



Faculty of Legal Sciences

School of International Studies

**INTERNATIONAL FAIRS AND THEIR
IMPACT ON FLOWER EXPORTING
COMPANIES IN THE PROVINCE OF AZUAY**

Project prior to obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in International
Studies

Author:

Barnuevo Acaro José Andrés

Advisor:

Engineer Xavier Esteban Ortega Vásquez

Cuenca – Ecuador

2025

To my parents, who have looked after my well-being and education, supporting me at all times, and placing their complete trust in every challenge that has presented itself to me, without doubting my intelligence and abilities for a single moment.

To my brother, whose determination, example, and perseverance have been a constant inspiration to me, showing me that goals are achieved with effort and courage.

To my family and close friends, who always supported me and were there for me every step of the way, never short of help.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my thesis advisor for his valuable guidance, dedication, and for providing me with the tools I needed to complete this research.

To my parents and brother, who have been the fundamental pillars in my life, for their unconditional love, their words of encouragement, and their constant emotional and moral support. Thank you for believing in me even when I had doubts, for teaching me by example the value of effort, patience, and dedication, for being a role model and a motivator. This goal achieved is also yours.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES AND ANNEXES	iv
List of figures	iv
List of contents	iv
List of appendices	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
RESUMEN.....	v
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Objectives.....	1
1.1.1 General objective.....	1
1.1.2 Specific objectives.....	1
1.2 Theoretical framework	1
1.2.1 Floriculture sector of Ecuador.....	1
1.2.2 Globalization and internationalization	2
2.1.3 International trade and its impact on exports and business	2
1.2.4 International Fairs as Foreign Trade Tools	3
1.2.5 Strategies for participation in international fairs	4
2. Literature review	5
3. Methods.....	6
3.1 Information analysis.....	7
3.2 Interview	7
4. Results	8
4.1 Information gathering.....	8
4.2 Interviews	13
5. Discussion	15
6. Conclusion.....	16
7. References	17
8. Appendices	20

LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES AND ANNEXES

List of figures

Figure 1 <i>National and International Production of Azuay in 2022</i>	10
Figure 2 <i>National and International Production of Azuay in 2023</i>	11
Figure 3 <i>Comparison of stems cut in recent years</i>	12
Figure 4 <i>Total number of companies and the percentage represented by Azuay</i>	13

List of contents

Table 1 <i>Comparison of the planted area of the 2022 National and Azuay</i>	9
Table 2 <i>Comparison of stems cut in 2022, National and Azuay</i>	9
Table 3 <i>Comparison of hectares of the 2023 national and Azuay</i>	10
Table 4 <i>Comparison of stems cut in 2023, National and Azuay</i>	11
Table 5 <i>Active companies and their total employees 2023</i>	12
Table 6 <i>Active companies in Azuay in 2023</i>	13
Table 7 <i>Costs of Participation in Fairs for Flower Companies</i>	14
Table 8 <i>Main International Flower Fairs and their Frequency</i>	14
Table 9 <i>Strategies to maximize sales during a fair</i>	15

List of appendices

Appendix 1 <i>Interview with Nancy Katherine Bravo Herrera</i>	20
Appendix 2 <i>Interview with Engineer Juan Andres Proaño</i>	22
Appendix 3 <i>Interview with Economist Maria Veronica Tapia</i>	24
Appendix 4 <i>Interview with Commercial Engineer Patricia Alexandra Guerrero Figueroa</i>	25

INTERNATIONAL FAIRS AND THEIR IMPACT ON FLOWER EXPORTING COMPANIES IN THE PROVINCE OF AZUAY

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the impact of international trade fairs on flower exporting companies in the province of Azuay. It considers whether these international trade platforms provide access to new markets, foster business contacts, and influence brand positioning. Through a qualitative methodology based on document analysis and interviews, the study identifies the challenges and opportunities that flower-exporting companies face when utilizing these international tools. It highlights the importance of strategic planning and post-fair follow-up to maximize business benefits. The research also explores the role of associations and industry groups, and whether they genuinely support flower-exporting companies. Considering that Azuay's flower production is relatively low compared to the national level, the study seeks to understand how these events contribute to the competitiveness of the province's floriculture sector, which demonstrates strong participation in the international market.

Keywords

International fairs, Floriculture sector, Exporting companies, Strategic alliances, International trade

INTERNATIONAL FAIRS AND THEIR IMPACT ON FLOWER EXPORTING COMPANIES IN THE PROVINCE OF AZUAY

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo de titulación analizará el impacto de las ferias internacionales en empresas exportadoras de flores de la provincia del Azuay. Tomando en consideración si estos medios de comercio internacional ofrecen acceso a nuevos mercados, generación de contactos e influencia en el posicionamiento de la marca. Por medio de una metodología cualitativa basada en análisis de documentos y entrevistas, se identificarán desafíos y oportunidades que enfrentan las empresas exportadoras de flores al hacer uso de estas herramientas internacionales. Por lo que se explicara la importancia de una planificación estratégica y el seguimiento post feria que las empresas deberán seguir para maximizar sus beneficios. También buscamos conocer la importancia de gremios o asociaciones, y si realmente estos ayudan a las empresas exportadoras de flores. Teniendo en cuenta que la producción de la provincia a comparación de la producción nacional es considerada baja, se buscará conocer como estos eventos contribuyen en la competitividad del sector florícola de la provincia del Azuay, puesto que esta muestra una fuerte participación en el mercado internacional.

Palabras clave

Ferias internacionales, Sector florícola, Empresas exportadoras, Alianzas estratégicas, Comercio internacional

INTERNATIONAL FAIRS AND THEIR IMPACT ON FLOWER EXPORTING COMPANIES IN THE PROVINCE OF AZUAY

1. Introduction

This research is motivated by the desire to understand the commercial impact of international trade fairs and whether they genuinely help improve companies' performance, with a particular focus on flower-exporting businesses in the province of Azuay. The study aims to explore topics of interest to these exporters and provide accessible information about emerging trade platforms, enabling companies to gain a realistic view of what participation in these fairs entails whether the process is easy, difficult, or depends on the company's capabilities.

The study will seek to determine whether the impact of international trade fairs is positive in terms of sales, strategic alliances, or brand positioning within companies, and to identify the strategies that prove effective for their improvement. Additionally, it will analyze whether these fairs serve as platforms for presenting new technologies and innovations, and whether such exposure truly fosters business development that enhances their competitiveness in the global market.

Although extensive information is available regarding various international trade fairs, there is limited documentation and insight into the actual processes required to begin or succeed in participating in them. In the case of the flower industry, questions arise such as whether it is necessary to be part of an association, whether such an association facilitates the process and provides benefits for companies, or whether it is possible and perhaps more advantageous to participate in a trade fair independently.

1.1 Objectives

1.1.1 General objective

To determine whether international fairs have truly helped flower exporters in the province of Azuay grow their market.

1.1.2 Specific objectives

Know what International Fairs are and indicate the advantages and disadvantages they offer.

Learn how companies use these International Fairs to position, improve, or strengthen their products.

To present success stories of some flower exporting companies after participating in international fairs and to indicate the changes in their products before and after participating in these fairs.

1.2 Theoretical framework

1.2.1 Floriculture sector of Ecuador

The floriculture sector stands out as a fundamental and active contributor to the country's development, as well as a key player in the global market. Agricultural activity generates the most employment while occupying a relatively small area of land. This sector holds significant importance, ranking third among Ecuador's exports. The country's favorable climatic conditions—characterized by stable temperatures, an eternal spring, and abundant daylight hours—make it an ideal environment for flower cultivation. Furthermore, floriculture contributes to the national economy through the generation of foreign exchange via exports, and Ecuador is especially recognized for producing some of the finest flowers in the world, successfully meeting global consumer demand (Vélez & Sozoranga, 2016).

Ecuador is a country located on the equator with great potential for the development of its agricultural and agro-industrial sectors. Its natural characteristics give it advantages in the production of certain goods for which Ecuador is known internationally. These products can be considered to have a comparative advantage over other competitors due to their geographic and climatic characteristics, which give them superior quality compared to their main competitors. The flower sector has been evolving since its beginnings in the 1980s to the present day, consolidating itself as one of the largest non-traditional export sectors. Ecuadorian flowers have unique characteristics that have positioned them as a premium product in international markets, being a product recognized and in demand by premium markets (Gomez & Egas, 2014).

As previously mentioned, flowers are one of Ecuador's traditional export products, standing out for their dynamism and rapid growth in the market. The country's geographical location gives Ecuadorian flowers distinctive characteristics, such as long, thick, and completely upright stems, vibrant colors, and extended vase life [...] (Camino et al., 2016). For this reason, flowers have become one of the main global products representing Ecuador, as well as one of the country's most significant export goods. According to Trade Map, in the past year, Ecuadorian flowers accounted for 9.4% of global flower exports, positioning the country third in the global flower export ranking (TRADE MAP, 2023). Therefore, flower companies need to develop effective strategies when expanding into new markets. Given that Ecuadorian flowers are internationally recognized, they have become an emblem of the country, with exports reaching a large portion of the global market.

1.2.2 Globalization and internationalization

When business activities extend beyond a nation's borders, they become international business. The exchange of goods and services within a single country is already complex and subject to various regulations and agreements. In international business, the same concept applies; however, the complexity increases due to cultural, political, institutional, and regulatory differences among the participating countries. Therefore, companies seeking to internationalize must develop an internationalization strategy that ensures the success of their venture (Carrion, 2018).

