MULTI-STAKEHOLDER VALUE CO-CREATION AND ITS ROLE IN SHAPING EXHIBITOR SATISFACTION AND BRAND PREFERENCE IN TRADE SHOWS

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Multi-Stakeholder Value Co-Creation and Its Role in Shaping Exhibitor Satisfaction and Brand Preference in Trade Shows

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it reproduces no material previously published or written, nor material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Pin YI

ABSTRACT

The trade show industry is a high-value service sector that generates substantial economic and social benefits for businesses and host cities. However, increasing competition and evolving participant demands present significant challenges, necessitating a shift toward value-driven ecosystems that benefit all stakeholders. Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) and Value Co-Creation (VCC) provide valuable theoretical foundations for addressing these challenges, emphasizing that value emerges from collaborative networks rather than isolated transactions. The service ecosystem perspective developed from SDL underscores the interconnected nature of value creation across micro, meso, and macro levels. Despite its relevance, empirical research on VCC in the trade show context remains limited, focusing primarily on micro-level impacts while neglecting the complexity of stakeholder networks and co-creation dynamics. This gap calls for a deeper investigation into how diverse VCC activities from a multi-stakeholder perspective influence trade show outcomes beyond simple dyadic exchanges.

To address this gap, this thesis explores VCC practices in trade shows from a service ecosystem perspective, specifically evaluating their direct and indirect effects on exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference. Two research objectives guided this study: (1) to identify VCC practices at different levels (micro, meso, and macro) within the trade show ecosystem, and (2) to investigate how these practices impact exhibitor satisfaction and preference for trade shows. A sequential mixed-methods approach was employed, comprising two phases: qualitative research followed by quantitative research.

Phase 1 of the thesis adopted a qualitative approach, conducting in-depth interviews with 21 industry stakeholders, including exhibitors, organizers, venue operators, and Destination Marketing Organization representatives in Hong Kong and Mainland China. These interviewees were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling methods. Three primary VCC practices emerged from the thematic content analysis: *exchange*, *co-production*, and *co-promotion*. A total of 47 items were determined through expert panel reviews. The findings also highlighted the interconnectedness of these practices across the three stages of trade show (pre-show, at-show, and post-show), offering a multi-stakeholder perspective on the ecosystem dynamics. These insights guided the development of a questionnaire to quantify these practices and assess their effects in Phase 2.

Phase 2 adopted a quantitative approach, using questionnaires to examine the impact of VCC practices on exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference. Data were collected via

face-to-face surveys administered to exhibitors at trade shows in Mainland China and Hong Kong, using both purposive and convenience sampling. The collection yielded 101 valid responses from a pilot test and 360 from the main survey. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) validated 34 measurement items from the pilot study to further analyze the main survey data. *Exchange* was identified as four factors: participant information, inter-organizational intelligence, network resources, and relational cultivation. *Co-production* emerged as three factors, including participant joint production, inter-organization joint production, and inter-alliance initiatives. *Co-promotion* comprised three factors: reciprocal brand exposure, targeted network promotion, and mutual endorsement. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) were then used to evaluate the measurement model and hypothesized relationships. The results indicated that while both *exchange* and *co-promotion* significantly enhanced exhibitor satisfaction, only *co-promotion* directly improved brand preference. C*o-production*, however, showed negligible influence on either outcome. Additionally, exhibitor satisfaction mediated the relationships between *exchange/co-promotion* and brand preference, but no mediation effect was observed for *co-production*.

This thesis makes several contributions. Theoretically, it expands the existing research on VCC and service ecosystems within the trade show context, presenting novel insights that differ from the B2C domain. It provides a comprehensive view of VCC practices across the trade show timeline. Furthermore, it introduces a research framework that encompasses exhibitors, organizers, and industry associations, examining the effects of various VCC practices within the trade show ecosystem. The study also verifies the mediating role of exhibitor satisfaction in VCC. Practically, the findings provide valuable implications for industry professionals looking to improve service design and encourage collaborative efforts. Policymakers can also leverage these insights to balance stakeholder needs while maintaining competitive advantages in the trade show sector.

Keywords: *value co-creation, service ecosystem, multi-stakeholder perspective, trade shows, exhibitions, exhibitor satisfaction, show brand preference*

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I've imagined writing my acknowledgements countless times. Yet now, as I finally begin, the joy I once anticipated is absent—only the silent weight of time pressing down on the page. This dissertation is more than a piece of academic work; it is a fossil of memory that holds my PhD journey: the late nights in TH842 and the library, the frustration of failed attempts, the exhilaration of sudden insights, and those long, solitary hours spent with tea and starlight. Research feels like a Sisyphean climb with no true summit. But for now, I choose to pause halfway up the mountain and put the past five years into words. May the "Future Pin" revisiting these lines still feel the warmth beneath the text and data—and may the flame of curiosity stay gold, undimmed by years.

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Above all, my deepest gratitude goes to my parents. Their warm voices during video calls lit up my darkest days, and the thought of the home-cooked meals brought comfort across the miles. More than anything, their unwavering belief in me gave me strength when I needed it most. Every step of this journey has been carried by their love, and this accomplishment belongs to them as much as it does to me.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

This study explores value co-creation (VCC) practices within the trade show context through the lens of a service ecosystem. It examines both the direct and indirect effects of these practices on exhibitor satisfaction and exhibition brand preference. Trade shows have long been a crucial platform for business-to-business (B2B) marketing, functioning effectively as a powerful marketing tool. They provide an ideal environment for face-to-face interactions among exhibitors, visitors, organizers, and other involved actors. Compared to other media, exhibiting at trade shows is often considered as more effective for companies in achieving their sales and marketing goals (Jin, 2011; Lau, 2020; H. Lee, 2019). While traditionally viewed as transactional arenas for product promotion and lead generation, trade shows have increasingly evolved into relational and knowledge-based platforms, positioning as dynamic networks for VCC (Tafesse & Skallerud, 2017). This shift aligns with the service-dominant logic (SDL) paradigm, which posits that products do not inherently contain value. Instead, value emerges through collaborative interactions among all actors involved (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). Grounded in SDL, the concept of VCC transformed customers from mere spectators into key contributors in the value-creation process (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

More recently, VCC research has adopted a service ecosystem perspective, moving beyond the previously dominant focus on service dyads (e.g., firm-customer interactions) to encompass networks of actors within a system (Frow et al., 2014; Ranjan & Read, 2019, 2021; Vargo & Lusch, 2017). A service ecosystem provides a holistic lens for examining the increasingly complex and collaborative relationships among actors, treating the ecosystem as the focus of analysis. This perspective transitions from singular one-on-one interactions to explore the broader networks of exchanges, providing a more holistic comprehension of how value is created. However, research on VCC through the lens of the service ecosystem is still in its early stages and requires further investigation in specific contexts.

Similarly, in the context of trade shows, existing literature predominantly focuses on dyadic relationships between organizers and show participants, while overlooking the systemic nature of stakeholder networks. This fragmented perspective neglects how multi-actor collaborations generate value beyond bilateral exchanges. Furthermore, while exhibitor satisfaction has been linked to short-term outcomes like word-of-mouth (Lee et al., 2015), its connection to long-term outcomes, such as exhibition brand equity, remains underexplored.

This gap is critical given the rising competition among global trade shows to cultivate loyal exhibitor bases in an era of digital alternatives and economic downturn following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Addressing these issues is urgent for the sustainable growth of the global exhibition sector. Exhibitors are increasingly prioritizing ROI metrics that encompass not only lead generation but also intangible benefits, such as networking and partnership opportunities. As a result, organizers face greater pressure to provide event participants with higher-quality and more effective services and products. A systemic understanding of VCC offers valuable insights into strategies that enhance both immediate exhibitor satisfaction and enduring brand loyalty for trade shows. The service ecosystem lens, rooted in SDL and the principles of VCC, offers a robust framework to address these challenges. By examining the interactions and exchanges among multiple stakeholders in a trade show setting, this framework can help identify opportunities for improved value propositions and relationship development. Furthermore, studying VCC in trade shows enriches existing VCC research by offering insights distinct from those in business-to-customer (B2C) contexts (e.g., tourism and hospitality), thereby contributing to a broader understanding of VCC in B2B settings.

1.2 Research Problem

Despite extensive discussions on VCC in academia, there are two major areas that merit further investigation, as follows:

1.2.1 Identification of VCC Practices and Dimensions Within a Service Ecosystem.

Extant studies on VCC mainly focus on dyadic, customer-supplier interactions (Frow et al., 2014). However, by adopting a service ecosystem perspective, recent studies in the SDL literature are moving towards a much broader view of multiple actors (Sharma et al., 2020). Specifically, actors within a service ecosystem can be classified across three distinct levels: micro-level individuals (such as tourists and employees), meso-level organizations (including tourism and hospitality businesses), and macro-level societal or institutional entities (like government bodies) (Frow et al., 2016; Ranjan & Read, 2021). From the ecosystem perspective, value is co-created in multi-actor systems via a complex and iterative process (Ranjan & Read, 2021; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). This approach recognizes the dynamic interactions among various stakeholders, where each actor contributes to and influences the value creation process. Consequently, it offers a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how value emerges within a service ecosystem. In this regard, further exploration is needed into how VCC is achieved at

different levels and how these levels interact (Chandler & Vargo, 2011). While scholars have increasingly explored service ecosystems conceptually, empirical studies on VCC and its measurement from an ecosystem perspective remain limited. Key aspects, such as co-creation activities among actors at various levels and the interconnectedness within the ecosystem, are still unclear (Frow & Payne, 2018).

1.2.2 Impacts of VCC Practices on Trade Shows

Previous literature on VCC mainly concentrated on B2C relationships and predominantly focused on the sharing economy, healthcare, as well as tourism and hospitality. Recent scholars have explored customer-to-customer (C2C) (Freire & Veríssimo, 2020; Han et al., 2021; Luo et al., 2019; Weretecki et al., 2021) and peer-to-peer (P2P) (Liu et al., 2022; Mustak & Plé, 2020; P. Zhang, 2017) co-creation interactions, yet B2B relationships have received relatively less attention (Lambert & Enz, 2012; Pathak et al., 2022; Sales-Vivó et al., 2021). This is potentially due to greater emphasis being placed on customer experiences and expectations in the B2C context (Gandhi et al., 2019). However, the B2B setting is frequently viewed as a collaborative effort between suppliers and buyers, requiring co-creation to achieve a win-win (Pathak et al., 2022). Recent literature has called for an extended knowledge of products, services, and value for B2B contexts (Charterina, 2019; Sales-Vivó et al., 2021).

Similarly, trade show studies from a service ecosystem perspective remains limited (H. Lee, 2019; Sarmento & Simões, 2018a). Existing research primarily centers on the micro level, emphasizing the exhibitors' perspective while overlooking actors at other levels (Sarmento & Simões, 2019a). Little is known about secondary market actors, such as venues, industry associations, and destination organizations. Trade shows operate within a multiple-actor setting, brought to life through the interactions and collaborations of diverse participants (H. Lee, 2019). Thus, value alignment among stakeholders is essential for the success of any trade show. Despite this, only a few studies have explored VCC in this context, with minimal attention paid to its influences on exhibitors satisfaction, performance, or perception (e.g., Wong & Lai, 2018, 2019b; C. Zhang & Xu, 2019). Moreover, while existing exhibition studies tends to analyze the direct impact of VCC at the micro level, it often overlooks the differentiation between various forms of VCC among actors. Thus, there is a need for empirical studies that investigate the diverse effects of VCC on trade show experiences, both directly and indirectly.

Consequently, the main research problem is stated as follows:

In the context of trade shows, <u>what</u> are value co-creation practices among multiple stakeholders at different ecosystem levels before, during, and after shows, and <u>how</u> do different practices influence exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference?

Accordingly, two major issues were investigated.

Research issue 1 focuses on the identification of value co-creation practices among exhibitors, organizers, industry associations, and governmental agencies before, during, and after shows. In particular, the following RQs will be addressed:

RQ1.1 What measures constitute value co-creation practices among trade show stakeholders within the service ecosystem?

RQ1.2 When do these practices occur at the three stages (before/during/after shows)?

By addressing these research questions, the study seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

1) identify and categorize the measures that constitute value co-creation practices among trade show stakeholders within the service ecosystem; and

2) analyze the timing of these VCC practices at three stages of trade shows and how they vary across different phases.

Research Issue 2 aims to examine how value co-creation practices influences exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference. In particular, the following RQs will be addressed:

RQ2.1 To what extent does each value co-creation practice exert an influence on exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference, respectively?

RQ2.2 What is the relationship among value co-creation practices, exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference? How does one impact others?

In this regard, the research questions will direct the achievement of these objectives:

1) empirically validate the measurements of the main constructs developed in Phase 1 and assess the direct impact of each VCC practice on exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference; and

2) identify the potential mediating effect of exhibitor satisfaction and evaluate the indirect effect of VCC practices on trade show brand preference.

Several sub-questions and corresponding hypotheses were created to steer the investigation. These research questions and hypotheses were detailed in Chapter 3 and are summarized in Table 3.8 of that chapter.

1.3 Research Justification

This research employs academic theory to address real-world problems affecting the trade show industry. By viewing trade shows as service ecosystems, it provides valuable insights into the industry's business and sustainability challenges. Simultaneously, it enriches marketing theory by deepening the systemic comprehension of VCC. Specifically, the present study is justified on three grounds:

First, while the introduction of the service ecosystem has revolutionized SDL by emphasizing the interconnectedness of actors within a system (Vargo & Lusch, 2016; Frow et al., 2014), its application to trade shows remains limited. Existing studies predominantly focus on dyadic interactions, such as exhibitor-visitor or exhibitor-organizer relationships (Lee & Kim, 2020; C. Zhang & Xu, 2019), overlooking the complexity of trade shows as multi-actor systems. Characterized by their "interaction-centricity" (Sarmento & Simões, 2019b), trade shows provide a unique context for intensive interactions among stakeholders through activities such as sales promotion, relationship development, and knowledge exchange (Sarmento & Simões, 2018b). While VCC research often aligns with this interactional nature, studies on trade shows have yet to explore the diverse co-creation practices that emerge in such dynamic environments. This gap underscores the need for a more thorough examination of interactions among multiple stakeholders within trade shows, providing deeper insight into VCC within this service ecosystem.

Second, focusing on trade shows as B2B networks emphasizes their characteristics compared to traditional B2C contexts. Unlike general public consumer shows, trade-to-trade exhibitions involve interactions between business organizations rather than individual consumers. This B2B context introduces a higher level of complexity and collaboration, where intensive interactions among network members are crucial for VCC (Marcos-Cuevas et al., 2016). However, existing trade show studies often limit their focus to three key actors—organizers, exhibitors, and buyers—while overlooking a broader ecosystem of stakeholders, such as venues, industry associations, and destination organizations (H. Lee, 2019). These affiliated stakeholders play vital roles in facilitating collaboration and delivering relevant

services, yet they remain underexplored in the literature. Adopting a service ecosystem perspective enables a systemic analysis of the interconnected relationships and value creation processes among all stakeholders, addressing the fragmented exploration in multi-actor settings. Moreover, this approach not only enhances the understanding of VCC within the trade show industry but also provides insights applicable to other B2B settings, where multi-level collaboration is essential.

Third, the exhibition industry significantly contributes to the economic progress of host cities and countries, generating billions in annual revenue and supporting millions of jobs across various sectors. Beyond its economic significance, trade shows serve as critical catalysts for innovation diffusion, supply chain collaboration, and market expansion. This depends on delivering superior value to stakeholders. However, despite its centrality, the industry faces escalating pressures: rising participation costs for exhibitors and intensifying competition among organizers due to the growing number of trade shows. Without timely attention and solutions, these challenges may lead to systemic inefficiencies across the ecosystem, such as reduced spending by dissatisfied exhibitors, revenue shortfalls for organizers, and diminished income from tourism and hospitality for host cities. Thus, it is important to examine how multi-actor collaborations can help mitigate these losses. Furthermore, as the most influential actors within the trade show ecosystem, organizers often lack evidence-based strategies to address these issues. By identifying VCC practices and linking exhibitor satisfaction to brand preference—a key driver of long-term participation—this research offers actionable insights to help organizers reduce exhibitor churn rates and stabilize revenue streams. This thesis addresses these urgent issues by investigating how service ecosystem-driven VCC can enhance exhibitor satisfaction and brand preference, offering both theoretical implications and practical solutions for the industry.

1.4 Methodology

This thesis utilized a mixed-method design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods. Utilizing both approaches allows the researcher to construct and validate a conceptual model aimed at addressing the previously identified research questions. Detailed justifications and explanations for each method are provided in Chapter 4 (Phase 1) and Chapter 5 (Phase 2).

Research Phase 1 adopted a qualitative study through semi-structured interviews to identify VCC practices among trade show stakeholders at three stages of the show. A total of 21 informants were interviewed, both in-person and virtually, based on their preferences.

Participants included exhibitors, show organizers, representatives from industry associations, exhibition venue operators, and Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) representatives from Hong Kong and Mainland China. Data analysis was conducted via content analysis. The findings classified VCC practices using a service ecosystem lens in the trade show sector and guided the development of a questionnaire to measure these practices and test their effects in the proposed framework during Phase 2.

Research Phase 2 utilized a survey-based quantitative study to investigate the effects of the proposed VCC practices on exhibitors' satisfaction and brand preference. A face-to-face survey collected 101 valid pilot test responses and 360 responses from the main survey. Data analyses were conducted using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), via SPSS 26 and SmartPLS 4. Chapter 5 details the results of the quantitative study in Phase 2.

Overall, the mixed-methods design provided a holistic and informative perspective on VCC practices within trade shows. Given that VCC from an ecosystem perspective remains abstract and difficult to measure, it is essential to understand the complexities of this concept. In this research, the qualitative investigation offers in-depth insights from multiple key stakeholders in the trade show industry regarding their co-creation activities, which aids in the measurement development of VCC and refining the proposed model.

1.5 Research Significance

This study seeks to advance both the theoretical insights and practical strategies related to trade shows.

Theoretically, this study employes the VCC framework and integrate the metatheory of service-dominant logic (SDL) with empirical knowledge in the trade show context, as emphasized by Vargo and Lusch (2017). By identifying various VCC practices specific to trade shows, this research enriches the existing literature and offers new insights distinct from B2C settings like tourism and healthcare. After confirming these practices, the study explores when each occurs, providing a holistic understanding of their timeline within trade shows. Additionally, it is the first to examine the effects of different VCC practices within the service ecosystem of trade shows. A proposed research framework reflects a multi-stakeholder perspective, including exhibitors, organizers, and industry associations, contributing to a more comprehensive measurement of VCC across ecosystem levels. Finally, the findings indicate

that exhibitor satisfaction acts as a mediator between VCC and show brand preference within the context of trade shows.

Practically, the study reveals important implications for industry practitioners. Understanding VCC practices across different ecosystem levels is essential for enhancing service design and delivery. By disentangling the complex concept of co-creation, the study shed lights on the interactions, collaborations, and resource integration among various stakeholders. Show organizers, as network orchestrators, can leverage these insights to foster collaborative interactions, ultimately boosting exhibitor satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, destination policymakers can utilize the identification of effective VCC practices to balance diverse stakeholder needs, gaining a competitive advantage.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises six chapters, with Figure 1.1 offering a visual summary of its organization. Chapter 2 reviews prior research on trade shows to establish the context of this thesis. In Chapter 3, a preliminary conceptual framework is introduced by examining existing literature on VCC and service ecosystems. In this study, a sequential mixed-methods approach is utilized, comprising two phases that follow a sequence of qualitative followed by quantitative research. In Chapter 4, the research methods, data analyses, and findings from Phase 1 are detailed. This phase is a qualitative study centered on the development of measurement items. Chapter 5 outlines the quantitative research design, statistical techniques, and empirical outcomes from Phase 2, emphasizing the evaluation of the finalized conceptual model and associated hypotheses. Finally, Chapter 6 offers discussions that address each research question and concludes the thesis by outlining theoretical and practical contributions, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

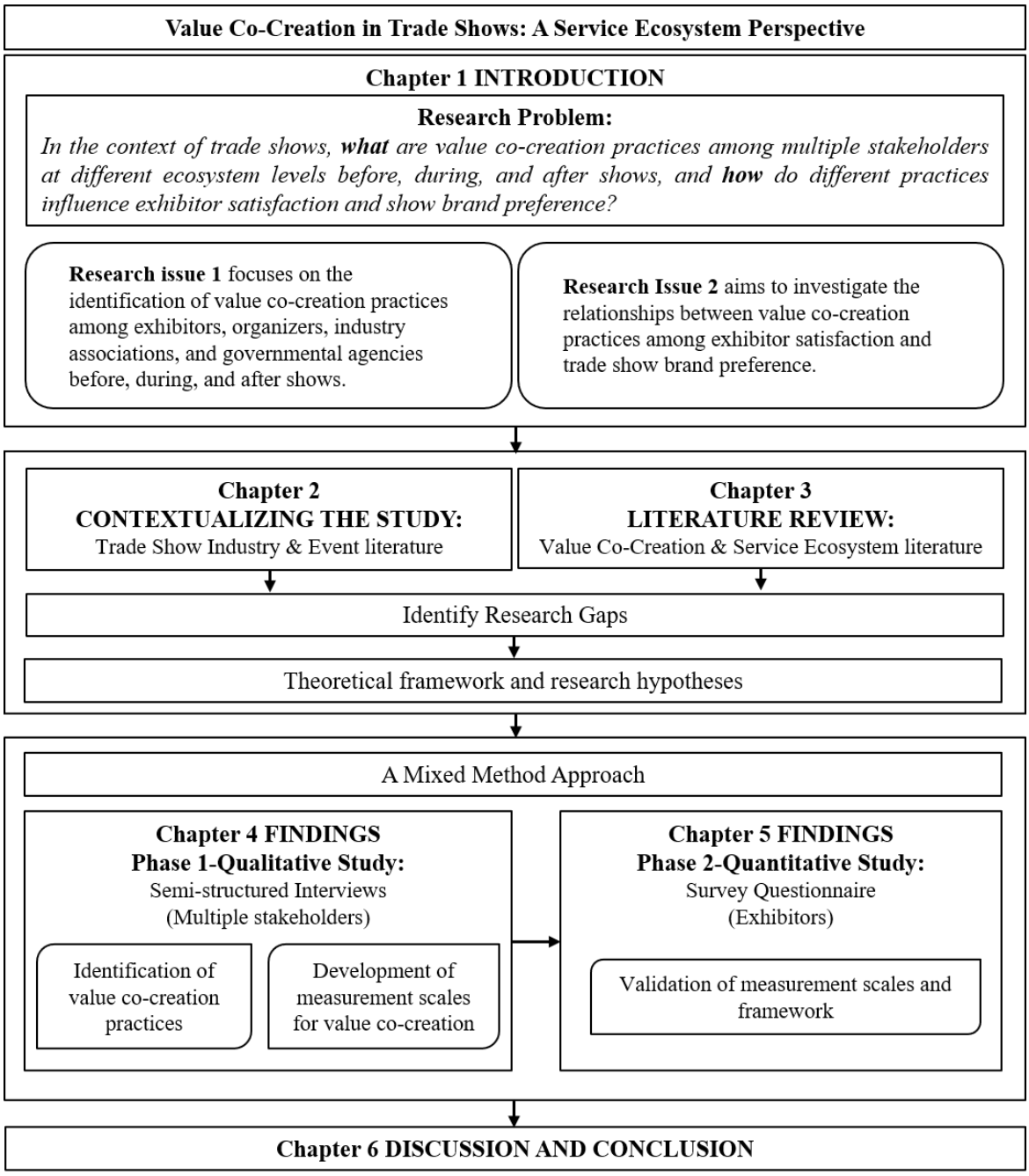

Figure 1.1 Thesis Structure

1.7 Study Delimitation

This section outlines the research boundaries and specifies the scope of the study. Since this study centers on VCC practices among stakeholders within an ecosystem and their impacts on exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference, the delimitation of this research comprises three key aspects:

First, the thesis centers on trade-to-trade shows, which are inherently different from consumer public shows. In trade-to-trade shows, visitors are organizational professional buyers, whereas consumer shows cater to individual customers. Consequently, the factors influencing VCC differ between B2B and B2C relationships. Thus, the results of this research might not apply to consumer shows. Additionally, this study excludes other forms of business events, such as meetings and conventions.

Second, this thesis examines trade shows hosted in Hong Kong and Mainland China, focusing on various industry stakeholders within these regions. Unique conditions in this geographical context may differ from those in exhibitions elsewhere. Therefore, caution is warranted when extending the conclusions to different regions or nations, given the distinct characteristics of each host destination.

Third, the factors influencing exhibitors' preferences for trade show brands are restricted to four key factors. Streamlining the data results in a leaner model, potentially neglecting the intricacies of various factors shaping exhibitors' choices. Furthermore, the direct impacts of each component of VCC practices on exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference have not been examined, highlighting the need for further research into the direct effects of each factor.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Table 1.2 shows key terms and their definitions within the present study. Further discussion of the main concepts in this research is carried out in the contextual study of trade shows (Chapter 2) and literature review (Chapter 3).

Table 0 Definition of Terms

Terms	Definitions
Trade shows/Trade fairs/Trade Exhibitions	"Trade shows are market events of a specific duration, held at intervals, at which a large number of companies present the main product range of one or more industry sectors and mainly sell it on the basis of samples. Trade shows/fairs predominantly attract trade and business visitors." (Kirchgeorg, 2005, p.37)
Trade show Organizers/ Companies	Organizations that manage "the planning, organization, staging and monitoring of trade shows". (Kirchgeorg, 2005, p.35)
Exhibitors/Sellers	Companies or entities showcasing goods and services at trade shows and leveraging the offerings of trade show service providers. (Kirchgeorg, 2005)

Terms	Definitions
Visitors/Attendees/Buyers	Companies or entities present at trade shows, collecting details on showcased services and products. (Kirchgeorg, 2005)
Exhibition Centers/Venues	The grounds where trade shows take place. Some trade show organizers also have ownership of trade show grounds while some do not. Generally, a trade show venue provides facilities, catering services, cleanliness, and service of staff to the shows. (Jin, 2011)
Industry Associations	"Industry associations represent the exhibitors and visitors in specific industries and serve as mediators to communicate members' needs and preferences to exhibition organizers." (H. Lee, 2019, p. 46)
Destination Management Organizations (DMOs)	Organizations that provide extensive local knowledge, expertise, and resources for corporate and association gatherings. DMOs work collaboratively with local tourism and hospitality service suppliers to ensure the implementation of business events. (Fenich, 2016)
Service-Dominant Logic (SDL)	"A meta-theoretical framework for explaining value creation through service exchange among multiple resource-integrating actors forming institutionally coordinated service ecosystems." (Vargo & Lusch, 2018, p. 740)
Service Ecosystem	"A relatively self-contained, self-adjusting system[s] of resource-integrating actors that are connected by shared institutional arrangements and mutual value creation through service exchange." (Lusch & Vargo, 2014, p. 161)
Institutions	"The humanly devised rules, norms, and beliefs that enable and constrain action and make social life predictable and meaningful." (Vargo & Lusch, 2016)
Resource Integration	"The process of amalgamating resources to create new resources with value-creating potential." (Vargo & Lusch, 2018, p. 740)
Value Co-Creation (VCC)	Value co-creation refers to the process of resource integration that takes place during interactions among actors connected within a service ecosystem. (Frow et al., 2016)

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a summary of the thesis, initiating with the research background and subsequently outlining the major research problems. Two primary research issues and several corresponding research questions were introduced, along with justifications for the research. The primary elements of the methodology, along with its theoretical and practical contributions were outlined, and important terms relevant to the study were listed. Chapters 2 to 6 comprehensively detail the thesis investigation.

Chapter 2 discusses the context of the trade show industry and reviews relevant event literature. It starts with an overview of the trade show sector, explaining key concepts and characteristics of these events, and identifying key stakeholders. Next, the importance of trade shows is highlighted, followed by a discussion of the challenges and opportunities within the industry. Finally, event literature related to business events, with a specific focus on trade shows, is reviewed and analyzed to identify research gaps in this field.

2 CONTEXTUALIZING THE STUDY: TRADE SHOW INDUSTRY

2.1 Chapter Introduction

In Chapter 1, the structure of the thesis was introduced and the research focus was defined. As discussed, this study aims to explore VCC in trade shows from a service ecosystem perspective. Two major research issues were established: 1) the identification of VCC practices among exhibitors, organizers, industry associations, and governmental agencies before, during, and after shows; and 2) the relationships between these VCC practices, exhibitor satisfaction, and trade show brand preference.

Chapter 2 will provide contextual background information on the trade show industry, together with a review of existing trade show studies. This will help establish the context for this research and identify potential research areas for trade show studies. As such, two major aspects are discussed in Chapter 2. The first provides an overview of the trade show industry and the worldwide status quo, while the second synthesizes previous trade show literature. As a result, this study identifies several research gaps related to the major research problem. This chapter is structured as follows: the subsequent section provides an overview of the trade show industry, including the conceptualization and classification of trade shows as well as an introduction to trade show stakeholders. The section then highlights the importance of trade shows before discussing major challenges and opportunities currently faced by the industry. Following this, key literature related to trade shows is summarized and discussed. The chapter concludes by identifying two specific research gaps.

2.2 Overview of the Trade Show Industry

2.2.1 Conceptualization and Classifications of Trade Shows

The industry-standard definition by UFI (2020) characterizes trade exhibitions as events that “promote trade and commerce, attended primarily by trade visitors while occasionally permitting public access during specified periods.” This contrasts with public exhibitions (or “consumer shows”), which UFI defines as “exhibitions open primarily to general public visitors.” This conceptualization of trade exhibitions aligns with Kirchgeorg's (2005, p.37) academic definition of trade shows as "market events of a specific duration, held at intervals, at which a large number of companies present the main product range of one or more industry

sectors and mainly sell it on the basis of samples," with both definitions emphasizing the predominant attraction of trade and business visitors.

It is worth noting that terms such as “trade fair,” “exposition,” and “trade exhibition” are frequently used interchangeably in scholarly literature (Kirchgeorg et al., 2010). However, to ensure consistent terminology, this study adopts the term "trade show," focusing exclusively on B2B contexts. This terminological precision serves to differentiate the focus from public exhibitions' B2C orientation, thereby clarifying the research boundaries.

Over time, the focus of the trade show concept has developed and evolved as its function gradually transformed (Curina, 2018; Jin, 2011). Originally, trade shows were considered sales and marketing tools with the ultimate objective of transaction and promotion (Kirchgeorg et al., 2010). Exhibiting at trade shows is a crucial sales and marketing medium that is typically more successful than other media in accomplishing sales and marketing objectives as it connects buyers with the widest range of vendors in one convenient place. Trade shows provide a venue for the launch of new products as well as a chance for businesses to interact with potential and existing customers, learn about their requirements, and obtain insights into industry trends. More recently, the focus of trade shows shifted to relational aspects, as a trade show is conceived as an important platform for relationship development with stakeholders (Curina, 2018). Onsite selling is gradually perceived as supplementary to strategic exchanges and relationship-building (Tafesse & Skallerud, 2017). Some scholars also conceptualized trade shows from a knowledge-based perspective. Rinallo et al. (2010) described trade shows as important "learning expeditions" motivating buyers to apply their innovative thinking to work-related difficulties, and the acquisition of "new ideas" and "unexpected knowledge" for future use.

Curina (2018) proposed five classification criteria for trade show typologies (Table 2.1). Firstly, trade shows are classified into three types based on the targeted market. Visitors at B2C trade shows are normally individual customers from the general public, which are also known as public shows, public trade shows, and consumer shows. By contrast, visitors at B2B shows are restricted to organizational buyers, distributors, intermediaries, and other business entities in the industry. Besides, mixed shows are also present, aimed at both professional visitors and final consumers. Nevertheless, the primary objectives of B2C and B2B trade shows are different: whereas B2C shows are primarily concerned with information and entertainment, B2B trade shows are more concerned with establishing contact networks with other companies

in the same sector (Curina, 2018). Consequently, B2B trade shows have been designated as the research topic of this study, which focuses on the interrelated connections and exchanges between trade show stakeholders.

Secondly, the origins of exhibitors and visitors categorize trade shows into three types: regional, national, and international. Similarly, the third criterion- exchange typologies are based on the level of internationality for participants and the nature of exchange. Accordingly, trade shows are described as platforms for national exchanges, demand and supply, as well as international exchanges. The fourth criterion is on the basis of the level of product specialization exhibited, which incorporates general, multi-industry, and specialized shows. The fifth classification is determined by the form of shows. Physical trade shows take place through face-to-face interactions, whereas virtual trade shows are held in cyberspace (Anja Geigenmüller, 2010; Lee-Kelley et al., 2004; Sarmento & Simões, 2019b). An introduction to virtual shows and a synthesis of relevant studies are presented in Section 2.5.2. The combination of physical and virtual settings is referred to as hybrid shows. Considering the applicability of trade shows, the present study targets international B2B shows.

Table 2.2.1.1 Classifications of Trade Shows

Classification Criteria	Trade Show Denomination
Typologies of admitted visitors	● B2B shows (trade fairs/trade shows) ● B2C shows (public fairs/public shows/consumer shows) ● Mixed shows
Geographical coverage	● Regional shows ● National shows ● International shows
Exchange typologies	● National exchange shows ● Demand shows (import trade shows) ● Supply shows (export trade shows) ● International exchange shows
Market coverage	● General shows ● Multi-industry shows ● Specialized shows
Trade show typologies	● Physical shows ● Virtual shows ● Hybrid shows

Source: adapted from Curina (2018, 2020)

As an effective marketing tool, trade shows are critical for the development of firms, primarily through three key functions: sales promotion, relationship development, and

knowledge exchange facilitated by intensive interactions (Sarmento & Simões, 2018b; Tafesse & Skallerud, 2017).

2.2.2 Trade show Stakeholders

Trade shows are embedded in a multi-stakeholder setting, relying on collaborative efforts of numerous industry partners. Trade show management involves "initiation, promotion, organization, sponsorship, and support from related public and private sectors" (Jin, 2011, p. 18). Thus, a successful show requires the coordinated interaction of various contributing companies and institutions (Kirchgeorg et al., 2005). Trade show stakeholders include organizers, exhibitors, buyers, industry associations, venue operators, media, subcontractors, sponsors, governmental agencies, and public service entities. Each stakeholder is crucial to the trade show process. The interdependence of these stakeholders highlights the necessity of strong alliances to sustain trade show success. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize and define these stakeholders and their interrelationships before examining the industry comprehensively (Lee, 2019).

While many stakeholders contribute to trade shows, their levels of involvement and relationships within the exhibition process vary significantly. Figure 2.1 outlines relevant stakeholders in the trade show sector. It defines organizers, exhibitors, visitors, and venues as core stakeholders within the sector, as they have strong links to each other, but they have weaker connections to other stakeholders like subcontractors or sponsors. Non-core stakeholders, such as media or public services, play supportive but less central roles. This structure reflects the industry's reliance on a core-periphery dynamic, where critical functions are concentrated among key players. This is also in line with the classifications of trade show stakeholders defined by many scholars.

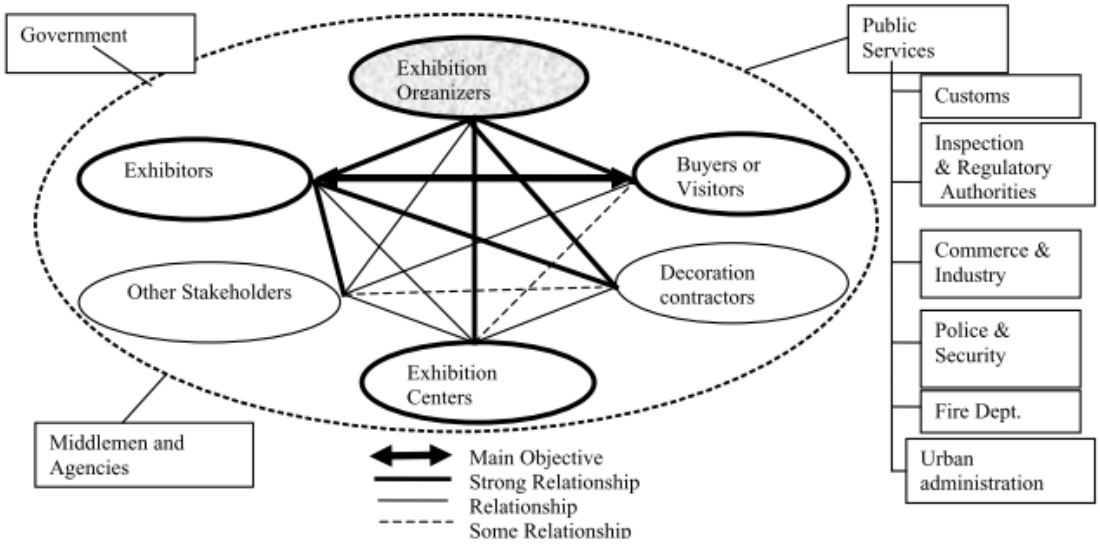

Figure 2.1 Stakeholders in the Trade show Industry – Adapted from Jin (2011)

Scholars have classified trade show stakeholders in various ways based on their roles and levels of involvement. For instance, Lee (2019) categorizes them into two groups: the service provider group, which includes venues, organizers, subcontractors, and others, and the consumer group, which includes exhibitors and visitors. Tafesse and Skallerud (2017) classify stakeholders based on their market involvement: key stakeholders (e.g., buyers, service providers) engage directly in trade shows, while peripheral market actors (e.g., industry associations, governments) participate indirectly. The role of certain stakeholders can differ by country. For example, in Germany, local and state governments are recognized as major stakeholders due to their investments in the trade show sector (Holzner, 2005), whereas in many other countries, governments may play a more peripheral role (Tafesse & Skallerud, 2017).

This study follows Kirchgeorg et al. (2005) in categorizing trade show stakeholders into three groups: primary actors, secondary actors, and peripheral market actors. This framework clarifies the roles of different stakeholders and defines the scope of this study. Each category is discussed in detail below.

2.2.2.1 Primary Actors

Primary actors are central to the success of trade shows, directly influencing their positioning and outcomes. This category includes trade show organizers, exhibitors, and

visitors (Kirchgeorg et al., 2005). These stakeholders form a core triad, with their interactions driving the overall success of the event (Jin, 2011).

- *Trade Show Organizers*

  Trade show organizers are essential in developing and managing the exhibition product. According to Kirchgeorg et al. (2005), there are three types of organizers: 1) leasing-operating companies, which both own exhibition grounds and host their own shows (an exception in most countries worldwide but common in Germany and China); 2) pure operating companies, such as globally recognized exhibition companies; and 3) associations that act as organizers, like trade associations that organize exhibitions to serve their members. Worldwide, trade shows are hosted by exhibition firms with support from industry associations and related organizations (Jin, 2011). Kirchgeorg et al. (2010) emphasize the necessity for organizers to be market experts, understanding the evolving needs of exhibitors and visitors. Their competitive advantage lies in creating platforms that facilitate networking, knowledge exchange and industry advancement. Trade show companies should transition from merely selling space to acting as information brokers, offering high-level services to enhance stakeholder engagement.

- *Exhibitors*

  Exhibitors include manufacturers, importers, wholesalers, and service providers (Kirchgeorg et al., 2005). Their motivations for exhibiting at trade shows have been extensively studied, revealing not only primary sales and promotional goals but also non-sales motivations such as research, networking, and strategic benefits (Jin, 2011; Y. Wang et al., 2017). While large exhibitors often hold significant negotiating power, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are now more actively engaged participants, using trade shows to expand their market presence (Jin, 2011). Exhibitors' long-term commitment is crucial for the sustainability of trade shows. Given the high costs of participation, exhibitors are likely to commit long-term if they achieve or exceed their goals. This commitment positively impacts the overall success and stability of trade fairs (Kirchgeorg et al., 2010).

- *Visitors/Buyers*

  Visitors or buyers are another critical group for trade show success. Similar to exhibitors, visitor types vary, but they often enjoy more flexibility in planning their attendance, as they do not require long-term booth reservations. Research indicates that visitors attend

exhibitions not only to purchase and gather information but also to support their industry and network with other participants (Godar & O'Connor, 2001; Jae Lee et al., 2012). Additionally, some visitors may transition into exhibitors after attending trade shows.

2.2.2.2 Secondary Actors

Secondary actors are those with whom the trade fair organizer typically interacts directly, influencing the conceptual design in various ways (Kirchgeorg et al., 2005). Among these, certain stakeholders, such as venue owners, industry associations, and government bodies, are beyond the organizers' direct control. Their decisions can significantly impact the trade show's operations, making it essential for organizers to cultivate trust-based relationships with them (Kirchgeorg et al., 2010). Key secondary actors include:

- *Exhibition Centers*

  Primarily, exhibition centers provide the physical venues for trade shows. Their role, however, can extend beyond simple leasing; in countries like Germany and China, they often function as both venue provider and event organizer. Ultimately, their business model is centered on maximizing capacity utilization by offering logistical support to organizers, thereby encouraging smooth operations and fostering long-term commitments to the venue (Kirchgeorg et al., 2005).

- *Trade Associations*

  As representatives of industry interests, trade associations can significantly shape a trade show's positioning and management. Some associations organize events for their members, while others serve as advisory bodies, advocating for trade shows within their networks. Because the endorsement from these associations is often vital for the success of large-scale events, building strong relationships with them is a key success factor for organizers (Kirchgeorg et al., 2005).

- *Government Agencies/ Government-affiliations*

  The third category of secondary actors involves government agencies representing the host city or nation. These entities typically promote national or local economic interests, using trade shows as a vehicle for industrial policy and trade development. This model is especially prominent in places like Mainland China and Hong Kong, with active organizing roles played by bodies such as the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC),

respectively. In other contexts, this function is often fulfilled by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs). According to Kirchgeorg et al. (2005), government support globally manifests in two primary ways: direct investment in trade fair infrastructure and offering financial incentives, such as subsidies or tax breaks, to attract events.

2.2.2.3 Peripheral Market Actors

Peripheral market actors are defined as those who do not directly influence the conceptual design of trade shows but still contribute to their success. According to Kirchgeorg et al. (2005), this group can be classified into several key categories. For instance, trade show service suppliers—such as booth builders, caterers, and staffing agencies—provide essential operational support without affecting strategic direction. Similarly, local businesses (e.g., hotels, restaurants, and transportation services) play a critical role during the event period by supporting attendees and exhibitors, despite having no direct influence on the show's design. Finally, the media serves as an intermediary to the public, increasing visibility and awareness in a supportive rather than strategic capacity.

While primary actors have received considerable attention, studies examining other stakeholders and their interrelationships remain limited. From a multi-actor perspective, this research includes both primary and secondary stakeholders that are relevant but have not been thoroughly investigated. Specifically, this study focuses on five key players in the trade show industry: organizers, exhibitors, exhibition centers, industry associations, and destination management organizations (DMOs).

2.2.3 Importance of the Trade show Industry

As a high-value service sector, the trade show industry is notable for fostering social benefits for business, industries, and host destinations in addition to substantial economic advantages (Lau, 2020). Serving as a catalyst for growth and collaboration on both local and global levels, it plays an essential role in the economy of today.

- Economic impacts

From a microeconomic perspective, trade shows foster growth and revival of a nation's exhibiting industry and market (UFI, 2010). By gathering industry suppliers and buyers in one venue, they enable exchanges of goods, services, and knowledge. For participating companies, they offer great opportunities for education, networking, and trend forecasting. Moreover, large-scale and high-quality trade shows can lead industry development by aggregating innovations, expert insights, and cutting-edge products, effectively guiding market evolution.

For host cities, the financial benefits of the trade show industry are substantial. Industry data reveals that exhibitions generate revenue streams through attendee spending, venue operations, and support services. A UFI (2022) study quantified this impact: global exhibitions directly engaged 353 million visitors and 5 million exhibitors pre-pandemic, generating €125.6 billion in direct spending. This activity supported 1.4 million jobs worldwide while contributing €73.5 billion to global GDP. When accounting for indirect and induced impacts—such as supply chain activities (e.g., venue energy costs, catering) and downstream services (e.g., marketing, legal support)—the total economic output reached €298.7 billion, sustaining 3.4 million jobs worldwide (See Figure 2.2). At the national and international levels, exhibitions are vital for economic development, attracting trade, investment, jobs, and visitors, thus playing a key role in global economic growth.

Besides, research has highlighted the spin-off revenue and multiplier effects of business events on host destinations (Jin, 2011; Kirchgeorg, 2005; Sangkaew, 2019). These benefits extend beyond direct participants to include indirectly related sectors, such as hospitality services. Furthermore, the growth of the trade show industry contributes to improving the infrastructure of host destinations, ultimately improving residents' quality of life. Trade shows also enhance the reputation and image of these locations. Previous studies indicate that they act as temporary clusters and catalysts for regional development (Curina, 2018), promoting destination visibility and improved urban functionality (Sangkaew, 2019).

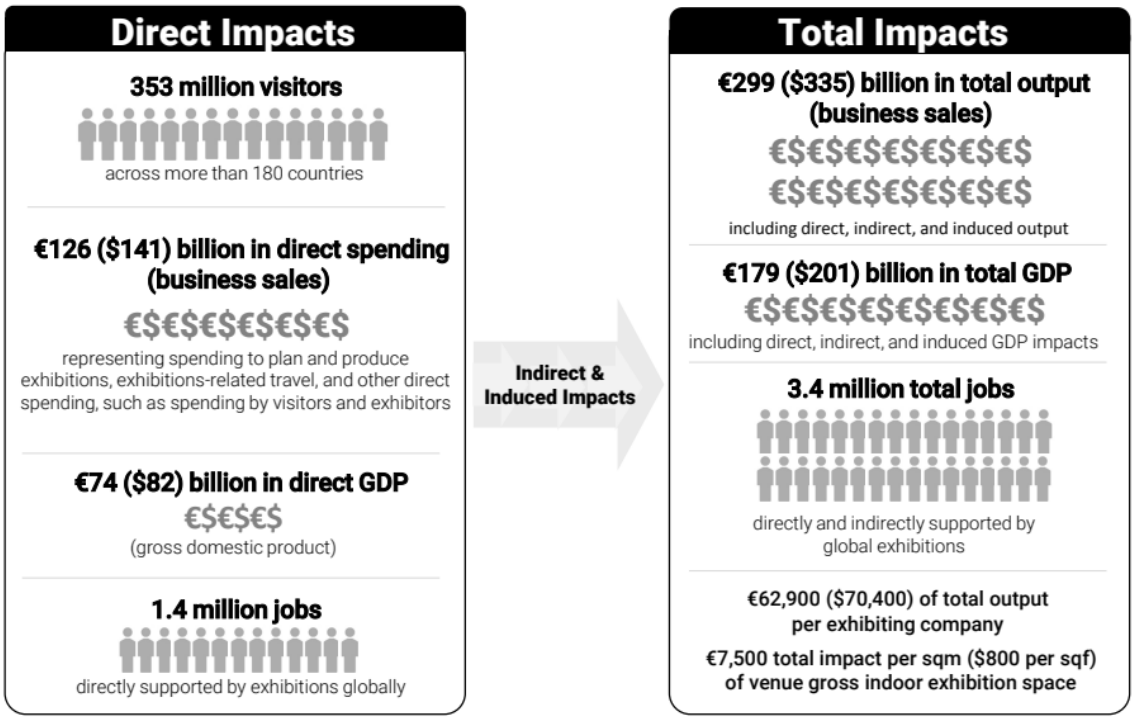

Figure 2.2 Impacts of Exhibitions – Adapted from UFI (2022)

- Social impacts

Trade shows provide a dynamic platform for exhibitors and buyers to achieve multifaceted marketing goals. They are essential to the marketing strategies of exhibiting companies, allowing for onsite sales, live product demonstrations, and face-to-face interactions. This approach helps companies achieve various marketing objectives, including sales, promotions, and customer relationship development (Curina, 2018; Tafesse & Skallerud, 2017).

