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UFI Global Barometer indicates further growth expected in 2025 for the exhibition industry globally

- 2024 and 2025 revenues expected to grow by 16% and 18% on average globally year on year respectively
- 46% of businesses plan to increase staff numbers in the coming 6 months
- Global economic developments, geopolitical challenges and sustainability / climate are the most important mid-term business issues
- Complete report includes dedicated profiles for 19 markets and regions, showcasing differences around the world

UFI, The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, has released the latest 34th edition of its flagship Global Exhibition Barometer report, which takes the pulse of the industry.

The results highlight that the exhibition industry will continue to grow revenues globally in 2024 and 2025 by a respective 16% and 18% year on year.

Globally, 46% of companies declare that they plan to increase their workforce in the coming 6 months, while another 51% declare that they will keep current staff numbers stable.

“Global economic developments” is the top mid-term issue with 20% of answers, followed by “Geopolitical challenges” and “Sustainability / Climate”, 15% each.

There is a clear consensus that the industry is using AI, with 92% of companies stating this. For the first time since this question was introduced a year ago, a majority of businesses state that they are already using this technology in “Sales, Marketing and Customer relations” functions, showing an unprecedented speed of adoption.

“UFI’s Barometer research has provided like-for-like benchmarking on key metrics for 18 years, and this new edition shows positive indicators for the year ahead across all markets, which is heartening to see. However, at the same time, it shows some uncertainty around economic environments and geopolitical challenges, demonstrating we operate in an ever-changing world,” comments **Chris Skeith OBE, Managing Director and CEO at UFI.**

“Many of the results validate the various projects UFI are working on in our centenary year, seeking greater recognition for the industry from policymakers, supporting our members to attract and retain the very best talent and help in the continued focus on Sustainability and Climate as all feature highly in the report.”

Size and scope

This latest edition of UFI’s bi-annual industry report was concluded in January 2025 and includes data from 390 companies in 56 countries and regions.

The study also includes outlooks and analysis for 19 focus countries and regions – Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, Colombia, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, the UAE, the UK, and the USA – as well as five additional aggregated regional zones.

Operations – Space sold

Globally, the level of operations in the second half of 2024 has picked up for 6 companies out of 10 (and even 7 out of 10 in North America, but only 5 out of 10 in Asia-Pacific) compared to the year before.

This trend will continue in the coming year with, on average, a percentage of companies reporting an increased activity ranging from 71% in North America, 62% in Central and South America and in the Middle East and Africa, to 60% in Europe and 42% in Asia-Pacific respectively.

In terms of space rented, results show a global progression of 9% for 2024 compared with 2019, but with significant variations at the country level, especially for some of the major global markets: while five countries have lower or comparable levels to 2019: Germany (-12%), China (-8%), France (-2%), Australia and the UK (same), nine have higher levels than the global average: Mexico and Spain (+13%), Italy (+15%), Saudi Arabia (+17%), Brazil and the UAE (+18%), Malaysia (+22%), Argentina (+34%), and India (+40%).

Turnover and operating profits

Revenues increased by 16% on average in 2024, and this trend is expected to continue. In 2025, revenues are expected to grow again by an average of 18% year on year.

These general trends vary from one country to another:

- Revenues from 2024 compared to 2023 increased by more than 20% in Argentina (+49%), Thailand (+30%), Mexico (+24%), Brazil (+23%) and Spain (+21%).
- Revenues from 2025 compared to 2024 are expected to increase by more than 20% in Argentina (+39%), the UK (+37%), Italy (+34%), Greece (+25%) and Colombia (+23%).

In terms of operating profits for 2024, 82% of the companies declare an annual increase of more than 10%, and 11% declare a decrease or a loss. Similar levels are anticipated for the 2025 operating profits, with 77% planning an annual increase of more than 10%, and 14% reporting a decrease or a loss.

In several markets, all respondents declared an increase of their operating profit by more than 10%: Australia (for 2024), France (for 2024), India (for 2025), Italy (for both 2024 and 2025), Mexico (for 2024), Spain (for 2024), South Africa (for 2025), the UAE (for both 2024 and 2025), the UK (for both 2024 and 2025), the USA (for both 2024 and 2025).

Workforce development

Globally, 46% of companies declare that they plan to increase their staff numbers, while another 51% declare that they will keep current staff numbers stable. Those levels follow similar positive ones measured six months ago (48% for both increase and stability).

The highest proportion of companies planning to add staff is identified in Saudi Arabia (100%), the UAE (86%), Malaysia (62%) and the UK (60%).

Most important business issues

For the short term:

- The most pressing business issues remains “State of the economy in home market” (23% of answers globally – 22% six months ago - and the main issue in all regions, except the Middle East and Africa, where it ranks second).
- “Geopolitical challenges” (16% of answers, compared to 14% six months ago, and the top issue for the Middle East and Africa) and “Global economic developments” (15%, same as six months ago) come in as the second and third most important issues globally.
- "Internal management challenges" (12%), "Competition from within the exhibition industry" (11%), followed by "Impact of digitalisation" and "Sustainability / Climate" (both 7%), and "Regulatory / Stakeholders issues" and "Competition with other media" (both 5%) follow.

