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Marketing Instytucji Naukowych i Badawczych nr 2(3), 43-60

2012

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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FAIRS AS A TOOL OF MARKETING ACTIVITY OF RESEARCH AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS

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Introduction

Dynamic changes in the surroundings of scientific and research institutions now taking place force these entities to search for ways to efficiently communicate with representatives of diverse groups which are important from the point of view of their marketing activities. In this context it seems that one of the least appreciated instruments are fairs, which in their contemporary form offer rich opportunities for presenting the offer of exhibitors. Taking advantage of the potential of contemporary exhibitions requires understanding their essence and the knowledge of rules concerning proper preparation and management of participation in trade fairs. Moreover, it is necessary to be aware of specific characteristics of trade fairs organized for particular market sectors, which to a large extent determine actions taken at exhibitions.

In this context the purpose of this work is to identify the possibilities of utilizing trade fairs in course of marketing activities of Polish research and scientific institutions. In order to achieve this goal the article presents the essence of contemporary trade fairs and their characteristics important from the point of view of communication activities of research and scientific institutions. Another issue which is discussed here are the factors and the process which determine whether a trade fair appearance is efficiently prepared and carried out. The article presents also the typology of people visiting the stands of research and scientific institutions. In addition the work presents exhibitions organized in order to stimulate co-operation between institutions from the area of science and research and the business sector.

Form of contemporary trade fairs

The organizational form of contemporary trade fairs is an effect of changes which took place over the 20th century. The first exhibition resembling contemporary trade fairs (the so-called specimen fairs), took place in Leipzig in 1894. It was then that exhibitors started presenting specimens and samples of their goods and not – as by the end of 19th century – their whole product portfolio (it was also assumed that every individual offered product has the same quality and characteristics). Specimen exhibitions soon started getting less universal and started transforming into branch events aimed at presenting the offer of a specific subject area concerning one or a few related branches of the economy. First trade fairs concerning a specific, narrow subject were organized in Parma in 1939. At the end of last century, as a result of evolution of exhibitors and visitors, exhibition events started taking the shape of so-called scien-

ce and technology fairs. What is characteristic about their form is that along with presentation of offers on stands on fair grounds, diversified ventures of great importance for the development of a particular branch of the economy take place. Such accompanying events usually take the shape of: branch contests, shows, congresses, meetings of professional and economic organizations, scientific meetings.

In literature on the subject many definitions of trade fairs, which relate to their former forms of organization, are presented. In light of the highlighted transformations these definitions have become largely obsolete. Taking into consideration the contemporary form of exhibitions and paying special attention to their marketing values it is possible to assume that trade fairs constitute an organized form of presenting product specimens by entities running diverse business activities. They are organized at a particular time and in a particular place and at possibly regular time intervals. During their duration a broad range of marketing communication tools¹. is used to influence interested people. Moreover, it is characteristic of contemporary trade fairs to include in their programs many accompanying events (targeted at both exhibitors and visitors).

In the context of the cited definition it is worth recalling that at the end of the 20th century, along with the development of global computer network some forms of Internet communication started being called virtual fairs. This name is usually ascribed to websites which are platforms of electronic trade, which allow to present the offer of many entities („virtual exhibitors“)². In such case subpages presenting information (including photographs) about product offer, as well as contact data, serve the function of stands. Such websites used to create commercial exchange are often equipped with an internal search engine allowing visitors to browse through available offers according to diverse criteria.

In the recent past another, less advanced form of trade fairs appeared. These are websites including complex computer animations, which present three-dimensional models of stands. People visiting such websites, sitting in front of their computer screen, can stop at virtual stands (similarly as in case of real trade fairs) they find most interesting in course of looking through the presented offers.

Characteristics of trade fairs important for the marketing activities of research and scientific institutions

Contemporary fairs allow us to carry out a few tasks at the same time³. This multifunctionality distinguishes them from other instruments of marketing communication and stems from exceptional traits of exhibitions.

Trade fairs, unlike many other forms of promotion allow people to directly learn about the exhibitor's offer, allow the exhibitors to address all senses of the recipients of marketing activities. Thanks to „live“

1 Por. M. Gębarowski, *Współczesne targi. Skuteczne narzędzie komunikacji marketingowej*, Regan Press, Gdańsk 2010, p. 32.

2 Referring to the most important characteristics of trade fairs (ie. enabling "live" presentation of products and creating conditions for establishing direct contacts between exhibitors and visitors) presented in the further part of this work, it is possible to assume that using the word „fairs“ with regard to such platforms of electronic trade is unsubstantiated.

3 Literature on the subject presents a broad range of goals which can be achieved thanks to carrying out a trade fair appearance properly. In some publications up to 100 possible goals are mentioned (B. Siskind, *Powerful exhibit marketing. The complete guide to successful trade shows, conferences and consumer shows*, John Wiley & Sons Canada, Mississauga 2005, p. 11-15).

presentation of a product and carrying out various marketing events within a stand we can evoke strong feelings among visitors, which – when a trade fair appearance is conducted properly – to a large extent contribute to creating the brand of the presenting entity. A thought-out participation in trade fairs allows the exhibitor to emotionally engage people visiting the stand, leaving unforgettable impressions. The delivered sensual experiences should be adapted to the concept of building the exhibitor's brand image.

An important trait of trade fairs, which gives them an exceptional character compared to other instruments of promotion, is gathering many people interested in a particular subject in the same place and time (at least a few hundred exhibitors and about a dozen thousand visitors participate in important exhibitions). Thus, fairs create favourable conditions for conducting numerous conversations with experts in short time⁴. Moreover, these conversations take place on „neutral grounds“ (outside the headquarters of entities represented by the interlocutors) and often in an atmosphere of a branch celebration, which often accompanies big events. Thanks to talks held at trade fairs representatives of research and scientific institutions are able to, among others, discuss their views with the industrial branch on a large scale (among others, with regard to defining programs of research and specifying technological solutions which may be essential in the future).

