

The Influence of Buyer Needs on Trade Show Effectiveness and Post-Show Purchase Intention in an Emerging Market: From a Literature Review to an Evaluation Framework

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Abstract

This review article investigates the influence of buyer motivation on perceived trade show (TS) effectiveness and post-show (PS) purchase intention, with particular emphasis on emerging markets. It draws upon Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Alderfer's ERG Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Sheth's industrial buyer behaviour model, Lemon and Verhoef's customer experience framework, and Edelman and Singer's Loyalty Loop to construct a comprehensive, buyer-centred perspective on TS outcomes. The literature synthesis demonstrates that buyer needs, including safety and security, belonging, and self-esteem, shape both at-show and PS experiences, which subsequently affect trust, loyalty, and purchasing decisions. The article further argues that researchers should conceptualise TS effectiveness as a dynamic process encompassing pre-show, at-show, and PS interactions rather than treating it as a single-event outcome. A significant contribution of this review is the introduction of a buyer-centred TS effectiveness evaluation framework that connects buyer needs to observable TS activities and PS purchase intention. Additionally, the review identifies the contextual limitations of classical motivation theories in emerging markets and recommends adapting them to reflect cultural and infrastructural conditions better.

Keywords: Buyer Needs; Emerging Market; Motivation Theories; Post-Show Purchase Intention; Trade Show Effectiveness

1. Introduction

Trade Shows (TSs) are widespread in industrial marketing, as TSs facilitate the convergence of several stakeholders, including distributors, retailers, wholesalers, regulatory authorities and manufacturers, in one place (1). Recent research highlights the value of unifying the actors in the sector (2). In addition, managers within the industry recognise the effectiveness of relationship marketing attributed to TSs (3). Researchers report that the growth of networks in TSs has positive effects on businesses, which is why both academia and practitioners are keen to know the effect of TSs (4). TSs are at the top of the marketing scale and provide economic benefits for businesses of all sizes (5,6). In addition, exhibitions and TSs generate other support activities which often benefit society and are visible before, during and after the event. According to Ivkov *et al.* (7), TSs have a multiplier effect in the political, cultural, economic and social spheres.

Evidently, industrial and emerging market exhibitors differ in firm-level resource availability, managerial expertise, and underlying motives for participating in TSs. Such variations suggest that the performance dimensions identified in the existing literature may not fully apply to exhibitors operating in emerging markets. This scenario underscores the need to examine and contextualise the dimensions of TS effectiveness within emerging economies (8). Although the global exhibition industry expanded markedly between 2018 and 2019 (with visitors rising from 303 million to 353 million

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and exhibitors from 4.5 million to 4.8 million across more than 180 countries) Africa's participation remained marginal, accounting for only 0.6% of total visitors and 0.9% of exhibitors (9,10). This imbalance underscores a significant gap in TS engagement and scholarly attention between developed and emerging economies. Given the industry's global economic contribution (over USD 140 billion in direct expenditure and 1.4 million jobs in 2019), there is a compelling need to investigate TS effectiveness in emerging markets (9,10). Research indicates that the transition from participation to actual sales is not reliable. Data from the African agro-processing industry reveal that although businesses collect numerous leads during TSs, only 30% or less of leads convert into sales (11,12). A systematic review by Tafesse and Skallerud (13) revealed a significant imbalance in TS effectiveness research. Approximately 66 per cent of studies focused on exhibitor's perspective, and only 16 per cent focused on visitor's perspective. There are limited theoretical and empirical studies examining buyer motivation as a determinant of TS effectiveness and Post-Show (PS) purchase intention, especially in emerging markets (13).

This article reviews and integrates the existing literature on the motivational factors that affect buyer behaviour. In particular, it investigates how buyers' motivational needs shape their perceptions of TSs' effectiveness and their PS purchase intention. Building on classical concepts of motivation (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Alderfer's ERG Theory, and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory), this article examines how these motivational models contribute to understanding buyer behaviours at TSs, particularly in emerging markets. It also proposes conceptualising a framework that incorporates these motivational perspectives better to understand TSs and TS outcomes from buyers' perspectives.

