

4.2. Study 2: Managing Trade Show Campaigns: Why Managerial Responsibilities Matter?²

Abstract

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responsibilities for important trade show tasks and the marketing performance of trade show marketers. Drawing theoretical insights from organizational role theory and the functionalist perspective of managerial roles, the paper proposed and tested a theory based, multiple task-managerial responsibility linkages using a large b2b trade show as a context. The empirical results indicated that the marketing performance of trade show participants was enhanced when (a) middle managers were responsible for the trade show objective setting task, (b) lower and middle managers were involved in the trade show selection decision and (c) lower managers implemented the booth management task. The paper concluded by discussing the theoretical and practical implications of these findings.

Introduction

Trade shows have evolved over the years into important marketing and promotional tools. Trade show participation serves marketers strategic as well as tactical marketing purposes by bringing affiliates of a particular industry together under one roof for a certain period of time (Tafesse & Korneliusen, 2011; Wood, 2009). Typical marketing activities that firms pursue at trade shows include customer relationship building, competitive intelligence, market information

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gathering, product promotion and consummating sales (Tafesse & Korneliussen, 2011; Tanner, 2002).

Existing research about trade show management is fairly extensive. The majority of the extant contributions are designed to explain how managers plan and execute various trade show tasks (e.g., Bellizzi & Lipps, 1984; Gopalakrishna & Lilien, 1995; Kerin & Cron, 1987; Lee & Kim, 2008; Li, 2008; Shoham, 1992; Tafesse & Korneliussen, 2011). These studies, however, discuss trade show management issues with little emphasis on how managerial responsibilities for important trade show tasks are assigned to different people in the organization. Despite the call for studying “who should be responsible for and participate in developing the trade show program” and how “the location [of the staff responsible for trade show tasks] in the organization influence performance” (Kerin & Cron, 1987: 93), little systemic research that addresses these issues is evident in the trade show literature.

Consequently, the relationship between trade show tasks and managerial responsibilities is not yet fully understood. For instance, there is little indication in the literature about which particular management level (i.e., top, middle or lower management) is appropriate for selecting a suitable trade show. Similarly, not much is written about which particular management level is more effective in setting goals for trade show participations or implementing booth related activities. In sum, the trade show task-managerial responsibility linkages and their implication for marketing performance remains unclear (Kerin & Cron, 1987; Tanner, 2002).

Our focus here is, therefore, to investigate how managerial responsibilities for trade show tasks, constituting objective setting, trade show selection and booth management, affect the marketing performance of trade show marketers using insights from organizational role theory (Dierdorff et al., 2009; Katz and Kahn,

1978), the functionalist perspective of managerial roles (Floyd & Lane, 2000) and the trade show management literature (Kijewski et al., 1993; Tanner & Chonko, 1995). Managerial roles, in the functionalist perspective are viewed as sets of structured work related expectations ascribed to different levels of management (Floyd & Lane, 2000). Beyond their importance in regulating managerial behaviour, managerial roles have implications for task performance (Dierdorff et al., 2009; Dierdorff & Morgeson, 2007; Katz and Kahn, 1978; Morgeson et al., 2005). The degree of fit between managers' role behaviour and the role requirement of organizational tasks determines whether those tasks are tied to appropriate managers having the right knowledge base, experience and access to relevant information (Das, 2001; Dierdorff et al., 2009; Morgeson et al., 2005).

Developing and implementing a successful trade show campaign requires inputs from various people in the organization. Accordingly, managers from different levels of management are assigned to carry out the tasks involved in a trade show campaign (Kijewski et al., 1993; Tanner, 2002). Because managerial responsibilities for trade show tasks are assigned to diverse groups of managers, stronger and weaker fits between role behaviours and role requirements can be expected (Dierdorff et al., 2009; Katz and Kahn, 1978; Morgeson et al., 2005). We expect managers to perform trade show tasks effectively when their role behaviour strongly fits the role requirement of the tasks, which should be reflected in higher firm level marketing performance. When their role behaviour poorly fits the role requirement of the tasks, on the other hand, task performance will be less effective which in turn will lower firm level marketing performance.

