EXHIBITION BRAND PREFERENCE IN MAINLAND CHINA: THE ROLE OF RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AND DESTINATION ATTRACTIVENESS

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Exhibition Brand Preference in Mainland China: The Role of Relationship Quality and Destination Attractiveness

By

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

Exhibition brand preference is the topic of this thesis, with a focus on Mainland China's exhibition industry. Despite the fact that many destinations around the world have invested significant resources to build large-scale exhibition centers and host exhibitions to gain both economic and non-economic benefits (e.g., Davidson & Rogers, 2006; Fenich, 2008; Kirchgeorg, 2005), there is little research on the impact of exhibitors' relationship with exhibition organizers and their perceptions of destination attractiveness on their preference for and intention to participate in a particular exhibition. This research aims to address this lack of research by focusing on the impact of relationship quality and destination attractiveness. In addition, it attends to the paucity of research on the effect of manufacturing clusters on exhibition brand preference. Drawing on relationship quality, destination marketing, and cluster theory to synthesize a theoretical framework, this thesis develops and tests in the context of Mainland China's exhibition industry a model of the effects of relationship quality with organizers and destination attractiveness on exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands.

This thesis combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and consisted of two major studies. Study 1 employed a qualitative approach; face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with 32 international and domestic exhibitors at four international exhibitions in Guangzhou and Beijing. Findings revealed significant differences in exhibitors' perceptions of the relationship with exhibitors, with a consequent impact on perceptions of trust, commitment, and relationship satisfaction. Regarding destinations, venue facilities, accommodation, economic environment, and the existence of manufacturing clusters emerged as important factors influencing exhibitors' preference for and satisfaction with exhibition brands. Exhibitors preferred certain destinations and/or venues over others, while their requirements for venue facilities and destination amenities varied. However, overall, destination/venue attractiveness was considered secondary, compared to the prestige of an exhibition and organizer performance.

Study 2 employed a quantitative approach. First, a pilot test was conducted with 216 respondents at an exhibition in Guangzhou. Results verified dimensions reflecting both relationship quality and destination attractiveness suggested by the literature and those that had emerged from the qualitative study. Second, the main survey collected 616 responses from exhibitors in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Wuhan and Nanjing. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) results confirmed dimensions obtained in the pilot test. Building on the results of EFA, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) supported the overall measurement model; all proposed dimensions were viable indicators. Relationship quality consisted of four factors, namely 1) service quality & satisfaction, 2) trust & affective commitment, 3) calculative commitment, and 4) communication. For destination attractiveness six factors emerged: 1) cluster effect 1 (leadership of the destination in the industrial sector of the exhibited products, 2) venue facilities, 3) cluster effect 2 (destination as a source of exhibitors), 4) economic environment, 5) destination leisure environment, and 6) accessibility. Independent sample t-tests found that exhibitors' perceptions of their relationship with organizers and destination attractiveness differed, depending on key characteristics of exhibitors, organizers, and destinations. Structural equation modeling (SEM) assessed the structural model with two paths: 1) from relationship quality to exhibition brand preference, and 2) from destination attractiveness to exhibition brand preference. Statistics indicated that the model fitted the data well, and that the statistical power of the model to predict exhibition brand preference was high. Relationship quality was the dominant causal factor for exhibition brand preference, confirming that relationship marketing should be very effective in the exhibition industry context. Destination attractiveness was principally represented by cluster effects and satisfactory venue facilities, providing support for the development of exhibitions in cities located in proximity to manufacturing clusters. However, while these factors might justify the choice of an exhibition site or provide added value to an exhibition brand, they had no causal impact on exhibitor preference for an exhibition brand. This finding implies that destination attractiveness factors constitute a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for exhibitors' brand preference, which is determined by whether organizers can meet exhibitors' needs and objectives, and are able to build strong relationships with exhibitors.

This thesis has made several theoretical contributions. First, it developed and tested a model to understand exhibitors' preference of exhibition brands that incorporates both relationship and destination factors. Second, in doing so, it is one of the first studies in the exhibition literature that utilized both qualitative and advanced quantitative approaches. Third, it extended relationship quality theory by testing in the exhibition context in Mainland China measures which were originally developed in varying business-to-business contexts in Western countries. Finally, the thesis drew on cluster theory, developing measures to examine the effect of clusters on destination attractiveness in Mainland China's exhibition industry.

Key Words: exhibitions, destination attractiveness, relationship quality, Mainland China

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Affective Commitment
ACCE	Accessibility
AUMA	Ausstellungs- und Messe-Ausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft e.V (Association of the German Trade Fair Industry)
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
B2B	Business-to-Business Relationships
B2C	Business-to-Consumer Relationships
CC	Calculative Commitment
CCA	Constant Comparative Analysis
CCE	China Convention & Exhibition Society
CCPIT	China Council for the Promotion of International Trade
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CIEC	China International Exhibition Corporation
CIEF	China Import and Export Fair
CLST	Cluster Effect
CO	Communication
CR	Composite Reliability
DA	Destination Attractiveness
DLE	Destination Leisure Environment
EBP	Exhibition Brand Preference
ECVI	Expected Cross-Validation Index
EE	Economic Environment
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EVER-BRIGHT	Shanghai Ever-Bright Convention & Exhibition Center
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
INTEX	Shanghai International Exhibition Center
KMO	Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy
NJIEC	Nanjing International Exhibition Center
PEACE	Hangzhou Peace International Convention & Exhibition Center

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (CONTINUED)

PRD	Pearl River Delta
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
RQ	Relationship Quality
RS	Relationship Satisfaction
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SMC	Squared Multiple Correlations
SMEs	Small-to-Medium Enterprises
SNIEC	Shanghai New International Expo Center
SQ	Service Quality
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index
TT	Trust
UBM	United Business Media
UFI	Union des Foires Internationales (The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry)
VF	Venue Facilities
WHCEC	Wuhan International Convention & Exhibition Center
YRD	Yangtze River Delta

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

This thesis examines the impact of relationship quality and destination attractiveness on exhibition brand preference, with a focus on the exhibition industry in Mainland China. Exhibitions are market events where a large number of companies from one or more industrial sectors present their main product range to commercial buyers. An exhibition brand consists of four components: the event, the operator, the exhibition center, and the host destination (Sasserath, Wenhart & Daly, 2005). The importance of exhibitions as a marketing medium to bring suppliers and buyers together for information and trade exchange has been well documented in the literature (e.g., Kijewski, Yoon, & Yong, 1993; Kirchgeorg, 2005; Li, 2007; Smith, Hama, & Smith, 2003) while the contribution of exhibitions to a regional economy and destination development has been increasingly recognized (e.g., Fuchslocher, 2005; Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995). In turn, exhibitions benefit from the inherent attractiveness of the host destination (Sasserath et al., 2005).

Many destinations around the world have invested significant resources into the development of their exhibition industry. China's exhibition industry in particular has experienced rapid growth in the past decades. Exhibition indoor space totaled over 2.5 million square meters in 2007 (UFI, 2007). The estimated revenue generated from the organization of exhibitions amounted to approximately US$ 1.7 billion in 2005 while exhibition center revenue totaled US$ 373 million (Kay, 2007). China has more than 240 exhibition centers, with an approximate average utilization rate of 15% (Kay, 2005). Although there are about 4,000 exhibitions of varying scales per annum, the market is facing consolidation and restructuring, becoming increasingly mature and selective (Chan, 2008, 2005; Erwin, 2005; Heckmann, 2005). A better understanding of relationship quality among critical stakeholders and destination attractiveness will assist in improving the exhibition industry in general and in China in particular.

1.2 Research Problem

The majority of studies on exhibitions has typically focused on issues relating to exhibitors' and visitors' exhibition participation, such as exhibiting and visiting objectives (e.g., Hansen, 2004; Kijewski et al., 1993; Kozak, 2005), exhibition selection (e.g., Tanner, Chonko, & Ponzurick, 2001), performance (e.g., Blythe, 2002; Li, 2007;) , effectiveness (e.g., Dekimpe, François, Gopalakrishna, Lilien, & Bulte, 1997; Tanner, 2002), exhibitor and visitor behavior (e.g., Herbig, O'Hara, & Palumbo, 1997; Rosson & Seringhaurs, 1995), service quality and satisfaction (e.g., Bauer, Law, Tse, & Weber, 2008; Jung, 2005).

Exhibitions are always a product of cooperation. The success of an exhibition depends on the close coordination of organizers and exhibitors with potential visitors (Kresse, 2005). Relationship quality is especially effective in the contexts of service-based exchanges, in business markets, and if transactions are conducted via multiple channels (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006). In the exhibition sector, organizers are compelled to give adequate considerations to the requirements and likings of exhibitors and visitors. Exhibitors' preference for exhibitions may be affected by their relationship with the organizers. Thus, exhibitors' preference for an exhibition brand, that is, their preference for one exhibition provided by the current organizer over other exhibitions of similar themes provided by other organizers, is expected to be influenced by the nature and quality of the relationship with the organizer. Current literature suggests that there is a binding relationship between exhibition organizers and exhibitors (Chan, 2005), yet studies on the nature, quality and impact of such relationships are missing.

Perceived attractiveness of destinations has been regarded as one of the evaluation constructs of destination performance as well as one of the determinants that affect pleasure destination choice (Kim, Guo, & Agrusa, 2005; Um, Chon, & Ro, 2006). Regarding business travel destinations, a number of authors have discussed convention destinations (Chacko & Fenich, 2000; Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Oppermann, 1996), identifying convention site (destination) selection variables and their relative importance.

Exhibitions depend on repeat attendance for long-lasting success, and thus, destination attractiveness might be related to repeat attendance of exhibitors. Apart from destination macro and touristic attributes already elaborated in the tourism and convention literature (e.g., Chacko & Fenich, 2000; Croch & Louviere, 2004), a destination's business and economic environment may largely contribute to destination attractiveness to exhibition participants, as exhibition operation and participation is particularly business-oriented. Cultivation of an exhibition for an industry sector is related to the maturity of the industry in a city (e.g., Butler, Bassiouni, El Adly, & Widjaja, 2007; Chan, 2005). Several commentators have discussed how exhibitions contribute to destination development (Clement, 2005; Law, 2002; Page & Hall, 2003) and how destination factors influence the cultivation of exhibitions (Chan, 2005, 2008; Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995). However, destination business attributes have not been sufficiently explored (Enright & Newton, 2004). In addition, very few studies have investigated the effect of manufacturing clusters on exhibition destination attractiveness, and how exhibitors' perceptions of destination factors influence their preference for exhibition brands.

Following the review of the literature and identification of research gaps, the research problem is stated as follows:

Which, and to what extent, do relationship quality and destination attractiveness factors impact on exhibition brand preference?

Several research questions and related hypotheses are developed to guide this thesis investigation. They are developed in Chapters 2 and 3, and are listed in Table 3.5, at the end of Chapter 3. The first set of research questions is related to relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers:

1.1 What constitutes relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers?
1.2 Are there significant differences in relationship quality, depending on key characteristics of organizers and exhibitors?
1.3 To what extent does relationship quality with organizers exert influence on exhibition brand preference of exhibitors?

The second set of research questions is related to destination attractiveness in the exhibition context:

2.1 What constitutes destination attractiveness for an exhibition destination from the exhibitors' perspective?
2.2 What measures constitute 'clusters' in an exhibition context and to what extent do 'clusters' contribute to destination attractiveness?
2.3 Do first and second tier destinations perform differently with regard to destination attractiveness factors from the exhibitors' perspective?
2.4 To what extent does destination attractiveness exert an influence on exhibition brand preference of exhibitors?

This thesis draws on relationship marketing theory to explore what constitutes relationship quality in the exhibition context and how it impacts on exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. Relationship marketing literature has articulated that high relationship quality can directly enhance customer purchase intentions, provided that the past interaction with and the performance of the supplier has been consistently satisfactory (e.g., Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The relationship quality construct consists of a number of dimensions, such as trust, commitment, relationship satisfaction, and service quality.

In addition, this thesis draws on destination attractiveness literature and cluster theory to explore the constituents and strength of destination attributes in the exhibition context, and its impact on exhibitors' exhibition brand preference. Apart from conventional measurements for a destination's macro, business and economic environment (e.g., Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Enright & Newton, 2004), such as accessibility, leisure environment, and economic standing, this thesis draws on Porter's (1998) concept of 'industrial clusters', which can describe a region's economic concentration and enhance national and regional competitiveness (Enright, 2003; Rocha, 2004), to measure economic performance in a destination and its impact on destination attractiveness to exhibitors.

1.3 Research Objectives

In order to address the research problem and questions in the context of Mainland China's exhibition industry, a model is developed and tested that can identify: 1) organizer and destination related factors that affect decisions relating to participation in exhibitions, and 2) key success factors for exhibitions and destinations in general, and for those in China in particular. Thus, this study strives to present implications for exhibition development in China's cities, which pay focal attention to the exhibition sector development, based on analyses of exhibitors' perceptions of quality exhibitions and attractive destinations. Since a wide range of factors affect exhibitors' preferences for exhibition brands in a complex manner, a relatively simple and easily applicable model that can reflect the determinants and be readily operationalized is in the interest of all stakeholders. The development of a set of variables and indicators under the key constructs also serves as a valuable tool for assessing exhibition brand preference.

The objectives of the thesis are summarized as follows:

Research Objective 1:

- develop and test a model of the effects of the quality of relationships between organizers and exhibitors and destination attractiveness on exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands
- develop an appropriate set of indicators under each of the key constructs
- identify the interrelationships among the key constructs

Research Objective 2:

- make appropriate recommendations to exhibition organizers and destination management/marketing parties relating to planning, marketing, and resource allocation

1.4 Justification for this Research

The research is justified on three grounds: 1) the rapid development of the exhibition industry, with potentially significant contributions to destination development, 2) current problems faced in exhibition management, and 3) a lack of academic research on the proposed topic.

First, the exhibition industry is a booming industry worldwide. According to the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI), there were 1,062 venues (with a minimum of 5,000 square meters of indoor exhibition space) worldwide in 2006, with a total indoor exhibition space of 27.6 million square meters. The USA, Germany, China, Italy and France are the five top countries in terms of capacity, accounting for 58% of the world total (UFI, 2007). In China, the estimated revenue generated from the organization of exhibitions amounted to approximately US$ 1.7 billion in 2005 (Kay, 2007). Many provincial and municipal governments have targeted the exhibition industry for development into a pillar industry. There were already 240 convention and exhibition centers in 2004 (Kay 2007), with centers having over 5,000 square meters indoor exhibition space in all major cities in China. Rapid development of the exhibition sector has exerted considerable impact on destination development.

Second, a number of problems occurred in developing the exhibition sector in China. The average utilization rate of exhibition centers is only about 15% (Kay, 2007). In addition, there are problems of poor organization and management of exhibitions (Chan, 2005; Liu, 2008; Luo, 2007), and even fraud in exhibitor acquisition (Wang, 2007). These problems severely hamper the development of the industry. Attracting quality and large-scale events is thus a challenge for many venues and destinations in China, and poses a timely and interesting research topic.

Third, theoretically, as Getz (2008, p.417) indicated “event geography is not a well-developed theme, and few scholars have examined event tourism patterns”. Getz especially calls for studies that can explain different patterns of event tourism and the forces that shape the future of events and event tourism. Although a large number of studies have discussed the importance and function of exhibitions, exhibition selection, performance, effectiveness

evaluation, buyer and exhibitor behavior (Borghini, Golfetto, & Rinallo, 2006; Hansen, 2004; Jung, 2005; Smith, Gopalakrishna, & Smith, 2004), no empirical studies examined relationship quality between organizers and exhibitors. The concept of 'exhibition brand' is also a recent conceptualization (e.g., Sasserath et al., 2005) and no studies in the generic literature (including exhibition, business and tourism) have empirically explored exhibition brand related issues. How relationship quality affects exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands is noticeably under-researched.

In addition, although a number of studies have discussed location and exhibition distribution, these factors related to destination factors only (Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995). The importance of these factors is unknown. Few empirical studies discuss the relationship between 'exhibition products' and destinations, despite the fact that 'exhibition products' are fundamentally different from both the traditional manufacturing goods and services and leisure 'tourism products'. There is also a paucity of research on the effect of manufacturing clusters on exhibition and destination development, with no empirical study to date exploring the issue from the exhibitor's perspective. This research will identify relationship and destination factors that affect exhibitors' preferences for exhibition brands.

1.5 Methodology

A mixed strategy method, which integrated both qualitative and quantitative approaches, was adopted to develop and test a model which aims to explain determining factors for exhibition brand preference. The research design follows Miles and Huberman's (1994) guidelines on multi-approach design issues. By using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the results obtained from the first method "inform the second's sampling" and "instrumentation" and can "expand the scope and breadth of the study by using different methods in different components" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.41).

A semi-structured interview method was adopted for the qualitative investigation; 32 face-to-face interviews with international and domestic exhibitors were conducted at four international exhibitions in Guangzhou and Beijing. The notion of "theoretical saturation" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was followed with regards to sample size. Interviewees were top

management staff at four international exhibitions held in two cities in China. Content analysis method was employed for data analyses.

A quantitative survey collected 216 responses for the pilot test and 616 responses for the main survey. The sampling size for the pilot and main survey were estimated based on the requirement of statistical analysis methods used. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were utilized employing SPSS 12.0 and AMOS 6.0 for the quantitative data analyses. Reliability and validity was tested. The survey findings are discussed in relation to the findings of the qualitative investigation.

Overall, in this research, the qualitative investigation gained an understanding of the perceptions of exhibitors, in their own words, regarding relationship quality with organizers and destination attractiveness. It aided with the conceptual development, instrumentation, interpretation, and validation of quantitative findings. The quantitative method tested the proposed model of exhibition brand preference. It avoided “elite bias” -- talking only to high-status respondents (Sieber, 1973), established the generality of the observations, and enhanced the reliability and validity of the measurement and structure model.

1.6 Significance of the Research

Developing and empirically testing a model that explains determining factors for exhibition brand preference in the exhibition sector addresses a gap in the research related to an increasingly important industry sector for many destinations around the world.

This study is one of the pioneering studies that strive to understand the integration of corporate behavior as well as a destination’s economic and leisure attributes that support the exhibition sector from the perspective of exhibitors. The major theoretical contribution of the study lies in the synthesis and testing of a model that is derived from relationship marketing, destination marketing, as well as cluster studies and applied to the exhibition sector. The thesis contribution is four-fold. First, it developed and tested a model to understand exhibitors’ preference for exhibition brands that incorporates both relationship and destination factors. Second, it is one of the first studies in the exhibition literature that

utilizes both qualitative and advanced quantitative approaches. Third, this research extended relationship quality theory by testing in the exhibition context in Mainland China measures which were originally developed in varying business-to-business contexts in Western countries. Finally, this research drew on cluster theory, developing measures to examine the effect of clusters on destination attractiveness in Mainland China's exhibition industry.

Practically, this research will enable decision-makers to make valid comparisons across exhibitions and destinations, allowing for identification of relative strengths/weaknesses of different exhibitions and destinations. It can also provide practitioners, for example, exhibition companies, with potential strategies to enhance customer loyalty. This model may present an assessment of the future prospects of China's cities that focus on the exhibition sector based on analyses of attractive profiles of destination areas. Considering the exhibition center boom in China and challenges facing destinations, the results of this research have implications for governments when making key decisions, concentrating limited financial and human resources on those factors that can best improve attractiveness and preference levels.

1.7 Thesis Structure

Perry (1998) recommended a five chapter approach – introduction, literature review, methodology, findings and discussions, and conclusion – in presenting a thesis. The structure of this thesis generally follows his model, though, in order to make certain topics discrete from others, some of the chapters converge or split to differentiate. Figure 1.1 denotes a graphic overview of the thesis contents. Chapter 2 discusses the context of the study – global exhibition studies, and the exhibition industry development in general, and in China in particular. Chapter 3 proposes the conceptual framework and methodological design, reviewing theoretical concepts relating to brand preference, relationship quality, and destination attractiveness. As the thesis employs both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, research methods, results and analyses of the two research approaches are reported in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively, followed by a discussion of the findings. The final chapter, Chapter 6, concludes the research by detailing the theoretical contributions to the generic exhibition, tourism and relationship marketing literature, practical implications, limitations, and future research directions.

Figure 1.1 Thesis Structure

1.8 Definitions of Useful Terms

Table 1.1 denotes a list of general terms which have an explicit meaning within the context of this thesis. Further definitions of specific constructs under investigation will be provided in the relevant sections of the literature review and industry development analysis (Chapter 2) and conceptual framework (Chapter 3). This thesis follows the common regional practice of using exhibitions to denote trade shows, trade fairs, exhibitions and expositions, ignoring the subtle differences proposed by different sources (Kirchgeorg, 2005; Montgomery & Strick, 1995).

1.9 Delimitations

In this section, the arbitrary boundaries to the thesis investigation are outlined. First, this thesis focuses on trade-to-trade exhibitions with a variety of topics, scopes and scales of importance. It also concentrates on location permanent exhibitions, that is, the exhibition returns to the same locality at an established frequency cycle. Thus, findings from this research may not be transferable to other forms of exhibitions, such as trade to consumer exhibitions or location mobile exhibitions. Exhibitions in this thesis also exclude various forms of festivals, conventions and all-year round show markets.

Second, this thesis examines exhibitions at international and national levels which were hosted in first and second-tier cities in Mainland China. There are special conditions present in this exhibition setting that may not be found in exhibitions hosted in other destinations. Thus, caution shall be taken when generalizing the findings to other exhibition settings.

Table 1.1 Definitions of Useful Terms

Term	Definition
Exhibitions/ Trade Fairs/Shows	are market events of a specific duration held at intervals, at which – with a predominate appeal to trade visitors – a large number of companies present the main product range of one or more sectors of industry and mainly sell to commercial buyers on the basis of samples. Exhibitions/trade shows/fairs predominantly attract trade and business visitors (adapted from AUMA, 2007).
Conventions	are formal assemblies, meetings or conferences with a large number of people for a common or specific purpose. Conventions can also accommodate trade shows. Trade conventions typically focus on a particular industry or industry segment (Kirchgeorg, 2005, p.35).
Exhibition Organizers/ Companies	are companies concerned with the planning, organisation, staging and monitoring of trade shows (Kirchgeorg, 2005, p.35).
Exhibitors/ Sellers	display products and services at trade shows and make use of the services provided by trade show companies (Kirchgeorg, 2005, p.35).
Visitors/Buyers Attendees	attend trade shows and gather information about the services and products on display (Kirchgeorg, 2005, p.35).
Public sector	refers to local and regional authorities often own a stake in trade show companies. As such, they promote the expansion of both these companies and the trade show infrastructure in order to boost economic and regional development (Kirchgeorg, 2005, p.35).
Destinations	are places towards which people travel and where they choose to stay for a while in order to experience certain features or characteristics, a perceived attraction of some sort (Leiper,1995, p.87).
Exhibition destinations	are places towards which people travel in order to attend exhibition events (adapted from Leiper, 1995, p.87)
Exhibition Brand Preference	refers to the extent to which exhibitors favour one exhibition provided by the current exhibition organizer and destination, in comparison to alternative exhibitions of similar themes provided by other organizers in their consideration set (adapted from Hellier, Geursen, Carr, & Rickard, 2003, p.1765).
Exhibition Destination Attractiveness	refers to the extent to which the availability, quality and management of local exhibition services satisfies the needs of the exhibition participant, i.e., contributes to his/her feeling of well-being in relation to the business activity and the destination (adapted from Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2009, p.3).
Relationship Quality	is a higher order construct that represents a) communication, b) trust, c) commitment, d) relationship satisfaction, and e) perceived service quality (adapted from Walter, Miller, Helfert, & Ritter, 2003).

Source: Compiled by Author.

Third, contextual factors impacting exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands in Mainland China's exhibition industry development, detailed in the model of exhibition brand preference, have been restricted to two second-order constructs. This data reduction produces a parsimonious model but may overlook the complexity of factors influencing exhibitors' preferences. Further, the direct impacts of first-order factors on exhibition brand preference are not explored. This selection calls for further research on the direct impacts of individual factors.

1.10 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the foundations for the thesis investigation have been outlined. The research background, the research problem and individual research questions have been introduced. The thesis investigation has been justified on both theoretical grounds and for its practical usefulness to critical industry stakeholders. Key aspects of the methodology and the structure of the thesis have been outlined, and useful terms have been listed. A detailed description of the thesis investigation follows in chapters 2 to 6.

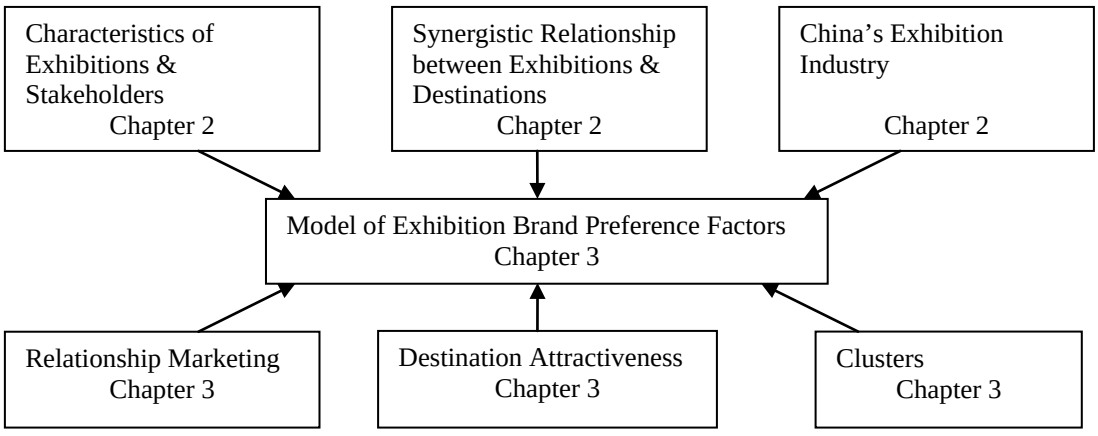
Chapter 2 reviews the generic exhibition literature and discusses the study context – the exhibition industry in Mainland China. It first articulates characteristics of exhibition products, key stakeholder relationships and the synergistic relationship among venues, destinations and exhibition development. The discussion then turns to Mainland China's exhibition industry, providing context to the thesis investigation, with the aim of identifying the research problem and questions, defining the scope of the research, and providing endorsement for the adopted research design.

CHAPTER 2 EXHIBITIONS – GLOBAL RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

2.1 Chapter Introduction

In Chapter 1, the outline of the thesis investigation was presented. The major research focus on exhibition brand preference was identified, and the setting of Mainland China's exhibition industry introduced. The research problem was stated as "Which, and to what extent, do relationship quality and destination attractiveness factors impact on exhibition brand preference?" The purpose of chapters 2 and 3 is to build a theoretical foundation for the research that will be reported in chapters 4 and 5. Building this foundation will be achieved in chapter 2 with a review of the current state of exhibition research, with a particular focus on characteristics of critical stakeholders of exhibitions, particularly exhibition companies, exhibitors, and venues. Exhibition industry development in Mainland China, including its specific prospects and problems will also be discussed. In the process of this review, both research gaps and research questions relating to the core research problem are identified. In Chapter 3, literature relating to relationship quality, destination attractiveness, and cluster theory is reviewed; on that basis specific hypotheses to guide the research program are developed. A framework for the examination of the relevant literature discussed in chapters 2 and 3 is displayed in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Framework of the Literature Review



2.2 Global Exhibition Research Perspectives

Exhibitions have evolved over the past centuries with consequent gradual transformations in their function, operation, stakeholder relationships, and impacts on host destinations. Until the Industrial Revolution, exhibitions were marketplaces at which products physically changed hands. As the Industrial Revolution unfolded, exhibitions began to exhibit models and samples, and visitors placed orders on the basis of those on display (Stoeck & Schraudy, 2005). After the Second World War, especially in Germany, exhibitions expanded rapidly and became more specialized, while venues became more decentralized, eroding the hegemony established in major venues (Schoop, 2005). Worldwide exhibitions grew significantly and played a key role in the growing inter-city competition (Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995). In recent decades, exhibitions are less a place for buyers and visitors to place orders on the basis of samples, instead, "this ordering function has increasingly given way to an information and communication function" (Stoeck & Schraudy, 2005, p.202).

It is a widely accepted practice to categorize exhibitions, trade fairs, trade shows and expositions – the business-related travel segments – under the discipline of business tourism (Davidson & Cope, 2003; Hedorfer & Todter, 2005). Yet, in current business tourism literature, convention tourism, festivals, and sport events received greater attention than trade-to-trade exhibitions. More empirical studies on exhibitions can be found in marketing, business, and economics journals than in hospitality and tourism journals as "the bulk of literature on trade shows looks at these events as tools of communication from the point of view of exhibitors, and examines issues relating to the management of trade show participation" (Kirchgeorg, 2005, p.35).

A more recent practice is to categorize the business-related travel activities under events. Getz (2005, 2008) classified fairs and exhibitions as business and trade events, which include meetings, conventions, trade shows, fairs, and markets. He proposed 'event studies' as an independent discipline and used 'event tourism' to refer to the overlapping area between tourism and event activities, which encompasses a market for event managers and destination development through events.

2.2.1 Main Topics in Extant Exhibition Studies

Table 2.1 provides a summary of the major studies on exhibitions that were published in major English trade, marketing and hospitality journals during the period from 1974 until 2010. This summary clearly indicates topics that have received most research attention, namely, exhibition selection, performance, management and effectiveness evaluations from the perspective of exhibitors. There are a number of studies on visiting objectives and on-going search behavior (e.g., Godar & O'Connor, 2001; Smith, Hama, & Smith, 2003), yet, studies from the visitors' perspective are relatively few in number. Studies from the organizer and venue perspective are rare (e.g., Luo, 2007), with studies focusing on the perspectives of other stakeholders being even less. Literature on the function and management of virtual exhibitions, given their recency, are still limited in number. It is also apparent that the spatial distribution of exhibitions is under-researched, which supports Getz's claim (2008, p.417) that "event geography is not a well-developed theme, and few scholars have examined event tourism patterns". The discussion now turns to an assessment of the nature of the exhibition product.

2.2.2 Characteristics of the Exhibition Product

The exhibition product that an exhibition company delivers to its customers is of a primarily intangible nature, relying on customer participation, and depends largely on minimizing the expectation-perception gap from the customers' perspectives. Bruhn and Hadwich (2005) argue that the exhibition product does not have 'search qualities' that enable it to be assessed before purchase, nor 'experience qualities' (Darby & Karni 1973, p.67) which can be assessed during or after consumption. It has, by its very nature, 'credence qualities' (Zeithaml 1991, p.40) which presents "a situation in which the attributes of services cannot be assessed even after purchase and consumption". It is difficult for exhibitors to develop and apply quantified methods to assess if leads (potential customers) are generated from a particular exhibition, even though techniques and skills on follow-ups after exhibitions proliferate. The decision to participate in an exhibition depends on exhibitors' trust in the exhibition organizer that future events live up to their expectations. Thus, the quality of the exhibition product can, at best, be judged during the process of exhibiting, but decisions to attend an exhibition in the future are made based on credence in the organizers, not simply on the one-off on-site experience.

Table 2.1 Major Empirical Studies on Exhibitions from 1974 to 2010

Topics	Perspectives		
	Organizers	Exhibitors	Visitors/attendees
Exhibition Selection		Berne & Garcia-Uceda, 2008; Kijewski et al., 1993; Rice & Almonssawi, 2002; Tanner, et.al. 2001;	Berne & Garcia-Uceda, 2008; Shoham, 1992; Smith, Haha, & Smith, 2003; Trade Show Bureau, 1991;
Performance		Blythe, 2002; Bonoma, 1983; Chiou, Hsieh, & Shen, 2007; Chonko, Tannar & McKee, 1994; Dekimpe et. al. 1997; Friedmann, 2006; Gopalakrishna, & Cox, 1993; Gopalakrishna & Lilien, 1995; Hansen, 1999; Kerin & Cron, 1987; Lee & Kim, 2008; Li, 2007; Li, 2006; Hansen, 2004; Tanner, 2002; Seringhaus & Rosson, 2001; Sharland & Balogh, 1996; Shoham, 1999;	
Management	Talbar, 1987; Luo, 2007	Motwani, Rice, & Essam, 1992; Pitta, Weisgal & Lynagh, 2006; Sashi & Perretty, 1992; Seringhaus & Rosson, 1998; Shipley & Wong, 1993 ; Tanner et al., 2001;	Munuera & Ruiz, 1999
Effectiveness		Blythe, 1999; Blythe & Ryner, 1996; Fu, Yang, & Qi, 2007; Dekimpe et. al., 1993; Gopalakrishna & Williams, 1992; Horn, 2002; Herbig, O'Hara, & Palumbo, 1998; O'Hara, 1993; Ponzurick, 1996; Smith et. al., 2004; Tanner, 2002;	Bello & Lohtia, 1993;
Buyer Behaviour			Borghini et. al., 2006; Bello, 1992; Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995
Service Quality		Breiter & Milman, 2006; Chonko, Tanner & McKee, 1994; Dickinson & Faria, 1985; Gopalakrishna & Williams, 1992; Parasuraman et. al., 1985, 1988; Tanner, et al., 2001; Smith, Hama & Smith, 2003; Jung, 2005	
Visiting Objectives		Kozak, 2005; Hansen, 1996; Pinar, Rogers & Baack, 2002; Smith & Smith, 1999;	Bauer et. al., 2008; Godar & O'Connor, 2001; Hansen, 1996; Smith, Haha & Smith, 2001;
Exhibitor Behaviour		Bello, et. al., 1986; Herbig, et a., 1997; O'Hara & Herbig, 1993; Hultsman, 2001; Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995; Robert, 1986	
Exhibitor & Visitor Profile		Herbig, et al., 1997	Berne & Garcia-Uceda, 2008 (Non-attendance)
Marketing Function & Strategy		Friedmann, 2006; Hansen, 1999; Pitta et. al., 2006	
Economic Impact & Benefits		Gartner & Holecek, 1983; Todd, 1994; Palumbo & Herbig, 2002; Poorani, 1996;	
Satisfaction		Jung, 2005; Wu, DeSarbo, Chen, & Fu, 2006;	Bauer et. al., 2008
HR	Breiter & Gregory, 2003; Gregory & Breiter, 2001; McCabe, 2008		
Virtual Exhibition	Edgar, 2002; Kelley, Gilbert, & Al-Shehabi, 2004; Wu et. al., 2004;		
Spatial Distribution	Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995, 1997		

Source: Compiled by Author.

Dwyer, Schurr and Oh (1987) compared discreet transactions and relational exchanges in business markets. The situational characteristics of relational exchanges are provided in Table 2.2. Exhibition display a typical relational exchange nature. From the exhibitors' perspective, buying exhibition products accompanies a high risk due to the 'credence' and 'relational exchange' nature of the exhibition business, its complexity, and asymmetrical information distribution (Bruhn & Hadwich, 2005).

Table 2.2 Situational Characteristics of Relational Exchange

Time of exchange	**Number of parties**	**Obligations**	**Expectations for relations**
Commencement traces to previous agreements, exchange is longer in duration, reflecting an ongoing process	Often more than two parties involved in the process and governance of exchange	Content and sources of obligations are promises made in the relation plus customs and laws; obligations are customized, detailed, and administered within the relation	Anticipated conflicts of interest and future trouble are counterbalanced by trust and efforts at unity

Source: Adapted from Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987

Table 2.3 provides an overview of exhibitor expectations in the various phases of an exhibition. As is apparent, exhibitors expect organizers to facilitate their pre- and post-exhibiting marketing activities in addition to providing satisfactory on-site services (Bruhn & Hadwich, 2005). Marketing and onsite services include: quality visitors, ideal trade fair facilities, minimal organizational effort, booth space and technical services, registration, appointment systems, and one-stop shopping/billing (Stoeck & Weiss, 2005). If organizers can meet and/or exceed the expectations of exhibitors, they will be able to develop strong relationships with their customers, thereby ensuring the success of future events.

Table 2.3 Expected Services from Organizers

	Pre-Exhibit Preparation	On-Site Process	Post-Exhibit Outcome
Exhibitors – Organizers	o Marketing support o Availability of exhibition space o Translation services o Availability of technical support	o Quality of technical support o Support in advertising o Securing communication before and during the exhibition o Flexibility in stand placement o Reaction to complaints	o Reliability of support o Quantity and quality of visitors o Assessment of the exhibition o Sales

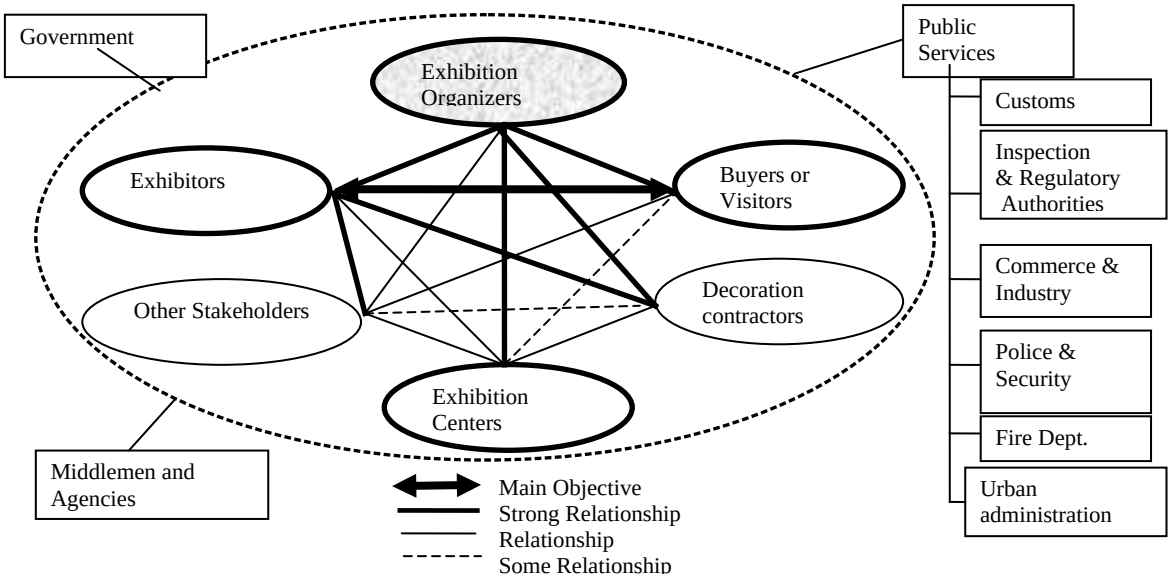
Source: Adapted from Bruhn & Hadwich, 2005

Next, extant studies on key stakeholders of exhibitions (with a focus on organizers and exhibitors), exhibition venues, and the synergistic relationship between exhibitions and host destination development are reviewed, with the intention to identify research gaps and to provide support for the research framework that will be outlined in Chapter 3.

2.2.3 Key Stakeholders

Exhibition management is a complex process and encompasses efforts from a wide range of players. The process encompasses initiation, promotion, organization, sponsorship and support from related public and private sectors. An exhibition can be organized by one organization having its own exhibition hall or by cooperation and collaboration of several organizations from the initiation to completion. Figure 2.2 presents a holistic portrait of all stakeholders involved in the exhibition sector, in which organizers, exhibitors, visitors, and venues are stressed as critical stakeholders for successful exhibition events (Liu, 2006).

Figure 2.2 Stakeholders in the Exhibition Industry



Source: Liu, 2006, cited in Kay 2007

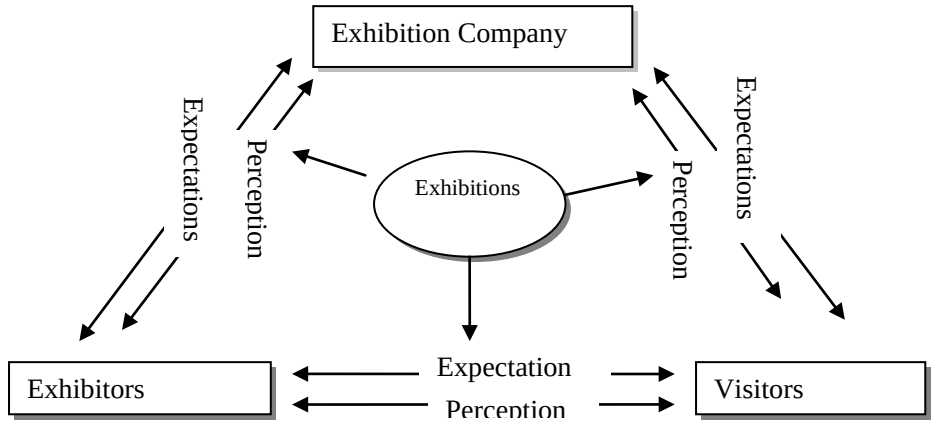
Holzner (2005) identifies critical stakeholders for exhibition companies as shareholders (public versus private), hospitality and logistics companies, trade fair service providers, key account exhibitors, exhibitors, visitors, trade associations, state and municipal government. Kresse (2005) stresses that the success of an exhibition depends on the close co-ordination of organizers and exhibitors with potential visitors.

With regard to exhibitors, their key stakeholders are visitors, organizers, and other stakeholders (Liu, 2006). Visitors are strongly linked to exhibitors and exhibition companies (organizers), and have a weaker link to other stakeholders such as distributors and exhibition venues. Figure 2.3 illustrates the relationship triad among these three key players, the focal point of stakeholder relationships in the exhibition sector, with Bruhn and Hadwich (2005, p.790) elaborating on this triad notion as follows:

> *Whatever dissatisfaction visitors articulate to exhibitors can influence the relationship between a trade fair company and exhibitors – assuming the trade fair company, rather than the exhibitor, is at fault. From the exhibitor's standpoint, trade fair companies must provide conditions that promise to satisfy visitors'*

expectations. Therefore, an exhibitor's judgment of the quality of a trade fair company's service also depends on the exhibitor-visitor relationship. Via this indirect relationship to performance, exhibitors' expectations of a trade fair company also depend on visitors' expectations regarding exhibitors.

Figure 2.3 Relationship Triad in the Exhibition Context



Source: Bruhn & Hadwich, 2005

The fact that exhibitors and visitors, as 'buyers' of the 'exhibition product' that the exhibition company 'sells', are themselves the main components of the 'product' constructs a complicated buying-selling relationship between the exhibition company, and the exhibitors and visitors respectively. The buying-selling relationship is influenced by the relationship between the two customer segments. The duty of organizers is to facilitate the relationship-building between the two segments at different stages of an event: pre-event, on-site and post-event. In addition, although organizers are sales representatives of the exhibition event, they are not the exclusive supplier of the product. Other suppliers include venues and related local sectors. This phenomenon is unique to the exhibition industry. Table 2.4 details the buying and selling relationships among the stakeholders in the exhibition-selling context.

Table 2.4 Buying and Selling Relationships in the Exhibition Sector

Buying-Side	Selling-Side	Product	Costs
Exhibitors	Exhibition company and its distributors and partners, including o Local municipalities o Trade associations o Professional societies o Agents o Venues o Contractors (for exhibitors)	Exhibition refers to "temporary nodal networks" (Maskell, Bathelt, & Malmberg, 2006), an activity context for learning and interaction. The 'Product' is information exchange among all kinds of firms on the value chain of a specific industrial sector being exhibited. 'Product' contents and benefits consist of: o Pre-visit and post-visit follow-up services provided by exhibition organizers o On-site experiences and benefits o Extra-exhibiting/visiting experiences and benefits	o Time o Booth rental o Booth construction o Staffing o Travel & accommodation o Marketing materials o Shipment of samples o Miscellaneous
Visitors			o Time o Travel & Accommodation o Miscellaneous
Exhibition Companies	Venues Local municipalities	Exhibition venue, space, and facilities	Space rental Miscellaneous

Source: Compiled by Author.

2.2.3.1 Exhibition Organizers / Companies

There are two main categories of exhibition organizers/companies: those with ownership of exhibition grounds and those without. In Germany, exhibition centers were built with public money and exhibition companies were set up by local municipalities and own the exhibition premises, although privatization is becoming a heated topic (Hosch, 2005). In Britain, exhibition centers were usually set up with private funding, and exhibition companies usually do not own venues. In China, exhibition centers are publicly-funded and usually state-owned exhibition companies set up by governments own these venues (Section 2.3.5). Globally, exhibitions are organized by exhibition companies with the assistance/sponsorship of industry or trade associations and other organizational bodies.

Exhibition companies play an important role in producing the exhibition product for exhibitors and visitors. Alles (1989, p.25) states that "successful exhibitions are the result of a good marketing concept, of good management and an understanding for the business

needs and human comforts of all customers." In the past, the main tasks were to sell floor space, hence organizers focused mainly on exhibitor and visitor acquisition, and the provision of optimal settings for participants. However, with the evolved function of exhibitions, organizers need to spot industry trends, develop innovative exhibition concepts in line with market requirements, and help exhibitors establish lasting communication with their customers (Heckmann, 2005).

Stoeck and Schraudy (2005, p.204) identify the following key benefits exhibition companies have to offer to ensure their success: 1) working as all-year-round 'hubs' for the markets they serve, 2) becoming the information brokers in their industry by filtering and structuring key information, making it available quickly and at low cost, 3) becoming the "mouthpiece" for their market, communicating the concerns of market players in a way that catches public attention, 4) offering one-stop shopping for complete packages of target group-specific communication services with minimal coverage loss, and 5) setting the scene for their whole industry, enabling the industry to attract the attention it needs, even in an age of information overload.

2.2.3.2 Exhibitors/ Exhibiting Firms

Herbig, O'Hara and Palumbo (1997) studied the differences between exhibitors and non-exhibitors. According to them, firms active in participating in exhibitions are 1) older firms, 2) firms with more customers and clients, having more customized, expensive and infrequently purchased products; 3) firms whose products are more technically complex; and 4) firms with more production lines. Non-exhibitors are likely to be service-providing firms and small firms. Thus, two major categories define the exhibitors: product and firm size. With changes in global economic activities and exhibition markets, exhibitions are increasingly an arena for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to exchange information and increase trade volume. For example, the greatest number of clients for trade fairs in Germany is recruited from SMEs (Zitzewitz, 2005). The same is the case for the China Import and Export (Canton) Fair, the largest exhibition in China.

Why firms exhibit is extensively examined in the extant literature (e.g., Alles, 1989; Hansen, 1996, 2004; Kozak, 2005; Smith & Smith, 1999). Sales promotion and market penetration are identified as driving motives, and a dichotomy of selling and non-selling activities, as well as specific objectives, are categorized (Bonoma, 1983; Kerin & Cron, 1987; Kozak, 2005). These specific expectations are sales-related, promotion-related, research-related, and strategic benefit-related (Kijewski et al., 1993; Kozak, 2005; Shipley, Egan, & Wong, 1993; Tanner & Chonko, 1995). Hansen (2004) classified exhibitor performance into various activities, including image-building relationship-building, motivation, sales-related, and information-gathering. Her research indicates that exhibition performance dimensions have a strong effect on exhibition intention.

The vast number of exhibitions held at a national and international level, especially in major cities, increased the complexity of selecting suitable exhibitions from the exhibitors' perspective (Rice & Almossawi, 2002; Smith, Hama, & Smith, 2003), with numerous academic discussions focusing on exhibitors' selection criteria (Berne & Garcia-Uceda, 2007; Kijewski et al., 1993; Shoham, 1992; Tanner et al., 2001). When selecting exhibitions and making decisions to attend, exhibitors usually consider show-specific features, such as expected attendance/lead performance, quality and quantity of buyers/visitors, marketing synergy, reputation of the show, show environment, costs, staffing capability, timing and location (Kijewski et al., 1993; Shoham 1992). However, how location influences the selection and decision to exhibit is under-researched (e.g. Alles, 1989; Fuchslocher, 2005). Smith and colleagues (2003) found that international trade show attendees have a variety of objectives when attending exhibitions; these objectives are not substantially altered by the attractiveness of the host destination. Yet, "the intention to participate in trade shows is affected differently, depending on its geographic location and education efforts, and the coordination of exhibitor and show management communication" (Smith et al., 2003, p.415). However, how intention to participate in an exhibition is affected by its location and attractiveness of the host destination is under-researched (Fuchslocher, 2005; Smith et al., 2003).

Several studies (e.g., Jung, 2005) have clearly identified the link between service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions of visitors (customer retention). Behavioral intentions include revisiting the next exhibition and positive word-of-mouth (Jung, 2005;

Ulrich, 2005), and preference of the current event over alternative events (Ulrich, 2005). Service quality is influenced by the ease of registration, contents, exhibition and booth attractiveness, booth layout and function, and access. Facilities, cleanliness, and service of staff are priorities requested by visitors from exhibition centers (Breiter & Milman, 2006). However, whether facilities and services outside the exhibition venue – for example, accommodation, destination amenities and ambiance, influence customer satisfaction and retention has received little research attention (e.g., Bauer et al., 2008).

The review of studies of organizers and exhibitors clearly indicates that no empirical studies have been conducted to date that explore the relationship between organizers and exhibitors, and how this relationship building affects exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. Therefore, this thesis investigation will address the following three research questions:

Research Question 1.1:

What constitutes relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers?

Research Question 1.2:

Are there significant differences in relationship quality, depending on key characteristics of organizers and exhibitors?

Research Question 1.3:

To what extent does relationship quality with organizers exert influence on exhibition brand preference of exhibitors?

2.2.4 Exhibition Centers/Venues

2.2.4.1 Worldwide Exhibition Center Boom

Since the early 1970s the number of exhibition venues and facilities has experienced remarkable growth. According to UFI, worldwide there were 1,062 venues with over 5,000 square meters of indoor exhibition space in 2006 (UFI, 2007). The United States, Germany, China, Italy, and France are the top five countries in terms of capacity, accounting for 58% of the world total. Table 2.5 provides a summary of the global distribution of exhibition space.

Table 2.5 Global Distribution of Exhibition Center Space

	Spaces [a] (%)	No. of Venues [b] (%)	Average Size of Venues (sqm)	No. of Mega Venues [c]
Europe	52	44	30,000	35
North America	26	34	20,000-25,000	5
Asia	14	12	20,000-25,000	7
China	9	NA	NA	5
World's total			NA	47

Note: [a] and [b] indicates the percentage of global share. [c] are venues with an indoor exhibition space of over 100,000 square meters. Source: compiled from UFI, 2007.

Space in exhibition centers, similar to that in hotels, is perishable, meaning that if space is not sold, then the resulting loss of revenue cannot be recovered (Kay, 2005). The lead time for an exhibition is at least six months. Exhibition attendance is affected by unexpected events such as economic setbacks, epidemic diseases, political unrest or terrorist attacks (Kay, 2005). As venue maintenance and operational expenses are very high, few centers generate sufficient funds to survive on a full commercial basis (Davidson & Cope, 2003; Law, 2002; Page & Hall, 2003).

Thus, many venues depend on public funding for survival. Consequently, the construction and operation of large venues as a catalyst to stimulate the regional economy has also aroused heated debates among commentators (e.g., Hazinski & Detlefsen, 2005; Law, 2002; Page & Hall, 2003). Sanders (2002) questions the methods used by the industry to calculate the occupancy rate of exhibition space, and to forecast market demand for more exhibition space. He points out that some feasibility forecasts are based on the increasing number of delegates attending events; others are based on the conviction that the growing economy, attributed to an increase in corporate profits, stimulates market demand. Thus, these forecasts misled public discourse over convention and exhibition center investment. Many centers were built to 'keep up with the Joneses,' regardless of whether supply might ultimately exceed demand" (Sanders, 2002, p.203). In his view, the increase in attendance number should not be the most important factor for estimating future space demand. Hazinski and Detlefsen (2005) argued for an alternative perspective, maintaining that the exhibition industry is developing into a mature and steadily increasing industry, and the construction of large centers in the U.S. is rational rather than over-zealous. However, the

authors of both studies agree that careful and realistic consideration of the chances of success is vital in convention center investment (Hazinski & Detlefsen, 2005).

2.2.4.2 Venue as a Determinant Factor for Exhibition Success

Sasserath and colleagures (2005) suggest that the 'event', 'operator', 'exhibition center' and 'host destination' are the four components of trade fair brands. The choice of exhibition center is a contributing factor to an exhibition's success. Ulrich (2005) recommends that organizers analyze the attractiveness and flair of the fair venue, and its urban environment when analyzing competition among fairs. This view is shared by Bauer (2005), who states that the attractiveness and competitiveness of a trade fair center are largely dependent on 'trade fair hardware' and 'trade fair software'. 'Trade fair hardware' includes the city, the center site and the site layout. These elements define the general conditions for the design of the trade fair software within the trade fair concept, that is, the event content and topics. 'Trade fair hardware' exerts a direct influence on the quality assessment of a trade fair center by exhibitors and visitors. Fuchslocher (2005) also indicates that 'order', 'contact', 'benchmarking,' and 'location' have considerably influenced the success of a fair for a long time. Likewise, center layout and facilities are important for customer satisfaction (Jung, 2005).

Numerous studies have discussed success factors for exhibition centers (e.g., Butler, Bassiouni, El Adly, & Widjaja, 2007; Carlsen, 2004; Getz, 2003; Wirtz, 2001). Principal success factors are identified as design, facilities, ease of air access, transportation, capacity, infrastructure, amenities, accommodation, and government or public sector support and integration (Butler et al., 2007; Carlsen, 2004; Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995; Wirtz, 2001). Carlsen (2004) stresses that exhibition center capacity must equate with airline and hotel capacity if the tourism spin-off effect is to be realized. Wirtz (2001) cautions that as market size decreases, the economic arguments in favor of convention centers apply only to larger cities that have the local population to support the center. Butler and colleagues (2007) also note that the success of a venue can be attributed to its location (ease of access), the social and political stability of the country, and the attractiveness of destinations to visitors from outside the region.

2.2.5 Exhibitions and Destination Development

2.2.5.1 Impact of Exhibitions on the Host Destination

Exhibitions stimulate market development, and are wealth generators to the host destination. The contribution of exhibitions to the host destination is two-fold. On the one hand, exhibitions are essential to market and industry development. Kirchgeorg (2005, p.38) states that "by giving market players a platform for interaction, they help stimulate and develop the market itself." For example, the trade fair industry contributes significantly to the development of the German national economy and changes in the economic framework (Zitzewitz, 2005, p.230). On the other hand, it provides spin-off revenue or multiplier effects for the host destination (Davidson & Cope, 2003; Kay, 2005). For example, the turnover of German fair organizers totals an annual average of more than €2.3 billion, with expenditures of exhibitors and visitors amounting to about €10 billion. The overall effect of this economic contribution totals more than €20 billion per annum. Moreover, at least 230,000 jobs rely on this sector. It also guarantees high utilization of hotels, restaurants and facilities provided by other service industries (Clement, 2005, p.83). The multiplier effect of the tourism industry is believed to range from 1:2 in less developed cities (due to greater economic leakage) to 1:12 in a developed host city (Fenich, 1996). For exhibitions, it is usually accepted by academia to be 1:9 in developed countries and 1:6 in China (Kay, 2005). These spin-off effects underscore the rationale for cities becoming increasingly involved in the exhibition industry (Law, 2002; Montgomery & Strick, 1995; Page & Hall, 2003).

2.2.5.2 Impact of Destinations on Exhibition Development

Exhibition development corresponds with the development of the regional economy of the host destination (Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995) and without sound regional economic development exhibitions cannot be generated. Several studies have pointed out that the maturity of an industry in a destination is important to the cultivation of exhibitions for an industrial sector (Butler et al., 2007; Chan, 2005). "Managing a trade show demands the support of a whole industry, whose players must be willing to accept the show as a valid forum within which to establish and cultivate business relationships" (Kirchgeorg, 2005, p.41). Conversely, premier exhibitions are regarded as a "barometer of

economic development in a particular branch of an industry sector. At the same time, they serve as a calling card for the host country or city" (Schoop, 2005, p.27).

Although leisure tourism and convention destinations are widely examined in the literature (e.g., Chacko & Fenich, 2000; Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Oppermann, 1996), few studies on exhibitions focus on the impact of the host city or town as a destination for participants. Hedorfer and Todter (2005) are among the few who utilize the term 'destination' to refer to exhibition host cities or towns, in contrast to the term 'location' that is utilized by many other studies (e.g., Alles, 1989; Berne & Garcia-Uceda, 2008; Fuchslocher, 2005).

A number of studies have discussed if 'location' of the host city or town may influence exhibition participation and development. Some authors believe that the success of an exhibition is in no way affected by its location (Alles, 1989). Hiller (1995), focusing on conventions, argues that large conventions are attractions in themselves, with location and setting of secondary importance, due to delegates' "commitment to the purpose of the convention" (Hiller, 1995, p.375). He considers issues such as accessibility more important than the attractiveness of the surrounding site. Alles (1989) argues that the location of an exhibition is not critical to visitors, but it is a significant factor to exhibitors, as distance, climate, ethnic, linguistic, economic, and historical links may have an influence on the success of exhibitions.

Other authors believe that location has a major effect on attendance, and regardless of the type of exhibition, attendance is the key to success (Fenich, 2008). Tanner and colleagues (2001) and Berne and Garcia-Uceda (2008) conclude that location is an influencing variable for visitors. Exhibition planners and organizers should select locations that are easier for audiences to accept and provide every ease for attendance. Fuchslocher (2005) argues that 'location' has considerably influenced the success of exhibitions. He finds that "the location factor earns few plus points, but if there were any problems resulting from it, exhibitors would react both immediately and negatively" (Fuchslocher, 2005, p.295).

Following this review of the literature relating to exhibitions in general, the focus of discussion will now shift to an assessment of the setting of this thesis investigation – the exhibition industry in Mainland China. Mainland China presents a suitable setting for research that aims to improve knowledge in exhibition management for several reasons. First, the status of its development makes it an important and interesting setting for exhibition studies. Among the top five countries in terms of size of exhibition development (USA, Germany, Mainland China, Italy, and France), Mainland China is the only emerging market. Development of the market is strongly influenced by practices developed in traditional exhibition markets such as Germany due to globalization of exhibition operations, yet, it also exhibits specific characteristics resulting from its unique cultural and economic advancement. This phenomenon provides a chance to explore the impact of concepts and theories developed in Western contexts, such as relationship quality in relationship marketing, exhibition brand and brand-building, and destination attractiveness and competitiveness, in a setting that has very unique economic and cultural characteristics. By applying theories and concepts originally developed in Western contexts, differences in outcomes can be identified. In addition, the exhibition industry is shifting from developed to emerging markets worldwide, and decentralization of both exhibitions and destinations are underway. Mainland China is the leading emerging market in the exhibition industry and shares with other emerging markets similar development protocols. Factors that influence and shape Mainland China's exhibition development are likely to have implications in understanding, evaluating, and predicting exhibition development of other emerging destinations. Thus, findings of this study may be generalized to other, similar settings.

In the following section, Mainland China's exhibition industry development is introduced with a focus on its driving forces, scale and spatial distribution, ownership and organizational models, mechanism for success, trends and problems.