2. Methodology

For this literature review, the researchers used a systematic, integrative approach to compile previous studies on the topic of interest. Peer-reviewed articles that were relevant to the topic were retrieved by searching academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar using keywords. The most recent literature reviews on TS effectiveness by Tafesse and Skallerud (13), Sarmiento and Simões (14), and Vitali *et al.* (15) guided the data search. The researchers then filtered the studies accessed based on relevance to the topic of study, rigorous methodology, and theoretical perspectives. The researchers then analysed the filtered articles to identify prevailing theories and examine findings from previous studies.

3. Literature review

3.1. Audience and Exhibit Performance Metrics for Evaluating TS Effectiveness

Mora Cortez, Clarke and Freytag (16) note that evaluating TS effectiveness is inherently challenging because exhibitors often pursue several goals simultaneously rather than a single measurable outcome. In response to this complexity, Tafesse and Skallerud (13), Sarmiento and Simões (14), and Vitali *et al.* (15) report that practitioners frequently rely on proxy performance indicators, including audience engagement, audience quality, target audience penetration, visitor numbers, contact rates, and lead generation. While these indicators provide practical insights, they capture only partial aspects of TS success.

Researchers define the *prospective audience* as the proportion of attendees who demonstrate genuine interest in a firm's offerings. Herbig, O'Hafa and Palumbo (17) underscore the importance of pre-show targeting to attract relevant audiences, yet this presumes firms possess accurate market intelligence, which is frequently lacking in emerging markets. Although Dekimpe *et al.* (18) show that increased pre-show promotional investment can enhance audience targeting, these results may reflect differences in resource availability rather than strategic capability. Bellizzi and Lipps (20) highlight the value of integrated pre- and PS engagement strategies, but such approaches raise costs without ensuring proportional returns. Beland and Chacon (21) contend that TS effectiveness depends on the presence of decision-makers within the audience; however, this view oversimplifies organisational buying processes, which often involve multiple stakeholders. Weisgal (22) finds that a high proportion of attendees identify as decision-makers or influencers, but such aggregate figures may exaggerate actual purchasing authority, thereby limiting the reliability of this metric.

Attraction efficiency, defined as the proportion of the target market visiting an exhibitor's booth (23), is a commonly used performance indicator. However, this metric assumes that booth visitation signifies meaningful engagement, which is not always the case. Williams, Gopalakrishna and Cox (24) identify tactics such as booth design, layout, and positioning to enhance visibility, but these strategies may also draw significant numbers of non-target visitors. This scenario raises concerns regarding measurement validity, as attraction may reflect general curiosity rather than

genuine purchase interest. Additionally, pre-show marketing and live demonstrations can complicate attribution, making it challenging to determine the actual drivers of booth traffic.

Contact efficiency quantifies the proportion of visitors who interact directly with booth staff (23). Although this indicator captures the occurrence of interaction, it does not assess the quality or depth of engagement. Resnick (25) observes that many booth interactions are brief and superficial, indicating that high contact rates do not necessarily correspond to meaningful buyer-seller exchanges. Williams, Gopalakrishna and Cox (24) emphasise the role of staff performance in fostering engagement. However, this focus may overstate personnel's influence while neglecting contextual factors such as visitor intent, time constraints, and booth congestion. Furthermore, staff assessments of visitor seriousness are inherently subjective, introducing potential measurement bias.

Conversion efficiency, defined as the proportion of contacts converted into leads (23), also has notable limitations. External factors such as brand reputation, competitor activity, and buyer readiness significantly influence conversion outcomes, complicating attribution. While firms often use leads as proxies for future sales, lead quality varies widely, and high lead volumes do not ensure future revenue. Consequently, conversion-based performance measures lose predictive validity, especially when firms do not apply consistent follow-up processes.

Lead generation remains one of the most widely used TS metrics because of its simplicity and ease of measurement. However, Herbig, O'Hara and Palumbo (26) caution that the quantity of leads does not reflect their quality or conversion potential. Excessive focus on lead counts may promote short-term, sales-oriented behaviours at the expense of long-term relationship-building objectives. Given that TSs also serve broader purposes, such as branding, networking, and market intelligence, relying solely on lead-based evaluation yields an incomplete assessment of effectiveness.

