An Investigation of Chinese Business Event Experience:

A Third Place Perspective

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Abstract

The value and rewards of hosting business events have been widely recognized by event organizers and other stakeholders. To be successful the organizers should be aware of the attitudes and perceptions of those who will be attending. At the present time there is limited research available in this area. In order to add to and explore the characteristics of a successful business event, this thesis will investigate the nature of business events using a sociological theory (Third Place) and apply it to a business event in order to gain a greater understanding of the symbiotic relationship between attendees and the event. The thesis will test a number of hypotheses relating to attitudes, motivations, perceived service quality and other factors.

A theoretical framework is proposed for a case study model to understand the complex relationships, both direct and indirect. A unique business event hosted in Hangzhou China was selected because of its wide appeal to those attending, and because of its successful influence in the market.

As part of this research an in-depth literature review was undertaken, which indicated that much of the literature was from a western perspective with less research relating to China, an important emerging market with unique cultural influences. Likewise, there was a lack of literature applying interdisciplinary theory to business events. To overcome the limitations of the existing literature which is mainly qualitative and descriptive, this thesis uses an empirical approach.

Informed by the literature and direct observation of the event, a questionnaire was developed to survey attendees at the chosen conference that resulted in a total of 1122 self-reported questionnaires. Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) was conducted to identify the service gaps and suggest actions to take. From these findings exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was initially used to extract factors to subsequently inform an analysis of causal relationships. To test the impacts of continuous variables (e.g., rating of performance) and categorical variables (e.g., gender, education) on the dependent variables (different levels of satisfaction), a multinomial logistic regression (MLR) was performed. The five identified constructs were used to determine the power and influence of the predicting constructs on the attendees' satisfaction and partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed using WarpPLS.

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative data were also collected comprising 28 participants that identified important reasons to attend the conference and the perceptions of work-conference relationships by those interviewees. The findings from the research confirm that a business event can be considered as a Third Place. Research findings including PLS-SEM showed that most of the direct relational hypotheses and mediating hypotheses were supported by the empirical data, yet only one moderating effect was significant in moderating the relationship between service quality and attendees' satisfaction by motivation.

The rich findings of this research have epistemological, methodological, and practical implications in conducting event studies, which will facilitate future researchers to investigate business events from an alternative view and re-consider the nature and non-business functions, thus adding new knowledge to event studies and extending the application scope of the Third Place Theory. These findings will provide reliable information for different stakeholders to understand the Chinese event industry and business event attendees. Further, they enable the organizers to design and operate business events innovatively with the guidance of Third Place Theory to maximise the other functions and further develop the potential of business events to provide consumers with satisfactory services but also memorable and delight event experiences.

In addition, future research directions and limitations are also reported, which will be useful for scholars to address these issues in a similar context.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The event industry has generated substantial economic contributions (Cecil, Fenich, Krugman, & Hashimoto, 2013; Davidson, 2016; Mair, 2013b; Rogers, 2013) and other impacts (Getz & Page, 2016; Park & Boo, 2010; Pavluković, Armenski, & Alcántara-Pilar, 2017) for host destinations worldwide for several decades.

Data from national organizations illustrate the benefits of staging events, especially international ones. BECA (2017) documented that over 430,000 business events were hosted in Australia in 2016, which generated more than US$19.2 billion direct expenditure, nearly 39 million visitors, and created 193,000 job opportunities. The Events Industry Council (2018b) reported that in 2016, more than 1,887,000 different types of events were staged in the United States, and over 251 million participants attended, with an economic impact of US$845 billion and 5.9 million job opportunities. Facts from international organizations like UFI (The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry), ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association) show similar contributions of the sector to the global event industry.

Identifying the value and possible rewards of hosting events means cities and countries "aggressively compete to be selected by global companies, international associations and event organisers as the host destination" (Rogers, 2013, p. xv). The competitiveness of the event marketplace has been discussed by many researchers (Getz, 2009; Martín, Román, & Gonzaga, 2016; Sarmento & Simões, 2018; Weber & Ladkin, 2005). Market competition exists not only among international destinations (Park, Wu, Shen, Morrison, & Kong, 2014; Whitfield, Dioko, Webber, & Zhang, 2014), but also cities (Baloglu & Love, 2005; Jin, Weber, & Bauer, 2012), and domestically and globally (Lee, 2003; Qu, Li, & Chu, 2000). Meanwhile, existing literature also suggests that both the research content and locations have been highly skewed toward the western world (Bernini, 2009; Jakob, 2012; Weber & Ladkin, 2003), which leaves remaining regions under-researched with the exception of Australia, Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore. The volume of current studies of China's event industry also under-represents its scale and rapid development. Such literature is also deficient in studies on the event attendees and their experiences.

Of many competitive event destinations in China, Hangzhou is one that has explicitly announced a strategy to establish the city as an international conference destination after an analysis of the market and its advantages and resources (ChinaDaily, 2016; Hangzhou Municipal Government, 2016a; Li, 2017; Z. Liu, 2017). Every year thousands of business events are hosted in the city. After several years of effort, it has been ranked 97th among the international conference destinations, 21st in Asia and 3rd in China (ICCA, 2018).

A specific example that has attracted attention is the Hangzhou Computing Conference hosted by Alibaba. Within eight years this event has grown from nothing to be a mega business affair in China and a globally influential hi-tech event. In 2017, it attracted 50,000 onsite attendees from 67 countries and 15 million online viewers. The practice of entertainization has turned it into a unique carnival-style business event which possibly functions as a Third Place (Oldenburg,1999) for the attendees; thus, satisfying its different stakeholders and contributing to its continuing success. Therefore, this business event is selected as a case to investigate the attendees' experiences.