First, it is important to understand that changes in the global economy have led companies with growth as a fundamental objective to turn their attention on foreign markets. Globalization, as both an economic and social phenomenon, offers a wide range of opportunities and provides the context in which this goal can be achieved (Puerto, 2010). For this reason, it is essential to understand that globalization is a complex and multifaceted process that has transformed the world, particularly through the increasing interconnectedness among countries and cultures, which has had significant impacts across various domains. In economic terms, it has facilitated international trade by allowing goods and services to move more freely between countries. It has increased competition, lowered prices for consumers, and expanded access to a wider variety of products. Additionally, globalization promotes the transfer of technology and knowledge, accelerating innovation and development, and enabling companies to access new markets and sources of capital. Through globalization, we can understand that companies rely on assets and resources controlled by other firms across the globe and gain access to these resources through global integration. A company's acquisition of knowledge largely depends on the establishment of international networks and the interdependence among actors within commercial, industrial, and social networks. (Gerschewski et al., 2020).

For some entrepreneurs, marketing Ecuadorian products abroad is considered a challenge; others view it as a valuable long-term business opportunity, while a few believe they will never be ready to enter the international market. Exporting is a process that must be carefully planned by companies, regardless of their size—whether small, medium, or large. These companies must take advantage of available tools to achieve successful international commercialization. Some of the key tools for promoting Ecuadorian products abroad include trade missions, international fairs, and business matchmaking events (Jaramillo et al., 2010).

Today, companies have come to understand that to make a positive impact within their organizations and improve as a business, they must expand their market presence, meaning they need to establish themselves in other countries. The goal is either to increase sales or reduce production costs, thereby fostering economic growth for the product.

2.1.3 International trade and its impact on exports and business

International trade emerged as a result of the Industrial Revolution, as industry and commerce underwent advancements in production techniques, marketing, transportation development, and the growth of product demand. It also gave rise to a generation of inventors seeking solutions to consumer needs. As a consequence, the mobility between countries, the globalization of markets, and the development of new technologies, along with companies seeking growth abroad, have ensured the development of international trade (Patricia & Becerra, 2010). Even Brouthers & Nakos (2005) It is noted that companies have become more international as the global business environment has transformed due to technological advancements, dramatic changes in the political landscape, trade liberalization, and the growth of bilateral and multilateral trade agreements.

Such international trade has forced developing and emerging countries to become competitive in terms of quality and services, optimize resources, and fully understand the characteristics of various markets, with the goal of meeting both their immediate and long-term needs. International trade in business has led to the creation of commercial intelligence, which is considered a cornerstone of international business. This intelligence allows companies to maximize human, material, and financial resources. Therefore, international

trade has changed the way business and exports are generated, as the traditional methods now seek to incorporate new, systematized processes that save time, reduce movement, eliminate risks, among other benefits. For this reason, it is considered that international trade has transformed the way business is conducted and has had a significant impact on these practices (Lazo & Jara, 2010).

The expansion in international trade generally begins with companies or individuals considered mature, either exporters seeking international growth opportunities or importers aiming to reduce supply costs. What we aim for is that these companies have sufficient international experience to recognize and capitalize on international growth opportunities (Hilmersson & Jansson, 2012). Currently, it is a fact that internationalization enables commercial expansion, access to new resources, economic diversification, and an increase in a company's production capacity. Within this process, the most important strategies for exporting the exportable offer of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises are involved. These strategies are based on new technological tools, active participation in international trade fairs, professional advice, periodic training, financing options, and continuous innovation in business productivity (A. Ramirez et al., 2023).

1.2.4 International Fairs as Foreign Trade Tools

Once we understand the importance of globalization, we can conclude that it is necessary for countries to seek new forms of trade with other nations, so that both parties can benefit. Moreover, it is evident that today there are various strategies available for a company to internationalize. These strategies can be applied depending on the needs and characteristics of each company.

Entering the world of international business and foreign trade often seems like an easy task; however, in a globalized world, it is essential to stay updated with informational tools that help businesses remain competitive when internationalizing their sector, product, or company. There are various strategies and tools that assist these companies in the global market. One of the forms of trade promoted by globalization is international trade fairs, which are considered tools to foster the development of commerce between territories that are geographically, culturally, and politically separated. They serve as instruments for companies seeking to strengthen their economic development, facilitate their access to foreign markets, and mitigate the effects of market failures (Puchalt & Munuera, 2008)

Traditionally, trade fairs were considered meetings where companies participated and concluded transactions. However, today, trade fairs are viewed as marketing and information platforms that enable companies to grow and expand internationally. For companies that participate in trade fairs with government support, this experience serves as an intense marketing learning opportunity. Trade missions provide experiential knowledge about foreign countries, and their purpose is to encourage companies to enter or expand into foreign markets when their experience with a specific market is still limited (Monreal-Pérez & Geldres-Weiss, 2020).

What these international trade fairs allow companies to do is engage in direct interaction to make contacts with new businesses or partners, present their products, identify new business opportunities, and gain a valuable exchange of knowledge. One of the key considerations is that, in order to participate in these fairs, companies must have a strategic plan in place. They should evaluate aspects such as where they should participate, clearly define their objectives, determine where to direct their efforts, and decide the best way to allocate budget, resources, and time.

The authors Evers & Knight, (2008) state that trade fairs are defined as "events that bring together, in one place, a group of suppliers who organize physical exhibitions of their products and services from a specific industry or field. [...] Trade fairs can be considered a highly cost-effective mechanism for meeting a large number of potential suppliers and customers in a short period in one location." The dominant view in the literature is that trade fairs serve as a vehicle for promotional and sales activities. Trade fairs are also regarded as periodic events where a large number of companies can present and "showcase" their key products and services. Trade fairs offer opportunities for companies to expand their global reach and exposure, announce their products and services, establish new business relationships, and facilitate an efficient exchange of knowledge with key stakeholders. (Gerschewski et al., 2020).

An important point, often overlooked by companies starting out in international trade, is that international trade fairs allow for the systematic acquisition of information about competitors, suppliers, and customers, as well as their technological and strategic options. During these fairs, participants seek to gain an overview of current technological trends and other developments. At most international trade fairs, it is said that companies have access to information about global developments and "rumors." (Chlodnicki et al., 2011).

Sebastián & Espinosa, (2017) It is stated that international trade fairs are a key marketing tool and a commercial platform that facilitates direct interaction between companies and various stakeholders, such as

customers, suppliers, shareholders, competitors, and potential employees. They act as a defined and temporary space that accelerates the sales process, optimizing the relationship between sales cost and customer, thereby enabling valuable connections to be made in a professional environment.

1.2.5 Strategies for participation in international fairs

The producing farms, especially the larger ones, have sufficient financial resources to independently participate in international trade fairs. These events allow them to meet potential customers, who are later contacted via phone or electronic means abroad to offer them a flower portfolio. Once the type of flower to be quoted is selected, a sample is sent for evaluation by the prospective customer. If the quality and characteristics of the flower meet the customer's requirements, the next step is negotiation, where price, volume, sales terms, delivery times, sales frequency, and customer classification are specified. A credit profile is assigned to the customer based on the review of documentation, as well as commercial and banking references. Once this stage of contact search and negotiation time is completed, the process moves to the order stage and delivery of the flowers under the terms of the sales contract.

One way to participate in international trade fairs is by being part of associations related to businesses, as these associations seek to foster cooperation among companies and pursue mutual benefits for all. By forming a larger organization, these associations can gain more experience in participating in international trade fairs. Therefore, business associations are described as intentional coalitions of companies formed with the goal of selling their products (goods and services) in foreign markets through joint actions. [...] Members understand that cooperation must prevail over competition in order to access foreign markets and the most efficient technology (V. Ramirez, 2018). Therefore, many consider international trade fairs as a form of export promotion by governments, as they can combine political, economic, and technical factors. The support provided by governments reduces the uncertainty of entering these forms of trade, allowing for better performance on the international stage. These government interventions (OPEs) aim to assist exporters in identifying and exploring markets for their products. In this regard, export promotion policies, often managed by agencies, commercial offices abroad, or institutions dedicated to promotion, aim to increase the presence of companies in international markets, diversify their product offerings, and expand commercial destinations. This fosters the development of various productive sectors within the country (Sebastián & Espinosa, 2017).

One of the largest flower associations in Ecuador is Expoflores, which represents 3,500 hectares and 209 members, offering comprehensive advice on flower production and export. Its team establishes management standards and is known for its effective communication. Additionally, we develop strategies tailored to the realities of the sector and lead the floricultural business community. This enables them to build strong relationships and provide efficient action plans to simplify the daily operations of our affiliates (Expoflores, 2023).

EXPOFLORES is the largest association that brings together Ecuadorian flower growers, and it works to promote Ecuadorian flowers internationally. Among its policies are the reintegration of flower growers and the aggressive promotion of Ecuadorian flowers through participation in trade fairs worldwide. Ecuadorian flowers have become a true symbol of national identity, as their beauty is appreciated in every market where the most important and relevant flower fairs are held globally. Trade fairs are a key factor in marketing, leading to the development of the most significant commercial transactions due to the opportunity for direct business closures, thus becoming spaces that generate economic resources and foster relationships between customers and suppliers (Lopez, 2009). As we analyze the work of the Association of Flower Producers and Exporters EXPOFLORES, it is aimed at creating business opportunities for Ecuadorian flower growers, such as providing facilities for them to participate in the AGRIFLOR fair, which is held in the country and is one of the most important in Latin America. It also offers opportunities to participate in international trade fairs, provides contacts for showcasing flowers in exclusive locations, enhances sales opportunities, and promotes the country's brand (Yolanda, 2016).

How can we analyze this association, which is considered the largest in the Ecuadorian flower industry? It offers a long list of benefits and helps companies gain more knowledge about the processes related to flower production and the exportation of these products. Similarly, this association has facilitated participation in several international trade fairs. Therefore, it will be analyzed whether flower companies from Azuay, by being part of this association, receive benefits for participating in these fairs, or if it is better for them to participate individually.