Researchers often identify *employee performance* as a critical determinant of TS success (23). Although increasing staff numbers can enhance engagement (18), this approach may overlook diminishing returns. Skyline Exhibits (27) underscores the significance of sales personnel, but non-sales roles, including technical specialists and relationship managers, also play substantial roles in TS outcomes. Metrics such as sales per representative tend to prioritise short-term results and may inadvertently discourage the development of long-term capabilities (28).

Return on Investment (ROI) continues to serve as a primary financial metric for evaluating TS effectiveness (29). However, calculating ROI is complex due to attribution challenges, time lags, and assumptions regarding conversion. CEIR (30) identifies inconsistencies in how firms define ROI, with some emphasising immediate sales and others considering long-term outcomes. Although ROI offers financial clarity, it frequently undervalues intangible benefits such as brand equity, trust, and relationship development.

Return on Objectives (ROO) addresses certain limitations of ROI by assessing performance relative to predefined goals (19,23,31). However, the effectiveness of ROO depends on the clarity and measurability of these objectives. CEIR (30) notes that firms frequently prioritise branding objectives, which are inherently difficult to quantify, thereby introducing subjectivity into the evaluation process.

Cost-based metrics, such as *total TS cost* and *cost per visitor*, are frequently used to assess efficiency. However, these indicators assume that all visitors are equally valuable, which is unrealistic. Herbig, O'Hara and Palumbo (26) propose cost per lead as a more nuanced measure, but it still does not account for lead quality or long-term returns. Additionally, cost comparisons across firms can be misleading due to variations in participation strategies and market conditions.

Exhibit efficiency, *product interest*, and *memorability* offer further insights into engagement and recall. Herbig, O'Hara and Palumbo (26) observe that these measures are frequently based on subjective assessments and often lack contextual sensitivity. High memorability does not necessarily translate into positive attitudes or purchasing behaviour, limiting its predictive value. Likewise, product interest does not ensure conversion into actual buying intention.

In summary, the literature indicates that although audience and performance metrics offer valuable indicators of TS activity, each metric captures only a partial aspect of effectiveness. This insight underscores the need for more integrated, buyer-centred approaches that combine behavioural, relational, and outcome-based indicators.

3.2. Motivation theories

This section lays the theoretical foundations for buyer motivation and establishes the conceptual basis for linking motivation theories to TS contexts.

3.2.1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs serves as a foundational theoretical framework for understanding human motivation and has significantly influenced organisational behaviour, marketing, and consumer research since its inception (32–34). The theory delineates five hierarchical needs that drive behaviour: physiological needs, safety and security, love and belongingness, self-esteem, and self-actualisation (32). According to Maslow, individuals typically satisfy lower-order needs before progressing to higher-order needs, with self-actualisation representing the pinnacle of personal development. Although the theory remains widely cited, empirical support within industrial and organisational contexts is limited. Wahba and Bridwell (35) observe that empirical studies often fail to distinguish between general human motivation and work-related motivation. Nonetheless, Maslow's framework continues to inform research on internal factors influencing buyer behaviour and decision-making.

Marketing scholars frequently employ Maslow's theory to explain consumer needs and to articulate product value propositions. Tikkanen (36) investigated the alignment of marketing activities with various need levels, while Dennis (37) demonstrated the theory's applicability in analysing consumer behaviour within shopping malls. Despite its continued influence in organisational contexts, there is a lack of studies directly connecting Maslow's hierarchy to business-to-business (B2B) buyer behaviour at TSs in emerging markets.

Conforti (38) extends Maslow's framework to buyer behaviour, contending that buyers exhibit emotional, social, and spiritual needs analogous to those of other individuals. Within TS environments, buyers engage not only for commercial purposes but also to satisfy social, psychological, and developmental needs. *Physiological, safety and security* needs constitute the foundational requirements for participation in TSs. Organisers and exhibitors address these needs by ensuring comfortable venues, providing refreshments, implementing effective crowd management, maintaining visible safety procedures, establishing emergency systems, and employing trained security personnel (39,40). The ongoing digitalisation of TSs further underscores the necessity for secure registration systems and transparent data policies, especially in hybrid event formats (41). Product-related assurances, including certifications, warranties, and durability information, further enhance buyer confidence and trust (42,43).

