

# Trade Show Performance: A Conceptual Framework and Its Implications for Future Research

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This article discusses the existing knowledge about trade show performance and develops, based on the literature, a conceptual framework for assessing exhibitor's performance. Existing measures of performance at trade shows do not adequately include dimensions important to exhibitors. To better understand the nature and dimensions of trade show performance, the marketing literature's outcome-based and behaviour-based control systems are examined. In light of this literature review, a framework for trade show performance is conceptualised.

### Existing Knowledge about Trade Show Performance

Efforts to define trade show performance at the theoretical level have been quite limited or non-existent. Five studies that have applied performance measures to test antecedents at the industry, company and the trade show level are identified (Dekimpe et al., 1997; Gopalakrishna and Lilien, 1995; Kerin and Cron, 1987; Seringhaus and Rosson, 1998; Williams et al., 1993). However, these studies claim their measures are indicators of performance, but fail to legitimise those claims with a clear definition of the domain being measured or to provide evidence of validity. Consequently, models are developed and tested at the observational or measurement level rather than the theoretical level (i.e., frame the hypotheses at the observational level). Correspondence between the theoretical and observational level is not demonstrated.

### Conceptual Framework

The general nature of performance within the specific research context is first described. Our research focused on understanding what activities are performed at trade shows that are representative of the trade show performance domain. The description were based on the marketing control literature's outcome- and behaviour-based control system taxonomy (Anderson and Oliver, 1987; Cravens et al., 1993; Jaworski, 1988). A control system is defined as an organisation's set of procedures for monitoring, directing, evaluating, and compensating its employees. Two major control systems are those monitoring the final outcomes of a process and those monitoring individual stages (e.g., behaviour) in the process.

### Output measures

(i.e., equitable measures of sales volume or value) are used because they are simple. Orders can also usually be limited to the individual salesperson responsible for the actual sale. Trade show performance has traditionally been evaluated using outcome-based measures (Cavanaugh, 1976; Gopalakrishna and Williams; 1992; Williams et al., 1993).

In behaviour-based control systems, subjective and more complex methods, rather than sales outcomes, are used to evaluate and compensate the sales force. If the exhibitors' most important activities are behaviour- rather than selling-based, sales related outcome measures are not the most appropriate. Behaviour refers to what people do (i.e., the tasks they expend effort on while working). In a behaviour-based control system, the process, rather than simply the outcome(s), is addressed. In this system, the booth personnel are directed to perform certain behaviours as a part of the company's marketing strategy.

The trade show literature was reviewed for activities and objectives that could represent dimensions and measures within the outcome- and behaviour-based control system. In light of the literature review, trade show performance was conceptualised as multidimensional. One outcome-based dimension and four behaviour-based dimensions were identified:

**Outcome-based:**

*Sales-Related Activities:*

The conceptual domain of sales-related dimension includes all activities related to on-site sales and sales immediately after the trade show.

**Behaviour-based:**

*Information-Gathering Activities:*

The conceptual domain of the information-gathering dimension includes all activities related to the collection of information about competitors, customers, industry trends, and new products at the trade show.

*Image-Building Activities:*

The conceptual domain of the image-building dimension includes all activities related to building corporate image and reputation at the trade show.

*Motivation Activities:*

The conceptual domain of the motivation dimension includes all activities related maintaining and enhancing the motivation of company employees and of customers.

*Relationship-Building Activities:*

The conceptual domain of the relationship-building dimension includes all activities related to maintaining and developing relationships with established customers and establishing relationships with new customers.

**Implications for Future Research**

First, the proposed framework can serve as a starting point for research to develop multidimensional trade show performance scales with sufficient and adequate psychometric properties.

Second, the two control system philosophies may affect the capabilities, attitudes, motivations, behaviour strategies and performances of the trade show staff. A series of propositions are suggested to link the outcome- and behaviour-based control system to trade show performance:

Behaviour-based control is likely to be associated with high trade show staff capabilities in product and company knowledge, integrated sales expertise, and professional competence. Outcome-based control will be associated with low capabilities in these areas.

