

Traditional and Current Aspects Regarding Fairs and Exhibitions Organized by Constanta Chamber of Commerce

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Abstract

Sometimes, in marketing theory and practice it is used the generic phrase "manifestations or exhibition events", which actually refers to fairs, exhibitions, economic and/or business conventions, currently appreciated as being the most effective marketing tools.

We are witnessing the enhancement of the interest of companies or organizations to participate in exhibition events (as exhibitors and/or visitors) due to the benefits that can be obtained as a result of their participation.

In a significant extent, the success of an exhibition event depends on the activity of the organizer. The Chambers of Commerce are institutions which, still since their establishment, set themselves to be involved in organizing fairs, due to the role played by them in supporting and stimulating the entire economic activity, locally, nationally, and internationally.

In this work, we propose to present significant aspects of the history of fairs, presenting a case study on the activity of Constanta Chamber of Commerce.

Key words: fairs and exhibitions, marketing tools, chambers of commerce

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1. Introduction

Even if the opinions of specialists in defining these actions are different, we shall keep in mind some generally valid aspects: fairs made their appearance first, long ago, as meeting opportunities between people, to exchange goods, being considered even forms of market, that included shares and acts of sale-purchase of goods, while exhibitions began to be organized later than fairs, as forms of presentation/exhibit of goods by manufacturers, without achieving their sale (Economica, 2003). Fairs combine the communication function with the commercial function, while exhibitions allow to manifest only the communication function. The theory and practice of marketing has taken these forms of meeting between supply and demand, gave them new dimensions and changed them into effective marketing tools, in a market economy.

2. Why fairs and exhibitions are or should be important for companies?

Fairs and exhibitions are marketing tools through which it is aimed to be achieved, in a limited theoretical approach, the presentation and commercialization of products. In practice, they have acquired new dimensions. For exhibitors and visitors, fairs and exhibitions represent, as shown in a study realized by the Center for Research in Exhibitions from US, a very useful tool for getting information (Barbu). The same research highlights the main advantages of these marketing tools: they are on top in a ranking of the best methods of collecting information, among 13 other sales and marketing techniques; they contribute to increasing sales and the number of orders, they help in launching new products in a more efficient way compared to the promotion activity that can be

achieved through business to business, direct e-mail, public relations and telemarketing; they provide a more complete information on market trends in which the participating companies operate (Barbu).

Fairs and exhibitions also represent opportunities that offer companies the possibility to find new business partners or to develop the relationships with existing partners, but also to know the size and forms under which the competition manifest (Constantin, 2014). The exhibition events, due to the aspect that provide face to face meetings between different categories of participants, are considered to be able to contribute in creating a trustful environment between partners, which further reflects in developing business opportunities, research-development activities, stimulating innovation and increasing competitiveness in certain areas of activity (U.F.I., 2014). In this context, increasingly, it is discussed about fairs and exhibitions as representing successful actions if (besides stimulating trade and achieving the advantage of image by the participants) they create and stimulate innovation, not only in terms of products and services, but even regarding the concept of the exhibitions. Thus, the trend is that the exhibition event should provide a complex experience. This dimension is characteristic and can be achieved through the concept of "fair in fair", which involves the simultaneous organization of several exhibition events, which may or may not have a complementary theme. A major reason that determines an exhibitor to participate in fairs and exhibitions, is the desire to present the innovations from his activity, trying thus to attract customers and business partners, differentiating himself from the competitors. In the same time, a professional visitor is attracted to participate in trade fairs to inform about the appearance of new products, technologies, raw materials, which he could use in his work for creating /achieving a competitive advantage (The analysis of abroad exhibition events market, 2015).

3. Categories of participants in fairs and exhibitions

In the most theoretical approaches regarding the participants in fairs and exhibitions, it is insisted, particularly, on the exhibitors, but we shall remember that, alongside them, there are also two other main categories: the professional visitors and the organizer/organizers of the exhibition event. Same as on the market, when any company can be in the same time (but in different transactions), seller and buyer, in the case of a fair, it can happen that a company can be an exhibitor, but also a professional visitor or have only one role: exhibitor or visitor. Regarding the organizer, the discussion about the fair as a marketing tool, presents certain particularities, compared to the aspects of the other two categories. Only a conjunctly approach, of these three large categories of participants, allows an accurate and complete understanding of the importance of the fair as a marketing tool, for ensuring marketing performance in any company.