Trade shows also serve as critical knowledge-sharing platforms. The concentrated presence of industry leaders and technical experts enables rapid dissemination of best practices and innovations. Face-to-face interactions at shows have proven more effective than digital alternatives for building professional trust (UFI, 2010).

Additionally, in an era of rising protectionism, trade shows serve as neutral grounds for cross-border collaboration. It bridges production and consumption, supply and demand, and connects domestic and international markets, serving as an essential force in driving economic and social growth. The industry fosters international trade and economic collaboration, helping to mitigate trade barriers and stimulate inclusive growth (Xinhua, 2025).

2.2.4 Challenges & Opportunities for the Trade show Industry

While trade shows remain vital drivers of economic growth for host destinations, the industry faces numerous challenges, especially following the economic slowdown triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Below are the most pressing issues:

One of the foremost challenges is the intense competition from alternative channels (Kirchgeorg et al., 2010). Trade shows now compete with digital platforms that offer cost-effective, borderless marketing solutions. The rise of e-commerce, social media, and virtual networking tools has reduced reliance on physical events for lead generation and customer engagement. These innovations have transformed the way businesses market themselves, thereby challenging the traditional role of trade shows (H. Lee, 2019). As a result, this shift forces trade show companies to adapt promptly to these changes and redefine their value proposition.

In addition to external competition, there is also fierce rivalry within the trade show sector itself. The sector is expanding rapidly, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. According to UFI, global venue space increased from 40.6 million square meters in 2022 to 43.1 million square meters in 2024. Along with this, the total number of trade show venues rose from 1,358 to 1,432 during the same period. The Asia-Pacific region, led by China's aggressive venue development, accounted for over 16 million square meters of exhibition space in 2024 (UFI, 2022; 2025). This rapid expansion has intensified competition among trade shows. This oversupply forces organizers to compete fiercely for limited exhibitors and visitors. Furthermore, not all trade shows maintain high quality or strong branding. In China, for instance, the market is characterized by numerous small, homogeneous, and low-quality exhibitions, which exacerbates the competition (Dawson et al., 2014).

Another significant challenge lies in exhibition retention and the evolving demands of customers. UFI Global Barometer data reveals that, on average, global revenues for 2021 are projected to reach only 47% of pre-pandemic (2019) levels, with 51% of exhibition businesses recording net losses in 2020 (UFI, 2021). Considering that participation costs—including booth rentals, travel, and logistics—have surged, many SMEs are deterred from participating. Exhibiting companies, faced with tighter budgets, now rigorously evaluate return on investment (ROI), prioritizing events with measurable outcomes like qualified leads or partnership opportunities. Even as in-person events rebound, exhibitors remain cautious. Additionally, the rise of technology has significantly influenced these decisions. Many firms

are now considering alternative marketing tools that allow for communication and interaction without the constraints of time and space. As the costs associated with participating in trade shows increase, along with concerns about ROI, many exhibitors and decision-makers desire insight into success determinants, motivating organizers toward innovation.

In conclusion, the trade show sector faces diverse competitive challenges arising from external and internal factors, along with shifting customer expectations. To thrive in this evolving environment, trade shows need to evolve from transactional marketplaces to value-driven ecosystems. Organizers should prioritize stakeholder-centric innovation, align with emerging marketing trends, enhance the quality of their offerings, and respond more effectively to the needs of their customers.

2.3 Main Research Topics

2.3.1 Synthesis of Major Empirical Studies of Trade Shows

This section presents empirical research on trade shows within the disciplines of marketing and management, as well as tourism. It identifies the main research streams and their perspectives based on a synthesis of previous literature. Several important studies that are pertinent to the present research are highlighted. As a result, this section proposes two research areas that have been under-researched.

Given the growth of the trade show sector and its multiplier effects on the host destination, academic interest has surged, with decades of journal publications on the topic. (Tafesse & Skallerud, 2015, 2017). As one of the business tourism sectors, trade shows have not received as much attention as festivals and sport events in business tourism literature. Marketing, business, and economics journals have published more empirical research on trade shows than tourism and hospitality journals (Jin, 2011), as trade shows were considered an integrated marketing and communication tool in many studies (Sarmento & Simões, 2018b). Table 2.1 summarizes key exhibition studies published in marketing and management, as well as tourism and hospitality journals from 1927 to 2023. It classifies extant literature based on the research topic and perspective.

According to Tafesse and Skallerud (2017), previous trade show literature was generally atheoretical, however, recent publications tend to be more theory-based. Particularly, theories such as relationship marketing, customer engagement, and branding have gained popularity in

trade show research (Tafesse & Skallerud, 2017). Yet, the application of VCC or service-dominant logic in trade shows is underdeveloped (Wong & Lai, 2019b). Furthermore, research on effectiveness, trade show objectives, performance, management, and relationships has received the most attention over the years according to Table 2.1, but is limited to the traditional triads. Besides, since most empirical studies focused on consequences at the corporate level, the question of how secondary actors contribute to trade show success requires further exploration.

Given that the primary trade show actors are organizers, exhibitors, and visitors, extant studies have primarily been conducted from these three perspectives, with a predominant focus on exhibitors (Tafesse & Skallerud, 2017). Research focusing on exhibitors typically examines dyadic relationships, such as exhibitor-organizer or exhibitor-visitor interactions. These studies explore exhibitors' perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions towards trade shows without considering the roles of other stakeholders (Gottlieb & Bianchi, 2017; Lai & Wong, 2021; H. Lee, 2019). There is comparatively less research from the perspectives of organizers and visitors, and even less from other stakeholders (Jin, 2011). As a result, trade show research from a multi-stakeholder perspective remains largely unexplored. However, trade show success hinges on the triad of organizers, visitors, and exhibitors, as well as partnership with other stakeholders. As noted by Kirchgeorg et al. (2010), the decisions made by certain stakeholders—such as venues, industry associations, and government organizations—regarding pricing and support services can significantly influence trade show operations. Therefore, there is a need for research that adopts a broader view of multiple stakeholders to investigate the interconnectedness of actors within the trade show context.

Last but not least, existing literature employed a three-step process to study trade show activities at different stages, namely, pre-show, at-show, and post-show activities. Studies focusing on pre-show stages such as trade show selection (e.g., T. Kim & Mazumdar, 2016), pre-show promotion (e.g., Geigenmüller, 2010; Chang Hyun Lee & Kim, 2008; Tafesse & Skallerud, 2017), trade show and visiting objectives (e.g., Tafesse & Skallerud, 2017), is limited. Studies on post-show activities are even less, indicating an imbalance in research attention across the three stages. Most studies aimed to address at-show issues such as service quality (e.g., M. J. Lee et al., 2015), customer engagement (e.g., Sarmento & Simões, 2019a; C. Zhang & Xu, 2019), customer experience (e.g., Ahn et al., 2017), trade show effectiveness (e.g., Gottlieb et al., 2014), and relationship quality (e.g., Jin, 2011; Lai, 2015).

Moreover, many researchers have simultaneously studied two or more stages, which may overlook the unique dynamics present at each phase. For example, Trade show effectiveness, according to Geigenmüller (2010), is the ability of an exhibiting company to respond to its communication efforts before, during, and after the show in order to promote interaction processes and discourse in a buyer-seller relationship. C. H. Lee and Kim (2008) examined how key factors variably influenced show performance at three stages. From a multi-stakeholder perspective, H. Lee (2019) explored the interrelationships among stakeholders in the trade show industry, suggesting that exhibitor and visitor behaviors differ before, during, and after trade shows because their demands evolve at each stage.

The fragmented focus on isolated stages obscures how value is created from cross-stage, multi-actor collaboration. Given that different actors are active at varying stages of the trade show process, there is a clear need for comprehensive research that explores all three phases in detail. This balanced approach will enhance our comprehension of the interconnectedness of stakeholders and the evolving nature of trade show activities, ultimately leading to more effective strategies for organizers, exhibitors, and other stakeholders involved. Therefore, the relative lack of trade show studies encompassing multiple stages requires further exploration.

Table 2.3.1 Empirical Studies on Trade Shows (1927-2024)

Focus	**Perspectives**		
	Visitor/buyer	Exhibitor	Organizer
Trade show objectives	Cunningham & White, 1974; Bello, 1992; Hansen, 1996; Blythe, 1999c; Munuera & Ruiz, 1999; Godar & O'Connor, 2001; Smith et al., 2003; Park, 2009; Gopalakrishna et al., 2010; Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012; Sarmento, Farhangmehr, & Simões, 2015b; Nayak & Bhalla, 2016; Bauer et. al., 2008;	Alexander, 1927; Banting & Blenkhorn, 1974; Cavanaugh, 1976; Bonoma, 1983; Kerin & Cron, 1987; Shipley & Wong, 1993; Shipley et al., 1993; Tanner & Chonko, 1995; Sharland & Balogh, 1996; Hansen, 1996; Blythe, 1999c; Blythe, 2000; Rice & Almossawi, 2002; Kozak, 2005; Yuksel & Voola, 2010; Kijewski et al., 1993; Godar & O'connor, 2001; Yuksel & Voola, 2010; Tanner & Chonko, 1995;	
Trade show selection	Berne & Garcia, 2008; Jin et al., 2010; Shoham, 1992; Smith et al., 2004; Han & Verma, 2014; Whitfield & Webber, 2011; Jin & Weber, 2016; Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012;	Lilien, 1983; Shoham, 1992; Shipley et al., 1993; Rice & Almossawi, 2002; Seringhaus & Rosson, 2001; Jin et al., 2010; Kijewski et al., 1993; Shipley & Wong, 1993; Whitfield et al., 2014; Tanner, et.al., 2001; Jin et al., 2013;	

Focus	Perspectives		
	Visitor/buyer	Exhibitor	Organizer
Trade show effectiveness	Gopalakrishna & Williams, 1992; Bello & Lohtia, 1993; Smith et al., 2003; Gottlieb, Brown, & Drennan, 2011; Zhang et al., 2010; Whitfield & Webber, 2011; Gottlieb et al., 2014;	Carman, 1968; Cavanaugh, 1976; Bonoma, 1983; Bellizzi & Lipps, 1984; Kerin & Cron, 1987; Sashi & Perretty, 1992; Gopalakrishna & Williams, 1992; O'Hara, 1993; Williams et al., 1993; O'Hara & Herbig, 1993; Herbig, O'Hara, & Palumbo, 1994; Gopalakrishna et al., 1995; Gopalakrishna & Lilien, 1995; Blythe & Rayner, 1996; Blythe, 1997; Dekimpe et al., 1997; Blythe, 1999b; Shoham, 1999; Blythe, 1999a; Blythe, 2000; Seringhaus & Rosson, 2001; Tanner, 2002; Hansen, 2004; Li, 2007a; Li, 2007b; Lee & Kim, 2008; Tafesse, Korneliussen, & Skallerud, 2010; Yuksel & Voola, 2010; Li, Evans, Chen, & Wood, 2011; Tafesse & Korneliussen, 2012; Berné & García-Uceda, 2010;	Rinallo et al., 2010; Berné & García-Uceda, 2010; Situma, 2012; Tafesse, 2014;
Participation & behaviors	Borghini et. al., 2006; Bello, 1992; Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995; J. Wang et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023;	Shoham, 1992; Kijewski et al., 1993; O'Hara, 1993; Bello, et. al., 1986; Herbig, et a., 1997; O'Hara & Herbig, 1993; Hultsman, 2001; Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995;	Lee&Park, 2023
Show management	Barczak et al., 1992; Munuera & Ruiz, 1999;	Wu et al., 2008; Jin et al., 2012a; Bello & Barczak, 1990; Tanner & Chonko, 2002; Chiou et al., 2007; Herbig et al., 1998; Kim & Mazumdar, 2016; Bello & Barksdale, 1986; O' Hara, Palumbo, & Herbig, 1993; Serinhaus & Rosson, 1998; Palumbo & Herbig, 2002; Evers & Knight, 2008; Skallerud, 2010; Li & Shrestha, 2013; Nadège & Cambell-Hunt, 2015; Shipley et al., 1993;	Wu et al., 2008; Kirchgeorg et al., 2010; Jin et al., 2012a; Tafesse, 2014; Oliver et al., 2015;
Show performance		Dekimpe et al., 1997; Blythe, 2002; Friedmann, 2002; Chiou et al., 2007; Bettis et al., 2010; Skallerud, 2010; Bonoma, 1983; Li, 2007; Chonko, Tannar & McKee, 1994; Gopalakrishna, & Cox, 1993; Gopalakrishna & Lilien, 1995; Hansen, 1999; Kerin & Cron, 1987; Lee & Kim, 2008; Li, 2006; Hansen, 2004; Tanner, 2002; Seringhaus & Rosson, 2001; Sharland & Balogh,	Tafesse, 2014;

Focus	Perspectives		
	Visitor/buyer	Exhibitor	Organizer
		1996; Shoham, 1999; Zhang et al., 2023;	
Service quality	Jung, 2005; Sarmento & Farhangmehr, 2016; Gottlieb, Brown, & Drennan, 2011; Lee 2020; Smith, Hama & Smith, 2003;	Tanner et al., 2001; Jung, 2005; Lin & Lin, 2013; Lee et al., 2015; Breiter & Milman, 2006; Jin & Weber, 2013; Lin, 2016;	Geigenmüller & Bettis-Outland, 2012; Adhitya, 2019;
Relationship marketing	Rice, 1992; Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995; Ponzurik, 1996; Hansen, 1999; Blythe, 2002; Sarmento, Farhangmehr, & Simões, 2015a; Sarmento, Simões, & Farhangmehr, 2015; Bauer et al., 2008; Palumbo and Herbig, 2002;	Rice, 1992; Hansen, 1999; Blythe, 2002; Li, 2006; Jin, Weber, & Bauer, 2012b; Sarmento, Farhangmehr, & Simões, 2015a; Lai, 2015; Rinallo and Golfetto, 2011; Palumbo and Her big, 2002;	Jin, Weber, & Bauer, 2012b; Lai, 2015; Rinallo and Golfetto, 2011;
Satisfaction	Bauer et. al., 2008;	Lin, 2016; Jung, 2005; Zhang et al., 2023; Adhitya, 2019;	
Innovation	Hlee et al., 2017; Pöllmann, 2013;	Pöllmann, 2013;	Bauer & Borodako, 2019;
Virtual show		Edgar, 2002; Geigenmüller, 2010; Li, 2010; Gottlieb & Bianchi, 2017; Gottlieb & Bianchi, 2017; Lee-Keley et al., 2004; Kirchgeorg et al., 2010; Wu & Wang, 2016; Sarmento & Simões, 2019a;	Davidson et al., 2002; Gregory & Breiter, 2001; Gottlieb & Bianchi, 2017; Kirchgeorg et al., 2010;
Marketing function & strategy		Kim & Mazumdar, 2016; Pitta et. al., 2006; Kirchgeorg et al., 2010; Hansen, 1999;	Kirchgeorg et al., 2010;
Spatial distribution	Rubalcaba & Cuadrado, 1995; Jin & Weber, 2016;		
Information & learning	Borghini et al., 2006; Rinallo et al., 2010; Tanner et al., 2001; Bettis-Outland et al., 2010; Ahola, 2012; Bettis-Outland et al., 2012;	Bettis-Outland et al., 2010; Bettis-Outland et al., 2012;	

Source: Sarmento & Simões, 2018a; Jiménez-Guerrero et al., 2020; Jin, 2011 and author's own elaboration.

2.3.2 Research Gaps – Trade Show Literature

Based on the synthesis of previous literature on trade shows, two major research gaps are identified.

Gap 1: Limited multi-stakeholder perspective

Extant studies predominantly adopts narrow viewpoints, focusing on dyadic interactions between exhibitors, organizers, and visitors (Tafesse & Skallerud, 2017). While exhibitor-organizer and exhibitor-buyer interactions were extensively investigated, other critical relationships remain underexplored. Studies involving other stakeholders are inadequate (Sarmento & Simões, 2019a). Specifically, literature on interconnections between secondary actors, such as venues, industry associations, and destination organizations, is limited. However, these stakeholders are also vital for organizing and conducting trade shows. Investigation from a multi-stakeholder perspective can contribute to the understanding of how they influence exhibitor satisfaction and their show brand preference. Yet, no framework systematically maps multi-level stakeholder networks or their collective impact. This oversight is problematic given the interconnected nature of trade show alliances. Therefore, there is an urgent need for empirical studies that considers overlapping areas and interconnected networks beyond the traditional triad of organizers, exhibitors, and visitors.

Gap 2: Imbalanced focus on trade show activity stages.

Previous research has conceptualized trade shows as a three-phase process comprising pre-show, at-show, and post-show stages (C. H. Lee & Kim, 2008). Despite this foundational framework, existing literature exhibits a significant imbalance. Scholarly attention has disproportionately focused on the at-show stage, driven by its immediate visibility and a traditional focus on onsite performance metrics over long-term relationship building (Tafesse & Skallerud, 2017). Consequently, the crucial activities of the other stages are often overlooked. The pre-show phase involves essential planning such as information acquisition and resource allocation (Gottlieb et al., 2014; Singh et al., 2017; R. Zhang et al., 2023), while the post-show phase aims to extend the event's impact through follow-ups on sales and promotion, image building, and relationships (Gottlieb & Bianchi, 2017; L. Y. Li, 2008; Singh et al., 2017). This fragmented analysis across stages ultimately prevents a holistic understanding of how value is created throughout the entire trade show journey.

Given the challenges identified in the trade show industry and the existing gaps in the literature, it is essential to incorporate other theoretical frameworks to investigate these issues

further. There is a clear need for research that explores trade show stakeholders and the dynamics of inter-stakeholder collaboration. This thesis aims to uncover critical issues and impacts within the trade show sector, contributing to a deeper understanding of its complexities.

2.4 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter provided contextual information for the study by introducing the trade show industry and reviewing existing research on trade shows. The literature review reveals a lack of empirical studies that extend beyond dyadic and triadic relationships, highlighting the insufficient investigation of current trade show literature at a systemic level.

Chapter 3 establishes the theoretical foundation for the present study. Particularly, the literature on VCC and service-dominant logic is reviewed, focusing on the perspective of service ecosystem. Drawing from the research gaps identified in Chapters 2 and 3, specific research questions and hypotheses are formulated to direct this study. Additionally, Chapter 3 outlines the initial conceptual framework, detailing the key concepts, hypotheses, and theories that underpin the present study.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Chapter Introduction

Chapter 2 presents the growth of the international trade show industry and reviewed recent trade show studies. It emphasized the industry's collaborative nature and interconnected stakeholder relationships. The literature analysis revealed two critical gaps: (1) limited empirical studies extending beyond organizer-exhibitor or exhibitor-visitor dyads, and (2) uneven academic attention across the industry's three developmental stages. To address these gaps, Chapter 3 introduces value co-creation (VCC) theory as a foundational framework for trade show studies.

Chapter 3 synthesizes VCC and service ecosystem literature to clarify the related constructs and their underlying dimensions relevant to the main research problem. This chapter also explores the relationships among VCC, exhibitor satisfaction, and show brand preference, along with the justification for including them in the proposed theoretical framework. The progression follows a Problem - Theory - Framework logic, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

First, this chapter presents central theories and literature related to VCC. It starts with an introduction to service-dominant logic (SDL), which underpins the concept of VCC (Vargo & Lusch, 2018). The development of VCC is then discussed from a service ecosystem perspective, followed by a synthesis of research that outlines its underlying dimensions and key constructs. Literature on VCC in a B2B context is also reviewed, with a specific focus on trade shows.

Second, exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference are introduced as outcomes of VCC. A comprehensive discussion leads to the formulation of relevant hypotheses that articulate the rationale for selecting these constructs. Additionally, factors that may mediate this relationship are examined, and corresponding hypotheses are proposed. The chapter concludes by outlining a preliminary conceptual framework and summarizing the hypotheses guiding this study. It also includes a review of the research design that combines qualitative and quantitative methods, focusing on trade shows in China.

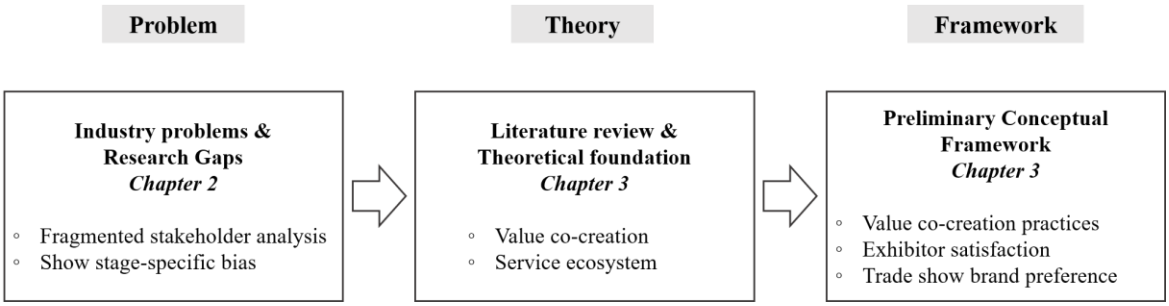

Figure 3.1 From Problem to Framework

3.2 Value Co-Creation (VCC)

3.2.1 From Service-dominant Logic (SDL) to Service ecosystem

Service-dominant logic (SDL), which was first proposed by Stephen Vargo and Robert Lusch in the early 2000s, has become the dominant paradigm in value co-creation (VCC) literature. It marks a transition in the prevailing view of marketing from being goods-oriented to service-oriented (Zinser & Brunswick, 2016). Historically, goods-dominant logic (GDL) prevailed in traditional marketing theory, where value is created by enterprises and delivered to customers via the trade of tangible products. Thus, GDL is a firm-centric logic that emphasizes economic value (value-in-exchange) (Lusch & Vargo, 2014). However, GDL has been recognized as a key drawback, as it fails to reflect the nature of markets and the roles of diverse participants in the value generation (Vargo & Lusch, 2018). Subsequently, an alternative lens—SDL—was developed, shifting the core exchange foundation from "goods" to "services." By definition, a service is "the application of operant resources (knowledge and skills) for the benefit of another actor" (Lusch & Vargo, 2014, p. 15). From an SDL perspective, operant resources (e.g., expertise), as opposed to operand resources (e.g., equipment), play a primary role in firms' development of core competencies (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008; Gronroos, 2011).

To capture the essence of SDL, which serves as a meta-theoretical framework, eight foundational premises (FPs) that were initially developed have been increased to eleven. Recently, five of these FPs have been identified as core and termed axioms and the remaining FPs derive from them (Vargo & Lusch, 2016; 2017). Table 3.1 lists the axioms and FPs within SDL.

Table 2.3.21 Axioms and Foundational Premises

Foundational Premises (FP)		**Axioms**
FP1	Service is the fundamental basis of exchange.	Axiom 1
FP2	Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange.	
FP3	Goods are distribution mechanisms for service provision.	
FP4	Operant resources are the fundamental source of strategic benefit.	
FP5	All economies are service economies.	
FP6	Value is cocreated by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary.	Axiom 2
FP7	Actors cannot deliver value but can participate in the creation and offering of value propositions.	
FP8	A service-centered view is inherently beneficiary oriented and relational.	
FP9	All social and economic actors are resource integrators.	Axiom 3
FP10	Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.	Axiom 4
FP11	Value cocreation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements.	Axiom 5

Source: Vargo & Lusch (2016, 2017)

There are five core concepts within SDL that serve as the foundation of the logic with the eleven FPs. According to the axioms and FPs, Axiom 1 states that "service is the fundamental basis of exchange," highlighting its essential role in SDL. In GDL, goods transactions form the foundation of commerce and economics; in contrast, goods are essentially considered appliances for service provision in SDL. As noted, "service" in SDL is more than a form of intangible output ; it involves applying resources for the benefit of other stakeholders. (Lusch & Vargo, 2014). Axioms 2 and 3 indicate the function of "actors" within the VCC process, representing the second foundational concept. The term "actor" encompasses any entities capable of value creation through resource integration and service exchange. Thus, apart from consumers and suppliers, many more players are included in SDL. The third foundational concept is "resource" which is the source of service provision. Within SDL, it refers to "anything, tangible or intangible, internal or external, operand or operant, that the actor can draw on for increased viability" (Lusch & Vargo, 2014, p.121). The fourth concept that is core to SDL is "value" which can be known as a benefit or a change in the actor's wellbeing, whether positive or negative. Axiom 4 reflects the actor-specific nature of value. Last but not least, Axiom 5 highlights the fifth foundational concept of SDL -institutions - which guides actors' resource integrating activities. Taken together, the narrative of SDL is based on the VCC by actors through resource integrations, coordinated by institutional arrangements and shared actor-generated institutions (Vargo & Lusch, 2017, 2018). The evolutionary pathway of SDL advances the paradigmatic view of VCC research to a broader and more integrated level, which is discussed next.

The first articulation of SDL has fueled significant research interest, resulting in the development of multiple service perspectives. In chronological order, this section introduces three key service perspectives - service logic, service science and service ecosystem - and illustrates trends in SDL research by comparing them. Grönroos (2006) first proposed service logic (SL), generally considered as an alternative to SDL. The two logics share many common features, as both acknowledge the prominence of service and interactions between firms and customers. Yet, there are several differences between SL and SDL. For example, Grönroos and Gummerus (2014) assert that consumers define value in SL, and firms are facilitators in the process of value creation. Hence, SL emphasizes customers' primary role in the value creation process. Furthermore, Gerke et al. (2020) argued that SL mainly focuses on dyadic relationships between customers and firms in VCC, which aligns with SDL in its early stage. Later, the introduction of service science (SS) extended the focus of VCC from the dyadic to the systemic relationship. Grounded in SDL, "service systems" were described by Maglio and Spohrer (2008) as "value-co-creation configurations of people, technology, value propositions connecting internal and external service systems, and shared information." In other words, service is exchanged within a service system, making service systems the unit of analysis for SS, including people, technologies and other resources. From SL to SS, the development of service perspectives indicates how its focus shifted from dyadic interactions to encompass a wider range of stakeholders in the system.

Over the past few years, an increasing number of studies in the marketing and management domains have examined VCC through a service ecosystem perspective, given the complexities of the current market (Giannopoulos, Piha, et al., 2020; Giannopoulos, Skourtis, et al., 2020). A service system can serve as the foundation for a service ecosystem, which extends VCC across micro, meso, and macro levels (Ostrom et al., 2015; Wilden et al., 2017). Since these levels are permeable, actors at each level can interact within and across levels (Vargo & Lusch, 2018). Specifically, actors at the micro level are individuals, such as customers and firms, whereas the meso level consists of triadic relationships or beyond within a collective organization or industry. At the macro level, actors generally include larger entities such as national or governmental authorities related to culture, economy, and politics (Vargo & Lusch, 2018). Moreover, service exchange, resource integration, and institutions are not isolated in the service ecosystem. In line with this, several terminologies used in the service ecosystem perspective have also been changed, as stated in the five core axioms consolidated by Vargo and Lusch (2017). Examples from earlier SDL literature include the terms of

"beneficiary" and "generic-actor orientation," which highlight that all actors—not just consumers or firms—can be beneficiaries and co-creators of value.

Table 3.2 compares the three service perspectives in terms of the definition, type of value, value focus and level of interactions. Frow et al. (2014) suggested that interconnectedness between players is best described as a "service ecosystem". Taking a service ecosystem view underscores the interconnectedness of interactions, with actors playing interdependent and collaborative roles. In alignment with the current study, a service ecosystem is thereby adopted as it presents a more extensive and dynamic relationship among actors, compared to other perspectives.

Table 2.3.2 Comparison of Service Logic, Service Science, and Service Ecosystem

Perspectives	**Definition**	**Type of value**	**Focus of value**	**Level of interactions**
Service Logic	"The firm facilitates processes that support customers' value creation." (Grönroos, 2006)	Value-in-use	Customer value	Supplier-customer dyad
Service Science	"Value-co-creation configurations of people, technology, value propositions connecting internal and external service systems, and shared information." (Maglio & Spohrer, 2008)	Value-in-use; Value-in-context	Service system value	Dyad interactions within and between systems
Service Ecosystem	"Relatively self-contained, self-adjusting system[s] of resource-integrating actors that are connected by shared institutional arrangements and mutual value creation through service exchange" (Lusch & Vargo, 2014)	Value-in-context	Service ecosystem value	A2A interactions within the ecosystem

Source: Grönroos & Voima (2013); Jian et al. (2016); Lusch & Vargo (2014)

3.2.1.1 Theoretical Justification: SDL versus Customer-Dominant Logic (CDL)

Apart from SDL, another theoretical approach to VCC that has attracted attentions in the marketing literature is customer-dominant logic (CDL). While both frameworks address VCC, they differ fundamentally in their focal point (Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015; Vargo et al., 2020). As discussed in earlier sections, SDL conceptualizes VCC as a systemic and multi-actor process involving resource integration and interaction among all participants within a service ecosystem (Vargo et al., 2020; Lusch & Vargo, 2006). This A2A (Actor-to-Actor) orientation is particularly well-suited to analyzing complex B2B exhibition ecosystems, where value emerges from dynamic interactions among organizers, exhibitors, visitors, and other stakeholders.

In contrast, CDL focuses exclusively on the customer's perspective and life context (Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015). It posits that value is primarily created within the customer's own ecosystem, often beyond direct service encounters. CDL is inherently customer-centric, emphasizing how individual consumers integrate services into their personal lives. It assumes the customer as the dominant actor, with value formed largely by their own logic, frequently independent of the service provider (Heinonen et al., 2013). As such, it is particularly suited to analyzing value experiences of individual consumers in B2C contexts, rather than interorganizational settings.

While CDL offers a nuanced understanding of customer experience in B2C contexts, it is less applicable to the context of this research, which involves organizational actors engaged in strategic, resource-intensive interactions at broader institutional and societal level (Lipkin & Heinonen, 2022). These organizations do not merely consume services but actively participate in co-creating value through negotiation, collaboration, and interorganizational engagement. The narrow consumer-centric lens of CDL does not adequately capture the systemic, reciprocal, and interdependent dynamics that characterize B2B ecosystems (Lusch et al., 2008; Vargo et al., 2020). Consequently, it overlooks the critical, multidirectional interactions between exhibition organizers and other stakeholders that are essential to the VCC process in trade shows.

Given this, SDL offers a more appropriate and comprehensive theoretical framework for the present study. Its systemic, networked, and institutionally grounded approach aligns closely with the research objective of capturing the multi-actor, interorganizational complexity of VCC within a B2B exhibition ecosystem.

3.2.2 Value Co-Creation

3.2.2.1 Conceptual Development of VCC

Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000, 2004) first introduced the notion of co-creation, redefining customers from passive recipients to active participants in value creation. As customers increasingly contribute knowledge and engage in value creation, firms are no longer sole creators but collaborators in a process distinct from traditional firm-centric models. This concept has gained popularity across multiple disciplines, although the terminology differs—terms like “value creation,” “co-creation,” “cocreation of value,” and “co-production” are often

used interchangeably (McColl-Kennedy & Cheung, 2018). Table 3.3 summarizes key conceptualizations of VCC and related constructs.

Table 2.3.2 Key Conceptualizations of Value Co-Creation and Related Constructs

Author(s)	Definition	Discipline	Related Constructs
Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004)	The locus of value co-creation and economic value extraction by the firm lies in interactions, where co-creation experiences become the basis for value.	Marketing	Co-creation experiences; Value-in-exchange
Vargo & Lusch (2008, p.7)	"Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary."	Service Research	Co-creation of value; Value-in-use
Maglio & Spohrer (2008)	Value emerges from the co-creation process involving dynamic configurations of resources, including people, technology, information, and organizations, linked through value propositions both internally and externally.	Service Science	Cocreation of value; Service systems
Vargo et al. (2008, p.150)	"Cocreation of value inherently requires participation of more than one service system, and it is through integration and application of resources made available through exchange that value is created."	Service Research	Cocreation of value; Service systems Value-in-context
Chandler & Vargo (2011, p.150)	The notion of a complex network is a fundamental aspect of value cocreation because of how actors, dyads, and triads create synergy among multiple simultaneous direct and indirect service-for-service exchanges.	Service Research	Market cocreation; Value-in-context
Grönroos & Voima (2013)	Value creation involves the consumer's generation of value-in-use, with interactions enabling the co-creation of value between the firm and the customer.	Service Research	Value creation roles; Value-in-use
Frow et al. (2016, p.24)	Value cocreation describes "the resource integration process that occurs during practices between actors linked together within a service ecosystem."	Service Research	Ecosystem perspective
Vargo & Lusch (2016, p.7)	"Resource-integrating, reciprocal service providing actors with cocreation of value through holistic, meaning- laden experiences in nested and overlapping service ecosystems, governed and evaluated through institutional arrangements."	Service Research	Ecosystem perspective; Institutional arrangements

Source: Adapted from McColl-Kennedy & Cheung (2018), Vargo & Lusch (2018)

As Table 3.4 illustrates, definitions of VCC emphasize distinct dimensions. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) framed value cocreation through *interactions* and "value-in-exchange," while service-oriented scholars like Lusch and Vargo (2006) and Grönroos and Voima (2013) emphasized "value-in-use," where value is created through consumption. Divergence also exists in roles: Vargo and Lusch (2006) positioned customers as collaborators, whereas

Grönroos and Voima (2013) distinguished customers as *value creators* and firms as *value facilitators*. Chandler and Vargo (2011) expanded this to networks, arguing that value arises from interconnected service systems and "value-in-context." Similarly, Frow et al. (2016) highlighted the significance of network relationships in resource integration from an ecosystem perspective.

The conceptual development of VCC reveals several key points, which are interconnected and stress the importance of collaboration in value creation. First, joint activities and interaction are central to value creation, as they require direct collaboration between actors (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Building on this, the interactional view has gained prominence, focusing on the dynamic and emergent nature of VCC processes. Second, resource integration plays a critical role, where actors mobilize and combine resources to realize value propositions (Maglio & Spohrer, 2008; Vargo et al., 2008). This process does not occur in isolation, as network perspectives reveal that VCC is inherently embedded in systems of interconnected actors and relationships (Chandler & Vargo, 2011; Frow et al., 2016). Third, value is fundamentally generated through interactive exchanges, with outcomes uniquely emerging from collaborative processes (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). Finally, context specificity remains vital, as practical applications depend on adapting to diverse settings where "value-in-context" varies (Chandler & Vargo, 2011). These gaps highlight the need for continued refinement of VCC concepts and frameworks.

3.2.2.2 Measuring VCC

To define the construct domain in this study, it is essential to determine the approach for measuring VCC. According to previous literature, the understanding of VCC includes three major perspectives: 1) behaviors (e.g., Khan, 2018; Wong & Lai, 2018; Yi & Gong, 2013; C. Zhang & Xu, 2019), 2) experiences (e.g., Campos et al., 2016; Mathis et al., 2016; P. Zhang, 2017), and 3) practices (e.g., J. S. Lee & Park, 2023). These approaches reflect diverse theoretical focuses and applications of VCC in prior research. Table 3.4 presents selected studies on VCC measurements in different contexts.

The first perspective examines the behavioral dimensions of VCC, focusing on what customers do to co-create value (Zhang, 2017). Yi and Gong (2013) provide a foundational framework by conceptualizing VCC activities into *customer participation behaviors* and *customer citizenship behaviors*. This scale has been widely applied in subsequent empirical research on measuring customer co-creation behavior. For instance, Wong and Lai (2018)

adapted Yi and Gong's scale to the trade show industry, introducing *participation behaviors* and *partnership behaviors* as dimensions of exhibitors' VCC activities. Moreover, much of the research on customer VCC behaviors emphasizes customer-firm interactions. For example, Cuijuan and Hong (2019) explored interactions among exhibitors, visitors, and organizers. However, the form of "interaction" can vary significantly depending on the context. Additionally, various behaviors related to VCC have been identified in the service and marketing literature, including co-production, dialogue, engagement, and problem-solving (Bharti et al., 2015; Järvi et al., 2018; Ranjan & Read, 2016). Currently, existing literature primarily focuses on measuring VCC behaviors from the customers' perspective.

The second perspective centers on the psychological feelings derived from customers' co-creation behaviors, specifically how customers perceive the VCC experience. For example, Verleye (2015) divides customer experiences in co-creation situations into six aspects: *cognitive*, *personal*, *social*, *economic hedonic*, and *pragmatic* experiences. Campos et al. (2016) defined co-creation tourism experiences as "the sum of the psychological events a tourist goes through when contributing actively through physical and/or mental participation in activities and interacting with other subjects in the experience environment." Zhang (2017) conceptualizes the co-creation experience into six psychological components: *authenticity*, *control, connection, personalization*, *learning*, and *autonomy*, especially concerning experiences of peer-to-peer accommodation. These research findings highlight that experiential measurements of VCC are highly dependent on specific contexts.

The third perspective investigates VCC practices, defined as a "routinized process of co-creation activities and interactions" involving the focal actor and other stakeholders (Campos et al., 2016; Frow et al., 2016; Marcos-Cuevas et al., 2016). Unlike the behavioral and experiential perspectives, which focus on individual factors, the practice-oriented perspective offers a broader and more systemic view of conceptualizing VCC. For instance, Lee & Park (2023) developed five practices for value proposition innovation among exhibition stakeholders. This practice-oriented perspective is significantly influenced by context, with dimensions and indicators differing across various settings. Furthermore, dominant studies on VCC practices primarily utilize conceptual or qualitative methods.

In summary, it is evident that there is significant interest in quantifying VCC, alongside a recognition of its complexity. Given the complexity of the concept, most VCC measurements are dimensional in nature. Dominant studies VCC as an aggregate construct that is composed

of multiple dimensions given the contextual nature of values. Therefore, there is no uniformity in VCC measurement, as dimensions and indicators vary by context (e.g., industry, culture). Furthermore, existing measurements mainly focus on the firm-customer relationship, often overlooking other stakeholders. These gaps highlight the need for adaptable VCC measurement that extends beyond traditional dyadic frameworks, as discussed in the next section.

Table 2.3.2 Selected Studies of VCC Measurements

Authors	Focus	Context	Main constructs	Dimensions	Structural Model
Yi & Gong (2013)	Customer value co-creation behavior scale	Service	Customer participation behavior, Customer citizenship behavior	*(1) Customer participation behavior:* Information seeking, information sharing, responsible behavior, personal interaction; *(2) Customer citizenship behavior:* Feedback, advocacy, helping, tolerance	Customer value
Ranjan & Read (2016)	Value co-creation measurement index	Marketing	Co-production, Value-in-use	*(1) Co-production:* Knowledge, equity, interaction *(2) Value-in-use:* Experience, personalization, relationship	Satisfaction
Verleye (2015)	Customer co-creation experience	General	Co-creation experience	(1) Hedonic experience (2) Cognitive experience (3) Social experience (4) Personal experience (5) Pragmatic experience (6) Economic experience	Characteristics of the co-creation environment, expected co-creation benefits, overall co-creation experience
Albinsson et al. (2016)	Firm's readiness for strategic value co-creation	Service	DART	(1) Dialogue (2) Access (3) Risk assessment (4) Transparency	Shared responsibility, loyalty
Bharti et al. (2015)	Value co-creation elements	General	Pillars of value co-creation (a conceptual framework)	(1) Interactive environment (2) Resources (3) Co-production (4) Perceived benefits (5) Management structure	-
Wong & Lai (2018)	Value co-creation activities of exhibitors	Trade shows	Participation behaviors, Partnership behaviors	*(1) Participation behaviors:* Information seeking, information sharing, responsibility, situational awareness; *(2) Partnership behaviors:* Engagement, knowledge transfer, resolving conflicts, commitment.	Exhibitor's overall Satisfaction

Authors	Focus	Context	Main constructs	Dimensions	Structural Model
Zhang et al. (2023)	Attendees' value co-creation activities	Trade shows	Value co-creation (attendee level)	(1) Cooperation (2) Co-production (3) Connection	(Attendee level) Technological interaction, interpersonal interaction; (Exhibitor level) Trade show performance, exhibitor satisfaction, intention to exhibit again
McColl-Kennedy et al. (2017)	Customer value cocreation practices	Healthcare	Interactions Activities	*(1) Interactions:* With medical staff at the medical center, with friends and family, with other customers *(2) Activities:* Coproduce, comply with basics, colearn, collate, diet and exercise, change, distract	Well-being
Tommasetti et al. (2017)	Customer value co-creation behaviors	General	The measurement framework for customer value co-creation activities	Cerebral activities, cooperation, information research and collation, the combination of complementary activities, changes in habits, co-production, co-learning, and connection	-
Geldres-Weiss et al. (2023)	B2B Value co-creation practices	Trade show	Linking; Materializing	(1) Linking (co-ideation, co-valuation, co-diagnosis); (2) Materializing (co-design, co-testing, co-launching);	Engagement (popularity, commitment and virality)
Lee & Park (2023)	Practices of offering value propositions for service innovation	Trade shows	Practices of offering value propositions	(1) Company innovation culture (2) Project teamwork (3) Collaboration with customers & business partners (4) Competitor management (5) Employee proactive attitude	-
Neghina et al. (2015)	Value cocreation in service interactions (Conceptual research)	Service	Value cocreation as a joint collaborative activity at the micro level	(1) Individuating joint actions (2) Relating joint actions (3) Empowering joint actions (4) Ethical joint actions (5) Developmental joint actions (6) Concerted joint actions	Relating antecedents; Knowing antecedents; Communicating antecedents
Zhang (2017)	Co-creation experience	Sharing economy	Co-creation experience	(1) Authenticity (2) Autonomy (3) Control (4) Learning (5) Personalization (6) Connection	Perceived values, satisfaction, and intention

Authors	Focus	Context	Main constructs	Dimensions	Structural Model
Mathis et al. (2016)	Co-creation of tourism experience	Tourism	Co-creation experience	Unidimensional	Satisfaction with vacation experience, satisfaction with impact of vacation on overall life, loyalty to service provider
Shamim et al. (2017)	Customer value co-creation attitude	General	Customer value co-creation attitude	(1) Interaction attitude (2) Responsive attitude (3) Knowledge sharing	Experiential value, customer value co-creation behavior
Merz, Zarantonello, & Grappi (2018)	Customer Co-Creation Value (CCCV) Scale	Brand Value Co-creation	Customer-owned resources, Customer motivation	*(1) Customer-owned resources:* Brand knowledge, brand skills, brand creativity, and brand connectedness *(2) Customer motivation:* Brand passion, brand trust, and brand commitment	-

3.2.3 VCC: An Ecosystem Perspective

3.2.3.1 Service Ecosystem

The previous section discussed the fundamental concepts of VCC and its measurements, which emphasized the limitations of dyadic (firm-customer) measurement frameworks. This section transitions to a systemic view of VCC through the lens of service ecosystems.

Lusch & Vargo (2014, p. 161) defined a service ecosystem as "a relatively self-contained, self-adjusting system of resource-integrating actors that are connected by shared institutional logics and mutual value creation through service exchange." As shown in Figure 3.2, the narrative of SDL (Vargo & Lusch, 2017) illustrates that VCC occurs through resource integration and service exchange, coordinated by shared institutions among multiple actors across nested levels of the ecosystem. Scholars utilize different levels of aggregation to "zoom in and zoom out" of the ecosystem (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Consequently, five important elements are identified: (1) nested and interlocking service ecosystems, (2) actors involved, (3) resource integration, (4) service exchange, and (5) institutions and institutional arrangements. These elements emphasize the complexity and dynamic nature of VCC from a service ecosystem perspective.

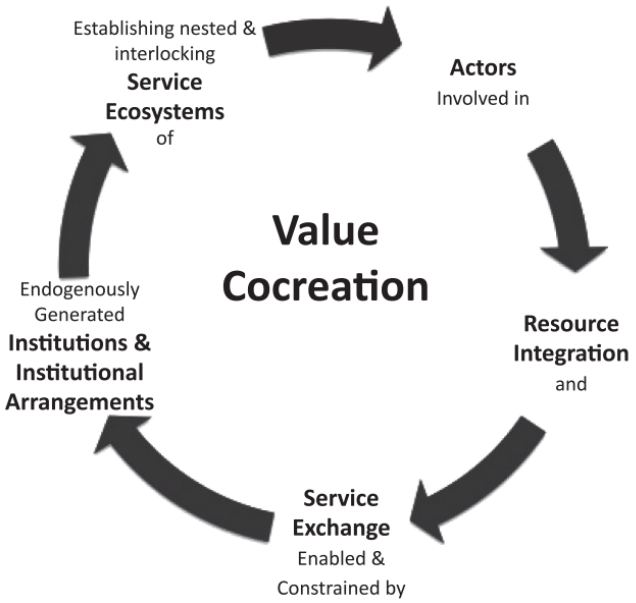

Figure 3.2.3 The Narrative and Process of SDL – Adapted from Vargo and Lusch (2017)

According to the second and third axioms of SDL developed by Vargo and Lusch (2017), "value is cocreated by multiple actors", and "all social and economic actors are resource integrators." This highlights the complex nature of VCC, as all actors are interconnected through their resource-integrating interactions, either directly or indirectly (Frow & Payne, 2018). Frow and Payne (2018) argued that little is known about how actors are interconnected through VCC within an ecosystem. Therefore, to understand and explore the complexity of service ecosystems, further research should investigate how actors are connected through their resource-integrating interactions involved in VCC.

According to Vargo and Lusch (2018), the structure of a service ecosystem is multi-level. Figure 3.3 displays three levels of an ecosystem: micro, meso and macro, with examples of typical actors interacting at each level. The micro level involves interactions and resource integration between individual actors, such as customers and suppliers. Early research on VCC largely focused on this level (Frow & Payne, 2018). At the meso level, the focus expands to midrange structures, such as actors within a collective organization, market, or industry. The macro level involves broader societal actors, such as governmental bodies (Frow & Payne, 2018; Vargo & Lusch, 2016).

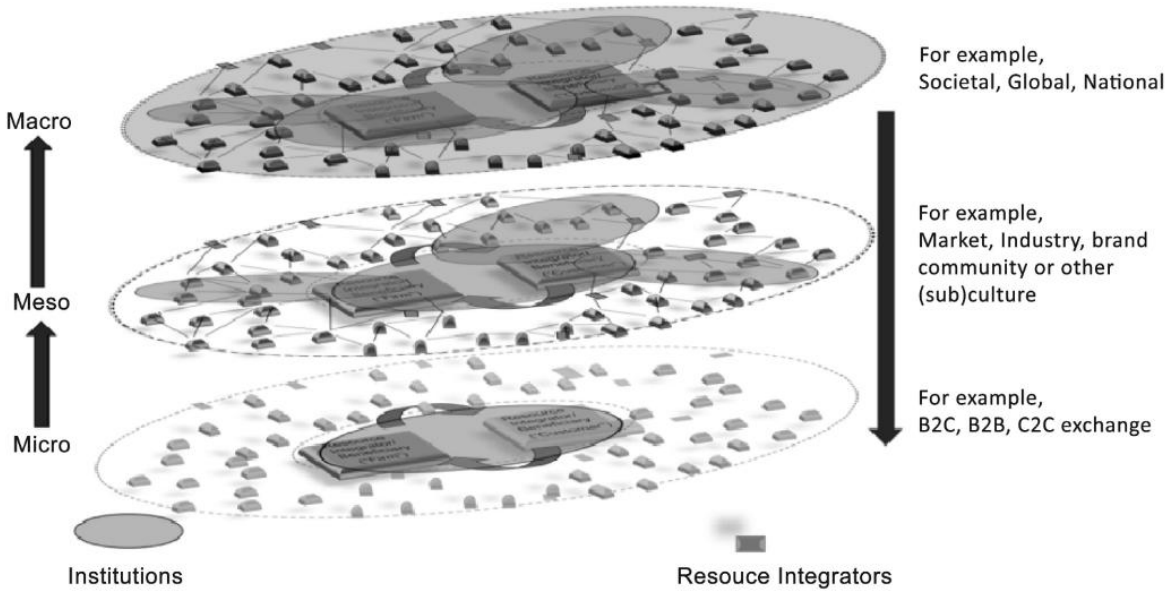

Figure 3.2.3 Service Ecosystem – Adapted from Vargo & Lusch (2018, p. 17)

As ecosystems are embedded, these levels are nested and permeated. Lusch and Vargo (2014) suggested that the micro level contributes to the formation of the meso level, while the meso level contributes to the macro level. However, once the macro level is formed, it has a downward effect on the meso and micro levels, as indicated by the downward arrow in Figure 3.3. For instance, if the macro level consists of a shared cultural system comprising language, governance, and values, these factors constrain micro-actors when they exchange operant resources (skills and knowledge) with other (Lusch & Vargo, 2014). This demonstrates that interactions within an ecosystem should not be considered in isolation at each level. Understanding how actors are interconnected through their resource-integrating interactions, both directly and indirectly (Frow & Payne, 2018) requires further investigation. Table 3.5 summarizes key aspects of service ecosystems at different levels of aggregation. It shows that cocreated value is realized by actors through resource integration, but it has been under-researched at the meso level.