Behaviour-based control of the trade show staff is also expected to be associated with positive attitudes in terms of commitment to the firm, acceptance of direction and control, and more team co-operation. Outcome-based control is expected to be associated with less positive attitudes.

Motivation (i.e., intrinsic and peer recognition forces) is proposed to be higher with behaviour-based control, and egocentric attitudes and a lack of loyalty to the firms' long term marketing goals with outcome-based control.

Behavioural strategies of the trade show staff is expected to be more customer oriented, more time spending on non-selling activities and open selling techniques with behaviour-based trade show control. Outcome-based control is expected to be associated with closed selling techniques, lower customer orientation and more time spent in selling activities.

The result expected is that behaviour-based control will lead to higher level of performance in achieving the firms' long term marketing goals and serving customer needs. Outcome-based control will lead to higher performance in achieving sales on the trade show and other output results.

## **Trade Show Performance: A Conceptual Framework and Its Implications for Future Research**

The purpose of this article is to define and clarify the definition of the trade show performance construct within a conceptual framework of outcome-based and behaviour-based control system. Much of the current literature on trade shows focuses on performance issues. This is natural based on the expectation that trade show (TS) participation will yield positive results - like other business investments. Despite this preoccupation, surprisingly little agreement exists regarding how trade show performance should be conceived or assessed (Hansen, 1996; Kerin and Cron, 1987; Seringhaus and Rosson, 1994). The lack of theory development and ambiguity surrounding the definition and measurement of trade show performance has made it difficult to accumulate the basic knowledge upon which more complex models could be built. The trade show literature provides effectiveness criteria that are based on studies that lack theoretical foundations. The proposed framework in this article identifies multiple outcome-based and behaviour-based dimensions of the trade show performance construct. Using this framework in future empirical studies of trade show performance will make more feasible the comparative and replication studies that lead to theory development, and testing.

Theoretical, empirical, and practical reasons justify additional work being carried out in this area. Although trade shows play a significant role in the marketing operations of many companies, they have been subjected to relatively little systematic examination. More theoretical discussion and empirical study appears warranted given that "performance" is a central construct in models of company trade show behaviour and in ideas about "best practice". There is a managerial imperative as well. Managers with trade show responsibilities must repeatedly consider important questions such as: What objectives should we set? Which trade shows should we attend? How should booth space and staff time be allocated? How much should we spend? In the absence of an accepted body of knowledge, answers to these questions are invariably based on personal judgement and anecdote - usually reflecting company trade show experience.

Theoretical models of the trade show performance construct are a prerequisite for good empirical research that will provide practising managers with deeper insights. This should enable them to make decisions that are more informed, with the obvious benefit that their companies could earn better returns from their trade show investments. The next section reviews the existing literature on trade show performance. In the third section a conceptual framework for the definition of the trade show performance construct is outlined. The last section discusses implications for future research.

### **EXISTING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT TRADE SHOW PERFORMANCE**

Historically, trade shows have been conceived of as vehicles of communication with company exhibits fulfilling an advertising and display function. Over time, this view has been challenged and replaced with the view that trade shows are primarily, events where products and services are sold or contracts and rights signed. However, in some instances, product or service offerings and buying processes are regarded as too complex to permit full assessment or commitment to be made on-site. In such situations, trade shows, at best, are likely to generate sales leads to be followed up afterwards. In the 1980s, a broader view of trade shows became more accepted. Several researchers argued that companies use trade shows to pursue multiple objectives beyond communications and selling (Bonoma, 1983; Greipl and Singer, 1980; Groth, 1983). Given these differing conceptions of trade shows, "performance" has been defined in several contrasting ways. Such a situation makes for a "sloppy" evaluation situation (Bonoma, 1983, p. 83).

Efforts to define trade show performance at a theoretical level have been limited or even non-existent. Table 1 summarises studies in the trade show literature that have developed performance measures to test antecedents at the industry, company and trade show level.

