

COVID pandemic hammered trade shows in Asia in 2020 and 2021: Recovery in 2022 will depend on market

- The latest UFI/BSG report on the trade fair industry in Asia compares regional markets before and during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic
- Net space sold fell from the 24.5 million m2 in 2019 to approximately 9.1 million m2 in 2020
- Asia's relative success in managing the pandemic has led to governments maintaining restrictive quarantine and travel policies, which will significantly impact the industry in Asia well into 2022

Paris/Hong Kong – 28 October 2021: UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, has released the 17th edition of its annual report on the Trade Fair Industry in Asia, providing a snapshot of an industry reeling from an ongoing crisis. The report, compiled by BSG in Hong Kong, provides a best estimate for the actual performance of the industry in 2020, as well as commentary on 2021 and the outlook for 2022.

For the first time in the 17-year history of this report, year-on-year comparisons have been rendered somewhat meaningless by the onslaught of the global pandemic. This year, BSG's bottom-up approach to estimates of net space sold was challenged by a dynamic and rapidly changing trading environment, as well as by limited availability of accurate data during various lockdowns across the region. Despite these unique circumstances, the report provides reliable insight into the state of the Asian trade fair market in 2020 and 2021.

Overall, BSG estimates that Asia recorded a stunning 63% drop in net space sold in 2020 compared to 2019 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This means net space sold fell from 24.5 million m2 in 2019 to just 9.1 million m2 in 2020.

Net space sold in the majority of trade fair markets fell by more than 80% in 2020. This figure includes some of the larger, more important trade fair markets such as Hong Kong, Thailand, Taiwan and Australia.

Relatively strong performance by China prevented the regional average from falling further. Trade fairs in China's key exhibition cities operated relatively normally from July to December 2020 – albeit with greatly reduced international participation. In 2020, China's net space sold fell approximately 54% compared to the regional average of 63%. As a result, China's regional share of net space sold jumped from 59% in 2019 to 75% in 2020. This surge in China's regional share of net space sold is expected to be temporary, and will likely return to around 60% in 2022 and 2023.

Of the large markets in Asia, Hong Kong was hit the hardest, with an approximate 95% drop in net space sold in 2020. This weak performance is expected to be repeated in 2021 as Hong Kong's borders remain essentially closed going into the fourth quarter of the year.

Overall, trade fair industry results in 2021 are expected to be a repeat performance of 2020. Most Asian trade fair markets will record an 80%+ drop in net space sold, with China again being the exception. From January to June 2021, key exhibition cities in China operated with few restrictions – although as in 2020, international participation was largely absent from Chinese shows due to border controls.

UFI Asia/Pacific Regional Director and BSG managing director, Mark Cochrane, noted, "2020 and 2021 will go down in history as two of the most difficult years ever for event organisers. Although hopes are high for recovery into 2022, a number of factors continue to hinder a potential return to 'normal' – including new COVID-19 variants, government policies, vaccine rates and travel restrictions."

Kai Hattendorf, UFI Managing Director and CEO, commented, “This is a global crisis that has hit every one of UFI’s members. As expected, net space sold in Asia in 2020 decreased significantly by an estimated 63%, however our industry will recover and will continue to play an essential role in Asia’s economic resurgence. Complete recovery will play out on a market-by-market basis, which makes this report more valuable than ever. UFI and our members advocate for common sense measures to allow our industry and the region’s economies to recover.”

The report provides detailed information on the development of trade fairs and supporting facilities in 17 markets: Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam. The report also includes analysis on actual market performance in 2020, as well as an industry outlook for the months ahead, including commentary on key trends in each market.

The research was undertaken for UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, by [Business Strategies Group \(BSG\)](#) in Hong Kong.

As a value-added service, each UFI member is entitled to receive an executive summary of the research and to purchase the full report at a substantial discount. The data is available on the UFI research portal at www.ufi.org/research.

For more information on this report, please contact UFI in Asia at: UFI Asia/Pacific Office - Suite 4114, Hong Kong Plaza, 188 Connaught Road West, Hong Kong - Tel: +852 2525 6129 - Fax: +852 2525 6171 - Email: asia@ufi.org

Attachment:

[- 17th edition UFI-BSG report cover](#)

About UFI – The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry: UFI is the global trade 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 more than 50,000 exhibition industry employees globally, and also works closely with its 60 national and regional association members. More than 800 member organisations in 88 countries around the world are presently signed up as members. Around 1,000 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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