



# Factors motivating visitors for attending handicraft exhibitions: Special reference to Uttarakhand, India



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## ABSTRACT

This study makes an effort to analyze the variables that motivate visitors to attend a handicraft exhibition. The study has been carried out in Indian context, with special reference to the northern state of Uttarakhand. The methodology used is primary in nature and data has been collected with the help of a questionnaire. The outcomes of the study suggest that there are numerous motivations that are responsible for attendance at a handicraft exhibition. On the basis of Factor Analysis, four factors emerged namely learning, maintaining awareness, purchasing and attraction. The study also trifurcates the visitors into three different clusters, namely shoppers, casual visitors and knowledge-seekers depending upon the characteristics that individual in each cluster share. The study shall be useful for the artisans and exhibitors to analyze the trends in the handicraft industry and thus improve their business performances by developing a better understanding of the visitor behaviour.

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## 1. Introduction

Over the years, exhibitions and trade fairs have been a major attraction to tourists and have contributed heavily towards folk migration across territories. It is a well-known fact that public showcasing (of products and services) in the form of exhibitions (as well as trade fairs) attracts huge investments and business opportunities as well as represents major sales promotion opportunities. Pizam (1990) highlighted that exhibitions encourage tourists (and travel retailers) to buy tourism products, and visit tourist destinations. Thus organizations like state tourism agencies participate in exhibitions and trade shows to increase destination and / or product awareness by reaching the potential audiences. Also other studies have been conducted in this direction to identify tourist motivations for visiting places of handicraft prominence (Farmaki, 2012; Mody, Day, Sydnor, Jaffe, & Lehto, 2014).

There is no denying the fact that sufficient amount of literature exists in context to the exhibitions and trade shows. As per the knowledge of the authors, much of the work available on exhibition attendance focuses on trade shows. Little is known about motivations in the context of consumer exhibitions (e.g. handicraft exhibitions). In order to identify the visitors' motivations at handicraft exhibitions, this study selectively tabulates a number of motivating variables and thereafter recognizes

the major ones for being a 'motivation to visit'. Numerous factors that could contribute to this study have been taken into consideration after extensive literature review as well as thoughtful brainstorming sessions with experts in this field. These experts not only have a theoretical knowledge on this subject but also have some practical experience, since they have been participants to such exhibitions earlier.

Considering the availability of work in the objective direction, it is easy to realize the significance of the research. It is noteworthy that there may be more than one motivation at a time in the mind of a visitor while attending an exhibition. It is, therefore, feasible to segregate the visitors into different classes depending upon the motivations.

The authors constrain their objectives to identify the motivations of visitors at exhibitions, handicraft exhibitions (a type of consumer exhibitions) in particular, and that too in Indian context with special reference to the state of Uttarakhand.

Uttarakhand often referred to as 'land of celestial beauty', is a state in north India blessed with the scenic beauty of the Himalayas. The state is divided into two divisions, Garhwal (plains), and Kumaon (hills), with a total of 13 districts. The interim capital of Uttarakhand is Dehradun, the largest city in the region. Uttarakhand's green forests covered landscapes, its snow-covered Himalayas, and crystal clear rivers flowing throughout the state make almost all of its cities a holiday destination. Some of the major tourist destinations include Nainital, Mussoorie, Dehradun, Rishikesh, and Haridwar. Uttarakhand is also referred to as 'DevBhoomi' meaning 'the land of God' particularly because of the many Hindu temples and pilgrimage centers found throughout the state.

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The local craft/handicraft of Uttarakhand owes significantly to the economy of the state. Some of the prominent local crafts include wood carvings, hand crafted jewellery, wax craft, copperware and bamboo work. Over the years, Uttarakhand has attracted tourists not only from the Indian subcontinent but also from other countries across the globe. The handicraft industry of Uttarakhand has flourished over years, tourism interest being one of the major reasons (Uttarakhand Development Report, 2009). As a matter of fact, Gaur (2014, p. 226) compared the trend of foreign tourist arrivals in India to that of exports of handicrafts for a time span of sixteen years and determined a strong correlation between the foreign tourist arrivals and export of handicrafts (Pearson Correlation factor,  $r = 0.89$ ). To a certain degree of aptness, it can be inferred that tourism and handicrafts are connected with mutual advantage in building and promoting one sector to support the other, here at Uttarakhand. In context of the relationship that the handicraft and tourism industries share, this study is devoted to exploring visitors' behaviour at handicraft showcasing. The study, in particular, tries to find the answer to the following simple basic question: "What motivates the visitors to attend handicraft exhibitions?" The study would segregate and segment the visitors based on their motivations behind visiting a consumer exhibitions (like that of handicrafts).