**TABLE 1**  
**Performance Measures used in the Trade Show Literature**

<b>Performance measures used in the trade show literature:</b>	<b>Authors:</b>
<b>Selling activities (3 items, Alpha = .75):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing new products</li> <li>• Selling at the show</li> <li>• New products testing</li> </ul> <b>Non-selling activities (4 items, Alpha = .64):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify new prospects</li> <li>• Servicing current customers</li> <li>• Enhancing Corporate image</li> <li>• Gathering competitive information</li> </ul>	<i>Kerin and Cron (1987)</i>
<b>Attraction effectiveness:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of target audience attracted to the booth</li> </ul> <b>Contact effectiveness:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of visitor at the booth contacted</li> </ul> <b>Lead effectiveness:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of visitor contacted whom became leads</li> </ul>	<i>Williams, Gopalakrishna and Cox (1993)</i> <i>Gopalakrishna and Lilien (1995)</i>
<b>Visitor attraction:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of target audience (based on stated product category interest) who actually visited the booth to talk or obtain literature.</li> </ul>	<i>Dekimpe et al. (1997)</i>
<b>Quantitative and qualitative measures of real-time and delayed performance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing impact (9 items, Alpha=.82)</li> <li>• Objective achievement (16 items, proportion reporting objectives achieved)</li> <li>• On-site sales (%)</li> <li>• Qualified leads (no.)</li> <li>• Contacts (no.)</li> <li>• Sales within 12 months (%)</li> <li>• Main decision maker reached (%)</li> <li>• Lead conversion (12 months) (%)</li> <li>• Time laps to sales (no. months)</li> <li>• Share of new leads (%)</li> <li>• Contact staff effectiveness (no. leads per contact staff)</li> </ul>	<i>Seringhaus and Rosson (1998)</i>

Kerin and Cron (1987) used an exploratory factor analytical approach and revealed that the seven trade show functions they identified, represented two underlying dimensions corresponding to selling and non-selling roles of trade shows. Dekimpe et al. (1997), Gopalakrishna and Lilien (1995) and Williams et al. (1993) included observational indicators in their performance measures. Seringhaus and Rosson (1998) included eleven different performance measures in their study, both composite measures and single observational indicators. The studies claim their measures are indicators of performance, but fail to legitimise those claims with a clear definition of the domain being measured or to provide evidence of validity. Consequently, models are developed and tested at the observational or measurement level rather than the theoretical level (i.e., frame the hypotheses at the observational level) and correspondence between the theory and

observation is not demonstrated. The trade show literature therefore lacks a comprehensive understanding of the trade show performance construct as well as scales with adequate evidence of validity.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section reviews the relevant areas of research associated with the definition and clarification of the trade show performance construct. The discussion includes trade show literature, and the marketing control literature's outcome-based and behaviour-based control system taxonomy. The procedures required to develop a psychometrically sound trade show performance construct (American Psychological Association, 1985; Bohrnstedt and Borgatta, 1981; Carmines and Zeller, 1979; Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 1991) are followed. Application of these procedures can lead to valid measures of trade show performance, and further to a better understanding of the relationships between trade show management and performance.

First, a trade show performance scale should be founded on a solid theoretical definition with the construct's domain thoroughly delineated and outlined. This definition and attendant description should entail both what is included and what is excluded from the construct's domain. The a priori dimensionality should also be included. A thorough review of the existing literature and expert opinion should be the basis for the trade show performance definition, the domain of the construct, and its dimensionality. The general nature of performance within the specific research context is first described. Our research focused on understanding what activities are performed at trade shows that are representative of the trade show performance domain. The description were based on the marketing control literature's outcome-based and behaviour-based control system taxonomy (Anderson and Oliver, 1987; Cravens et al., 1993; Jaworski, 1988). A control system is defined as an organisation's set of procedures for monitoring, directing, evaluating, and compensating its employees. Sales force control systems have been widely used and two major sales force control systems are those monitoring the final outcomes of a process and those monitoring individual stages (e.g., behaviour) in the process.