2.3 Mainland China's Exhibition Industry

2.3.1 Introduction

Throughout China's long history, there have always been marketplaces at which products physically changed hands. However, exhibitions in their modern sense functioning

as marketing platforms where manufacturers and buyers meet to examine samples and place orders first occurred in the 1950s, gradually developed in the 1990s, and rapidly expanded from 2001 to the present time (Chan, 2008). The country's indoor exhibition space totaled over 2.5 million square meters in 2007 (UFI, 2007). Estimated revenue generated from exhibitions amounted to approximately US$ 1.7 billion in 2005 while exhibition center revenue totaled US$ 373 million (Kay, 2007). The industry's multiplier is estimated to be 1:6, only slightly lower than that of 1:9 for developed countries (Kay, 2005). The exhibition sector is regarded as a valuable resource in showcasing the country's economic vision, has a tangible positive impact on local economic revenue, and plays a significant role in promoting success for Chinese brands in a global economy in addition to the direct value of its own commercial success (Reed, 2007).

2.3.2 Factors Contributing to China's Exhibition Industry Development

Three types of forces contribute to China's exhibition industry development: 1) its economic development, 2) political change, and 3) globalization. First, China's booming economy helps drive the exhibition industry development, and creates demand for exhibitions. The country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has risen from RMB 364.5 billion (about US$ 53.4 billion) in 1978, at the start of the reform period, to RMB 24.95 trillion (about US$ 3.65 trillion) in 2007, maintaining an average annual growth rate of about 9% during that period (China Statistical Yearbook, 2008). It is anticipated that China's economy will continue to grow at a rate of 7-9% per annum for another two to three decades (Holz, 2008; Lin, 2006), with the country being considered as the 'factory of the world' (Lemonie & Unal-Kesenci, 2002, in Ljungwall & Sjoberg, 2006, p.171). In 2005, China's ratio of exports to GDP was 37%, compared to 10% for the United States (Holz, 2008). The total value of imports and exports reached US$ 2.17 trillion in 2007 (China Statistical Yearbook 2008). Furthermore, its exports are accompanied by a huge volume of imports. Of the imported goods, a high proportion is of a high-tech nature, and, at the same time, many economies enjoy a surplus in their trade with China by being suppliers of substantial raw materials (Ljungwall & Sjoberg, 2006). In addition, there is enormous room for technological innovation in China's manufacturing industries (Holz, 2008; Lin, 2006). Thus, economic development, trade activities, and technological innovation stimulate demand for exhibitions.

Second, the development of the exhibition industry reflects the transformation and change of policy in China from a planned to a market-oriented economy. Before 1978, there were few exhibitions in China and their primary purpose was to break the dominance of capitalist market alliances and promote international trade (Jin & Weber, 2008). Convention and exhibition centers were few, being funded and operated only by the Central Government. From the early 1980s, China moved towards a market-oriented economic policy, and foreign exhibition organizers began to work together with Chinese state-owned organizers. However, until the early 1990s, Chinese partners were responsible for all business liaisons in China, including government approval, visitor invitation and promotion, and exhibition hall rental, while foreign organizers were expected to bring exhibitors to China (Kay, 2007). China's exhibition industry witnessed significant changes in 1992, as a result of the country's economic reform. In that year, individual enterprises obtained rights to conduct direct foreign trade that resulted in a rapid increase in the number of exhibitors and buyers (Jin & Weber, 2008). In the same year, private local citizens gained rights to establish their companies and organize exhibitions. The number of local private organizers grew rapidly, with the first generation of these organizers being mostly officials and employees who worked for former government and trade association-owned exhibition companies, and local entrepreneurs. In 2004, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce lifted the veto of foreign companies to hold exhibitions independently in China (Kay, 2007). This spurred a tidal wave of inbound investment into China's exhibition market, and hence, a restructuring of the market, with mergers and acquisitions increasing substantially since then (Chan, 2008).

Globalization represents the third force for the development of China's exhibition industry. It has been defined as "the closer integration of countries and the people of the world, brought about by the enormous reduction in the costs in transportation and communication technologies, which have in turn led to the breakdown of man-made barriers to the flow of goods, services, capital, knowledge, ideas, and to a lesser extent, people, across borders" (Stiglitz, 2002, in Ljungwall & Sjoberg, 2006, p.160). As a result of globalization, both East and South-East Asia have experienced a remarkable increase in the international flow of goods, portfolio capital, and direct investment (Ljungwall & Sjoberg, 2006). This flow of goods, capital and investment contributes to the development of the

economy, and stimulates exhibition demand in China. More exhibitions are shifting from Europe and North America to emerging markets in Asia. China is regarded as a strong growth market for exhibitions (Erwin, 2005; Heckmann, 2005), with international exhibition organizers increasingly seeking a presence in the country. For example, in 2008, members of the Association of the German Trade Fair Industry (AUMA) organized 224 exhibitions in 28 countries abroad; Asia was the number one target region with 124 events, out of which China attracted 71 events (AUMA, 2008). The entry of foreign exhibition companies into China's market has contributed to the standardization and internationalization of China's exhibitions.

2.3.3 Convention and Exhibition Center Construction

In China, exhibition business/facilities developed rapidly in cities of various sizes. In 1992 there was only one exhibition center in the country that had indoor space of more than 50,000 square meters, namely the China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair) Venue, Guangzhou. Yet, by 2003, there were 16 centers meeting this criterion. In 2005 there were a total of 240 exhibition centers of varying sizes in China (Kay 2007). Table 2.6 shows the largest centers in major Chinese cities, together with their respective sizes. These venues are usually the ones most recently built, with the most sophisticated facilities and designs, and thus represent the most popular options for exhibition organizers. It is noteworthy that in many of these cities there is more than one exhibition venue.

The driving forces behind the rapid construction of exhibition centers in China are complex. Local economic development, speculation about future prospects of the industry, and the expectation of a more favorable city image and land values via exhibition center construction drive the inputs of funds and favorable policies for exhibition center construction (Kay, 2005). Other forces include the personal motivations of municipal leaders, the intentions to not only raise income but to also build a sense of pride and prestige in a community, and a tool to strengthen the leading positions of the host destination in a few industries (Kay, 2005). Thus, it is apparent that the construction of exhibition centers in China is not always driven by market evaluation for exhibition demand but largely by political and other economic motivations.

Table 2.6 Largest Convention and Exhibition Centers in China

City	Space (sqm)	Population	City	Space (sqm)	Population
Dongguan	190,000	3,870,036	Hangzhou	81,000	1,750,251
Guangzhou	152,000	7,547,467	Wuhan	70,000	6,787,482
Shenzhen	105,000	6,480,340	Suzhou	69,000	1,750,251
Shanghai	103,500	14,230,992	Nanjing	65,000	3,783,907
Chongqing	132,700	5,087,197	Beijing	60,000	10,300,723
Zhengzhou	132,000	3,870,504	Chengdu	55,000	4,273,218
Qingdao	130,000	2,720,972	Tianjin	46,000	6,839,008
Xiamen	103,000	1,454,450	Xi'an	40,000	3,870,504
Dalian	81,000	2,872,048	Harbin	36,000	3,627,082

Source: Spaces of the centers were compiled from Guo (2007). Population was compiled from http://www.citypopulation.de/China.html, 2000 year figure. Population was included to indicate the sizes of these cities. Only urban population of these cities was extracted; population in suburban areas was excluded.

2.3.4 Exhibition Scale and Distribution

There are about 4,000 exhibitions of varying sizes in China annually (CCE, 2007; Chan, 2008; Guo, 2007). In 2007 their geographical distribution was as follows: East China about 33%, North China 20%, South China 17%, North-East China 10%, South-West China 9%, Central China 6% and North-West China 5% (CCE, 2007). With regard to large-scale exhibitions, only Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou are widely accepted as first-tier cities in the exhibition sector. Provincial capital cities as well as some smaller but active cities in this industry are considered as second- and third-tier cities. The hierarchy among the second- and third-tier cities in China is vague. Compared with the benchmark utilization rate of 40% for convention and exhibition centers to be successful (Hazinski & Detlefsen, 2005), purpose-built centers in China are seriously under-utilized, with an average utilization rate estimated at 15% (Kay, 2007). Table 2.7 identifies the top 10 cities hosting the largest number of exhibitions in 2006 and 2007 (CCE, 2007, 2008). Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Hong Kong dominate the market, with the number of exhibitions being stable and/or increasing. However, data and statistics from varying sources are not always consistent. Many statistics do not include details such as the size of exhibitions, number of exhibitors and visitors. Thus, statistics can only provide an approximate indication of the scale of the industry.

Table 2.7 Top 10 Cities with the Largest Number of Exhibitions in 2006 and 2007

City	2007	2006	City	2007	2006
Shanghai	547	318	Shenzhen	102	N/A
Beijing	359	243	Dongguan	79	N/A
Guangzhou	236	205	Qingdao	75	N/A
Hong Kong	113	93	Chengdu	71	N/A
Ningbo	103	116	Shenyang	N/A	71
Jinan	N/A	109	Changchun	N/A	65
Dalian	106	95	Hangzhou	N/A	62

Source: Compiled from CCE 2006 & 2007 figures.
Note: CCE did not clarify the criteria they used to collect the data (e.g. the scale of exhibitions, exhibition space, number of exhibitors, number of visitors). N/A denotes 'not available'.

Different sources were consulted to draw a more holistic and balanced picture of the spatial distribution of exhibitions currently organized and staged in China. Table 2.8 provides an indication of the spatial distribution of events either approved by UFI (an international label indicating the scale and quality of the event), or operated by leading international exhibition associations or organizers. As is apparent, these events are largely concentrated in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen.

Table 2.8 UFI Accredited Exhibitions and Exhibitions Operated by Foreign Exhibition Companies

Cities	UFI Accredited [a]	AUMA [b]	UBM Asia [c]	Reed Exhibitions [d]
Shanghai	19%	34	30	9
Shenzhen	10%	1	1	10
Beijing	9%	10	2	5
Guangzhou	5%	12	3	2
Dongguan	5%	2	/	5
Dalian	2%	/	/	2
Foshan	/	2	/	/
Chengdu	/	1	/	1
Suzhou	/	/	/	4
Total No.	50% (73)	62	36	42
Sources:	Guo 2007	AUMA 2009	UBM 2008	Reed 2008

Source: Compiled by Author. [a] indicates the percentage of national share, while [b], [c] & [d] indicates the number of exhibitions hosted.

Distribution of exhibitions among the various industry sectors is not even. Table 2.9 identifies the main industry sectors that have held the most exhibitions. Four major industry sectors – machines; building materials; food and food processing equipments; and automobiles – are the sectors with the most frequent exhibitions. Some industry segments have more than 30 exhibitions per annum while others have none.

Table 2.9 Major Industrial Sectors for Exhibitions

Industrial Sectors	**Market Share (**%)	**Industrial Sectors**	**Market Share (**%)
Machines & mechanical industry	16.1	Furniture & home ware	7.6
Building & building materials	12.8	Agriculture-related	6.1
Food & food processing equipments	9.3	Printing, paper, & packaging	5.8
Automobiles	8.6	Job fair	5.2
Textile, fashion & leather	8.5	Entertainment	4.1
Energy & metallurgy	8.1	Comprehensive fairs	3
Others	3.8	Total	100

Source: Compiled from CCE, 2007

2.3.4.1 Industrial Cluster Development in Mainland China

Fan and Scott (2003, p.296) demonstrate that there is a significant positive relationship between agglomeration and economic performance in Chinese regions, especially those sectors and spaces that have been "most deeply transformed by economic reforms and market orientation". Their findings show that the following industry sectors are ranked highest on the list of clustered sectors: stationery, education, and sporting goods; electronics and telecommunications; furniture manufacturing; garments and other fiber products; metal products; leather, furs, and related products; chemical fibers; electric equipment and machinery; plastic products; and textiles. These sectors are also the most active industry sectors for exhibitions, as shown in Table 2.9.

They also suggested that industrial clusters in China tend to be made up of small, labor-intensive enterprises. They found that the consumer electronics and garment industries are mostly clustered in the Pearl River Delta (PRD), Yangtze River Delta (YRD), and Beijing-Tianjin agglomeration. The computers, electronic equipment and instruments industries are principally located in Beijing-Tianjin, YRD, and PRD. Transportation-equipment manufacturing is more dispersed in Beijing-Tianjin, Changchun (North-East

China), Central China (in Shiyan and Wuhan City), and Chongqing in West China. Table 2.10 denotes the major urban clusters in China and leading cities inside each cluster.

Table 2.10 Urban Cluster Competitiveness in China

Rank	Urban cluster	Number of Cities	Leading Cities	Population /National Population	Cluster GDP/ National GDP	Industrial Development
1	Yangtze River	15	Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Dongguan	5.89	16.9	2
2	Pearl River	9	Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing	2.65	17.1	1
3	Beijing-Tianjin Belt	9	Beijing, Tianjin	4.65	7.6	3
4	Shandong Peninsula	8	Qingdao, Jinan	3.03	6.2	5
5	Liaoning Cluster	10	Dalian, Shenyang	2.36	4.3	4
6	Fujian Cluster	6	Xiamen, Fuzhou	1.93	3.3	7
9	Wuhan Cluster	9	Wuhan	2.29	2.3	10
10	Chengdu-Chongqing Cluster	10	Chengdu, Chongqing	6.01	4.4	13

Source: Adapted from Ni, 2007

2.3.4.2 Clusters and Exhibition Distribution in Mainland China

Exhibition distribution in China partially correlates with the distribution of industrial clusters. As declared by Zhang Wei, vice chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), the emergence of five major industrial belts in Beijing-Tianjin, YRD, PRD, North-East China, and West China supports exhibition development in China. Many exhibitions developed at localities where there are regional clusters for specific exhibition topics. These localities may or may not be provincial capital cities, with some being second or third-tier cities while others are smaller cities or towns.

The PRD, the clustering of a number of cities residing in the triangle of Guangzhou (capital city of Guangdong Province), Hong Kong and Macao, serves as a suitable example in this context. In 2000, there were 122 so-called “specialized towns” (towns or groups of towns characterized by a dominant industry of a ‘considerable’ size) (Bellandi & Tommaso,

2005, p.713). Within these towns, at least 30% of manufacturing output is produced by one particular industry with an annual industrial output of more than US$ 290 million. Among the 122 specialized towns, 63 are officially recognized in the province. Most of these towns are located in Dongguan, Foshan, Zhongshan, Huizhou, and Jiangmen. The development of these clusters does not seem to follow a precise sectoral distribution, but is more a mixture of tradition and recent opportunities. Guangzhou and Shenzhen, two leading cities with the highest level of industrial and urban development in the PRD do not host any of these recognized specialized towns (Bellandi & Tommaso, 2005).

The diffusion of the local economy has profound meaning for the exhibition development in the region. As previously stated, the development of industrial clusters in these areas motivates local exhibition industry development with the purpose of 1) strengthening the leading position of host destinations in a few industries, 2) promoting land value, and 3) building a sense of pride and prestige in a community, resulting in intense competition for hosting exhibitions in the area. The development of the exhibition industry in these second and third-tier cities is strongly supported by the local governments and local industry associations. Investment can be very large. Dongguan, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen have the largest exhibition halls in China, with many of the exhibitions hosted in these cities being of similar categories. For example, the 3-Famous Furniture Fair in Dongguan is based on the furniture manufacturing cluster in Houjie town of Dongguan City, which has about 400 large furniture manufacturers (Bellandi & Tommaso, 2005). In Guangzhou and Shenzhen, there are another two furniture exhibitions benefiting from the same industrial cluster. All three furniture exhibitions rank among the top ten exhibitions in China in terms of attendance and square footage, resulting in intense competition among them. Furthermore, intra-regional competition parallels inter-regional competition, especially competition with Furniture Shanghai, the largest furniture show in China. Facing market consolidation as well as the threat from the on-going economic downturn as a result of the 2008 global financial crisis, the prospect of the exhibitions, and the effects of clusters on exhibition operation and exhibition destination attractiveness poses an important and timely research topic.

The fact that the existence of industrial clusters triggers exhibition industry development, investment in large venues, and hosting of exhibitions in a locality is not uncommon in China. In the YRD region, for example, numerous exhibitions have

developed based on local industries, such as a garment fair in Ningbo City, Yiwu Fair from Yiwu market for small commodities, and a Textile Machinery Fair in Shaoxing City. Ningbo, Yiwu and other third tier cities in YRD have taken first-comer advantages in the exhibition market, which hinders development of exhibitions in Hangzhou, the provincial capital city and a famous tourist city in China. However, with Hangzhou municipal government's determination to develop the convention and exhibition industry by investing in convention and exhibition centers, the competition is becoming intense.

With regards to exhibition development in a locality, local protectionism adds further complexity as it is an important factor in China's regional industrial development (Bai, Du, Tao, & Tong, 2004). Exhibitions that are developed near an industrial cluster proliferate in China, and replication of these exhibitions has become a problem (Chan, 2008). Domestic firms active in exhibitions in China are mainly located within clustered areas, and exhibition companies (commercial organizers, excluding local governments acting as exhibition organizers) inevitably consider this effect in their decision to stage an exhibition in a specific locality. Local industry associations also contribute to the development of related exhibitions; mostly, it is the association and local government that jointly hold exhibitions in a particular locality (Luo, 2007). However, to what extent commercial organizers consider the effect of clusters is unknown. Moreover, whether professional visitors to exhibitions value the fact that a host destination belongs to an industrial cluster for the exhibited goods is also uncertain. Facing a broad restructuring of the exhibition industry in China, it is critical to investigate the role clusters play in exhibition operation, as well as the relationship between the cluster effect and both exhibition and destination attractiveness, and hence, the sustainable development of exhibitions in a given destination.

2.3.5 Main Players, Ownership, and Operational Models

2.3.5.1 Main Players

Nationally, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), a state-level organization with the aim of promoting international trade, and its subsidiary company – the China International Exhibition Corporation (CIEC), owns several brand-name exhibitions as well as venues. Municipal governments at different levels own

exhibition centers and have taken the initiative to run exhibitions to fill up venue space. Some of these exhibitions are well organized and became wealth generators for the hosting city while others failed, leaving many venues severely under-utilized (Kay, 2007). Most regional trade associations were only recently established, and are lightly controlled by the provincial or municipal governments. However, they play a key role in marketing commercial exhibitions. Foreign companies have already exerted a marked influence on exhibition management and development. Private exhibition companies began appearing in the early 1990s. Currently, private companies, although large in numbers, are mainly involved in advertising and contracting business, or as agents for exhibitor and visitor acquisition; few own brand-name exhibitions (Chan, 2008; Kay, 2007).

Chinese domestic enterprises and trading companies constitute the major portion of exhibiting firms and visitor groups for exhibitions staged in China. Although a large number of exhibitions are entitled 'international,' the percentage of international participants is typically quite low. Chan (2008) identified two main groups of international exhibitors: 1) the top 500 global enterprises and 2) international delegations organized by the government and/or the chamber of commerce of a specific source country, invited by the central or local governments of China under certain incentive schemes. International exhibitors of these delegations are usually small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs). International SMEs, as individual exhibitors, are still few in number at exhibitions in China without incentive schemes (Chan, 2008). Meanwhile, international visitors (buyers) originate from a wide variety of countries due to China's 'factory of the world' status. Yet, these international visitors usually focus on a limited number of export-oriented fairs, for example, the China Import and Export (Canton) Fair in Guangzhou, the China Yiwu International Commodities Fair in Yiwu, and the East China Import and Export Fair in Shanghai.

2.3.5.2 Ownership

Kay (2007) identified several types of exhibition ownership in China, as follows: 1) government-owned, 2) local entrepreneur and local association-owned, 3) foreign exhibition company-owned, and 4) joint partnership. Statistics by the Ministry of Commerce (2006) provide an insight into the share of the market based on ownership. The majority of exhibitions held in China are trade and industry association-owned (55%), followed by

government-owned exhibitions (25%), while private company-owned exhibitions account for only 5% of exhibitions.

Most of the exhibition centers in China are publicly-funded by municipal governments. Some small-scale exhibition centers were built with private funds in Beijing and Shanghai in the late 1980s and 1990s. Shanghai New International Expo Centre (SNIEC) was a joint investment (equal shares) by a subsidiary of the Shanghai local government and a joint-venture company set up by three leading German trade show companies (Erwin, 2005). The construction of SNIEC is regarded as a milestone in China's exhibition industry development, especially in securing Shanghai's position on the forefront of East Asian exhibition destinations (Schellkes, 2005).

2.3.5.3 Operational Models

Operational models in staging exhibitions in China are complex. Luo (2007) summarized the following models of exhibition operation, with specific reference to Dongguan, an important exhibition destination in Guangdong Province in Southern China: 1) joint operation by the related government sector, trade association, and exhibition companies, 2) authorizing agents to invite exhibitors and visitors, 3) acquisition of exhibitors under a new company jointly established by local or non-local chambers of commerce, trade associations, professional institutes and/or government agencies, and 4) acquisition of exhibitors and visitors under a shareholding partnership between exhibition companies and trade associations. These models of exhibition operation are equally relevant at the national level.

Due to profit distribution and property right issues, there can be conflicts among stakeholders in exhibition operations (Luo, 2007). Fraud on exhibitors and illicit exchanges are not uncommon due to the complexity of operations. Thus, Wang (2007) recommends that associations and industry societies should shoulder responsibility and play a more important role in exhibition operation. Khoo (2005) also argues that associations and professional societies are likely to play an increasing role as fair producers. However, other authors note that associations often hinder the cultivation of exhibitions for reasons of profit

distribution, and thus, should play a minor role and not replace professional organizers in exhibition management and operation (Chan, 2005).

2.3.6 Problems

A number of problems accompany the development of the exhibition industry in China, namely 1) poor organization and management of exhibitions (Chan, 2005; Guo, 2007; Kay, 2007; Liu, 2008; Luo, 2007), 2) lack of sufficient regulation of the industry via laws and industry self-regulation (Chan, 2005), 3) intellectual property-rights issues, and 4) a lack of cooperation among exhibition companies, government, and associations (Chan, 2005; Luo, 2007). Specific problems resulting from insufficient regulation and poor management of exhibitions are discussed next.

First, the extent of replication of events in a number of destinations represents a key problem for China's exhibition industry (Chan, 2008; Liu, 2008). About 80% of exhibitions in China are imitations or transplantations of successful exhibitions staged in other destinations (Chan, 2005). Many of the replicated exhibitions are initiated by local governments and industry associations. While local governments try to initiate events to fill venue space and promote the development of a particular industry, local industry associations replicate events to seek maximization of their own interests in profit allocation. Although these exhibitions should be respected as long as they are operated in a professional, competitive manner, replication causes problems in management, market control, return on investment, and cost. Many of the events are poorly organized due to opportunistic behavior and lack of organizing expertise. Moreover, exhibition participation in some local trade fairs is somewhat coercive. In addition to the replication of events at different times and destinations, copycat shows, which are held concurrently with brand name events in the same destination, and usually in nearby venues, represent a further serious problem. Organizers of copycat shows seek a free ride in attracting visitors and promoting their events. Erwin (2005, p.611) stated that "the current 'atomized' nature of the Chinese tradeshow scene does not always follow the rules of the market".

Second, China lacks premier exhibitions, resulting in low utilization rates of exhibition centers. The scale of China's 4,000 exhibitions is generally small, and their

specialization level is low (Chan, 2005, 2008; Guo, 2007; Kay, 2005, Ministry of Commerce, 2006). Shenzhen High Tech Exhibition Center, for example, hosts more than 60 exhibitions per year, yet the occupancy rate of the 105,000 square meter space is only about 30-35%. In contrast, exhibition centers in Hannover, Munich and Cologne, Germany have an average space of over 200,000 square meters, with the occupancy rate being over 60% with an average of 30 to 40 exhibitions per year (Chan, 2005). Increasing the scale of exhibitions by consolidation is the key to improve occupancy rates, as after the consolidation process, what will be left are the genuine premier trade shows (Erwin, 2005; Heckmann, 2005).

Third, there is a contradiction between the number of exhibition centers and space available in a single center. The average rented exhibition area from 1997 to 1999 was 50,000 square meters in German exhibitions. This requires a net exhibition indoor space of approximately 100,000 sqm (Bauer, 2005). Although China has over 240 exhibition centers, few have exhibition space exceeding 50,000 square meters. On the one hand, per venue exhibition space cannot meet demand for increasing hallmark exhibitions, which is a distinct problem in Beijing and Shanghai. On the other hand, many exhibition venues in second- and third-tier cities are poorly utilized (Guo, 2007; Kay, 2007; 2005; Ministry of Commerce, 2006).

Finally, some organizers display opportunistic behavior, resulting in low quality exhibitions, conflicts between exhibitors and organizers, and even fraud in exhibitor acquisition (Wang, 2007). Disorganisation among government agencies, industry or trade associations at national or local levels, exhibition companies, and agents and middlemen, and disputes in benefit allocation, all cause operational problems. In addition, some organizers focus their marketing and promotional efforts on exhibitors but neglect buyers. This often results in insufficient numbers of buyers at exhibitions - a key reason for dissatisfaction among exhibitors. Fraud in exhibitor acquisition has been a nationwide problem in recent years, attracting much media coverage. Exhibitors feel cheated when the actual exhibition they attend is different from what has been promised. Common issues identified by Wang (2007) include: 1) a local exhibition is titled ’international’, or under the name of ’China’, thereby misleading exhibitors; 2) a promised specialized exhibition turns out to be an assorted one, lacking buyers for their specific industries; and 3) the promised

exhibition site turns out to be a different venue. Opportunistic behavior, especially fraud and counterfeit activities, severely harms exhibition industry development in China.

2.3.7 Prospects

China's robust economy, transition to market orientation, and globalization will continue to benefit its exhibition industry, enabling it to keep the momentum of rapid growth in the near future. Industry prospects may be contemplated with regard to a number of aspects. First, the emergence of five major industrial belts, namely the Beijing-Tianjin, Yangtze River, Pearl River, North-East China, and West China belts will support exhibition business in the leading cities of these regions (Chan, 2008; Zhang, 2007). A growing opportunity resides in the exploration of new exhibition concepts – specific industry segments that demand exhibitions as marketing and developing media. With industries increasingly becoming more specialized, more focused exhibitions shall be developed in order to serve niche markets in the region (Chan, 2005), thus pointing to a vast growth potential to develop exhibitions for less-explored industry segments.

Second, the exhibition market with a current size of about 4,000 exhibitions per annum is unlikely to increase. A process of consolidation is expected, with the market being increasingly mature and selective (Chan, 2005, 2008; Erwin, 2005; Heckmann, 2005). Germany hosts only about 150 international trade fairs per annum in its 23 venues which offer around 2.7 million sqm of indoor exhibition space, yet exhibitors and visitors spend around US$ 13 billion, while the macroeconomic effects reach around US$ 30 billion (AUMA, 2009). In contrast, China's 4,000 exhibitions per annum generate revenue of only US$ 1.3 billion, contributing about 0.08% to its GDP, while the venue utilization rate is only about 15% (Ministry of Commerce, 2006). Thus, consolidation and restructuring of the market is in the interest of sustainable growth of the industry as a whole. Such a process will facilitate the creation of premier exhibitions, enhance the utilization rate of leading exhibition centers, and increase direct exhibition revenue. As a result of consolidation, facilities and services will be improved (Zhang, 2007), but an overall low utilization rate will continue, as some leading exhibition centers may be more fully utilized whereas most will be poorly utilized. Thus, destination factors that promote exhibition market growth are critical in such an environment of intense competition. Consequently, these developments

lend further practical support to the focus of this thesis investigation on factors relating to destination attractiveness and their impact on exhibition brand preference.

Third, the operation and management of exhibitions are undergoing changes. Zhang (2007) indicates a number of trends in this regard, namely: 1) the change in strategy by foreign exhibition organizers from merely transplanting overseas events to acquiring local events or working together with Chinese partners; 2) exhibition organizers' development of increasingly diversified businesses; and 3) the increasingly active role played by exhibition industry organizations. Currently, there are a limited number of exhibition industry organizations at provincial levels, playing a minor role in regulation formulation and industry self-regulation. In the future, there may be more provincial-level organizations and a national organization which will play a key role in exhibition accreditation, monitoring and auditing. The approach adopted by the Association of the German Trade Fair Industry (AUMA) in that regard has set a good role model for China's exhibition industry organizations.

Fourth, with more firms exhibiting in overseas exhibitions, domestic exhibitions not only compete against one another but also increasingly compete against overseas exhibitions, and as a result, the components of exhibitors in China's exhibitions may undergo distinct changes. Participation of Chinese exhibitors and visitors in overseas exhibitions is increasing at an unprecedented rate. Two-thirds of the world's leading trade exhibitions are held in Germany. Between 2002 and 2006, participation of Chinese exhibitors and visitors in German fairs increased by 97%. In 2008, China contributed 35,000 visitors to German trade fairs (ranking 17th and representing a significant increase from 16,000 in 2004), and 9,244 exhibiting firms, continuing to be the country with the second largest number of exhibitors (AUMA, 2009). Participation in exhibitions hosted in other countries, such as the United States, Italy and the United Arab Emirates, is also increasing rapidly. This trend will continue and it is conducive to the growth of China's exports and in the interest of exhibiting firms (Chan, 2008). As a result of this trend, exhibitor profiles may also change. Large domestic firms may increasingly reduce their attendance in domestic exhibitions while increasing their participation in overseas ones. At the same time, more SMEs are expected to participate in domestic exhibitions. With more international

organizations hosting exhibitions in China, the number of international exhibitors is likely to increase steadily.

It is expected that exhibitions will continue to mirror economic and industry developments (e.g., Kirchgeorg, 2005), but not all destinations are desirable for developing exhibitions (Chan, 2005). What, and how, attractive factors in a destination influence stakeholders' perceptions and decisions has, as demonstrated, received little attention in extant studies (Guo, 2007). Similarly, the effect of industrial clusters on exhibition destination attractiveness has not been examined to date. Therefore, this thesis investigation will address the following research questions:

Research Question 2.1:

> What constitutes destination attractiveness for an exhibition destination from the exhibitors' perspective?

Research Question 2.2:

> What measures constitute 'clusters' in an exhibition context and to what extent do 'clusters' contribute to destination attractiveness?

Research Question 2.3

> Do first and second-tier destinations perform differently with regard to destination attractiveness factors from the exhibitors' perspective?

Research Question 2.4:

> To what extent does destination attractiveness exert an influence on exhibition brand preference of exhibitors?

2.4 Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 reviewed global exhibition studies and China's exhibition industry development, with a particular focus on literature relating to characteristics of critical stakeholders of exhibitions, particularly exhibition companies, exhibitors, venues, and destinations. Reviews identified a lack of empirical examination of the relationship between exhibitors and organizers in addition to the importance of exploring this relationship and its impact on exhibitors' brand preference. It also noted a paucity of systematic, empirical

research on exhibition destination attractiveness and its impact on exhibitors' brand preference, especially the effect of manufacturing clusters on exhibition destination attractiveness. The review of studies delineates the contextual knowledge of this thesis.

Chapter 3 presents the conceptual framework of this thesis, and the concepts, assumptions and theories that support this research. Based on the contextual knowledge delineated in Chapter 2, the literature relating to brand preference, relationship quality, destination attractiveness, and cluster theory is reviewed to synthesize a model that explains determining factors for the quality of relationships between exhibitors and organizers, destination attractiveness, and exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. Chapter 3 delineates these key constructs, their underlying factors and relationships, and the rationale for the development of the conceptual model.

CHAPTER 3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Chapter Introduction

Chapter 2 reviewed the current state of global exhibition research and developments of the exhibition industry in China, with a special focus on characteristics of critical stakeholders of exhibitions, particularly exhibition companies, exhibitors, venues, and destinations. It pointed out that the exhibition product has a 'credence quality,' and that the relationship triad between organizers, exhibitors and visitors is essential for exhibition success. The synergistic relationship between exhibitions and venue/destination development was discussed, providing the rationale to research destination/venue factors. The exhibition industry development in China was discussed, with a focus on its prospects and problems. In the process of this review, specific research questions were identified.

Chapter 3 presents the conceptual framework of this thesis, and the concepts, assumptions and theories that support this research, literature relating to brand preference, relationship quality, destination attractiveness, and cluster theory is reviewed, not only to delineate the key constructs and their underlying dimensions, but also the relationships among the constructs, and the rationale for incorporating the constructs into the proposed conceptual model which aims to answer the key research problem. The chapter commences with defining exhibition brand preference and concludes with a conceptual model and a summary of hypotheses that guide this research, followed by a discussion of the research design which incorporates both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

3.2 Exhibition Brand Preference

3.2.1 Brand Preference

According to Kotler (2000), ten types of entities can be marketed, including goods, services, experiences, events, persons, places, properties, organizations, information, and ideas. The most distinctive ability of marketers is to create, maintain, protect, and enhance brands, which are a specific set of features, benefits, and services a seller promises and delivers consistently to buyers. A brand has six levels of meaning to convey, namely1) attributes, 2) functional and emotional benefits, 3) values, 4) culture, 5) personality, and 6) user.

Brand preference is regarded as a key step in consumer decision-making, involving elements of choice (Bahn, 1986). It is frequently utilized in relation to brand equity, with the generic literature testing whether and how brand equity impacts on brand preference and purchase intensions (e.g., Cobb-Walgren, Ruble & Donthu, 1995; Moore, Wilkie & Lutz, 2002). In establishing their brand preference, consumers compare and rank different brands by focusing on their uniqueness (Anselmsson, Johansson, & Persson, 2008).

Attitude measurements based upon beliefs about product-specific attributes and their relative importance are often used to measure brand preference, with Bass and Talarzyk (1972) noting that consumers' beliefs and values for product attributes substantially explain brand preference. Consumers' brand preferences are deemed to be related to perceived brand attributes, by either viewing the brand itself as a single most important attribute or by considering the brand as a combination of several attributes (Bahn, 1986). The difference between overall brand preference and multiple-attribute-based brand preference is based on objectively measured attribute levels (Park & Srinivasan, 1994).

A number of researchers used conjoint analysis and multiple regression analysis to assess consumers' brand preference, with brand preference as a dependent variable (e.g., Cobb-Walgan et al., 1995). Often respondents were asked to rate a number of brands in a category (including the test brands) on a number of dimensions using a 7-point scale. In these studies, the term 'brand preference' was used without an obvious definition, but merely implied in the context as a consumer's favoritism toward a company or its product/services over potential alternatives (Kim, 2007). Other studies have tried to capture the meaning, determinants, and outcomes of brand preference by utilizing a number of measurement items. In these studies, brand preference has been clearly defined. For example, brand preference is defined as "the extent to which the customer favors the designed service provided by his or her present company, in comparison to the designated service provided by other companies in his or her consideration set" (Hellier et al., 2003, p.1765). Roberts and Lattin (1991) defined 'consideration set' as the brands that a consumer would consider buying in the near future.

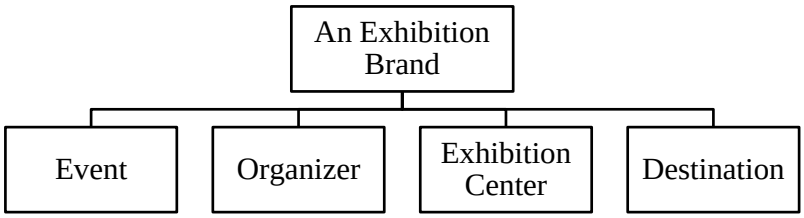
Determinants that detract from or enhance brand preference have also been explored in the generic literature. Three types of variables have been used to explore these determinants: consumer characteristics, situational influences, and marketing mix factors (Mathur, Moschis, & Lee, 2003), with specific topics including social group influence (e.g., Stafford, 1966), exposure and frequency (e.g., Becknell, Wilson & Baird, 1963), sales and post-sales promotions (e.g., Delvecchio, Henard, & Freling, 2006), congruity between product and customer self-concept (Moss, 2007), the effects of contingency variables in the relationship between brand preference and customer share of visits (Kim, OK, & Canter, 2010).

Finally, brand preference has been tested as a mediator between the perceived value of a product and repurchase intentions (Hellier et al, 2003), with the former having a direct significant positive effect on brand preference, and brand preference in turn leading directly to repurchase intentions. Hellier and colleagues (2003, p.1765) define perceived value as "the customer's overall appraisal of the net worth of the service, based on his/her assessment of what is received (benefits provided by the service), and what is given (cost or sacrifice in acquiring and utilizing the service)." Perceived value of the brand stems from perceived quality and equity of the product/services. They utilized a three-item instrument which inquired about a consumer's favoritism and future purchase intentions towards the product to measure brand preference; Jamal and Goode (2001), Olson and Thjomoe (2003), and Kim and colleagues (2010) utilized a similar instrument in their studies. Next, brand preference specific to the exhibition context is discussed.

3.2.2 Exhibition Brand

Exhibitions can be branded, with an exhibition brand consisting of four components: the event, the operator, the exhibition center, and the host city (Sasserath et al., 2005). In building exhibition brands these four components have to be considered and synthesized: the destination of the event (country/region/city), the exhibition center, the exhibition organizer, and the event itself (in some cases, a series of events). All four components shape the perceived quality of an exhibition brand and affect customers' attitudes of and behavior towards it. In brief, an exhibition brand can be regarded as a quaternary of its four components: destination, exhibition center, organizer, and event (See Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Components of an Exhibition Brand



Source: Adapted from Sasserath, Wenhart and Daly, 2005

An exhibition brand functions for the organizer and for target groups in several ways (Sasserath et al., 2005). First, it identifies the organizing company of the exhibition which is responsible for its quality. Second, an exhibition brand conveys information about the event, such as quality, and presents unique associations to the event participants and partners, in order to achieve a competitive advantage. The challenge for organizers and venue/destination management parties is to develop a consistent, attractive, distinct, and trusted brand of different orientations in content, region, and participants.

It is also worth noting that some exhibition brands are so established, independent, and prominent that the organizers of these events remain behind the scenes (Sasserath et al., 2005). The China Import and Export (Canton) Fair may serve as an illustrative example. The Canton Fair has become a prominent brand but participants may not be able to identify the full name of the organizer – China Foreign Trade Center. For more specialized and less widely known exhibitions, the destination, exhibition center, and/or the organizer can serve as a guarantee of quality and contribute to their success, as visitors can safely expect the event to be properly organized (Sasserath et al., 2005).

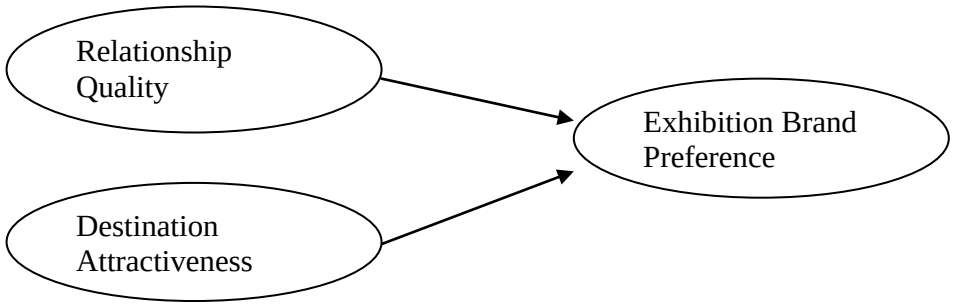
3.2.3 Exhibition Brand Preference

In view of previous studies on brand preference, exhibition brand preference may be defined as the extent to which exhibitors favor the exhibition they are participating in, in comparison to alternative exhibitions of similar themes provided by other organizers in their consideration set. If exhibition brand preference is understood in this way, it refers to participants' ordering of alternative exhibitions following participation in a particular exhibition.

Based on the conceptualization of an exhibition brand by Sasserath et al. (2005), this thesis develops a theoretical framework that guides the exploration of exhibition brand preference, as illustrated in Figure 3.2. The four components of an exhibition brand – namely, the organizer, the event, the venue, and the destination – are not independent, disparate entities. Important factors influencing exhibition brand preference should encompass the perceived value and quality of the event, organizers' performance, and venue and destination attractiveness. As it is difficult to clearly distinguish the quality of an exhibition from the performance of its organizers, this thesis explores the collective impact of the perceived performance of organizers and the quality of the exhibition on exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands, with a particular focus on the quality of the relationship between organizers and exhibitors. In a similar vein, this thesis assesses the collective impact of both the venue and destination, termed destination attractiveness, on exhibitors' brand preference.

Empirical studies have tested and confirmed that the quality of intangible aspects of a relationship not only increases customer retention but also provides a sustainable competitive advantage to corporations since the intangible aspects of a relationship are not easily duplicated by competitors (Roberts, Varki & Brodie, 2003). Business-to-business relationships (B2B) assume more rational behavior and mutual acceptance of reciprocity than business-to-consumer relationships (B2C), given the contractual nature of the former (Dwyer et al., 1987). It is empirically tested that relationship quality has additional explanatory power than the commonly utilized service quality scale in explaining behavioral intentions (Roberts et al., 2003). Thus, relationship quality with organizers from the perspective of exhibitors is used to predict exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. From the destination perspective, perceived attractiveness of destinations has been regarded as one of the evaluation constructs of destination performance as well as one of the determinants that affects pleasure destination choice (Kim et al., 2005, Um et al., 2006;). As exhibitions depend on repeat attendance for long-lasting success, and destination and venue environment constitute part of an exhibition brand, it is argued that destination attractiveness is potentially essential to predict exhibitors' exhibition brand preference. In summary, it is argued that exhibition brand preference is impacted by both relationship quality and destination attractiveness. Thus, a theoretical framework is developed by this thesis, as illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Factors that Determine Exhibition Brand Preference



The chapter now shifts to discuss dimensions of relationship quality and destination attractiveness, with the intent to provide further support for individual dimensions that impact exhibition brand preference.

3.3. Relationship Quality

3.3.1 Relationship Quality – a Key Element of Relationship Marketing

Given the importance of stakeholder relationships on firm performance and attainment of stakeholder value, relationship marketing has attracted focal interest from both academic research and business practice (Srinivasan & Moorman, 2005). It has been defined as "all marketing activities directed towards establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges." (Morgan & Hunt 1994, p.22)

The importance of understanding the role of long-term relationships with both customers and other stakeholder groups is acknowledged in the relationship marketing literature (e.g., Christopher, Payne, & Ballantyne, 1991; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). A relationship is a state of being connected; relationship marketing emphasizes stakeholder collaboration beyond immediate market transactions (Payne, Storbacka, Frow, & Knox, 2009). Successful exchange contacts and involvement can eventually lead the parties involved to a positive and enduring relationship, provided they are properly managed from both sides (Crosby et al., 1990). Since a relationship is two sided, a strong positive relationship has bi-directional benefits. In a buyer-seller context, the key benefit for the

buyer is enhanced firm performance, while for the seller, it is enhanced customer loyalty via a stronger relational bond (Palmatier, et al., 2006).

Relationship quality is regarded as a basis for a lasting bond with the supplier (Dorsh et al., 1998). Crosby and colleagues (1990) argued that high relationship quality enables a customer to not only rely on the salesperson's integrity to reduce perceived uncertainty in the transaction process but also to have confidence in that salesperson's future performance, provided that his/her past performance has been consistently successful. Relationship quality has two dimensions - trust and satisfaction – and is an important aspect when customers decide whether or not to develop and maintain a long-term relationship with a given supplier (Dorsh et al, 1998; Walter et al., 2003).

Morgan and Hunt (1994) introduced a conceptual model with commitment and trust as the two key mediating variables in relationship marketing. Based on this model, subsequent studies proposed a wide range of relational mediators (Palmatier et al., 2006) that are reviewed in terms of their definitions and aliases in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Review of Relationship Quality Construct

Constructs	Definitions	Common Aliases	Representative Papers
Commitment	An enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship	Affective, behavioral, obligation, and normative commitment	Anderson & Weitz 1992; Jap & Ganesan 2000; Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande 1992; Morgan & Hunt 1994
Trust	Confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity	Trustworthiness, credibility, benevolence, and honesty	Doney & Cannon 1997; Hibbard et al., 2001; Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol 2002
Relationship satisfaction	Customer's affective or emotional state toward a relationship, typically evaluated cumulatively over the history of the exchange	Satisfaction with the relationship, but not overall satisfaction	Crosby, Evans, & Cowles 1990; Reynolds & Betty 1999
Relationship quality	Overall assessment of the strength of a relationship, conceptualized as a composite or multidimensional construct capturing the different but related facets of a relationship	Relationship closeness and strength	Crosby et al., 1990; De Wulf, Odekerken-Schroder, & Lacobucci 2001

Source: Adapted from Palmatier et al., 2006

Numerous studies have empirically tested relationship quality in various research contexts, as well as its antecedents and outcomes, using a wide range of mediating variables. Researchers disagree on which relational mediators best capture the characteristics of a relational exchange, eventually influencing performance. Morgan and Hunt (1994) propose trust and commitment as key mediating variables. Some researchers argue that either trust (e.g., Kim & Smith, 2007) or commitment alone is the critical relational construct (e.g., Stanko, Bonner, & Calantone, 2007). Other researchers use relationship quality as a global construct, believing that this higher order construct, which is reflected by a combination of commitment, trust, relationship satisfaction, and other variables, best assesses relationship strength, and consequent exchange performance (e.g., Crosby et al., 1990; Kumar, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 1995; Walter et al, 2003). Kumar and colleagues (1995) added commitment and conflict to their conceptualization of relationship quality, while Hennig-Thurau and Klee (1997) and Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande (1992) added perceived service quality. Dorsch, Swanson, Scott, & Scott (1998) utilized opportunism, customer orientation, and

ethical profile to define relationship quality. In contrast, Walter and colleagues (2003) stressed that relationship satisfaction should be an indicator to relationship quality, apart from trust and commitment. Similarly, Rauyruen and Miller (2007) used four dimensions - trust, satisfaction, commitment and service quality - as determinants of relationship quality in a B2B environment. These authors also developed several scales to measure trust, commitment, satisfaction and perceived quality. Finally, De Wulf and colleagues (2001) studied the antecedents of perceived relationship investment and their effects on relationship quality in a cross-country/industry context. Their findings indicate that four forms of investment (direct mail, preferential treatment, interpersonal communication, and tangible rewards) exert varied influences depending on the country and industrial sectors. Whatever form, perceived relationship investment positively influences relationship quality.

With regards to the outcomes of relationship quality, whatever mediating factors are utilized in different studies in a wide variety of business and consumer settings, positive relationship quality results in customer loyalty (e.g., Kim et al., 2006; Rauyruen & Miller, 2007); word-of-mouth (e.g., Kim & Cha, 2002; Kim & Smith, 2007; Kim, Lee & Yoo, 2006); sales effectiveness (e.g., Johnson & Grayson, 2005); and strong purchase intention (e.g., Keh & Xie, 2008; Rauyruen & Miller, 2007; Stanko et al., 2007). Extant literature provides sufficient evidence that relationship quality has a significant positive influence on attitudinal and behavioral intentions from the customer's perspective. Table 3.2 provides a summary of recent empirical studies on mediating variables in relationship marketing that used structural models to test the relationships among antecedents, mediators and outcomes.

Table 3.2 Recent Empirical Studies on Relationship Quality

Author	Context	Antecedents	Mediating Variables	Outcomes
Abdul-Muhmin, 2005	B2B	Satisfaction with product Benevolence Credibility Opportunism	Satisfaction Commitment	Propensity to terminate relationships
Gounaris, 2005	B2B	Service quality Bonding	Trust Affective & Calculative Commitment	Maintain relations Invest in relations
Huntley, 2006	B2B	Goal congruity Trust Commitment	Relationship quality	Willingness to recommend Service sales Product sales
Johnson & Grayson, 2005	B2C	Service provider expertise Product performance Firm reputation Satisfaction with previous interactions Similarity	Affective vs. Cognitive Trust (at consumer & interpersonal level)	Sales effectiveness Anticipation of future interactions
Keh & Xie, 2008	B2C	Corporate reputation	Trust Commitment Identification	Purchase intention Price premium
Kim & Cha, 2002	Hotel	Customer orientation Relational orientation Mutual disclosure Service provider attributes	Relationship quality (with trust & satisfaction as 2nd order construct)	Share of purchase Relationship continuity Word of Mouth
Kim et al., 2006	B2C	Food quality Employee customer Orientation Communication Relationship benefits Price fairness	Relationship quality (with trust, satisfaction as 2nd order construct)	Loyalty Commitment Word of Mouth
Kim & Smith, 2007	Child-care Industry	Service quality (hard, soft)	Satisfaction Trust	Word of Mouth
Rauyruen & Miller, 2007	B2B	Service quality Commitment Trust Satisfaction	Relationship quality at both employee and corporate levels	Purchase intentions Attitudinal loyalty
Stanko et al., 2007	B2B	Relationship length Emotional intensity Mutual confiding Reciprocal services	Commitment	Favorable buyer purchase behavior

Source: Compiled by author.

3.3.2 Relationship Quality in the Exhibition Context

Researchers have recognized that relationship marketing is more conducive to generating positive outcomes under certain conditions (Anderson & Narus, 1991). Palmatier and colleagues (2006) summarized and empirically tested three contexts in which relationships may be more critical to the success of an exchange. First, building a strong relationship is more critical and effective in the context of service-based exchanges, as services are less tangible and consistent, and more perishable; at the same time, sellers and customers are more involved in the service-transfer process. Evaluation of a 'service product' is often ambiguous and depends on trust. Second, an enhanced relationship is more critical in a context in which transactions with customers are conducted via multiple channels. Multi-channel exchanges involve a variety of partners, have higher levels of interdependence, require coordinated action, and rely on the prevention of opportunistic behavior (Anderson & Weitz, 1989). Third, a sound relationship is more critical in business markets than in consumer markets as a firm's success in business markets depends directly on its working relationships (Anderson & Narus, 2004).

Thus, relationship marketing and building strong relationships should be very effective in the exhibition sector, since it embraces the identified three contexts, highlighting the importance of relationship quality on generating customer loyalty and repurchase intentions. First, the 'exhibition product' is an 'experience' and 'information exchange' serviced by the exhibition company to their business customers in business markets. It is crucial for an exhibition company to build a strong relationship with its business customers to sustain subsequent exhibitions. Second, all transactions take place in the business markets. Exhibitors as 'customers' of the exhibition companies are 'business entities' rather than individual consumers. So the relationships between exhibition companies and exhibitors are B2B rather than B2C, with the relationships between the two customer segments, visitors and exhibitors, being B2B as well. Stakeholder relationships in the exhibition sector are all of a business nature. Third, the distribution of this 'experience product' is through multiple channels (e.g., agents, chambers of commerce, trade associations), with the exhibition company playing a pivotal role. Different event operational models result in the involvement of a wide variety of organizing entities in the sales process. While some commentators advocate the greater involvement of distributors

(e.g., Wang, 2007; Wismer & Schutte, 2005), others believe that exhibition companies shall engage in direct communication with both exhibitors and visitors, and build relationships with key accounts in the two segments (e.g., Chan, 2005).

Relationship quality captures the perceived relationship with organizers from the perspective of exhibitors. The organizing company is the party that initiates the relationship marketing effort in the hope of strengthening its relationship with exhibitors. It is expected that high relationship quality perceived by exhibitors is likely to lead them to attend future exhibitions and continue their relationship with the exhibition company.

3.3.3 Relationship Quality – Key Dimensions

As indicated in Section 3.3.1, different researchers have proposed different dimensions for relationship quality, and there has been no empirical examination of the extent to which individual dimensions relate to each other (Roberts et al., 2003). This thesis takes the notion that relationship quality is a global construct composed of five dimensions, namely, 1) Trust, 2) Commitment, 3) Communication, 4) Perceived Service Quality, and 5) Relationship Satisfaction. Trust, commitment and relationship satisfaction are included because these three dimensions are central dimensions in numerous studies to evaluate the quality of relationships. Perceived service quality and communication are included because these two dimensions are tested in a few studies as a sub-dimension of relationship quality (e.g., Lages, Lancastre, & Lages, 2008; Rauyruen & Miller, 2007), and also because they are central to organizer performance in the exhibition context. These dimensions are discussed next, further elaborating the rationale for their inclusion, followed by a discussion of research questions and hypotheses.

3.3.3.1 Trust

Trust has been described in numerous ways. For example, Morgan and Hunt (1994, p.23) defined trust as “confidence in an exchange partner’s reliability and integrity,” and consisting of benevolence and honesty. Walter and colleagues (2003, p.161) extended the scope of trust by stating that “trust constitutes the belief, attitude or expectation of a party that the relationship partner’s behavior or its customers will be for the trusting party’s own benefit.” They believe that trust has three essential components: goodwill, competence, and

honesty of the relationship partner. The development of trust is the core of any successful relationship with customers, which depends on shared values, communication and non-opportunistic behavior (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Trust has been associated with many positive organizational outcomes, such as direct positive effects on customer loyalty and purchase intentions (e.g., Johnson & Grayson, 2005; Keh & Xie, 2008; Kim et al., 2006; Rauyren & Miller, 2007). In this thesis, trust is conceptualized and operationalised as having two essential components – organizer competence and organizer honesty. This thesis posits that relationship quality with organizers from the exhibitors' perspective is reflected by their trust in organizers.

Several studies (e.g., Rauyruen & Miller 2007) distinguish between two levels of trust: 1) trust at an interpersonal level, that is, consumers' trust in the employee of the supplier (organization), and 2) trust at the organizational level, that is, consumers' trust in the supplier (organization) as a whole. Rauyruen and Miller (2007) found that trust in the supplier, rather than trust in employees, has a significant positive influence on customer loyalty whereas Palmatier and colleagues (2006) observed the opposite. In the quantitative research of this thesis trust is operationalized at the organizational level only, whereas trust at the employee level is briefly discussed in the semi-structured interviews with exhibitors.

3.3.3.2 Commitment

Commitment, defined as "a desire to develop a stable relationship" and "a confidence in the stability of the relationship," (Anderson & Weitz, 1992; p.19), is regarded as a focal construct in relationship marketing (e.g., Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Huntley, 2006). It is generally agreed in the literature that commitment is an outcome construct of trust. However, researchers disagree whether commitment generates relationship quality or whether the reverse is true, that is, relationship quality generates commitment (e.g., Huntley, 2006). Some researchers regard commitment as a dimension of global relationship quality (e.g., Abdul-Muhmin, 2005, Rauyruen & Miller, 2007), whereas other researchers treat commitment independently (e.g., Stanko et al., 2007).

In a business relationship, commitment refers to a strong attitude formed concerning the continuation of a relationship with a business partner (Wetzels, Ruyter, & Birgelen,

1998). Most studies in marketing have conceptualized and operationalized commitment as a global construct. Some studies distinguished commitment into two types: calculative commitment (attachment due to instrumental reasons) and affective commitment (attachment due to liking and identification) (e.g., Rauyruen & Miller, 2007). Affective commitment means that corporations want to stay in the relationship because they like their suppliers, enjoy the partnership and feel a sense of loyalty and belongingness. Calculative commitment is the extent to which firms perceive the need to maintain a relationship due to the significant anticipated switching costs or lack of alternatives (Cater & Zabkar, 2009; Kumar et al., 1995). Extant empirical studies provide sufficient evidence that commitment leads to customer loyalty (e.g., Stanko et al., 2007). However, in Rauyruen and Miller's (2007) study, only affective commitment to a supplier significantly influences loyalty; calculative commitment and commitment to employees had no significant influence on either loyalty or purchase intention. Similarly, in Cater and Zabkar's (2009) study, trust has a positive impact on affective commitment, but not on calculative commitment, and only affective commitment has a positive impact on loyalty, while calculative commitment does not. In this thesis commitment is conceptualized and operationalized as having two components – affective commitment and calculative commitment. This thesis posits that relationship quality with organizers from the exhibitors' perspective is reflected by affective and calculative commitment.

3.3.3.3 Communication

Communication is defined as the informal and formal sharing of reliable and meaningful information between exchange partners (Anderson & Narus, 1990). The construct is frequently measured at three levels – communication quality, information exchange, and participation (e.g., Phan, Styles, & Patterson, 2005). Communication quality refers to timeliness, accuracy, usefulness, and credibility of information exchanged (Frone & Major, 1988). Information sharing refers to the degree to which partners proactively provide critical and confidential information to each other (Doney & Cannon, 1997). Participation is the extent to which partners engage in planning and goal setting (Mohr & Spekman, 1994). The quality of communication and information exchange is one of the most significant characteristics of business relationships (Mohr, Fisher, & Nevin, 1996).

Proactively sharing information is essential to the success of a relationship (Macneil, 1978) and holding B2B marketing relationships together (Mohr & Spekman, 1994).

Communication was used as one of the dimensions for a second order construct 'relationship quality' by Lages and colleagues (2008), other dimensions being relationship policy and practice, trust, commitment, and satisfaction. Communication behavior is found to be important to interpersonal relationship quality regarded as a higher order construct consisting of trust, satisfaction, commitment and joint problem solving (Phan et al., 2005). Communication in this thesis is operationalized as communication quality and it is posited that relationship quality with organizers from the exhibitors' perspective is reflected by the quality of communication initiated by organizers.

3.3.3.4 Service Quality

Service quality is a critical measure of organizational performance. High quality service potentially leads to a competitive advantage and customer loyalty (Palmer & Cole, 1995). Crosby and colleagues (1990) state that service quality is relevant to services marketing of both a transactional and relational nature. It can be considered a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for relationship quality (Crosby, 1989). There might be a certain overlap between perceived service quality and relationship quality; however, service quality seeks to measure firm performance along transactional dimensions whereas relationship quality measures interactions along relational dimensions (Roberts, Varki & Brodie, 2003). The path link between service quality and relationship quality has been established by a number of studies (e.g., Roberts et al., 2003).

Numerous studies measure service quality based on Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry's (1985) SERVQUAL, which has five main dimensions, namely, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Early works have used the expectancy disconfirmation theory which measures the gap between perceptions and expectations; from the 1990s onwards, perception-only measures of service quality dominate the services marketing literature — evidence suggests that perception-only measures are more psychometrically vigorous (Jayawardhena, Souchon, Farrell, & Glanville, 2007). Respondents may encounter difficulties and ambiguity when trying to indicate their

expectations with the expectation and performance gap method (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Perception measures may have better predictive validity than gap measures in predicting behavioral intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000). Other studies measure service quality using different dimensions. For example, Gronroos (1982) and Szmigin (1993) suggested using soft process quality, hard process quality, and outcome quality to measure how the service is performed, what is being performed, and the end result of the performance. Regardless of the measurement adopted by different studies, previous research has confirmed that there is a positive relationship between perceived quality and customer loyalty (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Since this study primarily measures the impact of service quality on customers' perception of relationship building with their suppliers (that is, for prediction purpose), the perception-only measures are used. Service quality in this thesis is conceptualized and operationalized as service performance of organizers from preshow, onsite to post-show stage perceived by the respondents. It is posited that relationship quality with organizers from the exhibitors' perspective is reflected by perceived service quality.

3.3.3.5 Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction describes a customer's affective or emotional state towards a relationship. Anderson and Narus (1984, p.66) defined relationship satisfaction as "a positive affective state resulting from the appraisal of all aspects of a firm's working relationship with another firm." Compared with service quality, customer satisfaction is more from an insider perspective and based on customers' own experiences of a service where the outcome is evaluated in terms of what value is received against what is given (Liljander & Strandvik, 1993). Storbacka, Strandvik and Grönroos (1994, p.25) defined satisfaction as "customers' cognitive and affective evaluation based on the personal experience across all service episodes within the relationship." They posited that customer satisfaction can be analyzed both on an episode level and on a relationship level (Storbacka et al., 1994).