One of the main organizations responsible for promoting exports in the country is Pro Ecuador, which is in charge of implementing export promotion policies and regulations. Its primary objective is to boost the offer of both traditional and non-traditional products, facilitating their strategic insertion into international trade. To achieve this, Pro Ecuador, through its 31 offices around the world, focuses its efforts on helping

exporters find markets for their products or services. Each of these offices plays a role in researching and analyzing the country where they are based, studying the market, trends, buyer requirements, demand for Ecuadorian products, and identifying commercial opportunities. This information is provided to Ecuadorian exporters to help them set their objectives and goals more efficiently, diversify their products, and expand their target markets. One tool Pro Ecuador implements is the promotion of these products through national and international trade fairs, events sponsored by the institution, which represent a significant opportunity for exporters to access new markets and overcome barriers (Alejandra & Jiménez, 2021).

2. Literature review

The export of flowers represents an important segment within the non-traditional export sector, so much so that in 1984, the National Association of Flower Producers and Exporters of Ecuador was established with the purpose of consolidating and supporting the country's floriculture sector. Currently, it represents 188 members, including flower-producing farms, freight agencies, marketers, breeders, and logistics operators, all of whom are directly involved with agricultural labor markets (Poveda, 2021).

Everything related to floriculture in Ecuador not only impacts the local level but also reaches a broader global context. The interdependence between countries, driven by globalization, facilitates the expansion of international markets where Ecuador, with its flowers, has found a privileged space. In this sector, not only are the country's climatic conditions leveraged, but it also benefits from global trade networks, which allow products like flowers to reach different parts of the world, expanding their presence in various international markets.

Supply chains, by creating an interconnected global network, have generated a complex web of dependency between different regions and economic sectors. Understanding this interdependence is crucial for addressing challenges and maximizing benefits in the current global economic landscape. Globalization has been a key catalyst in expanding the commercial reach of companies, providing them with new opportunities and challenges in the global business environment. The ability to adapt and leverage the benefits of this globalized environment is essential for companies seeking to thrive in the contemporary era (Véliz et al., 2024).

Among these strategies, we find the participation of companies in national and international trade fairs, as this strategy opens up new knowledge and new markets abroad. Through this, the social commitment of companies to their products and suppliers can be strengthened, allowing them to receive training to directly export internationally. These events also serve as seminars in international trade fairs and digital media, providing access to new markets, quality certifications, technical sheets of various products and countries, among others. In an industrial market, there are "networks of exchange relationships between companies." This cooperation provides access to key resources such as information, raw materials, technology, and markets, while facilitating strong relationships between buyers and sellers that maximize profits and minimize losses (Evers & Knight, 2008).

International trade fairs have a significant global impact. Although they have formed a process over the years, the COVID-19 pandemic has recently negatively affected this sector. Participants who attend these events consider personal contact through physical presence to be important, as they believe that through international trade fairs, they will always find positive aspects, as long as these fairs meet their objectives and companies can access them. Research on trade fairs has traditionally come from the fields of management and marketing. However, in recent years, studies in business administration, economic geography, sociology, and other disciplines have begun to understand and explore the role that trade fairs play in the creation and dissemination of key knowledge flows, connecting collective actors, institutions, businesses, and geographies in different parts of the world (Kourkouridis et al., 2024).

The importance of trade fairs as a marketing channel has been growing in recent years. Each year, more and more companies participate in fairs as part of their marketing plans. Compared to other marketing options, the strength of trade fairs lies in establishing personal contact with both old clients and new prospects. Participating in a trade fair requires a significant investment of time and money from the company. Therefore, the benefit gained from the fair must be as optimal as possible. The company's intention is to leave a positive impression or emotional connection on the visitor so that they remember it later (Hannula, 2012).

Participation in trade fairs provides a key space for direct interaction with clients and also creates a crucial platform for companies to expand into different markets. These types of events generate a positive impact and are essential for export strategies. Various entities and organizations offer support to companies to help them maximize their participation in these spaces. Some associations and other organizations assist in making these fairs a bridge between marketing and global growth opportunities.

However not everything is as it seems. While it is true that we can analyze that international fairs have various benefits for companies, we must also analyze why many of them do not feel confident participating in them. One of the factors to study is the lack of knowledge due to the differences between countries, such as language and culture, which is considered an important obstacle for many companies when making decisions related to the development of international operations and entering new forms of trade. We could even say that these differences constitute the main characteristic of international operations, as opposed to domestic operations (Johanson & Vahlne, s/f). herefore, participation in fairs is one of the most important strategies, and it must be prepared in the best possible way. Thus, it is important to know how to select the fair to participate in and the costs involved, such as: tickets, accommodation, travel for the personnel attending, booth rental, staff for assistance and booth setup, transportation of samples, preparation of quality advertising material, hiring interpreters, and business cards in the local language and English. Participating in international fairs provides an opportunity for direct contact with potential customers, as well as importers, distributors, and wholesalers, showcasing the product to thousands of visitors (Sandoval, 2014).

Another factor that raises doubts for a company is its size. Many small companies feel that, due to their size, they would not be able to participate in such forms of international trade. Therefore, we need to determine whether size plays a role in participation in these forms of international commerce. Calof, (1993) indicates that the relationship between company size and export behavior remains one of the most widely analyzed relationships. The proposition that company size is positively associated with export behavior is often taken for granted, and its acceptance has led both academics and public sector officials to focus on finding ways to improve the export activities of smaller companies. However, despite the presumed importance of size, there is little consensus on whether size is related to export behavior. Furthermore, researchers who have found associations between size and export activities have failed to provide any information that identifies the amount of variance explained by size. In the absence of consistent results, it is difficult to discern whether size actually affects export behavior, and without information on the amount of variance explained, it is impossible to determine exactly how important size is. Therefore, we could discern that the size of the company is not a limiting factor for participation in international fairs. Many of these companies feel they are unable to secure the resources and contacts needed to access such fairs, which is why many believe they are at a disadvantage when trying to compete internationally due to the perceived complexity of the international business environment and the comparative scarcity of resources. For this reason, Export Promotion Programs (EPPs) have been created by governments to help companies, especially small and medium-sized ones, overcome export barriers (Monreal-Pérez & Geldres-Weiss, 2020).

In Ecuador, an organization that supports exporting companies is Pro Ecuador. This entity offers training and seminars aimed at helping companies manage their exports in the global arena. These include topics such as effective participation in fairs, workshops on digital media promotion, seminars on certifications and market access, as well as technical sheets for each product and market. These sheets provide key information such as main destinations, tariff and non-tariff barriers, business opportunities for various products, and reports on international fairs in which companies can participate in different destinations (Sebastián & Espinosa, 2017).

Just as PROECUADOR supports the export of Ecuadorian products, there are various entities and organizations that assist each country. Similarly, there are different associations and guilds created by groups of companies, such as EXPOFLORES in the case of the flower industry in Ecuador. These organizations have among their objectives to help exporters expand into international markets through strategies like trade fairs.

3. Methods

For this study, a qualitative methodology will be employed in order to obtain a deeper understanding. This methodology allows for the collection of data through various sources, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, facilitating an interpretation of the studied case.

The qualitative methodology will allow for a deeper exploration of the case, which will be essential for its understanding. Qualitative data refers to rich, deep, and varied information that captures the complexity and diversity of human experiences and social realities. Instead of focusing on quantities or measurements, qualitative data aims to understand the complex nature of situations, uncovering the "why" and "how" rather than the "how much" (ATLAS.ti, 2025).

For data collection, we will focus on key aspects such as interviews with experts and personnel related to topic such as flower exports, companies participating in trade fairs, international trade, among others. The information presented will be gathered from various sources, including opinions and citations from researchers, which will help compare and contrast this information.

3.1 Information analysis

The information collection will be collected from official Ecuadorian websites, such as the Superintendency of Companies, Securities, and Insurance, the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC), and official pages of organizations like Expoflores and Proecuador. These official websites will provide us with the necessary information to understand various aspects, which will be essential for creating tables and graphs for better understanding.

The Superintendency of Companies, Securities, and Insurance is the technical body with administrative and economic autonomy that oversees and controls the organization, activities, operations, dissolution, and liquidation of companies and other entities under the circumstances and conditions established by law. This page will help us, through the "company ranking" option, to know the total number of flower cultivation companies in the Azuay province, as well as important information such as the number of employees and total employment, in order to understand their participation in the flower market.

The National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) operates as the institution responsible for official statistics. It is the entity in charge of planning, regulating, and certifying the production of the National Statistical System, which presents information through tables and charts. From this page, we will collect data on the total hectares planted nationwide and in the Azuay province, as well as the number of stems cut at the national level and in Azuay. This information will allow us to make a comparison between both regions and understand the participation of these sectors. Additionally, it will help us calculate other important data for the study.

The organization Expoflores, whose purpose is to consolidate and support the floriculture sector in the country through guild representation and the provision of services, will help us identify all the companies that are affiliated with this organization and hold the certifications and services it offers. This will allow us to determine whether these companies obtain any benefits compared to those that are not part of it.

3.2 Interview

What we aim to achieve with these interviews is to understand the depth of the participants' experiences, in order to open new ways of interpreting this study and thus highlight the significance of these international fairs in the floriculture market. Through the analysis of the collected information, we intend to present the participants' perspectives and examine the evolution of Ecuadorian flower exports, and whether there has been any progress as a result of their participation in these fairs. As previously mentioned, this information will be gathered from official websites and reports.

The objective of using this qualitative method is to understand the different interactions and perspectives among individuals regarding their experiences with the impact that international fairs have had on exporting companies. In this way, the findings can support new flower exporters from the province of Azuay by providing them with a clearer understanding of what these forms of international trade entail. It will also help determine whether such platforms could truly benefit them or, on the contrary, reveal that they might not yet be fully prepared to engage in these new forms of trade.