In practice, it is possible that between the objectives and purposes set by the three categories of participants in the exhibition events, occur some divergences and contradictions. From this reason, it is necessary that the objectives of each participant to be known, to identify ways and means to reach their harmonization, as a condition for the success of the event. At the same time, it is recommended that all the three categories of participants show flexibility throughout the whole process of organizing and course of an exhibition event. Gathering information on all these issues, analyzing and processing them, may lead to the elaboration of realistic conclusions, useful for future actions (Constantin, 2014)

It is believed that fairs and exhibitions, in order to manifest as marketing tools should include four main components:

(1) the exhibition area, called pavilion; it has to be appropriate for the purpose and the profile of the exhibition event. The technical and information progress specific for the last decades, contributed to the construction and the performant endowment of pavilions from many places, some of which are recognized, internationally, as important centers where exhibition events take place;

(2) the organizer of the event, who ensures all the activities related to the preparation, the course and the closure of the event;

(3) the exhibitors, who are the participants in an event and who aim to present/sell their offer of products/services. They have the following objectives: attractive exposure of products and special prices/tariffs in order to ensure a low level of participation costs;

(4) the visitors, who are represented by professional visitors, people who come for information purpose, communication or to close a deal, or another category of visitors, called the general public (Economica,2003).

The organizer of fairs and exhibitions is responsible for offering an increasingly diverse range of specialized activities, in order to ensure the success of the events, so that each participant achieve the objectives pursued. Among the most important tasks the organizer is responsible for, are: conducting marketing activities related to the design of the event; identifying, attracting and selecting participants (exhibitors, visitors, sponsors, speakers, prestigious specialists, providers of various services necessary for supporting the event, etc.); choosing the location, preparing and ensuring all the technical-material and services endowment, required during the event (Zamfir, 1997).

The efficiency of the organizer's work should be seen not only in the volume of revenues, respectively the profit made from organizing an event, but also in the appreciation level expressed by each participant. Even if this last aspect is likely subjective and therefore difficult to be quantified, it is very important to be known, because it may influence the success of future editions of the event.

One aspect that contributed to the increase of the interest to participate in fairs and exhibitions, for exhibitors and visitors (together with the advantages already mentioned) is the environment created within the event (Economica, 2003). First, this environment has to be appropriate for the interaction between exhibitors and visitors, in order to support the development of business, but also to increase the image and the notoriety of the participants. The environment created around the event can be achieved through a series of complementary actions, that can contribute so that each participant attain its objectives (Zamfir, 1997). We should mention, in this context, the most common types of events until present, namely: congresses, conferences, symposiums, seminars, fashion shows, product presentations, demonstrations of use/utilization, tastings. At the same time, by using and mixing these complementary actions, in an original way, in particular by the organizers, it can be ensured the differentiation of each exhibition event. It is estimated that, in their strategy, the organizers of fairs and exhibitions should take into account the development of new activities and the diversification of virtual services/events.

4. The Chambers of Commerce - main organizers of fairs and exhibition in Romania. A study on Constanta Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Shipping and Agriculture

The Chambers of Commerce are, currently, institutions of the market economy mechanism, which operates corresponding to a specific legislative framework, with a strong impact in ensuring social-economic development, at local/regional, national, bilateral and international level.

This type of institutions have emerged long time ago (in developed countries in terms of economy) due to the desire, especially manifested by industrialists and traders, to come together and form organizations that would defend their interests and would represent them towards certain state institutions. The first Chamber of Commerce in the world was founded in 1599, in Marseilles. The stated purpose of establishment of this institution was „... to control and protect commercial business ...”. (Bacau Chamber of Commerce and Industry)

