

countries, Middle East, Japan)

It is well known that being able to actually view goods on display and to have personal interaction with an exhibitor person creates a basis for trust and a positive attitude towards product and company. Not only will practical demonstration and detailed information enhance this process, but it will also leave a much stronger impression with the decision-maker or -influencer than advertising or promotional material by itself. For the visitor, comparison between competing exhibitors is likely to remain the most striking advantage trade fairs hold over other marketing instruments⁶⁰.

From a visitor perspective trade fairs have a high *event value* when compared with other marketing instruments. On the basis of the event and participant schedules, visitors can prepare themselves well in advance in relation to their own goals and objectives.

Exhibitors have been planning for the event for a much longer time. Participation commitment, the whole process of planning and management surrounding the fair, and detailed consideration of the competitive and market environment are set in motion at least one or two years prior to the event. The increasing cost for exhibitors will ensure that participation will become, more so than it has in the past, a planning factor like other marketing instruments. This requires that planning data, similar to that for other media, are provided. Trade fair organizers must deliver on this need.

While *event value* is also critical for the exhibitor, other marketing instruments, such a promotion through advertising, market and contact development through sales force or representatives, are clearly important. The notion of *event value* of a trade fair is embodied in six factors:⁶¹

- International importance of fair
- Economic importance of fair and sector
- Image of trade fair venue and organizers
- Characteristics of exhibitors and visitor profile
- Trade-related and social events and services
- Innovation image of the trade fair

No doubt exists about the significance of trade fairs to commerce. The role of fairs has been shaped and refined over centuries. This process is ongoing, as the recent events in Eastern