

How students understand the tasks and jobs done at a trade show

Josefin Larsson

Abstract

This paper examines what associations and understandings students have regarding to trade shows and what kind of jobs and task they (the students) think are done at trade shows by those who exhibit. And how they understand what tasks and jobs are done at a trade show.

Thru a questionnaire survey the empiric data have been collected, and with support and relevance from the theoretic framework the data have been analysed and compared to previously selected theory. Do students understand what kind of jobs and tasks are done at a trade show, or by exhibit marketing, and what tasks do students associate with exhibiting at a trade show. The theoretical framework and the empirical findings show that most students are aware of what jobs and tasks are done at trade shows, even if they never have participated in one. It also indicates that most students have the same associations with jobs done at a trade show as the theory about the subject.

Keywords: Trade shows, Exhibit marketing, Marketing mix

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Problem:

Exhibit marketing is a complex job and even if many students are aware of what a trade show is and how it works, it is sometimes difficult to understand and grasp what kind of tasks are done when you are working with a trade show. In this paper, we study what associations students have with working in a trade show. How students understand what kind of jobs and tasks are done at a trade show, and what kind of jobs and tasks are important in working with exhibiting at a trade show. This leads to this paper's questions and problem to study:

What job is really exhibit marketing? And how do students understand what kind of jobs and tasks are done at trade shows. How students understand the tasks and jobs done at trade shows.

Background:

Trade shows are an important instrument in the marketing mix, but it is also a big business and a popular medium to promote new products and services (Kerin, R. A., and Cron, W. L. 1987). The knowledge about the profits of exhibiting at a trade show revolves around what jobs and tasks are done in exhibit marketing, but this is not always an easy thing to figure out. In exhibit marketing, large company's often have a bigger marketing budget and therefore more resources to place in working with a trade show. Smaller company's marketing budgets are more limited and sometimes trade shows and direct personal selling is the only elements in the marketing mix who fits in the budget (Pitta, D. A., Weisgal, M., and Lynagh, P. 2006). This makes it even more important to work with exhibit marketing at a trade show effectively.

Method:

The theoretical framework used for this study is based on information and data from scientific articles that is relevant for this topic. The scientific articles are taken from databases as Summon, Web of science and Google scholar. All of the articles have been peer-reviewed.

A quantitative method of research was used to examine this topic and to collect the empirical data. To examine the topic of this paper, a survey was constructed in google forms and sent out to the respondents via student groups on Facebook. The respondents asked to answer the survey, consisted of current students at three Swedish universities. The sample was randomly selected and 224 respondents were asked. All of the respondents answered all of the questions in the survey. The universities the attendant studied at is Halmstad university, Lunds university and Jönköpings university. This could be a factor to the results, but the sample should well represent the population because of the differentiation of education types. Not all of the students who were asked had attended classes where exhibit marketing was discussed and thought out. The questions asked was put together with consideration to both those who had heard of the tasks done at trade shows, and those who had not. The survey was designed so it was clear to the respondents that the answers was anonymous and only to be used for this specific paper. Some of the results from the empirical data collection is presented in charts and forms to make it easier to understand. Biases that may occur in the study is that the 224 randomly selected students whom were asked to answer the survey only attended three Swedish universities, and that the range in age is not as wide as I had hope.

Theoretic framework

Trade shows (TSs) are defined as events which bring together in a single location a group of suppliers, distributors, and related services that set up physical exhibits of their products from a given industry or discipline. (Gottlieb, U, Brown, M and Ferrier, L ,2014)

There are things and factors in marketing whom increase sales, but as the author of this article says: You do not increase sales just by getting an award for marketing. And the most eye catching booth may not be the best way to reach the goals that you have set up. While you are budgeting (for the trade show) you have to keep this in mind. Observations shows that sales depend more on the salesmanship of the staff that works in the booth. Trade shows are used in the way that all marketing is used, it needs to give an acceptable return on the investment. The exhibitors can use visitors reactions and responses to evaluate if the trade show was a successful or not. And by examining what specific costumers wishes and want out of the trade show, you can get an advantage. (David A. Gilliam, 2015)

