

Exhibitions as a Marketing Tool: Strategies for Booth Design, Visitor Engagement

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Abstract

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Title of the thesis Exhibitions as a Marketing Tool: Strategies for Booth Design, Visitor Engagement		
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Abstract <p>The purpose of this study was to explore how companies can improve their marketing effectiveness by participating in consumer-oriented exhibitions. The main purpose of the study was to determine which strategies and methods are most effective for attracting potential customers and increasing brand awareness at exhibitions.</p> <p>The study examined various strategies that companies use at exhibitions, from booth design and ways to attract visitors to various advertising activities. Information was collected through observations at exhibitions, surveys, and interviews with company representatives.</p> <p>The results of the study revealed several factors that influence visitor attraction, such as interactive booth elements, personalized communication, and targeted promotional offers. Based on these results, the study provides recommendations for increasing brand awareness and improving customer interaction at trade shows.</p>		
Keywords Exhibition, marketing, business marketing, booth design, visitor engagement, marketing strategies		

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Exhibitions are a unique marketing tool for businesses. They provide an opportunity for companies to interact with the target audience directly. In comparison with digital marketing, where it is often hard to attract and keep a target audience, exhibitions are made for both interested parties to meet. Potential clients, business partners, and professionals are already interested in a particular sector and have come to the exhibition to choose the best option for them. (Ikin 2024.)

However, in a modern world of constant change, high competition, and digitalization, a crucial question arises: How can companies stand out from competitors and attract the attention of the audience in exhibitions?

Hybrid events, integration of digital marketing, and interactive booths are becoming more common (Shepherd 2025). To achieve success at the exhibition nowadays, the company needs to review traditional exhibition strategies and introduce innovations and trends. It is not enough just to be present at the exhibition. Now companies need effective strategies to ensure active interaction of visitors with their booth and turn people into potential customers.

This research is valuable for several key groups. Firstly, companies and businesses can benefit from it. To be successful, exhibitors need to know how to effectively attract potential customers and how to create an interesting booth. Participation in business expos requires significant investments in booth design, marketing materials, promotion, and staff work (Frost & Laing 2017). Companies must be confident that their efforts will bring tangible results in the form of increasing brand awareness and attracting potential customers. Secondly, it is valuable for the organizers of exhibitions. This report will provide research on visitor behaviour and engagement at exhibitions, and it can help exhibition coordinators improve planning and offer better marketing opportunities to exhibitors.

1.2 Objective and delimitations

The purpose of this study is to analyse how to improve marketing strategies that companies use for exhibitions. It includes effective booth design, visitor attraction methods, and promotional events. The research aims to identify key factors that attract the attention of potential customers at exhibitions, analyse visitor behaviour, and form practical recommendations for companies to improve the effectiveness of their participation at exhibitions. The

research will evaluate what elements contribute to a company's successful exhibition presence, what marketing strategies are effective for creating an efficient booth, and how businesses can maximize customer attraction.

The study is delimited to physical exhibitions, focusing specifically on business-to-consumer trade shows. Business-to-business expos will not be included by the research. It will not cover logistical factors like budgeting, venue selection, or supply chain management. It will focus on marketing methods of booth design, branding, interactive elements, and engagement approaches. The findings will be based on observations, surveys, and interviews from a selected exhibition. It ensures practical relevance while acknowledging the variability of results across industries and event types.

1.3 Research question(s)

The research aims to understand how companies can maximize their impact at exhibitions by analysing key factors of attracting visitors and marketing success. The central research question guiding this study is: What factors contribute to making an exhibition booth stand out? The study evaluates how design, corporate identity, and interactive features affect visitor engagement based on the literature review of scientific books and articles in the consumer psychology and business marketing areas.

In addition, another important part of this research is to analyse marketing strategies to attract visitors to exhibitions. Traditional methods such as printed brochures and gift-giving are still widely used at exhibitions, although modern approaches such as experiential marketing, technology usage, and interactive content are increasingly being used to successfully attract attention. Analysing these strategies, the study aims to identify the most effective ways for companies to interact with potential customers. The research will include visitors' psychology and customer behaviour analysis to find out the key strategies for attraction.

By exploring research questions, this study aims to provide both practical and theoretical insights into exhibition marketing. The findings will help businesses refine their strategies, increase engagement, and improve their overall success at future exhibitions.

1.4 Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in key marketing and consumer behaviour theories that help explain how businesses can optimize their exhibition presence. The theoretical framework provides the foundation for analyzing booth design, visitor engagement, and marketing effectiveness in the exhibition context. The research draws from theories in marketing communication,

experiential marketing, consumer attention, and exhibition management, including insights from books and research.

One of the theories useful for the study is Integrated Marketing Communications which focuses on how a single, clear message is effective across different marketing platforms (Kotler & Keller 2016). Exhibitions are an important part of a company's branding since they allow for face-to-face interaction with prospective clients and promote brand recall. Successful marketing through exhibitions is achieved when all aspects of the exhibition, such as the booth layout, advertising the exhibition, the hosting staff, and social media, create a coherent brand message.

Besides, the Brand Positioning Theory is also important when it comes to marketing through exhibitions (Ries & Trout 1981). It involves creating a unique image and offers that are memorable to the target audience. At the exhibition, this is achieved through booth design, strategic messages and interaction with visitors, which helps the brand to occupy a special place in people's minds.

Sensory marketing theory also plays a major part. It means that multi-sensory experiences will draw attention, and the brand will be remembered by consumers better (Tek & Engin 2008). The materials such as lights, colours, and even the digital features of the booth can enhance the perception of the visitors and make the exhibition a more powerful marketing device.

Moreover, Fogg's behavioural model of persuasive design explains how motivation, abilities, and triggers affect consumer behaviour (Fogg 2009). In an exhibition setting, companies should design their booths in a way that removes barriers to interaction, such as confusing design or unclear messages, and include incentives such as exclusive offers and interactive events to encourage visitors to explore their products or services. The exhibition effectiveness model identifies three critical factors that determine the success of an exhibition: pre-exhibition promotion, on-site interaction, and post-exhibition follow-up (Gopalakrishna & Lilien). This model highlights that companies should also focus on marketing before and after the event to attract potential customers and boost conversions.

The theoretical basis of this research combines key principles of marketing communication, consumer behaviour, experiential marketing, and exhibition management. By applying these principles, the study explores how companies can improve their performance at business exhibitions. It is intended to provide an idea of how to improve the overall effectiveness of marketing.

1.5 Research method

The research employs a quantitative and qualitative approach, focusing on direct observation and a questionnaire-based survey to assess the effectiveness of exhibition marketing strategies. The aim is to understand how booth design, marketing communication, and engagement tactics influence visitor attraction and interaction.

The research will be conducted at Kevätmessut ja Lähiruoka & Luomu 2025 Expo. This event provides a diverse range of exhibitors and visitors, making them ideal environments for studying how businesses attract attention and engage potential customers. Observing real exhibition environments will provide insight into how exhibitors implement marketing strategies and how visitors interact with booths.

The observation data will be analyzed to identify patterns in booth effectiveness and visitor behaviour, highlighting what strategies are most successful in attracting attention. Additionally an exhibition visitor's survey will be performed at the event to further observational data. The survey will compare the perceived value of each stand and the level of interaction. The questionnaire will include multiple-choice questions on visitor preferences, motivations for attending, and marketing strategies they found most effective, open-ended questions allowing respondents to describe what caught their attention and why. The survey responses will be collected digitally and via printed forms and analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends in visitor engagement.

Besides, interviews with companies will be conducted to gain insights into their experience at exhibitions. These interviews will help understand what strategies they use to attract visitors, and how successful it was.

Collected data will be analyzed through pattern identification in observed visitor behaviours and engagement levels, statistical analysis of survey responses to measure trends in booth attraction and marketing effectiveness, and comparative analysis of high-performing vs. low-performing booths to determine key success factors. By using direct observation and survey data, this study will provide concrete recommendations on how businesses can optimize their exhibition marketing strategies and booth designs.

2 Review of Literature

2.1 Historical Evolution of the Exhibition

Exhibitions appeared centuries ago, and their emergence is closely linked to the development of market relations. The first fairs existed in ancient times when traders assembled in certain places to demonstrate their goods. (Northrup 2015.) Thus, initially, exhibitions were a way of visual notification about something new, better or rare, as well as a way of international contacts to achieve some goals.