Sense of Belonging centres on social connection and relationship development. TSs inherently facilitate networking, collaboration, and relationship building (44). Opportunities for networking, collaborative activities, panel discussions, demonstrations, and interactive sessions foster social engagement and community formation (23,45–47). Exhibitors further reinforce emotional attachment by aligning brand values with buyer interests, such as sustainability and community development (48). Addressing these social needs increases perceived TS effectiveness and promotes post-event loyalty.

Self-Esteem needs pertain to recognition, competence, and professional identity. Exhibitors address these needs by offering personalised invitations, customised solutions, acknowledgement of buyer expertise, and opportunities for knowledge sharing (49). The provision of clear information further enhances buyers' confidence in decision-making (50), while emphasising product uniqueness and industry leadership elevates buyer prestige and status perceptions (51). These strategies contribute to TS effectiveness and foster PS purchase. *Self-actualisation*, representing the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy, encompasses personal growth and fulfilment. Conforti (38) contends that self-actualisation is facilitated by providing individuals with opportunities for learning, innovation, and active participation. At TSs product demonstrations, seminars, consulting services, and collaborative innovation activities promote professional advancement and knowledge development (47,52). Additionally, self-paced learning resources and independent product exploration empower buyers and support their personal development objectives (53).

Despite its theoretical contributions, Maslow's hierarchy has been subject to frequent criticism. Empirical studies indicate that individuals may pursue higher-order needs before fulfilling lower-level needs (54), and that need priorities often vary among individuals (55). Hall and Nougaim (56) reported that employee needs shifted with career progression rather than following a strict, sequential hierarchy. Huizinga (57) observed that occupational roles also influenced motivational priorities. Some scholars question the applicability of self-actualisation in industrial contexts and argue that unmet lower-level needs may continue to influence behaviour (58,59). Trexler and Schuh (60) provided partial support for Maslow's deprivation principle but identified methodological limitations.

Cross-cultural research further questions the universality of Maslow's framework. Sanford (61) found that, in Latin America, family rather than work fulfilled many needs. Backer and Barling (62) observed that South African and Xhosa workers prioritised physiological needs over self-actualisation. Ghaleb (64) contends that collectivist societies often emphasise social obligations above personal aspirations. Kopsov (65) Ring Model proposes that individuals may satisfy multiple needs concurrently. Evidence from South African and Mexican contexts also highlights cultural variation in

need satisfaction and prioritisation (66,67). These findings suggest that research should adapt Maslow's framework to account for cultural and contextual differences, particularly in emerging-market TS environments.

3.2.2. Alderfer's ERG Theory

Alderfer introduced the Existence, Relatedness, and Growth (ERG) theory as a refinement of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, condensing human motivation into three categories: Existence, Relatedness, and Growth needs (68,69). In contrast to Maslow's hierarchical structure, ERG theory employs a more flexible framework, conceptualising needs as ranges rather than fixed, sequential levels. Several researchers contend that Alderfer's model possesses stronger empirical support and broader applicability than Maslow's theory, which was primarily based on clinical observations and has received limited empirical validation (70–72). According to Alderfer (73), existence needs correspond to physiological and safety needs, relatedness encompasses belongingness and internal esteem, and growth reflects external esteem and self-actualisation. The theory posits that multiple needs can influence behaviour concurrently rather than in a strict sequence.

A central feature of ERG theory is the frustration-regression principle, which posits that individuals may redirect focus to lower-level needs if higher-order needs are not satisfied (73,74). Mukhtar (75) further asserts that individuals prioritise the most pressing needs rather than adhering to a predetermined sequence. This flexibility increases the theory's explanatory capacity and supports its use in organisational settings to analyse motivation, morale, and productivity (68).