Table 3.2.3 Service Ecosystem at Different Levels of Aggregation

Level of Aggregation	Nature and Level of Actors' Interactions	Role of Institutions	Resource Integration	Value Co-Creation
Micro	Studies that are *actor*-centric, i.e. focused on specific individuals or interconnected actors within an ecosystem	Shared institutional arrangements guide individual actors' actions, interactions and resource integrations	Performed by individual actors based on the resources that they possess, control or have access to; influenced by actors' ability to shape, integrate and appropriate resources	Benefits realized by the actor through resource integration
Meso	Studies focused on a *subsystem*, i.e. midrange structures and activities (e.g. industry, brand community, platform) within a service ecosystem	Institutions act as the rules for resource integration and coordinate actors' efforts to enable value co-creation	Not clearly defined in reviewed literature	Not clearly defined in reviewed literature
Macro	Studies focused on investigating topics related to broader *societal* structures and activities, such as the health care ecosystem	Institutions facilitate and bind the behavior of social actors, thus making social life predictable and meaningful	Forms a crucial part of the literature; various actors (e.g. humans, machines, organizations) integrate resources with one another to co-create value, which is phenomenologically determined by each actor	Ambiguous definitions of value at the ecosystem level; vaguely characterized as the outcome of actors' resource integration through which the entire ecosystem is better off

Source: Adapted from Mustak and Plé (2020)

Given the growing interest in service ecosystem research, researchers have paid attention to service ecosystems in the tourism context. In this sense, the unit of analysis in previous research ranges from a specific travel experience context (Rihova et al., 2018) to a broad destination analysis (Giannopoulos, Piha, et al., 2020; J. M. Ho et al., 2021; Stoica et al., 2021). Giannopoulos et al., (2020b) investigated destination brand co-creation mechanism and the interactions among DMOs, hotels, and restaurants within the tourism ecosystem. The research findings indicate that resource sharing in an ecosystem within a destination setting is a prerequisite for A2A interactions. The supply perspective at the organization and destination level highlights the co-creative interaction between tourists and suppliers. The two parties have a common vision of co-creation, which is used as a business-oriented and competitiveness-enhancing strategy (Campos et al., 2018). As such, VCC is affected by the mobilization of all the destination's networks and processes to encourage consumers' participation in value creation (Ciasullo & Carrubbo, 2011; Eraqi, 2011).

The service ecosystem concept provides a valuable lens for understanding complex, interconnected systems where value is co-created. Various methodological approaches were employed in service ecosystem research. Many studies utilized conceptual and qualitative methods, such as netnography, focus group discussion, interviews, and observation, to gain a holistic understanding of actors in an ecosystem (Ranjan & Read, 2021). In contrast, surveys, mixed-methods, mathematical modelling, and longitudinal research are less frequently employed (Gölgeci et al., 2021). While the predominance of qualitative research methods in service ecosystem studies is valuable for theory building, there's a need for more quantitative studies to test and validate existing frameworks. However, capturing the complexity of interactions within service ecosystems remains a significant challenge. To address this complexity, Gölgeci et al., (2021) advocate the use of diversified research methods to develop a comprehensive knowledge of the service ecosystem research.

3.2.3.2 VCC Practices in Ecosystems

Existing research highlights a practice-based perspective, where the practice itself, rather than individuals or organizations, serves as the unit of analysis (Russo-Spena & Mele, 2012). Schatzki (2005) conceptualizes firms and consumers as interconnected bundles of practices composed of actions, routines, and material arrangements. This aligns with Vargo and Akaka's (2012) proposition that VCC practices constitute routine actions that contribute to the formation and reformation of service systems. Such practices dynamically change the service ecosystem, creating an evolving context for value creation.

However, the theoretical understanding of the complexity of VCC within the ecosystem remains underdeveloped, according to Frow and Payne (2018). They advocate for the adoption of practice theory to better understand VCC in an ecosystem and identify two primary interpretations of VCC: First, VCC can be understood as a routine process that emerges from interactions among actors, where value is generated through service-for-service exchanges. Second, it can be viewed as a deliberate collaborative activity initiated by actors through co-production, co-design, or co-promotion to generate value via mutual engagement. Similarly, Kjellberg et al., (2018) suggest two main focuses in the practice-oriented literature on SDL. One direction explores how practices are internally constituted, emphasizing theoretical constructs and identifying VCC-specific practices. The other direction explores how practices constitutively influence broader phenomena by serving as analytical lenses for ecosystem investigations.

Recent research by Mohammadi et al., (2020) suggests that the co-creation process normally includes main practices, routines, actions, and mechanisms. Practices are context-specific and enable VCC through their enactment (Korkman, 2006). Key VCC practices include co-production (customers contributing to service delivery while firms retain primary responsibility for value creation), co-design (collaborative development of offerings), and co-promotion (joint marketing efforts) (Frow et al., 2015; Frow & Payne, 2018; Saha et al., 2021). While these concepts, particularly co-production, are sometimes used interchangeably with VCC in certain studies, their meanings differ to some extent (Saha et al., 2021). For instance, in co-production, customers are regarded as co-producers in the production and delivery of services, with companies assuming primary responsibility for value creation (Keränen, 2015; Saha et al., 2021).

Table 3.2.36 Selected Studies of VCC Practices

Authors	**Focus**	**Context**	**Methodological Approach**	**Unit of Analysis**	**Practices Identified**
McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012)	Customer value cocreation practices styles (CVCPS) typology	Healthcare	Mixed qualitative methods (interviews, observations, and focus group)	Health care customers	Team management, insular controlling, partnering, pragmatic adapting, and passive compliance
Russo-Spena & Mele (2012)	"Five Co-s" in innovating	Web sites	Netnography	Online community	Co-ideation, co-evaluation, co-design, co-test, and co-launching
Frow et al. (2015)	A co-creation design framework	General	A morphological method	Companies	Co-conception of ideas, co-design, co-production, co-promotion, co-pricing, co-distribution, co-consumption, co-maintenance, co-outsourcing, co-disposal, co-experience, and co-meaning creation
McColl-Kennedy et al. (2015)	Co-creating service experience practices	Service	Mixed qualitative methods (observations, interviews, and diary study)	Residents and staff	(1) *Representational* (assimilating, producing, personalizing); (2) *Normalizing* (bonding, bridging, linking); (3) *Exchange* (accounting, evaluating, appreciating, classifying, play)
Marcos-Cuevas et al. (2016)	Value co-creation practices in B2B networks	Business markets	Case study	Companies	(1) *Linking* (co-ideation, co-valuation, co-diagnosis); (2) *Materializing* (co-design, co-testing, co-launching); (3) *Institutionalizing* (embedding)

Authors	Focus	Context	Methodological Approach	Unit of Analysis	Practices Identified
Geldres-Weiss et al. (2023)	B2B Value co-creation practices	Trade show	Mixed (Content analysis of online posts and regression analysis)	Trade show organizer	(1) *Linking* (co-ideation, co-valuation, co-diagnosis); (2) *Materializing* (co-design, co-testing, co-launching);
Frow et al. (2016)	Co-creation practices in health care ecosystem	Healthcare	Conceptual	Health care ecosystem	A typology of eight co-creation practices
McColl-Kennedy et al. (2017)	Customer value cocreation practices	Healthcare	Mixed (qualitative method of diary study and quantitative method of survey)	Health care customers	*(1) Interactions:* With medical staff at the medical center, with friends and family, with other customers *(2) Activities:* Coproduce, comply with basics, colearn, collate, diet and exercise, change, distract
Johnson & Neuhofer (2017)	Host-guest value co-creation practices	Tourism	Qualitative method of online content analysis	Airbnb guests	Touring like a local, cooking and cleaning at home, cultural learning about Jamaica and relaxing with a view
Lee & Park (2023)	Practices of offering value propositions for service innovation	Trade shows	Mixed (qualitative method of interviews and quantitative method of survey)	Exhibition association members	(1) Company innovation culture (2) Project teamwork (3) Collaboration with customers & business partners (4) Competitor management (5) Employee proactive attitude

Table 3.6 summarizes key studies on VCC practices. Existing studies on VCC practices predominantly employ qualitative methodologies, such as interviews and content analysis, to explore micro-level interactions among individuals or firms. Research contexts are largely concentrated in B2C sectors, including healthcare and tourism. For instance, McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012) identified five categories of healthcare customer VCC practices resulting in a typology of practice styles that are linked to improvements in quality of life. Frow et al. (2016) developed a typology consisting of eight co-creation practices that shape a health care ecosystem, along with narrative measures to assess their impacts on ecosystem well-beings. Another example is co-promotion, which existing studies have primarily explored theoretical understanding rather than detailed analysis of its specific dimensions. Most literature primarily examine this practice in a B2C context, defining it as customers advocating for a firm's products or services through their own channels such as social media (Re & Magnani, 2022). Common forms include word-of-mouth (WOM) referrals and online influence behaviors (Eisingerich et al., 2014; Ge & Gretzel, 2018).

Additionally, while VCC practices change based on context, certain similarities can be observed, such as the frequent emphasis on co-design, which highlights the contributions of actors beyond designers in the design process. However, the specific activities associated with VCC can vary significantly across different contexts. These variations highlight the need to clarify how VCC practices are operationalized across contexts. Based on the above literature review, there is a lack of identification of specific activities that constitute VCC in different contexts (e.g., how practices differ between B2C and B2B) and limited attention to meso/macro ecosystem levels. The following section compares VCC research in B2C and B2B contexts to provide more concrete examples.

3.2.4 Synthesis of VCC Research

The understanding of VCC is fundamentally grounded in its contextual dependency. As Vargo and Lusch (2008) posit, value inherently varies across different contexts for different actors. From a conceptual perspective, four primary perspectives based on how value is derived determine the type of co-created value, namely, "value-in-exchange" (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), "value-in-use" (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Vargo et al., 2008), "value-in-context" (Chandler & Vargo, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2008) and "value-in-experience" (Helkkula et al., 2012; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2020). This "value-in-" perspective implies a dynamic and phenomenological approach to exploring the formation of co-created values (Rihova et al., 2015). Among these concepts, "value-in-use" is recognized as an essential component of SDL, as value is ultimately determined by customers through the application of a firm's offering (Akaka et al., 2012; J. McColl-Kennedy & Cheung, 2018). Built on this concept, Vargo et al. (2008) proposed "value-in-context" to highlight the importance of context from which value is derived. Chandler and Vargo (2011) operationalized context through a three-tiered ecosystem framework (micro, meso, macro), defining it as "a set of unique actors with unique reciprocal links among them" (p. 40). However, empirical research within specific contexts, particularly in B2B settings, remains insufficient compared to other types (Lambert & Enz, 2012; Pathak et al., 2022; Sales-Vivó et al., 2021). Therefore, an in-depth investigation that considers the complexity of context is essential for a better understanding of how value is created and determined (Scarlett et al., 2022). Additionally, there is a need for developing practical frameworks for designing and managing service ecosystems in specialized contexts.

The foundational literature on VCC provides a rich but complex landscape. Core to the concept is the idea that value emerges through active participation and interaction among stakeholders. Future studies need to prioritize context-specific applications and thorough empirical validation. The following subsections systematically review and contrast VCC studies in B2C and B2B contexts. This comparative analysis aims to bridge the gap between B2B and B2C by exploring how insights from B2C co-creation can be adapted to B2B contexts and vice versa.

3.2.4.1 VCC in B2C and B2B Context

The concept of VCC has been studied extensively across diverse contexts over the last two decades, with a predominant focus on B2C. Empirical studies in B2C include fields like healthcare (e.g., Juhua Wu et al., 2019), tourism and hospitality (e.g., Busser & Shulga, 2018; H.-C. Wu & Cheng, 2019), education (e.g., Cook-Sather, 2019), and social media (e.g., Khajeheian & Ebrahimi, 2021). While there is a growing trend toward a service ecosystem perspective in recent studies, a significant portion of the VCC literature remains focused on interactions between firms and customers. Furthermore, current research on the service ecosystem predominantly originated from marketing and service management literature (Gölgeci et al., 2021).

Contextual differences in VCC research highlight distinct focuses between B2C and B2B environments. In B2C research, the emphasis is often on how individual customers interact with firms to co-create value, with a focus on individual customers. This approach typically prioritizes enhancing the customer experience and improving products. In contrast, B2B research examines inter-organizational relationships, where VCC is viewed as a strategic endeavor, whose goals are to improve efficiency, foster innovation, and gain a competitive advantage through deeper integration between organizations. While previous research on VCC has evolved from its initial conceptualization to address more industry-specific concerns (Saha et al., 2021) , it has also expanded to include customers-to-customers (C2C) and peer-to-peer (P2P) interactions, which are increasingly capturing the attention of scholars. For instance, Han et al., (2021) investigated the role of tourist–tourist social interactions on the co-creation and co-destruction of tourist value. Despite the prolific publications in this area, Saha et al. (2021) argued that VCC literature remains fragmented, and further research is required to explore VCC in industry-specific contexts, particularly within B2B markets.

Comparatively, the development of VCC research in B2B contexts lags behind their B2C counterparts (Pathak et al., 2022; Saha et al., 2021). This may be the case due to the complex networks and exchange processes between organizations and customer firms in the B2B context (Pathak et al., 2022). D'Andrea et al. (2019) stated that VCC in B2B entails the collaboration of managers in cross-functional, cross-firm teams in search of solutions that benefit both sides. Likewise, Roser et al., (2013) stated that B2B co-creation, as a means of knowledge and experience sharing, is typical for suppliers to develop solutions for customers (D'Andrea et al., 2019). According to Saha et al., (2021), VCC studies in the B2B context mainly aimed at the enhancement of innovation and supply chain capabilities, whereas literature in the B2C context is more associated with relationship marketing and customer engagement. In this regard, Saha et al., (2021) stressed the role of trust-based and risk-sharing partnerships between firms in the B2B co-creation. Furthermore, Järvi et al. (2018) suggested that the major difference of interactions between B2B and B2C is the role of customers in problem-solving process. Specifically, network customers in B2B interactions actively participate in the problem-solving process, while that is not the case in B2C interactions, given that in the former problems are usually more complex and greater than in the latter. Table 3.7 summarizes and compares VCC research in the two different contexts.

Table 3.2.47 VCC Research in B2B vs. B2C

Aspect	B2C Value co-creation	B2B Value co-creation	Key References
Research Focus	Consumer engagement, branding, personalized experiences	Strategic partnerships, resource integration, service innovation, relationship marketing	D'Andrea et al. (2019); Sarmento et al. (2015); Kohtamäki & Rajala (2016); Ranjan & Read (2016); B. Zhang et al. (2021); Roser et al. (2013); Sarkar & Banerjee (2020);
Measurement	Experience, behaviors, engagement, interactions	Behaviors, practices	Yi & Gong (2013); McColl-Kennedy et al. (2017); Mathis et al. (2016); McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012); Frow et al. (2016); Verleye (2015); Roser et al. (2013);
Antecedents	Consumer empowerment, social capital	Closeness, trust, transparency, and rapport, institutional alignment	Ullah et al. (2023); Järvi et al. (2018); D'Andrea et al. (2019); Sarmento et al. (2015); Franklin & Marshall (2019); Tuan et al. (2019); Xie et al. (2021); Pathak et

Aspect	B2C Value co-creation	B2B Value co-creation	Key References
			al. (2022);
Outcomes	Customer satisfaction, perceived values, brand loyalty, future intentions.	Business outcomes, financial performance, service innovation, trust and commitment	Lambert & Enz (2012); B. Zhang et al. (2021); M. H. W. Ho et al. (2020); Xie et al. (2021); J. Xie et al. (2020); Alqayed et al. (2022);
Major Findings	Enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty	Increases trust, commitment, and innovation	Ranjan & Read (2016); B. Zhang et al. (2021);
Relationship Nature	Transactional or relationship-oriented.	Long-term, strategic, and deeply embedded.	Ullah et al. (2023); Keränen (2015); Sarmento et al. (2015);
Complexity	Lower complexity in many cases.	Higher complexity due to multiple actors, processes, and technologies involved. Requires specialized knowledge and expertise.	Pathak et al. (2022); Lambert & Enz (2012); Kohtamäki & Rajala (2016); Marcos-Cuevas et al. (2016);
Expertise	Consumers may have varying levels of expertise. Value co-creation may focus on personalization, feedback, and user-generated content.	High levels of expertise are often required from both parties. Value co-creation may involve collaborative problem-solving, knowledge sharing, and joint innovation.	Lambert & Enz (2012); Kohtamäki & Rajala (2016); McColl-Kennedy et al. (2017); Marcos-Cuevas et al. (2016); Roser et al. (2013); Gligor & Maloni (2021); Glyptou (2021); Alqayed et al. (2022);
Service Ecosystem	B2C ecosystems are often **platform-based**, with the firm acting as a hub connecting consumers with various resources and services. Value co-creation is about enabling consumers to **personalize** and integrate offerings from different providers to meet their individual needs.	B2B ecosystems are complex webs of **interconnected organizations**, each contributing specialized resources and capabilities. Value co-creation is about **orchestrating** these resources to deliver superior solutions to end customers.	Ullah et al. (2023); Marcos-Cuevas et al. (2016); Siaw & Sarpong (2021); Sarkar & Banerjee (2020); Marcos-Cuevas et al. (2016); Shin et al. (2020);

Research in B2C and B2B contexts shares foundational principles of the concept of VCC but diverges in implementation and focus. In B2C settings, VCC often revolves around consumer engagement and personalized experiences. D'Andrea et al. (2019) highlight how consumer interactions and feedback loops are integral to co-creation processes in these contexts. Conversely, B2B research focuses on collaborative innovation and strategic partnerships, emphasizing long-term relationships and mutual benefits (Kohtamäki & Rajala, 2016).

In B2C environments, VCC enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty by fostering a sense of ownership and personalization (Gligor & Maloni, 2021). Key antecedents in B2C include consumer empowerment and digital engagement platforms, which facilitate interaction and feedback (Singaraju et al., 2016). In contrast, B2B antecedents often involve strategic alignment and resource sharing, which are crucial for effective collaboration (Kohtamäki & Rajala, 2016). Studies by Iglesias et al. (2020) reveal that co-creation in B2B can lead to increased trust and commitment between partners, driving innovation and competitive advantage. Furthermore, B2B metrics such as financial performance are employed to evaluate the impact of co-creation (Lambert & Enz, 2012). B2B VCC prioritizes strategic partnerships and collaborative innovation, necessitating trust, institutional alignment, and shared goals to integrate resources across organizations (Kohtamäki & Rajala, 2016).

While both contexts aim to build trust and deliver value, their relationship dynamics differ significantly. B2C relationships are often transactional or short-term, focusing on scalable, standardized solutions for individual customers. For instance, B2C ecosystems—often platform-based—enable consumers to mix and match services to meet individual needs (Ullah et al., 2023). In contrast, B2B relationships are inherently long-term and rooted in complex networks of organizations, requiring specialized expertise to customize solutions and align processes across stakeholders (Keränen, 2015). B2B ecosystems involve orchestrating resources from suppliers, manufacturers, and clients to deliver integrated solutions, which increases complexity but facilitates deeper value creation (Pathak et al., 2022).

The role of expertise and ecosystem structure further distinguishes the two contexts. B2C co-creation often involves consumers with varying levels of expertise contributing feedback or user-generated content, while B2B requires high levels of technical knowledge from both parties to collaboratively solve problems. B2B processes face greater complexity due to multi-actor coordination and integration challenges, whereas B2C prioritizes simplicity and scalability (Sarkar & Banerjee, 2020; Shin et al., 2020; Ullah et al., 2023).

In conclusion, VCC is a multifaceted concept that manifests differently in B2C and B2B contexts, although both can enhance relationship quality between the parties. B2C co-creation focuses on consumer engagement and personalization, while B2B co-creation emphasizes strategic partnerships and collaborative innovation. Ultimately, understanding these nuances enables firms to tailor their strategies—prioritizing consumer-centric personalization in B2C or fostering strategic alliances in B2B—to maximize co-created value in their specific contexts.

3.2.4.2 Trade Show as a B2B Context

In response to the dearth of industry-specific studies in the B2B context, this study considers trade shows as a suitable setting for VCC research for two main reasons. First, given the credence quality of the trade show product, trust and commitment are important determinants in relationship quality for trade show stakeholders (Jin, 2011), which highlights how closely connected these stakeholders are. Second, the success of trade shows relies on the collaboration of various stakeholders involved in the industry. Although each stakeholder plays a distinct role, they work together as a reliable alliance through interactive processes. Moreover, the trade show industry encompasses various production and resource-integrating activities, which can benefit from VCC with other actors (Wong & Lai, 2019b). This is in line with the service-ecosystem view, which shifts the emphasis from dyadic exchange to various forms of resource integration and interactions (Vargo & Akaka, 2012). Furthermore, this broader view includes largely loosely coupled relationships or weak ties (Chandler & Vargo, 2011; Vargo & Akaka, 2012) within an ecosystem. Similarly, trade show stakeholders exhibit varying strengths in their relationships with one another, as discussed earlier in Section 2.2.2 (Chapter 2). Thus, the ecosystem perspective facilitates the investigation of B2B relationships in a trade show setting.

In practice, VCC has received increasing research attention in the trade show context; however, it is still in its infancy. There are currently four relevant studies on VCC in a trade show setting, focusing on the traditional triad of organizers, exhibitors, and visitors. For instance, Wong and Lai (2018) developed a two-level measurement scale of VCC behaviors from the exhibitor perspective, verifying that all these behaviors, particularly partnership behaviors, are positively related to perceived performance (Wong & Lai, 2019a). From a service system perspective, Wong and Lai (2019) highlighted the collaborative dynamics within the service system of trade shows. However, their research still concentrates on the traditional exhibitor-organizer relationships, without extending the perspective on co-creation. In another study, Zhang and Xu (2019) focused on exhibitors and professional visitors, finding that their interactions with organizers significantly influenced customer loyalty, with experience value serving as an intermediate construct. Nevertheless, this work only emphasized interaction and experience value as measurements of VCC, which is inadequate for addressing the complexity of this multidimensional concept. Geldres-Weiss et al. (2023) analyzed Twitter posts from a trade show organizer to investigate the effects of VCC practices (co-ideation, co-evaluation, co-design, co-testing, and co-launching) on customer engagement. However, this

study's analysis of VCC practices through the frequency of Twitter posts may not fully capture VCC practices due to potential issues such as the lag in online comments and insufficient sample representativeness. A recent study by Zhang et al. (2023) focused on attendees' VCC activities and examined their impact on exhibitors' trade show performance. While this study confirms the positive relationship between attendees' VCC activities and exhibitors' trade show performance, it still adopts a dyadic perspective at the micro level. Overall, VCC is a relatively novel concept in trade show studies, indicating a lack of sufficient literature on this topic. Therefore, to enrich VCC research in trade shows, the present study delving into VCC may provide valuable insights for B2B contexts.

Based on Korkman (2006, p. 10), practices are a broader concept than actions, which incorporate a sequence of actions that are contextually embedded. The current study employs a practice-based approach to investigate VCC in trade shows, aiming to understand the dynamic and multidimensionality of the concept within an ecosystem. Following the suggestions of Kjellberg et al. (2018) and Frow and Payne (2018) discussed earlier (Section 3.2.3.2), this study investigates the composition and the identification of VCC practices, defined as actions enacted by a network of actors to create values by collaborative activities at different ecosystem levels in a trade show context.

Specifically, at the micro level, VCC practices may involve exhibitors and show organizers. At the meso level, VCC practices occur among show organizers, industry associations, and exhibition venues, all collaborating with stakeholders at other levels to organize and produce shows. At the macro level, VCC practices may involve government agencies, which serve as secondary stakeholders in the trade show industry (Kirchgeorg et al., 2005). Industry associations support organizers by providing access to actors within the industry cluster, while local government agencies manage the distribution of vital resources and set tax rates or tax exemptions (He et al., 2020). These resources are not operated in isolation; they are integrated to create quality trade shows. Although interactions between macro-level actors (e.g., tourism boards) and micro-level actors (e.g., exhibitors) may not be as direct or strong as those at other levels, resources are still shared and integrated within the ecosystem. Therefore, disentangling the complex concept of VCC into its constituent elements may enhance understanding of interactions, collaborations, and resource integration among actors.

3.2.5 Research Gaps of VCC Literature

Building on the comprehensive review of exhibition and VCC literature in Chapters 2 and 3, three critical research gaps are identified:

Gap 1: Insufficient empirical exploration of VCC through a service ecosystem lens.

The service ecosystem perspective emphasizes the existence of multiple actors and the importance of a holistic view of involved actors within the ecosystem (Sharma et al., 2020). It emphasizes multi-actor interactions across micro (individual/organizational), meso (industry/network), and macro (societal/institutional) levels through resource integration and institutional arrangements (Frow & Payne, 2018; Vargo & Akaka, 2012). Although there has been an increase in conceptual research on service ecosystem, the number of empirical studies applying this perspective remains insufficient (Chandler & Vargo, 2011; Frow & Payne, 2018). Besides, empirical VCC research predominantly examines dyadic firm-customer relationships (Galvagno & Dalli, 2014), neglecting horizontal collaborations among multiple stakeholders like government agencies and industry associations (Sarmento & Simões, 2019a). The literature also fails to resolve whether existing VCC measurement tools (developed for dyadic contexts) can effectively capture the complexity of multi-stakeholder resource integration processes (Vargo & Akaka, 2012). This gap limits understanding of how VCC shapes from multi-actor interactions and their interconnectedness within complex ecosystems. Hence, this study adopts an ecosystem perspective to investigate VCC practices among stakeholders and their interconnectedness within a trade show setting.

Gap 2: Methodological imbalance in ecosystem-level VCC research.

Current studies disproportionately employ qualitative methods to explore VCC from a service ecosystem perspective (Gölgeci et al., 2021). While qualitative methods effectively explore "what" and "how" questions (e.g., identifying stakeholder roles), they lack the capacity to test underlying relationships or quantify practice influences. Recent studies adopt practices as fundamental units of VCC, which involve the subject, the action, the tools, and the context. In other words, a practice-based approach provides a systemic view to understand VCC as a dynamic concept in service systems consisting of individuals, organizations, and resources (Vargo & Akaka, 2012), rather than focusing on the action or experience of individuals (Russo-Spena & Mele, 2012). Although practice-based approaches enable an exploration of VCC from an ecosystem perspective, measurement instruments are still underdeveloped, as existing VCC scales primarily emphasize customer behaviors (P. Zhang, 2017). Mixed-methods approaches

that combine interviews (to identify practices and underlying dimensions) with surveys (to measure performance impacts) have been suggested for use in service ecosystem research due to their potential to address multi-level complexity (Gölgeci et al., 2021). In this view, this study adopts a mixed-method approach to identify different VCC practices within the service ecosystem and examine their influence within a trade show context.*Gap 3: Understudied VCC research in B2B contexts.*

While existing VCC scales predominantly focus on customer behaviors in B2C contexts (P. Zhang, 2017), trade shows represent a unique B2B environment where value is co-created through coordinated collaboration among exhibitors, organizers, industry associations, and other secondary stakeholders. Current exhibition literature disproportionately examines dyadic interactions between exhibitors and visitors/organizers (Sarmento & Simões, 2019a), but neglecting two critical aspects: (1) the roles of other stakeholders (e.g., industry associations, exhibition venues) in shaping VCC practices, and (2) temporal dynamics of these practices across pre-show, at-show, and post-show stages (Mistilis & Dwyer, 2000). To address this gap, this study investigates how diverse stakeholders engage in VCC practices at each show stage, advancing the understanding of B2B VCC in multi-actor ecosystems.

Consequently, this study aims to fill these gaps by answering the question: what are the value co-creation practices among trade show stakeholders at different ecosystem levels before, during, and after shows?

Two sub-questions guide the investigation:

RQ1.1 What measures constitute value co-creation practices among trade show stakeholders within the service ecosystem?

RQ1.2 When do these practices occur at the three stages (before/during/after shows)?

In brief, VCC is a concept grounded in service-dominant logic, emphasizing the collaborative nature of value creation among multiple actors (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). From a service ecosystem perspective, existing literature explores various forms of VCC practices, such as co-production, co-design, and co-promotion (Frow et al., 2015; Frow & Payne, 2018; Saha et al., 2021). In the context of trade shows, VCC represents the joint efforts of exhibitors, organizers, and other stakeholders to create mutual benefits and enhance the exhibition outcomes. The following sections proposes a theoretical framework that links VCC to exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference, highlighting the mediating role of

satisfaction in this relationship. A detailed rationale for the development of the hypotheses is discussed below.

3.3 Value Co-Creation upon Exhibitor Satisfaction

As a crucial managerial variable, satisfaction represents a customer's subjective evaluation, cognitive judgment, or emotional response related to consumption (Fu et al., 2019). In service marketing research, customer satisfaction is particularly significant because it links consumption and purchase behavior to future intentions, such as repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth (Lee et al., 2015). In the tourism and hospitality industry, measuring customer satisfaction is integral to marketing efforts, as it helps improve the quality of products and services. Understanding customer satisfaction is important for identifying the essential factors that impact a customer's purchase experience. Exhibitions are fundamentally services, consisting of intangible experiences that occur within a managed atmosphere for a limited duration (Lin, 2016). Given that exhibitors are primary target customers for exhibition organizers, venue operators, and destination marketers, understanding their perceptions of exhibition service attributes and their influence on exhibitor satisfaction and behavioral intentions can help organizers focus on exhibitors' needs (Lee et al., 2015). As a pivotal metric in exhibition research, exhibitor satisfaction evaluates the alignment between exhibitors' expectations and their post-event assessments of service outcomes.

Exhibitor satisfaction refers to the extent to which exhibitors feel their goals are met through their participation in trade shows (Lee et al., 2015). The quality of service perceived by exhibitors is critical for the successful and sustainable development of trade shows (Jin et al., 2012). Therefore, satisfaction with organizers is probably an essential factor in shaping exhibitors' positive behavioral intentions (Lin, 2016). This study adopts the validated measurement scale developed Lee et al. (2015), which conceptualizes exhibitor satisfaction as a unidimensional construct measured through three reflective items, assessing exhibitors' evaluation of the show experience, the show organizer, and the overall event.

In B2C context, satisfaction is a critical outcome of VCC practices, as it reflects the degree to which customer feel their contributions and expectations are valued (Ranjan & Read, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). Research in service marketing consistently demonstrates that active involvement in co-creation processes fosters satisfaction by aligning outcomes with stakeholders' individual needs (Homburg et al., 2005; Payne et al., 2008). In the context of exhibitions, previous studies have explored several antecedents of exhibitor satisfaction, such

as service quality (Chen & Mo, 2012), place attachment (Fu et al., 2019), and VCC activities (Wong & Lai, 2018). Wong and Lai (2018) empirically examined the relationship and suggested that exhibitors' VCC activities (participation and partnership activities) are linked to their overall satisfaction.

The positive relationship between VCC and exhibitor satisfaction can be attributed to several reasons. First, objective alignment is crucial, as VCC practices involve joint efforts from various stakeholders in show production, allowing for better addressing of exhibitors' needs and thereby enhancing their satisfaction. Second, engagement and involvement are significant factors; active participation in co-creation fosters a sense of ownership, which positively impacts satisfaction (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Lastly, the relational aspects of VCC practices are vital, as they build trust, collaboration, and mutual understanding between exhibitors and organizers, which are key drivers of satisfaction (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This collaborative approach enhances exhibitors' perceptions of the event's value, ultimately leading to greater satisfaction.

However, the relationship between various forms of VCC within an ecosystem and satisfaction has been under-researched. This oversight is theoretically significant because trade shows involve multilayered VCC processes that differ from conventional service encounters. Such complexity suggests that the drivers of exhibitor satisfaction may vary due to different forms of VCC. As a result, it is assumed that VCC practices have a positive effect on exhibitor satisfaction. Therefore, the following research question and related hypothesis are advanced:

Research Question 2.1a:

To what extent does each value co-creation practice exert an influence on exhibitor satisfaction?

$H_{2.1a}$: *Value co-creation practices have a positive direct impact on exhibitor satisfaction.*

3.4 Value Co-Creation upon Show Brand Preference

Brand preference is a crucial construct in brand management literature, reflecting customers' inclination to choose a specific brand over competitors (Chang & Liu, 2009). While customer satisfaction typically indicates a post-consumption evaluation, brand preference represents a more stable and comparative inclination within a competitive consideration set. This makes it a more relevant metric for capturing brand equity and competitive resilience. According to Hellier et al. (2003), 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" (p.1765) . The significance of brand preference lies in its direct influence on future behavioral intentions, brand choice, and customer loyalty (DAM, 2020; Ebrahim et al., 2016; Hellier et al., 2003). Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated its association with key antecedents, including brand equity (e.g., Chang & Liu, 2009; Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995), customer satisfaction (e.g., Hellier et al., 2003), perceived value (e.g., DAM, 2020), and brand experience (e.g., Ebrahim et al., 2016; Tsai et al., 2015).

From a VCC standpoint, brand preference is shaped through ongoing interaction, mutual engagement, and shared meaning-making among stakeholders within a service ecosystem (Baker et al., 2022; Gallan & Jefferies, 2020). VCC processes facilitate resource integration, and foster the emergence of collectively negotiated brand meanings. When key stakeholders actively engage in VCC, they evolve from passive recipients to co-creators of brand value. This deep engagement cultivates a shared sense of ownership and emotional connection, aligning stakeholders' attitudes and behaviors with the brand and thereby enhancing brand preference (Jaakkola, E., & Alexander, 2014). Accordingly, brand preference can be considered a consolidated indicator of the effectiveness of VCC, as it reflects not only transactional satisfaction but also emotional and attitudinal alignment forged through collaboration.

Furthermore, brand preference serves as an indicator of ecosystem health and sustainability. Effective VCC aligns beliefs and behaviors across firms, customers, and other stakeholders, fostering a cohesive and resilient network (Baker et al., 2022). In this research context, widespread brand preference among exhibitors reflects the trade show's maturation into a trusted and indispensable industry platform. Thus, brand preference extends beyond individual psychological outcomes to reflect the vitality of the broader service ecosystem.

Within trade show contexts, trade show brand preference refers to the extent to which exhibitors favor a particular trade show over other similar alternatives (Jin & Weber, 2013). This construct is a strategically relevant outcome in the context of trade shows and is shaped by the relationship quality with show organizers. Dimensions such as trust, emotional commitment, and effective communication are especially influential in shaping exhibitors' brand preferences (Jin, 2011). This further illustrates that brand preference in this context reflects not only satisfaction but also a deeper emotional and attitudinal commitment. Exhibitors with a strong brand preference are more likely to return, recommend the event, and deepen their partnership with the organizer, which are critical behaviors for sustaining

competitive advantage in the exhibition industry (Hansen, 2004; Jin & Weber, 2013). This makes brand preference a vital metric for trade show organizers seeking to strengthen exhibition brand equity and ensure long-term success.

To measure brand preference comprehensively, this study adopts a multidimensional approach based on the work of Sasserath et al. (2005) and Jin & Weber (2013). Sasserath et al. identified three foundational components of an exhibition brand: the event itself, the organizer, and the venue. Jin & Weber (2013) extended this framework by adding the host city as a fourth component, recognizing its influence on exhibitors' perceptions through factors such as accessibility, infrastructure, and reputation. Each component contributes to the perceived value of the trade show and influences exhibitors' preferences and loyalty. Grounded in this framework, the study draws on adapted items from Jin and Weber (2013) to assess brand preference across four dimensions—event, organizer, exhibition center, and host city.

Empirical research supports the positive relationship between VCC and brand-related outcomes. VCC is fundamentally a relational and interactive process that integrates resources and resolves information asymmetries among stakeholders (Gallan et al., 2020). This collaborative process does more than improve service delivery; it contributes to the co-creation of shared brand meaning across the service ecosystem (Baker et al., 2022). From a B2C perspective, France et al. (2020) found that active customer participation in brand co-creation activities enhances their perceptions of brand value, particularly through advocacy and development behaviors. Similarly, in the hospitality industry, González-Mansilla et al. (2019) demonstrated that customers' perceptions of a hotel's VCC processes positively influence the hotel's brand equity. This finding highlights that co-creation not only strengthens customer perceptions of value but also enhances the overall strength and reputation of the brand. From a triadic stakeholder perspective, Sarkar and Banerjee (2020) examined the role of VCC in branding through the collaboration of customers, suppliers, and sponsoring organizations. Their research revealed that co-creation for branding positively influences consumers' perceptions of brand value, enhances purchase intentions, and fosters greater brand loyalty. From a service ecosystem perspective, Giannopoulos, Piha, et al. (2020) developed a brand co-creation framework in the context of destination branding. Their study examined how the brand co-creation process operates across various levels of a service ecosystem, offering a comprehensive view of how stakeholders can collaboratively shape a destination's brand identity. However, the authors noted that this framework requires validation in a quantitative

research setting, suggesting that further empirical exploration is necessary to confirm the framework's applicability and effectiveness.

Despite growing evidence of VCC's importance in brand management, a significant gap remains in understanding how VCC shapes brand preference in B2B trade show contexts. Most research to date has focused on B2C settings, leaving the dynamics of VCC in B2B exhibitions underexplored. While B2C contexts often involve direct customer-brand interactions, trade shows represent more complex ecosystems involving multiple stakeholders. In such settings, VCC emphasizes engagement, collaboration, and shared value creation, all of which contribute to positive exhibitor experiences and stronger emotional bonds with the trade show brand. Active participation in VCC enhances exhibitors' perceptions of value and strengthens brand preference (Sarkar & Banerjee, 2020). Additionally, VCC allows trade shows to differentiate themselves by offering unique value propositions tailored to exhibitors' needs. It helps build long-term relationships, which is a key success factor in the exhibition industry (X. Yi et al., 2017). Consequently, understanding how VCC influences brand preference in the trade show context is essential.

Although theoretical insights suggest a strong link between VCC and brand preference, empirical research in this area remains limited. This gap underscores the need for further investigation into how VCC practices influence exhibitors' attitudes, as well as the mechanisms through which these practices shape brand preference. Given these considerations, this study positions show brand preference as an appropriate and impactful outcome variable for assessing the influence of VCC in trade shows. Based on the above discussion, the following research question and hypothesis are proposed:

Research Question 2.1b:

To what extent does each value co-creation practice exert an influence on show brand preference?

$H_{2.1b}$: *Value co-creation practices have a positive direct impact on show brand preference.*

3.5 The Role of Exhibitor Satisfaction

- *Exhibitor satisfaction upon show brand preference*

Customer satisfaction is widely recognized as a key factor in shaping brand preference within brand management literature. It significantly influences attitudinal changes, affecting

repurchase intentions and increasing the likelihood that a brand will remain in a customer's consideration set, thereby enhancing overall brand preference (Hellier et al., 2003). Empirical research highlights the robust relationship between customer satisfaction and brand preference. Hellier et al. (2003) found that customer satisfaction directly boosts brand preference and indirectly influences repurchase intentions via this preference. Similarly, Chinomona et al. (2013) confirmed that satisfaction is among the most critical precursors to brand preference. Furthermore, Tsai et al. (2015) highlighted the strong link between brand satisfaction and brand preference, noting that higher satisfaction strengthens brand memory and preference.

Satisfaction arises when a brand meets or exceeds customer expectations, resulting in positive brand evaluations. Satisfied customers are more likely to develop loyalty and recommend the brand, reinforcing their preference over competitors (Homburg et al., 2005). Similarly, exhibitors who achieve business objectives at trade shows often develop a strong preference for the event's brand, attributing their success to the show's reputation and offerings. This satisfaction fosters trust and emotional bonds between exhibitors and organizers, cultivated through reciprocal relationship investments (Lai & Wong, 2021). Trust and emotional attachment are crucial drivers of brand preference; exhibitors who feel valued and supported are more likely to commit to the trade show brand in the long term (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Additionally, perceived service quality is a significant factor in building long-term brand loyalty (Grönroos, 2008), as satisfied exhibitors view the show as a dependable, high-value platform, fostering enduring preference over time. In conclusion, when exhibitors achieve their business objectives, it reinforces their preference for the trade show. Satisfaction, along with accumulated trust and perceptions of quality, plays a crucial role in fostering lasting brand loyalty over the long term. These factors underscore the importance of satisfaction as a pivotal variable in brand management and the formation of preferences for trade shows.

Based on the discussion above, the corresponding research question and hypothesis are developed as follows:

Research Question 2.2.1:

Does exhibitor satisfaction exert an influence on trade show brand preference?

$H_{2.2.1}$: *Exhibitor satisfaction has a positive direct impact on show brand preference.*

- *The mediating role of exhibitor satisfaction*

Empirical studies in various contexts have demonstrated the mediating role of satisfaction in influencing customer loyalty (e.g., Caruana, 2002; Kaura et al., 2015; Mahamad & Ramayah,

2010) and firms' financial performance (e.g., Al-Hawari & Ward, 2006; Berraies & Hamouda, 2018) , as well as customer behavioral intentions (C.-C. Wang, 2020). Similarly, the relationship between VCC and trade show brand preference may not be entirely direct; it is also mediated by exhibitor satisfaction. VCC practices enhance exhibitors' experiences by offering opportunities for active participation, personalized services, and meaningful interactions. These enriched experiences lead to higher satisfaction levels, which subsequently influence brand preference (Grönroos & Voima, 2013).

Satisfaction may also serve as a crucial link between the advantages of VCC practices and exhibitors' perceptions of the trade show brand. However, research on the role of satisfaction as a vital mechanism through which co-creation activities impact exhibitor brand preference in trade shows is lacking. The central question is whether the impact of VCC on brand preference is direct or if it is mediated by exhibitor satisfaction, which has significant managerial implications. The mediating effect of satisfaction underscores the importance of addressing exhibitors' needs and expectations throughout the co-creation process. By actively engaging exhibitors and providing value-added experiences, organizers can enhance satisfaction levels, thus strengthening the trade show's brand preference. Given these arguments, the following research question and hypothesis is proposed:

Research Question 2.2.2:

Does exhibitor satisfaction mediate the relationship between value co-creation practices and trade show brand preference?

$H_{2.2.2}$: *Exhibitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between value co-creation practices and show brand preference.*

3.6 Theoretical Framework

Based on the literature review and the discussion of the main constructs, the theoretical framework with hypotheses is developed (See Figure 3.4). In addition, demographic characteristics of exhibitors (company size, exhibiting frequency, and nationality) are included into the framework as control variables. A summary of the research questions and hypotheses is presented in Table 3.8.

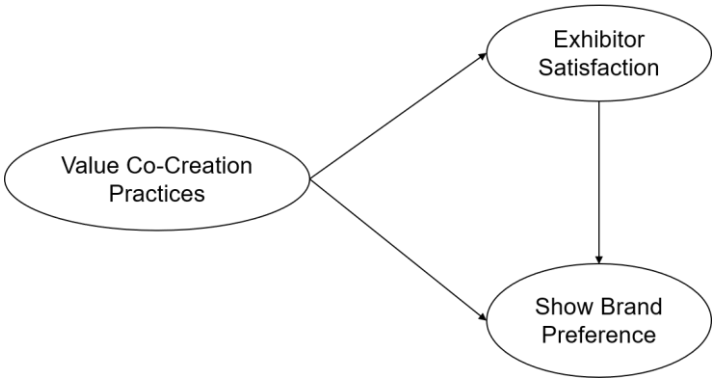

Figure 3.4 Preliminary Conceptual Framework

Table 3.8 Summary of Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Problem
*In the context of trade shows, **what** are value co-creation practices among multiple stakeholders at different ecosystem levels before, during, and after shows, and **how** do different practices influence exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference?*
Research issue 1 focuses on the identification of value co-creation practices among exhibitors, organizers, industry associations, and governmental agencies before, during, and after shows. ***Research Question 1.1:*** What measures constitute value co-creation practices among trade show stakeholders within the service ecosystem? ***Research Question 1.2:*** When do these practices occur at the three stages (before/during/after shows)?
Research Issue 2 aims to investigate the relationships between value co-creation practices among exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference. ***Research Question 2.1:*** To what extent does each value co-creation practice exert an influence on exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference, respectively? ***$H_{2.1a}$:*** *Value co-creation practices have a positive direct impact on exhibitor satisfaction.* ***$H_{2.1b}$:*** *Value co-creation practices have a positive direct impact on show brand preference.* ***Research Question 2.2:*** What is the relationship among value co-creation practices, exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference? How does one impact others? 2.2.1 Does exhibitor satisfaction exert an influence on trade show brand preference? ***$H_{2.2.1}$:*** *Exhibitor satisfaction has a positive direct impact on show brand preference.* 2.2.2 Does exhibitor satisfaction mediate the relationship between value co-creation practices and trade show brand preference? ***$H_{2.2.2}$:*** *Exhibitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between value co-creation practices and show brand preference.*

3.7 Research Design

3.7.1 Mixed Methods Design

This thesis employs a mixed-method research design, specifically an exploratory sequential design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods to address the research questions. The research process consists of two phases, wherein an initial qualitative exploration (Phase 1) builds the foundation for a subsequent quantitative examination (Phase 2) (Creswell and Creswell, 2023). This combined approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem than either approach alone (Given, 2008). Specifically, the qualitative phase is designed to investigate areas overlooked in the existing literature, classify different types of VCC, and identify their underlying constructs within the trade show context. The findings of Phase 1 offer empirical grounding for the relationships that were subsequently formalized and tested as hypotheses in Phase 2.

Phase 1 employed a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews with various trade show stakeholders, exploring VCC practices from a service ecosystem perspective. The primary purpose of the initial qualitative phase is to explore the under-researched VCC practices in the context of trade shows from a multi-actor, service ecosystem perspective. Given the limited prior research in this specific context, a qualitative approach is essential to explore how diverse stakeholders engage in VCC. Informants include show organizers, exhibitors, venue operators, representatives from industry association and destination marketing organizations. The findings from this phase contribute to a holistic understanding of how these actors engage in the VCC process. The qualitative data, combined with a comprehensive literature review, provide deeper insights into the classification of various VCC practices and their dimensions in trade shows. This understanding is crucial for developing measurements for VCC practices that have not yet been established, facilitating conceptual development and quantitative survey instrumentation. Furthermore, the qualitative findings served as the empirical foundation for hypothesized relationships among specific VCC practices, exhibitor satisfaction, and show brand preference, relationships not previously examined in the exhibition and tourism literature. These empirically grounded relationships then guided the development of the hypotheses for the quantitative phase. In addition, the holistic understanding of the VCC practices gained in Phase 1 enabled the refinement of the conceptual model, ensuring that the variables and relationships selected for testing in Phase 2 were

contextually relevant and significant to the primary subject of quantitative survey: the exhibitors.

