
Preface

This book is about trade shows, which is a function studied under the heading of *exhibition marketing*. Some readers may wonder about the title “*trade show intelligence*”. That is an aspect of exhibition marketing which focuses on information gathering and analysis. It is a consequence, we might say, of the *Information Age* and the realization that trade shows, to be truly effective and profitable today, need to take full advantage of the information opportunity which a trade show is.

Trade shows have become increasingly sophisticated and complex just over the past 20 years. That itself has resulted in part from advances in the study of marketing, which has given company managers many more choices. People who attend these occasions today have much higher expectations for the exhibition and the behaviour and performance of exhibitors than they had only a few years ago. That in turn has created a demand for more education in this field. Students and budding professionals need a thorough understanding of the different roles and functions of a trade show; the days of just showing up and doing one’s best are over.

The aim of this book is twofold: to survey the research literature in the field, and to show how successful boothmanship and booth design is achieved at trade shows. The book is not written from any individual national perspective, but sets out to address a truly international audience. This has meant drawing on cultural elements and citing examples from trade shows all round the world.

To date, trade shows have been neglected in the literature of marketing. Philip Kotler, for instance, devotes only a few paragraphs to the topic in his *Principles of Marketing*. At the same time, these events continue to prove themselves to be a highly significant function within the marketing profession, indeed one of its leading activities. That is reflected in the figures for spending on trade shows.

Statistics for 2010 show that there are now more than 30,000 exhibitions with a size of over 500 m² annually, attended by 2.8 million companies and 260 million visitors.¹

¹ See UFI, *2011 Exhibition Industry Statistics*, p. 14. The UFI organization, based in Paris, is the largest interest organization for trade shows; the acronym originally stood for *Union des Foires*

The project of writing this book has stemmed from the experience of taking part in a number of different international trade shows with dozens of companies for over a decade now, initially with smaller IT companies and with Swedish furniture manufacturers.

The aim has been to write a university textbook for students who plan to specialize in the field of *event marketing* and more particularly *exhibition marketing*, while at the same time producing a book that might be of interest to practitioners. As such, it is very much a do's-and-don'ts book, but not like the bulk of the existing literature: for instance, it does not contain as many checklists as other books on this topic tend to include. Checklists are unavoidable in the practical activity of exhibition marketing, but they are not a necessary element of *marketing theory*. Also, this book does not go down to the same level of detail as many other books; for instance, it will not tell you what voltage to use in different countries, or how to fill in the registration form for a particular show. Rather, it offers you different ways of organizing your exhibit or booth, and it outlines the particular sales behaviour and managerial challenges required to make trade shows both efficient and successful. To help the reader in the task of learning exhibition marketing, all keywords important for a thorough understanding of the theory are given in italics. Thus you can check your knowledge by seeing what you are able to remember and explain. This is also done in order to help employees in company training sessions, and teachers in finding good exam questions.

Many people imagine that selling at exhibitions is just like selling at home; that the skills and requirements are more or less the same. One of the aims of this book is to show that people who think like that are mistaken.

The book adopts the exhibitor's perspective. The emphasis is on exhibition behaviour. Exhibitors often overlook the fact that exhibitions give them the opportunity not only to distribute information, but also to gather information from customers, from their competitors, and from stakeholders. Exhibition behaviour draws on the study of *market psychology*, the *psychology of marketing*, and *behavioural economics*. All of these subjects are explored here as we set out to present the trade show in each of its aspects.

One problem in writing a book on trade shows is that little research is available, even though there are plenty of books on event marketing in particular, and things have improved over the past decade. A large majority of existing studies have been carried out by trade associations and interest groups; fewer by academics. Most of the books available are written by consultants, who often carry their own personal views over into the conclusions in the hope of fostering business opportunities. That is only to be expected; it is understandable enough.

Internationales. It is now the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, but the old acronym is still used. The second largest interest organization is the Society of Independent Show Organizers (SISO) in the USA, with about 2,700 events, according to its homepage. In Latin America there is AFIDA, and in Southern Africa EXSA.

I first became acquainted with trade shows when I worked as an auditor with KPMG at the Norway Trade Fair in Oslo in 1996. Since then I have had the opportunity of attending a number of the largest exhibitions around the world as a consultant, working for more than two dozen companies, mostly in Europe and the USA. This took me to events such as the International Furniture Fair of Milan (*Salone Internazionale del Mobile*), the world's largest interior-decoration trade fair, and the *Consumer Electronics Show* (CES) at Las Vegas, one of the world's largest technology-related trade shows. Much of the content for this book began as notes I made in order to help those companies understand how to get the most out of the trade shows we attended, either as exhibitors or as visitors. At the same time, I have very much remained an academic with a keen interest in marketing and later also in *intelligence studies*. I hope the book will appeal to both practitioners and academics alike.

I would like to express my thanks to the staff members of all the various companies I have travelled with over the years. They are too many to be mentioned individually here, but some of their names will crop up in the book. Special thanks are due to Prof. Per Odenrick of the University of Lund, Georg Gärdh of Träriket, Lars E. Thon, Chief System Architect at Aeluros Inc., The Knowledge Foundation, Per Jenster Chairman of NIMI, Paul Woodward Managing Director of UFI, Annette Fink of AUMA, Gordon Nary and Jim Wurm at E2MA, Richard Liden of Karskrona Municipality, UNIVA in Lund, Charles M. Orgish of Stanford University and to Prashanth Mahagaonkar and Barbara Bethke at Springer.

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Klaus Solberg Søylen



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