ERG theory is highly applicable to TS environments. Existence needs encompass safety, comfort, and fundamental requirements such as access to product information, transparent pricing, refreshments, and organised booth layouts (76–78). Relatedness needs highlight the importance of social interaction, networking, and relationship building, which exhibitors can facilitate through staff engagement and seminars (79). Growth needs pertain to self-esteem, learning, and development, while exhibitors address these needs through educational presentations, demonstrations, and innovative solutions that enhance buyer capabilities (73). Aligning TS strategies with ERG theory enables exhibitors to address buyer needs more holistically, thereby increasing engagement, satisfaction, and PS sales opportunities.

3.2.3. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, introduced in 1959, differentiates between motivation factors and hygiene factors as key determinants of employee attitudes and performance (80,81). Motivation factors, including achievement, personal growth, recognition, advancement, responsibility, and meaningful work, contribute to increased job satisfaction and productivity. In contrast, hygiene factors such as salary, supervision, work conditions, interpersonal relationships, and organisational policies primarily serve to prevent dissatisfaction (82). According to Herzberg, enhancing hygiene conditions alone is insufficient to generate satisfaction; organisations must also address intrinsic motivational factors to improve performance. The theory posits that job dissatisfaction stems from environmental conditions, whereas satisfaction arises from the nature of the work itself (80,81).

Herzberg's framework closely parallels Maslow's hierarchy by distinguishing lower-level extrinsic needs from higher-order intrinsic needs (82). Extrinsic factors, including management and workplace conditions, mitigate dissatisfaction but do not actively promote satisfaction. In contrast, intrinsic factors facilitate personal development and enhance performance (80,81). The lack of motivation factors typically results in neutral attitudes rather than dissatisfaction, underscoring the complementary relationship between the two dimensions.

The theory also offers valuable insights for understanding TSs in emerging markets, particularly in developing economies where research is limited (8). In these contexts, safety and security frequently dominate attendee concerns due to infrastructural limitations and public safety challenges (83). As a result, effective crowd management, emergency procedures, and the presence of professional security personnel are essential for fostering attendee confidence and ensuring TS success (83,84). In addition to business functions, TSs contribute to professional identity development and provide social support within emerging industries (85), aligning with principles of social identity theory (86). Cross-cultural evidence challenges the universality of traditional motivation theories. Research demonstrates that need priorities vary across contexts, with dignity and community frequently taking precedence over individual growth in developing markets (61,63,66,87). Consequently, scholars contend that motivation theories must be culturally adapted when applied to emerging-market TS environments, as buyers may prioritise safety, trust, and belonging rather than self-actualisation (88–92).

3.3. Theoretical Frameworks

Maslow's (34) hierarchy of needs serves as the theoretical foundation for this study and remains relevant in both organisational and buyer behaviour contexts. Solomon (93) characterises buyer behaviour as the process by which individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. Previous research demonstrates that social, cultural, psychological, and personal factors influence customer decision-making (94), although exhibitors typically have limited control over many of these determinants.

Sheth's (95) *integrative model of industrial buyer behaviour* accounts for B2B purchasing by illustrating how psychological, social, and organisational factors collectively influence decisions. The model comprises three components: (i) the psychological world of individuals, such as engineers, purchasing agents, and users, shaped by background characteristics, information sources, search behaviour, perception, and satisfaction; (ii) organisational decision structures, which determine whether purchasing is joint or autonomous based on risk, complexity, and organisational size or centralisation; and (iii) the decision process, in which stakeholders resolve conflict through rational methods such as problem-solving or persuasion, or through non-rational approaches such as bargaining. Although the model remains valuable for understanding the complexity of industrial buying, it does not fully address digital engagement tools or the experiential and emotional factors that increasingly influence TS interactions. Furthermore, it underrepresents relationship marketing and real-time personalisation facilitated by modern technologies.

Despite these limitations, the model continues to offer value for TS strategy. Exhibitors may tailor communication to distinct stakeholder groups, such as cost-focused purchasing agents, technically oriented engineers, and efficiency-driven managers, while also fostering trust through enhanced reliability, effective problem resolution, and consistent follow-up engagement. Integrating Sheth's framework with digital analytics and experiential marketing increases its relevance by providing real-time insights into visitor behaviour and facilitating richer engagement experiences (96,97). Experiential methods, including interactive demonstrations and networking, further reinforce emotional engagement and trust.