Studies have showed that trade shows are a place to meet and check out the competitors, it is not only for the purpose of spying on their methods but also meet them and share experiences. However, to meet competitors is not the most important persons you are meeting at trade shows, the most important meetings are the meetings you have with potentially new costumers, and others who may affect the value of your company. (Aspers, P and Darr, A, 2011)

Limited amount of studies shows result in effectivity of capturing the visitor perceptions of the trade shows construct. But there are some results that implicate what the visitors value the most when visiting a trade show. Many of the visitors are driven by using the non-purchasing activities at the trade show, however these activities may lead to a possible affair in the near future. (Gottlieb, U, Brown, M and Ferrier, L,2014)

Attendees of a trade show has a combination of buying and non-buying perspectives while. For an example the buying dimension could include placements of orders and requests for product information from current or new suppliers. (in B2B) The non-buying dimension can include (professional) networking, searching to see what is new, and gathering competitive intelligence. There are more factors that includes in the different dimensions. And how the attendees behave on the floor (and after the trade show) could be influenced by how the exhibitor act during the trade show. In example: if the exhibitor handles customer complaints and questions in an impressive way, this may influence both current and new customers to choose the exhibitor. (Gopalakrishna, S., Roster, C, A., Sridhar, S, 2010). Trade shows are a big thing, and many companies have specific budgets for trade shows. The problem that some have with the investment is that it is hard to measure the return on the investment you have made (Sashi, C. M., and Perretty, J. 1992).

Studies show that it is not always the companies that sales the most at the trade show, who makes the largest revenue, and earns the most out of exhibiting. Some of the exhibitors mostly us their exhibition at the show as a marketing opportunity to make potential customers aware of their presents on the market. Most of the work is not done at the trade show it is the planning ahead, and evaluating afterward that are the most time-consuming tasks. The work that is done during the actual trade shows is also very important because you have a chance to

show the whole market (not only potential buyers) your capability. It is an important job to handle not only the selling aspects of one-on-one personal interactions but also the interactions who does not result in any purchase at that particular time. To be approachable can be called the key to a successful marketing at a trade show. (Vence, D, L., 2002)

According to Kirchgeorg, M., Springer, C., Kästner, E. (2009) trade shows are an important way to increase your company`s market share. This by making new contacts with both costumers and other participants on the market. This makes the people who is working with the trade shows a very important asset to the company. This study implicates that customer loyalty is increasing if the company have effectively exhibited at a trade show. Trade shows is also shown to be an important instrument to increase the selling.

The immaterial positive effects, as costumer loyalty and contacts with participants on the market are the most noticeable when you are working with exhibiting and working at a trade show. While exhibiting, you show new products and the brand of the company (Yuksel, U., Voola, R, 2010).

According to Gopalakrishna, S., Lilien, G, L., Williams, J, D, and Ian K. Sequeira, (1995) there are four crucial factors to consider as a company while working with a trade show: 1) What do we know about the role of the trade show in the business marketing communication mix? 2) How can we evaluate either individually, or as part of an overall communication program the effectiveness of trade show investments? 3) Is there evidence that any trade show has a positive net return of investments? 4) What program of monitoring and/or ongoing research is needed for a firm to establish the determinants of the return on trade show investments? (Gopalakrishna, S., Lilien, G, L., Williams, J, D, and Sequeira, I, K., 1995)

