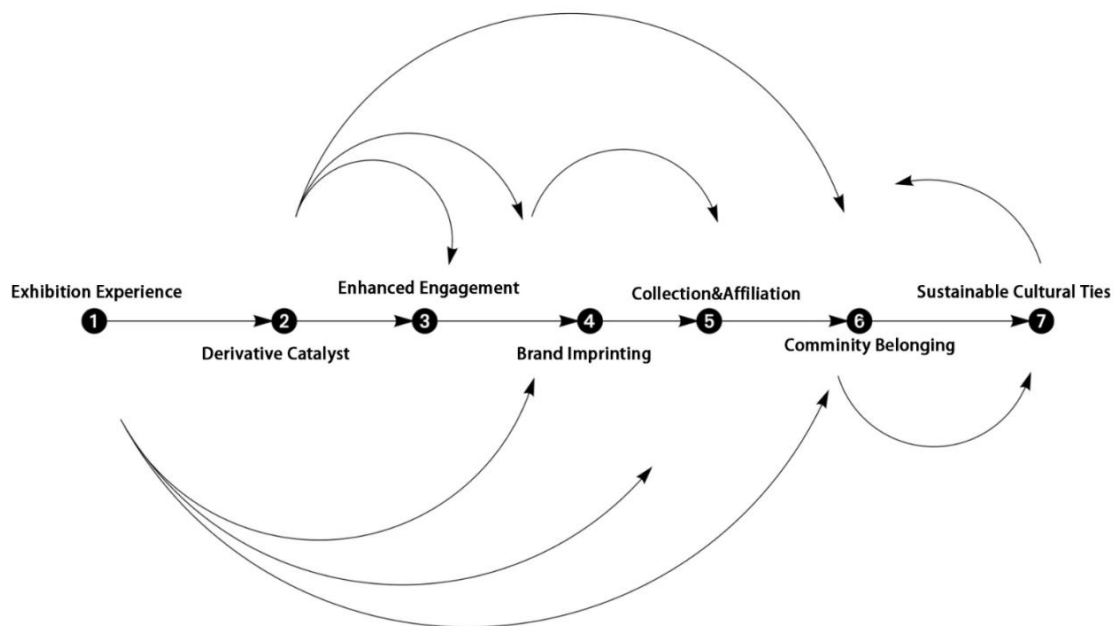


Figure 1. Sustainable Cultural Engagement Model.

5.2.1. Transition from exhibition experience to cultural relations

Traditional exhibitions mostly focus on short-term visual presentation and on-site traffic, and the audience's behavior path is often "watching-remembering-leaving", lacking a follow-up cultural identity mechanism. With the changes in the consumption environment dominated by the experience economy and social communication, the audience's expectations for a sense of participation and belonging have increased, requiring art institutions to transform one-time experiences into long-term cultural relationship chains.

Art derivatives play the role of "cultural mediators" in this process: through the continuation of design, stories and symbols, the audience can continue to "own" the artistic experience after the exhibition; Through collection, social sharing and secondary market exchange, a repeated participation and communication path is formed, and the passive audience is transformed into an active cultural co-creator.

5.2.2. Model structure and logical path

The model proposed in this study consists of the following three phases:

Stage 1: Exhibition Experience → Derivatives Catalyst → Participatory Enhancement

As a "re-trigger", derivatives extend the audience's social behavior from purchasing, sharing to collecting, and promote initial cultural identity and reproduction.

Stage 2: Participatory stimulation → Deepening of brand impression → Collection and identity transformation

Through limited editions, certifications and serialized designs, the audience's emotional belonging and loyalty to the artist and the institution's brand are strengthened.

Stage 3: Solid brand relationship → Community ownership generation → Long-tail effect of cultural relations

Transform a single experience into long-term attention, collection, and co-creation, forming a sustainable cultural connection and community ecology. This model emphasizes that art derivatives are not only economic transactions, but also a strategic mechanism for the continuation of art experience, the construction of audience relationship and the cultivation of brand value.

5.3 Suggestions for strategic optimization paths

In order to support the implementation of the above model, this study proposes six core action path suggestions based on research and case comparison:

- Embed behavioral incentive mechanism: Design incentive systems such as point exchange, blind box unlocking, and secondary purchase bonuses to promote the psychological transformation from "interest to collection".
- Strengthen the cultural mediation mechanism: lower the cognitive threshold through story-based packaging, short videos, interview content, etc., so that derivatives become narrative media rather than mere commodities.

- Optimize product structure and collection path: Adopt strategies such as limited numbering, signature certification, and series themes to build a standardized and sustainable collection logic.

- Build a lightweight collection conversion chain: gradually guide from daily low-cost derivatives to mid-to-high-end collections, cooperate with membership services and private domain communities, and cultivate culturally identity users.