Contemporary trade fairs are one of the most transparent forms of marketing communication. Participation in events with big number of exhibitors also contributes to learning about competition. This is a necessary condition for entrepreneurship of universities, but also of other research and scientific institutions. These institutions can monitor exhibitors in order to, among others, define their promotional activities and build their educational or scientific offer⁵.

The ability of fairs to gather numerous representatives of the supply and demand sides makes them deliver latest, accurate and complex information about particular branches. The fact that such events are organized regularly allows us to monitor the latest trends. Moreover, exhibitions display high susceptibility to what goes on on particular markets. For this reason many works concerning trade fairs call them an „economic barometer“.

The process of preparation and management of trade fair appearance

Whether research and scientific institutions can achieve maximum benefits from participation in exhibitions, depends on proper implementation of a series of actions, which enable appropriate preparation and management of a trade fair appearance. The process consisting of these actions can be divided into the following stages:

- defining the goals of participating in exhibitions,
- the choice of fairs which will allow us to achieve the defined targets,
- defining the budget for a trade fair appearance,

4 It can be assumed that a person participating in trade fairs often – depending on the branch – can have between 8 and 30 specialist conversations a day.

5 Por. Przedsiębiorcza uczelnia i jej relacje z otoczeniem, ed. M. Pluta-Olearnik, Difin, Warszawa 2009, p. 53.

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- specifying the concept for presentation of the offer and preparation of a stand,
 - selecting and training members of the exhibition team,
 - preparation of advertising materials,
 - participation in trade fairs,
 - taking up follow-up activities after the appearance.

The goals of participating in exhibitions to a large extent determine the choice of trade fairs and manner of organizing presentations. Defining these goals clearly at an early stage of preparations allows us to minimize the risk of an unsuccessful trade fair appearance. Properly defined goals are also an important reference point for measuring the achieved results. Thanks to this the exhibitor can check whether goals defined before the start of an event were realistic or whether trade fair was selected properly with regard to the possibility of achieving these goals.

In case of research and scientific institutions among the most important goals of participation in exhibitions there are: presenting and promoting results of activities, presenting latest offers of cooperation to potential business partners, looking for sources of financing for current projects, establishing contacts with representatives of other scientific centres, highlighting one's position in the environment and strengthening the desired image (eg. as an innovative institution in a particular field of research), attracting the attention of the media participation in events accompanying the trade fairs, presenting new technologies and inventions, popularizing own branch of research activity and educating the participants of fairs. From the point of view of efficiency of activities of the exhibitor it is important to select only a few goals (based on own priorities) that the exhibition staff will try to achieve during the trade fair appearance.

From the point of view of goals achieved by the exhibitor the choice of trade fair events, he participated in within a year, is of utmost importance. Research and scientific institutions should take into consideration qualitative and quantitative parameters of particular exhibitions⁶. in course of making such decisions. Among the most important criteria, which always have to be taken into consideration are above all: the number of exhibitors and visitors at the last edition of an event (with distinction between domestic and foreign participants), whether particular trade fairs have been organized for a long time and whether they enjoy high renown, the total size of rented exhibition space, number of accredited journalists, the attractiveness of the program of accompanying events, position of the organizer on the trade fair market. Moreover, every exhibitor, when making a decision to participate in a particular event, has to take into consideration the total cost of preparing and carrying out a trade fair appearance.

Many items form the general costs of participation in particular trade fairs. The financial expenses that the exhibitor has to bear can be divided into two general categories – direct costs and indirect costs. The first group covers basic fees associated with renting exhibition space, designing and building a stand. Other items which belong to direct costs are the costs of installation and dismantling the stand together with purchasing additional equipment and connecting necessary installations (eg. electricity, water

⁶ Basic information describing previous editions of most exhibitions taking place in Poland are available in the reports of Polish Chamber of Exhibition Industry (reports titled: „Reports – exhibition market in Poland”) and on websites of organizers of particular exhibitions.

supply), logistic services (among others the transport of exhibits, equipment, unloading and loading exhibits and their packaging), accommodation and catering for the exhibition team, preparing advertising materials and conducting promotional activity during the fairs. It is much harder to estimate indirect costs. Among basic items in this category are the costs of: training and additional remuneration for the exhibition team, travel of the exhibition team, phonecalls and access to the Internet, meetings with clients, insurance and security of the presentation. Moreover, indirect costs can also include losses resulting from the absence of employees of the exhibitor in his headquarters during their presence at trade fairs⁷.

The exhibitor can prepare a stand himself or commission a specialized company to design and prepare a stand. The first solution is usually applied in case of small budgets and in cases when the exhibitor decides to take advantage of a simple systemic stand. In case of non-typical projects, exhibitors often cooperate with an external entity providing services, which involve designing and building trade fair structures. It is also possible to rent a stand, which allows us to reduce the costs of participating in one or more events. However, this way it is hard to substantially distinguish oneself from other exhibitors.

The most basic characteristics of exhibition stands are visual attractiveness and functionality. The second trait is associated with creating appropriate conditions for achieving goals defined by the exhibitor. The structure of a stand should secure proper work environment for members of the exhibition team, who need to have at their disposal enough space to hold numerous conversations at the same time. The stand also has to allow them to present the offer in an attractive way as well as to relax and recuperate. Moreover, within the stand there should be storage space big enough to hold the team's clothes and advertising materials.