Lemon and Verhoef's (98) *customer experience model* advances this understanding by highlighting pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase touchpoints that influence satisfaction and brand perception (99–101). Within TS contexts, the model helps exhibitors align pre-show messaging, on-site engagement, and PS follow-up with buyer expectations. Nevertheless, its effectiveness is limited in TS environments due to time constraints, high competitive intensity, and restricted post-event interaction (102–104). Adapting the model, however, can enhance engagement and conversion outcomes throughout the TS lifecycle.

The Loyalty Loop model by Edelman and Singer (105) further explains how prior positive experiences reduce evaluation effort and accelerate repeat purchasing. In TS contexts, this supports strategies that build strong first impressions through pre-show marketing, immersive booth experiences, and structured PS communication. However, the complexity of industrial buying limits its direct application, as Sheth (95) highlights the role of multiple decision-makers and formal evaluation procedures. Additionally, TS environments expose buyers to competing suppliers, which often reintroduces evaluation even among loyal customers (106).

In summary, integrating Maslow's motivational framework with Sheth's decision-making model, Lemon and Verhoef's customer experience approach, and the Loyalty Loop yields a more comprehensive explanation of TS effectiveness. Collectively, these theories demonstrate that layered psychological needs, organisational decision structures, experiential engagement, and loyalty-building processes across pre-show, at-show, and PS stages shape TS outcomes.

3.4. Developing a Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework synthesises Sheth's (95) integrative model of industrial buyer behaviour, Lemon and Verhoef's (98) customer experience framework, Edelman and Singer's (105) Loyalty Loop and Maslow's (34) hierarchy of needs to explain buyer motivations, decision-making processes, perceived TS effectiveness, and PS purchase intentions in an emerging market.

Maslow's (34) hierarchy of needs provides the motivational foundation by elucidating how safety and security, sense of belonging, and self-esteem needs influence buyer expectations in business-to-business (B2B) TS contexts. Exhibitors can enhance perceived TS effectiveness by addressing these needs through trust-building initiatives, relevant product assurances, and opportunities for professional recognition and advancement.

Sheth's (95) model explains that industrial buying decisions result from interactions among multiple stakeholders and organisational factors. Exhibitors enhance perceived TS effectiveness when they address the diverse decision-making roles of engineers, purchasing agents, and end users and respond to key product variables such as cost, innovation, and reliability.

Lemon and Verhoef's (98) framework organises the buyer journey into three stages: pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase. Within TS environments, effective management of pre-show engagement, on-site interactions, and follow-up communication enhances continuity in the buyer experience and reinforces purchase intentions.

Edelman and Singer's (105) Loyalty Loop model demonstrates that positive PS engagement reinforces trust, accelerates evaluation processes, and increases repeat-purchase intentions through personalised follow-up communication.

In summary, the integrated framework illustrates that buyer needs, organisational decision dynamics, customer experience, and loyalty processes collectively influence TS effectiveness and PS purchase intention.

