

Unveiling the Unique Value of Physical B2B Trade Fairs: Mutual Social Construction of the Trade Show Reality

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Abstract

This ethnographic study explores the significance of physical B2B trade fairs through participant observations, active participation, and 24 in-depth interviews. Despite digital alternatives, businesses rely on physical events, prompting our investigation into their distinctive values. Our holistic approach considers the nature of trade fair interactions, uncovering the social construction of B2B trade fairs. We identify implicit market negotiation and construction processes as the main drivers of value formation. Central to our study are the mechanisms of market probing, market shaping, and market sensing. During the fair participants continuously balance market narratives, influencing the market representation and construction. These processes involve a constant assessment of the market's legitimacy and shaping of the market's future. Our research contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the values embedded in physical trade fairs, shedding light on their enduring relevance.

Subject Areas: *Business-to-Business Marketing, Direct Marketing, Marketing Strategy*

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