

An Exploration on the Factors Influencing Exhibitor's Participation Decision in Professional Exhibitions

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Abstract: With the continuous development of the exhibition industry around the world, various professional exhibitions have emerged. Exhibitors are an important component of professional exhibitions, and their participation decisions are a key factor affecting the success of the exhibition. The objective of this study is to reveal the reasons which affect the exhibitor's participation decision in professional exhibitions. This exploration uses descriptive statistics and factor analysis methods, and the data collection method is online self-administered questionnaires. This study obtains data by distributing questionnaires at the exhibition site and a sample of 201 valid respondents is achieved. This research explores the possible influencing factors of exhibitors choosing professional exhibitions, extracts the main influencing factors, determines their influence weights, and reveals the main factors that affect the exhibitor's participation decision. Four influencing factors are extracted through factor analysis, namely "Exhibition", "Organiser", "Exhibition venue", and "Professional visitors & Exhibitors". The conclusion is that most important influencing factor is "Exhibition", the situation of the exhibition itself.

Keywords: Exhibitor's Participation Decision; Professional Exhibitions; Factor Analysis; Exhibitors

1. Introduction

Professional exhibitions refer to exhibitions that showcase a certain industry or even a certain product, with both exhibitors and visitors being professionals, such as automobile exhibitions, that the purpose of enterprise participation is diverse, and the reason is that the functions of exhibitions are diverse. It is revealed that enterprises should adjust their participation

jewelry exhibitions, clothing exhibitions, building materials exhibitions, and others. Professional exhibitions have emerged and rapidly developed with the continuous refinement of industrial division of labor and the enrichment of new products. As the rapid development of the economy and industrialisation, the number of professional exhibitions is constantly increasing. This research takes the "CHINTERGEO Exhibition", a highly influential platform for surveying and mapping geographic information technology equipment exchange in the Asia-Pacific region and China, as an example to explore the influencing factors of exhibitor participation decisions in professional exhibitions.

2. Literature Review

Exhibitors are a specific group of people who use a fixed exhibition area for direct information exchange during the exhibition period. The three main bodies of the exhibition is the exhibitors, organisers and professional visitors [1]. The Western academic community generally divides the purpose of corporate exhibitions into two dimensions: sales and non sales [2]. For the purpose of sales, the objective of enterprise exhibitions includes obtaining sales orders, identifying and contacting new customers, selling old products, testing and promoting new products [3]. For the purpose of non-sales, it includes building new relationships [4], shaping and maintaining image [5], interactive learning [6], and building social networks [7]. Some studies categorize the purpose of enterprise exhibitions into six aspects: trade transactions, customer information management, product display, information collection, promotion, and brand maintenance [8]. These researches display objectives based on the characteristics of exhibitions in order to achieve a good input-output ratio [9].

Some researchers have conducted research on

the exhibitors' behavior of participation decision-making, exploring the impact of enterprise characteristics, exhibition types, and participation motivations on participation decision-making behavior, and attempting to classify the participation decision-making types of different exhibitors. The evaluation factors for participation decisions are divided into seven evaluation factors: "exhibition quality", "exhibition brand", "host city", "booth location", "relationship with the organiser", "exhibition services", and "exhibition cost". Through factor analysis, it has been found that exhibitors place more emphasis on quality of exhibition, brand of exhibition, and other issues that can bring actual benefits, while pay less focus on service of exhibition, relationship situation, and cost level [10][11]. Scholars have also categorized the decision-making factors that affect exhibitors' exhibition choices into three categories: exhibition factors, enterprise factors, and external factors. The factors of the exhibition itself are still divided into four aspects: organisers, visitors, exhibitors, and exhibition fees. The factors of the enterprise itself are divided into the business situation, exhibition plan, budget situation, and actual exhibition performance. External influencing factors is macroeconomic conditions. Taking the large-scale international professional exhibition in Shanghai as an example, the above influencing factors are summarized and subdivided into 19 influencing factors. The factor analysis method is applied to extract the above influencing factors into 8 impact factors [12,13]. Recently, scholars have reviewed relevant literature on clothing exhibitions,

exhibition motivations, exhibition decisions, and consumer behavior decisions both domestically and internationally [14]. Based on in-depth interviews with clothing brand exhibitors and industry experts, a model of the influencing factors of clothing brand exhibition decisions has been constructed, and research questions and hypotheses have been proposed [15]. Through data analysis of questionnaire surveys, it was found that the influencing factors of clothing brand participation decisions can be roughly divided into three parts: clothing brand's own factors, clothing exhibition's own factors, and external environmental factors. The weight of these three parts on clothing brand participation decisions varies. Based on empirical research, a clothing brand exhibition strategy model was constructed from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives, providing valuable reference methods for brand exhibition decision-making [16].

3. Conceptual Model

Based on the previous literature, relevant factors that affect the exhibitor' s participation decision in professional exhibitions are extracted and a new model is formed in this study. This research screens out three categories of factors that affect exhibition behavior decisions: exhibition related factors, internal factors of enterprises, and external environmental factors. The three categories of factors constructed based on the model of factors influencing exhibitor' s participation decision also include specific evaluation indicators. Table 1 displays the model of factors influencing the exhibitor' s participation decision in this research.

Table 1. Model of Factors Influencing the Exhibitor' S Participation Decision

Exhibition related factors	Organiser	Qualification and industry influence
		Overall organizational capability
		Promotion ability
		Exhibition experience
		Whether there is a government or association background
	Exhibition	Fame and brand effect
		Industry influence
		Exhibition on-site service situation
		Booth and exhibition fees
		Exhibition hall layout and supporting facilities
	Professional visitors and exhibitors	Number and quality of professional audiences
		Number and quality of exhibitors in the same industry
		Are there any industry leaders participating in

		the exhibition
Internal factors of enterprises	Enterprise's own situation	
External environmental factors	The convenience of transportation in the exhibition venue	
	A good urban image	
	The development of the service industry	

effective rate of questionnaire distribution is 96%.