Visual attractiveness is a subjective parameter, as the same stand can be regarded differently by each participant. However, it is possible to assume that whether a particular stand draws attention and attracts numerous visitors depends above all on the following factors⁸:

- colours of particular elements and a visible graphic symbol (logo or logotype) of the exhibitor – used colours should attract attention and refer to the corporate colours of the organization,
- building materials used for the stand – appropriate choice of materials for decoration can create a desired atmosphere on the stand (eg. raw wood creates a rustic and natural atmosphere, metal combined with glass gives the impression of modernity),
- the form of exhibition and the adapted concept of exposing the offer – the offer can be presented „live“ in form of exhibits or by means of models, boards etc.

Stand should strongly attract the attention of people present in the trade fair hall, because the visitors decide whether to learn more about the presentation of a particular exhibitor in a matter of a few seconds. Visual attractiveness of a stand can be raised by using an original design. In such case it is possible to freely arrange exhibition space.

⁷ Por. M. Gębarowski, *Współczesne...*, op. cit., p. 84-85.

⁸ Por. M. Gębarowski, *Twoje stoisko targowe musi być atrakcyjne i funkcjonalne*, „Targi” 2009, no 1, p. 30.

However, taking advantage of non-standard design is the most expensive option possible and only exhibitors with big budgets decide to choose this solution. A cheaper solution is to rent from the fair organizer a stand built on the basis of one of standard exhibition systems (the so-called „octagonal”)⁹.

In such case the exhibitor gets a stand which is similar to many other stands located in the hall. The exhibitor has to adapt the stand to the needs of his presentation himself. In this case giving individual character to the exposition constitutes the greatest challenge. Sometimes exhibitors, including research and scientific institutions, decide to choose another available option. They use elements of mobile exhibition systems, which they have at their disposal. Such systems can be used not only during fairs, but also during other kinds of events – such as: scientific conferences, seminars, congresses, presentations, open days. The basic components of such installations are, among others, walls, pillars, platforms, roller blinds and racks for printed advertising materials.

Not only the appearance and shape of a stand, but also its configuration and location influence the number of visitors. When making a reservation of a location in an exhibition hall it is possible to choose a place in a row, at a corner, at the front or at an island. In case of these types of stands, contact with visitors is possible over one, two, three or four uncovered sides, respectively. Most places available in exhibition halls are located in rows. They are the cheapest solution, however, due to the fact that this option limits access to exhibits and the personnel to just one side, it offers a restricted capacity of conducting marketing activities. The number of available island type locations is the lowest and for this reason it is very hard to book them. Moreover, they are the most expensive locations – price per square meter is the highest.

Inside exhibition halls there are more or less convenient places for stands. Considering the direction of movement of most people visiting fairs, a beneficial location is a separated stand between traffic routes (island type location). Other advantageous locations for an exposition may be the areas of main entries to exhibition halls. Such location guarantees heavy traffic, however, the accompanying crowdedness and noise may hamper carrying out marketing activities. Places which should be avoided are endings of rows of stands, as not all visitors manage to reach these places.

The efficiency of marketing activities conducted during fairs depends not only on the manner of arranging the exposition, but also to a large extent on the behaviour of personnel representing the exhibitor. For this reason it is necessary to pay much attention to thorough selection of members of the exhibition team, to training them and proper coordination of actions taken during the work of the stand.

The team representing the exhibitor should consist of people who are able to provide efficient services to the visitors and guarantee proper functioning of the stand (which allows us to achieve the defined targets). For this reason, members of the exhibition team of a scientific and research institution should play the following roles¹⁰:

- exposition manager – person responsible for managing personnel's work and for the course of trade

⁹ Such systemic solutions are created on the basis of reusable elements (identical modules). In this case the basis for construction of a stand are walls (panels covered with PCV, in white colour, 100cm wide and 250cm high. The panels can be attached to each other with metal posts. It is possible to attach a few walls to one post.

¹⁰ Por. M. Gębarowski, *Współczesne...*, op. cit., p. 125.

fair appearance for the whole duration of the fair,

- presenters – people demonstrating the offer and establishing contact with people interested in the exposition,
- receptionist – person waiting for visitors at the border of a stand (eg, behind a desk) who is supposed to greet the guests, collect business cards, manage the schedule of meetings and direct visitors to the appropriate (specialized in a particular issue) members of the exhibition team,
- maintenance staff – employees who install and dismantle the stand, install equipment or manage the work of people installing equipment and the stand,
- trainees or apprentices – people serving auxiliary functions, carrying out tasks ordered by other members of the team.

Hostesses often supplement exhibition teams. Their function is to represent the exhibitor and invite guests to visit the exposition. In case of scientific and research institution it is rather uncommon to employ hostesses for exhibitions. At the same time, students often appear at stands of universities (especially during educational fairs), as for high school students they are the most credible source of information. Moreover, in case of learners and students there is no barrier in communication which usually appears in case of talks between future graduates and academic employees.

Appropriately prepared participation in trade fairs can become an important tool for achieving public relations goals of an organization. For this reason in a complete exhibition team there is a representative of the exhibitor who is supposed to communicate with representatives of the media. Such person should have the knowledge and skills of conducting talks with journalists (among others, giving interviews) and have professionally prepared press materials. Information passed on to journalists should above all be attractive for the recipients of branch media (usually professionals – readers of specialist magazines or websites). That's why in case of scientific and research institutions it is advisable to focus in press materials on innovative solutions and applications and to avoid theorizing.

Members of the team working at a stand, regardless of their roles, have to be aware of the goals of participation in an exhibition. Moreover, such people should display strong organizational and interpersonal skills. They also have to be able to function in a team and in conditions characteristic of trade fairs. Talks at trade fairs are usually conducted in an atmosphere of haste. Representatives of the exhibitor are often forced to carry out a few tasks at once, repeatedly answer the same or similar questions asked by the visitors and to stand for many hours.