In medieval Europe, fairs became important economic events which contributed to the development of trade and market relations between regions. With the growth of cities and the progress of international trade, the role of fairs expanded. Exhibitions have become more than just a place to sell goods. It also started to be a platform for concluding contracts, establishing business connections and demonstrating technological achievements. (Hunt and Murray 1999.)

With the development of industry and technology, fairs gradually evolved into specialized exhibitions. The first world exhibition appeared in the 19th century, its goal was to present achievements in various fields and therefore became important events on a global scale. Over time, exhibitions acquired a narrow focus, which led to the emergence of industry events focused on specific areas, such as agriculture, technology and art. These specialized exhibitions became key marketing tools, allowing companies to present their products, study the market, find partners and conclude profitable deals. (Auerbach 1999; Roche 2000.)

Nowadays, exhibitions are a valuable and in-demand tool widely used in business and various industries. Currently, more than eleven thousand exhibitions are held annually in the world, half of which have international status. The leader of the exhibition business is the USA, where the largest exhibition centers in the world are located. Germany is the leader in the European market, through which the fifteen largest world deliveries in various industries pass. (Frost & Laing 2013.)

Finland also plays a significant role in the exhibition industry. Messukeskus Helsinki, Finland's largest exhibition center, hosts different events every year, including technology, healthcare and consumer exhibitions. In Finland, the exhibition industry is actively focused on sustainability, with an emphasis on green solutions, digitalization and innovation. (Kulchawik 2015.)

Thus, over the centuries, exhibitions have evolved from local trade fairs to global platforms for promoting innovation and networking. In the context of digital transformation and globalization, they remain an essential marketing tool for promoting business and international cooperation.

2.2 Visitor Behaviour and Engagement

The evolution of exhibitions has been changing together with the way companies interact with visitors. While in the past the focus was on demonstrating products and services, today the success of an exhibition event largely depends on how effectively it attracts and keeps the attention of the audience.

Digital transformation and globalization make studying visitor behavior and engagement especially relevant nowadays. Understanding the factors that influence the perception of an exhibition space helps organizers create more attractive and interactive events, and companies prepare a successful marketing strategy.

Consumer psychology examines many factors that determine the choice and behavior of visitors. The Attention Theory states that people process information by selecting the most significant and noticeable stimulus (Broadbent 1958). In an exhibition stand, this means that the design should include elements that immediately attract the attention of visitors, such as bright colors, dynamic lighting, or interactive screens that highlight key messages. (Verma 2023.)

Emotional design theory highlights the influence of visual and sensory elements on emotional states and decision-making (Norman 2004). This can be used in the design of the booth by creating an atmosphere that evokes positive emotions, for example, through interactive elements that allow visitors to interact with the products.

The consumer involvement model considers the level of involvement depending on the personal significance of the product or service (Zaichkowsky 1985). To increase the engagement of booth visitors, companies can use personalized demonstrations, product samples, or interaction opportunities such as virtual reality or game mechanics that involve the audience in the process of getting to know the brand.

Visual elements play an important role in attracting attention and forming the first impression of a product or service. Research shows that contrasting colours and harmonious compositions increase attractiveness, clear typography and user-friendly interface make information easier to perceive, and the use of high-quality images increases brand credibility.

Applying these principles to a stand involves using a well-thought-out colour palette, clever content placement and quality graphics to convey the brand identity and message.

Sensory factors play an important role in enhancing the emotional response and memorability of an exhibition stand. The use of visuals, multimedia screens, and effective lighting helps to instantly attract the attention of visitors. Music and sound effects create an atmosphere and increase emotional involvement, making the stand more memorable. (Alekseev 2018.)

Tactile sensations also play an important role. Allowing visitors to touch various materials, test products or interact with demonstration models increases their level of involvement. Additionally, smells and tastes can boost the emotional response, especially in the food, perfume and cosmetics industries, where aroma marketing helps to create strong associations with the brand. (Gupta 2022.)

Branding plays a key role in shaping visitor perception and engagement. Brand recognition increases consumer trust and loyalty. It includes a clear identity, such as a colour palette, logo, and communication style, as well as brand stories and values that strengthen associative links and influence behavioural patterns. When developing an exhibition stand, it is important to integrate the company's corporate style, maintain a recognizable visual language and use storytelling to convey the key values of the brand through design and interaction with visitors.

Thus, analysis of visitor behavior and engagement allows exhibitions not only to be platforms for demonstrating innovations but also to become powerful marketing tools capable of forming audience loyalty and increasing the effectiveness of business communications. A well-designed stand that takes into account the principles of consumer psychology allows companies to attract, retain and engage visitors, creating a memorable and effective brand interaction experience.

In addition, when considering theoretical issues, it is necessary to consider how objectively visitors evaluate the advertising strategies of companies. This issue was raised after the data from the exhibition was collected and analysed, and the results of the survey of visitors to the exhibition did not match the results of observations.

Several scientists have studied the manipulation and influence of marketing on people. One of the famous ones is Daniel Kahneman, who has studied cognitive biases and decision-making. His work has shown how emotions and biases influence consumer behavior. (Kahneman 2023.)

It is also worth mentioning Robert Cialdini's research, where he identified six basic principles of influence, such as reciprocity, consistency, social proof, authority, sympathy, and scarcity. These principles are actively used in advertising strategies. His research demonstrates how easily people are manipulated without even realizing it. (Cialdini 2021.)

Advertising can trigger emotional reactions that overshadow rational analysis. Even sceptics can be emotionally influenced. Many advertising techniques are aimed at creating memorable images or associations that can change behavior that the consumer does not realize.

2.3 Booth Design and Branding Strategies

Developing an effective exhibition stand design is a complex process. A successful stand should not only stand out from the competition visually but also effectively convey the company's values, forming an emotional connection with the audience.

The development of the stand is based on several key design principles, including several theories. Firstly, the Gestalt theory, which means that the stand should be organized in such a way that all elements are perceived as a single whole, ensuring the logic, symmetry and harmony of the compositions (Dahlen 2010). Secondly, the 3-second rule, explains that visitors decide whether to stop at the stand in just a few seconds. Therefore, it is important that the key messages are clear and the visual style is eye-catching. (Buxton 2019.) And thirdly, the concept of open space. Modern exhibition stands are often built in an open format, without barriers, which facilitates easy interaction with the brand and creates a friendly atmosphere (Springer 2011).

To effectively promote a brand through stand design, it is necessary to take into account the corporate style - the use of corporate colors, logo, typography and visual elements that are associated with the brand. Special attention should be paid to the information component of the stand. Catalogues, brochures, price lists and commercial offers should be easily accessible so that visitors can get all the necessary information about the products. The use of digital tools such as QR codes, mobile applications and a website will make the stand more convenient and interactive. The stand should tell the story of the company, convey its values and key messages using graphics, video and interactive elements. In addition, an important aspect is a comfortable atmosphere. Creating a comfortable space where visitors can feel comfortable, due to convenient negotiation areas, soft lighting or tactile materials.

Interactive technologies play an important role in increasing audience engagement. Modern technologies such as augmented and virtual reality, touch screens and gamification allow

companies to create a unique user experience and increase visitor interest (Orus & Sanchez 2021). The use of virtual and augmented reality technologies allows visitors to immerse themselves in the world of the brand, test the product or go through an interactive presentation. Interactive panels and kiosks allow visitors to independently study products, browse catalogues, leave reviews or participate in surveys. The inclusion of game elements helps to retain the attention of visitors and makes interaction with the brand more exciting (Xi & Hamari 2019). Additionally, interactive zones such as photo zones, master classes, competitions and virtual tours of the factory allow the stand to be not only informative but also exciting. It helps to engage visitors and form an emotional connection with the brand. (Colombani 2025.)

The use of such technologies not only increases the time visitors spend at the stand but also creates positive emotions, which can later influence the decision to cooperate or purchase. It is important to remember that the purpose of the stand is not just to present products but to create a memorable and emotional experience. To do this, it is necessary to carefully select the best samples, demonstrating the most attractive and unique models. Thus, a well-thought-out stand design that matches the brand and the introduction of interactive technologies creates a unique user experience that contributes to the brand's memorability and strengthens its position in the market.

2.4 Marketing Strategies in Exhibitions

Exhibitions have traditionally been a powerful marketing tool, giving businesses a unique opportunity to gain the interest of prospective clients, build relationships, and enhance their reputation. In the modern world, the effectiveness of participation in an exhibition depends not only on being physically present but also on making successful use of both traditional marketing strategies and modern digital technologies. (Rodriguez-Oromendia 2012.)

