

Introduction

The present work sets out to provide an overview of international craft trade fairs and their significance for companies. The international craft sector supplies products to a wide range of retailers globally. The work of artisans is found in shops ranging from galleries selling unique items through to the mass retail chains offering high-volume functional, decor and gift items. The sector provides employment to millions of people. Yet it is no easy task for these suppliers of artisanal products to define locations where they may effectively offer their products for sale. The identification of such locations was requested by the UNESCO/ITC International Symposium on Crafts and the International Market: Trade and Customs Codification, held in Manila in October 1997. The present publication stems from the Recommendations and Plan of Action adopted on that occasion.

About this Guide

The purpose of this Guide is to provide crafts producers and exporters with a practical methodology to:

- ➔ Assess potential markets in terms of national and individual enterprise capabilities for effective market penetration.
- ➔ Select the international trade fair that best matches their needs for a particular market audience.
- ➔ Budget, plan and implement successful participation in any trade fair.
- ➔ Avail of the many opportunities to obtain market information that arise at such events.

The Guide enables readers to select, plan and participate effectively in suitable international craft trade fairs throughout the world. It includes checklists and reference material selected specially for the needs of the crafts sector.

The Directory in Annex 1 is a select compilation of international craft trade fairs where artisanal products are substantially exhibited. The fairs selection criteria are listed in the introduction to the Directory, and the information given follows the standard layout used in most directory sources.

Target audience

This publication is aimed at the following readership: individual craft producers and exporters, associations of craft industries and trade in exporting countries, and trade support institutions (TSIs) responsible for dissemination of information to, and co-ordination of, groups of exhibitors of artisanal products.

Some definitions

Although there is no universally accepted definition of artisanal products due to the many variables involved, and indeed to the variety of purposes for which such definitions may be sought, the present Guide uses the fairly broad definition given below, as adopted by the UNESCO/ITC International Symposium (Manila, 1997).

Artisanal products are those produced by artisans, either completely by hand or with the help of hand-tools or even mechanical means, provided that the direct manual contribution remains the most substantial input of the finished product. Such products are without restriction in terms of quantity and the use of raw materials from sustainable resources. The special nature of artisanal products derives from their distinctive features which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional or religiously and socially symbolic and significant.

In order to include the broadest range of fairs that provide an opportunity to exhibit artisanal products, the following definitions are used in this Guide:

International trade fairs indicate those that are open to foreign exhibitors.

Trade fairs refer to those at which direct sales of merchandise within the exhibition complex are not normally permitted.

Craft trade fairs in general are those at which makers and suppliers display contemporary and traditional arts and crafts, giftware, decorative accessories, home furnishings, interior decoration, jewellery, toys and craft stationery products.

General trade fairs exhibit all types of consumer and industrial goods. They are open to the public but also attract business visitors. The audience may be international, national, regional or even provincial in character.

Consumer fairs are designed to attract the public at large. Most such fairs are general in terms of product shown and audience interest. Yet many major consumer fairs specialize in particular sectors such as automobiles, home furnishings and other consumer-goods categories.

Trade visitor is taken to mean a professional buyer or specialist with an interest in the fair.

Open to the public indicates that members of the public may attend the fair and that retail sales may take place.