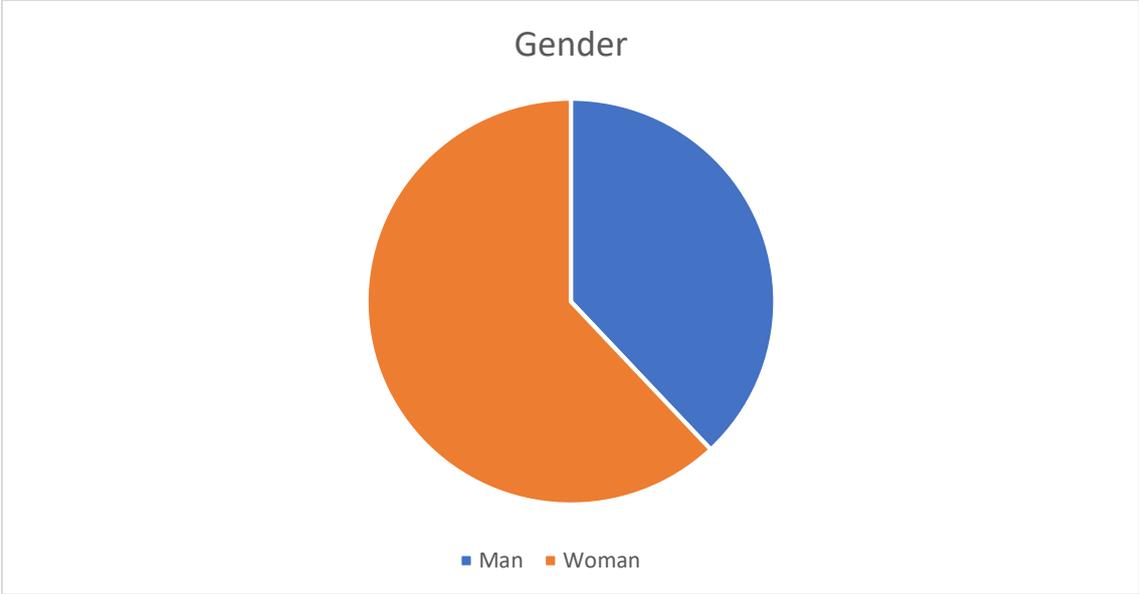
Marketers always have a given place both at the trade show and in the planning and evaluating stadiums. It is crucial to be able to use the trade show as an instrument to reach out to costumers and to use it as a tool for marketing communications. Trade shows is described as a way to work with direct sales and advertising. The direct sales and promotion is done at the booth by the sales agent, or by someone whom is there to answer questions and connect customers to products and brand. The advertising is done the whole time during the trade show just by making the attendants of the trade show aware of your company`s market presence. It is not only at the trade show that the work effort is done most of the jobs involve the processes before and after the trade show, such as preparation, implementation and follow up. There are some suggested steps to use as a technic for making participation in a trade show worth the work, you need to do a situation analysis, definition of trade show marketing objectives, definition of the trade show marketing strategy, planning of the trade show marketing mix, implementation and control and evaluation. (Kellezi, J., 2014)

According to Sashi, C. M., and Perretty, J. (1992) there are different types of key points you can choose to look at while evaluating for an example the exhibit performance. Some of these are: Exhibit efficiency that investigates the percentage of the potential audience that receives person-to-person contact at the company`s exhibit. Personnel performance that investigates the quality and number of exhibit personnel on duty at the booth. Buying influence, that

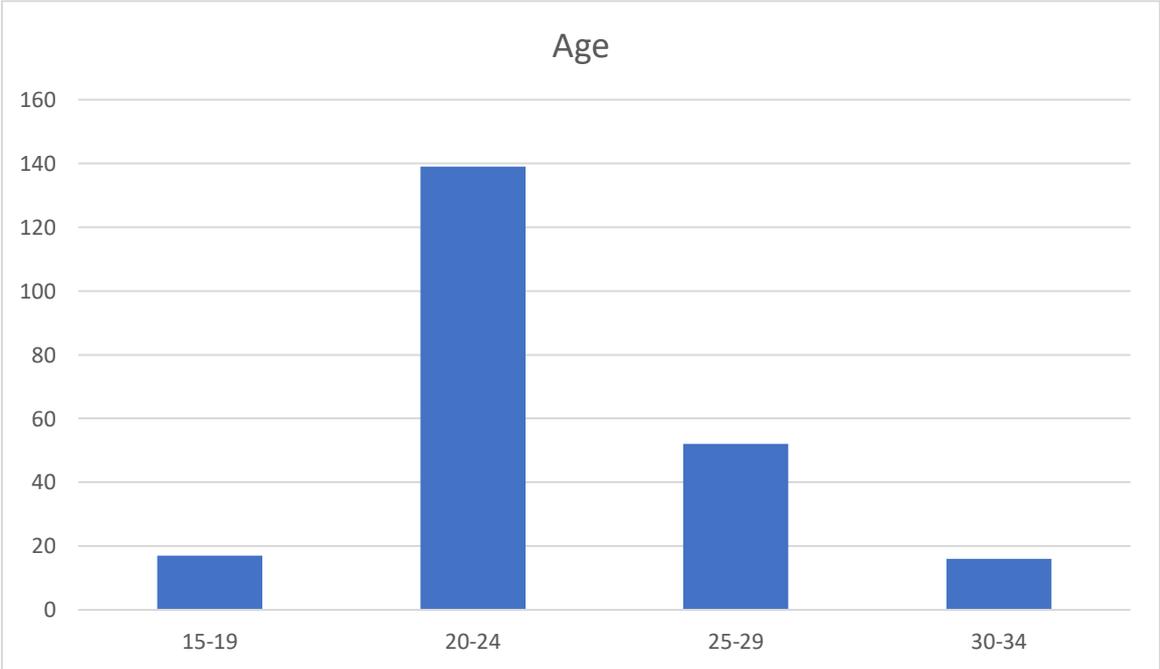
measures the percentage of an average exhibit’s visitors who claim buying influence for its products.