Hence, the research is entitled "**An Investigation of a Chinese Business Event Experience: A Third Place Perspective**" with the aims of addressing both the research content and geographical gaps in the literature. Specifically, this empirical research will dissect the business conference attendees' experiences and examine the relationships among five proposed constructs through a mixed research method.

This chapter has the following sections: a "research background" which describes the background to this study, indicating the importance of event industry, the current state of industry development in the world and in China, and the research gaps. Using that background, research questions are proposed in the next section. To address those questions, the following section will briefly introduce the research methods; section 1.6 is designed to briefly explain the importance or implications of conducting this study. This is followed by a presentation of the thesis structure; and finally a summary.

1.2 Research background

The importance of the event industry has been increasingly recognized by organizations (China Convention Exhibition Event Society, 2015; Convention Industry Council, 2011; ICCA, 2018; UFI, 2016; UIA, 2016) and governmental bodies (Melbourne Convention

Bureau, 2017; Office of Hangzhou West Lake Expo, 2017; The State Council of China, 2016; UNWTO, 2014) at different levels and geographical locations.

This trend of supporting and promoting the event industry, especially international events, has come about for several reasons. The primary reason is the expected benefits of hosting international events. Those benefits include but are not limited to economic contributions (Connaughton & Swartz, 2014; Gartner & Holecek, 1983; Hanly, 2012; Kim, Chon, & Chung, 2003; Morgan & Condliffe, 2006), image and identity impacts (Clark, 2008; Dwyer, Mellor, Mistilis, & Mules, 2000; Ritchie, 1984), positive social impacts (Clark, 2008; Dwyer et al., 2000; Oshimi, Harada, & Fukuhara, 2016; Ritchie, 1984; Waitt, 2003), environmental impacts (Clark, 2008; Park & Boo, 2010), media exposure and destination promotion (Clark, 2008; Dwyer et al., 2000; Ritchie, 1984; Santos, Vareiro, Remoaldo, & Cadima Ribeiro, 2017).

Another reason is the general development of the industry and its resilience when facing different types of challenges. Data from international event organizations indicate the continual growth trend of the industry. For example, ICCA (2018, p. 18) states that its database of international conference "has grown exponentially by approximately 10% each year" since 1960s, which indicates "the number of meetings has doubled every 10 years". More important this general trend has not been interrupted for nearly 55 years, regardless of economic recessions, or regional turmoil. Statistics from EIC also confirm the special features of this industry (EIC, Events Industry Council, 2018b; UIA, 2016). EIC (2018b, p.9) records that since 2009, "the number of meetings increased 5.4%" and direct meetings spending increased 23%, reaching "$325 billion in 2016" in United States.

To bring or create construction and economic opportunities for a destination is also a crucial reason for event promotion. Many benefits are possible by alternative methods or channels, but the opportunities created or brought by staging an international event are usually historical, phenomenal, and often beyond the reach of a single city (Clark, 2008). In China, those opportunities not only produce the above benefits, but also gain support from central government resulting in the creation of a favourable policy that enables a city to perform at a national-level platform and have access to different resources.

Consequently, competition among event destinations, both domestic and international, is becoming more intensive. This phenomenon has successfully attracted attentions of researchers all over the world. However, the existing literature, as noted above, has mainly focused on the western world, especially North America and Europe (Bernini, 2009; Jakob, 2012; Weber & Ladkin, 2003), and thus is deficient. As the Global Business Travel Association (2018) reported, the stable mature market "Stalwarts" that "are comprised of many of the world's major economies" has contributed about 50% to global business travel market, which reflects the international business event market. Brazil and Russia (BR) remain low in both market maturity and opportunity. However, the emerging segment markets of India, China and Indonesia (ICI) are continuing to grow at a phenomenal rate and are estimated to overtake the "Stalwarts" by 2035 (Figure 1.1). More specifically, the business travel market in China is expected to grow fast in the next five years and remains the "largest business travel market" in the world.

Figure 1.1: Change of Global Business Travel Market Share

Source: Global Business Travel Association (2018)

With the rapid growth of the Chinese event industry in the past several decades (Jin & Weber, 2008; Jin, Weber, & Bauer, 2010; Wei & Go, 1999), the Chinese corporate travel market has reached the value of US$ 24.3 billion in 2017; while the global market value of business travel is estimated to reach US$346.5 billion in the same year (Zhang, 2018). Similar to others, cities in China are not immune to the benefits of this lucrative and progressive industry, and the market is being increasingly competitive. However, studies of these larger business events in China are few. Moreover, traditional first-tier cities (Luo & Lu, 2011; Wei & Go, 1999; Yang, Zeng, & Gu, 2010) like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and the two Special Administrative Regions, i.e., Hong Kong and Macau (Bauer, Law, Tse, & Weber, 2008; Siu, Wan, & Dong, 2012; Zhou, 2010) are privileged in hosting different types of international events and attract most of the research attention because of their attractiveness and advantages in location (gateways), economic status, excellent infrastructure and reputations both in and outside China (Kay, 2005). From a domestic perspective, Jin et al. (2012, p. 1438) has confirmed that first-tier cities (Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou) “gain support from several clusters in the near region” and “strengthen their leadership” in the event industry, while cities of second or third-tier are facing intensive “intra-regional competition” with their primary support coming from their respective local governments and organizations.

As a second-tier city, Hangzhou has gradually achieved much that not only increases its recognition as an event destination in China, but improves its visibility and reputation in the world. Many international events have been hosted in Hangzhou (e.g., G20 Summit, 2017 UCLG World Council) and some that were locally initiated (e.g., World Internet Conference) have also successfully grown into international recognized events. Among these events, it is the uniqueness and continuing success of the Hangzhou Computing Conference which integrates music festivals, sports event etc. into this business event, that has been rarely explored and so attracted the author’s interest.

