

UFI's Global Barometer shows a growing industry, currently refocussing and advancing on digital transformation

- Globally, the majority of exhibition companies report increases in turnover and rising profits for 2017 – but regional differences remain
- Companies are putting more focus on the economies in their respective home markets and on increasing competition within the industry
- 2/3 of survey participants have implemented at least one digitisation initiative

Paris, 27 July 2017 – The latest edition of the Global Barometer, UFI's flagship research that measures the global pulse of the exhibition industry, indicates a shift of focus in the industry. While the vast majority of survey participants reported increases in turnover and rising profits in 2017, top management is more focused on the economic development of home and core markets rather than on global economic growth. In addition, "competition within the industry" has risen to become the second most important business issue. Globally, digital products and services are increasingly implemented in the industry.

Size & Scope

This latest edition of UFI's semi-annual industry survey was concluded in July 2017 and includes data from 257 companies in 56 countries.

The study delivers outlooks and analysis for ten major markets: Brazil, China, Germany, India, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, Thailand, the UK and the US. In addition, four aggregated regional zones have been analysed.

"We are happy to welcome IEIA, the Indian Exhibition Industry Association, as the 9th research partner for the Global Barometer. This has already enabled us to add a new country profile for this growth market to the research results", says Kai Hattendorf, UFI Managing Director/CEO.

Economic developments

Regarding turnover for the two halves of 2017 and the first half of 2018, at least 74% of respondents in Asia/Pacific and Europe declared an increase for these periods.

In the Americas and the Middle East/Africa, the results were a bit less positive: on average for the three periods, 66% of respondents in the Americas and 58% of respondents in Middle East/Africa reported increases in turnover. The reported turnover across these regions was, however, not always stable as the Americas reported a peak for the second half of 2017 and the Middle East/Africa reported a drop in the second half of 2017.

In terms of operating profit, most regions maintained a good level of performance in 2016, even though it was generally lower than the level recorded in 2015. Moreover, profits for 2017 appear to be on the rise in all regions, except in the Middle East/Africa.

“The optimism already outlined in the survey conducted six months ago remains valid, with a series of positive signs in most markets”, comments Hattendorf.

Top Business Issues

When asked about their top business issues, the “state of the national/regional economy” was considered most important, with 25% of all respondents naming this as a top business issue, and also most major exhibition markets. It scored the highest in South Africa (34%) and Brasil (33%).

“Competition from within the industry” was considered a top business issue by 21% of survey respondents, being rated as the Number One priority in Thailand (32%) and India (26%).

Companies indicated that “global economic development” was less important than it had been in previous surveys, with 20% of respondents naming this as a top issue. This issue remains the Number One priority in Germany (31%) and China (26%).

Regarding additional top issues, “internal challenges” and “impact of digitisation” take the next two places. Within digitisation, is it noteworthy that – compared to the results from summer 2016 – the share of companies citing “new digital products” as a major topic has grown from 36% to 61%.

Digitisation

With digitisation accelerating in businesses around the world, this edition of the Global Barometer also focusses on the state of digital activity in the exhibition industry, providing for the first time ever an overview of activities in this field on a global level. Results show that the majority of companies have responded to the accelerating process of digitisation in the exhibition industry. The U.K., Germany, China, and the U.S. are identified as the exhibition markets who are currently most active in the digital transformation process.

Two out of three survey participants reported that they have added digital services/products (like apps, digital advertising, digital signage) around existing exhibitions. This is the norm already in Germany (100% of respondents), and is also widely established in Brazil (82%) as well as in the U.S., Russia, and Thailand (73% each).

The companies in the exhibition industry are digitising themselves as well: Globally, 55% stated that they have changed internal processes and workflows to be more digital. The most advanced exhibition markets here are Thailand (73%), China (71%) and Germany (69%).

One in four companies participating in the survey reported that they have developed a digital transformation strategy for the whole company, with Mexico (58%) and the U.S. (45%) leading.

One in five companies has created a designated function (like a Chief Digital Officer) in the upper/top management – led here by China (33%) and Germany (31%).

Finally, also one in five survey participants stated that they have launched digital products not directly related to existing exhibitions – a development especially visible in the U.K. (50%) and the U.S. (36%).

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Background

The 19th Global Barometer Survey, conducted in June 2017, covers insights given by 257 companies from 56 countries. It was conducted in collaboration with AAXO (The Association of African Exhibition Organizers) and EXSA (Exhibition and Events Association of Southern Africa) in South Africa, AEO (Association of Event Organisers) in the UK, AFIDA (Asociación Internacional de Ferias de América) for Central and South America, AMPROFEC (Asociación Mexicana de Profesionales de Ferias y Exposiciones y Convenciones) in Mexico, IEIA (Indian Exhibition Industry Association) in India, SISO (Society of Independent Show Organizers) in the USA, TEA (Thai Exhibition Association) in Thailand and UBRAFE (União Brasileira dos Promotores Feiras) in Brazil.

In line with UFI's objective to provide vital data and best practices to the entire exhibition industry, the full results can be downloaded at www.ufi.org/research.

The next UFI Global Barometer Survey will be conducted in December 2017.

About UFI - The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry: UFI is the leading global association of the world's tradeshow organisers and exhibition centre operators, as well as the major national and international exhibition associations, and selected partners of the exhibition industry. UFI's main goal is to represent, promote and support the business interests of its members and the exhibition industry. UFI directly represents around 50,000 exhibition industry employees globally, and also works closely with its 58 national and regional association members. More than 700 member organisations in 85 countries around the world are presently signed up as members. Over 900 international trade fairs proudly bear the UFI approved label, a quality guarantee for visitors and exhibitors alike. UFI members continue to provide the international business community with a unique marketing media aimed at developing outstanding face-to-face business opportunities.

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