The major contribution of the present paper is to empirically delineate the effect of managerial responsibilities for important trade show tasks on marketing performance. The results, consistent with both organizational role theory (Dierdorff et al., 2009; Dierdorff & Morgeson, 2007; Katz & Kahn, 1978) and the functionalist

perspective of managerial roles (Floyd & Lane, 2000), showed that firm level marketing performance was enhanced when a strong fit between managers' role behaviour and the role requirement of trade show tasks existed. Beyond their practical relevance in documenting which groups of managers are most appropriate for specific trade show tasks, the task-managerial responsibility linkages that are proposed and tested here can be extended to related contexts. Particularly, these linkages hold some promise for shedding light on how different groups of managers can contribute to other forms of promotional campaigns such as sponsorships and new product launches. The next section reviews the trade show management, the managerial role and the organizational role theory literature.

Literature Review

Research about management issues involved in trade show campaigns, with few exceptions, is largely anecdotal. In an earlier empirical study that focused on the staffing practices of exhibitors, Tanner and Chonko (1995) reported that the majority of firms assigned the responsibility for important trade show tasks to staff members whose job description includes trade show duties, while few firms assigned trade show management responsibilities to volunteer employees. That study, however, did not breakdown the trade show campaign into tasks of practical importance and linked the responsibility for these tasks to distinct management levels.

Similarly, Tanner (2002) discussed the role of various departments in trade show selection and budgeting decisions focusing on small firms. The study reported that the responsibility for the trade show campaign was evenly distributed among top level management, the marketing department and the sales department. The same study observed that successful exhibitors tended to utilize a resident expert in exhibit marketing. Nonetheless, Tanner (2002) found no significant difference in

the perceived success of the trade show campaign based on differences in managerial responsibilities for key trade show decisions.

Kijewski et al. (1993) introduced a rational choice model of the trade show decision-making process by delineating important trade show tasks and the management level of the people who were responsible for these tasks. Their study presented a more systematic effort to explain the trade show task-responsibility linkages although, in the end, it ignored the performance implication of these linkages. Kijewski et al. (1993) highlighted the involvement of top, middle and lower managers in executing important trade show tasks. They reported that sales and marketing managers set trade show objectives and selected appropriate trade shows whereas teams composed of lower managers were responsible for booth related activities.

The forgoing discussion presented studies in the trade show literature that addressed management issues involved in trade show campaigns. Because these studies are normative, however, it is impossible to draw sufficient theoretical insights on which to ground the present study. In search of a comprehensive body of work that can explain organizational task-managerial responsibility linkages at a more general level, we turned our focus to the functionalist perspective of managerial roles (Floyd & Lane, 2000). This perspective offered a structured view of, work related, managerial roles distinctly performed by top, middle and lower managers and how the collective role behaviour of these managers differ across the strategic-operational continuum (Burgelman, 1991; Floyd & Lane, 2000; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Pavett & Lau, 1983).

Top managers exercise roles such as ratifying, directing and recognising (Floyd & Lane, 2000) in order to formulate the strategic context of the organization and lay down standards against which implementation can be evaluated (Bartlett &

Ghoshal, 1993; Burgelman, 1991). Top managers, thus, focus much of their efforts on strategic decisions to align the organization's strategy to changes in the external environment (Burgelman, 1991; Floyd & Lane, 2000). Middle managers' role, on the other hand, involves facilitating and synthesizing the flow of information between top and lower managers (Dutton et al., 2001; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992) and championing and brokering alternatives (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Shi et al., 2009). Owing to their intermediate position, middle managers have knowledge of strategy as well as operational matters (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Regner, 2003). Lower managers' role primarily centres on task execution and task experimentation (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Regner, 2003). This is consistent with their duty to adapt and implement organizational programs related to their area of functional specialization (Burgelman, 1991; Ireland et al., 1987; Noble, 1999; Pavett & Lau, 1983).

