Venice Immersive Think Tank 2024

The LBE Market: Immediate Options to Address the Pressing Needs of Immersive Distribution and Exhibition in Venues

Hosted by Venice Immersive 2024: Michel Reilhac, Liz Rosenthal, and Doede Holtkamp

Introduction

Venice Immersive previously produced a report titled "Think Tank: Immediate Options to Address the Pressing Needs of Immersive Distribution" that surveyed the landscape of immersive distribution challenges. They stated in that report, "As a festival, our primary responsibility is to provide the best possible launchpad for the finest immersive projects. However, the question arises: what purpose does a launchpad serve if there is no market to receive these projects?" The Venice Immersive 2023 Think Tank was the preliminary brainstorm with industry experts focused on this issue, and one key conclusion was that the current Location-Based Entertainment (LBE) market "seems to be the one that generates the most revenue for non-gaming creative immersive content," but that there is still a lot of friction and room for optimization for LBE distribution.

The Venice Immersive 2024 Think Tank continued this discussion by bringing together leading immersive distribution stakeholders to discuss how many immersive works are not being conceived, designed, and produced in order to match the constraints and business realities of immersive exhibition venues. The goal of this Think Tank was to brainstorm around three main topics including robust IP development, venue facilitation such as how venues are developing their networks, as well as a brief discussion of the impact of public funds.

Participants

There were over 40 immersive producers, distributors, and venues to discuss gaps between the production and distribution of immersive works. This included 18 participants in the round table discussion, nearly 30 observers as well as 24 respondents to a survey that was sent to participants and observers in advance of the Think Tank. This report is an anonymized summary of this roundtable discussion with paraphrased quotes that also includes insights and key data from the survey, and it starts with discussing the gap between immersive producers and content distributors.

Discussion participants

- Neil Carty (Cosm)
- Jimmy Cheng (Atlas V)
- Babette Wijntjes (Cassette Stories)
- Marialya Bestougeff (Le Centquatre-Paris)
- Kent Bye (Voices of VR)
- Myriam Achard (PHI Centre)
- Luke Kemp (Barbican Centre)
- Chloé Jarry (Lucid Realities/ Unframed Collection)
- Camille Lopato (Diversion Cinema)
- Samantha King (Vive Arts)
- Jordana Leigh (Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts)
- Saskia Bakhuys (Musée d'Orsay)
- Maria Grazia Mattei (MEET Digital Culture Center)
- Caspar Sonnen (IDFA Doclab)
- Natasha Greenhalgh (Nxt Museum)
- Elisha Karmitz (MK2)

Moderators

- Liz Rosenthal (Venice Immersive, La Biennale di Venezia)
- Michel Reilhac (Venice Immersive, La Biennale di Venezia)

Notes & Report Writer

- Kent Bye (Voices of VR Podcast)

Observers

- Tonya Nelson (Arts Council England)
- Manon Blot (Forum des Images)
- Ulrich Schrauth (VRHAM!)
- Sarah Atkinson (King's College London)
- François Le Gall (A_Bahn)
- Tetsuya Ohashi (Cinema Leap)
- Claudia Montes (Forum des Images)
- May Abdalla (Anagram)
- Janine Steele (Canada Media Fund)
- Diliana Alexander (FilmGate Miami)
- Roei Amit (Bibliothèque nationale de France)
- Absaline Hehakaya (Netherlands Film Fund)
- Paul Bouchard (Diversion Cinema)
- Alina Mikhaleva (Less Media Group)
- Nicola Jones (MOIN Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein)
- Fiona Kilkelly (CoSTAR National Lab Royal Holloway University of London)
- Arnout van der Maas (Creative Industries Fund NL)
- Jeanne Marchalot (France Télévisions)
- Michele Ziegler (Forum des Images)
- Toby Coffey (4424)
- Maria Rakusanova (Raindance)
- Amy Seidenwurm (AGOG)
- Max Permantier (FilmFernsehFonds Bayern)
- Syb Groeneveld (Creative Industries Fund NL)
- Marie Point (Dark Euphoria)
- Alejandro Martin (Espronceda Institute of Art & Culture)
- Paulien Dresscher (PublicSpaces)
- Kath Dooley (University of South Australia

Executive Summary

This first section on “Connecting IP Development to Venue Constraints” explores the disconnect between immersive content creators and the practicalities of venue exhibition with these key takeaways:

- **Flexibility and adaptation:** There is a need for immersive projects to create multiple versions suited to different scales and venue space constraints.
- **Venue involvement within productions:** It is important for artists to understand the constraints of LBE venues during the early stages of content development.
- **Throughput and scalability:** Artistic vision needs to be balanced with a high enough throughput in order for LBE experiences to be financially sustainable.
- **Prototyping and user testing:** Rapid iteration and continuously testing experiences within target audiences is crucial.
- **Reformatting XR content for different display contexts**: Artists are presenting VR works in different mediums to expand reach and accessibility.
- **Community building and audience engagement**: Some experiences are designed in order to foster conversations and cultivate communities.

This second section on "Venue Facilitation" examines the lack of accessible information about immersive exhibition venues and their specific requirements, but also some of the evolving business models and hybrid exhibition approaches for the distribution of immersive experiences.

- **The need for data on immersive exhibition venues**: There is a desire for a comprehensive list of venues with detailed space, format, length, and technical specifications while taking into consideration the sensitive nature of these details.
- **Exploring venues that can be adapted for immersive exhibition**: Some cinemas are being adapted to show 360 video content, and there are existing surveys of cultural institutions that could also be potential exhibitors of LBE and XR experiences.
- **Survey results of immersive distribution business models**: There is a prevalence of flat fees, then revenue share, and then minimum guarantee deals in LBE, and the typical length for LBE licensing deals ranges from a quarter of a year to half a year.
- **Novel business models with the goal of raising VC money**: Some content producers are offering discounted extended rights in order to rapidly seed the market and attract investment.
- **Hybridity to have multiple entry points for immersive exhibitions**: Many exhibitors are integrating physical installations, video art, and other formats alongside XR experiences to enhance engagement and diversify revenue streams.
- **The resurgence of digital art**: Museums are increasingly recognizing the value of digital art, offering new opportunities for VR artists to exhibit and monetize their work.

- **Adapting to immersive exhibits**: Cultural institutions are exhibiting at offsite locations and have to navigate frictions as they balance the priorities between physical versus virtual exhibitions.
- **Developing unique curatorial branding of immersive genres**: Venues are defining their unique flavor and identity within the diverse immersive landscape as they curate projects and cultivate audiences.
- **Educating audiences about the value of immersive**: Because XR is still novel to many audiences, then there is a need to educate audiences about the unique affordances of the medium and value of immersive experiences.
- **Communicating value beyond the technology**: It is important to emphasize the story and experiential qualities of immersive content in marketing efforts beyond the mediating technologies.
- **Different formats and genres serve different audiences**: There are a range of different immersive formats and emerging genres that will serve different audience needs and expectations.

This last section on "Public Funding" addresses the role of public funding in supporting immersive content creation and distribution:

- **Public funding for production, but not distribution**: There are challenges to European artists who receive production funding but lack support for subsequent distribution and exhibition.
- **Challenges to embracing more business-oriented distribution**: There are different funding cultures in Europe versus the US leading to challenges in sustainable business strategies beyond what is sustained by public funding.
- **Regional resources for immersive distribution**: There are a number of emerging efforts across different countries to aggregate resources of different immersive venues and artists.

There is also an extensive appendix with additional survey results from the Think Tank participants and observers including:

- What's currently missing in the distribution landscape
- Pricing data from different LBE providers
- Other relevant information survey respondents would like to share about LBE distribution
- The biggest challenges for distributing LBE content
- Feedback on the suggested actions from the 2023 Think Tank Report
- Other survey results and graphics

Connecting IP Development to Venue Constraints

> “There are artists who come in, and the only thing they want to know is details about the space they’re going to get. And then there are artists who don't do that, and they just make their own thing and then you have to figure out how to make it work.”

The Think Tank conversation started with comments about how immersive works are being designed, conceived, and produced without really integrating or thinking about the constraints that they will face when they are ready to go out in the world and into markets. But at the same time, crucial information about these venues is not readily-available, which is a topic that was discussed in more detail within the second section around venue facilitation.

Flexibility and adaptation

The Think Tank discussion started with reflecting upon some large-scale immersive projects that were originally designed for a large space, but yet they ran into troubles finding appropriate spaces that were large enough within the subsequent stops on their tour. They had to learn the hard way, by having to subsequently create multiple versions of their experience in order to accommodate for different space sizes.

Another venue had been designing immersive experiences for multiple locations simultaneously as early as possible. “At the very early stage of development of the exhibition, we bring a co-producer onboard almost straight away. So when we're designing the exhibition for our primary location, we're almost also designing for a second venue already.” They have adopted the principle that “everything that we do has to start with touring.”

One producer with a music background shared that they encourage immersive artists to draw inspiration from music touring, where financial restrictions are similar. “If you're 17 people on the road, then you're going to have a really hard tour. I advise musicians to target four to five people on the road” and that “this conversation is not different from other parts of the performing arts.”

One venue produces works for their space, but also simultaneously thinks about touring the content to other spaces. The physical experience is really important for them, and so the first thing they do is evaluate a piece for their existing space, but then start to think about how to adapt it for different space sizes. They have to evaluate whether or not the experience will still have the same impact, and if they’ll be able to tell the story in the same way.

