

# Current Situation and Countermeasures of Green Exhibition Development Against the Strategic Background of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

## Taking the Canton Fair as an Example

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### ABSTRACT

The Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council in 2019 clearly pointed out its green development concept, and it is the "ecological responsibility" of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to actively implement and respond to the green development concept clearly pointed out in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The exhibition industry is divided into conference industry and exhibition industry, which is a new expansion of modern circulation industry and has a distinct "bonanza effect". However, with the rapid development of the exhibition industry, the accompanying problems are gradually being exposed. For example, after large-scale exhibition events, problems such as energy consumption of electrical lighting, waste of resources, environmental pollution caused by garbage, traffic congestion, and poor travel have emerged one after another. This article takes the development strategy of the Greater Bay Area as the background and takes the Canton Fair as an example, to solve the problems faced by green exhibitions and put forward the new missions of new green exhibitions.

**Keywords:** Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Canton Fair, Green exhibition, Low carbon, Dual carbon strategy.

### 1. INTRODUCTION: THE RELEASE OF THE OUTLINE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE GUANGDONG-HONG KONG-MACAO GREATER BAY AREA CLEARLY PROMOTES THE CONSTRUCTION OF GREEN AND LOW-CARBON ENERGY

On February 18, 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (hereinafter referred to as the Outline). The

Outline specifies that it should vigorously promote the structural reform of the energy supply side and optimize the energy structure and layout of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Continuously promoting the standardization of "green exhibitions" is an inevitable requirement for building a clean, low-carbon, safe, and efficient energy supply system. However, with the holding of more and more large-scale exhibition events, a new green exhibition model, "green exhibition", is an inevitable choice for achieving sustainable development. For example, the Canton Fair has become China's largest trade platform and an important window and symbol of China's opening up to the outside world. However, there are also corresponding issues in the development of green

operations at the Canton Fair, such as the need to strengthen awareness of low-carbon and environmental protection development, lack of full process and comprehensive joint execution and supervision, and neglecting the protection of resources and environment, and so on. How to carry out green construction and sustainable development of exhibitions is an issue that the Canton Fair should pay attention to.

## **2. THE DEVELOPMENT PROSPECT FOR THE GREEN EXHIBITIONS OF THE CANTON FAIR AGAINST THE STRATEGIC BACKGROUND OF THE GUANGDONG–HONG KONG–MACAO GREATER BAY AREA**

### ***2.1 Challenges Faced by the Canton Fair Against the Strategic Background of the Greater Bay Area***

The orderly promotion of carbon peaking and carbon neutrality is a work requirement proposed in the 2022 Government Work Report. As a centralized window for the exhibition, exchange and investment attraction of cities and enterprises in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area, the Canton Fair is bound to play the role of "leader". But under the premise of leadership, there are also many challenges to be faced. First, affected by the epidemic in Shenzhen, the decline of excessive orders during the epidemic, the impact on the domestic supply chain, the accelerated transfer of orders overseas, the accumulated high inventory and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, etc., have had a certain negative impact on China's exports. Second, there are institutional loopholes, such as the phenomenon of reselling booths, which directly leads to a mix of exhibitors at the Canton Fair, mixed quality and other phenomena. At the same time, it also directly leads to some exhibitors' booth construction unable to meet green and environmental requirements. Third, in promoting cooperation in the Greater Bay Area and promoting dual circulation, the Canton Fair plays an important role, shouldering the mission of assisting resource integration between different cities in the Greater Bay Area and improving the supporting industrial chain. It is necessary for it to work closely and deepen exchanges and cooperation with Hong Kong, Macao, and nine other cities to overcome regional obstacles, draw on the successful experience of the international bay area, build a

regional innovation system, promote green and low-carbon urban development, and promote the economic construction of the Greater Bay Area. [1]

### ***2.2 A High-quality Industrial Development Solution: Green Exhibition***

#### ***2.2.1 Green Exhibition***

"Green" is a figurative term that usually refers to all plans, actions, ideas, concepts, activities, etc. to maintain the ecology and natural environment of the earth. It not only has economic benefits, but also ecological and social benefits. The green management theory refers to the application of "green management" thinking in the operation and management of enterprises, organically integrating "environmental protection" ideas into various management, related fields, business directions, and management processes, such as catering, accommodation, transportation, services, exhibition systems, exhibition materials, materials or online systems, logistics and other material supply situations. It reflects the environmental protection awareness, resource conservation awareness, and social responsibility awareness of enterprises in the process of commodity circulation.