When we decide to participate in trade fairs, we need to prepare an adequate amount of advertising-information materials, matched in terms of content and form with the character of a particular fair. Most often scientific and research institutions use printed materials (leaflets, folders) and advertising gadgets (stationery, sweets and other small gadgets – eg. key rings, key leashes). Moreover, similarly as other exhibitors, institutions representing the sector of science and research provide information about themselves in fair catalogues published by the organizers of particular events.

Not all information and advertising materials prepared in association with participation in fairs should be universal in character. It is advisable to adapt at least some of them to the profile of visitors and the subject of an event. Promotional materials have to be diversified and prepared so that they arouse the interest of recipients who constitute a segment of the market important from the point of view of marketing activities of the institution presenting itself. In case of graphic materials targeted at a broad group of visitors, particular attention has to be paid to their external form. At the same time, in works targeted at specialists we should focus above all on the content. Nevertheless, the exhibitor always has to remember to maintain high editorial level of printed advertising materials¹¹.

Most exhibitors distribute gadgets to participants of trade fairs. However, some claim that in case of research and scientific institutions taking advantage of advertising gadgets is risky, because often it is hard to identify the association of gadgets with the conducted activities and the desired image. Low quality clothes with a printed image (eg. a t-shirt) or a calendar with non-professional pictures of buildings owned by a particular institution, rarely bring satisfaction to the recipient of the gadget. Sometimes such gadgets raise doubts about the economic soundness and seriousness of an institution. On the other hand practical items (eg. calendars, pens, bags with a graphic sign of an institution) often help establish good relations with future partners. Inventive gadgets can remind of creativity of an organization's employees¹². It is also important that advertising gadgets should – if it is possible – refer to the profile of activity of an institution or its unique characteristics, which make it exceptional¹³.

A publishing form, which can be used by a research and scientific institution for purposes of advertising is exhibition catalogue printed on the order of the organizer of an event. Such publication contains basic information about entities taking part in particular fairs, published in form of short notes (most often they provide: the number of stand, address of the website and the headquarters of the exhibitor, his profile of activity and a short description of his offer). The costs of publication of a note are usually included in the payment for participation in fairs. However, it is necessary to pay additionally for publishing a separate advertisement. The main purpose of a trade fair catalogue is to help visitors find exhibitions they are interested in. The catalogue is usually sold in ticket offices or distributed for free to the visitors. It is often used by them in the period following fairs as a kind of source of information about entities from the branch, which was associated with the subject of the event.

From the point of view of the exhibitor the stage of participating in an exhibition boils down above all to supervising the work of a stand in order to guarantee the implementation of originally adopted plans. The script of participation in fairs prepared by a research and scientific institution should assume giving an interesting form to the presentation and stimulating the activity of visitors. This can be achieved by

11 M. Gębarowski, *Reklama w czasie targów*, „Gazeta Targowa” 2006, Nr 3(273), p. 24.

12 Por. I. Iłowiecka-Tańska, *Promocja w nauce. Poradnik dobrych praktyk*, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Warsaw 2007, p. 29.

13 *An example of matching advertising gadgets with unique characteristics of an institution are items promoting the Rzeszów University of Technology, which – as the only civilian university in Poland – educates students in the area of „piloting” (at the „aviation and cosmonautics” faculty). During its trade fair appearances the university distributed the so-called anti-stress gadgets in form of airplanes.*

taking actions, which allow establishing close contact with visitors. In this respect the most successful solutions are: competitions, quizzes, lotteries, special shows and tasting (in case of entities associated with the farming and food production branch). To what extent events included in the script of a meeting attract the attention of visitors depends largely on their originality. However, exhibitors should strive to avoid a situation in which an event included in the schedule of a stand's work overshadows his offer. Moreover, the event should refer to elements used in the arrangement of the exposition or the exhibitor's profile of activity.

Along with changes in the form of contemporary trade fairs and the growing supremacy of their informative and promotional role many exhibitors have started giving a spectacular shape to theory presentations calling them events. Such arrangement of exposition is often associated with the utilization of various forms of expression (among others, music, untypical lighting, original decoration). However, it is necessary to point out here that marketing events are targeted above all at non-professional clients and thus, using them is more reasonable and justified in case of business to customer fairs (targeted at mass audience)¹⁴. In case of scientific and research institutions resorting to such events is advisable only in case of educational fairs or science festivals.

During the work of a stand it is necessary to pay particular attention to the process of collecting information about potential partners of the exhibitor¹⁵. In order to make it possible to establish numerous contacts the exposition has to be adapted to holding several meetings simultaneously. We should also consistently document all talks, which will allow us to develop established contacts after the fairs. For this purpose the exhibitor should have at his disposal handy information forms for collecting data about clients (allowing us to write down, among others, name and surname of an interlocutor, his or her position, name of his or her company, the scope of possible cooperation, provided information and advertising materials), which should be filled out after conversations. It is good to attach a business card of the visitor to each form.

The process of conducting a trade fair appearance doesn't end at the moment a stand is dismantled. The effects achieved by the exhibitor depend to a large extent on follow-up actions taken by employees following the conclusion of fairs. The scope of actions that should be taken at this time can be presented in form of a few groups of tasks involving: developing contacts with current or potential clients, identifying achieved marketing results, arranging collected materials¹⁶.

In course of shaping established relations the employees of a research and scientific institution should send information and advertising materials (to those who were promised to receive such materials following the exhibition) and contact potential partners (those who declared willingness to hold further talks during their visit to the stand). It is possible to strengthen relations with potential partners by sending them letters (traditional letters or e-mails) thanking them for visiting our exposition.