Venue involvement within productions

Another content producer suggested that “it would be great to see more projects being developed in partnership with those venues, rather than developed in isolation” as well as to “start thinking about these as more like exhibitions.” Also to consider having a number of different tiered formats for the project that includes the festival format, a medium-scale format, a large-scale format that's more scalable, and then more elaborate physical builds if institutions want to have installations.

Some venues are still adapting to the much smaller scale of immersive works as they're moving from presenting things to over 2,500 people to now just 10 people. "I cannot justify a one-on-one experience at this moment in my venue, but I can justify a very intimate experience and something that can happen multiple times. For me, it's not about the revenue, but it's about the audience. And it's about being able to serve many people with that investment."

Some venues have been very proactive in educating immersive creators by providing grants. "I think it should be the burden of the venue and the institution to pay for education of the ecosystem that they're dealing with so that the creative idea can take the lead."

Throughput and scalability

LBEs are looking to maximize the throughput of how many people per hour can see the experience in order to make these experiences sustainable. One survey respondent said, "*Carne y Arena* by Alejandro G. Iñárritu was designed in a way that very few tickets could be sold per site per day. This is the artist's vision, but now many years later I'm being consulted to figure out better throughput, less square footage without reducing the artistic vision. It's possible, but would have been so much more possible if those considerations were being put on the table in the early prototyping / design stage of that project."

Another venue owner said during the discussion "The thing for us is still always throughput. We don't have full subsidies, and so we have to fund ourselves within the structure of the organization."

Some large-scale LBE installations have a throughput of over 100 people per hour, and have reported selling over 170,000 tickets over a 7-month period. So there's certainly some momentum with this format in being able to scale to a point where it's profitable for both the content producers and exhibitors.

There was also some concern expressed within the survey results from someone who worried that these large-scale VR experiences may be compromising too much on quality. "The LBE trend of using standalone headset hardware may be driving the market down in terms of quality. The most successful installations in museums sacrifice the quality of the user experience (crowded footprints, people bumping into each other, etc.) for profitability. There is a risk of people being disappointed by LBE VR, or feeling like paying a ticket for this is not worth it."

These types of large-scale VR expeditions with other people is not the only model as it's also possible to have high throughput on standalone VR experiences. One producer shared, "There is still space for a single-user experience that can actually still achieve very high levels of throughput, as we've seen 40,000 people going through one of our VR experiences." They also emphasized a hybrid exhibition approach with "a more limited throughput for the VR, but perhaps there's a physical exhibition that's alongside it that people can still go to. Four times the amount of people could go to the physical exhibition than could see the VR."

Another venue talks about thinking about the constraints of their venue as related to the different formats and scales of the experiences. "We are now thinking about the range of audience sizes for our space. We can have a small experience for one person or we can have a huge one. We have huge festivals for music and we have exhibitions. The main point is how we can find a way to think of our places and think of our content together."

Prototyping and user testing

Rapid iteration, prototyping, and user testing are key factors in finding a content fit for a venue's target audience. One venue representative said, "If you are not in the ecosystem, it's very difficult to really understand what the experience is going to be. So prototyping is key. Prototyping in the venues using the different format scales with different audiences."

Reformatting XR content for different display contexts

There are also examples of VR artists who are reformatting their work to be projected. One venue says, "We also had what we called context screens in the space. One thing is engaging with the work, but it's also about helping audiences to understand that this is art. Or is it art and how is it art? Why is what I'm engaging with innovative, exciting, curious? We help them understand the themes and the topics within the work, and why this is an important medium. I don't think we should shove it down their throats, but instead provide them something within the space that they can understand."

Community building and audience engagement

Designing the events so that audiences can connect more to each other is another important consideration. "We are in the performing arts. We're not a gallery space, and so we want to build a community. When we present art, it's about building community. So even if it's a one-on-one experience, then how do I make a presentation so that afterwards you can say, 'Okay, you saw this and I saw this, and we share this experience. We can have a drink at the lounge afterwards to discuss.' How to make that happen is part of the conversations that we're having right now."

Another issue is finding the sweet spot of how much audiences are taking on. A venue owner said, "People were so overwhelmed with the intensity of experiences they were trying to take in. Because they're trying to read about the project, then they have hosts who were with them guiding them through. Then they do the experience. They come out, and then they're digesting it. Some of the feedback was that it was just too much."

Venue Facilitating

The need for data on immersive exhibition venues

There is no existing comprehensive list of venues who are welcoming immersive content, nor are their space or format constraints easily discoverable. There is a desire from content producers to make this information about venues more accessible, however one concern that was also raised is that information around venue size or resolution specifications can have some competitive intelligence implications. As one venue representative said, “We try not to let too much of it out because then someone else is going to copycat the same thing. We are very free with our specs once you're under an NDA.” Some of this data may also be aggregated by immersive distribution companies who have cultivated their own network of relationships and data, and may not be incentivized to share it for similar reasons.

On the other hand, the sentiment was repeated throughout the session that “We need information. We need data about the venues, and we have nothing at the moment. We can't create these formats until we have the data.” Aggregating this data from immersive venues who are willing to share it could be a follow-up action item from this think tank, but there is some additional context shared in the discussion as well in survey responses included below.

Determining the ideal length of an experience is important that may change depending on the exhibition context. One producer said that knowing some data around expected lengths would be helpful, “Like we may want an experience that is 22 minutes, but our audience may want an experience that's 45 minutes. Because we've done projects that were the wrong length.” Then when they go to potential distributors, they realize that “Those four venues are not really a fit, but it lines up with this group and that group. You can build a consortium of distribution simply by knowing what they want.” For independent dome projects, one vendor responded that the desired length for “traditional full dome experiences is anywhere from 23 to 27 minutes.”

One venue said, “We have this information in a very basic format, which is just literally the square footage of each space. Because in an ideal world, we prefer that the artist or the creator would tell us the medium and the format. Because I don't believe that we should say to the artist that we really want to extract your work from VR and put it into a dome projection. Because for them, VR might be the perfect medium that captures the essence of their experience. So the direction should also come from the artist, not from the venue saying to fit everything onto my screen.”

Exploring venues that can be adapted for immersive exhibition

When asked to name some solutions for getting this type of useful venue information, one producer referenced how the Global Cultural District Network distributes the [AEA Consulting Cultural Infrastructure Index] that is “a measure of major investments in capital projects in the cultural sector with budgets of US$10 million or more, that were either announced or completed in 2023.” The immersive producer said, “we shouldn't necessarily be producing work for just one kind of space” but that there are all of these “historic spaces that can be retrofit to be able to present this kind of work.” They pointed out that there are a lot of new venues with venture capital funding that seem to be driving everything within the cultural sector, and asked, “Why can't we reuse our existing spaces and be able to present this work that can be shown in a multiplicity of forms?”

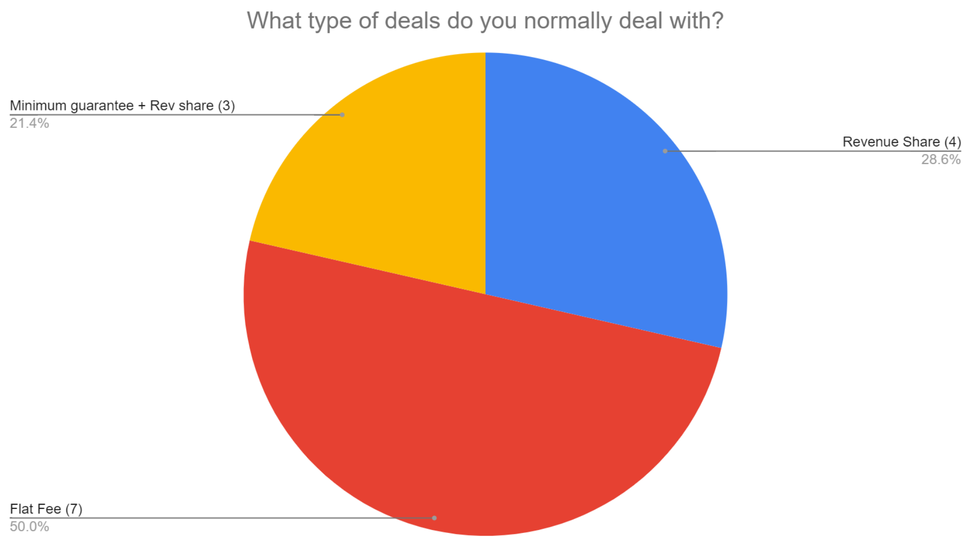
One distributor said that they are “starting to look at existing venues who already have an audience reach with an audience that ticks all the boxes that we want to reach with artistic VR and immersive media with storytelling.” Their model is to “go to the cinemas and give them all the technical equipment they need. We give the staff instructions. We do the curation of the program. We do the whole national marketing campaign because that's very important, and we have a national reach.” They are focusing on “a good old-fashioned 360-degree experience in a cinema room where the sound is going through the sound system of the cinema. Audience members have a collective experience that they love, and they want to stay afterwards to talk about it.”

Another distributor said that some institutions are “afraid because they have never shown any VR experiences. So you have to reassure them. We always send a team to be able to train their staff and to install and to help to mediate.”

Others are looking to transform existing infrastructure around cinemas. “We think it's time to change the footprint of the cinemas, to change what we can do in cinemas. Exhibition spaces can be built for digital art that can bring new audiences. Our flagship space is a big cultural space. What's good about immersive programming is that it brings events, brings new audiences, brings press, and attracts new audiences. We think immersive technologies and most of the content that we see here at Venice Immersive are proposals of the future. Cinema exhibitors want to find turnkey solutions, a turnkey business model solution, and they want to make sure that you can find content for any type of audience. Cinema's model is based on multi-programming. And most of the big museums nowadays are also based upon multi-programming.”