Green exhibitions cover ecological exhibitions and the ecologicalization of the exhibition industry. "Green exhibitions" conform to the requirements of "ecological civilization" and achieve the sustainable development of the "exhibition industry" with the mission of the times of "low-carbon", "environmental protection", and "energy conservation". In a broad sense, "green exhibition" is an "exhibition" centered around "simulating natural ecology". In a narrow sense, "green exhibition" is essentially a research platform and practical base that showcases human sustainable development and is the embodiment of "sustainable development" and "scientific development concept" in practice.

#### ***2.2.2 Green Exhibitions Take Leading the Ecologicalization of the Industry as Its Responsibility***

Today, the concept of ecological civilization "Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" has been deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. However, because the Canton Fair takes a low-end, popular oriented route, it will move from the original "extensive development" to the substantive "green development" phase in the

process of rapid development of the exhibition economy. However, during the transformation process, some mid-low end and mass enterprises lack the concept of green exhibition hosting, and there is still room for improvement in green exhibition preparation, exhibition showcase, exhibition withdrawal, conferences, transportation, catering, and other aspects. In the context of ecological civilization construction, this will inevitably put forward higher requirements for the Canton Fair. Development must abandon the conservative idea of "pollution before governance". It is necessary to not only develop the economy, but also take into account ecological civilization. The two should work together and play a leading role. Regarding issues such as how to widely adopt environmental protection technology at the Canton Fair, how to use its conference and exhibition systems, exhibition materials, materials, or online systems with technological, digital, and ecological characteristics through linking upstream and downstream resources, to achieve effective resource utilization and energy consumption reduction, and how to apply the concept of circular economy and adhere to scientific, innovative, and green hosting, and so on, efforts should be made to minimize the impact of exhibition projects on the ecological environment from aspects such as exhibition preparation, planning and design, execution and construction, exhibition display, reception services, accommodation and catering, travel during the exhibition, garbage disposal, post-exhibition withdrawal, and recycling, fully promote the transformation and upgrading of digitization, intelligence, and ecologicalization of the exhibition industry, promote the healthy development of the industry, and assist in the high-quality development of the regional economy. This is also a necessary plan to create a resource-saving and environment-friendly Canton Fair. [5]

### **3. THE NEW MISSIONS OF THE GREEN EXHIBITIONS AT THE CANTON FAIR AGAINST THE STRATEGIC BACKGROUND OF THE GUANGDONG-HONG KONG-MACAO GREATER BAY AREA**

#### **3.1 *Current Situation of China's Green Exhibitions***

The exhibition industry is a "barometer" that reflects the development of a city and an important

window for showcasing the city's image. In the development process of over 40 years of reform and opening up, China's exhibition industry has entered a new stage of development from high-speed development to high-quality development. Since the 1990s, China's exhibition industry has shown a prominent development in the world exhibition industry, forming an emerging exhibition market that plays an important catalytic and driving role in guiding and promoting investment and trade, as well as economic development. Major cities adhere to the business philosophy of people-oriented and environment-friendly green exhibitions in their exhibition activities. They are paying more attention to protecting the environment, developing and reusing various exhibition resources in a reasonable manner, promoting the new concept of green exhibitions based on sustainable development and circular economy, and maximizing the avoidance of pollution and waste. For example, in 2014, the Ministry of Commerce decided to carry out the green development work of the Canton Fair, to reduce the resource and energy consumption of it, and promote the transformation, upgrading, and sustainable development of it. The Foreign Trade Center completed the Green Canton Fair Plan in three years, making it the earliest exhibition in China to enforce the implementation of "green exhibitions". Jiang Huai, Deputy Secretary General of the China Convention/Exhibition/Event Society and Director of the Industrial Convention and Exhibition Promotion Center, pointed out on the 130th Canton Fair that it's crucial to comprehensively improve the quality of green development, and better serve the goals of carbon peaking and carbon neutrality. In particular, he has formulated an exhibition green development indicator system, focusing on promoting the application of green materials, optimizing special booth, and upgrading standard stalls to improve the overall level of the Canton Fair, and he has also formulated industry national standards and taken the lead in formulating three national standards, including the Exhibition Green Operation Guidelines, to strive to create green exhibition halls. [2] At the Western Green Ecological Development Forum held in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province on December 27, 2019, Jinhui International Group first proposed the "12-zations" of green exhibitions in the exhibition industry, namely, ecological concept, less paper-using, recycling, low-carbon travel, resource conservation, elimination of bushmeat, empty plates movement, waste classification,

centralized treatment, clean venue, healthy diet, and high quality. [3]

### ***3.2 Constraints on the Development of Green Exhibitions at the Canton Fair***

#### ***3.2.1 Weak Awareness of Green Design Concept and Dual Carbon Strategy***

The slow development and lagging concept of green exhibition design in China is mainly due to the slow development of China's exhibition industry, low research and development level of designers in interior design, graphic design, and other fields, coupled with a lack of national policy guarantees, resulting in a slow development speed of green exhibitions in China. Moreover, there are enterprises that prioritize economic interests and neglect social and ecological benefits such as resource waste and environmental pollution.