Empirical findings:

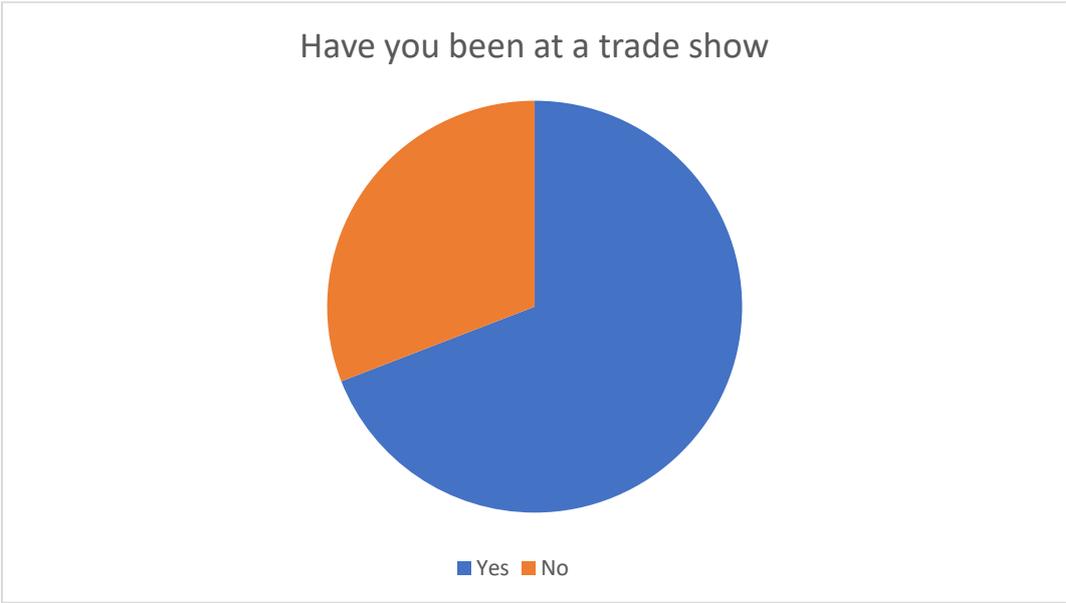
The empiric data bellow is collected by a survey that 224 university students were asked to respond to. The survey was anonymous and the results of the empirical data is only to be used in this study. The relevant results from the survey will be presented in charts, texts and figures.



