

On the Constructions of Developmental Environment for "Online Exhibition"

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Abstract—The "Online Exhibition", at the beginning of the "SARS" period, is discussed in regards to the exhibition industry in China. The discussion leads the industry to think about innovation of the traditional exhibition economy. Experts in the industry are very concerned about the "Online Exhibition" while the experiences of 2008 caused by the global financial crises influenced China's economic development. This kind of situation for China's exhibition industry poses a new challenge. The industry once again is concerned about the "Online Exhibition" and its developmental trends and the environment. This article discusses the "Online Exhibition" environment and the strategy of building an effective system.

Keywords- *Online Exhibition ; Strategy; Developmental Environment*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The global financial turmoil, triggered by the U.S. Sub prime Mortgage Crisis, makes the traditional exhibition to expose its vulnerability in a sudden crisis. The entity economy in China has suffered a negative impact of financial crisis. At the same time, financial crisis has also cooled down the over-expansion in domestic Exhibition industry and initiated a reflection for traditional exhibition economy within the profession. People in the field has fully concerned about "online exhibition" instead of regarding it as a "concept" before. They also put increasing enthusiasm for the development of "online Exhibition". Thus, exhibition industry in China has begun a new era in which involves "online exhibition" and traditional exhibition together as well as takes complementary advantages.

As early as the period of "SARS" in 2003, domestic exhibition industry began a discussion of "online exhibition". The idea that "online exhibition" should be widely praised and promoted because of its working at the cutting edge of exhibition industry under the shadow of SARS,¹ has been accepted by some scholar. They even asserted that online exhibition was able to surpass traditional exhibition soon. Another viewpoint believed that "online exhibition" was a branch of E-Commerce because its development and formation were completely based on the basic concepts and basic module of E-Commerce. These different voices reflected divergences while evaluating "online exhibition" in the field. Therefore, the conclusion of the role of "online

exhibition" in the post-SARS era, made by different scholars, were widely divergent. Some people expected "online exhibition" a good future while others regarded it as a temporary strategy for domestic exhibition industry in order to manage to survive a sudden crisis. The causes of divergences could be concluded into two aspects. On the one hand, an authoritative definition of "online exhibition" has not been given by theoretical circle. On the other hand, a good developmental environment for "online exhibition" has not been supplied. In 2008, global financial turmoil resulted in a comprehensive threat to the developmental process of China's entity economy. It also brought domestic exhibition industry a new challenge for its survival. In such an economic situation, the industry once again focused on the developmental trend of "online exhibition" and gave impetus to its rapid growth. During the past few years, the environment of both Internet hardware and software has occurred an essential change. "Online exhibition" has achieved a certain success with powerful supports in both technology and operating environment. Therefore, the further exploration of building developmental environment for "Online Exhibition" is positively significant.

II. FOCUS ON TESEARCH OF THE THE DEFINITION OF "ONLINE EXHIBITION"

Bill Gates had predicted, "The Internet age is coming with its infinite charm. It not only affects the way we work and means of communication, but also affects our way of life." The rapid development of IT and network technology in the 21st century inevitably affects the developmental pattern of traditional industries. A new environment and more developmental spaces for all walks of life are increasingly formed and exhibition industry is no exception. Both the birth and development of online exhibition are based on a widely use of IT and network technology in the traditional exhibition. The traditional exhibition is composed of three elements, information flow, business flow and related services. It makes exhibition professionals to process these three elements more convenient, efficient and accurate with the help of IT and network technology. Running exhibition online has been acknowledged by the whole industry and has played an important role in exhibition industry. It is believed that developing "online exhibition" is a major direction for exhibition industry in the Internet age.

The definition of "online exhibition" should be clear before doing strategy research of building developmental

environment. In this way, a good soft environment for the development of “online exhibition” could be created with the corresponding theoretical support. It is thought that “online exhibition” was a new exhibition mode in which assembles network technology and various service functions supplied by traditional exhibition. It is characterized by the integrated use of IT and network technology, the adoption and improvement of the services in the traditional exhibition as well as the exhibition presentation through Internet. Unlike traditional B2B or B2C e-commerce, online exhibition achieves its business goal by the way of E2B (Exhibition to Business).

However, the idea that online exhibition is merely a different form of e-commerce is still held by some scholar in the field.² The reason for the idea is that the majority of domestic online exhibitions is run basing on a B2B or B2C mode, and its most working modules, such as commodity database acquisition and processing system, and online business transaction platform, are plied by network operators through the integration of IT technology. Although these exhibitions supply clients with some services through Internet, they could not be viewed as “online exhibitions” according to author’s viewpoint. These exhibitions only take IT and network technology as a tool to achieve business. The history of traditional exhibition, brand value and more general professional services, such as the research and development of customer value, professional services tracking for exhibitors and trader as well as related logistics and financial services support, are not presented by the means of network. Therefore, this kind of exhibition could not be categorized as a real “online exhibition” due to its lack of service functions supplied by traditional exhibitions.