Conventional marketing strategies are still useful and efficient at exhibitions. Visitors can find organized information about the business, its goods, and its services in brochures and catalogues. In addition to providing information, they also act as a tangible reminder of the brand. Souvenirs and branded gifts, such as pens, and bags with the company logo, help to increase brand memorability and create positive associations among visitors. Face-to-face communication and business negotiations are among the key advantages of exhibitions, as direct contact with potential clients and partners builds trust and allows people to make deals directly at the event. (Gopalakrishna 2010.)

The recent improvements in digital technologies and changing customer preferences have led to the realization that new marketing tactics and strategies are required to keep and even increase the audience's attention. The active usage of popular social media platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter helps companies to connect with a larger audience, where they can announce their participation in certain events, as well as conduct live broadcasts from the exhibition and interact with visitors during the live streaming.

Live demonstrations, such as product tests, master classes and presentations at the stand, allow potential customers to visually evaluate the benefits of the product and increase trust in the brand. Experiential marketing, which includes creating a unique user experience using interactive technologies, sensory zones, VR demonstrations and game mechanics, helps to form an emotional connection with the brand and increase visitor engagement. (Vaníčková 2020.)

The right usage of digital technologies not only improves the physical presence at the exhibition but also expands the audience and attention on a significant level. With QR codes and mobile applications, customers can immediately get access to information such as company, product catalogues, and contact details, and also register for events and get personalized offers. Online analytics and CRM systems help track visitor activity and analyze their interests and preferences, which allows exhibitors to build a personalized interaction strategy after the exhibition. Hybrid and virtual exhibitions that combine offline and online formats make it possible to attract remote participants, organize virtual tours of the stand, and extend the life of exhibition content through online platforms.

Modern exhibitions require an integrated approach to marketing, including the use of both traditional and innovative tools. Classic methods such as printed materials and personal meetings remain an important part of interaction with visitors, while digital technologies allow you to expand the boundaries of a physical event, engage the audience and increase the effectiveness of communication. Companies that successfully integrate these strategies gain a competitive advantage by strengthening their market position and creating memorable and impactful brand experiences.

2.5 Current Trends and Innovations in Exhibition Marketing

Exhibition marketing is changing significantly. This is driven by new trends and technological innovations. Recent developments such as hybrid events, gamification, and the integra-

tion of digital marketing strategies into physical trade shows are influencing the way companies participate in events and engage with visitors. These trends improve the attendee experience and impact booth design and visitor engagement strategies. (Söilen 2013.)

Hybrid events that combine both in-person and virtual components are becoming increasingly popular. This trend allows organizers to provide opportunities for remote attendees to participate in their events. Companies can connect with a global audience and present their products to a larger, more diverse group, with virtual components such as live streaming, virtual tours, and interactive online booths.

All of these changes are impacting booth design. That is why companies now often use virtual components for their booths. It includes screens for broadcasting, interactive access points, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR). Additionally, elements such as QR codes and links to online webinars or virtual chats boost the interactivity of the booths. It provides remote visitors with an experience similar to that of being in person. (Vaničková 2020.)

Now it is becoming popular for companies to use gamification in exhibition marketing. Implementing game design elements such as challenges, competitions, rewards, and interactive activities increases visitor engagement (Colombani 2025). The introduction of gamification allows companies to attract the attention of attendees and motivate them to interact.

Gamification strongly influences the design of the booth. Physical space becomes more dynamic and unique, due to interactive installations, touch screens and games. For example, the booth may include digital wheels of fortune, quizzes or product demonstrations offering rewards for participation. These experiences encourage visitors to spend more time at the booth, increasing the possibility of engagement and potential deals.

Digital tools are increasingly being used to promote events. This can include social media, mobile apps, email campaigns, and the use of data analytics to tailor messages and interactions based on attendee behaviour and preferences. This helps to engage with audience members before, during, and after the event and offers personalized material.

The impact of trends on booth design is obvious. A booth must be equipped with technology to remain competitive. Digital screens, interactive kiosks and social media walls are often used to display content, show live streams or display user-generated content. (Rodriguez-Oromendia 2012.) QR codes allow visitors to easily access information, download materials or participate in competitions and surveys. The use of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) can create unique experiences.

These digital strategies also mean that booth design is changing from a technology perspective. They need to be designed with connectivity and mobile interaction in mind. Booths should be equipped with charging stations, Wi-Fi hotspots, and mobile interfaces that provide a convenient experience for visitors. Booth staff will often use tablets or other digital devices to communicate with visitors in real-time, creating a personalized experience.

The evolution of marketing, which includes hybrid events, gamification, and digital integration, is changing the way companies engage with attendees. These innovations affect booth design, making it more interactive and accessible to both in-person and remote audiences. By utilizing technology, companies can create memorable experiences, strengthen brand connections, and maximize visitor engagement.

3 Current Issues

3.1 Challenges in Booth Design

The design of the exhibition stand plays a key role in attracting visitors. The appearance and organization of the space create the first impression of the company and force visitors to either stop, study the product or service in more detail, or pass by in search of something interesting. To build a successful booth and stand out from the competitors, it is important to take into account convenient navigation, visual identity, interactivity and a comfortable atmosphere. (MacPherson 2025.)

An unsuccessful booth design can lead to the loss of potential customers. Visitors may simply not pay attention if the booth looks empty. Weak branding can make a company and a stand unremarkable, and the lack of interactive elements will reduce engagement. As a result, the company loses opportunities to attract new customers, establish new contacts and successfully present itself. On the contrary, an overly saturated booth will be too difficult for visitors. The purpose of the stand is not to showcase the entire product range but to facilitate the right choice. In this regard, it is increasingly possible to see stand expositions built in a minimalistic style, when the main attention of visitors is focused only on those products that show the main activities and main achievements of the exhibiting company, and the full range of products is presented in advertising publications and catalogues. (Robbe 1999.)

One of the main problems in booth design is inefficient layout. Poor navigation inside the stand leads to the fact that visitors will not understand where to go, which area is for what, and they will not have the opportunity to get to know the goods or services well. In an overloaded space, important details will be lost in the abundance of elements. The lack of clear areas, for example, for demonstration, communication and recreation, will lead to ineffective booth operation when people with different needs and interests interfere with each other. Narrow passageways that obstruct the flow of people can create chaos and discourage visitors from approaching the stand in the future.

In addition, booths with insufficient interactivity risk losing potential engagement. Adding touchscreens, interactive games, product demonstrations, VR experiences, or other elements can significantly enhance visitor engagement and retention (Bloch 2017). The areas where visitors can interact with the product will be better remembered by visitors. Giving visitors something practical can enhance their exposure and help the booth stand out from the competition.

The stand is an extension of the company's presentation, so the neglect of branding is an important problem in its design. A stand that does not reflect the branding through logos, colours, and messages will lead to a confusing experience for visitors. Subsequently, attendees will forget the company and the product after the exhibition. Overloading the stand with text and visual elements will complicate perception, and a poorly chosen colour scheme and unreadable fonts will reduce brand credibility.

The consequence of poor booth design is a decrease in visitor traffic, which will lead to a low level of interaction and engagement. This means that potential customers will be lost, and in extreme cases will even have a negative perception of the brand.

3.2 Visitor Engagement and Retention

For the company's successful experience at the exhibition, the stand must not only attract but also retain the attention of visitors. Companies face a high level of competition at trade shows. Hundreds of booths compete for the audience's attention and create information noise. As a result, visitors quickly get tired and lose their concentration. With a decrease in motivation, they may even pass by potentially interesting companies for them. If visitors do not see a clear benefit from the interaction, they simply leave after a few seconds.

To ensure that the stand does not go unnoticed, it is important for the company not only to stand out through design but also to actively engage the audience. Companies should create conditions where the audience wants to stay longer and explore the company's offerings.

One strategy for engaging and retaining visitors is to use technology to immerse people in the brand. These can be screens showing important information, touchscreens for individual review, and the use of virtual reality. (Davidson 2018.)

In addition, nowadays companies have started to use stand gamification more often. People see an opportunity to actively interact, try their skills and have fun, and this makes them spend more time at the booth and get familiar with the products natively. Companies have started using Wheels of Fortune and other simple and fast games like golf, basketball, and darts. (Bloch 2017). Even if customers were not initially interested in a particular product or service, such games attract everyone, and the company has a chance to tell and show the product or service to a larger audience.