The above review and additional works in organizational role theory (Das, 2001; Dierdorff et al., 2009; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Morgeson et al., 2005) point out that top, middle and lower managers essentially differ in their collective role behaviour along the strategic-operational continuum. This difference in managerial roles serves as a basis for assigning managerial responsibilities for strategic and operational organizational works. For performance to be improved, organizational works should be tied to people with appropriate managerial roles (Das, 2001; Floyd & Lane, 2000; Dierdorff et al., 2009; Morgeson et al., 2005). For instance, organizational works of strategic importance should be assigned to people with strategic managerial roles. Similarly, organizational works with operational role requirements need to be performed by people with operational managerial roles.

When managers' role behaviour fits well with the role requirement of organizational tasks, task implementations can be effective (Das, 2001; Dierdorff et al., 2009; Dierdorff & Morgeson, 2007; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Morgeson et al., 2005).

A strong fit benefits performance since organizational tasks get implemented by people with proper knowledge structure, managerial experience, proximity to the task environment and access and ability to process relevant information (Dierdorff et al., 2009). On the other hand, a weak fit can hurt performance as organizational tasks will end up in the hands of people with incompatible or inadequate knowledge, experience, proximity and information (Dierdorff et al., 2009). The next section extends these ideas to the trade show management context to formulate propositions linking trade show tasks with managerial responsibilities.

Hypotheses Development

Objective Setting

For firms participating in a trade show, setting attendance objectives is a critical first step (Bellizzi & Lipps, 1984; Shoham, 1992) as objectives will guide subsequent actions (Tanner & Chonko, 1995; Wood, 2009). Firms can set a range of strategic as well as tactical goals in relation to a trade show campaign such as information gathering (Kerin & Cron, 1987), competitive intelligence (Tafesse & Korneliusen, 2011), strengthening company image (Li, 2008), sales lead generation (Gopalakrishna & Lilien, 1995) and customer support (Lee & Kim, 2008).

While setting goals for a specific trade show campaign, decision makers seek to align the goals of the trade show with the overarching marketing strategy of the firm (Shoham, 1992; Tanner & Chonko, 1995). In addition, the objective setting task involves considerations of implementation issues to ensure that the goals are achievable (Bellizzi & Lipps, 1984; Lee & Kim, 2008). The trade show objective setting task can, therefore, be considered a boundary spanning activity which involves balancing the strategic priorities of the firm with its implementation constraints (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997). The objective setting task also requires brokering with top managers to secure essential resources and with lower

managers to actually implement the goals and produce concrete outcomes (Kijewski et al., 1993; Lee & Kim, 2008).

We expect middle managers to do well in the objective setting task since their managerial role is in line with the role requirement of the objective setting task. Drawing on their knowledge of strategy as well as implementation (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Mantere, 2008), middle managers can formulate strategically relevant and operationally implementable trade show objectives – which may lead to improved firm level performance. In addition, middle managers can take advantage of their intermediate position to broker and rally top and lower managers (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Shi et al., 2009; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997) around realizing the goals of the trade show campaign. Therefore,

H₁: When middle managers are responsible for the objective setting task, marketing performance will be higher.

Trade Show Selection

The goal setting stage precedes the trade show selection decision as marketers need to be aware of what goals they have to accomplish prior to deciding which show to attend (Bellizzi & Lipps, 1984; Shoham, 1992). Primary show selection factors include fit between attendance objectives and show characteristics (Herbig et al., 1994), visitor quality of the show (Herbig et al., 1994), competitive importance of the show (Kijewski et al., 1993) and location of the show (Shoham, 1992). In Kijewski and colleagues' (1993) model of the trade show decision process, the show selection decision is composed of (1) generating an initial pool of eligible trade shows, (2) screening the most viable trade shows and (3) selecting the one that will best serve the goals of the firm. This procedure of selecting a trade show surely requires information about key characteristics of potentially viable trade shows.

There is little evidence in the literature to suggest that a particular management level can be effective in selecting a suitable trade show. However, top managers are unlikely to be fully knowledgeable about the characteristics of potential trade shows that the firm can participate in (Tanner, 2002). Their loose connection with the trade show environment and dearth of practical information can preclude them from selecting an optimally suitable trade show. Top managers' involvement is likely to be constrained to sanctioning the type of trade shows that the firm can go to at a more general level. Because of their proximity and experience with the trade show environment middle and lower managers can have better access to information about the characteristics of potentially viable trade shows (Kijewski et al., 1993).