Survey results of immersive distribution business models

Of the 24 responses to the survey, 14 of them were from distributors, venues, and content producers regarding what types of deals they typically deal with. Half of the respondents (7 of 14) use flat fees, 29% use revenue share (4 of 14), with 21% (3 of 14) who use a combination of a minimum guarantee with a revenue share.

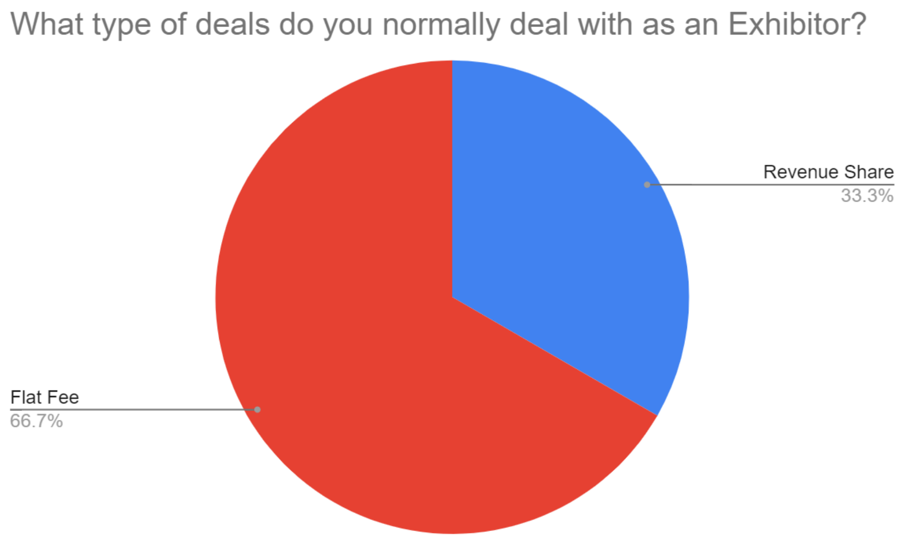


One content producer said, “There are various business models with fixed fees or revenue share. And with revenue share, it's possible that you can probably get more income, but it's also just a lot more hassle. It's a lot of work that needs infrastructure around it. It needs staying on top of the operator, staying on top of the marketing, making adjustments, and making iterations to that.”

The logistical hassle of revenue sharing may be a reason why fixed fees are slightly more popular in this small sample size, and it could also provide business opportunities for turnkey solutions.

In response to the question on whether or not "Transparency would ensure that producers or developers get the real benefits from their investments,” one survey respondent said, “That's not the case for most, that's why we developed our own monitoring solution. Standardization would encourage venues to get solutions. That's a starting point to have the LBE VR market grow even bigger and faster."

There were nine respondents who have experience exhibiting immersive works, and two thirds use flat fees, and the other one third uses revenue share.



One distributor shared some anecdotes about how the success of large-scale immersive expedition experiences has opened the door for smaller experiences “such as 6 by 6 meter or 10 by 10 meter where we have 6 to 12 players at one time.” For some of these markets, there is a high bar for quality.

There was a survey question that asked how long typical LBE deals are. There were 15 responses to this question with 4 respondents who selected multiple lengths of time with 11 who chose a single length. 40% of responses (6 out of 15) typically make deals that range from 1-3 months with a fairly normal distribution in the other lengths of time.

For planetariums, it’s not uncommon to have much longer licensing terms. “Some will invest in one piece of content for 20-year license terms. And they'll play that for 20 years. We have a catalog of over 500 films and we're building new ones with a subscription model now, where it gives them the opportunity to take five titles every year based on a five-year term and we'll provide it with marketing. Then if something doesn't work they can swap it back in but also benefit off of the learnings across the entire network. So flexibility is key. We want to make that almost like a no-brainer.”

Novel business models with the goal of raising VC money

Some folks are starting to see novel business models emerge where content producers are selling extended rights for a discounted price in order to grow the market of immersive exhibitors and then raise VC money. “Their business model will be different from a pure revenue share model. They will give you all three episodes as a bundle for one location with three-year rights. You handle your operation, and handle your hardware staffing. They will support you on the installation and training, but they don't need to take any revenue share. They are only charging an extremely cheap price, and they already signed 15 locations in two months.”

After talking to VR companies, it sounds like entrepreneurs are aiming to quickly seed the market, aiming to raise investment based upon the adoption. “They don't aim to earn money from the content. The next thing the owner does is go to an A round or B round for $50 million. So right now we know some of these people who are doing the investment game, but not as a content game.”

Hybridity to have multiple entry points for immersive exhibitions

Another exhibitor echoes that point saying that “Hybridity is a really important point. How can some projects get the most out of their IP? There are specific artists that do that well because they can work with the constraints of a space and present their work in different formats across these different contexts.”The exhibitor continued with some anecdotes for how they’ve been integrating the principle of hybridity. “One of the tricks we accidentally learned was to put up video art. It gives a lot of people the opportunity to just sit there, watch one project, realize it's not scary to go into the headset after they see people come out. And I think that's exactly what you're talking about.”

Immersive dome curators are advising immersive artists to not just think about VR as the only output, but that there are specific design affordances and narrative considerations that will change depending on the format. They are telling them, “Don't shoot yourself in the foot by not thinking from a narrative perspective about other formats as well. Understanding these new spaces that are evolving, and that being flexible is advice that we always give to creators.”

For some venues, part of the hybrid exhibition experience is thinking about the offboarding experience where you can connect to others to unpack your shared experiences. As one exhibitor said, “I am very curious to discover new hybrid formats, but we have to take care that these formats are safe for the public. What I really love about the Venice Immersive festival is that we are doing a lot of experiences, and meeting a lot of people. But what is very interesting is to talk to each other and to ask, ‘What have you experienced? And what do you feel about this piece of art?’ And I think that the role of the venue is to not only bring people together, but to have the opportunity to discuss your feelings. What were your emotions that were provoked? So how do we create our venue spaces to discuss and exchange our emotions?”

The resurgence of digital art

Digital art within the art world has traditionally been devalued, but there are signs of a resurgence of museums and exhibitions treating digital art as art. One exhibitor said, “Digital art kind of went into the gaming paradigm. What if the personal computer had never happened and gaming would have stayed in arcades and would have grown from there instead of expanding into bedrooms and onto our phones? Like how do we get digital art to be location-based?”

There may be other monetization strategies for VR art if immersive experiences start getting curated as digital art within the context of museums. One producer said, “VR artists should be thinking about what are the possible derivative works. If they're wanting to sell their work through a gallery, this could be a part of a constellation that comes out of that project rather than it just being one format.”

Another commenter noted how MoMA is starting to take digital art seriously. “What's new at MoMA is in the lobby, which is a huge screen for video art. It's huge for them. They have a new space that is a hybrid room dedicated to immersive performing arts and to be able to mix together different mediums and be very hybrid. And inside their own exhibitions, they have started to mix video, sculpture, paintings, drawings, and it's the first time ever in the history of the MoMA that they are doing it. And they are changing the way they are creating the rooms. They are changing one room at least every month. It's a revolution at MoMA, and this is leading all the museums in the world.”

Adapting to immersive exhibits

Some cultural institutions are opting to screen immersive pieces that are tied to physical exhibitions at an external location from their main venue. “Both experiences have been shown near their main exhibition space, but they are also dedicated to travel to other cities and to have their own existence. So I think those big institutions can also adapt to the different formats.”

Integrating immersive exhibitions at cultural institutions is also likely to have some friction and resistance from curators of physical art pieces. “The curators are very angry at the moment that the digital takes so much space. They say the digital project has to support the fine arts exhibition where the most important thing to them are the physical artworks.”

This brings up long-standing debates as to whether or not digital art should be considered as art. One curator says, “it sounds like we're then saying that there's fine arts in the museum, but

VR artworks are not considered fine art. So I think that's maybe also one of the things that we need to address also as spaces that are presenting the work is that it is fine art."

Developing unique curatorial branding of immersive genres

One exhibitor commented, "I think that's the whole thing about cinema, and if you look at theaters, there are completely different flavors and genres and communities. Is this an indie art house or blockbuster piece?" The fact that immersive genres are still developing was a theme that started to emerge at this point in the discussion. The ambiguity of "flavors and genres" of immersive experiences makes it challenging for both immersive curators and exhibitors, but also the audience since established genres and formats usually provide a shared set of expectations around the narrative and experience. However, this lack of shared understanding and shared expectations means that you often have to experience a piece before you can fully understand and describe it. This makes it a challenge for curators in finding their own flavor or branding around immersive experiences, but also a challenge for audiences who also don't have enough reference points to know what may resonate with them or not.

As museums have started to include immersive experiences in the context of other art works, then sometimes audiences may think of the pieces as a supplementary documentary about the art rather than being a piece of art within itself. As one exhibitor said, "It just took quite a long time to contextualize the immersive work in an exhibition space so that audiences would see it as being as valuable as the other art pieces. It is an artwork. It's an artwork alongside physical artworks. It's not a documentary about the artworks."

Part of having a VR experience set within the context of other art works means that the branding of the museum can start to be exported and used in other physical locations above and beyond the museum itself. "For many of the major museums the issue is not about bringing more visitors in since they already have big footfalls. It's about being able to work outside the building as well. It does feel like there's a big opportunity there to think about partnerships with real estate to extend the museum's brand to these external immersive exhibition spaces. Museums know their audiences, but need to have trust to work with producers to create something that is off-site."