14 M. Gębarowski, *Praca stoiska podczas targów*, „Gazeta Targowa” 2006, Nr 2 (272), p. 20.

15 *The process of searching for potential clients is called prospecting. The goal of such activity is looking for the so-called „prospects”, that is, people or companies that we could or should cooperate with.*

16 M. Gębarowski, *Aktywność „potargowa” wystawców*, „Forum Targów” 2008, Nr 1-2, p. 26-28.

From the point of view of future exhibition activities it is important to assess our participation¹⁷. Thanks to this it is possible to draw conclusions important for future marketing activities and check whether goals defined before the commencement of fairs were realistic and whether the appropriate event was chosen. The assessment has to be carried out in a few ways. One of the simplest methods of evaluation is counting the amount of advertising materials (leaflets, folders, advertising gadgets) and identifying the number of people interested in the presented offer. It is also possible to address the number of established contacts with representatives of the media. An exhibitor who has sufficient knowledge and information collected during an exhibition at his disposal, also has a chance to reach for more advanced methods of measurement, which can be defined with three groups of indicators: value („quality“) of trade fair audience, the activity of visitors, efficiency of participation in trade fairs¹⁸.

Participation in important trade fairs allows us to collect diversified materials concerning a particular branch. For this reason after the conclusion of a trade fair appearance, people working at the stand should collect and segregate collected works – both printed works (leaflets, folders, catalogues, branch magazines, economic information brochures) and electronic works (catalogues provided on CD's or pen drives). Exhibitors often decide to obtain original data from fair participants (eg. by using random surveys). In such case the collected research tools (questionnaires) should be prepared for further use in following stages of the process of carrying out marketing research.

Groups of people visiting the stands of research and scientific institutions

During fairs stands are visited by people differing in terms of their behaviour and interest in the exhibitors' offers. From the point of view of efficiency of activities conducted by an exhibition team it is important to have the skill of classifying visiting people (allocating them to one of groups constituting trade fair audience) and choosing appropriate style of communication for them.

Generally, taking into consideration the degree to which people are interested in the exposition of a given exhibitor, we can distinguish between the following groups of visitors¹⁹:

- invasive people – people who are so interested in the presented offer, that they enter a stand themselves and start conversation without any encouragement from the staff,
- interested people – people who stand outside the exposition, at the border of a stand who don't come inside, but display interest,
- passive people – people walking past stands, who only stop for a while to look at the presented products.

17 In many cases precise identification of the results of exhibition activities is quite difficult. It is above all because the effects of participation in trade fairs become apparent only in the long-term perspective. Moreover, if an organization uses at the same time various forms of marketing communication, the effects of other promotional activities are superimposed on the results of a single presentation. It is hard to gauge some of the effects also because they concern changes in attitudes of people visiting an exposition (eg. growth of recognizability of a brand of an institution participating in an exhibition).

18 Indicators which belong to the mentioned groups have been presented in more detail in works concerning particular issues associated with the assessment of trade fair appearances – discussed, among others, by. M. Gębarowski, Wskaźniki oceny efektów wystąpienia targowego, „Gazeta Targowa” 2005, Nr 2(266), p. 21-22.

19 Por. D. A. Pitta, M. Weisgal, P. Lynagh, Integrating exhibit marketing into integrated marketing communications, „Journal of Consumer Marketing” 2006, Nr 3(23), p. 162.

Table 1. Groups of people visiting the stands of research and scientific institutions, distinguished from the point of view of purpose of participation in fairs

Group	Characteristics	Manner of behaviour of the exhibition team
Current or potential partners	Representatives of bussiness environment and other research and scientific institutions who appear at trade fairs in order to achieve particular goals. These are people displaying strong interest in the presented offer.	It is necessary to pay much attention to them and answer their questions in detail and at the same time provide them with information and advertising materials. These people should become the main recipients of marketing activities of the exhibitor.
„VIP” visitors	Visitors (most often invited by the organizer of an event) who represent above all: political circles, public authorities, local administration, business and science.	People of this status should be greeted and later presented with the most interesting (eg. innovative) elements of the presented offer.
Collectors of advertising materials	Visitors focusing on collecting all kinds of free advertising publications and gadgets. These people are usually not interested much in the subject of the fairs.	In a situation when it turns out that a person present within a stand is not interested in the offer, but only in free materials, the staff should tactfully refuse to provide them with these materials (and provide no more than a leaflet). A full set of materials can be given only after exchanging business cards.
Journalists	Representatives of the mass media (in particular, media associated with the subject of the event) striving to obtain information which may be interesting for their recipients (readers, viewers, listeners).	Contact with journalists should be the task of the representative of an exhibitor who has the skills of conducting talks with journalists and has at his or her disposal special materials for the media (press-kits).
Children with parents	Children together with their custodians participate in events which are organized above all for them (science festivals). The purpose of participation in this case is observation of interesting experiments and learning through play.	In case of science festivals it is the main group of visitors and it is necessary to pay most attention to this group.
Students and learners	Students and learners usually appear at fairs in organized groups (school trips). The goal of their participation is obtaining information about the educational offer (educational fairs) or gaining knowledge (science festivals). During fairs students usually look for materials for their diploma works and job offers.	During educational fairs learners constitute the most important group of visitors, which requires answering their questions in detail. During other exhibition events talks with them shouldn't take too long. It is possible to hold longer conversations with students.
Other groups of visitors	People with goals which are insignificant from the point of view of the exhibitor's goals. They are, among others, unemployed looking for work, sales representatives, acquaintances of members of exhibition team and other people not interested in expositions.	Talks with representatives of these groups should be short and should take place only when near the stand there are no other people interested in the exposition.

Source: Own materials.