In terms of the Canton Fair, exhibition organizers excessively pursue aesthetic perception due to their pursuit of a high-end, magnificent and classy perspective on the exhibition. Some exhibitors lack environmental awareness and have a poor understanding of low-carbon environment, and therefore, in order to reduce the consumption of funds, they choose materials with lower costs but high pollution and emissions during the exhibition arrangement. This phenomenon is not only caused by enterprise factors. In addition, it will take some time for green exhibition design to keep up with the pace of the times. There is a lack of creativity, and traditional materials are also difficult to adapt to the display characteristics of the modern exhibition industry, such as using too many materials, fast exhibition arrangement, and short cycles. As a result, the development of the "black economy" of exhibition enterprises has been indulged, resulting in unreasonable exhibition booth design and planning. Only when the public's awareness of green environmental protection is generally raised and the public's supervision of enterprises and the national government form a joint force can enterprises be urged to "speak and act with caution".

#### ***3.2.2 Insufficient Standardization of Government Management System and Green Exhibition Evaluation System***

At present, China's environmental protection policies are not yet perfect and there are many problems such as cost differentiation of environmental protection materials, inconsistency

between technology and scenarios, and the lack of a sound green exhibition standard system, which make the practice process of green exhibitions in China relatively slow. Many exhibition projects don't have comprehensive environmental regulations and there is no effective environmental management for their entire process of construction, testing, use, dismantling, etc., causing the use of substandard paint during booth construction, excessive consumption of packaging materials during transportation, such as sealed wooden boxes and tape, material damage caused by violent withdrawal without recycling, and waste exhibits, packaging materials, and carpets becoming difficult issues for waste disposal. Nowadays, with the deepening of green development at the Canton Fair, solid waste from exhibitions has significantly decreased. The holding of the 130th Canton Fair's first online and offline integration has accelerated the upgrading of itself and enhanced its platform role in unblocking the domestic circulation and connecting the domestic and international dual circulation.

However, at present, some links are unable to be fully implemented, inspected and supervised, which to some extent restricts the green operation and development of the Canton Fair. The "green and environmental protection special booth" standard for the Canton Fair still needs to be gradually refined and improved, so that various enterprises can implement a series of operations such as booth design, decoration, material use, green operation, and intelligent operation in accordance with sound industry standards.

#### ***3.2.3 Lack of Professional Talents***

After vigorously promoting the "energy-saving brand" at the Canton Fair, various enterprises have taken green and environmental protection as the entry point for product innovation. For example, in terms of demand for green exhibitions, exhibitors should focus on green, environment-friendly and recyclable materials from design to construction stages, and it is necessary to timely understand the performance, usage methods, costs, and other aspects of various types of recyclable materials. But one of the biggest problems in China is the lack of composite high-end talents, especially the lack of certain practical experience. Some exhibition designers have a low level of professionalism and lack practical experience, resulting in uneven qualifications of the exhibition industry's team and enterprises. They also lack consideration for

environmental factors and environmental literacy, and are still limited to previous decoration designs, resulting in insufficient innovative use of green and environment-friendly materials to present diverse booth forms and unable to meet exhibitors' demands for green booths.

### **3.3 Strategies for Green Exhibitions at the Canton Fair under the Program**

#### **3.3.1 Increasing the Promotion of the Concept of Green Exhibition Development and Continuing To Promote the National Dual Carbon Policy**

Establishing the concept of ecological civilization and exploring new green exhibition models for ecological and environmental protection are the top priorities for building a new type of green exhibition development. But in some cities, the awareness of ecological environment protection still needs to be improved, the development concept of quenching a thirst with poison still exists, and the development concept of draining the pond to get all the fish has not been eliminated. In pursuit of economic growth, the ecological environment has paid a high price. Therefore, strengthening the publicity and education of ecological and environmental protection, further enhancing the enthusiasm and initiative of the public to participate in ecological and environmental protection, creating a good atmosphere for everyone to participate in ecological and environmental protection, and firmly establishing their environmental awareness are important contents of strengthening ecological and environmental protection work. Exhibitions should use low-carbon and environment-friendly materials, introduce high-tech achievements, and resist excessive decoration. People should be encouraged to follow the "efficient Minimalism", choose low-carbon transportation, and consciously maintain public health. The concept of green ecology should be implemented and transmitted to everyone and efforts should be made to minimize the impact of the Canton Fair on the ecological environment, forming a replicable and promotable new type of green exhibition supply chain system.