The type of interview we will conduct is a semi-structured interview. We chose this type of interview because it offers a greater degree of flexibility compared to structured interviews, as it is based on planned questions that can be adjusted to the interviewees. Its main advantage lies in the ability to adapt to the subjects, providing significant opportunities to engage the interviewee, clarify terms, identify ambiguities, and reduce formalities (Laura et al., 2013). We consider this particularly important when formulating the questions, as we will be surveying individuals connected to the topic. What we aim to understand is the perspective of the interviewees, taking into account their different roles and positions.

For the interview, we first considered it appropriate to divide the questions into different topics of interest or areas deemed important. We selected topics that an exporting company might consider relevant when seeking expansion or engagement with international trade fairs. These topics include: Budget, Frequency of trade fairs, Sales growth, Strategic alliances, and Brand positioning. We believe that each topic should consist of 1 to 2 questions in order to be clear and concise with the interviewee. This approach helps to avoid exceeding the allotted time and prevents repetitive information overload. As a starting point, we have proposed five key questions for each topic of interest.

Budget

- What is the average budget your company allocates for participation in international trade fairs?
- What factors influence the determination of the budget for attending these fairs (travel costs, accommodation, booth setup, etc.)?

- Do you consider the allocated budget sufficient to maximize the benefits of participating in international trade fairs?
- Has your company ever had to adjust or reduce the budget for trade fairs? How has this affected your participation?
- What percentage of your company's annual marketing or export budget is allocated to international trade fair participation?

Frequency of Trade Fairs

- How often does your company participate in international trade fairs related to the exports of flowers?
- What criteria do you use to select the fairs in which you participate (location, market relevance, costs, etc.)?
- Have you noticed an increase or decrease in the frequency of participation in international trade fairs in recent years? What are the reasons for this?
- Are there specific fairs that you consider essential for your annual participation? Which ones and why?
- How does the frequency of international trade fairs affect your company's strategic planning?

Sales Growth

- Has your company experienced an increase in sales after participating in international trade fairs? If so, approximately by what percentage?
- How long does it take for the impact of trade fair participation to be reflected in your company's sales?
- What types of clients or markets have you been able to reach thanks to your participation in these fairs?
- Have you noticed increased demand for your products in specific markets following participation in international trade fairs?
- What strategies do you implement during trade fairs to maximize their impact on sales?

Strategic Alliances

- Has your company established strategic alliances with other businesses or distributors as a result of participating in international trade fairs?
- What types of alliances have proven most beneficial for your company (distributors, suppliers, business partners, etc.)?
- How do you evaluate the success of the alliances formed during trade fairs?
- Have you been able to expand your business network through these fairs? To what extent?
- How important do you consider strategic alliances for your company's growth in international markets?

Brand Positioning

- How has participation in international trade fairs impacted your brand's positioning in the global market?
- Have you noticed an increase in brand recognition in international markets after attending these fairs?
- What strategies do you use during trade fairs to improve your brand's positioning?
- Have you managed to position your brand in premium markets as a result of your participation in international trade fairs?
- How do you measure the impact of international trade fairs on your company's positioning (surveys, customer feedback, sales growth, etc.)?

4. Results

4.1 Information gathering

According to (INEC, 2022), the harvested area of flowers in Ecuador reached 7,854 hectares, accounting for a production of 3.395 billion cut stems. Of these figures, only 0.663% of the harvested area and 1.01% of the cut stems corresponded to the province of Azuay, as shown in the following tables with their respective crops.

Table 1
Comparison of the planted area of the 2022 National and Azuay

Area planted per hectare in 2022		
Crop	Surface Sown (H)	
	Nationals	Azuay
Rose	5,711.28	
Other Transitory Flowers	700.4	7.80
Gysophilia	234.47	20.60
Other Permanent Flowers	196.57	0.50
Sunflowers	172.75	
Astromellas	105.33	
Carnation	104.64	
Iris - Lilies	102.78	
Delphinium (Lackpur)	74.83	18.00
Hypericum	71.9	
Aster	68.96	
Chrysanthemums	64.85	
Randuculos	40.39	
Solidago	34.86	
Anemone	32.7	
Other crops that do not reach more than 30	137.32	
H		
Orchids		4.00
Trachelium		1.20
Total	7,854.03	52.10

Note: Collected from the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), prepared by the author

Table 2
Comparison of stems cut in 2022, National and Azuay

Production of cut stems in 2022		
Crop	Production of cut stems 2022	
	National	Azuay
Rose	2,547,606,910.37	
Gysophilia	226,457,481.00	30,260,000.00
Other Transitory Flowers	142,575,251.61	1,165,110.00
Sunflowers	141,861,177.56	
Carnation	70,650,353.60	
Hypericum	55,913,616.00	
Chrysanthemums	31,924,944.00	
Aster	26,359,951.00	
Astromellas	20,214,618.64	
Iris - Lilies	19,868,484.00	
Delphinium (Lackpur)	17,651,013.00	1,535,100.00
Solidago	13,070,185.00	
Limonium	11,029,051.00	
Craspedias	10,890,790.00	
Buttercups	10,407,839.05	
Other Permanent Flowers	10,038,367.00	300,000.00
Eryngium	9,192,207.00	
Lyatris	8,788,972.00	
Anemone	8,175,883.43	
Veronica	7,146,371.00	
Trachelium	2,017,485.00	229,950.00
Lilium	1,168,656.00	
Orchids	851,000.00	800,000.00
Cartridge	721,000.00	
Scabiosa	576,894.00	
Gardenia	298,150.00	
Gerberas	237,891.00	
Total	3,395,694,542.26	34,290,160.00

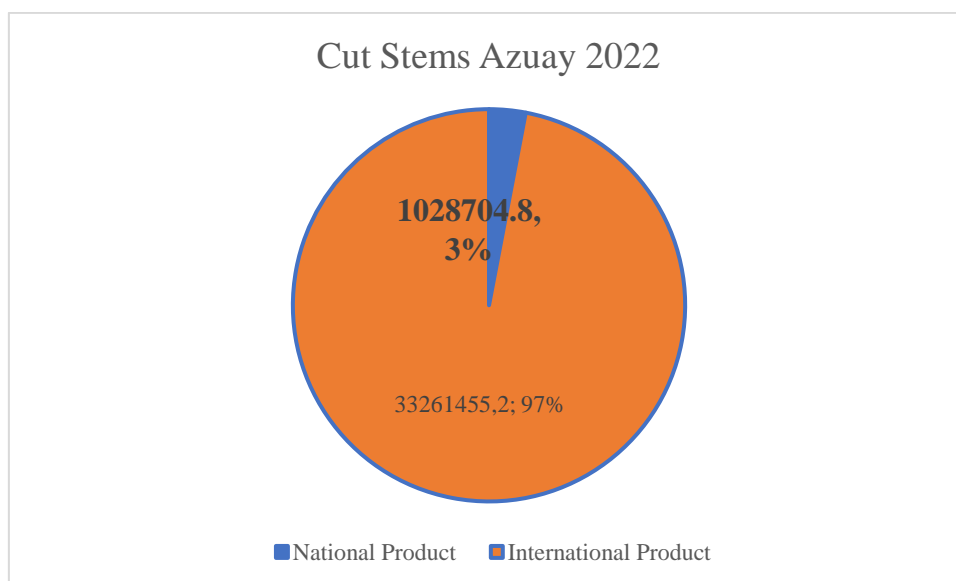
Note: Collected from the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), prepared by the author

These tables are important for understanding the extent of flower production in the province of Azuay within the floriculture sector. In 2022, 84% of the total harvest was directed toward the international market,

while the remaining 16% was destined for the domestic market. Specifically, in the case of Azuay, 97% of its total flower production was intended for export, and only 3% was allocated to the national market.

Figure 1

National and International Production of Azuay in 2022



Note: Collected from INEC, created by the author

In contrast, according to INEC (2023), more than 9,464.38 hectares were recorded, encompassing a production of 5.372 billion cut stems. Of these figures, only 0.22% of the harvested area and 2.00% of the cut stems corresponded to the province of Azuay. In this context, 80% of the production was aimed at the international market, while the remaining 20% was directed toward the domestic market.

Tabla 3

Comparison of hectares of the 2023 national and Azuay

Area planted per hectare in 2023		
Crop	Surface Sown (ha)	
	Nationals	Azuay
Rose	6,002.72	
Hypericum	859.09	
Delphinium (Lackpur)	856.45	10.5
Other Transitory Flowers	330.74	
Other Permanent Flowers	248.23	1
Eryngium	215.80	
Sunflowers	211.86	
Gyrophilia	161.89	
Iris - Lilies	143.00	
Carnation	99.74	
Chrysanthemums	69.91	
Astromellas	63.12	
Aster	60.81	
Cartridge	38.81	
Other crops that do not reach more than 30	102.21	
H		
Craspedias		6
Orchids		3.5
Total	9,464.38	21

Note: Collected from the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), prepared by the author

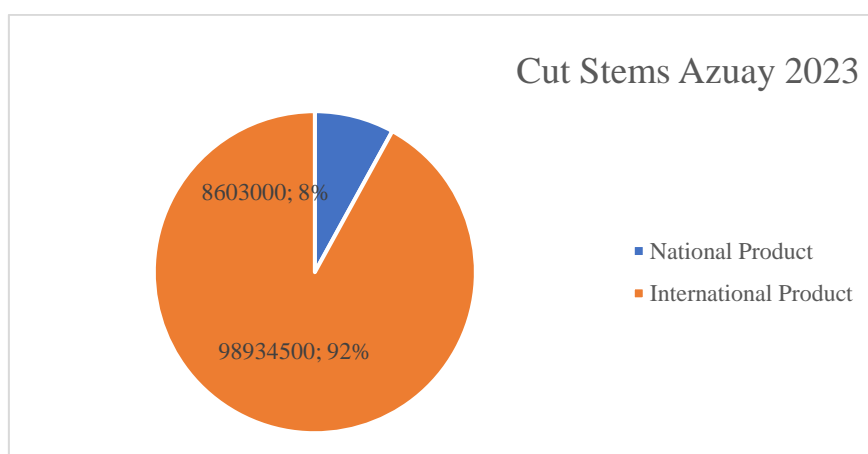
Table 4
Comparison of stems cut in 2023, National and Azuay