Relationship satisfaction has been regarded as a key dimension of relationship quality in the relationship marketing literature (e.g., Kim et al., 2006; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Some studies operationalized customer satisfaction as measuring the overall

satisfaction with suppliers' services (e.g., Kim & Cha, 2002; Kim et al., 2006). Other studies stressed measuring customer satisfaction at the relational level (e.g., Abdul-Muhmin, 2002). Palmatier and colleagues (2006) argued that relationship satisfaction shall reflect exclusively the customers' satisfaction with the relationship and thus, shall differentiate it from customers' satisfaction with the overall exchange.

One way to achieve strong and long term relationships is to ensure that customers are satisfied (Storbacka et al., 1994). However, it does not mean that dissatisfied customers will end a relationship (e.g., Liljander & Strandvik, 1993; Oliver, 1989; Woodruff, Cadotte, & Jenkins, 1983; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1993). There seems to be a tolerance zone, the difference between an adequate and a desired level of service (Zeithaml et al., 1993), suggesting that customers dissatisfied with a service episode can still be satisfied with the relationship (Storbacka et al., 1994). In this thesis, relationship satisfaction is conceptualized and operationalized more on the relational level than on the episode level, and it is posited that relationship quality with organizers is reflected by the level of satisfaction exhibitors perceived they have with their relationships with organizers.

Based on the review of the relationship marketing literature with regards to relationship mediators (constituents of relationship quality as a second-order factor) and the consequences, and the discussion of relationship quality in the exhibition context, this thesis proposes the following hypotheses:

$H1_a$: Exhibitors' relationship quality with organizers in the exhibition context is a second order construct composed of five factors: (1) trust, (2) commitment, (3) communication (4) service quality, and (5) relationship satisfaction.

$H1_b$: Relationship quality with organizers has a significant, positive effect on exhibitors' exhibition brand preference.

3.4 Destination Attractiveness

3.4.1 Leisure and Convention Destination Attractiveness

3.4.1.1 Leisure and Business Travel Destinations

A destination is identified as an ‘experience supplier’ by Ryan (1991, 1997), and regarded as a brand name of a place that binds together different products and services provided by a destination. Destinations can be divided into leisure and business travel destinations. In the leisure travel context, a destination is perceived as a product that has the potential to generate a wonderful experience and provide an optimum sense of well-being during a holiday trip. The success of destinations depends on the attractiveness of characteristics that make up the tourist strengths of a certain area (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2009). Destination image, attractiveness, choice and competitiveness have been mainstreams of research relating to leisure travel destinations (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Gomezelj & Mihalic, 2008; Pike, 2002). Factors that influence the afore-mentioned constructs have been identified and relationships among the constructs proposed and tested (e.g., Beerli, Meneses, & Gil, 2007; Crompton, 1992; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Enright & Newton, 2005).

Business travel can be divided into promotable and non-promotable business trips. Promotable trips comprise three kinds: trips to exhibitions, trips to conferences, and incentive trips (Hedorfer & Todter, 2005). The concept of a destination is widely utilized in the context of convention tourism, with a number of authors having discussed convention destinations, including destination image, choice and selection (Chacko & Fenich, 2000; Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Oppermann, 1996). These studies have identified convention site (destination) selection variables and their relative importance (e.g., Crouch & Louviere, 2004). However, few studies on exhibitions paid attention to how destinations exert an influence on exhibition participation by exhibitors (e.g., Fuchslocher, 2005; Ulrich, 2005).

Since both venues and destinations are part of an exhibition brand (Sasserath et al., 2005), ‘destination attributes’ and ‘events’ together form an integrated product experience for exhibitors. The resulting event experience is inextricably connected with the characteristics of the destination and their attractiveness. Hence, destination attractiveness has a synergistic relationship with exhibition development/attractiveness, and is a key factor

for exhibition organizers, as well as for exhibitors and visitors, when making an assessment to develop or participate in exhibitions. Destination attractiveness in the generic literature is discussed next.

3.4.1.2 Destination Attractiveness – Definitions and Outcomes

Mayo and Jarvis (1981) state that destination attractiveness is a combination of personal benefits bought by leisure travelers and the perceived ability of the destination to deliver these benefits. Hu and Ritchie (1993) refer to the attractiveness of a destination as a reflection of feelings, beliefs, and opinions that individuals have about a destination's perceived capacity to provide satisfaction in relation to their special vacation needs. Cracolici and Nijkamp (2009, p.3) maintain that destination attractiveness refers to "the extent to which the availability, quality and management of local tourist services satisfies the needs of the customer, contributing to his/her feeling of 'tourist well-being' in relation to the holiday destination." Thus, destination attractiveness is regarded by scholars as the perceived value of destination products and services, or the worth of products and services, based on travelers' evaluation of what is received and what is given.

Perceived attractiveness has been regarded as one of the evaluation constructs of destination performance as well as one of the determinants that affects pleasure destination choice (Kim et al., 2005; Um et al., 2006). Um and colleagues (2006) explored the antecedents of revisit intention by examining the impacts of four constructs on revisit intentions: perceived attractiveness, perceived quality of service, perceived value for money, and satisfaction. Their findings indicate that perceived attractiveness, rather than satisfaction, is the most important indicator of revisit intention, supporting Kozak and Rimmington's (2000) study that perceived destination attractiveness is most significant in explaining overall satisfaction. Um and colleagues (2006, p.1152) conclude that "if image is a key factor in destination choice to first-timers (Echtner & Ritchie 1991; Um & Crompton, 1990), perceived attractiveness could be a key factor for the repeaters. After visiting a destination, perceived attractiveness rather than destination image could be effective on revisit intention." As exhibitions depend on repeat attendance for long-lasting success, perceived destination attractiveness, measured at the post-exhibit stage, can be regarded as a cognitive evaluation of the value of destination attributes which contribute to an exhibition brand.

3.4.1.3 Leisure Destination Attractiveness Factors

Several scholars have attempted to conceptualize and operationalize destination attractiveness. Thach and Axinn (1994) first divided destination attractiveness into two dimensions: 1) core attributes; and 2) augmented attributes, evaluating the attractiveness of amusement parks on these two dimensions. A number of authors identified both the core and augmented attributes for cultural tourism, and found that the augmented dimension represented functional/physical attributes that may influence visitors' evaluation of the core attributes (Hou, Lin, & Morais, 2005). Formica and Uysal (2006) argue that supply and demand elements contribute to the overall evaluation of destination attractiveness in a specific area, noting that tourists represent the demand side while destinations represent the supply side with specific attraction power. Tourism is propelled by the reciprocal relationship between the two key elements. Tourist attractions are the core attributes and transportation, information, and marketing components form the contexts that propel travelers' holiday decisions.

3.4.1.4 Convention Site-Selection Factors

Numerous studies have identified convention site selection variables and their relative importance. Factors affecting site selection decisions can be broadly divided into site-specific and association factors (Weber & Chon, 2002). Go and Zhang (1997) classified the convention site-selection criteria into two primary categories: 1) the destination environment (capacity) and 2) meeting facilities. Thus, the destination environment, meeting facilities, and association factors form the three key constructs in convention site-selection from the meeting planners' perspective.

Many convention studies empirically verified the destination being an important consideration for convention attendees. Oppermann (1996) first discussed the relationship between destination image and convention site selection. Baloglu and Love (2005) established the link between the perceived cognitive, affective, and overall image of five US cities by association meeting planners and their site selection intention. The perceived image of the cities includes perceived restaurant/retail accessibility, facilities, logistics, city image, and the support and services from the Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs). Chacko and Fenich (2000) tried to quantify the influence and importance of specific

destination attributes in the overall destination image for seven US convention cities. They found that image is the result of a city's attractiveness, based largely on its physical attributes, and that location is a critical factor in determining success, while the promotional appeal is a significant contributor to overall destination image. Following a comprehensive review of the literature on convention site selection, Crouch and Ritchie (1998) identified eight key dimensions considered in the site selection process by association meeting planners, namely 1) accessibility, 2) local support, 3) extra-conference opportunities, 4) accommodation facilities, 5) meeting facilities, 6) information, 7) site environment, and 8) other criteria. Subsequently, Crouch and Louviere (2004) found that cost of venue, food quality, plenary room, on-site/off-site accommodation, and participant proximity are the five most important attributes influencing convention site-selection of meeting planners. More recently, Lee and Back (2008) examined factors affecting brand satisfaction and attitudinal brand loyalty of convention attendees. Their findings confirm that convention site selection has a significant, positive impact on (convention) brand satisfaction, which results in attitudinal brand loyalty (word-of-mouth and repurchase intention).

3.4.1.5 Convention and Exhibition Site-Selection

Considering the "promotable" (Hedorfer & Todter, 2005, p.119) nature of travel to an exhibition, relating to its program, venue and host destination, factors that affect leisure holidays or convention selection are likely to also have a certain impact on exhibition selection decisions, though the nature and degree is not clear from the extant literature. However, as travel motivations for holidays, conventions, and exhibitions are different, factors that influence exhibition organizers and participants are likely to be noticeably different from those that influence leisure and convention travelers.

Table 3.3 summarizes the similarities and differences of site-selection for conventions and exhibitions. Both conventions and exhibitions potentially provide host destinations with business and income, investment and sponsorship, tax revenue, employment and training, increased business opportunities, an improved destination image, and increased visitor numbers. Thus, literature on decision making for convention participation, site selection, and convention feasibility is conducive to understanding similar aspects in exhibition organization and site selection. One of the differences is the

importance and consequent ranking that different groups of customers (leisure tourists, convention and exhibition participants) assign to destination business and leisure factors. Thus, the extant literature on exhibition destination factors is discussed next.

Table 3.3 Comparison of Convention and Exhibition Site-Selection

	Convention Site-selection	**Exhibition Site-selection**
Similarities	Meeting planners and exhibition organizers consider similar destination attributes, such as location, accessibility, accommodation, facilities, environment, local support, destination prestige.	
Differences	Location is usually not fixed	Aimed to be long-standing events, the location is usually fixed
	Clients vary and clients (associations) may not be the attendees	Clients are usually attendees, thus need to retain clients and enhance loyalty
	There is only one group of participants: the conference attendees	There are two groups of participants: the exhibitors and visitors. The relationship between the two parties may influence exhibition participation decision
	Costs for all attendees are the same; attendees are flexible in making attendance decisions	Costs for exhibitors and visitors are different; visitors are more flexible in making attendance decisions than exhibitors
	Planners consider programs and a destination's touristic value and features	Planners consider programs and a destination's economic, industrial and social features

Source: Compiled by Author.

3.4.2 Exhibition Destination Attractiveness

3.4.2.1 Measuring Exhibition Destination Macro and Leisure Attributes

Several commentators have discussed the impact of 'location' on exhibition cultivation and attendance (Fenich, 2008; Fuchslocher, 2005; Hedorfer & Todter, 2005). Hedorfer and Todter (2005) identify the advantages of Germany as a destination for promotable business travel as follows: central location in Europe; scenery; town development and history; accommodation variety and facilities; shopping and food provision; market leadership; services; high standard of infrastructure, and excellent public transport. Fuchslocher (2005) points out that 'location' considerably influences the success

of exhibitions. He argues that exhibitors would not acknowledge the merit of location factors, but would react both immediately and negatively to problems resulting from location factors.

Rubalcaba-Bermejo and Cuadrado-Roura's (1995) study represents a key study that examines and empirically confirms the relationship between urban hierarchies and exhibitions distribution. Utilizing data from 140 fair-hosting cities in Europe, they aimed to identify the relationship between exhibition development and city characteristics. Data utilized included the number of fairs, sectors represented; direct exhibitors; visitors; direct foreign exhibitors; and foreign visitors, in addition to net rented area. They found that a set of varying destination factors explain why some destinations are more attractive exhibition hosts than others. These factors include: 1) tradition and history, 2) local income and population, 3) infrastructure and communication availability, 4) location, 5) tourism, environmental and weather conditions, 6) public investment and support policies, 7) the city's international standing, 8) exhibition centre size, and 9) the composition of the regional industry. Another finding was that the size of exhibitions in a city depends on industry fragmentation and sector specialization. Bigger cities have a greater number of fairs and a higher level of sector diversification. Interestingly, they found that exhibition size and internationalization may be considered non-correlated dimensions in European trade to trade exhibitions. Big exhibition-hosting cities compete with one another within the different combinations of size and internationalization. As they grow, cities tend to enhance their international position. Although their study provided a comprehensive list of success factors for exhibition destinations, these factors were not the focus of their study, and thus, the importance of these factors was not examined. Following the discussion of exhibition destination macro and leisure attributes, the business and economic environment of a destination is examined next.

Integrating destination attributes discussed in the convention site-selection and exhibition literature, the following dimensions are identified that are potentially important for a destination to be competitive as exhibition host: 1) accessibility, 2) exhibition facilities, 3) accommodation, 4) city leisure environment, 5) local support/policies, 6) composition of the regional economy, 7) tradition and history, 8) local income and population, 9)

international prestige, and 10) local support and policies. Previous tourism and convention site selection literature has provided measurements for four of the dimensions (See Table 3.4). Since most of China's cities have large populations but short history in hosting exhibitions, the two dimensions are not included in the proposed model for destination attractiveness. No empirical studies provided measurements for the economic and business environment of exhibition destinations, namely, composition of the regional economy, local support for exhibition industry, international prestige and economic standing. Thus, how to measure destination business and economic environment conducive to hosting exhibitions is discussed next.

Table 3.4 Empirical Studies Related to Destination Macro and Leisure Attributes

Dimensions	**Empirical support**
Accessibility	Chi & Qu, 2008; Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Hankinson, 2005; Kim, Sun & Ap, 2008
Exhibition facilities	Hankinson, 2005; Kim, Sun & Ap, 2008;
Accommodation	Chi & Qu, 2008; Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Kim, Sun & Ap, 2008;
City Leisure/Tourism conditions	Chi & Qu, 2008; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Lin, Morais, Kerstetter & Hou, 2007; Lehto, O'Leary, & Morrison, 2002; Hou, Lin & Morais, 2005;

3.4.2.2 Measuring Destination Business and Economic Environment

Exhibition operation and participation is primarily business-oriented, motivated and driven by the market appeal of a destination. Exhibition development in a destination is closely related to the regional industry development in/near a destination, which represents market demand. Trade and exchange opportunities are major motivating factors for both exhibitors and visitors. From the perspective of the organizers, cultivation of an exhibition for an industrial sector is related to the maturity of the industry in a city (Butler et al., 2007; Chan 2005). Kirchgeorg (2005, p.38) stated that "managing a trade show demands the support of a whole industry, whose players must be willing to accept the show as a valid forum within which to establish and cultivate business relationships". Premier exhibitions are regarded as a "barometer of economic development in a particular branch of industry." (Schoop, 2005, p.27) Rubalcaba-Bermejo and Cuadrado-Roura (1995, p.396) commented that "economic concentration in space explains fair and exhibition concentration, and under

this assumption exhibitions are but another expression of international development." In their opinion, exhibitions scatter in places with adequate industrial support for the exhibition category, while exhibitions facilitate the development of the industry sector.

Economic standing of a destination can be measured by statistical data. Aggregate income (e.g., GDP for industry categories) and total disposable income (that is, population times the average income per capita) has been used to measure the latent demand for the convention and exhibition market (ICON, 2005). However, latent demand is not actual or historic, nor future sales, but can be either lower or higher than actual sales. Furthermore, population and the economic standing of a destination alone do not explain destination attractiveness and preference for the destination from the stakeholders' perspectives. Some destinations can win industry support from a wider geographical area, whereas others can only draw the attention of customers within the local area. City size might not be enough to explain the maturity of a given industry in the destination, and how the destination can win the support of the entire industry.

Given that statistical data are imprecise to forecast market demand for exhibitions (ICON, 2005), this thesis proposes to use 'clusters' (Porter,1998) to measure to what extent certain economic attributes exert influence on destination attractiveness from the exhibitors' perspective, as 'clusters' describe economic and industrial concentration in a region. Furthermore, in China, the presence of industrial clusters motivates local governments in second and third-tier cities to stage exhibitions for a number of economic and political benefits. Next, the concept of 'clusters' and its effect on regional development, as well as the correlation between 'clusters' (industrial districts) and spatial distribution of exhibitions, are assessed.

3.4.2.3 Clusters and the Spatial Distribution of Exhibitions

Cluster theory traces its origin to the notion of 'industrial districts' discussed by Marshall (1966, p.225), which refers to a "concentration of small businesses of a similar character in particular localities." By concentrating, industrial districts result in economies of scale and specialization, increased efficiency of SMEs, and spillover of knowledge and innovation (Rocha, 2004). Porter's (1998) 'cluster' theory renewed worldwide interest in

industrial districts, with clusters being defined as “geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions in particular fields that compete but also cooperate.” He points out that “the roots of productivity lie in the national and regional environment for competition” (1998, p.7) and the “presence of clusters suggests that much competitive advantage lies outside a given company or even outside its industry, residing instead in the *locations* of its business units” (1998, p.198). Cluster advantages relate to co-location and localization externalities, like specialized labor markets and infrastructure (Enright, 2003; Gordon & McCann, 2000), interactive learning and knowledge creation (Maskell, 2001; Wolfe & Gertler 2004). Enright (2003) pointed to a significant impact of clusters on corporate performance, regional economic development, and national competitiveness, however, not all industries or even most industries exhibit this regional clustering phenomenon.

Local clusters, once established, will sustain as long as the reasons for their existence remain in place. In Germany, clusters with more than 100 years history still can be easily identified (Brenner & Gildner, 2006). Hence, the impact of local clusters on the local economy and structure is long-lasting. The economic benefits gained by a region via industrial agglomeration can be used to improve the regional environment and its attractiveness in business and trade (Brenner & Gildner, 2006). Some regions have a heterogeneous industrial structure whereas others have a more homogenous one. Yet, a region that is dominated by one industrial cluster only may encounter difficulties in developing other industries, and will decline once the market for its products decreases. Brenner and Gildner (2006, p.1326) also found that “the positive relation between local clusters and economic performance wears off with time.”

Researchers have investigated the effects of clusters at varying levels of analysis, for example, at the firm level (Ingram & Roberts, 2000; Visser, 1999), regional level (e.g., Enright, 2000, 2003) and at multiple levels (Porter, 1998). Of interest to this thesis is the regional level of clustering, given its interest in the effects of the economic environment of a locality on exhibition destination attractiveness.

Clusters, as concentrations of businesses in particular localities, may explain the spatial distribution of exhibitions (Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995). Globally, two categories of exhibition destinations co-exist: those that are supported by industrial clusters or the legacy of these clusters, and those that do not have clustered industrial bases in the surrounding region. The former pattern is evidenced in, for example, the Italian exhibition industry, where the existence of industrial districts in Ascoli Piceno and Macerata for footwear and leatherwear, Siena for furniture, and Modena for mechanical engineering and clothing largely supports the large scale exhibitions staged in Milan, a city which has a strong tradition in holding exhibitions in Italy and Europe. The latter pattern is evidenced in Las Vegas, where the exhibition industry is developed and based on the provision of large exhibition spaces, professional skills, and touristic value and resources, independent of support of any manufacturing industries nearby. Urban hierarchies, to a certain extent, also explain the spatial distribution of exhibitions in China, as Shanghai and Beijing attract most international exhibitions. However, it is not obvious at provincial city levels. Compared to German exhibition destinations, China's second and third-tier cities lack both international prestige and a history of hosting exhibitions. Realizing the market potential and economic benefits, numerous Chinese cities are seeking to develop the exhibition sector, resulting in intense competition between destinations, as discussed in Chapter 2. Although clusters are widely discussed in the strategic management literature, no empirical measurement relevant to the exhibition context exists. Thus, this thesis will develop measurements for cluster effect based on semi-structured interviews with exhibitors.

Based on the review of literature covering leisure tourism, convention site selection, exhibition destination attractiveness, China's exhibition industry and industrial agglomeration in China, the thesis proposes the following hypotheses:

> $H2_a$: Destination attractiveness is a second order construct composed of six factors: 1) cluster effect, 2) venue facilities, 3) accommodation, 4) economic environment, 5) city leisure environment and 6) accessibility.
>
> $H2_b$: Destination attractiveness has a significant, positive effect on exhibitors' exhibition brand preference.

3.5 Proposed Conceptual Model

Based on a comprehensive literature review and discussion of China's exhibition industry, three constructs are identified, with exhibition brand preference as the dependent construct, and relationship quality with organizers and destination attractiveness as independent constructs. The conceptual model, shown in Figure 3.3, delineates the key factors preceding exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. A summary of the research questions, hypotheses and propositions is presented in Table 3.5.

Figure 3.3 Proposed Conceptual Model

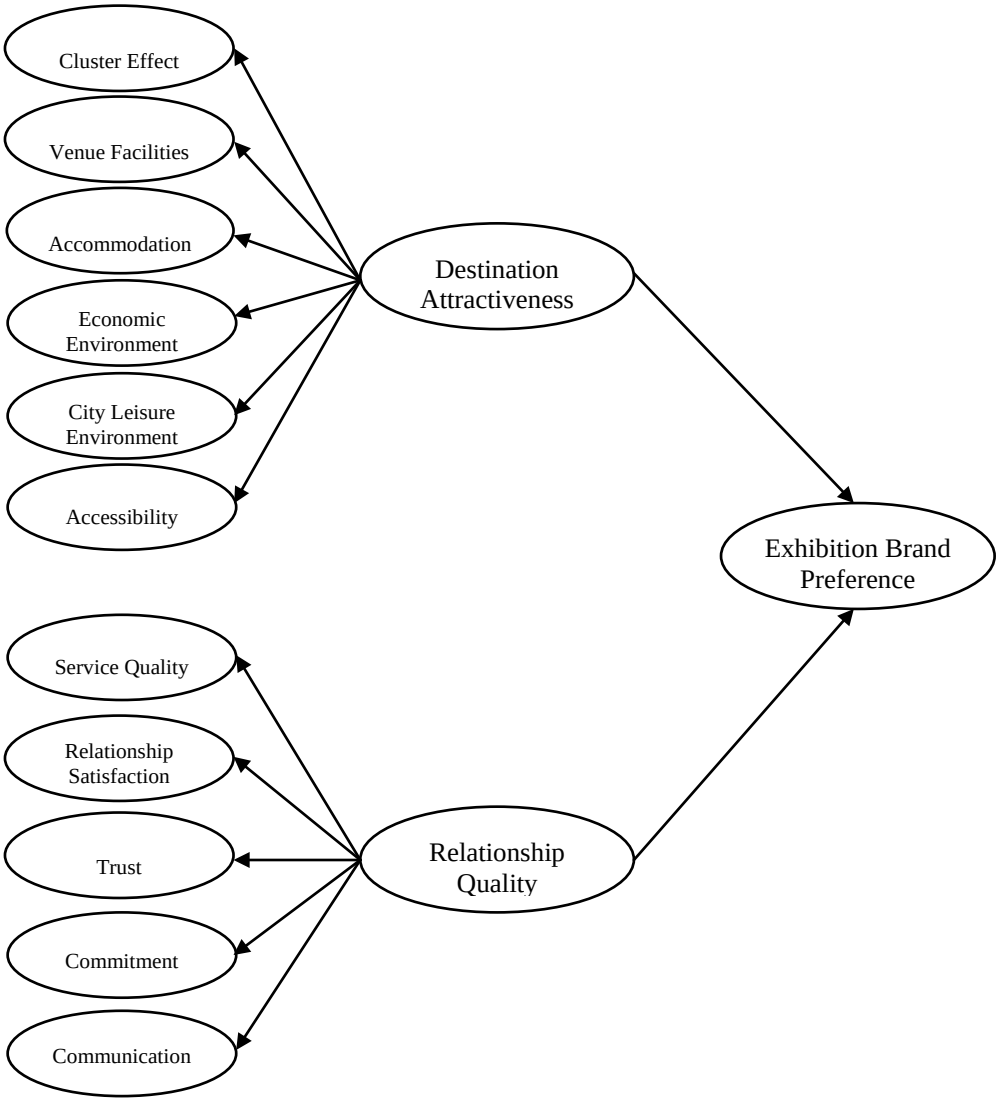


Table 3.5 Summary of Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Problem

Which, and to what extent, do relationship quality and destination attractiveness factors impact on exhibition brand preference?

Research issue 1 centers on the impact of relationship quality with organizers on exhibition brand preference.

Research Question 1:

1.1 What constitutes relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers?
1.2 Are there significant differences in relationship quality, depending on key characteristics of organizers and exhibitors?
1.3 To what extent does relationship quality with organizers exert an influence on exhibition brand preference of exhibitors?

$H1_a$: Exhibitors' relationship quality with organizers in the exhibition context is a second order construct composed of five factors: (1) trust, (2) commitment, (3) communication, (4) perceived service quality, and (5) relationship satisfaction.

$H1_b$: Relationship quality with organizers has a significant, positive effect on exhibitors' exhibition brand preference.

Proposition 1: Relationship quality with organizers differs, depending on key characteristics of organizers and exhibitors.

Research issue 2 centers on the impact of destination attractiveness on exhibition brand preference.

Research Question 2:

2.1 What constitutes destination attractiveness for an exhibition destination from the exhibitors' perspective?
2.2 What measures constitute 'clusters' in an exhibition context, and to what extent do 'clusters' contribute to destination attractiveness?
2.3 Do first and second-tier destinations perform differently with regard to destination attractiveness factors from the exhibitors' perspective?
2.4 To what extent does destination attractiveness exert an influence on exhibition brand preference of exhibitors?

$H2_a$: Destination attractiveness is a second order construct composed of six factors: 1) cluster effect, 2) venue facilities, 3) accommodation, 4) economic environment, 5) city leisure environment, and 6) accessibility.

$H2_b$: Destination attractiveness has a significant, positive effect on exhibitors' exhibition brand preference.

Proposition 2: Destination attractiveness may differ, depending on the characteristics of exhibitors and destinations.

3.6 Research Design

3.6.1 Mixed Strategy Design

This thesis utilizes both qualitative and quantitative approaches to develop and test a conceptual model which aims to establish determining factors for exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. The research design follows Miles and Huberman's (1994) guidelines on multiple approach design issues. By using both qualitative and quantitative methods, results obtained from the first method "inform the second's sampling, instrumentation" and can "expand the scope and breadth of the study by using different methods in different components" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.41). Qualitative data assist by aiding with conceptual development and instrumentation, and validate, interpret, clarify, and illustrate quantitative findings. The quantitative method is critical to find a representative sample, avoid elite bias, that is, talking only to high-status respondents (Sieber, 1973), and establish the generalizability of observations. It also enhances the reliability and validity of the measurement and structural model.

In summary, this thesis aims to draw on qualitative data to:

a) explore variables potentially relevant to exhibitors' perceptions of relationship quality with organizers and destination attractiveness, and their exhibition brand preference, especially for those for which no established measurements exist; and
b) provide an empirical grounding for the emergence of relations between variables which cannot readily be hypothesized based on extant exhibition and tourism literature

In contrast, the quantitative approach emphasizes standard measures, replicable findings, comparison to accepted good standards, minimization of bias, and successful prediction. Questions of magnitude, rate, incidence, or prevalence generally yield only to quantitative methods. They also enable the identification of factors that are effective but not consciously articulated during the qualitative research process (Fielding & Schreier, 2001). In summary, this thesis draws on quantitative data to:

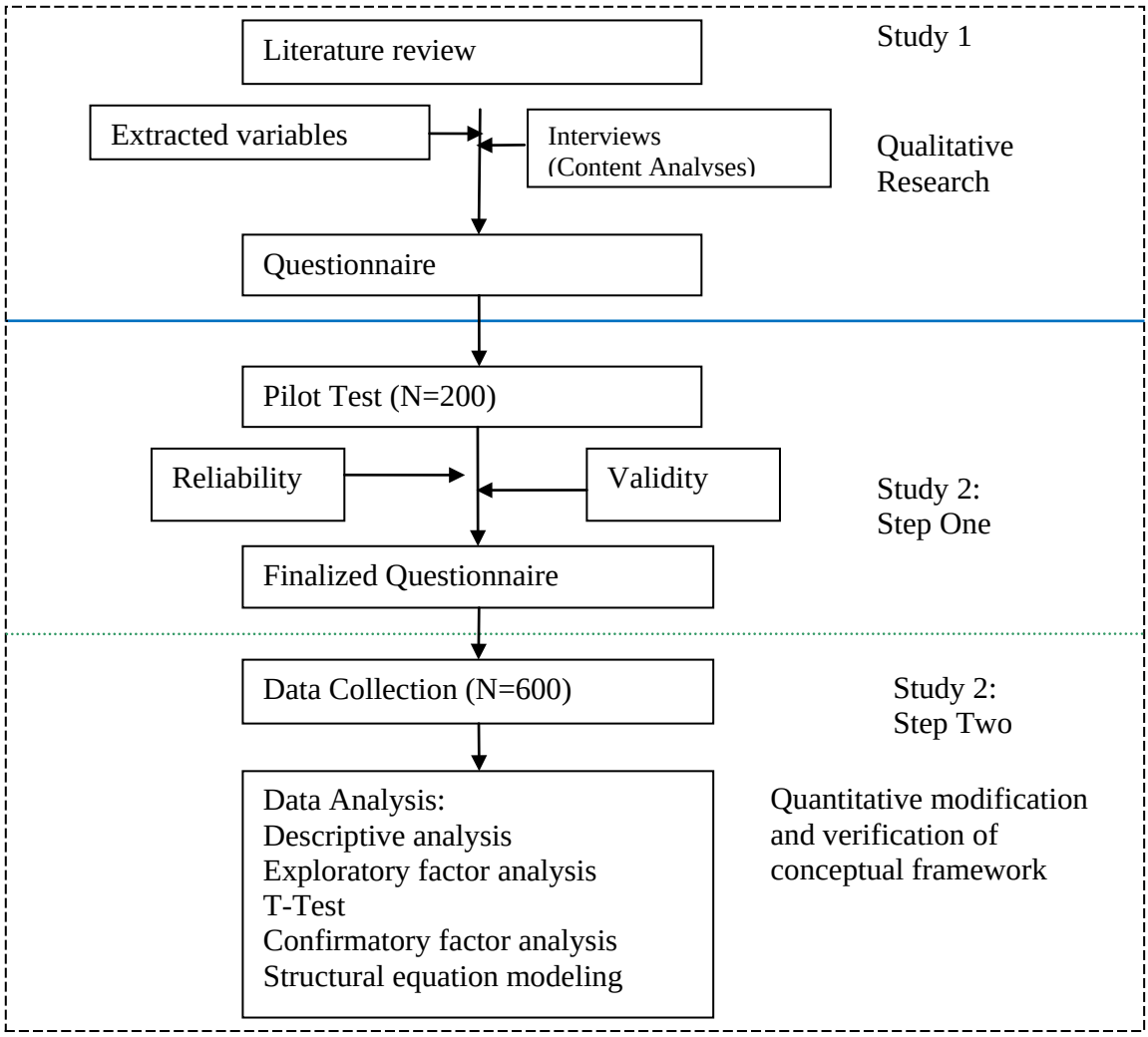
a) empirically verify theoretical relationships in larger samples;
b) develop logically internally consistent theories and models; and
c) offer evidence for the development of new theory (Wacker, 1998)

The qualitative data help identify 1) *which and why* relationship quality attributes affect exhibitors' preferences for exhibition brands, and 2) *which and why* destination attributes, including the impact of industrial clusters on destination attractiveness, affect exhibition brand preferences of exhibitors. The proposed quantitative data explain *to what extent* these proposed exogenous variables affect exhibitors' exhibition brand preferences. The quantitative findings are compared with the qualitative results to check if qualitative results support quantitative findings and vice versa. Thus, the qualitative research in this study does not only serve "to provide information for developing further quantitative research" (Lewis, Chambers & Chacko, 1995, p171, cited in Walle, 1997, p.524), but also serves to discover knowledge from different perspectives. Triangulation is adopted in this research, by combining two methods, to verify the validity and reliability of the findings via the two research approaches.

3.6.2 Research Stages

This research follows the sequence of literature review and interviews, pilot test and data analysis, and main survey and data analysis (See Figure 3.4). In the first stage, based on a thorough review of relevant literature and examination of the industry phenomenon, an interview guide with questions for exhibitors was developed. At the same time, a master list of measurements extracted from the literature was developed. Interviews were conducted with exhibitors. Based on the extracted measurements and the results of the interview data, an original questionnaire was developed in English. In the second stage, a pilot test and the main survey were conducted. Data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS. Exploration factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were conducted to establish the measurement model and model fit. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesized relationship of latent variables and the overall goodness of fit of the hypothesized model. Final quantitative results were compared with the qualitative interview results for cross-validation purposes. Figure 3.4 indicates the general research design of this thesis.

Figure 3.4 Research Design



3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the development of a model that tests the impact of relationship quality and destination attractiveness on exhibition brand preference of exhibitors, by drawing on theories from different fields – relationship marketing, destination attractiveness, and cluster theory. Relationship quality is operationalized as a higher-order construct that reflects variances in 1) trust, 2) commitment, 3) communication, 4) service quality, and 5) relationship satisfaction. Destination attractiveness is operationalized as a higher-order construct that reflects variances in 1) cluster effects, 2) venue facilities, 3) accommodation, 4) economic environment, 5) city leisure environment and 6) accessibility.

Research hypotheses and propositions are advanced. A mixed strategy combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches is adopted, and the rationale for research design is detailed.

Chapter 4 reports the methodology, findings, and discussion of Study 1 – the qualitative investigation on how exhibitors perceive and evaluate their relationship with organizers, and the attractiveness of destinations. It provides a deeper understanding of exhibitor-organizer relationships and destination attractiveness from the exhibitors' perspective, which supports the development of the quantitative research. Then, chapter 5 discusses the methodology and results of the pilot test and main survey.

CHAPTER 4 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH – IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

4.1 Chapter Introduction

By drawing on relationship quality, destination attractiveness and cluster theory, Chapter 3 presented the conceptual model of this research, which aimed to test the underlying dimensions of relationship quality and destination attractiveness, and their effects on exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. A mixed strategy approach, which incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods to test the model, was proposed, with the qualitative research aiming to 1) explore variables potentially relevant to exhibitors' perceptions, especially those for which no established measurements exist, and 2) to provide an empirical grounding for the relations between variables hypothesized in the conceptual model.

Chapter 4 reports the methodology, analyses and findings of Study 1 – the qualitative investigation on how exhibitors perceive and evaluate their relationship with organizers and the attractiveness of destinations. It commences with an account of the methodology, and then analyzes findings according to the constructs and dimensions delineated in the conceptual framework.

4.2 Methodology

Qualitative studies are especially appropriate in understanding the cognition, affect, and intentions from the participants' perspectives (Maxwell, 2005). A qualitative approach "satisfies the need to collect rich data and offer voice to the researched" (Tribe, 2010, p.8). In addition, a qualitative method has an inherent openness and flexibility that allows a researcher to modify the design and focus during the research to understand new discoveries and relationships (Maxwell, 2005). Apart from discovering the interviewee's own framework of meaning, Study 1 also aims to verify survey items generated from the literature. It will also develop measures for variables without existing measures for the subsequent quantitative research which will empirically test the model proposed in Figure 3.3. In this section, general considerations, the sample, instrument, procedures and data analysis methods are discussed.

4.2.1 General Considerations

This research employed an in-depth interview approach to conduct the qualitative research on exhibitors. Following an evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of the various qualitative methods, in-depth interviews were considered as most appropriate, based on a number of reasons. First, an in-depth interview is "one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory … for certain descriptive and analytic purposes, no instrument of inquiry is more revealing" (McCracken, 1988, p.9). It is also recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as a method ideally suited to clarifying concepts and their relationships. Second, an in-depth interview is less structured and less constrained in that the interviewer can briefly introduce his/her study topic, and further questions can be based on the response of the interviewee, mostly for clarification and probing for details (Britten, 1995). This reduces the degree of imposing the researcher's structures and assumptions on the interviewees. Furthermore, an in-depth interview is flexible in nature and can collect real, rich and deep data (Stainback & Stainback, 1988). Thus, as the qualitative approach of this thesis aimed to understand the perceptions of exhibitors toward their preferred exhibition brands, the in-depth interview method offered several advantages over alternatives, such as participant observation, analysis of documents and materials. Like individual interviews, focus groups also allow the researcher to gain access to a range of exhibitors, understand their perceptions, with the result of identifying issues, hypotheses, and measurements for the quantitative research. However, focus group method was regarded as inappropriate due to possible group effects (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 1995), and spatial and temporal constraints.

Within the range of in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, rather than entirely unstructured interviews, were carried out, because the focus of the investigation was clear, and with an interview guide, more specific issues could be addressed (Bryman, 2004). In the extant literature, no studies have employed in-depth interviews to explore exhibitors' perceptions of their relationships with organizers and destinations. Thus, Study 1 provides an in-depth insight into exhibitor-organizer relationships and destination attractiveness from the exhibitors' perspective.

4.2.2 Sample

The sample for this qualitative research consisted of international and domestic exhibitors participating in international exhibitions hosted in China. Visiting exhibitions and conducting face-to-face interviews with exhibitors was deemed as the most appropriate method to approach respondents. This was because: 1) face-to-face interviews stimulate respondents' feedback more than telephone/email interviews; and 2) respondents' perceptions could be analyzed and evaluated concurrently with the observations of the researcher regarding the sampled events. To ensure representativeness, sampled events with a diversity of operational and ownership patterns (e.g., government affiliations, private Chinese companies, joint ventures, international exhibition companies) were chosen, which might have varying impacts on perceived exhibition quality and management. To be able to draw on a diversity of data sources, four exhibitions hosted in two first-tier cities – Guangzhou and Beijing – were visited, from which respondents were selected and interviewed. The four exhibitions were selected based on timeline, characteristics of the operational parties (the organizers), location, scale of and access to the events. Themes of these exhibitions were not considered so that results can be generalized across exhibitions from a variety of industrial sectors.

Interviewees were selected based on Guba and Lincoln's (1989) maximum variation sampling approach. Initially, interviewees were selected based on their availability, their willingness to provide information, and individual characteristics and regions of origin (convenience sample). After preliminary analysis of data collected from the first exhibition, interviewees representing different characteristics of their affiliations (e.g., region of company origin, size of the company, company ownership, and times of participation) were selected. It is assumed that interviewees of different backgrounds could maximize differences of perceptions on the study variables. This procedure allowed demonstration and control of similarities and differences in interview outcomes and informant characteristics "in a way that is analogous to that in experimental and survey designs" (Spiggle, 1994, p.494).

Sample size was determined following the notion of theoretical saturation termed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) – a point in data collection at which information obtained tends to

be repetitive. Determining sample size required to reach saturation depends on a number of factors, including the scope of the study, the quality of the data, the nature of the topic, the amount of useful information obtained, and the qualitative method and study design used (Morse, 2000). If the study is relatively focused, the topic is clear and obvious, and the amount of useable data obtained from each interviewee is high, then fewer numbers of interviewees are needed. The number of participants in generic qualitative studies of all fields may vary contingent on the mode of the approach, ranging from 6 to 60 (Morse, 2000). The total number of interviewees for this study was 32; considering the scope and topic of the study, this number is considered appropriate. The profile of interviewees is presented in Table 4.2 in Section 4.3.

4.2.3 Instrument

An interview guide was developed prior to conducting interviews. The purpose was to provide focus and ensure that important areas were covered in the interview. Questions were developed according to the constructs discussed in the tourism, exhibition and relationship marketing literature, and were designed to examine the perceptions and experiences of informants. Relevant questions centered on the perceptions of: 1) operation of the exhibition, 2) organizer quality and relationship with organizers, and 3) destination attractiveness. Each section contained a series of general questions and potential probing questions to be used in exploring that issue. The guide was designed to be used flexibly (Brenner, 1985). When answers to any question became repetitive, no further questions were asked on the topic. However, further probing questions were supplemented from early interviews until all major aspects of relationship quality and destination attractiveness were covered. A copy of the interview guide is provided in Appendix A.

4.2.4 Procedures

Interviews were conducted at four international exhibitions staged from April to July 2009 in Guangzhou and Beijing. Access to the exhibitions was gained by contacting the organizers and obtaining registration as a visitor/interviewer. Table 4.1 presents the characteristics of the events where interviews were conducted. Certain information about the events, such as names, specific dates, and industry sectors, are disguised or omitted to ensure confidentiality requested by organizers.

Table 4.1 Sampled Events

Event	Organized by	Categorization of Exhibition	Number of Respondents
Event A	a quasi-governmental division	Multi-industry exhibitions	9
Event B	joint cooperation between a quasi-government division, industrial associations, and a Chinese private exhibition company	Specialized exhibitions	7
Event C	a Sino-foreign joint venture company – a merger between a private Chinese exhibition company and a famous international trade fair company	Specialized exhibitions	4
Event D	joint cooperation between a quasi-government division, industrial association and a famous foreign company	Specialized exhibitions	12

Notes: Event A, B, and C were held in Guangzhou in April, May and June 2009 respectively. Event D was held in Beijing in July 2009.

These events covered four different industry sectors and were organized by different types of exhibition companies: 1) quasi-governmental divisions; 2) Sino-Foreign joint venture companies – a merger between a private Chinese exhibition company and a well-known international exhibition company; 3) joint cooperation between quasi-government divisions, industrial associations and foreign companies; and 4) joint cooperation between quasi-government divisions, industrial associations and a Chinese private exhibition company. The four trade events had different orientations in terms of focus. One exhibition was mainly export-oriented; the other three exhibitions attracted more participation of international exhibiting companies. The four events were either hallmark events (Getz, 2005) or the primary events in their specific industry sectors.

At each of the selected exhibitions, interviews with exhibitors were conducted face-to-face. A single exhibiting firm was treated as a unit of analysis. The researcher approached the exhibiting booths and invited a senior exhibitor for the interview. In most instances, a senior manager or business owner/partner was approached; on limited occasions (4 out of 32 cases), senior sales representatives participated in the interview. Prior to the commencement of each interview, the objective of the study was explained and anonymity was assured. 14 interviews were conducted in English and 18 in Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese). All interviews were audio-recorded, subject to approval by interviewees. The average duration of interviews was about 20 minutes, ranging from 15 to 30 minutes. All

interviews were completed at the booths; they were labeled and transcribed verbatim in the original language used in the interviews. Key ideas and insights were summarized within a day, and full transcription of all interviews from one exhibition was finished within two weeks. Transcripts were used for content analysis.

4.2.5 Data Analyses

Miles and Huberman (1994) indicate that the analysis of qualitative data involves three aspects: data reduction, display and drawing conclusions. Data reduction allows for identification of categories, themes and concepts; data display assists in organising the categories and themes into some form of ideograph such as a typology, map, matrix or model; conclusions are drawn by constantly comparing data against other data. The aim is to generate themes and make inferences (Jennings, 2001).

Interview transcripts were analysed using the content analysis method. Content analysis is "any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1969, p.14). Berg (2001) identified five steps in analyzing qualitative data: 1) coding the data; 2) transforming codes into categories, labels or themes; 3) sorting data by categories and identifying similar phrases, patterns, relationships, commonalities or disparities; 4) examining sorted data to identify and isolate meaningful patterns and processes; and 5) comparing the identified patterns in the context of previous research and theories.

The analysis of the interview data in this research followed the steps recommended by Berg (2001). First, a code scheme was developed to guide the remainder of the process. Data were coded using the constructs proposed in the conceptual framework as main categories of the data. If any new categories emerged from the data, a new title was given to that category. Tabulations that listed all incidents that represented the construct across cases were created. Second, themes related to these constructs were identified. These themes were coded using statements that were similar to the measures in the literature for the main constructs. Third, similar words, phrases and relationships were identified and grouped under the same themes. Fourth, these similar phrases were compared and counted; the quotation that was the most comprehensive and clear in meaning was chosen as a

representative comment from respondents. Last, the themes were compared with the measures drawn from previous literature to verify the validity of the items to be used in the quantitative research in Study 2. Coded themes were used as measures in the quantitative research. In quoting the comments of the informants, each interviewee is identified by a unique number that corresponds to his/her key characteristics (See Table 4.2).

Constant comparative analysis (CCA) was used as a supporting tool for interview data analysis. CCA "involves taking one piece of data (one interview, one statement, one theme) and comparing it with all others that may be similar or different in order to develop conceptualizations of the possible relations between various pieces of data" (Thorne, 2000, p.69). CCA was achieved by data immersion with repetitive reading and re-reading of data, comparing each new interview with the previous one until all had been compared with each other, and then clustering data around key analytic categories according to the nature of the data and literature instruction.

4.3 Findings

4.3.1 Respondents' Profile

The sample profile of 32 interviewees is provided in Table 4.2. Interviewees represented a wide range of locations of company headquarters, regions of origin, and industry sectors. They had varying experiences in exhibition participation, ranging from novice to highly experienced. The interviewees were mainly company owners or sales managers, who were involved in the decision-making process of exhibition participation or evaluation. All except two interviewees were in their 30s and 40s. Almost all (90%) of them were male. This is consistent with the general business environment both in China and overseas where the vast majority of senior management positions are filled by men rather than women, for example, the percentage of female managers in the UK is about 24%, in China and Turkey about 8% (Davidson & Burke, 2004). Thus, these data are considered representative in gender. Informants represented different types of companies, such as private, state-owned, and joint ventures. In Event A, B and C, most of the interviewees represented small and medium-sized companies with an export orientation. In Event D, an import oriented exhibition, many companies were joint ventures with their headquarters located overseas, while their factories were in China.

Table 4.2 Interview Profile

ID	Gender	Age	Region of Origin[1]	Position	Times of Participation[2]	Company Size[3]	Company Ownership	Event[4]
1	Male	30s	Turkey	Sales Executive	9	Small	Private	Event A
2	Male	40s	India	Managing Partner	10	Small	Private	Event A
3	Male	40s	Turkey	Vice President	4	Small	Private	Event A
4	Male	40s	India	Business Owner	6	Small	Private	Event A
5	Male	30s	Brazil	China Market Representative	7	Medium	Private	Event A
6	Male	40s	China (Shandong)	Executive Director	20	Large	State-Owned	Event A
7	Female	40s	China (Guangdong)	Sales Representative	10	Large	Private	Event A
8	Male	40s	China (Guangdong)	General Manager	20	large	Private	Event A
9	Female	20s	China (Beijing)	Sales Representative	8	Medium	Private	Event A
10	Male	30s	Italy	Manager	6	Large	n/a	Event B
11	Male	40s	China (Shandong)	Sales Manager	9	Large	Private	Event B
12	Male	30s	China (Jiangsu)	Sales Manager	4	Large	Private	Event B
13	Male	30s	China (Shandong)	Sales Manager	1	Medium	Private	Event B
14	Male	40s	UK	Sales Manager	8	n/a	n/a	Event B
15	Male	40s	Italy	Sales Manager	6	n/a	n/a	Event B
16	Male	50s	Germany	Sales Manager	6	n/a	n/a	Event B
17	Male	40s	China (Guangdong)	Business Owner	1	Large	Private	Event C

Note: [1]: Words in parenthesis are provinces of China.[2] Some of the informants visited the fair as visitors before they decided to exhibit; thus, time of participation in this exhibition is included instead of times of exhibiting. [3]: Small companies are companies that have less than 100 employees, medium-sized companies have 100-300 employees, and large companies have more than 300 employees. [4]: Event A is held twice per annum, the rest once per annum.

Table 4.2 Interviewee Profile (Continued)

ID	Gender	Age	Region of Origin[1]	Position	Times of Participation[2]	Company Size[3]	Company Ownership	Event
18	Male	40s	China (Taiwan)	Business Owner	6	Large	Private	Event C
19	Male	30s	China (Jiangsu)	Business Owner	10	Large	Private	Event C
20	Male	30s	China (Guangdong)	Sales Manager	4	Large	Private	Event C
21	Male	30s	Denmark	Sales Manager	2	Large	Sino-Foreign Joint Venture	Event D
22	Male	50s	China (Anhui)	Sales Manager	6	Large	State-Owned	Event D
23	Male	30s	Germany	Sales Manager	3	Large	Sino-Foreign Joint Venture	Event D
24	Male	30s	Germany	Sales Manager	1	Large	International company	Event D
25	Female	30s	China (Guangdong)	Sales Representative	4	Large	Sino-Foreign Joint Venture	Event D
26	Male	20s	Austria	Sales Representative	2	Large	n/a	Event D
27	Male	40s	China (Shanghai)	Senior Manager	8	Large	Sino-Foreign Joint Venture	Event D
28	Male	30s	China (Beijing)	Senior Manager	4	Medium	Private	Event D
29	Male	30s	Austria	Senior Manager	5	Medium	Private	Event D
30	Male	30s	China (Liaoning)	Senior Manager	3	Medium	private	Event D
31	Male	30s	China (Beijing)	Senior Manager	5	Large	Sino-Foreign Joint Venture	Event D
32	Male	30s	China (Shanghai)	Senior Manager	5	Large	Sino-Foreign Joint Venture	Event D

Note: [1]: Words in parenthesis are provinces of China.[2] Some of the informants visited the fair as visitors before they decided to exhibit; thus, time of participation in this exhibition is included instead of times of exhibiting. [3]: Small companies are companies that have less than 100 employees, medium-sized companies have 100-300 employees, and large companies have more than 300 employees. [4]: Event A is held twice per annum, the rest once per annum.

4.3.2 Relationship Quality with Organizers

Table 4.3 presents the categories (constructs), sub-categories, sub-themes/continuum, and illustrative comments, derived from the data analyses. A total of seven categories emerged from the data. Five of the categories – communication, trust, commitment, service quality, and relationship satisfaction – could be identified by extant relationship marketing literature, but two unique categories – nature of the relationship and knowledge of the organizer – emerged from the interviews. Attributes of these constructs were explored along continua or sub-dimensions. These attributes resemble or vary in the data across the incidents depicting the construct. By exploring similarities and variations across incidents, the conceptual meaning of the construct represented was clarified and enriched. Furthermore, relationships among constructs were explored by identifying their dimensions and variations (Spiggle, 1994).

4.3.2.1 Knowledge of the Organizer

Knowledge of the organizer emerged from data as a new category. This is presented and analyzed along a continuum. Knowledge of the event organizer varied from ‘knowing little’ to ‘knowing a lot’. Informants’ knowledge had consequent impacts on their perceptions of trust, commitment and satisfaction with organizers.

Many exhibitors admitted that they paid little attention to brand name, reputation and financial strength of the organizer. Approximately two-thirds of international informants stated that they only knew their immediate agents, with whom they came to exhibit in China, and that they did not have sources to learn about the Chinese organizer. These informants were either business owners/senior managers who were new to the exhibition and joined the international pavilion, or sales representatives who exhibited onsite but had no direct contacts with the main organizer. Lack of knowledge of and direct contact with the main organizer might result in poor communication and problems.

All sampled exhibitions were organized by an exhibition company/government affiliation with the support of several entities. Exhibitors were recruited via a number of intermediaries (channels). Those who exhibited onsite might not have had direct contacts

with the main organizer, however, their consideration of the exhibition and organizer performance would almost certainly affect the future attendance of their company, as they were persons who evaluated the effect of the exhibition for future attending decisions.

Approximately a quarter of interviewees felt that there was no need for them to learn about the organizer because they never evaluated their work. They simply evaluated the effect of the exhibition on their own businesses. These informants were mainly new exhibitors in their specific events and had a strong sales orientation in terms of exhibiting objectives and evaluation. For example, Respondent 17 (male, 40s, from Guangdong, China, first-time exhibitor, Event C), questioned “Is there a need to learn about the exhibition company? I only need to look at the effect of the trade fair and the word-of-mouth”, adding, “we definitely will be a loyal customer as long as the organizer guarantees there would be so many visitors at future fairs.”

In contrast, approximately one-third of all respondents knew organizers relatively well, checked the brand name, history and record of the main organizer, and gained knowledge of the organizing companies via their employees, their own research, word-of-mouth, and organizer service. These interviewees were mainly repeat exhibitors from medium-sized and large enterprises. Chinese interviewees outnumbered international ones in this group. Their exhibiting objectives went beyond sales and focused more on information-exchange and networking activities.

Table 4.3 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Relationship Quality

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/ Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Knowledge about organizer		I don't know the organizer	6	I don't really know the organizers. Is there a need to learn the exhibition company? I only need to look at the effect of the trade fair and the word-of-mouth. (No 17, 40s, from Guangdong, China, Event C)
		We only know our immediate agent	7	We came with a Turkish organizing company. If we have any problems, we contact them, not directly with the Chinese organizers. We are satisfied with the Turkish company, but we don't know the Chinese organizer. We don't have sources to learn the reputation of the organizer. We never think about the financial strength of the organizer. (No 3, 40s, from Turkey, Event A)
		We know the organizer	12	We checked the records of various companies who are organizing and related to this exhibition. (No 14, 40s, from UK, Event B)
Nature of Relationship		There is no business relationship, only commercial transaction	6	We do not think that there is any business to business relationship [between the exhibition company and our company]. As long as the price is acceptable, and we can achieve our exhibiting objectives, we will come. (No 13, 30s, from Shandong, China, Event B)
		Business relationship does not exist due to seller's market	4	We should be their customers. But it is a seller's market: The organizer decided everything. It is not our decision on related arrangements, so the relationship does not exist. All popular trade fairs are like this. At less popular fairs, there is such a business customer relationship. (No 7, female, 40s, from Guangdong, China, Event A)
		Organizers take care of us in the relationship	5	With organizers we have a relation. They take care of us. But this relation is not like our relation with our clients (buyers). (No 2, 30s, from India, Event A)

Table 4.3 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Relationship Quality (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/ Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Nature of Relationship		Our relation with the organizer is a partnership	3	I feel the relationship with the organizer is a partnership. Because it is based on cooperation and mutual interdependence. (No 27, 40s, from Shanghai, China, Event D)
Communication	Communication frequency	Organizers regularly inform exhibitors	9	The organizer release information on their website. They renew it quite often. Besides, they give us a newsletter at least once every month. (No 21, 30s, from Denmark, Event D)
		Organizers do not regular inform exhibitors	5	We feel what the organizers do is simply giving us a space in a venue. They contacted us frequently, about one phone call every two days, when we were about to decide to exhibit, and gave promises, but no communication afterwards. It seems that there is nothing else they do after we decided to exhibit. (No 32, 30s, from Shanghai, China, Event D)
	Quality		3	When we arrived, we learnt that our booth was replaced in hall 9. Before we came here, we had informed all our clients that we would be in hall 5 and some customers could not find us. This is such a huge venue and it took some clients a whole day to find us here. We came with a Turkish organizer company. They say that they did not know this [replace of booth] in advance. I don't know if it is true or not. (No 3, 40s, from Turkey, Event A)
	Impact		3	We communicate often with the organizers, especially our industrial association. We let them know what's going on in the industry, our preference in booth arrangement, etc. I think the organizers will do better if they know the needs of the enterprises. (No 30, 30s, from Liaoning, China, Event D)
Trust	Organizer competence	The quality of this exhibition has been high	25	This fair is the most important fair for our company in Asia. During the past few years we got good results from this exhibition, so we participate year by year, like this. (No 10, 40s, Italy, Event B)

Table 4.3 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Relationship Quality (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/ Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Trust		The organizer is capable of providing quality exhibitions	11	The fair should be good as the organizer is the world's largest exhibition company. (No 18, 40s, from Taiwan, China, Event C)
			3	This exhibition is organized by the government, not by private companies. We trust the Chinese government. (No 2, 40s, from India, Event A)
	Organizer integrity	Trust the information organizers provide	10	We are a member of the industrial association, which is one of the organizers of this fair. We know them very well. Sometimes they gave out information and we trust them. (No 27, 40s, from Shanghai, China, Event D)
		Organizer keeps promises	3	Of course I expect every promises given must be realized. (No 1, 30s, Turkish, Event A)
	Organizer reliability at the interpersonal level		3	It is not that we exhibitors fill in a form, apply for a booth and we are here. I think it is more like a bit trust in the organizer here… we can rely on the organizer, for example, our contact is very friendly and helpful. (No 5, 30s, from Brazil, Event A)
Affective Commitment	Positive feeling of the organizer/exhibition		7	When we contact our customers, they are all very well informed about this fair, and we consider the organization positively for this one. (No 15, 40s, Italy, Event B)
			2	It is like a prestige to be here and to meet with the customers. (No 4, 30s, from Brazil, Event A)

Table 4.3 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Relationship Quality (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/ Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Affective Commitment	Relationship Building	There is mutual benefit in the relationship	5	We exhibitors come here to do business. If the organizers deliver business, we will come. If it is a good show, we not only do business, we also learn where the industry is heading, the potential of the industry, market development and trend. So we do business and learn about the industry. The organizers get profits and become more and more famous. We benefit each other. (No 27, 40s, from Shanghai, China, Event D)
			5	We are committed to the exhibition as it is a good opportunity for us to break into a market we want to enter. (No 21, 30s, male, from Denmark, Event D)
		Maintaining a long-term relationship is important to exhibitors	9	This fair is vital to our business as a marketing platform. It is a well-known brand and has great impacts on trade. Our first orders with many clients were generated here. We will participate even if this year's performance is not good due to the current economic crisis, since, on the long run, it is unwise behavior to simply give up the platform because of a little frustration. (No 6, 40s, from Shandong, China, Event A)
		Exhibitors are not sure if they can develop a long-term relationship	3	The first few sessions are like gambling. You don't know if you can get return on investment before the end of the show. To be here is better than not to be. It takes time to find out. (No1, 30s, Turkish, Event A)
			5	We definitely will be a loyal customer as long as the organizers guarantee there would be so many visitors on future fairs. (No 17, 40s, from Guangdong, China, Event C)
		Exhibitors are not committed to a long-term relationship	1	We participated in most of the trade fairs in our sector, Berlin, Frankfurt, here, but we are not committed to any of them. If we go, we go. That's all. (No 2, 40s, from India, Event A)

Table 4.3 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Relationship Quality (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/ Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Calculative Commitment	Economic Consideration	Exhibiting pays off economically	10	We will not suffer economically if we do not come. We are here to promote business. We need to open up new markets. If we don't exhibit, business is the same. But if we exhibit, the chances are that we may be better. (No 2, male 30s, from India, Event A)
		There might be (potential) sacrifice if a relationship ends	6	We, in this industrial sector, have to come to this trade fair. If we do not come, there is no current economic loss, but there will be in the future. Future sales will be affected. (No 7, female, 40s, Guangdong, China, Event A) Surely there will be economic loss. Why? Because if we do not come, we might lose some opportunities. As long as we are here, we have opportunities. It is just that how big the opportunities are. (No22, male, 50s,. from Anhui, China, Event D)
		Difficult to break relationship with organizers	2	There is still guanxi (inter-personal relationship) in the planned economy style in this fair management. We need to find guanxi to come in and keep this guanxi so that we have this good booth location. It is not that you can have this location by paying more money; you must have guanxi for it. We are able to have our booth located here after keeping the guanxi for several years. (No 8, male, 40s, Guangdong, China, Event A) Every year we go to Germany to exhibit, because we must queue in [for space], If we do not attend continuously, we would be re-grouped. If we do not want to go this year, we would have to seriously consider that. If we decided not to go, we must be prepared that we would not go for a period of time. It is not that we could go whenever we want to go or otherwise. (No 8, male, 40s, Guangdong, China, Event A)

Table 4.3 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Relationship Quality (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/ Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Calculative Commitment	Absence of competitive offerings		3	We used to exhibit in another fair as well, but after six-seven times, it disappeared. And another reason for us to come back to this fair is we know it has more customers, suppliers than other fairs. (No 20, 30s, from Guangdong, China, Event C)
	Inertia to change		4	Compared to last year, this year we have only about half of the number of visitors. But this is not that the organizer did not do a good job. It is because of the economic recession. We will come back next year even if the economic recession continues. Chinese Farmers have a saying: We must plant annually even if there is no harvest. Anyway, this annual event is just like a routine. (No 11, male, 40s, from Shandong, China, Event B)
Service quality	Organizers attract right type of buyers		20	The most important thing is the quality of the incoming buyers, buyers who are related to my line, my production, my sector. It is very buyer-specific. All the rest are secondary. (No 4, 40s, from India, Event A)
	Organizer understands exhibiting objectives		2	I feel they [as organizers] really know our exhibiting needs. They organize the fair from our perspective and help us do business. (No 27, male, from Shanghai, China, Event D)
	Organizers respond to problems		3	If you have any problems, they solve immediately and respond to you rapidly. This makes me trust the organizers. This organizer is good in responding to problems. (No 3, 40s, from Turkey, Event A)

Table 4.3 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Relationship Quality (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/ Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Service quality	Welfare	Organizers do not care about our welfare	3	The organizer does a very poor job in security. Many visitors are not here to visit. They are here to copy. This is the least we exhibitors want to see. The organizers did little to screen out visitors. You see, visitors are taking photos of the booths and securities do not stop them. Even children are allowed in. Nonetheless, this exhibition is much better than the one in X town. That one was purely for political achievement and was fully corrupted. It was very fake and hypocrite; never took our interest into consideration. (No 17, 40s, from Guangdong, China, Event C)
	On-site Service	On-site services do not meet expectations	4	This fair is the best in our sector in terms of potential and customer. But every year we have some problems. Maybe because we are the competitors of China, so every year they are moving us from one hall to another hall. Maybe next year, there won't be an international pavilion, I don't know. In this case, I think fairs in Germany will be more popular. If they don't let international companies come here, they will all go to Germany, which is increasing in figures. (No 3, 40s, from Turkey, Event A)
		Service quality is not satisfactory	5	All the organizer wants is to make money. This organizer does not have quality service. (No 18, 40s, male, from Taiwan, China, Event C)
		Service quality is satisfactory	7	Services are good. Everything works. So I have nothing bad to say. (No 21, male, 30s, from Denmark, Event D)

Table 4.3 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Relationship Quality (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/ Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Service quality		Service quality might affect future attendance	4	We will buy this fair as long as we are satisfied. If one day the fair quality or the service quality decline we may consider other trade fairs. We also need to consider the effect, services and other aspects. (No 26, female, 30s, from Guangdong, China, Event D)
		Service quality might not affect future attendance	6	Relationship quality will not affect our trade show attendance. It is totally dependent upon if the trade fair can bring us economic benefits. (No 7, female, 40s, from Guangdong, China, Event A)
Relationship Satisfaction		We are satisfied with the relationship	4	I think our relationship with the organizer is great, because one of the contacts from the organization is a wonderful person, helpful and makes us happy as I know I can trust the organization's personnel. (No 5, male, 30s, from Brazil, Event A)
		We are not satisfied with the relationship	1	We are not satisfied with the organizer. The services of the organizer are very poor. We have to continue to exhibit here because this is the largest exhibition in Asia in our field. (No 18, 40s, male, from Taiwan, China, Event C)
			2	The organizer should consider how they can enable effective communication between enterprises as this is the ultimate goal of a trade fair. But look at this trade fair, many of the details are not paid attention to. Securities here don't even prohibit photo-taking. It turns the trade fair to money-making for the organizer. (No 20, male, 30s, from Guangdong, China, Event C)

4.3.2.2 Nature of the Relationship

The nature of the relationship also emerged from data as a new category. Perceptions of the relationship with organizers differed significantly, ranging from 'having no relationship' to 'having a partnership'. These perceptions had consequent impacts on interviewees' perceptions of trust, commitment, and satisfaction with organizers.