Educating audiences about the value of immersive

Another exhibitor commented about where the visitor journey might begin. "Where do you start the immersive work as well? Is it the moment someone visits the website? But there's follow through as well up until them doing the whole experience. Even within a venue, we see resistance from people committing to come out to these events, and so we have to convince them that these immersive experiences are an avenue worth going down." Satisfying the needs and expectations of audiences through immersive curation is an ongoing and iterative process. "Part of this process is understanding what the needs are going to be over the long term as well, not just in the immediate. Obviously, we want to balance that with doing things that we can do on site at the moment, and then also what we might be able to do in the future as well as we continue to launch our dedicated immersive event spaces."

In collaborating with existing venues, it becomes more about educating them and bringing them up to speed. "I don't think it's a lack of interest or appetite to try to do something with immersive content or with VR, but the reality is that educating and training the venues who want to enter this playing field is very, very important. I think most of our time is not in selling VR, but rather it's actually all of the explaining and training the staff in what it entails so it becomes a sustainable model for these venues to continue showcasing this art form of VR installations. We really need more of this knowledge to be shared, and more people who will be able to go to these venues and explain and train the staff."

Communicating value beyond the technology

One takeaway from the discussion was that it's better to focus on the value of the experience rather than the novelty of technological innovation. As one curator said, "We seem to be at a point where we can afford to or we should stop focusing on the medium of VR or immersive technologies and focus solely on the content. We should be focusing on what it does and what it brings to the audience, like what is the actual aesthetic, artistic, or cultural experience?"

Another exhibitor echoes this sentiment by saying, "Either you sell a technology, or you sell emotions. And you have to make a choice. Some people in cinema make the choice to sell a technological format such as 3D, IMAX, Haptic Chairs, etc. So you arrive on the website of some cinema networks, and first you choose the technology, and then you choose a movie. Some other cinema networks choose to first sell the content, sell the emotions, and elements that relate to audiences. And I think there's two different paths and also two different ways to see how content businesses either prioritize the technological medium or aspects of the story being told."

There are some exhibitors who want to ensure that their exhibition of an immersive work is completely unique than how it is experienced within other contexts. "I care about a unique experience. If they take their experience to a VR platform, or a live theatrical, all that does is reinforce the IP for what's happening in my venue as long as what we're showing is still unique."

The marketing of these immersive experiences should also be focusing on the unique experiential qualities rather than on the technologies. As one exhibitor said, "To me, it's always about: What's the story? Why are we doing this piece? And why are we doing it in this format? How does this fit? I had to get my marketing team to understand this, because we did this very large-scale XR project, and they were selling the technologies. They were emphasizing that this is something new coming to our venue. And I was like, 'That's not what we're selling. We're selling the story and it happens to be in a new format. But we need to sell the story of what the experience is of being in this speculative future.'"

Another exhibitor echoes this with another anecdote of selling an experience so well that audience members were surprised to discover that it was in VR. “The technology is there to serve the story. I always say, if the story or the storytelling is strong enough that it makes me forget that I have a VR headset on my head, then the technology is really at the service of the story, and in service of the content. People arrive and they are surprised that we give them a VR headset. And we say, ‘Yes, it's a VR experience.’ But it's not what we say first. We say come and do a journey into the pyramid. And as everybody knows, pyramid journeys sell really well.” Another producer emphasizes how some of these immersive expeditions have social VR dimensions as well, and so the marketing emphasizes that “it's an experience you can come do collectively together.”

Recognizing different formats & genres serve different audiences

One of the distributors of 360-degree video expressed their desire to expand out to thousands of different locations. “Of course as a producer, content is first and technology is second. But I really think that video art and cinema are not the same, even if they use the same technology. So it's not a question of technology. It's also a question of networks. And not all VR is aimed to be shown at the MoMA. I'm sure of that. VR is a way to produce a story, but the VR medium is not the reason why a piece might be shown in a major contemporary art museum. I mean, a lot of stories can be shown in very, very different kinds of spaces. We are not trying to create a distribution network of 10 or 20 different amazing spaces in the world, but rather to have perhaps thousands of spaces where we can show VR”.

The idea of having thousands of potential locations to have immersive experiences was contradictory to some venues who are striving to have totally unique experiences. “I think this is very contradictory about what is location-based experience today. People are looking for singularity when they go out. And I think that immersive business is part of youth culture that wants to have very unique experiences. And I think the business you are talking about is an at-home business.”

A moderator stepped in to point out the differences in demographics between these two exhibitors. “They're very different venues with very different audiences and content. Are we talking about scaling all of the different models?” Again, coming back to the “genres and flavors” of immersive experiences pointed out before, another exhibitor jumped in to say, “Your spaces are all very different. So even if we focus only on your types of spaces, there's still multiple categories within that. Because from the point of view that we present VR or present artists that use VR, it's from an artistic angle, which is not even about an immersive experience. It's about them expressing their creativity, and they happen to be using VR.”

Genres help to match content with an audience who knows what to expect. As one curator of more experimental works said, “What are the formats or the frameworks? Because to take the football metaphor, if you come to the football pitch with a hockey stick, it's going to be awkward. I guess the point I want to make is we have to provide both. People are deeply bored and deeply looking for a very surprising, crazy, unimaginable new thing. The ones here that are successful, whether it's a festival, or an exhibitor, or a producer are the ones who know how to figure out that sweet spot. You're going to get some sort of framework that you know what you're going to do here, but it's going to be a completely new match. It's going to be a completely new game every time. But I think a book of immersive venues could do that. Our venue will be a bit more experimental, a little bit weird, and we embrace the awkwardness that comes with pushing boundaries.”

Each venue will be developing their own curatorial branding, and as they experience more content, then audiences will learn to understand the underlying affordances of the medium through these stories, but also the particular twist and curatorial intent of these specific venues and distribution channels.

One exhibitor reflected on the power of curation based purely on the size of the room a film might play in. A small vs large theatre telegraphs meaning to an audience about the film they might expect to experience, intimate vs blockbuster, for instance. For this reason, the exhibitor explained, it is important for curators or producers to match venues with their marketing efforts. “We noticed that one program with a certain team works better, (even though) we do the same effort in another one. So it’s not about VR but about how you market it and how you sell it and how you reach the community who is interested in a certain subject matter.”

Public Funding

Public funding for production, but not distribution

The last topic briefly discussed was the impact of public funds. The moderators set the context by saying, “Unlike in the US, we're very lucky that in Europe, there are several countries that benefit from significant public funding. It’s important to address this question because it came up in your questionnaires, particularly the European ones, that public funding mechanisms need to be reformed in different ways. A lot of the time there is no support for distribution and exhibition after the content has been funded. So what role do the public funds play in helping us develop more robust, commercially-viable, location-based art and entertainment?” One producer of immersive content said, “We are fortunate enough in Canada to receive a lot of funding for production. But then, when it's time to distribute or to show the works, then nothing happens. They invest in production, and then what? So how can we convince them that something needs to be with funding distribution.”

As one exhibitor emphasized, there are not generalizable solutions to the problem of immersive distribution because there's a diversity of different exhibition contexts, immersive formats, and content genres represented within the discussion. “Ultimately, it's about 'How do you get it to be sustainable?' I think that's exactly the same risk that we are having in this conversation where we're simultaneously talking about different scales ranging from mainstream, blockbuster LBE projects to more avant-garde and experimental festival projects. I think it's about acknowledging that it's different types of art, different types of commercial production, and different ways that these projects connect to their target audiences. We focus on production. We focus on distribution. But then only for works that will sustain themselves completely. Or only for works that are experimental R&D that fundamentally don't care if it gets an audience. And that's a really complicated thing. I mean, how do we do that? You need to build unique plans for each of these that’s as diverse as this group of people, and that's quite a challenge.”

It was also pointed out that the public funds have different policy objectives in different countries. "In the UK, it's both economic and cultural. Whereas in France, it's culturally-driven. So in the UK, we have to have some kind of return on investment built in, but the public funding dynamics are very different across different countries." Someone else commented, "In Europe, public funds are not free money. It's money coming from the people where we collectively agree to invest this money into culture. And it's true that we need political vision for the long-term, but maybe what we need is to have more collaborations because getting together makes us stronger."

Challenges to embracing more business-oriented distribution

There’s a challenge for European producers and distributors to move into more of a survival-of-the-fittest mentality like the United States, where there are no public funds to subsidize the production or distribution of immersive works. As one curator says, “In the US, you have a whole ecosystem around a culture of fundraising and involving foundations and corporations and individuals that see it as almost a civic duty, a civic responsibility to get involved. We don't have that culture in Europe because we have public funds that we can rely upon. So it's hard to make that transition of saying, ‘Okay, we need to move to a more commercially-sustained system where generated income needs to take a bigger part in funding in financing production and distribution.’”

Since XR is a combination of different design disciplines, then there are different financing and distribution networks for films vs performance-based dance or theater. As a US-based exhibitor says, “The film funding model is very different from the performing arts funding model in terms of how things are created. So I'm really interested in learning how those systems work and to be able to navigate them both to support a project. Because the performing arts world is a very different thing where we commission work, then they go to foundations and they get support, and they develop projects that way. And then they own their IP, then they tour it, and support themselves in those ways. But then I'm seeing in the film world, you create something, then you sell it, and it gets distributed that way.” Another curator reflects that “the finance models are really interesting between all of these different silos.”

Regional resources for immersive distribution

A representative from the UK mentioned that she was trying to “develop the UK networks of immersive venues, and that they have a desire to extend this work internationally.” A French-based producer said that “Unifrance is trying to do this for the French producers but not in the French market, but the international market for the French works.” Another person mentioned “the work that Villa Albertine and Hub and the Netherlands have been doing is incredibly helpful. And there have been 20 creators that have already been vetted by the French Embassy, which is a helpful filtering mechanism similar to how festivals curate projects and artists.”

