

10th International Strategic Management Conference**Effects of the pre-show, at-show and post-show firm activities on trade show performance measurement**Emine Çobanoğlu^a, Venera Turaeva^{b*}^{a,b} Marmara University, Istanbul, 34722, Turkey

Abstract

Literature on trade show has been widening recently as with the acceleration of globalization trade shows are viewed not only as sales and promotion tools utilized by companies but also as a marketing strategy that integrates sales and promotion of company products and services, developing relationship building both with local and international customers and other stakeholders, increasing and sustaining the company image, benchmarking the company by analyzing the competition in the market, etc. Participation in international trade shows creates an excellent opportunity of entering new markets for firms and especially for SMEs which lead to the increase in their export thus easing the internationalization of their business. Within the context of this study, we aim to reveal empirical evidence of trade show performance measurement that is said to be effected by various firm activities conducted at pre-show, at-show and post-show stages of the trade show. As the method of data collection primary data collection was used with a development of a questionnaire which was conducted on a sample constituting of 124 firms 112 of which are SMEs at three international trade shows held in Istanbul, Turkey in 2013. Key findings are that sales-related and information-gathering performances are the most important for Turkish SMEs whereas at least one component from each stage of the trade show effect these performances.

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INTRODUCTION

Although trade show sector development in Turkey relies back to 1936 with an opening of the Izmir International Fair, this sector developed nationally with the opening of exhibition centers in various parts of the country until 1980's (Acartürk, 2012). Export incentive regulations put forward during the early 1980's and increase in the industrial production capability of Turkish firms increased export to foreign countries (Erdil, 2012). This eventually served as a reason of the development of the Turkish trade show sector in an international context. Ulaş (2004) identified 5 different foreign market entry strategies for SMEs in Turkey and as a result of her study participation in national and

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international trade shows where incentives and support of the government are provided, was shown to be one of the most appropriate foreign market entry strategies due to its cost effectiveness. With an acceleration of the globalization in 1980's and 1990's there was a dramatic increase in trade shows held and money allocated on trade show budget by firms. Therefore, most of the prominent and vast amounts of researches on trade show are conducted in 90's (Pöllman, 2013). Most of those works pursue sales approach by prioritizing lead generation and product demonstration in explaining the importance, role, functions and overall success of the trade show (Bonoma, 1983; Kerin and Cron, 1987; Tanner and Chonko, 1995). By the mid-90s focus of the trade show literature started to shift towards trade show performance and failure of the exhibiting firm managers carrying out multiple objectives of trade show was an underlying reason of this shift (Pöllman, 2013). Researchers conducted in the context of trade show measurement employs lead generation efficiency, attraction, contact and conversion efficiency, attraction effectiveness index, etc. (Gopalakrishna and Williams, 1992; Gopalakrishna and Lilien, 1995; Dekimpie *et al.*, 1997; Rosson and Seringhaus, 1998; Tanner and Chonko, 1995). Latter researches dedicated to trade show recognized the insufficiency of sales and lead generation approach of the trade show performance measurement, thus new approaches relied on more sophisticated methods as outcome-based and behavioral-based approach of the performance measurement (Hansen, 2004).

Evaluation of the trade show performance considering its pre-show, at-show and post-show activities separately is another important factor in trade show literature. The reason is that trade show is such an activity that requires differentiated firm activities, resources and marketing approaches from the time the decision to participate at a certain trade show until the end of the trade show (Seringhaus and Rosson, 2004). A three step process of the trade show has been used in many research studies in order to show the importance of each activity and the stage it belongs (Gopalakrishna and Lilien, 1995; 1998; Seringhaus and Rosson, 1998; Tanner, 2002; Li, 2006; Lee and Kim, 2008). The importance of dividing the trade show activities into three stages is that exhibitors have to behave differently at pre-show, at-show and post-show since visitor behavior and needs vary depending on the stage of the trade show (Gopalakrishna and Lilien, 1995). Our research is based on revealing the effects of the pre-show, at-show and post-show firm activities on several trade show performance dimensions as image-building, information-gathering, sales-related, relationship- building and motivation by testing the research model with Turkish SMEs. Firstly, study presents the relevant literature review of trade show performance measurement, firm activities by three stages of the trade show. Research methodology, analyses results and research model will take place at second section. The results of the analyses will be discussed and recommendations will be provided for managers and academicians at the last section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Trade show performance measurement

Tafesse *et al.* (2010) identifies two different approaches followed in trade show performance measurement one as the perceptual data which is obtained from exhibit manager's subjective rating and the other approach relies on objective indicators which are the exhibitors' activity measures. The most commonly utilized type of approach is the exhibit managers' perception or subjective rating of delivered performance on several trade show performances (Hansen, 2004; Lee & Kim, 2008). These trade show performances are as follows:

Sales-related performance: all the company activities concerning the sales objectives as sales volume, sales value or order amount, as well as the number of visitors to the booth, the number of leads generated, the average cost per visitor and the cost per generated lead. Lead generation efficiency (Gopalakrishna & Williams, 1992) selling at the show, new product testing, writing orders, obtaining leads, developing prospects, etc. (Hansen, 1999; 2004).

Information-gathering performance: includes all activities related to the collection of information about competitors, customers, industry trends, and new products demonstrated at trade show (Rosson and Seringhaus, 1995; Blythe, 2000), new technologies (Rice and Almossawi, 2002) and information about potential partners (Hansen, 2004)

Image-building performance: This is a company performance dedicated to all activities related to improving and enhancing company image at trade show. Bonoma (1993) emphasizes the importance of maintaining company image with competitors, customers and with the industry in general as a marketing communication to be performed at trade show.

Relationship-building performance: all activities related to maintaining and developing relationships with existing customers and establishing relationships with potential customers. Exhibitors tend to improve their relationship with existing customers (Tanner *et al.*, 2001; Hansen, 2004; Li, 2006), establishing relationships with new customers (Tanner & Chonko, 1995).

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