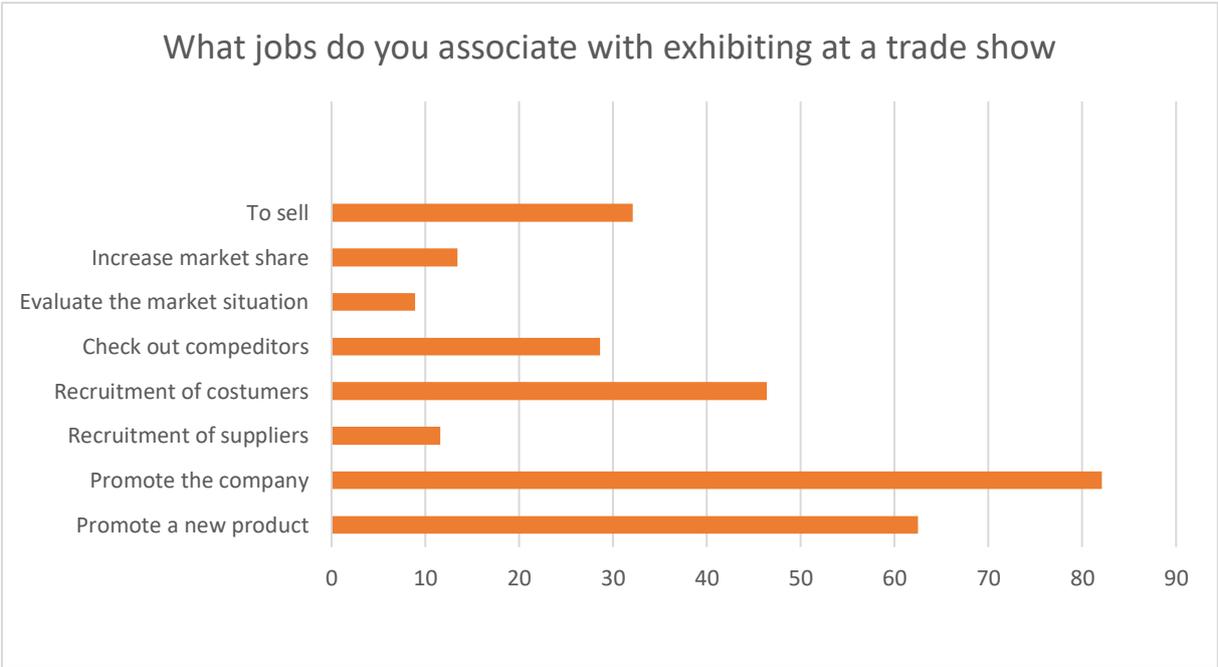
62 % of the respondents were women and 38% were men.



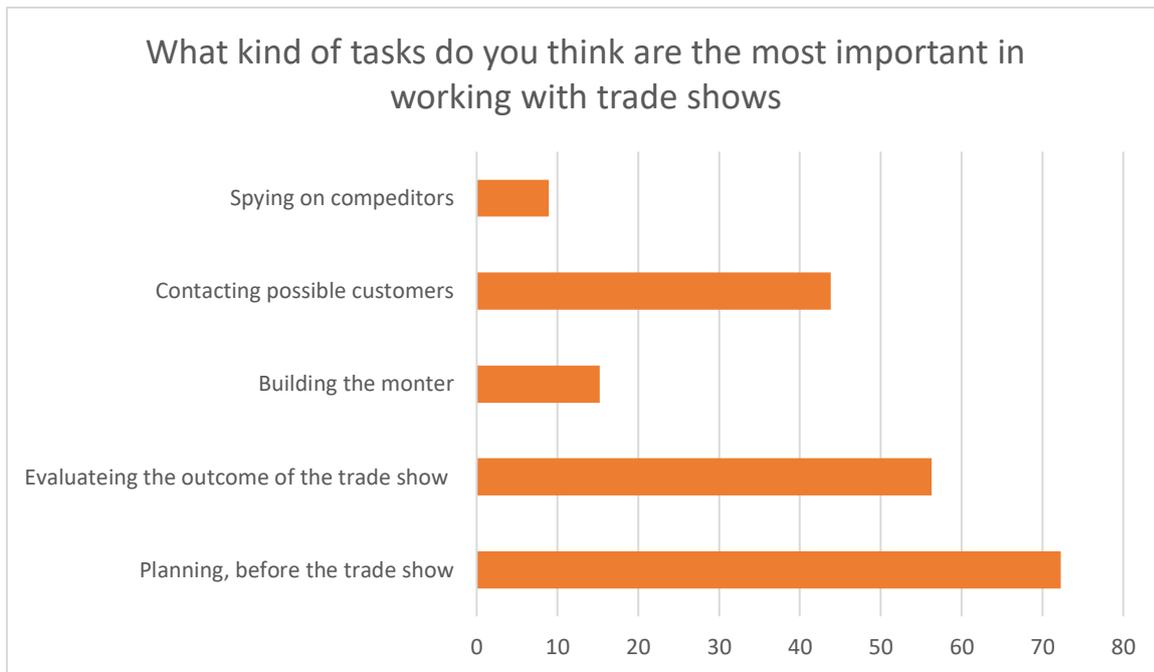
Only students were asked to answer the survey because of the research question, however there were some differences in age between the respondents. The majority of the asked respondents is between 20 and 24 years old.