Two main groups emerged. One group (approximately 40%) rejected the existence of any relationship while the other group (approximately 60%) used varying terms to conceptualize their understanding of a relationship between organizers and their company. Among the first group, several respondents simply rejected the term 'relationship'. To them, a relationship could only be used to denote inter-human relations, not inter-company relations. Most of the informants in this group regarded their relationships with organizers as one-off commercial transactions. For example, one respondent stated,

> *We do not think that there is any business-to-business relationship. As long as the price is acceptable, and we can achieve our exhibiting objectives, we will come (Respondent 13, 30s, from Shandong, China, Event B).*

The respondent also admitted that his company participated in the exhibition for the first time and that potential economic benefits of the exhibition promoted them to exhibit:

> *Although we hadn't exhibited in the past, we visited the exhibition several times. We see that other companies can achieve good exhibiting results and we decided to come.*

Among the same group who rejected a business-to-business relationship with organizers, some interviewees reasoned that such a relationship did not exist due to the seller's market. This was evidenced in premier exhibitions where organizers possessed dominant power in exhibition arrangements. At this kind of exhibition, it was difficult for exhibiting firms, especially small and medium-sized enterprises regardless of industrial sectors, to obtain desirable space and location. These respondents might have exhibited in

the specific exhibitions for years. They appreciated the economic benefits of these events, but were not very happy with their operational models of and services of the organizers.

Among the group that acknowledged a relationship with organizers, some international respondents, who represented private, small businesses, used terms such as 'host versus guest', 'parent versus children' to conceptualize their relationship. They stressed that the organizers should take care of their needs in all ways, from admission, exhibiting effects, to accommodation in the host city. A Chinese interviewee termed the relationship with organizers as guidance and being guided. He stated,

> *We've been to some overseas exhibitions. With them, it was simply business. They gave us a booth. They would not give guidance in terms of enterprise development. Here with this exhibition, organizers gave such guidance. Now export is in recession, so the organizers invited domestic buyers to encourage and stimulate domestic sales (Respondent 6, 40s, from Shandong, China, Event A).*

Only around 10% of respondents, mostly Chinese exhibitors from Event D, conceptualized the relationship as a 'partnership' which was based on cooperation and mutual interdependence. They stated a clear information-searching and network building orientation in their exhibiting objectives. A senior manager from Shanghai remarked,

> *I feel the relationship with the organizer is a partnership, because it is based on cooperation and mutual interdependence. It is not that one is the monopoly and the other is monopolized, or one depends on the other. Without exhibitors, organizers could not sustain. Exhibiting companies decide to exhibit or not based on their short and long-term marketing strategies…. Now enterprises do not come to demonstrate their products, like they did in the past. Now enterprises come to trade shows to collect information, such as customer feedback, complaints, and potential problems and opportunities in the market. Without such an event, enterprises could not come together and share information. (No 27, late 40s, from Shanghai, China, Event D)*

Exhibitors who acknowledged a kind of partnership with the exhibition or organizer were more willing to pay a premium price, and had confidence in the exhibition even at a

time of economic recession. The following two statements represented exhibitors' attitudes toward the exhibitions:

> *This year the economic situation is a problem. We still don't acknowledge that it starts to shrink, plus we have swine flu… European companies have to pay five times more than Chinese companies to exhibit. Our argument for that is stronger this year. We said if the price would not be reduced we would leave. They don't believe us, but saying that, we have booked next year already. I booked yesterday for next year's show. That shows our confidence in the show. We are looking for value, the value-price power relationship. We can improvise price to gain for value (Respondent 14, 40s, from UK, Event B).*

> *As long as the exhibition has a good international reputation, we will participate, because we see congruence of the exhibition brand with our own brand building. If we don't go, there might be suspicion that we are not as competitive in the market. People would say 'why aren't you there at such an important event?' That's our concern…. We are not concerned with the current economic recession. No, we aren't concerned that the exhibition will shrink and we cannot achieve our exhibiting goals. Like I said, we are not here for orders. We value participation (Respondent 22, 50s, from Anhui, China, Event D).*

In summary, informants conceptualize the relationship with organizers differently, based on their individual experiences and cognition. It appears that organizers have not established the concept of partnership in the minds of many of their clients. Respondents' varying perceptions of relationship with organizers had an influence on their perceptions of communication, trust, commitment and satisfaction. This will be explored next.

4.3.2.3 Communication

Interview data revealed some main information sources for exhibitors to learn about an exhibition: organizers' direct marketing, word-of-mouth, exhibition websites, and advertisement/reports in trade journals and news. Among these information sources, organizers' direct marketing and organizer/exhibition websites are the two main ways to

disseminate exhibition information and communicate with exhibitors. Organizers' direct marketing methods include direct mail, email, phone calls, or business visits from both the main organizer (the exhibition company) and their organizing partners, such as industry associations, agents, and foreign chambers of commerce.

All exhibitions where interviews took place had developed dedicated websites for their events. On the website all key information of the event could be easily found, such as fair information, concurrent conference information, information for exhibitors, information for press, and travel service information. Details of exhibition information usually included facts and figures of the exhibition, dates and opening hours, location and exhibition venue, post show report, admission, exhibit profile, visitor profile, exhibitor list, market information, organizers, sales representatives, and e-newsletters. Exhibition information released via websites have become a key communication method for organizers to reach out to exhibitors. The objective of the development of the specific website is twofold: 1) release information about the exhibition, and 2) make it an information platform for the whole industry (Stoeck & Schraudy, 2005). All news about the industry throughout the value chain can be found on the website.

However, interview data found that few exhibitors used website information for their perusal and organizers' direct communication with exhibitors was perceived as unsatisfactory by approximately one third of interviewees.

When asked where they learnt the detailed information about the exhibition, about half of the respondents acknowledged the function of portal websites. International exhibitors were more likely to check websites of the exhibitions. For example, one respondent said,

> *We check the website. They have a special part for suppliers. We search the website and check the company's situation (No 5, 30s, from Brazil, Event A).*

Good communication, especially personal communication throughout the pre-show, onsite and post-show process, is inextricably connected with relationship satisfaction. One respondent especially praised his contact in the exhibition company:

I think [our relationship with organizers] is great, 'cause one of the contacts from the organization is a wonderful person, friendly, helpful, makes us happy as I know I can trust the organization's personnel. She regularly contacted us, informing all key information and important arrangements. She helped unpack the booth. She is helping us inside the fair and also outside (No 5, 30s, from Brazil, Event A).

Yet, more than a quarter of informants complained that organizers communicated with them only for the purpose of persuading them to exhibit and were reluctant to provide new information after they submitted their subscription for a booth. One respondent reported:

We feel what the organizers do is simply giving us a space in a venue. They contacted us frequently, about one phone call every two days, when we were about to decide to exhibit, and gave promises, but no communication afterwards. It seems that there is nothing else they do after we decided to exhibit (No 32, 30s, from Shanghai, China, Event D).

Similarly, a company owner from Turkey reported that organizers failed to inform him of important changes which resulted in considerable problems. This incident revealed a lack of communication among organizer, agents and exhibitors:

When we arrived, we learnt that our booth was relocated to hall 9. Before we came here, we had informed all our clients that we would be in hall 5 and some customers could not find us. This is such a huge venue and it took some clients a whole day to find us here. We came with a Turkish organizer company. They say that they did not know this [relocation of the booth] in advance. I don't know if it is true or not (No 3, 40s, from Turkey, Event A).

One senior manager from Taiwan remarked:

Organizers should at least come to us exhibitors and ask, "Oh, what are the services you are happy with and where are the problems?" This organizer never had. They

collected only a questionnaire. In contrast, a similar event in Hong Kong sent employees to invite feedbacks from us every year. This is where the differences are (No 18, 40s, from Taiwan, China, Event C).

Interviewees also referred to communication with their specific industry associations, as in all the sampled exhibitions, industry associations played important supporting roles. A manager from Shanghai added the following point:

If organizers can work together with the industry associations to understand enterprises, especially to understand enterprises' needs, objectives and industrial cycle, then they can organize and implement the show better, for example, times of the show, dates, etc. since every industry has a timing for marketing (No 27, 40s, from Shanghai, China, Event D).

It is difficult to identify relationships between communication patterns with company profiles. However, it is evident that communication with exhibitors had an impact on exhibitors' perception of relationship quality with organizers. Poor communication resulted in a poor perception of relationship quality in terms of trust, commitment and satisfaction. In contrast, good and frequent communications appeared to lead to customer commitment and satisfaction.

4.3.2.4 Trust

Findings indicate that almost all respondents demonstrated a certain level of trust in the events and the organizers. Aspects that contribute to trust were explored and presented along sub-dimensions in Table 4.3. These dimensions include trust in the organizer in general, organizer competence and integrity, and trust in the employees of the organizer.

The reason respondents trusted the sampled exhibitions and organizers might be because all sampled exhibitions were primary events for their respective industry sectors. Respondents knew the quality of the exhibition had been consistently high based on knowledge of the exhibitions (exhibition history, reputation, scale, number and quality of

buyers), their past participation, past visitation, and word-of-mouth. One respondent from Italy remarked:

> *This fair is the most important fair for our company in Asia. During the past few years we got good results from this exhibition, so we participate year by year, like this (No 10, 40s, Italy, Event B).*

Another respondent from Guangdong, China, said:

> *We have observed the trade show for a few years before we decided to exhibit. We found that there had been more international visitors year by year. We exhibit because of this. If there were only domestic visitors, we would not exhibit (No17, male, 40s, Guangdong China, Event C).*

Organizers' reputation either as a world-renowned exhibition company or an impressive government affiliation influenced exhibitors' perception of organizers' competence to host an effective exhibition for the industry. Some international respondents from developing countries claimed that they trusted the exhibitions because they trusted the Chinese government who organized the events.

Organizer integrity had an impact on trust and confidence in an exhibition. Whether or not the organizers understand exhibitors' exhibiting objectives and care about their interests, whether the organization had standardized services, whether they kept promises and provided trustworthy information, made a difference on trust and willingness to exhibit from the exhibitors' perspective. One respondent described a local exhibition in X town which was hosted to meet political objectives of the town government rather than to help with market promotion of the exhibitors. Another respondent compared the exhibition in X town with the exhibition where the interviews took place:

> *The exhibition in X town was hosted to meet the political ambition of the town officials. It was not intended to help enterprises. It was very false, very corrupt. For example, when the exhibition finished, we were all asked to fill in a form to report turnover. The bigger the number we filled in, the better. Thus, the show ended. But,*

was the show able to help the enterprise? No. In order to obtain larger visitor numbers, they organized day trips from nearby towns, and even got old ladies and children to see the show. In contrast, this show was much better (No 17, 40s, from Guangdong, China, Event C).

Well [local governments] forced enterprises to participate. This is a common phenomenon. That will not happen in this show, because this place is not under the direct jurisdiction where enterprises are located (No 20, 30s, from Guangdong, China, Event C).

In addition, respondents acknowledged their trust of the exhibition/organizer originated from industry associations in which they held memberships. Except Event A, which was organized by a national level quasi-government affiliation, Event B, C, and D had industry associations as event organizing partners. It is evident that the industry associations played a role in exhibition organization in activities such as contacting exhibiting firms, inviting keynote speakers, disseminating show information, and designing show themes. They served as a third party endorsement to exhibitor recruitment and guarantee the event quality. It should be noted that the quasi-government affiliations and the industry associations who organized the sampled exhibitions were all national level entities. Such sentiments are best reflected by a remark from an interviewee from Shanghai:

We are a member of the industry association, which is one of the organizers of this fair. We know them very well. Sometimes they gave out information and we trust them (No 27, 40s, from Shanghai, China, Event D).

4.3.2.5 Commitment

Respondents were asked if and why they were committed to the exhibition and the organizer. Their answers revealed variously defined commitment found in the literature, for instance, a desire to maintain a long-term relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), the sacrifice or potential for sacrifice if a relationship ends (Anderson & Weitz, 1992), and the absence of competitive offerings (Gundlach, Achrol, & Mentzer 1995). Respondents' comments were categorized under two constructs – affective and calculative commitment. According

to Gustafsson, Johnson, and Roos (2005), the former relates to more emotional factors that develop through the degree of reciprocity or personal involvement that a customer has with a company, while the latter is a more rational, economic-based dependence on product benefits due to a lack of choice or switching costs (Anderson & Weitz, 1992). Sub-dimensions of affective and calculative commitment are explored and presented in Table 4.3. Within each dimension, contrasting views, if there are any, are presented and compared.

The interview data provided evidence that affective commitment developed through reciprocity and personal involvement. More than a quarter of respondents praised organizers for their marketing efforts to attract the largest possible number of quality buyers so that exhibitors could gain substantial returns on exhibiting investment. Several respondents emphasized that they saw the reciprocity of the relationship, regarded the exhibition as a gala ceremony of the industry, and took pleasure in participating. For example, an interviewee from Denmark remarked,

> *This exhibition is a famous brand in our sector. It's like a grand gathering of the whole industry here in China. We really take pleasure to come and communicate with fellow suppliers and buyers. (No 21, male, 30s, from Denmark, Event D)*

Several informants had exhibited/participated in the exhibition a number of times and felt happy with the outcome of the exhibition and services provided by the organizers. They affirmed that maintaining a long-term relationship was important to them, and thus, would make an effort to nurture the relationship. For example, they declared that they would support the organizer in times of economic recession, providing ardent patronage to their organized activities. The following comments are indicative of their sentiments:

> *This fair is vital to our business as a marketing platform. It is a well-known brand and has great impacts on trade. Our first orders with many clients were generated here. We will participate even if this year's performance is not good due to the current economic crisis, since, in the long run, it is unwise behaviour to simply give up the platform because of a little frustration (No 6, male, 40s, from Shandong, China, Event A)*

If this exhibition were domestic and local, we would not attend. Even if we attend [a domestic and local show], we go for obligatory reasons. This exhibition is well-known, international and specialized. We are sure to come to promote our company. We must show our company in such an arena. If we do not come, it means we are not active in the market… we pay little attention to the possible impact of the financial crisis on this exhibition, because we focus on participation, not immediate order. We have confidence in the show. (No 22, male, 50s, from Anhui, China, Event D)

In contrast to affective commitment, approximately two-thirds of respondents attributed continuation of their relationship to calculative commitment. Several dimensions emerged from the data: perceived economic benefits gained, perceived (potential) financial sacrifice, perceived difficulties in breaking the relationship, absence of competitive offerings, and inertia.

Almost all respondents admitted that exhibiting paid off economically, despite varying exhibiting objectives and ways to evaluate performance. The sales-oriented exhibitors were satisfied with an exhibition as long as there were quality visitors, even if it would only be a few quality visitors. Others claimed that they did not evaluate exhibiting performance by the number of leads they gained from an exhibition. They stressed the networking, information exchange, promotion and image-building opportunities an exhibition provided.

Respondents did not agree on whether their business would suffer economically if they would not continue to exhibit. Around two-thirds of interviewees claimed that their business would not suffer. They came to promote business and open up new markets. Business would remain the same even if they did not exhibit. Approximately one third speculated that their future sales would suffer because they would lose business opportunities.

Factors such as organizer's operational model, guanxi (inter-personal relationship for mutual benefit), and organizer power make it difficult for exhibitors to break relationships with an exhibition/organizer. Some exhibition organizers use a senority

scheme to encourage continuous exhibiting and build up customer commitment. According to the rules of this scheme, exhibitors are ranked by the number of times they have exhibited in the event. Continuous, recurring exhibitors are able to secure a good location and space in the venue. They might enjoy other benefits, such as discounts. If exhibiting is non-continuous, exhibitors' ranking will drop. Some informants claimed that they had to commit to the exhibition because of organizer power. These organizers might represent local government, thus, having jurisdictional power, or alternatively industry associations, having administrative power. Organizers might gain power by being located in a certain host city, having geographical advantages. Several Chinese respondents from small and medium-sized private enterprises stated that guanxi played a role in exhibition participation. If they broke with guanxi, their business might be affected, as guanxi was like an interwoven net that extended beyond one industry sector. The following statement reflected how guanxi was utilized:

> *There is still guanxi (inter-personal relationship) in the planned economy style in this fair management. We need to find guanxi to come in and keep this guanxi so that we have this good booth location. It is not that you can have this location by paying more money; you must have guanxi for it. We are able to have our booth located here after keeping the guanxi for several years (No 8, male, 40s, Guangdong, China, Event A).*

About half of the informants, especially Chinese exhibitors, said they continued to exhibit in one exhibition out of inertia to change, or because they could not find a worthwhile alternative. Exhibiting was one of the most important marketing tools for most of the interviewed exhibiting firms, if not the single most important tool. Most interviewees claimed that they exhibited two to four times per annum and that exhibiting was like a routine. Although they were not very satisfied with organizer services, they had to continue the relationship because there were no alternative exhibitions.

Apparently, not all exhibitors had established strong affective commitment to the exhibition and the organizer. It takes time for new exhibitors to develop a sense of commitment in general to an exhibition or the organizer. To the new exhibitors, especially if they evaluate exhibiting performance and effectiveness using economic benefits gained and

sales generated, the first few sessions are like ‘gambling’. To them, it is like “To be here is better than not to be. It takes time to find out.” (No 1, male, 30s, from Turkey, Event A). Whether or not they can develop a sense of commitment in general may depend on exhibiting performance, service quality, and relationship satisfaction, which are reported next.

4.3.2.6 Service Quality and Relationship Satisfaction

In regard to service quality, interview data revealed five main themes under the service quality category: 1) organizer understands exhibiting needs, 2) organizer attracts right type of buyers, 3) organizer responds to problems, 4) organizer cares about exhibitors’ welfare, and 5) on-site services meet expectations. Varying performances and qualities of services resulted in exhibitor satisfaction or dissatisfaction, subject to respondents’ individual experience, perception, and criteria of good performance. In addition, perceptions differed on whether dissatisfying pre and on-site services would affect trust, commitment, satisfaction and future attendance.

Organizers’ understanding of exhibiting needs and consequently, recruiting the right type of buyers was regarded by respondents as the most important part of organizer services. These two dimensions were inextricably linked. If an exhibition had attracted the right type and number of visitors/buyers, then the organizer got credit for understanding the needs and objectives of exhibitors. A respondent from India remarked:

> *The most important thing is the quality of the incoming buyers, buyers who are related to my line, my production, my sector. It is very buyer-specific. The rest is secondary (No 4, 40s, from India, Event A).*

Organizers for each of the interviewed events were favorably recognized with regard to marketing the show to attract the right type of buyers. This was potentially because each of the sampled events was the largest of its kind in the respective industry sector, having a verified record and established reputation among enterprises in the industry. Not surprisingly, exhibitors stressed the quality rather than the quantity of buyers. A senior manager from the UK said:

We are very pleased with the show up to now. Yesterday was probably the busiest first day anyone can remember at any show. It is busy in a good way that we have quality visitors. A lot of shows, and here in the past as well, we come across many visitors, but not quality visitors. What I say quality visitors are people who have powers to buy things. Last year we've got people who were interested, but not ever will buy anything. This year, people here are not just interested. I think that's a big difference. The economic situation is a problem, plus we have swine flu. However, the fair is good in spite of this. Yesterday I had an enquiry right after the opening ceremony. I would be very happy to walk away from any exhibition with that one inquiry. I am very happy about that (No 14, 40s, from UK, Event B).

Various service problems might occur throughout the exhibiting process. These problems include registration, booth arrangement, booth set-up, exhibit transportation, onsite logistics, security, and other onsite problems. Whether or not organizers promptly respond to problems affects exhibitors' perception of service quality. One problem that seriously affected exhibitors' perception of service quality was whether or not organizers cared about their interests, in particular, whether organizers took actions to protect their intellectual property rights. Depending on the nature of the exhibits and the industry sector, violation of intellectual property rights in exhibitions was a serious problem in some exhibitions. A sales manger from Guangdong in Event C said,

The organizer does a very poor job in security. Many visitors are not here to visit. They are here to copy. This is the last we exhibitors want to see. The organizers did little to screen out visitors. You see, visitors are taking photos of the booths and security does not stop them. Even children are allowed in. Nonetheless, this exhibition is much better than the one in X town. That one was purely for political achievement and was fully corrupted. It was very fake, corrupted, and never took our interest into consideration (No 20, male, 30s, from Guangdong, China, Event C).

Many organizers set up a special work group to deal with violation cases and purge copycat exhibitors. It is difficult to monitor and keep out visitors whose visiting objectives are to copy the products of other exhibitors. However, exhibitors request organizers show

their sincerity and attention to the problem by taking actions such as strengthening security. Otherwise, exhibitors might perceive organizers as profit-driven, not protecting exhibiting firms and eventually contributing to the healthy growth of the industry.

Onsite services include opening, reception, signage, label of booths, intra-hall traffic, cleaning service, provision of basic facilities, and provision of food and beverages. Onsite services were criticized by many respondents. For example, a respondent commented, "Onsite services always need improvement" (No 27, 40s, from Shanghai, China, Event D). Several Chinese respondents in Events B and C complained that there was no grand opening of the event. Several international respondents complained that exhibitors were not allowed to come to the venue earlier than visitors for preparation. Almost all international exhibitors complained that categorization of exhibits and numbering of booths was not rational so that it was difficult to locate a booth. Provision of facilities and food were also problematic, despite the fact that all exhibitions were hosted in venues with first class facilities. Onsite services tied with venue facilities and services. Some services were provided by venues, some by organizers. However, to exhibitors, there was no perceived difference between organizers and venue service suppliers.

Whether or not organizers understand exhibiting needs and objectives of exhibitors, attract the right type of buyers, and protect exhibitors' welfare, appears to affect exhibitors' perceptions of organizers and the exhibition. However, there were differing views as to whether dissatisfaction with on-site services affects future attendance. The following comments demonstrate the differing views toward onsite-services:

> *I will not say that we are loyal customer. If the quality and service has been satisfying, we would continue buying space. If one day the quality or service declines, we would consider exhibiting in another show. It is like this. It is not that we will come whenever it is held and whatever services we get. We need to consider several aspects: exhibiting effectiveness and on-site organizer services (No 25, female, 30s, from Guangdong, China, Event D).*

We are not sure if we will come back to this show next year. If the services continue to be unsatisfactory, we will only choose the Hong Kong show (No 18, male, 40s, from Taiwan, Event C).

There are service problems, but not that much, I have to say. For us, if I think there is such a case to meet the potential customers, I will come. That's the main reason for exhibiting (No 1, male, 30s, from Turkey, Event A).

Interview data suggests that large firms and firms that demand a certain standard of service quality are more likely to switch to other exhibitions if onsite service quality is consistently unsatisfactory. In contrast, small and medium-sized enterprises with a strong sales-oriented exhibiting objective tend to assess their future attendance based on potential economic benefits to their firms from exhibiting rather than onsite service quality.

In regard to relationship satisfaction, interview data showed that relationship satisfaction with the exhibition brand and the organizer was related to the quality of the exhibition, trust in organizer's competency and integrity, commitment, and organizers' service quality. Some respondents praised impressive services provided by employees in the organizing company. The pleasant contact between the informant and the employees resulted in the perception of a relationship with the organizing company as a whole as satisfactory. Several informants attributed their satisfaction to a satisfactory show performance. On the other hand, dissatisfaction resulted from profit-driven behaviours of the organizers and poor customer management. Some organizers did not treat exhibitors as commercial customers, and consequently, these exhibitors were not satisfied with the relationship. The following comments demonstrate the differing sentiments regarding relationship satisfaction:

I think our relationship with the organizer is great, because one of the contacts from the organization is a wonderful person, helpful and makes us happy as I know I can trust the organization's personnel (No 5, male, 30s, from Brazil, Event A).

We are not satisfied with the organizer. The services of the organizer are very poor. We have to continue to exhibit here because this is the largest exhibition in Asia in our field (No 18, 40s, male, from Taiwan, China, Event C).

We are not satisfied with the organizer. The organizer should consider how they can enable effective communication between enterprises as this is the ultimate goal of a trade fair. But look at this trade fair, many of the details are not paid attention to. Securities here don't even prohibit photo-taking. It turns the trade fair to money-making for the organizer.(No 20, male, 30s, from Guangdong, China, Event C)

4.3.3 Destination Attractiveness

Table 4.4 presents the categories, sub-categories, themes/continuum, and illustrative comments relating to destination attractiveness. A total of seven categories emerged from the data: 1) importance of destination overall, 2) international standing, 3) economic environment, 4) accessibility, 5) venue facilities, 6) destination leisure environment, and 7) cluster effects.

Five categories (international standing, accessibility, venue facilities, economic environment, and destination leisure environment) were identified by extant tourism or exhibition literature (e.g., Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Hankinson, 2005; Lin et al., 2007). Attributes of these categories were explored along sub-themes, which reveal the perceptions of interviewees regarding their importance in their decision to attending exhibition. Contrasting views for each sub-theme, if there are any, are presented and analysed.

Two categories (importance of destination overall and cluster effect) have not been discussed in previous literature. Overall destination importance denotes exhibitors' perceptions on the weight of destinations in their decision-making of exhibition attendance or preference. Cluster effect relates to respondents' knowledge of manufacturing bases for the products exhibited and their effect on exhibition development in a locality. The two categories are also explored along sub-dimensions.

Table 4.4 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Destination Attractiveness

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Importance of Destination Overall		Attend as long as business is generated	15	I've no comments on the host city. We just come for a few days and then we will leave. It doesn't matter if the host city is an ideal destination or not, as long as visitors come. Where the exhibition is held makes no difference to us, as long as the exhibition space is large enough to accommodate and the quality of onsite service is good. That's important. All that matters is venue service and space. (No 18, 40s, male, from Taiwan, China, Event C) I have problems with the city, traffic, hotel location, etc. But I don't care much about the cities, I care about the customers. I don't mind about the city, even if there are problems (No 3, 40s, from Turkey, Event A) If we expect that we can sell a lot of goods, even without any good place, unknown city, we will come. But if the fair is not good, just to think the city is good, a good place to visit, good food, but no business, we will not go. We are not concerned if we go to an unfamiliar city. (No 1, 30s, from Turkey, Event A)
		Willing to move if exhibition is transferred		We don't worry about the city at all. It is not that we come for this city. If tomorrow the fair is moved to Shanghai, we go there. If it moves to a smaller city, we will go. We will not worry about it. (No 2, 40s, from India, Event A)
International Standing		Not important	8	Host city does not have to be internationally well-known. Canton or Guangzhou, nobody knows in general. If the fair is in Beijing, it might be easier [for exhibitors & visitors]. But for me it is not that important. (No 1, 30s, from Turkey, Event A)

Table 4.4 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Destination Attractiveness (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
International Standing		Important		Host city should be an internationally known city. My personal opinion of two best cities in Asia to make good trade shows are Hong Kong and Shanghai… these are cities with good air access to all over the world, great landscape, pretty city, essential services, English speakers, cuisine. I think there are requirements for a city to host international events. (No 5, 30s, from Brazil, Event A) Beijing and Shanghai should be much better than any other cities [as exhibition destinations], especially for this kind of international comprehensive shows. The influence of the city is much bigger [than other cities]. I've been to a show in Tianjin. That show was really empty; the number of exhibitors outnumbered visitors. Tianjin is not far from Beijing, but the difference is huge. (No 28, male, 30s, from Beijing, Event D)
Economic Environment		Not important	2	We are not expecting people from this city to visit us, so the business and economic environment of the host city is not so important. The economic position of the city is important for importers, not exporters. (No 3, 40s, male, from Turkey, Event A)
		Very important	3	The business and economic environment of the host city is very important. If things are not at the place, people, facilities, securities, it is a thing of concern. (No 2, 40s, male, from India, Event A)
Accessibility	Accessibility to the city		10	Guangzhou is a good choice; at least it is convenient for us and customers to come to this city. (No 17, 40s, male, from Guangdong, China, Event C)

Table 4.4 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Destination Attractiveness (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Accessibility				My personal opinion of two best cities in Asia to make good trade shows are Hong Kong and Shanghai… these are cities with good air access to all over the world (No 5, 30s, male, from Brazil, Event A)
	Intra-city transportation		7	For us foreigners, most of the times we use taxi and we have a lot problems with that. (No 5, 30s, male, from Brazil, Event A)
	Easy access to information		7	The city shall make it easy for participants to get information about the city, because so many buyers coming and they should know the city, know where to go in the city, how to reach there, the hotels, sightseeing places, the food, where have food to our taste. These should be openly given in magazines or newspapers, hotels or media. It is important. (No 4, 40s, male, from India, Event A)
Venue Facilities	Variety and standard of specific venue facilities	Very important	10	Venue facilities are important. Here they give phone lines, lots of water and security is good. (No 1, 30s, from Turkey, Event A)
				What do we expect from a venue? To have clean booths, internet, restaurants responding to international foods, not just one type of food or drinks. International restaurants are very important. (No 3, 40s, from Turkey, Event A)
		Not very important		This exhibition center is ok. I mean, I've been to some other halls, some nicer, some not as nice. Some have nicer architecture, nicer roof. In our case we have the air conditioning. That's basic. Of course it would be nicer if somehow the venue is constructed nicely. But I think it is not necessary. It's just a trade show in the end. (No 24, male, 30s, from Germany, Event D)

Table 4.4 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Destination Attractiveness (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Venue Facilities	Variety and standard of specific venue facilities			Well, this exhibition center is a bit old in facilities. The space cannot be enlarged. Anyway, regarding the venue, we enterprises do not have extravagant hopes for interior design, decoration or hardware. I think organizers and venues shall pay more attention to software, services they provide. I think a venue shall provide places for visitors to have rest. It's better to provide free water and free toilet paper. Yesterday, we had to go to Carrefour to buy toilet paper. There were so many exhibitors there buying paper and water. Carrefour was almost out of stock. I think organizers should pay attention to services like this. (No 27, 40s, from Shanghai, China, Event D)
	Sufficient exhibition space		5	Where the exhibition is held makes no difference to us, as long as the exhibition space is large enough to accommodate and the quality of onsite service is good. That's important. All that matters is venue service and space. (No 18, 40s, male, from Taiwan, China, Event C)
				This is the best city to hold this event, because other cities do not have such huge venue and space. (No 13, 30s, from Shandong, China, Event B)
	Accessibility to the venue		7	The most travel I do is from hotel to fair and from fair to hotel. If it takes one hour to cover say five kilometers, you don't feel very comfortable. (No 1, 30s, from Turkey, Event A)
				The location of the venue in Beijing is not good. Traffic is not easy. (No22, male, 50s, from Anhui, China, Event D)

Table 4.4 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Destination Attractiveness (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Venue Facilities	Accessibility to the venue			There is another show in Shanghai. We exhibited there as well… the venue in Beijing is easier in terms of intercity transportation. We can take buses or metro. In Shanghai, the metro sign is not clear. Actually there is a metro station not too far away from the venue, but it took us a long time to find it. This is not related to the organizer or the venue. It is more related to city development. Anyway, it doesn't matter if we take taxies. (No 25, 30s, female, from Guangdong, China, Event D)
				This center is better than the new exhibition center in outer suburb of Beijing. To be honest, I really don't appreciate the objectives of the government to build a venue there, because it is really too far away from the city. Even taxi drivers cannot find it. So the government (venue owner) only considered that cost of building a venue there is relatively low, having more space, and cheaper to levy the land. But they did not consider for whom the venue is used. (No 27, 40s, from Shanghai, China, Event D)
Destination Leisure Environment	Traffic, safety and security, and accommodation are the most important aspects of an exhibition city			If you say the part of the city, traffic, safety and security, good quality and good price of accommodation is important for me. That's all, apart from the fair. (No 1, 30s, from Turkey, Event A)
				Guangzhou is still very crowded. This is not easy to change. Traffic nowadays is improved. (No 6, 40s, from Shandong, China, Event A)
			9	Hotel in Guangzhou is still very expensive. We are not accustomed to the local food. We don't have a lot of requirements in this regard. It is only that the city should stop regarding the event as the seller's market, like several years ago when the fair was badly needed by exhibiting firms. Hotels shall not raise price too high during the exhibition period. (No 6, 40s, from Shandong, China, Event A)

Table 4.4 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Destination Attractiveness (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Destination Leisure Environment	Friendliness of the people is important		5	It is very important. If people are not friendly, you don't feel like going there. We don't need a place [market] where we don't feel liked. (No 2, 40s, from India, Event A)
	The exhibition city lacks English speaking people		6	The language is a big problem. Very few people can speak English. I've been here 9 years. Every year I practice my [Chinese] pronunciation. Two days ago, I took a taxi, I said, Beijing Road several times, he couldn't understand. I stopped another one, I said shopping, made a lot effort, but the taxi driver still couldn't understand. (No 1, 30s, from Turkey, Event A)
	Perception toward tour attraction and leisure activities varied	No time to visit/unimportant	10	I don't have time to visit the city. (No 15, male, 40s, Italy, Event B)
				Tour attraction [in destination] is not important. However, I've been to lots of attractions here in Guangzhou as I've come many times. (No 2, 40s, from India, Event A)
		Want to visit/Important		Night leisure activities are important. During the day, you work a lot, and in the evening, you want to refresh yourself. (No 3, 40s, from Turkey, Event A)
				They don't seem to organize something at night at a big exhibition venue. They could improve some of the things they do. For people not being here before, it could be a little bit informed about where people can go. China needs to become a little bit more international. What the companies need is to see themselves as world class. (No 14, 40s, from UK, Event B)

Table 4.4 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Destination Attractiveness (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Destination Leisure Environment	Perception toward tour attraction and leisure activities varied	Want to visit/important		It is first time I am in Beijing. After the show, I am curious to see a little bit of Beijing on my own. I have some dates free after the show. I will see the city, and the wall. (No 24, male, 30s, from Germany, Event D) It is important, but this city (Guangzhou) lack attractiveness to me and my customers. They have gone to HK today. We come here to find business, but after three or four days, we want some time to relax, to see sports, to have fun, or to know different culture. So the tourist spots are important, giving something else than just business. (No 5, 30s, from Brazil, Event A)
Cluster Effect	Location	Host city shall be a leading city of an industrial belt for the exhibits	4	Foshan and Zibo are the two most well-known production bases in our sector. We choose Guangzhou because it is a big city and is near to Foshan. The exhibition in Zibo is a specialized one, so we also exhibit there, although Zibo is a very small and unknown city. Organizers in Shanghai and Qingdao also invited us, but we won't go. (No 13, 30s, from Shandong, China, Event B)
		Host city shall be near the production base	5	For the exhibition in my sector we choose between Foshan and Guangzhou. Even we can choose Zibo, because the factories in our sector in China especially locate in Foshan and Zibo. Guangzhou is better than Foshan because it is closer to the airport, closer to Hong Kong and the train to Hong Kong is convenient. Guangzhou has more hotels. In exhibition, the most important thing is to have the possibility to locate to have enough places for all the guests and every possibility to give them the service. It is also important that the location is near to the factories, as many visitors would like to visit the factories after the fair. (No 10, 40s, from Italy, Event B)

Table 4.4 Sample of Interviewees' Comments on Destination Attractiveness (Continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Sub-Theme/Continuum	Count	Representative Comments
Cluster Effect	Location			I feel exhibitions cannot be hosted independent of the manufacturing base. At least with one visit I can see as many products and factories that I want to see. Can you imagine what will happen if this exhibition were held in Tibet? Apart from nearing a manufacturing base, many of the buyers and developers of our sector have their offices in Beijing. Most big companies have their offices in Beijing. (No 30, 30s, from Liaoning, China, Event D)
	Impact/benefits of location	We can visit factories if the host city is nearer to the production base	4	I think it was a good choice to come here because it is nearest to Foshan, the production center. I think it is a good choice here, easy to visit the factories, when we are here, we spend four days on the fair, and normally we stay here 10 days, to visit factories and customers. (No 15, 40s, from Italy, Event B)
		Host city nearer to the production base saves cost for exhibitors	3	The nearer the host city to the production base, the lower the exhibiting costs for the exhibitors. An exhibition can be staged easily near the production base. To my view, a similar show can be easily launched in Shanghai since there are factories there as well. Whether the show could be good depends on the organization of the organizers. (No 19, 40s, male, from Jiangsu, China, Event C)
		Host city shall be a distribution hub of the products	6	Whenever people talk about the best exhibition in our sector, they would say Guangzhou. Other cities, like Shanghai, are launching exhibitions of the same topic, but they cannot achieve the same effects, because Guangzhou has been the distribution hub of our sector. This exhibition is good here, if it were transferred elsewhere, theoretically it is not ideal. (No12, 30s, from Jiangsu, China, Event B)
		Host city has a strong industrial association	5	There are about 10 exhibitions annually in our sector. Beijing should be the best city for this exhibition, because there are a number of industrial associations and chambers of commerce here. In our sector, Europe has the most advanced technology and their chambers of commerce are all here in Beijing. In Tianjin, [a city near Beijing], there is a big manufacturing base for the products. So I think Beijing is advantageous in hosting this exhibition. (No 30, 30s, from Liaoning, China, Event D)

It is important to note that specific destination factors are interrelated. A city with an international standing implies good quality and a variety of accommodation, good infrastructure (e.g., subway service), favorable business and leisure environment, more English speaking professionals and local people, and potentially more investment in exhibition centers.

4.3.3.1 Importance of Destination Overall

Overall, interviewees were not concerned about destination factors, even if they had problems with the city, as long as the exhibition was effective in attracting sufficient quality buyers. What they cared about was that the city had exhibition space large enough to accommodate the event and resources to accommodate exhibitors and visitors. Furthermore, they indicated their willingness to move with a quality exhibition to another city if necessary. They were not concerned if they had to go to an unfamiliar city as long as there were businesses. Informants declared that they had no choice over the host destination; they had to accept any destination chosen by organizers, and in any case, just came to the destination for a few days. In this regard, perceptions were similar among international and Chinese exhibitors. No particular differences were identified by company profile. The following comments are representative of informants' views. For example, an interviewee from Taiwan remarked:

> *I've no comments on the host city. We just come for a few days and then we will leave. It doesn't matter if the host city is an ideal destination or not, as long as visitors come. Where the exhibition is held makes no difference to us, as long as the exhibition space is large enough to accommodate and the quality of onsite service is good. That's important. All that matters is venue service and space (No 18, 40s, male, from Taiwan, China, Event C).*

An informant from Turkey commented:

> *If we expect that we can sell a lot of goods, even without any good place in an unknown city, we will come. But if the fair is not good, just to think the city is good,*

a good place to visit, good food, but no business, we will not go. We are not concerned if we go to an unfamiliar city (No 1, 30s, from Turkey, Event A)

Another informant from India commented:

We don't worry about the city at all. It is not that we come for this city. If tomorrow the fair is moved to Shanghai, we go there. If it moves to a smaller city, we will go. We will not worry about it. (No 2, 40s, from India, Event A)

It appears that the destination is secondary compared to exhibition quality and performance. However, when talking about specific destination factors that might affect exhibition attendance and experience, respondents exhibited differing views. Their preference for destinations and venues, their demand for facilities and amenities, and their perception of the importance of specific factors varied. Perceptions of respondents on specific destination factors are discussed next.

4.3.3.2 International and Economic Standing

The importance of the international standing of an exhibition destination was perceived differently. About half the interviewees did not perceive it important or necessary for a host city to be internationally well-known, while the other half held an opposite view. For example, Guangzhou was considered by many international exhibitors as not well-known internationally. One respondent from Turkey who had exhibited nine times in the relatively well-known exhibition hosted in Guangzhou said

The host city does not have to be internationally well-known. Canton or Guangzhou, nobody knows in general. If the fair is in Beijing, it might be easier [for exhibitors & visitors]. But for me it is not that important (No 1, 30s, from Turkey, Event A).

Several respondents opposed this view. To them, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing were three destinations with an international reputation that they wished their exhibitions were hosted in, due to factors closely related to international standing. For example, one respondent from Brazil who had exhibited seven times in Guangzhou remarked:

The host city should be an internationally known city. My personal opinion of the two best cities in Asia to make good trade shows are Hong Kong and Shanghai… these are cities with good air access to all over the world, great landscape, pretty city, essential services, English speakers, cuisine. I think these are requirements for a city to host international events (No 5, 30s, from Brazil, Event A).

Another informant from India in the same exhibition said:

It has to be internationally known, because so many buyers are coming, they should know the city, know where to go to in the city, how to reach it, the hotels, sightseeing places, the food, where to have food to our taste. It is important. The city has to have metro, good places to stay, good air connections, and exposure to different cultures (No 4, male, 40s, from India, Event A).

International status of an exhibition destination is related to other specific destination factors, such as direct air access to other parts of the world, having a presence of a large number of international associations and firms, and favorable transportation, accommodation and recreation facilities. Those who did not perceive it necessary for an exhibition destination to have an international reputation seemed to be more business-oriented, less comfort-driven, or pleasure-seeking than those who demanded the host destination to have an international reputation.

A destination's international standing is also related to its economic standing, including its gross domestic product, the presence of international firms, level of technology, and support from related industries. Perceptions of the importance of the overall economic standing of the destination varied. Roughly half of interviewees regarded it as unimportant, exhibiting in a world-class or cross-regional exhibition where buyers were from the wider region or from all over the world. For example, an interviewee from India remarked:

For international exhibitions like this one, the host city is not so important, because we are not expecting people to visit us from Guangzhou. When I exhibit in Frankfurt, I don't expect anyone from Frankfurt. I expect buyers from Germany or from

Europe. Here I expect buyers from all over the world. So the economic environment of the host city is not so important to us exhibitors (No 1, male, 30s, from Turkey, Event A).

The economic position of the destination might be more important if the destination hosted import-oriented exhibitions than export-oriented fairs, as noted by an interviewee from Turkey, as follows:

The economic position of the city is important for importers, not exporters. We are an export company. China is not our target market actually, so we don't care about the economic position of the city (No 3, 40s, from Turkey, Event A).

In contrast, the other half of the sample perceived it as important because a destination's business and economic standing was correlated to the capacity of the destination to attract a large number of exhibitors and visitors, as well as the quality of facilities and services that the destination can provide. The following comments reveal informants' concerns:

It is very important, because the facilities should be there. It is correlated (No 2, male, 40s, from India, Event A).

The host city has to be economically developed. If not, buyers from overseas may have a wrong picture of the country. If you show them an undeveloped or economically unsound city, buyers will take a very wrong image back, because they just stay here for five days. So it is important (No 4, 40s, from India, Event A).

If I'm going to somewhere that is struggling to survive, what the city can offer me? If I say to my customers that we're going to a city that's been developing over 30 years and 9% of the people are getting rich every year, like Shenzhen, they are going to be amazed. It is easy to convince them to come (No 5, male, 30s, from Brazil, Event A).

No clear pattern among respondents regarding the importance of economic standing emerged. Different perceptions were based on exhibitors' experience and attitudes toward exhibitions.

4.3.3.3 Accessibility

Three sub-themes of accessibility were identified by informants: easy access to the city, ease of moving inside the city, and easy access to information about the city. Easy access to the host city by air was considered crucial for an exhibition destination. Guangzhou, the host city for three of the exhibitions sampled, was considered by most interviewees as having ease of access, as they could either fly directly from their own country or transit from Hong Kong via a two-hour direct train. Intra-city transportation referred mainly to transportation to the exhibition center from the airport or hotel, with taxi being the most frequently used means, even for domestic participants. International informants gave anecdotal accounts of problems they encountered with taxis, mainly related to language barriers and professional ethics of the taxi drivers. Although Guangzhou has a metro system which covers most parts of the city, some international informants were nervous about it and seldom used it due to unfamiliarity and fear of getting lost.

Apart from inter-city and intra-city transportation, respondents particularly stressed accessibility to information about the destination, as demonstrated by the following comments:

> *The city shall make it easy for participants to get information about the city, because so many buyers are coming and they should know the city, know where to go in the city, how to reach there, the hotels, sightseeing places, the food, where to have food to our taste. These should be openly given in magazines or newspapers, hotels or media. It is important (No 4, 40s, male, from India, Event A).*

> *I've been here four times, but I didn't know there is a subway until today. I think people working for the exhibition and working in the hotels should inform customers more about the city (No 3, 40s, male, from Turkey, Event A)*

It is apparent that exhibitors expect the host city to make information available easily and free of charge for exhibitors/visitors that allows them to move around the city and utilize its facilities and amenities.

4.3.3.4 Venue Facilities and Services

Venue space, facilities and service quality affected exhibitors' event experience and satisfaction. Apart from a limited number of exhibition companies that own large-scale and purpose-built venues, most exhibition organizers rent space from exhibition centers. Thus, exhibitors could not always clearly distinguish services provided by the venue, the organizer, or a third party. To them, venue service is part of the organizers' onsite services (See Section 4.3.2.5).

The layout of exhibition centers and floor plans designed by organizers aroused major concerns. Many purpose-built exhibition centers were designed to be city icons, with aesthetical value been given equal importance as functional value. However, respondents might only appreciate the functional aspects of a venue that provide convenience of usage, such as space, easy layout and fewer stairs.

Informants did not perceive the aesthetics of the venue as important. Event D in Beijing was hosted in an exhibition center constructed in the early 1980s. Air-conditioning was an issue frequently mentioned by respondents. Apart from that, respondents raised no other issues. Like one respondent said, "we enterprises do not have extravagant hopes for interior design, decoration or hardware" (No 27, 40s, from Shanghai, China, Event D). Another respondent stated:

> *This exhibition center is ok. I mean, I've been to some other centers, some nicer, some not as nice. Some have nicer architecture, nicer roof. In our hall we have the air conditioning. In other halls, air conditioning is not as good. Of course it would be nicer if somehow the venue is constructed nicely. But I think it is not necessary. It's just a trade show in the end (No 24, male, 30s, from Germany, Event D).*

Apart from space and layout, venue facilities and provisions frequently stated by interviewees were parking and loading availability and convenience, security, cleanliness, clean booths, spacious halls and hallway, food courts or kiosks that provided a variety of food, sufficient ATM machines, air-conditioning, and the provision of basics (such as free water, toilet paper, phone lines, and wireless internet connection). These features have been identified and discussed by previous literature, (e.g., Breiter & Milman, 2006).

Accessibility of the venue from the hotel or airport/train station was considered as important by respondents. Perceptions of the location and accessibility of even the same venue varied. Nonetheless, respondents disliked venues in outer suburban area. They preferred venues within the city, connected to hotels and recreational areas by metro or bus systems. Respondents highly appraised provision of shuttle buses by either hotels or exhibition organizers to drive them to and from the venue to hotels. The following two comments are representative:

> *This center is better than the new exhibition center in outer suburb of Beijing. To be honest, I really don't appreciate the objectives of the government to build a venue there, because it is really too far away from the city. Even taxi drivers cannot find it. So the government (venue owner) only considered that cost of building a venue there is relatively low, having more space, and cheaper to levy the land. But they did not consider for whom the venue is used. (No 27, 40s, from Shanghai, China, Event D)*

> *There is another show in Shanghai. We exhibited there as well… the venue in Beijing is easier in terms of intercity transportation. We can take buses or metro. In Shanghai, the metro sign is not clear. Actually there is a metro station not too far away from the venue, but it took us a long time to find it. This is not related to the organizer or the venue. It is more related to city development. Anyway, it doesn't matter if we take taxies. (No 25, 30s, female, from Guangdong, China, Event D)*

4.3.3.5 Destination Leisure Environment

Regarding city infrastructure and leisure environment, respondents corroborated requirements similar to those of leisure tourists and convention participants (e.g., Crouch & Louviere, 2004). Traffic, safety and security, and accommodation are the most important aspects of an exhibition city. Interviewees demand quality and a variety of hotels, and quality and variety of food.

As for the general city environment, a destination's weather and climate, the friendliness of its local people, and the openness of the city were aspects interviewees paid attention to. Respondents hope that they feel culturally accepted. Perception toward tourism attractions and leisure activities varied. Up to one-third of international interviewees never explored the exhibition city due to a lack of time and/or lack of information. Some enjoyed touristic activities, especially night activities. In general, informants displayed a lack of concern for participating in leisure tourism, in stark contrast to convention delegates.

4.3.3.6 Cluster Effect

The existence and diffusion of manufacturing clusters (Porter, 1990) has profound implications for exhibition cultivation and expansion. Since economic reform started in the early 1980s in China, a number of smaller cities/towns have developed and are characterized by a significant agglomeration of industrial activities, with a great number of firms of local or external ownership (Bellandi & Tommaso, 2005). The perceived importance of the relationship between exhibition development in a region and firms clustered in the same area was evident in the interview data. This was evident in two kinds of exhibitions: those staged in the specialized towns/cities and those staged in a nearby leading city. The development of local exhibitions was actively supported by local governments, with a strong incentive to promote the industry and the city/town to gain economic and non-economic benefits. There is considerable controversy about local governments' objectives and involvement in exhibition development. Exhibitions in leading cities have a lesser degree of government involvement in exhibition operation.

Most interviewees were aware of the relationship between an exhibition and a manufacturing cluster. Respondents in Event B, for example, compared exhibitions of a similar theme for their specific industry sector in different locations – Foshan (near Guangzhou), Zibo (in Shandong Province, near Qingdao), Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Qingdao, and accounted for why they exhibited in some of the exhibitions. Shanghai and Guangzhou are considered first tier cities; Qingdao, the leading city in Shandong province, is a second-tier city; and Foshan and Zibo, where factories are located, are third-tier cites. Exhibition distribution across regions was strongly influenced by historical patterns, with exhibitions in Guangzhou, Foshan and Zibo having a longer history than exhibitions in Shanghai and Qingdao. Relocation of exhibitions may not be easy and a slow process. However, future exhibition patterns could be a mixture of tradition, management and recent opportunities, as remarked by one informant:

> *Foshan and Zibo are the two most well-known production bases in our sector. We choose Guangzhou [to exhibit] because it is a big city and is near to Foshan. The exhibition in Zibo is a specialized one, so we also exhibit there, although Zibo is a very small and unknown city. Organizers in Shanghai and Qingdao also invited us, but we won't go (No 13, 30s, from Shandong, China, Event B).*

Interview data revealed the impacts of clusters on an exhibition: size of the exhibition, reduced cost for exhibitors from nearby regions, and word-of-mouth of fellow exhibitors. Bigger cities near manufacturing clusters may have a presence of offices, industrial associations and chambers of commerce, and become distribution hubs for the industry, thus having advantages in hosting exhibitions for the sector. For example, an interviewee from Jiangsu, China, stated that his firm likes to exhibit in Guangzhou because it is the distribution hub of their industry sector:

> *Whenever people talk about the best exhibition in our sector, they would say Guangzhou. Other cities, like Shanghai, are launching exhibitions of the same topic, but they cannot achieve the same effect, because Guangzhou has been the distribution hub of our sector. This exhibition is good here, if it were transferred elsewhere, it might not be as successful (No12, 30s, from Jiangsu, China, Event B)*

Another respondent from Liaoning, China, preferred the host city near the manufacturing base of the products:

> *I feel exhibitions cannot be hosted independent of the manufacturing base. At least with one visit I can see as many products and factories that I want to see. Can you imagine what will happen if this exhibition were held in Tibet? Apart from being near a manufacturing base, many of the buyers and developers of our sector have their offices in Beijing. Most big companies have their offices in Beijing (No 30, 30s, from Liaoning, China, Event D).*

This respondent from Liaoning also pointed out the influence of professional associations on event hosting:

> *There are about 10 exhibitions annually in our sector. Beijing should be the best city for this exhibition, because there are a number of industrial associations and chambers of commerce here. In our sector, Europe has the most advanced technology and their chambers of commerce are all here in Beijing. In Tianjin, [a city near Beijing], there is a big manufacturing base for the products. So I think Beijing is advantageous in hosting this exhibition (No 30, 30s, from Liaoning, China, Event D).*

The majority of respondents (80%) prefer exhibition destinations that are highly developed in the specific industry sector for the exhibition and near the manufacturing base. An exhibition hosted in a destination close to the factory location could save exhibition costs, and provide ease for exhibitors and visitors visiting factories for on-site investigation. The following are two supporting comments from interviewees:

> *I think it was a good choice to come here [Guangzhou] because it is nearest to Foshan, the production center. I think it is a good choice here, easy to visit the factories, when we are here, we spend four days on the fair, and normally we stay here 10 days, to visit factories and customers (No 15, 40s, from Italy, Event B).*

The nearer the host city to the production base, the lower the exhibiting costs for the exhibitors. An exhibition can be staged easily near the production base. In my view, a similar show can be easily launched in Shanghai since there are factories there as well. Whether the show could be good depends on the organization of the organizers (No 19, 40s, male, from Jiangsu, China, Event C).

The cluster effect on exhibition distribution/cultivation is enhanced by a destination's infrastructure and management. Leading/gateway cities with the presence of manufacturing clusters in the nearby region have more advantageous resources than smaller cities/towns where clustering factories are located, in aspects such as accessibility, accommodation capacity, and venue management expertise. The following comments revealed why the exhibition in Guangzhou is larger in scale and has a greater prestige than the ones in Foshan and Zibo:

For the exhibition in my sector we choose between Foshan and Guangzhou. Even we can choose Zibo, because the factories in our sector in China especially locate in Foshan and Zibo. Guangzhou is better than Foshan because it is closer to the airport, closer to Hong Kong and the train to Hong Kong is convenient. Guangzhou has more hotels…the most important thing is to have enough places for all the guests and every possibility to give them the service. It is also important that the location is near factories, as many visitors would like to visit the factories after the fair (No 10, 40s, from Italy, Event B).

Interview data confirmed prior discussion in literature about the correlation between the cluster effect and exhibition distribution. Consequently, measurement items were generated to capture the impact of clusters on destination attractiveness and exhibition brand preference. Themes frequently mentioned by interviewees were developed into a total of nine item statements, which are proposed to measure the level of leadership of the host city in the industry sector and the impact of the presence of cluster on exhibitor participation. Table 4.5 presents the measurement items for the cluster effect developed from the interview data. These items were subjected to purification by an expert panel review and the pilot test, and ultimately used in the model in the main survey.

Table 4.5 Measurement Items for Cluster Effects on Exhibition Brands

1) This city is a famous manufacturing base for our industrial sector in China.
2) This city is a leading city of an industry belt where most products/equipments in this exhibition are manufactured.
3) This city is a famous distribution hub for our industry sector.
4) There is a strong professional association of our industry sector in this city.
5) This city provides incentives to exhibitors.
6) Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in this city.
7) Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in the nearby regions.
8) Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited come from this city.
9) Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited in this exhibition come from the nearby regions.

4.4 Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 reported the qualitative research (Study 1), and provided a deeper understanding of exhibitor-organizer relationships and destination attractiveness from the exhibitors' perspective, thus addressing a significant gap in the literature. Interview findings revealed significant differences in perceptions of the relationship between exhibitors and organizers, and that their demand for venue facilities and destination characteristics and amenities varied. Study 1 also verified the applicability of measures adapted from the literature, and developed measures for cluster effects, for which there was no measure in the extant literature. Findings supported the conceptual model proposed in chapter 3. However, the extent to which relationship quality and destination attractiveness affect their preference for exhibition brands remains unclear.