One of the important elements of attraction can be practical experience. It is a demonstration of the product in action. Staff can manage product testing so that visitors can try the products. Engaging in the process helps visitors remember the brand.

In addition, personalized interactions and direct contact are important. Individual conversations and demonstrations based on the interests of visitors will help consumers feel more involved and important to the company. Many people at exhibitions are not the first to make contact. Only a small part actively interacts with the stands on their initiative. Mostly, visitors only occasionally stop and ask questions or just watch from the sidelines. To motivate people to stop at the stand, there must be a trained and friendly staff. They act as the face of the company, and interaction with them directly affects the success of the stand at the exhibition. Staff should be proactive and passionately engage visitors instead of waiting for questions. Untrained or uninvolved staff can lead to missed opportunities or even leave a negative impression on potential customers.

The company should create a feeling of comfort and exclusivity. The stand should contain comfortable areas for communication and possibly include rest areas. As well as exclusive materials and presentations for interested guests, they will create an atmosphere of uniqueness and make guests feel closer to the brand than other people.

In addition, stimuli are often used to attract visitors to maintain interest. These can be gifts, drinks, food, as well as personalized souvenirs. For example, a photo booth that either prints out photos or sends them to a phone with a company brand on a frame. Visitors will share this photo with their surroundings, and even more people will learn about the company.

In a highly competitive environment, the use of creative methods will be very effective. It is the original approach that makes people motivated to study the product and remember the brand. The use of unusual contests and non-standard communication formats will arouse emotions and interest among the audience. This will create a unique experience. The more memorable the interaction, the more visitors will return, tell others about the stand and become a customer of the company in the future.

Thus, visitor engagement is a combination of technology, a personal approach and competent communication. Specific engagement strategies are individual and must be tailored to each company individually in combination with their goals and messages.

3.3 Existing Gaps in Knowledge

Exhibitions are a unique marketing tool where companies meet their target audience directly (Grigg 2024). Even though exhibitions are popular and widely used, there are gaps in knowledge and a lack of scientific research on this topic. Eliminating them will help both organizers and companies to hold exhibitions more efficiently and have the best results from the event.

First, there is limited research on how different booth layouts influence crowd flow and visitor engagement. Most companies design booths based on traditional methods without taking into account movement data. This may lead to the fact that the stand will simply not be convenient and not noticeable in the abundance of other companies.

Currently, there is a trend towards using technology and virtual reality on the stand (Davidson 2018). Artificial intelligence and digital panels are becoming increasingly popular. All these elements have great potential, but it is unclear how companies can use them in an intuitive and accessible way for all visitors.

In addition, an important gap in knowledge is the measurement of engagement. Currently, engagement is determined by the number of visits and the time spent by people at the booth. However, there is a lack of standardized metrics to measure interaction depth and visitors' emotional responses.

In the modern world, virtual and mixed exhibitions are beginning to gain popularity. With the development of technology, there is great potential, but limited research on company involvement and success at such exhibitions.

A deeper study of booth design and visitor engagement strategies will allow companies to have more effective results at exhibitions. This will make the organization of exhibitions more successful for both visitors and companies.

4 Proposed Solution

4.1 Research Methodology: Exhibition and Analytical Approach

To study the effectiveness of booth design and visitor engagement strategies, research was conducted at the Kevätmessut ja Lähiruoka & Luomu 2025 Expo (Spring Fair), which was located in Helsinki between 26 and 29 March 2025. More than 500 companies were represented at the exhibition, and slightly more than 50,000 people visited. It was a B2C event for people interested in cottages, interiors, renovation and gardens.

Three different studies were held to collect accurate data. An observation, a survey of visitors and interviews with companies were conducted. Thus, the opinions of all the participants of the exhibition were taken into account, and also, an objective assessment of the visitors' behavior at the exhibition was carried out.

Firstly, the general atmosphere was analysed. Some companies used unusual designs and methods of attracting attention. The observation was established over companies from three groups, such as Home Services, Garden Equipment and Wooden Construction Solutions, to make it more objective. Each group included different booths, designs, and engagement methods. Visitors were monitored every hour for four days at each selected stand, and the results were compared within the same group. This allows us to get objective figures about the attractiveness of the stands. Collecting data regularly at the same time is suitable for analysing the dynamics of interest in booths throughout the day. After that, all the collected data was analyzed, and in each group, one company was identified that attracted more visitors during all four days and aroused greater audience interest. In this way, a leader appeared in each group - a company that, according to observations, consistently supported the largest number of visitors both on the whole for four days and on every single day.

In addition, a survey of visitors was conducted, which included questions about the purpose of the visit, what attracts them to the stand, design and elements, methods of interactivity and technology. The result contains responses from 203 exhibition visitors of different genders and ages, with the majority being over 30 years old, since it was the target audience for this event.

In addition, at the end of the event, interviews were conducted with each of the companies that were monitored during the exhibition. This made it possible to compare their own ideas and conclusions with the results of my observations, as well as to see what conclusions they had drawn and how the exhibition experience had developed for them. By combining

all the results, an objective conclusion can be drawn regarding the exhibition and the effectiveness of various designs and audience engagement strategies.

4.2 Key Findings: observations, survey and interviews

More than five hundred companies participated in the exhibition, and each tried to stand out and attract the attention of visitors. The booths were very different. Some of them were minimalistic, where the emphasis was on simplicity and clearness, others were spacious with creative design, places for relaxation and separate corners for negotiations. Many companies relied on branded colours, vibrant designs, or unusual decorative solutions, sometimes attracting attention with giant mascots or themed designs. For example, some companies related to plants built green mazes that aroused curiosity and encouraged visitors to walk all the way through while getting to know the products. Since the exhibition was in spring and related to cottage goods, some of the participants decorated the stands with flowers, wood elements and natural materials, creating an atmosphere of nature.

Many companies have used various activities to engage people. Somewhere, you could play simple games, spin the wheel of fortune, or complete physical tasks and get a prize. There were areas for children with creative and sports activities, while parents talked with representatives of companies. Other participants relied on technology. They installed tablets and computers where visitors could learn everything about the brand and its offers on their own. There were also more unusual solutions, such as photo zones with professional cameras. Visitors took beautiful photos with the company's logo remaining in the corner, which were sent to their phones. The desire to show this souvenir to their friends or post it on social media gave the brand additional advertising and became an excuse to communicate with employees.

A lot of attention was paid to the atmosphere of the stands. The companies offered drinks, sweets and treats, created cosy places to relax, where you could rest and at the same time get acquainted with the products or talk with specialists. The booths were often divided into open areas where employees attracted attention and started a conversation, and more private spaces where interested visitors could communicate in more detail.

In general, a variety of approaches could be seen at the exhibition: some companies relied on bright design and unique elements, some on technology and interactive, and others on comfort and informal communication. This created an atmosphere of a lively, dynamic event, where each company strived to be remembered and tried to find its own way to attract visitors.

4.2.1 Exhibition

The report is based on four-day observations of visitor flows at the booths of three thematic groups: Housing Services, Garden Equipment and Wooden Construction Solutions. The recording was carried out every hour from 1 pm to 5 pm. During all four days, the data was collected from each booth, recording the number of visitors and their interactions. Then, this information was compiled into a table and analyzed to see which booth in each group consistently attracted more people. The analysis showed that in each group, there was one leading company that supported the largest number of visitors throughout all four days, while other companies had a lower attendance rate. The data is summarized in Excel in the form of tables and graphs of the leader and the average of the group for each day. This format allows us to simultaneously see the initial effect of the first day and the consistency of interest at the end of the exhibition. All the results of the observations are in Appendix 1.

In the first group of Housing Services, the leading company was significantly ahead of its competitors during all four days. Figure 1 shows that the number of visitors to its booth was consistently above average.