To the question Have you ever been to a trade show, the results showed that 69,1% of the 224 asked respondents had visited or worked at a trade show but that 30,9% had not.



To the item above the respondents were allowed to choose three of the possible answers, and the one that was chosen the most was the alternative: Promote the company witch 184 of the respondents choose. The second most popular answer alternative was Promote a new product (140 answers).



The results for the question What kind of jobs and tasks do you think are the most important in working with a trade show, showed that most students think that the planning before the show and the evaluating after are the most important jobs in working with at a trade show. The respondents were allowed to choose two of the answer alternatives. Planning before the show got 72,3% of the answers and evaluating after the show got 53,3%. The two lowest rated alternatives were spying on competitors (8,9%) and building the monter (15,2%), however these two alternatives were frequently mentioned in the alternative the respondents had to write their own thought about exhibit marketing and trade shows.

Analysis:

Studies from David A. Gilliam, (2015) shows that it is considered more important that the salesmanship of the persons who is working in the booth than how large and expensive the booth looks. These implications also occur in the empiric findings in this study when the task building the booth is one of the alternatives who got the least answers. Students seems to rate other types of tasks as the most important. The non-purchasing activities that visitors to the trade show are engaging in (as trying new products and talking to the exhibitors about the products and the company) can be even more valuable for the company than selling at the booth. This is also an indication of that the salesmanship of the person in the booth is of a large extent, if you connect salesmanship also to work that do not results in a direct sell. (Gottlieb, U., Brown, M and Ferrier, L. 2014). One definition to the term trade show is the one according to Udo Gottlieb, Mark Brown and Liz Ferrier, (2014) who states that trade shows are events which bring together in a single location a group of suppliers, distributors, and related services that set up physical exhibits of their products from a given industry or discipline. This definition appears to be appropriate for this study because of the respondents

answers to the question what jobs do you associate with exhibiting at a trade show. The two answer alternatives chosen was first, to promote the company and second, to promote a new product. And all of the high rated answer alternatives had something related to personal marketing skills. As personal marketing skills seems to be of great importance, also according to Vence, D, L., (2002) the awareness about the company and its state on the market increases by exhibiting (successfully) at a trade show. If you have been and are working effectively with exhibit marketing, your presence at a trade show can increase your market share even if you are not the exhibitor that sells the most. Important jobs to handle in salesmanship area in the booth is not only the selling aspects of one-on-one personal interactions but also the interactions who does not result in any purchase during the time for the trade show. To be approachable can be called the key to a successful marketing at a trade show. As the results of the empiric findings show, students find the marketing aspect of exhibiting at a trade show, more important than the actual selling aspect. According to the asked students promotion seems to be the key word to exhibit marketing.

Gottlieb, U, Brown, M and Ferrier, L. (2014) says that there are some studies that implicates that visitors to a trade show are more driven by the non-purchasing activities than they think that they are. However they also say that it is of great importance that you capture the visitors eye. This leads us in to the booth its self, the empiric findings in this paper shows that students seems to value the design of the booth low. They don't seem to think that the looks of the booth is the most important thing in working with trade shows. David A. Gilliam, 2015 agrees with this and states that it is more important with who is working the booth rather than how the booth is designed. The most expensive booth design, and the company that has the largest budget is not automatically the ones that are the most effective.

The competitive part of exhibiting at a trade show is central, you can learn from your competitor's mistakes and successes. The empiric data of this study shows that student associate some of the work done at trade shows to spy and connect with competitors. But students do not seem to think of the competitive part as the biggest task when you are exhibiting at a trade show. It is known among the exhibit marketers that you can draw conclusions and make difficult decisions based on what your competitors have done before. For an example is this supplier trustworthy or is this too much money to spend on a trade show booth space. Most company's may not share this type of information directly, but all of this can be discovered at a trade show. (Patrik Aspers and Asaf Darr, 2011) This is something that Kellezi, J. (2014) agrees with. It is not only the marketers who focus on salesmanship that have a place in exhibit marketing, it is also marketers that focus more on the behind the scenes aspects on working with a trade show. The part of exhibit marketing that focus on the market situation has an important task in checking out the competitors.

