

ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY AND PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGE OF PARTICIPATING AT TRAVEL FAIRS

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The article is meant to create an idea about the opportunities of participating at a travel fair by acknowledging about the most important facts regarding preparation, participation and evaluation. Knowing the reasons of participating both for visitors and participants and getting information about the economic costs that arise at a travel fair will raise the fog from the question of which show to attend and what are the professional advantages if there are any.

Keywords: travel fair, efficiency, advantages, reasons
Jel code: A1

What are travel fairs?

Travel fair represents a wonderful opportunity to meet travel professionals in a single place. This kind of events reunites under the same roof not only the promoters of inbound, outbound, but those of the internal tourism, too.

Travel fairs offer unlimited opportunities to promote and sale the company's special destination or special product.

Fairs are able to stimulate travel, tourism, hospitality both inside and outside the country. It represents a place where travel professionals and potential customers meet face – to – face and develop a potentially advantageous relation.

Travel fairs are valuable occasions both for already active companies and for those who's activity are about to begin. These companies can later remember what they've learned from the show and they can network with potential business partners, they can study the sales strategies of the participants. For these reasons and not only, it should be paid maximum attention in participating at travel fairs as a visitor and as an exhibitor as well.

Good preparation for the travel fair will eliminate the obvious stress which comes few days before the show.

Advantage of promotion at a travel fair

Before they begin, during the shows and after they shows there is a concentrated promotion campaign to ensure and to inform an interested public. The means are:

- invitation campaigns by email and post for potential guests from different domains: transport, tourism, hospitality industry, aviation industry, government and private institutes, travel industry related companies
- publicity in main local newspapers, publicity in the most important magazines, TV publicity, Internet publicity, radio publicity etc.
- briefings from the travel show in travel related magazines
- the event is strategically programmed it should take place before the beginning of the season.

Promotion at the show is realized with the help of a media company which through its travel fair experience can ensure an adequate image of the exhibitor.

Who is participating?

Visitor's profile

- Visitors from the travel industry
- Business people visitors
- Visitors - potential holiday makers, travelers
- Visitors with a role in decision making (business, local authorities, institutions of the government)
- Potential investors in the hotel, travel and entertainment industries
- Travel agents
- Tour operators
- Visitors without any relation to the industry

Exhibitor's profile

- Government institutes and travel industry organizations
- Tour operators(inbound and outbound industry)
- Travel offices
- Tourism associations
- Professionals in relation with the travel industry: sport equipments makers, means of transport makers(buses, minibuses, camping cars) etc.
- Producers and sellers of hotel management and catering relating goods
- Publishing houses of travel related literature(books, maps etc.)
- Educational institutes

Participating at a travel fair is above all an investment for both exhibitor and visitor as well. They must take a decision about participation or not at a certain travel fair. Above the things that might have to be considered before taking any decision are: the name of the travel fair, location, date, who is the organizer, type of the show, relative number of exhibitors, relative number of visitors, the cost of rental of the booth and the necessary equipment, cost related to the travel, accommodation, meals, cost of the promotional materials and their transport(brochures, catalogues etc).

Before taking a final decision exhibitors try to determine the necessary budget. In order to be capable to realize that it must consider creating a handout with the approximate number of employees who will represent the company at the show and the estimated costs that will arise.

Although travel shows are a very good occasion to make business, limits must be considered, especially financial limits, because the investment will not necessarily determine an immediate raise of sales. In general, expenses with travel, accommodation will highly depend on the show's location, namely the distance from the company's residence.

Reasons for participating

Of course, here are certainly hundreds of reasons for participating at the travel fair. For an active travel business, participation means the opportunity to meet hundreds or maybe thousands of potential customers who visit its booth. One of nowadays sale strategies is exhibiting at travel fair, *where customers come to companies and vice versa. Speaking about difficult times(after the Gulf war, 9. 11 events, actual economic crises) travel companies must reconsider all previously tested sale strategies and implement new ones.*

Travel fair are perfect exhibition spaces to introduce new travel products or destinations, for establishing new contacts or selling or buying products or services, all these in the same spot with maximum efficiency. In order to develop customers portofolio and for a better visual presence participation is vital both for older comapnies and new comers as well.

