

The Research of International Exhibition and National Image—Taking 2010 Shanghai Expo as an Example

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Abstract: Taking the Shanghai World Expo 2010 as an example, this paper combines the relevant theories of international exhibitions and national image, and analyzes the role and influence of the Shanghai World Expo on China's national image and how China's conference and exhibition industry should be in line with the international standard, based on the support of detailed facts and corresponding data, so as to explore the relationship between international exhibitions and national image and analyze the internal structure and chain effect, so as to further encourage the conference and exhibition to connect with the international standard and to shape the national image by this way.

Keywords: Expo; International exhibition; National image; International communication

1. Introduction

In 1851, the British government spent 4,500 tons of steel and hundreds of thousands of pieces of glass to build a fairytale crystal palace next to Hyde Park. The interior was filled with engines, textile machinery, and water-powered printing presses and so on. This palace has attracted almost 6.3 million visitors in the following 160 days. And the first London World Expo also marked the beginning of the industrial age. After more than one hundred years of development, the World Expo has developed into an international large-scale exhibition to reflect the achievements of mankind in the fields of economy, civilization, science and technology, and has become a golden key to reshape and enhance the national image. The Shanghai World Expo is an example of showing national image, with its grand scale, high-quality volunteer services, holistic program, and mature industrial chain, all of which have helped to greatly enhance China's national image in the international arena.

2. Current Situation and Development Trend of International Exhibitions

2.1 Definition of International Exhibition

MICE is an abbreviation for collective commercial or non-commercial activities such as exhibitions (Trade Show, Exhibition, Trade Fair or Trade Events, Exposition, etc.), conferences and large-scale events.

The concept connotes a mass social activity in which a large number of people come together in a certain geographical space to form an institutional or non-institutional, regular or irregular exchange and transmission of information. And the extension of its concept includes various types of exhibitions and sales activities, large and small meetings, expositions, festivals, cultural activities and so on. The theme-specific conventions and exhibitions are exchange events gathering of people around a specific theme within a specific time and space range. Conventions and exhibitions in the narrow sense refer only to exhibitions and conferences; in the broad sense refer to a collective term for exhibitions, conferences, all kinds of industry/trade related exhibitions and festivals. The most typical exhibition event is the EXPO.

2.2 Development Trend of International Exhibitions

Specialized brand exhibition has become a mainstream trend in the development of the exhibition industry. The original comprehensive exhibition has been refined into specialized exhibitions, which not only reflect the overall situation of an industry or its related industries, but also have quite strong market

functions. First, the content of the exhibition is more focused on fine-tuning; Secondly, the exhibition of emerging industries has ushered in new development opportunities; Thirdly, the exhibition in the field of new consumption releases new kinetic energy. With the "00s" gradually becoming the new consumer, high-level professional brand exhibitions of animation, games, e-sports, pets and other types will achieve rapid growth. Exhibitions themed on sports events are expected to take advantage of the 2022 sports year to pick up, and the fitness industry will become one of the directions for future exhibitions.

Digitalization is also a major trend in the exhibition industry. In recent years, advanced technologies such as digital technology, 5G networks, artificial intelligence, face recognition, etc. have been or are being introduced into the construction and operation of China's exhibition halls. In the age of the Internet, everyone can't live without cell phones and the Internet. Organizers combine big data analysis to publicize, explore potential users, understand the user's consumption habits, and form a new model of online and offline dual-line exhibition.

It is also a major trend to speed up the convergence with international exhibitions by organizing or participating in exhibitions overseas. The world economy is silently moving towards China, and the exhibition industry is also shifting to China. A number of exhibitions and forums have been organized in China, bilateral and regional exhibitions have been further strengthened, and the pace of "going out" and "bringing in" in the exhibition industry has been further accelerated. China's exhibition industry caters to this big trend, and at the same time of fully introducing important international exhibitions and famous exhibition enterprises, it pays more attention to the strategy of "going out", actively explores foreign markets, and implants China's exhibition companies and exhibition brands into the international market, so as to rapidly develop the exhibition economy and drive the development of the overall economy.

3. The Role and Influence of the Shanghai World Expo on China's Image.

3.1 The Ways and Means of Promoting the National Image

Currently, there are five main forms of international communication: international broadcasting, print media, the Internet, news agencies, and (satellite) television. Zhang Kun (2005) defines "external publicity and communication". In his view, the past view of "external publicity" should be changed and replaced by "external publicity and dissemination communication". Instead of changing a simple matter of form, make the shift from the most basic idea. He believes that the actual avenues of external communication include: the Internet, news agencies, diplomacy, covert activities, international broadcasting, movies, public relations and lobbying, foreign students, and media correspondents in China.