Production of cut stems in 2023		
Crop	Production of cut stems 2022	
	Nationals	Azuay
Rose	3,640,172,420.62	
Eryngium	397,560,692.92	
Hypericum	243,448,341.73	
Delphinium (Lackpur)	204,447,443.44	6,148,500.00
Other Transitory Flowers	171,497,936.12	
Gysophilia	163,827,351.16	
Orchids	100,053,000.00	99,999,000.00
Chrysanthemums	91,736,780.00	
Carnation	63,443,778.06	
Other Permanent Flowers	63,290,259.38	790,000.00
Aster	60,582,011.47	
Iris - Lilies	42,962,063.00	
Sunflowers	33,487,814.60	
Anemone	28,144,770.85	
Cartridge	17,969,882.79	
Buttercups	16,245,382.75	
Astromellas	12,254,765.47	
Limonium	6,133,084.00	
Scabiosa	4,700,000.00	
Craspedias	4,104,296.00	600,000.00
Campanula	1,977,520.00	
Veronica	1,570,500.00	
Solidago	1,230,000.00	
Lyatris	1,150,110.00	
Gerberas	164,570.00	
Total	5,372,154,774.36	107,537,500.00

Note: Collected from the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), prepared by the author

As in the previous year, the majority of the production was directed toward the international market. In 2023, 80% of the total harvest was intended for export, while the remaining 20% was allocated to the domestic market. Specifically, in the case of the province of Azuay, 92% of its total flower production was directed toward the international market, and 8% was destined for the national market.

Figure 2
National and International Production of Azuay in 2023

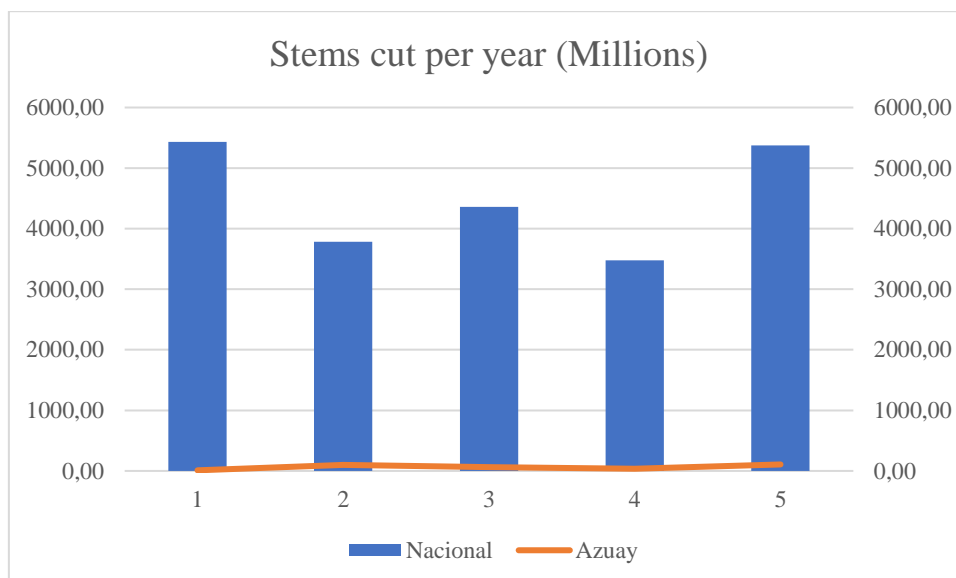


Note: Collected from the INEC created by the author

The following section presents a comparison of cut stem production over the past five years. The objective is to illustrate Azuay's production capacity in relation to the total national output. In this way, it becomes evident that the level of flower production in Azuay is relatively minimal.

Figure 3

Comparison of stems cut in recent years



Note: Collected from the INEC created by the author

According to Supercias (2024), there were 471 companies dedicated to flower cultivation across Ecuador, representing an 8.53% increase compared to the previous year, which recorded over 434 active companies. In 2023, 50 of these companies were classified as large, employing 35,510 people; 87 were medium-sized, with 8,720 employees; 190 were microenterprises, with employing 187 people; 91 were small enterprises, with 1,523 employees; and the remaining companies were not registered as active.

Table 5

Active companies and their total employees 2023

Size	Companies	Employees
Big	50	35,510
Median	87	8,720
Small	91	1,523
Microenterprise	190	187
Grand Total	287	39,503

Note: collected from the Superintendency of Companies, prepared by the author

Of the 471 companies registered in 2024, 12 active companies were located in the province of Azuay.

Figure 4

Total number of companies and the percentage represented by Azuay



Note: Collected from the superintendency of companies, created by the author

Table 6

Active companies in Azuay in 2023

Name	Employees	Income Totals
STARFLOWERS CIA. LTDA.	702	11,744,488.31
MALIMA PLANTATIONS CIA. LTDA.	703	4,144,229.38
COLORFULL CIA. LTDA.	4	3,293,469.04
PLANTATIONS PLANTREB CIA. LTDA.	129	2,725,880.68
SOUTHERN FLOWERS FLORESUR CIA. LTDA.	27	524,458.16
Hydrangeas Ecuador SAS	3	172,476.54
HORTENSIASCABOGANA CIA.LTDA.	2	54,578.97
GASCRESOIL CIA. LTDA.	4	0
ISLAPLANTS CIA. LTDA.	2	0
QUINTORIOHEMP SAS	4	0
KUMTURI SASBIC	4	0
CANNABISALUD SAS	3	0
Total	1587	22,659,581.08

Notes: Collected from the Superintendency of Companies, created by the author

Currently, there is a considerable number of flower-producing farms in the country, estimated to be more than 700, as shown in Table 5. The majority of these enterprises are small and medium-sized; however, due to their size, many have not been able to fully register with AGROCALIDAD or join EXPOFLORES, resulting in an incomplete and inaccessible record of them.

However, considering the membership registry of the Association of Flower Producers and Exporters, EXPOFLORES, we can quantify 109 floricultural companies affiliated with EXPOFLORES, 93 of which hold the FlorEcuador Certification. This certification is granted to floricultural companies whose processes are more technologically advanced and align with good environmental and labor practices.

4.2 Interviews

As can be seen in the annexes, interviews were successfully conducted with four individuals involved in Ecuador's floriculture sector who have experience with international trade fairs and their impact on the companies they currently work for or have worked for in the past. As mentioned in the methodology section, the interviews were guided by five key topics aimed at understanding the impact of these fairs on companies. From these topics, the most relevant points will be selected and presented in a summarized manner. For more detailed information, please refer to the annexes.

Regarding the budget, it is important to clarify that participation in both international and national trade fairs represents a significant investment for companies, and the impact varies depending on their objectives,

target market, and the execution of their strategy. In international events, factors such as location, booth size, logistical costs, and the number of representatives can considerably increase expenses. For instance, fairs held in Europe or Asia tend to be more expensive due to travel and accommodation costs. In contrast, events in countries like Russia or the United States generally require a mid-range budget. Additionally, companies that participate through trade missions or national pavilions may be able to reduce expenses, while those that do so independently often face higher costs.

Table 7
Costs of Participation in Fairs for Flower Companies

Type of Fair	Cost Range (USD)	Details Additional
National Fairs	2500 - 30000	The cost varies by booth size and additional activities.
International Fairs (USA/Europe)	10000–40000	Includes stand, travel, accommodation, and promotion. Higher costs in Europe.
International Fairs (Asia/Russia)	15000–25000	Average cost with logistics and promotion expenses.
Additional Costs	An extra %	Individual participation (without a national flag) increases the base budget.

Among the most important factors that individuals consider when participating in trade fairs and allocating a budget are: the location of the fair given that logistical costs are generally higher in Europe or Asia; the size and design of the booth the larger the booth, the higher the cost; and the number of company representatives since travel, accommodation, and per diem expenses must be taken into account.

Regarding the frequency of trade fair participation, we asked respondents to identify the key criteria they use when selecting which fairs to attend. These include the relevance of the target market, prioritizing events that attract key buyers, such as fairs in the Netherlands for the European market or Miami for the United States. They also consider factors such as current production capacity, as careful planning is essential in floriculture, with new cultivation areas requiring up to a year of preparation. Logistical costs associated with each location also play a significant role, as the event's location influences the decision-making process, especially for international fairs where accessibility for foreign clients is a priority. Additionally, the size of the company is a determining factor: for newer businesses, economic constraints tend to be decisive, whereas more established companies focus on the long-term impact on business relationships and brand positioning.

It is important to consider that trade fairs may be held either annually or biennially. The reason for biennial scheduling is often due to the high costs associated with organizing and participating in these events. In one of the interviews, it was mentioned that countries such as Ecuador and Colombia collaborate to support companies by organizing biennial fairs. However, instead of hosting them simultaneously, they alternate the events, meaning that when a fair is not held in Colombia, it takes place in Ecuador, and vice versa. Below is a table listing the main annual and biennial trade fairs, as provided by one of the interviewees, which can also be found in Annex 2.