### Outcome-Based Control System

In an outcome-based control system, straightforward objective measures of outcomes (results) are used to evaluate and compensate the sales force, rather than measures of the methods salespeople use to achieve results. Outcome-based measures are the most widely used control system for evaluating salespeople (Churchill et al., 1993). Output measures (i.e., equitable measures of sales volume or value) are used because they are simple. Orders can also usually be limited to the individual salesperson responsible for the actual sale. Trade show performance has traditionally been evaluated using outcome-based measures. Cavanaugh (1976) focused on measures related to trade show activities, such as number of visitors to the booth, number of leads generated, cost per visitor, and cost per lead generated. In a more recent study, Gopalakrishna and Williams (1992) employed lead generation efficiency to reach a measure of trade show performance. Williams et al. (1993) also used booth attraction and booth contact as performance measures. Booth attraction refers to the number of interested visitors who visited the firm's booth and booth contact refers to the number of interested visitors to the booth who were then contacted. Both these are measured in relation to the number of interested visitors at the show.

### Behaviour-Based Control System

In behaviour-based control systems, subjective and more complex methods, rather than sales outcomes, are used to evaluate and compensate the sales force. As noted by Kerin and Cron (1987, p.88): "conventional sales productivity measures.....are questionable indices of trade show performance for many firms". That is, if the exhibitors' most important activities are behaviour-based rather than selling-based, sales related outcome measures are not the most appropriate. Behaviour refers to what people do (i.e., the tasks they expend effort on while working). In a behaviour-based control system, the process, rather than simply the outcome(s), is addressed. In this system, the sales force, or in the trade show context - the booth personnel - are directed to perform certain behaviours as a part of the company's marketing strategy. The booth personnel should be judged only on those phases of sales performance over which they exercise control. This enables the manager to eliminate inequities that arise from using simple output measures (Anderson and Oliver, 1987).

Trade shows blend some elements of direct selling (i.e., outcome) and other promotional and relational activities (i.e., behaviour) (Dekimpe et al., 1997). Frequently, managers have both effort and outcome goal associated with exhibiting at trade shows (i.e., exhibitors have multiple objectives for participating). Applying the control system philosophy, the

general nature of trade show performance and the domain of the construct are outlined as both outcome-based and behaviour-based. The two different control systems are here outlined as stereotypes, but many control systems are a mix of approaches, containing elements of both behaviour-based and outcome-based strategies (Churchill et al., 1993).

If we proceed to the next step in the framework, the general definition of performance is the foundation for specifying the focal domain of the performance construct in our research context. The marketing literature's sales force control system taxonomy (Anderson and Oliver, 1987; Behrman and Perreault, 1982; Bush et al., 1990) is used to describe the domain of trade show performance construct. The trade show literature was reviewed for activities and objectives that could represent dimensions and measures within the outcome-based and behaviour-based control system. In light of the literature review, trade show performance was conceptualised as multidimensional. The identified dimensions are listed in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**  
**Dimensions of the Trade Show Performance Construct**

<b>Outcome-based dimension:</b>	<b>Behaviour-based dimensions:</b>
<i>Sales-related activities</i>	<i>Information-gathering activities</i> <i>Image-building activities</i> <i>Motivation activities</i> <i>Relationship-building activities</i>

### **OUTCOME-BASED DIMENSION**

#### **Sales-Related Activities**

The conceptual domain of sales-related dimension includes all activities related to on-site sales and sales immediately after the trade show. In the early models of trade show performance, assessment of sales related activities are very conspicuous. Carman (1968) and Bonoma (1983) focused on direct selling and introduction of new products as activities of importance at trade shows. Cavanaugh (1976) listed several sales-related activities (as mentioned previously). Kerin and Cron (1987) identified selling activities, such as introduction of new products, selling at the show, and new product testing, all of which reflect the selling dimension.