Later, in 1805, under the reign of Napoleon, it was founded what today is called the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Paris (Juganaru, 2015). The first chambers were established, on the current territory of Romania, in 1850, in Transylvania (Cluj, Brasov, Timisoara, Arad, Oradea and Targu-Mures) and based on the Law of the Chambers of Commerce (1864), in the Romanian Principalities there were established fifteen Chambers of Commerce in: Bucharest, Turnu-Severin, Craiova, Turnu Magurele, Giurgiu, Braila, Galati, Ismail, Barlad, Iasi, Piatra Neamt, Bacau, Focsani, Botosani and Ploiesti. By setting up these institutions, it was intended the connexion with the Western capitalist economic system, which became, after the second half of the XIX century, a political, economic and cultural model for the Romanian Principalities (The Romanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry). Shortly after the War of Independence (1877-1878) and the annexation of Dobrogea to the United Principalities, it is founded, in 1880, Constanta Chamber of Commerce, whose purpose was to protect the interests of traders and industrialists of the area between the Danube and the Black Sea and to stimulate their economic activity. To

achieve these objectives, Constanta Chamber of Commerce was organized into several sections, namely: Grains trading, Clothing trading, Oil, derivatives and timber trading, Various tradings, Small trading, Credit and insurance, Food industry, Various industries, Small industry (Juganaru, 2015).

In the history of the chambers of commerce, several laws issued in 1864, 1886, 1925, 1934, 1949, 1973, 1990 and 2007, regulated their activity, depending on the economic and political situation (The Romanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry). All the county chambers in Romania functioned until 1949, when, by Decree no. 74 of November 25th 1949, they were abolished. The Romanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry was the only one kept, but passed under the Ministry of Foreign Trade and mainly, dealt with the organization of Romania's participation in international fairs.

After a period of 50 years, by Decree-Law no. 139 from 1990, the system of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Romania was reestablished and by Decision no. 799 of July 23rd 1990, the Government recognizes the establishment of several county chambers, among which Constanta Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Shipping (Juganaru, 2015)

According to the Law of their establishment, from 1864, the chambers had a double mission: advisory and administrative. Regarding their advisory mission, the chambers had to present to the government and to the public administration information about the interests and the activities of merchants and industrialists in their constituencies. The administrative mission of the chambers regarded the management of several economic objectives in their constituencies, as, for example: sea and river ports, free areas-in ports, shipping channels, trade stock exchange, fairs, commercial and industrial museums, commercial and industrial schools (Bacau Chambers of Commerce and Industry). We shall keep in mind that, since their establishment, the chambers of commerce were involved in "managing" fairs. In the same context, we shall mention that, also since its establishment, Constanta Chamber of Commerce had the following responsibilities: registration of companies, organization of markets and fairs, setting custom schedules, compilation of statistics, setting up and supporting trade and vocational schools (Juganaru, 2015).

About the existence of fairs in Dobrogea it is known that the largest one was founded in 1756 by the Sultan Mahmud I and was held in Medgidia, twice a year: in June and October, when there were sold, in particular, agricultural tools, cattle, trays, various manufactured objects. During the Ottoman domination, it is mentioned the existence of four fairs, that were organized in Balchik, Bazargic and two in Medgidia (Juganaru, 2015).

Since the establishment of Constanta Chamber of Commerce (1880), there were also founded two fairs in Constanta; one was "The fair of raw corn fields" and was held between 1-15 of May, and the other was specialized in selling cattle, cheese and rams and was organized between 1-15 of September. This concern has grown, so, in 1928, Constanta Chamber of Commerce came to organize fourteen fairs, specialized in grain and other goods, as well as 4 cattle fairs (Juganaru, 2015).

In the press from that period (in "Dobrogea Economica" newsletter, no.79-80 from 1-15.XI.1937, edited by Constanta Chamber of Commerce and Industry) there are recorded two important events: the inauguration of the Grain Exchange building from the new Market and the inauguration of the Regional Economic Museum of Dobrogea, both actions being "...called to contribute, in a larger measure, to the growth of agriculture, commerce, industry and other branches of the regional economic activity" (Juganaru, 2015). Regarding the Economic Museum (located in the Chamber of Commerce Palace) it is recorded that it was organized as a permanent exhibition of products from Dobrogea. In the four hall were exhibit the most important and most representative products from Dobrogea, from natural products of local flora and fauna, to subsoil and industrial products. The President of the Chamber from that period (Mr. Nicolae Stefan) appreciated this museum as being "the economy of Dobrogea, in miniature, in order to know how and what to work"; he also considered that visitors "... foreigners of the country, arriving on water, foreigners of the city, arriving by train, will have another attraction" (Juganaru, 2015, p.30). Another figure who attended this event, Mr. Gh. Cristodorescu, general manager of the Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Romania, recalled in his speech about "the wise words of His Majesty, King Carol II", delivered on the occasion of the first Congress of Chambers of Commerce, held in Constanta, while HM was crown prince "... I know the difficulties that oppose against the