Table 8
Main International Flower Fairs and their Frequency

Region	Fair	Location	Frequency
America	Expo Flor Ecuador	Ecuador	Biannual
	Proflora / Florverde	Colombia	Biannual
Europe	IFTF	Holland	Annual
	Chelsea Flower Show	England	Annual
USA	WF&FSA / World Floral Expo	Miami	Annual
Asia	Ifex	Japan	Annual
	Canton Fair	China	Annual
Russia	Flowers Expo	Moscow	Annual

Companies agree that the results of participating in an international trade fair should become evident within one to four months after the event. These results are typically reflected through sample requests and active business contacts. However, this largely depends on the follow-up conducted with those contacts. It is also important to consider that if a commercial relationship is not established within the first month, there is a higher risk that these contacts will lose interest. A key factor to consider is the type of product, as this can significantly influence outcomes. For instance, seasonal flowers—such as roses—are in higher demand during specific celebrations like Valentine's Day or Mother's Day. This seasonality can accelerate sales and more

quickly demonstrate the impact of having participated in the trade fair. Conversely, other products may require a longer period to achieve market consolidation.

The success of an international trade fair does not rely solely on participation; it depends on the implementation of strategic actions before, during, and after the event. While initial results may become visible within the first few months, sustaining that success requires consistent follow-up with contacts and the ability to offer differentiated proposals. Companies should prioritize staff training, booth design, and leveraging peak seasons to maximize return on investment. Below are strategies they can implement to maximize sales during a trade fair.

Table 9
Strategies to maximize sales during a fair

Strategy	Detail
Attention personalized	Direct interaction with buyers; the seller's first impression is key.
Clear value proposition	Show quality, innovation (e.g., new varieties), and competitive prices.
Experience in the stand	Design attractive, sample physical
Promotions exclusives	Discounts for purchases during the fair or for new markets.

Strategic alliances are crucial for flower companies during the process of internationalization, as these collaborations generate a positive impact on the strengths of each party involved. For example, a producer can partner with a local distributor to expand market coverage. Additionally, these alliances allow for the optimization of resources and functions, such as logistics and sales to specialized partners. Moreover, strategic alliances reduce the need for significant initial investments to enter unfamiliar markets. Therefore, these alliances become a key element in competing internationally.

Participation in international trade fairs has proven to be a key tool for improving a company's positioning in the global market. According to the interviewees, the repeated appearance of the brand at these events increases recognition, as international buyers begin to associate product quality with the company. As one participant mentioned, the more they see the brand, the quicker they recognize it. Furthermore, a unique competitive advantage is the direct contact with customers, as this allows companies to showcase key characteristics such as flower quality, color, or stem size—features that are difficult to convey through digital means.

Participation in these trade fairs has a direct impact on brand recognition, which is closely linked to each company's value proposition. While each company has different characteristics, those with distinctive features achieve long-lasting positioning. However, many companies may be limited by operational challenges, such as high logistical costs. The direct contact at these events not only fosters trust through personal interaction but also allows companies to highlight tangible qualities that are difficult to communicate through other means.

5. Discussion

As observed in the results, international trade fairs play a key role in enhancing the competitiveness of flower companies in the Azuay province. Although the province's participation is quite small compared to national production, with only 0.22% of the planted area and approximately 2% of the cut stems, despite this national representation, the province maintains a strong export focus. This is evident as 92% of the production is directed toward international markets, indicating a significant goal for foreign trade.

In the literature review, authors such as Gerschewski, Evers, and Knight highlight that international trade fairs function as platforms for marketing, market expansion, and learning. This was confirmed and further explored through the interviews. As indicated in Annex 1, the interview with Nancy Bravo emphasizes that “participating in an international fair is always important for the industry; everyone involved operates within these types of shows to make new business deals, discover new suppliers, and learn about the latest product trends.” From a methodological perspective, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed the collection of valuable insights regarding budget frequency and strategies used, key elements when it comes to participating in a trade fair. The interviews also revealed that, in many cases, the benefits appear after the event, depending largely on the follow-up conducted with contacts, and even pointed out the importance of product seasonality.

Based on the interviews, I believe it is important to note that it is not possible to define essential trade fairs that companies should participate in to achieve improvements, as participation depends on the target market a company aims to reach, and this need may vary from one company to another. The decision to engage

in these forms of foreign trade is driven by commercial objectives, market relevance, and financial capacity. Some trade fairs may be considered essential for companies looking to maintain their market presence, while others may prioritize regional or biennial fairs to optimize costs. The biennial nature of these fairs suggests that preparation time is required, and that investment recovery may also take time.

A very important point that can be highlighted is that participation in trade fairs not only generates new customers but also allows companies to improve their products and evaluate themselves. This is because they are constantly comparing themselves directly with other competitors, which enables companies to receive feedback that helps them validate their quality, price, and presentation. Many of these companies take advantage of the space to showcase exclusive or innovative varieties, particularly attracting international buyers, which leads to an increase in post-fair demand. International trade fairs offer a unique advantage in in-person events, as having a space to display the product directly allows sellers to convey feelings that are difficult to evoke through digital means. I believe this could lead to a potential future study on the impact of digital media or trade fairs, exploring the differences between digital and in-person events, and whether digital platforms could cater to products where visibility and tactile experience are crucial.

As indicated by the interviews and the literature review, participation in trade fairs has become a key space for flower companies to establish strategic alliances with various stakeholders. These collaborations can even lead to agreements with logistics agencies aimed at sharing booth and transportation costs, helping to reduce expenses by approximately 30% to 50%. As shown in Annex 4, the interview with Patricia Guerrero highlights the importance of these collaborations. In her view, in the company where she worked, “the alliance with trading companies is important because they are responsible for placing the flowers with wholesale clients, but especially with retailers, which optimizes both financial resources and time.” It has thus been determined that one type of strategic alliance involves local distributors, as they allow companies to access international markets by leveraging their regional knowledge. Although it is not very common, many companies may even form agreements with other flower producers in order to carry out joint promotions and offer a wider variety of products, creating a more attractive value proposition for the international market. Strategic alliances formed at trade fairs represent a very important tool for the growth of flower companies. These collaborations can not only reduce costs and risks associated with international expansion but also broaden access to new markets and distribution channels. Therefore, to maximize the benefits, it is essential to carefully select partners by establishing clear objectives and defined metrics. As can be seen throughout the text, there is a strong emphasis on collaboration and alliances, which we can identify as a key factor for companies to consolidate their international presence and thus ensure their growth.

As indicated by the author Sandoval, the success of an international trade fair depends on pre-planning and effective strategies, as these fairs involve high costs, requiring companies to have clear objectives. The findings suggest that the impact of the fair is neither immediate nor automatic; rather, it largely depends on the follow-up, prior preparation, and the effective use of strategies. These elements align with what the author Hannula highlights, emphasizing the importance of the experience at the booth and the connection between the seller and the customer.

Throughout the article, several challenges associated with international trade fairs are identified, including high costs, the need for good effective strategic planning, and the disparities in capabilities between large and small companies. While it is true that the size of the company is not an impediment to participating in trade fairs, according to Calof, it does affect investment capacity, contact follow-up, and logistics. Therefore, organizations such as EXPOFLORES and PROECUADOR play a very important role, as we can see in the theoretical framework and literature review. These organizations provide technical advice and collective representation. However, one interview highlighted that having the EXPOFLORES certificate did not necessarily lead to increased sales. While the certificate helps validate compliance with production standards, it does not automatically translate into higher sales or commercial preference, as international buyers prioritize factors such as observable quality, logistics capacity, and competitive pricing. Additionally, the high financial contributions required to be part of this association represent a significant barrier for many producers, which may explain why many farms are not part of this organization. Therefore, we can conclude that while many of these certifications provide technical endorsement, their impact on commercial positioning is limited. The impact largely depends on the company's objectives, as it should focus its resources on strengthening visible characteristics and building commercial relationships during international trade fairs. These are key factors that influence purchasing decisions and participation in such fairs.

6. Conclusion

The main objective of this thesis was to determine whether international trade fairs have contributed to the growth of flower exporting companies in the Azuay province. Through a theoretical analysis, collection of official data, and interviews with individuals involved in the floriculture sector, all the proposed objectives

have been met, demonstrating the strategic importance of these events, which are considered international tools for companies.

The first specific objective was to understand what international trade fairs are and identify their advantages and disadvantages. From this objective, it was determined that these events function as platforms where companies can gain better insight into the market. They also serve as platforms for learning, innovation, and positioning for companies. In practical terms, the literature review and interviews confirmed that while participation in these fairs can be costly, there are benefits such as access to new markets, learning opportunities, and direct contact with buyers. These characteristics outweigh the limitations, making it crucial for companies to implement well-planned and clear strategies.

With the second objective, which was to understand how companies use these trade fairs to position, improve, or strengthen their products, we were able to demonstrate that continuous presence at these international trade fairs leads to greater brand recognition, facilitating contact and interaction with customers and distributors, and offering unique product opportunities. Similarly, it was determined that these fairs serve as spaces for technical and commercial comparison, allowing companies to assess their quality either directly or indirectly against international market competition, and thus receive feedback on their product and value proposition.

Regarding the third objective, which was to identify success stories of companies after their participation in these trade fairs, we were able to identify experiences of companies that have benefited from them, such as increased sales, improved market positioning, and the establishment of strategic alliances with international distributors and other stakeholders. Through the semi-structured interviews, we gathered statements from individuals involved in the floriculture sector, who confirmed that the impact of these fairs can bring benefits that generate learning and long-term relationships.

As a contribution, the research demonstrates the reality of this productive sector, which, as a province, has a small statistical representation but a strong orientation toward the international market. Furthermore, by employing a qualitative methodology, we are able to delve into the real experiences of actors who are or have been involved in the floriculture sector, providing insights that cannot be captured in quantitative studies. This research offers recommendations and resources for future entrepreneurs or individuals interested in getting involved in this sector.