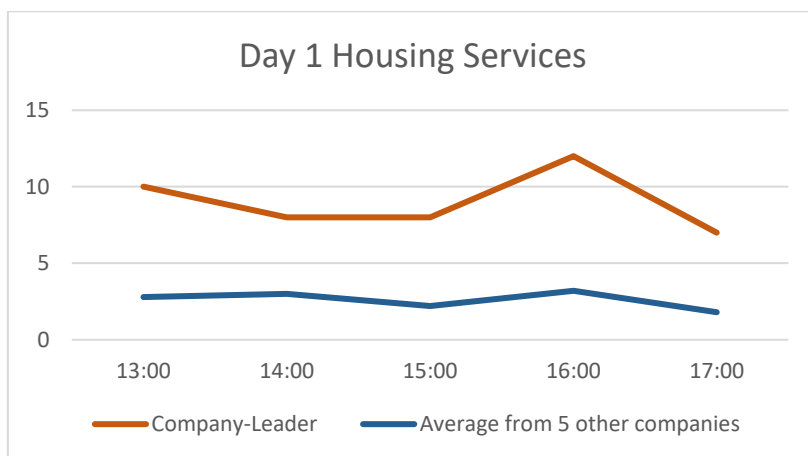


Figure 1. Day 1 Housing Services

The main reason for the success was the thoughtfulness of the design and structure. Their stand was decorated in bright brand colours and looked like a separate area, rather than a typical exhibition area. The back part was decorated with a curtain illuminated in the company's colour, which created the impression of a stage. In the centre, there was a wooden house with a large illuminated brand name, around which the main activity was formed. The space was clearly divided into four functional zones: a welcome area with friendly staff, the left side for consultations on specific issues, the central area for negotiations and making deals in a calm atmosphere in a separate space in the house, and the right side with creative

workshops. These workshops have become a separate magnet. The staff showed how to make spring symbols out of paper and allowed visitors to do their own creative work. Both children and adults liked it, because it allowed them to rest, learn something new and spend time usefully. The competitors in the same group looked weaker. For example, one of the companies had a large booth, but without dedicated areas. The staff walked all over the territory, creating confusion. They offered drinks, but there wasn't a special area to relax, so people took the treats and moved on. The other company had a smaller booth, using corporate colours in the decor, but the employees were dressed in ordinary clothes with a small logo, and in a crowded exhibition, they simply did not notice. A few more companies have limited themselves to a couple of employees. Despite their efforts, it was difficult to attract a stream of visitors without a bright visual design and additional activities. All this reduced the retention and conversion of interest into a deep dialogue.

Figure 2 shows that the gap remained in the dynamics of the fourth day. Even after the first day, the leader's flow is consistently higher, which indicates sustained interest, supported by activities and a comfortable meeting area, and not just the decorative effect.

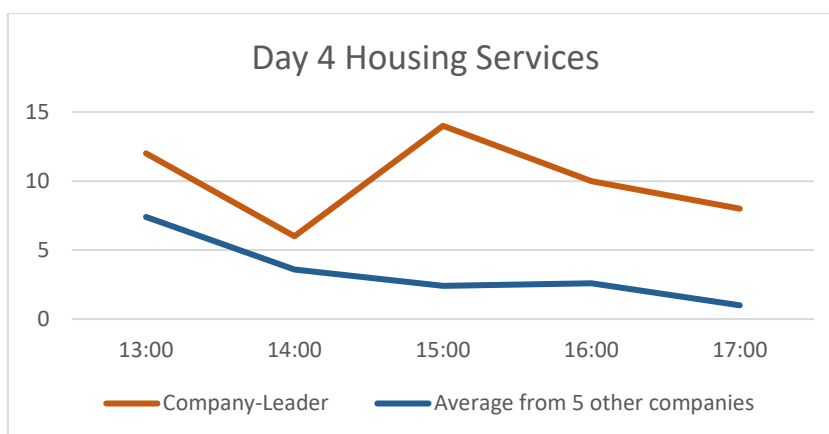


Figure 2. Day 4 Housing Services

In the second group, Garden Equipment was also a clear leader. This is visible in Figure 3.

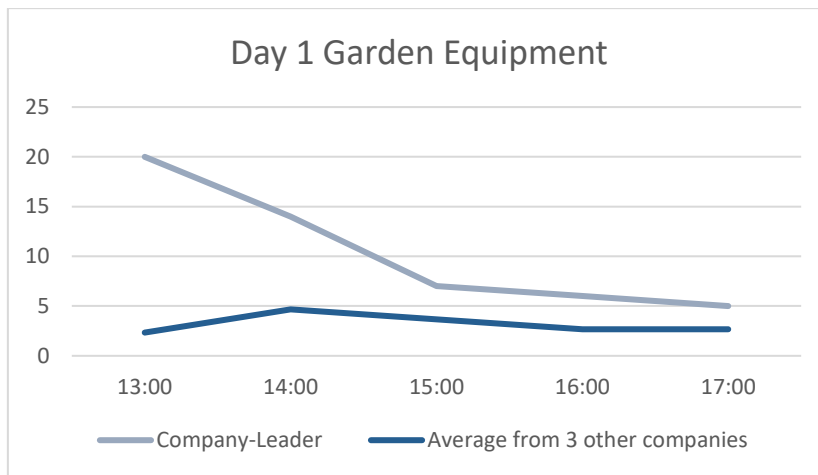


Figure 3. Day 1 Garden Equipment

Their stand always remained busy, even during the hours when the competitors' flow was decreasing. The design was made in corporate colors and referred to the theme of spring and summer: the floor imitated the grass covering, creating the effect of a real garden. The stand's territory included several separate areas: five to six storefronts with goods, a central counter for placing orders and activities to attract people. Their most popular game was the wheel of fortune with small prizes. There was a queue for this area constantly, and employees actively used the moment. They communicated with each participant, clarified their interests, and offered suitable products and promotions. As a result, the game was not only entertaining but also directly led to new deals. In addition, product demonstrations were held at the stand. The staff showed how the equipment works, how it differs from its analogues and what benefits it gives to the buyer. Even when the activity was closed, the flow of people did not subside, because the atmosphere remained lively. The competitors had a much less well-developed strategy. Despite the fact that the areas of the stands were large, they were used monotonously: there were samples of goods everywhere, and staff were on duty nearby. For those who already knew the brand, this was enough, but it was difficult to attract new visitors, as there were no active points of engagement. People came up, looked at the exhibits and quickly moved on.

Figure 4 shows the dynamics of the last day, it is clear that the leader was not just the effect of the first day. The gap with competitors persisted and even intensified during the hours of activity. Moreover, product demonstrations provided secondary engagement. Some of the

visitors who initially came for the game returned to the stand for a more detailed acquaintance with the goods and placed orders.

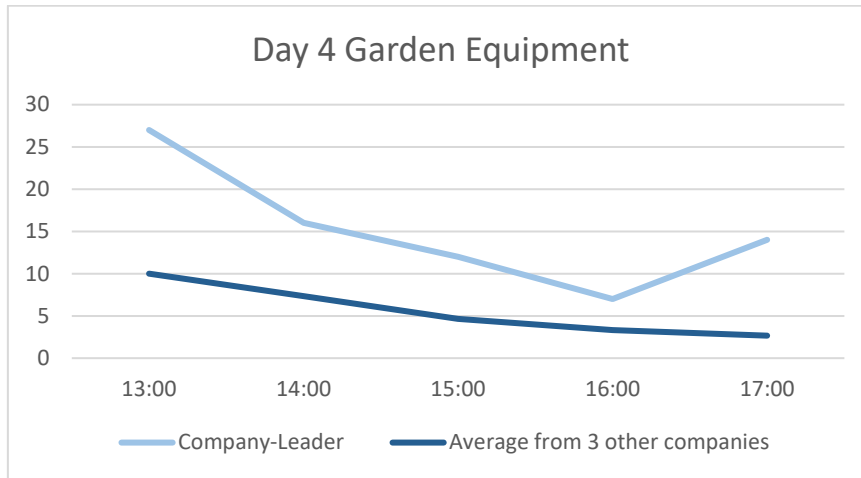


Figure 4. Day 4 Garden Equipment

The third Wooden Construction Solutions group was generally less popular than the first two. However, the contrast between the leader and the rest of the companies turned out to be the most noticeable. Figure 5 demonstrates that the number of visitors to the leader, although not very high, consistently exceeded the competitors. The main element of the stand was a large wooden mascot, which immediately attracted attention even from afar. The stand was decorated minimally, the main colour was white, and there were wooden accents, which emphasized the theme of the exhibition and the company's products. There was a long stand with product samples in front, and a digital screen with the main information about the company and offers in the back. The staff worked in front, actively inviting visitors, and at the back of the booth, there was a zone for negotiations and transactions. Competitors in this field had a much simpler approach. They mostly offered booklets and informational materials, and sometimes photos of samples. There were only two or three staff members. Without bright accents and a large number of employees, such stands remained inconspicuous, and the flow of visitors was minimal.