There is an interesting change in ranking when comparing the most important issues in the short-term versus mid-term:

- “Global economic developments” is the top mid-term issue with 20% of answers (compared to the short-term issues, where it ranks third with 15% of answers).
- While “Geopolitical challenges” remains the second issue for both mid-term and short-term (with 15% and 16% of answers, respectively), “Sustainability / Climate” jumps to the

third position for the mid-term (with almost the same level of 15% as the second one), compared to the seventh position on the short-term (with 7% of answers).

Generative AI applications

Globally, there is an overwhelming consensus that AI will affect the industry, with 92% of companies stating this (+5% compared to mid-2023 when we introduced the question).

The two main areas expected to be most affected by the development of AI are the same in all regions: “Sales, Marketing and Customer relations” (86% globally) and “Research & Development” (82%). These are precisely the areas where generative AI applications are already mostly used and in all regions, with a very fast recent rhythm of adoption:

- 54% globally for “Sales, Marketing and Customer relations”: + 15% compared to six months ago, and +17% to a year ago
- 49% globally for “Research & Development”: + 11% compared to six months ago, and + 14% to a year ago.

Other areas expected to be most affected by the development of AI are all selected by most companies for the time in the 3 successive surveys: “Event production” (62%), “Human Resources” (57%), “Finance and Risk management” and “Other support functions” (both 54%).

Background

The 34th Global Exhibition Barometer report, concluded in January 2025, provides insights from 390 companies across 56 countries and regions.

It was conducted in collaboration with 32 associations: AAXO (The Association of African Exhibition Organizers) and EXSA (Exhibition and Events Association of Southern Africa) in South Africa, ABEA (Australian Business Events Association), ABEOC (Associação Brasileira de Empresas de Eventos) and UBRAFE (União Brasileira dos Promotores Feiras) in Brazil, AEFI (Italian Exhibition & Trade Fair Association) in Italy, AEO (Association of Event Organisers) in the UK, AFE (Spanish Trade Fairs Association) in Spain, AFECA (Asian Federation of Exhibition & Convention Associations) in Asia, AFEP (Asociación de Ferias del Peru) in Peru, AFIDA (Asociación Internacional de Ferias de América) in Central & South America, AIFEC (Asociación Colombiana de la Industria de Ferias, Congresos, Convenciones y Actividades Afines) in Colombia, AKEI (The Association of Korean Exhibition Industry) in South Korea, AMEREF (Asociación Mexicana de Recintos Feriales) and AMPROFEC (Asociación Mexicana de Profesionales de Ferias y Exposiciones y Convenciones) in Mexico, AOCA (Asociación Argentina de Organizadores y Proveedores de Exposiciones, Congresos, Eventos y de Burós de Convenciones) in Argentina, APPCE (Asociación Panameña de Profesionales en Congresos, Exposiciones y Afines) in Panama, AUDOCA (Asociación Uruguaya de Organizadores de Congresos y Afines) in Uruguay, HKECIA

(Hong Kong Exhibition and Convention Industry Association) in Hong Kong, IECA/ ASPERAPI (Indonesia Exhibition Companies Association) in Indonesia, IEIA (Indian Exhibition Industry Association) in India, JEXA (Japan Exhibition Association) in Japan, MFTA (Macau Fair & Trade Association) in Macau, MACEOS (Malaysian Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers) in Malaysia, MECA (Myanmar Exhibition and Conference Association) in Myanmar, PEIFE (Professional Events Industry Association Saudi Arabia) and SCEGA (Saudi Conventions & Exhibitions General Authority) in Saudi Arabia, SECB (Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau) in Singapore, SISO (Society of Independent Show Organizers) for the US, SOKEE (Greek Exhibition Industry Association) in Greece, TEA (Thai Exhibition Association) in Thailand, and UNIMEV (French Meeting Industry Council) in France.

In line with UFI's objective to provide vital data and best practices to the entire exhibition industry, the full results can be downloaded at www.ufi.org/research.

The next UFI Global Exhibition Barometer survey will be conducted in June 2025.

Attachments:

- [Cover of the 34th edition of the UFI Global Exhibition Barometer report](#)
- ["Revenue growth in all regions" infographic](#)
- ["Most important short-term and mid-term business issues" infographic](#)
- ["Impact of generative AI on the exhibition industry" infographic](#)

About UFI, The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry: UFI is the global trade association of the world's tradeshow organisers and exhibition centre operators, as well as the major national and international exhibition associations, and selected partners of the exhibition industry. UFI's main goal is to represent, promote and support the business interests of its members and the exhibition industry. UFI directly represents more than 50,000 exhibition industry employees globally and also works closely with more than 72 national and regional association members. More than 900 member organisations in 90 countries and regions worldwide are presently signed up as members. Over 900 international trade fairs proudly bear the UFI-approved label, a quality guarantee for visitors and exhibitors alike. UFI members continue to provide the international business community with a unique marketing media aimed at developing outstanding face-to-face business opportunities.

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