Building on the results from the qualitative research (Study 1), the pilot test and main survey (Study 2) were conducted to empirically test the dimensionality of relationship quality, destination attractiveness, and exhibition brand preference, differences in exhibitors' perception, as well as the relationships between the constructs, using advanced statistical methods. Chapter 5 reports on Study 2, including its methodology, findings and discussion of findings.

CHAPTER 5 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH – PILOT AND MAIN SURVEY

5.1 Chapter Introduction

Chapter 4 detailed the methodology and results of the qualitative research, conducted with exhibitors. Results of the qualitative study provided initial support for the conceptual model and the proposition that relationship quality with organizers and destination attractiveness might have a significant, positive impact on exhibitors' preferences for exhibition brands. Findings also verified the content validity of measurements adapted from the literature, and developed measurements for the 'cluster effect' construct.

Chapter 5 focuses on the consequent quantitative research, first detailing the method adopted, followed by the results of Study 2, and a discussion of the findings of both study 1 and 2. Employing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), independent sample t-tests, and structural equation modeling (SEM), it aims to empirically validate the measurements for the proposed constructs and test the hypotheses and propositions that relationship quality and destination attractiveness factors may differ dependent on key characteristics of organizers, exhibitors and destinations, and that both constructs significantly impact exhibition brand preference, as proposed in chapter 3. The chapter concludes with a discussion of findings in relation to individual research questions and hypotheses.

5.2 Methodology

The quantitative research design employed in this thesis is based on Churchill's (1979) approach. The design reflects the positivist research paradigm. It involves three stages: 1) developing the survey instruments, 2) testing the survey instruments for the exhibition context in China using a pilot test, and 3) using structural equation modeling to test the proposed model, drawing on data collected from the main survey. The pilot test was designed and administered to serve several purposes, mainly to: 1) assess the questionnaire design in terms of ease of comprehension, clarity of item wording, response formats, and instructions; 2) reveal the practicality and potential problems related to the data collection procedure and technique; and 3) evaluate the measurements by employing EFA, purify the

measure and assess construct validity. The purpose of the main survey was to 1) identify underlying factors for relationship quality with organizers and destination attractiveness; 2) reveal different perceptions of exhibitors on the two main constructs; and 3) use structural equation modeling to test the impacts of the two main constructs on exhibition brand preference. Next, key considerations related to the sample, instrument, data collection procedures, and data analyses methods are discussed.

5.2.1 Sample

5.2.1.1 General Considerations

A sampling population, defined as "a collection of elements about which we wish to make an inference" (Scheaffer, Mendenhall, & Ott, 1996, p.42), was first designated. A sample as representative as possible should be obtained to derive an accurate understanding of the population under study (Short, Ketchen, & Palmer, 2002). Kerlinger (1986) indicates that a representative sample should have approximately the characteristics of the population relevant to the research in question. Short et al. (2002) noted that a heterogeneous sample should be chosen for a study with an objective to generalize findings across different types of firms (or industries or countries); whereas a homogenous sample is more appropriate if internal validity is the main concern. This study examines the effects of the proposed constructs in the context of trade-to-trade exhibitions at international and national levels in China. Thus, the population is international and domestic exhibitors, representing their exhibiting firms, in these exhibitions in China. It was deemed necessary that samples should be derived from a number of exhibitions covering a variety of industry sectors and being hosted in different cities so that the results of the survey can be extrapolated to the population. Given this priori, there was a focus on the representativeness of the exhibitions and locations, the adequacy of the sample size, and potential sampling errors in order to obtain a representative sample.

Consideration was first given to different means and practical aspects of obtaining a comprehensive sampling frame and approaching the samples. For example, the potential advantages and biases of a face-to-face survey versus a mail or online survey were

considered. A face-to-face survey was deemed appropriate, as it could overcome disadvantages of mail, email and online surveys, as follows:

1) It is possible to obtain directories of exhibiting firms in major exhibitions and use them as the sampling frame. However, these directories lack details of contact persons, mail and email addresses;
2) Mail, email and online surveys without a definite, optimum and willing-to-participate population generate low response rates, resulting in high non-response bias (e.g., Baruch, 1999; Couper, 2000); and
3) A self-administered survey might result in a large number of missing values, given the length of the questionnaire.

A face-to-face survey of appropriate samples was employed. This method involved finding a comprehensive list of exhibitions hosted in various cities in China, visiting selected exhibitions, and after obtaining permission from the exhibition organizer, approaching exhibitors onsite to conduct structured interviews. This method had the following advantages:

1) it is possible to obtain a comprehensive list of exhibitions hosted in China as a sampling frame via portal websites and search engines;
2) a face-to-face survey generates a high response rate, and thus effectively reduces non-response bias;
3) a relatively large number of respondents can be surveyed within a short time period; and
4) it allows for surveys being conducted in multiple exhibitions and destinations so that heterogeneity of exhibitions in scale and industry sector, and that of destination characteristics, can be attained, allowing a relatively accurate generalization from the sample to the population. This will enhance the external validity of findings.

Consideration was also given to whether incentives should be provided to increase response rates, as it is a popular form of encouraging respondent cooperation (Goritz 2004; Singer, van Hoewyk, & Maher, 2000). However, inherent problems with incentives may create potential dangers to survey validity as they might 1) alter the sample's composition

by attracting particular respondents; 2) influence the survey's outcome as incentives can affect participants' mood, resulting in mood congruent or mood-incongruent responses; 3) alter participants' attitudes toward the interviewer and thereby influence their statements; and 4) drive intrinsically motivated participants away from the survey (Deci 1971, as cited in Goritz 2004). The optimal respondents for this research are senior and middle management staff attending exhibitions at international or national levels. Their acquiescence in survey participation should not be significantly altered by material incentives of meager value that the research could possibly provide for a large number of respondents. Their cooperation should be based on their intrinsic motivation to voice their perception of the event, from which they expect a return on investment for their companies, to a third, independent, research party, whose report might provide feedback to the organizer for future benefit of the survey participants. For this reason, no incentives were utilized. These assumptions were verified during the survey, with participants regarding the survey as an opinion outlet, and consequent high response rates.

5.2.1.2 Sample Frame

The sample frame was identified by obtaining a comprehensive list of exhibitions hosted in China in 2009 via portal exhibition websites (e.g. www.expo-china.com and www.topcce.com). Given the timeline of the research, the researcher contacted organizers that organized events from September 2009 to December 2009 to obtain survey permissions. Sampled exhibitions were selected based on availability, organizer and host destination category, geographical location and dates. The primary consideration for selection was to sample international and national exhibitions of diverse ownerships, staged in venues in both first and second-tier cities, and covering varied industry sectors. The pilot test and main survey sampled altogether 10 exhibitions in two first-tier cities and four second-tier cities in the Yangtze River and Pearl River Delta of China. It is acknowledged that the surveys excluded exhibitions in other destinations but given the leading position of the two regions in China's exhibition industry, the sampled exhibitions and destinations can be considered representative of the population, with non-observation errors being low.

5.2.1.3 Sample Size

The determination of the sample size was influenced by the purpose of this study to cover varied exhibitions hosted in both first and second tier-cities, the proposed data analysis methods, and pragmatic considerations (timeline and budget). For factor analysis, a sample of 300 cases is considered a good sample size (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001), providing a stable factor solution (Field, 2005). Consideration of the sample size for SEM is affected by five factors, namely, 1) multivariate distribution of the data; 2) estimation technique; 3) model complexity; 4) amount of missing data; and 5) amount of average error variance among the reflective indicators (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2006). Data with nonnormal distribution may require a respondent to parameter ratio of 15:1 to minimize error impact (Wang, Fan, & Wilson, 1996). Maximum Likelihood, as the most common SEM estimation procedure, can provide valid results with sample sizes as small as 50. The recommended sample size for ML is between 150 and 400. The procedure becomes more sensitive to samples larger than 400, resulting in poorer goodness-of-fit measures (Tanaka, 1993). According to Hair et al. (2006), larger samples mean less variability and increased stability in solutions for complex models and researchers should plan for an increase in sample size to offset any problems of missing data. Hair and colleagues (2006) suggested that sample size might have to exceed 500, if the number of factors is larger than six, with some of the factors using fewer than three measured items as indicators and presence of multiple low communalities. Sample size should be increased if data exhibit nonnormal characteristics.

In this research, the pilot test collected 225 responses; 8 cases with more than 10% missing values were discarded. The main survey collected 643 responses; after data screening that deleted cases with more than 10% missing values and cases that had extreme outliers, 616 valid responses were retained for analysis. ML estimation procedure was employed. Considering the complexity of the model, normality of data distribution, and communalities of indicators, the sample size was deemed appropriate.

5.2.2 Instrument

5.2.2.1 Construct Measures

Instrument development followed Churchill's (1979) approach, namely to specify a domain of construct, generate a sample of items, collect data, purify the measure, collect data, assess reliability and validity, and develop norms. Altogether 14 underlying dimensions were proposed in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.3) in Chapter 3. Measurement items representing 'exhibition brand preference', 'communication', 'trust', 'commitment', 'relationship satisfaction', 'destination accessibility', 'accommodation', 'destination leisure environment', and 'destination economic environment' were generated from the literature. Measurement items representing 'perceived service quality' and 'cluster effect' were developed via interviews. The pool of items was reviewed by a panel of four tourism researchers and one industry executive in Hong Kong to evaluate the content validity of these items. Measurements for each construct and their sub-dimensions, including their sources, are provided in Table 5.1.

A 7-point Likert scale indicating a level of agreement ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7) was utilized for all measurements except those measuring 'exhibition brand preference', for which four items were measured by a 7-point Likert scale and the other four items by a 7-level semantic differential scale with opposing adjectives at either end of the scale.

The construct 'exhibition brand preference' (EBP) in this study refers to the priority exhibitors give to one exhibition over others in re-attendance, having evaluated the four component aspects of the exhibition brand: the exhibition, the organizer, the venue, and the destination. It is defined as the relative attitude towards the four component parts and can be operationalized as the extent of exhibitors' preference towards the current exhibition components compared to possible alternatives. Adapted from measurements of brand preference (Chen & Chang, 2008; Hellier et al., 2003; Kim, Lee & Yoo, 2006; Overby & Lee, 2006; Russell-Bennett., McColl-Kennedy, & Coote, 2007), six items were utilized to measure 'exhibition brand preference' in the pilot test. Based on the results of the pilot test, the instrument for the main survey was adjusted, utilizing eight items.

Relationship quality (RQ) is conceptualized as a higher order construct that represents 1) communication, 2) trust, 3) commitment, 4) relationship satisfaction, and 5) perceived service quality. Measurement items for the RQ dimensions were adapted from extant literature (e.g., Coote, Forrest, & Tam, 2003; Lages, Lages, & Lages, 2005) with the exception of items assessing perceived service quality, which were developed via the qualitative interviews under the framework of SERVQUAL.

The construct 'communication' (CO) assesses the extent and quality of interaction between the two sides of the relationship dyad. It refers to formal rather than informal communication. Three measurement items were adapted from Coote et al. (2003) and Lages et al. (2005) to measure the frequency and quality of communication between organizers and exhibiting firms initiated by organizers.

The construct 'trust' (TT) measures the extent to which exhibitors believe that 1) organizers have the required expertise to stage a successful exhibition, and 2) organizers have intentions and motives beneficial to exhibitors. Five indicators adapted from Garbarino and Johnson (1999), Liu, Tao, and Wang (2008), and Huntley (2006) were employed in the pilot test; four items were added in the main survey. These items mainly measured the reliability and benevolence of the trustees (that is, the organizers).

Affective commitment (AC) items measure the intention and positive emotion of maintaining this relationship, and were adapted from Coote et al. (2003), Gustafsson, Johnson and Roos (2005), and Stanko et al. (2007). Four items were employed in the pilot test, and a total of seven items were utilized in the main survey. The additional measures were adapted from the literature, with the purpose of making a clear demarcation between trust and affective commitment.

Calculative commitment (CC) items measure the extent to which exhibitors perceive the need to maintain the relationship with organizers due to the significant anticipated switching costs, lack of alternatives, or simply the perception that they ought to. Measurement items of 'calculative commitment' were adapted from Geyskens and Steenkamp (1995), Gounaris (2005), Gustafsson et al. (2005), and Kumar et al. (1995) which cover the practical, economic, administrative, and location concerns of exhibitors.

The construct ‘service quality’ (SQ) measures the level of services provided by organizers that meet the expectations of exhibitors in terms of solving problems, caring about exhibitors’ interests and welfare, meeting their exhibiting objectives, and on-site services. Four measurement items for SQ were derived from interviews with the exhibitors. The construct ‘relationship satisfaction’ (RS) not only measures exhibitors’ overall satisfaction with organizers’ services, but also aims to measure exhibitors’ satisfaction at the relational level. Two measurement items were adapted from Abdul-Muhmin (2005) and Huntley (2006).

Destination attractiveness (DA) is conceptualized as a higher-order-construct that represents 1) accessibility, 2) venue facilities, 3) destination economic standing, 4) destination general/leisure environment, and 5) cluster effect. In this study, destination infrastructure, accessibility and environment indicators were mainly adapted from Lin et al. (2007) and Chi and Qu (2008). These items were under the factors of ‘natural characteristics’, ‘amenities ‘and ‘infrastructure’ in Lin et al. (2007) and ‘activities and events’, ‘lodging’, ‘accessibility’ and ‘environment’ in Chi and Qu (2008). Destination business environment items were based on Enright and Newton (2005), while items measuring venue facilities were mainly based on the opinions of the interviewed exhibitors, although Jung (2005) and Kim et al. (2008) served as additional references. The construct ‘cluster effect’ follows the definition of Porter (1998) and Enright (2003), with measurement items developed in the interviews with exhibitors. Although a number of studies have used exploratory factor analysis to classify destination-related items, these studies are not congruent in terms of measurement items, and different labels were given to name the emergent latent factors in different studies (e.g., Chi & Qu, 2008; Lin et al., 2007). Thus, measurement items adapted from the literature and developed from the interviews of this research were subjected to purification and validation via exploratory factor analysis.

Table 5.1 Measurements in Pilot Test and Main Survey

Constructs	Measurements in the Pilot Test	Measurements in the Main Survey
Exhibition Brand Preference (EBP) (Kim, Lee & Yoo, 2006; Bennett, McColl-Kennedy, & Coote, 2007; Hellier et al., 2003; Overby & Lee, 2006)	1) Our company intends to switch to other exhibitions provided by other organizers within the next 3 years. 2) Our company would prefer this exhibition to be operated by other organizers organizing similar exhibitions in this field. 3) Our company would prefer this exhibition to be hosted in another exhibition center. 4) Our company would prefer this exhibition to be hosted in another city. 5) This exhibition meets our exhibiting needs better than any other exhibition in China. × 6) This exhibition will be our company's primary choice for exhibiting in China within the next 3 years. ×	1) Our company would prefer to switch to other exhibitions of its type. 2) Our company would prefer this exhibition to be operated by other organizers organizing similar exhibitions in this field. 3) Our company would prefer this exhibition to be hosted in another exhibition center. 4) Our company would prefer this exhibition to be hosted in another city. 5) Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be * Good □□□□□□□ Bad Favorable □□□□□□□ Unfavorable Most preferred □□□□□□□ Least preferred Likely □□□□□□□ Unlikely
Relationship Quality ***Communication (CO)*** (adapted from Lages et al., 2005, and Coote et al., 2003)	1) This organizer regularly informs us about the exhibition. 2) This organizer always informs us about any changes regarding the exhibition. 3) Our company and this organizer exchange information that may benefit both parties.	1) This organizer regularly informs us about the exhibition. 2) This organizer always informs us about any changes regarding the exhibition. 3) Our company and this organizer exchange information that may benefit both parties.
Trust (TT) (adapted from Garbarino & Johnson, 1999, Liu et al., 2008, Huntley, 2006 Garbarino & Johnson1999; Farrelly & Quester 2005)	1) This organizer has been frank in dealing with us. 2) This organizer keeps promises they make to our company. 3) We trust the information that this organizer provides us. 4) This organizer is capable of providing quality exhibitions and services to us. 5) The quality of exhibitions by this organizer has been consistently high.	1) This organizer has been frank in dealing with us. 2) This organizer keeps promises they make to our company. 3) We trust the information that this organizer provides us. 4) This organizer is capable of providing quality exhibitions and services to us. 5) The quality of exhibitions by this organizer has been consistently high.

Notes: * newly added-items in the main survey; ® items reversed in the main survey; × deleted items after the pilot test; ×× two items merged as one in the main survey

Table 5.1Measurements in Pilot Test and Main Survey (Continued)

Constructs	Measurements in the Pilot Test	Measurements in the Main Survey
Trust		6) Our company cannot always trust the quality of this exhibition to be good. * ® 7) Our company is concerned that the exhibition may not be worth our financial investment. *® 8) Our company can rely on this organizer in our business relationship. * 9) Our company worries that attending this exhibition will be a waste of time. * ®
Affective Commitment (AC) (adapted from Gustafsson et al., 2005, & Coote et al., 2003)	1) Our company thinks positively of this organizer which operates the exhibition. 2) There is mutual benefit in the relationship between our company and this organizer. 3) We take pleasure in being a customer of this organizer. 4) Maintaining a long-term relationship with this organizer is important to our company.	1) Our company thinks positively of this organizer which operates the exhibition. 2) There is mutual benefit in the relationship between our company and this organizer. 3) We take pleasure in being a customer of this organizer. 4) Maintaining a long-term relationship with this organizer is important to our company. 5) The relationship with this organizer will be profitable over the long term. * 6) Our company is committed to the relationship with the organizer. * 7) Our company dedicates important efforts to continue the relationship with this organizer. *
Calculative Commitment (CC) (adapted from Gounaris, 2005 & Gustafsson et al., 2005)	1) Our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no worthwhile alternatives. 2) Our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer 3) This organizer has administration and location advantages compared with other companies. 4) It is difficult to break the relationship with this organizer.	1) Our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no worthwhile alternatives. 2) Our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer 3) This organizer has administration and location advantages compared with other companies. 4) It is hard to break the relationship with this organizer.

Notes: * newly added-items in the main survey; ® items reversed in the main survey; × deleted items after the pilot test; ×× two items merged as one in the main survey

Table 5.1Measurements in Pilot Test and Main Survey (Continued)

Constructs	Measurements in the Pilot Test	Measurements in the Main Survey
Service Quality (SQ) (based on SERVQUAL and qualitative interviews)	1) This organizer responds to problems immediately. 2) The organizer understands our exhibiting needs and objectives. 3) The organizer cares about our welfare (e.g. actions been taken to try to protect our products' copyright). 4) The on-site services provided by this organizer met our expectations.	1) This organizer responds to problems immediately. 2) The organizer understands our exhibiting needs and objectives. 3) The organizer cares about our welfare (e.g. actions been taken to try to protect our products' copyright). 4) The on-site services provided by this organizer met our expectations. 5) This organizer has attracted the right type of buyers to this exhibition. *
Relationship Satisfaction (RS) (Abdul-Muhmin, 2005, Huntley, 2006; Rodriguez et al., 2006)	1) Overall, the services provided by this organizer meet our expectations. 2) In general, we are satisfied with our relationship with the exhibition organizer. 3) We are satisfied with the products and services we get from the organizer.	1) Overall, the services provided by this organizer meet our expectations. 2) In general, we are satisfied with our relationship with the exhibition organizer. 3) We are dissatisfied with the products and services we get from the organizer. ® 4) I will recommend this organizer as an exhibition supplier to other firms. * 5) The relationship with this organizer has produced results that enable our company to increase the value of our brand. *
Destination Attractiveness		
Accessibility (ACCE) (Adapted from Lin et al., 2007, and Chi & Qu, 2008)	1) The geographical location of this host city is convenient. 2) Accessibility to the city is easy. 3) Access to information within the host city is easy.	1) The geographical location of this host city is convenient. 2) It is easy to get to the city. 3) It is easy to get information about this host city.
Destination Leisure Environment (DLE) (Adapted from Lin et al., 2007, and Chi & Qu, 2008)	1) The quality of accommodation is high. 2) This city has limited choices for accommodation. 3) This city has good restaurants. 4) The weather in this city is nice. 5) The environment in this city is clean. 6) This city has good nightlife. 7) Transportation within this city is convenient. 8) This city has many tourist sites to visit.	1) The quality of accommodation is high. 2) This city has limited choices for accommodation. ® 3) This city has good restaurants. 4) The weather in this city is nice. 5) The environment in this city is clean. 6) This city has good nightlife. 7) Transportation within this city is convenient. 8) This city has many tourist sites to visit.

Notes: * newly added-items in the main survey; ® items reversed in the main survey; × deleted items after the pilot test; ×× two items merged as one in the main survey

Table 5.1Measurements in Pilot Test and Main Survey (Continued)

Constructs	Measurements in the Pilot Test	Measurements in the Main Survey
	9) The local people of the host city are friendly. 10) We feel safe in this city. 11) We have no language barriers in this city.	9) The local people of the host city are friendly. 10) We feel safe in this city. 11) We have no language barriers in this city.
Venue Facilities (VF) (Based on Jung, 2005; Kim et al., 2008)	1) Transportation to this exhibition center is convenient. 2) Exhibition center facilities are excellent. 3) Exhibition center layout is convenient. 4) The exhibition center is a comfortable place for business events.	1) Transportation to this exhibition center is convenient. 2) The facilities of the exhibition center are excellent. 3) Exhibition center layout is easy for people to find ways. 4) This exhibition center has sufficient space to accommodate this exhibition. 5) Location of this exhibition center is excellent. *
Economic Environment (EE) (based on Enright & Newton, 2005)	1) This city has a large number of international firms. 2) This city has support from related industries. 3) This city is among the top five in China with the strongest overall economy.	1) This city has a large number of international firms. 2) This city has support from related industries. 3) This city is among the top five in China with the strongest overall economy. 4) The business environment of this city is excellent. *
Cluster Effect (CLST) (based on Porter, 1990; Enright 2003; and developed via qualitative interviews)	1) This city is a famous manufacturing base of our industrial sector in China. 2) This city is a leading city of an industrial belt where most products/equipments in this exhibition are manufactured. 3) This city is a famous distribution hub of our industrial sector. 4) Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in this city. ×× 5) Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in the nearby regions. ×× 6) Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited come from this city. ×× 7) Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited in this exhibition come from the nearby regions. ×× 8) There is a strong professional association of our industry sector in this city. 9) This city provides incentives to exhibitors.	1) This city is an important manufacturing base of our industrial sector in China. 2) This city is a leading city of an industrial belt where most products/equipments in this exhibition are manufactured. 3) This city is an important distribution hub of our industrial sector. 4) Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in this city or nearby regions. 5) Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited in this exhibition come from this city or nearby regions. 6) There is a strong professional association of our industry sector in this city.

Notes: * newly added-items in the main survey; ® items reversed in the main survey; × deleted items after the pilot test; ×× two items merged as one in the main survey

5.2.2.2 Questionnaire Design

Questionnaire design considered several factors, including a user-friendly format, simplicity of language, and means to reduce response bias. The questionnaire was divided into several sections: introduction, respondent profile, questions about 1) relationship quality, 2) destination attractiveness, and 3) exhibition brand preference. To avoid response set bias, five items were negatively phrased, four items were reversely scaled, and items under each section were mixed independent of their proposed sub-dimensions. The questionnaire contained only close-ended questions with pre-determined answers. The questionnaire was first developed in English and then translated into Chinese, adopting a back-to-back translation procedure. Translations were conducted by two professional translators; both are native Chinese speakers with many years of translating experiences. The translations were compared and questionnaires were revised. Only Chinese questionnaires were used in the pilot test; both English and Chinese questionnaires were utilized in the main survey. Sample questionnaires for the pilot and the main survey in English and Chinese are provided in Appendices B and C.

5.2.3 Data Collection Procedures

The pilot test and main survey followed the same data collection procedures and techniques. A comprehensive list of exhibitions hosted in China in 2009 was obtained via portal exhibition websites (www.expo-china.com and www.topcce.com). The researcher contacted 15 exhibition companies who organized exhibitions in the Pearl River and Yangtze River Delta from September to December 2009 by email, seeking permission to conduct surveys at their exhibitions. This email articulated the purpose of the study, the survey procedure, assistance needed, possible reciprocal benefits to the organizer, and the survey ethics (e.g., safety and anonymity of the data). This was followed by emails and phone calls to further explain the purpose, benefits and logistics of the survey, to ensure the anonymity and safe use of data, and a promise to cause the least disturbance possible to the events. A sample questionnaire was also provided for organizers' review. Permission was obtained from nine organizers, enabling surveys be conducted at 10 exhibitions covering varied industry sectors in five cities – Guangzhou, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing, and Wuhan, which are leading cities in the Pearl River and Yangtze River industrial belts.

Local university students were recruited via university websites to work as survey helpers. Due to an attractive remuneration offered, more than 200 applications were received, leading to a selection of 24 postgraduate and senior undergraduate students from five leading universities in the five cities as survey helpers. The researcher arrived in each city one day in advance and gave students a 3-hour intensive briefing, which covered work attitude, ethics, requirements, questionnaire-related issues, survey procedures, survey techniques and tips, logistics, and dress code.

With the support of the organizers, the researcher and trained survey helpers were able to approach exhibitors on-site to conduct the surveys. The survey utilized a convenience sampling method. After arriving at the exhibition center, the helpers were assigned to different halls or areas at each exhibition center to ensure appropriate coverage of exhibiting booths. Each single exhibition booth (one exhibiting firm) was treated as one respondent. Interviewers were instructed to approach the exhibitors booth by booth, covering smaller booths as well as bigger ones. Questionnaire completion took around 15 to 20 minutes. The response rate ranged from 70% to 90% in different exhibitions.

The pilot test was conducted in September 2009 in Guangzhou at an established and influential fair of its kind in China, operated by an international exhibition company. Despite the scale, most of the participants were Chinese. Thus, only Chinese questionnaires were utilized. The main survey collected data from nine exhibitions staged at six exhibition centers in four cities in Eastern China – Shanghai, Wuhan, Nanjing and Hangzhou from November to December 2009. Two exhibitions were the largest of their kind in China, with the percentage of international exhibitors exceeding 20%; thus, both English and Chinese questionnaires were utilized. The remaining exhibitions were events at the national level, organized by a variety of organizers: international exhibition companies, state-owned exhibition companies, government affiliations, and private local exhibition companies. Table 5.2 presents the profiles of the exhibitions sampled.

Table 5.2 Exhibitions Sampled for Pilot Test and Main Survey

	Total No. of Exhibitors	Sample Obtained	Location	Venue	Organizer Characteristics
Pilot	˜1000	215	Guangzhou	China Import & Export Fair Pazhou Complex (CIEF)	A well-known international exhibition company
Main Survey					
1	1,158	107	Shanghai	Shanghai New International Exhibition Center (SNIEC)	A well-known international exhibition company
2	227	94	Shanghai	Shanghai International Exhibition Center (INTEX)	A national quasi-governmental division
3	˜100	49	Wuhan	Wuhan International Convention & Exhibition Center (WHCEC)	A local private exhibition company
4	1,982	79	Shanghai	Shanghai New International Exhibition Center (SNIEC)	A well-known international exhibition company
5	˜200	58	Shanghai	Shanghai Ever-Bright Convention & Exhibition Center (EVER-BRIGHT)	A local private exhibition company
6	˜200	75	Nanjing	Nanjing International Exhibition Center (NJIEC)	Joint cooperation between a local industrial association and an external exhibition company
7	˜100	42	Nanjing	Nanjing International Exhibition Center (NJIEC)	Local government divisions
8	˜300	81	Hangzhou	Hangzhou Peace International Convention & Exhibition Center (PEACE)	An external exhibition company
9	155	58	Shanghai	Shanghai International Exhibition Center (INTEX)	Joint cooperation between a national industrial association and an overseas exhibition company

Note: Total number of exhibitors was obtained from the event organizers. ˜ means ‘approximately’. Name, duration/time, and industrial sector of the exhibitions were purposely omitted to ensure anonymity.

5.2.4 Data Analyses

Data were analyzed using SPSS 12.0 and AMOS Graphics 17.0, drawing on relevant statistical methods, such as descriptive analysis, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structured equation modeling (SEM). Validity and reliability were also tested. Prior to the analyses, data were screened for entry errors, missing values, multivariate normality, and outliers that may impair data analysis.

5.2.4.1 Coding and Missing Values

Consideration was given to the ease of coding when designing the questionnaire. Apart from categorical questions on respondents' profiles, all other questions used 7-point Likert or semantic differential scales, allowing mutually exclusive and independent numerical values to be assigned to responses. After the initial data entry, the negatively phrased and reverse scaled items were recoded.

Three categories of missing values are discussed in the literature: 1) values missing completely at random, 2) values missing at random, and 3) values systematically missing (Kline, 1998). Systematically missing data, having systematic and nonrandom occurrence, causes research bias and affects the generalizability of research findings (Kline, 1998). With regard to the number of missing values, five to ten percent missing data on a variable may be judged small (Cohen & Cohen, 1983), while data with 40% missing values on a variable is considered high (Raymond & Roberts, 1987).

The face-to-face survey method adopted in the pilot and main survey in this research enabled interviewers to supervise the completion of the questionnaire, resulting in few missing values overall. By using the frequency function of SPSS, the percentage of missing data on any variable in the datasets of the pilot and main surveys was estimated: 4% for the pilot survey and 5% for the main survey. No specific missing pattern could be identified. In dealing with missing values, cases that had more than 10% missing values were deleted from the dataset. Thus, 8 cases in the pilot and 23 cases from the main survey were discarded. This resulted in 217 valid cases for the pilot and 616 for the main survey.

Two approaches -- listwise deletion and mean substitution were adopted to deal with missing values in this study. The reason was that the percentage of missing values of the datasets in this study was very low, and thus, any inaccuracies that might be yielded by the two simple and conservative methods would not create serious bias. In conducting descriptive and EFA analysis, listwise deletion was utilized. In CFA and SEM analysis, series mean was adopted.

5.2.4.2 Normality

Normality is one of the important assumptions for path analysis. According to Byrne (2001), when data are non-normal, several problems may occur. First, the χ^2 value derived from maximum likelihood estimation (ML) becomes exceptionally large. Second, values of some fit indices, such as Tucker-Lewis index (TLI, Tucker & Lewis, 1973) and the comparative fit index (CFI, Bentler, 1990), are modestly underestimated. Third, the standard errors can be spuriously low, resulting in statistically significant parameters for regression paths and factor/error covariances, although they may not be so in the population. Allison (1987) proposed ML as a major estimate tool. This method assumes multivariate normality. However, he also stated that violations of multivariate normality will not seriously compromise the estimates.

Normality is usually measured on two levels: univariate and multivariate. Univariate normality can be assessed by examining the skewness and kurtosis indices of each variable. Bulmer (1965) suggested a rule of thumb for estimating skewness: if skewness is between -1 and -0.5 or between 0.5 and 1, the distribution is moderately skewed. If skewness is between -0.5 and 0.5, the distribution is approximately symmetric. The direction of skewness can be estimated by a critical ratio. With a value lower than -2, the population is likely skewed negatively. With a value between -2 and 2, no conclusion can be reached. The distribution in the population can either be symmetric or skewed in either direction. With a value higher than 2, the population is likely skewed positively, although the degree of skewness is not known. The reference standard for a normal distribution of kurtosis is 3. A distribution with kurtosis less than 3 is platykurtic; a distribution with kurtosis over 3 is leptokurtic. Multivariate normality can be assessed by chi-square tests in the output of AMOS. Normal distribution of each variable (univariate normality) does not necessarily

guarantee a multivariate normal distribution. In addition, large sample size might inflate chi-square values of the normality test. Normally, a sample size of 200 could have generated significant results in chi-square tests (Kline, 1998).

Univariate and multivariate normality was assessed for the main survey data prior to various statistical tests by using the output of AMOS. Results showed that variables had either an approximately symmetric distribution (with a skewness value between -0.5 to 0.5) or a moderately skewed distribution (with a skewness value between -1 and -0.5 or between 0.5 and 1). Critical ratio values for most variables are less than -2, implying that the population is likely moderately skewed negatively. Regarding kurtosis, all variables had a platykurtic distribution (with kurtosis less than 3). Chi-square for multivariate test is significant. However, given that 1) the large sample size (616 respondents) and number of variables in this research (66 variables) may have inflated the chi-square values of the normality test, 2) the absolute values of univariate skewness and kurtosis did not exceed the thresholds set by Bulmer (1965), and 3) in practice, most data cannot meet the assumption of multivariate normality (West, Finch, & Curran, 1995), it is argued that the assumption of multivariate normality was not seriously violated. The ML estimation method would offset the effect of non-normality on final results. Therefore, data transformation was not deemed necessary, and the original dataset was used for subsequent analyses.

5.2.4.3 Exploratory Factor Analysis

After data screening, data were subjected to factor analysis to either suggest dimensions or confirm whether the number of dimensions conceptualized can be verified empirically. Tests for reliability (Cronbach alpha) for each dimension were performed to guarantee the quality of the measurement (Churchill, 1979). The formula was applied separately to items relating to different factors as suggested by Cronbach (1951). A value higher than 0.9 is considered excellent, higher than 0.8 is good, and a value higher than 0.7 is acceptable (Field, 2005). This cutting-off point of .7 was utilized to judge the strength of the measures. Items with a low Cronbach coefficient alpha were eliminated. The Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were checked to examine the adequacy of sample size and validity of correlation matrix. KMO values between .7 and .8 are considered good, values between .8 and .9 are great, and values

above .9 are superb (Field, 2005). Varimax rotation was employed for each EFA analysis as rotation "improves the interpretability of factors" (Field, 2005, p.644). In extracting factors, Kaiser's criterion of eigenvalues greater than 1 was utilized. Items with a factor loading less than .4 were suppressed. The correlation matrix was scanned to identify coefficients higher than .9 to be confident that multicollinearity was not a problem for the data. Items with communalities lower than 0.5 were removed for not having sufficient common correlations with other items. The EFA results of the main survey were compared with the EFA results in the pilot test to decide the dimensionality of the constructs.

The main survey data were randomly split into two subsets: one calibration sample with 294 cases for EFA analysis and one validation sample with 293 cases for CFA analysis. This was based on Hair and colleagues' (2006) argument that CFA is the most direct method of validating the results of EFA and that if sample size permits, the sample may be split into two subsets to estimate a factor model for each subset. Comparison of the two resulting factor matrices provided an assessment of the robustness of the solution across the sample.

5.2.4.4 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFA was conducted to examine if the instruments were sound and valid in measuring the corresponding constructs. Three steps were taken to validate the conceptual model. First, first order CFA was conducted separately for the three endogenous and exogenous constructs with the validation sample to establish measures and dimensionality. Then, second order CFA was conducted for each endogenous and exogenous construct with the full data to confirm that the constructs are higher order constructs that represented the proposed dimensions. Models were also modified based on modification indices. Lastly, CFA of the overall measurement model was conducted, and validity parameters were calculated.

In first order CFA, standard factor loadings, t-value, squared multiple correlations (R^2 or SMC), and composite reliability (CR) were reported to measure the reliability and validity of the measurement models. SMC measures the reliability of the indicators by showing the proportion of variance in an indicator that is explained by its underlying latent

variable. A high SMC value indicates high reliability for the indicator concerned (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). Using squared correlation coefficient, CR, and average variance extracted (AVE), construct convergent and discriminant validity were checked. Convergent validity of the measure is evidenced by the extent to which it correlates highly with other methods designed to measure the same construct. Discriminant validity is indicated by "predictably low correlations between the measure of interest and other measures that are supposedly not measuring the same variable or concept" (Heeler & Ray, 1972, p.362, in Churchill, 1979, p. 70). CR exceeding 0.60 indicates good construct validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). AVE is a complement to test construct validity. If AVE exceeds 0.5, it indicates that convergent validity reaches a satisfactory level. If AVE for each construct is higher than the squared correlation coefficients for corresponding inter-constructs, it confirms discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

In the second step, higher-order factor structures were validated. Such factors can be thought of as "one way of accounting for covariance between constructs just as first-order factors account for covariation between observed variables" (Hair et al., 2006, p.816). A second-order factor is more parsimonious but conceptually more complicated than the first-order structure. If the higher-order factor explains theoretically related outcomes as well as or better than the combined set of first-order factors, then evidence is in favor of the higher-order factor. A second-order model is also supported if it shows greater nomological validity than a first-order model (Hair et al., 2006). Higher-order measurement models are still subject to construct validity standards. Thus, standard factor loadings, t-value, SMC, and CR were reported to measure the reliability and validity of each of the second-order models. The reason why both first and second-order factor CFAs were conducted is that, in the first-order model, the relationships between the multiple first-order factors could be tested, while in the second order model, these first-order factors are used as indicators of the higher order factor. As the final step, the overall measurement model including all endogenous and exogenous variables was validated, with the standard factor loadings, t-value, SMC, CR, and AVE reported.

5.2.4.5 Independent Sample T-Tests

Independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare the differences in exhibitors' perceptions of their relationships with the organizers and destination attractiveness of different destinations. Perceptions of exhibitors with different corporate backgrounds or exhibiting at exhibitions of varying organizer and destination characteristics were compared. Perceptions of relationship quality dimensions were compared within three groups: 1) exhibitors at exhibitions organized by international organizers versus those at shows organized by domestic organizers; 2) exhibitors at exhibitions organized by private exhibiting companies versus those at shows organized by government-affiliations; and 3) first-time exhibitors versus repeat exhibitors. In addition, perceptions of destination attractiveness factors of exhibitors exhibiting at the first-tier city were compared with those exhibiting at second-tier cities. Mean difference, T-values and significant levels were reported.

5.2.4.6 Structural Model

After adequate measurement and construct validity were established by using CFA, SEM was conducted to test the structural model. The structural model represented the hypotheses of interests. The hypotheses were tested by examining the sign, magnitude, and statistical significance of the structural coefficients (Baumgartner & Homburg, 1996). Maximum likelihood estimation (ML), which is the most widely used approach, was chosen as the technique to estimate the model. ML is efficient and unbiased when the assumption of multivariate normality is met, and has proven fairly robust to violations of the normality assumption (Hair et al., 2006). Parameters for the alpha coefficients for each structural equation, SMC, and goodness-of-fit indices were reported. SMC disclosed the percentage of variation in the endogenous constructs accounted for by the exogenous constructs. SMC which explained variances in the endogenous construct that was explained by the exogenous variables, illustrated the statistical power of the model to predict the endogenous construct. Goodness-of-fit indices indicated if the model was plausible or not.

5.2.4.7 Assessment of Overall Model Fit

Using three to four model fit indices provides adequate evidence of model fit (Hair et al., 2006). Model fit indices, such as chi-square (χ^2), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), in CFA and SEM, were quoted to indicate if the proposed measurement model was plausible or not. These fit indices not only consider the fit of the model, but also its parsimony. The goal is to produce a goodness-of-fit index that does not exclusively depend on the sample size, the distribution of the data, and the complexity of the model. χ^2 statistics are absolute fit indices, which are a direct measure of how well the model specified by the researcher reproduces the observed data. χ^2 statistic is difficult to use as a sole indicator of SEM fit, as the value increases with sample size and the number of observed variables. GFI is often sensitive to sample size, normality of the data, and complexity of the model. RMSEA, as a goodness-of-fit index, is considered as an alternative (Byrne, 2001). The idea is to test how well a given model approximates the true model. If the approximation is good, the RMSEA should be small. CFI is one of the incremental fit indices, which assesses how well a specified model fits relative to some alternative baseline model. CFI is among the most widely used indices because it has many desirable properties including its relative, but not complete, insensitivity to model complexity (Hair et al., 2006). Evaluation of fit should also consider different sample size, model complexity, and degrees of error in model specification. Table 5.3 provides guidelines for using fit indices in different situations when the number of observations is larger than 250.

Table 5.3 Model Fit Indices across Different Model Situations

Fix Indices	M≤12	12 <M> 30	M≥30
χ^2	Insignificant p-values can result with good fit	Significant p-values can be expected	Significant p-values can be expected
CFI or TLI	.95 or better	Above .92	Above .90
SRMR	Could be biased upward; use other indices	.08 or less (with CFI above .92)	.08 or less (with CFI above .92)
RMSEA	Values <.07 with CFI of .97 or higher	Values <.07 with CFI of .92 or higher	Values <.07 with CFI of .90 or higher

Note: N>250; M=number of observed variables;
Source: Hair et al., 2006

5.2.4.8 Model Modification

Models were modified during the analyses based on the guideline that the resulting parameter change was theoretically and practically meaningful (Baumgartner & Homburg, 1996). Items of low item-total correlations or bad performance in EFA or CFA were deleted from the model. The proposed model in Chapter 3 was specified based on the EFA and CFA analyses results. No further addition of structural paths or pruning of the model was made.

Next, the results of both the pilot test and the main survey are presented in Sections 5.3 and 5.4 respectively. Section 5.3 reports the result of the pilot test, including the profile of respondents, descriptive statistics, EFA analyses results, reliability analyses, and measurement improvements after EFA. The profile of respondents of the pilot test is presented in Table 5.4. However, tables relating to the descriptive statistics and results of the EFA for the pilot test have been placed in the Appendix D to aid brevity and clarity of presentation and flow. Section 5.4 reports the results of the main survey, including the profile of respondents, descriptive statistics, EFA and CFA tests, independent sample t-tests, and SEM. All relevant tables detailing the results of the main survey have been placed throughout Section 5.4.

5.3 Results – Pilot Test

5.3.1 Profile of Respondents

Table 5.4 presents the profile of pilot test respondents. About half of the respondents represented medium-sized companies, followed by one-third of small companies with less than 50 employees, and one-fifth of respondents representing larger companies with more than 300 employees.

The majority were repeat exhibitors of the sampled exhibition; more than half the respondents had attended the sampled exhibition more than six times, close to one third had attended twice to five times, and less than one fifth were first-time exhibitors. Respondents were frequent exhibitors, given that the companies represented exhibited frequently in China on an annual basis: close to 60% exhibited three or more times, more than 30% exhibited twice a year, and only less than 10% exhibited only once a year. Most respondents

held managerial positions in their respective companies. More than 12% of respondents were business owners or partners and more than 60% of respondents were senior or middle management staff. The sampled exhibition was hosted in Guangzhou, a leading city of South China and a famous distribution center for the industrial sector for the exhibition topic. Thus, not surprisingly, the majority of exhibitors came from South China (59%), followed by exhibitors from East China (27%); the remainder were from other parts of China and overseas.

Table 5.4 Sample Profile – Pilot Test

Characteristics	Number	Percent (%)
Size of the company		
Less than 50 employees	63	29.4
50 to 300 employees	106	49.5
More than 300 employees	45	21.0
Times exhibited in this exhibition (since exhibition started)		
once	39	18.2
2 to 5 times	63	29.4
6 to 9 times	36	16.8
10 times or more	76	35.5
Annual exhibition attendance in China		
once	20	9.3
twice	67	31.3
Three times	51	23.8
4 times or more	76	35.5
Position in the company		
business owner	13	6.1
managing partners	14	6.6
senior management staff	50	23.5
middle management staff	78	36.6
others	58	27.2
Company location		
South China	124	58.5
East China	57	26.9
Northeast China	13	6.1
Middle China	6	2.8
Overseas	5	2.4
Southeast China	3	1.4
Northwest China	4	1.9

N=214

5.3.2 Descriptive Statistics

A table of the descriptive statistics in descending mean values for the pilot test is provided in Appendix D. Most measurement items for all three constructs were rated above the mid-point (4.0) value, indicating high EBP, positive perception of relationship with organizers and high ratings on destination attractiveness.

Regarding items measuring relationship quality, the highest rated items were ‘maintaining long-term relationship is important’ (AC), ‘there is mutual benefit in the relationship’ (AC), ‘organizer understands exhibiting needs and objectives’ (SQ), ‘organizer is capable of providing quality exhibitions’ (TT), and ‘we take pleasure in being a customer of this organizer’ (AC), with mean values of 5.08, 4.97, 4.95, 4.95 and 4.95 respectively. These items measure the perceived affective commitment and trust of respondents toward the organizer. Results indicate that the respondents deemed it important to develop long-term beneficial relationship with the organizers, and, to a certain degree, they had established a sense of trust in the organizer based on experience. The lowest rated items were ‘the on-site services provided by the organizer are good’ (SQ), ‘the organizer cares about our interests’ (SQ), ‘it is difficult to break the relationship with this organizer’ (CC), and ‘our company may suffer economically if the relationship is broken’ (CC), with mean values of 4.53, 4.52, 4.03, and 3.84 respectively. The two lowest rated items measure the calculative commitment of respondents toward the relationship with the organizer, potentially indicating respondents’ perception that they possessed independence in business standing and their choice of exhibition participation. The item ‘our company may suffer economically if the relationship is broken’ (CC) is the only one that had a mean value lower than the mid-point (4.0) among a total number of 24 items. Items measuring service quality and communication were generally rated lower than those measuring trust and affective commitment, indicating that trust and affective commitment might be evaluated based on the scale and effectiveness of the exhibition, rather than on the services provided by organizers.

Considering the destination attractiveness construct, only one item had a mean value lower than the neutral point (4.0) among a total number of 30 items, indicating that destination performance was perceived favorably. The top rated items were ‘city nightlife’

(DLE), ‘accessibility to the city’ (ACCE), ‘access to information within the city’ (ACCE), ‘economic standing of the city as one of top five in China’ (EE), with mean values of 5.5, 5.45, 5.39, and 5.35 respectively. The lowest rated items were all related to destination leisure environment (DLE): intra-city transportation (4.31), nice weather (4.25), accommodation choice (4.11), and safety (4.08). It is surprising that ‘city nightlife’ was rated highest; in contrast to other items measuring destination leisure environment being the lowest rated items – Guangzhou has a negative image of poor intra-city transportation and safety in China, and it is not regarded as a leisure but business destination. Although items measuring venue facilities and economic environment were rated lower than those measuring accessibility, they were among the top rated items, reflecting the fact that the venue where the sampled exhibition was hosted is the largest and most sophisticated venue in China, and Guangzhou is the leading city in the industrial sector for the exhibition topic.

Regarding EBP, the highest rated items were ‘this exhibition will be our company’s primary choice’ (4.96), and ‘this exhibition meets our needs better than other exhibitions’ (4.94), indicating positive confirmation of this exhibition brand and a certain degree of positive behavioral intention. In contrast, respondents’ attitudes toward the organizer and the exhibition center are more neutral: ‘our company prefers this organizer to other organizers’ (4.24) and ‘our company prefers this exhibition center to other centers’ (4.17). The lowest rated item was ‘our company prefers this city to other cities’ (3.89), pointing to the potential willingness of exhibitors to move to another destination if the organizer decides to move the exhibition. Overall, results indicate that the exhibition basically served as their primary choice for future exhibiting activities.

5.3.3 Exploratory Factor Analysis

Measures from the relationship marketing and tourism literature were adapted to a different context and setting (that is, the exhibition B2B context and China) in this study. Measures for ‘cluster effect’ were developed from the interviews, as detailed in chapter 4. Thus, as advised by Churchill (1979), EFA was performed to reassess the dimensionality and reliability of these measures. Results of the EFA for relationship quality, destination attractiveness and exhibition brand preference, reporting factor loadings, Eigen-value, variance explained and reliability coefficient, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity and KMO results,

are presented in Appendix D. These results and amendments for the main survey questionnaire are discussed next.

5.3.3.1 Relationship Quality

A four factor solution explaining 66.4% of the total variance was generated, which differed from the six dimension conceptualization suggested by the literature (Table 5.1). Items proposed to measure 'communication' loaded onto one underlying factor as suggested by the literature. The same held true for items proposed for the 'calculative commitment' dimension. However, items proposed for 'trust' and 'affective commitment' loaded onto one underlying factor. The same happened to items proposed for 'service quality' and 'relationship satisfaction'. Cronbach's alphas, which exceeded 0.7 for all four factors generated, confirmed internal consistency of the measurements (Field, 2005).

Even though in EFA items are loaded simply on a statistical basis without any theoretical justification, this solution is not unexpected and is tenable. A scrutiny of the literature demonstrates that researchers did not sufficiently differentiate between measurements of trust and affective commitment. For example, Gustafsson et al. (2005) even used an item 'I have feelings of trust towards the company' as a measure for affective commitment. It should be noted that the measures for affective commitment diverge from the measures for calculative commitment, emphasizing the need for the caution to treat commitment as a uni-dimensional factor in further studies.

Another interesting finding from EFA is that, although 'the organizer cares about our interests' item was a measure for 'trust' in many studies (e.g., Farrelly & Quester, 2005; Huntley, 2006; Liu et al., 2008), it loaded onto the factor that signifies service quality and satisfaction in this study, which is in congruence with the interview results, as reported in Chapter 4.

Based on EFA results of the pilot test, no changes were made for the 'communication' and 'calculative commitment' measurements for the main survey questionnaire, given their stable and clear dimensionality. However, this was not the case for the service quality and relationship satisfaction construct. In order to test whether items

proposed for these two constructs loaded onto one underlying factor was due to the limited number of items used in the pilot test or due to the commonality the items shared in this exhibition context in the Chinese setting, three more items were added to the original seven items. Two items proposed to measure relationship satisfaction were adapted from Rodriguez, Agudo, and Gutierrezl (2006); one item, derived from the exhibitor interviews, was proposed to measure service quality (See Table 5.1). Likewise, to verify whether trust and affective commitment can be uni-dimensional, additional items were adapted from the literature and added into the questionnaire for the main survey. Three items were adapted from Garbarino and Johnson (1999), and were negatively phrased to reduce response set bias for trust. Four items were adapted from Farrelly and Quester (2005), one of which was negatively phrased (See Table 5.1).

5.3.3.2 Destination Attractiveness

Seven factors emerged, explaining 62.1% of the total variance, which were labeled venue facilities, cluster 1 (leadership of the host city in the industry), cluster 2 (host city/region as a source of exhibitors), destination leisure environment, destination economic environment, accommodation, and accessibility.

Several issues were identified as a result of the EFA solution. First, items proposed to measure cluster effects loaded upon two underlying factors: cluster effect 1 and cluster effect 2. Loaded with four items, Cluster effect 1 stressed the leadership of the host city in the industry: strong industry association, distribution hub, manufacturing base, and leading city of an industrial belt. Only one item ‘access to information within the city’ lacked theoretical justification under this dimension, which was supposed to be a measure for accessibility (e.g., Chi & Qu 2008). Considering respondents’ concerns over the ease of accessing information about the city in the qualitative research, the ‘access to information within the city’ (ACCE) item was retained for validation using main survey data. It would be removed from further analyses if EFA using main survey data obtained the same result. Further, Cronbach’s alpha suggested that the reliability coefficient of cluster effect 1 could be improved from 0.811 to 0.829 if this item were deleted. Cluster effect 2 stressed the sources of exhibitors for the exhibition; all four items in cluster effect 2 had high factor

loadings and the factor had high internal consistency (0.870), thus the dimensionality of this factor can be assumed.

Second, the nine items proposed for destination leisure environment loaded onto three factors: five items loaded onto one factor which was labeled ‘destination leisure environment’, two items (‘having good nightlife’ and ‘having tourist sites’) loaded onto the ‘venue facilities’ factor, one item (‘intra-city transportation’) loaded onto the ‘accommodation’ factor. These loadings lacked theoretical justification. It might be that the two items loaded onto the ‘venue facilities’ factor were placed next to the venue measures in the questionnaire, which might cause inertia in the way items were rated.

Third, the ‘accommodation’ factor had a low Cronbach alpha (0.542), suggesting a low internal consistency of variables within the factor. However, the three items were retained to be tested again in the main survey as these items were among key factors proposed by exhibitors in interviews. The factor and indicators would be removed from further analyses if EFA using main survey data obtained the same result. Likewise, items for destination leisure environment and accessibility were retained.

In view of concerns over dimensions in the EFA of the destination attractiveness construct, minor changes were made to the instrument. First, two items were added to the main survey questionnaire: 1) ‘location of the venue is excellent’, and 2) ‘the business environment of this city is excellent’ to enhance the measures for venue facility and city economic environment factors. Second, according to the feedback of pilot test respondents, items for cluster effect 2 were merged to avoid repetition and aid brevity (See Table 5.1). Third, several items were relocated in the questionnaire for the main survey.

5.3.3.3 Exhibition Brand Preference

The EFA of exhibition brand preference generated two factors, explaining 67.9% of the variances in the underlying construct. Two indicators aiming to assess exhibitors’ comparative evaluation of the exhibition brand, that is, the ‘this exhibition meets our exhibiting needs better than any other exhibitions in China’ and ‘this exhibition will be our company’s primary choice for exhibiting in China within the next 3 years’ item, loaded

together, which was labeled as preference for the exhibition brand. The other four factors loaded together, which measured preference for the components of the exhibition brand, namely the event, the organizer, the venue, and the host city, to other alternatives. Considering that this study aimed to identify the effect of all four components of an exhibition brand to exhibitors, not just one collective entity, this result was deemed acceptable.

EFA results identified two dimensions for the construct 'exhibition brand preference', with one dimension having only two indicators. Yet, a measurement model with only two measured items and a single construct might be underidentified (Hair et al., 2006). Thus, minor changes were made to the instrument. A four-item measurement utilizing a 7-point semantic differential scale to measure customers' attitude towards their preferred choice of brands/products used by Bennett et al. (2007) was adapted to measure exhibitors' preference towards the exhibitions they attend (See Table 5.1). These measures are both brand-specific and measure the purchaser's predisposition to purchase the brand on the next purchase occasion (Bennett, 2001).

In summary, EFA for the pilot test resulted in a four-factor solution for the relationship quality construct, a seven-factor solution for the destination attractiveness construct, and a two-factor solution for the exhibition brand preference construct. RQ was represented by 1) service quality & relationship satisfaction, 2) trust & affective commitment, 3) calculative commitment, and 4) communication. DA was represented by 1) cluster effect 1, 2) cluster effect 2, 3) venue facilities, 4) accessibility, 5) accommodation, 6) destination leisure environment, and 7) economic environment. EBP was represented by 1) preference for different segments of the exhibition, and 2) attitudes towards future exhibiting. Results revealed some discrepancies compared to the previous literature and the proposed models based on analyzing the literature. In order to test if the discrepancies were data or context-specific, measurements were adjusted, including addition of new items, reversely-coded items, and relocation of items in the questionnaire. The revised instrument was utilized for the main survey, the results of which are presented next.

5.4 Results – Main Survey

5.4.1 Sample Characteristics

Table 5.5 provides a summary of the characteristics of the sample of the main survey, both at the aggregate and venue-specific level, as the latter can disclose more detailed information about the subjects in each exhibition.

At the aggregate level, about half of the sample was from medium-sized enterprises with 50 to 300 employees. Smaller enterprises with less than 50 employees and larger enterprises with more than 300 employees accounted for approximately 25% each, although this slightly differed among the sampled exhibitions. This is consistent with the nature of the exhibition industry in China, which serves predominantly as a marketing platform for SMEs (e.g., Zitzewitz, 2005). About one-third of the respondents were first-time exhibitors, yet again, this figure fluctuated among different exhibitions, ranging from a 52% of first-time exhibitors in EverBright-Shanghai to 21% in SNIEC-Shanghai. The two exhibitions sampled in SNICE had a relatively low rate of first-time exhibitors and a higher rate of repeat customers.

In terms of annual exhibition attendance in China, aggregately, more than 80% of firms attended more than two exhibitions per annum. Approximately 36% of firms exhibiting in SNICE stated that they only attended this one exhibition per annum, while this figure went down in other shows: ranging from 21% in the Hangzhou show to 3% in the Nanjing show. In contrast, a sizable number of firms stated that they attended more than 4 exhibitions per annum in China: ranging from 71% for the sample in Nanjing to 25% of the sample in SNIEC.

In terms of global exhibition attendance, many firms exhibited more than 3 times per annum at overseas exhibitions: ranging from 46% of the sample in SNIEC to 18% of the sample in Wuhan. The frequency with which firms in China exhibit both domestically and internationally indicates that they are actively seeking exhibiting opportunities, which is not restricted to first-tier cities in China.

Table 5.5 Sample Characteristics – Main Survey

Characteristics	Venue-Wise												Overall Sample	
Venue	**SNIEC**		**INTEX**		**EVERB RIGHT**		**WHCEC**		**PEACE**		**NJIEC**		**Overall**	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Size of the company														
Less than 50 employees	43	24.3	32	21.8	9	17.3	11	24.4	28	34.6	26	23.6	149	24.3
50 to 300 employees	83	46.9	76	51.7	30	57.7	18	40.0	40	49.4	55	50.0	303	49.4
More than 300 employees	51	28.8	39	26.5	13	25.0	16	35.6	13	16.0	29	26.4	161	26.3
Total (listwise)	177		147		52		45		81		110		613	
Times exhibited in this exhibition since the exhibition started														
once	38	21.3	54	36.5	27	51.9	15	33.3	35	43.2	36	32.7	205	33.3
2 to 5 times	93	52.2	56	37.8	10	19.2	15	33.3	17	21.0	34	30.9	225	36.6
6 to 9 times	24	13.5	20	13.5	5	9.6	5	11.1	11	13.6	11	10.0	76	12.4
More than 10 times	22	12.4	18	12.2	10	19.2	10	22.2	18	22.2	29	26.4	109	17.6
Total (listwise)	177		148		52		45		81		110		615	
Times of annual exhibition attendance in China														
once	63	36.0	8	5.4	5	9.8	4	8.9	17	21.0	3	2.7	100	16.4
twice	39	22.3	49	33.3	10	19.6	11	24.4	18	22.2	10	9.1	137	22.5
Three times	29	16.6	38	25.9	11	21.6	10	22.2	17	21.0	19	17.3	124	20.3
4 times or more	43	24.6	52	35.4	25	49.0	20	44.4	29	35.8	78	70.9	249	40.7
Total (listwise)	174		147		51		45		81		110		610	

Notes: Both overall and breakdown of main survey sample characteristics are presented. Breakdown was compiled according to the venues where data were collected.