The jobs done by an exhibit marketer is complex and hard to describe on a daily basis, however most of the named tasks and jobs done at a trade show by Kirchgeorg, M., Springer, C., Kästner, E. (2009) are the same as the respondents of the survey associate exhibit marketing with. It contains many different areas of tasks, as planning before the trade show, evaluating after, working in the booth during the trade show, spying on competitors and so on. According to Kirchgeorg, M., Springer, C., Kästner, E. (2009) the most important job done at

a trade show is too increase your company`s market share, this can be done in many different ways. By performing tasks who satisfy the visitors and possible new costumers you can increase your market share without actually selling something at the trade show. The immaterial effects could be more important for your profit (Yuksel, U., Voola, R. 2010). The top rated answer alternatives (in the survey) to the question what you associate with exhibiting at a trade show were all connected to non-purchasing activities. As the highest rated answers were: promoting the company and promoting new products. And planning and evaluating. These are the jobs that students associate exhibit marketing with, and it shows that students have a quite good understanding of what tasks who exist in exhibit marketing. The 69,1% of the respondents who had visited a trade show could have a better understanding of the jobs done in exhibit marketing. Some jobs that is not directly connected to the exhibit is the planning before the trade show and evaluating and analyse the outcome after the trade show (Kellezi, J., 2014). This parts of the jobs done as an exhibit marketer appears to be the most important tasks according to the empirical data. As 72,3% of the asked students listed planning before to be the most important tasks done in working with exhibiting at a trade show. The second most important task according to the respondents was the evaluation after.

While building the booths design it is important to prepare the booth in the way that attract the right customer. The most eye-catching booths do not always attract the proper attendees. It could result in the fact that the booth is crowded, but only with nonbuyers. Design elements most therefor be discussed early on in the planning and building process. And you have to link the design of the booth to what you want to accomplish and what kind of customers you want to attract. (Gilliam, D. A. 2015)

Gopalakrishna, S., Lilien, G, L., Williams, J, D, and Sequeira, I, K., 1995 describes how exhibit marketing can be a part of the marketing communications mix and what you know about the role of the trade show in the business marketing communication mix. Another thing that they describe is the importance of the evaluation and how you evaluate either individually, or as part of an overall communication program the effectiveness of trade show investments. If the trade show has generated a positive return on the investment. Sometimes the return on the investment isn`t noticeable until some time has passed. When you evaluate your market share before and after the trade show. This is something that the empirical findings of this paper support. The respondents thought that evaluation was one of the more important tasks in working with trade shows.

Both Kirchgeorg, M., Springer, C., Kästner, E. (2009) and Yuksel, U., Voola, R, (2010) agrees with the fact that increasing the market share is the most important job in exhibit marketing. However, working towards increased market share can include very different types of tasks. It can take its form in direct selling, or situations that do not results in direct selling. This can be handling customer contacts in a positive way, that may lead to future revenues. Awareness about the company with customers is also an indication of a possible increased market share. The value of exhibiting at a trade show can be very different. It depends on the effectiveness of what your company has preformed at the trade show. Sashi, C. M., and Perretty, J. (1992) mentions that it is very difficult to measure the value that a trade show gives. It is difficult to value the non-selling parts of the trade show. How much revenue can

you count. What does earned customer loyalty and satisfied customers look like in numbers. These are some of the big questions that companies have to consider before participating in a trade show. But even if there is some confusion about the revenue of the non-selling processes in working with trade shows, it is still an important part of the marketing and promotion mix. Despite the problems, many companies choose to spend a part of their advertising budget on exhibiting at trade shows. And this shows how important they seem to think it is, and the value it gives.

According to studies made by Gottlieb, U., Brown, M and Drennan, J. (2011) that the perceptions of a trade show's effectiveness depends on how the attendants perceived the service quality of the exhibitors at the trade shows. And that this is an important factor to the attendant's future purchase in the companies. The effectivity of the promotion at the trade show also depends on what kind of product you are promoting. The respondents chose "promoting a new product" as the second most important job (that they associated) done at a trade show, and many definitions of trade shows include the sentence. However, sometimes the effectivity of promoting a new product differs, depending on what kind of product you are promoting. Sashi, C. M., and Perretty, J. (1992) studies shows that more technically challenging products are one of the most effective things to promote during a trade show.