#### **Other sales-related activities found in the literature include:**

- writing orders (Belizzi and Lipps, 1984; Bonoma, 1983; Lilien, 1983);
- obtaining leads, developing prospects, and mailing lists (Belizzi and Lipps, 1984; Cavanaugh, 1976; Morris, 1988); and,
- speeding up the process of comparisons, questions, and negotiating (Bello and Barksdale, 1986).

These initial findings provided evidence that different types of outcomes (results) are used to evaluate the trade show performance. Expanding on the same logic, it is suggested that in addition to the outcome-related dimension, the trade show performance construct also consist of behaviour-related dimensions.

### **BEHAVIOUR-BASED DIMENSIONS**

#### **Information-Gathering Activities**

One of the behaviour-related dimensions is that of information-gathering activities. The conceptual domain of the information-gathering dimension includes all activities related to the collection of information about competitors,

customers, industry trends, and new products at the trade show. Conducting market research and information gathering is identified in the trade show literature as a potential exhibitor objective (Belizzi and Lipps, 1984; Cavanaugh, 1976; Kerin and Cron, 1987; Makens, 1988). The opportunity to see what competitors are doing is also classified as an information-gathering activity (Hansen, 1996; Rothchild, 1987; Shust, 1981). Sharland and Balogh (1996) suggested that within a transaction cost analysis approach, information gathered at trade shows could help managers to make strategic decisions about marketing, finance, and production policies and programs.

Also, information exchange at trade shows helps companies choose better trading partners, reduces legal and contracting costs, and helps to decide which parts of the business can be spun-off or kept in-house. Bello (1992) introduced a typology of trade show information sources, which reflects the multiple opportunities for obtaining information. He applied the traditional personal/non-personal distinction for industrial information sources and introduced an in-exhibit/out-of-exhibit dichotomy to distinguish sources of information. The increased recognition of, and emphasis on, the information-gathering aspects at trade and international trade shows, makes this dimension an important one to consider in a definitional framework of trade show performance.

### **Image-Building Activities.**

The conceptual domain of the image-building dimension includes all activities related to building corporate image and reputation at the trade show. International trade shows are large industry gatherings where one of the primary objectives for exhibiting is to create product interest and awareness. Another is the desire to build corporate image and reputation (Belizzi and Lipps, 1984; Smith, 1998). As a marketing communication tool, the advertising and display function (i.e., image-building activities) of trade shows is the second behaviour-related dimension in the conceptual framework. Bonoma (1983) included maintaining the company image with competitors, customers, and the industry generally as a marketing communication function served by trade shows. Barczyk et al. (1989) identified three important image-building motives for exhibiting at trade shows. The first was competitive pressure (i.e., a firm's need to exhibit because of its competitors' participation in the trade show). The second was customer expectations (i.e., customers' expectation of a firm's participation and the possibility that they might interpret the firm's failure to appear as a sign of trouble). The final motive was that of image (i.e., a firm's use of trade shows as a vehicle to create or solidify an image to participants in the marketplace). Drawing on a survey of British engineering companies, Shipley et al. (1993) indicated clearly that firms set qualitative non-selling objectives for exhibiting, and the highest mean was recorded for the objective of enhancing company image. The competitive value of exhibiting was also recognised. Moderately high means were assigned to "getting an edge on non-exhibitors" and "keeping up with competitors". Hansen (1996) found in a study of Norwegian seafood exporters exhibiting at international trade shows that the highest mean was assigned to enhancing and maintaining the company profile. The literature shows the importance of image-building activities at trade shows. Such activities are therefore conceptualised as a behaviour-related dimension of trade show performance.