For research and scientific institutions the representatives of first two groups play a key role. The personnel of a stand should be particularly active with regard to people described as „interested“. This attitude should be characterized by readiness to start conversation and subtle encouragement to get acquainted with an exhibitor's offer.

Referring to the goals of people visiting the stands of research and scientific institutions allows us to distinguish between further groups of visitors (table 1). Representatives of each of them represent diversified competences and communication styles and thus prefer varied behaviour of the exhibition personnel.

Conducting talks at trade fairs requires quick choice of proper style of communication for the profile of a particular visitor. This is not an easy task, because often at the same time people from various groups are present within the stand and it is necessary to establish contact with them almost simultaneously.

Conditions for the success of research and scientific institutions at trade fairs

On the basis of gathered experiences it is possible to identify factors which to a large extent determine the effects of the participation of scientific and research institutions in trade fairs. One of the factors which determines the results of exhibition activities is the concept of positioning of an organization, compared to other, similar entities. The adopted strategy of positioning of an institution should be reflected in the arrangement of exhibition space and above all in the form of the stand, the equipment and the way exhibits are presented²⁰.

The range of possible solutions for the presentation of scientific and research institutions depends on the specific characteristics of their offers. Limitations on the possibility of arranging stands appear in case of entities offering only services. Non-material character of services makes it hard to show the process of providing these services in conditions typical of trade fairs. An alternative solution used by exhibitors are presentations and films displayed within stands by means of screens or projectors. Generally, it is easier to organize an exposition when the exhibitor has at his disposal material attributes of his offer.

In case of presentation of the offer of scientific and research institutions it is important to include in the exposition elements enabling interaction. This can be achieved for example by giving the visitors the opportunity to steer the presented devices or by taking advantage of the so-called kiosk stations with touchscreens. Applying interactive solutions makes trade fair appearance more attractive and makes it possible to engage many senses of people visiting a stand.

A factor which determines the efficiency of a presentation is its relative simplicity and comprehensibility (unequivocal) for people visiting expositions. During talks and demonstrations conducted by representatives of research and scientific institutions it is important to avoid unnecessary theorizing – especially when the population of visitors is dominated by non-professionals (most often during events organized for the so-called B2C markets). Thus, it is important to adapt the style of communication to individual traits of recipients.

²⁰ For example, if a higher education institution wants to be regarded as modern, its stand should contribute to creating such an image (among others by means of equipping it with multi-media devices and innovative exhibits).

An average person visiting fairs will usually remember in detail no more than 20 out of a few hundred stands it sees²¹. Whether a given exposition can make it to this group is determined by its shape (structure, colours and materials used for decoration) and the form of presentation. Moreover, the choice of people representing the exhibitor plays a major role. It depends to a large extent on their personality, skills and involvement what the final result of a presentation will be. In this context it is possible to highlight a set of desirable traits of members of the exhibition team of research and scientific institutions. The following are some of these traits²²:

- good knowledge of the offer presented at a stand,
- good knowledge of foreign languages together with specialist language and terminology typical of a particular branch,
- the ability to listen and ask the right questions in order to find out the needs of partners,
- optimism and open attitude towards people, which facilitates establishing contacts,
- the ability to deal with various types of clients,
- the ability to cooperate in a group and the ability to delegate authority,
- flexibility, which makes it possible to adapt to various conditions of activity,
- patience and composure – especially under pressure of emotional stress and tiredness,
- the ability to feel empathy or in other words understand the point of view of other people,
- self-assertion – being resolute and taking care of interests of an organization,
- knowledge of various techniques of sale combined with the ability to assess the situation and the ability to use these techniques in practice,
- politeness and observing norms of behaviour and social forms.

The shape of a trade fair appearance is determined by the time that the exhibitor devotes to preparing participation in fairs. The duration of preparations should depend on the adopted concept of presenting the offer of a research and scientific institution. The general advice is that – mainly due to the necessity to book an attractive location for the stand – planning participation in a trade fair should be started a year ahead. In case of a specially designed stand, the design and the builder of the stand should be chosen 6 months ahead. The most intensive works on trade fair appearance take place in the last quarter before the fair and involve, among others, selecting and training personnel, taking care of transport of the stand, exhibits and preparing information and advertising materials, making an entry in the fair catalogue, sending invitations to clients, arranging the details concerning installation and dismantling of the exposition, booking accommodation for members of the team working at the stand.

An important factor which influences the effects achieved by means of trade fair marketing is the awareness of the most common mistakes made by Polish exhibitors and avoiding these mistakes in course of own appearances. Among mistakes, which can appear during the participation of research and scientific

21 J. Appleyard, *How to exhibit at trade fairs. The complete guide to making your company's next exhibition enormously rewarding*, How to Books, Begbroke 2005, p. 9.

22 Por. M. Gębarowski, *Zgrany team*, „Forum Targów” 2007, nr 3/4, p. 36-37.

institutions in exhibition events there are²³:

- leaving the stand empty during the fairs,
- sitting on chairs prepared for visitors,
- ignoring people waiting at the border of an exposition for contact with a representative of the exhibitor,
- using language not suitable for the target group during talks,
- reading newspapers and magazines or looking through advertising materials received from other exhibitors,
- spending time at a laptop (or other electronic device) without an attempt to establish eye contact with people approaching the stand,
- talking on a mobile phone for a long time,
- standing next to each other and talking – team members create close groups and visitors find it hard to interrupt their conversation,
- assuming inappropriate (closed) body posture when waiting for clients (eg. avoiding eye contact, hands crosses over the chest, turning one's back to the border of a stand).

The above-mentioned mistakes are often regarded by Polish exhibitors as small and insignificant flaws, but they may to a large extent contribute to lowering attendance at a stand and thus lower the efficiency of trade fair activities.

