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Vinexpo Asia Returns to Hong Kong, Revealing 'Continentalisation' Trend in Trade Shows

Vinexpo Asia's Dual-City Strategy Proves Successful, Catering to Regional Markets

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After a six-year hiatus from Hong Kong, Vinexpo Asia made a triumphant return this year, marking a significant milestone for the global wine industry. Despite the challenges posed by the long break, the three-day event showcased an impressive turnout, revealing intriguing trends about how international event attendance is evolving in the post-Covid era.

Held from May 28-30, 2024, Vinexpo Asia hosted a whopping 1,032 producers from 35 countries. A notable one-third of these exhibitors hailed from France, underscoring the enduring prominence of French wines in the Asian market. Australia, too, made a bold statement with 85 wineries, buoyed by the lifting of retaliatory tariffs by China. Italy, Spain, Chile, and China were also well-represented, reflecting a diverse and vibrant participation.

What truly stood out, however, was the visitor count. Surpassing the organizers' expectations, the fair attracted 14,203 visitors from 60 countries. A closer look at these figures reveals a compelling shift: 75% of attendees came from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. This regional concentration of visitors highlights a significant trend that Vinexpo Asia's CEO, Rodolphe Lameyse, terms "continentalisation."

So, what exactly is 'continentalisation'? According to Lameyse, it's the emerging trend where individuals prefer to attend trade shows within their own geographical region. This shift is a stark departure from the pre-pandemic era, where international events drew a more globally dispersed audience.

Vinexpo Asia's history dates back to 1998, with Hong Kong serving as its primary hub. However, the post-pandemic landscape has prompted a strategic evolution. Now, the exhibition alternates annually between Hong Kong and Singapore, a decision aimed at better catering to distinct regional markets.

Lameyse elaborated on this strategy, emphasizing that Singapore is strategically positioned to serve the burgeoning Southeast Asian market, while Hong Kong remains pivotal for accessing the Chinese market. "It's not one or the other, it's one and the other," he stated. Last year's inaugural event in Singapore saw 80% of its visitors coming from Southeast Asia, affirming the region's growing interest in wine.

The rise of wine consumption in Southeast Asia is driven by several factors: a young and dynamic population, an expanding middle class, and an increasing penchant for Western wine styles. Lameyse highlighted these trends, pointing out that this burgeoning market presents significant opportunities, especially at a time when the wine industry is grappling with challenges like climate change and a general decline in wine consumption.

Hong Kong's edition of Vinexpo Asia, on the other hand, remains focused on Mainland China and its neighboring regions, aligning with the current visitorship patterns. "We are very happy with this strategic decision," Lameyse said, reflecting on the success of this year's event.

Beyond the bustling exhibition floor, Vinexpo Asia's business matching service played a crucial role in facilitating connections between buyers and exhibitors. The online platform managed to secure 4,237 pre-booked meetings, highlighting the event's role as a critical business nexus.

As the dust settles on this year's successful event, the wine industry looks forward to the next edition of Vinexpo Asia, set to take place in Singapore from May 27-29, 2025. This alternating model not only caters to the distinct regional markets but also underscores the broader trend towards 'continentalisation' in international trade events.

In conclusion, Vinexpo Asia's recent visitorship trends offer valuable insights into how the global landscape of trade shows is reshaping. The focus on regional attendance reflects a pragmatic approach in a post-pandemic world, ensuring that these events remain relevant, accessible, and impactful. As the wine industry continues to navigate its challenges and opportunities, Vinexpo Asia stands as a testament to the power of adaptation and strategic foresight.