Middle and lower managers can use this information together with past experiences to select a trade show that will best serve the needs of the firm. Further, middle and lower managers are largely responsible for executing various onsite activities. If they are told to carry out a trade show campaign that they had little say in – as documented in other cases (Janczak, 2006; Noble & Mokwa, 1999) – they may be less committed and fail to reach their potential. Therefore,

H₂: When middle and lower managers are responsible for the trade show selection task, marketing performance will be higher.

Booth Management

Once trade show objectives are formulated and an appropriate trade show is selected, trade show participants need to subsequently execute a series of activities related to the booth (i.e., the temporary store where products and services will be promoted and sold at the trade show) (Bellizzi & Lipps, 1984; Kijewski et al., 1993; Lee & Kim, 2008). Booth management in a specific campaign involves implementing activities related to booth location (Lee & Kim, 2008), booth

design and set up (Gopalakrishna & Lilien, 1995), product presentations (Herbig et al., 1994) and on-site promotional materials (Bellizzi & Lipps, 1984).

Booth management is inherently an operational task (Kijewski et al., 1993; Tafesse & Korneliussen, 2011; Tanner, 2002) which depends on planning and implementing a series of booth related activities that are essential for successful participation at the trade show (Bellizzi & Lipps, 1984; Lee & Kim, 2008). In essence, booth management represents the de facto implementation phase of the trade show campaign. As a result, successful implementation of booth related activities requires an operational managerial role underpinned by strong experience and proximity to the trade show environment (Kijewski et al., 1993; Tanner & Chonko, 1995).

Because lower managers primarily exercise task experimentation and task execution roles in their regular organizational works (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Noble, 1999; Noble & Mokwa, 1999; Pavett & Lau, 1983), they can do a better job in booth management. Lower managers' operational role behaviour will allow them to effectively perform booth related activities, producing higher firm level performance. It is not often that top and middle managers perform task experimentation and task execution roles as part of their routines. As a result, they may lack the operational abilities needed to effectively perform what is clearly an operational task (Tanner, 2002). Therefore,

H₃: When lower managers are responsible for the booth management task, marketing performance will be higher.

Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

This study drew a sample from firms that participated at the Addis Chamber International Trade Fair (ACITF) which took place in 2008. The ACITF is a large and a week-long b2b event hosted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia that regularly attracts hundreds of companies from both at home and abroad. The 2008 event featured about 300 domestic and international participant firms and was visited by thousands of people. Questionnaires were hand delivered to the offices of the 150 domestic firms that took part at the 2008 ACTIF in the first four weeks following the event.

After talking to people in each firm familiar with the ACTIF campaign, we identified appropriate informants who completed the questionnaire. These informants were people keenly involved in the planning or the implementation stage of the 2008 ACTIF campaign and included top, middle and lower level managers. It is worth noting that we solely relied on the domestic firms for data collection as the foreign firms were no longer present in Addis Ababa at the time the survey was administered. Respondents who returned workable questionnaires were 59 in number, yielding a 40% response rate.

The respondents firms represented the manufacturing (40%), the merchandising (39%) and the service (21%) industries. Pertaining to annual sales, 20% of the firms reported sales of less than 1.5 million US\$. The proportion of firms that reported sales of between 1.5 and 10 million US\$ were 49%. Firms that reported sales of between 10 and 50 million US\$ were 21%. The rest (10%) reported annual sales exceeding 50 million USD. Regarding international exposure, roughly half of the firms operated domestically (43%). The rest of the firms (57%) were involved in exporting and importing activities.