Table 5.5 Sample Characteristics – Main Survey (Continued)

	SNIEC		INTEX		EVERB RIGHT		WHCEC		PEACE		NJIEC		Overall	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Times of annual exhibition attendance overseas														
Not at all	34	19.3	46	31.1	20	38.5	26	57.8	43	53.1	46	41.8	215	35.1
once	23	13.1	29	19.6	11	21.2	4	8.9	8	9.9	13	11.8	88	14.4
twice	37	21.0	30	20.3	6	11.5	7	15.6	13	16.0	17	15.5	111	18.1
3 times or more	81	46.0	43	29.1	15	28.8	8	17.8	17	21.0	34	30.9	199	32.3
Total (listwise)	176		148		52		45		81		110		613	
Positions in the company														
business owner	12	6.7	5	3.4	3	5.8	1	2.2	10	12.5	7	6.4	38	6.2
managing partners	15	8.4	4	2.8	1	1.9	2	4.4	5	6.3	5	4.5	32	5.2
senior management staff	51	28.7	14	9.7	6	11.5	10	22.2	15	18.8	26	23.6	122	20.0
middle management staff	78	43.8	71	49.0	23	44.2	19	42.2	29	36.3	47	42.7	268	43.7
others	21	11.8	51	35.2	19	36.5	13	28.9	21	26.3	25	22.7	151	24.7
Total (listwise)	175		145		52		45		80		110		611	
Where is the company located														
North China	50	28.6	23	15.8	1	1.9	2	4.4	13	16.0	15	13.6	104	17.0
East China	69	39.4	100	68.5	32	61.5	8	17.8	58	71.6	68	61.8	336	55.1
South China	10	5.7	6	4.1	17	32.7	9	20.0	7	8.6	14	12.7	63	10.3
Middle China	27	15.4	8	5.5	1	1.9	26	57.8	3	3.7	3	2.7	67	11.0
Southeast China	6	3.4	1	.7	1	1.9					7	6.4	14	2.3
Northwest China	3	1.7	2	1.4							1	.9	7	1.1
Northeast China	4	2.3	5	3.4							2	1.8	12	2.0
Overseas	6	3.4	1	.7	52		45		81		110		7	1.1
Total (listwise)	175		145										610	

Notes: Both overall and breakdown of main survey sample characteristics are presented. Breakdown was compiled according to the venues where data were collected.

Most respondents were in managerial positions: about half of the respondents were middle management staff, followed by one-third who were business owners or at senior management level. The majority of exhibitors (60%) in most sampled exhibitions were from nearby regions of the host city. Overall, approximately 55% of all sampled firms are located in Eastern China, followed by 17% in Northern China, and the remainder from other parts of China. The number of exhibitors from nearby regions decreased when the event became increasingly international.

5.4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 5.6 shows the number of valid samples, means, and standard deviations for all measurement items. It presents the variables under each of the three main constructs in descending order of mean values, providing an indication of the level of agreement with each of these statements.

Among the variables relating to the relationship quality construct, three items measuring trust were the highest ranking variables: ‘this organizer keeps promises’ (TT), ‘our company trust the information this organizer provides’ (TT), and ‘our company can rely on this organizer in our business relationship’ (TT) with mean values of 5.1, 5.07, and 4.92 respectively. This was followed by three items measuring affective commitment, with mean values ranging from 4.86 to 4.80. Considering the survey used a 7-Likert scale, the mean values of these items were not very high. The lowest rated items were items measuring calculative commitment: ‘it is hard to break the relationship with the organizer’ (CC) and ‘our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer’ (CC), with mean values of 3.9 and 3.6 respectively. This was consistent with the results of the pilot test, indicating that respondents believe that they possess independence in business standing and their choice of exhibiting participation. These are the only two variables having a mean value lower than the neutral point (4). It should be noted that one important item measuring service quality (‘this organizer has attracted the right type of buyers to this exhibition) has a low value of 4.06, indicating that some of the exhibitors felt their exhibiting objectives were not met. In general, items measuring service quality were rated lower than those measuring trust and affective commitment. This is in consistent with the

result of the pilot test, suggesting that organizers might have competencies to establish trust and affective commitment, but they might have to improve their services to further improve their relationship with the exhibitors.

Regarding the items measuring the destination attractiveness construct, a total of 18 items had mean values higher than 5.0; 11 items had mean values between 4.0 to 5.0. This indicated that destinations were generally rated favorably by respondents. The three highest rated items were all related to accessibility (ACCE): 'the geographical location of this host city is convenient', 'it is easy to get information about this host city', and 'it is easy to get to the city', with mean values of 5.6, 5.56, and 5.49 respectively. Interestingly, this is identical to the results of the pilot test. The fact that accessibility was rated very favorably might indicate the improvement of inter-city transportation (air and fast train network) in China. The lowest rated items were 'this city is an important manufacturing base of our industrial sector in China' (CLST), 'transportation within this city is convenient' (ACCE), and 'the facilities of the exhibition center are excellent' (VF), with mean values of 4.28, 4.36, and 4.48 respectively. Generally speaking, items measuring cluster effects and venue facilities were rated lower than those measuring destination leisure environment, indicating that opinion on the venue facilities in some of the host cities, and the advantages of the host city in the industrial sector for the exhibition topic varied considerably among respondents.

Overall, respondents were positive towards future participation, with the four items measuring their attitude towards future attendance ranging from 5.39 to 5.44. However, the mean values of the preference for the exhibition brand components, especially for organizer and the event were low, with values of 3.99 and 4.08 respectively. This suggests that exhibition attendance in the near future might not be affected by dissatisfying organizer service or effectiveness, as exhibitors are actively seeking marketing opportunities in exhibitions. However, organizers must enhance their services and the quality of the exhibitions so that exhibitors would not switch to other events.

Table 5.6 Descriptive Statistics – Main Survey

	Measures	Mean	Std. Deviation
Relationship Quality			
TT	This organizer keeps promises it makes to our company.	5.10	1.519
TT	Our company trusts the information this organizer provides	5.07	1.446
TT	Our company can rely on this organizer in our business relationship.	4.92	1.486
AC	The relationship with this organizer will be profitable over the long term.	4.86	1.445
AC	Our company takes pleasure in being a customer of the organizer.	4.84	1.621
AC	Maintaining a long-term relationship with this organizer is important to our company.	4.80	1.601
CC	This organizer has location advantages compared with other organizers.	4.77	1.717
CO	This organizer always informs our company of important changes about the exhibition.	4.75	1.667
TT	Our company trusts the organizer to provide quality exhibitions and services to us.	4.73	1.612
CO	This exhibition organizer regularly informs our company about this exhibition.	4.73	1.788
AC	The relationship with this organizer is something our company intends to maintain.	4.73	1.562
SQ	This organizer responds to problems immediately.	4.65	1.496
AC	There is a mutual benefit in the relationship between our company and the organizer.	4.64	1.692
AC	Our company is committed to the relationship with the organizer.	4.64	1.497
TT	Our company worries that attending this exhibition will be a waste of time ®.	4.63	1.854
CO	This organizer and our company exchange information that may benefit one another.	4.61	1.655
SQ	Our company is displeased with the products and services we get from the organizer ®.	4.59	1.770
SQ	This organizer understands our exhibiting needs and objectives.	4.59	1.586
RS	In general, our company is satisfied with our relationship with this organizer.	4.57	1.588
RS	Our company is satisfied with the professionalism of this organizer.	4.57	1.593
AC	The relationship with this organizer has produced results that enable our company to increase the value of our brand.	4.56	1.568
SQ	Overall, the services provided by this organizer meet our expectations.	4.54	1.578
SQ	This organizer cares about our interests (e.g. actions have been taken to protect the copyright of our products).	4.48	1.529
CC	It pays off economically to be a customer of this organizer.	4.45	1.597
SQ	The on-site services provided by this organizer are good.	4.42	1.664
TT	Our company is concerned that the exhibition may not be worth our financial investment ®.	4.41	1.806

N=616. Note: all items were measured on a 7 Likert scale, with 1 indicating ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 indicating ‘strong agree’. ®:items negatively phrased in the questionnaire and recoded for analyses.

Table 5.6 Descriptive Statistics – Main Survey (Continued)

	Measures	Mean	Std. Deviation
RS	I will recommend this organizer as an exhibition supplier to other firms.	4.39	1.729
AC	Our company dedicates important efforts to continue the relationship with this organizer.	4.38	1.616
CC	Our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no better similar exhibitions in this region.	4.30	1.710
TT	Our company cannot always trust the quality of this exhibition to be good ®.	4.07	1.841
SQ	This organizer has attracted the right type of buyers to this exhibition.	4.06	1.713
CC	It is hard to break the relationship with this organizer.	3.90	1.665
CC	Our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer.	3.36	1.736
Destination Attractiveness			
ACCE	The geographical location of this host city is convenient.	5.60	1.391
ACCE	It is easy to get information about this host city.	5.56	1.315
ACCE	It is easy to get to the city.	5.49	1.507
EE	The business environment of this city is excellent.	5.47	1.284
DLE	This city has many tourist attractions.	5.45	1.405
EE	This city has a large number of international firms.	5.45	1.446
DLE	I feel safe in this city.	5.43	1.371
DLE	I have no language barriers in this city.	5.41	1.762
VF	This exhibition center has sufficient space to accommodate this exhibition.	5.33	1.596
EE	This city has support from industries related to this exhibition.	5.22	1.416
ACCE	Location of this exhibition center is excellent.	5.20	1.461
EE	The overall economic condition of this city is among the top five in China.	5.17	1.821
DLE	The local people of this host city are friendly.	5.17	1.461
DLE	This city has good nightlife.	5.16	1.397
DLE	Transportation to this exhibition center is convenient.	5.13	1.583
DLE	The quality of hotel accommodation in this city is high.	5.09	1.399
DLE	The environment of this city is clean.	5.05	1.561
DLE	The weather of this city is pleasant.	5.01	1.538
VF	Exhibition center layout is easy for people to find ways.	4.92	1.522
CLST	This city is an important distribution hub of our industrial sector in China.	4.85	1.628
CLST	China's manufacturing firms in our industry are especially located in this city or nearby regions.	4.79	1.681
CLST	Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited come from this city or nearby regions.	4.76	1.563

N=616. Note: all items were measured on a 7 Likert scale, with 1 indicating 'strongly disagree' to 7 indicating 'strong agree'. ®: items negatively phrased in the questionnaire and recoded for analyses.

Table 5.6 Descriptive Statistics – Main Survey (Continued)

	Measures	Mean	Std. Deviation
CLST	Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in this city or nearby regions.	4.70	1.527
CLST	There is a strong professional association of our industrial sector in this city.	4.68	1.502
CLST	This city is a leading city of an industrial belt where most products/equipments in this exhibition are manufactured.	4.66	1.583
DLE	This city has LIMITED choices for accommodation ®.	4.63	1.799
VF	The facilities of the exhibition center are excellent.	4.48	1.557
DLE	Transportation within this city is NOT convenient ®.	4.36	1.898
CLST	This city is an important manufacturing base of our industrial sector in China.	4.28	1.808
Exhibition Brand Preference		**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
EBP	Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be good	5.44	1.729
EBP	Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be positive	5.42	1.707
EBP	Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be likely	5.40	1.717
EBP	Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be favorable	5.39	1.688
EBP	Recoded -- Our company would prefer this exhibition to be hosted in another city.	4.50	1.781
EBP	Recoded -- Our company would prefer this exhibition to be hosted in another exhibition center within this city.	4.19	1.718
EBP	Recoded -- Our company would prefer this exhibition to be operated by another organizer organizing similar exhibitions in this field.	4.08	1.698
EBP	Recoded -- Our company intends to switch to other exhibitions provided by other organizers within the next 3 years.	3.99	1.683

N=616. Note: all items were measured on a 7 Likert scale, with 1 indicating ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 indicating ‘strong agree’. ®: items negatively phrased in the questionnaire and recoded for analyses.

In addition to the descriptive statistics for the statements relating to the three constructs at the aggregate level, as presented in Table 5.6, descriptive statistics were also compiled to provide an overview of the differences in means, according to the venue where the data were collected; they are presented in Table in Appendix E. However, rather than examining differences in ratings on the basis of organizer and exhibitor characteristics at this point, data reduction utilizing factor analysis is performed first. Following the factor analysis, potential differences in perceptions of relationship quality, destination attractiveness, and exhibition brand preference in view of organizer characteristics (international versus national; private versus government), exhibition frequency (first-time versus repeat exhibitor), and destination characteristics (first versus second-tier cities) will be assessed. Next, results of factor analyses are presented, starting from EFA, followed by first-order CFA and finally second-order CFA for each of the three main constructs.

5.4.3 Factor Analyses

5.4.3.1 Relationship Quality

5.4.3.1.1 EFA of Relationship Quality Items

EFA of the relationship quality construct was conducted using the calibration sample (Table 5.7). A four factor solution was generated, explaining 63.4% of the total variance. KMO was 0.962 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was highly significant ($p<.000$), indicating the robustness of the analysis. A comparison of these EFA results with the EFA results of the pilot test displayed a very high level of similarity. First, variables loading onto communication and calculative commitment were almost identical to those of the EFA in the pilot test. Second, like the EFA in the pilot test, items proposed for trust and affective commitment loaded onto one factor, while items proposed for service quality and satisfaction loaded onto one factor. The reliability coefficient values of the four factors were: trust & affective commitment (0.906), service quality and satisfaction (0.946), communication (0.808), and calculative commitment (0.711), indicating internal consistency of the dimensions (Field, 2005). Factor loadings for all variables are higher than .4. Thus, all variables were kept for CFA validation.

Table 5.7 EFA Results of Relationship Quality

Factor/Item	Loading	Eigen-value	Variance Explained	Reliability Alpha
Service Quality & Relationship Satisfaction		**13.325**	**49.351**	**0.946**
Overall, the services provided by this organizer meet our expectations.	.798			
Our company is satisfied with the professionalism of this organizer.	.779			
This organizer has attracted the right type of buyers to this exhibition.	.722			
In general, our company is satisfied with our relationship with this organizer.	.713			
I will recommend this organizer as an exhibition supplier to other firms.	.689			
This organizer cares about our interests (e.g. actions have been taken to protect the copyright of our product).	.689			
The relationship with this organizer has produced results that enable our company to increase the value of our brand.	.664			
This organizer understands our exhibiting needs and objectives.	.629			
This organizer responds to problems immediately.	.615			
The on-site services provided by this organizer are good.	.575			
Trust & Affective Commitment		**1.505**	**5.574**	**0.906**
Maintaining a long-term relationship with this organizer is important to our company.	.720			
Our company takes pleasure in being a customer of the organizer.	.696			
This organizer keeps promises it makes to our company.	.665			
Our company trusts the information this organizer provides.	.633			
Our company can rely on this organizer in our business relationship.	.620			
The relationship with this organizer will be profitable over the long term.	.619			
Our company trusts the organizer to provide quality exhibitions and services to us.	.565			
There is a mutual benefit in the relationship between our company and the organizer.	.472			

Table 5.7 EFA Results of Relationship Quality (Continued)

Factor/Item	Loading	Eigen-value	Variance Explained	Reliability Alpha
Communication		**1.268**	**4.695**	**0.808**
This exhibition organizer regularly informs our company about this exhibition.	.759			
This organizer and our company exchange information that may benefit one another.	.752			
This organizer always informs our company of important changes about the exhibition.	.645			
Calculative Commitment		**1.027**	**3.804**	**0.711**
Our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer.	.788			
Our company dedicates important efforts to continue the relationship with this organizer.	.683			
It is hard to break the relationship with this organizer.	.516			
Our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no better similar exhibitions in this region.	.420			

N=294
KMO = 0.962;
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity :Approx. Chi-Square=5031.080, df=351, Sig.=.000；
Total variance explained = 63.425
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

5.4.3.1.2 First-Order CFA of Relationship Quality

CFA was conducted to verify the 4-factor solution with the 293-case validation sample. In this model, the four factors were specified as latent variables which correlate with one another, and the items loaded on them were specified as indicators to measure the latent variables. Following Hair's et al. (2006) guideline that a good rule of thumb for factor loadings is .5 or higher (and ideally .7 or higher), items with factors loadings lower than 0.5 were deleted from further analyses. Table 5.8 presents the results of CFA of the relationship quality construct.

Table 5.8 Measurement Model of Relationship Quality – First-Order

Factor/Item	Std. Factor Loading	t-value	SMC	Composite Reliability
Service Quality & Satisfaction				**0.94**
The relationship with this organizer has produced results that enable our company to increase the value of our brand.	0.803	n/a	0.645	
I will recommend this organizer as an exhibition supplier to other firms.	0.844	24.695	0.713	
In general, our company is satisfied with our relationship with this organizer.	0.866	25.642	0.751	
Overall, the services provided by this organizer meet our expectations.	0.866	25.622	0.75	
This organizer cares about our interests (e.g. actions have been taken to protect the copyright of our products).	0.738	20.497	0.544	
Our company is satisfied with the professionalism of this organizer.	0.871	25.859	0.759	
This organizer has attracted the right type of buyers to this exhibition.	0.773	21.833	0.598	
This organizer responds to problems immediately.	0.749	20.92	0.561	
This organizer understands our exhibiting needs and objectives.	0.754	21.096	0.568	
Trust & Affective Commitment				**0.91**
The relationship with this organizer will be profitable over the long term.	0.654	16.644	0.427	
Maintaining a long-term relationship with this organizer is important to our company.	0.764	n/a	0.583	
Our company can rely on this organizer in our business relationship.	0.811	21.362	0.657	
Our company takes pleasure in being a customer of the organizer.	0.824	21.798	0.68	
There is mutual benefit in the relationship between our company and the organizer.	0.61	15.402	0.372	
Our company trusts the organizer to provide quality exhibitions and services to us.	0.804	21.154	0.646	
Our company trusts the information this organizer provides.	0.798	20.96	0.636	
This organizer keeps promises it makes to our company.	0.7	17.987	0.494	
Communication				**0.82**
This organizer and our company exchange information that may benefit one another.	0.754	n/a	0.569	
This exhibition organizer regularly informs our company about this exhibition.	0.788	18.185	0.621	
This organizer always informs our company of important changes about the exhibition.	0.719	16.733	0.517	
Calculative Commitment				**0.60**
It is hard to break the relationship with this organizer.	0.6	n/a	0.361	
Our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no better similar exhibitions in this region.	0.637	11.162	0.406	
Our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer.	0.5	9.466	0.278	
N=293, χ^2=509.599；χ^2/df=2.275；P=0.000；GFI=.866；TLI=.928；CFI=.936；RMSEA=.066				

Results indicate that the measurement model fits the data well (χ= 509.599, df =224, p<0.001, χ^2/df = 2.275, GFI= 0.866, AGFI= 0.835, CFI=0.936; RMSEA= 0.066). The CR values for three of the four latent variables are 0.94, 0.91, and 0.80 respectively, demonstrating excellent internal validity of the factors. One dimension (calculative commitment) has a CR value of 0.60, barely meeting the cut-off point of .60 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). With regard to factor loadings, only four out of the 23 indicators have a factor loading lower than .7, resulting in SMC values lower than .4, indicating that less than 40% of variances in these indicators were explained by the latent variables. These four indicators were 'there is mutual benefit in the relationship between our company and the organizer' (TAC), 'it is hard to break the relationship with this organizer' (CC), 'our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no better similar exhibitions in this region' (CC), and 'our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer' (CC). Three of these indicators measure calculative commitment, resulting in the low CR value for the construct (0.60). Overall, the measurement model is supported and the measures demonstrate good measurement properties. In order to keep as many variables as possible in the model (Hair et al., 2006), the four indicators were retained and subjected to the second-order CFA test.

5.4.3.1.3 Second-Order CFA of Relationship Quality

Table 5.9 presents the results of the second-order model, using the full data. This measurement model includes the four first-order factors, together with their indicators, measurement errors, and standardized coefficients. Each of the four first-order factors has significant factor loadings of 0.931, 0.926, 0.831, and 0.806 respectively, on the second-order factor, indicating that the four latent variables significantly converge on a common underlying construct (Cadogan, Diamantopoulos, & Mortanges, 1999). SMC for the four factors are high: .691 for communication, .650 for calculative commitment, .858 for trust & affective commitment, and .866 for service quality and satisfaction, indicating that the latent construct explains 69.1%, 65%, 85.8% and 86.6% of the variances of the four dimensions respectively. All factor loadings for the first-order indicators are above 0.5, and each indicator t-value exceeds 7.0 (p<0.001). These statistics suggest that the indicators are valid and reliable measurements for the designated constructs. The second-order model exhibits adequate fit (χ^2 =699.558, df= 226, p<0.001, χ^2/df =3.095, GFI=0.902; CFI= 0.950,

RMSEA=0.058). Compared to the first-order measurement model, the second-order model exhibits better predictive validity, and is more parsimonious and performs better on indices that reflect parsimony (PNFI=0.829, PCFI=0.848, PRATIO=0.893). CRs for the second-order construct and three of the four compositing factors are higher than .8, indicating excellent convergent validity of the constructs. Only the calculative commitment factor has a CR value of .66, still above the point of .6 for acceptance (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). Thus, all statistics support the second-order measurement model for the relationship quality construct.

Table 5.9 Measurement Model of Relationship Quality – Second-Order

Factor/Item	Std. Loading	t-value	SMC	AVE	CR
Relationship Quality				**0.76**	**0.93**
Service quality & Relationship Satisfaction	.931	17.716	.866	0.65	0.94
Trust & Affective commitment	.926	n/a	.858	0.56	0.91
Communication	.831	15.272	.691	0.57	0.80
Calculative commitment	.806	11.615	.650	0.34	0.66
N= 616, χ^2=699.558； χ^2/df=3.095； P=0.000； GFI=0.902. AGFI=.881; CFI=.95； RMSEA=.058; PNFI=0.829					

In summary, following the results of EFA, first and second order CFA, it can be concluded that relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers in the exhibition context in Mainland China, perceived from the exhibitors' perspective, is a higher order construct composed of four factors: 1) service quality and relationship satisfaction, 2) trust and affective commitment, 3) communication, and 4) calculative commitment. Next, the results of factor analyses for the destination attractiveness construct are reported.

5.4.3.2 Destination Attractiveness

5.4.3.2.1 EFA of Destination Attractiveness Items

Using the same calibration sample randomly selected by the software to test EFA of the relationship quality construct, EFA was performed to assess the destination attractiveness construct. The EFA result was a six factor solution, explaining 61.4% of the total variance, with a KMO of 0.886 and Barlett's Test of Sphericity highly significant

($p<0.001$), indicating that this EFA result fits the data. The six factors are labeled 'destination leisure environment', cluster effect 1 (leadership of the host city in the industry), venue facilities, accessibility, cluster effect 2 (host city/region as a source of exhibitors), and destination economic environment. Table 5.10 summarizes the result of the EFA.

Compared to the seven factor solution of the EFA result of the pilot test, the accommodation factor in the EFA solution of the pilot test was not able to converge as a latent factor in the main survey data, resulting in the six factor solution of the EFA result of the main survey. Since Cronbach alpha for the accommodation dimension in the pilot test was only 0.54, lower than the threshold of 0.70 for indication of reliability, this dimension was removed from further analysis. The reason that the accommodation-related indicators failed to converge might be because two of the items were negatively phrased and the other item was not. The two negatively phrased items converged together, independent from all other items. This is the same problem identified in the EFA of the relationship quality construct in the main survey data. Respondents in China might not be accustomed to negative expressions, or they responded to negative questions in such a similar way that the statistical software just grouped them together. The factor solutions for the other five dimensions are not significantly different compared to the pilot test results. Hence, the factors and indicators identified by the EFA of the main survey were used for first order CFA analysis.

Table 5.10 EFA Results of Destination Attractiveness

Factor/Item	Loading	Eigen-value	Variance Explained	Reliability Alpha
Destination Leisure Environment		**8.783**	**32.529**	**0.822**
I feel safe in this city.	.739			
The weather of this city is pleasant.	.727			
The local people of this host city are friendly.	.701			
This city has many tourist attractions.	.673			
The environment of the city is clean.	.642			
I have no language barriers in this city.	.438			
This city has good nightlife.	.405			
Cluster 1 (Leadership of the Host City in the Industry)		**2.431**	**9.002**	**0.808**
There is a strong professional association of our industrial sector in this city.	.685			
This city is an important distribution hub of our industrial sector in China.	.656			
This city is an important manufacturing base of our industrial sector in China.	.631			**0.823**
This city is a leading city of an industrial belt where most products/equipments in this exhibition are manufactured.	.607			
This city has support from industries related to this exhibition.	.596			
Venue Facilities		**1.625**	**6.020**	**0.816**
Exhibition center layout is easy for people to find ways.	.702			
Transportation to this exhibition center is convenient.	.677			
Compared with other cities in China, the cost of exhibiting in this city (excluding booth rental fees) is low.	.633			
Location of this exhibition center is excellent.	.622			
This exhibition center has sufficient space to accommodate this exhibition.	.617			
The facilities of the exhibition center are excellent.	.605			

Table 5.10 EFA Results of Destination Attractiveness (Continued)

Factor/Item	Loading	Eigen-value	Variance Explained	Reliability Alpha
Accessibility		**1.407**	**5.209**	**0.753**
It is easy to get information about this host city.	.816			
It is easy to get to the city.	.755			
The geographical location of this host city is convenient.	.708			
Cluster 2 (Host City/Region as a Source of Exhibitors)		**1.212**	**4.491**	**0.716**
China's manufacturing firms in our industry are especially located in this city or nearby regions.	.655			
Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in this city or nearby regions.	.618			
Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited come from this city or nearby regions.	.611			
Destination Economic Environment		**1.121**	**4.151**	**0.721**
The overall economic condition of this city is among the top five in China.	.847			
This city has a large number of international firms.	.708			

N=294, KMO = 0.886;
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square=2964.900, df=351, Sig.=.000;
Total variance explained = 61.403;
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

5.4.3.2.2 First-Order CFA of Destination Attractiveness

Table 5.11 presents the results of the CFA model for destination attractiveness. All factor loadings were above 0.5 and each indicator t-value exceeds 7.0 ($p<0.001$), suggesting that these indicators were viable measures for the designated constructs. CR was calculated for each of the six latent constructs. The values demonstrated good internal consistency: destination leisure environment (.80), venue facilities (.80), accessibility (.75), destination economic environment (.75), cluster effect 2 (.74) and cluster effect 1 (.64). Model fit indices showed that the measurement model fitted the data well (χ^2 is 435.279 with 211 degrees of freedom, $p<0.001$, $\chi^2/df=2.063$, GFI=0.886, CFI=0.914, RMSEA=0.060).

Two indicators ('I have no language barriers in this city', and 'location of this exhibition center is excellent') had a low SMC value (0.255 and 0.286 respectively), suggesting that about 25% and 28% of variances in the indicators respectively were explained by the underlying latent variables. However, considering that the overall construct validity (0.80 for both constructs) was good and that fit indices were not improved significantly if the two indicators were removed, they were kept to fully represent the construct and maximize reliability. Thus, first order CFA confirmed the six factor model for destination attractiveness, and indicators for each of the six factors.

5.4.3.2.3 Second-Order CFA of Destination Attractiveness

A second-order CFA model of destination attractiveness was applied using the main survey sample (n=616). This measurement model includes the six first-order factors. Table 5.12 presents the results of the second-order CFA model. Results confirm that each of the six-first-order factors has significant, positive and large coefficients on the second-order factor, indicating that the six latent variables converge on a common underlying construct (Cadogan et al., 1999).

Table 5.11 Measurement Model of Destination Attractiveness – First-Order

Factor/Item	Std. Loading	t-value	SMC	Composite Reliability
Destination Leisure Environment				**0.80**
I feel safe in this city.	0.74	10.375	.558	
The weather of this city is pleasant.	0.661		.437	
The local people of this host city are friendly.	0.705	9.531	.467	
This city has many tourist attractions.	0.61	8.697	.351	
This city is clean.	0.651	9.234	.417	
I have no language barriers in this city.	0.505	7.591	.255	
Cluster effect 1 (Leadership of the Host City in the Industry)				**0.64**
There is a strong professional association of our industrial sector in this city.	0.614	9.695	.405	
This city is an important distribution hub of our industrial sector in China.	0.596		.355	
This city has support from industries related to this exhibition.	0.773	9.477	.598	
This city is a leading city of an industrial belt where most products/equipments in this exhibition are manufactured.	0.633	8.472	.401	
Venue Facilities				**0.80**
Exhibition center layout is easy for people to find ways.	0.748	11.294	.559	
Transportation to this exhibition center is convenient.	0.645	9.998	.416	
Location of this exhibition center is excellent.	0.535	8.316	.286	
This exhibition center has sufficient space to accommodate this exhibition.	0.721		.520	
The facilities of the exhibition center are excellent.	0.699	10.441	.483	
Accessibility				**0.75**
It is easy to get information about this host city.	0.765	9.237	.587	
It is easy to get to the city.	0.705	9.095	.491	
The geographical location of this host city is convenient.	0.662		.442	
Cluster effect 2(Host City/Region as Sources of Exhibitors)				**0.74**
China's manufacturing firms in our industry are especially located in this city or nearby regions.	0.595	8.23	.361	
Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in this city or nearby regions.	0.714		.517	
Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited come from this city or nearby regions.	0.781	10.617	.593	
Economic Environment				**0.75**
The overall economic condition of this city is among the top five in China.	0.657	8.627	.441	
This city has a large number of international firms.	0.881	na	.747	
χ^2 = 435.279, df=211, p<0.001, χ^2/df=2.063,GFI=.886, CFI=.914, RMSEA=0.060, n=293.				

Cluster effect 1 – host city leadership in the industry – had the highest estimate (0.969), and SMC value (0.939), reflecting that 93.9% of variances in this factor was represented by the destination attractiveness construct. This was followed by venue (estimate 0.804 and SMC 0.647), cluster 2 – host city as sources of exhibitors (estimate 0.737 and SMC 0.543), city general environment (estimate 0.712 and SMC 0.506), city economic environment (estimate 0.702 and SMC 0.492), and accessibility (estimate 0.665 and SMC 0.442). SMC values of the six first-order factors are high (0.939, 0.647, 0.543, 0.506, 0.492, and 0.442 respectively), portraying that the underlying common factor explains 93.9%, 64.75, 54.3%, 50.6%, 49.2%, and 44.2% of the second-order factors.

At the indicator level, all factor loadings of the indicators on the first-order constructs are above 0.5, and each t-value exceeds 7.0 ($p<0.001$). These values show little variation from the first-order CFA. The second-order model exhibits adequate fit (χ^2 =712.831, df = 220 $p<0.001$, $\chi^2/df=3.240$, GFI=0.905, CFI=0.909, PNFI=0.761, RMSEA=0.060), and compared to the first-order measurement model, it is more parsimonious and performs better on indices that reflect parsimony (PNFI=0.761, PCFI=0.791, PRATIO=0.870). Other fit indices (GFI, CFI, RMSEA etc.) are as good as, or even better than, the first-order model. Composite reliability of the factors all comfortably exceed 0.70. Thus, all statistics support the assumption that the destination attractiveness construct reflects variances in multiple first-order latent factors as a second-order factor.

Table 5.12 Measurement Model of Destination Attractiveness – Second-Order

Factor/Item	Std. Loading	t-value	SMC	AVE	CR
Destination Attractiveness				0.59	0.90
Cluster effect1 (host City Leadership in the Industry)	0.969	10.647	0.939	0.41	0.73
Venue Facilities	0.804	10.467	0.647	0.44	0.80
Cluster 2 (host City as a Source of Exhibitors)	0.737	n/a	0.543	0.48	0.73
Destination Leisure Environment	0.712	9.941	0.506	0.43	0.82
Destination Economic Environment	0.702	10.401	0.492	0.58	0.82
Accessibility	0.665	9.155	0.442	0.51	0.75

χ^2 = 712.831, df=220, $p<0.001$, $\chi^2/df=3.240$, GFI=0.905, CFI=0.909, RMSEA=0.060
n=616.

In summary, following the results of EFA, first and second-order CFA, it can be concluded that destination attractiveness, in the exhibition context in Mainland China, perceived from the exhibitors' perspective, is a higher order construct composed of six factors: 1) cluster effect 1 (host city leadership in the industry), 2) venue facilities, 3) cluster effect 2 (host city/region as a source of exhibitors), 4) destination leisure environment, 5) destination economic environment, and 6) accessibility. Next, the results of factor analyses for the exhibition brand preference construct are reported.

5.4.3.3 Exhibition Brand Preference

5.4.3.3.1 EFA of Exhibition Brand Preference Items

Table 5.13 summarizes the results of the EFA for the exhibition brand preference construct. Similar to the pilot test results, the EFA resulted in two factors: attitudes towards future attendance and preference for different components of the exhibition brand.

Table 5.13 EFA Results of Exhibition Brand Preference

Factor/Item	Loading	Eigen-value	Variance Explained	Reliability Alpha
Attitude towards future attendance		**4.061**	**50.768**	**.967**
Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be good.	.940			
Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be favorable.	.957			
Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be positive.	.955			
Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be likely.	.924			
Preference of Exhibition Brand Components		**1.977**	**24.710**	**.771**
Our company prefers this exhibition to other exhibitions of its type.	.724			
Our company prefers this organizer to other organizers operating similar events in this field.	.780			
Our company prefers this exhibition center to other centers within this city.	.800			
Our company prefers this city to other cities for exhibitions.	.743			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. KMO=.851, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Chi-Square=1825.464, df=28, Sig=0.000, n=294

These two factors explain 75.5% of the total variance of the latent variable. Factor loadings are all higher than .7. Reliability alpha for both factors exceeds .7, suggesting good internal consistency of the measures. The KMO value was 0.851 and Barlett's Test of Sphericity was highly significant ($p<0.001$), indicating that this EFA result fits the data. It is consistent with the EFA result in the pilot test, except that a two item instrument was utilized in the pilot test for the 'attitudes toward future attendance' factor. Based on the EFA result, first-order CFA was conducted for exhibition brand preference, which hypothesized a two-factor model, with four indicators for each factor.

5.4.3.3.2 First-Order CFA of Exhibition Brand Preference

Table 5.14 presents the results of the CFA test for exhibition brand preference. The two factor solution recognized by EFA was verified by CFA, drawing on the same validation sample used for the first-order CFA tests for the relationship quality and destination attractiveness constructs.

Table 5.14 Measurement Model of Exhibition Brand Preference – First-Order

Factor/Item	Std. Factor Loading	t-value	SMC	Composite Reliability
Attitude towards future attendance				**0.96**
Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be good…bad.	0.939		0.882	
Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be favorable… unfavorable.	0.955	34.137	0.913	
Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be positive… negative.	0.935	31.276	0.875	
Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be likely … unlikely.	0.86	23.789	0.739	
Preference for exhibition brand components				**0.75**
Our company prefers this exhibition to other exhibitions of its type.	0.751		0.563	
Our company prefers this organizer to other organizers operating similar events in this field.	0.654	9.559	0.428	
Our company prefer s this exhibition center to other centers within this city.	0.62	7.437	0.385	
Our company prefers this city to other cities for exhibitions.	0.6	7.158	0.36	
χ^2 =51.088, df=19 ($p<0.000$), χ^2/df =2.689, GFI=0.956, CFI=0.981, RMSEA=0.076, n=293				

Results demonstrate good reliability of the measures for the two factors. Factor loadings for the 'attitude towards future attendance' construct exceed 0.86, SMC parameters exceed 0.7, and CR is as high as 0.96. Factor loadings for' the preference for different components of the exhibition brand' construct exceed 0.6. SMC parameters exceed 0.36, and CR exceeds 0.70. Correlation between the two latent variables is 0.316; covariance between the two latent variables is 0.650 and significant. Results demonstrate good model fit for the data (χ^2=51.088, df = 19, p<0.000, χ^2/df =2.689, GFI=0.956, CFI=0.981, RMSEA=0.076). Following the first order CFA, two dimensions of EBP are identified as 1) attitude towards future attendance, and 2) preference of exhibition brand components.

5.4.3.3.3 Second-Order CFA of Exhibition Brand Preference

In the second-order CFA test, first-order latent variables are regarded as indicators for the underlying latent construct at the second order. In this case, there are only two indicators to test if the two latent variables share one underlying common factor. Since "a measurement model with only two measured items and a single construct is underidentified" (Hair et al., 2006, p.784), the second-order CFA model with only two first-order factors is an under-identified model. A unique solution cannot be found, unless an additional constraint was given to the model. This constraint is to impose tau-equivalence assumptions, that is, to require the factor loadings for each factor to be equal (Hair et al., 2006). This approach was adopted in attempting a second-order CFA for the 'exhibition brand preference' construct. Results indicate that the factor loadings exceed 0.5 and SMC values exceed 0.3, although composite reliability value for the second order construct is lower than 0.6. Table 5.15 presents the results.

It should be noted that the identification issue will not be a problem when this second-order construct is integrated into the overall measurement model. The same identification rules still apply, but an overidentified CFA overall measurement model may result because this construct can borrow the extra degrees of freedom from some of the other constructs (Hair et al., 2006).

Table 5.15 Measurement Model of Exhibition Brand Preference – Second-Order

Factor/Item	Std. Factor Loading	SMC	Composite Reliability
Exhibition Brand Preference			0.42
Attitude towards future attendance	0.564	0.318	0.77
Preference for exhibition brand components	0.641	0.411	0.63
χ^2 =28.373, df=18 (p<0.000), χ^2/df =1.576, GFI=0.989, CFI=0.997, RMSEA=0.031, n=616			

In summary, following the results of EFA, first and second-order CFA, it can be concluded that exhibition brand preference, in the exhibition context in Mainland China, perceived from the exhibitors' perspective, is a higher order construct composed of two factors: 1) attitude towards future attendance and 2) preference for exhibition brand components.

5.4.3.4 Section Summary

Factor analyses (EFA, first and second-order CFA) were conducted, resulting in the support of three second-order models, measuring the two exogenous constructs and the endogenous construct respectively. Results suggest that relationship quality with organizers is a second-order construct composed of 1) service quality and relationship satisfaction, 2) trust and affective commitment, 3) calculative commitment, and 4) communication. Destination attractiveness is a second order construct composed of 1) cluster effect 1, 2) venue facilities, 3) cluster effect 2, 4) economic environment, 5) destination leisure environment, and 6) accessibility. Exhibition brand preference is a second order construct composed of 1) attitude towards future attendance and 2) preference for exhibition brand segments. These results largely support the proposed model in Chapter 3, but have minor discrepancies in terms of the number of dimensions.

Following the verification of the three higher order constructs, potential differences in perceptions of relationship quality, destination attractiveness, and exhibition brand preference in view of organizer characteristics (international versus national; private versus government), exhibition frequency (first-time versus repeat exhibitor), and destination characteristics (first versus second-tier cities) are assessed in the next section.

5.4.4 Different Perceptions of Exhibitors

5.4.4.1 Different Perceptions on Relationship Quality

Differences in exhibitors' perceptions on relationship quality were assessed based on: 1) exhibitions organized by international organizers versus those organized by national organizers; 2) exhibitions organized by private companies (including both international private and national private companies) versus those organized by government-affiliations; and 3) first-timers versus repeat exhibitors. Independent sample t-tests were conducted both at the factor level and the individual item level. In the text, the tests at the factor level are presented and discussed, while tables for the t-tests at the individual item level are placed in Appendix F to aid clarity and brevity of presentation.

Perceptions of exhibitors at trade shows operated by international organizers were compared to perceptions of exhibitors at trade shows operated by national organizers (Table 5.16). Exhibitors at trade shows operated by the international organizers rated all four RQ dimensions higher than their counterparts at trade shows operated by national companies. The grand mean scores rated by exhibitors at fairs operated by international organizers were 5.36, 5.20, 5.13 and 4.31 respectively for trust and affective commitment, communication, service quality and relationship satisfaction, and calculative commitment; in contrast, the grand mean scores by exhibitors at fairs operated by national organizers were 4.67, 4.48, 4.22 and 3.66 respectively. Independent sample t-test shows that there was significant difference in terms of all four dimensions within the two groups, as detailed in Table 5.16.

Table 5.16 T-Tests for Exhibitors' Relationship Quality Perceptions –Trade Fairs Organized by International versus Domestic Organizers

	International (n=178)	**National (n=437)**			
	Mean	Mean	Mean Diff.	t-value	Sig.
Trust & Affective Commitment	5.36	4.67	.69	7.224	.000*
Communication	5.20	4.48	.71	6.346	.000*
Perceived Service & Relationship Quality	5.13	4.22	.92	8.999	.000*
Calculative Commitment	4.31	3.66	.65	5.913	.000*

Note: * Indicates a significant difference at $\alpha \leq 0.05$

Exhibitors' perceptions of relationship quality with private companies were compared to those of exhibitors with government-affiliations (Table 5.17). The former rated all four dimensions higher than the latter. The grand mean scores rated by exhibitors at fairs operated by private organizers were 4.95, 4.77, 4.67, and 3.98 respectively for trust and affective commitment, communication, perceptive service and relationship satisfaction, and calculative commitment; in contrast, the grand mean scores by exhibitors at fairs operated by government affiliations were 4.76, 4.58, 4.23, and 3.67 respectively. Independent sample t-test shows that there was a significant difference in terms of the service quality and relationship satisfaction dimension and the calculative commitment dimension, as detailed in Table 5.17. There was no significant difference in terms of the communication dimension. For trust and affective commitment, the difference is not significant at the 95% intervals, but it is significant at the 90% intervals (p=0.53).

Table 5.17 T-Tests for Exhibitors' Relationship Quality Perceptions – Trade Fairs Organized by Private Companies versus Government-Affiliations

	Private (n=357)	**Government (n=258)**			
	Mean	Mean	Mean Diff.	t-value	Sig.
Trust & Affective Commitment	4.95	4.76	.19	1.940	.053
Communication	4.77	4.58	.19	1.599	.111
Service Quality & Relationship Satisfaction	4.67	4.23	.44	4.089	.000*
Calculative Commitment	3.98	3.67	.31	3.019	.003*

Note: * Indicates a significant difference at $\alpha \leq 0.05$

Perceptions of relationship quality of exhibitors who exhibited for the first-time at the particular exhibition were compared to perceptions of repeat exhibitors (Table 5.18). First-timers rated all the four dimensions lower than repeat exhibitors. The grand mean scores rated by first-timers were 4.82, 4.47, 4.33 and 3.57 respectively for trust and affective commitment, communication, perceptive service and relationship satisfaction, and calculative commitment; in contrast, the grand mean scores by repeat exhibitors were 4.89, 4.80, 4.57, and 3.99 respectively. Independent sample t-tests show that there was significant difference in terms of communication, perceived service and relationship satisfaction, and calculative commitment, as detailed in Table 5.18. This indicates that repeat exhibitors perceive a more binding relationship to organizers than first-timers. There was no significant difference in terms of the trust and affective commitment dimension.

Table 5.18 T-Tests for Exhibitors' Relationship Quality Perceptions – First-Timers versus Repeat Exhibitors

	First-Timers (n=205)	**Repeat Exhibitors (n=409)**			
	Mean	Mean	Mean Diff.	t-value	Sig.
Trust & Affective Commitment	4.82	4.89	-.07	-.703	.482
Communication	4.47	4.80	-.33	-2.684	.007*
Service Quality & Relationship Satisfaction	4.33	4.57	-.23	-1.99	.047*
Calculative Commitment	3.57	3.99	-.42	-3.882	.000*

Note: * Indicates a significant difference at $\alpha \leq 0.05$

5.4.4.2 Different Perceptions on Destination Attractiveness

In order to examine potential differences in perception of destination attractiveness, perception of exhibitors attending exhibitions in the first-tier city was compared with those who exhibited in second-tier cities (Table 5.19). The first-tier city (Shanghai) has higher ratings in all dimensions than the three second-tier cities (Nanjing, Hangzhou, and Wuhan). The grand mean scores of the first-tier city on economic environment, accessibility, leisure environment, cluster effect 1 (leadership of the host city in the industry), venue and cluster 2 (host city/region as a source of exhibitors) were 5.97, 5.52, 5.16, 5.14, 5.00 and 4.80 respectively; in contrast, the grand mean scores of second-tier cities for the five scores were 4.28, 5.59, 5.40, 4.68, 5.03, and 4.67 respectively. Independent sample t-test shows that there was significant difference terms of cluster 1 (leadership of host city in the industry), economic standing of the destination, and leisure environment. There was no significant difference in terms of venue facilities, destination as a source of exhibitors, and accessibility, indicating that second-tier cities are perceived as having venue facilities and accessibility as good as the first-tier city. The next section will test the overall measurement model, which is a prior step for testing hypotheses using structural equation modeling.

Table 5.19 T-Tests for Exhibitors' Destination Attractiveness Perceptions – First versus Second-Tier Cities

	1st Tier (n=379)		2nd Tier (n=236)				
	Mean	rank	Mean	rank	Mean Diff.	t-value	Sig.
Economic Environment	5.97	1	4.28	6	1.70	16.193	.000*
Accessibility	5.52	2	5.59	1	-.06	-.649	.512
Leisure Environment	5.16	3	5.40	2	-.24	-2.699	.007*
Cluster Effect 1	5.14	4	4.68	4	.46	4.976	.000*
Venue Facilities	5.00	5	5.03	3	-.030	-.304	.761
Cluster Effect 2	4.80	6	4.67	5	.13	1.227	.220

Note: * Indicates a significant difference at $\alpha \leq 0.05$

5.4.5 Overall Measurement Model

In the overall measurement model, relationship quality was defined as a second-order construct composed of four dimensions: 1) service quality & satisfaction, 2) trust & affective commitment, 3) communication and 4) calculative commitment. Destination attractiveness was defined as a second-order construct composed of six dimensions: 1) cluster effect 1(host city leadership in the industry), 2) venue facilities, 3) cluster effect 2 (host city as a source of exhibitors), 4) destination economic environment, 5) destination leisure environment, and 6) accessibility. Exhibition brand preference was designated as a second-order construct composed of two dimensions: 1) attitude towards future attendance and 2) preference for different components of the exhibition brand. The overall CFA measurement model allowed for correlation between all three key constructs and presented a baseline to assess the fit of the structural model (Hair et al., 2006).

Table 5.20 presents the results of the overall measurement model. Among the 12 standard regression weight parameters at the construct level, 11 had a factor loading higher than 0.70, and are significant, providing evidence of convergent validity at the construct level. The standard multiple correlation values of the 11 dimensions exceed 0.40, indicating a good proportion of the variances of the constructs explained by the latent constructs. Only the 'preference for different components of the exhibition brand' dimension had an estimate of 0.457 and a SMC value of 0.208. Comparisons of the overall measurement model with individual first and second-order measurement models revealed that t-values in the overall measurement model were higher than the corresponding values in individual measurement

models. Based on the assessment of key model fit indices as detailed in Section 5.2.4.7, the model exhibits good fit of the data, (χ^2=3160.042, df=1357,χ^2/df=2.329. GFI=0.836, CFI=0.910, TLI=0.905, RMSEA=0.046 with 90% CI between 0.044 and 0.049). Therefore, the results indicated a satisfactory fit for the overall measurement model.

Table 5.20 Overall Measurement Model

Factor/Item	Std. Factor Loading	t-value	SMC	CR
Service Quality & Relationship Satisfaction <--- Relationship Quality	0.935	15.567	0.874	0.94
Trust & Affective Commitment <--- Relationship Quality	0.931	15.326	0.867	0.91
Calculative Commitment <--- Relationship Quality	0.803	11.090	0.644	0.60
Communication <--- Relationship Quality	0.818		0.669	0.80
Economic Environment <--- Destination Attractiveness	0.717	9.836	0.515	0.73
Host city Leadership in the Industry <--- Destination Attractiveness	0.989	10.704	0.978	0.74
Venue <--- Destination Attractiveness	0.810	9.249	0.656	0.80
Destination Leisure Environment <--- Destination Attractiveness	0.670	9.230	0.448	0.82
Accessibility <--- Destination Attractiveness	0.643		0.414	0.75
Host city as a Source of Exhibitors <--- Destination Attractiveness	0.723	9.184	0.523	0.73
Attitude towards Future Attendance <--- Exhibition Brand Preference	0.793		0.629	0.96
Preference for Exhibition Brand Components <--- Exhibition Brand Preference	0.457	7.485	0.208	0.75
χ^2 =3160.042 ,df=1357, χ^2/df=2.329. GFI=0.836, CFI=0.910, TLI=0.905, RMSEA=0.046, n=616				

Table 5.21 presents the correlations among the three second-order latent constructs, together with their composite reliability and AVE, indicating that both exogenous constructs (relationship quality and destination attractiveness) are correlated with the endogenous construct (exhibition brand preference), with correlation coefficients being 0.82 and 0.55 respectively. Furthermore, the two exogenous constructs are correlated (coefficient 0.75). Substantial collinearity is not identified as the correlation between the two independent variables did not exceed the cut-off point for high correlations, which is generally 0.90 or higher (Hair et al., 2010).

Results show that the relationship quality and destination attractiveness constructs have good composite reliability (0.92 and 0.89 respectively). These AVE values exceed 0.50, indicating good convergent validity, and are higher than the squared correlation estimates between each pair of construct, which is evidence of good discriminant validity.

Table 5.21 Inter-Correlations, CR and AVE of the Second Order Constructs

	Exhibition Brand Preference	**Destination Attractiveness**	**Relationship Quality**
Exhibition Brand Preference	1		
Destination Attractiveness	0.546 (0.298)	1	
Relationship Quality	0.82 (0.672)	0.754 (0.569)	1
AVE	0.42	0.59	0.76
CR	0.60	0.89	0.92

Note: Values in each column are correlation estimates. Values in parenthesis are squared correlations.

However, the construct of exhibition brand preference exhibits poorer CR and AVE estimates, with the CR value just meeting the cut-off point of acceptance for convergent validity. The AVE value is 0.42, higher than the squared correlation between the exhibition brand preference and destination attractiveness constructs, but lower than the squared correlation between exhibition brand preference and relationship quality constructs. This reveals that the two first-order factors that were specified as reflective factors for the exhibition brand preference lack convergent validity. Considering that the two factors measure basically different orientations, lower convergent validity was considered acceptable. In addition, AVE is also sensitive to a lack of convergent validity and can be better used to assess discriminant validity. Although the AVE value is preferably greater than 0.50, it often stays below 0.50 due to the conservative nature of the AVE test (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Since the exhibition brand preference construct reflects 62.9% and 20.8% of variances of the two first-order constructs respectively, and both the first-order constructs have good CR values (0.96 and 0.75 respectively), the second-order factor was retained for the structural model.

Parameters and model fit indices supported the viability of the overall measurement model composed of three higher-order constructs. Following the verification of the overall

measurement model, the next section will discuss the testing of the hypothesized relationships between the exogenous variables and the endogenous variable, using structural equation modeling.

5.4.6 Structural Equation Modeling – Model Testing

Given an acceptable model fit each for the second-order measurement models and the overall measurement model, a structural model was assessed based on the proposed hypotheses. The proposed structural model shows the two exogenous variables (relationship quality with organizers and destination attractiveness), and the endogenous variable (exhibition brand preference). The two exogenous variables were specified to allow correlation with each other. The proposed paths were: a) from relationship quality to exhibition brand preference; and b) from destination attractiveness to exhibition brand preference. Table 5.22 denotes the path coefficients of the structural model.

Table 5.22 Path Coefficients in the Structural Model

Path			**Standardized Coefficient**	**t-Value**
Exhibition Brand Preference	<	Destination Attractiveness	-0.167	-2.114
Exhibition Brand Preference	<	Relationship Quality	0.946	10.407***
Service Quality & Relationship Satisfaction	<	Relationship Quality	0.935	15.567***
Trust & Affective Commitment	<	Relationship Quality	0.931	15.326***
Calculative Commitment	<	Relationship Quality	0.803	11.09***
Communication	<	Relationship Quality	0.818	n/a
Economic Environment	<	Destination Attractiveness	0.717	9.836***
Host City Leadership in Industry	<	Destination Attractiveness	0.989	10.704***
Venue Facilities	<	Destination Attractiveness	0.810	9.249***
City Leisure Environment	<	Destination Attractiveness	0.670	9.23***
Accessibility	<	Destination Attractiveness	0.643	n/a
Host city as a Sources of Exhibitors	<	Destination Attractiveness	0.723	9.184***
Attitude towards Future Attendance	<	Exhibition Brand Preference	0.793	n/a
Preference for Exhibition Brand Components	<	Exhibition Brand Preference	0.457	7.485***

***significant at the 0.01 level, n=616

The model fit indices suggest that the hypothesized model fits the data, based on the assessment of key criteria, as outlined in Section 5.2.4.7 (χ^2 is 3160.042, df=1357, n=0.000, χ^2/df= 2.329, RMR=0.138, GFI=0.836, PGFI=0.764, CFI=0.910, RMSEA=0.046). The expected cross-validation index (ECVI) detects the overall error of the model, denoting if a

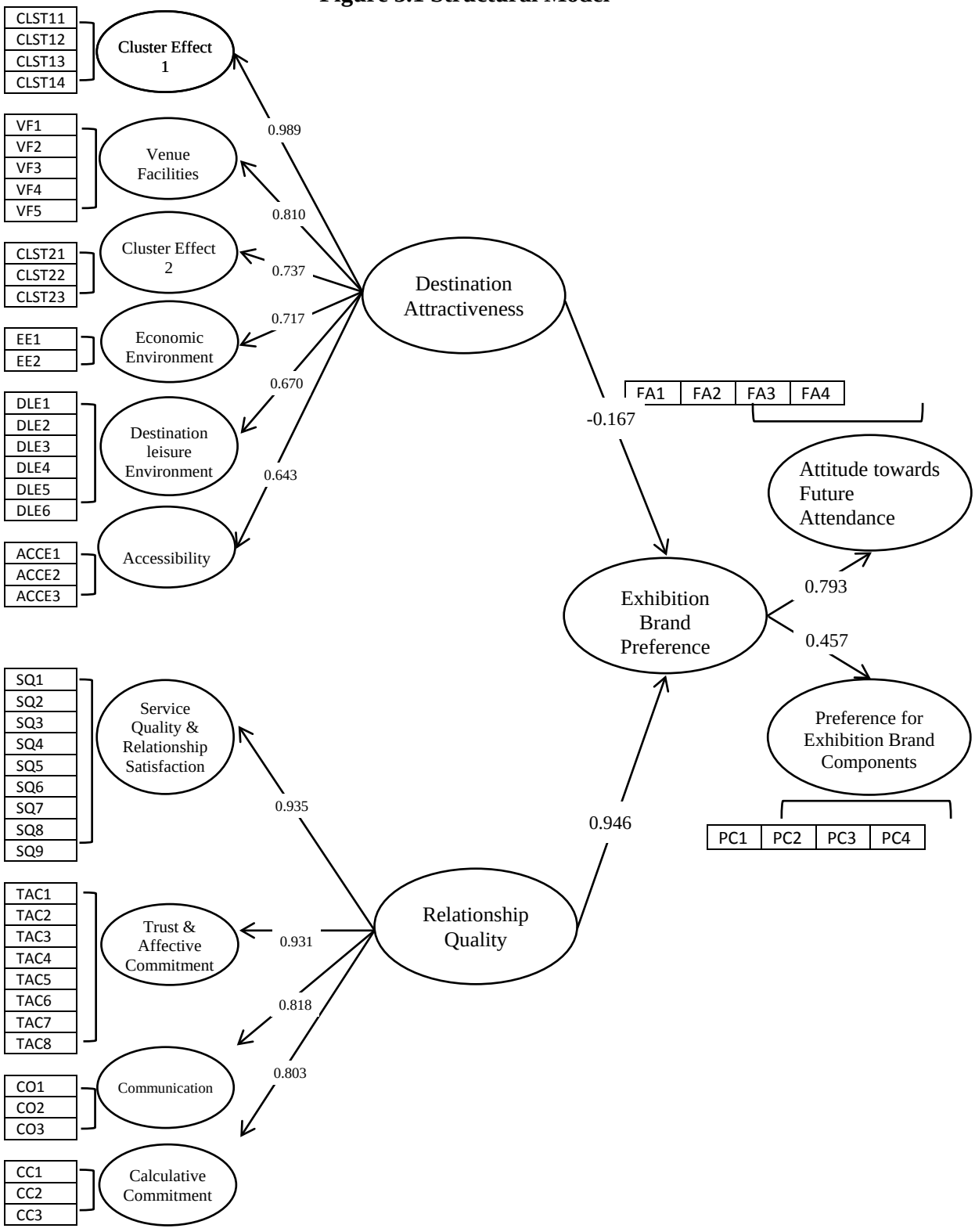
model is likely to cross-validate across samples of the same size from the same population. ECVI of the default model is 4.885, marginally higher than ECVI of the saturated model (4.146), and substantially lower than ECVI of the independence model (33.063), suggesting that the discrepancy between the fitted covariance matrix in the analyzed sample and the expected covariance matrix in a cross-validated sample of equivalent size is low.

However, caution is advised when drawing inferences from this result. The correlation between the constructs ‘relationship quality’ and ‘destination attractiveness’ is 0.75, much lower than the tolerance point of a multiple correlation of 0.95, which indicates an almost certain multicollinearity problem. However, a lack of high correlation between the two independent variables does not ensure a lack of collinearity. According to (Hair et al., p204), "correlations of even 0.70 (which represents ‘shared’ variance of 50%) can impact both the explanation and estimation of the regression results". With this concern in mind, Hair et al.’s (2010) recommendation of interpreting the regression results is utilized:

1) Use the model with highly correlated independent variables for prediction only (that is, make no attempt to interpret the regression coefficients), while acknowledging the lowered level of overall predictive ability; and
2) Indicate the 'suppression effect', which denotes that the relationship between the weaker independent variable and the dependent variable might be hidden in the bivariate correlations.

It is apparent that ‘relationship quality’ is a strong predictor of ‘exhibition brand preference’. Given its dominant power, the effect of ‘destination attractiveness’ might be suppressed, evidenced in the negative value of the coefficient estimate (-0.167). According to Hair et al., (2010), this reversal of sign might be expected and desirable, as it might suggest that the relationship between ‘destination attractiveness’ and ‘exhibition brand preference’ is hidden in the bivariate correlations, which in this case is the correlation between relationship quality and destination attractiveness. A visual diagram depicting the structural model is shown in Figure 5.1. The model displays three second order constructs, 12 first order latent constructs and 54 measured indicators.

Figure 5.1 Structural Model



Next, discussions are made in response to the research questions, hypotheses and findings, which center on the two exogenous constructs (relationship quality and destination attractiveness). Under each construct, the composing latent variables, differences in the perceptions of exhibitors, and the impact of the second-order construct on EBP are discussed.

5.5 Discussion

Table 5.23 presents a summary of the findings of this thesis, relative to the respective research questions and hypotheses. Each of these will now be discussed, with reference to previous research.

5.5.1 Research Question 1.1 – Constituents of Relationship Quality

Hypothesis $H1_a$ proposed that exhibitors' relationship quality with organizers in the exhibition context is a second-order construct composed of five factors: (1) trust, (2) commitment, (3) communication, (4) service quality, and (5) relationship satisfaction. The hypothesis is only partially supported as the EFA and CFA analyses supported a four-factor model rather than a five-factor model. This model consists of (1) service quality & relationship satisfaction, (2) trust & affective commitment, (3) calculative commitment, and (4) communication. Thus, results confirmed that both instrumental (communication and service quality) and interpersonal factors (trust and commitment) are important determinants of relationship quality, and consequently, of building exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. Next, relationship quality scale is discussed in the sequence of service quality and relationship satisfaction, trust and affective commitment, calculative commitment, and communication.