Review papers contend that of the many important research topics, “event attendees”, “event experience” and “innovation” are prioritised (Getz, 2010; Getz & Page, 2016; Mair, 2012; Yeoman, 2013), as discussed in the following chapter. Furthermore, Mair (2013b) argues that “the complexities of conferences and conventions” remains under-explored, and “the body of knowledge” related to those events needs to be advanced (p.1). More importantly, the shortage of interdisciplinary work, as well as the ignoring of social perspectives of business events should also be addressed (Mair & Weber, 2019). To explore the nature and the non-business functions of business events, Third Place Theory (Oldenburg, 1999) facilitates the forming of an analytical framework, and practically illustrates the nature of interactions, improves the sense of community, and contributes to the wellbeing and life satisfaction of community members (Campbell, 2017; Jeffres, Bracken, Jian, & Casey, 2009). Therefore, it is important to examine business events from a Third Place perspective, while investigating essential business benefits.

Getz and Page (2016) and (Mair, 2012) have noted that previous event studies are mainly qualitative and descriptive in nature, though empirical studies are increasing in number. Thus, empirical investigations are suggested, and a variety of research approaches are encouraged for future studies. Recognizing the development of event industry *per se* and the research gaps, this study, using mixed method approach, examines attendees' experiences and satisfaction when attending a locally initiated international business event hosted in Hangzhou, China.

1.3 Research questions

Being aware of the background, several mismatches exist between the event studies about China and the position of the industry in the rest of the world. First, the number of event studies do not do justice to the size of Chinese event market. Second, the small number of event studies have primarily limited their research to destination selection and competitiveness (Huang & Chung, 2016; Jin, Weber, & Bauer, 2013; Lu & Ouyang, 2016; Qiu, Li, So, & Lehto, 2015), trends of development (Dai, 2013; Wang, Li, Ding, & Yang, 2016; Wei & Go, 1999; Xia, 2009), planners/organizers (Jin et al., 2012; Park et al., 2014), and bid processes for international events (Luo, 2010; Yang et al., 2010). Third, event studies have been largely skewed to first-tier Chinese cities, which leave the second and third-tier cities extremely under-researched. Fourth, studies in the context of China, are generally congruent with other reviews, among which qualitative and descriptive studies are the most frequent.

To better understand the business event market, especially attendees who are end consumers of event services and products, the above problems need to be addressed. Many researchers have highlighted that attendees are the common concerns of both the organizers and destinations, since the longer-term success of any event is largely depending on the number of attendees and their satisfaction. Thus, the following **research questions** are proposed:

(1) Whether the business event can be considered as a Third Place for attendees with the innovative changes?

(2) What attributes are of importance that motivate potential Chinese attendees to attend such a business event?

(3) How do Chinese business event attendees evaluate the performances of those attributes?

(4) How do different factors and demographic features influence the attendees' satisfaction levels? and

(5) What relationships are in existence among the factors that determine business event experiences?

1.4 Research methods

To answer the research questions this study adopts mixed methods research to investigate the experiences of attendees who attended the Hangzhou Computing Conference. Considering the purpose and the nature of the study, the qualitative method plays a facilitating role to: 1) elicit the motivations of attendance at a business conference; 2) inform the design of survey questionnaire; 3) compare and justify the examining results of quantitative investigation. Qualitative data were collected from voluntary respondents by using convenience and snowballing sampling methods, and the interview questions were derived from a literature review and practical observations.

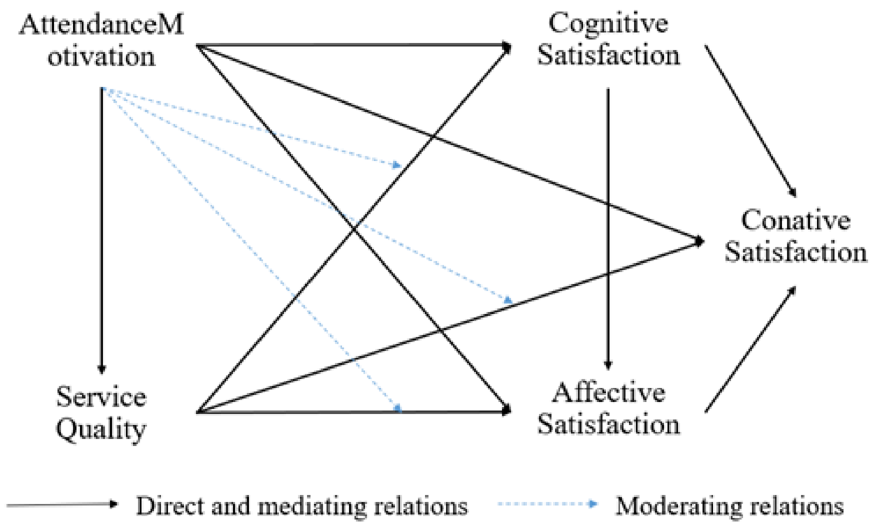
Sequentially, a quantitative study is conducted in five steps: 1) using the qualitative results to design and refine the survey questionnaire; 2) the on-site use of the questionnaire to collect data after checking its reliability and validity; 3) the establishment of SPSS and WarpPLS files; 4) quantitative examinations and testing, including logistic regression and partial least squares structural equation modelling to examine the causal relationships and test the proposed hypotheses; and 5) interpreting the quantitative results and findings, and comparing the results with the qualitative findings.