### **Motivation Activities.**

It is suggested that in addition to the dimensions above, there is a behaviour-related motivation dimension as well. The conceptual domain of the motivation dimension includes all activities related maintaining and enhancing the motivation of company employees and of customers. The motivational aspect of trade show participation has not been emphasised in the existing trade show literature. However, Hansen (1996) showed that enhancing and maintaining the morale of company employees and of customers are moderately important activities for exhibitors at international trade shows. Going back to Carman (1968), even he stressed that participating in such shows is a way of building morale of local sales representative, particularly when manufacturer's representatives staff the booth. This is a way for the home office to give the representative some personal attention. Barczyk et al. (1989) indicated that one motive for exhibiting at trade shows is sales force morale (i.e., a firm's use of trade shows as a tool to build the morale of its sales force). Shipley et al. (1993), Shoham (1992), and Witt and Rao (1988) also indicated that trade shows can be used to train and motivate the sales force. In an international trade show (ITS) context, the motivational dimension may be more explicit compared with regional or national trade shows.

Attendees at international trade shows are given the opportunity to meet and interact with foreign customers and to visit a foreign country they may not have visited before. It is therefore suggested that one dimension of the trade show performance construct is that of motivation, at least at international trade shows.

### **Relationship-Building Activities.**

The fifth and final dimension included in the trade show performance framework is that of relationship-building activities. The conceptual domain of the relationship-building dimension includes all activities related to maintaining and developing relationships with established customers and establishing relationships with new customers. Witt and Rao (1989) stressed the need for research into the value of trade shows in the development of buyer-seller relationships. Håkansson (1982) emphasised the significance of social exchange when there is spatial and cultural distance between the buyer and seller. This characterises especially the buyers and sellers at international trade shows. Many booths at European international trade shows have their own conference rooms and lounges, and drinks and snacks are often served to visitors (Tesar, 1988), which encourage visitors to spend significant amount of time in the booths they visits, thus lengthening interactions (Rice, 1992). Smith (1998) found in a case study that trade show attendees indicated a high degree of success in building relationships at the show. Several relationship-building variables are identified in the trade show literature.

These include:

- maintaining and developing relationships with established customers (Bonoma, 1983; Carman, 1968; Kerin and Cron, 1987; Kijewski et al., 1993; Seringhaus and Rosson, 1994),
- establishing relationships with new customers (Herbig et al., 1993; Sashi and Perretty, 1992; Shipley et al., 1993; Tanner and Chonko, 1995),
- the opportunity to meet key decision makers who are otherwise inaccessible (Shust, 1981; Witt and Rao, 1989), and,
- accomplishing personal contact with customers (Lilien, 1983; Morris, 1988).

However, the development of buyer-seller relationships in industrial markets is a process often described in stages. Ford (1980) identified five stages from the pre-relationship stage, through the early stage, the development stage, the long-term stage, to the final stage. This process goes beyond the limited time at a trade show. The relationship dimension in the conceptual framework is therefore the most problematic one. It is questionable that the control system taxonomy captures the relationship-building dimension satisfactorily because the parties interact over a period (Rice, 1992). Although results can occur quickly, they are more likely to occur after a period (Rothschild, 1987). We have nevertheless chosen to include the dimension because of the exploratory nature of this article.

## **THE DIMENSIONALITY OF THE TRADE SHOW PERFORMANCE CONSTRUCT**

As illustrated in Table 1, previous conceptualisations of trade show performance have not included the full complement of dimensions identified in the trade show literature. Kerin and Cron (1987) made a distinction between the selling and non-selling roles of trade shows. However, the trade show performance construct appears to be both more complex and multifaceted than can be captured within a two-dimensional selling and non-selling conceptualisation. The proposed framework in this article captures all the dimensions suggested from the trade show literature within an outcome-based and behaviour-based control system taxonomy.