Building directly upon the VCC practices and conceptual insights identified in Phase 1, Phase 2 employed a quantitative approach through survey questions to validate the identified VCC practices and empirically test the hypothesized relationships within the conceptual model from the perspective of a larger exhibitor population. In contrast to the qualitative approach, the quantitative approach emphasizes standard measures, replicable findings, comparison to accepted good standards, minimization of bias, and successful prediction (Fielding et al., 2001). This thesis leverages quantitative data to empirically verify theoretical relationships in larger samples and establish the generalizability of observations (Xin, 2011). Specifically, the quantitative data elucidate the extent to which these proposed VCC practices affect exhibitor satisfaction and their brand preference towards trade shows. Additionally, the quantitative findings examine the indirect effects of these practices on exhibitors' brand preference through satisfaction.

The rationale for employing a mixed-method strategy in this study is threefold. First, qualitative research is necessary to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of VCC practices within a service ecosystem in the trade show context. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, few studies have explored VCC in this setting, particularly from a service ecosystem perspective. Moreover, the number of organizers and related stakeholders is limited compared to exhibitors. Given that this topic is under-researched with limited available data, an exploratory qualitative research strategy is deemed appropriate (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008). Second, based on the data obtained from Phase 1, Phase 2 aims to empirically test the proposed research framework from the exhibitors' perspective. Given the large population of exhibitors, a quantitative method is advantageous. In summary, Phase 1 serves as an exploratory research stage aimed at identifying, interpreting, and developing a research framework and measurement items for the subsequent quantitative research. Phase 2 provides empirical confirmation from the exhibitor perspective, examining the advanced research framework and hypotheses while improving the study's reliability and validity.

3.7.2 Research Phases

This research follows a sequence that includes a literature review, in-depth interviews, pilot testing and data analysis, followed by the main survey and data analysis. The detailed procedures are illustrated in Figure 3.5.

Prior to the qualitative research, a comprehensive literature review identified possible practices of VCC and proposed hypotheses regarding the impacts of VCC on exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference. Accordingly, a preliminary conceptual framework was developed, along with interview guides containing questions tailored for different trade show stakeholders. In the first phase, interviews were conducted, resulting in an initial pool of measurement items related to VCC. An original questionnaire was developed in English and subsequently translated into Chinese. These scales were further refined through expert panel reviews, leading to a revised conceptual model and questionnaire. In the second phase, a pilot test and the main survey were conducted. The pilot test assessed the reliability and validity of the measurements, with data analyzed using principal component analysis (PCA) via SPSS. Following item purification and survey finalization, data for the main survey were collected and analyzed using SmartPLS software. Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to evaluate both the measurement model and the structural model. The setting of the study will be discussed next.

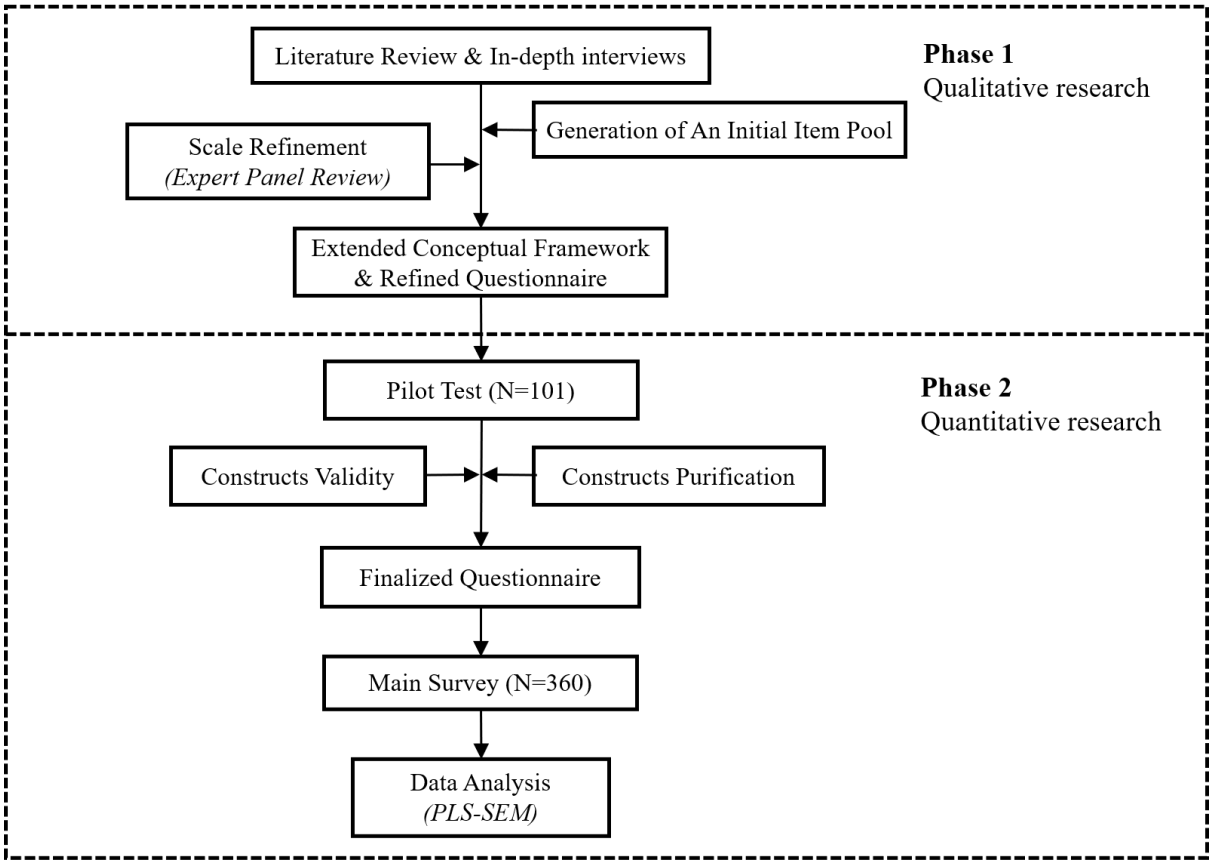

Figure 3.5 Procedures of the Study Methodology

3.8 Research Setting

This study selects China's exhibition industry as the research setting due to its large scale, dynamic complexity of stakeholder interactions, and uneven regional development. These factors provide a rich context for exploring VCC from a service ecosystem perspective. This choice not only aligns with global trends in the exhibition sector but also offers new insights into relevant theories from an emerging market context. The rationale is elaborated below.

First, China is recognized as a significant emerging market in the global exhibition sector (Blazyte, 2024). According to the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT, 2025), the country hosted 3,844 economic and trade exhibitions in 2024, with total exhibition space increasing by 10.1% compared to the previous year, reaching 155 million square meters. Exhibitions are essential for China's economic development, driving trade, investment, employment, and tourism (Blazyte, 2024). In recent years, the government has prioritized the sector as a key economic growth engine, implementing supportive policies and investing in infrastructure to attract international exhibitions (Xinhua, 2025). China's prominence and dynamism in the global exhibition landscape make it an ideal setting for this research.

Second, China's exhibition industry exhibits unique market characteristics that distinguish it from Western counterparts. Unlike the predominantly market-driven systems in Europe and North America, China's ecosystem blends market-oriented and government-led models (CCPIT, 2025). Market-driven exhibitions (e.g., the China International Digital Economy Expo) emphasize the involvement of industry associations and chambers of commerce in organizing events through market-oriented approaches. In contrast, government-led exhibitions are international or regional events organized or co-organized by the government. Many large-scale exhibitions, such as the Canton Fair and the China International Import Expo, are government-led. These two models foster multi-actor collaboration among governments, associations, and enterprises, creating a complex service ecosystem. Such complexity addresses gaps in B2B literature by revealing how multi-actor collaboration and institutional arrangements shape VCC practices and by investigating peripheral actor involvement that is often overlooked in exhibition studies.

Third, China's regional disparities in exhibition development offer important research opportunities. According to UFI (2025), China holds four of the top five venues globally, with a total indoor exhibition area of about 13.46 million square meters. This accounts for 81.2% of

the Asia-Pacific region and 31.2% of the global total. However, the China Convention/Exhibition/Event Society (CCEES) reported that only 22% of sampled venues achieved utilization rates above 20%, while 52% had rates below 10% (CCEES, 2024). These numbers indicate a serious oversupply issue in venue construction in China. In contrast, venues in developed countries like Germany and the United States often achieve utilization rates above 70%. While China ranks high in exhibition area, there remains a significant gap in venue utilization compared to Western countries (Hu, 2020). Additionally, exhibition resources are concentrated in first-tier cities (e.g., Shanghai, Beijing), where venue utilization exceeds 50%, whereas lower-tier cities face underused infrastructure (Hu, 2020). These spatial imbalances—overcrowded hubs versus underutilized regional venues—highlight systemic challenges in resource allocation. By analyzing how actors in developed cities leverage localized networks and consolidation strategies, this study may provide insights for optimizing VCC in mid-sized and small exhibition ecosystems

3.9 Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 reviewed the literature on VCC, exhibitor satisfaction, and show brand preference. It discussed the potential underlying dimensions of VCC and the relationships among VCC, exhibitor satisfaction, and show brand preference. A preliminary conceptual model and a summary of hypotheses were proposed to address the research problem. A mixed-methods strategy, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, was adopted, with a detailed rationale for the research design and setting.

Given that research on VCC from a service ecosystem perspective, particularly in the trade show sector, is still in its infancy, a qualitative study (Phase 1) employing in-depth interviews was conducted. This approach aimed to gain a deeper understanding of VCC within the trade show ecosystem from a multi-stakeholder perspective and to explore their interconnected relationships. Chapter 4 reports the methodology and findings of Phase 1—the qualitative research. Additionally, it presents the final conceptual framework based on the identified VCC practices within the trade show industry.

4 PHASE 1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH – IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

4.1 Chapter Introduction

As the theoretical foundation of this research, Chapter 3 presented the previous literature on VCC and service ecosystem. It developed a preliminary conceptual model to test the hypothesized relationships among VCC, exhibitor satisfaction, and show brand preference. The chapter also described the methodological choices that guide this research. The purpose of the research design is twofold and a mixed-method research design is adopted, including both qualitative (Phase 1) and quantitative (Phase 2) methods.

Chapter 4 reports on qualitative research conducted in Phase 1. This phase involved semi-structured interviews with multiple trade show stakeholders. The aim was to understand the VCC practices in trade shows from a service ecosystem perspective (Research issue 1). The chapter details the reasons for using semi-structured interviews, the sampling method, interview question development, data collection process, data analysis, and key findings for Phase 1. Consequently, the conceptual framework proposed in Chapter 3 is extended to include the specific VCC practices identified in the interviews. This leads to a finalized conceptual framework, followed by a summary of revised research hypotheses to conclude this chapter.

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Rationale for Using Semi-Structured Interviews

Research Phase 1 adopted a qualitative study through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Qualitative research provides a "detailed description and analysis of the quality, or the substance, of the human experience" (Marvasti, 2004). It emphasizes the acquisition of in-depth data in order to construct rich narratives (Creswell, 2009). This approach proves particularly valuable when investigating phenomena with limited theoretical foundations or intangible factors, as its inherent flexibility supports knowledge exploration (Maxwell, 2008). As a primary qualitative data collection tool, in-depth interviews facilitate comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). The term "in-depth"

suggests that the exchange between the interviewer and informants extends beyond yes-or-no questions or simple responses. Instead, a set of predetermined open-ended questions is used to acquire insightful and informative data (Given, 2008; Lei, 2018).

Semi-structured interviews are often employed explore informants' opinions and beliefs concerning a given situation, product, or issue (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). According to Given (2008, p. 810), the semi-structured interview is "a qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions." These questions enable participants to provide in-depth and detailed information on the topics or the issues of the study. Although these questions might be included in an interview schedule or guide, the interviewer is not limited to them and can adapt the questioning as necessary. This flexibility allows researchers to pose additional questions based on interviewee's responses and to explore new topics that may not have been previously considered (Lei, 2018). In other words, the questions are organized in a logical and consistent sequence based on the interview process and the unique responses of each participant, allowing for adaptability in questioning and and responses (Cope, 2016). The semi-structured interview method offers a more standardized approach to data collection than unstructured interviews, resulting in a lower "dross rate" or amount of unnecessary information. This strategy enables the collection of comparable data from different respondents, enhancing consistency and increasing the trustworthiness of the findings (Daymon & Holloway, 2010).

These characteristics make semi-structured interviews particularly suitable for VCC research adopting service ecosystem perspectives (Ranjan & Read, 2021). Due to the early stages of service ecosystem research, which primarily focus on developing concepts, theories and frameworks, most studies rely on qualitative methodologies, such as interviews (Mustak & Plé, 2020). For instance, Giannopoulos, Piha, et al. (2020) successfully employed this approach to examine brand co-creation within the ecosystem. Given the qualitative approach of the present study, which focuses on exploring the perceptions of multiple stakeholders based on their VCC experiences, individual interviews prove more appropriate than focus groups or observations due to two major considerations: 1) overcoming logistical constraints (Jin, 2011), and 2) enabling detailed follow-up on personal experiences (E. Braun et al., 2013). Furthermore,

to the best of the author's knowledge, no prior studies have employed in-depth interviews to investigate the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding VCC in a trade show context.

In summary, three key factors justify the choice of semi-structured interviews for this study. First, Chapters 2 and 3 reveal limited VCC research within trade show ecosystems, which calls for an exploratory investigation through inductive methods. Second, the ecosystem perspective necessitates an examination of the complex interactions among multiple stakeholders, a task that semi-structured interviews are well-suited for, as they capture nuanced perspectives while maintaining comparability. Third, the flexibility of this method aligns with the exploratory objectives of Phase 1, which aims to develop foundational frameworks for subsequent quantitative research. By allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences beyond preset questions (Cope, 2016; Daymon & Holloway, 2010), this approach enables emergent theme identification and unexpected insight generation. The following sections outline sampling strategy, research instruments, implementation procedures, and analytical methods of Phase 1.

4.2.2 Sample

Qualitative sampling strategies are purposeful and strategic, based on judgements directly related to the research objective. The sampling process involves decisions about what data to collect and analyse, and where to access it (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). Since this study adopts an ecosystem perspective to investigate VCC, it aims to gain insights from a multi-stakeholder perspective in trade shows.

The interviewees in this study are categorized into five groups: 1) exhibitors (E), 2) show organizers (O), 3) exhibition venues (V), 4) industry associations (A), and 5) government agencies or destination marketing organizations (G). These stakeholders were selected for two reasons: first, show organizers and exhibitors are primary actors fundamental to the trade show industry, while the others are secondary actors that are important yet under-explored. Second, the study is developed from a service ecosystem perspective, which comprises multiple levels (micro, meso, and macro). Each stakeholder group plays a significant role at different levels of the ecosystem: exhibitors and organizers are focal actors at the micro level; industry

associations and venues are engaged in the production and delivery of trade shows at the meso level; and DMOs, as market actors at the macro level, provide expertise and resources to other stakeholders.

The recruitment of informants was based on two key criteria. First, informants must have a minimum of three years of practical experience in the trade show industry to provide reliable and experience-based insights into the research topic. This ensures that they possess not only basic knowledge but also practical insights based on experience, enhancing the reliability and depth of the collected data. Second, informants must have experience in either Hong Kong or Mainland China, the target destinations of this study. This criterion is particularly important due to the unique cultural, economic, and political factors influencing the trade show industry in these regions. By selecting informants who meet these two criteria, the study aims to gather relevant and informative insights that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the trade show industry in Hong Kong and Mainland China.

Targeted stakeholders in this study were recruited as interviewees primarily through purposive and snowball sampling methods. Purposive sampling, also known as criterion-based sampling, involves selecting individuals based on pre-determined criteria pertinent to the research question (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). In contrast, snowball sampling begins with a limited number of initial informants who identify and nominate other potential participants meeting the study's eligibility criteria (Given, 2008). This strategy is particularly useful when researchers face challenges in identifying suitable informants, when participants are not easily reachable, or when anonymity is preferred (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). In this study, the primary sampling method was purposive sampling, applied to all targeted stakeholders based on the two criteria mentioned earlier. On the other hand, snowball sampling was employed as a supplementary strategy to gather information from exhibitors, show organizers, and industry associations, with some participants referred by initial informants due to access challenges. This approach was particularly valuable in overcoming gatekeepers and identifying qualified participants who met the pre-defined criteria but were not easily accessible through public channels. To maintain the integrity of the sample, all referrals were screened against the same

two eligibility criteria before being invited to participate. Table 4.1 outlines the sample selection strategies of Phase 1.

The sample size in qualitative research is often determined by the point of theoretical saturation, which occurs when the collected data provides sufficient meaningful information of high quality, and no new insights emerged. While there are no strict guidelines for determining sample size, researchers typically consider a range of 4 to 40 informants suitable for their research objectives in most cases (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). In this study, a total of 21 informants were interviewed before reaching theoretical saturation. The profile of interviewees is presented in Table 4.3 in Section 4.3.

Table 4.1 Sample Selection Strategies in Phase 1

Stakeholder Categories	**Operational Definitions**	**Selection Criteria**	**Sampling Strategies**
Exhibitors (E)	Companies or entities that "display products and services at trade shows and make use of the services provided by trade show companies" (Kirchgeorg, 2005, p.35)	Company representatives who exhibited at trade shows in the recent three years.	Purposive & Snowball
Show Organizers (O)	Organizations that deal with "the planning, organization, staging and monitoring of trade shows" (Kirchgeorg, 2005, p.35)	Those who organized branded trade shows in Hong Kong or Mainland China.	Purposive & Snowball
Venue Operators (V)	The grounds where trade shows take place (Kirchgeorg et al., 2005).	Exhibition centers, whether newly established or well-established, at which large-scale trade shows were held in Hong Kong or Mainland China.	Purposive
Industry Associations (A)	An organization that supports companies and employers of a particular type of industry and protects their rights ("INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary")	Trade associations that have experience in organizing or assisting with trade shows.	Purposive & Snowball
Government Agencies or DMOs (G)	DMOs work collaboratively with local service suppliers in the tourism and hospitality industry to ensure the implementation of business events. (Fenich, 2016)	Local government agencies who work with the abovementioned stakeholders to promote the destination.	Purposive

4.2.3 Instrument

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher asks a sequence of prearranged but open-ended questions to informants (Given, 2008). A written interview guide is developed before conducting the interviews. The aim of these interviews is to shed light on how exhibition stakeholders co-create value by uncovering their activities and processes. To achieve this, questions are designed to explore the joint or collaborative activities that occur among various stakeholders before, during, and after shows. Key interview questions focused on how different stakeholders work together to create value at these three stages.

When time allows, the interview process begins with questions about the background and demographic information of the informants. This is followed by the main interview questions associated with VCC practices, which may be supplemented with probing questions to ensure all relevant topics are covered. However, due to time constraints, background information for certain informants may be gathered in advance through official websites or confirmed via email after the interviews. If responses to the questions become repetitive, no further questions will be asked. Drawing from the research questions and literature review, an interview guide containing sample questions is presented in Appendix A.

Specifically, participants were asked to share their experience and perspectives. The interviewer began by asking participants to share any mutual beneficial practices or collaborative activities they engaged in with other stakeholders in the industry. Follow-up questions were posed based on their responses, leading to in-depth discussion about their roles, perceptions, and specific interactions at different stages. The interviewer utilized questioning techniques such as "Can you explain that in more detail?" and "Can you elaborate on that?" to encourage informants to provide more elaborate and detailed information (J. R. McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). During the interviews, the sequence of questions was flexible, adapting to the interviewees' answers (Cope, 2016; Daymon & Holloway, 2010). The study employed specific sets of semi-structured questions tailored to different stakeholder categories, aiming to obtain responses relevant to each group and aligned with the research objectives. For instance, since exhibitors typically have more direct interactions with organizers and industry associations than with other stakeholders, the interview questions predominantly focused on

their joint activities with these two groups. In contrast, interviews with organizers covered collaborative activities with all relevant parties, as they engage with all stakeholders involved in trade shows.

4.2.4 Procedures

According to Kvale, (1996, p. 88), an interview process generally incorporates seven stages: 1) Thematizing – defining the interview objectives and key discussion topics; 2) Designing – developing a plan to achieve the objectives; 3) Interviewing – conducting the interviews as per the plan; 4) Transcribing – creating written records of the interviews; 5) Analyzing – determining appropriate analytical methods for the data; 6) Verifying – assessing the reliability and validity of the data; and 7) Reporting – sharing findings with others. Following thematizing and designing, informants were recruited through various methods.

As earlier sections discussed the criteria for selecting key exhibition stakeholders as informants, the recruitment procedures are now elaborated. Most informants were invited from the researcher's personal network or through referrals. Since the research focuses on Hong Kong and Mainland China, and most interviewees have trade show experience in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Shenzhen, the selection of DMOs and venue operators was deliberate. Due to the limited number of informants in these categories, a purposive sampling method was employed. Potential venue operators in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Shenzhen were identified through website searches and contacted via formal invitation emails, which included participant information sheets, interview questions, and the researcher's business card to ensure transparency and trust with them. The use of diverse recruitment strategies, including personal networks and online searches, facilitated the identification of interviewees with relevant expertise in the trade show industry. However, challenges arose with confidentiality concerns; potential interviewees from government agencies were hesitant to participate. The researcher faced difficulties securing interviews with representatives from government-affiliated organizations responsible for trade exhibitions, as permission from superiors was necessary. Similar challenges occurred when seeking assistance from industry professionals to reach government representatives.

Prior to the interviews, interviewees were informed that data collected would be used for a doctoral thesis and that no private information would be included in the final report. They were also briefly introduced to the research topic and the process for utilizing the interview data, which encouraged their voluntary participation. From November 2022 to May 2023, twenty-one informants were interviewed including exhibitors, organizers, industry associations, exhibition venues and a DMO. Due to the prevailing mobility restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, most interviews were conducted via telephone or video conferencing platforms such as WeChat, Zoom, or MS Teams. Two interviews were conducted face-to-face in a café or at the interviewees' workplaces, as requested by them. Six interviews were conducted in English, while the others were conducted in Chinese. All interviews were audio recorded with the permission of informants, and subsequently transcribed verbatim in their original language. Transcriptions were then subjected to content analysis with a primary purpose of scale development for VCC practices in trade shows in Research Phase 2.

4.2.5 Data Analyses

Following the transcription of interviews, a content analysis method was employed to analyze the data. Content analysis allows for knowledge and insights through both inductive and deductive interpretation. According to Elo and Kyngäs (2008), inductive content analysis is recommended when previous research on a particular phenomenon is limited or fragmented. In contrast, a deductive approach is more suitable for testing established theories in new contexts or comparing categories across different time periods. Another method is the abductive approach, which involves an iterative process of moving between literature-based theories and empirical data (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Abduction is particularly useful for exploring less-studied phenomena in new settings, focusing on theory development rather than generation. Given the novelty of the theories and topics in the trade show context, an abductive approach was deemed appropriate for this study. T Thus, the author integrated insights from both collected data and relevant literature to develop co-creation practices established in prior research, testing them against empirical cases derived from the interview data. As Dubois and Gadde (2002, p. 559) state, this process facilitates "fruitful cross-fertilization where new

combinations are developed through a mixture of established theoretical models and new concepts derived from the confrontation with reality."

In this study, transcripts were analyzed by thematic content analysis in order to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes from the interview data. The six-step process for thematic analysis defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was followed, which includes: 1) familiarizing oneself with the data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing the themes, 5) identifying and naming themes, and 6) producing the report. Table 4.2 shows these six phases in details. Specifically, after familiarization with the data, the author generated initial codes for VCC activities at the micro, meso, and macro levels using first-order labels. These first-order codes were then grouped into second-order codes as sub-categories based on the similarities. The sub-categories were reviewed and defined according to the features of the codes. Subsequently, they were aggregated into theoretical dimensions, representing the themes or categories identified in the study. This phase involved reviewing and refining the identified themes by comparing them with VCC practices from existing literature. Grounded in the theory of VCC, this process supports the identification and classification of empirical data. It enhanced understanding of the interconnectedness within different levels of the ecosystem and highlighted the interplay between various practices supported by empirical evidence. To facilitate this process, the researcher utilized NVivo 12, a software program designed to store, code, and organize qualitative data. The next section outlines the informant profiles and presents the interview findings related to the identified VCC practices.

Table 4.2 Phases of Thematic Content Analysis

Phases	**Description of the process**
1. Familiarizing with data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking the relationships between the themes and the coded extracts, generating a thematic map.
5. Defining and naming themes	Continuous refining the themes, structuring the overall story, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	Selection of vivid examples, relating back to research question and literature, and producing a scholarly report.

Source: Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006)

4.3 Findings

4.3.1 Profile of Participants in Phase 1

The qualitative study in Research Phase 1 includes 21 informants, with a total interview time of 16 hours and 53 minutes (an average of approximately 51 minutes per interview). Table 4.3 presents the participants' demographic profiles, including gender, stakeholder category, position, work location, and years of experience. Informants represent diverse stakeholders, including 3 exhibitors, 8 organizers, 3 industry association representatives, 6 venue staff, and 1 DMO representative. The majority of interviewees held senior or executive-level positions and possessed an average of over 10 years of industry experience, indicating their professional standing and expertise within this domain. Besides, most of them were located in metropolitan cities, such as Hong Kong, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Beijing, which are widely recognized as top-tier destinations for business events. The participant demographics showed a higher representation of male participants (62%) compared to female participants. This aligns with industry data from both China and overseas, where men predominantly occupy senior management positions (Jin, 2011).

Table 4.3 Informant Profile

ID*	Gender	Category	Position Level	Location	Years of Experience
E1	Female	Exhibitor	Manager	Shanghai	7
E2	Male	Exhibitor	Manager	Shenzhen	5
E3	Female	Exhibitor	Marketing Executive	Shanghai	6
O1	Male	Organizer	Manager	Beijing	10
O2	Male	Organizer	Trade Enquiry Representative	Beijing& Hong Kong	4
O3	Male	Organizer	Deputy General Manager	Shanghai	20
O4	Male	Organizer	Marketing Supervisor	Shanghai	10
O5	Female	Organizer	Manager	Shanghai	10
O6	Male	Organizer	President	Shanghai	22
O7	Female	Organizer	Sales Executive	Shanghai	4
O8	Female	Organizer	COO	Shenzhen	23
A1	Male	Industry Association	Manager	Beijing	3
A2	Male	Industry Association	Executive Committee Member	Hong Kong	21
A3	Male	Industry Association	Associate Chairman	Hong Kong	3
G1	Male	DMO	General Manager	Hong Kong	11
V1	Male	Venue	Director	Shanghai	22

ID*	Gender	Category	Position Level	Location	Years of Experience
V2	Male	Venue	General Manager	Shanghai	10
V3	Female	Venue	Managing Director	Hong Kong	30
V4	Female	Venue	Head of Marketing & Sales	Hong Kong	20
V5	Female	Venue	CSO	Hong Kong	9
V6	Male	Venue	Deputy General Manager	Shenzhen	30

Note*: To ensure confidentiality of those who were interviewed, their names were replaced with a code that consisted of letters representing a particular stakeholder category and a number. (E-Exhibitors, O-Organizers, A-Industry Association, V-Venues, G-Government Agencies/Destination Marketing Organizations.)

4.3.2 Value Co-Creation Practices in Trade Shows

Based on the analysis of the 21 interviews with different stakeholders across ecosystem levels, three main VCC practices were identified that occur in trade shows from an ecosystem perspective: *exchange*, *co-production*, and *co-promotion*. Additionally, since trade shows consist of three stages—pre-show, during-show, and post-show—this study investigates the interplay of these practices across multiple stages. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how these practices are interconnected and leveraged for the success of trade shows. Table 4.4 lists the three practices, along with their sub-categories, continuum, and indicative comments. The following sections describe each practice in relation to its conceptual meanings, dimensions, and representative quotations.

4.3.2.1 Exchange

The first emergent theme from interviews is identified as exchange practice, which means two or more actors share or trade resources for mutual benefits (Bharti et al., 2015). In this study, these resources are normally intangible (Shih & Yang, 2019), including specialized knowledge, industry insights, professional expertise, social networks, and strategic relationships that collectively drive value generation. As most informants (75%) referred to the exchange practice in their interviews, it can be inferred that it is one of the most prominent practices among the three. According to the findings, the exchange practice within trade shows, from an ecosystem perspective, comprises three key dimensions: 1) participant information exchange, 2) network resource exchange, and 3) relational cultivation exchange.

1) **Participant information exchange.** This dimension is the most frequently mentioned in interviews, as it permeates nearly all trade show interactions. The crucial role of information exchange in achieving successful VCC lies in the fact that these activities help firms gain a better understanding of their customers, thereby enhancing their performance (Yi & Gong, 2013). For exhibitors, information seeking and sharing are essential activities for co-creating value (Wong & Lai, 2018). Specifically, these activities involve exhibitors seeking and sharing market, product, and customer information with other exhibitors, visitors, and organizers during the trade show. As one exhibitor stated,

> *During the exhibition, there were many speeches. It was also a kind of information sharing to listen to the opinions of people from different companies on the trends of the industry. We could also learn from industry associations whether there were any policies on the frontier, or their plans for next year. (E1, Exhibitor, Shanghai)*

However, information seeking and sharing are crucial not only for exhibitors but also for other stakeholders involved in trade shows. For example, from the viewpoint of show organizers, engaging with actors at all three levels is essential. Before the show, organizers require information about the host destination, particularly if they are new to the region. They need details about the venue, contractors, and other related aspects, as well as insights into local policies or incentive schemes. In such cases, exhibition associations and destination marketing organizations provide support and share information with organizers, exemplifying typical information exchange at the meso and macro levels.

To design the show effectively, organizers also need to understand the exhibiting industry, which involves acquiring industry insights from exhibitors at the micro level or from associations at the meso level that possess knowledge about products, technology, and market trends. As one interviewee reported:

> *The organizers are not directly involved in this market, so they don't know much about how the market as a whole has changed. They need more voices or demonstrations from exhibitors to understand the entire market and its trends. This also helps them*

make some dedicated settings on current trends at the next event. (A1, Industry Association, Beijing)

To ensure the quality of the show, organizers also require feedback from participants. Industry associations work closely with organizers to collect feedback from their members who participated in the show, helping organizers improve their performance, as noted here:

We mostly talk about how to achieve a better [outcome] to be different [from] last year. We are not talking about the theme. We are not talking about business, but [about] services. How can the service be improved? What are some of the comments that the buyers have—[which are] good and which are not? (A3, Industry Association, Hong Kong)

Apart from organizers, other stakeholders such as industry associations also derive benefits from trade shows and acquire valuable information from events or other participants. As one interviewee claimed:

The president of the watch association I contacted participates in our show every year, regardless of the epidemic, online or offline. He said that this is the responsibility of their watchmakers, and they must come to communicate with peers from watch associations in other regions to share information and data. I think our show also provides them with an important communication opportunity and platform. (O2, Organizer, Beijing & Hong Kong)

In addition to trade shows, industry associations foster information and knowledge exchange through regular internal or external meetings. In particular, they share information with their members and receive feedback, which is a common mode of exchange. Additionally, they provide a voice channel to deliver important messages to the industry enabling members to make significant announcements or share information with others. The following quotes are indicative examples:

If we have important messages to share, for instance, during [COVID] and the government launched some incentive programs to attract international business… we use associations to share that information to the international players. So those are

also another benefit of being a member of them [such associations] and collaborating with them as well. (V3, Venue, Hong Kong)

For example, event associations like UFI, ICCA, IAEE, etc., hold some events around the world, such as their annual meeting or some large-scale events at the institutional level, they will invite us to join. Through such activities, we can learn more about foreign situations. For example, we can obtain more information through their channels to know more about the developments in the international exhibition industry. (A1, Industry Association, Beijing)

To promote knowledge sharing within the industry, some stakeholders actively participate in learning and training activities, typically occurring at the meso level. For example, some venues or associations organize field trips to visit peers and learn about best practices. Others offer training programs to share their expertise and knowledge. The statement reflects this comment:

We actually have a tour of Australia and visited about six venues in Australia to learn from their operation as well as hardware and also [their] management as well. (V3, Venue, Hong Kong)

Another important type of information based on the interviews is data, such as show data, customer data, or industry data. Specifically, this data may include visitor demographics, exhibitor profiles, transaction amount, impact assessments. The collection of these statistics is usually conducted by organizers or industry associations for research or decision-making purposes of governments. Hence, this practice is typically carried out at the meso and macro levels. Two examples of data sharing by organizers and industry associations are:

We do some data analysis; for example, we study what percentage of the participating companies this year come from the IP side and what type of IP, such as cartoons, culture, film, television, etc., and then we look at which industry the licensees who are concerned about this industry come from, whether there are more in clothing or more in toys, and then we can give the market feedback about the development trend of the

industry and suggest what the popularity and trends will be next year to drive the development of this industry. (O7, Organizer, Shanghai)

One of the purposes of the association is to be able to collect data in the industry and to be able to assess and to analyze, you know, from the data to tell the trend and the wellbeing or the suffering of the industry…So we gather all the data and analyze it and to tell the government or to share how the industry is doing. (V3, Venue, Hong Kong)

2) **Network resource exchange.** Another dominant type of *exchange* in VCC referred to in this study is *network resource exchange*. Unlike *participant information exchange*, *network resource exchange* involves the sharing of business of networks among stakeholders. Empirical studies within the exhibition sector reveal that exhibitors, professional attendees, potential buyers, and media entities are fundamental components of business networks. This network infrastructure shows a positive relationship with organizer effectiveness, as indicated by exhibitors' greater tendency to participate in exhibitions with extensive network resources (Lai, 2015). The exchange of business or industry networks is as important as that of information and knowledge, as it enables exhibition stakeholders to identify business opportunities and achieve their objectives. According to the findings, the sources of business network can be any stakeholder involved in the exhibition sector, and these networks can be exchanged among stakeholders for collaborative purposes. This practice occurs at all three levels of the ecosystem.

As previously discussed, industry associations recruit exhibitors or buyers for trade shows, leveraging their large pool of members and sharing their databases among association members. As one informant from an exhibition association stated:

UFI also can learn more about our industry in Hong Kong. They can also have our full contact list of all the industry stakeholders. (A2, Industry Association, Hong Kong)

Similarly, some organizers share buyer data with exhibitors after the show. One informant remarked:

Some organizers provide us with the buyer's information after the show. (E3, Exhibitor, Shanghai)

Another source of *network resource exchange* is engaging in networking or business matching events, either as hosts or participants. This practice is usually implemented at the micro and meso levels, with leading enterprises, show organizers, and industry associations playing active roles. For example, some organizers host networking events and invite exhibitors and associations to participate, who, in turn, bring their customers to attend, thereby expanding the mutual network. As one exhibitor suggested:

> *Sometimes we have local resources that can be recommended to organizers in a reverse manner. Some organizers may hold business matchmaking meetings simultaneously, so we invite our local VIP guests to participate, which allows them to communicate and establish partnerships. (E3, Exhibitor, Shanghai)*

3) **Relational cultivation exchange.** Within the exchange practice, relationship building and cultivation emerge as an important factor among interviewees, particularly exhibition organizers and industry associations. This dynamic represents a more advanced form of exchange than simple relational transactions, reflecting deeper commitment between actors (Jin et al., 2012). The study participants stressed the significance of establishing these relationships through continuous partner connectivity. The findings identified two complementary strategies: maintaining contact to ensure continuous engagement, and fostering good relationships.

Based on findings, relational cultivation exchange can be achieved through both formal means (e.g., networking events) and informal activities (e.g., visits and arranging dinners). As interviewees suggested, it is essential to keep in contact with customers and maintain a positive relationship with them. One association representative stated:

> *Basically, we're very hand to hand because, as I said, we have nine months to prepare the show. So, it's not something like, we finish and go, "okay, bye, let's have a holiday." The next meeting starts maybe three weeks later. So, it's like a continuously running system. It's not like the once-a-month thing, you know, [there's] so much work to put into to those few days. And also, there's a lot of laws [regulations], like government*

regulations, [that we have] to follow… so we're really, very, very connected. (A3, Industry Association, Hong Kong)

When discussing the importance of maintaining and fostering good relationships with customers, two informants claimed:

We should definitely cater to the preferences of the exhibitors and engage in regular conversations with them. It is important to visit them frequently as well. We don't want our interactions with exhibitors to be solely about logistical matters such as booth locations or payment issues. It creates a negative impression if they feel that we only approach them for those reasons. Many of our sales colleagues believe that selling trade shows and booth spaces is really about selling themselves as a person and building relationships. When people feel that you are trustworthy and genuine, they are more likely to view you as a friend. So, I think it's important to consider exhibitors as friends as well. (O4, Organizer, Shanghai)

Nowadays, businesses are becoming more diverse. For example, a company might be a leader in the field of new energy but also have investments in other industries. Therefore, by understanding these corporate resources, we can effectively organize various events and activities related to different sectors… Building strong relationships with these participating companies can also provide better resources for exhibitions and activities in other industry categories. In this way, the company can remain active while exploring different themes. (A1, Industry Association, Beijing)

In sum, the three dimensions of the exchange practice are interrelated and typically occur simultaneously. In the trade show industry, information and networks are highly valued (Q. Li et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2021); however, exchanging them alone is not sufficient. Stakeholders must also prioritize maintaining relationships to improve the quality of these exchanges. Moreover, the practice of exchange is equally crucial at all three levels of the ecosystem - micro, meso, and macro levels.

4.3.2.2 Co-production

The second practice identified is *co-production*, which has been recognized as a key construct for measuring VCC in previous studies (Bharti et al., 2015; Frow et al., 2015). *Co-production* refers to customers' active involvement in developing core offering of firms (Lusch & Vargo, 2006). It involves their participation across service/product design, creation, and delivery phases (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Shin & Perdue, 2022; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). This collaborative approach not only enhances the overall value of the offering but also increases its appeal to customers. According to Ranjan and Read (2014), *co-production* involves network actors jointly integrating resources to create value configurations.

In the literature on VCC, co-production has received considerable attention and was often used interchangeably with the concept of VCC (Ranjan & Read, 2016, 2021). However, it is crucial to distinguish between the two concepts, as they are not synonymous. VCC is understood as the broader, phenomenological process through which value is jointly determined and realized through the integration of resources and interactions among multiple actors within the ecosystem (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). This process includes both tangible and intangible forms of engagement, such as co-ideation, co-design, co-testing, co-consumption, and co-production (Frow et al., 2015; Loureiro et al., 2020; Russo-Spena & Mele, 2012). In contrast, co-production represents a specific, operational form of participation within the broader VCC framework (Bharti et al., 2015). It involves the direct engagement of actors in activities related to the production or delivery of core service offerings (Payne et al., 2008). Thus, while VCC encompasses a wide range of interactions and relational dynamics, co-production is more narrowly focused on the concrete and collaborative efforts that contribute directly to service delivery (Luonila & Jyrämä, 2020).

To better understand how exhibition stakeholders engage in co-production, this study examines various forms of collaborative production conducted by various actors in the context of trade shows. In trade show co-production, organizers serve as the central actor, taking primary responsibility for overall production, while other stakeholders, such as exhibitors, venues, and associations, contribute at different levels to the process.

Existing research from a firm-customer perspective highlights four core elements of co-production: customer participation, involvement, partnership, and mutuality (Bharti et al., 2015). Building on this framework and integrating insights from interview analysis, the current study expands the understanding of co-production through a service ecosystem lens. Findings reveal three critical dimensions shaped by differential actor engagement: 1) participant joint production, 2) inter-organization joint production, and 3) inter-alliance joint initiative.

1) **Participant joint production.** This dimension highlights the collaborative nature of trade show production, where participants get involved in the production process guided by the focal actor, typically the show organizer. Exhibitors contribute by responding to organizer requests, sharing information, providing resources, and offering services as needed. This interaction is in line with to *customer participation*, as defined by Chan and Kin (2010, p. 49), where "customers share information, provide suggestions and engage in shared decision making". The active engagement of participants in trade shows is primarily observed at the micro level, with a focus on show content creation - such as exhibits and concurrent events - engaging actors like organizers and exhibitors. Exhibitors are encouraged by organizers to offer their ideas, showcase their best products, and provide feedback to optimize booth performance and enrich the show experience. This dynamic emphasizes joint production, wherein both organizers and exhibitors collaborate to enhance the overall quality and appeal of the show. As one organizer stated:

> *We really need good quality exhibitors to bring the most cutting-edge and innovative exhibits on site. So a lot of times we need to discuss [this] with exhibitors. We need to educate the exhibitors [on] how to get the best return on the investment and encourage them to bring a new release…We work with exhibitors to encourage them to bring their activities. The annual activities usually include the annual distributors meeting, annual products press conference and their company event, to be part of the show. (O8, Organizer, Shenzhen)*

One exhibitor (E2) mentioned the significant investment of time and financial resources made by their company to build a high-performing booth, showing their commitment to the show. Additionally, their frequent communication with the show organizer indicates a

proactive approach to aligning their efforts with show production. Furthermore, some exhibitors (E1 & E3) mentioned assisting organizers in coordinating and participating in concurrent events during the show, such as roundtable discussions and seminars. This active involvement extends beyond their exhibit presence, contributing to the overall richness and success of the trade show. The following comment demonstrates the collaboration with exhibitors regarding this issue:

> *Since many exhibitions basically have some concurrent activities, they will give our company exposure in forums for as short as one or two hours, or as long as half a day. Then we will invite guests to help them communicate about the content of the forum speeches and so on. (E3, Exhibitor, Shanghai)*

2) **Inter-organization joint production.** The second aspect extends to inter-organizational collaboration, representing a deeper level of engagement and greater influence in the co-production process compared to *participant joint production*. In this scenario, the involved organizations are empowered actors who leverage their resources and expertise to closely collaborate with the focal actor. Analysis of the interviews revealed that inter-organization joint production manifests as active engagement by meso-level actors, as industry associations and exhibition venues, who become actively engaged in co-production with show organizers. They contribute their networks, resources, and expertise to enhance the quality and experience of the show. Given that industry associations serve as vital sources of exhibitors and buyers for trade shows, organizers partner with them to recruit participants or manage themed pavilions at the show. As one informant stated:

> *We tell them [the organizers] we are able to bring, let's say, 200 companies, 100 companies, or 50 companies. [We then proposed:] "You know, can you guys give us a spot?" [For example,] when we organize the Hong Kong pavilions… [we considered whether] we can be co-partners to work with them. You know, because like every jewelry show, they need other players and stakeholders to come in to make their shows much more happening [appealing]. (A3, Industry Association, Hong Kong)*

Similar to how exhibitors share insights with organizers, industry associations provide valuable information on industry trends, market dynamics, and local conditions, assisting organizers in aligning trade show content with current needs and interests. These associations leverage their expertise in show production through ongoing communication with show organizers, providing industry insights and contributing to concurrent events like forums. Furthermore, they utilize their networks of industry professionals and leaders to facilitate forums, seminars, or panel discussions. As one informant mentioned:

> *We share our marketing insights [with the organizer], we share the information we get from the industry, and what we would like to see during the shows. (A3, Industry Association, Hong Kong)*

Exhibition venues play a crucial role in collaborating with organizers to design and enhance the onsite experience for trade show participants. They work closely with organizers to develop new facilities and services that cater to the evolving needs of exhibitors and visitors. For instance, one organizer (O8) mentioned collaborating with an exhibition center to develop new facilities and services tailored to the live streaming requirements of exhibitors. This proactive approach shows how exhibition venues actively work with organizers to identify emerging trends and technologies, ensuring that exhibitors have the necessary infrastructure and support to effectively showcase their products. As the informant stated:

> *We [the organizer and exhibition center] talk about whether we should offer some online streaming booths, "zhibo", the live streaming area. So exhibitors can rent a special room and they can actually start the live streaming and things like that. (O8, Organizer, Shenzhen)*

The examples discussed at both the micro and meso levels suggest that co-production entails a dynamic process of the sharing of knowledge and the creation of new knowledge, resulting in a continuous mutual learning among the involved actors (Akaka et al., 2012; Payne et al., 2008; Roser et al., 2013). This mutual learning plays a vital for VCC, as it enables the optimization of service provision through an iterative learning process involving the focal actor and other participants (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This process not only shapes the experience of

the actors involved but also influences their perception of value (Roser et al., 2013). The following comment is an example:

> *Throughout the long-term collaboration with our clients [exhibitors], I have found that as our company grows, our clients have moved away from traditional single solutions and continuously updated their service requirements… I believe that our company and our clients are growing together. Ultimately, the client's needs are driven by market changes, as they are faced with an increasingly diverse range of suppliers and are becoming more discerning in their choices. (O3, Organizer, Shanghai)*

3) **Inter-alliance joint initiative.** When value is created through the active involvement of actors, it tends to become more frequent and robust. Some actors depend on collaboration with other businesses to gain access to resources they lack, reflecting "a high-involvement and long-term relationship that allows maximization of the co-production potential" (Bharti et al., 2015). By partnering with other business, actors can leverage external capabilities, expertise, and resources necessary to meet the diverse requirements of their counterparts (Akaka et al., 2012). Such repeated exchange of specialized capabilities fosters ongoing co-productive efforts. Over time, these mutually beneficial interactions evolve into institutionalized partnerships, forming a strong alliance. This alliance is built upon a mutual recognition of the value generated through collaborative endeavors and a shared understanding that cooperation enhances the value creation potential for all parties involved. Continuous engagement and interaction within the alliance strengthen these partnerships and contribute to a productive VCC process.

Based on responses from the informants, various forms of partnerships are observed, including co-hosting events or other strategic alliance initiatives. This type of partnership is commonly found at both the meso and macro levels, as actors at these levels possess exclusive resources that are challenging for actors at other levels to access. Thus, B2B ecosystem actors are motivated to form alliances to maximize co-production potential and minimize transaction costs (Pathak et al., 2020) through high-involvement collaboration. Effective VCC in alliances depends on the strategic alignment of partner resources, especially through complementary and

supplementary alignment (Case et al., 2012), as observed in the empirical findings of the present study.