In the context of the highlighted factors it is important to point out that exhibition activity should be regarded as planned, long-term, consistent communication activity targeted at groups important for the functioning of a given research and scientific institution. Moreover, such activity should comply with the assumptions of marketing strategy of the participating entity. The efficiency of exhibition activities is determined by the coherence of taken actions, that is, the extent to which the goals of participation in fairs are associated with assumptions concerning the utilization of other forms of marketing.

Fairs of high significance for the promotion of activities of research and scientific institutions

In the context of these deliberations it becomes important to distinguish educational fairs (addressed to people planning to start education in schools of various level) and events which enable developing cooperation between various scientific and research institutions, as well as between the sphere of science and research and business in its broad meaning. Educational fairs, which primarily serve the function of promoting didactics, are events organized for mass customer, which allows us to allocate them to the category of fairs for B2C (business to customer) markets. The second group of events are fairs prepared in order to address the participants of the B2B (business to business) market, that is, above all professionals from a particular branch²⁴. The biggest group of people participating in such ventures are people who are

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

²⁴ Among currently organized fairs about 90 pct are events targeted at only representatives of the industry (fairs for B2B markets). They are less visible from the point of view of the society in general, however, they generate turnover worth many billions of dollars, which helps fuel global economy (P. Locker, *Exhibition design*, AVA Publishing SA, Lausanne 2011, p. 15).

attached as hobbyists or professional to their subject.

In Poland, similarly as in many other countries, the most common type of event are educational fairs. Sometimes they are combined with other events (eg. job fairs, school equipment fairs). The biggest educational fair in Poland is organized in the capital of Wielkopolskie voivodship, on the initiative of Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli w Poznaniu (ed. Poznań center for teacher training), Office of the Marshal and Poznań International Fair²⁵. Big events organized in order to present the offers of higher education institutions take place every year in many other Polish cities, including: Kraków (Educational Fair EDU. PL), Warsaw (International Education Fair PERSPEKTYWY), Kielce (Education Fair EDUKACJA), Łódź (Łódź Educational Fair), Rzeszów (Podkarpackie Targi Edukacyjne).

In the world there are few exhibitions which contribute to creating links between the sphere of science and research and industry on an international scale. Such an annual event in which exhibitors from many countries participate is Research & Technology fair organized in Hannover by Deutsche Messe AG²⁶.

Another exhibition, which is important on a European scale, is International Scientific Instrument Manufacturing Trade Fair and Conference – for Research and Industrial Applications SIMEXPO & IMEEX. The fair takes place every year in Moscow's exhibition center „Expocentr”, and the Russian Academy of Sciences²⁷. participates in the organization of the event. Apart from the above-mentioned events, other meetings which enable scientific and research units to present themselves are organized. However, they have mainly just national reach eg. Trade Fair for Science, Research and Innovation RESEARCH AUSTRIA in Graz, International ExpoForum on Industrial Innovation R2B – Research to Business Days in Bologna).

In Poland an important event which serves the purpose of creating conditions for technology transfer and implementing the effects of works of scientific and research institutions is the „Nauka dla Gospodarki” (ed. Science for the Economy) event. It takes places every year and is a part of the ITM (Innovative Thinking Mode) fair organized by Poznań International Fair. This event, which is one of the biggest fairs in Poland includes a few smaller events (devoted to such areas as: welding, metallurgy, metal processing, steel industry, varnishing, transport and industrial safety)²⁸.

The main purposes of the ITM fair are presenting new products and promoting innovative solutions in particular branches of the economy.

25 360 exhibitors (including 280 schools of various levels) and 45,000 visitors participated in the the 2011 edition of Poznań Educational Fair. 60 higher education institutions from Poland and abroad – among others, Denmark, Finland, Holland, Germant, Great Britain – had their stands at the fair (according to: <http://edukacja.mtp.pl>).

26 Fair which took place for the first time in 1976 is organized under the slogan „Leading Trade Fair for R&D and Technology Transfer”. In 2010 474 exhibitors – including 98 foreign exhibitors (from 21 countries) - participated in the event. They rented 8,600 square metres of space. The number of visitors reached 52,000 – including 5,400 from outside Germany (according to: <http://www.expodatabase.com>).

27 SIMEXPO & IMEEX fair was organized for the first time in 2007. 73 exhibitors (including 8 foreign) took part in the 2010 edition. They occupied a surface of 1,500 square metres. 4,600 visitors attended the fair (according to: <http://www.expodatabase.com>).

28 In 2011 during ITM fair 934 exhibitors (representing 32 countries) presented their expositions on 20,000 square metres. Expositions were visited by a total of 16,800 guests (acording to: <http://nauka.mtp.pl>). At the „Nauka dla Gospodarki” event 53 exhibitors (from Poland and Germany) presented their offers.

Another Polish center which regularly hosts meetings of representatives of science and business is Gdańsk. On the initiative of Gdańsk International Fair, every year an industrial technology, science and innovation fair TECHNICON-INNOWACJE²⁹ takes place. This event is accompanied by conferences and contests, which reward innovative products.

Apart from the above-mentioned fairs which regularly gather many exhibitors and visitors, in Poland there are also smaller exhibitions organized once or a few times in course of EU projects. The idea of the organizers of such ventures is to provide a platform for meetings of representatives of science and business³⁰. However, the influence of such events is limited to a local reach.

