



THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF THE DESIGN INDABA: A CASE STUDY OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUYERS' PROGRAMME



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INTRODUCTION

Design Indaba (DI) was launched in 1995 as a conference, then incorporated an Expo in 2004 (Design Indaba, 2014a:1). The DI Expo triggered the need for buyer and exhibitor interaction in order for them to network as well as form business relationships; therefore leading to the launch of the DI Buyers' Day, a programme aimed at bringing buyers and exhibitors together on a day exclusively dedicated to the buyers who view all products and services offered at the Expo before the public (Design Indaba, 2014b:1).

The DI has grown to be to become one of the world's leading design and business events and according to Getz (2008:403) business events (alongside sport events and festivals) are one of the three general types of events that attract most attention. Saymaan and Saymaan (2004:629) concur by stating that events are staged to meet specific objectives with the emphasis of attracting tourists, visitors and gaining income from their participation at the event or in relation to it.



This study seeks to identify the economic contribution of the DI Buyers' Programme for the event, buyers, exhibitors and Cape Town as a tourism destination. The research provides an analysis of the DI Buyers' Programme, focussing on the buyers' spending patterns at the Expo and in Cape Town, their level of awareness and involvement at the event, satisfaction and perceptions of the event as well as their profiles. The study also analyses the exhibitors' profiles, their awareness and participation at the event including their satisfaction of the event. Key informant interviews will be conducted with stakeholders prior and post the event. Preliminary results of the key informant interviews will be presented.

METHODOLOGY

This study will make use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. Two different surveys with closed and open-ended questions will be completed; one has been conducted face-to-face with the exhibitors at the DI Expo at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (between 28th February 2014 and 2nd March 2014) and the other will be sent via electronic mail to the buyers, post event. As per 2013 figures (Swart, 2012:13), 506 buyers (115 international and 391 local) had enrolled in the DI Buyers' Programme and 486 exhibitors showcased their work at the DI Expo. Based on this, the sample for the research is 159 surveys for the buyers and 214 for the exhibitors, at a 95% confidence level (Isaacs & Michael, 1981:192-193). The data collected from both these surveys will be analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software which will allow the necessary data to be tabulated and graphically represented.

Key informant interviews were conducted with the event organiser and one of the event stakeholders (Department of the Premier, Western Cape Provincial Government) in order to gain key insights from the relevant parties prior to the event. Key informant interviews will also be conducted post the event. The qualitative data will be analysed using the constant comparative method. For the purposes of this presentation, only the findings of the initial interviews will be presented.

KEY FINDINGS – Perceptions of Key Informants



As per responses gathered from the interviews; the event organisers and the event stakeholder (Department of the Premier), they are both satisfied with the event and feel that the buyers programme offers buyers the opportunity to interact with other buyers and exhibitors freely without interruption whilst also receiving the opportunity to gain great exposure. The event organisers also added: "We provide the opportunity at great expense, it is for the exhibitors to utilise the opportunity and market themselves. We also do the pre-marketing and run the registration process to ensure that there is a major buyer representation from a global perspective."

Both event organisers and the Department of the Premier were aware of business opportunities created as a result of the buyers' day and both were not involved in the partnership(s) or project(s). The event organisers did however mention that they are aware of these partnerships due to the fact that they conduct a survey after the event where the exhibitors provide them with data based upon their sales during the Expo days.

The Department of the Premier stated that they do not have any problems with the DI Buyers' programme, nor did they indicate any improvement as they were satisfied with the DI Buyers' programme. The event organiser on the other hand felt that both buyers and exhibitors lacked the necessary skill to manage themselves during the DI Buyers' day as from previous feedback given they found that: "The exhibitors are sometimes inadequately prepared to meet with and interact with the buyers and they don't always have a feel for export processes". Furthermore they noted that improvements would definitely lead towards increasing the quality of buyers and obtaining a government department to take responsibility of the DI Buyers' Programme by funding and executing it. "Having the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) take responsibility for the buyers programme, something we have tried in the past; it is an extensively marketed programme locally and internationally. It should be supported by a government department to take it to its next" – Owner of Design Indaba

Table 1: Event Organisers' responses

EVENT ASPECTS	SD	D	N	A	SA
This event profiles Cape Town as a tourism destination					X
This event is important for the economy					X
This event creates job/ business opportunities					X
This event promotes local businesses (specifically in Cape Town)					X
This event is worthy of its economic value					X
This event created (financial) benefits for everyone who participates/ enrolls in the DI Buyers' Programme					X
This event allows DI to grow internationally and locally					X
This event encourages a frequent return rate to the DI Expo (annually)					X

Table 2: Event Stakeholder's responses

EVENT ASPECTS	SD	D	N	A	SA
This event profiles Cape Town as a tourism destination					X
This event is important for the economy					X
This event creates job/ business opportunities					X
This event promotes local businesses (specifically in Cape Town)					X
This event is worthy of its economic value					X
This event created (financial) benefits for everyone who participates/ enrolls in the DI Buyers' Programme					X
This event allows DI to grow internationally and locally					X
This event encourages a frequent return rate to the DI Expo (annually)					X

In comparing the responses of the event organisers and the Department of the Premier; they both strongly agreed that the DI Buyers' Programme profiles Cape Town as a tourism destination, the event is important for the economy, it creates job/ business opportunities, it promotes local businesses (specifically those in Cape Town), that the event is worthy of its economic value and that the event allows DI to grow internationally.



Contrastingly, the Department of the Premier merely agreed to fact that the event is worthy of its economic value instead of strongly agreeing; as the Interactive Africa did. In addition to that the Department of the Premier felt neutral about the fact that event created financial benefits for everyone who participates/ enrolls in the DI Buyers' Programme while Interactive Africa agreed to that statement. Once again, the Department of Premier only agreed with the statement that the DI Buyers' Programme encourages a frequent return rate to the DI Expo while Interactive Africa strongly agreed with the statement.

In conclusion, both event organisers and the Department of the Premier equally find the DI Buyers' day as beneficial to both the exhibitors and the buyers as they both are aware of economic benefits of the programme and also see the increase in the event attendance each year from both local and international buyers. Furthermore, they concur that the event is a great platform that ensures that jobs/business opportunities are created for the buyers, exhibitors, Design Indaba and Cape Town as a tourism destination.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the DI Buyers' programme is one of the biggest of all the trade shows in South Africa as it attracts the largest number of buyers. It is a significant opportunity created for exhibitors but they do not manage the opportunity, thus the benefits and the rewards created by the event organisers cannot be maximised to its full potential.

The DI Buyers' programme is an extensively marketed programme locally and internationally; the goal is to increase its worth by receiving support from more government departments to take it to its next level by having more hosts who can assist with export questions, production questions, local and international terms of trade as well as introducing new measures of trade to those of first time buyers/sellers (exhibitors).

Furthermore, the event organisers feel that the "funding and execution of the Buyers' Programme should really be the responsibility of a government department such as the DTI and not a private sector company as the DI Buyers' programme has the purpose is to create new markets, deal with exports and job creation."



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