The first form, complementary alignment, refers to the integration and utilization of distinct sets of resources within an alliance. By bringing together these dissimilar resources, the alliance achieves a level of completeness in fulfilling its resource requirements (Case et al., 2012). A typical example is co-hosting events between show organizers and other stakeholders. For instance, some industry associations may partner with show organizers to co-host networking events or sharing sessions. Through this collaboration, associations can leverage the organizers' event hosting capabilities, while organizers may utilize the strong network of the association to attract more potential participants for their events or trade shows. The following comment reflects this aspect:

> *We offer to fund the annual gathering, like the annual meeting, the annual members meetings that we fund. We provide the venue with one [industry association] on the F&B and other aspects. (O8, Organizer, Shenzhen)*

A similar example at the meso level is the collaboration between venues and other industry partners to enhance the experience for trade show participants. According to a venue informant, they collaborated with an airline company to offer in-venue check-in services to show visitors, aiming to enhance their overall experience and increase their time spent at the venue. They also partnered with local attractions that are the members of the same associations to offer exclusive deals and promotions to trade show visitors. Besides, newly established venues may actively engage in collaborations with global organizers to attract more trade shows to their premises. By partnering with renowned organizers on a global scale, these venues aim to enhance their attractiveness and draw more branded shows to their facilities. As one interviewee said:

> *We have identified certain organizers as our key accounts and have signed strategic cooperation agreements with them to entice some of their branded exhibitions to be hosted at our venue. (V5, Venue, Shenzhen)*

In contrast, the second form, supplementary alignment, involves actors within the alliance providing similar types of resources. Through this alignment, the actors collectively create

value that exceeds the sum of their individual efforts (Case et al., 2012). This kind of partnership allows the alliance to achieve results that would be challenging for each actor to achieve independently. An example at the macro level is illustrated by a representative from a venue engaged in an innovative collaborative initiative called the "One show in two cities" plan. This project encompasses various regions within the Greater Bay Area and involves the joint organization of trade shows and concurrent events between two cities, alongside shared efforts for publicity and promotion in both locations. As the interviewee stated:

> *We work with Zhuhai to do a promotion meeting together, and we will hold conferences together. We call this "One show in two cities," which means that we will spend two days in Hong Kong and one day in Zhuhai. (V4, Venue, Hong Kong)*

In summary, co-production plays a crucial role in VCC by involving multiple pertinent actors in the design, creation, innovation, and delivery of offerings. This practice mainly occurs at micro and meso levels. Engagement evolves from reactive participation to collaborative involvement, and eventually to formal partnerships during production. Through this practice, the main actor can utilize collaborators' collective knowledge and creativity to develop offerings that better meet market needs and drive innovation.

4.3.2.3 Co-promotion

In addition to the design and production phase, VCC extends to product and service distribution and promotion (Ge & Gretzel, 2018). The third theme that emerged in the interviews is identified as co-promotion practice, which refers to two or more actors collaborating on promotional activities related to a product, a brand or other entity (Frow et al., 2015). In trade shows, promotion is essential for all stakeholders, including exhibitors, organizers, industry associations, venues, and host cities, with a primary purpose of increasing publicity and attracting potential customers. As an important form of VCC, co-promotion can strengthen the effectiveness of promotional efforts through collaboration with various stakeholders, ultimately contributing to brand creation and shaping (Frow et al., 2015; Ge & Gretzel, 2018; Russo-Spena & Mele, 2012). Thus, it is commonly observed across all levels that stakeholders work together to amplify their overall impact by collaborative promotional

efforts. Taking an ecosystem perspective, the findings of interviews primarily centered around the promotion activities of focal actors and their partners through their respective channels. Three major aspects of co-promotion have been identified: 1) reciprocal brand exposure, 2) targeted network promotion, and 3) mutual endorsement.

1) **Reciprocal brand exposure.** Media channels serve as essential platforms for engaging customers in co-promotion efforts, enhancing brand exposure (Re & Magnani, 2022). In a related context, interviews reveal that stakeholders involved in exhibitions, beyond the organizers, contribute to promoting the trade show through their media channels, such as social media platforms, official websites, and news articles. This promotional activity through the media channels of various stakeholders is observed throughout all levels of the ecosystem. As one organizer stated,

> *So we do have a publicity kit for the exhibitions. So they [exhibitors] can actually send the invitation. They can actually post and a poster or video on social media, you know Facebook… Instagram. So their friends and business peers can easily understand, "Oh, I need to be involved because a lot of my peers, my friends are exhibiting, so I need to go there." (O8, Organizer, Shenzhen)*

Trade show stakeholders' promotional efforts sometimes are mutually beneficial, advancing their own interests while enhancing the event's visibility. For instance, exhibition venues naturally promote ongoing shows when advertising their facilities. Additionally, customer-driven recommendations, or word-of-mouth, play key roles in brand promotion (Re & Magnani, 2022). Exhibitors actively spread the word about the show and their booth to their clients and partners, as noted by interviewee E2.

Effective promotion benefits all parties by increasing exposure and attendance, ultimately supporting their business objectives. Show organizers can enhance the credibility and reliability of their shows through strategic marketing, which can drive exhibitor and visitor participation. Other stakeholders also benefit from increased participation, as it creates more business opportunities. Moreover, building on prior literature that emphasize the critical role of customer channels in co-promoting firm offerings, this study further reveals bidirectional

channel utilization. In this context, customers promote through the firms' channels, while firms leverage customers' brand influence. For example, one organizer (O1) mentioned that the achievements of exhibitors during the shows were highlighted on the show website, reflecting the level of influence and credibility the show has in the market. Furthermore, some organizers emphasize specific exhibitors who are the leading enterprises in the industry when promoting the show. One exhibitor reported:

> *Before the exhibition, I sometimes trade resources with the organizers, like their social media accounts and PR articles, where they mentioned our companies to enhance our exposure. Then I would ask my colleagues in the business development department to forward the information about the exhibition and help get more people to register. (E3, Exhibitor, Shanghai)*

2) **Targeted network promotion.** Industry associations play a pivotal role in offering show organizers a valuable channel for targeted promotion to specific groups. This targeted network promotion, predominantly occurring at the meso level, is essential for organizers to effectively reach potential customers. As a result, organizers often establish close partnerships with industry associations, not only to gain valuable industry insights but also because their members are the target customers for show organizers. Moreover, the publicity efforts of industry associations can facilitate the acquisition of highly qualified exhibitors and visitors for show organizers (Tafesse, 2014). Collaborating with associations to promote the show to their members is regarded as an effective strategy for organizers. This statement reflects this comment:

> *The industry associations actually get the members from the industry that we would like to target…for example, electronics exhibitions. We work with a lot of electronics associations so that we are able to promote even more effectively, get feedback more effectively...You talk to a group of people who are highly targeted and highly relevant to the event. (O8, Organizer, Shenzhen)*

Similarly, some exhibition stakeholders are themselves members of particular associations. This membership enables them to reach and engage with the targeted audience,

allowing them to collaborate with the associations to execute effective marketing campaigns, as one representative from an exhibition center mentioned:

> *You have to understand who the members are and what the functions of the international associations are. They are also our partners. Sometimes we run marketing campaigns through them. (V3, Venue, Hong Kong)*

3) **Mutual endorsement.** Co-promotion can also be achieved through influencing behaviors (Ge & Gretzel, 2018), which are defined as customers' role in shaping other market actors' perceptions, preferences, and knowledge about focal firms (Virlée et al., 2020). These behaviors enable actors to indirectly promote firms by influencing potential customers' perceptions and decisions. Extending this logic, the findings identified *mutual endorsement* as the third critical co-promotion approach in trade shows. This refers to recognition and support from influential or reputable parties, and involves obtaining endorsements from four authoritative sources: industry-leading enterprises, expert practitioners, institutional partners, and government bodies, whose public validation enhances the show's market credibility. Thus, *mutual endorsement* is observed across the three levels of the ecosystem.

The strategic inclusion of prominent industry enterprises as exhibitors significantly enhances a trade show's credibility and professional standing. This elevated status directly translates to increased buyer attendance, as participants seek opportunities to engage with market leaders. Building on this professional credibility, industry experts and authorities frequently contribute as featured speakers for trade shows, delivering keynote addresses that disseminate cutting-edge industry insights. Such third-party endorsement carries greater perceived authenticity and trustworthiness compared to messages directly conveyed by the organizers (Gopalakrishna et al., 2019). Show organizers further amplify this credibility through institutional partnerships with influential entities like industry associations and trade media outlets. These collaborative partnerships leverage institutional reach and specialized channels to increase show visibility and convey industry-wide endorsement. Organizers can enhance their industry and policy profile by partnering with industry associations that have strong ties to market actors and policymakers (Tafesse, 2014). For example, government involvement enhances the credibility and authority of a show, particularly in large-scale

exhibitions, which are often government-led. Official participation manifests through high-profile engagements, such as ministerial attendance at opening ceremonies or keynote addresses by public officials.

The following comments highlight the importance of endorsements for the show from leading enterprises and governments.

> *Large enterprises play a crucial role in setting an example for others in the industry. When small and medium-sized enterprises see that the leading companies are participating in a trade show, they perceive it as a sign of importance and value. This can motivate them to prioritize the event and make the decision to participate. (O6, Organizer, Shanghai)*

> *The government is not only funding the event, but also helping us to bring in a top-notch speaker. That's particularly true for a manufacturing event. We need a top-notch academician, a scientist to come to the event. (O8, Organizer, Shenzhen)*

A representative from an industry association underscored the value of organizational endorsements in supporting trade shows:

> *It's not like a promotion they need to do. It is more like we all agreed and we [are] here to support the show or just prove to the world, to the industry, that the show is a legit jewelry show… We do need strong confidence from the industry, from different associations. They agree and say, "This is a legit jewelry show; the show is proven." (A3, Industry Association, Hong Kong)*

The endorsement dynamic operates reciprocally: while trade shows benefit from partner validation, participating entities simultaneously gain recognition through their association with endorsed events. This mutual benefit allows trade shows to share their credibility by officially endorsing key stakeholders, including exhibitors, industry associations, and institutional collaborators, in their promotional efforts. This two-way validation creates a synergy where the show's authority boosts the status of its partners, and in turn, the prestige of these partners enhances the event's market position. As one informant said:

When you see that this company works with such a big international show - if it's a well-known brand in this business - you'll see its name or logo on the page of any other partner, which will make you feel like you can trust them. The value created is growing their popularity, endorsing each other, boosting the reputation and power of the business, and then improving each other's resources and products. (O5, Organizer, Shanghai)

To conclude, the three practices of *exchange*, *co-promotion*, and *co-production* are interdependent and not isolated from one another. For example, *exchange* often overlaps with other practices. These practices do not follow a strict linear order but can occur simultaneously (such as *exchange* and *co-promotion*) and continuously (such as *co-promotion*). While all three practices can be observed across the three levels of the ecosystem, their prevalence varies. The *exchange* practice is commonly found at all three levels. *Co-promotion* and *co-production* typically occur at the micro and meso levels, involving exhibitors and other industry partners.

Table 4.4 Sample of Interviewee's Quotations on Value Co-Creation

Categories/ Themes	Sub-Categories/ Sub-Themes	Ecosystem Level	Continuum	Count	Indicative Quotes
Exchange	Participant information exchange	Micro, meso, macro	Information and knowledge exchange for the shows	15	People believe that trade shows provide a platform which allows them to meet the maximum number of individuals and obtain information at the lowest cost. This includes gaining insights into industry trends and changes in personnel across various aspects of the industry. (O6, Organizer, Shanghai)
		Micro, meso	Information and knowledge exchange through associations	9	We also work together with association outside (e.g., UFI), so that we know each other better, know the industry better, know what is happening in the other parts of the world and things like that. (A2, Industry Association, Hong Kong)
		Meso	Learning and training	7	In fact, whenever we visit a new city, we check out different venues to observe how they conduct their activities and take note of what works well and what does not. We also try to identify any good practices and elements that we can incorporate into our own venue. (V4, Venue, Hong Kong)
		Meso, macro	Data sharing for research or policy making purposes	5	We also help UFI on some of their research or some publications that they need information from this part of the world, mainly from Hong Kong. (A2, Industry Association, Hong Kong)
	Network resource exchange	Micro, meso, macro	Exchange of business network	8	Occasionally, some organizers may provide us with information on the buyers who attended after the show. (E3, Exhibitor, Shanghai)

Categories/ Themes	Sub-Categories/ Sub-Themes	Ecosystem Level	Continuum	Count	Indicative Quotes
		Micro, meso, macro	Exchange through networking and business matching events	6	We are a member of a few key international associations…and we're active in engaging with them, because many of their member are actually our potential or existing customer... the members are all exhibition organizers. So by attending their conference, we are actually networking with the key organizer in the world. (V3, Venue, Hong Kong)
	Relational cultivation exchange	Micro, meso, macro	Keep contact and stay connected	6	As part of our exhibition, we organize related activities such as afternoon tea, dinner, and parties. The purpose of these events is to bring together our authorized parties and IP holders for casual communication and networking. By staying connected with us, they are more likely to participate in our year-round exhibition activities and make greater investments in the event. (O7, Organizer, Shanghai)
		Micro, meso, macro	Maintain good relationship	9	It is essential to maintain regular contact with buyers to avoid giving them the impression that you only reach out to them once a year. By sending them messages and inviting them to join our activities, we can catch up with them and stay connected throughout the year. Additionally, having more activities means that we have more reasons to invite them, which helps us maintain a better relationship with them. Ultimately, staying in touch with buyers throughout the year is crucial for building long-term relationships and business success. (O5, Organizer, Shanghai)
Co-production	Participant joint production	Micro, meso	Actors' support to shows in response to requests from the show organizer.	5	Occasionally, show organizers invite us to do round table discussions together. During such instances, we offer them our professionals' expertise while also gaining exposure for our brand. As a result, this arrangement is mutually beneficial and a win-win situation. (E3, Exhibitor, Shanghai)

Categories/ Themes	Sub-Categories/ Sub-Themes	Ecosystem Level	Continuum	Count	Indicative Quotes
		Micro, meso	Actors actively engage in the production of shows or related events.	12	We put in significant effort to secure the largest booth space for our company at the show. It was the first time we had requested such a big area and invested considerable resources and time into it. Initially, the organizer had limited knowledge about our company when we applied for the booth. We engaged in extensive discussions to negotiate and secure the prominent location. In fact, the organizer also had some doubts about us...However, despite the show being only three days long, our booth stood out as one of the highlights, attracting a busy and continuous flow of visitors. (E2, Exhibitor, Shenzhen)
	Inter-organization joint production	Micro, meso,	Group exhibition	3	Most of the time, industry associations encourage their members to participate in our exhibitions. Also, these industry associations often introduce some of their non-member business partners to our trade shows. (O1, Organizer, Beijing)
	Inter-alliance joint initiative	Meso, macro	Joint organization of shows or related events	5	We collaborate with an attraction industry association based in Hong Kong, where we are one of the founding members. The association also includes members such as Ocean Park, Jockey Club, Disneyland, Ngong Ping 360, and Sky 100. We get together every month with other members to discuss ways to collaborate and create opportunities for exhibitors to experience different activities in Hong Kong. (V4, Venue, Hong Kong)

Categories/ Themes	Sub-Categories/ Sub-Themes	Ecosystem Level	Continuum	Count	Indicative Quotes
		Meso, macro	Other strategic alliance initiatives	3	We have identified certain organizers as our key accounts and have signed strategic cooperation agreements with them to entice some of their branded exhibitions to be hosted at our venue. (V5, Venue, Shenzhen)
Co-promotion	Reciprocal brand exposure	Micro, meso, macro	Promotion of the show through stakeholders beyond the organizers	7	Prior to trade shows, we did a lot of marketing, including advertising to all of our clients, current partners, and potential partners throughout the Asia-Pacific region. We also spread the word about this exhibition and our own booth. We talked about what we would do at the show, what kind of activities we would have, what kind of team we would have, what business we would bring, what its highlights would be, etc. In fact, we began doing extensive publicity two or three weeks prior to the start of the show. (E2, Exhibitor, Shenzhen)
		Micro, meso, macro	Promotion of the stakeholders through the show	7	For instance, there may be concurrent forum events at trade shows. Exhibitors will also occasionally have the chance to speak on stage, participate in panel discussions, or deliver keynote addresses during these events. They also pay more attention to it and join in because it is also a way of publicity. (A1, Industry Association, Beijing)
	Targeted network promotion	Micro, meso,	Promotion through associations	5	The industry associations actually get the members from the from the industry that we would like to target. For example, electronics exhibitions. We work with a lot of electronics associations so that we are able to promote even more effectively, get feedback more effectively, because there's a very, very focus group...You talk to a

Categories/ Themes	Sub-Categories/ Sub-Themes	Ecosystem Level	Continuum	Count	Indicative Quotes
					group of people who have highly targeted is highly relevant to the event. (O8, Organizer, Shenzhen)
	Mutual endorsement	Micro, meso, macro	Endorsement for the show	7	When experts are associated with our show, it serves as an endorsement of our event by the said experts. For instance, if a logistics association with a prominent leader frequently attends our events and engages with us, it is a recommendation for our show. (O4, Organizer, Shanghai)
		Micro, meso, macro	Endorsement for the partners	2	When you see that this company works with such a big international show - if it's a well-known brand in this business - you'll see its name or logo on the page of any other partner, which will make you feel like you can trust them. The value created is growing their popularity, endorsing each other, boosting the reputation and power of the business, and then improving each other's resources and products. (O5, Organizer, Shanghai)

4.3.2.4 Interplay Between the Three Stages of Trade Shows

Trade shows can be divided into three stages: before, during, and after the show. However, VCC practices at each stage are not entirely distinct and often overlap, reflecting the interrelated nature of the trade show process. For instance, co-promotion activities span all three phases: pre-event marketing campaigns to attract exhibitors and visitors, real-time social media engagement and on-site branding during the show, and post-event content dissemination to maintain publicity and reinforce the trade show's brand. This continuity ensures that stakeholder attention is maintained beyond the physical duration of the event, amplifying long-term brand visibility and industry influence. The following are two supporting comments from interviewees:

> *I would say the exhibitions is actually almost like a cycle. There is no end and no start. Yeah. So when you talk about whether we work with them before the show or during the show or after show, actually in every single touch point, we need to work with them. (O8, Organizer, Shenzhen)*

> *Proper publicity and promotion should be conducted even after the exhibition has ended. It does not mean that the exhibition is completely over after the exhibition is over; it can be considered a program with a beginning and an end. However, sending a thank-you message after the exhibition is not enough. It is crucial to maintain market interest and momentum through continued publicity and promotion. (O6, Organizer, Shanghai)*

Similarly, co-production is another practice that spans multiple stages. Before the show, it involves the design and preparation of the exhibition between show organizers and exhibitors, as well as production efforts between organizers and industry associations. During the event, joint efforts between organizers and associations focus on operational coordination within themed pavilions or for co-hosted events. After the show, this practice can evolve into other forms of inter-alliance joint initiative, such as co-hosting ancillary events like industry forums or investor matchmaking sessions, which leverage the exhibition's accumulated momentum to foster deeper business

connections.

Exchange, as a core form of VCC, also takes place throughout all three stages. Before the show, businesses exchange networks, resources, and preliminary information to establish connections and collaborations. During the event, knowledge exchange becomes a focal point, as participants share insights, expertise, and industry trends with peers and stakeholders. Besides, fostering connections and maintaining relationship is another vital aspect of exchange during the show. After the event, the emphasis shifts to managing and strengthening these relationships, ensuring that the connections formed during the event lead to future opportunities. This ongoing exchange reinforces the dynamic and continuous nature of VCC at trade shows, highlighting the importance of building and sustaining business network over time.

Overall, the temporal feature of these practices underscores a critical insight: VCC in trade shows operates as a cyclical process rather than a linear sequence. VCC practices are embedded throughout the entire trade show process, rather than confined to particular stages. The overlapping nature of these practices reflects the complexity and richness of trade show ecosystems, where multiple actors collaborate dynamically to co-create value across different phases. This interrelated approach ensures that trade shows deliver both immediate and lasting benefits to all stakeholders involved.

4.3.3 Item Generation

Based on the interview findings, an initial pool of measurement items was developed to explore VCC practices within the trade show industry. Since these practices were derived from a multi-stakeholder perspective, only the most relevant items for exhibitors were selected for the measurement development. This resulted in a list comprising three categories and nine subcategories, totaling 63 item statements designed to measure VCC practices in the industry.

The items underwent refinement through expert panel reviews and a pilot test before being tested in the main survey. Several rounds of review were conducted to

evaluate and enhance the quality of the measurement items. In the first round, four doctoral students reviewed the initial items to provide feedback on conciseness, readability, redundancy, and wording. Based on their suggestions, some items were refined to improve clarity and simplify complex wording. To further enhance the practicality of the measurement items, six exhibitors were invited to review the initial survey questions during a trade show. They raised valid concerns regarding the quantity, repetition, and complexity of the questions, given their busy schedules. In response, the items were refined for conciseness, reducing the total number to 56.

In the second round, a panel of six experts assessed the representativeness and wording of the updated items, including two industry professionals and four academics with experience in scale development (Table 4.5). This process aimed to improve the face and content validity of the measurement scales. Each construct was defined, and the scholars rated the extent to which each item represented the corresponding construct using a three-point Likert scale (i.e., not representative, somewhat representative, or clearly representative) (Busser & Shulga, 2018; Y. Yi & Gong, 2013). Following the panel's review, nine items were eliminated for lack of alignment with the construct definitions or due to duplication, while six items were rephrased to focus on activities or perceptions rather than outcomes. This refinement resulted in a final set of 47 items (see Table 4.6), focusing on exhibitors' viewpoints.

Table 4.5 Profile of Panel Members

No	Gender	Age	Role	Expertise
1	F	25-34	Exhibitor	A manager who has extensive experience in participating trade shows.
2	F	25-34	Exhibitor	An expert who has extensive experience in charge of trade show related issues for the company.
3	F	25-34	Asistant professor	An expert who has publications in scale development study.
4	M	25-34	Asistant professor	An expert who has publications in scale development study.
5	F	35-44	Researcher	An expert who have extensive experience both in the industry and scale development research.
6	M	25-34	Doctorate student	A postgraduate student with a research interest on scale development.

The survey was initially developed in English and later translated into Simplified/Traditional Chinese for the target population. To ensure the accuracy of the Chinese-language items, two doctorate students, who are native Chinese speakers fluent in English, were invited to perform back-translation. This process aimed to verify the precision of the translation.

Table 4.6 Initial Measurement Items for Value Co-Creation Practices in Trade Shows

Categories	**Sub Categories**	**Initial measurement items**
Exchange	Participant information exchange	1. Our company actively exchanges information in terms of our products and technologies with attendees, exhibition organizers, and other exhibitors at this show. (Wong & Lai, 2019a) 2. Our company actively exchanges market information with attendees, exhibition organizers, and other exhibitors at this show. (Wong & Lai, 2019a) X Our company actively exchanges information and feedbacks in terms of this show with the organizer. 3. We learn new knowledge through information exchange with attendees, exhibition organizers, and other exhibitors at this show. 4. Our company actively exchanges information in terms of our products and technologies with industry associations at this show. X Our company actively exchanges information and feedbacks in terms of this show with industry associations. 5. Our company actively exchanges market information with industry associations at this show. 6. We learn new knowledge through information exchange with industry associations. (Frías Jamilena et al., 2017)
	Network resource exchange	7. We share our business network with the show organizer (to help them attract more people to the show). X We introduce our business network in the host destination to the show organizer (to get more people participate in the show). 8. The organizer of this show shares buyers' information with us. 9. We actively participate in networking and matchmaking events hosted by the show organizer to grow business network. 10. We actively participate in the networking and matchmaking events hosted by the show organizer to find business partners. X The networking events held by the organizer after the show help us find partners and achieve cooperation agreements. 11. We share our business network with industry associations. 12. Industry associations share business network with us. X As an association member, our company is recommended by industry associations to participate in this show. X As an association member, our company is recommended by industry associations to participate in networking and business matchmaking events hosted by this organizer.
	Relational cultivation exchange	13. We maintain a long-term relationship with the organizer by visiting each other on a regular basis and attending events on both sides. X We visit the organizer regularly and invite them to attend our events to maintain a good/long-term relationship. 14. We maintain a close contact with the organizer by visiting each other on a regular basis and attending events on both sides. X We visit the organizer regularly and invite them to attend our events to maintain a close contact. 15. We maintain a close contact with the organizers by participating in extension events after the show, such as networking and communication (e.g., seminars, workshops) events. X We dedicate important efforts to maintain the relationship with the organizer through regular exchange. X We felt an attachment or strong connection with the organizer through regular exchange. 16. As an association member, we maintain a close contact with industry associations by participating in events on both sides.

Categories	Sub Categories	Initial measurement items
Co-production	Participant joint production	17. Upon the organizer's request to enhance and improve the quality of the show, we collaborate by sharing our ideas and suggestions. 18. Upon the organizer's request to enhance and improve the design of the show, we collaborate by sharing our ideas and suggestions. 19. Upon the organizer's request to enhance and improve the content of the show, we collaborate by sharing our ideas and suggestions. 20. Our company provides practical assistance and support to the organizer in terms of the concurrent events (e.g., forums, conferences, seminars, and workshops) at the show. [R] [X] Our company works closely with the organizer to provide our new products and the latest technologies to help create a quality show. 21. Our company works closely with the organizer to bring our events (e.g., launching events, and product demonstration events) to help create a quality show. [R] 22. The active participation of our company in collaboration with the organizer facilitates a mutual understanding between us. [R] [X] The active participation of our company in collaboration with the organizer facilitates a mutual learning between us.
	Inter-organization joint production	[X] Our company works closely with industry associations to exhibit in the show. 23. Industry associations help our company apply for a booth at the show. 24. Our company applies for a booth at the show through industry associations. [X] Our company works closely with governmental agencies (e.g., local branches of CCPIT) to participate in the show. 25. Governmental agencies (e.g., local branches of CCPIT) help our company apply for a booth at the show. 26. Our company applies for a booth at the show through government agencies (e.g., local branches of CCPIT).
	Inter-alliance joint initiative	27. The networking and communication events jointly held by show organizers and industry associations are helpful for our company.[R] 28. The industry events jointly held by governmental agencies and show organizers and industry associations are helpful for our company. [R] 29. The networking and communication events jointly held by governmental agencies and show organizers are helpful for our company. [R] 30. The industry events jointly held by governmental agencies and show organizers are helpful for our company. [R]
Co-promotion	Reciprocal brand exposure	31. Our company extensively disseminates information about this show through our official media channels (e.g., company website, WeChat official account, WeChat video channel, Weibo, LinkedIn, and TikTok). 32. I share pictures and experience about this show through my personal social media profiles (e.g., WeChat, Weibo, Little Red Book, TikTok, and Bilibili). 33. The organizer mentions our company when promoting the show through official marketing channels (e.g., urban ads, WeChat articles, WeChat videos, and LinkedIn). This exposure greatly boosts the visibility of our company. 34. The offer of customized advertising of our company in the organizer's official marketing channels (e.g., WeChat article, WeChat video, show website, and show catalog) is helpful for us to obtain greater exposure. 35. Releasing new products, the latest technologies, or new achievements of our company through the official channel of the show (e.g., WeChat article, WeChat video, and show website) is helpful for us to obtain greater exposure. [X] The active involvement of relevant government agencies in promoting the show significantly amplifies the exposure and visibility of our company.

Categories	Sub Categories	Initial measurement items
		36. We pay attention to firms that provide speakers at concurrent events. 37. We pay attention to industry associations that provide speakers at concurrent events. [X] We pay attention to new shows or events promoted by the show where we exhibited. 38. We discover other trade shows at which our company can exhibit at this show. 39. We get information about other trade show at this show.
	Targeted network promotion	40. As an industry association member, we know this show through the media channel of the association (e.g., WeChat official account, WeChat group, website, and newsletter). 41. The industry associations, to which we belong as members, often work with show organizers to promote trade shows to us. 42. As an industry association member, we are often informed about various trade shows by the association.
	Mutual endorsement	43. Our participation in this show serves as validation for the quality standards of our business. 44. Our participation in this show enhances our company's reputation and image. 45. The participation of industry-leading enterprises enhances the authority and recognition of the show. 46. The presence of industry experts or associations in concurrent events of the show (e.g., forums, conferences, seminars, and workshops) enhances the authority and recognition of the show. 47. The presence of governmental agencies at the show enhances the authority and recognition of the show.

Notes: [X] deleted; [R] revised.

4.4 Final Conceptual Model

According to the interview findings, exchange, co-production, and co-promotion were identified as key VCC practices. Based on the preliminary framework proposed in Chapter 3 (see Figure 3.4), these practices were incorporated into to the final model (see Figure 4.2). The final model details the specific relationships between each practice, exhibitor satisfaction, and show brand preference. Additionally, Table 4.7 presents the updated research questions and corresponding hypotheses for research issue 2 based on these changes.

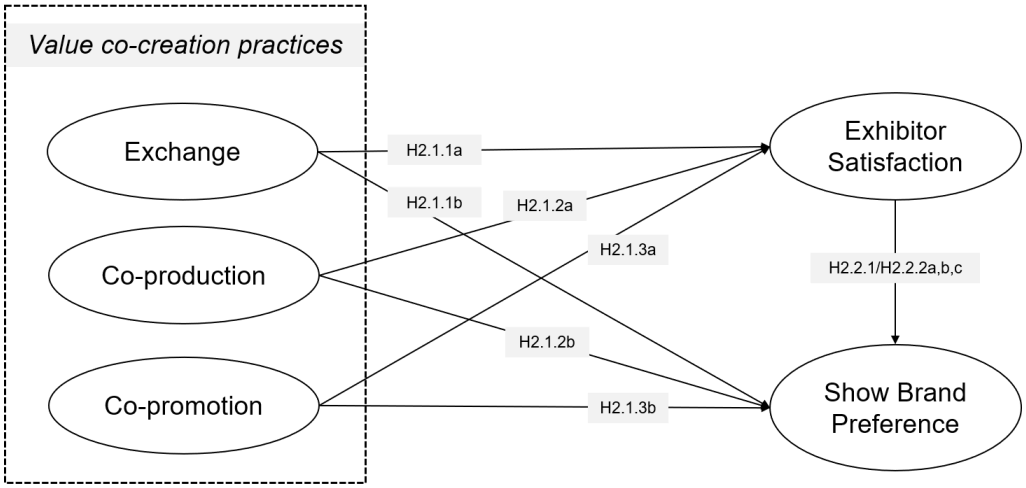

Figure 4.2 Final Conceptual Framework

Table 4.7 Updated Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Issue 2 aims to investigate the relationships between VCC practices among exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference.

Research Question 2.1: To what extent does each value co-creation practice exert an influence on exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference, respectively?

Research Question 2.1.1a: Does exchange exert an influence on exhibitor satisfaction?

$H_{2.1.1a}$: *Exchange has a positive direct impact on exhibitor satisfaction.*

Research Question 2.1.1b: Does exchange exert an influence on trade show brand preference?

$H_{2.1.1b}$: *Exchange has a positive direct impact on show brand preference.*

Research Question 2.1.2a: Does co-production exert an influence on exhibitor satisfaction?

$H_{2.1.2a}$: *Co-production has a positive direct impact on exhibitor satisfaction.*

Research Question 2.1.2b: Does co-production exert an influence on trade show brand preference?

$H_{2.1.2b}$: *Co-production has a positive direct impact on show brand preference.*

Research Question 2.1.3a: Does co-promotion exert an influence on exhibitor satisfaction?

$H_{2.1.3a}$: *Co-promotion has a positive direct impact on exhibitor satisfaction.*

Research Question 2.1.3b: Does co-promotion exert an influence on trade show brand preference?

$H_{2.1.3b}$: *Co-promotion has a positive direct impact on show brand preference.*

Research Question 2.2: What is the relationship among value co-creation practices, exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference? How does one impact others?

Research Question 2.2.1: Does exhibitor satisfaction exert an influence on trade show brand preference?

$H_{2.2.1}$: *Exhibitor satisfaction has a positive direct impact on show brand preference.*

Research Question 2.2.2: Does exhibitor satisfaction mediate the relationship between exchange/co-production/co-promotion and trade show brand preference?

$H_{2.2.2a}$: *Exhibitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between exchange and show brand preference.*

$H_{2.2.2b}$: *Exhibitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between co-production and show brand preference.*

$H_{2.2.2c}$: *Exhibitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between co-promotion and show brand preference.*

4.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented the qualitative research (Phase 1), which provided a comprehensive understanding of VCC practices from a multi-stakeholder perspective. The interview findings identified three main VCC practices: exchange, co-production, and co-promotion. Phase 1 also developed measurement scales for these practices, addressing the gap in the existing literature regarding the lack of measures. In addition, findings demonstrated the interplay of these practices across the three trade show stages. However, how these VCC practices affect exhibitor satisfaction and their preference for exhibition brands remains unclear.

Building on the results of the qualitative research (Phase 1), a pilot test and main survey (Phase 2) were conducted. This phase aimed to empirically test the dimensionality of each practice and the proposed relationships using advanced statistical methods. The methodology, findings, and discussion the results from Phase 2 are reported in the next chapter.

5 PHASE 2 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH – PILOT AND MAIN SURVEY

5.1 Chapter Introduction

Chapter 4 presented the methodology and findings of the qualitative research that identified three key VCC practices in trade shows from various stakeholder perspectives. The results of this qualitative study provided initial support for the conceptual model and the proposed relationships, indicating that exchange, co-production, and co-promotion may significantly and positively influence exhibitor satisfaction and preferences for show brands. Additionally, the findings confirmed the content validity of the measurements developed from the in-depth interviews related to the three VCC practices.

This chapter focuses on the subsequent quantitative research, beginning with an overview of the adopted methodology, followed by a detailed description of the data collection and analysis methods. It also presents the results of the pilot test and main survey. Utilizing Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), the chapter aims to empirically validate the measurements for the proposed constructs and to test the hypothesized relationships between the three VCC practices and exhibition satisfaction, as well as show brand preference, as outlined in Chapter 3.

5.2 Methodology

5.2.1 Rationale for Adopting a Face-to-face Survey

The choice of using a survey questionnaire approach in this study was based on two main reasons. Firstly, questionnaires are a widely accepted quantitative research method for validating proposed models. They enable researchers to collect data from a large number of participants and conduct statistical analyses, thereby providing empirical evidence for the proposed model (Sangkaew, 2019). Secondly, previous research has demonstrated the feasibility and effectiveness of using surveys in similar studies (e.g., Jin & Weber, 2013; Wong & Lai, 2019; Yi, Fu, Jin, & Okumus, 2017), further supporting the selection of this method.

In terms of survey administration, face-to-face (f2f) surveys were preferred over online or email surveys due to limitations associated with the latter methods. Online surveys often

experience low response rates, raising concerns about non-response bias. Moreover, obtaining contact information for a representative sample can be challenging, making it difficult to ensure sample representativeness. Self-administered surveys, whether online or via email, also tend to have higher rates of missing values (Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013).

Thus, this study employed face-to-face surveys which provide several advantages. They allow researchers to target specific exhibitions and efficiently collect data from a large and representative sample within a short timeframe. The diversity of exhibitions in terms of scale and industry sector enhances the external validity of the study's findings (Jin, 2011). A significant benefit of the f2f format is that it facilitates immediate clarification and assistance, reducing misunderstandings respondents may have regarding the questions. This personal interaction can improve the quality of data collected. Furthermore, face-to-face surveys enable researchers to follow up with respondents, minimizing the likelihood of missing values and ensuring a more complete dataset. These surveys are highly structured, providing a controlled environment for data collection, while still allowing for flexibility and adaptability based on the specific research context (Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013).

Overall, face-to-face surveys create a structured, flexible, and controlled environment for data collection in this study. This study involves distributing in-person questionnaires to exhibitors at trade shows across various scales and industry sectors. The following section discusses the sampling design of this study.

5.2.2 Sample

This quantitative study aims to examine the effects of the identified VCC practices on exhibitors' satisfaction and brand preference in the context of trade-to-trade exhibitions. The target population consists of exhibiting firms located in Mainland China and Hong Kong. To construct a robust and representative sample, the study adopted trade shows as the primary sampling units. It was essential to select a diverse range of exhibitions that varied in scale and industry sector and were hosted in different cities. This approach was intended to enhance the generalizability of the survey findings to the broader population. To achieve this, the study focused on the representativeness of selected exhibitions and locations, the adequacy of the

sample size, and the minimization of sampling errors. Drawing samples from a diverse range of trade shows across various industry sectors and scales was considered essential. Considering the differences in geographical context, the selection criteria for trade show locations were aligned with those used in Phase 1 of the qualitative study, ensuring consistency and comparability across research phases.

Accordingly, trade shows were selected based on following two criteria to ensure diversity and representativeness:

(1) Held in Shenzhen and Shanghai from August to September, 2024;

(2) Medium to large scale, with an exhibition area exceeding 20,000 square meters or involving at least 200 exhibitors.

Within each selected trade show, the study targeted individual respondents from exhibiting firms who were directly involved in the exhibition process. A combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques was employed. Data were collected through on-site, face-to-face surveys, with each exhibitor booth treated as one unit of analysis (i.e., one respondent).

During the scale development phase, researchers must ensure that data is collected from a sufficiently sized sample to conduct subsequent analyses appropriately (Hinkin, 1998). The widely adopted "10-times rule" suggests that the sample size should be ten times the number of survey items (Hair et al., 2011). However, there has been significant debate regarding the necessary sample size for developing a latent construct. Some researchers argue that the choice of sample size is primarily influenced by the selected data analysis method, as well as practical considerations such as available resources, timelines, and budget constraints (Boateng et al., 2018; Jin, 2011).

In this phase, multivariate statistical analyses, including principal component factor analysis (PCA) and PLS-SEM, were employed to analyze the data. Two independent samples were utilized: one from the pilot test and another from the main survey. Johanson and Brooks (2010) recommend a minimum of 30 representative participants from the target population for a pilot study aimed at preliminary survey or scale development. For PLS-SEM analysis, Kock and Hadaya (2018) suggest a minimum sample size of 160, particularly when researchers lack

information about the path coefficient's minimum absolute value. Additionally, many researchers recommend a minimum sample size of 300 for scale development (Boateng et al., 2018; Clark & Watson, 1995; Comrey & Lee, 2013; Guadagnoli & Velicer, 1988).

As a result, the pilot test in this phase consisted of 123 total responses, resulting in 101 valid responses collected. The subsequent main survey generated a total of 427 responses, of which 360 were considered valid. Therefore, the number of responses meets the sample size criteria discussed above. Next, the instrument used in the questionnaire is explained.

5.2.3 Instrument

The f2f survey consisted of 57 questions comprising three main sections. The first section of the survey included 44 items scored on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree" to measure the VCC practices identified in Phase 1. Specifically, this section addressed: 1) exchange (participant information exchange, inter-organizational intelligence exchange, network resource exchange, and relational cultivation exchange); 2) co-production (participant joint production, inter-organization joint production, and inter-alliance joint initiative); and 3) co-promotion (reciprocal brand exposure, targeted network promotion, and mutual endorsement). The second section utilized adopted scales to assess respondents' overall evaluation of the show and their brand preferences. The third section included demographics questions to gather information about the exhibiting companies. To minimize Common Method Bias (CMB), the survey instrument was designed with clear and straightforward scale items, ensuring that respondents could easily understand the scales. Additionally, respondents were assured anonymity and confidentiality to reduce evaluation apprehension (Sie et al., 2021; Tehseen et al., 2017).

The questionnaire was initially developed in English and then translated into Simplified and Traditional Chinese, adopting a back-to-back translation procedure. This process was carried out by two PhD students who are native Chinese speakers fluent in English. The translations were compared and the questionnaires were revised accordingly. For the pilot test and main survey, only the Chinese versions of the questionnaires were used. Sample questionnaires in both English and Chinese can be found in Appendix B and C. Measurements

for each construct and the corresponding sources are discussed in greater detail as below.

'Exchange' is conceptualized as a higher-order construct that represents 1) participant information exchange, 2) inter-organizational intelligence exchange, 3) network resource exchange, and 4) relational cultivation exchange. The majority of measurement items for these four factors were developed via qualitative interviews, and some were adapted from extant literature. The sources and measurement item details are discussed as follows.

The construct 'participant information exchange' (PIE) assesses the extent to which exhibitors exchange information with other entities during the show. Three measurement items were adapted from Wong and Lai (2019) and Frías Jamilena et al. (2017) to measure the frequency of informational communication between exhibiting firms and organizers, other exhibitors, and buyers at the micro level. Minor adjustments were made to align the items with the situation of exhibiting firms in a trade show at the micro level.

The construct 'inter-organizational intelligence exchange' (OIE) assesses the extent to which exhibitors exchange information with industry associations during the show. Similar to the construct of PIE, the measurement items were adapted from Wong and Lai (2019a) and Frías Jamilena, Polo Peña, and Rodríguez Molina (2017) to measure the frequency of informational communication between exhibiting firms and associations at the meso level. This construct was initially derived from PIE in the pilot test as a separate factor in the main survey. Minor adjustments were made to align the items with the situation of exhibiting firms in a trade show at the meso level.

The construct 'network resource exchange' (NRE) assesses the extent to which exhibitors extend their business network with other entities during the show. Six measurement items were examined in the pilot test, and three were deleted in the main survey. The three maintained items measured the exchange between the exhibiting firms and organizers for business networking at the micro level.

The construct 'relational cultivation exchange' (RCE) assesses the extent to which exhibitors maintain relationships with other entities. Four measurement items were examined in the pilot test, measuring the interaction between exhibiting firms and organizers or exhibiting

firms and industry associations. In the main survey, three items were maintained to measure the relationship cultivation between the exhibiting firms and organizers at the micro level.

'Co-production' is conceptualized as a higher-order construct that represents 1) participant joint production, 2) inter-organization joint production, and 3) inter-alliance joint initiative. It refers to the joint production between various actors in the development of the core offering itself. The construct 'participant joint production' (PJP) assesses the intention of exhibitors to participate in the production of trade shows in general as initiated by organizers. Three measurement items were examined in the pilot test and the main survey. The construct 'inter-organization joint production' (OJP) assesses the intention of exhibitors to actively participate in the production of trade shows or exhibit as a group. Seven measurement items were examined in the pilot test, and only four items were included in the main survey. The four items measure exhibitors' intention to apply for a booth in the area that is a collaboration between organizers and industry associations or government agencies. The construct 'inter-alliance joint initiative' (AJI) assesses exhibitors' experiences in participating in events jointly hosted by the show organizer and other entities, including associations and government agencies. Four measurement items were examined in the pilot test and the main survey. PJP measures the joint production activities at the micro level, while OJP and AJI measure the collaborative activities at the meso and macro levels.

'Co-promotion' is conceptualized as a higher-order construct that represents 1) reciprocal brand exposure, 2) targeted network promotion, and 3) mutual endorsement. It refers to two or more actors collaborating on promotional activities related to a product, a brand, or another entity (Frow et al., 2015). The construct 'reciprocal brand exposure' (RBE) assesses the experience of exhibitors with the promotion related to the show. Nine measurement items were examined in the pilot test, and four were maintained in the main survey. The construct 'targeted network promotion' (TNP) assesses the experience of exhibitors with the promotion related to industry associations. Three measurement items were measured in the pilot test and the main survey. Minor adjustments to these three measurement items were made to simplify and improve readability. The construct 'mutual endorsement' (MER) assesses the perception of exhibitors related to the show quality. Five measurement items were examined in the pilot test,

and four remained in the main survey. While RBE and MER measure co-promotion activities at both the micro and meso levels, TNP only measures at the meso level.

The two dependent variables were derived from previous literature. Specifically, exhibitor satisfaction (SAT) was measured using a scale developed by Lee, Lee, and Joo (2015), which consists of three items assessing exhibitors' evaluation towards the show experience, show organizer, and the overall show. Minor adjustments were made to enhance respondent comprehension. The construct 'show brand preference' (EBP) in this study refers to exhibitors' ranking of alternative trade shows after attending a specific exhibition, based on their evaluations of four aspects: the show itself, the organizer, the venue, and the destination. This measurement scale were adapted from Jin and Weber (2013), utilizing four items from the dimension of preference for exhibition brand components as the outcome variable to investigate the varying impacts of VCC practices on the show brand preference. Next, the data collection methods and procedures are outlined in detail.

5.2.4 Data Collection

The data collection for this quantitative study was conducted in two stages. In the pilot test, the researcher aimed to refine the survey process and obtain preliminary insights, whereas the main survey aimed to gather a wider range of responses from relevant participants. Both purposive and convenience sampling methods were utilized to enhance the quality and representativeness of the collected data. Each exhibition booth, representing a single exhibiting firm, was treated as one respondent. The specific steps taken during each phase of data collection are detailed below.

For the pilot test, f2f surveys were conducted at two trade shows in Shenzhen and Hong Kong. To facilitate this process, a team of university students was recruited as survey helpers, comprising three postgraduate students. Prior to data collection, they received intensive training to ensure they were well-prepared to administer the survey effectively. Upon arriving at the exhibition center, each helper was assigned to different exhibition areas to ensure comprehensive coverage of the exhibiting booths. During the survey distribution, the researcher monitored the process on-site and maintained communication with the helpers to

address any issues that arose.

For the main survey, data collection was carried out in collaboration with a market research company to collect a broader range of responses from various trade shows held in Shenzhen and Shanghai. Before data collection commenced, the researcher held a briefing session with the company to outline the research objectives, survey questions, and sampling criteria. Additionally, discussions were held regarding the selection of appropriate trade shows and respondents, ensuring that the study focused on the most relevant participants. Following this collaborative effort, the research company actively approached and invited eligible exhibitors at trade shows to participate in the study. On-site photographs of the surveys were taken to assist the researcher in monitoring the data collection process.

As a result, the pilot test took place over a one-week period in April 2024, during which a total of 123 questionnaires were received. The main survey was conducted in August and September 2024, expanding the total number of questionnaires to 427.

5.3 Data Analysis

5.3.1 Data Screening

After survey data collection, it is essential to address four critical issues to ensure the validity and integrity of the empirical findings, as recommended by Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2021). These issues include: 1) missing data, 2) suspicious response patterns, 3) outliers, and 4) data distribution. Accordingly, several steps were implemented to ensure data quality prior to analysis. First, an initial data cleaning was conducted, and responses met any of the following criteria were deemed invalid and excluded from the analysis: (1) incomplete or unengaged responses (i.e. failure of pass the attention filters), and (2) invariant answers (straight lining or inconsistent answers; Hair et al., 2021). Second, responses were reviewed carefully to ensure the absence of outliers. Next the two datasets were examined for normality using SPSS 26. Normality was assessed by calculating the skewness and kurtosis for each item. According to Kline (2011), for data to be considered normally distributed, skewness should fall within the range of ±3, and kurtosis should fall within the range of ±8. In this study, skewness values ranged from -1.384 to -0.257 for the pilot test and from -1.473 to -0.501 for the main

survey. Similarly, kurtosis values ranged from -1.080 to 2.129 for the pilot test and from -0.320 to 2.647 for the main survey, both of which fall within the acceptable thresholds, according to Kline (2011). As a result, the final sample included 101 valid responses from the pilot test and 360 valid responses from the main survey.

In the next section, the data analysis methods employed in this study is introduced, following the results of both the pilot test and main survey analyses.

5.3.2 Data Analysis Methods

This study employed partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) for data analysis. This method has gained significant attention in the fields of marketing and business research (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2019). Comparing to covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM), which focuses on theory testing, confirmation, or the comparison of alternative theories, PLS-SEM is more suitable for exploratory research aimed at theory development (Becker et al., 2012; Hair et al., 2019). PLS serves as a data analysis method that facilitates the development and testing of theories by examining the predictive power of a set of concepts and estimating relationships rather than validating existing theoretical frameworks (Sarstedt, Ringle, & Hair, 2014).

Therefore, this study employed PLS-SEM analysis with SmartPLS 4 (Ringle et al., 2024) for the following reasons. First**,** PLS-SEM allows for the analysis of complex models, including hierarchical latent variables (Becker et al., 2012) , and provides latent variable scores for further analysis (Hair et al., 2019), which aligns with the needs of this study. Second, PLS is recognized as a soft modeling approach that does not require large samples or assume normal distribution of data (Hair et al., 2021). This flexibility is particularly advantageous for B2B research, where small population sizes limit available sample sizes. Third, prior literature has extensively adopted PLS analysis due to its higher statistical power and strong predictive capabilities for the proposed model (Christian et al., 2012). SPSS 26 was used to check the descriptive statistics and PCA, and SmartPLS 4 was then employed for PLS-SEM analysis to test the proposed model. Figure 5.1 illustrates the process of the data analysis in this study, involving preliminary analysis, measurement model assessment and structural model assessment.