normalization of life, I also know the spirit of the vicious public, to receive particularly products from abroad, but that is why it is the duty of all, in these difficult times that we pass through, to educate the public that in our country are and can be made things just as good, if not better, as those from abroad” (Juganaru, 2015, p.30). This analysis of the behavior of the Romanian consumer, even though it was expressed almost 80 years ago, it can be said that it is valid nowadays, too, when many buyers are attracted (for various reasons) of foreign products and ignore, even refuse goods made by the Romanian producers (some of these goods, like 80 years ago, being even better than the imported ones). In this context, it is worth to point out the current concern for the organization of fairs having as main purposes promoting the Romanian products, educating the Romanian consumers and creating a new buying and consumption behaviour, contributing, through these pursuits to support the Romanian producers. By Decree no. 74 of November 11th 1949, Constanta Chamber of Commerce and Industry was abolished and by Decree-Law no. 139 of 1990 it was reestablished, with the title of Constanta Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Shipping. Later, in April 1996, following the decision of the General Assembly of its members, the Chamber’s name was completed, adding the word Agriculture, thus becoming Constanta Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Shipping and Agriculture (Juganaru, 2010)

The activity of organizing fairs is a constant concern of Constanta Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Shipping and Agriculture (CCINA). In 1991, it was founded, within the structure of the Chamber, the company Targuri si Expozitii SRL, and in 1999 its name changed into Expolitoral SRL. Between 1990-2015, the Chamber has organized over 290 fairs, exhibitions and specialized salons, locally and nationally, some with international participation. Among the most representative actions, we shall mention: the Clothing and Footwear National Fair (TINIMTEX), which reached in 2015 its 65th edition; the Metal and Chemical National Fair (TINMEC); the Agriculture and Food Industry National Fair (EXPOAGROUTIL), with international participation, which reaches its 24th edition, in 2016; CCINA is the only Chamber in Romania, which organizes exhibitions in maritime transport, in collaboration with foreign partners.

During CCINA’s entire activity of organizing fairs and exhibitions, the issue of the location of the event (place of venue) represented the main problem. Even if, from 1990 until now, there were made great efforts to build a special building, in the Chamber’s property, designed and intended for organizing fairs and exhibitions, this objective was not achieved yet. From 2009, after Constanta County Council finished the construction of the Exhibition Pavilion, CCINA organizes most of its fairs and exhibitions in this location.

5. Conclusions

History records that fairs have emerged in the world, long before the establishment of chambers of commerce. In Dobrogea, it is mentioned that the first fair was organized 260 years ago (in 1756, during the reign of the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud I). From the establishment of Constanta Chamber of Commerce, in 1880, organizing new exhibition events has become a constant concern in the activity of this institution, regardless of the changes in its structure and its name that occurred until 1949. Still since the period between 1880-1949, Constanta Chamber of Commerce, through the actions of organizing exhibitions, got itself noticed both locally/regionally and nationally. After its reestablishment, in 1990 and the change of its name from 1996, Constanta Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Shipping and Agriculture, through its activities, especially those regarding the organization of fairs and exhibitions, stood out as an institution with national and international recognition.

Regarding the concerns on growth performance in organizing exhibition events, CCINA will pay special attention to both exhibitors (regarding offering them information about new fairs and exhibitions, monitoring their activity and creating an appropriate environment to stimulate business during the course of exhibitions, establishing and developing relationships with representatives of exhibiting companies) and visitors (in terms of knowing their needs and their behavior, their segmentation and creating databases). Also, besides its traditional events, CCINA has in view the international trend in the industry of fairs towards specialized fairs (niche) and thus will be preoccupied with organizing new exhibition events.

Knowing that by organizing fairs and exhibitions are created social-economic effects with

impact at local/regional level (such as: creating new jobs, infrastructure development, stimulating the activity of companies from different fields of activity, improving the image of Constanta city and so on), CCINA's activity (as main institution having the role of organizing exhibition events) should be supported and sustained by the territorial administrative structures.

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