As the roundtable discussion came to a close, then a moderator said, “We're very much aware that not everything can be solved around a table like this, but I think it's a privilege that such diverse and great minds and with so many great experiences around the table can start the conversation and continue this conversation.”

Appendix: Additional Survey Results

Below are selected survey answers that were submitted by 24 of the Think Tank Participants and Observers.

Can you elaborate on what you are currently missing in the distribution landscape that would help distribute/exhibit content more effectively?

- Most exhibitors/operators have no prior experience of operating or promoting LBE experiences and often need to go through a deep learning curve.
- There are no distributors who can handle distribution because the operating/exhibiting network is too light. Finding venues is an issue, as well as having partnerships earlier in the production process with venues. I guess that having standardised format & solutions would encourage venues to be equipped, and then, having a network of venues, and distributors will flourish.
- Example: *Carne y Arena* was designed in a way that very few tickets could be sold per site per day. This is the artist's vision, but now many years later I'm being consulted to figure out better throughput, less square footage, etc... without reducing the artistic vision. It's possible, but would have been so much more possible if those considerations were being put on the table in the early prototyping / design stage of that project. For my second comment, the use of interactivity is almost always introduced through the technology of a game engine, which often means game designers or developers from the games industry are involved in the production of VR. The attempt to "gamify" an experience is actually a strong detractor from storytelling when done wrongly. Interactivity needs to support the grip of presence, not break it. Hand interactions can AMPLIFY the sense that you are truly inside of a world and a story, but not if you are suddenly trying to get the most points.
- The most difficult is to identify, get interest and start concrete discussions with potential exhibitors.
- I believe we are still in a period similar to the early days of the film industry, where movie theatre distribution had not yet been established. First, I think we need standardized business models and delivery methods, as well as theaters that have the potential for scale in terms of numbers and audience size.
- The missing link is still the level of awareness of the viewers and low numbers of through-put combined with higher operational costs. It is related to distributing short-form and individual narrative VR pieces. I've been pitching multi-user VR experiences to various venues without previous experience in exhibiting this type of format, and it's very hard for them to commit to something longer (and those formats make sense commercially only when run at least 3 months) without previously experiencing it in a multi-user setup.
- To distribute a XR installation is like touring a rock band: once you've shipped it to South Korea you want to carry on in Asia. So you need to be able to deal and schedule with other venues (if you know them!), have someone that will manage the logistics from one

venue to the other, etc. And if the 2nd venue is smaller than the 1st one, would you be able to scale down your artwork? It's quite complex.
- Transparency of business models: it's harder to distinguish where our financing can work best, on the end of the makers, or on the end of the venues and festivals. They'll have to work together and find ways together to best present immersive and interactive works in the long run. The team members are the experts on their particular projects, but the venues and festivals are nodal points where knowledge and technical expertise can have longevity and the XR industry can find places to take root as an ecosystem. Without proper business models, we end up trying to support the XR ecosystem on both ends as best as we can.
- There is little to no infrastructure here, so folks don't know where to begin. Few creators have the skillset to figure this out on their own

Any other suggestions you would like to take into account for the Think Tank 2024?
- Design principles for the artists themselves and any innovation from the artists around formatting.
- For content deployed in LBE, I believe it's crucial to be able to draw up a calculation formula where (number of participants × ticket price) - operation costs (initial costs + running costs) results in a positive figure.
- This is particularly important for convincing venues to invest in it. Therefore, I think we should create a template format that makes this calculation easy to perform, and discuss what kind of content delivery methods would result in a positive calculation formula.
- By doing so, we can recognize the harsh realities, such as the difficulty of recouping costs when offering only a 10-minute single-player experience, unless the ticket price can be set very high. This recognition will allow us to begin content production with a clear understanding of these challenges.
- To have a platform where all the venues would be listed + tech specifications (how many m2, how many beamers, etc.) + would list what they provide (technicians, mediators, gear...) + what are the programming slots available + the budget they can allow... that would be awesome!
- More discussion and practical steps to move the thinking on, with organisations who have the capacity to do so, taking on a role in doing so.

Kindly please share your pricing.
- Single title: Flat fee is normally quoted at the range of US$80,000-$100,000 for 8-10 headsets (over a period of months, 1 month fee $10k).
- LBE multiplayer: Revenue share is charged at 30%-40% ticket sale distributed to IP owners.
- As a distributor, we have to ways of charging, as we mainly provide operators with our solutions - B2B2C market :

- 1/ License fee : Based on a negotiation, we estimate the cost of use for one title(monthly; yearly; lifetime license), with specific type of use including the number of installations, number of countries...
- We signed different deals, one successful in the US that was 25K$ per quarter for a 4 dynamic seats installation displaying our roller coasters.
- 2/ PPP: Most of our deals rely on a ""Pay per Use"" model. As we developed our own tools to secure our content, but also to monitor their consumption worldwide. We act on a fixed amount per user based on an estimated ticket fee. Generally we estimate a 20% fee on ticketing, resulting in a 4€ / 6$ fee per user.
- For specific demands requiring our operational tools we charge 3%.
- Regarding operational deals we signed, we witness that operator share roughly goes from 60 to 70%; the remaining shares being split between distributors and producers.
- We are by default aiming for a 50/50 deal with the venue, or the producer of the event at the venue who has been responsible for customer acquisition. One challenge is where there are too many parties needing to be a profitable business. At 50/50 between the party who financed the customer acquisition and the party who financed the VR content, both have a profitable model. If the landlord, the operator, the headset manufacturer, the chair manufacturer, etc.... all want 25% or expect to be significantly involved with rev share, it doesn't work. This has led to success for parties that are more vertically integrated, although it's caused content creation to be lower quality and "good enough" for the VR tech to be a draw and produce enough revenue that they think the content is fine.
- For a 20 minute 6 person experience:- Licence fee : 2,5k€ per week / 9k€ per month / 22k€ per quarter
- -Additional operational fee (full package if needed - transportation and accommodation not included) : 1,1k€/day
- -Hardware renting only (with no operation) : 1k€ per week / 3,5k€ per month / 8k€ per quarter trimester"
- Average ask : 1,000 Euros/per exhibition week [up to 5 VR headsets]
- Low/minimum ask : 300 Euros/per week [up to 5 VR headsets]
- Minimum package deal fee is 1,500 Euros
- Average Sales Agent commission: 30%
- Operational, service installation, logistic fees are always separate from the Exhibition/Exploitation license fee.
- License fees: $1000 USD for three months, the fees charged to the audience: $5 to 10 USD per content (10 - 30min)
- £1.3m production for 1200 sqm exhibition. Inc all staff, equipment as well as build and AV materials
- Depending on the festival or exhibition, I usually negotiate a flat fee and in addition to that, pay for installation, set up, running and often travel and accommodation for lead artist
- Depends on the buyer, but mostly we do revenue share with the venue and IP owner.

- The license fee for one work per headset is $100 US / per week , Ticket price: 1, VR 360 film $6 - 8 US , 2, VR interactives for $9-15 US , all programmes are under 60 minutes.
- Licensing prices for one VR work ranges between 1000 euros and 3000 euros per month. Ticket prices range between 5 euros and 10 euros depending on the country and length of the timeslot.

<u>Any other relevant information you would like to share about your distribution?</u>

- In the Greater China market, there is huge appetite for LBE, especially on the cultural heritage side
- LBE is not a standardised format so distribution is about being flexible, you need to adapt to the venue or your goals for revenue and to the format of LBE.
- Different venues will have a different set-up – Shanghai, Xi'an, Kaohsiung, Beijing, contexts are always different (museum, shopping centre, exhibition centre), so there is room for creativity.
- LBE is always about the business model – it doesn't matter how good the content is, and there are multiple business models so you need flexibility with this.
- Also need to have a good distribution system/deployment system, management of the operator is key
- Whoever is doing business development or the Production Manager needs to have very good communication with the operators and the different partners need to be creative with the business approach
- Most people use the revenue share model, so that needs close communication to make sure marketing/branding strategy is working well
- With revenue share you get more income than with a flat fee (but it's more hassle with revenue share, as above)
- Technical challenges – streaming, tracking – depends on the system, need close comms with the operator to understand technical robustness and maintenance
- Sometimes it is difficult to access or even find the hardware locally (especially in new and remote geographical areas, such as Africa, Latin America or Australia....).
- We believe that Multiplayer content will be more lucrative, but there is a limitation of experience area because the facilities were not designed for Multiplayer content. So the existing LBE also needs to shift its business model to expand its capacity.
- Since our venue is a tourist area, the general audience is more interested in watching VR with high entertainment nature such as adventure/famous paintings/science fiction and horror genres. Also because VR headsets are still a niche product, most viewers are watching VR for the first time. They are fresh to new technologies and are happy to try them.
- Usually, we offer 30-minute to 1-hour slots, depending on the programming, giving the viewers the ability to choose between several different titles. We also had success programming two or three titles into a specific track like Science or Storytelling, so viewers can choose the track and watch several works. It is a good strategy to include shorter narrative projects that are hard to distribute separately, however, for some new

users one hour is too long and they get very tired after 30-40 min. That's why we are making the timeslots cheaper, but shorter.

What has been the biggest challenge for distributing your content?

- Difficult to find appropriate venues (4)
- Financing (3)
- Staff capacity and skills (3)
- Limited audience (3)
- Customer Acquisition (1)
- Good and popular XR works is very rare (1)
- Operating Costs (OPEX) + Shipping (1)

Can you elaborate on your challenges?