Mixed research is believed to generate richer data for analysis, to create “dialogues” between the qualitative and quantitative data under the same research design, which employs the merits of both qualitative/descriptive and empirical research to reach an optimal and reliable result (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

1.5 Proposed theoretical model

A review of the literature about relationships between motivation and service quality (Lee, Jeon, & Kim, 2011; van Riper, van Riper, Kyle, & Lee, 2013), motivations and satisfaction (Bauer et al., 2008; Prebensen, Skallerud, & Chen, 2010; Yoon & Uysal, 2005), service quality and satisfaction (Jung & Tanford, 2017; Lee, Lee, & Joo, 2015; Pegg & Patterson, 2010; Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007; Tse & Wilton, 1988), and the relationship among the three component of satisfaction (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018; Breckler, 1984; Clarke, 2001; Jung & Tanford, 2017) has supported the design of a research model for examining the five constructs (Figure 1.2): attendees’ motivation, event service quality, and the three components of satisfaction, i.e., cognitive, affective and conative.

Figure 1.2: Direct Relations and Mediating Relations



The proposed research model not only explores the direct relations among the constructs, but also the indirect relations, which includes moderating relations. The figure above illustrates the model, in which solid black lines present the direct and mediating relations, while dashed blue lines show the possible moderating effects of motivations on relations between service quality and satisfaction. This proposed model and hypotheses will be further introduced and explained attentively in Chapter 2.

1.6 Significance of the research

1.6.1 Theoretical implications

First, the research provided an alternative epistemological view of the business event that is to consider this type of events as Third Places (Oldenburg, 1999) for the attendees. This approach offers an alternative view with which to investigate the business event while also permitting more conventional theories of motivation. Third Place illustrates the viewpoint business events can function more than just a simple business operational role by providing a place/space for people who share common interests to interact, socialize, relax, celebrate, and even have fun (Campbell, 2017). Consequently, the place (business event) and the activities (programs, entertainments) facilitates people to develop, recharge, enhance relationships, form communities and improve their quality of life/wellbeing (Jeffres et al. (2009). Thus the research answered the call for the usage of theories beyond business discipline (Mair & Weber, 2019), and enabled the author to investigate the non-business objectives of business event (Cudny, 2014).

Second, the uniqueness and innovative practices of the selected case prove that a business event can serve as a Third Place, especially when the organizer integrated entertainment activities into business event. In doing so, the event is softening its commerciality and becoming more “carnival-style”, thus it leads to consideration of the nature of business events – that is the ‘humanity’ side of a business event (Gao, 2017). This is a challenge to the traditional operations of business events. As Getz (2012a, p. 60) explained, “The fundamental purpose of this type of event is to promote, market or directly engage in commerce, or otherwise meet corporate objectives.” Indeed, the corporate and association meetings are the “business get-togethers” of those organizations for “business communication” and “maximum return on its investment” (McCabe, Poole, Weeks, & Leiper, 2000, p. 56). Therefore, the study suggests both the academia and practitioners should reconsider and redefine the nature of business event, which should bring more benefits to different stakeholders as well as release the full potential of business events.

Third, the current research proposes a conceptual framework that is informed by motivation theory, service gap theory and satisfaction theory and is based on literature review within the areas of event studies, tourism, marketing and psychology. The relationships among the proposed five constructs will be investigated through quantitative analysis. The findings will add knowledge of the business event consumption experience in the Chinese cultural context.

The fourth implication is that research will add new knowledge about a Chinese locally initiated business event to the existing event literature, so contributing to the locational diversification of the cases that have been researched in domestic and international contexts, thereby extending the research to a locally initiated international business conference. In other words, both the current scope of content and geographical coverage of event studies have been extended.

Another implication of this research is the adoption of mixed methods to investigate the experience of the attendance at a business event. This study is believed to be the first to investigate Chinese business event attendees’ experience which employs both qualitative and quantitative methods and software by which both sets of results are compared and triangulated.

Finally, this study has modified the traditional IPA model interpretations, which contributes in two aspects: 1) the improvement of its explanatory power, and 2) the retention of its key advantages, such as its simplicity and ease of interpretation.

1.6.2 Practical implications

The practical implications mainly lie in the following aspects: first, the event industry stakeholders, both in China and other counties/regions, are provided with information to better understand the Chinese event industry and attendees through this unique/novel event; second, the event organizers/planners are encouraged to adopt the Third Place Theory when designing and operating their various types of events, which eventually will benefit multiple stakeholders; third, the results of motivational research facilitate the organizers to understand Chinese business event attendees sufficiently, design programmes, and provide event services that meet their expectations; fourth, the modification of the interpretations of IPA model presents the organizers with an instrument to measure the attendees' behaviour, interpret the results and take actions; and finally, both the qualitative and quantitative results imply that organizers need to consider the importance of integrating entertaining activities into the business event, as well as to be aware of the cultural and geographical identity differences.

