

Research shows steady growth in exhibition industry

The Exhibition Association of Southern Africa (Exsa) has commissioned extensive research into its industry to identify the benefits of exhibitions over alternative marketing media.

Shirelle Raubenheimer, Exsa General Manager, says that reluctance on the part of advertising and public relations practitioners to use the exhibition medium is probably due to a lack of knowledge and the fact that exhibitions do not generate commission for them. Exsa commissioned the research to counter this view.

Some interesting findings to emerge from the study are:

- Gauteng has the largest number of shows (48%), followed by the Western Cape (13%) and KZN (12%). Since Grant Thornton Kessel Feinstein conducted similar research in 2000 there has been an increase in shows in both the Western Cape and KZN with a corresponding decrease in Gauteng.
- 11% of exhibitions are new shows - a strong indicator of growth, while some shows have been around for very long time, boosting the average time in existence to 11.4 years.
- The average number of shows per organiser is 1.97. 85% hold one or two shows and 15% hold three or more, an indication of the highly-fragmented nature of the industry, despite considerable consolidation.
- 76% of shows are held annually, but strangely enough show activity peaks in even-numbered years (63%)
- September and October are the busiest months, followed by March and July.
- 18 158 local and international visitors on average attend each show. The estimated total at all shows is 2. million.
- A total of 40 796 international visitors visited South African shows, averaging 510 per show. International visitors spent an estimated R278-million at South African exhibitions.
- 47% of all shows were classified as trade exhibitions. The number of consumer shows have increased - 17% are classified as trade and industrial shows; 16% as "broad-sector shows/agricultural"; 10% as information and technology-based; and 10% are classified as home and office decor.
- Location influenced venue choice for 78% of the shows, while size of the venue and facilities were other main influencing factors.