Finally, we can conclude that international flower trade fairs are not just commercial platforms where companies showcase their products; they are also platforms that can aid in the strategic transformation of the floriculture sector. In these events, there are dynamics that go beyond economic transactions, focusing on the generation of networks, learning, and quality validation. Therefore, the answer to the main objective is yes, they can help in the growth of a company, provided there is good prior planning, a clear vision of the company's objectives, and continuous follow-up of these factors. Thus, international trade fairs for flower-exporting companies in the Azuay province have the potential to become aids for innovation, brand differentiation, and the opening of new international markets.

7. References

- Alejandra, M., & Jiménez, T. (2021). *Information brochure for Ecuadorian exporters on participation in Colombian trade fairs*.
- ATLAS.ti . (2025). *Essential Guide to Qualitative Research* . ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH Site by New Now. <https://atlasti.com/guides/qualitative-research-guide-part-1>
- Brouthers , L.E., & Nakos, G. (2005). The role of systematic international market selection on small firms' export performance. In *Journal of Small Business Management* (Vol. 43, Issue 4, pp. 363–381). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-627X.2005.00142.x>
- Calof , J.L. (1993). *The relationship between firm size and export performance revisited* . www.jstor.org
- Camino, S., Andrade, V., & Pesantez, D. (2016). Positioning and Efficiency of Ecuadorian Bananas, Cocoa, and Flowers in the Global Market. *UNEMI Science* , 48–53.
- Carrion, M. (2018). *Internationalization strategies in the Ecuadorian flower industry* .
- Chlodnicki , M., Leszczyński, G., & Zieliński, M. (2011). *Trade fairs-a tool for the spread of innovation* . <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319036682>
- Evers, N., & Knight , J. (2008). The role of international trade fairs in the internationalization of small firms: A network perspective. In *International Marketing Review* (Vol. 25, Issue 5, pp. 544–562). <https://doi.org/10.1108/02651330810904080>

- Expoflores . (2023). *Management report of the National Association of Flower Producers and Exporters of Ecuador* .
- Gerschewski , S., Evers, N., Nguyen, A.T., & Froese, F.J. (2020). Trade fairs and SME internationalization: Networking for performance. *Management International Review* , 60 (4), 573–595.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-020-00421-y>
- Gomez, C., & Egas, A. (2014). *Historical analysis of the floriculture sector in Ecuador and market study to determine its current situation* .
- Hannula , E. (2012). *SME company's participation in international trade fairs* .
- Hilmersson, M., & Jansson, H. (2012). International network extension processes to institutionally different markets: Entry nodes and processes of exporting SMEs. *International Business Review* , 21 (4), 682–693. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2011.08.003>
- INEC. (2022). *Continuous Agricultural Surface and Production Survey (ESPAC)* .
<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiZTEyY2NiZDIhYjIzYi00ZGQ1LTlkNGEtNDE1OGViM2Q1N2VlIiwidCI6ImYxNThhMmU4LWNhZWMTNDQwNi1iMGFiLWY1ZTI1OWJkYTExMiJ9&pageName=ReportSection>
- Jaramillo, M., Moreno, J., Guillen, J., & Cordero, C. (2010). *Ecuador's Foreign Trade* . www.uazuay.edu.ec
- Johanson, J., & Vahlne, J.-E. (n.d.). *The internationalization process of the firm: A model of knowledge development and increased commitment to foreign markets* . www.jstor.org
- Kourkouridis , D., Frangopoulos , Y., & Salepaki , A. (2024). Business travel motivations and objectives of trade fair visitors: experience from the trade fairs in Thessaloniki, Greece. *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites* , 53 (2), 442–453. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.53207-1219>
- Laura, C. : , Díaz-Bravo, P., Díaz-Bravo, L., Torruco-García, U., Martínez-Hernández, M., & Varela-Ruiz, M. (2013). The interview: a flexible and dynamic resource. In *Inv Ed Med* (Vol. 2, Issue 7). www.elsevier.es
- Lazo, M., & Jara, E. (2010). *The importance of commercial intelligence: a practical case of Ecuadorian exports* .
- Lopez , L. (2009). *Production Analysis Floricola in Ecuador and its export during the period 2006-2007* .
- Monreal-Pérez, J., & Geldres -Weiss, VV (2020). A configurational approach to the impact of trade fairs and trade missions on firm export activity. *BRQ Business Research Quarterly* , 23 (1).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2340944420901045>
- Patricia, D., & Becerra, P. (2010). Globalization and business growth through internationalization strategies. *Redalyc* , 171–195. <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=64615176009>
- Poveda, LM (2021). Ecuadorian flower sector and its impact on the international market due to COVID-19. *South Florida Journal of Development* , 2 (3), 4609–4621. <https://doi.org/10.46932/sfjdv2n3-061>
- Puchalt , J., & Munuera , J. (2008). International Panorama of Trade Fairs. *ICE TRADE FAIRS* , 7–28.
- Puerto, D. (2010). Globalization and *entrepreneurial growth through internationalization strategies growth through internationalization strategies* .
- Ramirez , A., Procel, L., & Solórzano, S. (2023). *Internationalization strategies for the exportable supply of MSMEs in El Oro, Ecuador* . 8 (2), 1603–1625. <https://doi.org/10.23857/pc.v8i2>
- Ramirez , V. (2018). *Effectiveness of business associations for SMEs' participation in the export business* .
- Sandoval, D. (2014). *Design of strategies for the marketing and export of flowers to the Russian market, focusing on the association of flower producers and exporters (EXPOFLORES)*.
- Sebastián, C., & Espinosa, C. (2017). *International Fairs Sponsored by PROECUADOR and the Perception of Participating Companies* .
- Supercias . (2024). *Companies subject to the supervision of the Superintendency of Companies, Securities, and Insurance* . <https://appscvsmovil.supercias.gob.ec/ranking/reporte.html>
- TRADE MAP. (2023). *List of importing markets for a product exported by Ecuador in 2023. Metadata Product: 0603 Cut flowers and buds of flowers, suitable for bouquets or ornamental purposes, fresh, dried, bleached, dyed, impregnated or otherwise prepared* . TRADEMAP.

- Vélez, M., & Sozoranga, H. (2016). *Floriculture in Ecuador*.
<http://www.eumed.net/rev/caribe/2016/10/floricultura.html>
- Véliz, DCM, Burgos, PGM, Llor, DCE, Moreira, JCB, Cabrera, SFS, & Bardelline, KCS (2024).
 Globalization and its impact on international trade: an analysis in the context of global supply chains.
South Florida Journal of Development, 5 (2), 750–764. <https://doi.org/10.46932/sfjdv5n2-027>
- Yolanda. (2016). *Analysis of the production and export of Ecuadorian flowers: a case study and projections for 2015-2020*.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview with Nancy Katherine Bravo Herrera

Presentation:	
Nancy Katherine Bravo Herrera	
Learn about their relationship with the Ecuadorian floriculture sector:	
Leading a business unit for the US, Canada, Asia, and Oceania markets, the company is a flower marketing company headquartered in the Netherlands.	
Questions	Answers
Budget	
If you have participated directly or indirectly in an international or national flower fair, please answer: What is the average budget that a company allocates to participate in fairs?	It depends mainly on the size of the booth you're planning to purchase; it could range from \$40,000 to \$70,000. If the fair is outside the country, an additional \$20,000 is required for the US; if it's in Europe, the costs would be higher. Regarding the budget for the number of people, I couldn't tell you per person because you'd have to figure out the costs per person depending on the city where the fair is held. The reference cost I gave you of \$20,000 would be approximately for 5 people.
What factors influence your budget for participating in these fairs (travel costs, accommodation, stand setup, etc.)?	Cost of exhibition space, stand setup, airline tickets, accommodations, and invitations to potential clients.
Do you consider the allocated budget sufficient to maximize the benefits of participating in international fairs?	Yes , definitely .
Frequency of Fairs	
What criteria do you think they use to select the fairs they participate in (location, market relevance, costs, etc.)?	Mainly the relevance of the market to which the company's sales are focused.
Are there specific fairs that you consider essential for your annual participation? Which ones are they and why?	It all depends on the market you want to reach; the main ones are Ecuador, Colombia, Amsterdam (central Europe), Miami (central USA).
Increased Sales	
How long do you think it takes for the impact of trade show participation to be felt by companies?	It depends on the follow-up given, generally 4 months until the first sales are achieved.
Have you noticed an increase in demand or improvements in your products after participating in international fairs?	For sure yes .
What strategies do you implement during trade shows to maximize sales impact?	Customer service is generally attended by buyers, and the relationships and connections that can be established in person are very important.
Alliances Strategic	
Have you established strategic alliances with other companies or distributors through your participation in trade shows?	Yes, to reduce costs, the stand can be shared with a freight forwarder.
How do you evaluate the success of alliances established at trade shows?	By number of visitors to the stand.
How important do you consider strategic alliances for the growth of your company in the international market?	Very importantly, large companies form alliances with important companies within the same industry.
Increased Positioning	
How has participating in trade shows impacted your company's positioning in the global market?	The brand is associated with the more people see it, the faster they recognize it.
Have you noticed an increase in brand recognition after participating in these fairs?	Yes , definitely .
Others	
Could you provide any opinions, recommendations, and information you consider relevant to these questions about trade shows and their impact on flower exporting companies?	Participating in an international trade show will always be important. Everyone involved in the industry participates in these types of events to make new business, meet new suppliers, and discover new product trends. The opportunity to meet a client in person is very important for future sales.

It is important to be part of Expoflores , as it is a guild of exporters and producers working for their own benefit. Not all Ecuadorian producers and exporters are affiliated because, from what I know, the monthly financial contributions are high.

