

Is the exhibition industry dead?

By [Amanda Cunningham](#)

3 Oct 2019

The 23rd edition of the UFI Global Exhibition Barometer survey was recently concluded and it represents up-to-date information on the development and outlook of the global exhibition industry on 20 specific countries and zones.



Image supplied.

I have put together a brief summary of the survey.



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In short, the key facts and figures are:

1. The exhibition industry is alive and well and will keep growing – year on year.
2. Eight of the surveyed countries and regions have, for all three periods surveyed, a majority of companies declaring turnover increases. South Africa is one of these countries.
3. Operating profit charts reveal that 80% of companies have maintained a good level of performance providing excellent ROI for exhibitors.
4. When organisers were asked what the main business issues that impact current activity are:
 - The state of the economy in home markets
 - Competition with the industry
 - Global economic developments
5. Is digitisation an issue?
 - Digitisation still has a weak impact on global trade show and the exhibition industry. At least 9% of organisers claim it's a factor that impacts their activity. Other media make up only 4%.
 - A total of 58% of organisers confirmed that they have added digital services and products to the mix of marketing tools

available at their exhibitions.



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Like most companies in today's economic environment, times are tough. But you have to think smart and developing a "spray and pray" approach with your marketing budget never has and never will work. It is very important that all companies – big or small, develop a strong marketing strategy on an annual basis.



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In the case of exhibitions, don't do every single expo in your field if (a) you can't afford them all (b) some are unknown, first-time operations promising the world to everyone. Go with the expos that have a proven track record who do **actually** produce the results.

Enhancing experiences

Digital marketing can certainly take less time to implement but what's missing is the value that can only be obtained from a trade show or exhibition and will **never** be found through digital or online resources.

Engaging experiences are what exhibitors and visitors are looking for:

- Creating more interactive experiences
- Workshops
- Digital experiences
- Networking

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However, exhibition organisers can't be held solely responsible for creating a more explosive experience – the exhibitors need to get more involved too. How are you going to enhance the experience of the visitor whilst at the expo? Improving your bottom line is what it is all about but measuring your ROI or ROO from an expo requires that the exhibitor puts in the hard work before, during and after the event.



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Exhibitions deliver genuine results. Undertaken correctly, they are a powerful marketing channel that engages an active and highly-motivated audience in a face-to-face environment. The people who attend exhibitions choose to be there and want to connect with the products or services on show.

ABOUT AMANDA CUNNINGHAM

Amanda Cunningham has been in the event management, marketing and communications industries for over 30 years. She began her career working in television in London in 1986. A four-year stint selling residential property in London enhanced her sales skills and she moved to South Africa in 1994 where she began a career in PR and exhibitions.

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