- The biggest challenge was the business model and also the localization costs.
- For the audience in Asia, it is tricky to define suitable content for the market.
- As a former head of cinema at a multidisciplinary cultural institution - It has to pay off to close off a room of the venue for only a single installation in comparison to all the other activities you could have there throughout the day with less staff involved (in comparison: cinema screenings, rentals, debates, theatre performances or other)
- VR non-gaming content is very new to audiences. It requires an appropriate marketing budget, especially when having a short-term event (1-2 weeks). We can not charge super high prices for the tickets because the majority of the viewers have no idea what VR is and it's becoming a very big barrier. Also, users do not want to pay a lot for a short experience. If we make a longer timeslot, it is hard for new users to sustain an hour of VR non-stop. The reference point usually is the movie price - we can not go higher than a movie price in the respected country where we run an exhibition. The hope is when users are more familiar with VR, they'll be inclined to pay more. But that requires to have longer exhibitions and consistent venues.
- We have exhibited the immersive content at our festival, but it's really hard to monetize the festival by the ticketing fee so far. So we have tried to collect the budget by private & public, but we invest in the festival so much by ourselves. To continue the festival, we need to find the right solution.
- We're primarily looking for a venue partner with good foot traffic. We often find great content, but there's no venue ready to commit to hosting an exhibition that can prove the foot traffic or customer acquisition/marketing prowess to underwrite a major VR budget.

ACTION PLAN 2023
The report from last year included the following action points. In this section we're curious to hear your feedback on the following suggested actions from the [2023 REPORT].

Create a Design Kit About the Experience

- For distribution, we have a standardized installation process, technical rider and printing patterns for the operator/venues to follow.
- More broadly, I remember mentioning this point at the think tank last year. I still feel there could be more crossover between exhibition designers (either from the museum world - used to designing for cultural institutions and object-based displays – or the theatre world) and immersive producers. I understand the challenges around keeping build elements light and flexible and easy for a variety of different operators to present based on their contexts. But I still think this approach could help potential exhibitors better visualize how the experience can be presented imaginatively to visitors and improve the audience experience. For one of our projects, we had a skinned exterior/facade that offered an impressive, physical presence with visual interest for visitors to start the experience and was designed with the intention of being easy to build locally for future tour venues. This is different but would accompany the technical rider and include e.g. installation photos, floor plan/design plans, finishes schedule, graphic identity, lighting notes.
- It's necessary to provide tools like technical doc, game master guide, troubleshooting documents...
- This was a great suggestion - not just for the practicality of a venue learning, but it gets the artists thinking about this issue. Designing experiences for LBE throughput needs to be a top priority if artists want their content to be seen by larger audiences beyond festivals.
- Delivering experiences with an exhibition kit is part of our process. We want to keep doing it when it is relevant and possible depending on the business plan.
- I also believe that it is essential to make this kind of kit to communicate with potential venues. Most of the venues don't have enough knowledge to exhibit immersive content, so if we don't prepare this kind of kit, they tend to think that there is so much to do to make it happen.
- It is important to have a kit for the venue / operator to understand / follow.
- In view of the quality of the performance, standardize a certain brand and quantity of vr headsets. If it is a free-roam VR, set an appropriate walking range for groups of several people to avoid requiring an excessively large area for execution.
- Yes, we do have supporting documentation for trainers and those who assist the viewings when we train them. We do have a content program for the visitors, but we do not provide documentation to venues as usually we also run exhibitions with our personnel.
- Helpful, but skills are only really acquired through practical use and practical education - technical knowledge is lost if not used on a regular basis, and technicians in venues

move jobs all the time... it's hard to have people with a specific technical skillset on a freelance basis, but not undoable (compare: film technicians with skills for analogue film projection)

Create Standardised Modules with Additional Movable Parts

- We have not yet been involved in this part. However we are starting to explore the potential of developing projects in a tiered way ie light, medium, heavy for venues with higher capacity/who can contribute further resources/funding ie adding on additional physical installation elements, projection mapping, more modules
- If you're willing to share your know-how with your competitors indeed this can be useful. But most studios keep their tools for themselves, providing a competitive advantage.
- We propose a light and turn-key solution (with less hardware and easy to operate).
- Our projects are made for all kinds of places / spaces, with a possibility of self-customized scenography for the venues.
- Yes. We have been doing it for several years. Our company works on development of adapted and standardised installation solutions for our different clients.
- I also think that this is very efficient. For now, we reinvent the wheel in different venues, companies, and areas. We would like to create a package that can be realized through a combination of commercially available products, in order to make it a module accessible not only from Western countries but from various countries and regions.
- This can allow different sizes of venues to adapt.
- For the development of fixed brands of VR headsets, the possibility of extending them according to their performance quality can be reduced to more than unnecessary additional devices.
- Handy to make an experience scalable and flexible for different venues and program formats
- Critical to the full design and development process to ensure scalable costs and resources are factored in and to make the experience as attractive as possible to venues.
- Would be ideal, but the challenge remains that it is highly contingent on the individual creative elements of each project, and the lack of standardized technical specs as we see in linear film and television.

Offer Specific Education for Immersive Artists

- Yes, but best to do via talent development programmes or hosted by funding bodies.
- Yes, and expand this to production companies as well; studios already know this.
- We've not done this generically, but we've created a deck/presentation that is about 20 slides of VR LBE business principles that explain our approach BEFORE we get into pitching the creative for a particular project we're pursuing with a venue/IP partner. It has helped tremendously.
- Create a standard in all of these topics with a wide range of content available.
- It sounds really important. Many creators in the immersive fields tend to be satisfied with just completing the content. But if they cannot receive enough revenue from it, they can't

continue their creation. Such education should not be just "mindset", but we need to expand the proper knowledge of how to create market-ready XR formats.
- It is important to let the artist know how to balance creativity and business.
- Provide exhibition venue specifications and budget in advance, provide exhibition design information of similar past cases, and provide artists with references.
- This is critical to IP and business development processes and should be factored into business growth and IP development programmes. It creates resilience and adaptability to help navigate market disruptions, trends and needs.
- Absolutely essential for the growth and sustainability of the industry. Current training programs are highly localized.

Conduct Specific Research at a National Level
- We would like to do more research and survey for our own knowledge of the market.
- We are exploring working with external consultants to conduct market research for future projects. But rather than doing this on an individual basis, perhaps there is a way to pool market research intel (even across this group, in a similar manner to this survey)?
- Yes, and it has already begun in countries like France.
- We really hope to do and know the result of this kind of research in each market.
- This should be a constant in the market and help to show dedication to connection and collaborations.
- This can help for customize a project for a specific type of venue.
- From the perspective of national policy, the construction of venues for coaching LBE can provide a venue for current XR works to be performed, which is currently urgently needed.
- This is a significant and vital piece of work, and may be worth looking at how this could be developed in a modular way that fits together as one body of work. There is a lot to address here.
- Building a network of available and friendly venues internationally to immersive content would be a wonderful outcome.

Meet Key Agencies in the Industry to Spread Awareness
- This work is ongoing. We regularly exchange with industry bodies, and domestic and international creatives and institutions regularly. As above, is there a way to pool knowledge? Potential to conduct a mapping exercise in the field.
- Awareness is important especially for the HR issue studios are facing. To take the example of France, museums are key to spreading awareness, but not only.
- I think the presentation that we've made would be incredible to present to the American Alliance of Museums. We do not have connections with any of these agencies.
- It sounds really important. We're not familiar with European and American key agencies, but we also have the key agencies in our home countries. We need to keep promoting the immersive content field to such key agencies.
- This feels like building greater knowledge and understanding around a solid business case for immersive experiences and the value of doing so, culturally, socially and economically. Much needed!

- Yes, but also encourage alliances among aquariums, libraries, zoos and other public spaces. We should possibly provide them with a template to help them raise money for an innovation fund.
- Again - any network that encourages cross collaboration across markets/countries would be beneficial.

Think of Common Tech Formats for LBE

- Yes for sure, this is the next step, creators pushing formats that will be adopted by other creators. Manufacturers like HTC are strongly positioning on the LBE-VR market.
- I've been presenting to Google, Samsung, Microsoft, and Apple in the past 12 months about a proposal for a standard format for VR entertainment content. None of them have a standard yet.
- Definitely the basic idea of our studio strategy
- It is key but slow and difficult work. Part of our tech team is working on tech standards for VR exhibition with other members from the industry.
- Exactly. In addition to the hardwares, the cost of printing markers for each content is huge, especially for the large-scale LBE content. If we can have the common maker formats for LBE, venues don't need to replace it for each content.
- This makes buy-ins at venues easier.
- This is what the operators in China are looking for.
- It may be that there is a standard kit list as 'minimum' that can be supplemented by each touring experience.
- Agreed. Similar actions in film/television and the web require highly coordinated international groups that agree to adhering to standards.

Provide Venues with Informational and Operational Materials About the Experience

- We try to set up such an operational kit for the partners to be as complete and comprehensive as possible.
- We do this in a project-by-project way, but our aim is to radically reduce the need for this so that any typical "ride operator" employee can run our theater with quick training.
- Improving the documentation we provide with every new project released
- Yes. It is important. It is an important part of our work to create and deliver such documentation to venues operating exhibitions of the works by themselves.
- This is an absolute must.
- We always make an operational guide for the venue / operator.
- Helpful, but skills are only really acquired through practical use
- As with question one, this is a 'must have' not 'nice to have' to ensure quality, safety and risk management.
- Yes. This should be part of the design kit.