#### **3.3.2 The Embodiment of Social New Economy Using the Internet as a Carrier in the Exhibition Industry**

The 14th Five-Year Plan specifically puts forward a new development pattern of "promoting domestic and international dual circulation" to promote each other. In 2021, as a form of exhibition industry belonging to the modern service industry and urban economy, with the spread of the epidemic in the past two years, new display methods and activity methods such as "online exhibitions and virtual exhibitions" have accelerated, reproducing the entire enterprise in the Internet cloud, forming a positive sign of the "gushing forth" exhibition new economy. [6] Traditional exhibitions are transitioning towards "digital" exhibitions. With the help of the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, employing numbers to endow intelligence, powerful nation of science and technology, and 3D space digital Internet will be a booster and accelerator for the economic recovery of supply and demand in China's various industrial markets under the epidemic, and also a "new infrastructure" for online virtual exhibition economy. Whether it is the venue, organizer, builder, or exhibitor, they are actively embracing the trend of "exhibition digitization", accelerating the construction of a new digital exhibition track system, strengthening the leading role of digital exhibitions at the Canton Fair, and ushering in a new era of development.

#### **3.3.3 Strengthening Institutional Construction, Increasing Supervision, and Improving the Green Exhibition Evaluation System**

The government should improve the relevant policy system, and clarify industrial environmental standards and regulatory foundations. In the three national standards, including the Exhibition Green Operation Guidelines, which were first formulated nationwide at the 130th Canton Fair, it was pointed out that it is necessary to sort out and remind all relevant parties to understand the promotion effects they should play in achieving a green exhibition system. While doing a good job in institutional construction, the government should also play a leading role, which serves as a baton and key to the implementation of green exhibition practices. For example, in the on-site service strategy of the home service provider, firstly, for some enterprises that

use green exhibition materials, more convenience and discounts can be given in terms of the amount of deposit return, time, and priority given to on-site services. Secondly, for booths that use non-green exhibition materials, appropriate measures such as increasing garbage disposal fees and policy penalties can be implemented to force exhibitors and builders to actively follow up on green booth construction. At the same time, in the specific operation of the Canton Fair, measures should be introduced to encourage the reduction of waste, in order to promote the green and environmental protection of the exhibitions and encourage the emergence of more green exhibition booths and exhibitions. In addition, it is necessary to promote the establishment of an environmental protection review agency for exhibition construction as soon as possible, inspect the quality and safety of exhibition halls and booths after construction is completed, and comprehensively promote green construction. What's more, industry associations should play an important role in establishing green exhibition rules, promoting industry joint management, and promoting exhibition qualification evaluation. They should gradually improve the green exhibition standard system, guide the healthy development of the industry through exhibition construction, form professional teams, establish unified, suitable, and graded evaluation standards, design and implement clear and specific evaluation processes, and strengthen the promotion and implementation of national standards such as the Green Booth Evaluation Guidelines and the Green Exhibition Operation Guidelines, so as to strengthen the recognition, supervision, and management of enterprises and promote the green development of the Canton Fair. [4]

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Under the policy guidance of the Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Accelerating the Establishment and Improvement of a Green and Low-carbon Circular Development Economic System (GF [2021] No. 4) issued by the State Council in 2021, new missions of green exhibition development have emerged in the integrated development process of the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area: In 2022, China's exhibition industry should focus more on efficient collaboration between the upstream, midstream, and downstream industries, promoting the coordinated development of transportation, accommodation, catering, logistics, communication,

finance, insurance, culture, tourism, planning, advertising, design, printing, and other fields. The added value of the exhibition industry chain has more spillover effects, fully unleashing new momentum of the exhibition economy through models such as "exhibition + industrial clusters", "exhibition+business districts", and "exhibition+advantageous industries". At the same time, starting from 2022, China's exhibition industry will inevitably move towards a high-quality development direction that is efficient, green, and low-carbon. But promoting green exhibitions requires the full participation and joint efforts of all relevant parties in order to make breakthroughs and achieve true progress.

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