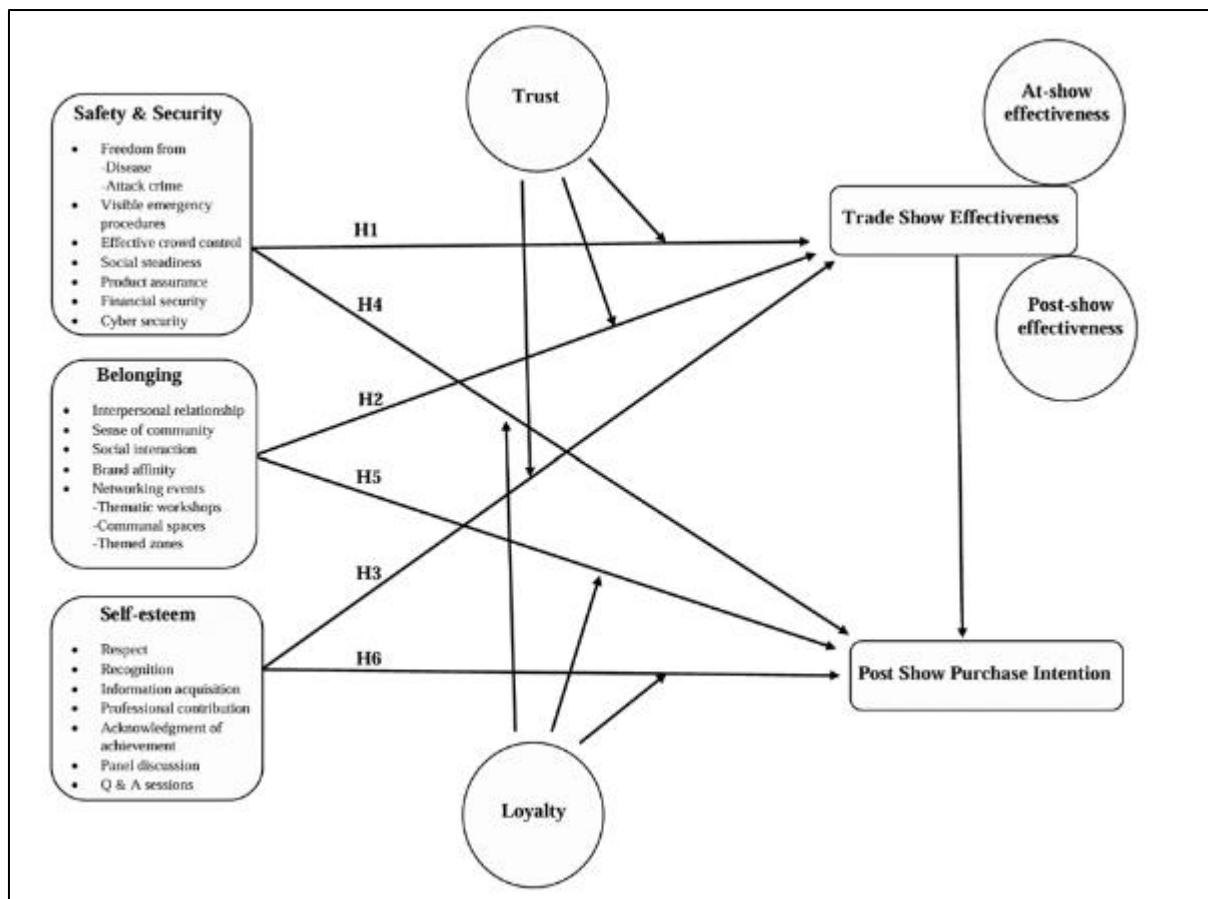


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

3.4.1. Buyer-Centred Trade Show Effectiveness Evaluation Framework

The buyer-centred framework directly connects buyer needs to observable TS activities and outcomes, drawing on Maslow's (34,107) hierarchy of needs. In this framework, safety and security, belonging, and self-esteem needs shape buyer perceptions and behaviours. The framework conceptualises TS effectiveness across two temporal dimensions: at-show effectiveness and PS effectiveness. These dimensions collectively influence PS purchase intention, with trust and loyalty serving as moderating variables that can strengthen or weaken these relationships.

During the at-show stage, exhibitors address safety and security needs by providing transparent demonstrations, product certifications, clear pricing, and reliable information, all supported by well-trained staff (42,43). The physical and organisational TS environment reinforces these needs through secure venues, refreshments, crowd control, and visible safety systems (108,109). In digital and hybrid contexts, secure registration systems and transparent data policies further enhance buyer confidence (41).

Exhibitors meet belonging needs by facilitating networking opportunities, interactive discussions, collaborative learning, and inclusive engagement spaces (23,46,52). TSs serve as social platforms that foster professional relationships and community building (110,111). Alignment with shared values, such as sustainability or innovation, further enhances emotional connection and brand affinity (48).

Exhibitors fulfil self-esteem needs by recognising buyer expertise, offering personalised engagement, and providing opportunities for knowledge sharing in expert forums and presentations (49,112). Clear and comprehensive information supports confident decision-making (113), while product prestige and innovation elevate perceived status (51). These experiences reinforce buyers' sense of competence and professional identity.