The lack of previous empirical research makes it difficult to propose whether the trade show performance construct has a hierarchical structure or not. If future empirical studies indicate high correlations among items across dimensions, it could be reasonable to expect a hierarchical factor structure consisting of a dimension level and an overall level. It also appears that some of the dimensions are more complex in that they may have more than one component to them. If this were the case, it would be reasonable to expect the dimensions to contain sub-dimensions. For instance, the literature review indicates that there may be two sub-dimensions in the outcome-based selling dimension. These could be (1) on-site sales (i.e., selling at the show, writing orders), and (2) sales immediately after the trade show (i.e., introducing new products, new product testing, obtaining leads, speeding up the process of comparisons, questions and negotiation). The literature review also indicates that the relation-building dimension may contain sub-dimensions (i.e., pre-relationship stage, the early, the development, the long-term, and the final stages).

To further explore the hierarchical structure of the concept (i.e. one-level, two-level or three-level structure), one could combine findings from future qualitative research with the trade show literature review in this article. To test the factor structure of the trade show performance construct, confirmatory factor analysis with partial disaggregation can be applied (Bagozzi and Heatherton, 1994). This technique allows one to combine items into composites to reduce higher levels of random error and yet it retains all the advantages of structural equations, including accounting for measurement error, allowing for multiple, multidimensional variables, and testing for hierarchical factor structure (Dabholkar et al., 1996).

Guidelines for developing an instrument measuring trade show performance are found in Churchill (1979), as well as in Gerbing and Anderson's (1988) updated paradigm for the assessment of unidimensionality. The domain of the research question is defined in the conceptual framework outlined in this article. Reviewing prior research on trade shows can generate an initial set of items. In conjunction with the trade show literature review; experience surveys in form of interviews with trade show managers and trade show participants will also contribute to the item generation process. When developing measures of each dimension, it is important that the items are unidimensional (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988). Each dimension (e.g., relationship-building) and potential sub-dimensions (e.g., pre-relationship stage, the early, the development, the long-term, and the final stages) must be clearly identified and measured using unidimensional items, and if appropriate, be combined by using relevant methods (Paul et al., 1993).

### IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The proposed definition of trade show performance provides a conceptual framework in an area where little prior research has been carried out. This framework contributes to new explanations of antecedents beyond those explained in previous trade show literature (i.e., industry, company, and trade show characteristics).

The control system approach focuses on the capabilities, attitudes, motivations, behaviour strategies, and performances of the trade show staff. This offers the exhibiting firm's management a set of procedures not previously conceptualised, for monitoring, directing, evaluating, and compensating the trade show staff. Also, limiting the definition and measurement of performance to sales outcomes only, or to a single item measure (whether global or specific) fails to capture important facets of performance. The result could be that the relationship between the management processes and performances will be masked or distorted (Kumar et al., 1992). Therefore, the proposed conceptual framework implies an agenda for further research.

First, there is a need to develop standardised measurement instruments for trade show performance. The framework developed in this paper revealed five evaluative dimensions. Future research must generate items that capture the contents of the five dimensions, design appropriate response scales to measure trade show performance with respect to each item, and condense the list of items to produce a reliable, comprehensive and concise instrument. The items generated should be such that with suitable changes in wording, the instrument can be used to measure trade show performance across industries and trade show types (i.e., regional, national, international).

Second, following the argument of Anderson and Oliver (1987), behaviour-based control systems depend more on the trade show manager monitoring, directing, evaluating, and rewarding trade show staff because they are evaluated on an input basis that is more subjective and the measures are more complex. Outcome based-control systems rely primarily on measuring trade show staff outcomes. Proposed differences between behaviour-based and outcome-based control systems are highlighted in Table 3. The two control system philosophies may affect the capabilities, attitudes, motivations, behaviour strategies and performances of the trade show staff.

While somewhat stereotypical in nature, it is proposed in Table 3 that behaviour-based control is likely to be associated with high trade show staff capabilities in product and company knowledge, integrated sales expertise, and professional competence. Outcome-based control will be associated with low capabilities in these areas.