1.7 Structure of thesis

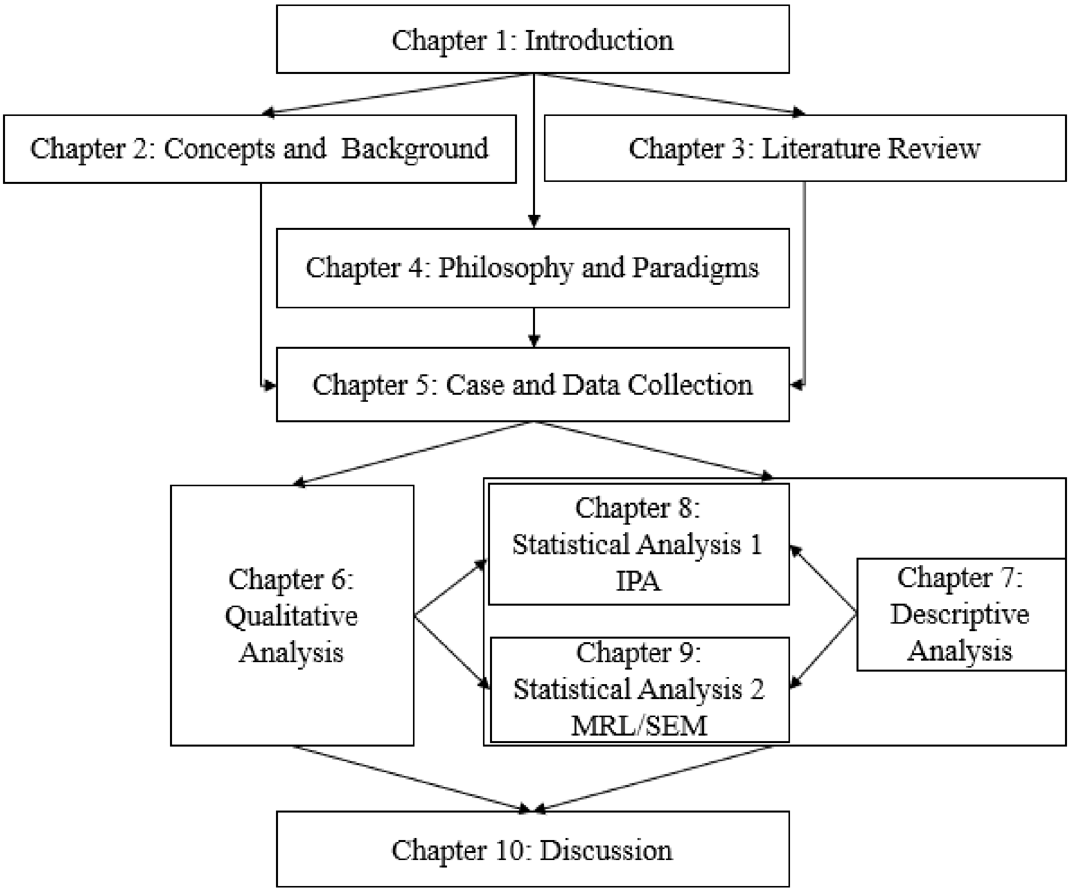
The thesis is structured with ten chapters, and their relations are illustrated in Figure 1.3.

Chapter 1 aims to brief the readers of this research. It starts with the basic premise on which the study is based, then presents the background that defines the research context and scope in general. The next section introduces the research questions and research methods. The rationalization is supported by its theoretical and practical significance. An overall structure of the thesis is also provided.

Chapter 2 provides the background and research context in detail. It firstly discusses the critical concepts that closely related to this research, then presents the importance and development of business event industry both worldwide and in China. This chapter also concludes the challenges that are facing by business event industry.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature of the Third Places Theory and business event studies. It first analyses the relationship between Third Places and events, which serves as a theoretical background to explore the nature and design of business event. Then, a detailed review of business event experience and the evaluation methods follows. Finally, a proposed research model concludes this chapter.

Figure 1.3: Relationship among the Chapters in the Research



Chapter 4 covers the research methodology adopted in this study. It starts with the introduction of the importance of research paradigm, which is followed by the discussion of specific paradigms and research methods. The chapter then further justifies the adoption of mixed method approach.

Chapter 5 explains the usage of case study approach to investigate a business event – the Hangzhou Computing Conference, which is then introduced in detail. The specific case and context define the methods and process of data collection. Thus, instrument development, sampling methods, data collection, and techniques for data analysis are then discussed in this chapter, which informs both the qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Chapter 6 reports and interprets the results of qualitative inquires. In this chapter, the qualitative data collection and interview results profile are first reported, followed by the discussion and application of QDA programs; then the qualitative results will be described and interpreted, and whether business events could be considered as Third Place was discussed. The conclusion section briefly summarises this chapter.

Chapter 7 details the results of quantitative data collection, describes the characteristics of the sample, preliminarily checks the reliability of collected data and adequacy of the sample, as well as the ratings of the attributes' importance and perceived performance of the surveyed business conference.

Chapter 8 conducts the first statistical analysis – IPA analysis, which starts with justifying the IPA application; then the steps of implementing are described. Following these steps, an IPA analysis is subsequently performed. Finally, the findings are reported and discussed, and the implications identified.

Chapter 9 runs explorative factor analyses for extracting explainable and meaningful factors from the attributes and multinomial logistic regression analysis (MLR) is performed to investigate the relationship between the predictor variables and the categorical target variables. Then, analytical results are presented and interpreted. In this chapter, WarpPLS is used to perform a PLS-SEM analysis. The chapter begins with a discussion of structured equation modelling and rationale for applying WarpPLS. Consequently, the proposed constructs and hypotheses are established for further analysis. In the following sections, the causal relationships among those constructs are examined, as well as the mediating and moderating effects.

Chapter 10 discusses the research findings that are obtained from qualitative and quantitative investigations. It first recaps the research findings of previous chapters, and then discusses the findings respectively regarding to the research questions. This chapter also concludes the research and specifies the theoretical, managerial implication as well as limitations of the research. Future research directions are also suggested at the end of the chapter.

1.8 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has depicted the research. It briefly vindicated the research topic, and identified the research gaps which will be further discussed in Chapter 3. The chapter presented the research questions that would be addressed by the mixed research methods (see details in Chapter 4). Research questions and methods anchor the theoretical research model as shown in section 1.5; they are used to investigate the business event attendees' experience in Chinese cultural context, which will be discussed in Chapter 4 and 5, and examined from Chapter 6 to Chapter 9. Meanwhile, the potential significances of this research from both theoretical and practical aspects are indicated and illustrate the rationale for the study (see a complete discussion and conclusion in Chapters 10.