Target Specific Non-Immersive Venues and Events

- We work with a variety of venues (cultural organisations, shopping malls, exhibition centres)
- Yes, as long as your content meets the public there.

- Of course, any cultural venues should consider the opportunity to offer such kind of experience to enlarge their audience and bring new publics to culture
- Yes. It is an important development market for us to work with first time XR exhibitors.
- We have approached these non-immersive venues and events because there are very few immersive venues in our country. I think that it is important to expand the market.
- There is the appetite for these experiences and often not for traditional culture audiences, so going out to meet audiences where they are is important.
- This is what we are doing in China, especially focusing on movie theaters and shopping malls.
- The business case, if developed as per the previous question, could elucidate and incentives others to work this way.
- Yes. Science centres and planetariums are another possible venue for expansion.

Invite Potential Exhibitors to Immersive-Related Events

- We always invite partners to experience projects in our programme and also share resources on process and insights creating immersive projects.s there also a potential opportunity to develop a satellite programme/event that can be demoed to these individuals where they are not able to attend the festival?
- Yes. It's always good to meet in person with potential exhibitors. They are the most complicated to reach.
- It is important to expand the market. We have invited potential exhibitors to our festival.
- Useful idea.
- This is important to guide them through what we are doing and open their mindset.
- Yes, first hand experience is essential!
- Yes. And the bosses of those interested
- Absolutely. This has to happen at a local level.

Consider Spaces Not Normally Open to the Public

- Still feel there is a lot of potential in this, particularly for theatres – something that perhaps could be explored in partnership with a market research consultancy firm such as AEA or CounterCulture who regularly work with cultural institutions/theatres on capital projects
- I don't agree. Spaces have to be considered as strategic. Not normally open to the public implies difficulties to access, bad information on site to guide spectators or promote the experience. This would relegate the immersive content to a "place holder" and I feel like the tech already evolved to something bigger than that.
- Yes we are exploring things like this with a theatre company now and with a major IP tour.
- Yes. It is part of our current work and strategy.
- We haven't explored this possibility, but it seems very important not only to find the venue to exhibit but also to increase the possibility of recouping by reducing the cost and approaching the wider audience.
- This depends on the financial support, sometimes the rent is too high.
- No, we don't have a backstage area.

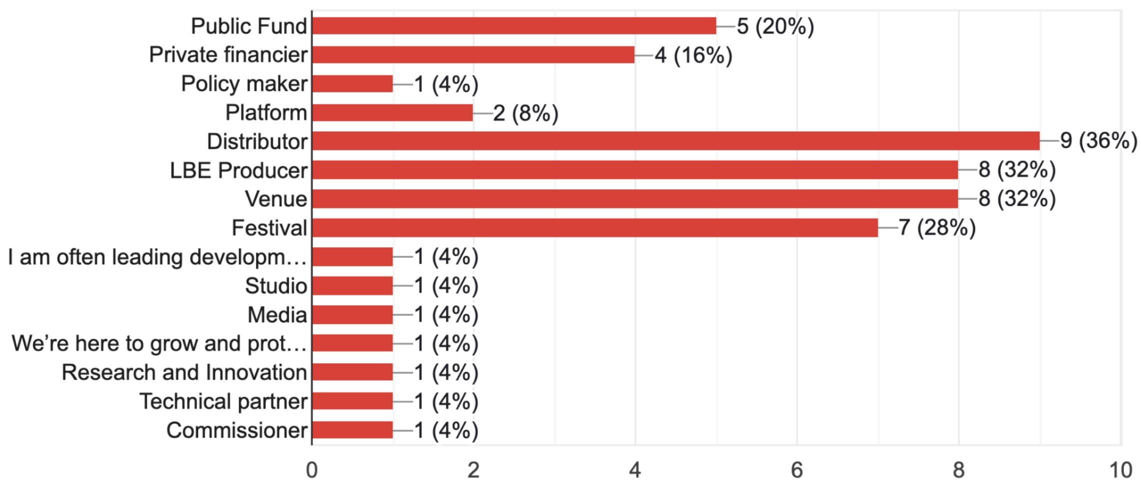
- Yes, but in general, smart cultural institutions already monetize all their space(s) - if they don't use them for pragmatic reasons. There are also safety reasons & measures to take into consideration: places not open to the public are mostly closed off for safety reasons.
- We have run XR experiences in foyers, green rooms, staff rooms, to avoid disruption, and it can work. Also affiliated spaces to the venue, who may have local partners in towns / cities where space could be utilized e.g. in a library or community setting.
- Intriguing, but will be highly contingent on each venue. Difficult to standardize.

How would the transparency/standardisation contribute to distributing more effectively?

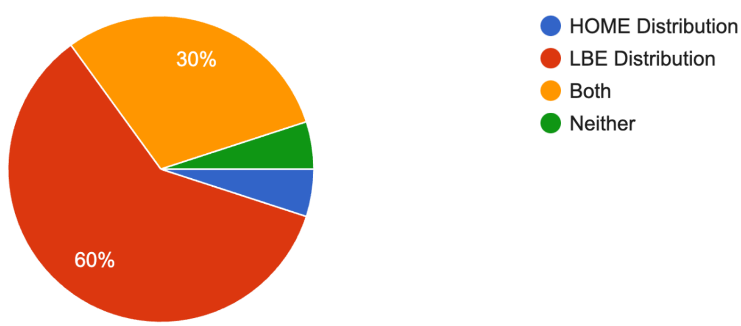
- The market could scale up more easily and quickly.
- Transparency would ensure producers/developers get the real benefits from their investments. That's not the case for most, that's why we developed our own monitoring solution.
- Standardization would encourage venues to get solutions. That's a starting point to have the LBVR market grow even bigger and faster.
- It would reduce the amount of cost and time spent getting projects ready.
- Once the venues are equipped with a specific hardware, it will be easier for them to just pay for license fees and get direct access to the content.
- You could duplicate the exhibition format faster to different venues
- If there is no transparency/standardization, creators need to invent a business model and distribution model for each piece of content. So if there is any manual for it, creators can focus on creating the content according to a standardized delivery scheme.
- I'm not sure if it would help due to regional differences
- This could facilitate the set up and training.
- Standardized specifications of exhibitions are helpful for touring exhibitions and facilitate exhibition units to estimate budgets and possibilities.
- Headset management, the transition from one device to another, and the necessity to constantly invest in different hardware - it would definitely help to have more industry standardization on hardware for LBE.
- Not sure it will help. Each XR piece is unique and can necessitate a custom-made deal.
- It helps us to move from one offs to an actual ecosystem where new projects can feed off of the successes of older works, and where older works can find new ways of life as cultural heritage.
- Many artists and developers have to start from ground zero, repeating the steps that others have made before them. Sharing knowledge and experiences would get everyone to the starting line first!
- I think it would get a lot of people started
- Standardization would make the process of selling content to multiple venues much easier. Less ongoing work for the producer to see each exhibition through. There could be a rise in the role of sales agents and distributors who could operate on behalf of the producer.

Additional survey results and graphics

What is your role in the Immersive creative content ecosystem?
25 responses

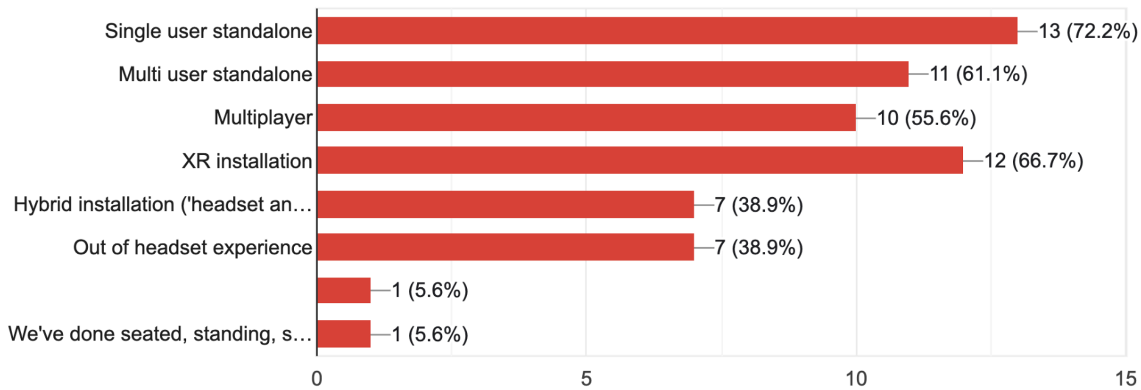


What are your channels of distribution?
20 responses



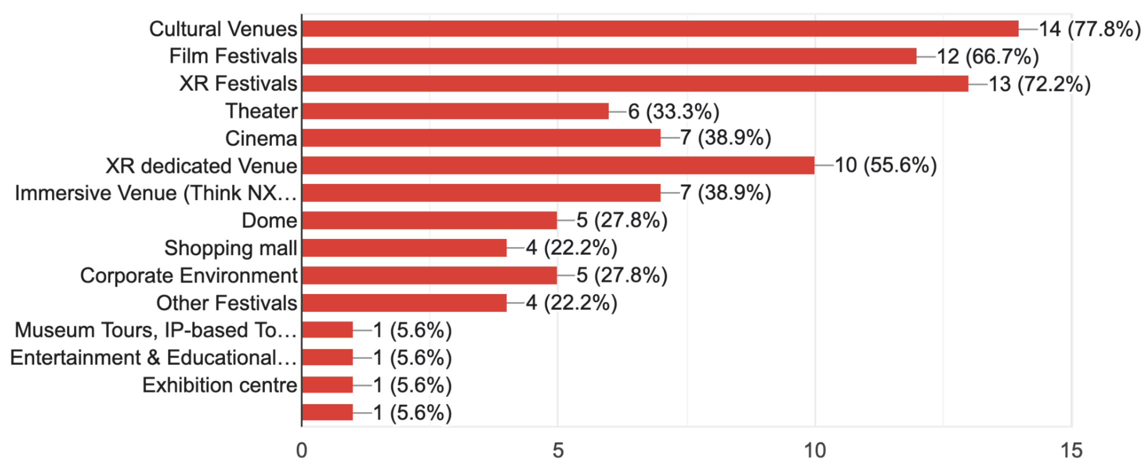
What kind of LBE format have you been distributing