Table 5.23 A Summary of Research Questions, Hypotheses and Findings

Research Questions	Research Hypotheses/Propositions	Findings	Hypothesis Test
1.1What constitutes relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers?	H1a: Exhibitors' relationship quality with organizers in the exhibition context is a second order construct composed of five factors: (1) trust, (2) commitment, (3) communication (4) service quality, and (5) relationship satisfaction.	Exhibitors' relationship quality with organizers in the exhibition context is a second order construct composed of four factors: (1) perceived service quality & relationship satisfaction, (2) trust & affective commitment, (3) calculative commitment, and (4) communication.	Partially Supported
1.2Are there significant differences in relationship quality, depending on key characteristics of organizers and exhibitors?	Proposition 1: Relationship quality with organizers differs, depending on key characteristics of organizers and exhibitors.	Perceptions of exhibitors on relationship quality with organizers differ, depending on key characteristics of organizers (e.g., international versus domestic organizers, private companies versus government-affiliations) and exhibitor background (first-time versus repeat exhibitors to the particular exhibition).	Supported
1.3To what extent does relationship quality with organizers exert influence on exhibition brand preference of exhibitors?	H1b: Relationship quality with organizers has a significant, positive effect on exhibitors' exhibition brand preference.	Relationship quality with organizers is a dominant, causal factor for exhibition brand preference.	Supported

Table 5.23 A Summary of Research Questions, Hypotheses and Findings

Research Questions	Research Hypotheses/Propositions	Findings	Hypothesis Test
2.1What constitutes destination attractiveness for an exhibition destination from the exhibitors' perspective?	H2a: Destination attractiveness is a second order construct composed of six factors: 1) cluster effect, 2) venue facilities, 3) accommodation, 4) economic environment, 5) city leisure environment, and 6) accessibility.	Destination attractiveness is a second order construct composed of six factors: 1) cluster effect 1, 2) venue facilities, 3) cluster effect 2, 4) economic environment, 5) city leisure environment, and 6) accessibility.	Partially Supported
2.2 What measures constitute 'clusters' in an exhibition context and to what extent do 'clusters' contribute to destination attractiveness)?		Cluster effect is measured by two dimensions: 1) leadership of the host city in the industry and 2) the host city as a source for exhibitors. Cluster effects are important indicators for destination attractiveness in the exhibition context.	
2.3Do first and second tier destinations perform differently with regard to destination attractiveness factors from the exhibitors' perspective?	Proposition 2: Destination attractiveness differs, depending on the characteristics of exhibitors and destinations.	Perceptions of exhibitors on destination attractiveness may differ, depending on the characteristics of destinations (e.g., first tie city versus second tier city).	Supported
2.4To what extent does destination attractiveness exert an influence on exhibition brand preference of exhibitors?	H2b: Destination attractiveness has a significant, positive effect on exhibitors' exhibition brand preference.	The impact of destination attractiveness on exhibition brand preference is not definite.	Not Supported

5.5.1.1 Service Quality and Relationship Satisfaction

This thesis confirmed 'service quality and relationship satisfaction' as a key indicator for relationship quality in the exhibition context. The effect of service quality on relationship quality has been tested (e.g., Kim & Smith, 2007). Relationship satisfaction has also been regarded as an indicator for relationship quality in the generic literature (e.g., Palmatier et al., 2006). This thesis used a total of nine items developed from interviews based on SERVQUAL and adapted from a number of previous studies (e.g., Abdul-Muhmin, 2005; Huntley, 2006; Rodriguez, et al., 2006) to measure both relationship satisfaction and evaluation of organizer performance. Findings indicated that 'service quality and relationship satisfaction' was the most important predictor of relationship quality, suggesting that the variances in relationship quality with organizers are contingent upon variances in perceptions of service quality and relationship satisfaction. This result is in line with previous studies that regard both service quality and relationship satisfaction as important dimensions of relationship quality in the relationship marketing literature (e.g., Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Kim et al., 2006; Rauyruen & Miller, 2007). It also supports previous arguments in the exhibition literature that organizers' service quality and service readiness determines their future success, in addition to the content and programme diversity of exhibitions (von Baerle & Muller, 2005). Organizers must create exhibitor-oriented tailor-made packages to improve service and relationship satisfaction.

Three points shall be noted in this context. First, services measured in this research are primarily at the organizational level, reflecting organizational activities and facilities provided, rather than at the interpersonal level with a focus on employee service performance. Second, this research found that 'service quality and relationship satisfaction' items were so highly correlated that they loaded onto one dimension. This is viable since Gounaris (2005) also found that different dimensions of service quality may collapse into one dimension, and that service quality dimensions are industry-specific. Third, service quality variables developed in the interviews and confirmed in the CFA model encompassed five aspects: 1) understanding exhibitors' exhibiting needs and objectives, 2) attracting the right type of buyers, 3) responding to problems, 4) caring about exhibitors' interests, and 5) good on-site services. Clearly, it was not on-site services alone that exert significant influence on relationship quality. This supports previous commentators' calls for service

quality management in exhibitions requiring analysis of service quality in the context of relationships and their interdependencies (Stoeck & Schraudy, 2005). Organizers shall not only provide exhibition space and related onsite services, but they also need design and efficiently market non-space products and services. Such service offerings can best be described as a global marketing package since an organizer is a marketing partner who can provide one-stop shopping for a comprehensive array of carefully coordinated interactional services (Stoeck & Schraudy, 2005).

Whether the expectation-performance gap in services in the exhibition context affects exhibitors' preference for an exhibition brand is not clear. Despite service failures being reported by numerous study participants, there was typically the intention expressed to continue exhibiting in view of potential business opportunities. It appears that currently service failures do not stop exhibitors participating in trade fairs; if they discontinue exhibiting, it is because there are not enough quality visitors or financial reasons. In addition, exhibition spaces are usually sold via multiple channels with the help of intermediaries and other cooperation parties, which further complicates the relations between exhibitors and the organizer. However, it appears that as long as exhibitors are satisfied with their relationship with the main contact, be it the main organizer or intermediaries, they tolerate numerous service problems. It would be of interest though to establish in future studies how, and to what extent, repeated and severe service failures affect exhibitors' brand preference.

5.5.1.2 Trust and Affective Commitment

This research used a total of eight items adapted from a number of previous studies (e.g.; Gustafsson et al., 2005; Coote et al., 2003; Huntley, 2006) to assess trust and affective commitment in the exhibition context in Mainland China. Findings indicated that the two dimensions are so highly correlated that they become one dimension. This is in marked contrast to previous studies that make a clear distinction between these two closely related dimensions (e.g., Gounaris, 2005; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; de Ruyter, Mooreman, & Lemmink, 2001). A possible reason that trust and affective commitment collapsed into a single dimension in this research might be because these dimensions are industry-specific (Cater & Zabkar, 2008). In contrast, trust has no significant relationship to calculative

commitment, measured as the motivation to continue the relationship due to reasons such as a perceived lack of alternatives.

The CFA analyses indicated that 'trust and affective commitment' was an important, significant predicator of relationship quality with organizers, confirming evidence to that effect from previous relationship marketing studies (e.g., Cater & Zabkar, 2008). It also supports Bruhn and Hadwich's (2005) argument that the exhibition product has 'credence qualities,' and decisions to attend an exhibition in the future are based on credence in the organizer. Consequently, organizers need to devise appropriate strategies to instill trust and cultivate affective commitment with exhibitors, as to affect their preference for the exhibition brand.

This thesis identified a number of indicators of trust and affective commitment in the exhibition context in Mainland China. First, at the organizational level, the organizer's fame and prestige were perceived as indicators of trust, either resulting from a strong government position or a reputation as a leading international exhibiting company. Second, at the individual (employee) level, enthusiastic and competent employees can enhance exhibitors' trust in the organization. Third, trust and affective commitment are generated when exhibitors have credence on the exhibition product: whether the exhibition can be consistently good based on the performance of the organizer, the number of quality visitors, past visitation and/or participation and word-of-mouth.

5.5.1.3 Calculative Commitment

This thesis is one of the few studies that incorporated calculative commitment as one of the predictors of relationship quality. EFA results clearly differentiate calculative commitment from affective commitment, thereby supporting the limited number of empirical studies that have explicitly differentiated between these two forms of commitment (e.g., Gounaris, 2005; Ruyter et al., 2001, Rauyruen & Miller, 2007). Furthermore, results demonstrated that calculative commitment exerts an influence on exhibitors' perceptions of the organizer, and possibly on their preference for the exhibition brand. In particular, participants in the in-depth interviews appeared to use calculative rather than affective reasoning when evaluating their commitment to organizers.

Previous relationship marketing literature states that calculative commitment functions differently from affective commitment, and might not have a significant, causal influence on customer loyalty or purchase intention (e.g., Cater & Zabkar, 2008; Gounaris, 2005; Rauyruen & Miller, 2007). However, findings of both the qualitative and quantitative studies of this thesis investigation suggest that calculative commitment has an impact on building relationships between exhibitors and organizers, and possibly on exhibition brand preference. Thus, it can be inferred that calculative commitment variables, which include perceived economic benefits gained, perceived loss of opportunities and/or *guanxi*, absence of competitive offerings, and inertia, might serve as a basis for further relationship building.

However, the apparent current dependence on calculative commitment as a basis of relationships suggests that organizers in Mainland China need to invest efforts to build long-term relationships with exhibitors based on affective rather than calculative commitment, drawing on extensive industry expertise and professionalism. This is essential to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in the long-term.

5.5.1.4 Communication

Several previous studies have developed second-order models of relationship quality in different B2B contexts which incorporated communication (or quality of communication) as one of the contributing first-order factors (e.g., Alrubaiee & Al-Nazer, 2010; Lages et al., 2005; 2007). De Wulf and colleagues (2001) found that direct mail, preferential treatment, interpersonal communication, and tangible rewards positively influence relationship quality to a varied degree in different country and industry settings. This research incorporated communication quality as one of the predictors of relationship quality, confirming that the level of relationship quality between organizers and exhibitors was positively associated with their communication quality. This finding reinforces the importance of quality communication as a key factor in building successful relationships (Alrubaiee & Al-Nazer, 2010; Coote et al., 2003; Lages et al., 2005; 2007).

Many conflicts between exhibitors and organizers, and fraud in exhibitor acquisition, are caused by opportunistic behavior of the organizer and information asymmetry in Mainland China's exhibitions (Wang, 2007). Results of this research indicate that sharing of

useful, accurate, relevant, credible and timely information with exhibitors is essential to building good relationships with exhibitors. Many service failures are communication failures. Communication between exhibitors and organizers is mainly one way communication, that is, information is distributed from the organizer to the exhibitors, through organizers' direct marketing and exhibition/portal websites. Information might be distorted, delayed, or inflated since it might be distributed via a number of channels, such as private agents, professional institutions, trade associations, chambers of commerce, and foreign agents. In short, the complex exhibition operation model might impair communication quality. In the future, organizers should expand the scope of communication and encourage information exchange with exhibitors. Improving communication quality, encouraging effective information exchange, and enhancing exhibitor participation are essential to developing quality relationships with exhibitors.

5.5.2 Research Question 1.2 - Difference in Perceptions for Relationship Quality

Proposition 1 stated that that relationship quality differs, depending on key characteristics of organizers and exhibitors. Study findings supported this proposition.

First, exhibitors at fairs operated by international organizers rated all relationship quality variables, at both the factor and item levels, significantly higher than their counterparts at fairs operated by domestic organizers. It appears that the former perceived to have better relationships with international organizers than their counterparts with domestic organizers. This might be due to a number of reasons: 1) the two international organizers sampled in this study enjoy a global reputation as industry leaders; 2) the events they hosted took place in the SNIEC, one of the benchmark venues in Mainland China, and 3) the exhibitions were premier events in their specific industry sectors, demonstrating high operational standards and professionalism in fair management. The organizers' international reputation, database development, business attitude, standardized operation, and communication platform utilized (be it via website, direct mail, or personal communication) are all likely to contribute to the observed differences. It also provides some evidence that foreign exhibition companies have exerted a marked influence on China's exhibition management and development, and contributed to the standardization of the industry (Kay, 2007).

Second, exhibitors at fairs operated by private organizing companies rated three relationship quality factors (service quality & relationship satisfaction, calculative commitment, and trust & affective commitment) significantly higher than those at fairs operated by government-affiliates. This finding suggests that the former were more satisfied with organizers' services and their relationships, had a higher level of trust and established a higher level of commitment than the latter. The private companies refer to both international and domestic private companies; the fact that international organizers established better relationships with exhibitors than domestic companies, as previously discussed, might contribute to the observed differences. Yet, it could also imply that some domestic, private companies have developed better relationships with exhibitors than government-affiliations. This can be argued on two grounds. On the one hand, the domestic private companies sampled are mainly industry associations with a number of years' experience of operating exhibitions (e.g., the private company operating the fair staged in PEACE-HZ). As identified by Chan (2008) and Kay (2007), domestic, private companies which operate and own brand-name exhibitions are few in number; however, given their identity as industry associations, expertise in knowing the industry, and experience in fair operation, they might be able to provide quality services, and establish trust and commitment with exhibitors. On the other hand, two kinds of problems might hamper relationship building between exhibitors and government-affiliation companies, namely, 1) a sellers' market with an administrative style of management rather than a business partnership, and 2) governments' motivation to try to fill venue space with exhibitions without systematic evaluation of the resources and feasibility to develop sustainable exhibitions (Chan, 2005, 2008; Kay, 2007). Given the various possible interpretations of this study finding, future studies may examine this aspect in particular. Finally, there was no significant difference in perceptions regarding communication, suggesting that both private and government-affiliates utilized similar methods for information exchange, with resulting communication quality being very similar.

Third, repeat exhibitors rated three relationship quality factors (service quality & relationship satisfaction, communication, and calculative commitment) significantly higher than first-time exhibitors. Thus, it appears that, in general, repeat exhibitors were more committed to the exhibitions/organizers (even if that commitment was based on calculative considerations) and that they were more willing to forgive some service failures by the organizers. Furthermore, repeat exhibitors might be more active in searching for and

receiving information from organizers than first-timers. In contrast, first-timers might be more sales-oriented, thus evaluating organizer performance mainly based on their own business outcomes. It is interesting to note that first-time exhibitors demonstrated no significant difference in perceptions of trust and affective commitment from repeat exhibitors, indicating that this factor, from the exhibitors' perspective, depends more on exhibition quality and organizer performance than frequency of participation. On the other hand, it might imply that, in general, the level of trust and commitment of all exhibitors is relatively low.

The differences in perceptions regarding relationship quality provide implications for exhibition management. They suggest that there is a clear distinction between high and low relational exhibitors, with the former exhibiting more relational intentions, compared to the latter group having more transactional objectives. This distinction impacts on trust, commitment, and service quality perceptions and relationship satisfaction. Exhibitors with more transactional objectives paid little attention to brand name, reputation, and financial strength of the organizer. Their evaluation of exhibition performance was primarily based on their own business outcomes. In contrast, high relational exhibitors regarded information-exchange and networking activities as their exhibiting objectives. They were also more willing to pay a premium price, and had greater confidence in the exhibition and the organizer at a time of economic recession. Thus, organizers shall differentiate and mark their accounts, and take measures to enhance relationships with different kinds of exhibiting firms.

In conclusion, results suggest that currently in Mainland China's exhibition context exhibitors are not fully aware of the benefits and approaches to build long-term partnerships with organizers. Most exhibitors continue exhibiting in anticipation of a series of exhibition benefits (e.g., business opportunities resulting from the exhibition and the event size), as well as some calculative commitment variables (e.g., no worthwhile alternative exhibitions, inertia). Few exhibitors posit a clear intention to build an interdependent relationship with the organizer. However, according to Kumar, Bohling, and Laddas (2003), a customer may start buying with no initial relationship intention, but will develop relationship intention based on the equity the customer perceives in the firm, the brand, and the intermediary

associated with the product. Thus, organizers must consider building quality relationships with exhibitors by improving the equity of their exhibition product.

5.5.3 Research Question 1.3 - Impact of Relationship Quality on EBP

Hypothesis $H1_b$ proposed that relationship quality has a significant, positive impact on exhibition brand preference. As hypothesized, the effect of relationship quality with organizers on exhibition brand preference of exhibitors is significant ($H1_b$: estimate=0.946, t=10.407). Thus, hypothesis $H1_b$ is supported.

The vast majority of publications on exhibition success factors are based on observation, industry experience and practice, or anecdotal evidence, rather than systematic empirical research (e.g., Alles, 1989; Fuchslocher, 2005; Hiller, 1995; Ulrich, 2005). This thesis represents one of the first empirical examinations of the effect of relationship marketing on exhibition brand preference, supporting arguments by a number of commentators (e.g., Alles, 1989; Erwin, 2005) that good management and an understanding of exhibitors' needs and objectives lead to successful exhibitions. In short, relationship marketing should be very effective in the exhibition industry context, and thus, lending support to propositions by Palmatier and colleagues (2006) that relationship quality is particularly effective for service-based products utilizing multiple channel distribution and in business markets, as is the case for exhibitor – organizer relationships.

It should be noted that any discussion on relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers in the trade fairs context in Mainland China must consider the influence of government entities and other related parties. Unlike in purely market-oriented settings where exhibitions are essentially commercial activities, in China, many non-commercial factors affect the establishment of relationship intention and quality. Local enterprise characteristics, the role of local governments and associations in the event organization, the overall quality of employees of the organizing company, the extent of operational standardization of organizers, and *guanxi* all exert a considerable influence.

5.5.4 Research Question 2.1 - Constituents of Exhibition Destination Attractiveness

Hypothesis $H2_a$ proposed that destination attractiveness is a second-order construct composed of six factors: 1) cluster effect, 2) venue facilities, 3) accommodation, 4) economic environment, 5) destination leisure environment, and 6) accessibility. The hypothesis is partially supported as the items proposed to measure accommodation did not converge and those items proposed to measure cluster effects converged onto two separate dimensions. EFA and CFA analyses support a six-factor-model for the destination attractiveness construct which reflects 1) cluster effect 1, 2) venue facilities, 3) cluster effect 2, 4) economic environment, 5) city leisure environment, and 6) accessibility. These dimensions are interrelated; potential rankings of the attractiveness of destinations should be based on the scores of individual dimensions times their corresponding weights, with destinations having high scores for all dimensions presumably being the most competitive ones. Next, each of these dimensions is discussed in turn, with special emphasis given to the discussion of constituents and impacts of clusters, as per research question 2.2.

5.5.4.1 Venue Facilities

Previous exhibition literature states that a venue is an important factor contributing to the success of an exhibition; thus, organizers must analyze the attractiveness of the venue and its urban environment, especially economic environment (e.g., Bauer, 2005; Kirchgeorg, 2005; Ulrich, 2005). This research provides empirical support that the venue is indeed an important dimension of exhibition destination attractiveness, with measurements covering venue layout, transportation, location, space, and facilities, confirming findings of previous research by Butler and colleagues (2007) and Carlsen (2004).

However, while a venue must have adequate space to accommodate events, be of international standard and have good transportation connections, a destination having a large, sophisticated venue may still not be competitive for exhibitions. Study findings showed that a suitable venue must be present together with cluster effects, accessibility, the leisure environment and economic environment of the destination. This finding is in agreement with previous research that center capacity must equate with airline and hotel capacity (Carlsen, 2004), and that venues in larger cities are typically more competitive in a

saturated or declining market (Wirtz, 2001) than smaller cities due to the influence of economic environment .

This research also found that venue facilities and service quality had limited influence on the success of an exhibition as long as the venue was perceived as an efficient place for business transaction. It appears that exhibitors are quite tolerant of venue and destination amenities as long as they felt that they had achieved their exhibiting objectives which may explain the success of some exhibitions held in less attractive venues in emerging markets.

5.5.4.2 Destination Economic Environment, Leisure Environment and Accessibility

This research indicated that destination economic environment, leisure environment and accessibility had a significant impact on exhibition destination attractiveness, albeit to a lesser extent than cluster effects and venue facilities. Economic environment was measured by strong economic condition and presence of large number of international firms. This is in line with previous studies that stress the importance of economic standing of an exhibition destination (e.g., Fuchslocher, 2005; Rubalcaba-Bermejo and Cuadrado-Roura's, 1995). Regarding destination leisure environment, findings of this research support previous studies positing that exhibitors and visitors typically prefer cities with pleasant environments (e.g., Jin et al., 2010). Compared to German destinations for exhibitions, China's second and third-tier cities lack both international prestige and a history of hosting exhibitions. Thus, cities with better leisure environment with regard to safety, cleanliness, tourist facilities, and openness should be more competitive in developing exhibition industry in the locality. Accessibility, measured by ease of access to the city, location, and ease of getting information on the city, was perceived as important, lending support to similar findings in previous studies on convention site selection and exhibition center success factors (e.g., Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Hiller, 1995; Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura 1995). However, the most important constituents of destination attractiveness were cluster effects, which will be discussed next in response to Research Question 2.2.

5.5.5 Research Question 2.2 -- Cluster Effects

This research established two dimensions for the cluster effect: 1) host city leadership in the industry and 2) host city as a source of exhibitors. Cluster effects result in distinct differences for exhibition destinations versus convention or tourism destinations. Cluster theory affirms that clustering has a significant impact on regional economic development and national competitiveness (e.g., Enright, 2003). This research is one of the first empirical studies that explores the impact of clusters on exhibition destination development. It found that exhibition destination attractiveness is primarily represented by host city leadership in the industry and the host city being a source for exhibitors. 'Host city leadership in the industry,' manifested in a host city being an important distribution hub of a specific industry sector, having support from related industries and a strong professional industry association, has the impact on exhibition destination attractiveness, closely followed by the 'Host city being a source for exhibitors.' Exhibitors are aware of and prefer host destinations with cluster effects that have developed over time, thus, supporting arguments that the maturity of an industry in a destination is important to the cultivation of exhibitions for a specific industry sector (Butler et al., 2007; Chan, 2005), and that exhibitions mirror economic and industry developments (e.g., Kirchgeorg, 2005). It also provides evidence that the development of China's exhibition industry is similar to that in Germany and Italy where exhibitions gained strength as a result of cluster effects, both past and current. It is likely to prove very difficult to start an exhibition in a city in China without any of the cluster advantages. This is in marked contrast to exhibitions developed in, for example, Las Vegas, where exhibition development is based on available space, professional operation, and touristic value rather than any cluster effects.

The impacts of cluster effect 1 (leadership of the host city in the industry) and cluster effect 2 (host city as a source of exhibitors) on destination attractiveness shall be different. First, the two dimensions bear different weights of importance on the destination attractiveness construct. Second, the two dimensions manifest urban hierarchy. Economic standing of cities might differentiate cities having leadership (cluster effect 1) from those being sources of exhibitors (cluster effect 2), as cities with a strong economic standing are typically large cities (defined in terms of municipality and economic output). This is in line with Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura's (1995) argument that larger cities have a

higher level of industry diversification and a greater number of exhibitions. Cluster effect 1 explains the leadership of a few gateway cities in exhibition development. Thus, the three first-tier cities in China's exhibition industry – Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou - as the leading cities of the three largest industrial belts (the Yangtze River, Beijing-Tianjin and Pearl River Industrial belts), are likely to strengthen their leadership. Gateways cities have a more competitive edge as they may gain support from several clusters in the near region. Cluster effect 2 provides theoretical support for the development of exhibitions in second or third-tier cities where manufacturing facilities/factories cluster. Thus, cities located in such clusters, like Dongguan, Shenzhen, Ningbo, and Yiwu, for example, have a competitive advantage. It also explains why some specialized exhibitions hosted in smaller cities, such as Zibo and Foshan, are well recognized by exhibitors.

Cluster effects play an important role in both inter-region and intra-region competition, especially for exhibitions with a similar theme. Greater specialization of exhibitions is a prevalent trend in the exhibition industry due to the exponential growth of new technologies, sciences and industries (Zitzewitz, 2005). Destinations with specialized industrial clusters are likely to more readily generate exhibitions in their region. Regarding intra-regional competition, the economic environment and cluster effect 1 might offset first-comer advantage of some smaller cities where exhibition brands have been established. The development of the exhibition industry in second and third-tier cities is usually strongly supported by the local governments and associations. Yet, there is controversy about local governments' objectives and involvement in exhibition development. If well managed, exhibitions hosted in second and third-tier cities with industry cluster advantages can strengthen the leading position of host destinations in the specific industries, as well as resulting in other economic and non-economic benefits (such as spin-off effects and enhanced reputation). However, with both second and third-tier cities boosting development of exhibitions, and facing intra-region competition, it is difficult to assess the sole impact of cluster effect 2 on destination attractiveness.

In conclusion, destinations that possess leadership in a particular industry, have good venue facilities and accommodation options, are accessible and located near the manufacturing base for the exhibited products are likely to be more attractive to both organizers and exhibitors. Thus, gateway cities and leading regional cities, which have

strong financial support to build venue facilities, ease of access and a variety of quality accommodation, are likely to be more competitive as exhibition destinations. However, this is not to say that smaller cities are automatically excluded from developing successful exhibitions, as the ability to locate or relocate an exhibition not only depends on destination attractiveness dimensions but also on the professionalism of organizers, their effort and determination, and support gained from industry associations, local government, and venues.

5.5.6 Research Question 2.3 - Differences in Perceptions for Destination Attractiveness

Proposition 2 stated that destination attractiveness differs, depending on the characteristics of exhibitors and destinations; this research found evidence to support the proposition. Results showed that Shanghai was rated significantly higher in terms of economic standing and cluster effect 1 than second-tier cities (Nanjing, Hangzhou and Wuhan), in line with their actual economic development. Interestingly, Shanghai's leisure environment was rated lower than that of the second-tier cities, with Nanjing and Hangzhou in particular being famous tourist destinations. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between the first and second-tier cities in terms of venue facilities and accessibility. This finding confirms the previous argument that it is the cluster effects and a destination's economic standing rather than the destination leisure environment and accessibility that determine an exhibition destination's competiveness,

Findings of this research suggest that the sampled second-tier cities in this thesis are promising emerging exhibition destinations. They are provincial capital cities having impressive venues, convenient inter-city and intra-city transportation, satisfactory leisure environments, and touristic attractions. The three cities are among the top 15 cities having the largest exhibition centers (See Table 2.6). In 2007, Hangzhou ranked 11th in terms of per capita GDP in China, Nanjing 12th, and Wuhan 14th. These cities are tourist cities as well, with Hangzhou ranking 5th in international tourist arrivals in 2007, Nanjing 7th, and Wuhan 15th. Hangzhou is located in close proximity to Shanghai; inter-city high speed train averages 1 hour and 30 minutes, with a fast train link of 45 minutes from Shanghai Hongqiao airport to Hangzhou train station. Nanjing is about 2 hours from Shanghai by train, with the fast train link from Shanghai Hongqiao airport taking about 1 hour and 15 minutes. Wuhan is currently about 5 hours by train from Shanghai, but due to its strategic

location in Central China it is the hub of China's train and highway network. The venue size, city environment and convenient inter-city transportation explain why exhibitors rate accessibility, destination leisure environment and venue factors similarly. Other second or third-tier cities located in industrial belts that have large venues, high per capita GDP, and a substantial number of international arrivals include Shenzhen, Suzhou, Qingdao, Dongguan, Xiamen, Chengdu Xi'an, Dalian, Chongqing and Tianjin. As exhibitors clearly prefer destinations with cluster effect advantages, these second-tier cities can be potentially successful destinations for many exhibition topics. Thus, regional flagship exhibitions in different growth regions are likely to increase both in number and significance.

5.5.7 Research Question 2.4 - Impact of Destination Attractiveness on EBP

Hypothesis 2_b proposed that destination attractiveness has a significant, positive impact on exhibition brand preference. Contrary to expectations, the effect of destination attractiveness on exhibition brand preference was found to be suppressed by the impact of relationship quality; it was non-significant at the 0.01 level ($H2_b$: estimate= -0.167, t=-2.114). Following Hair et al.'s (2010) recommendation that uses only the highly correlated independent variables for prediction under a case of suppression effect, hypothesis 2_b is rejected.

A possible explanation for the insignificant impact of destination attractiveness on exhibition brand preference from the exhibitors' perspective might be related to respondents' characteristics. More than 90% of respondents were Mainland Chinese; these respondents should have been rather familiar with the host destinations, for example, about 60% of exhibitors were actually from nearby regions of the host city. These exhibitors regularly attended exhibitions on an annual or biannual basis. Familiarity with the host city might have mitigated their perceived importance of destination attractiveness. In addition, their strong business-orientation in an exhibition might further reduce the perceived importance of destination attractiveness on exhibition brand preference.

Thus, study results lend some support to Alles' (1989) argument that the success of an exhibition is largely unaffected by its location, relative to other factors. The location and setting of exhibition centers appear to be of secondary importance to exhibitors, who are

primarily concerned with achieving their exhibiting objectives. These findings are also in line with Smith and colleagues (2003) who suggest that attending goals of international trade show attendees are not substantially altered by the attractiveness of the host destination. Comparing the importance of location on the success of an exhibition to that of a convention, study findings also echo Hiller's argument (1995) that due to delegates' "commitment to the purpose of the convention," the convention location is less important to them (Hiller, 1995, p.375). Consequently, results of this research are different from Lee and Back's (2008) finding that convention site selection has a significant, positive impact on convention brand satisfaction from the attendees' perspective.

However, it has to be emphasized that being of secondary importance does not mean that exhibitors do not consider destination attractiveness factors when choosing exhibitions hosted in different destinations. Yet, the influence of destination factors on exhibitors' satisfaction and preference for an exhibition brand might be concealed in that exhibitors build a relationship only with organizers who consistently choose suitable settings for exhibitions that allow them to achieve their exhibiting objectives. Thus, as suggested by Fuchslocher (2005, p295) while "the location factor earns few bonus points, if there were any problems resulting from it, exhibitors would react both immediately and negatively." In summary, findings of this thesis imply that destination attractiveness factors constitute a necessary, but not sufficient condition for exhibitors' exhibition brand preference. Rather, it is determined by whether organizers can meet exhibitors' needs and objectives, and are able to build trust and commitment. If that is the case, then it may also be relatively easy for organizers with a renowned exhibition brand to relocate an exhibition to an alternative setting (venue and/or destination).

5.6 Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 discussed the methodology and results of pilot test and main survey. Though utilizing a convenience sampling method, the research developed a sample frame and collected data covering a variety of industry sectors for the main survey. Building on the results of EFA, CFA confirmed the overall measurement model. Independent sample t-tests found that exhibitors' perception of their relationships with organizers and destination attractiveness differed, depending on key characteristics of exhibitors, organizers, and

destinations. SEM assessed the structural model with two paths: 1) from relationship quality to exhibition brand preference, and 2) from destination attractiveness to exhibition brand preference. Statistics indicated that the model fitted the data well, and that the statistical power of the model to predict exhibition brand preference was high. The quality of the relationship with organizers was the dominant causal factor for exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. It appeared that destination attractiveness factors had a non-significant impact on exhibitors' brand preference, due to suppression effect. Implications of these results were also discussed. Based on the results and discussion, Chapter 6 concludes the research with implications of the findings for theory, policy, and practice.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This research was designed to address the research problem "which, and to what extent, do relationship quality and destination attractiveness factors impact on exhibition brand preference?" in the context of China's exhibition industry. This final chapter summarizes the findings in response to this research problem.

Chapter 1 introduced the background of the research, outlined the research problem, and discussed justifications and the importance of the research. Chapter 2 reviewed global exhibition studies and China's exhibition industry development. Reviews found that there is a lack of empirical examination of the relationship between exhibitors and organizers, and how this relationship impacts exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. It was also noted that there is a paucity of systematic, empirical research on the effect of manufacturing clusters on exhibition destination attractiveness, and in turn on exhibition brand preference from the perspective of exhibitors. Chapter 3 reviewed the literature relating to relationship marketing, destination attractiveness, convention site-selection, and clusters. By drawing on relationship quality, destination marketing and cluster theory, Chapter 3 synthesized a theoretical model that aimed to test the effects of relationship quality with organizers and destination attractiveness on exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. A three-stage research design utilizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches was justified. Chapter 4 reported the methodology, analyses and results of the in-depth interviews while Chapter 5 detailed the methodology, analyses and results of the quantitative research. It also discussed research findings in the context of the generic literature and China's exhibition industry development.

In this final chapter, conclusions are made about the research problem and each of the research issues. This chapter compares and contrasts research findings with the extant literature to highlight similarities and differences, and thereby demonstrates the contributions of this thesis to the literature and the wider body of knowledge. Chapter 6

concludes with implications of the findings for theory, policy and practice, a discussion of the limitations of the research, and recommendations for future research.

6.2 Conclusions about the Research Issues and the Research Problem

The research issues of this thesis are assessed at three levels in the extant literature, as suggested by Perry (1998). First, a research issue may have been explored to a certain depth in the generic literature of relationship marketing or tourism, but not in the exhibition environment. Second, research issues may have been speculated on, implied, or mentioned in passing but not empirically tested in either the generic literature or the exhibition context. Third, a research issue may have attracted minor or no past research, showing an important area for contribution by this research. Table 6.1 details the research issues and contributions of this thesis.

Contributions of this research are summarized at three levels in Table 6.1. The first level of contribution is confirmation and/or disconfirmation of expectations of a phenomenon that has been explored in some depth in the extant generic literature. This is marked as ‘to minor extent’. The second level of contribution is additions to knowledge in an area about which there were some speculations in or inferences from the generic literature but no empirical testing has been conducted. This is indicated as ‘to some extent’. The third level refers to additions to knowledge in a new area where minor research has previously been done. This is referred to as ‘to great extent’.

Table 6.1 Research Contributions

Issue No.	Research Issue	Conclusions made for each research issue and final hypotheses within it	Status of research in the extant literature	Extent of contribution of this research to current Knowledge
Research Issue 1 focuses on RQ between exhibitors and organizers.				
1.1	What constitutes relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers?	Exhibitors' relationship quality with organizers in the exhibition context is a second-order construct composed of four factors: (1) perceived service quality & relationship satisfaction, (2) trust & affective commitment, (3) calculative commitment, and (4) communication.	Investigated in some depth in generic marketing literature	To minor extent
			No prior research on the association between exhibitors and organizers in the exhibition context	To some extent
		Conclusion 1.1.1 The level of relationship quality with organizers is positively associated with service quality and relationship satisfaction.	No prior research on the association between exhibitors and organizers in the exhibition context	To some extent
		Conclusion 1.1.2 The level of relationship quality with organizers is positively associated with trust and affective commitment.	No prior research on the association between exhibitors and organizers in the exhibition context	To some extent
		Conclusion 1.1.3 The level of relationship quality with organizers is positively associated with communication.	No prior research on the association between exhibitors and organizers in the exhibition context	To some extent
		Conclusion 1.1.4 The level of relationship quality with organizers is positively associated with calculative commitment.	No prior research on the association between exhibitors and organizers in the exhibition context	To some extent

Table 6.1 Research Contributions (Continued)

Issue No.	Research Issue	Conclusions made for each research issue and final hypotheses within it	Status of research in the extent literature	Extent of contribution of this research to current knowledge
1.2	Are there significant differences in relationship quality, depending on key characteristics of organizers and exhibitors?	Conclusion 1.2.1 Exhibitors exhibiting in trade fairs organized by international organizers rated all four relationship quality factors significantly higher than exhibitors exhibiting in fairs organized by domestic organizers.	No prior research on the difference between the perceptions of the two groups.	To some extent
		Conclusion 1.2.2 Exhibitors exhibiting in trade fairs organized by private organizing companies rated two relationship quality factors (service quality and relationship quality, and calculative commitment) significantly higher than exhibitors in fairs organized by government-affiliations.	No prior research on the difference between the perceptions of the two groups.	To some extent
		Conclusion 1.2.3 Repeat exhibitors in all exhibitions rated three relationship quality factors (service quality and relationship satisfaction, calculative commitment, and communication) significantly higher than first time exhibitors.	No prior research on the difference between the perceptions of the two groups.	To some extent
1.3	To what extent does relationship quality exert influence on exhibition brand preference of exhibitors?	Conclusion 1.3 Relationship quality with organizers has a significant, positive effect on exhibition brand preference.	No prior research on the association between exhibitors and organizers in the exhibition context	To some extent

Table 6.1 Research Contributions (Continued)

Issue No.	Research Issue	Conclusions made for each research issue and final hypotheses within it	Status of research in the extent literature	Extent of contribution of this research to current knowledge
2.1	What constitutes destination attractiveness for an exhibition destination?	Destination attractiveness is a second order construct composed of six factors: 1) cluster effect 1, 2) venue facilities, 3) cluster effect 2, 4) economic environment, 5) city leisure environment, and 6) accessibility.	Speculated on, or commented in conceptual paper in exhibition literature	To some extent
		Conclusion 2.1.1 Destination attractiveness is positively associated with cluster effect 1 (host city leadership in the industry).	Speculated on, or commented in conceptual paper in exhibition literature	To great extent
		Conclusion 2.1.2 Destination attractiveness is positively associated with venue facilities.	Speculated on, or commented in conceptual paper in exhibition literature	To some extent
		Conclusion 2.1.3 Destination attractiveness is positively associated with cluster effect 2 (host city as a source for exhibitors).	Speculated on, or commented in conceptual paper in exhibition literature	To great extent
		Conclusion 2.1.4 Destination attractiveness is positively associated with destination leisure environment.	Speculated on, or commented in conceptual paper in exhibition literature	To minor extent
		Conclusion 2.1.5 Destination attractiveness is positively associated with economic environment.	Speculated on, or commented in conceptual paper in exhibition literature	To minor extent
		Conclusion 2.1.6 Destination attractiveness is positively associated with accessibility.	Investigated in some depth in generic tourism literature	To minor extent
			Speculated on, or commented in conceptual paper in exhibition literature	To some extent

Table 6.1 Research Contributions (Continued)

Issue No.	Research Issue	Conclusions made for each research issue and final hypotheses within it	Status of research in the extent literature	Extent of contribution of this research to current knowledge
2.2	What measures constitute 'cluster effect' in an exhibition context, and to what extent do 'clusters' contribute to destination attractiveness?	Conclusion 2.2: Cluster effect is measured by two dimensions: 1) leadership of the host city in the industry and 2) the host city as a source for exhibitors. Cluster effects are important indictors for destination attractiveness in the exhibition context.	No prior empirical research on measuring clusters and the impacts on exhibition destination attractiveness.	To great extent
2.3	Do first and second-tier destinations perform differently with regard to destination attractiveness factors from the exhibitors' perspective?	Conclusion 2.3 There are significant differences in perceptions of economic environment, cluster effect 1, and leisure environment between first-tier and second-tier cities.	No prior research on the difference between the perceptions of the two groups.	To some extent
2.4	To what extent does destination attractiveness exert influence on exhibition preference of exhibitors?	Conclusion 2.4 Destination attractiveness does not have a significant, positive effect on exhibition brand preference.	Speculated on, or commented in conceptual paper in exhibition literature	To some extent

6.2.1 Research Issue 1

Research issue one centers on the relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers and relates to three aspects: 1) the predictors of relationship quality, 2) the extent to which relationship quality impacts on exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands, and 3) differences of perceptions of exhibitors in their relationships with organizers. Three main conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this research.

6.2.1.1 Research Issue 1.1

Research Question 1.1 What constitutes relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers?

The first conclusion relates to the dimensions that formed relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers. The generic literature in relationship marketing offers different perspectives when treating relationship quality as a global construct. Most prior research identified trust, commitment and relationship satisfaction as dimensions of relationship quality as a second-order construct (Abdul-Muhmin, 2005; Anderson & Weitz, 1992; Crosby et al., 1990; Huntley, 2006; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Stanko et al., 2007). Recent studies added further dimensions to this global construct, for example, Rauyruen and Miller (2007) added service quality while Alrubaiee and Al-Nazer (2010) and Lages et al. (2008) incorporated communication. Thus, it can be inferred that relationship quality building between exhibitors and organizers can be multi-dimensional. However, prior to this research, this relationship has not been empirically examined in the exhibition context.

This research found that the level of relationship quality between organizers and exhibitors in the exhibition context is represented, in descending order of importance, service quality & relationship satisfaction, trust & affective commitment, communication, and calculative commitment. The findings of this current research support the inclusion of service quality and communication as important, additional dimensions of relationship quality as a higher order construct. The findings also differentiate affective commitment from calculative commitment, as suggested by recent studies (e.g., Cater & Zabkar, 2009;

Gounaris, 2005). Organizers must acknowledge these categories to building long-term relationships with the customers.

6.2.1.2 Research Issue 1.2

Research Issue 1.2: Are there significant differences in relationship quality, depending on key characteristics of organizers and exhibitors?

No extant literature discussed differences in exhibitors' perceptions of their relationship with organizers. This research found that relationship quality between organizers and exhibitors is perceived differently, depending on key characteristics of organizers and exhibitors. Exhibitors exhibiting in trade fairs organized by international organizers rated all four relationship quality factors (service quality and relationship satisfaction, trust and affective commitment, calculative commitment, and communication) significantly higher than exhibitors exhibiting in fairs organized by domestic organizers. Exhibitors exhibiting in trade fairs organized by private organizing companies rated two relationship quality factors (service quality and relationship satisfaction, and calculative commitment) significantly higher than exhibitors in fairs organized by government-affiliations. Repeat exhibitors in all exhibitions rated three relationship quality factors (service quality and relationship satisfaction, calculative commitment, and communication) significantly higher than first-time exhibitors. This research provides implications that relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers can be significantly different dependent on organizer and exhibitor characteristics. It appears that international organizers have developed further relationship quality with their customers than domestic organizers, private organizers have developed further relationship quality with their customers than public organizers, or organizers of all types have better relationship quality with repeat exhibitors than first time exhibitors. This opens new ground for future research.

6.2.1.3 Research Issue 1.3

Research Question 1.3 To what extent does relationship quality exert influence on exhibition brand preference of exhibitors?

The third conclusion relates to the outcomes of relationship quality with organizers. Extant generic literature provides sufficient evidence that relationship quality significantly influences attitudinal and behavioral intentions from the customer's perspective, regardless of sub-dimensions utilized by different studies in a wide variety of business and consumer settings. High relationship quality results in customer loyalty (e.g., Kim et al., 2006; Rauyruen & Miller, 2007); word-of-mouth (e.g., Kim & Cha, 2002; Kim & Smith, 2007; Kim et al., 2006); sales effectiveness (e.g., Johnson, Sohi, & Grewal, 2004); and purchase intention (e.g., Keh & Xie, 2008; Rauyruen & Miller, 2007; Stanko et al., 2007).

This research found that, in the exhibition context in Mainland China, relationship quality with organizers (supplier) has a positive, causal impact on exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. This supports previous studies that identified a positive, causal relation between relationship quality (being measured by various combinations of communication, trust, commitment, satisfaction, and service quality individually or combined) and buyer purchase behaviors in various B2B or B2C contexts in Western countries. Findings support arguments by a number of commentators (e.g., Alles, 1989; Heckmann, 2005; Ulrich, 2005) that a good marketing concept, good management and an understanding for the exhibiting needs and objectives generate exhibition success. This is in congruence with Jin et al. (2010)'s finding that organizer performance is the most important factor influencing exhibition participants' decision-making.

6.2.2 Research Issue 2

Research issue two centers on exhibition destination attractiveness and relates to four aspects: 1) the predictors of destination attractiveness, 2) the measures of cluster effect, 3) the extent to which destination attractiveness impacts on exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands, and 4) differences of perceptions of exhibitors in destination attractiveness factors. Four main conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this research.

6.2.2.1 Research Issue 2.1

Research Question 2.1 What constitutes destination attractiveness for an exhibition destination?

The first conclusion relates to the dimensions that formed exhibition destination attractiveness. In the generic destination and exhibition literature, the relationship between destination attributes and sustainable development of the exhibition industry in a locality is widely discussed (e.g., Alles, 1989; Fuchslocher, 2005; Guo, 2007; Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995). However, most of the studies speculated on, implied, or commented on destination factors contributing to successful exhibition development. Few prior literatures have empirically examined the strength of the dimensions of destination attractiveness in the exhibition context.

This research empirically tested dimensions of exhibition destination attractiveness in Mainland China's exhibition context from the perspective of exhibitors. Especially, the effect of the presence of manufacturing clusters in/near a destination on destination attractiveness and development is proposed and tested. Findings indicate that exhibition destination attractiveness is represented in descending order of importance, cluster effect 1(leadership of the city in the industry), venue facilities, cluster effect 2 (the host city as a source of exhibitors), economic environment, destination leisure environment, and accessibility. This is similar to previous literature regarding success factors for exhibition centers and destinations identified as economic standing, facilities, accessibility, city capacity, infrastructure, accommodation, and government or public sector support (e.g., Butler et al., 2007; Carlsen, 2004; Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995; Wirtz, 2001). This implies that cluster effects, venue facilities, destination leisure and economic environment, and accessibility benchmark preferred exhibition destinations, and thus justify organizers' site selection.

6.2.2.2 Research Issue 2.2

Research Issue 2.2: What measures constitute 'cluster effect' in an exhibition context, and to what extent do 'clusters' contribute to destination attractiveness?

Cluster theory states that geographic concentrations of firms in related industries, suppliers, providers and associated institutions have a significant impact on regional economic development and national competitiveness (e.g., Enright, 2003; Porter, 1998). Extant literature speculated on the correlation between clustering of manufactures and exhibition industry development (e.g., Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995, Chan, 2005).

This thesis is the first study to develop a two-dimensional scale with seven items to measure cluster effects in the exhibition industry. It verified via CFA two dimensions: 1) leadership of the host city in the industry and 2) the host city as a source for exhibitors. Second-order CFA found that 'leadership of the host city in the industry' is the most important indicator to destination attractiveness while 'host city as a source for exhibitors' is also an important factor. This suggests that initiation of exhibitions in destinations with cluster effects, or relocation/transplantation of exhibitions to these destinations, is viable. On the contrary, cautions shall be taken to initiate, relocate or transplant exhibitions to destinations without presence of cluster effects.

6.2.2.3 Research Issue 2.3

Research Issue 2.3: Do first and second tier destinations perform differently with regard to destination attractiveness factors from the exhibitors' perspective?

No extant empirical studies directly compared destination performance in terms of attractiveness between first and second-tier exhibition cities in China. This research found that exhibitors exhibiting in a first-tier city (Shanghai) rate its economic environment and cluster effects significantly higher than exhibitors exhibiting in second-tier cities (Hangzhou, Nanjing and Wuhan). However, the former also rated destination leisure environment factors lower than the latter. There are no significant differences in terms of other destination attractiveness factors. This indicates that, compared to the first-tier city, second-

tier cities possess the necessary resources to host large-scale exhibitions. However, they are not as competitive as first-tier cities due to absence of leadership of the city in the industry and less favorable business environment. Hence, premier exhibitions may still be located in first-tier cities, yet destination decentralization is possible in that regional flagship exhibitions in different growth regions will increase in number and significance.

6.2.2.4 Research Issue 2.4

Research Question 2.4 To what extent does destination attractiveness exert influence on exhibition brand preference of exhibitors?

The last conclusion relates to whether exhibition destination attractiveness impacts on exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. Prior studies mainly speculated or commented on the issue based on observation, industry experience or practice. One opinion is that destination factors are of secondary importance, not impacting the success of an exhibition, but might, to some extent, influence exhibitors' intentions to attend an exhibition (e.g. Alles, 1989; Jin et al., 2010). Alternatively, some authors maintain that destination factors influence the success of exhibitions as exhibitors would react negatively to poor destination attributes (Fuchslocher, 2005; Ulrich, 2005).

This research assessed the relationship between exhibition destination attractiveness and exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. It concluded that the impact of destination attractiveness factors on exhibition brand preference is suppressed by the impact of relationship quality on the dependent variable, which implies that destination attractiveness factors constitute a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for exhibitors' exhibition brand preference. This might give justification for some successful exhibitions being held in venues with few frills but strong market demand in emerging markets. Findings imply that there is a tolerance zone between conditions and status that exhibitors perceive as important, and conditions and status that they perceive they can act upon. This signifies that exhibitors would go anywhere as long as there is good business to be had.

6.2.3 Conclusions about the Research Problem

The research problem was stated as: Which, and to what extent, do relationship quality and destination attractiveness factors impact on exhibition brand preference?

Chapter 3 synthesized a theoretical framework which hypothesized the constituents of the relationship quality and destination attractiveness constructs and their impact on exhibition brand preference. The structural model was tested in Chapter 5. This research found that relationship quality between organizers and exhibitors is a second-order construct composed of four factors (service quality and relationship satisfaction, trust and affective commitment, communication, and calculative commitment), while destination attractiveness is a higher-order construct composed of six factors (cluster effect 1, venue facilities, cluster effect 2, destination leisure environment, economic standing, and accessibility). Exhibitors' exhibition brand preference is determined by relationship quality with organizers while the impact of destination attractiveness on EBP is suppressed by relationship quality. This finding indicates that exhibitors' preference for an exhibition brand is not substantially altered by the attractiveness of the host destination.

6.3 Implications for Theory

This research makes a substantial contribution to the exhibition literature in that it developed and empirically tested a model to understand exhibition brand preference of exhibitors that incorporated both relationship quality and exhibition destination attractiveness factors. In doing so, it 1) developed a scale for cluster effects and tested their impact on exhibition destination attractiveness, and in turn on exhibition brand preference; 2) confirmed a distinct difference in destination attractiveness for exhibitors versus that for convention attendees; 3) ascertained the primary importance of relationship quality on exhibition brand preference; and 4) supported the use of a second-order relationship quality construct with four dimensions.

First, the current study presents the first empirical research that uses cluster effects to measure a destination's economic environment and industry support that enhance exhibition destination attractiveness. Findings of this research indicate that cluster effects are the most important indicators for destination attractiveness in the exhibition context in

Mainland China. This lends support to the proposition that clustering has a positive, significant impact on corporate performance, regional economic development, and national competitiveness (Enright, 2003). The findings of this research linked the development of individual exhibitions and the exhibition industry in general, with the emergence and development of regional clusters. They also provide a basis for further empirical research on the impacts of clusters on exhibition development from the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as organizers, visitors and destination management parties, with potential areas for future research outlined in Section 6.7.

Second, results of this research also demonstrated that exhibitors' perceptions of the importance of a destination are different from those of conference/convention attendees. Lee and Back (2008) found that convention site-selection has a significant, positive impact on convention brand satisfaction from the attendees' perspective, resulting in positive word-of-mouth and repurchase intentions. In contrast, this research found that destination factors are not as important to exhibitors as other factors, in particular relationship quality. Thus, in future research on site selection a clear distinction has to be made between exhibitions and conventions rather than approaching the subject from a more general MICE segment perspective.

Third, this is one of the first studies that used both qualitative and advanced quantitative approaches to explore relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers, and the outcome of this relationship on exhibition brand development. It adapts relationship quality scales and measurements developed in various B2B or B2C contexts in Western countries to the exhibition context in Mainland China. Results indicate that in the exhibition context, where exhibitor recruitment and the provision of facilities/amenities become more and more homogenous among competitive exhibitions/organizers/destinations, it is relationship quality that creates exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands. Thus, cultivating a long-term relationship orientation with exhibitors is critical for exhibition organizers for the success and sustainable development of exhibitions. Since no previous empirical studies have explored the impact of relationship quality between organizers and exhibitors, this research provides a foundation for subsequent studies in related fields, such as approaches to building exhibitors' trust and commitment, and enhancing the brand of the exhibition organizer in addition to exhibition brand.

Fourth, this research supports the use of a second-order relationship quality construct with service quality and relationship satisfaction, trust & affective commitment, calculative commitment, and communication as its dimensions, suggesting that a multidimensional conceptualization of relationship quality is viable. Prior research has utilized only a subset of these dimensions to predict relationship quality, most often trust, commitment and satisfaction (e.g. Abdul-Muhmin, 2005; Huntley, 2006; Stanko et al., 2007). In contrast, this research used service quality and communication as two additional dimensions of relationship quality; results support the inclusion of service quality as a dimension of relationship quality by Rauyruen and Miller (2007), one of the first empirical studies that included this dimension following suggestions by Crosby et al. (1990) and Hennig-Thurau and Klee (1997). Results also support the inclusion of communication as a dimension of relationship quality, as suggested by Alrubaiee & Al-Nazer (2010) and Lages et al. (2005; 2008).

6.4 Implications for Policy and Practice

6.4.1 Implications for Exhibition Management

This research has implications for exhibition organizers in building their brands, their relationships with customers, and exhibition site-selection. First, relationship quality with organizers is the dominant, causal reason for exhibition brand preference of exhibitors. To a certain extent, these influencing factors are under the influence and control of the organizer. It is imperative for organizers to recognize and implement the relationship-building measures as to give exhibitors reasons to stay with their exhibitions.

Second, establishment of a long-term quality relationship with exhibitors can assist in developing the brand of the exhibition company, not just a particular exhibition. An exhibition is an event which is marketed and held by an organizer, and thus, is part of its intellectual property. In China's trade fair context, often the event itself is prestigious but the organizer who operates it might not be well-known by participants. Therefore, even if ownership changes, exhibitions can still thrive. Thus, there is a danger that some exhibition organizers/partners may be removed from ownership when conflicts occur among

organizing partners. In view of the study findings, organizing companies need to not only develop and market the exhibition brand but also their own company brand as to establish customer loyalty to their company, thereby reducing potential risks.

Third, exhibitors in general appeared to have low intentions to build relationships with the organizers; many exhibitors continue exhibiting due to a series of calculative factors, including but not limited to switching costs, the lack of worthwhile alternatives, and the power of the event and/or organizers. These exhibitors do not appear to have any affective commitment towards the organizers. Thus, there is a danger that these exhibitors switch if conditions allow. This research offers guidelines to exhibition organizers on how to define relationship quality, and manage relationships with exhibitors. Results indicated that service quality and relationship satisfaction, and trust and affective commitment were more important than calculative commitment and communication in cultivating exhibition brand preference. Thus, exhibition organizers should focus on improving the former dimensions, even if competitors do not host exhibitions of the same themes in the same destination.

Finally, study findings indicate a need for differentiated marketing approaches by organizers, given that many domestic exhibitors in China have strong sales-oriented exhibition objectives, whereas non-selling activities are largely neglected. While this may generate market demand for exhibitions it may negatively affect their relationship with organizers. Garbarino and Johnson (1999) suggest using transactional marketing for customers with low relational intentions since managing satisfaction is more effective for these customers. In contrast, directing relationship marketing efforts toward customers with high relational intentions to maintaining and building trust and commitment is appropriate, since these customers do not only seek satisfaction. Based on their recommendation and in view of study results, it is recommended that, for key account exhibitors, mainly big or medium-sized companies (leading companies in an industry), organizers shall build trust and affective commitment to achieve enhanced relationship quality. In contrast, for exhibitors who are more sales-oriented, organizers may initially focus on the provision of quality visitors but in the longer-term also need to promote the benefits of developing a strong relationship.

6.4.2 Implications for Destination Management

This research provides practitioners and policy makers with a means of assessing and enhancing the competitiveness of their destination. This study identified the various destination business factors; it also confirmed that destination business factors have a greater impact than leisure factors on exhibition destination attractiveness. Since destinations are able to directly compete on the basis of business-related factors (Enright & Newton, 2005), this finding offers a direction for destinations to develop and enhance their competitiveness in the exhibition sector.

The results of this research have implications for the decentralization of exhibitions and destinations in second and third-tier cities in China, specifically for national and regional exhibitions. Worldwide, exhibitions have grown significantly and played a key role in the growing inter-city competition (Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995), resulting in decentralization of destinations. Decentralization is occurring in Asia, with China and India being the most promising markets in the region. With the number of exhibitions growing rapidly in cities such as Shanghai, Beijing, Mumbai, New Delhi, and Bangalore, the traditional hegemony of Singapore and Hong Kong as regional centers has shifted. Within China, exhibitions at national and regional levels proliferate in second-tier cities, even though international organizing companies are still cautious in relocating exhibitions to these cities. Yet, study findings which show that exhibitors evaluate their preference for exhibition brands primarily based on their relationship quality with organizers, suggest that success of exhibitions is only marginally affected by the specifics of destinations. Thus, relocating exhibitions to destinations with market demand but less advanced venue facilities and destination amenities appears viable, and well-developed and managed exhibition centers in second-tier cities are likely to have good opportunities to attract exhibitions. Decentralization of destinations should be in the interest of exhibitors as they could have easier access to regional markets and enhance their regional presence (Tan, Hock & Piaw, 2004). As decentralization is a worldwide trend, the findings of this research may also have implications for second-tier cities around the world.

Given the opportunities to develop exhibitions in second-tier cities, destination management parties should be realistic and evaluate their competitiveness based on factual

data, not speculation. The criteria to judge whether a city is a suitable destination in which to stage an exhibition are complex. Destination management parties might have to analyze the opportunities for their venues, based on market analysis of the regional clustering of industries, venue facilities and competing venues in the region, location of the region, and the local economic and leisure environment. Destination attributes identified as predictors of exhibition destination attractiveness in this study may provide insights for destinations that aim to establish themselves in the process of decentralization.

In addition, they should understand that whether a given exhibition in a particular destination can sustain and grow steadily involves both organizer performance and destination attractiveness attributes. They need to mobilize all their resources to facilitate exhibition development; that means promoting the city and the exhibition industry in the city as a whole. They should also support organizers' efforts to build long-term relations with exhibitors. In the exhibition field, it is not "If you build, they will come", but "If you meet their objectives, they will come." Thus, the objectives of destination parties to develop exhibitions shall not be based on political motivations, speculations about potential multiplier effects of exhibitions on a destination, or the increase in land value. Destination parties shall develop exhibitions to facilitate the development of the industry in the region. Only when exhibitors perceive that an exhibition can indeed contribute to their business development, can the exhibition grow steadily.

The rapid growth of China's exhibition industry cannot be maintained indefinitely. Pending consolidation and restructuring of the market is likely to impact on venue management and destination development. Currently, a large number of cities of varying sizes aim to compete for a share of the exhibition market, driven by a variety of political and economic motivations. However, the success of hosting several exhibitions in a destination does not automatically brand the host city as a successful and attractive exhibition destination (Chan, 2005). Based on the review of the literature relating to China's exhibition industry development, and the results of this study, it can be concluded that the key success factors for China's future exhibition industry will be enhanced quality management, derived from long-term relationships with customers, industry self-regulation, reduced opportunistic behavior, and enhanced venue and destination facilities and services.

6.5 Generalizability of Findings

This research used a combined research strategy. Qualitative research included interviews with exhibitors from different industry sectors at four exhibitions in Guangzhou and Beijing. The main survey collected data from nine exhibitions at six exhibition centers in four cities in China. Data collected represented diversified exhibition/organizer ownerships, industrial sectors, and exhibition center and destination characteristics. The sampled exhibitions were organized by a variety of organizing companies of diversified ownership and reflected varying organizer-exhibitor relationships. Each of these exhibitions was organized for a specific industrial sector. Varying venue and destination characteristics of the six cities (Guangzhou, Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou, and Wuhan) represented the level of exhibition facilities development in both first and second-tier cities. Data collected are representative of the type of exhibitors. Exhibitors interviewed and surveyed reflected a variety of characteristics of the exhibiting firms regarding size of the company, frequency of participation in the exhibition, and country/region of origin. Triangulation in research approaches and the heterogeneous sample is representative of the research population.