Measures

Trade Show Tasks

The trade show campaign was broken down into three practically meaningful tasks: objective setting (Tanner & Chonko, 1995), trade show selection (Kijewski et al., 1993) and booth management (Lee & Kim, 2008). Each task was defined and the definitions were included in the questionnaire to standardize the meaning of the tasks for respondents. Objective setting was defined as *the task of setting marketing goals that are expected to be achieved at a trade show campaign* (Tanner & Chonko, 1995). Trade show selection was defined as *the task of evaluating various potential trade shows and selecting the most suitable trade show* (Kijewski et al., 1993). Booth management was defined as *the task of choosing booth location, setting up product presentation and preparing promotional materials* (Lee & Kim, 2008).

Managerial Responsibilities

Managerial responsibilities were captured by the management levels of the people responsible for the three trade show tasks. Respondents indicated the management levels of the people who performed each task from a category of top level manager, middle level manager and lower level manager. Top level managers were defined as *senior managers responsible for overseeing operations of the organization at the highest level including presidents, CEOs, general managers and their vices* (Bartlett & Goshal, 1993; Floyd & Lane, 2000; Pavett & Lau, 1983). Middle level managers were defined as *mid level supervisors responsible for planning and coordinating day-to-day operations within a specific department or division including divisional managers, marketing managers, production managers and sales managers* (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Wooldridge et al., 2008). Lower level managers were defined as *front line staff responsible for detailed planning and implementation of specific tasks within a particular department or division such as sales staff, marketing staff and*

manufacturing staff (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Pavett & Lau, 1983). These definitions were included in the questionnaire.

Marketing Performance

To measure the marketing performance of firms at the 2008 ACTIF, 13 marketing activities deemed relevant for trade show campaigns were extracted from the literature. The 13 marketing activities were broadly representative of the competitive intelligence, the information gathering, the selling and the image building functions of marketing and were adopted from previous studies (Lee and Kim, 2008; Li, 2008; Tafesse and Korneliussen, 2011). A seven-point scale (1 = poor, 7 = excellent) was used to enable the respondents to evaluate how effective the performance of their firm was at the 2008 ACTIF with respect to each marketing activity.

An oblique rotated exploratory factor analysis, with maximum likelihood extraction, on the 13 items resulted in four factors. Two of the items were subsequently removed on grounds of low communality and high cross loadings (Fabrigar et al., 1999). The remaining 11 items significantly loaded on either of the four factors which captured the competitive intelligence, the information gathering, the selling and the image building sub-functions of marketing. However we were unable to directly use the four factor solution to test the research hypotheses for reasons related to unidimensionality, parsimony and high inter-factor correlations (Fabrigar et al., 1999).

The unidimensionality of two of the four factors were doubtful as they attained reliability alphas lower than .7. The factor structure was also less parsimonious in that our central interest lies in overall marketing performance but we have arrived at four factors which represented the performance of companies in relation to distinct sub-functions of marketing. In addition, these factors were highly correlated

with each other implying the possibility for the existence of a higher order factor that embodied the contents of the four factors more parsimoniously. Also, using the four factors as separate dependent variables will complicate data analysis by bloating the number of statistical relationships that need to be tested.

Under the forgoing circumstances creating a second order latent variable (i.e., a second order factor) defined by first order latent variables (i.e., factors which are defined by multiple manifest or measurement items) is a recommended modeling approach (Chen et al., 2006; Fabrigar et al., 1999; Gerbing et al., 1994; Koufteros et al., 2009). Second order modeling enable researchers to aggregate the relationship between variables more parsimoniously, reduce the number of variables that need to be estimated and retain possible sources of variances (Chen et al., 2006; Koufteros et al., 2009). Moreover, second order modeling is appropriate when the central interest of a research model lies in the general construct (i.e., the second order factor) and not on narrowly defined and highly related first order constructs (Chen et al., 2006, p. 222).