3.2 Enhancement of National Image through International Exhibitions

International image is the "national card" of a country in international communication, and its positioning determines the influence and interests of a country in international communication.^[1] Taking the World Expo as an example, it covers various aspects such as politics, economy and culture, and at the same time gathers a large number of people, invests a large amount of money and lasts for a long period of time. So it is a feast for the hosting city, and it is also a demonstration of the highest achievements made by the human society. Relevant data show that "all countries that have hosted World Expositions and Olympic Games have greatly benefited in terms of political, economic, cultural and social life." Such international exhibitions not only promote economic development, but also provide a good opportunity to build and display the country's image.^[2]

3.3 The Impact of the Shanghai World Expo on China's Image

Since the reform and opening up, our economy, science and technology are developing rapidly. The world is paying more and more attention to China, and our international right of speech is growing stronger. However, there is still room for improvement in terms of cultural export and promotion of the country's image. Although "Made in China" is circulating all over the world, our cultural output is far from adequate. Many foreign friends still have little understanding of the real China, and people around the world still retain a one-sided image of China that belongs to the old days. The Chinese nation has 5,000 years of history and culture, which is our precious treasure, but our external communication power is insufficient, many foreign media reports on China are inaccurate, all of which are not conducive to shaping a favorable national image of our country. In the contemporary world, information is highly integrated, national image plays an extremely important role in the development of economy and the

enhancement of international status. Just under such a background, we need to pay more attention to the export of the country's image. And the Shanghai World Expo is a bridge connecting China and the world, not only displaying scientific and technological achievements, but also exchanging civilizations and cultures and shaping the national image.

The Shanghai World Expo is an excellent platform to rebuild China's international image, and showing China's modern civilization and Shanghai-style culture to the world. It shows Shanghai's historical deposits and cultural heritage, the infinite charm of contemporary culture and creativity, the latest portrait of urban civilization of countries around the world. It displays the latest global scientific and technological achievements, promotes the new development of ecological civilization. It also demonstrates to the world the image of an Asian metropolis as a "front runner", and a new brand of "Cultural Shanghai" and "World City". Through the window of Shanghai, the soft power of the country was demonstrated, and a strong sense of national pride was aroused in all Chinese people.

The organization of the World Expo demonstrated that developing countries have begun to play a dominant role in some international exhibitions. For example, the China Pavilion, which includes branch pavilions from various provinces, cities and autonomous regions in China, not only shows the overall appearance of the Chinese nation, but also reveals to the outside world the diversity and exploratory nature of China's development in terms of regional economy, social management, ethnic customs and even cultural characteristics. This is clearly different from previous host countries that have completed the industrialization process and provides a living lesson for other developing countries. As another example, the five sub-themes of the Expo: the relationship between cities and sustainable development, the interaction between urban and rural areas, the relationship between cities and high-tech development, the relationship between cities and economic development, and the relationship between cities and multicultural development are closely related to the various challenges in the process of urbanization in developing countries, and are of high practical significance; In addition, we can also use specific cases such as China's support for the construction of the African Joint Pavilion and ensuring the participation of countries such as North Korea and Iran to illustrate that China endeavors to put its hard and soft power at the service of the overall interests of developing countries.

China is an ancient civilization with a long history, and traditional Chinese symbols can best highlight the long history and culture of China. The Shanghai World Expo has carefully selected the most representative cultural symbols of our national image. Tea, porcelain and silk are displayed throughout the exhibition and these representative exhibits highlight the unique charm and have won the attention and recognition of the world.^[3]At the same time, modern technological means and other diversified methods are used to display the cultural symbols of our country, more richly expressing the meaning of each exhibit and spreading China's national image in the new era.

It's been nearly 13 years since the 2010 Shanghai World Expo in China ended, but the Expo fervor that was generated by the event is still going strong. The Expo has increased China's reliance on large-scale international events and better communication with the outside world, and China has gradually embarked on a project to communicate its national image.

4. Ways for China's Exhibition Industry to Connect with the International Community

4.1 Preparation for International Exhibitions under Economic Globalization

Economic globalization refers to the globalization of production, trade, investment, finance and other activities, that is, the optimal allocation of production factors on a global scale. Under the background of economic globalization, the structure of the world exhibition industry economy shows the development trend of globalization, and develops into a comprehensive service trade industry, which has a very high degree of correlation with many other fields, such as information and communication, transportation, urban construction and so on. The exhibition industry creates high economic value, brings a large number of employment opportunities, and at the same time boosts economic growth. The United States Center for Exhibition Industry Research has such a data show that the United States held 13,000 exhibitions in 2000, and the direct income reached about 12 billion dollars. The comprehensive social consumption related to the exhibition is about 125 billion dollars, and the economic driving ratio of the exhibition is 1:10. Meanwhile, there are about 100,000 people engaged in the exhibition industry in Germany. In 2000, the sales of German exhibitions amounted to 4.5 billion marks, pulling the direct consumption of trade visitors and exhibitors to 17 billion marks, providing 230,000 employment opportunities for the society, creating a comprehensive social value of 41 billion marks, and driving the

ratio of economy to 1:9.1.

It can be clearly seen from the global flow of projects, exhibition capital, talents and management techniques that economic globalization has a very profound impact on the exhibition economy, readjusting the structure of the world's exhibition economy, optimizing the allocation of exhibition resources, and then intensifying the competition in the exhibition market and promoting the development of the exhibition economy all over the world.