- Activate social communication mechanisms: design UGC co-creation activities, topic marketing and exhibition communities, and promote the transformation of audiences into cultural communicators of the brand.

- Synchronous curatorial mechanism design: In the early stage of exhibition planning, the concept and interaction mode of derivatives are coordinated to achieve narrative consistency and experience coupling between exhibitions and derivatives.

These paths provide local art institutions with systematic deployment ideas from product to audience relationship, from pre-curatorial to long-term management, and help build a strategic system of art derivatives with cultural continuity and brand carrying capacity.

6. Conclusions and future prospects

This study takes “art derivatives” as the starting point to explore its functional transformation and strategic value in contemporary art management. Combined with literature combing, international and local case analysis, questionnaire research and mechanism modeling, the “sustainable cultural relationship model” is proposed, emphasizing the strategic positioning of art derivatives as a “cultural intermediary mechanism” and “audience behavior trigger”.

The study finds that the top international institutions have generally realized the collaborative integration of the brand system and the audience mechanism, and formed an integrated management model of exhibition, publishing, derivatives and community. However, there are still significant gaps in the mechanism deployment of local institutions, including insufficient brand continuity, shortage of audience education, and weak cultural intermediary mechanism. At the same time, although the young audience has a high degree of interest, there is a gap of “high interest and weak action” under the lack of collection education and brand dependence.

Based on this, this paper proposes four strategic dimensions and six optimization paths, covering concept extension, interactive stimulation, collection logic, social communication and pre-curatorial design, which provides a systematic framework for art institutions to construct deep cultural relationships in the context of lightweight consumption.

Future research can be further expanded to the following directions:

- Media path innovation: pay attention to the impact of emerging forms such as NFTs and digital blind boxes on cultural mechanisms.

- Deepening Institutionalization Research: Exploring the institutional design and performance evaluation methods of institutions of different sizes.

- User Lifecycle Management: Construct a "Audience-Fans-Collector" growth path model.

- **Regional Cultural Adaptation Research:** Comparing the psychology and strategies of art consumption in different cultural contexts.

In summary, this study attempts to respond to the practice of arts management, “What does the audience take away after the exhibition?” This core proposition emphasizes that art derivatives are a cultural mechanism that connects artists, audiences and society. Through systematic design and management, it can not only realize economic value, but also promote the sustainable development of cultural consumption and the long-term precipitation of brand equity.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Emerging Audiences / Potential Collectors - Art Derivative Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. It aims to understand the interests, motivations, and brand

perceptions of emerging audiences regarding art derivatives (e.g., limited edition prints,

artist-branded products, collectible toys). Your responses are anonymous and used solely for

academic research.

Estimated completion time: 5-7 minutes.

1.What is your age?

2.What is your current occupation?

3.Through which channels do you usually access exhibition or artist information?
(Multiple choice)

4.Have you ever purchased an art derivative product? (e.g., limited poster, art merchandise, artist

collab)

5.If yes, what were your main motivations? (Multiple choice)

6.What types of art derivatives do you prefer to purchase? (Multiple choice)

7.How important is the artist's brand in your purchasing decisions? (Multiple choice)

8.What factors most strongly drive your identification with an artist's brand?
(Multiple choice)

9.Can you recall a recent memorable experience with an art derivative or artist brand?

(Open-ended)

10.What features do you most value when purchasing or collecting art derivatives?
(Multiple choice)

11.What kind of collecting experience do you prefer? (Multiple choice)

12.Are you interested in learning more about art collecting in the future?

13.Ideally, what aspects would you like art institutions or brands to improve in derivative design?

(Open-ended)

14.What is your acceptable price range for art/art derivative products?

Appendix 2: Emerging Audiences - Institutional Interview Question

This guide is designed to explore how art institutions perceive, develop, and manage art derivatives in connection with curatorial

practice, branding, and audience engagement. Responses will be treated anonymously for academic research only.

Section 1: Institutional Background

- 1. Could you briefly introduce your institutions positioning, founding background, and curatorial direction?

- 2. Does your institution have a dedicated team for art derivative or cultural product development? If so, what is its approximate size?

Section 2: Understanding and Strategic Perception of Derivatives

- 3. In your view, what is the core value of art derivatives? Do you consider them part of your strategic art management?

- 4. How do you think derivatives support exhibitions or the artist's brand?

Section 3: Practice and Development Strategies

- 5. Has your institution ever developed derivatives based on an exhibition or artist? Could you share a representative example?

- 6. How is the development process typically organized from concept to execution? Is it in-house or through collaboration?

- 7. What is your opinion on the application of strategies like limited editions, collaborations, or functional products?