Chapter 2 Critical Concepts and Study Background

This chapter starts with the introduction of event typology which is followed by the discussion of several critical event concepts that are closely related to this study. Then, the profile of business event industry is covered, which displays the importance and development of global and Chinese business event industry. The chapter ends with the presentation of the challenges that the industry is facing. The first part of this chapter serves as the conceptual background and the second part provides industry background.

2.1 Event typology and concepts

2.1.1 Event typology

This research will focus on the investigation of business events. Yet, business events are just one type of planned event (Getz & Page, 2016, p. 594), it is necessary to understand the different types, which will then assist the discussion of the concepts and the importance of business events as a part of the whole industry.

Despite the variety and complexity of events (Krugman & Wright, 2006), two different ways of event categorization were developed by Jago and Shaw (1998) and Getz (2008). Jago and Shaw's hierarchical framework is based on the significance and scale of events. In the first/top level, an event can be segmented as either ordinary or special event; and a special event can be further divided into minor, festival and major event; the major event can further be classified as a hallmark or mega event.

Getz (2008) believes that events are "planned events" with planned purposes or aims, which are used as criteria to classify events (see Table 2.1): cultural celebrations, business events, arts and entertainment, sport and recreation, political events and private events.

The six types of planned events cover most of the events encountered by researchers and practitioners and assist them to study or manage those events accordingly. However, another important type of event – charity events (Snelgrove & Wood, 2010; Taylor & Shanka, 2008; Webber, 2004) play an important role in fundraising, public education and charity promotion, yet are not been included in Getz's typology. It is highly recommended to add charity events as the seventh type.

Table 2.1 Typology of planned events

Cultural Celebrations	Business and Trade	Arts and Entertainment	Sport and Recreation	Political and State	Private Events
Festivals, Heritage commemorations	Meetings, Conventions	Scheduled concert	League play, Championships	Summits	Rites Of Passage
Carnivals, Mardi Gras	Fairs, Exhibitions	Shows, Theatre	One-off meets, Tours	Royal Occasions	Parties
Pilgrimage	Markets	Art Exhibits	Fun Events	VIP visits	Reunions
Religious events	Corporate Events	Installations and temporary art	Sport Festivals	Military	Celebrations
Parades	Edu. Science Congresses	Award ceremonies	International Games	Political Congresses	weddings

Source: Getz (2008, p. 404)

As Watt (1998) indicated, it is crucial to understand the diversity of events and treat each of them differently because of their individual characteristics and specific requirements. This explains why most business event organizers conservatively concentrate on one type of event (ICCA, 2018; UFI, 2016; UIA, 2016), thus making it relatively easy to identify the characteristics and associated requirements of that event. Not all follow this pattern. For example, the organizer of the Alibaba Computing Conference integrated different types of business events (exhibition, conference), as well as different forms of entertainment (e.g., sport, music festivals, and competitions) into a business conference, which not only creates a carnival-style international business event (Aliyun, 2017), but signals a developing trend – the entertainization of business events.

2.1.2 Critical event concepts

Under the business event category, conferences, exhibitions (trade shows), as well as corporate events are the conventional forms that comprise this classification. However, as mentioned above, different forms of entertainment are an integral part of the selected business event, suggesting the inclusion of entertainment concepts. The definition of a "business event" is also provided since the lack of a clear concept in existing literature (Getz, 2012).

Conference

In this instance, an integral and essential segment of events is that of meetings and presentations. Getz (2012) noted conferences are assemblies for conferring and discussion, and should be small enough to facilitate interaction, whereas “conventions” are generally large assemblies of people from associations, political parties, clubs or religious groups. In respect to the content and organizers, Meeting Professionals International (MPI) distinguishes association, corporate, scientific and incentive meetings, but “meeting” is the generic term applicable to an assembly of people for any purposes.

It often observed that the conference sector is mostly characterized by its business and trade focus (Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2011). Business conferences are usually separated into being either corporate or association meetings. Association conferences are held by professional groups of education, medicine, religion, etc. and usually attract a large number of attendees; and corporate meetings are smaller in size and likely to be more diverse than association ones, including training, product launch, publicity events, etc. Corporate customers tend to use the same venues repeatedly and have strong links with them (Getz, 2012).

According to the Convention Industry Council (CIC), the meeting industry includes many different types of business events. Moreover, CIC explains the specific terms, definitions, and interpretations of varying meetings that is shown in Table 2.2. Generally, the term “meeting” has been broad-based and often used to refer to a wide range of business events of varying size and type (CIC, 2012). Though conceptually different terms are used to indicate various forms/types of meetings, their usage in the actual business world is not strictly followed. It is also true in China, since most of the business meetings are being translated into “conference” regardless of their scale or attendees. In some cases, the boundary between corporate business event and industry business event is blurring. For example, if well-known companies like Amazon or Alibaba organize a suppliers' conference, this should be classified as a corporate event according to CIC, but it would be perhaps more correct to consider it as an industry event, because they attract a large number of companies in the industry to attend.