Another group of exhibitions are invention fairs and science festivals which are often organized all around the world (also in Poland). The first type of fair usually resembles a contest and its purpose is to reward and promote the most innovative solutions³¹. Invention fairs also contribute to popularizing science and research in the society. Popularizing science is also one of the main goals of science festivals (sometimes called science picnics). These are social events which involve diverse activities in form of lectures, exhibitions, workshops, laboratories and experiments carried out during festivals, exploration trips, discussion panels and conferences. Some science festivals take place on the initiative of particular entities and some on the initiative of associations of universities and institutions, which are established especially for this purpose. In some teams also high schools were involved³². The basic goal of science festivals is educating children and youth as well as raising their passion for exploration.

Conclusion

Contemporary fairs may play an important role in communication activities of Polish scientific and research institutions. Their potential stems, among others, from the fact that thanks to their characteristics they fit very well into the direction of changes in the area of promotion of science taking place in Europe over the recent years. One of the apparent trends is focusing on organizing direct meetings of

29 In 2010 59 exhibitors (including one from the Czech Republic) participated in TECHNICON – INNOWACJE. Expositions covered an area of 670 square metres. 2.500 visitors attended the fair. (according to: <http://www.expodatabase.com>).

30 One of such events was the Knowledge-Innovation-Development Exhibition WIPRO organized in June 2010. 50 entities participated in the event. It took place in Bydgoszcz on the initiative of the University of Technology and Life Sciences in Bydgoszcz. The goal of the exhibition was to present the most interesting results of scientific research and development works, which are significant for economic development, and examples of successful implementations as well as of cooperation between science and business. (according to: <http://www.wipro2010.utp.edu.pl>). Another example is „Podkarpacka Nauka dla Przedsiębiorczości” (ed. Science of Podkarpacie Region for Entrepreneurship) fair, which took place in June 2011 in Rzeszów within the project „Podkarpacka Nauka do Przedsiębiorczości” conducted by Rzeszów Regional Development Agency. The goal of the event, which attracted 25 exhibitors, was to draw the interest of potential investors and business partners to innovative technologies, products, research or services provided by universities and other research and scientific institutions (according to <http://www.podkarpackanauka.pl>). Both projects were co-financed with funds from the European Social Fund within the framework of Operational Program „Human Capital”.

31 An example of such an event with an international renown is the annual International Innovation, Scientific Research and New Technology Fair BRUSSELS INNOVA fair organized in Brussels. Inventions presented during the exhibition are assessed by a jury consisting of a few dozen members. In the jury there are specialists from branches present at the fair. Exhibitors are awarded medals, Grand Prix prizes and other prizes. In 2010 316 innovative solutions (from 17 countries) were presented at the fair. Expositions presenting innovations were visited by 4,000 people (according to: <http://www.haller.pl>).

32 T. Malczyk, Nyski Festiwal Nauki. Międzynarodowy wymiar popularyzacji nauki, Oficyna Wydawnicza PWSZ w Nysie, Nysa 2009, p. 13, 24.

scientists with the society, which are an opportunity not only to pass on knowledge, but also for a dialogue between creators and recipients of science. Direct meetings (including meetings at fairs) contribute to eliminating the stereotype that science is inaccessible for normal people and that it is not interested in their opinions. Another observed phenomenon is teaching based on the „hands-on-science“ approach, that is, learning about science by means of independent experimenting, watching phenomena and the functioning of devices (such form of education is possible within stands). Moreover, in the scientific community of countries of Western Europe there is a common conviction that communicating regularly with the environment and informing about achievements is an important element of public relations of scientific institutions (fairs, which are usually organized every year or every second year, offer the opportunity for such regular meetings)³³.

Referring to the multifunctionality of contemporary fairs presented in this work allows us to identify the benefits associated with thought out application of fairs in course of marketing activities of research and scientific institutions. Among these benefits there are the following:

- strengthening the desired image of an organization in its environment (industrial, scientific and social) by means of influencing all senses of fair participants,
- the growth of influence of representatives of business community on determining the direction of science and research policy,
- obtaining suggestions from potential partners and clients (concerning, among others: needs of the market, faculties, expectations with regard to didactic staff),
- strengthening ties between market entities and research and development centres (establishing expert and partnership relations),
- diminishing barriers in cooperation with the industry – above all those which are the effects of possession of insufficient information about possibilities of cooperation and lack of trust,
- growth of awareness of the offer of Polish research and scientific institutions among entrepreneurs (both in Poland and abroad, depending on the scale of fairs),
- establishing formal and informal contacts between the representatives of the sphere of industry and the area of research and science,
- exchanging experiences and integrating the scientific community,
- developing the skills of employees of research and scientific units in the area of conducting communication activities (especially concerning attractive presentation of offers and holding direct talks).

Despite the existing benefits, there are also certain limitations, which hamper broader utilization of exhibition marketing by Polish research and scientific institutions. On the basis of observation of their past activities, it is possible to identify the following barriers in this respect:

- low awareness of the scientific community of benefits that can be derived from a properly conducted trade fair appearance,
- insufficient knowledge concerning the application of techniques of exhibition marketing,

³³ Por. I. Howiecka-Tańska, *Promocja...*, op. cit., p. 53.

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- regarding participation in fairs as a one-off activity, used in isolation from other marketing activities of an organization,
 - limited amount of financial means for participation in fairs.

Fairs in their contemporary form can become an important tool for building cooperation between enterprises and research and scientific institutions, thanks to an appropriate approach to them. They can play a major role in the process of searching for partners and thus, they can speed up the process of commercialization of research results or technology. Moreover, under current market conditions it is not enough to have innovative or unique technology to attract the interest of entrepreneurs. It is also necessary to skillfully use the instruments of marketing communication. Among these instruments fairs may be an important element. Thus, it is advisable to popularize in the scientific community the rules of exhibition marketing and following these rules in practice. Otherwise, even substantial financial means allocated to participation in fairs, won't bring the desired benefits to research and scientific institutions.

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