To resolve the problem of having an insufficiently parsimonious factor structure with highly correlated factors with some of the factors attaining low reliabilities, we employed second order modeling. In line with recommendations in the relevant literature (Chen et al., 2006; Koufteros et al., 2009; Gerbing et al., 1994), we first created summated scales of the four first order factors by summing up the measurement items that significantly loaded on each factor. These summated scales were treated as measurement items and entered into an oblique rotated exploratory factor analysis with maximum likelihood extraction. The exploratory factor analysis yielded single second order factor (marketing performance) which explained about 52% of the variance. All the first order factors (i.e., competitive intelligence, information gathering, selling and image building) loaded significantly on the second order factor (marketing performance) which attained acceptable

reliability ($\alpha = .72$). A summated scale of the second order factor created by adding up the mean scores of the first order factors was used in subsequent analyses. The results of the first order and the second order factor modeling using two exploratory factor analyses are reported in table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Summary Statistics of Exploratory Factor Analyses

Measurement items	Mean (St. dev)	First order factors				Second order factor (Marketing performance)
		Competitive intelligence	Information gathering	Selling	Image building	
Gather information about competitors	5.2 (2.1)	.86				
Exchange information with competitors	4.8 (2.3)	.81				
Benchmark competitive position	5.0 (1.9)	.77				
Gather information about new products	4.6 (2.3)		.78			
Explore new market opportunities	4.1 (2.3)		.74			
Promote products at the show	5.2 (2.0)		.70			
Generate sales at the show	4.4 (2.1)			.81		
Build relationship with customers	6.0 (1.1)			.67		
Get media publicity	4.0 (2.3)				.85	
Meet key decision makers	3.8 (2.3)				.81	
Demonstrate capabilities to customers	5.6 (1.8)				.43	
Competitive intelligence	5.0 (1.8)					.88
Information gathering	4.6 (1.7)					.77
Selling	5.2 (1.3)					.68
Image building	4.5 (1.5)					.56
Eigenvalues		3.4	1.4	1.0	1.2	2.04
Variance explained		34%	14%	10%	12%	52.1%
Alpha		.81	.70	.51	.65	.72

Results and Discussion

Before presenting the main findings, a descriptive account of the managerial responsibilities for the different aspects of the trade show campaign are summarized. Lower managers, middle managers and top managers were responsible for the objective setting task in 44%, 37% and 19% of the firms, respectively. The responsibility for the trade show selection decision was distributed fairly evenly among lower managers (36%), middle managers (30%) and top managers (34%). Pertaining to the booth management task, lower managers, middle managers and top managers were assigned in 51%, 32% and 19% of the firms, respectively.

To delineate the effects of managerial responsibilities for the three trade show tasks on marketing performance, an ANCOVA test was conducted. The Shapiro-Wilk statistic ($S-W = .97$, $p = .25$) confirmed that the dependent variable was normally distributed (Hair et al., 2010). The Levene's statistic ($F = .67$, $p = 0.8$) showed that the error variance of the dependent variable across the three groups of managers was homogeneous. Finally, firm size measured with annual sales in US\$ (< 1.5 million = 1, 1.5-10 million = 2, 10-50 million = 3, > 50 million = 4) and marketers promotional activities measured in terms of the number of promotional tools deployed at the trade show were entered as covariates. The result of the ANCOVA test is reported in table 2.2.

Objective Setting

H_1 predicted that assigning the objective setting task to middle managers will enhance the marketing performance of firms at the trade show. Consistent with H_1 , firms that assigned the objective setting task to middle managers ($M = 5.2$, $SD = 1.1$) achieved higher marketing performance compared with firms that assigned top

managers ($M = 4.5$, $SD = 1.0$) and lower managers ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 1.1$) in a statistically significant way ($F(2, 50) = 4.1$, $p < 0.01$). As a result, H_1 is supported.

Table 2.2. The Effect of Managerial Responsibilities on Marketing Performance

Trade show tasks	Managerial Responsibilities	Marketing performance			
		Cell means (St. Dev.)	F value	Partial eta ²	Post hoc tests
Objective setting	1 Lower managers (N = 26)	4.4 (1.1)	4.1**	.18	2 > 1, 3
	2 Middle managers (N = 22)	5.2 (1.1)			
	3 Top managers (N = 11)	4.5 (1.0)			
Trade show selection	1 Lower managers (N = 21)	5.1 (1.0)	3.5*	.16	1, 2 > 3
	2 Middle managers (N = 18)	4.6 (1.4)			
	3 Top managers (N = 20)	4.7 (.86)			
Booth management	1 Lower managers (N = 30)	5.0 (1.1)	3.0*	.13	1 > 3 1 > 3
	2 Middle managers (N = 19)	4.8 (1.1)			
	3 Top managers (N = 10)	4.0 (.9)			
Full model			2.1**	.47	-