III. FORMULATE RULES FOR RUNNING "ONLINE EXHIBITION"

In China, the government plays a prominent role in the development of exhibition industry. On the one hand, the government actively engages itself in exhibition projects and supplies exhibition industry with enormous funds and countless resources. On the other hand, it is responsible of supervising exhibition organizers as well as guaranteeing a high quality of exhibitions. Similarly, it is not possible that online exhibition could achieve a rapid and healthy development without the correct guidance by the government. Thus, it is urgent and important for the relevant authorities to formulate a serial of rules for online exhibition.

Formulating rules for running "online exhibition" requests a careful deliberation between government and industry. It also must take full account of the basic characteristics of online exhibition. Online exhibition in china is experiencing an early development stage. According to its basic characteristics in this stage, online exhibition should be scientifically planed and adopt the mode which led by famous exhibitions, promoted by the policy and presented by network technology. At the same time, the organizers of online exhibitions should achieve approval by a highly authoritative apartment. Afterwards, the government may further standardize the composition and behavior of online exhibition with the help of laying down related laws and

policies accompanied by a powerful network technical support. It is likely that domestic exhibition industry could successfully achieve morphological diversification, expand the market as well as create a “win-win” even an “all-win” situation through establishing and strengthening the rule for “online exhibition”. The rule could also guarantee a sustained, steady and healthy development for exhibition industry in china.

Exhibition industry is still a newborn thing relative to other industries in China, so the organization and development of the exhibition has not strictly followed the principle of marketization, standardization, and commercialization. Various harmful phenomena, such as confused organizers, blind-obedience exhibition titles and disorder, are also serious. Neither the theory nor execution has a sound environmental mechanism. Both the relevant laws and regulations have not been fully established and strengthened. All these flaws make a negative impact on the development of domestic exhibition economy. Therefore, reforming existing exhibition management system and regulating the exhibition market with the help of laying down laws and policies satisfy the objective requirement of the development. These strategies are also essential for domestic industry to integrate itself with the international exhibition market competition. In a word, the rule which includes law, regulations as well as policies for “online exhibition” should be carefully considered and established as soon as possible. It is beneficial to the growth and improvement of china’s “online exhibition”.

IV. STRENGTHEN THE INDUSTRY SUPERVISION FOR "ONLINE EXHIBITION"

Many people are worried about network security, the authenticity of information and the credibility of service because “online exhibition” lacks sufficient law restriction and industry supervision. These insufficiencies also trouble exhibition enterprises even hinder them from setting foot to the field of online exhibition. It results in a consequence that exhibition enterprises always prefer traditional exhibitions in a real space to virtual exhibitions on the Internet. Thus, it is urgent for online exhibition to achieve a high credibility and interactive supports.

Industry supervision is an important guarantee for a healthy development of online exhibition. However, it is difficult for the traditional exhibition to manage and operation in accordance with law due to the absence of legislation as well as a weak supervision by the government. As for online exhibition, neither its developmental environment nor support policies can be reasonably managed because there is no clause at all. Therefore, it is suggested that “Exhibition Law” should be made as soon as possible. On the one hand, it is helpful of making definite about the function and role of exhibition regulatory authority. On the other hand, it is useful of establishing a good environment for infrastructure investment and development in the field of online exhibition. Moreover, it may supply the growing online exhibition with legal protection.

The supervision for online exhibition covers broad aspects, such as supervising organizers, dealing with legal issues (such as patent, copyright and taxation), monitoring network security, assessing financial credibility and risk, making assessment criteria and so on. Thus, all these jobs are required to be monitored by a specialized industry organization. This organization should be highly professional and authoritative. At the same time, it should be authorized by the central government and qualified for planning developmental strategies of exhibition industry for governments at all levels. At present, four aspects need to be involved in the industry supervision immediately. A. The regulatory organization should devote itself to assist the government to announce the related laws, regulation and policies for "online exhibition". B. It is in charge of making plans for the development of "online exhibition" in China. C. It is responsible for planning, investing and managing infrastructure of "online exhibition". D. It should carry out qualification assessment, information exchange and research as well as professional personnel training. In this way, the quality of online exhibition will be greatly raised.

V. PAY ATTENTION TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF CONFIDENCE PLATFORM FOR "ONLINE EXHIBITION"

Cultivating confidence on both sides of exhibitors and buyers has become an important factor in promoting a healthy growth of online exhibition. However, it is a complicated process. The success requires efforts from all circles and demands the implementation step by step. The most important question, which needs to be firstly solved, is what constitutes a confidence platform for "online exhibition". According to the author's viewpoint, the composition of confidence may be summed up as coming under five categories. 3

A. Brand

Online exhibition should focus on brand breeding. Building brand confidence is an important part of establishing the confidence platform. Therefore, it is necessary for online exhibition to explore the method of brand cultivation. Take "Chinese Export Commodities Fair (CECF) Online" for example, it has achieved an unexpected success. The virtual exhibition of CECF was widely accepted because it broke through the restriction of time and space. However, the brand effect of CECF is even more important in promoting "CECF Online". Clients embrace a high brand loyalty to the brand of CECF, so they also trust its virtual form.