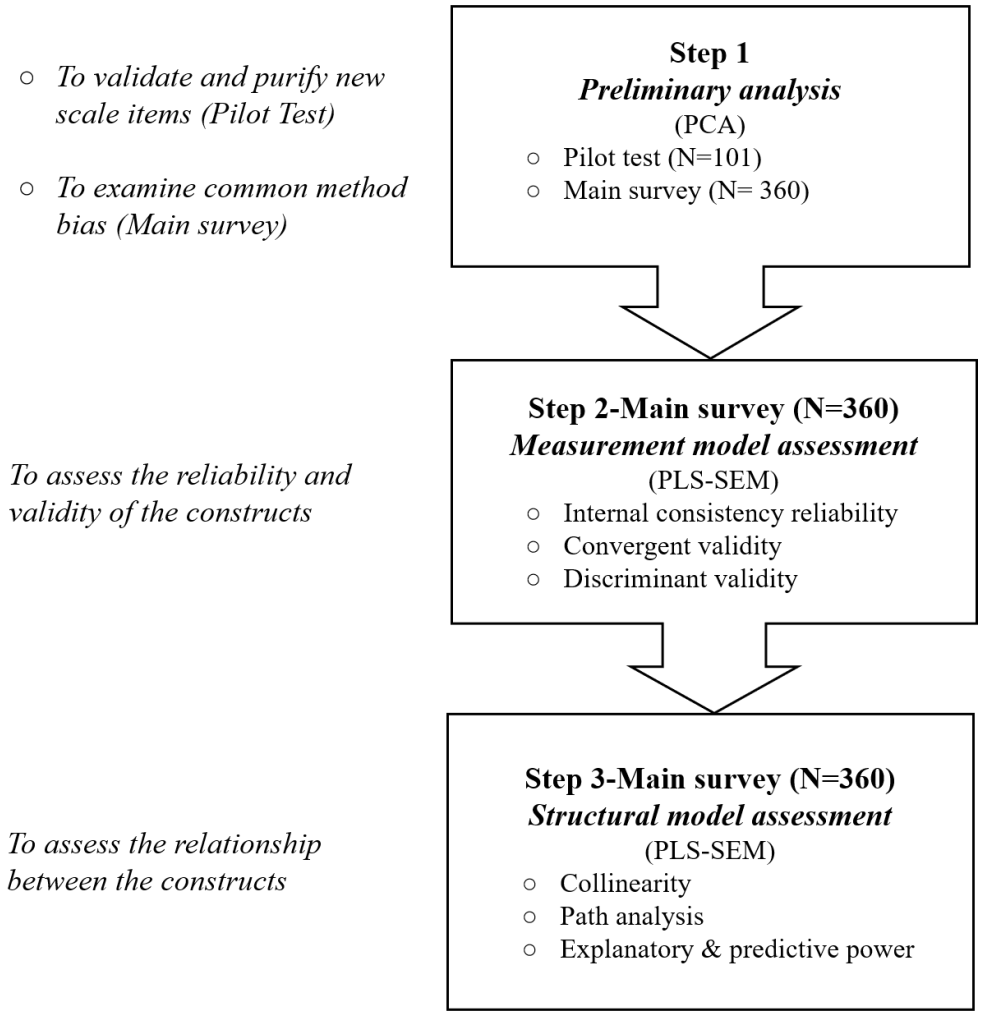

Figure 5.1 Data Analysis Process of This Study

5.3.2.1 Preliminary Analysis

- *Pilot Test (Items Validation and Purification)*

A sample of respondents (N = 101) was surveyed in the pilot test to assess the initial reliability and validity of 54 items, with the aim of refining these items. This analysis was carried out utilizing SPSS version 26 to obtain descriptive statistics and perform Principal Component Analysis (PCA). First, a demographic profile of the respondents was generated to better understand sample characteristics, enhancing the contextual insight into the diverse backgrounds of the study participants. Second, PCA was employed to identify the underlying

dimensions associated with three key VCC practices: exchange, co-production, and co-promotion. This analysis was carried out using the varimax rotation method to evaluate the reliability and structure of the newly developed scale items. By grouping the interrelated variables into related factors, the analysis provided insights into the construct structure, allowing for the refinement and validation of the measurement scale (Hair et al., 2010). Following the criteria established by Joseph Hair et al. (2010), items were excluded from the analysis if they had loadings below 0.7, if they cross-loaded on more than two factors, or if they were related to factors with a Cronbach's Alpha lower than 0.70. The remaining items were then tested in the main study using PLS-SEM.

- *Main Survey (Common Method Bias Examination)*

The refined scales obtained in the pilot test were further evaluated for construct reliability and validity, followed by model testing in the main survey (N = 360). Before assessing the measurement model, it was necessary to check for common method bias (CMB) that may arise when using the same survey at one point in time (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To identify potential CMB problems, a Harman's single factor test was applied using PCA without rotation, and estimating the total variance of the single factor. If the result is lower than the cut-off point of 50%, it suggests that CMB is not a concern (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In this study, the results showed that the common factor accounts for 31.161% of the variance for the main survey, which indicates that there is no CMB in this measurement model. Next, a PLS-SEM analysis was conducted, with the procedures detailed in the following section.

5.3.2.2 Measurement Model Assessment

A two-step process was employed to evaluate the outer model for the reliability and validity of measures, and the inner model for the strength of the relationships among variables (Hair et al., 2013), using SmartPLS 4.0 (Ringle et al., 2024). The first step in evaluating PLS-SEM results involves analyzing the measurement models, or outer models, aiming to establish the relationships between observed variables or indicators and their underlying latent variables. This assessment is crucial for determining the reliability and validity of the constructs being studied. It's important to note that the criteria for evaluating reflective and formative constructs

vary based on the nature of the constructs and the specific research context in which they are applied.

This study highlights the multidimensional nature of VCC practices (i.e., exchange, co-production, and co-promotion). To test the higher-order model, a hierarchical component model (HCM) was employed. Generally, a higher-order construct (HOC) is a general concept that is either represented (reflective) or constituted (formative) by its dimensions, known as lower-order constructs (LOCs) (Becker et al., 2012). In other words, using a HCM helps simplify the path model by reducing the number of relationships and making it more comprehensible and concise (Hair et al., 2018). Previous literature has identified four types of higher-order constructs based on the relationship between HOCs and LOCs: reflective-reflective, reflective-formative, formative-reflective, and formative-formative (Sarstedt et al., 2019). In this study, exchange, co-production, and co-promotion as HOCs were manifested by several latent dimensions (LOCs), with some dimensions, such as participant information exchange and network resource exchange, representing reflective-reflective higher-order constructs.

Given the reflective-reflective nature of the VCC practices as HCMs and their exogenous role in the path model, a repeated-indicators approach was applied to analyze the measurement model (Becker et al., 2012; Sarstedt et al., 2019). Internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were evaluated for all constructs followed the guidelines established by Hair et al. (2019) and Sarstedt et al. (2019). These standards served as a foundation for evaluating the reliability and validity of the constructs within the measurement model.

Each criterion for validity and reliability is discussed in detail based on the definitions provided by Hair et al. (2021). Indicator reliability refers to the extent to which the variation in an item is explained by the construct, which is measured through factor loading values. Internal consistency reliability evaluates the consistency of results across items on the same test, using Cronbach's alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR). Convergent validity indicates how well a reflectively specified construct accounts for the variance of its indicators, measured by Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Lastly, discriminant validity assesses the extent to which a construct is empirically distinct from other constructs in the model, using two

criteria: Fornell-Larcker and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios.

Table 5.1 summarizes the metrics that should be used when interpreting and reporting PLS-SEM results, along with the relevant references.

Table 5.1 Criteria for Assessing the Reflective-Reflective Measurement Model Using PLS-SEM

Aspects	Measure	Threshold values	Sources
Indicator reliability	Factor loadings	>0.70	(Hair et al., 2021)
Internal consistency reliability	Cronbach's alpha (CA)	Minimum 0.70 (between 0.60 and 0.70 are acceptable in exploratory research), Maximum of 0.95, Recommended 0.70-0.90	(Hair et al., 2019)
	Composite reliability (CR)	Minimum 0.70, Maximum of 0.95, Recommended 0.70-0.90	(Hair et al., 2019)
Convergent validity	Average variance extracted (AVE)	>0.50	(Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2021)
Discriminant validity	Fornell-Larcker Critierion	square root of AVE > inner construct correlation	(Fornell & Larcker, 1981)
	HTMT	<0.85	(Hair et al., 2021)

5.3.2.2 Structural Model Assessment

When the measurement model assessment is satisfactory, the next step in evaluating PLS-SEM results is assessing the structural model. To evaluate the model's ability to explain and predict other constructs, the structural model was estimated. The assessment procedure included four steps (Hair et al., 2021; Sarstedt et al., 2019):

First, an inner variance inflation factor (VIF) test was performed to assess collinearity issues among the predictor variables in the inner model. The threshold for VIF is set at 3 (Hair et al., 2021), meaning that a VIF value exceeding this threshold indicates a strong correlation among predictor variables, potentially undermining the reliability of the regression coefficient

estimates. Conversely, a VIF below the threshold suggests that collinearity is not a concern for the model, allowing for further analysis of the reported results. If the VIF is above the threshold, it may be necessary to consider eliminating problematic variables, merging predictors, or creating higher-order constructs (Hair et al., 2021).

Second, the significance and relevance of the relationships within the structural model were evaluated. Specifically, path coefficients represent the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. These coefficients have standardized values ranging approximately from -1 to +1, with values closer to 0 indicating weaker relationships within the structural model. Conversely, path coefficients with absolute values near 1 imply strong relationships. According to the guidelines provided by Hair et al. (2021), the significance of all structural model relationships is assessed using t-values, p-values, or bootstrap confidence intervals, with any of these metrics being sufficient. In this study, both t and p values are reported to avoid redundancy. A path coefficient is considered statistically significant if its empirical t-value surpasses the critical threshold, typically set at 1.96 for a 5% significance level or 2.57 for a 1% significance level in a two-tailed test (Hair et al., 2021).

Once the significance of the relationships has been confirmed, the relevance of those significant relationships can be assessed. A statistically significant path coefficient indicates the degree to which the exogenous construct is associated with the endogenous construct. This step is essential for interpreting the results and drawing meaningful conclusions, as small coefficients, despite being significant, may not merit managerial attention (Hair et al., 2021). Given that the model in this study includes a mediating variable (i.e., exhibitor satisfaction), an evaluation of total effects is also conducted. The total effect is defined as the sum of the direct effects between constructs and their indirect effects through mediators. As suggested by Hair et al. (2021), this interpretation is especially valuable for examining the varying impacts of driver constructs on a criterion construct via mediators.

Third, the coefficient of determination R^2, was utilized to evaluate the model's explanatory power for each endogenous construct, following the approach suggested by Sarstedt et al. (2019). Generally, R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are considered as substantial, moderate, and weak relationships, respectively (Henseler et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2011). As the R^2 value

might increase due to the inclusion of additional predictor constructs, f^2 effect size was also assessed (Hair et al., 2021). The f^2 effect size measures the change in the R^2 value when a specific predecessor construct is omitted from the model. Cohen's cut-off values of 0.02 (small effect), 0.15 (medium effect), and 0.35 (strong effect) were employed for interpretation (Cohen, 1988; Hair et al., 2021).

The fourth step in assessing the structural model involves evaluating its predictive power using two approaches: Stone-Geisser's Q^2 and root-mean-square-error (RMSE). This out-of-sample prediction was performed to assess the model's ability to predict new or future observations and produce generalizable findings (Hair et al., 2021). The Q^2 value, based on Stone-Geisser's approach, is calculated using a cross-validated redundancy method that generates path model estimates in both the structural and measurement models (Hair et al., 2021). The Q^2 values greater than 0 indicate the validity and relevance of the model (Hair et al., 2021).

Another primary approach for assessing the predictive power of a PLS path model is the PLSpredict procedure proposed by Shmueli et al.'s (2016) PLSpredict procedure. The root mean square error (RMSE) values obtained from PLS-SEM were compared with those of a linear regression model (LM) for each indicator of the key target constructs. If the PLS-SEM analysis yields lower RMSE values compared to the LM, it suggests a high predictive power. If the majority of indicators show lower RMSE values (medium predictive power), or if only a minority or the same number of indicators show lower RMSE values (low predictive power), or if none of the indicators show lower RMSE values (no predictive power), the predictive power is accordingly categorized (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 5.2 summarizes the metrics to be used when interpreting and reporting the results of the structural model assessment. The measurement and structural model of this study is illustrated in Figure 5.2, with further details discussed in the following sections.

Table 5.2 Criteria for Assessing the Structural Model Using PLS-SEM

Aspects	Measure	Threshold values	Sources
Collinearity	VIF	VIF value<3	(Hair et al., 2021)
Explanatory power or in-sample prediction	R^2	0.75 (substantial), 0.50 (moderate), 0.25 (weak)	(Henseler et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2011)
Effect size	f^2	0.02 (small effect), 0.15 (medium effect), 0.35 (strong effect)	(Cohen, 1988; Hair et al., 2021)
Out-of-sample prediction	Stone-Geisser's Q^2	$Q^2>0$	(Hair et al., 2021)
	The root mean square error (RMSE)	$RMSE_{PLS} < RMSE_{LM}$	Shmueli et al.'s (2016), (Shmueli et al., 2019)

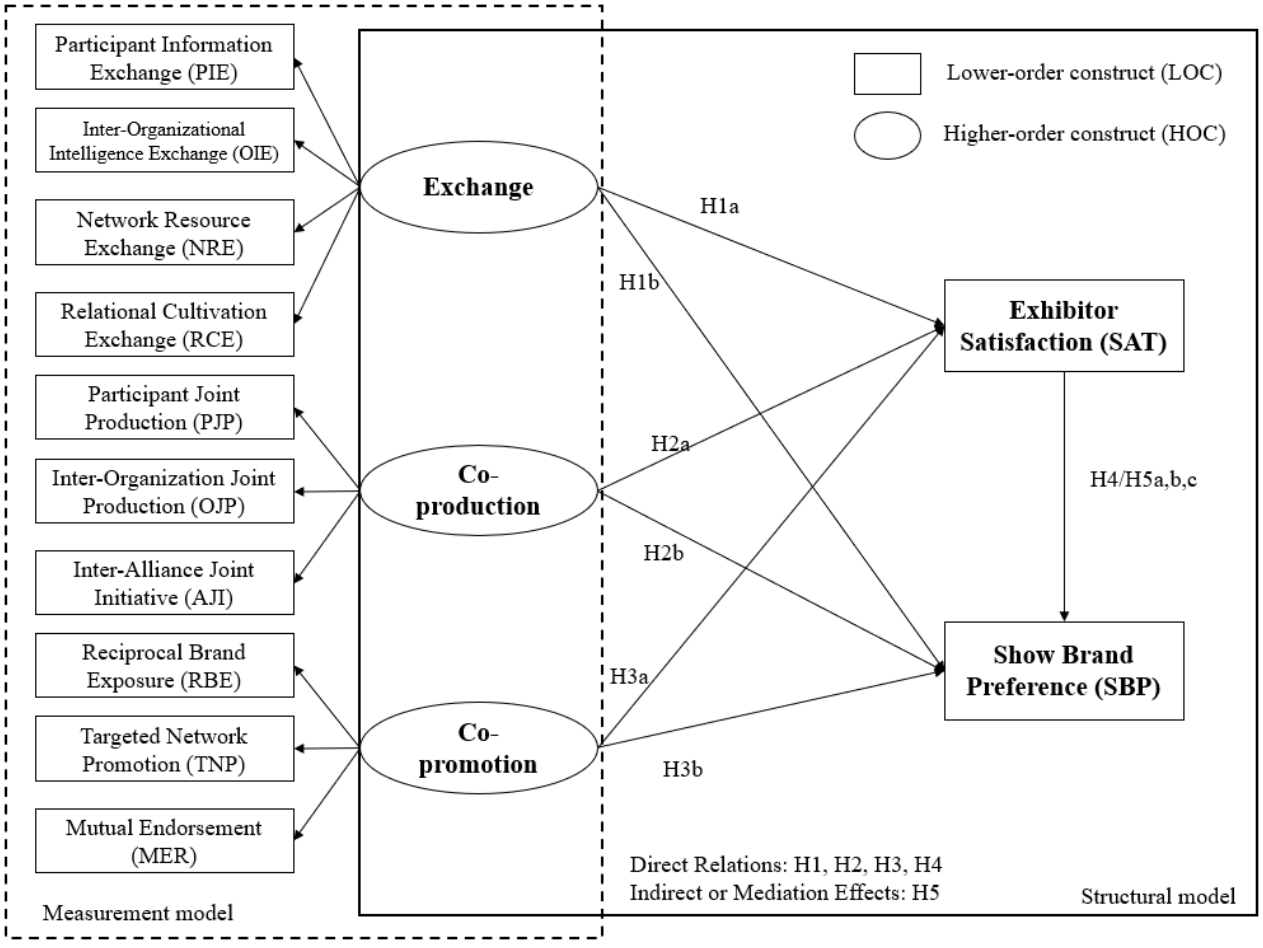

Figure 5.2 Measurement and Structural HCM Model

5.4 Results- Pilot Test

5.4.1 Profile of Respondents

Table 5.3 provides an overview of the characteristics of the 101 companies exhibiting in the pilot test trade shows. In terms of company size, the majority (45.5%) represented small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with 51-300 employees, followed by those with 1-50 employees (36.6%). A smaller proportion (17.8%) were large enterprises with over 300 employees. This distribution suggests a predominance of SMEs among the exhibitors. Regarding exhibition experience, 34.7% of participants reported having exhibited more than ten times, reflecting an active presence of seasoned exhibitors. Additionally, 38.6% had participated in two to five exhibitions, while only 5.9% were first-time exhibitors, indicating a diverse range of experience levels. In terms of annual exhibition attendance in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau, 43.6% of respondents attended one to three exhibitions annually, while 26.7% attended four to six, and 11.9% attended seven to ten. A further 17.8% reported attending over ten exhibitions annually. Concerning membership in industry associations, the data reveals that the majority of participants (63.2%) are not members of any associations, while 36.8% confirmed their membership status. In terms of organizational roles, 55.4% of respondents hold middle management positions, followed by 27.7% in junior roles and 16.8% in senior or executive roles. Finally, regarding the location of company headquarters, 88.1% of companies are based in Mainland China, 4.0% in Hong Kong, and 7.9% operate across both regions.

Table 5.3 Profile of Responding Exhibitors (N=101)

Characteristics		**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Company size	1-50	37	36.6
	51-300	46	45.5
	Over 300	18	17.8
Times exhibited in this show	First time	6	5.9
	2-5	39	38.6
	6-10	21	20.8
	Over 10	35	34.7
Annual exhibition attendance in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and	1-3	44	43.6
	4-6	27	26.7

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Macau	7-10	12	11.9
	Over 10	18	17.8
Member of industry associations	Yes	65	64.4
	No	36	35.6
Position in this company	Junior	28	27.7
	Middle	56	55.4
	Senior and above	17	16.8
Company location	Mainland China	89	88.1
	Hong Kong	8	7.9
	Mainland & Hong Kong	4	4.0

5.4.2 Construct Evaluation and Purification

SPSS 26 was utilized to perform Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with the Varimax rotation method to assess the reliability and identify the underlying components of the 47 measurement items developed in the qualitative research phase. PCA offers a means to analyze the structure of interrelationships among a large set of items by identifying groups of variables that are highly correlated (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

The elimination of items was based on two criteria: (1) factor loadings below 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010), and (2) cross-loadings on two or more factors exceeding 0.40 (Bernstein, 2012). After applying these criteria, a total of 10 items were eliminated from the initial set, while 34 items remained, distributed among ten factors. The suitability of the data was confirmed by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values, which ranged from 0.792 to 0.851, indicating significant correlation. Bartlett's test of sphericity also supported the suitability of the data (Hair et al., 2010). Table 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6 provide detailed results of the PCA for the exchange, co-production, and co-promotion constructs.

For the exchange construct, the initial three-factor structure developed from qualitative data was expanded to a four-factor structure after PCA. The four factors include participant information exchange, network resource exchange, relational cultivation exchange, and the newly-developed factor inter-organizational intelligence exchange. Three items originally

assigned to the "participant information exchange" factor were reclassified under a newly emerged factor "inter-organizational intelligence exchange" because of their stronger association with industry associations. Additionally, three items from the "network resource exchange" factor and one item from the "relational cultivation exchange" factor were removed due to low loadings and cross-loadings. The factor “inter-organizational intelligence exchange” extracted most of the variance in the data (44.146%), and the highest Cronbach’s Alpha value (0.964). As a result, 16 items were reduced to 12 items significantly loading onto four factors within the exchange construct.

For the co-production construct, PCA revealed a three-factor structure: participant joint production, inter-organization joint production, and inter-alliance joint initiative. Three items were removed from the "inter-organization joint production" factor due to inadequate loadings and cross-loadings. Among the factors, participant joint production accounted for the highest variance (48.613%) but a smaller Cronbach’s Alpha value (0.910), followed by inter-organization joint production and inter-alliance joint initiative. In summary, the co-production construct was refined from 14 items to 11 items, which loaded onto three factors.

Regarding the co-promotion construct, PCA confirmed a three-factor structure including reciprocal brand exposure, targeted network promotion, and mutual endorsement. Two items were excluded from the "reciprocal brand exposure" factor, and one item was removed from the "mutual endorsement" factor due to cross-loadings. Reciprocal brand exposure extracted the highest variance (39.726%) but the lowest Cronbach’s Alpha value (0.827), followed by mutual endorsement and targeted network promotion. Overall, the co-promotion construct was reduced from 17 items to 11 items loading onto three factors.

5.4.3 Survey Adjustments

Based on the abovementioned procedures, the following adjustments were made in the main survey:

(1) The initial set of 47 items from the pilot test was reduced to 34 items, which were further refined in the main survey. The remaining items were categorized into four dimensions of exchange, three dimensions of co-production, and three dimensions of co-promotion.

(2) In response to feedback from pilot test respondents, three items were rephrased for clarity and ease of understanding. These revisions are detailed in Table 5.7.

(3) Since the research unit focuses on exhibiting companies rather than individuals, demographic questions were revised to reflect the company perspective. Consequently, one question regarding the respondent's position was replaced with a question about the booth size of the exhibitor.

Table 5.4 Results of PCA for Exchange Practice

Factors/Items	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained	Cronbach's alpha
Participant Information Exchange (PIE)		1.513	9.458	0.867
(PIE1) We exchange product information with buyers, the show organizer, and other exhibitors at this show.	.833			
(PIE2) We exchange market information with buyers, the show organizer, and other exhibitors at this show.	.876			
(PIE3) We interact with buyers, the show organizer, and other exhibitors to share and learn knowledge.	.741			
Inter-Organizational Intelligence Exchange (OIE) *(*new dimension derived from PIE)*		7.063	44.146	0.964
(PIE4) We exchange product information with industry associations at this show.	.859			
(PIE5) We exchange market information with industry associations at this show.	.850			
(PIE6) We interact with industry associations to share and learn knowledge.	.830			
Network Resource Exchange (NRE)		2.298	14.363	0.877
(NRE2) The show organizer shares buyers' information with us.	.800			
(NRE3) We actively participate in networking and matchmaking events hosted by the show organizer to grow business network.	.840			
(NRE4) We actively participate in the networking and matchmaking events hosted by the show organizer to find business partners.	.850			
Relational Cultivation Exchange (RCE)		1.660	10.376	0.899
(RCE1) We have a long-term relationship with the show organizer through active participation in their shows.	.845			
(RCE2) We maintain a close contact with the show organizer through active participation in their shows.	.853			
(RCE3) We maintain a close contact with the show organizer through active participation in their events.	.867			

N=101

KMO=0.792

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square= 1444.005, df= 120, Sig.=.000

Total variance explained=78.343

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 5.5 Results of PCA for Co-Production Practice

Factors/Items	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained	Cronbach's alpha
Participant Joint Production (PJP)		6.806	48.613	0.910
(PJP1) If the show organizer requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on enhancing the show quality.	.860			
(PJP2) If the show organizer requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on the show design.	.857			
(PJP3) If the show organizer requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on the show content.	.909			
Inter-Organization Joint Production (OJP)		2.132	15.232	0.926
(OJP4) We would like to exhibit as a group with other firms led by industry associations.	.826			
(OJP5) We would like to apply for a booth in a group pavilion area organized by industry associations.	.884			
(OJP6) We would like to exhibit as a group with other firms led by government agencies.	.904			
(OJP7) We would like to apply for a booth in a group pavilion area organized by government agencies.	.870			
Inter-Alliance Joint Initiative (AJI)		1.712	12.228	0.931
(AJI1) We actively participate in networking events or sharing sessions jointly held by the show organizer and industry associations.	.859			
(AJI2) We actively participate in industry events jointly held by show organizers and industry associations.	.837			
(AJI3) We actively participate in networking events or sharing sessions jointly held by the show organizer and government agencies.	.876			
(AJI4) We actively participate in industry events jointly held by the show organizer and government agencies.	.858			

N=101

KMO=0.851

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square= 1157.890, df= 91, Sig.=.000

Total variance explained= 76.073

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Table 5.6 Results of PCA for Co-Promotion Practice

Factors/Items	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained	Cronbach's alpha
Reciprocal Brand Exposure (RBE)		6.753	39.726	0.827
(RBE3) We partner with the show organizer to have our company mentioned in their show promotions.	.792			
(RBE4) We partner with the show organizer to promote our company through their official channels.	.714			
(RBE5) We partner with the show organizer to showcase our products, technologies, or achievements through their official channels.	.716			
(RBE7) We pay attention to industry associations that provide speakers at concurrent events.	.727			
Targeted Network Promotion (TNP)		2.020	11.884	0.930
(TNP1) Industry associations recommend trade shows to us.	.834			
(TNP2) We get trade show information hosted by different organizers through industry associations.	.853			
(TNP3) We get trade show information hosted by different organizers at association events.	.874			
Mutual Endorsement (MER)		1.820	10.708	0.837
(MER1) Participating in this show validates the high quality of our business.	.722			
(MER2) Participating in this show enhances our company's reputation and image.	.794			
(MER3) Participation of industry-leading firms enhances the recognition of the show.	.715			
(MER4) The presence of industry associations at the show enhances its recognition.	.725			

N=101

KMO=0.805

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square= 1262.510, df= 136, Sig.=.000

Total variance explained=62.317

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Table 5.7 Measurement Items in Pilot Test and Main Survey

Constructs	Measurement items in the Pilot Test	Measurement items in the Main survey
Exchange *Participant information exchange (PIE)* Adapted from (Frías Jamilena et al., 2017; Wong & Lai, 2019b) and developed via qualitative interviews	(PIE1) We exchange product information with buyers, the show organizer, and other exhibitors at this show. (PIE2) We exchange market information with buyers, the show organizer, and other exhibitors at this show. (PIE3) We interact with buyers, the show organizer, and other exhibitors to share and learn knowledge. (PIE4) We exchange product information with industry associations at this show. (PIE5) We exchange market information with industry associations at this show. (PIE6) We interact with industry associations to share and learn knowledge.	(PIE1) We exchange product information with buyers, the show organizer, and other exhibitors at this show. (PIE2) We exchange market information with buyers, the show organizer, and other exhibitors at this show. (PIE3) We interact with buyers, the show organizer, and other exhibitors to share and learn knowledge.
*Inter-organizational intelligence exchange (OIE)**	*(*new dimension derived from "participant information exchange")*	(OIE1) We exchange product information with industry associations at this show. (OIE2) We exchange market information with industry associations at this show. (OIE3) We interact with industry associations to share and learn knowledge.
Network resource exchange (NRE)	(NRE1) We share our business network with the show organizer. [x] (NRE2) The show organizer shares buyers' information with us. [R] (NRE3) We actively participate in networking and matchmaking events hosted by the show organizer to grow business network. (NRE4) We actively participate in the networking and matchmaking events hosted by the show organizer to find business partners. (NRE5) We share our business network with industry associations. [x] (NRE6) Industry associations share business network with us. [x]	(NRE1) The show organizer helps us grow our business network. [R] (NRE2) We actively participate in networking and matchmaking events hosted by the show organizer to grow our business network. (NRE3) We actively participate in the networking and matchmaking events hosted by the show organizer to find business partners.
Relational cultivation exchange (RCE)	(RCE1) We have a long-term relationship with the show organizer through active participation in their shows. (RCE2) We maintain a close contact with the show organizer through active participation in their shows. (RCE3) We maintain a close contact with the show organizer through active participation in their events. (RCE4) We maintain a close contact with industry associations through active participation in their events. [x]	(RCE1) We have a long-term relationship with the show organizer through active participation in their shows. (RCE2) We maintain close contact with the show organizer through active participation in their shows. (RCE3) We maintain close contact with the show organizer through active participation in their events.

Constructs	Measurement items in the Pilot Test	Measurement items in the Main survey
Co-production *Participant joint production (PJP)*	(PJP1) If the show organizer requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on enhancing the show quality. (PJP2) If the show organizer requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on the show design. (PJP3) If the show organizer requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on the show content. (PJP4) We would like to provide assistance to concurrent events at the show. [x] (PJP5) We would like to bring our events to the show (such as product launch and product demonstration events). [x] (PJP6) We would like to actively interact with the show organizer to improve their understanding of our needs and enhance their service. [x]	(PJP1) If the show organizer requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on enhancing the show quality. (PJP2) If the show organizer requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on the show design. (PJP3) If the show organizer requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on the show content.
Inter-organization joint production (OJP)	(OJP1) We would like to exhibit as a group with other firms led by industry associations. (OJP2) We would like to apply for a booth in a group pavilion area organized by industry associations. (OJP3) We would like to exhibit as a group with other firms led by government agencies. (OJP4) We would like to apply for a booth in a group pavilion area organized by government agencies.	(OJP1) We would like to exhibit as a group with other firms led by industry associations. (OJP2) We would like to apply for a booth in a group pavilion area organized by industry associations. (OJP3) We would like to exhibit as a group with other firms led by government agencies. (OJP4) We would like to apply for a booth in a group pavilion area organized by government agencies.
Inter-alliance joint initiative (AJI)	(AJI1) We actively participate in networking events or sharing sessions jointly held by the show organizer and industry associations. (AJI2) We actively participate in industry events jointly held by show organizers and industry associations. (AJI3) We actively participate in networking events or sharing sessions jointly held by the show organizer and government agencies. (AJI4) We actively participate in industry events jointly held by the show organizer and government agencies.	(AJI1) We actively participate in networking events or sharing sessions jointly held by the show organizer and industry associations. (AJI2) We actively participate in industry events jointly held by show organizers and industry associations. (AJI3) We actively participate in networking events or sharing sessions jointly held by the show organizer and government agencies. (AJI4) We actively participate in industry events jointly held by the show organizer and government agencies.

Constructs	Measurement items in the Pilot Test	Measurement items in the Main survey
Co-promotion *Reciprocal brand exposure (RBE)*	(RBE1) We share information about this show through our official media channels. [x] (RBE2) I share information about this show through my personal social media profiles. [x] (RBE3) We partner with the show organizer to have our company mentioned in its show promotions. (RBE4) We partner with the show organizer to promote our company through its official channels. (RBE5) We partner with the show organizer to showcase our products, technologies, or achievements through its official channels. (RBE6) We pay attention to firms that provide speakers at concurrent events. [x] (RBE7) We pay attention to industry associations that provide speakers at concurrent events. (RBE8) We discover other trade shows at which our company can exhibit at this show. [x] (RBE9) We get information about other trade show at this show. [x]	(RBE1) We partner with the show organizer to have our company mentioned in its show promotions. (RBE2) We partner with the show organizer to promote our company through its official channels. (RBE3) We partner with the show organizer to showcase our products, technologies, or achievements through its official channels. (RBE4) We pay attention to industry associations that provide speakers at concurrent events.
Targeted network promotion (TNP)	(TNP1) Industry associations recommend trade shows to us. [R] (TNP2) We get trade show information hosted by different organizers through industry associations. [R] (TNP3) We get trade show information hosted by different organizers at association events. [R]	(TNP1) Industry associations recommend this kind of trade shows to us. [R] (TNP2) We get trade show information of this kind through industry associations. [R] (TNP3) We get trade show information of this kind at association events. [R]
Mutual Endorsement (MER)	(MER1) Participating in this show validates the high quality of our business. (MER2) Participating in this show enhances our company's reputation and image. (MER3) Participation of industry-leading firms enhances the recognition of the show. (MER4) The presence of industry associations at the show enhances its recognition. (MER5) The presence of government officials at the show enhances its recognition. [x]	(MER1) Participating in this show validates the high quality of our business. (MER2) Participating in this show enhances our company's reputation and image. (MER3) Participation of industry-leading firms enhances the recognition of this show. (MER4) The presence of industry associations at this show enhances its recognition.
Exhibitor satisfaction (SAT) Adapted from (M. J. Lee et al., 2015)	(SAT1) Overall, we are satisfied with the experience at this show. (SAT2) Overall, we are satisfied with the show organizer. (SAT3) Overall, we are satisfied with this show.	(SAT1) Overall, we are satisfied with the experience at this show. (SAT2) Overall, we are satisfied with the show organizer. (SAT3) Overall, we are satisfied with this show.

Constructs	Measurement items in the Pilot Test	Measurement items in the Main survey
Show brand preference (SBP) Adapted from (Jin & Weber, 2013)	(SBP1) We prefer this trade show to other shows of its type. (SBP2) We prefer this organizer to other organizers operating similar events in this field. (SBP3) We prefer this exhibition center to other centers within this city. (SBP4) We prefer this city to other cities for trade shows.	(SBP1) We prefer this trade show to other shows of its type. (SBP2) We prefer this organizer to other organizers operating similar events in this field. (SBP3) We prefer this exhibition center to other centers within this city. (SBP4) We prefer this city to other cities for trade shows.

Notes: [X] deleted in the main survey; [R] revised in the main survey.

5.5 Results- Main Survey

5.5.1 Profile of Respondents

Table 5.8 provides an overview of the characteristics of the responding exhibitors (N=360) for the main survey. Since the research unit is the exhibiting company, this section presents the profile at the company level rather than the individual level. The majority of the respondents represented small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with 47.5% of the companies employing between 51 and 300 individuals. Smaller companies, with fewer than 50 employees, accounted for 37.8% of the sample, while larger enterprises, with over 300 employees, constituted 14.7%. This distribution aligns with the typical structure of trade show exhibitors, where SMEs tend to dominate due to their reliance on such platforms for networking and market exposure.

In terms of exhibition experience, a significant proportion of respondents (54.7%) had participated in the show between two to five times, indicating a moderate level of familiarity with the event. A smaller percentage (26.4%) had exhibited six to ten times, while 9.4% were first-time exhibitors and another 9.4% had participated more than ten times. This variation in experience levels suggests a mix of both established and new exhibitors, which may influence their engagement level associated with VCC for shows.

Regarding annual exhibition attendance in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau, 44.4% of the respondents attended between one to three exhibitions annually, while 39.4% attended four to six exhibitions. A smaller segment (11.9%) attended seven to ten exhibitions, and only 4.2% attended more than ten exhibitions annually. This indicates that a significant portion of exhibitors are active in attending trade shows and have abundant related experience.

Membership in industry associations was reported by 32.8% of the respondents, while the majority (67.2%) were not members. This suggests that a significant portion of exhibitors may have limited experience with industry associations.

The size of exhibiting spaces reflects the level of financial investment and engagement for the show. The majority (43.6%) occupied booths between 19 and 36 square meters, while 37.8% had booths smaller than 18 square meters. A smaller proportion (18.1%) had booths

larger than 36 square meters.

Geographically, the majority of the companies (85.6%) were based in Mainland China, with 12.5% located in Hong Kong. This geographic concentration highlights the prominence of Mainland Chinese exhibitors as the main target of this research.

Table 5.8 Profile of Responding Exhibitors (N=360)

Characteristics		**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Company size	1-50	136	37.8
	51-300	171	47.5
	Over 300	53	14.7
Times exhibited in this show	First time	34	9.4
	2-5	197	54.7
	6-10	95	26.4
	Over 10	34	9.4
Annual exhibition attendance in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau	1-3	160	44.4
	4-6	142	39.4
	7-10	43	11.9
	Over 10	15	4.2
Member of industry associations	Yes	118	32.8
	No	242	67.2
Booth size (sqm)	Less than 18	136	37.8
	19-36	157	43.6
	Over 36	65	18.1
Company location	Mainland China	308	85.6
	Hong Kong	45	12.5
	Others	7	1.9

5.5.2 Preliminary Analysis

The remaining 47-item scale developed in the pilot test was further tested in the main survey (N = 360). To examine the presence of common method bias (CMB), Harman's single factor test and collinearity Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) were applied. Harman's (1967) single-factor test and PCA with no rotation for all items, confirmed that common method bias

was not a concern, as a single factor explained less than 50% of the variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In this study, the one-factor model accounted for only 31.161 of the variance, which is below the 50% threshold. Additionally, all VIF scores were below 3.3 indicating the absence of collinearity issues (Kock & Lynn, 2012). Therefore, based on these two assessments, it can be concluded that there is no evidence of CMB in the data.

Regarding the normality of the study, skewness values ranged from -1.473 to -0.501, and kurtosis values varied from -0.32 to 2.647. These results indicate that the data did not violate the assumption of normality recommended by Kline (2011). Based on these indicators, the data can be considered approximately normal.

5.5.3 Measurement Model Assessment

The first step in evaluating PLS-SEM results involves analyzing the measurement models or outer models, aiming to assess the reliability and validity of measures (Hair et al., 2021). The evaluation criteria for a reflective measurement model, as outlined by Hair et al. (2019) and Sarstedt et al. (2019), include internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Specifically, Cronbach's Alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated for each construct, following specific thresholds: loadings should exceed 0.7, CA should be greater than 0.6, CR should exceed 0.7, and AVE should be above 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019, 2021). Following the suggestion of Sarstedt et al. (2019), the repeated indicators approach was employed to assess the model (Figure 5.2), which is recommended for evaluating reflective higher-order models.

As displayed in Table 5.9, all indicators demonstrated statistically significant factor loadings above the cut-off of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021), except for one indicator (SBP4). The measures' composite reliability, ranging from 0.713 to 0.851 (rho_a) and 0.839 to 0.909 (rho_c), and Cronbach's alphas, ranging from 0.713 to 0.851, demonstrated good scale reliability. The average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceeded the threshold of 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2021).

Discriminant validity is established through three criteria: 1) the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT; Hair et al., 2021), where the correlation between pairs of

constructs is below 0.85; 2) Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion, indicating that the square root of AVE for each construct is greater than the levels of correlation; and 3) cross-loadings showing that all items have a higher value in the defined construct than in any other constructs. Table 5.10 shows that all HTMT values were below the threshold of 0.85, confirming strong discriminant validity. The results in Table 5.11 supports the second criterion. Additionally, the cross-loading results in Table 5.12 confirm discriminant validity.

Overall, the evaluation of the measurement model in PLS indicates satisfactory internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity for the reflective measurement model.

Table 5.9 Results Summary for Reflective Measurement Models (N=360)

Latent Variables / Indicators	Loadings	AVE	CA	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Participant Information Exchange		0.653	0.736	0.740	0.850				
PIE1	0.797					5.510	1.023	-1.473	2.646
PIE2	0.818					5.270	1.009	-0.566	1.695
PIE3	0.810					5.380	1.145	-0.760	0.571
Inter-Organizational Intelligence Exchange		0.693	0.779	0.781	0.872				
OIE1	0.826					5.440	1.138	-0.946	1.196
OIE2	0.835					5.370	1.145	-1.197	2.437
OIE3	0.837					5.170	1.264	-0.902	0.926
Network Resource Exchange		0.661	0.744	0.747	0.854				
NRE2	0.789					5.330	1.210	-0.894	0.610
NRE3	0.837					5.240	1.086	-0.657	0.877
NRE4	0.812					5.390	1.222	-0.559	-0.039
Relational Cultivation Exchange		0.745	0.828	0.829	0.897				
RCE1	0.870					5.000	1.307	-0.917	0.411
RCE2	0.866					5.010	1.314	-0.754	0.313
RCE3	0.852					5.030	1.392	-0.577	-0.320
Participant Joint Production		0.741	0.825	0.827	0.896				
PJP1	0.896					5.680	1.084	-1.152	2.153
PJP2	0.839					5.450	1.126	-0.851	1.204
PJP3	0.847					5.560	1.184	-0.706	0.527
Inter-Organization Joint Production		0.571	0.750	0.749	0.842				
OJP4	0.738					5.400	1.077	-0.856	1.424
OJP5	0.739					5.440	1.072	-0.761	1.027
OJP6	0.777					5.490	1.142	-0.821	0.603
OJP7	0.768					5.460	1.153	-0.748	0.415

Latent Variables / Indicators	Loadings	AVE	CA	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Inter-Alliance Joint Initiative		0.585	0.764	0.765	0.850				
AJI1	0.760					5.260	1.023	-1.033	1.995
AJI2	0.769					5.430	1.097	-1.113	2.647
AJI3	0.771					5.420	1.071	-0.850	1.828
AJI4	0.760					5.470	1.060	-0.765	0.579
Reciprocal Brand Exposure		0.574	0.751	0.752	0.843				
RBE3	0.748					5.100	1.232	-0.754	0.130
RBE4	0.763					5.100	1.230	-0.766	0.822
RBE5	0.811					5.180	1.318	-1.064	1.238
RBE6	0.704					5.230	1.272	-0.805	0.267
Targeted Network Promotion		0.635	0.713	0.713	0.839				
TNP1	0.807					5.240	1.133	-1.063	0.884
TNP2	0.795					5.190	1.187	-0.908	0.940
TNP3	0.789					5.360	1.228	-0.858	0.839
Mutual Endorsement		0.567	0.746	0.753	0.840				
MER1	0.760					5.510	0.985	-0.930	1.551
MER2	0.741					5.480	1.026	-0.671	0.913
MER3	0.710					5.340	1.167	-0.538	-0.051
MER4	0.798					5.300	1.098	-0.686	1.026
Exhibitor Satisfaction		0.770	0.851	0.851	0.909				
SAT1	0.885					5.150	1.126	-0.775	0.739
SAT2	0.864					5.120	1.141	-0.711	1.195
SAT3	0.883					5.310	1.141	-0.836	0.846
Show Brand Preference		0.571	0.749	0.769	0.841				
SBP1	0.819					5.120	1.250	-0.724	0.271
SBP2	0.809					5.150	1.021	-0.621	1.280
SBP3	0.726					5.240	1.141	-0.501	0.070
SBP4	0.656					5.240	1.301	-1.069	1.211

Note: AVE - average variance extracted, CR - construct reliability, CR- Cronbach’s alpha

Table 5.10 Results of Discriminant Validity Analysis (N=360): Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio

	PIE	OIE	NRE	RCE	OJP	PJP	AJI	RBE	TNP	MER	SAT	SBP
PIE												
OIE	0.678											
NRE	0.595	0.635										
RCE	0.583	0.590	0.510									
OJP	0.559	0.586	0.604	0.458								
PJP	0.567	0.415	0.564	0.474	0.705							
AJI	0.522	0.563	0.645	0.671	0.617	0.560						
RBE	0.556	0.574	0.534	0.622	0.389	0.390	0.675					
TNP	0.572	0.645	0.560	0.657	0.539	0.541	0.782	0.762				
MER	0.522	0.434	0.577	0.368	0.721	0.598	0.544	0.432	0.582			
SAT	0.625	0.499	0.514	0.601	0.493	0.444	0.643	0.614	0.643	0.646		
SBP	0.484	0.465	0.545	0.447	0.504	0.444	0.580	0.453	0.668	0.669	0.749	

Table 5.11 Results of Discriminant Validity Analysis (N=360): Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	PIE	OIE	NRE	RCE	PJP	OJP	AJI	RBE	TNP	MER	SAT	SBP
PIE	0.808											
OIE	0.520	0.833										
NRE	0.441	0.486	0.813									
RCE	0.463	0.477	0.404	0.863								
PJP	0.442	0.334	0.445	0.391	0.861							
OJP	0.418	0.451	0.453	0.365	0.556	0.756						
AJI	0.397	0.436	0.489	0.532	0.448	0.471	0.765					
RBE	0.421	0.444	0.401	0.493	0.310	0.298	0.510	0.757				
TNP	0.418	0.483	0.412	0.504	0.415	0.397	0.575	0.559	0.797			
MER	0.386	0.333	0.431	0.293	0.469	0.540	0.413	0.329	0.432	0.753		
SAT	0.499	0.410	0.413	0.505	0.373	0.397	0.517	0.494	0.502	0.516	0.877	
SBP	0.359	0.353	0.404	0.363	0.342	0.369	0.439	0.359	0.491	0.498	0.610	0.756

Note: HTMT = heterotrait–monotrait, PIE = participant information exchange, OIE = inter-organizational intelligence exchange, NRE = network resource exchange, RCE =

relational cultivation exchange, PJP = participant joint production, OJP = inter-organization joint production, AJI = inter-alliance joint initiative, RBE = reciprocal brand exposure, TNP = targeted network promotion, MER= mutual endorsement, SAT = exhibitor satisfaction, SBP = show brand preference.