4. Methodology

4.1 Sampling

According to the above framework, an empirical exploration on exhibitors participating at "CHINTERGEO Exhibition", a highly influential platform for surveying and mapping geographic information technology equipment exchange in China and the Asia Pacific region was conducted. After more than 20 years of development, each "CHINTERGEO Exhibition" has attracted more than 200 domestic and foreign companies, with tens of thousands of professional visitors nowadays.

Self-administered questionnaires, as a basis for data collection, were distributed to exhibitors at "CHINTERGEO Exhibition" in 2023 in Guangzhou, China. Within three days of the exhibition, questionnaires are distributed to exhibitors on the day of registration and the morning of the last day of the exhibition in order to avoid busy exhibition periods and ensure their effectiveness. The total number of 210 questionnaires was distributed in this inquiry, and a total of 201 valid questionnaires were obtained, after rejecting 9 invalid samples. The

4.2 Data Analysis

SPSS 26.0, a statistical software, was operated in data handling. Descriptive statistics were conducted on all questions to check for errors and missing data in data input. To test reliability and validity, Cronbach's alpha, and KMO and Bartlett's Test were utilized. This study also conducted multivariate rotation factor analysis on all research items.

5. Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Most of the companies participating in this exhibition have some experience, with 80.6% of all exhibitors exhibiting twice or more. The scale of the exhibitor companies participating in this exhibition is mainly distributed among less than 100 and 101-500 people, mainly small and medium-sized enterprises. The exhibitors who participated in this exhibition mainly learned about the exhibition through industry websites and invitations from organisers, accounting for 56.7% and 41.8% of the total, respectively.

Table 2. Results of Rotated Component Matrix

Questions	Component			
	1 (Exhibition)	2 (Organiser)	3 (Exhibition venue)	4 (Professional visitors & Exhibitors)
17. The on-site service of the exhibition can affect the participation of enterprises	0.847			
15. The popularity and brand effect of the exhibition can affect the participation of enterprises	0.815			
19. Exhibition booth fees and other exhibition expenses can affect exhibition participation	0.79			
20. The layout and supporting facilities of the exhibition hall can affect the participation of enterprises	0.78			
18. The choice of exhibition time and location can affect the participation of enterprises	0.778			
16. The industry influence of the exhibition can affect the participation of enterprises	0.761			
21. Whether the transportation around the exhibition hall is convenient can affect the participation of enterprises in the exhibition	0.755			
9. The overall organisational ability of the organiser affects the participation of enterprises		0.78		
10. The organiser's ability to promote exhibitions and exhibitors affects the participation of enterprises		0.764		

7. The organiser's exhibition experience can affect the participation of enterprises		0.763		
6. The qualifications and industry influence of the organiser can affect the participation of enterprises		0.761		
11. The exhibition services and guarantees provided by the organiser affect the participation of enterprises		0.752		
8. The organiser whether has any government background affects the participation of enterprises in the exhibition		0.728		
13. The city image of the exhibition organiser can affect the participation of enterprises in the exhibition			0.812	
14. The development status of the service industry in the exhibition venue can affect the participation of enterprises			0.803	
12. The transportation convenience of the exhibition venue affects the participation of enterprises in the exhibition			0.802	
22. The number and quality of professional visitors can affect the participation of enterprises in exhibitions				0.842
23. The number and quality of peer exhibitors can affect the participation of enterprises				0.794
24. Whether industry leading companies participate in exhibitions can affect other companies' participation				0.779

5.2 Reliability and Validity

The numerical value of Cronbach's alpha (0.935) is very high and the value of all 19 issues is above 0.9. The numerical value of KMO and Bartlett's Test for the entire questionnaire is also ideal. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant at $p=0.000$, and the numerical value of KMO is 0.832. The results indicate that conducting factor analysis is suitable and appropriate.

5.3 Factor Analysis

In order to determine the most critical factors affecting the exhibitor's participation decision in professional exhibitions, this study used Principal Component Analysis (PCA) as the extraction method and Varimax with Kaiser Normalization as rotation method. The rotation converged in 6 iterations. The research results are displayed in Table 2. The 19 items are divided into 4 themes: "Exhibition", "Organiser", "Exhibition venue", and "Professional visitors & Exhibitors".

Table 3. Results of Mean Comparison

Factors affecting participation decision	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank
Exhibition	3.80	0.043665394	1
Organiser	3.60	0.030550505	2
Professional visitors & Exhibitors	3.57	0.057735027	3
Exhibition venue	3.55	0.064990842	4

5.4 Comparison of Mean

So as to confirm the relative significance of factors that affect the exhibitor's participation decision in professional exhibitions, a comparative analysis of mean was implemented. Table 3 reveals the outcome of average antithesis.

6. Conclusion

The results of this exploration are significant to professional exhibition organisers, as they can provide a deeper understanding of the participation decisions of exhibitors. This research indicates that there are four factors that may affect the participation decision of experienced exhibitors in professional exhibitions. The most significant influencing determinant is "Exhibition", the situation of the exhibition itself. Other factors include "Organiser", "Exhibition venue", and "Professional visitors & Exhibitors". From the perspective of exhibition organisers, future efforts should focus on exhibition promotion to expand influence of it, improving exhibition transportation services, strengthening communication with professional visitors & exhibitors, improving service processes to maintain stable relationships and cultivating professional exhibition brands in order to expand brand awareness.

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