

Opinion: What place do trade shows have in the future of the Outdoor community?

By [Charles Ross](#) | 1 July 2022

As the debrief from the re-connection of the industry at **Outdoor by ISPO** continues, those responsible for the marketing budgets are debating whether the gatherings are still the best investment of resources. For those who did not make it to the **Munich Order Center** – you missed the energy and passion of this industry, which has been obvious at every event since the lockdown was relaxed.

Although the flip of the shows to digital did provide an opportunity to stay up-to-date with the trends and developments in the trade, they were almost useless from a sales point of view. What did become obvious was that alongside the product is a need to stay abreast of current lines of thought, so to be able to listen to presentations while sitting at a screen did help raise the bar of information. Half the turnover from the Outdoors is linked to apparel – which encompasses the best side of gatherings. Although haptic technology is progressing, nothing is yet up to the individual examination standard of working out the drape, shine and tactile feel of handling a garment.

Alongside the stands, the organizers produced attitude. This was most easily seen by the conference program put on across the road in the tented area (although the EOG education sessions were of a higher quality upstairs above Hall 4). Without embedding the dreams that this clothing will help the user reach, we are just another part of the textile industry whose greatest progress has been trying to produce the cheapest garment. **Obi22** went that extra step. The move to the MOC worked well as the halls all looked full and busy – even though only 8000 people turned up. Everything can be further improved (the show catalog was printed before all the details of the brand showrooms on the upper levels were completed), but the buzz was back. The key question is whether the show remains at this location.

The biggest winners were those unknown brands for whom there is never enough time to visit normally. A shoutout to **Keen**, **Vaude** and **Rab**, who supported the first night's party. It banished all memories of **Outdoor by ISPO 2021**, which was canceled just a week before it was meant to be staged.

The week before the pan-European event, the **Outdoor Trade Show (OTS)** was staged in Liverpool. This built on the 2021 exhibition, and the three-day show was just strong business, which was used as an excuse for many British retailers not coming to Munich; the ideas tried out last year had been built up (thanks to **Rab** and **Lowe Alpine** for supporting the Sustainability Breakfast). Footfall was up almost 20 percent on the show that was the first after lockdown in the previous year, with 850 visitors turning up this time, plus a greater number staying for multiple days to get around all the stands. Munich had ten times that number, both attending and staying for longer.



OTS22 Award Nominations

Before these shows were both the **Functional Fabric Fair** (in Portland, Oregon) and **Performance Days** (at **Messe München**). These ingredient sourcing shows also had record attendances – the U.S. version had more people turn up on the first day of each of the last three exhibitions than attended the whole of the previous staging of the event. The Munich show had just short of 3,000 fabric developers and designers when it was staged in April this year.

The traits in common with all these exhibitions: they are short and low budget (gone are the days of the massive exhibition stands); they have social aspects (clue: look for the beer at the end of the day); they are themed around particular issues. Shifting the shows forward in the diary has not affected the draw of the exhibitions.

The New Normal has already commenced – take it while it is there; if you turn down the chance, you will only regret the opportunity. Focus on quality, not quantity...



Source: Messe München
Outdoor by ISPO