B. Cost

Online exhibition includes all functions supplied by exhibitions in reality. It also guarantees an effective face-to-face communication between exhibitors and professional audiences by means of network technology. Furthermore, it may display products with a stereoscopic 3D image. Finally, online exhibition covers all functions of office automation as well as transaction platform. It is obvious that online exhibition is a multifunctional platform. Its characteristic of

low cost could attract enterprises and strengthen their confidences of participating online exhibition.

C. Efficiency

Online Exhibition breaks through the boundary of time and space. It not only establishes a vertical contact, such as one-to-one, one-to-all and all-to-all talk between clients and exhibitors during the period of exhibition, but also helps them to maintain a lasting dialogue after exhibition. This mode benefits both the above-mentioned sides because they may deeply understand each other. Thus, online exhibition will undoubtedly improve office efficiency and increase trade opportunities for enterprises. These advantages may encourage more enterprises to set up a long-term confidence for online exhibitions.

D. Risk

Although traditional exhibitions take the mode of face-to-face transaction, it is likely to run the risk of credibility imbalance or encounter fraud. As for online exhibition, these problems are more serious while trading in a virtual network space. Therefore, security of online exhibition seems extremely important. Professional technical team should enhance encryption technology as well as establish credit rating and assessment system. These strategies could effectively help online exhibition to avoid risks and greatly raise the target clients' confidence index.

E. Service

Online Exhibition should provide all parties more value-added intelligent services besides traditional services. Organizers may effectively manage exhibition process and resource with the help of computer systems, electronic means and Internet technologies. Exhibitors may gain a professional service, which is famous for its standardization, streamlining, informationization, intelligence and automation. Online exhibition completes the whole process of exhibition in network environment. At the same time, it retains all functions of traditional functions and gives exhibitions more powerful interactions. All the services supplied by online exhibitions strictly comply with the standard formulated by UFI (International Exhibition Association). In a word, online exhibition may completely change the traditional management process and scientifically provide an economical, effective, convenient, fast and accurate service system.

VI. IMPROVE THE CULTIVATION SYSTEM OF PROFESSIONAL TALENTS

Domestic exhibition industry has not carried out a market-oriented operation during the past few years. The quality of employees in this industry is also unsatisfied. The majority of employees have not accepted professional trainings while the other employees who know foreign languages and the knowledge of foreign trade have owned insufficient practical experience. Inter-disciplinary talents who have a solid theoretical basis of business management, familiar with the exhibition practice as well as network

technology are in great demand. Exhibition industry always takes a way in

which experienced masters are responsible of training apprentices to cultivate the employed. It is obvious that the traditional “master-apprentice” mode of talents training has constrained the development of online exhibition in China. It is necessary for exhibition industry to reform the cultivation system of professional talents.

The coming success of online exhibition in China has to rely on our own team of professional talent, a talent training system and a long-term planning. Therefore, the strategy of systematically nurturing talents seems extremely important and urgent. Nowadays, many universities and vocational training schools have set up or are experiencing the process of setting up the specialism in conference and exhibition. It is suggested that universities should set up specialized courses according to the developmental trend of exhibition industry as well as involve IT and network technology in their daily teaching. The specialized education may provide domestic exhibition industry more talents in future. On the other hand, in-service training should be actively carried out. Employees in exhibition industry should obtain the knowledge of exhibition theory and the training of comprehensive abilities. The training combines daily learning and centralized teaching. At the same time, it supplies professionals with different levels of courses according to their different requirements. In a word, in-service training integrates theory with practice and plays an important role in cultivating talents for “online exhibition” in China.

VII. CONCLUSION

Nowadays, the development of “online exhibition” in China meets with all kinds of setbacks because it is short of

technology, supervision as well as professional talents. Thus, establishing a good developmental environment for domestic “online exhibition” is significant. However, the construction of developmental environment for online exhibition is a complicated process. It requires efforts from all parties. Five strategies are submitted in this paper. Firstly, academic circle should focus on the research of the definition of “Online Exhibition”. Secondly, the government should formulate rules about running “online exhibition” as soon as possible. Thirdly, it is necessary for the authority to strengthen industry supervision for “online exhibition”. Furthermore, a confidence platform for “online exhibition” should be established immediately. Finally, exhibition industry must improve its cultivation system of professional talents. It is believed that “online exhibition” can be widely applied in future and play an important role in exhibition industry with a good developmental environment.

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