At-show experiences inform real-time evaluations of TS effectiveness, which, in turn, influence PS perceptions. PS effectiveness depends on reliable communication, fulfilment of promises, and consistent engagement (114). Exhibitors sustain a sense of belonging through relationship management and personalised follow-up (115,116), while they reinforce self-esteem needs through tailored offers and ongoing professional interaction (117,118). These processes convert experiential evaluations into PS purchase intentions.

Overall, the framework presents a sequential logic in which buyer needs drive TS activities, shaping at-show effectiveness, influencing PS effectiveness, and ultimately determining PS purchase intention. Trust and loyalty moderate these relationships by enhancing long-term engagement. The study underscores that TS effectiveness depends on aligning exhibitor strategies with evolving buyer needs across all stages of the TS experience, particularly in emerging markets.

4. Discussion of Findings

The findings show that alignment between buyer motivational needs and exhibitor activities across the event lifecycle primarily determines TS effectiveness in emerging markets. The existing literature consistently identifies Maslow's (34,107) hierarchy of needs as a foundational explanation of buyer engagement with TSs, emphasising safety and security, belonging, and self-esteem as the most influential needs in business-to-business exhibition contexts. In emerging markets, these needs are amplified by infrastructure limitations, heightened uncertainty, and weaker institutional trust, underscoring the importance of risk reduction and reassurance during TS participation.

The synthesis further demonstrates that a single theoretical perspective cannot fully explain TS effectiveness. Sheth's (95) model highlights the complexity of organisational buying by showing that multiple stakeholders, such as engineers, purchasing agents, and end users, simultaneously influence decision outcomes. This finding confirms that both emotional or motivational factors and functional alignment with technical, financial, and operational requirements shape perceived TS effectiveness.

Lemon and Verhoef's (98) framework reinforces the importance of viewing TS engagement as a continuous process rather than a discrete event. The findings indicate that pre-show expectations, at-show experiences, and PS interactions are interconnected and collectively shape buyer perceptions. TS environments compress these stages, requiring exhibitors to create strong immediate impressions and ensure effective follow-up.

Edelman and Singer's (105) Loyalty Loop further explains that positive TS experiences reduce future evaluation effort and accelerate purchasing decisions. However, the findings confirm that loyalty remains fragile in TS contexts due to competitive exposure and ongoing supplier comparisons.

Overall, the findings support the proposed buyer-centred framework, which integrates motivational needs, decision-making structures, experience management, and loyalty mechanisms. Trust and loyalty serve as critical moderating variables, strengthening the relationship between TS effectiveness and PS purchase intention.

5. Conclusion

This review concludes that TS effectiveness in emerging markets emerges as a dynamic, multi-theoretical, and multi-stage process shaped by buyer needs, organisational decision structures, customer experience, and loyalty formation. Maslow's (34,107) hierarchy of needs provides the motivational foundation for buyer engagement, while Sheth's (95) model clarifies the influence of organisational complexity on decision-making. Collectively, these perspectives demonstrate that TS outcomes depend on both psychological and structural factors.

The integration of Lemon and Verhoef's (98) customer experience framework and Edelman and Singer's (105) Loyalty Loop demonstrates that TS effectiveness extends beyond the event itself. Pre-show communication, at-show engagement, and PS follow-up collectively shape buyer perceptions and purchasing intentions. The effectiveness of these models, however, depends on their adaptation to the unique constraints of TS environments, such as limited time, intense competition, and brief interaction cycles.

A key contribution of this study is the development of a buyer-centred TS effectiveness framework that links buyer needs to observable TS activities and outcomes, incorporating trust and loyalty as moderating factors. This framework offers both theoretical and practical value by providing a structured approach to evaluating TS performance from the buyer's perspective. Improving TS effectiveness and PS purchase intention requires exhibitors to align their strategies with evolving buyer needs across all stages of the TS experience. This insight is particularly critical in emerging markets, where uncertainty, resource constraints, and relationship-based purchasing strongly shape buyer behaviour.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is **No** conflict of interest neither financial nor non-financial in connection with the article

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