On the way to meet the globalization of exhibition economy, China rapidly developed its exhibition economy. It was only after the founding of New China that the modern Chinese exhibition industry began to develop, which is nearly a hundred years late compared with the development of modern exhibition industry in Europe. From the 1950s to the mid-1980s, the main economic activities of China's exhibition companies were to organize exhibitions of economic and trade achievements abroad and a few independent exhibitions to host other socialist countries in China. At that time, there was a certain gap between China's exhibition industry and the developed western exhibition countries in terms of exhibition funds, exhibition ideas, operation mode, management technology, professional talents and scale economies effect. After 15 years of development since the mid-1980s, China's exhibition industry has developed rapidly, with an annual growth rate of 20%, becoming an emerging force in the world exhibition economy.

4.2 Main Problems Faced by China's Exhibition Industry at Present

4.2.1 Management Systems

Compared with foreign countries, China has not yet formed a unified exhibition management mechanism and industry binding organization. According to the current exhibition management measures, the ministries and commissions under the State Council and their affiliated associations, chambers of commerce, foreign trade companies, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), industrial and trade companies as well as their industry branches, local governments or provincial and municipal authorities in charge of foreign trade, exhibition venues, and overseas exhibition organizations are all capable of organizing exhibitions. The excessive situation of multi-channel and multi-level exhibitions has led to the phenomenon of conference and exhibition "bubble" in some places, and the management of conference and exhibition has also fallen into chaos. Nonetheless, China's conference and exhibition industry still maintains the examination and approval system for exhibitions and the qualification system for exhibition companies formed by the planned economy, which is not in line with the market in the era of survival of the fittest.

4.2.2 Holding Venues

Since China joined the WTO, opening to the outside world and the market economy have developed in depth, the municipal governments have attached great importance to the exhibition industry. The exhibition venues have developed rapidly, and a part of large-scale modernized exhibition venue facilities have been newly built, which are constructed in accordance with the modern requirements of the current exhibition industry, and have a great deal of renovation and expansion from the scale to the facilities and equipment. At present, many cities are still developing in the planning and construction of large exhibition venues. However, according to relevant statistics, the current utilization rate of the national convention and exhibition venues is less than 25% on average. Obviously, a serious problem with convention and exhibition venues of China is that the venues are underutilized, limiting the development of convention and exhibition industry of China. At the same time, some of the exhibition halls are very small, with outdated facilities, single function, low level of service and lack of competitiveness, not to mention the ability to take over international exhibitions, and can only organize exhibitions of a relatively low level.

4.2.3 Regionalization

China's current advanced convention and exhibition economic belts: Yangtze River Delta centered on Shanghai; Bohai Rim centered on Beijing; Central and Western China centered on Zhengzhou, Xi'an, Chengdu and Wuhan; Pearl River Delta centered on Guangzhou; and Northeast China centered on Dalian. These five convention and exhibition economic belts have a leading position in China, but it is also difficult to drive the development of the national exhibition industry, resulting in many other areas of the exhibition industry is relatively backward, and there is also an imbalance between supply and demand, supply exceeds demand, and more but not more refined.

4.2.4 Practitioners

The convention and exhibition industry has not yet formed a pattern of specialized division of labor and collaboration. The convention and exhibition economy needs high-quality professional exhibition talents to carry out elaborate planning and specialized exhibition companies to undertake it. However, at present our country lacks high-quality professional exhibition talents and exhibition companies, resulting in confusion in the organization and management of conventions and exhibitions. Emphasis on form rather than content makes the quality and effectiveness of the convention and exhibition industry poor. In addition, technology, information and other supporting services lag behind, restricting the exhibition economies .

4.2.5 Issues in Branding

In the context of economic globalization, branding has become an unstoppable trend. But at this stage, some Chinese enterprises lack of brand awareness, brand marketing. Since the reform and opening up, although China's conference and exhibition industry has been developed relatively fast, at the present stage, the number of regional exhibitions with the same theme is relatively common, and the interval time is relatively short, and the variety is relatively single, so that some manufacturers are prone to information illusion, which leads to a large amount of wastage of conference and exhibition resources.

5. Conclusion

To summarize, the process of global economic integration plays a great role in developing countries, and most of them begin to pay attention to the concept of convention and exhibition economy. Although the market share of developing countries in the convention and exhibition industry is not yet very large due to the imbalance of regional economic development, the huge potential for economic development in developing countries is deeply appealing to the exhibition industry. China is the world's largest country in terms of population and one of the fastest-growing countries in the world in terms of GDP, but China's position in the international exhibition industry is still far from China's international status. Accordingly, we all agree that there is a lot of space for the development of China's convention and exhibition industry, waiting to be developed and explored. We still hope that the domestic convention and exhibition companies can not be afraid of hardships, and learn from the difficulties and seek development in the setbacks while competing with the foreign convention and exhibition leaders. Competition is not scary, and economic globalization is even less scary. What scares us is the mentality of watching and waiting and short-sightedness. We have to adjust our mentality to keep the general goal while taking hold of the specific tasks, so that Chinese exhibition companies can really benefit from the WTO process, and Chinese exhibition companies can keep pace with the times, develop continuously, and create new splendor on the new international stage.

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