The CIC report also points out that UNWTO, in cooperation with Reed Travel Exhibitions, ICCA, and MPI proposed the adoption of a universal definition instead of overlapping and conflicting definitions by different organizations. They define meetings as “gatherings of 10 or more participants for a minimum of 4 hours in a contracted venue”. But this definition differs from the definition of what has been considered as international conference by ICCA (2015) and UIA (2015), which criteria have been widely accepted by many countries, and their annual rankings of countries and cities for staging international conferences have become the key index of the global conference industry. Consequently, the criteria and ranking system created by international event organizations that are mainly from North America and Europe are widely adopted by global destinations or countries for the industry evaluation and marketing. These are show in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Major definitions of different types of Meetings

Conference	1) Participatory meeting designed for discussion, fact-finding, problem solving and consultation. 2) An event used by any organization to meet and exchange views, convey a message, open a debate or give publicity to some area of opinion on a specific issue. No tradition, continuity, or periodicity is required to convene a conference. Although not generally limited in time, conferences are usually of short duration with specific objectives. Conferences are generally on a smaller scale than congresses.
Convention	1) A general and formal meeting of a legislative body, social, or economic group in order to provide information, deliberate or establish consent or policies among participants. In the United States, the term is used to describe large, usually national meetings of business circles, for discussion and/or commercial exhibition. 2) An event where the primary activity of the attendee is to attend educational sessions, participate in meetings/discussions, socialize, or attend other organized events. There is a secondary exhibit component.
Congress	1) The regular coming together of large groups of individuals, generally to discuss a particular subject. A congress will often last several days and have several simultaneous sessions. The length of time between congresses is usually established in advance of the implementation stage and may be either pluri-annual or annual. Most international or world congresses are of the former type while national congresses are more frequently held annually 2) Meeting of an association of delegates or representatives from constituent organizations. 3) European term for convention.
Trade show /business Exhibition	1) An exhibition of products and/or services held for members of a common industry. The primary activity of attendees is visiting exhibits on the show floor. These events focus primarily on business-to-business relationships, but part of the event may be open to the general public. 2) Display of products or promotional material for the purpose of public relations, sales and/or marketing.
Corporate /business Meeting	1) Business-oriented meeting usually hosted by a corporation, in which participants represent the same company, corporate group or client/provider relationships. 2) Gathering of employees or representatives of a commercial organization. Usually, attendance is required and travel, room and most meal expenses are paid for by the organization.

Source: CIC (2014, pp10-11)

Exhibition (trade show)

Besides conferences, as shown in Tables 2.1 and 2.2, an exhibition or trade show is another crucial type of business event that could be further divided into trade and consumer shows (Getz, 2012b). Morrow (1997) stressed that the core mission of "trade" and "consumer" shows is to link the suppliers and purchasers in a temporary, designed market.

"Consumer shows" are designed for the public with intentions of informing and entertaining customers with the objective of generating sales – both at the time of the exhibition or in the future. For this type of exhibition, customers are attracted by the popular themes (sports, hunting, lifestyle shows) and admission fees are required. "Trade shows" are usually for invitees only, based on specific business needs or association membership. Getz (2013, p261) added that international trade fairs: (1) are large and targeted at consumers globally; (2) are often hosted in cities with major airports and exhibition facilities, and (3) embrace hybrid forms that allow professional guests to visit the fair on some days and public consumers on other days.

Agreeing with Morrow (1997), Bowdin et al. (2011) also state that exhibitions bring suppliers of goods and services together with buyers, usually in a particular industry, bridging the "trade and consumer show" and bringing them together. Observing the merging of exhibition and conference in one event, they even coined a new word "Confex" to refer to this phenomenon. However, more forms of combination or convergence of events are emerging, some of which are natural with the change of culture and some are intentional (Getz, 2012b). This has become a growing trend whereby more and more conferences include exhibitions and/or other events; at the same time exhibitions are more likely to include conferences/seminars and other social events. The Computing Conference organized by Alibaba exemplifies the intentional integration of conference, tradeshow, entertainment, sports and other activities into a single business event.

Entertainment events: Music festival and sport event

Vogel (2014) has explained that entertainment could be anything that stimulates, encourages, or otherwise generates a condition of pleasurable diversion. This is agreed by Getz (2012) that "almost any activity, sport, artistic display or event can be viewed as entertainment" (p.58). In general, entertainment is defined in two ways: objective and subjective approaches (Bates & Ferri, 2000). From the objective angle, entertainments either inclusively encompass "any kind of game or play" regardless of the forms of organization and ways of participation (Zillmann & Jennings, 1994, p. 438) or mainly concentrate on business-oriented commodities that "can be sold to and enjoyed by large and heterogeneous groups of people" (Barnouw & Kirkland, 1992, pp. 50-51). The subjective approach suggests that "what entertains a given individual is inescapably subjective" (Bates & Ferri, 2000, p. 6).

The explanation of what is entertainment suggests that both music festivals and sports events are falling into the category of entertainment events (Bates & Ferri, 2000; Getz, 2012c). Likewise, the concepts of music festivals and sport events also highlight their entertainment functions. As Stone (2008, p. 205) conceptualized, a music festival is "a performance event comprising two or more live performances of pop music over one or more days and at recurring periods, which is packaged as a coherent whole". Having a variety of forms and themes, music festivals generate different festival experiences and "serve as adult playgrounds, representing marginal, liminal zones devoted to hedonism and largely uninhibited play and fun" (Stone, 2008; p. 223).

The Association of Applied Sport Psychology explains sport as follows:

> *"Sport" means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aimed at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels.*

The above concept does not specifically mention entertainment, yet Mehus (2005) defined a sports event as "a spare time activity" that involves the pursuits of "pleasurable and de-routinizing emotional arousal via motility, sociability, mimesis, or some combination of all three" (p.335), which clearly incorporates notions of sport as an entertainment. Mehus (2005) further explained that "sociability" and "excitement" is located at the heart of the motives for participating or spectating at sport events. Additionally, music festivals fit the entertainment category well (Getz, 2012, p.59), and sports events are listed as one of the seven types of entertainments that are classified by the U.S. Department of Commerce (Bates & Ferri, 2000, p. 47).