62 percent of the respondents were women and 38 percent were men, however there is no fact that the knowledge of trade shows and exhibit marketing among students varies dependent on what gender you associate yourself with. The question concerning age is not relevant to the problem, because there is not a broad spread in age among the students. And most of the age groups that university students often are within are represented. One surprising answer was that the majority of the respondents of the survey had visited a trade show, and this can explain the fact that most of the students seemed to have a pretty good understanding of what jobs and tasks done at trade shows.

Both Sharland, A., and Balogh, P. (1996) and Sashi, C. M., and Perretty, J. (1992) discuss the difficultness of the evaluating process. It is hard to evaluate the value of exhibiting at a trade show because of the difficultness of comparing revenue to its situation. The empirical findings in this paper indicates that students think that evaluation is one of the most important jobs done while working with trade shows and exhibit marketing. Planning and evaluating were the highest rated answer alternatives. However, the survey did not include questions that treated how an evaluation process should look like. Sashi, C. M., and Perretty, J. (1992) suggest that one way to make the evaluation process easier is to use measurable key points that you evaluate one at a time. Yuksel, U., and Voola, R. (2010) discusses the importance of market shares and this is an evaluating point that can be hard to measure. Even if it is easy to see how the market share have changed over a year, the hard part is to know how you can connect the change in the market share to consequences of exhibiting at a trade show. The connection between the measured key points and the trade show, is the hard part to evaluate. Kellezi, J., (2014) agrees with the student about the fact that planning and evaluating are important factors in working with exhibit marketing. The suggested steps to use as a technic for making participation in a trade show worth the work, is to do a situation analysis, to define trade show marketing objectives, to define the trade show's marketing strategy, to plan the

trade shows marketing mix, implementation and control and evaluation. And these are the jobs that they suggest to be central in planning and evaluating. It is interesting that students have a similar view that the theoretic framework in this paper presents. Even if the students did not rate spying on competitors as the most important job done at a trade show, the theory expresses that this is an important way to get information that you never could get otherwise. Patrik Aspers and Asaf Darr, (2011) describes the competitor part of a trade show, as a central part of the tasks done at trade shows. This seems to be a task that students overlook while it is compared with tasks and jobs as planning, evaluating and promoting. Aspers, P and Darr, A, (2011) agrees with the students and they claim that even if you can learn a lot from your competitors, the most important personal meeting you have at a trade show, is the ones with potential new customers.

Trade shows are described as an important part of the marketing mix, and that is why marketers always has a spot in working with trade shows (Kellezi, J., 2014). Many points out the importance of the salesmanship of the people working in the trade show. And compares this to the experience that the attendees have while visiting the trade show. Studies shows that the visitors experience does not depend as much on what the booth looks like, but more on who is working the booth. Kellezi, J., 2014 also states that the advertising done at a trade show is one of the most effective types of advertising. And David A. Gilliam, (2015) also states that the most eye-catching booth is not always the best way to make the attendants experience worth. He states that the salesmanship is a better way to increase market share and make positive contacts with potential customers. Students seem to agree with this, but in the open format question of the survey, the looks and size of the booth was frequently mentioned.

Conclusions and Implications

The theoretical framework and the empirical findings implicates that most student at Swedish universities have a good idea of what kind of jobs and tasks are done at trade shows. Most of the respondents agreed with the definition of a trade show as a place to promote the company and its new products. The knowledge among students, about the jobs and tasks at a trade show is mostly applied to the tasks as a selling agent that you preform while working in the booth at a trade show. One conclusion that can be drawn by the empiric data from this study is that more of the respondents had visited a trade show, than those who had not. 68,1 % answered that they had been to a trade show. This could indicate that the associations the respondents have, too exhibit marketing jobs at a trade show is based on the experience they had while attending a trade show. The limitations within this study is that the sample of respondents does not clearly show how many of them whom had attended classes where exhibit marketing and trade shows were discussed. Most of the asked students thought that planning before the trade show and evaluating after the trade show was the most important tasks. But the other answer alternatives as promoting and increase market shares were also chosen.

Future studies

In future studies it would be interesting to examine how the knowledge of exhibit marketing and the jobs done at trade shows differs between different groups of students. Perhaps a study that investigate the knowledge about the topic with different schools in mind, with the aim to investigate differences between the knowledge in various universities

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