Appendix 2

Interview with Engineer Juan Andres Proaño

Presentation:	
Engineer Juan Andres Proaño	
Learn about their relationship with the Ecuadorian floriculture sector:	
Director of continuous improvement and training, with experience in the floriculture sector, currently working at Florícola San Isidro Labrador Flor Santo.	
Questions	Answers
Budget	
If you have participated directly or indirectly in an international or national flower fair, please answer: What is the average budget that a company allocates to participate in fairs?	<p>If you participate as a member of a trade mission or national pavilion, the cost per stand is around \$3,000 USD, including products, transportation, and lodging. This is approximately \$10,000 USD in the US or Europe. If you participate alone, the cost of the stand increases by around \$3,000 to \$5,000 USD because you don't get a discount.</p> <p>Surprisingly, a fair in Ecuador can be more expensive... Why? Larger spaces or a larger display area ... Budget around \$20,000 - \$30,000 USD (this fair is more focused on welcoming existing clients, not generating new leads). In Asia, the participation price with a stand, products, travel, and lodging ranges between \$20,000 and \$25,000 USD.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The target you want to target 2. Location of the fair 3. Stand structure and setup 4. In a globalized world, flower fairs have been losing their ability to generate new leads and are becoming more of a place to maintain contact with your customers. It's cheaper to contact your customers face-to-face at these fairs than to tour each of your customers' facilities worldwide, except when you're entering a new market and your presence is new to everyone.
What factors influence your budget for participating in these fairs (travel costs, accommodation, stand setup, etc.)?	NO, the most important thing is the attitude of the people at the fair, the way the product is presented, and the way customers are brought from the corridor to the stand, which often makes up for and maximizes the benefits.
Do you consider the allocated budget sufficient to maximize the benefits of participating in international fairs?	
Frequency of Fairs	
What criteria do you think they use to select the fairs they participate in (location, market relevance, costs, etc.)?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Your value proposition. What product, what service, what distribution method. 2) Availability of additional sales. In agriculture, you can't turn new production areas on and off; many of these investments take a year before that additional production is available. 3) Market, distributor, or regional economy.
Are there specific fairs that you consider essential for your annual participation? Which ones are they and why?	<p>Ecuador - Florecuador, Floreexpo every 2 years</p> <p>Colombia - Florverde Proflora, every 2 years, the year that Ecuador does not do</p> <p>Holland - IFTF and Aalsmeer Trade Fair</p> <p>USA - Wffsa + World Floral Expo +</p> <p>England: Chelsea Flower Show</p> <p>Russia: Flowers Expo</p> <p>Japan: Ifex</p> <p>China: Canton Fair, Kixi</p>
Increased Sales	
How long do you think it takes for the impact of trade show participation to be felt by companies?	Within a month of contact, if a business relationship has not been established up to this point, it will almost certainly become a cold lead.
Have you noticed an increase in demand or improvements in your products after participating in international fairs?	Yes, because you can see your product in the market and compare it directly.

<p>What strategies do you implement during trade shows to maximize sales impact?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show quality product • Be clear about your value proposition • The attitude of the sellers... <p>The stand, the product, The give away attract ... but the seller is the one who makes the lead and there is nothing better than a first impression, a price promotion at a fair or an introduction to the market.</p>
<hr/> <p>Alliances Strategic</p> <hr/> <p>Have you established strategic alliances with other companies or distributors through your participation in trade shows?</p> <p>How do you evaluate the success of alliances established at trade shows?</p> <p>How important do you consider strategic alliances for the growth of your company in the international market?</p> <hr/>	
	<p>YES... logistics, joint participation with local distributor, promotions, contests, etc.</p> <p>Cost reduction, increased sales, market share or purchasing preference</p> <p>A lot... an alliance is a sum of forces... synergy is always generated in one way or another</p> <hr/>
<p>Increased Positioning</p> <hr/>	
	<p>How has participating in trade shows impacted your company's positioning in the global market?</p>
	<p>YES... having a finger in the market and direct contact with the customer is priceless.</p>
	<p>Have you noticed an increase in brand recognition after participating in these fairs?</p>
	<p>In some cases, yes, in others, no. Yes, when your value proposition sets you apart from the competition.</p> <hr/>
<p>Others</p> <hr/>	
<p>Could you provide any opinions, recommendations, and information you consider relevant to these questions about trade shows and their impact on flower exporting companies?</p>	<p>Regarding ExpoFlores , although it provides a certificate, in my experience this certificate has not helped me achieve a closer relationship or have higher sales, since this certificate serves to recognize that a series of standards have been met throughout the production process. Still, it has not helped me increase sales when a customer chooses the product.</p> <hr/>

Appendix 3

Interview with Economist Maria Veronica Tapia

Presentation:	
Economist Maria Veronica Tapia	
Learn about their relationship with the Ecuadorian floriculture sector:	
Foreign Trade, Plantations Plantreb CIA. LTDA	
Questions	Answers
Budget	
If you have participated directly or indirectly in an international or national flower fair, please answer: What is the average budget that a company allocates to participate in fairs?	
What factors influence your budget for participating in these fairs (travel costs, accommodation, stand setup, etc.)?	Staff, who the participants are, where the event will take place, guests and dissemination
Do you consider the allocated budget sufficient to maximize the benefits of participating in international fairs?	No, not always. It's more about promoting the brand and products, since the market is very volatile.
Frequency of Fairs	
What criteria do you think they use to select the fairs they participate in (location, market relevance, costs, etc.)?	It depends a lot on the company if it is new or not, in our case, it would be for cost
Are there specific fairs that you consider essential for your annual participation? Which ones are they and why?	No
Increased Sales	
How long do you think it takes for the impact of trade show participation to be felt by companies?	They are usually given in the short term with samples, then it is up to the client to maintain the business relationship.
Have you noticed an increase in demand or improvements in your products after participating in international fairs?	To be honest, no
What strategies do you implement during trade shows to maximize sales impact?	The display of products
Alliances Strategic	
Have you established strategic alliances with other companies or distributors through your participation in trade shows?	Yeah
How do you evaluate the success of alliances established at trade shows?	They are good, they help to reach a greater variety of products
How important do you consider strategic alliances for the growth of your company in the international market?	Helps diversify the market
Increased Positioning	
How has participating in trade shows impacted your company's positioning in the global market?	None
Have you noticed an increase in brand recognition after participating in these fairs?	No
Others	
Could you provide any opinions, recommendations, and information you consider relevant to these questions about trade shows and their impact on flower exporting companies?	Trade shows are more of a time to interact with clients, freight agencies, and farms to find out how the competition is doing, but I wouldn't believe it helps to significantly increase sales.

Appendix 4

Interview with Commercial Engineer Patricia Alexandra Guerrero Figueroa

Presentation:	
Eng. Patricia Alexandra Guerrero Figueroa	
Learn about their relationship with the Ecuadorian floriculture sector:	
I worked at Altaflor Plantaciones, a flower company dedicated to the production and marketing of roses in the province of Cañar, where I was Head of Purchasing.	
Questions	Answers
Budget	
If you have participated directly or indirectly in an international or national flower fair, please answer: What is the average budget that a company allocates to participate in fairs?	Until 17 years ago, when I worked at the flower farm, we participated in the largest fair in the country, Expo Flor Ecuador. It was held every two years in the Middle of the World. The approximate cost of participating with a stand at the fair was approximately \$2,500. We also participated every two years in one of the largest fairs in the world, held in Russia, which involved costs of approximately \$15,000, including travel expenses for representatives.
What factors influence your budget for participating in these fairs (travel costs, accommodation, stand setup, etc.)?	To participate in a fair, you must consider all the costs and expenses involved in creating a budget and deciding whether or not to participate.
Do you consider the allocated budget sufficient to maximize the benefits of participating in international fairs?	I think it is enough to expand the market and find new niches for marketing.
Frequency of Fairs	
What criteria do you think they use to select the fairs they participate in (location, market relevance, costs, etc.)?	The location is a strategic point for holding trade shows. First, it must have the ideal space that provides all the facilities for both participants and attendees. Considering that even if a trade show is held within the country, future clients are not only national marketers but also foreigners. Therefore, the location is important for logistics.
Are there specific fairs that you consider essential for your annual participation? Which ones are they and why?	Generally, due to the costs involved in holding a fair, both for participants and attendees, fairs are held every two years.
Increased Sales	
How long do you think it takes for the impact of trade show participation to be felt by companies?	Time is relative because much depends on the quality, variety, and type of flowers you sell. Roses, for example, are sold all the time, but in greater quantities for Valentine's Day, Women's Day, and Mother's Day.
Have you noticed an increase in demand or improvements in your products after participating in international fairs?	From what I remember, after the fairs, new clients were obtained.
What strategies do you implement during trade shows to maximize sales impact?	In the case of the company where I worked, it was always about impressing the customer with new varieties of roses.
Alliances Strategic	
Have you established strategic alliances with other companies or distributors through your participation in trade shows?	Among the new clients were also flower retailers who intervened to place the flowers in different locations and thus expand the reach of the flowers to more places.
How do you evaluate the success of alliances established at trade shows?	The alliances for the company where I worked were always favorable, especially with the marketing companies, since they were in charge of the logistics of delivering the flowers to different clients.
How important do you consider strategic alliances for the growth of your company in the international market?	Partnering with retailers is important because they are responsible for placing flowers with wholesale customers, but especially with retailers, which optimizes financial resources and time.
Increased Positioning	
How has participating in trade shows impacted your company's positioning in the global market?	Well, during the time Altaflor Plantations was active, it was very well-positioned for its quality, flower color intensity, and stem size, which is one of the key selling points. Unfortunately, labor and logistics costs in the South have prevented Altaflor from remaining as successful as other plantations today.

Have you noticed an increase in brand recognition after participating in these fairs?

As long as the flower company remained active, its brand was always very well positioned.

Others

Could you provide any opinions, recommendations, and information you consider relevant to these questions about trade shows and their impact on flower exporting companies?

Holding a flower fair is very important for flower growers to showcase their products and initiate new business relationships.