Table 5.12 Cross Loadings

	PIE	OIE	NRE	RCE	PJP	OJP	AJI	RBE	TNP	MER	SAT	SBP
PIE1	0.797	0.349	0.347	0.282	0.345	0.307	0.250	0.309	0.313	0.306	0.326	0.231
PIE2	0.818	0.402	0.352	0.361	0.370	0.359	0.304	0.285	0.305	0.346	0.414	0.312
PIE3	0.810	0.496	0.370	0.464	0.357	0.344	0.395	0.416	0.387	0.287	0.460	0.320
OIE1	0.409	0.826	0.396	0.328	0.247	0.347	0.287	0.296	0.321	0.205	0.284	0.244
OIE2	0.450	0.835	0.421	0.379	0.315	0.397	0.418	0.417	0.474	0.313	0.352	0.326
OIE3	0.439	0.837	0.396	0.479	0.270	0.380	0.380	0.391	0.405	0.308	0.384	0.308
NRE1	0.355	0.342	0.789	0.249	0.324	0.353	0.334	0.296	0.262	0.345	0.272	0.285
NRE2	0.333	0.422	0.837	0.358	0.388	0.370	0.441	0.340	0.365	0.389	0.380	0.371
NRE3	0.388	0.415	0.812	0.369	0.371	0.381	0.412	0.338	0.368	0.318	0.347	0.324
RCE1	0.415	0.447	0.349	0.870	0.363	0.321	0.467	0.452	0.476	0.264	0.428	0.343
RCE2	0.412	0.407	0.349	0.866	0.309	0.306	0.456	0.415	0.415	0.258	0.465	0.338
RCE3	0.371	0.381	0.347	0.852	0.341	0.317	0.455	0.409	0.412	0.235	0.415	0.256
PJP1	0.390	0.302	0.443	0.305	0.896	0.507	0.394	0.278	0.390	0.418	0.320	0.302
PJP2	0.384	0.308	0.403	0.387	0.839	0.466	0.398	0.345	0.390	0.454	0.331	0.337
PJP3	0.368	0.249	0.300	0.319	0.847	0.462	0.364	0.175	0.288	0.337	0.311	0.242
OJP1	0.373	0.431	0.378	0.419	0.415	0.738	0.391	0.343	0.361	0.384	0.374	0.321
OJP2	0.302	0.383	0.399	0.370	0.456	0.739	0.385	0.256	0.404	0.415	0.323	0.307
OJP3	0.306	0.266	0.316	0.144	0.412	0.777	0.308	0.155	0.194	0.418	0.241	0.236
OJP4	0.279	0.275	0.271	0.156	0.395	0.768	0.336	0.138	0.231	0.416	0.258	0.247
AJI1	0.374	0.324	0.401	0.360	0.329	0.325	0.760	0.390	0.468	0.334	0.450	0.366
AJI2	0.302	0.345	0.352	0.492	0.285	0.314	0.769	0.418	0.465	0.300	0.424	0.355
AJI3	0.240	0.353	0.363	0.398	0.342	0.372	0.771	0.442	0.425	0.322	0.348	0.318
AJI4	0.303	0.315	0.381	0.383	0.404	0.422	0.760	0.318	0.406	0.308	0.366	0.308
RBE1	0.257	0.282	0.346	0.380	0.211	0.163	0.378	0.748	0.443	0.205	0.347	0.227
RBE2	0.267	0.288	0.230	0.301	0.181	0.141	0.351	0.763	0.388	0.197	0.305	0.227
RBE3	0.367	0.385	0.258	0.429	0.251	0.256	0.386	0.811	0.442	0.254	0.397	0.261

	PIE	OIE	NRE	RCE	PJP	OJP	AJI	RBE	TNP	MER	SAT	SBP
RBE4	0.374	0.381	0.377	0.376	0.289	0.330	0.426	0.704	0.416	0.333	0.439	0.366
TNP1	0.347	0.411	0.358	0.360	0.296	0.310	0.434	0.465	0.807	0.339	0.402	0.395
TNP2	0.329	0.346	0.310	0.380	0.328	0.304	0.446	0.444	0.795	0.384	0.406	0.356
TNP3	0.323	0.398	0.316	0.469	0.370	0.336	0.497	0.426	0.789	0.307	0.392	0.424
MER1	0.284	0.259	0.372	0.160	0.377	0.432	0.315	0.253	0.319	0.760	0.361	0.355
MER2	0.299	0.254	0.360	0.270	0.394	0.394	0.348	0.221	0.282	0.741	0.406	0.338
MER3	0.275	0.229	0.235	0.157	0.299	0.370	0.232	0.205	0.259	0.710	0.368	0.358
MER4	0.305	0.260	0.327	0.284	0.345	0.429	0.342	0.301	0.420	0.798	0.420	0.441
SAT1	0.429	0.364	0.374	0.400	0.329	0.363	0.446	0.433	0.431	0.461	0.885	0.547
SAT2	0.423	0.411	0.389	0.479	0.345	0.385	0.474	0.461	0.475	0.483	0.864	0.531
SAT3	0.464	0.300	0.320	0.450	0.305	0.294	0.439	0.404	0.413	0.413	0.883	0.527
SBP1	0.297	0.275	0.310	0.260	0.243	0.247	0.345	0.324	0.397	0.420	0.521	0.819
SBP2	0.247	0.272	0.302	0.359	0.237	0.263	0.356	0.400	0.403	0.358	0.539	0.809
SBP3	0.295	0.245	0.324	0.306	0.286	0.310	0.345	0.177	0.375	0.348	0.431	0.726
SBP4	0.257	0.285	0.297	0.143	0.290	0.324	0.276	0.131	0.296	0.394	0.317	0.656

5.5.4 Structural Model Assessment

5.5.4.1 Collinearity

Before testing the structural model, a VIF test was conducted to ensure there were no collinearity issues with the structural model. Table 5.13 presents the VIF values of all exogenous variables related to their corresponding endogenous variables in the inner model. According to the collinearity assessment guidelines previously discussed (Hair et al., 2017), all VIF values are well below the threshold of 3, indicating that there are no significant collinearity concerns among the exogenous variables in the inner model. Therefore, collinearity is not an issue, and no further modifications of the structural model were necessary.

5.5.4.2 Path Coefficient – Hypothesis Test

To evaluate the path coefficients and the direct, indirect, and total effects among constructs in the proposed model, a two-tailed bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples was performed, following the path weighting scheme (Becker et al., 2023; Hair et al., 2021). The results of the assessment of the hypothesized relationships are presented in Table 5.13, while Figure 5.3 displays the structural model results from SmartPLS 4. Among the 10 paths tested, 5 were supported at a significance level of $p<.001$, and 1 at $p<0.01$.

Hypothesis 1a was analyzed by assessing the path coefficient between exchange and exhibitor satisfaction – it was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.261$, $t = 4.518$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, hypothesis 1a is supported.

Hypothesis 1b was analyzed by assessing the path coefficient between exchange and show brand preference – it was positive but not significant ($\beta = 0.016$, $t = 0.239$, $p = 0.811$). Therefore, hypothesis 1b is not supported.

Hypothesis 2a was analyzed by assessing the path coefficient between co-production and exhibitor satisfaction – it was positive but not significant ($\beta = 0.073$, $t = 1.196$, $p = 0.232$). Therefore, hypothesis 2a is not supported.

Hypothesis 2b was analyzed by assessing the path coefficient between co-production and show brand preference – it was positive but not significant ($\beta = 0.085$, $t = 1.331$, $p = 0.183$). Therefore, hypothesis 2b is not supported.

Hypothesis 3a was analyzed by assessing the path coefficient between co-promotion and exhibitor satisfaction – it was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.410$, $t = 5.903$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, hypothesis 3a is supported.

Hypothesis 3b was analyzed by assessing the path coefficient between co-promotion and show brand preference – it was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.242$, $t = 3.271$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, hypothesis 3b is supported.

Hypothesis 4 was analyzed by assessing the path coefficient between exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference – it was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.401$, $t = 6.188$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, hypothesis 4 is supported.

Hypothesis 5a was analyzed by assessing the indirect path coefficient between exchange and show brand preference through exhibitor satisfaction – it was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.105$, $t = 3.716$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, hypothesis 5a is supported.

Hypothesis 5b was analyzed by assessing the indirect path coefficient between co-production and show brand preference through exhibitor satisfaction – it was positive but not significant ($\beta = 0.029$, $t = 1.131$, $p = 0.258$). Therefore, hypothesis 5b is not supported.

Hypothesis 5c was analyzed by assessing the indirect path coefficient between co-promotion and show brand preference through exhibitor satisfaction – it was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.164$, $t = 4.430$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, hypothesis 5c is supported.

5.5.4.3 Explanatory Power (R^2)

In the third step, the coefficient of determination R^2 was utilized to evaluate the model's explanatory power (Shmueli and Koppius, 2011) or its in-sample predictive power (Rigdon, 2012; Sarstedt et al., 2014). Generally, R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are considered substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively (Henseler et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2011). In this study, the R^2 value was 0.430 for show brand preference and 0.455 for exhibitor satisfaction, both of which indicate an acceptable level of explanatory power or in-sample predictive power. Since the R^2 value can increase with the number of paths from exogenous latent constructs to endogenous latent constructs, the f^2 effect size was also assessed (Hair et al., 2021).

5.5.4.4 Effect Size (f^2)

The f^2 effect size assessed the change in R^2 value when a specific exogenous construct was removed from the model. As previously discussed, f^2 effect size values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 suggest small, medium and large effect sizes, respectively (Cohen, 1988). As shown in Tables 5.13, the effect of each predictor in the model ranged from 0.000 to 0.154. Exhibitor satisfaction had the highest contribution to show brand preference with an f^2 value of 0.154, indicating a medium effect. Additionally, exchange exhibited a small f^2 effect sizes on exhibitor satisfaction, with a value of 0.056, while its effect on show brand preference was negligible. Co-promotion showed a small effect on both exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference, with f^2 values of 0.138 and 0.040, respectively. Conversely, co-production had negligible effects on both exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference.

5.5.4.5 Predictive Power

This study evaluated the model's predictive accuracy by means of two approaches: Stone-Geisser's Q^2 and root-mean-square-error (RMSE). Following the PLSpredict procedure recommended by Shmueli et al.'s (2016), these values were calculated with a setting of ten folds and ten repetitions in SmartPLS 4. Table 5.14 summarises the values of Q^2 predict and RMSE for the PLS-SEM and the linear regression model (LM) models, along with the differences in RMSE between the two models. As shown in Table 5.14, all Q^2 predict values for the key constructs (exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference) were higher than zero, ranging from 0.130 to 0.388. Subsequently, the RMSE values for each indicator of the two constructs were compared with those from LM. The PLS-SEM analysis generated smaller RMSE values for all indicators of exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference compared to LM models, thereby supporting the model's predictive power (Shmueli et al., 2019). In other words, the results validate the strong predictive power of the high-order constructs on the outcome constructs of exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference.

Figure 5.3 Results of PLS Analysis (Repeated Indicator Approach)

Table 5.13 Results of the Structural Model (N=360, Repeated Indicator Approach)

Effects		Path Coefficient	t-value	p-value	f^2	VIF	Remarks
Direct							
	Exchange → Participant information exchange	0.778	25.730	0.000***	1.530	-	-
	Exchange → Inter-organizational intelligence exchange	0.806	36.151	0.000***	1.853	-	-
	Exchange → Network resource exchange	0.739	18.072	0.000***	1.201	-	-
	Exchange → Relational cultivation exchange	0.772	28.007	0.000***	1.478	-	-
H1a	Exchange → Exhibitor satisfaction	0.261	4.518	0.000***	0.056(small)	2.254	**Supported**
H1b	Exchange → Show brand preference	0.016	0.239	0.811	0.000(negligible)	2.380	Not supported
	Co-production → Participant joint production	0.813	30.647	0.000***	1.945	-	-
	Co-production → Inter-organization joint production	0.831	26.693	0.000***	2.240	-	-
	Co-production → Inter-alliance joint initiative	0.795	27.194	0.000***	1.712	-	-
H2a	Co-production → Exhibitor satisfaction	0.073	1.196	0.232	0.004(negligible)	2.239	Not supported
H2b	Co-production → Show brand preference	0.085	1.331	0.183	0.006(negligible)	2.249	Not supported
	Co-promotion → Reciprocal brand exposure	0.803	25.769	0.000***	1.813	-	-
	Co-promotion → Targeted network promotion	0.828	40.402	0.000***	2.181	-	-
	Co-promotion → Mutual Endorsement	0.743	16.358	0.000***	1.234	-	-
H3a	Co-promotion → Exhibitor satisfaction	0.410	5.903	0.000***	0.138(small)	2.236	**Supported**
H3b	Co-promotion → Show brand preference	0.242	3.271	0.001**	0.040(small)	2.544	**Supported**
H4	Exhibitor satisfaction → Show brand preference	0.401	6.188	0.000***	0.154(medium)	1.835	**Supported**
Indirect							
H5a	Exchange → Exhibitor satisfaction → Show brand preference	0.105	3.716	0.000***	-	-	**Supported**
H5b	Co-production → Exhibitor satisfaction → Show brand preference	0.029	1.131	0.258	-	-	Not supported
H5c	Co-promotion → Exhibitor satisfaction → Show brand preference	0.164	4.430	0.000***	-	-	**Supported**

Note: Exhibitor satisfaction: $R^2 = 0.455$; Show brand preference: $R^2 = 0.430$; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

Table 5.14 Out-of-Sample Prediction

	$Q^2_{predict}$ >0	$RMSE_{PLS}$	$RMSE_{LM}$	$RMSE_{PLS} < RMSE_{LM}$
SAT1	0.335	0.916	0.960	YES
SAT2	0.388	0.885	0.933	YES
SAT3	0.294	0.988	1.024	YES
SBP1	0.220	1.099	1.170	YES
SBP2	0.229	0.925	0.965	YES
SBP3	0.164	1.037	1.070	YES
SBP4	0.130	1.062	1.078	YES

Note: SAT = Exhibitor satisfaction; SBP = Show brand preference; RMSE = Root mean square error; LM = linear model

5.6 Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 discussed the methodology and results of the pilot test and the main survey. PLS-SEM was employed to analyze the proposed model. Reliability and validity of measurement models were confirmed and the structural model were assessed to test the proposed hypotheses. PLS-SEM assessed the structural model with three paths: 1) directly from exchange, co-production, and co-promotion to exhibitor satisfaction, 2) directly from exchange, co-production, and co-promotion to show brand preference, and 3) indirectly from exchange, co-production, and co-promotion to show brand preference through exhibitor satisfaction.

Chapter 6 provides a discussion addressing the research questions and hypotheses, concluding the study with a presentation of theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

6 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Chapter Introduction

This thesis aims to address the main research problem: "*In the context of trade shows, **what** are value co-creation practices among multiple stakeholders at different ecosystem levels before, during, and after shows, and **how** do different practices influence exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference?*" Specifically, the research addressed two specific research issues: (1) the identification of VCC practices among multiple stakeholders within a trade show ecosystem, and (2) the investigation of the impact of these practices on exhibitors' satisfaction and their preference towards trade shows.

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the research background, detailing the research aims and justifying the methodology and significance of the study. Chapter 2 presented an overview of the exhibition industry and conducts a comprehensive review of relevant literature. Findings from prior research highlight several gaps in empirical studies adopting a multi-actor perspective within the trade show sector. Chapter 3 focused on reviewing literature related to VCC and service ecosystems, identifying key gaps in empirical research on VCC in B2B relationships from a service ecosystem perspective, as well as the lack of quantitative methods to measure VCC within this framework. Building on these theoretical insights, Chapter 3 proposed a theoretical model to explore the interrelationships among various VCC practices, exhibitor satisfaction, and their preferences for show brands. This model establishes the foundation for the mixed-methods approach employed to address the research questions. Chapter 4 presented findings of the qualitative research (Phase 1), identifying three major VCC practices within the trade show ecosystem: exchange, co-production, and co-promotion. Based on these findings, the chapter finalized the theoretical model and advanced corresponding hypotheses. Chapter 5 discussed the process of pilot test and the main survey in the quantitate research (Phase 2), examining the impacts of these VCC practices on exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference.

In this concluding chapter, the study integrates findings from both the qualitative and quantitative phases, aligning them with the research question and objectives. The chapter

systematically presents findings in relation to each research question, drawing comparisons with prior literature to demonstrate how the research achieves its aims and objectives. Additionally, it outlines the theoretical and practical contributions of the study, discusses its limitations, and provides recommendations for future research. Table 6.1 presents a summary of the research questions, hypothesis and related findings derived from this thesis.

Table 6.1 Summary of Research Questions, Hypotheses and Findings

Research Questions	**Research Hypothesis**	**Findings**	**Hypothesis Test**
Research issue 1 focuses on the identification of value co-creation practices among exhibitors, organizers, industry associations, and governmental agencies before, during, and after shows.			
1.1 What measures constitute value co-creation practices among trade show stakeholders within the service ecosystem?	- Relevant RQs and Hypotheses were advanced for Research issue 2.	The study identified three key types of value co-creation practices in the trade show context through qualitative interviews: 1) **Exchange**, which was measured by three factors: participant information exchange (*with inter-organizational intelligence exchange emerged as an additional factor*), network resource exchange, and relational cultivation exchange; 2) **Co-production**, which was measured by three factors: participant joint production, inter-organization joint production, and inter-alliance joint initiative; 3) **Co-promotion**, which was measured by three factors: reciprocal brand exposure, targeted network promotion, and mutual endorsement.	Partially supported
1.2 When do these practices occur at the three stages (before/during/after shows)?	-	The study found that these value co-creation practices are not limited to specific stages but can occur across the entire trade show process, with potential overlaps between them.	-

Research Questions	Research Hypothesis	Findings	Hypothesis Test
Research Issue 2 aims to investigate the relationships between value co-creation practices among exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference.			
2.1 To what extent does each value co-creation practice exert an influence on exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference, respectively?	2.1.1a: Exchange has a positive direct impact on exhibitor satisfaction.	Results showed a positive significant path coefficient between exchange and exhibitor satisfaction.	**Supported**
	2.1.1b: Exchange has a positive direct impact on show brand preference.	Results showed no significant path coefficient between exchange and show brand preference.	Not supported
	2.1.2a: Co-production has a positive direct impact on exhibitor satisfaction.	Results showed no significant path coefficient between co-production and exhibitor satisfaction.	Not supported
	2.1.2b: Co-production has a positive direct impact on show brand preference.	Results showed no significant path coefficient between co-production and show brand preference.	Not supported
	2.1.3a: Co-promotion has a positive direct impact on exhibitor satisfaction.	Results showed a positive significant path coefficient between co-promotion and exhibitor satisfaction.	**Supported**
	2.1.3b: Co-promotion has a positive direct impact on show brand preference.	Results showed a positive significant path coefficient between co-promotion and show brand preference.	**Supported**
2.2 What is the relationship among value co-creation practices, exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference? How does one impact others?			
2.2.1 Does exhibitor satisfaction exert an influence on trade show brand preference?	2.2.1: Exhibitor satisfaction has a positive direct impact on show brand preference.	Results showed a positive significant path coefficient between exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference.	**Supported**
2.2.2 Does exhibitor satisfaction mediate the relationship between value co-creation	2.2.2a: Exhibitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between exchange and show brand preference.	Results showed a significant path coefficient between exchange and show brand preference through exhibitor satisfaction.	**Supported**

practices and trade show brand preference?	2.2.2b: Exhibitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between co-production and show brand preference	Results showed no significant path coefficient between co-production and show brand preference through exhibitor satisfaction.	Not supported
	2.2.2c: Exhibitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between co-promotion and show brand preference	Results showed a positive significant path coefficient between co-promotion and show brand preference through exhibitor satisfaction.	**Supported**

6.2 Research Issue 1

The first objective of this research was to identify the practices of VCC within trade show service ecosystems. Research Issue 1 specifically addresses the identification of such practices among exhibitors, organizers, industry associations, and governmental agencies across three phases: before, during, and after shows. Two research questions were addressed:

Research Question 1:

1.1 What measures constitute value co-creation practices among trade show stakeholders within the service ecosystem?

1.2 When do these practices occur at the three stages (before/during/after shows)?

To address these questions, Phase 1 adopted a qualitative methodology, utilizing interviews and identifying three core VCC practices: exchange, co-production, and co-promotion. The first three practices were operationalized as second-order constructs. The findings demonstrate not only the co-created activities that constitute these dimensions but also the interconnected relationships and dynamic interplay among the practices. It also considers the three stages of trade shows when investigating VCC practices: before, during, and after trade shows. Detailed discussions of these outcomes in relation to each research question are presented in subsequent sections.

6.2.1 Research Question 1.1

The first research question of Research Issue 1 focuses on identifying the classifications of VCC practices within the context of trade shows from a service ecosystem perspective, as well as the dimensions that shape these practices. The study investigates the multidimensional nature of VCC, recognizing it as a complex concept that cannot be adequately captured by a single measure (Akter et al., 2022; Busser & Shulga, 2018; Yi & Gong, 2013). By addressing Research Question 1.1, this study contributes to the development of a multidimensional scale for VCC within the trade show ecosystem. Subsequently, the three practices are discussed in the following order: exchange, co-production, and co-promotion.

6.2.1.1 Exchange

The practice of exchange is the first identified within VCC and is recognized as one of the most prominent among the three. This observation is supported by existing literature on trade shows and VCC, which underscores exchange as a vital indicator of co-creation (Yi & Gong, 2013). The research suggests three dimensions of exchange: 1) participant information exchange, 2) network resource exchange, and 3) relational cultivation exchange, which were derived from interviews. However, the three-factor structure receives only partial support; PCA analysis and PLS measurement model assessment reveal a four-factor model, introducing a new dimension called "inter-organizational intelligence exchange." This dimension is derived from "participant information exchange." Thus, exchange is characterized as a second-order construct comprising four dimensions: 1) participant information exchange, 2) inter-organizational intelligence exchange, 3) network resource exchange, and 4) relational cultivation exchange.

The factor *Participant Information Exchange* (PIE) evaluates the extent to which exhibitors share information with other entities during the trade show. Three measurement items were adapted from Wong and Lai (2019) and Frías Jamilena et al. (2017) to gauge the frequency of informational communication between exhibiting firms, organizers, other exhibitors, and buyers at a micro level. Similarly, the factor *Inter-Organizational Intelligence Exchange* (OIE) assesses the extent of information exchange between exhibitors and industry associations. In practice, according to informants' responses, the key difference in information exchange with different actors may lie in its nature: exchanges with industry associations tend to be more strategic and policy-oriented, whereas exchanges with other participants are more operational and transactional. For example, industry associations may provide market data, assist in setting industry standards, and lead learning and training activities among their members. In contrast, communication with buyers or peer exhibitors typically focuses on immediate transactional needs, such as specific procurement requirements.

PCA results distinguish PIE from OIE, suggesting these two forms of exchange involve different actors. Findings indicate that these two factors are the most significant predictors of exchange, highlighted by their largest factor loadings, underscoring the critical role of information exchange among actors in the context of trade shows. These results align with previous studies that emphasize informational interactions as essential dimensions of VCC (e.g., Frías Jamilena, Polo Peña, & Rodríguez Molina, 2017; Wong & Lai, 2019b).

Relational Cultivation Exchange (RCE), developed from interviews and referred from prior literature (i.e., Jin, 2011; Ranjan & Read, 2016), was measured using three items to assess the extent to which exhibitors cultivate relationships with other entities. The results of the PLS outer-model assessment indicate that this factor is a crucial predictor of the exchange construct, despite being overlooked in earlier VCC research. This factor emphasizes the relationship between exhibitors and show organizers, which develops through ongoing interactions. Particularly for repeat exhibitors, these relationships with organizers tend to strengthen through reciprocal and iterative exchanges, leading to active contact and long-term partnerships.

The fourth factor, *Network Resource Exchange* (NRE), consists of three items derived from interviews in Phase 1. This factor, which has been neglected by prior literature, measures the reciprocal exchange within the business network, illustrating how exhibitors expand their connections in the trade show industry. While existing VCC literature has primarily focused on informational exchange, this study stands out as one of the few to introduce the exchange of business networks as a significant predictor of the exchange construct. This finding aligns with the relational nature inherent in exhibitions (Jin et al., 2012).

6.2.1.2 Co-production

Co-production emerges as the second core practice in VCC, characterized by multi-actor collaboration in developing central service offerings. While existing VCC research often positions co-production as an equivalent conceptualization of VCC (Ranjan & Read, 2014) - particularly through firm-customer interaction frameworks in retail contexts (Ranjan & Read, 2016) - this study extends beyond dyadic relationships to capture the multiplex interactions inherent in trade show co-production. From a service ecosystem lens, this research developed

a measurement scale for co-production in the context of trade shows, comprising three dimensions: 1) participant joint production, 2) inter-organization joint production, and 3) inter-alliance joint initiative.

The first dimension, *participant joint production* (PJP), evaluates exhibitors' intentions to engage in the production of trade shows as initiated by the organizers. Three measurement items derived from interviews capture exhibitors' willingness to contribute to exhibition production regarding show quality, design, and content. Results indicate that while PJP is a significant predictor of co-production, respondents show a greater interest in enhancing show quality, followed by content and design. This reflects exhibitors' strong intent to actively contribute to the shows in which they participate.

The second dimension, *inter-organization joint production* (OJP), assesses the intention of exhibitors to participate in trade shows as part of a group led by other entities. Four items, derived from interviews, were used to investigate exhibitors' intentions to apply for booths in areas that involve collaboration between organizers and industry associations or government agencies. According to the PLS measurement model assessment, OJP emerges as an significant factor within the co-production construct. This dimension indicates that co-production activities at other ecosystem levels have a notable impact on exhibitor participation at the micro level. In certain cases, specific exhibition spaces are allocated to industry associations or government-affiliates (e.g., branches of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade), which provide booth services to exhibitors seeking to leverage collective advantages, such as optimal booth locations or pricing. Findings reveal that exhibitors show nearly equal preferences for group exhibitions, regardless of the leading entity, with a slightly higher preference for governmental organizations.

The third dimension, *inter-alliance joint initiative (AJI)*, examines exhibitors' experiences in events jointly organized by show organizers and partners, such as trade associations and government agencies. Four measurement items from interviews were assessed. Similar to OJP dimension, AJI focuses on collaborative activities between show organizers and official institutions, expanding trade show possibilities across different stages. This *co-production* approach combines different organizations' resources to create value. Study results show that

respondents report similar experiences in these joint events, suggesting strong ongoing partnerships between collaborators.

The empirical findings help clarify the conceptual distinction between VCC and co-production, offering a more nuanced theoretical understanding of their interrelationship. While co-production plays an important role in service delivery, the results indicate that it should not be equated with the broader construct of VCC. Value co-creation encompasses a wider, interactive process involving diverse forms of stakeholder engagement and relational dynamics, whereas co-production refers more narrowly to direct participation in the production or delivery of services (Luonila & Jyrämä, 2020; Oertzen et al., 2018; H. Wang & Ran, 2025). This perspective aligns with the framework proposed by Payne et al. (2008), in which co-production is positioned as one element within the VCC process. Accordingly, in the context of trade shows, co-production may be understood as a specific component or outcome of the broader VCC framework, but the two concepts differ in both scope and focus.

6.2.1.3 Co-promotion

The third practice of VCC is co-promotion, which involves collaboration among two or more actors on promotional activities related to a product, brand, or entity (Frow et al., 2015). Although co-promotion has been explored qualitatively in the retail service sector, this research focuses on developing and validating measurement scales specifically for trade shows. In this study, co-promotion is defined as a higher-order construct comprising three dimensions: 1) reciprocal brand exposure, 2) targeted network promotion, and 3) mutual endorsement.

The factor *reciprocal brand exposure* (RBE) is important predictor of *co-promotion*. Four items derived from interviews were analyzed to assess exhibitors' experiences with promotions related to the shows they participated in. Trade shows offer an excellent platform for exhibitors to promote their products or brands, prompting them to collaborate closely with organizers. Some exhibitors partner with organizers to leverage official channels, such as websites, social media, and advertisements, to boost their visibility. While leading enterprises may be direct mentioned in promotional materials, many respondents reported promoting their products and achievements through these channels.

The second factor *targeted network promotion* (TNP) is another key predictor of co-promotion, assessing exhibitors' experiences with promotions related to industry associations. Three measurement items derived from interviews were evaluated. This dimension is novel in the context of trade shows and has not been previously tested. In the trade show industry, industry associations play a vital role by connecting members and other market actors (Jin, 2011; Kirchgeorg et al., 2005). For show organizers, these associations are essential partners for collaboratively promoting trade shows to specific target groups.

The factor *mutual endorsement* (MER) is the third dimension of *co-promotion*. It assesses exhibitors' perceptions regarding show recognition or acknowledgement to participants. This factor includes four items derived from interviews and reflects the reciprocal benefits between the show and its participants, including the exhibiting company, leading companies, and industry associations. The findings suggest that participation in exhibitions positively impacts exhibitors' product and company reputations. Moreover, exhibitors recognize that the involvement of industry associations and leading companies enhances the overall recognition of the show.

6.2.2 Research Question 1.2

The second research question under Research issue 1 investigates the temporal distribution of VCC practices across trade show stages. Findings in Phase 1 indicate that these practices are not limited to distinct exhibition phases; rather, they exhibit dynamic overlaps throughout the exhibition timeline. This finding disrupts traditional linear models discussed in most exhibition literature and supports the cyclical and interrelated characteristics of service ecosystems. For example:

- *Exchange* occurs continuously through pre-event information and network sharing, knowledge transfer during the show, and post-event relationship cultivation initiatives.
- *Co-production* involves exhibitors participating in pre-event exhibition design, collaborating with show organizers and industry associations to co-host events during the exhibition, and engaging in post-show activities.

- *Co-promotion* takes place across all phases, involving pre-show collaborative marketing campaigns, real-time social media engagement during the show, and post-show content co-creation to maintain visibility.

This dynamic temporal pattern aligns with the observation of Tommasetti et al. (2017), reinforcing the comprehensive nature of VCC while extending this concept to organizational actors in B2B contexts.

By addressing Research Question 1.2, this exploratory study makes several important contributions. First, it is the first to systematically examine VCC practices from a temporal perspective within trade show ecosystems, addressing a gap in exhibition literature. Second, the study provides practitioners with a clear process for resource allocation and stakeholder engagement throughout the exhibition timeline.

6.2.3 Conclusion

Research issue 1 was addressed by providing a classification of VCC practices at trade shows across different stages. Through the analysis of interview findings and a synthesis of prior research, three major VCC practices at trade shows were identified, along with their underlying dimensions or manifestations. This classification makes the process of VCC more tangible and measurable within the trade show context. It potentially offers valuable insights for achieving VCC in other B2B settings.

To address research question 1.1, the study utilized a multi-method approach. Interviews (Phase 1, Chapter 4) were conducted to derive key insights, and validation of the measurement scales was performed (Phase 2, Chapter 5). The findings led to the identification of three typical VCC practices at trade shows: *exchange*, *co-production*, and *co-promotion*. The analysis of interviews and synthesis of prior research confirmed the multi-dimensional nature of the first three practices.

Research question 1.2 was addressed by examining these VCC practices across three trade show stages in Phase 1. The findings revealed that these practices are interdependent and not isolated, often occurring simultaneously rather than in a strict linear sequence. This study

contributes to the empirical exploration of co-creation practices by offering a holistic understanding of the interconnected nature of these practices from an ecosystem-centric perspective within the trade show context.

6.3 Research Issue 2

Following the identification of specific VCC practices and their dimensions in trade shows contexts, these practices were subsequently measured and validated through a structural model. Research issue 2 focuses on examining the impacts of the identified VCC practices on exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference. Two research questions were formulated to assess how three core practices (*exchange*, *co-production*, and *co-promotion*) exert influence within the service ecosystem:

Research Question 2:

2.1 To what extent does each value co-creation practice exert an influence on exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference, respectively?

2.2 What is the relationship among value co-creation practices, exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference? How does one impact others?

2.2.1 Does exhibitor satisfaction exert an influence on trade show brand preference?

2.2.2 Does exhibitor satisfaction mediate the relationship between value co-creation practices and trade show brand preference?

Guided by the findings from Research Question 1.1, three VCC practices were operationalized at the micro-level for quantitative analysis. Corresponding hypotheses were developed to empirically test their mechanisms of influence. Phase 2 (Chapter 5) employed a quantitative methodology, utilizing PLS-SEM to address both research questions. For Research Question 2.1, the direct effects of exchange, co-production, and co-promotion practices were evaluated in relation to exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference outcomes. Research Question 2.2 extended this investigation by examining the mediating role of exhibitor satisfaction in translating VCC practices into enhanced brand preference. Detailed discussions

of these findings, including theoretical implications and contextual interpretations, are presented in subsequent sections.

6.3.1 Research Question 2.1

6.3.1.1 Hypothesis 2.1.1- Direct Impact of Exchange on Exhibitor Satisfaction/ Show Brand Preference

Hypothesis 2.1.1a proposed that exchange has a direct, positive impact on exhibitor satisfaction. The hypothesis was supported ($\beta = 0.261$, $t = 4.518$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a significant positive relationship between the exchange practice and exhibitor satisfaction. This finding confirms that exchange serves as a critical antecedent influencing exhibitors' satisfaction level toward trade shows. The result partially aligns with prior studies by Wong and Lai (2019) and Yi and Gong (2013), which demonstrated that informational exchange, as a key dimension of VCC, positively impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty (e.g., Busser & Shulga, 2018; Ranjan & Read, 2014).

The positive relationship between exchange and exhibitor satisfaction can be understood through the lens of relationship marketing and VCC. Prior studies provide substantial evidence that VCC significantly influences satisfaction and loyalty from the customer's perspective, irrespective of the sub-dimensions utilized by various studies across diverse business and consumer settings. High customer engagement through VCC leads to increased customer loyalty (e.g., Busser & Shulga, 2018), satisfaction (e.g., Ranjan & Read, 2014), improved exhibitor performance (e.g., Wong & Lai, 2019), and service innovation (e.g., Akter et al., 2022). Similarly, in the current study, the exchange practice, such as effective communication and resource sharing (e.g., information and network sharing) foster trust and reciprocity, which are essential for building satisfaction. This finding is particularly significant in the context of trade shows, where exhibitors' satisfaction can be driven by their perception of the organizer's ability to meet their needs and expectations.

Likewise, Hypothesis 2.1.1b proposed that exchange has a direct, positive impact on show brand preference. Contrary to expectations, the hypothesis was not supported ($\beta = 0.016$, $t =$

0.239, p = 0.811). Although the path coefficient indicates a slight negative effect, the relationship is not statistically significant, leading to the rejection of Hypothesis 2.1.1b.

The lack of a significant relationship between exchange and exhibition brand preference may be attributed to the strong business orientation of these exhibitors. For exhibitors primarily focused on achieving business outcomes, such as securing deals or networking, this strong orientation may have diminished the perceived importance of exchange in shaping their brand preference. Further research may be required to refine the measurement scales and to investigate this relationship in different geographical contexts to identify any potential differences.

This study represents one of the first empirical explorations of the relationship between the exchange practice and exhibition brand preference. While prior research has not directly examined this relationship, the findings provide a new theoretical foundation for understanding how various VCC practices influence brand-related outcomes in the trade show context. By integrating insights from relationship marketing and VCC, this research advances the understanding of exchange practice in service ecosystems and offers a framework for future studies in similar settings.

6.3.1.2 Hypothesis 2.1.2- Direct Impact of Co-Production on Exhibitor Satisfaction/ Show Brand Preference

Hypothesis 2.1.2a proposed that co-production has a positive direct impact on exhibitor satisfaction; however, this hypothesis was not supported (β = 0.073, t = 1.196, p = 0.232). Although the path coefficient indicates a positive effect, this correlation is not statistically significant. Therefore, there is no evidence to support a direct effect of co-production on exhibitor satisfaction. This finding contradicts the results of Ranjan and Read (2014), who found that co-production as a key dimension of VCC directly and positively influences individual customer satisfaction.

Similarly, Hypothesis 2.1.2b proposed that co-production has a positive direct impact on show brand preference; however, this hypothesis was also rejected (β = 0.085, t = 1.331, p =

0.183). The lack of significant impact of co-production on exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference may be attributed to several factors. First, one possible explanation lies in differences how co-production is measured. For instance, Ranjan and Read (2014) assessed co-production in B2C settings, focusing on individual customers. In contrast, the current study considered co-production involving multiple stakeholders. In such a complex setting, the process involves coordination among various actors, which may dilute the perceived value for individual participants and complicate the direct link to satisfaction or brand preference.

Second, the nature of co-production in this setting suggests that its influences on outcomes may not be straightforward. The broader model implies that the relationship could be conditional or mediated by factors, such as trust or the quality of coordination. Recent theoretical developments also illuminate that not all resource integration automatically leads to value creation (Sthapit & Björk, 2020). When co-production is poorly managed, it can result in "value co-destruction," where misaligned efforts waste resources and frustrate participants rather than create benefits (Fusco et al., 2023; Sarmento et al., 2024). This underscores that co-production requires effective coordination; otherwise, it can generate inefficiencies.

Additionally, co-production often requires a high level of involvement and resource commitment from exhibitors, which can lead to perceived complexity or inefficiency if not managed effectively (S. Lee & Na, 2024; Loeffler et al., 2018; Surva, 2023). Exhibitors may view co-production activities as time-consuming or burdensome, particularly if the benefits are not immediately apparent. Moreover, the context of the show may play a critical role. In environments where exhibitors prioritize simplicity, clear outcomes, and quick returns, collaborative efforts like co-production may not resonate as strongly. Prior studies were often conducted in contexts where participants exhibited a higher tolerance for complexity and a stronger intrinsic motivation to collaborate, leading to the conclusion that co-production fosters deeper engagement and satisfaction (Addis et al., 2021; Hunt et al., 2012). However, in the context of trade shows or exhibitions, exhibitors may prioritize efficiency and tangible outcomes over collaborative processes, which could explain the divergence in findings.

Another plausible explanation is that the impact of co-production unfolds over time. While the effects of exchange may be more immediate, co-production tends to be a longer-term

process. Its full benefits, such as deeper engagement and realized value, often emerge over time and may not be captured in a cross-sectional study. As some researchers have noted, co-production may bring about short-term changes, but its meaningful impact typically requires sustained interaction (Loeffler et al., 2018; Tu, 2022). In trade shows, where immediate returns are often prioritized, the extended timeline of co-production's benefits might not strongly translate into current satisfaction or brand preference.

Despite the non-significant findings, co-production should not be dismissed as irrelevant. Instead, event organizers should focus on improving the implementation of co-production practices to maximize their potential benefits. For example, organizers should communicate the long-term benefits of co-production, such as enhanced brand visibility and stronger industry relationships, to motivate stakeholders to participate more actively. The findings highlight the need for further research to explore the contextual factors and temporal factors that influence the effectiveness of co-production. Future studies could employ longitudinal designs to track its impact over time and investigate potential mediators, such as perceived trust or organizational support, which might better explain how co-production indirectly influences key outcomes.

6.3.1.3 Hypothesis 2.1.3- Direct Impact of Co-Promotion on Exhibitor Satisfaction/ Show Brand Preference

Hypothesis 2.1.3a and Hypothesis 2.1.3b were advanced to investigate the direct impact of co-promotion, as detailed below:

Hypothesis 2.1.3a: Co-promotion has a positive direct impact on exhibitor satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2.1.3b: Co-promotion has a positive direct impact on show brand preference.

The results show that co-promotion positively influences both exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference directly. Thus, Hypothesis 2.1.3a ($\beta = 0.410$, $t = 5.903$, $p < 0.001$) and Hypothesis 2.1.3b ($\beta = 0.242$, $t = 3.271$, $p < 0.01$) were supported. These findings confirm that the practice of co-promotion can enhance not only exhibitors' satisfaction toward the show but also their preference for the show brand.

The positive impact of co-promotion on exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference can be attributed to its ability to boost visibility and foster collaboration, shared value creation. Co-promotion activities, such as joint marketing campaigns or collaborative branding efforts, create a sense of partnership and mutual benefit between exhibitors and organizers. This aligns with Schau et al. (2009), who highlight that co-promotion can result in creating and shaping brands, particularly within brand communities. The present study underscores the importance of co-promotion as a strategic tool for enhancing brand perception and customer satisfaction.

As no prior study has specifically examined the impact of co-promotion on customer satisfaction and brand preference, the present study stands as a pioneer in shedding light on a previously unexplored aspect in the literature. The results contribute significantly to the understanding of co-promotion as a measurable factor, filling a research gap. While previous studies have not directly addressed this relationship, the findings of this study provide a new theoretical foundation for understanding the role of co-promotion in VCC processes.

Furthermore, this study introduces a novel framework that explores the relationship between co-promotion, exhibitor satisfaction, and show brand preference, addressing a gap in the existing literature on VCC in event management. The findings not only advance academic understanding but also offer practical insights for organizers seeking to enhance exhibitor engagement and brand loyalty. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring additional contexts or examining other VCC practices that may influence customer satisfaction and brand preference.

To leverage the benefits of co-promotion, show organizers should actively engage exhibitors in collaborative marketing initiatives. For example, joint advertising campaigns, co-branded social media content, or shared promotional events can strengthen exhibitors' sense of involvement and ownership. Organizers should also provide platforms for exhibitors to showcase their contributions, such as featuring their brands in event materials or hosting collaborative workshops. By fostering a collaborative environment, organizers can enhance exhibitors' satisfaction and reinforce their preference for the show brand.

6.3.1.4 Expanding the Dimension of Exhibitor Satisfaction: The Role of Hedonic Factors

This study demonstrates a significant positive relationship between certain VCC practices (i.e., exchange and co-promotion) and exhibitor satisfaction. In line with prior B2B trade show research (Lin, 2014; 2016), the study primarily conceptualizes satisfaction from a cognitive perspective, emphasizing practical evaluations of trade shows and service performance. The results strongly support that VCC is an important driver of this type of goal-oriented satisfaction.

However, gaining a comprehensive understanding of this relationship requires moving beyond a focus on purely functional outcomes. Recent literature increasingly conceptualizes satisfaction as a multidimensional construct that encompasses not only cognitive elements but also affective components, particularly the hedonic dimensions related to pleasure, enjoyment, and the emotional and social value derived from experiential contexts (Elzagi & Buntu Laulita, 2024; Magai, 2024). This multidimensional perspective is also relevant in trade show environments, where factors such as social engagement, networking opportunities, and an overall positive event atmosphere contribute meaningfully to participants' evaluations.

Although the current study did not directly assess the affective aspect of satisfaction, the mechanisms underlying VCC are likely to indirectly enhance such experiences. For instance, collaborative interactions between exhibitors and organizers, such as reciprocal brand exposure or joint production initiatives, can foster a sense of partnership, recognition, and being valued, which contribute to emotional value, a recognized antecedent of overall satisfaction (Drengner et al., 2012; Meeprom & Fakfare, 2021). Likewise, VCC among stakeholders, through activities like knowledge sharing and joint promotional activities, cultivates a sense of community and enhances social value, both of which are key components of affective satisfaction (Royo-Vela & Casamassima, 2011).

6.3.2 Research Question 2.2

6.3.2.1 Hypothesis 2.2.1- Exhibitor Satisfaction and Show Brand Preference

Research question 2.2 aimed to investigate the indirect impact of various practices on

show brand preference with the mediating role of exhibitor satisfaction. Hypothesis 2.2.1 proposed that exhibitor satisfaction has a positive impact on show brand preference. The results show that hypothesis 2.2.1 was supported ($\beta = 0.401$, $t = 6.188$, $p < 0.001$), thereby confirming the positive relationship between exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference.

This finding can be explained by the fact that customer satisfaction fosters emotional attachment and trust toward the brand, which in turn enhances brand preference. When exhibitors are satisfied with their experience, they are more likely to perceive the show as valuable, reliable, and aligned with their expectations. This positive perception strengthens their loyalty and preference for the show brand, as they associate it with high-quality experiences and outcomes.

The result aligns with prior literature, which has consistently demonstrated the positive influence of customer satisfaction on brand preference (e.g., Geigenmüller & Bettis-Outland, 2012; Jin & Weber, 2013). These studies highlight that satisfied customers are more likely to develop a strong affinity for a brand, leading to repeat engagement and positive word-of-mouth.

6.3.2.2 Hypothesis 2.2.2- Indirect Impacts of Practices on Show Brand Preference (Exhibitor Satisfaction as a Mediator)

Research question 2.2.2 was formulated to investigate the mediating effect of exhibitor satisfaction, and three hypotheses were advanced:

H2.2.2a: Exhibitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between exchange and show brand preference.

H2.2.2b: Exhibitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between co-production and show brand preference.

H2.2.2c: Exhibitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between co-promotion and show brand preference.

The results show that the relationship between co-production and show brand preference

was not mediated by exhibitor satisfaction, while exhibitor satisfaction mediated the relationship between show brand preference and the other two VCC practices. Specifically, Hypothesis 2.2.2a ($\beta = 0.105$, $t = 3.716$, $p < 0.001$) and Hypothesis 2.2.2c ($\beta = 0.164$, $t = 4.430$, $p < 0.001$) were supported. This indicates that both exchange and co-promotion positively influence show brand preference, and exhibitor satisfaction significantly contributes to explaining how these practices impact show brand preference.

More specifically, the effect of exchange on brand preference is fully mediated by satisfaction. In other words, exchange practices only lead to stronger brand preference when they result in higher exhibitor satisfaction. This suggests that satisfaction is the only pathway through which exchange activities affect brand preference. Exchange practices, such as informational and network resource exchange, foster trust and reciprocity, which are critical for satisfaction.

In contrast, co-promotion shows both direct and indirect effects on brand preference. Co-promotion activities are inherently attractive and can directly boost brand perception. At the same time, they also enhance satisfaction, which further reinforces brand preference. This dual pathway indicates that co-promotion influences brand preference both independently and through satisfaction. Activities such as joint marketing efforts create a sense of partnership and shared success, further strengthening exhibitors' emotional connection to the show brand.

On the contrary, Hypothesis 2.2.2b ($\beta = 0.029$, $t = 1.131$, $p = 0.258$) was not supported. The results indicate that co-production does not have a significant direct impact on show brand preference, nor an indirect impact through exhibitor satisfaction. This suggests that the effect of co-production may operate through alternative mechanisms, such as improving operational efficiency or enhancing professional engagement, rather than through satisfaction or emotional responses. Furthermore, co-production requires a high level of involvement and resource commitment from exhibitors(S. Lee & Na, 2024; Loeffler et al., 2018; Surva, 2023), which can lead to perceived complexity or inefficiency if not managed effectively (Fusco et al., 2023; Sarmento et al., 2024). As a result, the benefits of co-production may not translate into immediate satisfaction or brand preference, especially in contexts where exhibitors prioritize simplicity and clear outcomes over collaborative efforts.

To leverage the findings of this study, show organizers may focus on enhancing exchange and co-promotion practices to maximize exhibitor satisfaction and brand preference. While co-production did not show a significant impact in this study, organizers should not disregard its potential value.

Based on the findings of this study, a new model was proposed that positions exhibitor satisfaction as a key mediator through which VCC practices influence show brand preference. This framework offers a novel direction for future research and may be applicable to other similar contexts. Furthermore, future studies could explore additional VCC practices that may indirectly impact brand preference through customer satisfaction. By expanding the scope of research, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of how different VCC strategies contribute to brand loyalty and long-term success in various settings.

6.3.3 Conclusion

This section examined the relationships between three key VCC practices—exchange, co-production, and co-promotion—and their impacts on exhibitor satisfaction and show brand preference. The findings reveal direct and indirect pathways by which these practices influence those outcomes.

Addressing Research question 2.1, the study found that exchange and co-promotion significantly enhanced exhibitor satisfaction, with only co-promotion showing a significant impact on show brand preference. In contrast, co-production did not demonstrate a significant impact on either exhibitor satisfaction or show brand preference. This may be due to the high level of involvement and resource commitment required from exhibitors for co-production activities. Upon further analysis of Research question 2.2, it was revealed that exhibitor satisfaction only mediates the relationship between exchange or co-promotion and show brand preference, without demonstrating a significant mediating effect for co-production.

Overall, the results underscore the importance of exchange and co-promotion as effective tools for enhancing exhibitor satisfaction and brand preference. At the same time, the findings suggest that co-production may requires further exploration to fully understand their potential

impacts within the trade show ecosystem.

6.4 Implications for Theory

This thesis adopts Perry's (1998) three-level framework to evaluate research questions and their corresponding contributions. First, while some research questions have been thoroughly explored in marketing and tourism literature, they remain underexamined within the specific context of trade shows. Second, certain topics have been briefly referenced, commented, or theorized in prior work but lack empirical validation. Third, there are research areas have been largely overlooked in previous studies, offering substantial opportunities for this research to provide valuable contributions.

Table 6.2 presents the contributions of this study across three levels. At the first level, the research either confirms or contests existing assumptions regarding phenomena widely addressed in the general literature, categorized as contributions made "to a minor extent." The second level involves enhancing knowledge in areas that have been speculated about or inferred in the literature but lack empirical backing, classified as contributions made "to some extent." The third level focuses on producing new insights in relatively unexplored domains with minimal prior research, representing contributions made "to a great extent."

6.4.1 Research Issue 1

Research Issue 1 aims to identify the practices of VCC among trade show stakeholders (i.e., exhibitors, show organizers, exhibition venues, industry associations, and government agencies) before, during, and after trade shows.

Research Question 1.1 What measures constitute VCC practices among trade show stakeholders within the service ecosystem?