The paper has been divided into five major sections. Introduction being the first, where the authors have explained about the topic of research, its significance and connection with the tourism industry. A brief description has been done about Uttarakhand, the place where the research has been conducted. The next section is the review of literature, in which major research work done in the field of visitor motivation for attending consumer exhibitions have been explained. The third section deals with the research methodology which has been followed as a part of this study. Here the authors have highlighted on the research design, survey method, sample selection and the number of samples used for this study. The data handling and verification before conducting statistical analysis has been done in this section. The fourth section is related to the analysis of the data and interpretation of it. The final section which is the fifth one is the discussion and implication section. Here the authors have explained the findings of the study, its implications to the society as well as the other business stakeholders and scope for future research that has emerged during this study.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Exhibitions and trade fairs: attendance motivations

Exhibitions are an organized presentation and display of a selection of items. Exhibitions, as well as trade shows, are dynamic and complicated processes encompassing initiation, promotion, organization, sponsorship and support from related public and private sectors, and therefore, involve efforts from a wide range of players (Jin & Weber, 2013). Public showcasing like exhibitions (and trade fairs) is increasingly aimed at the wider public, not necessarily with the target of increasing user numbers. These are effective marketplaces where exhibitors and visitors satisfy their mutual goals (Fouracre, 2015).

It is observed that often the terms 'exhibition' and 'trade show' are used interchangeably to refer to showcase of products and services. However, there is a very thin line that demarcates these two very similar events. In fact exhibitions can be divided into three categories: consumer exhibitions, trade shows and trade and consumer exhibitions, thus giving a hint that trade show is merely a sub-class to the exhibitions (Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012). One major difference among these lies in the fact that unlike exhibitions, trade shows exclusively have invited customers and suppliers as major visitors (Browning & Adams, 1988). However, in some cases, media may also participate. As it is in the case of consumer exhibitions, the events are open to the public. And as clear it is from the name of the last category, i.e. the trade and consumer exhibitions, it is a hybrid to the first two categories (Chansate,

2008). As per Jin, Weber, and Bauer (2012), exhibition operation and participation is primarily business-oriented, motivated and driven by the market appeal of a destination. Getz (2008) identified exhibitions as one of the factors responsible for event tourism. The study reported that interest in the tourism value of exhibitions (both trade and consumer shows) had been intense for so long that almost all major cities now possess exhibition facilities.

In reference to both exhibitions and trade shows, there exists significant amount of literature that focuses exhibitors' and visitors' participation, such as exhibiting and visiting objectives (Hansen, 2004; Kijewski, Yoon, & Young, 1993; Kozak, 2005), exhibition selection (Berne & García-Uceda, 2008; Shoham, 1992), performance (Blythe, 1999), effectiveness (Dekimpe, Francois, Gopalakrishna, Lilien, & Van den Bulte, 1997), exhibitor and visitor behaviour (Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995), service quality and satisfaction (Bauer, Law, Tse, & Weber, 2008).

In one such study, Blythe (2002) mapped exhibitors' and visitors' exhibition objectives against key account management (KAM) activities. The study emphasised that prior to deciding whether or not to attend a specific exhibition, visitors evaluate the potential benefits and costs of obtaining information and knowledge on products, companies, industry and technologies.

Breiter & Milman (2006) stated that major motivations of exhibition attendance are networking, learning about new products, and viewing the quality of the exhibits. In an another significant study, Rittichainuwat and Mair (2012) suggested that visitors to consumer travel exhibitions have multiple motivations: acquiring purchase information, being attracted by the theme, or being encouraged to visit by media coverage. The study suggested two major clusters: 1) Shopper cluster whose major motivation is purchasing and 2) Total Visitors whose motivation is to undertake an ongoing information search and attend seminars to maintain their awareness of new trends with the tourism industry.

In an earlier study, Bello and Lohtia (1993) had observed that purchasing rarely occurs at the exhibition, even though an exhibitor's optimal goal in participating in an exhibition is to close orders and generate sales leads. To add to this, Hansen (1999) identified that rather than making a purchase at the exhibition, sales orders usually take place after the exhibition.

Later, Tanner, Chonko, and Ponzurick (2001), created a model that could be useful in attracting attendees, either to a trade show or even to a specific booth and examined trade show attendees' show choice behaviour from a learning perspective. Three-dimensional reasons were identified, namely shopping, career development, and general industry awareness. Further, making use of these dimensions five segments (or clusters) were identified and profiled.

Smith, Hama, and Smith (2003) explored the relationship between a successful trade show visit and future attendance intentions keeping the crowd sample limited to the Japanese trade show visitors (at a Japanese domestic and an offshore US building material trade shows). Using various techniques such as paired sample meant-test, principal components analysis, logistic regression, the study concluded that visitors have similar goals for international exhibition attendance regardless of exhibition's geographical location.

In an another attempt, Berne and Garcia-Uceda (2008) conducted their research aiming to identify important criterion for visitors in evaluating trade shows to visit and also the underlying structure of criteria. The authors made use of Confirmatory Factor Analysis to identify a measurement model and thus suggested that the evaluation criteria used by visitors have been affected by the changes in the marketing orientation of companies. Pointing out the main disparity to be the non-relevance of the marketing research criteria i.e. 'trade shows are a good marketing research tool for exhibitors but much more limited for visitors', the research went on to highlight the differences between visitors and exhibitors.

Ahead of this, Kozak and Kayar (2009) performed empirical research concerning attendees' exhibition selection attributes and ranked

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