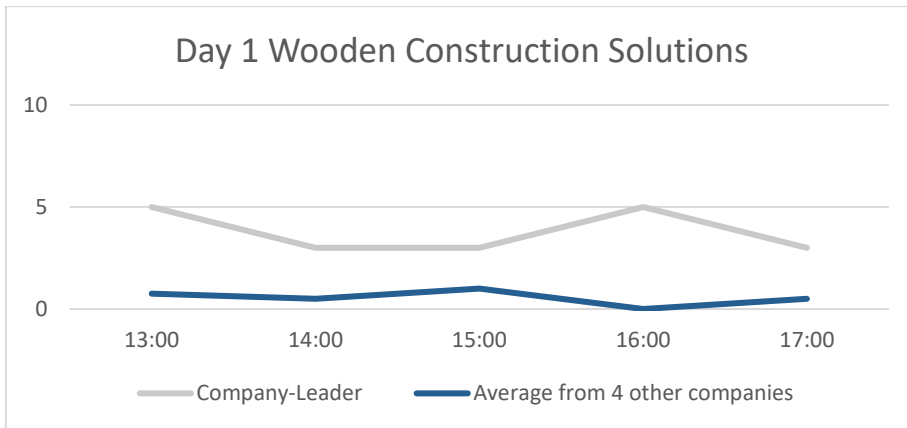


Figure 5. Day 1 Wooden Construction Solutions

By the third day, the dynamics of attendance remained stable. Even with a moderate absolute flow, the leader maintained a noticeable advantage. Their success was attributed not to the number of visitors in general, but to the effective use of attention. This was achieved with a bright visual marker in the form of a large mascot, which attracted attention from afar, as well as due to a well-structured logic of movement inside the stand. Figure 6 shows that the leader maintains higher interest and stronger dynamics.

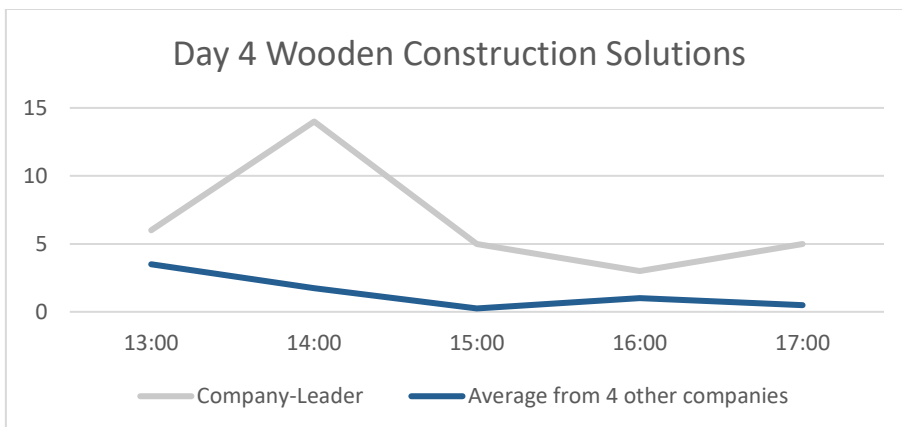


Figure 6. Day 3 Wooden Construction Solutions

The leaders won not only because of the bright design, but also because of the integrated approach. They clearly organized the space. The bright and holistic identity included corporate colours, large readable elements and visual readability of the staff. The space was clearly organized with different scenarios of engagement and zoning. Activities and interactivity served as generators of the primary flow, such as games and workshops, and demonstrations were used as a tool to deepen interest. Comfort and retention were provided by places to relax, clear stands with goods, and the absence of visual and audio overload. The team's work was evident through a visible form, quick and friendly engagement, and tar-

geted responses. On the contrary, other companies were more likely to have an unstructured space, staff without identity, treats without places to sit, a lack of anchors of attention, and limited interaction.

4.2.2 Survey

The survey results revealed an interesting discrepancy with the results of observations. During the survey, 203 responses were received. It is important to note that the sample of 203 respondents was formed from a total audience of approximately 50,000 exhibition visitors. At a 95% confidence level, it corresponds to a margin of error of about $\pm 6.5\%$. This level of accuracy is considered acceptable for marketing research because it allows to identify consistent patterns, even if the results do not reach the highest level of statistical accuracy. The survey is one of three research methods used in this study. Together with observations and interviews with companies, this provides a comprehensive view of visitors' behaviour and preferences, combining quantitative data with qualitative information.

First, 77.2% of people visit exhibitions once or twice a year, and 10.4% even more often. This means that they can be considered experienced visitors. Figure 7 illustrates the frequency of visits to exhibitions by respondents.

How often do you attend exhibitions?
202 ответа

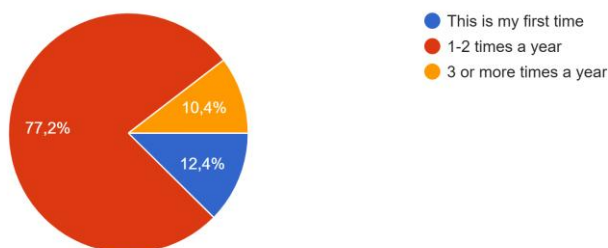


Figure 7. How often do you attend exhibitions?

To the question "What type of stand design and decoration do you like the most?" the most popular answer (40.6%) was that the design itself is not important to them, the content is much more important.

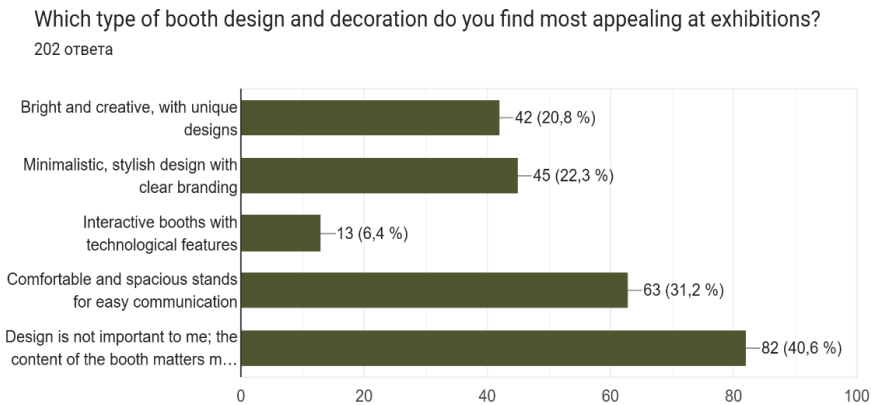


Figure 8. Distribution of responses to the question “Which type of booth design and decoration do you like the most?”

Figure 9 shows that similarly to the question “Which booth elements interest you the most?” more than half of the respondents (52.7%) noted personal interaction with company representatives. However, the least mentioned answers included visual style and the use of technology.

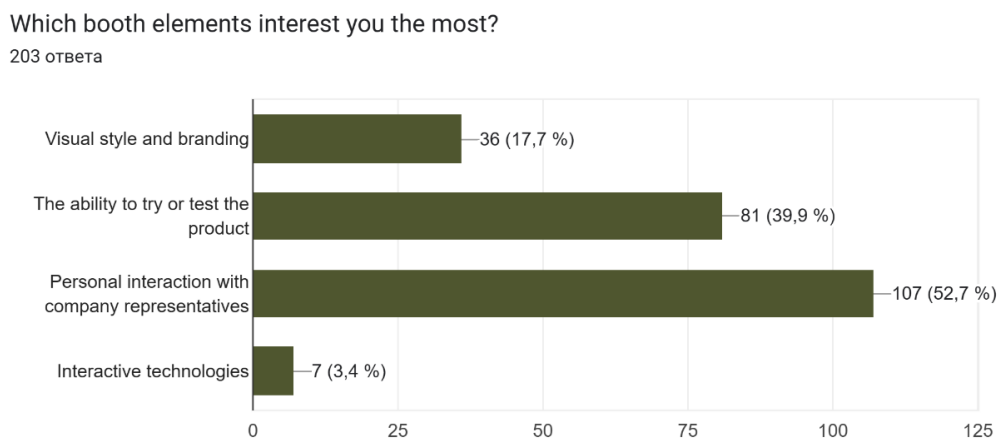


Figure 9. Distribution of responses to the question “Which booth elements interest you the most?”