Notes: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Trade Show Selection

H_2 predicted that assigning the trade show selection task to middle and lower managers will enhance marketing performance. Consistent with H_2 , firms that

assigned the trade show selection decision to lower managers ($M = 5.1, SD = 1.0$) and middle managers ($M = 4.8, SD = 1.4$) achieved higher marketing performance compared with firms that assigned top managers ($M = 4.4, SD = .86$) in a statistically significant way ($F(2, 50) = 3.5, p < 0.05$). Therefore, H_2 is supported.

Booth Management

H_3 predicted that assigning the booth management task to lower managers will enhance marketing performance. Consistent with H_3 , firms that assigned the booth management task to lower managers ($M = 5.0, SD = 1.1$) achieved higher marketing performance than firms that used top managers ($M = 4.0, SD = .9$) in a statistically significant way ($F(2, 50) = 3.0, p < 0.05$). But the performance difference between firms that used lower managers ($M = 5.0, SD = 1.1$) and those that used middle managers ($M = 4.8, SD = 1.1$) was not statistically significant. Therefore, H_3 is only partially supported.

Conclusion and Implications

By combining insights from organizational role theory, the functionalist perspective of managerial roles and studies on trade show management practices, this paper brought three important aspects of a trade show campaign together and examined how they are related to each other. The paper established links between important trade show tasks and managerial responsibilities and explained why these task-managerial responsibility linkages affected the marketing performance of firms. The trade show task-managerial responsibility linkages, along with the covariates, explained a substantial 47% of the variance in marketing performance.

We found that trade show marketers assigned managerial responsibilities for the objective setting, the trade show selection and the booth management tasks to diverse groups of managers. While several of the firms relied on lower and middle managers to implement the three trade show tasks, cases of top managers directly

involving in implementing these tasks were limited. More importantly, the current results showed that managerial responsibilities for the three trade show tasks significantly influenced the outcome of the trade show campaign. Marketing performance was enhanced when trade show tasks were tied to people with appropriate management levels.

With respect to defining proper trade show goals, an understanding of the marketing strategy of the firm as well as implementation issues is a requisite. The results indicated that when the goal setting task was assigned to middle managers, a management level that enacts strategic as well as operational roles, marketers achieved higher marketing performance. By leveraging their knowledge of strategy and implementation, middle managers did a good job in formulating strategically relevant and operationally implementable trade show goals. Middle managers intermediate position could also enabled them to broker and rally top and lower managers around achieving the goals of the trade show.

The decision process to arrive at a suitable trade show requires managers to possess relevant information about various viable trade shows. The results indicated that when this task was assigned to middle and lower managers, groups of decision makers that have access to useful information and are close to the trade show environment, marketing performance was enhanced. In addition to the information factor, commitment and motivation could help explain this finding. That is, centralized trade show decisions at the top of the organization could have a diminishing effect on the commitment and motivation of middle and lower managers who are often instrumental in implementing various onsite activities.

Successful booth management depends on proximity to the task environment and an operational approach to the activities involved. The results showed that when the responsibility for booth management was assigned to lower managers, a

management level with predominantly operational managerial role, marketing performance was improved. Firms that assigned lower managers to the booth management task achieved significantly higher marketing performance over those that assigned top managers. This was because, relative to top managers, lower managers' role behaviour better fitted the role requirement of the booth management task. Also, firms that assigned lower managers for the booth management task performed better than those that assigned middle managers, although the performance difference was not large enough to be statistically significant.