**TABLE 3**  
**Propositions Linking the Outcome and Behaviour-Based Control System to Trade Show Performance**

	<b>Outcome-based trade show control system:</b>	<b>Behaviour-based trade show control system:</b>
<i>Control system strategy:</i>	The trade show staff are not monitored, offered little direction, and evaluated on outcome measures by objective and simple measures (for instance on-site sales).	The trade show staff are closely monitored, directed, and evaluated on an input basis by subjective and more complex measures.
<i>Capabilities:</i>	The trade show staff possess lower capabilities with regards to product and company knowledge, integrated sales expertise, and professional competence.	The trade show staff possess more product and company knowledge, integrated sales expertise, and professional competence.
<i>Motivation:</i>	All risk and reward are transferred to the trade show staff, resulting in egocentric attitudes and a lack of loyalty to the firm.	The exhibiting firm's interests comes first. The trade show staff are protected from risk. By active monitoring, the communication bond between the firm and the trade show staff are strengthened.
<i>Behavioural strategies:</i>	Selling at the trade show using "closed" sales techniques is encouraged.	Immediate pressure to sell at the trade show is removed. Customer service to ensure repeat business and favourable word-of-mouth are encouraged.
<i>The trade show staff performance:</i>	The trade show staff are focusing on short-term performance (e.g., on-site sales).	The trade show staff will come closer to achieving the firm's long term marketing goals and to serving customer needs.

Behaviour-based control of the trade show staff is also expected to be associated with positive attitudes in terms of commitment to the company, acceptance of direction and control, and more team co-operation. Outcome-based control is expected to be associated with less positive attitudes. Motivation (i.e., intrinsic and peer recognition forces) is proposed to be higher with behaviour-based control, and egocentric attitudes and a lack of loyalty to the firms' long term marketing goals with outcome-based control.

Behavioural strategies of the trade show staff is expected to be more customer oriented, more time spending on non-selling activities and open selling techniques with behaviour-based trade show control. Outcome-based control is expected to be associated with closed selling techniques, lower customer orientation and more time spent in selling activities. The expected results are that behaviour-based control will lead to higher level of performance in achieving the firms' long term marketing goals and serving customer needs. Outcome-based control will lead to higher performance in achieving sales on the trade show and other output results.

Embedded in the propositions above for the appropriateness of behaviour or outcome control of the trade show staff are ideas about how control systems may influence the staff (i.e., staff will respond to the control system, and the control

system should correspond to the desired outcome). The type of control system is instrumental for a proper functioning of the trade show management process.

The comparison of trade show management processes in Table 3 is based on propositions advanced in Anderson and Oliver (1987) and Craven et al. (1993). Research is now needed to test the propositions. Other propositions are also expected to emerge as future theoretical and empirical work is conducted. It should be noted that Oliver and Anderson (1994) have underlined the significance of viewing the difference between behaviour-based and outcome-based control system as one of the degree not simply of type.

Challagalla and Shervani (1996) also noted that assuming any universal superiority of one control system over the other would be unwise. However, it is likely that both control systems can be effective depending on the selling situation. The management's attention should focus on the contingencies associated with the appropriateness of the different control systems. In a business-to-business selling situation, a normal case at trade shows, Piercy et al. (1998) argued that the contingencies that are more appropriate for behaviour-based control are apparent. At trade shows, co-operative relationships with customers, co-ordinated team selling and building internal relationships between business functions to obtain competitive advantages in the market, are activities included by the proposed trade show performance framework.

### SUMMARY

The conceptual framework outlined in this article offers several insights and propositions concerning trade show performance. Specifically, the framework revealed five outcome-based and behaviour-based dimensions of measuring trade show performance (i.e., sales-related activities, information-gathering activities, image-building activities, motivation activities, and relationship-building activities). Embedded in the theoretical rationale for the appropriateness of behaviour-based or outcome-based control is ideas about how control systems influence trade show staff. A series of propositions are suggested about the impact of a control system on trade show staff capabilities, attitudes, motivations, behavioural strategies and performances. The major insights gained through this conceptualisation of trade show performance will hopefully spawn both academic and practitioners interest in trade show performance and serve as a framework for further empirical research in this important area.

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