Cross-validation in research and sampling approach enhanced the generalizability of the research. Results of this thesis can be generalized in several ways. First, research results may be extrapolated to international and Chinese exhibitors exhibiting in exhibitions held in first and second-tier cities in China. Second, the development of exhibition destination attractiveness dimensions can be generalized to rate the attractiveness of other destinations, since the measurement of these dimensions possesses high levels of universality. Third, measurement items for the relationship quality construct employed in this research are flexible, in the sense that items may be adapted to fit other service industry sectors to assist in their relationship-building efforts.

China is presently considered the largest emerging exhibition market globally. Considering the decentralization of exhibitions and destinations worldwide, the findings of this research, that is, the composite of relationship quality and destination attractiveness factors, and their impact on exhibition brand preference, and the success factors identified as conducive to exhibition industry development, should be able to be generalized to

other countries. That is especially the case for emerging markets of similar market and destination conditions to those of the first and second-tier cities sampled in this research.

However, it should be cautioned to generalize the non-causal relationship between destination attractiveness and exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands to less-developed destinations, considering that destination leadership in the industry for exhibiting, accessibility, infrastructure and exhibition center facilities in smaller cities in emerging markets might be far below the standards of the destinations/venues sampled in this research. Due to the small number of international respondents in the main survey, and considering distance and culture, caution needs to be exercised when generalizing the findings to international exhibitors and exhibitors in other countries.

6.6 Limitations

This research utilized both qualitative and quantitative approaches in exploring exhibitors' preferences for exhibition brands, and their perceptions on relationships with organizers and destination attractiveness. More than 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted with international and Chinese exhibiting firms. The pilot and main survey collected more than 200 and 600 responses respectively from 10 exhibitions in seven exhibition centers at five cities. However, there are a number of limitations that are acknowledged. However, these limitations do not detract from the significance of the findings, and provide a platform for future research.

First, this research used convenience sampling and cross-sectional data rather than longitudinal data, which might mitigate the high level of reliability and validity of the research. The research aimed for a balance among different data sources, for example, about 210 responses were collected from the two premier exhibitions hosted in the leading exhibition center (SNICE) in Shanghai, with a further 210 responses from exhibitions hosted in other venues in Shanghai, and finally, 247 responses from exhibitions hosted in second-tier cities, which appeared to give a comparatively even distribution of data across premier exhibitions, exhibitions hosted in first-tier cities versus exhibitions hosted in second-tier cities. However, if scrutinized, it is found that only about 10% of exhibitors at the two premier exhibitions in Shanghai were surveyed; whereas about 25% to 50% of

exhibitors in other exhibitions were surveyed. This might mean that perceptions of exhibitors in the two premier exhibitions might not be represented as well as those of exhibitors in other exhibitions. In addition, exhibitions surveyed covered a variety of industry sectors (exhibition themes). Furthermore, exhibitors' perceptions of their relationship quality with organizers might be influenced by the nature of their specific industry sector. However, different perceptions of exhibitors derived from the nature of their industry and the way they interact with the organizers were not considered in this research, but may represent a fruitful avenue for future research.

Second, between-group analyses in the SEM framework were not conducted due to data unavailability. For example, in-depth interviews had a balanced number of international and Chinese respondents. However, the surveys had less than 100 international exhibitors, making it impossible to compare their perceptions with that of Chinese counterparts, and explore potential differences between the two groups. Likewise, although the interviews found significant differences in relationships (trust and commitment) for exhibitors with relational behaviors, compared with exhibitors with more transactional patterns of exchange (low and high relational exhibitors), it was not possible to empirically explore the potential structural differences between the two groups in the survey.

Third, when exploring the causal relation between relationship quality and exhibition brand preference, relationship quality is conceptualized as a second-order construct, and as such, the impacts of the first-order dimensions (that is, communication, trust and affective commitment, calculative commitment, service quality and relationship satisfaction) on exhibition brand preference are not explored. In the same vein, the impacts of the first-order dimensions of destination attractiveness on exhibition brand preference are not explored.

6.7 Future Research Directions

This thesis investigation provides several avenues for future research. First, further research may explore whether, and which relationship-building activities, can transform exhibitors' weak relational intentions into high relational intentions. Future studies may also

explore the impact of organizer profiles and operational models on building long-term relationships with exhibitors.

Second, future research may assess the influence of government and other related parties on relationship building between exhibitors and organizers, and exhibition destination attractiveness in Mainland China, given the transitional nature of its economy. Unlike in some foreign countries where trade fairs are essentially commercial activities and thus, are of commercial interest, in Mainland China, many non-commercial factors affect the establishment of relationship intentions and quality. Local enterprise characteristics, the role of local governments and associations in exhibition organization, the overall quality of employees and operation of the organizing company, and Chinese Guanxi all exert influence.

Third, since industry associations and professional societies are likely to play an increasing role as exhibition organizers (Khoo, 2005), the way associations, professional societies, and agents influence exhibitor-organizer relationship building can be explored. Antecedents of relationship quality dimensions may be included in a potential model to assess their relative influence.

Fourth, for a comprehensive treatment of the topic, perceptions of international and domestic buyers/visitors on relationship quality with organizers and destination attractiveness, and their impact on exhibition brand preference should be examined and compared with those of exhibitors. In addition, further studies may be conducted in different regions and/or countries, covering a greater variety of industry sectors to test and compare which, and to what extent, relationship quality with organizers and destination attractiveness factors impact on exhibitors' and visitors' exhibition brand preference.

Finally, the relationship between the spatial distribution of exhibitions and regional economic development deserves greater research focus, especially, how clusters (industrial districts) contribute to inter-regional and intra-regional competitiveness in the exhibition industry.

6.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, a comparison of the findings related to the seven research issues of this research with the generic literature was presented to establish the contribution this thesis makes to the resolution of the research problem, and to the body of knowledge. Conclusions about the research problem, and implications for theory and managerial practice were presented, followed by the limitations of the research. Finally, future research directions were suggested.

In brief, this research provides a structure for understanding the components of relationship quality and destination attractiveness factors, and their impacts on exhibitors' preference for exhibition brands in the exhibition context in Mainland China. The advanced model of exhibition brand preference in the exhibition context makes an important contribution as a first rigorously researched step towards understanding exhibitors' perceptions of relationship quality with organizers and destination attractiveness. The model was built from theory and empirical research, and provides a foundation for future research.

APPENDICES

Appendix A Interview Guide

Thank you very much for giving me time for an interview. I am a PhD Candidate from School of Hotel and Tourism Management at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, specializing in convention and exhibition studies. The purpose of this study is to investigate which, and how relationships with exhibition organizers and destination attractiveness factors affect exhibitors' preference for exhibitions. This interview is confidential. I as a researcher am interested in your opinions and what you think about the subject matter. There are no right or wrong answers.

Interview Questions

Issues	**General Questions**	**Probing Questions**
Relationships with organizers	How do you describe the relationship between your company and the show organizer?	
Communication	From what sources do you learn about the reputation of the organizer? What information do organizers disseminate?	How often do organizers communicate with your company?
Trust	What actions & activities make you trust/distrust the organizer? How important is financial strength of the organizer?	What makes an organizer reliable to clients? How do you assess financial strength of the organizer?
Commitment	Are you committed to this exhibition? Do you think that you have to exhibit?	Would you suffer economically if you cancel attendance? Would you regret if you cancel attendance?
Service quality	Can you briefly describe a trade show with excellent/high quality? How do you know if an organizer is/can be consistent in quality standard?	How can you assess the quality of a show prior to the show attendance?
Satisfaction of the relation	In general, are you satisfied with your relationships with the organizer?	How do you assess satisfaction?

Appendix A

Interview Guide (Continued)

Interview Questions

Issues	General Questions	Probing Questions
What makes a city in China attractive to you in attending trade shows (apart from what has been talked about in terms of the show/organizer)?		
Geographical location	Do you have special consideration with regard to geographical location of the host city?	If yes, which is your preferred geographical area in China for exhibitions?
Accessibility	Can you briefly describe your perception of easy access to a host city?	
Prestige	Do you require that the host city is well-known city with an international reputation?	Is this city internationally known?
Venue and facilities	What kind of venues or facilities do you think are important for an excellent/high quality trade show?	
Business & economic environment	How important is the business and economic environment of the host city to you?	How do you perceive the business environment of the destination (host city)?
Accommodation	Can you briefly describe your requirements for accommodation in the host city?	The variety/quality of accommodation The variety/quality of food
Population and people	How important is the 'friendliness' of the people of a city?	Population, friendliness,
Tourism conditions	How important is the existence of well-known tourist attractions in the host city?	What tourist facilities /attractions do you value?
How concerned would you be to stage a show in a destination where you haven't previously exhibited?		
How important is the subsidies from the organizer for your attendance?		

Appendix B Questionnaires – Pilot Test

Appendix B1 Questionnaire in English

Questionnaire code _____
Name of the trade fair: _____
Name of the destination: _____

This research is conducted by the School of Hotel & Tourism Management at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU). It aims to investigate exhibition brand preference from the perspective of exhibitors. Data collected as part of this research project will remain confidential, as only aggregate results will be reported in any subsequent papers or publications. If potential participants have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research they can contact me directly at x.jin@_____or +852 3400 3146. It takes about 10 minutes to complete this questionnaire. Your cooperation is truly appreciated!

Part I. Respondent Profile (Please tick as appropriate):

1. Size of the company (according to the number of employees)
□ Less than 50 employees □ 50 to 300 employees □ More than 300 employees

2. How many times has your company exhibited in this exhibition since this exhibition started?
□ Once □2-5 times □6-9 times □ 10+ times

3. How frequent does your company exhibit in similar exhibitions in China each year?
□ Once □ Twice □3 times □ 4 times or more

4. Your position in your company
□ Business owner □ Managing partner □Senior management □Middle management
□Others (Please specify _____)

5. In which department of the company do you work?
□Research & Development □Production
□Sales & Marketing □Others (Please specify _____)

6. Where is your company located? Please specify:
_____

Appendix B1 Questionnaire in English (Continued)

Part II. Relationship between Your Company and the Exhibition Organizer

This section inquires about the specific aspects of the relationship between your company and the exhibition organizer (including co-organizers). **Please rate your agreement on the statements with the scale provided, with 1="Strongly Disagree", 4 ="Neutral", and 7 = "Strongly Agree".**

Statements	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
This organizer regularly informs us about the exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This organizer always informs us about any changes regarding the exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company and this organizer exchange information that may benefit one another.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Statements	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
This organizer has been frank in dealing with us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This organizer keeps promises they make to our company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
We trust the information that this organizer provides us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This organizer is capable of providing quality exhibitions and services to us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The quality of the exhibitions produced by the organizer of this exhibition is consistently high.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

statements	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
Our company thinks positively of the organizer which operates this exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is mutual benefit in the relationship between our company and the organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
We take pleasure in being a customer of the organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Maintaining a long-term relationship with the organizer is important to our company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no worthwhile alternatives.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company may suffer economically if we do not keep a relationship with the organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This organizer has administrative and location advantages compared with other organizers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is difficult to break the relationship with the organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix B1 Questionnaire in English (Continued)

Part III: Overall Organizer Service Quality and Satisfaction

This section inquires about overall organizer service quality and your satisfaction over the relationship between your company and the organizer. **Please rate your agreement on the statements with the scale provided, with 1="Strongly Disagree", 4 ="Neutral", and 7 = "Strongly Agree".**

statements	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
The organizer responds to problems immediately.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The organizer understands our exhibiting needs and objectives.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The organizer cares about our welfare (e.g. actions been taken to try to protect our products' copyright).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The on-site services provided by the organizer are good.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall, the services provided by this organizer met our expectations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In general, we are very satisfied with our relationship with the exhibition organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
We are satisfied with the products and services we get from the organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part IV. Attractiveness of the Host City and the Exhibition Center

This section inquires about if this host city and exhibition center is a good choice for hosting such an exhibition. **Please rate your agreement on the statements with the scale provided, with 1="Strongly Disagree", 4 ="Neutral", and 7 = "Strongly Agree".**

statements	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
The geographical location of this host city is convenient.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Accessibility to the city is easy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Transportation within this city is convenient.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The quality of accommodations is high.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city has limited choices for accommodations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city has good restaurants.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The weather in this city is nice.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The environment in this city is clean.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city is overcrowded.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Access to information within the host city is easy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The local people of the host city are friendly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
We feel safe in this city.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
We have no language barriers in this city.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city has many tourist sites to visit.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city has good nightlife.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix B1 Questionnaire in English (Continued)

Part IV. Attractiveness of the Host City and the Exhibition Center. Please rate your agreement on the statements with the scale provided, with 1="Strongly Disagree", 4 ="Neutral", and 7 = "Strongly Agree".

statements	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
Transportation to this exhibition center is convenient.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Exhibition center facilities are excellent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Exhibition center layout is convenient.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The exhibition center is a comfortable place for business events.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

statements	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
This city is a famous manufacturing base of our industrial sector.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city is leading an industrial belt where most products/equipments in this exhibition are manufactured.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city is a famous distribution hub of our industrial sector.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in this city.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in the nearby regions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited in this exhibition are located in this city.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited in this exhibition are located in the nearby regions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is a strong professional association of our industry sector in this city.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city provides incentives to come to exhibit.							
This city has a large amount of international firms.							
This city has support from related industries.							
The overall economic condition of this city is among the top five in China.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix B1 Questionnaire in English (Continued)

Part IV. Exhibition Brand Preference

This section inquires about your overall perception on this exhibition, and in particular, your preference for different aspects of this exhibition brand. **Please rate your agreement on the statements with the scale provided, with 1="Strongly Disagree", 4 ="Neutral", and 7 = "Strongly Agree".**

statements	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
This exhibition meets our exhibiting needs better than any other exhibitions in China.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This exhibition will be our company's primary choice for exhibiting in China within the next 3 years.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company intends to switch to other exhibitions provided by other organizers within the next 3 years.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company would prefer this exhibition be operated by other organizers organizing similar exhibitions in this field.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company would prefer this exhibition be hosted in another exhibition center.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company would prefer this exhibition be hosted in another city.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Thank you very much for your support and your cooperation is truly appreciated!

Appendix B2 Questionnaire in Chinese

问卷编号_____
展会名称：_____
展会举办地 : _____

本项研究由香港理工大学酒店及旅游业管理学院进行， 旨在调查影响展会品牌优势的一些因素。本调查收集的资料将只以集合数据的形式发表， 其他资料将不会公开。如果参与者对本项研究的研究过程有疑问，请电邮 x.jin@ 或者致电+852 3400 3144 与我联系。填写问卷需要约 10 分钟时间。 对您的参与我深表感谢！香港理工大学酒店与旅游业管理学院博士生金鑫

第一部分：受访者背景 （请在适当处划√）

1. 贵公司规模（按照雇员人数）
□少于 50 人 □ 50 to 300 人 □ 300 人以上

2. 贵公司是第几次参加这个展览会？
□1-2 次 □3-5 次 □6-9 次 □ 10 次以上

3. 贵公司每年在中国参加几次这种类型的展览会？
□1 次 □ 2 次 □3 次 □ 4 次以上

4. 请说明您在贵公司的职位：
□ 公司所有人 □ 执行股东 □高级管理经理

□中级管理者 □其他 (请说明 _____)

5. 请说明您在贵公司的哪一个部门工作：
□科研和发展部门 □生产部门
□销售部门 □其他部门 (请说明 _____)

6. 请说明贵公司所在地区：_____

Appendix B2 Questionnaire in Chinese (Continued)

第二到第五部分都是探寻您的意见。 请按照所给的标尺衡量您对下列句子的同意程度。

1 =“非常不同意”，4 =“中间”，7=“非常同意”。请在适当的数字处画圈。

第二部分： 贵公司与展览会主办单位之间的商业关系

这部分调查贵公司与展会主办单位（包括协办单位）之间的工作关系。

	非常不同意						非常同意
展会主办单位定期向我们通报展会有关情况。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展会主办单位总是通知我们与展会相关的任何变化。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们公司与展会主办单位交换可能对彼此有益的信息。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	非常不同意						非常同意
展会主办单位与我们公司交流时一直很坦率。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展会主办单位遵守他们对我们公司的承诺。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们相信展会主办单位提供给我们的信息。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展会主办单位有能力为我们提供有质量的展览会和服务。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个展会主办单位举办的展会一直保持着高质量。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	非常不同意						非常同意
我们公司对这个展会主办单位的评价是肯定的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们公司和展会主办单位之间存在着互惠关系。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
成为主办单位的参展客户， 我们公司感到很高兴。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
与主办单位之间保持长期的关系对我们公司很重要。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们公司会继续利用这个主办单位的服务，因为没有其他更值得的选择。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
如果我们不和展会主办单位保持关系，我们会有经济上的损失。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
与其他主办单位相比，这个展会主办单位有行政管理和地理位置上的优势。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
与展会主办单位脱离关系是很困难的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix B2 Questionnaire in Chinese (Continued)

第三部分：展会主办单位服务的综合质量和满意度

这部分探寻展会主办单位服务的综合质量和贵公司对你们与展会主办单位之间关系的满意度。

	非常不同意						非常同意
有问题时，展会主办单位能及时回应。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展会主办单位了解我们的参展目的和需要。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展会主办单位关心我们的利益（例如，采取行动试图保护我们的产品产权）。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展会主办单位的现场服务很好。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
总的来说， 展会主办单位提供的服务达到了我们的期望。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
大体上， 我们对与主办单位之间的商业关系感到很满意。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们对从主办单位处获得的产品和服务感到满意。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

第四部分：展会举办城市和展览（馆）中心的吸引力

这部分调查展会举办城市和展览中心对这个展览会来说是否是一个良好的选择。

	非常不同意						非常同意
这个举办城市的地理位置很方便。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
到达这个城市很容易。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市的市内交通很不方便。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市的住宿质量很好。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市在住宿方面的选择很少。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市有很多好餐馆。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市的气候很好。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市的环境清洁。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市过于拥挤。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在这个城市， 信息很方便。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
当地居民很友好。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在这个城市我们感到安全。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在这个城市我们没有语言障碍。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市有很多可以参观的旅游景点。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市有很好的夜生活。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
来这个展览中心的交通方便。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个展览中心的设施设备非常好。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展览中心的布局很便利。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个展览中心是一个举办商务活动的舒适场所。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix B2 Questionnaire in Chinese (Continued)

第四部分：展会举办城市和展览（馆）中心的吸引力

	非常不同意						非常同意
这个城市是我们这个行业著名的生产基地。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市领导一个工业带， 这个展览会上多数的产品/设备都是在这个工业带生产的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市是我们这个行业著名的销售中心。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在此展览会上， 多数的供应商都来自这个城市。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在此展览会上， 多数的供应商都来自附近一些地区。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在此展览会上， 多数展览产品的销售商都来自这个城市。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在此展览会上， 多数展览产品的销售商都来自附近一些地区。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们这个行业的一个强有力的行业组织位于这个城市。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市为来参展提供奖励机制。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市有大量的国际企业。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市有相关一些行业的支持。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市的综合经济实力属于中国的前 5 强。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

第五部分：展会品牌的优先度

这部分探寻您对展会的综合意见， 特别是对这个展览会品牌各个方面的喜好程度。

	非常不同意						非常同意
与其他展会相比， 这个展会更能够满足我们的参展需求。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个展会将是我们公司未来 3 年内在中国参展的首选。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
未来 3 年内， 我们公司打算转到其他主办单位举办的其他展览会。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们公司更希望这个展会是由同行业的其他主办单位举办。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们公司更希望这个展会在另外一个展览（馆）中心举办。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们公司更希望这个展览会在另外一个城市举办。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

非常感谢您的支持与合作！

Appendix C Questionnaires – Main Survey

Appendix C1 Questionnaire in English

Name of the trade fair:
Questionnaire code:

This research is conducted by the School of Hotel & Tourism Management at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU). It aims to investigate exhibition brand preference from the perspective of exhibitors. Data collected in this research project will remain confidential, for only aggregate results will be reported in any subsequent publications. If you have any questions regarding this research please feel free to contact me directly at x.jin@_____ or +852 3400 3146. It takes about 10 minutes to complete this questionnaire. Your cooperation is truly appreciated!

Part I Your Perception of the Relationship between Your Company and the Exhibition Organizing Company

This section inquires about **your perception** of the business relationship between your company and the exhibition organizing company (including co-organizers). Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements by ticking (√) one appropriate number, where 1="Strongly Disagree", 4 ="Neutral", and 7 = "Strongly Agree".

	STRONGLY DISAGREE						*STRONGLY AGREE*
This organizer always informs our company of important changes about the exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This exhibition organizer regularly informs our company about this exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company worries that attending this exhibition will be a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This organizer and our company exchange information that may benefit one another.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This organizer keeps promises it makes to our company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company trusts the information this organizer provides.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company trusts the organizer to provide quality exhibitions and services to us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is a mutual benefit in the relationship between our company and the organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company takes pleasure in being a customer of the organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company cannot always trust the quality of this exhibition to be good.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company is concerned that the exhibition may not be worth our financial investment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company can rely on this organizer in our business relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C1 Questionnaire in English (Continued)

Part I Your Relationship between Exhibitors and Organizers (Continued)

	STRONGLY DISAGREE						STRONGLY AGREE
Maintaining a long-term relationship with this organizer is important to our company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company dedicates important efforts to continue the relationship with this organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This organizer has location advantages compared with other organizers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The relationship with this organizer is something our company intends to maintain.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The relationship with this organizer will be profitable over the long term.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company is committed to the relationship with the organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no better similar exhibitions in this region.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The on-site services provided by this organizer are good.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This organizer understands our exhibiting needs and objectives.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is hard to break the relationship with this organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This organizer responds to problems immediately.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This organizer has attracted the right type of buyers to this exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company is satisfied with the professionalism of this organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This organizer cares about our interests (e.g. actions have been taken to protect the copyright of our products).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall, the services provided by this organizer meet our expectations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In general, our company is satisfied with our relationship with this organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I will recommend this organizer as an exhibition supplier to other firms.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The relationship with this organizer has produced results that enable our company to increase the value of our brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company is displeased with the products and services we get from the organizer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C1 Questionnaire in English (Continued)

Part II. Attractiveness of the Host City and the Exhibition Center

This section inquires about **your perception** of whether the selection of this host city and this exhibition center is a good choice for this exhibition. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements by ticking (√) one appropriate number, where 1="Strongly Disagree", 4 ="Neutral", and 7 = "Strongly Agree".

STATEMENTS	***STRONGLY DISAGREE***						***STRONGLY AGREE***
The geographical location of this host city is convenient.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is easy to get to the city.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Transportation within this city is NOT convenient.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is easy to get information about this host city.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city has LIMITED choices for accommodation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The weather of this city is pleasant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have no language barriers in this city.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel safe in this city.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The environment of this city is clean.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city has many tourist attractions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The local people of this host city are friendly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Location of this exhibition center is excellent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city has good nightlife.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Transportation to this exhibition center is convenient.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This exhibition center has sufficient space to accommodate this exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city is an important manufacturing base of our industrial sector in China.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Exhibition center layout is easy for people to find ways.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The overall economic condition of this city is among the top five in China.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The facilities of the exhibition center are excellent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C1 Questionnaire in English (Continued)

Part II. Attractiveness of the Host City and the Exhibition Center (Continued)

STATEMENTS	*STRONGLY DISAGREE*						*STRONGLY AGREE*
China's manufacturing firms in our industry are especially located in this city or nearby regions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited come from this city or nearby regions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The quality of hotel accommodation in this city is high.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city is an important distribution hub of our industrial sector in China.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city is a leading city of an industrial belt where most products/equipments in this exhibition are manufactured.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in this city or nearby regions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is a strong professional association of our industrial sector in this city.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The business environment of this city is excellent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city has a large number of international firms.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This city has support from industries related to this exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part III Your Overall Preference of the Exhibition Event

This section inquires about your overall preference of this exhibition event. Please respond to each item by checking (√) only one box that best reflects the opinion of your company towards the exhibition.

STATEMENTS	***STRONGLY DISAGREE***						***STRONGLY AGREE***
Our company would prefer to switch to other exhibitions of its type within the next 3 years.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company would prefer this exhibition to be operated by other organizers organizing similar exhibitions in this field.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company would prefer this exhibition to be hosted in another exhibition center within this city.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Our company would prefer this exhibition to be hosted in another city.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C1 Questionnaire in English (Continued)

Part III Your Overall Preference of the Exhibition Event (Continued)

Future exhibiting in this exhibition would be

Good	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	Bad
Favorable	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	Unfavorable
Positive	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	Negative
Likely	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	Unlikely

Part IV. Respondent Profile (Please tick as appropriate):

1. Size of the company (according to the number of employees)
□ Less than 50 employees □ 50 to 300 employees □ More than 300 employees

2. How many times has your company exhibited in this exhibition since the exhibition started?
□ Once □2-5 times □6-9 times □ 10 times or more

3. How often does your company exhibit in China each year?
□ Once □ Twice □3 times □ 4 times or more

4. How often does your company exhibit internationally (excluding China) each year?
□ Not at all □Once □ Twice □3 times or more

5. Your position in your company
□ Business owner □ Managing partner □Senior manager staff
□Middle management staff □Others (Please specify _____)

6. Where is your company located? Please specify:
_____

Thank you very much for your participation and support.

Appendix C2 Questionnaire in Chinese

展会名称：
问卷编号：

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY 香港理工大學

本项研究由香港理工大学酒店及旅游业管理学院进行， 旨在调查影响展会品牌优势的因素。本调查收集的资料将只以集合数据的形式发表， 其他资料将不会公开。如果参与者对本项研究的过程有疑问，请电邮 x.jin@ 或者致电+852 3400 3146 与我联系。填写问卷需要 10 分钟时间。 对您的参与我深表感谢！香港理工大学酒店与旅游业管理学院博士生金鑫

第一部分：您对参展商与主办单位之间商业关系的看法

这部分询问您对贵公司与展会主办单位（包括承办单位等）之间商业关系的看法。 请按照所给的标尺衡量您对下列句子的同意程度。 1 =“非常不同意”，4 =“中间”，7=“非常同意”。请在适当的数字处画√。

	非常不同意						非常同意
展会主办单位总是通知我公司与展会相关的重要变化。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展会主办单位定期向我公司通报展会有关情况。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我公司与展会主办单位交换可能对彼此有益的信息。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我公司担心参加这个展会可能是浪费时间。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展会主办单位遵守他们对我公司的承诺。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我公司相信展会主办单位提供给我公司的信息。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我公司相信展会主办单位能为我公司提供高质量的展会及服务。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我公司和展会主办单位之间存在着互惠关系。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我公司无法总是相信这个展会的质量一直是好的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
成为主办单位的参展客户， 我公司感到很高兴。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我公司担心这个展会可能不值得我们投入资金。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在双方的商业关系中我公司可以信赖主办单位。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
与主办单位保持长期的关系对我公司很重要。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C2 Questionnaire in Chinese

第一部分：您对参展商与主办单位之间商业关系的看法

	非常不同意						*非常同意*
如果不与展会主办单位保持关系， 我公司会有经济上的损失。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
为保持和主办单位的关系，我公司做出重要的努力。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
与其他主办单位相比， 这个展会主办单位有地理位置上的优势。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
与主办单位的关系是我公司计划要保持的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
长远来说， 与主办单位的商业关系是有经济效益的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们忠于与主办单位的关系。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我公司会继续使用主办单位提供的服务， 因为在这个地区没有更好的相关展会。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展会主办单位的现场服务很好。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展会主办单位了解参展商的参展目的和需求。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
与展会主办单位脱离关系是很困难的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展会主办单位对出现的问题能及时做出回应。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
主办单位为展会招徕了高质量的买家。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我公司对主办单位的专业化水平感到满意。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展会主办单位关心参展商的权益（例如， 采取措施保护我们的产品产权）。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
总的来说， 展会主办单位提供的服务达到了我公司的期望。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
总体来说， 我公司对与主办单位之间的商业关系感到很满意。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们将向其他公司推荐这个主办单位/展会。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
和主办单位的商业关系使我公司得以提高我公司的品牌价值。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我公司对从主办单位处获得的展会和服务感到不愉快。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C2 Questionnaire in Chinese

第二部分：您对展会举办城市和展馆的看法

这部分询问您是否认为举办城市和展馆对这个展会来说是个很好的选择。 请按照所给的标尺衡量您对下列句子的同意程度。 1 =“非常不同意”，4 =“中间”，7=“非常同意”。请在适当的数字处画圈。

	非常不同意						非常同意
这个举办城市的地理位置很便利。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市的市内交通很不方便。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
通往这个城市的交通很便利。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
获取有关这个城市的信息很容易。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市在住宿方面的选择很有限。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在这个城市我没有语言障碍。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市的气候怡人。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
在这个城市我感到安全。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市的环境清洁。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
当地居民很友好。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市有很多可以参观的旅游景点。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个展览中心的地理位置非常好。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市有很好的夜生活。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个展览中心空间宽敞， 足够容纳这个展览会。 .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
来这个展览中心的交通方便。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市是我们这个行业重要的生产基地。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
展览中心的布局很便利。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个展览中心的设施设备非常好。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市的综合经济实力位于中国前 5 强。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们这个行业的中国生产厂家位于这个城市或者周边地区。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
此展会上展出的产品及设备的大部分经销商来自这个主办城市或者周边地区。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C2 Questionnaire in Chinese

第二部分：您对展会举办城市和展馆的看法

	非常不同意						非常同意
这个城市的住宿质量很好。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市是我们这个行业重要的销售中心。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市是一个工业带的主导城市， 此展览会上多数的产品/设备都是在这个工业带生产的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们行业在这个城市有一个强有力的行业组织。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
此展会上大多数的供应商都来自这个城市或者附近一些地区。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市的商业环境非常好。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市有大量的跨国企业。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
这个城市有与展会相关的 一些行业的支持。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

第三部分：您对展会的综合意见

这部分询问您对展会的综合意见， 特别是您对这个展会品牌各个方面的喜好程度。请按照所给的标尺， 在适当的数字处画√。

	非常不同意						非常同意
未来 3 年内， 我们公司打算转到其他主办单位举办的其他展览会。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们公司更希望这个展会是由同行业的其他主办单位举办。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们公司更希望这个展会在这个城市的另外一个展览中心举办。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
我们公司更希望这个展览会在另外一个城市举办。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

未来参加这个展会将会是

好的	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	不好的
赞成的	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	不赞成的
积极的	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	消极的
很有可能的	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	不可能的

Appendix C2 Questionnaire in Chinese

第四部分：受访者背景（请在适当处划√）

1. 贵公司规模（按照雇员人数）
□少于 50 人　　□ 50 to 300 人　　□ 300 人以上

2. 贵公司参加了多少次这个展览会？
□1-2 次　　□3-5 次　　□6-9 次　　□ 10 次以上

3. 贵公司每年在中国参加几次此类的展览会？
□1 次　　□ 2 次　　□3 次　　□ 4 次以上

4. 贵公司每年在国际上（不包括中国）参加几次展览会？
□没有去过　　□1 次　　□ 2 次　　□3 次或以上

5. 请说明您在贵公司的职位：
□ 公司所有人　　□ 执行股东　　□高级管理者
□中级管理者　　□其他 (请说明 _____)

6. 请说明贵公司所在地区：_____

非常感谢您的支持与合作！

Appendix D Pilot Test Results

Appendix D1 Descriptive Statistics – Pilot Test

Measurements	Constructs	Mean	Std. Deviation
Relationship Quality			
Maintaining a long-term relationship with this organizer is important to our company.	AC	5.08	1.35
There is mutual benefit in the relationship between our company and this organizer.	AC	4.97	1.38
The organizer understands our exhibiting needs and objectives.	SQ	4.95	1.47
This organizer is capable of providing quality exhibitions and services to us.	TT	4.95	1.58
We take pleasure in being a customer of this organizer.	AC	4.95	1.39
This organizer keeps promises they make to our company.	TT	4.94	1.57
Our company thinks positively of this organizer which operates this exhibition.	AC	4.88	1.46
We trust the information that this organizer provides us.	TT	4.86	1.53
This organizer has administration and location advantages compared with others.	CC	4.86	1.54
The quality of exhibitions by this organizer has been consistently high.	TT	4.82	1.48
In general, we are satisfied with our relationship with the exhibition organizer.	RS	4.79	1.4
This organizer regularly informs us about the exhibition.	COM	4.78	1.61
Overall, the services provided by this organizer meet our expectations.	RS	4.73	1.51
This organizer always informs us about any changes regarding the exhibition.	COM	4.7	1.65
We trust that this organizer considers how their decisions and actions will affect us.	TT	4.69	1.5
Our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no worthwhile alternatives.	CC	4.65	1.59
This organizer responds to problems immediately.	SQ	4.65	1.63
Our company and this organizer exchange information that may benefit both parties.	COM	4.63	1.67
We are satisfied with the products and services we get from the organizer.	RS	4.63	1.54
This organizer has been frank in dealing with us.	TT	4.58	1.52
The on-site services provided by the organizer are good.	SQ	4.53	1.64

Notes: * Original items were negatively phrased. These items were re-phrased and recoded in descriptive analysis. AC: affective commitment, CC: calculative commitment, TT: trust, COM; communication, SQ: perceived service quality, RS: relationship satisfaction, DLE: destination leisure environment, ACCE: accessibility, EE: economic environment, VENE: venue, CLST: cluster effect, EBP: exhibition brand preference. N=216.

Appendix D1 Descriptive Statistics – Pilot Test (Continued)

Measurements	Constructs	Mean	Std. Deviation
The organizer cares about our interests (e.g. actions have been taken to protect the copyright of our products).	SQ	4.52	1.56
It is difficult to break the relationship with this organizer.	CC	4.03	1.93
Our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer.	CC	3.84	1.82
Destination Attractiveness			
This city has good nightlife.	DLE	5.50	1.37
Accessibility to the city is easy.	ACCE	5.45	1.42
Access to information within the host city is easy.	ACCE	5.39	1.44
This city is among the top five in China with the strongest overall economy.	EE	5.35	1.52
Exhibition center facilities are excellent.	VENE	5.30	1.42
The exhibition center is a comfortable place for business events.	VENE	5.23	1.43
This city is a famous distribution hub of our industrial sector.	CLST	5.19	1.54
Exhibition center layout is convenient.	VENE	5.15	1.47
The geographical location of this host city is convenient.	ACCE	5.04	1.67
There is a strong professional association of our industry sector in this city.	CLST	5.02	1.54
Transportation to this exhibition center is convenient.	ACCE	5.00	1.79
This city is a leading city of an industrial belt where most products/equipments in this exhibition are manufactured.	CLST	4.97	1.52
This city is a famous manufacturing base of our industrial sector.	CLST	4.93	1.83
This city has good restaurants.	DLE	4.93	1.66
This city has a large amount of international firms.	EE	4.91	1.56
This city has many tourist sites to visit.	DLE	4.89	1.64

Notes: * Original items were negatively phrased. These items were re-phrased and recoded in descriptive analysis. AC: affective commitment, CC: calculative commitment, TT: trust, COM; communication, SQ: perceived service quality, RS: relationship satisfaction, DLE: destination leisure environment, ACCE: accessibility, EE: economic environment, VENE: venue, CLST: cluster effect, EBP: exhibition brand preference. N=216.

Appendix D1 Descriptive Statistics – Pilot Test (Continued)

Measurements	Constructs	Mean	Std. Deviation
The local people of the host city are friendly.	DLE	4.64	1.63
This city has support from related industries.	EE	4.83	1.54
The quality of accommodation is high.	DLE	4.61	1.48
We have no language barriers in this city.	DLE	4.59	1.85
Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited in this exhibition come from the nearby regions.	CLST	4.58	1.62
Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in the nearby regions.	CLST	4.57	1.64
Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in this city.	CLST	4.55	1.66
Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited come from this city.	CLST	4.38	1.77
The environment in this city is clean.	DLE	4.33	1.72
Transportation within this city is convenient.	ACCE	4.31	1.90
The weather in this city is nice.	DLE	4.25	1.71
This city has choices for accommodation. *	DLE	4.11	1.89
We feel safe in this city.	DLE	4.08	1.82
Exhibition Brand Preference			
This exhibition will be our company's primary choice for exhibiting in China within the next 3 years.	EBP	4.96	1.60
This exhibition meets our exhibiting needs better than any other exhibition in China.	EBP	4.94	1.50
Our company would prefer this exhibition to be operated by this organizer to other organizers in this field. *	EBP	4.24	1.78
Our company would prefer this exhibition to be hosted in this exhibition center to other centers. *	EBP	4.17	1.88
Our company would not switch to other exhibitions provided by other organizers within the next 3 years. *	EBP	4.01	1.75
Our company would prefer this exhibition to be hosted in this city rather than other cities. *	EBP	3.89	1.97

Notes: * Original items were negatively phrased. These items were re-phrased and recoded in descriptive analysis. AC: affective commitment, CC: calculative commitment, TT: trust, COM; communication, SQ: perceived service quality, RS: relationship satisfaction, DLE: destination leisure environment, ACCE: accessibility, EE: economic environment, VENE: venue, CLST: cluster effect, EBP: exhibition brand preference. N=216.

Appendix D2 EFA Results of Relationship Quality – Pilot Test

Factor/Item	Loading	Eigen-value	Variance Explained	Reliability Alpha
Trust & Affective Commitment		**11.008**	**47.860**	**0.933**
This organizer is capable of providing quality exhibitions and services to us.	.729			
Our company thinks positively of this organizer which operates this exhibition.	.713			
We trust the information that this organizer provides us.	.711			
This organizer keeps promises they make to our company.	.674			
We take pleasure in being a customer of this organizer.	.674			
The quality of exhibitions by this organizer has been consistently high.	.669			
Maintaining a long-term relationship with this organizer is important to our company.	.631			
There is mutual benefit in the relationship between our company and this organizer.	.609			
We trust that this organizer considers how their decisions and actions will affect us.	.517			
Service Quality & Satisfaction		**1.824**	**7.932**	**0.910**
The on-site services provided by the organizer are good.	.812			
Overall, the services provided by this organizer meet our expectations.	.749			
This organizer responds to problems immediately.	.721			
The organizer cares about our interests (e.g. actions have been taken to protect the copyright of our products).	.680			
In general, we are satisfied with our relationship with the exhibition organizer.	.679			
We are satisfied with the products and services we get from the organizer.	.642			
The organizer understands our exhibiting needs and objectives.	.604			

Notes: n=216, *originally negatively phrased item; recoded for EFA.

Appendix D2 EFA Results of Relationship Quality – Pilot Test (Continued)

Factor/Item	Loading	Eigen-value	Variance Explained	Reliability Alpha
Communication		**1.426**	**6.200**	**0.842**
This organizer always informs us about any changes regarding the exhibition.	.811			
This organizer regularly informs us about the exhibition.	.761			
Our company and this organizer exchange information that may benefit both parties.	.738			
Calculative Commitment		**1.012**	**4.402**	**0.774**
It is difficult to break the relationship with this organizer.	.814			
Our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer.	.800			
Our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no worthwhile alternatives.	.631			
This organizer has administration and location advantages compared with others.	.500			

KMO = 0.935;
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity :Approx. Chi-Square=3004.770, df=253, Sig.=.000;
Total variance explained = 66.394
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Notes: n=215, *originally negative phrased item; recoded for EFA.

Appendix D3 EFA Results of Destination Attractiveness – Pilot Test

Factor/Item	Loading	Eigen-value	Variance Explained	Reliability Alpha
Venue Facilities & Environment		**8.074**	**26.912**	**0.833**
Exhibition center layout is convenient.	.753			
Exhibition center facilities are excellent.	.739			
The exhibition center is a comfortable place for business events.	.725			
Transportation to this exhibition center is convenient.	.659			
This city has good nightlife.	.579			
This city has many tourist sites to visit.	.565			
Cluster 1 (Leadership of the Host City in the Industry)		**3.097**	**10.324**	**0.811**
This city is a leading city of an industrial belt where most products/equipments in this exhibition are manufactured.	.756			
This city is a famous manufacturing base of our industrial sector.	.751			
This city is a famous distribution hub of our industrial sector.	.749			
There is a strong professional association of our industry sector in this city.	.654			
Access to information within the host city is easy.	.483			0.829
Cluster 2 (Host City/Region as Sources of Exhibitors)		**2.497**	**8.324**	**0.870**
Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in the nearby regions.	.819			
Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited come from this city.	.800			
Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in this city.	.774			
Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited in this exhibition come from the nearby regions.	.761			

Notes: n=216, *originally negatively phrased item; recoded for EFA.

Appendix D3 EFA Results of Destination Attractiveness – Pilot Test (Continued)

Factor/Item	Loading	Eigen-value	Variance Explained	Reliability Alpha
City General Environment		**1.546**	**5.155**	**0.794**
The local people of the host city are friendly.	.812			
We feel safe in this city.	.701			
The environment in this city is clean.	.643			
We have no language barriers in this city.	.637			
The weather in this city is nice.	.490			
City Overall Economic Standing		**1.219**	**4.065**	**0.722**
This city has support from related industries.	.696			
This city has a large number of international firms.	.684			
This city is among the top five in China with the strongest overall economy.	.493			
Accommodation		**1.145**	**3.816**	**0.542**
This city has good choices for accommodation.*	.744			
Transportation within this city is convenient.	.627			
The quality of accommodation is high.	.566			
Accessibility		**1.059**	**3.530**	**0.716**
The geographical location of this host city is convenient.	.694			
Accessibility to the city is easy.	.628			

KMO = 0.851;
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square=2614.233, df=435, Sig.=.000;
Total variance explained = 62.127;
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

Notes: n=216, *originally negative phrased item; recoded for EFA.

Appendix D4 EFA Results of Exhibition Brand Preference – Pilot Test

Factor/Item	Loading	Eigen-value	Variance Explained	Reliability Alpha
Our company would prefer this exhibition to be hosted in another exhibition center.	.819	2.367	39.444	0.766
Our company would prefer this exhibition to be operated by other organizers organizing similar exhibitions in this field.	.774			
Our company intends to switch to other exhibitions provided by other organizers within the next 3 years.	.741			
Our company would prefer this exhibition to be hosted in another city.	.733			
This exhibition meets our exhibiting needs better than any other exhibitions in China.	.923	1.706	28.438	0.829
This exhibition will be our company's primary choice for exhibiting in China within the next 3 years.	.923			

KMO = 0.717;
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity : Approx. Chi-Square=368.857, df=15, Sig.=.000;
Total variance explained = 67.882
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.
n=216

Appendix E Descriptive Statistics Breakdown by Venues Sampled

Appendix E1 Means of Relationship Quality Breakdown by Venues Sampled

Relationship Quality	Measures	Mean					
		SNIEC	INTEXSH	EVERBRIGHT	WHCEC	PEACE	NJIEC
CO	This organizer always informs our company of important changes about the exhibition.	5.27	4.94	3.75	4.07	5.07	4.20
CO	This exhibition organizer regularly informs our company about this exhibition.	5.37	5.01	3.70	4.25	4.58	4.10
CO	This organizer and our company exchange information that may benefit one another.	4.96	4.70	3.80	3.93	4.97	4.27
TT	Generally speaking, this organizer is trustworthy.	5.67	5.28	4.08	4.38	5.20	4.59
TT	Our company worries that attending this exhibition will be a waste of time. (recoded)	5.41	4.47	3.87	4.36	4.69	4.03
TT	This organizer keeps promises it makes to our company.	5.38	5.42	4.26	4.38	5.26	4.78
TT	Our company trusts the information this organizer provides	5.55	5.24	4.27	4.44	5.08	4.68
TT	Our company trusts the organizer to provide quality exhibitions and services to us.	5.48	4.82	4.13	3.93	4.57	4.14
TT	Our company cannot always trust the quality of this exhibition to be good. (recoded)	4.71	4.04	3.63	4.27	4.06	3.24
TT	Our company is concerned that the exhibition may not be worth our financial investment. (recoded)	5.05	4.46	3.88	3.96	4.46	3.73
TT	Our company can rely on this organizer in our business relationship.	5.43	5.14	4.34	4.05	5.00	4.37
AC	There is a mutual benefit in the relationship between our company and the organizer.	5.06	4.64	4.31	3.77	5.14	4.15
AC	Our company takes pleasure in being a customer of the organizer.	5.45	4.86	4.08	4.09	5.02	4.40
AC	Maintaining a long-term relationship with this organizer is important to our company.	5.38	4.90	3.98	4.20	4.87	4.33
AC	Our company dedicates important efforts to continue the relationship with this organizer.	4.77	4.19	3.79	4.02	4.70	4.18

Note: all items were measured on a 7 Likert scale, with 1 indicating ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 indicating ‘strong agree’. Recoded: items negatively phrased in the questionnaire and recoded for analyses.

Appendix E1 Means of Relationship Quality Breakdown by Exhibition Centers Sampled (Continued)

	Measures	Mean					
		SNIEC	**INTEX SH**	**EVERB RIGHT**	**WHCE C**	**PEACE**	**NJIEC**
AC	The relationship with this organizer is something our company intends to maintain.	5.32	4.73	3.88	3.91	4.89	4.36
AC	The relationship with this organizer will be profitable over the long term.	5.13	4.93	4.36	4.22	5.00	4.72
AC	Our company is committed to the relationship with the organizer.	5.05	4.64	4.18	4.18	4.75	4.33
CC	Our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer.	3.74	3.29	3.12	2.96	3.51	3.02
CC	This organizer has location advantages compared with other organizers.	5.19	4.51	4.21	4.64	4.85	4.71
CC	It pays off economically to be a customer of this organizer.	4.80	4.44	3.87	3.76	4.86	4.16
CC	Our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no better similar exhibitions in this region.	5.01	4.01	3.30	4.18	4.43	3.95
CC	It is hard to break the relationship with this organizer.	4.21	4.08	3.53	3.40	3.91	3.49
SQ	The on-site services provided by this organizer are good.	5.04	4.52	3.65	3.93	4.27	3.95
SQ	This organizer understands our exhibiting needs and objectives.	5.08	4.68	3.67	3.84	5.19	3.95
SQ	This organizer responds to problems immediately.	5.08	4.81	3.91	4.33	4.67	4.20
SQ	This organizer has attracted the right type of buyers to this exhibition.	5.01	3.98	3.40	3.00	4.46	3.10
SQ	This organizer cares about our interests (e.g. actions have been taken to protect the copyright of our products).	4.97	4.62	3.73	3.40	4.63	4.17
RS	Our company is satisfied with the professionalism of this organizer.	5.34	4.56	3.55	3.67	4.94	3.92
RS	Overall, the services provided by this organizer meet our expectations.	5.20	4.70	3.66	3.60	4.99	3.74
RS	In general, our company is satisfied with our relationship with this organizer.	5.29	4.71	3.92	3.73	4.63	3.81
RS	I will recommend this organizer as an exhibition supplier to other firms.	5.26	4.42	3.72	3.58	4.81	3.28
RS	The relationship with this organizer has produced results that enable our company to increase the value of our brand.	5.04	4.59	3.77	4.16	5.00	3.95
RS	Our company is displeased with the products and services we get from the organizer. (recoded)	5.04	4.82	4.26	4.07	4.43	4.07

Note: all items were measured on a 7 Likert scale, with 1 indicating ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 indicating ‘strong agree’. Recoded: items negatively phrased in the questionnaire and recoded for analyses.

Appendix E2 Means of Destination Attractiveness Breakdown by Venues Sampled

Relationship Quality	Measures	Mean					
		SNIEC	INTEXSH	EVERBRIGHT	WHCEC	PEACE	NJIEC
Destination Attractiveness							
ACCE	The geographical location of this host city is convenient.	5.63	5.56	5.34	5.89	5.48	5.71
ACCE	Recoded -- Transportation within this city is NOT convenient.	4.02	4.49	4.45	4.16	4.69	4.52
ACCE	It is easy to get to the city.	5.33	5.61	5.12	5.78	5.27	5.78
ACCE	It is easy to get information about this host city.	5.64	5.65	5.33	5.38	5.47	5.54
DLE	Recoded -- This city has LIMITED choices for accommodation.	4.73	4.58	4.17	4.69	4.68	4.72
DLE	I have no language barriers in this city.	4.83	5.65	5.57	5.67	5.51	5.78
DLE	The weather of this city is pleasant.	4.85	5.11	4.85	4.60	5.57	4.95
DLE	I feel safe in this city.	5.40	5.51	5.17	5.04	5.78	5.44
DLE	The environment of this city is clean.	4.89	5.29	4.94	3.82	5.60	5.12
DLE	The local people of this host city are friendly.	5.30	5.05	4.68	4.76	5.49	5.26
DLE	This city has many tourist attractions.	5.19	5.16	5.17	5.36	6.06	5.98
DLE	This city has good nightlife.	5.29	5.55	4.75	4.82	4.90	4.95
DLE	The quality of hotel accommodation in this city is high.	5.27	5.28	4.81	4.78	4.91	4.92
VF	Location of this exhibition center is excellent.	5.18	4.90	4.82	5.78	5.36	5.46
VF	This exhibition center has sufficient space to accommodate this exhibition.	5.83	5.10	4.42	4.78	5.01	5.72
VF	Transportation to this exhibition center is convenient.	4.71	5.07	4.82	5.51	5.36	5.68
VF	Exhibition center layout is easy for people to find ways.	5.35	5.06	4.26	4.16	4.62	4.86
VF	The facilities of the exhibition center are excellent.	5.02	4.59	3.67	3.84	4.41	4.13
EE	The overall economic condition of this city is among the top five in China.	5.80	6.23	5.75	2.89	4.65	3.78
EE	The business environment of this city is excellent.	5.58	5.82	5.44	4.60	5.52	5.15
EE	This city has a large number of international firms.	5.93	6.15	5.65	3.93	4.65	4.85
CLST	This city has support from industries related to this exhibition.	5.52	5.61	5.06	4.38	5.15	4.69
CLST	China's manufacturing firms in our industry are especially located in this city or nearby regions.	5.03	4.90	4.57	3.75	5.30	4.38
CLST	Most distributors of the products/equipments exhibited come from this city or nearby regions.	4.79	4.87	4.47	4.30	5.14	4.61
CLST	This city is an important distribution hub of our industrial sector in China.	5.38	4.84	4.42	4.29	4.77	4.53
CLST	This city is a leading city of an industrial belt where most products/equipments in this exhibition are manufactured.	5.22	4.77	4.00	3.78	4.80	4.20
CLST	There is a strong professional association of our industrial sector in this city.	5.24	4.60	4.00	4.11	4.71	4.39
CLST	Most suppliers in this exhibition are located in this city or nearby regions.	4.77	4.66	4.57	4.20	4.96	4.70
CLST	This city is an important manufacturing base of our industrial sector in China.	4.80	3.82	4.00	3.89	4.60	4.08

Note: all items were measured on a 7 Likert scale, with 1 indicating 'strongly disagree' to 7 indicating 'strong agree'. Recoded: items negatively phrased in the questionnaire and recoded for analyses.

Appendix F Differences in Perceptions of Exhibitors at the Item Level

Appendix F1 T-Tests for Exhibitors' Relationship Quality Perceptions – Trade Fairs Organized by International versus Domestic Organizers

	Construct	International	National	Statistic[a]	Sig.
This organizer always informs our company of important changes about the exhibition	COM	5.269	4.545	28.662	.000
This exhibition organizer regularly informs our company about this exhibition.	COM	5.371	4.462	40.921	.000
This organizer and our company exchange information that may benefit one another.	COM	4.960	4.457	13.529	.000
This organizer and our company make it a point to keep each other informed.	COM	5.335	4.743	24.116	.000
Generally speaking, this organizer is trustworthy.	TT	5.674	4.851	44.751	.000
Our company worries that attending this exhibition will be a waste of time.	TT	2.588	3.683	49.540	.000
This organizer keeps promises it makes to our company.	TT	5.376	4.980	10.088	.002
Our company trusts the information this organizer provides.	TT	5.551	4.870	39.961	.000
Our company trusts the organizer to provide quality exhibitions and services to us.	TT	5.483	4.426	77.777	.000
Our company cannot always trust the quality of this exhibition to be good.	TT	3.290	4.182	29.837	.000
Our company is concerned that the exhibition may not be worth our financial investment.	TT	2.955	3.848	32.764	.000
Our company can rely on this organizer in our business relationship.	TT	5.432	4.714	37.302	.000
There is a mutual benefit in the relationship between our company and the organizer.	AC	5.057	4.475	17.398	.000
Our company takes pleasure in being a customer of the organizer.	AC	5.449	4.601	43.101	.000
Maintaining a long-term relationship with this organizer is important to our company.	AC	5.384	4.565	45.742	.000
Our company dedicates important efforts to continue the relationship with this organizer.	AC	4.773	4.217	16.992	.000
The relationship with this organizer is something our company intends to maintain.	AC	5.318	4.482	46.632	.000
The relationship with this organizer will be profitable over the long term.	AC	5.131	4.747	10.148	.002
Our company is committed to the relationship with the organizer.	AC	5.053	4.479	21.318	.000

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Appendix F1 Comparison of the Mean Scores of Exhibitors at Trade Fairs Organized by International Organizer and Those by Domestic Organizers (Continued)

	Construct	International	National	Statistic[a]	Sig.
Our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer.	CC	3.736	3.206	11.513	.001
This organizer has location advantages compared with other organizers.	CC	5.192	4.598	19.191	.000
Our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no better similar exhibitions in this region.	CC	5.006	4.005	54.946	.000
It is hard to break the relationship with this organizer.	CC	4.215	3.766	9.477	.002
The on-site services provided by this organizer are good.	SQ	5.040	4.166	44.374	.000
This organizer understands our exhibiting needs and objectives.	SQ	5.080	4.385	28.942	.000
This organizer responds to problems immediately.	SQ	5.081	4.469	24.933	.000
This organizer has attracted the right type of buyers to this exhibition.	SQ	5.006	3.677	102.414	.000
This organizer cares about our interests (e.g. actions have been taken to protect the copyright of our products).	SQ	4.971	4.278	29.515	.000
Overall, the services provided by this organizer meet our expectations.	RS	5.199	4.267	59.543	.000
In general, our company is satisfied with our relationship with this organizer.	RS	5.292	4.272	74.127	.000
I will recommend this organizer as an exhibition supplier to other firms.	RS	5.261	4.034	91.536	.000
The relationship with this organizer has produced results that enable our company to increase the value of our brand.	RS	5.040	4.361	28.153	.000
Our company is displeased with the products and services we get from the organizer.	RS	2.961	3.587	16.899	.000

a. Asymptotically F distributed.

Appendix F2 T-Tests for Exhibitors' Relationship Quality Perceptions – Trade Fairs Organized by Private Companies versus Government-Affiliations

	Construct	Private	Government	Statistic[s]	Sig.
Our company trusts the organizer to provide quality exhibitions and services to us.	TT	4.880	4.527	7.029	.008
Our company cannot always trust the quality of this exhibition to be good.	TT	3.651	4.300	19.114	.000
Our company is concerned that the exhibition may not be worth our financial investment.	TT	3.400	3.856	9.749	.002
There is a mutual benefit in the relationship between our company and the organizer.	AC	4.804	4.429	7.006	.008
Our company takes pleasure in being a customer of the organizer.	AC	4.980	4.661	5.734	.017
Our company dedicates important efforts to continue the relationship with this organizer.	AC	4.516	4.180	6.135	.014
Our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer.	CC	3.500	3.175	5.156	.024
Our company worries that attending this exhibition will be a waste of time.	CC	3.113	3.716	16.016	.000
This organizer has location advantages compared with other organizers.	CC	4.901	4.560	4.727	.030
Our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no better similar exhibitions in this region.	CC	4.517	3.984	14.855	.000
This organizer understands our exhibiting needs and objectives.	SQ	4.740	4.372	8.069	.005
This organizer has attracted the right type of buyers to this exhibition.	SQ	4.390	3.605	32.595	.000
Overall, the services provided by this organizer meet our expectations.	RS	4.717	4.287	11.019	.001
In general, our company is satisfied with our relationship with this organizer.	RS	4.742	4.326	10.271	.001
I will recommend this organizer as an exhibition supplier to other firms.	RS	4.716	3.934	31.309	.000
The relationship with this organizer has produced results that enable our company to increase the value of our brand.	RS	4.730	4.316	10.478	.001

a. Asymptotically F distributed.

Appendix F3 T-Tests for Exhibitors' Relationship Quality Perceptions – First-Timers and Repeat Exhibitors

	Construct	First-timer	Repeat exhibitor	Statistic[s]	Sig.
This organizer always informs our company of important changes about the exhibition	COM	4.429	4.913	11.989	.001
This exhibition organizer regularly informs our company about this exhibition.	COM	4.488	4.847	5.608	.018
Generally speaking, this organizer is trustworthy.	TT	4.878	5.193	5.117	.024
Our company may suffer economically if we do not work with this organizer.	AC	3.099	3.491	7.278	.007
Our company dedicates important efforts to continue the relationship with this organizer.	AC	4.005	4.565	17.470	.000
The relationship with this organizer is something our company intends to maintain.	AC	4.468	4.846	7.828	.005
Our company will continue to use the services of this organizer as there are no better similar exhibitions in this region.	CC	3.917	4.474	14.759	.000
It is hard to break the relationship with this organizer.	CC	3.675	4.000	5.010	.026
Overall, the services provided by this organizer meet our expectations.	RS	4.350	4.630	4.003	.046
In general, our company is satisfied with our relationship with this organizer.	RS	4.371	4.660	4.280	.039
I will recommend this organizer as an exhibition supplier to other firms.	RS	4.142	4.511	5.955	.015

a. Asymptotically F distributed. Robust Tests of Equality of Means Welch

Appendix F4 T-Tests for Exhibitors' Destination Attractiveness Perceptions – First versus Second-Tier Cities

	Construct	1st tier city	2nd tier city	Statistic[s]	Sig.
I have no language barriers in this city.	DLE	5.253	5.665	8.339	.004
This city has many tourist attractions.	DLE	5.178	5.990	43.006	.000
This city has good nightlife.	DLE	5.316	4.911	12.443	.000
The quality of hotel accommodation in this city is high.	DLE	5.211	4.890	7.455	.007
Location of this exhibition center is excellent.	ACCE	5.019	5.488	15.412	.000
Transportation to this exhibition center is convenient.	ACCE	4.869	5.538	29.730	.000
Exhibition center layout is easy for people to find ways.	VF	5.087	4.644	11.945	.001
The facilities of the exhibition center are excellent.	VF	4.665	4.168	14.820	.000
The overall economic condition of this city is among the top five in China.	EE	5.963	3.897	219.987	.000
The business environment of this city is excellent.	EE	5.655	5.170	21.763	.000
This city has a large number of international firms.	EE	5.976	4.606	151.765	.000
China's manufacturing firms in our industry are especially located in this city or nearby regions.	CLST	4.912	4.579	5.609	.018
This city is an important distribution hub of our industrial sector in China.	CLST	5.032	4.564	11.965	.001
This city is a leading city of an industrial belt where most products/equipments in this exhibition are manufactured.	CLST	4.872	4.326	17.295	.000
There is a strong professional association of our industrial sector in this city.	CLST	4.817	4.448	8.625	.003
This city has support from industries related to this exhibition.	CLST	5.490	4.788	37.013	.000

a. Asymptotically F distributed. Robust Tests of Equality of Means Welch

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