In addition, when asked about technology at exhibitions, 71.6% replied that they are neutral about new technologies at the exhibition, while 14.9% prefer traditional methods, while only 13.4% spoke positively about VR and other digital tools. Figure 10 demonstrates this clear preference for traditional methods over digital tools.

How do you feel about the use of technology (VR, interactive panels, mobile apps) at exhibitions?
201 ответ

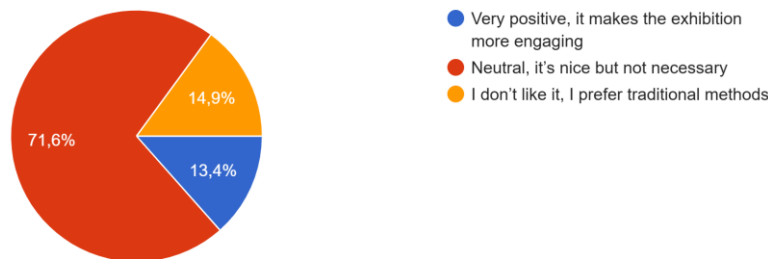


Figure 10. How do you feel about the use of technology?

However, these results clearly differ from observations. In fact, the companies with striking designs, original activities and technological solutions (games, photo zones, workshops) attracted the largest flow of visitors and held the attention longer. Moreover, the dynamics of the four-day observations showed that the leaders were those companies that competently combined the product with emotionally engaging design elements.

Such a contradiction may be explained by the peculiarities of the visitors' perception itself. According to the researchers, people tend to underestimate the impact of marketing and overestimate the role of rational factors. In their responses, they emphasize that the decision is determined by the quality of the product, not emotions or manipulative strategies. However, as D. Kahneman has shown, cognitive distortions and emotional reactions have a decisive impact on consumer behavior, even if they are not aware of it (Kahneman 2023). Similarly, R. Cialdini identified six basic principles of influence (reciprocity, social proof, authority, scarcity, etc.) that are actively used in marketing and are able to guide people's choices without them noticing (Cialdini 2021).

An example is the specific responses of the respondents. Many noted that they particularly remembered the stands of companies that also turned out to be leaders in the observational study. Moreover, it was those elements that provided high interest that stood out: bright visual solutions, unusual design and well-organized activities. Thus, the subjective impressions of the audience indirectly confirm the conclusions of the observations, even if the respondents tried to demonstrate a rational approach in the questionnaires.

The final comparison shows that the exhibitors declare product orientation and direct dialogue, but in reality, it was marketing techniques, design and interactive elements that formed the primary interest and held the attention. This confirms the conclusion that emotional engagement and proper organization of the space often turn out to be decisive factors in the perception of a brand, even if the consumer is not aware of their influence.

4.2.3 Interviews

A series of short interviews were conducted with all the companies that had been observed during the exhibition, in total 15 companies. The questions focused on the company's overall strategy, the design of their booth, their evaluation of the target audience, the elements that generated the most visitor interest and the use of digital tools, mobile applications and technological innovations. Brief interviews with the exhibitors provided a deeper understanding of the differences in the strategies of the leaders and other companies. The responses confirmed that the companies that were taken as leaders in the observational study themselves rated the level of interest in their booths as high or very high. At the same time, representatives of companies that were not among the leaders, in most cases noted only an average level of interest and indicated that the influx of the audience was limited.

In the first group, the leader reported a very high level of interest from visitors. A comprehensive set of tools was used to attract visitors: product demonstrations, souvenir distribution, contests, interactive games and thematic presentations. The stand was decorated brightly and creatively, it not only attracted attention but also created a convenient space for communication and served as a platform for activities. That is why the company managed to ensure a steady flow of visitors and keep their interest. Other members of this group rated the attention to their stands as high or average. They called the main methods only the distribution of souvenirs or product demonstration, and there were no interactive components. Thus, their ability to attract and retain visitors was limited.

In the second group, the leader also reported high interest. The key tools were the use of interactive technologies, a recognizable corporate symbol (mascot), as well as a minimalist but memorable stand design. This allowed not only to attract attention, but also to ensure comfortable interaction with the audience. Other companies in this group noted an average level of interest and emphasized that the audience was only partially relevant. The methods of attraction were limited to traditional product demonstrations or souvenir giveaways, while digital tools were used minimally. Thus, the companies themselves pointed out that their strategies did not ensure high engagement and admitted that the flow of visitors was more modest compared to the leader.

In the third group, the leader noted a very high interest from the audience and especially emphasized the effectiveness of the combination of product demonstrations, games and contests. The stand was distinguished by its striking design, the presence of areas for communication and the use of modern technologies (interactive screens). This ensured the attraction and retention of visitors throughout the exhibition. Other companies in the group also reported high or very high interest, but their focus was narrower: some focused only

on product testing, others on workshops or QR codes. At the same time, they acknowledged that visitors approached, tried the product, but stayed at the stand for a short time.

Thus, the analysis of the interview shows an important contrast: leaders consciously applied comprehensive strategies that combined product, vivid design, emotional activity and technological solutions. This ensured a high and stable interest of the audience. Other companies noted that they had a lower flow of visitors, and attributed this to a limited set of methods, mainly demonstrations and the distribution of souvenirs.

As a result, a comparison of the three research methods showed noticeable discrepancies between what the visitors said in the surveys and what was actually observed at the exhibition. According to the results of the observations, the leaders were companies that used an integrated approach: a bright and recognizable stand design, active forms of engagement (games, workshops, photo zones), as well as convenient areas for communication and relaxation. They consistently attracted the most visitors throughout the four days of the exhibition. Their competitors, on the contrary, more often limited themselves to simple product demonstrations or souvenir giveaways and admitted that their audience flow was lower.

At the same time, in surveys, the majority of respondents stated that their interest is primarily influenced by the product itself, rather than the design or marketing elements. More than half noted the importance of personal communication with representatives of companies, and technologies like VR were generally restrained. However, this is clearly at odds with the real picture. Interviews with companies have confirmed this trend. The leaders themselves assessed the interest in their stands as very high and explained this by using various tools: from games and contests to digital technologies. The rest of the participants admitted that their audience was partially relevant, and the set of methods was mainly limited to demonstrations and souvenirs.

Thus, we can draw a general conclusion that visitors tend to underestimate the role of design and marketing in words, but in reality, it is emotional involvement, creative activities and proper organization of the space that become decisive factors. Detailed data, tables and graphs are provided in Appendix 2.

4.3 Effective Booth Design & Engagement Strategies

The analysis of the collected data showed that the success of the stands at the exhibition does not depend on individual elements, but on an integrated approach in which visual design, interactive solutions and staff work form a single strategy. Visitors reacted primarily to the integrity of the image: attention was drawn to those companies that managed to think

through the design of the stand, fill it with activities and at the same time establish live interaction with the audience.

The visual appeal of the stand determines the first impression. Companies that used corporate colors, large and noticeable decorative elements, lighting or associative symbols stood out in the exhibition space and formed the feeling of an independent zone, and not just another standard site. The thoughtful architecture, which included a division into welcome areas, demonstration areas, meeting places and relaxation areas, helped not only to attract attention, but also to organize the movement of visitors inside the stand. It is also important that the design carries a semantic load: companies from the construction sector used wood and natural materials, which emphasized the credibility of the product, and representatives of the garden industry resorted to green decor, creating an atmosphere.

Interactive elements played an equally important role. The stands where product demonstrations were combined with game mechanics and entertainment activities turned out to be the most successful. The opportunity to test the product with your own hands became the main incentive to return to the stand again and discuss the details with the staff in a more relaxed atmosphere. Games, contests, workshops, and photo zones complemented this process, attracting the attention of casual visitors and allowing the audience to be held for a longer time. The use of technologies such as VR, touchpads, or mobile apps enhanced the novelty effect and helped position the company as innovative. At the same time, the photo and media zones performed a dual function: they created positive emotions and provided the company with additional advertising through social networks.

However, even the most striking visual solutions and technological innovations proved insufficient without the competent work of the staff. The leaders of the exhibition paid special attention to the human factor. Their employees were easily recognizable due to their uniforms and branded accessories, clearly understood their roles, and quickly oriented themselves in the interests of visitors. In such cases, the staff did not just answer questions, but built personalized communication, helping each guest find something that really suited their needs. The combination of technology and live contact proved to be particularly effective: the visitor began to get acquainted with the materials through digital panels or interactive screens, and the employee joined in the dialogue, explained the details and suggested specific solutions.