Main reasons for an exhibitor:

- Create awareness of products/services with potential buyers
- Evaluate the competitors

- Research for demand.
- Generating sales.
- Enhancing the image of the company
- Reach of a specific targeted public
- Establishing a strong market presence
- Distribution of brochures, catalogues, promotion objects
- Enhancing marketing politics.
- Meeting face to face the customers, competitors and distributors
- Evaluation of potential or new competitors/customers.
- Demonstrating products in ways not possible using other marketing channels
- Recruiting new distributors
- Education and information for targeted customers.

The importance of a professional booth

The exhibition booth must be professionally designed. It must be able to attract the audience's attention by using different themes (tour operators who promote a certain destination use colors and objects to remind the culture of the destination country).

Travel fairs are very important for small companies as well because exhibition are is not expensive and booth are easy to design very attractively even with the small amount of money. This way smaller company can look like a much bigger business giving a kind of an advantage.

Travel shows are a very powerful marketing atmosphere because they take place in a single location, they have limited time (usually 2-3 days) and unite hundreds of exhibitors and potential customers. It is very common for an exhibitor that during a show he will meet many of his suppliers, customers and dealers.

But, which show is worth to attend?

A research conducted by the National Fair Exhibitors Association in America revealed the top 15 criteria used by exporters in selecting which fairs to attend were:

The quality of Visitors

The proportion of visitors with decision-making power	1
The proportion of target customers among the visitors	2
Fair limited to a certain type of clientele (domestic tourism fair)	8
Number of new contracts made in previous fairs	9
Visitor rating	15

The quality of Visitors

Number of visitors	3
Extension of promotions during the fair	5
Number of visitors to the fair last year	6

Booth Location

Booth Position	4
Ability to perform requirements and specifications (size, location)	7
Traffic between the lines of traffic side booth	13

Logistical issues

Easy Registration	10
Safety (security)	11
Ease of entry or exit from the booth / fair assistants	12
Bringing / removal equipment / facilities needed	14

The decision to participate or not at a certain show belongs to each company's head and the result itself reveals the importance of that specific show for the business. Sometimes trade simulations are made to evaluate if employees are ready enough. This study reveals the importance given to people with decision power, followed by the proportion of targeted customers from the number of visitors. Facts like easy registration, security are on the end of the top.

Budgeting for the show

Budgeting for an exhibitor is not only about the cost or space and booth rental. Below there is an estimation in euro for the 3 fazes of a travel show(before, during and after) for a travel agency who finally have not attended a local travel fair organized on Oradea, in Selgros mall parking in 2009.

Before the fair

The cost of renting space / booth	300
Cost of booth design	30
Construction cost with stand	40
Creating promotional materials	300
Cost of transport	50
The cost of moving	10
The cost of preparing the team	100
Other expenses	100
TOTAL	930

Cost over the fair

Accommodation	0
Local travel (e.g. Hotel - fair)	30
Staff pay cost over fair	150
Expense for receiving guests	100
Expenses necessary equipment	20
Entertainment expenses	50
Other expenses	0
TOTAL	350

After the fair

Travel home	10
The cost of transportation advertising equipment / materials home	20
Other expenses	0
TOTAL	30

GRAND TOTAL **930 + 350 + 30 = 1310 EURO**

Measuring the economic efficiency

To determine the economic efficiency indicators can be used:

- Total number of visitors(e.g. 10.000)
- Number of visitors who attended company booth(e.g. 2.000)
- Percentage of visitors who attended company booth from total number of visitors (2.000 x 10.000/100)
- Promotion level – number of catalogues/brochures distributed(e.g. 1.000)
- Number of new contacts established during the show(e.g. 50)
- Number of new requests during and after the show(e.g. 200)
- Number of effectively realized booking(e.g. 100)

If we want to appreciate the economic efficiency we must create a report containing all the fact we encountered. First and foremost the objectives must be considered if they were achieved or not, the results can be compared to previous shows or previous years.

Conclusion

Among the advantages of participation at a travel fair are the new experiences we get, enhancement of customer relation abilities dealing with a large number of potential customer in a very short time, the enhancement of company and personal image.

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