Consistent with organizational role theory (Dierdorff et al., 2009; Dierdorff & Morgeson, 2007; Katz & Kahn, 1978) as well as the functionalist perspective of managerial roles (Floyd & Lane, 2000) our findings provided evidence that the fit between managers' role behaviour and the role requirement of organizational tasks significantly predicted organizational performance. The task-managerial responsibility framework that we have introduced in the current paper can be used to identify the contributions of different groups of managers to activities within the wider area of event marketing. Given that successful implementations of promotional campaigns, such as sponsorships and new product launches, often rely on inputs from various people in the organization, it is important for marketers to understand which sorts of people are effective for which sorts of tasks. Extending the task-managerial responsibility framework presented here to related contexts will help practitioners improve their campaign performance by tying specific campaign tasks to appropriate groups of managers.

Managerial Implications

Concerning managerial implications, the findings of the study highlighted two broader issues. First, despite the importance of matching trade show tasks with

appropriate managerial responsibilities, we observed a considerable degree of mismatch between the two. Whereas the results indicated that middle managers were most appropriate for the goal setting task, a significant number of firms assigned this task for top and lower managers. Contrary to the finding that firms experienced improved marketing performance when lower and middle managers were responsible for the show selection decision, several marketers assigned this task to senior managers.

This mismatch implied the need for practitioners to pay more attention to how managerial responsibilities for trade show tasks are assigned to people in the organization. In this respect, the results demonstrated that firms that used middle managers for the objective setting task achieved significantly higher marketing performance than did firms that used top managers and lower managers, indicating that middle managers are best suited for the objective setting task. Pertaining to the trade show selection decision, firms that used lower and middle managers attained better marketing performance than firms that used top managers, implying that middle and lower managers appear more appropriate for trade show selection decisions. With respect to booth management, firms that used lower and middle managers performed significantly better than those that used top managers while the marketing performance advantage of firms that used lower managers' over those that used middle managers was somewhat marginal. The implication is lower managers, and to a lesser degree middle managers, are most suited for booth management.

Second, the findings indicated that the involvement of top managers in implementing specific trade show tasks did not benefit the trade show campaign. Across the three trade show tasks that we have examined, firms that used top managers achieved lower marketing performance compared with firms that used middle and lower managers. This does not mean that senior managers should

disengage from the trade show decision process. Rather, it entails that they need to shift the nature of their involvement from a specific, implementation oriented one; to a more general, strategic one. Involvements at the strategic level will allow senior managers to establish the context in which individual trade show campaigns can appropriately be conducted. Therefore, senior managers need to realign their efforts towards strategic trade show decisions. Instances of such decisions include allocating resources for trade show campaigns, deciding on the market coverage of trade show campaigns and determining the optimum number of trade shows to be attended annually. Once the context is established, the responsibility for selecting, planning and implementing specific trade show campaigns can be left to middle and lower level decision makers.

Limitations and Future Research

The findings of this study should be understood with the following limitations in mind. First, generalizing the trade show task-managerial responsibility linkages reported here to a wide array of firms may prove problematic as we have studied a relatively small number of firms. Therefore, additional research efforts involving large number of firms are needed to test the extent to which the trade show task-managerial responsibility linkages can be generalized to broader contexts. Similarly, research that can extend the present study with a lateral (departmental) focus is highly desirable. Such efforts will facilitate a more complete understanding of managerial issues involved in a trade show campaign.

A second limitation of our paper is related to the fact that we have not considered the possibility for shared managerial responsibilities for trade show tasks. There are some indications in the literature that trade show marketers employ a team of people drawn from different departments and management levels to execute specific trade show tasks (Tanner & Chonko, 1995; Kijewski et al., 1993). If this is

the case, it will be important to study the managerial teams responsible for implementing specific trade show tasks to understand team related factors that can contribute to improved marketing performance.

Third, we relied on managers self report to measure marketing performance. This method of acquiring data can be a source of method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Moreover, the distributions of the management levels of the people that answered the questionnaires were not obvious from the data. This precluded us from identifying biases in respondents' evaluation of the marketing performance of their firm at the 2008 ACTIF. Whether managers who were responsible for the trade show campaign deliberately inflated their evaluation of marketing performance was not immediately clear. Future research should try to minimize the threat of this type of biases by developing proper measurement and data collection mechanisms.

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