The conclusion of research question 1.1 focuses on identifying and analyzing the components of VCC practices at trade shows. Existing research suggests that VCC is inherently multi-dimensional, with predominant studies conceptualizing it as a second-order construct

(e.g., Akter et al., 2022; Busser & Shulga, 2018; Y. Yi & Gong, 2013). While scholars have extensively discussed various types of VCC practices (e.g. Frow, McColl-Kennedy, & Payne, 2016) across industries such as healthcare, retail services, tourism, and hospitality, the B2B-oriented trade show sector remains underexplored. Notably, prior investigations have predominantly emphasized micro-level interactions between firms and customers, with limited consideration of broader ecosystem dynamics or non-customer stakeholders. This study addresses this gap by systematically identifying and measuring VCC practices within a B2B ecosystem —an approach that extends beyond the conventional dyadic firm-customer focus. Prior to this research, VCC practices from an ecosystem perspective had not been empirically investigated in the context of trade shows.

This research adopted a multi-stakeholder perspective to examine VCC practices across micro, meso, and macro levels within trade show ecosystems, shifting the focus of VCC from customer-firm collaboration to the co-creation of multiple actors. Three distinct VCC practices emerge from the analysis: *exchange*, *co-production*, and *co-promotion*. While *exchange* and *co-production* have been investigated and measured in prior customer-centric literature, this study extends their dimensions to an ecosystem level by incorporating diverse trade show stakeholders and adapting measurement components to the exhibition context. The third practice, *co-promotion* - previously acknowledged in qualitative studies but lacking operational clarity - is operationalized here through three contextually grounded dimensions.

Empirical findings reveal nuanced operationalizations of these practices. *Exchange* manifests as a second-order construct comprising participant information exchange, inter-organizational intelligence exchange, network resource exchange, relational cultivation exchange. *Co-production* similarly emerges as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing three factors: participant joint production, inter-organization joint production, and inter-alliance joint initiative. Besides, while the concept of *co-promotion* has been speculated in conceptual papers and qualitative studies in generic VCC literature, it had not been empirically measured with specific dimensions. The study makes methodological contributions to *co-promotion* measurement by empirically validating three concrete dimensions—reciprocal brand exposure, targeted network promotion, and mutual endorsement. Overall, these findings

contribute to service ecosystem knowledge by improving measurement frameworks for established VCC practices within the unique dynamics of trade show contexts in a B2B ecosystem.

Research Question 1.2 When do these practices occur at the three stages (before/during/after shows)?

The second conclusion relates to the identified VCC practices across different exhibition stages. Previous empirical studies in exhibition literature have examined exhibitors' behaviors or activities at various exhibition stages, with exhibitor revisit intention as a key outcome (e.g., M. J. Lee, Lee, & Joo, 2015; Lin, 2016). While many other studies have emphasized activities occurring during the show itself, the extant VCC literature in trade show contexts has paid limited attention to the various stages.

After confirming the identification of VCC practices, this study further explores at which stage each practice occurs, providing a holistic understanding of the identified practices within the timeline of trade shows. The research found that these VCC practices are not mutually exclusive at each stage, and there may be some overlaps between them. VCC practices are not limited to a specific stage and can occur throughout the trade show process. This reflects the characteristics of VCC in a service ecosystem, where VCCs are not isolated, aligning with the findings of Frow and Payne (2018). This discovery also opens a new area for future research.

6.4.2 Research Issue 2

Research Issue 2 aims to investigate the relationships among VCC practices, exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference.

- **Research Question 2.1** To what extent does each VCC practice exert an influence on exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference, respectively?

Research Question 2.1 aims to explore the direct impact of VCC practices (*exchange*, *co-production*, and *co-promotion*) on exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference, respectively. The theoretical contributions of this study are detailed in the following aspects:

First, this study is the first to examine the effects of various VCC practices within the service ecosystem of trade shows. In generic VCC and tourism literature, customer VCC behaviors or activities have been widely investigated as antecedents to customer satisfaction and loyalty (e.g., Mathis et al. 2016; Ranjan & Read, 2016; Zhang, 2017). The current study shows that *exchange* and *co-promotion* have a significant positive impact on exhibitor satisfaction, while co-production does not. This finding challenges the traditional assumption in VCC theory that "all collaborative forms enhance customer satisfaction" (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), revealing the heterogeneity of practice effectiveness. Specifically, *exchange* and *co-promotion* enhance satisfaction by building trust and partnership, while the complexity of *co-production* may diminish its effectiveness.

Second, in terms of the service ecosystem, existing research has primarily speculated or commented on the issue based on literature reviews, observations, industry experiences, or practices (Marcos-Cuevas et al., 2016). As a result, there is a significant lack of empirical analysis, which limits the understanding of the underlying dynamics within the service ecosystem. Therefore, it is essential to adopt empirical research methods, such as surveys or case studies, to collect both quantitative and qualitative data that can offer more concrete and reliable insights (Ranjan & Read, 2021). Responding to this gap, this study employs a mixed-method approach (qualitative interviews and quantitative validation) to develop a VCC measurement tool tailored to the trade show industry. For example, the operationalization of exchange practice includes multi-dimensional indicators such as information and relational exchange, overcoming the limitations of single-dimensional measures in traditional research (Yi & Gong, 2013). This study also undertakes a contextual development of *co-production* measurement specific to the trade show industry. Additionally, it develops and validates a measurement for *co-promotion*, integrating these constructs into a structural relationship for further exploration. This scale not only enhances the measurability of VCC but also provides a fundamental base for future research.

- **Research Question 2.2** What is the relationship among VCC practices, exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference? How does one impact others?

Research Question 2.2 focuses on the mediating role of exhibitor satisfaction in the relationship between VCC practices and trade show brand preference. Its theoretical contributions can be summarized as follows:

First, this study is the first to validate the mediating role of exhibitor satisfaction in VCC within the trade show context. The results indicate that satisfaction mediates the impact of *exchange* and *co-promotion* on brand preference, while the mediating effect of *co-production* is not significant. Although the exchange practice greatly increases exhibitor satisfaction, their direct effect on brand preference is minimal. Nevertheless, the practice can enhance brand preference indirectly by improving satisfaction. In contrast, the study reveals that *co-production* has neither a direct nor an indirect effect on brand preference. This unexpected finding suggests an area for future research to explore the complexities of co-production and its mechanism, particularly how varying levels of participant engagement and resource integration might affect its influences in different settings.

Second, this study confirms the direct positive impact of customer satisfaction on brand preference, a relationship that has been extensively examined in prior literature and is now applied specifically within the context of trade shows. Previous studies, such as those by Hellier et al. (2003) and Ebrahim et al. (2016), have demonstrated that satisfaction is a critical antecedent of brand preference, as satisfied customers are more likely to develop stronger emotional and cognitive connections with a brand, ultimately enhancing their loyalty and preference. By empirically validating this relationship in the trade show industry, this study reinforces the importance of satisfaction as a key driver of exhibitors' brand preference and provides industry-specific insights into how satisfaction influences exhibitor behavior and brand-related outcomes.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature by proposing an integrated framework of "value co-creation—satisfaction—brand preference." This framework extends the conventional satisfaction-brand preference model by incorporating VCC practices as an antecedent to satisfaction and, consequently, brand preference. The inclusion of VCC reflects a shift from traditional service delivery models to more collaborative approaches, where stakeholders actively participate in creating value. By positioning VCC as a foundational

element, the proposed framework not only sheds light on the mechanisms through which satisfaction and brand preference are shaped but also highlights the dynamic and interactive nature of these relationships in the trade show context.

This integrated framework offers significant academic and practical value. Academically, it bridges existing gaps in the literature by linking VCC, satisfaction, and brand preference in a model, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of how these constructs interact. While previous research has typically examined satisfaction and brand preference in isolation or within a linear framework, this study emphasizes the role of VCC as a precursor to satisfaction, offering a fresh perspective on how collaborative practices can influence brand-related outcomes.

From a practical standpoint, the framework is highly relevant not only to the trade show industry but also to other B2B service scenarios where collaborative value creation is key. By demonstrating the applicability of the framework across these contexts, this study provides actionable insights for service providers aiming to strengthen their brand equity and build long-term relationships with clients. In particular, the framework underscores the importance of actively engaging stakeholders in co-creation activities to foster satisfaction and establish a strong preference for the brand.

Table 6.2 Theoretical Contributions

Issue	Research Questions	Conclusions made for each research issue and final hypotheses within it	Status of research in the extant literature	Extent of contributions of this research to current knowledge
1	1.1 What measures constitute value co-creation practices among trade show stakeholders within the service ecosystem?	Three types of vcc practices in trade shows were identified through interviews, including: 1) exchange, 2) co-production, and 3) co-promotion.	Investigated in some depth in value co-creation literature. But no prior research a service ecosystem perspective in the exhibition context.	To some extent
		1.1.1 Exchange is measured as a second-order construct composed of four factors: participant information exchange, inter-organizational intelligence exchange, network resource exchange, relational cultivation exchange.	Investigated in some depth in the value co-creation and exhibition literature	To some extent
		1.1.2 Co-production is measured as a second-order construct composed of three factors: participant joint production, inter-organization joint production, and inter-alliance joint initiative.	Investigated in some depth in the value co-creation literature	To some extent
		1.1.3 Co-promotion is measured as a second-order construct composed of three factors: reciprocal brand exposure, targeted network promotion, and mutual endorsement.	Investigated in some depth in the value co-creation literature	To some extent
1	1.2 When do these practices occur at the three stages (before/during/after shows)?	The value co-creation practices observed at each stage are not mutually exclusive, demonstrating potential overlaps, and can occur throughout the entire trade show process.	Minor research	To some extent

Issue	Research Questions	Conclusions made for each research issue and final hypotheses within it	Status of research in the extant literature	Extent of contributions of this research to current knowledge
2	2.1 To what extent does each value co-creation practice exert an influence on exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference, respectively?	2.1.1a: Exchange has a positive direct impact on Exhibitor satisfaction.	Investigated in some depth in exhibition literature	To minor extent
		2.1.1b: Exchange does not have a positive direct impact on show brand preference.	Minor or no past research	To some extent
		2.1.2a: Co-production does not have a positive direct impact on Exhibitor satisfaction.	Investigated in some depth as an antecedent in value co-creation literature. But no prior or minor research in exhibition studies.	To minor extent
		2.1.2b: Co-production does not have a positive direct impact on Show brand preference.	Investigated in some depth as an antecedent in value co-creation literature. But no prior or minor research in exhibition studies.	To minor extent
		2.1.3a: Co-promotion has a positive direct impact on Exhibitor satisfaction.	Minor or no past research	To great extent
		2.1.3b: Co-promotion has a positive direct impact on Show brand preference.	Minor or no past research	To great extent
2	2.2 What is the relationship among value co-creation practices, exhibitor satisfaction and trade show brand preference? How does one impact others?			
	2.2.1 Does exhibitor satisfaction exert an influence on trade show brand preference?	2.2.1: Exhibitor satisfaction has a positive direct impact on Show brand preference.	Investigated in some depth in exhibition literature.	To minor extent

Issue	Research Questions	Conclusions made for each research issue and final hypotheses within it	Status of research in the extant literature	Extent of contributions of this research to current knowledge
	2.2.2 Does exhibitor satisfaction mediate the relationship between value co-creation practices and trade show brand preference?	2.2.2a: Exhibitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between exchange and Show brand preference.	Investigated in some depth as an antecedent in exhibition literature. But no prior research on the mediator effect of exhibitor satisfaction for value co-creation.	To some extent
		2.2.2b: Exhibitor satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between co-production and Show brand preference.	Investigated in some depth as an antecedent in exhibition literature. But no prior research on the mediator effect of exhibitor satisfaction for value co-creation.	To some extent
		2.2.2c: Exhibitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between co-promotion and Show brand preference.	Investigated in some depth as an antecedent in exhibition literature. But no prior research on the mediator effect of exhibitor satisfaction for value co-creation.	To some extent

6.5 Implications for Policy and Practice

The starting point for this research is the understanding that VCC is challenging to observe empirically. A classification of VCC would make it more observable, thereby enhancing its designability and manageability (Storbacka et al., 2016). Understanding VCC practices across nested levels of the ecosystem and the process through these activities are critical for improving service design and provision (Salo & Myers, 2018). To ensure the health and sustainability of the trade show ecosystem, all stakeholders must adopt an ecosystem mindset. This necessitates a fundamental shift in strategic focus from firm-centric value creation to ecosystem-level value co-creation, recognizing the interdependence of all actors within this interconnected environment (Osborne et al., 2022). Furthermore, disentangling the complex concept of co-creation in this manner facilitates greater insights into the interactions, collaborations, and resource integration among ecosystem actors. Specifically, this research helps industry practitioners identify important integrated resources and practices for VCC at different stages of producing and delivering trade shows. It also reveals how can different stakeholders benefit from these activities, such as exhibitors, trade show organizers, and the host destination. Below, several practical implications of this study are presented for actors at each level of the ecosystem with tailored recommendations for each stakeholder group.

6.5.1 Implications for Exhibition Organizers

As show organizers often serve as network orchestrators of collaboration (Lee, 2019), this research offers valuable insights into how they can engage with other stakeholders through collaborative interactions during resource integration. A key strategic implication is the need to strategically prioritize resources toward two key VCC activities: industry-wide exchange and co-promotion. By focusing on these practices, organizers can develop targeted strategies to enhance exhibitor satisfaction and loyalty, while collaboratively building superior value propositions for a more competitive trade show.

The pre-show phase is crucial for show organizers to establish a strong foundation for VCC with exhibitors. To enhance exchange practices, it is essential to prioritize transparent

communication and timely resource allocation. This builds trust and reciprocity, which are vital for successful partnerships. Additionally, developing mutual value-creation initiatives—such as sharing industry insights or offering exclusive networking opportunities—can significantly strengthen relationships with exhibitors.

Fostering long-term relationships is also essential for continued collaboration. Providing exhibitors with exclusive offers or incentives for future events encourages repeat participation. Regular communication or personalized follow-ups sustains engagement and loyalty, ensuring a strong partnership moving forward. By following these strategies at each stage of the event, organizers can create an ecosystem of VCC that benefits all parties involved.

Leveraging co-promotion strategies is another key aspect of the VCC activities. By collaborating with exhibitors on joint marketing campaigns, such as co-branded social media content or shared advertising efforts, organizers can cultivate a sense of partnership and shared success. Highlighting exhibitors' contributions in event materials and promotional campaigns further enhances their visibility and strengthens their connection to the show brand. Organizers can also bolster their industry and policy reputation by partnering with industry associations that maintain strong links with market actors and policymakers (Tafesse, 2014). In practice, trade show organizers can employ various VCC strategies to reinforce their brand preference among exhibitors. These practices not only enrich exhibitors' experiences but also foster long-term loyalty and preference for the trade show brand.

Finally, optimizing co-production implementation is equally important. To achieve this, organizers should develop and apply structured co-production frameworks that clearly delineate roles, responsibilities, and expected outcomes for actors involved. By clarifying the structure, the model enhances stakeholder engagement and readiness to participate. Communicating the long-term benefits derived from these co-production activities, such as increased brand visibility and stronger industry relationships, can further motivate exhibitors to invest their resources actively.

6.5.2 Implications for Industry Associations and Exhibition Venues

Industry associations and exhibition venues, as crucial meso-level actors, play a vital role in the service ecosystem. They should recognize the significance of VCC while leveraging the positive effects of these practices. By actively engaging in VCC, they can enhance collaboration among stakeholders, improve event outcomes, and foster stronger relationships within the industry. Emphasizing these practices not only benefits individual organizations but also contributes to the overall growth and sustainability of the industry, creating a stronger and more interconnected community.

For industry associations, their role is essential in facilitating broad knowledge sharing and collaboration, as these are the key engines for driving industry growth. They can create platforms for knowledge sharing and networking among organizers, exhibitors, government authorities, and other stakeholders. These interactions can spark innovation and strengthen relationships within the industry. Moreover, industry associations should actively maintain industry networks and foster ongoing knowledge sharing. Establishing mentorship programs to connect experienced professionals with newcomers could enhance skill development and promote best practices across the sector.

Additionally, industry associations should act as a bridge, collaborating with event organizers to utilize exhibition platforms and work together with various stakeholders, including policymakers, to serve the industry by establishing evaluation frameworks that measure sustainability metrics and industry benchmarks. These frameworks can elevate industry standards and ensure that future events meet evolving expectations. Furthermore, publishing case studies or reports that highlight successful events and best practices can guide organizers in making informed decisions and improvements for future initiatives.

For exhibition venues, their role extends to facilitating coordination and communication between event organizers and local government entities. Specifically, venues can act as strategic local partners by facilitating access to municipal resources, assisting with regulatory compliance, and connecting organizers with key city networks. By serving as a bridge, venues ensure that the needs of both parties are met, fostering a smoother planning and execution

process. Venues should also invest in developing flexible spaces that accommodate various event formats and requirements, enhancing the overall event experience.

6.5.3 Implications for Policymakers

From the perspective of government policy, economic support, and strong coordination capabilities, promoting industry development is essential. The identification of effective practices within a complex service ecosystem is critical for destination policymakers, as they must balance the needs of various levels and actors. The investigation of different VCC practices emphasizes the roles of various stakeholders, helping destination marketers utilize local resources to develop a competitive advantage.

For policymakers, the pre-event phase is vital for supporting industry development. This support can be financial, such as providing funding or incentives for trade show organizers to enhance destination attractiveness and competitiveness. Beyond direct aid, policymakers can also lend significant credibility and enhance a show's brand value through official partnerships and endorsements. This non-financial support signals quality and importance, helping to attract a diverse array of international participants. Facilitating these international collaborations by easing visa processes and offering subsidies can further enrich the overall event experience.

Moreover, encouraging research and innovation is crucial for the continuous evolution of the trade show industry. Funding research initiatives to explore emerging trends and best practices ensures that the industry adapts to global standards and remains competitive. However, the role of government extends beyond being a mere supporter. More broadly, policymakers must proactively shape the service ecosystem by fostering an environment of fair competition and carefully balancing the diverse interests of all stakeholders. This governance role is fundamental to the long-term health of the industry. By adopting this collaborative and holistic approach, policymakers can significantly enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the trade show industry, ultimately benefiting all participants involved.

6.6 Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study presents several theoretical contributions and practical implications, it also acknowledges limitations that provide valuable directions for future research. These limitations highlight areas for further investigation to enrich the understanding of VCC practices within service ecosystems, particularly in a B2B context.

First, the study identifies three VCC practices rooted in a service ecosystem perspective, encompassing micro, meso, and macro levels. In Phase 1, the industry experts interviewed primarily represented the micro and meso levels, with a limited number of macro-level actors, such as government representatives. Although insights into macro-level VCC were derived from meso-level actors connected to governmental bodies, future research could deepen this understanding by directly incorporating the perspectives of macro-level actors. Such an approach would provide a deeper insight into their roles and contributions within VCC processes. For instance, certain VCC practices may be either weakened or strengthened by government intervention through administrative policies. Future studies should incorporate an institutional perspective to systematically account for how policy frameworks and regulatory settings shape these practices across different economic systems.

Second, the operationalization of exhibitor satisfaction in this study represents a notable limitation. The measurement scale primarily captured the cognitive and utilitarian dimension of satisfaction, focusing on functional performance aspects. While this approach is well-grounded in prior B2B trade show research, it may not fully reflect the affective dimension of satisfaction, which includes emotional and social value derived from experiential engagement. Research in service contexts advocates for a cognitive-affective framework, suggesting that both dimensions are crucial in shaping participant loyalty and behavioral intentions (Kang, 2007; Lin, 2016). The growing prevalence of "bleisure" in business travel further underscores that participants seek not only utility but also meaningful and enjoyable experiences (Ezeuduji, 2024; Mercan et al., 2024; Mohd Sohaili et al., 2022). Therefore, future research is encouraged to employ multi-dimensional satisfaction scales that can distinguish between cognitive and affective components, thereby offering a more complete understanding of how VCC practices contribute to overall satisfaction.

Third, this study predominantly focuses on trade shows in China, specifically in Shanghai and Shenzhen in Phase 2. While these cities are significant hubs for trade shows, the findings may not be generalizable to other countries or regions. Additionally, service ecosystems can differ across geographical contexts and are influenced by various factors, such as cultural norms, institutional frameworks, and economic conditions. For instance, stakeholder interactions can differ between markets due to variations in economic policies and industry ties. Future research could broaden the geographical scope by examining trade shows in different regions, facilitating cross-regional comparisons and a deeper understanding of how contextual factors shape VCC practices.

Fourth, the respondents in Phase 2 were primarily exhibitors, whose perceptions and engagement in VCC may be influenced by their respective industry sectors. This raises concerns about whether the findings fully capture the diversity of VCC practices across different industries. For instance, exhibitors in technology-driven sectors may emphasize innovation and collaboration, whereas those in traditional manufacturing industries may prioritize operational efficiency and cost reduction. Future research could address this limitation by exploring VCC practices across a broader range of industries, comparing how exhibitors from different sectors perceive and engage in VCC. Such investigations would offer a more comprehensive understanding of industry traits and their impact on VCC at trade shows.

Finally, the study employed a cross-sectional design, collecting data at a specific moment in time. Given the dynamic nature of service ecosystems, which may be influenced by technological progress, market shifts, and regulatory updates, a longitudinal approach in future research could offer valuable insights into how service ecosystems evolve over time and how VCC practices adapt to these changes.

6.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, a discussion of the findings related to the two research issues was presented, highlighting the contributions of this thesis to resolving the research problem and advancing the knowledge of VCC. Conclusions were drawn regarding the research problem, and

implications for both theory and managerial practice were discussed. Additionally, the limitations of the research were acknowledged, and future research directions were proposed to address these gaps and build on the findings.

This research provides a comprehensive framework for understanding VCC from a service ecosystem perspective, investigating its impacts on exhibitor satisfaction and exhibition brand preference within the context of Mainland China's trade show industry. The proposed VCC model represents research contributions to the field, offering multi-stakeholder perspective on how exchange, co-production, and co-promotion practices influence exhibitor satisfaction and preferences. By integrating theoretical foundations with empirical evidence, this model not only enhances our understanding of VCC in the exhibition context but also provides a solid foundation for future research. These insights offer valuable guidance for exhibition organizers, industry associations, exhibition venues, and policymakers, enabling them to design more effective strategies that foster collaboration, enhance exhibitor experiences, and strengthen brand loyalty. Moving forward, future research could explore additional VCC practices, contextual factors, and moderating variables to further refine the model and extend its applicability to other industries or regions. By addressing the identified limitations and building on the proposed framework, scholars and practitioners can continue to advance the understanding of VCC and its role in shaping sustainable and competitive service ecosystems.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Sample Questions

A mutually beneficial practice* can be seen as planned collaboration in which different parties work collaboratively to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome.

**The phrase "mutually beneficial practice" is used to help interviewees understand the concept of value co-creation (VCC).*

- Based on this scenario, please think about your mutually beneficial practices with **exhibition stakeholders** at the three stages of trade shows.

  1. *To explore VCC practices with exhibitors*
     1) What are mutually beneficial practices before the show is held?
     2) What are mutually beneficial practices during the show?
     3) What are mutually beneficial practices after the show finished?

  2. *To investigate VCC activities for each practice*
     1) What are the key aspects/activities when working with the partner?
     2) How common/frequent is this practice with the partner?
     3) What important knowledge, skills, and competencies were used? How?
     4) During the collaboration process, what did you say and do? What did the partner say and do?

  3. *To identify important resources for VCC*
     1) Regarding the practices you mentioned, what are the top 3 resources integrated for each stage? (e.g., informational, physical, financial, relational, economic, social, cultural, technology, knowledge & skills, competence.)
     2) Who provides these resources?
     3) Why do you think they are important?

  4. *To investigate outcomes/created values of VCC activities*
     1) Any new resource was created as a result? What was it?
     2) What benefits did you gain from using the resources, and why?
     3) What benefits did the partner gain from using the resources, and why?

- General questions
  1. Please briefly introduce yourself and your company (gender, occupation, nationality, location, industry sector).
  2. How long have you been working in this company? (years of experience in the industry)

Appendix B: Questionnaires – Pilot Test

Appendix B1: Questionnaires in English

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY 香港理工大學

Questionnaire code: SZ-____-_____

- **Study background**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your participation in this research study! I am a PhD student from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University's School of Hotel & Tourism Management. Currently, I am conducting research on the impact of mutual beneficial practices in the exhibition industry. Your perspective as an exhibitor is crucial to this study. Please be assured that all your responses will be treated confidentially, and only aggregated results will be reported. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me directly at pin.yi@ . Thank you once again for your valuable contribution!

Section 1 Exchange Practice

1. Participant Information Exchange

This part inquires about how your company exchanges information with other entities **at this show.**

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6-Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
1	We exchange *product* information with **buyers, the show organizer**, and **other exhibitors** at this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
2	We exchange *market* information with **buyers**, **the show organizer**, and **other exhibitors** at this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
3	We interact with **buyers**, **the show organizer**, and **other exhibitors** to share and learn knowledge.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
4	We exchange *product* information with **industry associations** at this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
5	We exchange *market* information with **industry associations** at this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
6	We interact with **industry associations** to share and learn knowledge.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

2. Network Resource Exchange

This part inquires about how your company exchange business network with other entities **at this show.**

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6-Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
7	We share our business network with the **show organizer**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
8	The **show organizer** helps us grow our business network.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
9	We actively participate in networking and matchmaking events hosted by the **show organizer** to *grow our business network*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
10	We actively participate in the networking and matchmaking events hosted by the **show organizer** to *find business partners*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
11	We share our business network with **industry associations**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
12	**Industry associations** share business network with us.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

3. Relational Cultivation Exchange

This part inquires about how your company maintains relationships with other entities **for this show.**

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6-Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
13	We have a long-term relationship with the **show organizer** through active participation in their *shows*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
14	We maintain close contact with the **show organizer** through active participation in their *shows*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
15	We maintain close contact with the **show organizer** through active participation in their *events*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
16	We maintain close contact with **industry associations** through active participation in their *events*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

Section 2 Co-production Practice

1. Participant Joint Production

This part inquires about how your company would like to be involved in trade shows in general.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6-Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
17	If the **show organizer** requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on enhancing the *show quality*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
18	If the **show organizer** requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on the *show design*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
19	If the **show organizer** requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on the *show content*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
20	We would like to provide assistance to concurrent events at the show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
21	We would like to bring our events to the show *(such as product launch and product demonstration events)*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
22	We would like to actively interact with the **show organizer** to improve their understanding of our needs and enhance their service.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

2. Inter-Organization Joint Production

This part inquires about how your company would like to be involved in trade shows in general.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6-Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
23	We would like to exhibit as a group with other firms led by **industry associations**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
24	We would like to apply for a booth in a group pavilion area organized by **industry associations**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
25	We would like to exhibit as a group with other firms led by **government agencies**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
26	We would like to apply for a booth in a group pavilion area organized by **government agencies**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

3. Inter-Alliance Joint Initiative

This part inquires about your company's experiences in participating in the events jointly hosted by the **show organizer** and other entities.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6-Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
27	We actively participate in *networking events* or *sharing sessions* jointly held by the **show organizer** and **industry associations**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
28	We actively participate in *industry events* jointly held by **show organizers** and **industry associations**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
29	We actively participate in *networking events* or *sharing sessions* jointly held by the **show organizer** and **government agencies**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
30	We actively participate in *industry events* jointly held by the **show organizer** and **government agencies**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

Section 3 Co-promotion Practice

1. Reciprocal Brand Exposure

This part inquires about your experience with the promotion related to **this show**.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6-Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
31	We share information about this show through our official media channels.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
32	I share information about this show through my personal social media profiles.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
33	We partner with the **show organizer** to have our company mentioned in its show promotions.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
34	We partner with the **show organizer** to promote our company through its official channels.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
35	We partner with the **show organizer** to showcase our products, technologies, or achievements through its official channels.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
36	We pay attention to **firms** that provide speakers at concurrent events.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
37	We pay attention to **industry associations** that provide speakers at concurrent events.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
38	We discover *other trade shows* at which our company can exhibit at this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
39	We get information about *other trade show* at this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

2. Targeted Network Promotion

This part inquires about your promotional experience related to **industry associations**.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6-Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
40	**Industry associations** recommend trade shows to us.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
41	We get trade show information hosted by different organizers through **industry associations**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
42	We get trade show information hosted by different organizers at **association events**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

3. Mutual Endorsement

This part inquires about your perception related to the quality of **this show**.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6-Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
43	Participating in this show validates the high quality of our business.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
44	Participating in this show enhances our company's reputation and image.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
45	Participation of industry-leading **firms** enhances the recognition of this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
46	The presence of **industry associations** at this show enhances its recognition.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
47	The presence of **government officials** at this show enhances its recognition.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

Section 4 Overall Perception

1. Exhibitor Satisfaction

This part inquires about your overall satisfaction with **this show**.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6-Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
48.	Overall, we are satisfied with the experience at this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
49.	Overall, we are satisfied with the show organizer.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
50.	Overall, we are satisfied with this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

2. Show Brand Preference

This part inquires about your overall preference for **the show brand**.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements., using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6-Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
51.	We prefer this trade show to other shows of its type.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
52.	We prefer this organizer to other organizers operating similar events in this field.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
53.	We prefer this exhibition center to other centers within this city.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
54.	We prefer this city to other cities for trade shows.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

Section 5 Respondent Profile

1. Size of your company (according to the number of employees)
   ☐ 1-50 employees ☐ 51-300 employees ☐ Over 300 employees

2. How many times has your company exhibited in this show, including the current one?
   ☐ Once ☐ 2-5 times ☐ 6-10 times ☐ More than 10 times

3. At how many similar shows in Hong Kong or Mainland China does your company exhibit each year?
   ☐ 1-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-10 ☐ Over 10

4. Is your company a member of any industry associations?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. What is your position level in your company
   ☐ Junior ☐ Middle ☐ Senior and above

6. Where is your company located?
   ☐ Mainland China ☐ Hong Kong ☐ Macau ☐ Others (Please specify_____)

Thank you very much for your participation and support !

Appendix B2: Questionnaires in Chinese

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY 香港理工大學

问卷编号：SZ-____-_____

尊敬的女士/先生，

您好！感谢您拨冗参加本次调查问卷。我是香港理工大学酒店及旅游业管理学院的博士研究生，正在进行会展业互利共赢实践的相关研究，调查对象为专业展会参展商。本问卷采用匿名方式，所有信息仅用作学术研究，请您放心作答。所有题目没有对错之分，请您依照自身情况填写。如果您对本项研究有疑问，请电邮 pin.yi@ 与我联系。再次衷心感谢您的鼎力支持！

第一部分 互惠交换实践

1. 信息交换

这部分询问贵公司在**本次展会**上的信息交流活动。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
1	我公司与**买家、展会主办单位**和**其他展商**交流*产品*信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
2	我公司与**买家、展会主办单位**和**其他展商**交流*市场*信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
3	我公司与**买家、展会主办单位**和**其他展商**互动来分享和学习知识。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
4	我公司与**行业协会**交流*产品*信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
5	我公与**行业协会**交流*市场*信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
6	我公司与**行业协会**互动来分享和学习知识。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

2. 人脉交换

这部分询问贵公司在**本次展会**上的人脉分享活动。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
7	我公司与**展会主办单位**分享商业网络。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
8	**展会主办单位**帮助我公司拓展商业网络。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
9	我公司积极参加**主办单位**组织的社交及商贸配对活动，以*扩大商业网络*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
10	我公司积极参加**主办单位**组织的社交及商贸配对活动，以*寻找商业伙伴*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
11	我公司与**行业协会**分享商业网络。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
12	**行业协会**与我公司分享商业网络。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

3. 关系发展

这部分询问贵公司与其他组织的关系管理。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
13	我公司积极参与**主办单位**组织的*展会*，与其建立了长期合作关系。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
14	我公司积极参与**主办单位**组织的*展会*，与其保持密切联系。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
15	我公司积极参与**主办单位**组织的*行业活动*，与其保持密切联系。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
16	我公司积极参与**行业协会**组织的*行业活动*，与其保持密切联系。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

第二部分 联合创作实践

1. 展会合作

这部分询问贵公司的展会参与意愿。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
17	如**主办单位**邀请，我公司愿意就提升*展会质量*提供意见和建议。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
18	如**主办单位**邀请，我公司愿意就*展会设计*提供意见和建议。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
19	如**主办单位**邀请，我公司愿意就*展会内容*提供意见和建议。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
20	我公司愿意为展会同期活动提供帮助。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
21	我公司愿意将产品活动带到展会现场（*如新品发布会、产品演示活动等*）。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
22	我公司愿意与**主办单位**积极互动，以增进他们对我们需求的了解并提升服务。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

2. 跨组织合作

这部分询问贵公司的展会参与意愿。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
23	我公司愿意与**行业协会**牵头组团的其他企业*集体参展*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
24	我公司愿意在**行业协会**牵头组织的*团体展区*申请展位。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
25	我公司愿意与**政府机构**牵头组团的其他企业*集体参展*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
26	我公司愿意在**政府机构**牵头组织的*团体展区*申请展位。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

3. 联盟合作

这部分询问贵公司对于由**本次展会主办单位**和其他机构合作主办的活动参与经历。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
27	我公司积极参与**主办单位**和**行业协会**联合举办的*社交活动*或*分享会*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
28	我公司积极参与**主办单位**和**行业协会**联合举办的*行业活动*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
29	我公司积极参与**主办单位**和**政府机构**联合举办的*社交活动*或*分享会*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
30	我公司积极参与**主办单位**和**政府机构**联合举办的*行业活动*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

第三部分 联合推广实践

1. 品牌曝光

这部分询问贵公司与**本次展会**有关的宣传推广经历。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
31	我公司在官方媒体平台分享该展的相关信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
32	我在个人社交媒体平台分享该展的相关信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
33	我公司与**主办单位**合作，他们会在宣传展会时提及我公司。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
34	我公司与**主办单位**合作，以通过其官方平台宣传我公司。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
35	我公司与**主办单位**合作，以通过其官方平台宣传我们的产品、技术或成果。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
36	我们关注为展会同期活动提供演讲嘉宾的公司。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
37	我们关注为展会同期活动提供演讲嘉宾的行业协会。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
38	在本次展会上，我们发现了*其他展会*的参展机会。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
39	在本次展会上，我们获取了*其他展会*的信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

2. 定向推广

这部分询问贵公司与**行业协会**有关的宣传推广经历。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
40	**行业协会**向我公司推介专业展会。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
41	我公司通过**行业协会**获得不同主办单位的展会信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
42	我公司在**行业协会活动**上获取不同主办单位的展会信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

3. 认证加持

这部分询问贵公司对**本次展会**的相关看法。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
43	参加本次展会证明了我公司的专业质量。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
44	参加本次展会提升了我公司的声誉和形象。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
45	**龙头企业**的参与增强了本次展会的行业认可度。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
46	**行业协会**的出席增强了本次展会的行业认可度。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
47	**政府官员**的出席增强了本次展会的行业认可度。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

第四部分 整体评价

1. 展商满意度

这部分询问贵公司对**本次展会**的满意度评价。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
48	总的来说，我公司对本次*参展体验*感到满意。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
49	总的来说，我公司对*主办单位*感到满意。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
50	总的来说，我公司对*本次展会*感到满意。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

2. 展会品牌偏好

这部分询问贵公司对**展会品牌**的偏好。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
51	相比其他**同类展会**，我公司更希望参与这个展会。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
52	相比其他**主办单位**，我公司更希望展会由这个主办单位举办。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
53	相比这个城市的其他**场馆**，我公司更希望展会在这个会展中心举办。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
54	相比其他**城市**，我公司更希望展会在这个城市举办。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

第五部分 受访者信息

1. 贵公司规模（按照雇员人数）
□1-50 人 □51-300 人 □300 人以上

2. 贵公司参加了多少次这个展会？
□第 1 次参加 □2-5 次 □6-10 次 □10 次以上

3. 贵公司每年在中国大陆或香港、澳门参加几次同类展会？
□1-3 □4-6 □7-10 □10 次以上

4. 贵公司是否是任何行业协会成员？
□是 □否

5. 您在贵公司的资历级别
□初级 □中级 □高级及以上

6. 贵公司总部所在地区
□大陆 □香港 □澳门 □其他，请注明_____

非常感谢您的支持与合作！

Appendix C: Questionnaires – Main Survey

Appendix C1: Questionnaires in English

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
香港理工大學

Trade show: _____
Questionnaire code: _____

- **Study background**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your participation in this research study! I am a PhD student from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University's School of Hotel & Tourism Management. Currently, I am conducting research on the impact of mutual beneficial practices in the exhibition industry. Your perspective as an exhibitor is crucial to this study. Please be assured that all your responses will be treated confidentially, and only aggregated results will be reported. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me directly at pin.yi@ . Thank you once again for your valuable contribution!

Section 1 Exchange Practice

1. Participant Information Exchange

This part inquires about how your company exchanges information with other entities **at this show.**

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
1	We exchange *product* information with **buyers, the show organizer**, and **other exhibitors** at this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
2	We exchange *market* information with **buyers**, **the show organizer**, and **other exhibitors** at this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
3	We interact with **buyers**, **the show organizer**, and **other exhibitors** to share and learn knowledge.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

2. Inter-Organizational Intelligence Exchange

This part inquires about how your company exchanges information with industry associations **at this show.**

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
4	We exchange *product* information with **industry associations** at this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
5	We exchange *market* information with **industry associations** at this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
6	We interact with **industry associations** to share and learn knowledge.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

3. Network Resource Exchange

This part inquires about how your company exchange business network with other entities **at this show.**

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
7	The **show organizer** helps us grow our business network.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
8	We actively participate in networking and matchmaking events hosted by the **show organizer** to *grow our business network.*	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
9	We actively participate in the networking and matchmaking events hosted by the **show organizer** to *find business partners.*	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

4. Relational Cultivation Exchange

This part inquires about how your company maintains relationships with other entities **for this show.**

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
10	We have a long-term relationship with the **show organizer** through active participation in their *shows*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
11	We maintain close contact with the **show organizer** through active participation in their *shows*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
12	We maintain close contact with the **show organizer** through active participation in their *events*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

Section 2 Co-production Practice

1. Participant Joint Production

This part inquires about how your company would like to be involved in trade shows in general.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
13	If the **show organizer** requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on enhancing the *show quality*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
14	If the **show organizer** requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on the *show design*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
15	If the **show organizer** requests, we will provide ideas and suggestions on the *show content*.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

2. Inter-Organization Joint Production

This part inquires about how your company would like to be involved in trade shows in general.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
16	We would like to exhibit as a group with other firms led by **industry associations**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
17	We would like to apply for a booth in a group pavilion area organized by **industry associations**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
18	We would like to exhibit as a group with other firms led by **government agencies**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
19	We would like to apply for a booth in a group pavilion area organized by **government agencies**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

3. Inter-Alliance Joint Initiative

This part inquires about your company's experiences in participating in the events jointly hosted by the **show organizer** and other entities.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly agree*

20	We actively participate in *networking events* or *sharing sessions* jointly held by the **show organizer** and **industry associations**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
21	We actively participate in *industry events* jointly held by **show organizers** and **industry associations**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
22	We actively participate in *networking events* or *sharing sessions* jointly held by the **show organizer** and **government agencies**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
23	We actively participate in *industry events* jointly held by the **show organizer** and **government agencies**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

Section 3 Co-promotion Practice

1. Reciprocal Brand Exposure

This part inquires about your experience with the promotion related to **this show**.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
24	We partner with the **show organizer** to have our company mentioned in its show promotions.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
25	We partner with the **show organizer** to promote our company through its official channels.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
26	We partner with the **show organizer** to showcase our products, technologies, or achievements through its official channels.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
27	We pay attention to **industry associations** that provide speakers at concurrent events.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

2. Targeted Network Promotion

This part inquires about your promotional experience related to **industry associations**.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
28	**Industry associations** recommend this kind of trade shows to us.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
29	We get trade show information of this kind through **industry associations**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
30	We get trade show information of this kind at **association events**.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

3. Mutual Endorsement

This part inquires about your perception related to the quality of **this show**.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
31	Participating in this show validates the high quality of our business.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
32	Participating in this show enhances our company's reputation and image.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
33	Participation of industry-leading **firms** enhances the recognition of this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
34	The presence of **industry associations** at this show enhances its recognition.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

Section 4 Overall Perception

1. Exhibitor Satisfaction

This part inquires about your overall satisfaction with **this show**.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
35	Overall, we are satisfied with the experience at this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
36	Overall, we are satisfied with the show organizer.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
37	Overall, we are satisfied with this show.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

2. Show Brand Preference

This part inquires about your overall preference for **the show brand**.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements, using the following scale. *1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Neutral, 5- Somewhat agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly agree*		
38	We prefer this trade show to other shows of its type.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
39	We prefer this organizer to other organizers operating similar events in this field.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
40	We prefer this exhibition center to other centers within this city.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7
41	We prefer this city to other cities for trade shows.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

Section 5 Respondent Profile

1. Size of your company (according to the number of employees)
   ☐ 1-50 employees ☐ 51-300 employees ☐ Over 300 employees

2. What is the size of your exhibition space in square meters?
   ☐ Less than 18 ☐ 19-36 ☐ Over 36

3. Is your company a member of any industry associations?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. How many times has your company exhibited in this show, including the current one?
   ☐ Once ☐ 2-5 times ☐ 6-10 times ☐ More than 10 times

5. At how many similar shows in Hong Kong or Mainland China does your company exhibit each year?
   ☐ 1-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-10 ☐ Over 10

6. Where is your company located?
   ☐ Mainland China ☐ Hong Kong ☐ Others (Please specify_____)

Thank you very much for your participation and support !

Appendix C2: Questionnaires in Chinese

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY 香港理工大學

展会名称: _____

问卷编号: _____

尊敬的女士/先生，

您好！感谢您拨冗参加本次调查问卷。我是香港理工大学酒店及旅游业管理学院的博士研究生，正在进行会展业互利共赢实践的相关研究，调查对象为专业展会参展商。本问卷采用匿名方式，所有信息仅用作学术研究，请您放心作答。所有题目没有对错之分，请您依照自身情况填写。如果您对本项研究有疑问，请电邮 pin.yi@ 与我联系。再次衷心感谢您的鼎力支持！

第一部分 互利共赢实践

1. 信息交换

这部分询问贵公司在**本次展会**上的信息交流活动。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
1	我公司与**买家、展会主办单位**和**其他展商**交流*产品*信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
2	我公司与**买家、展会主办单位**和**其他展商**交流*市场*信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
3	我公司与**买家、展会主办单位**和**其他展商**互动来分享和学习知识。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
4	我公司与**行业协会**交流*产品*信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
5	我公司与**行业协会**交流*市场*信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
6	我公司与**行业协会**互动来分享和学习知识。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

2. 人脉交换

这部分询问贵公司在**本次展会**上的人脉分享活动。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
7	**展会主办单位**帮助我公司拓展商业网络。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
8	我公司积极参加**主办单位**组织的社交及商贸配对活动，以*扩大商业网络*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
9	我公司积极参加**主办单位**组织的社交及商贸配对活动，以*寻找商业伙伴*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

3. 关系发展

这部分询问贵公司与其他组织的关系管理。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
10	我公司积极参与**主办单位**组织的*展会*，与其建立了长期合作关系。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
11	我公司积极参与**主办单位**组织的*展会*，与其保持密切联系。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
12	我公司积极参与**主办单位**组织的*行业活动*，与其保持密切联系。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

4. 展会合作

这部分询问贵公司在**一般专业展会**中的参与意愿。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
13	如**主办单位**邀请，我公司愿意就提升*展会质量*提供意见和建议。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
14	如**主办单位**邀请，我公司愿意就*展会设计*提供意见和建议。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
15	如**主办单位**邀请，我公司愿意就*展会内容*提供意见和建议。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

5. 跨组织合作

这部分询问贵公司在**一般专业展会**中的*参与意愿*。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意　2-不同意　3-有点不同意　4-中立　5-有点同意　6-同意 7-非常同意**		
16	我公司愿意与**行业协会**牵头组团的其他企业*集体参展*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
17	我公司愿意在**行业协会**牵头组织的*团体展区*申请展位。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
18	我公司愿意与**政府机构**牵头组团的其他企业*集体参展*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
19	我公司愿意在**政府机构**牵头组织的*团体展区*申请展位。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

6. 联盟合作

这部分询问贵公司对于由**本次展会主办单位**和其他机构合作主办的活动参与经历。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意　2-不同意　3-有点不同意　4-中立　5-有点同意　6-同意 7-非常同意**		
20	我公司积极参与**主办单位**和**行业协会**联合举办的*社交活动*或*分享会*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
21	我公司积极参与**主办单位**和**行业协会**联合举办的*行业活动*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
22	我公司积极参与**主办单位**和**政府机构**联合举办的*社交活动*或*分享会*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
23	我公司积极参与**主办单位**和**政府机构**联合举办的*行业活动*。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

7. 品牌曝光

这部分询问贵公司与**本次展会**有关的宣传推广经历。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意　2-不同意　3-有点不同意　4-中立　5-有点同意　6-同意 7-非常同意**		
24	我公司与**主办单位**合作，他们会在宣传展会时提及我公司。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
25	我公司与**主办单位**合作，以通过其官方平台宣传我公司。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
26	我公司与**主办单位**合作，以通过其官方平台宣传我们的产品、技术或成果。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
27	我们关注为展会同期活动提供演讲嘉宾的**行业协会**。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

8. 定向推广

这部分询问贵公司与**行业协会**有关的宣传推广经历。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意　2-不同意　3-有点不同意　4-中立　5-有点同意　6-同意 7-非常同意**		
28	**行业协会**向我公司推介此类专业展会。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
29	我公司通过**行业协会**获得此类专业展会信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
30	我公司在**行业协会活动**上获取此类专业展会信息。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

9. 认证加持

这部分询问贵公司对**本次展会**的相关看法。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意　2-不同意　3-有点不同意　4-中立　5-有点同意　6-同意 7-非常同意**		
31	参加本次展会证明了我公司的专业品质。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
32	参加本次展会提升了我公司的声誉和形象。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
33	**龙头企业**的参与增强了本次展会的行业认可度。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
34	**行业协会**的出席增强了本次展会的行业认可度。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

第二部分 整体评价

1. 展商满意度

这部分询问贵公司对**本次展会**的满意度评价。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
35	总的来说，我公司对本次*参展体验*感到满意。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
36	总的来说，我公司对*主办单位*感到满意。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
37	总的来说，我公司对*本次展会*感到满意。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
38	本题请您选择第二个选项。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

2. 展会品牌偏好

这部分询问贵公司对**展会品牌**的偏好。

请根据您对以下问题的同意程度进行打分。 **1-非常不同意 2-不同意 3-有点不同意 4-中立 5-有点同意 6-同意 7-非常同意**		
39	相比其他**同类展会**，我公司更希望参与这个展会。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
40	相比其他**主办单位**，我公司更希望展会由这个主办单位举办。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
41	相比这个城市的其他**场馆**，我公司更希望展会在这个会展中心举办。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7
42	相比其他**城市**，我公司更希望展会在这个城市举办。	□1 □2 □3 □4 □5 □6 □7

第三部分 受访者信息

1. 贵公司规模（按照雇员人数）
   □1-50 人 □51-300 人 □300 人以上

2. 贵公司此次参展面积是？
   □9-18 平方米 □19-36 平方米 □36 平方米以上

3. 贵公司参加了多少次这个展会？
   □第 1 次参加 □2-5 次 □6-10 次 □10 次以上

4. 贵公司每年在中国大陆或香港、澳门参加几次同类展会？
   □1-3 □4-6 □7-10 □10 次以上

5. 贵公司是否是任何行业协会成员？
   □是 □否

6. 您在贵公司的资历级别
   □初级 □中级 □高级及以上

7. 贵公司总部所在地区
   □大陆 □香港 □其他，请注明_____

非常感谢您的支持与合作！