Section 4: Challenges and Resource Constraints

- 8. What specific difficulties have you encountered during implementation? For example:

- Insufficient design resources or inconsistent aesthetics
- Legal / copyright coordination issues
- Budget / distribution / inventory pressure

- 9. What is your current level of investment and future intention in art derivative development?

Section 5: Audience Connection and Cultural Engagement

- 10. Have you noticed changing interest among audiences regarding derivatives? E.g., social sharing, collecting motives, or brand identification?

- 11. Do you wish to build stronger emotional bonds with your audience through derivatives? Are you considering a more systematic path for cultural engagement?

Section 6: Art Management and Policy Suggestions

- 12. What do you consider the biggest shortcoming in China's current development of art derivatives?

- 13. Any suggestions for how institutions can better integrate 'art brand audience business' in the future?

Appendix 3: Six-dimensional grading criteria

Score	Description
5	Very High: This dimension is outstanding, reaching international leading or industry benchmark level.
4	High: This dimension is excellent, with systematic planning and significant results.
3	Medium: This dimension has some planning, but there are clear shortcomings or limitations.
2	Low: This dimension has limited attempts or weak planning, with limited effectiveness.
1	Very Low: This dimension is basically missing or lacks an effective mechanism.

Dimension 1: Narrative Strength

Definition: Whether the exhibition or mechanism has a clear narrative structure and theme logic that guides audience engagement, and whether it can expand the narrative boundary through derivatives and other means.

Score	Evaluation Criteria
5	The narrative is highly complete, with strong coherence between derivatives and the exhibition, enabling deep experience and long-term memory mechanisms.
4	Has a basic theme and narrative system, with partial linkage and response between derivatives and the exhibition; narrative is relatively coherent.
3	Has a clear theme, but limited linkage between derivatives and the exhibition; narrative does not extend well to audience post-visit experience.
2	Narrative is weak, with the exhibition and derivatives lacking clear content connection.
1	No clear narrative logic; derivatives are completely detached from the exhibition content.

Dimension 2: Brand Continuity

Definition: Whether there is a consistent long-term brand visual system, cultural language, and artist image framework.

Score	Evaluation Criteria
5	Brand visuals/concepts are highly systematic and unified, integrated across exhibitions, publishing, derivatives, and community/multi-platform operations.
4	Brand has a certain degree of recognition, with derivatives basically consistent with the artist's image.
3	Brand recognition is moderate, with derivatives' imagery biased toward individual artworks rather than the artist as a whole.
2	Brand imagery is scattered, lacking a unified system.
1	No consistent brand concept or strategic planning.

Dimension 3: Audience Engagement

Definition: Whether an effective mechanism for audience interaction, participation, community, and membership is established to enhance cultural stickiness.

Score	Evaluation Criteria
5	Has a comprehensive audience participation system, such as membership programs, UGC strategies, data operations, and community management.
4	Has basic interactive mechanisms, such as punch-in events, online streaming guidance, and campaign-led participation.
3	Occasional interactive or participatory design, but lacks a sustained strategy.
2	Interaction with the audience is single and uniform, unable to maintain long-term relationships.
1	Completely lacks audience participation or feedback mechanisms.

Dimension 4: Product Innovation

Definition: Whether derivatives are designed around original artistic concepts, with cultural recognizability and differentiation.

Score	Evaluation Criteria
5	Derivatives are closely aligned with the artist's concept, highly original, with breakthroughs in material, function, or form.
4	Derivatives show innovative ideas and are consistent with the artistic style.
3	Mostly standard derivative designs, with some individual product innovation.
2	Mostly simple, repetitive products lacking support from artistic concepts.
1	Clearly homogenized and mass-produced, with no design innovation.

Dimension 5: Cultural Assetization Potential

Definition: Whether derivatives have value-confirming potential, tradability, and cultural capital attributes (e.g., limited editions, collectibility).

Score	Evaluation Criteria
5	Derivatives have clear limitation mechanisms and scarcity design, already recognized in secondary markets or as cultural capital.
4	Has some limitation or certification logic, with cultural or collectible value.
3	Derivatives have partial added cultural value but lack a systematic tradability mechanism.
2	Weak limitation concept, commoditized products, limited cultural value.
1	No assetization potential at all, exists only as one-time consumer goods.

Dimension 6: Cross-sector Collaboration

Definition: Whether there is collaboration with design, fashion, technology and other fields to expand pathways for artistic and cultural communication.

Score	Evaluation Criteria
5	Regular, in-depth collaboration with multiple industries, building a cross-sector brand ecosystem.
4	Has representative cross-sector projects that effectively enhance cultural influence.
3	Occasional collaboration, mainly short-term events or co-branding.
2	Lacks systematic cross-sector collaboration strategies.
1	Completely no record or capability of cross-sector collaboration.

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