Thus, it can be argued that the most sustainable result was provided by the integration of three factors: thoughtful design, interactivity and personal interaction. The visual component formed the primary interest, interactive elements made it possible to hold attention, and live communication turned this interest into trust and, ultimately, into negotiations and deals.

Companies that have managed to combine these aspects into a single system have become leaders in attendance and engagement. Those who limited themselves to bright decorations or, conversely, only the distribution of souvenirs, were unable to achieve such a level of engagement and stable audience flow.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The conducted research has shown that the effectiveness of the company's participation in the exhibition is determined by a combination of factors that form a holistic strategy for interacting with the audience. A theoretical analysis of the literature and marketing concepts, as well as observations, surveys and interviews at the exhibition revealed several key conclusions.

Firstly, the central role of stand design in creating a first impression is confirmed. Theories of consumer attention and emotional design indicate that visual stimuli such as color accents, lighting solutions, and large graphic elements are the most important triggers that determine whether a visitor will stop at a booth. Practical observations confirmed this thesis: the most successful companies stood out for their bright and thoughtful design, in which visual elements were closely linked to the corporate identity and key brand messages.

Secondly, interactive elements had a significant impact on visitor engagement. The literature on sensory marketing and engaging consumer experience emphasizes that the opportunity to test, or experience a product, significantly increases brand memorization and builds emotional attachment. In the actual conditions of the exhibition, this was manifested in the fact that booths offering demonstrations, VR or AR experiences, games, or contests attracted a steady stream of audience and held their attention longer than booths limited only to handouts or souvenirs.

Thirdly, the personal factor turned out to be decisive. The booth staff and their professionalism, engagement skills, and ability to offer customized solutions had a direct impact on the visitors' assessment of the company. According to the theory of integrated marketing communications, a brand is perceived as a single whole, and it is the employees who connect the visual image and technology with live human interaction. Observations showed that the leading companies of the exhibition were distinguished by the active work of their staff, while less successful participants were often limited to the formal presence of employees, which reduced the level of engagement.

In addition, an important gap has been identified between the perception of visitors and observational data. In the questionnaires, many respondents indicated that the visual design of the stand was not a key factor for them. However, the results of observations and analysis of behaviour on the site showed the opposite: it was the brightly decorated and interactive stands that attracted the largest number of visitors. This confirms the conclusions

of the behavioural theories of Kahneman and Cialdini that people are not always aware of the true mechanisms that influence their choices.

Thus, summarizing the results of the study, it can be argued that the most effective strategies contributing to the success of the exhibition are a thoughtful and visually holistic design of the stand, the introduction of interactive and technological solutions, as well as personalized interaction with the audience. Only a combination of these elements allows the company to stand out from competitors, hold the attention of visitors and convert interest into real business contacts.

5.2 Practical Recommendations for Exhibitors

For companies participating in exhibitions, success depends on the quality of the product and how it is presented. The first thing companies should pay attention to is the visual design of the stand. The design becomes the first signal for the visitors and determines whether they will stop near the company or pass by. The bright but harmonious design, the use of corporate colours and a prominent logo, as well as the convenient structure of the space with dedicated areas for communication and demonstrations, form a holistic image of the brand. Despite the fact that respondents in surveys claimed that design does not matter to them, observations have shown the opposite. Companies with well-thought-out visual solutions invariably gathered a larger audience and held their attention.

The next aspect is related to audience engagement. A routine product demonstration is rarely sufficient. Visitors expect activities that create an interactive experience and bring out an emotional response. Workshops, the opportunity to test equipment, the use of VR and AR, contests or game mechanics turn the booth into a living space, rather than a static showcase. It is important that each activity is directly related to the product and highlights its benefits, otherwise, the effect may be superficial and short-term.

The work of the staff plays an equally important role. Even the most spectacular stand loses its significance without an attentive and energetic team. Employees at the stand should not just talk about the company but be able to communicate in a truly lively and attentive way. It is important to offer help in time, pick up the interest of the visitors and speak to them in their language. When people feel kindness and sincere attention, they gain trust, and the usual fleeting interest gradually develops into a serious conversation about possible solutions.

An effective strategy also involves a combination of offline and online tools. QR codes, mobile applications and digital catalogues help to continue communication after visiting the

stand. Additional activities, such as photo zones or game formats, ensure the brand's presence on social networks when visitors share photos or impressions.

In conclusion, we can say that the exhibition should be considered as part of a longer journey. The greatest effect is achieved when the company starts communicating with its audience in advance, for example, through invitations or announcements of activities, and then continues this communication after the end of the exhibition. People who have shown interest in the stand need careful further contact so that a short conversation at the exhibition eventually turns into long-term relationships and real partnerships.

Despite the fact that many survey participants claimed that marketing strategy and visual design are not so important to them, these factors actually turn out to be decisive. They form a first impression, attract attention, and create the background for rational arguments about the product to be heard. Therefore, a successful strategy for participating in an exhibition should always combine a strong visual image, emotional involvement and professional teamwork.

5.3 Implications for Future Exhibitions

Future exhibitions will take place in an increasingly competitive environment for the attention of visitors, and technology is already noticeably changing the format of interaction. Companies can no longer limit themselves to just attending the event. To really achieve results, they need to think through a strategy in advance that takes into account new trends, uses modern tools, but at the same time does not lose focus on human communication.

Digitalization is becoming one of the key directions. Augmented and virtual reality tools allow you to make the product demonstration as visual and exciting as possible. Visitors can try out the product in a virtual environment or take an interactive route inside the stand. Digital dashboards, QR codes, and mobile apps simplify access to additional information and help establish contact with the company. Practice shows that technology alone cannot keep people's attention. They may be interesting, but live communication is still the main thing. Therefore, it is important to consider how digital tools will complement rather than replace booth conversations and help build trust.

A personal approach is equally important. Increasingly, visitors expect the company to offer them exactly the experience that matches their interests. Data analytics and CRM systems are used for this purpose. They allow us to get to know the audience better in advance and prepare more accurate offers for them. As a result, a person feels that they are being talked to personally, and not according to a general pattern.

The topic of sustainability and environmental friendliness requires special attention. More and more companies and customers are paying attention to the materials used to build the stand, how the disposal is organized, and how the event complies with the principles of the green economy. In the near future, environmental responsibility will become not just a pleasant bonus but a necessary condition for maintaining a positive image of the company.

Now it is increasingly clear that the exhibition is not just one day with a visit to the stand. The real success of a company is also determined by the way the company communicates with people before and after the event. Social media, mailing lists, online meetings, and individual support help turn an interest at the exhibition into real long-term relationships and real partnerships.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

Promising areas for further research are related to an in-depth study of new formats and audience behaviour. The analysis of virtual and hybrid exhibitions is becoming more and more in demand with the development of technology. It is important to understand exactly how such formats affect the perception of the brand, the level of engagement and the willingness of visitors to further cooperation.

A detailed study of the behaviour of different categories of visitors is also required. For example, comparing professional audiences and ordinary consumers can show which approaches work best depending on the type of exhibition.

In addition, the study of the effects of ecology and material recycling can be considered a promising area. Digital alternatives instead of printed materials are becoming increasingly relevant, and researching how these solutions are perceived by visitors will help companies shape more effective strategies in the future.

Further research would allow us to analyse the effectiveness of individual methods. Also, it would expand our understanding of how exhibitions change under the influence of technology, social demands and cultural specificity.

5.5 Reliability and Ethical Considerations

The data was collected systematically through observations, surveys, and interviews to ensure the validity of this study. Using several methods allowed us to double-check the results and increase the reliability of the conclusions. The observations were carried out every day at the same time. It made it possible to consistently compare the results. The survey and

interviews helped broaden the horizons and confirmed the general validity of the conclusions.

The ethical aspects were carefully considered. The companies that participated in the surveys have given their consent, and their responses are provided without providing personal information to preserve confidentiality. All collected data has been securely stored and used only for the thesis. The names of companies are not mentioned in the work to preserve confidentiality.

The author of this work, Ksenia Mikhailova, is responsible for the accuracy of all content. Artificial intelligence tools were used only for some language editing. DeepL (DeepL Translate: The world's most accurate translator) was used for language checking to ensure linguistic correctness. These tools did not influence the design of the study, data collection, analysis, or conclusions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Observation results

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<file:///C:/Users/kseni/Downloads/Observations%20Day%202.pdf>

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Appendix 2. Exhibition Visitor Survey Results

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