18 responses



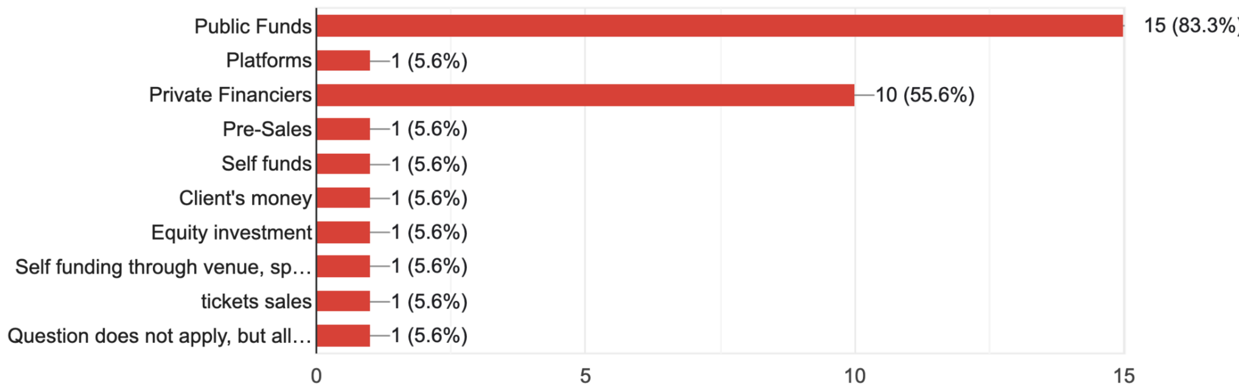
Can you please define the types of institutions you distribute to (for a fee)?

18 responses



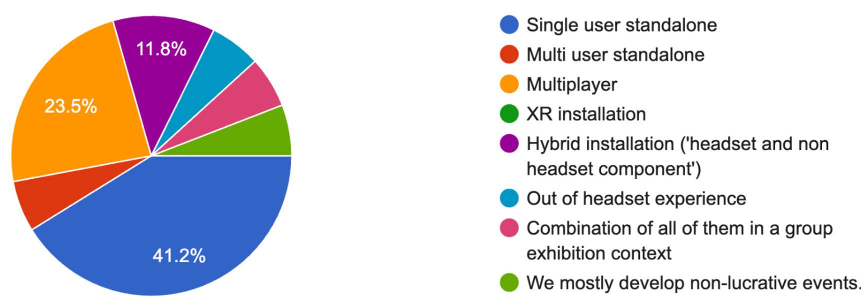
How do you generally finance your projects?

18 responses



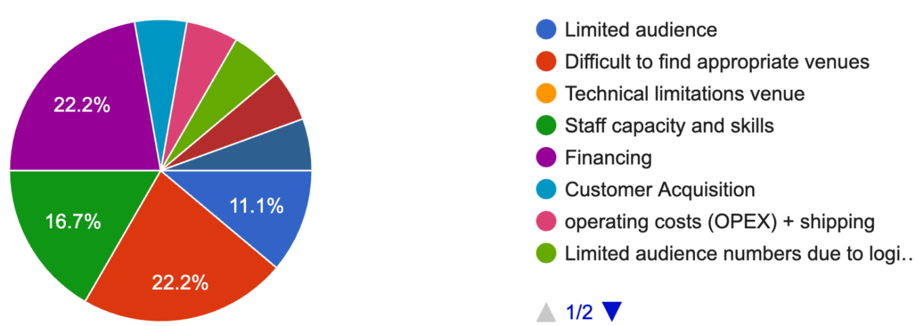
Which LBE distribution channel has been most lucrative for your content.

17 responses

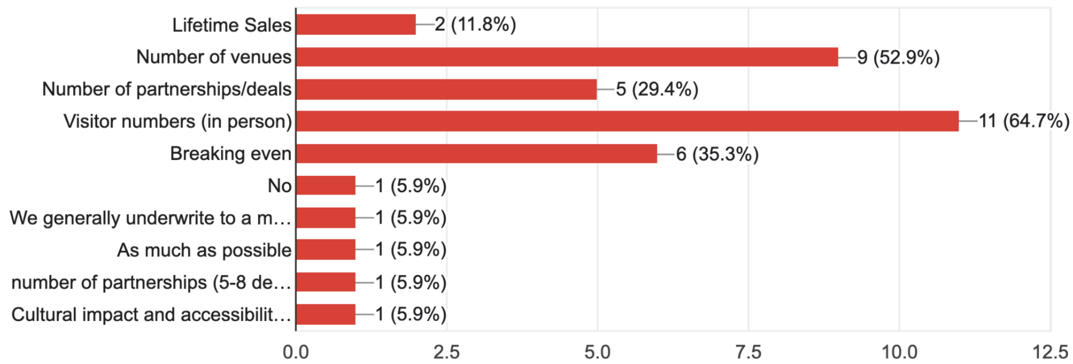


What has been the biggest challenge for distributing your content?

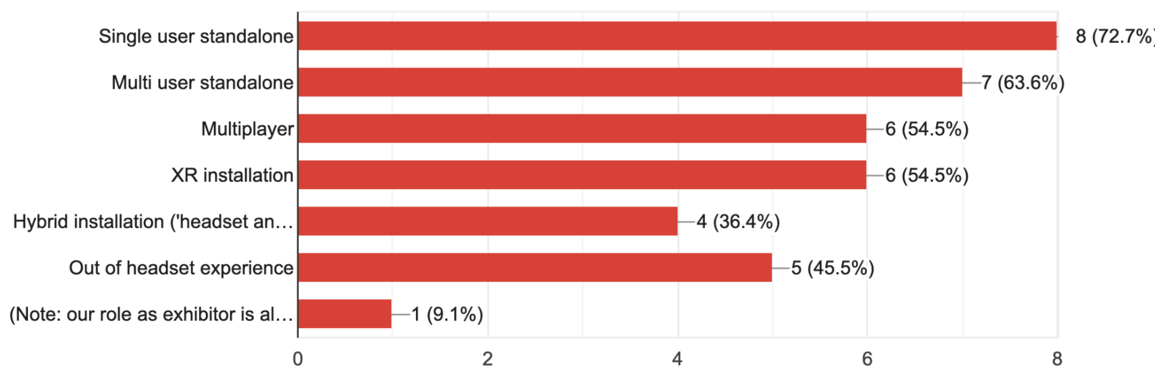
18 responses



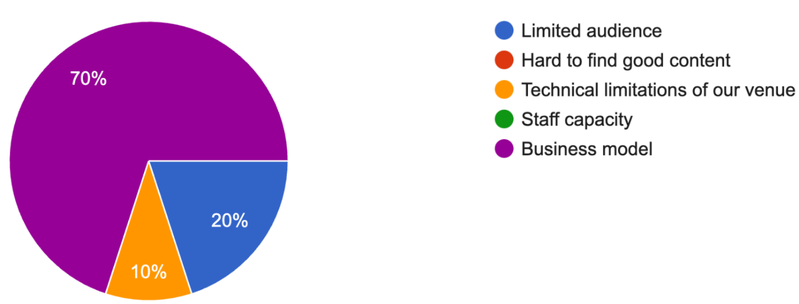
Do you set any specific distribution goals for the content prior to distribution? How is that objective defined?
17 responses



Which LBE have exhibited?
11 responses

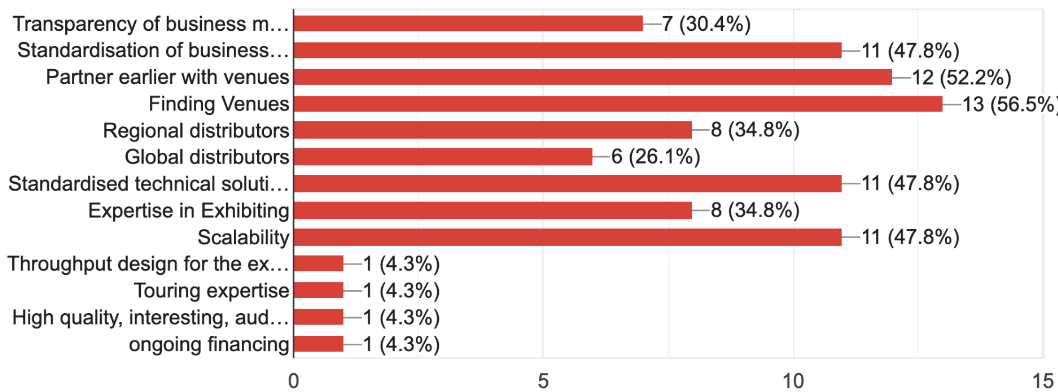


What has been the biggest challenge for exhibiting your content?
10 responses



What are you currently missing in the distribution landscape that would help distribute/exhibit content more effectively?

23 responses



How do you generally finance your projects?

18 responses