To explore why people seek leisure and entertainment, Iso-Ahola (1982) indicated that "pursuit" and "escape" are the two motivational factors, with the former for "inner" satisfaction, whereas the latter is for daily diversion. Ordinary life is full of "constraints and disciplines, responsibilities and chores, and a host of things disagreeable", whilst "entertainment, in contrast, encompasses activities that people enjoy and look forward to doing, hearing, or seeing" (Bates & Ferri, 2000, p. 44). Thus, people demand entertainment products and services, which motivates the inclusion of entertainment into business events that differ from ordinary life.

2.1.3 Define business event

Different scholars use different concepts for business events; while in practice, various types of events can be incorporated into a single business event. Therefore, it is important to define business events while taking into consideration the nature and characteristics of this particular business event.

In his influential book, *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events,* Getz (2012) did not define business events directly, rather he presented examples to illustrate what are business events. He indicated that the essential purpose of business events is "to promote, market or directly engage in commerce, or otherwise meet corporate objectives" (p.60). Consequently, he argued that world fairs, expos, meetings and conventions and corporate events are all different forms of business events.

In a practical way, to facilitate its survey and analysis, the Business Events Council of Australia (BECA, 2015, p. 5) has defined a business event as:

> *Any public or private (business) activity consisting of a minimum of 15 persons with a common interest or vocation, held in a specific venue or venues, and hosted by an organisation (or organisations). This may include (but not limited to): conferences, conventions, symposia, congresses, incentive group events, marketing events, special celebrations, seminar, courses, public or trade shows, product launches, exhibitions, company general meetings, corporate retreats, study tours or training programs.*

Akin to Getz's opinion, BECA believes that business events serve as a platform for organisations "to communicate messages, to educate or train, to promote a product, to reward or celebrate, to collaborate on issues and solutions, or to generate resources" (www.businesseventscouncil.org.au, 2011). In general, meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions, usually known as MICE, are the main components of business events.

As shown in previous concepts, commercial functions and business objectives have usually been the focus when organizing or studying business events. In addition, (business) events also act as Third Places to serve other social functions, such as forming a community, facilitating connections, increasing social capital, and improving the quality of life/wellbeing (Jon Hawkins, 2013; Purnell & Breede, 2018; Shipway, 2012), a perspective which is often neglected.

It is important and essential to retain the commercial functions and conventional forms of business events, but the neglect of Third Place functions may impede or limit innovative operations and designs of business events. Such a lack might then eventually reduce the productivity, significance, attractiveness and success of business events. Realizing the potential threat, many event organizers have added activities like social programs, a gala dinner, and pre/post-event visits to business events (Ardani, 2017; Bauer et al., 2008), which increases opportunities for attendees to network, relax, and interact. However, simply tossing different programs unthinkingly into an event might ruin its atmosphere and fail to align with the original theme. Consequently, careful selection and design is required for entertainment activities or programs to be included.

In conclusion, business events are meetings that are organized to reach multiple aims/goals that business regard as a necessity, regardless of the types of activities or programs included for creating a memorable experience, increasing sociability and distinguishing the event from other similar events. Business events may be hosted with various frequencies (e.g., bimonthly, annually) and with a large span of event duration, from several hours to months. Attendees or participants are self-sponsored, or company/organization sponsored to attend, either by invitation or application, voluntarily or compulsorily. Throughout the research, the term business event is used in general, and when comes to the selected case, both business event and business conference are employed interchangeably, since a conference is one specific type of business event and the duality of terminology avoids repetition of the term “business event”.

2.2 Business event industry

After discussing critical concepts of events and defining a business event, it is necessary to understand the event industry both worldwide and in China where the unique case is selected.

Events, as a social phenomenon, have a long history and their development parallels that of human beings (Bowdin et al., 2011; Fenich, 2012; Getz, 2012b). Matthews (2007) has illustrated this with the introduction of two historical celebrations in Europe: the Triumph Celebrations of ancient Rome, and the "Field of the Cloth of Gold" planned by medieval Britain and France. Tracing the history of events, Matthews (2007) argued that during that time, major events were mostly hosted or organized in traditional ancient civilizations, which, unlike modern events, were mostly funded by rulers or royal courts, and were usually for political or triumph-related purposes.

However, various types of events in modern society have shifted their focus from celebrations (Formica, 1998; Matthews, 2012) to economic/commercial development (Shone, 1998). For example, a report conducted by Business Visits and Events Partnership in 2010 indicated that the event industry had contributed substantially to the UK economy (US$ 46.6 billion), and the business events sector (US$39.2 billion) generated 84% of the total industry (Bladen, Kennell, Abson, & Wilde, 2012). Data from the Events Industry Council (2018c) also showed the importance of the business event industry in the global economy.

2.2.1 Global business event industry

Within the event industry, it is challenging to present a total picture of the global industry due to 1) the different methods of statistics collection, and 2) limited access to the data. However, many organizations and individual researchers have endeavoured to explore and analyse data (Davidson, 2016; Events Industry Council, 2018c; ICCA, 2013; Rogers, 2013; UNWTO, 2014) for the purpose of understanding, predicting, and managing the business event industry.

Organizations, such as UIA, ICCA, UFI, and UNWTO have played an important role in providing industry information through their annual reports within their specific sectors. For example, UIA (2016) and ICCA (2018) analyse the sector of international conference and convention based on their own database; while UFI (2014) provides annual reports of the exhibition sector. However, each fail to provide reports for the overall industry. Aiming to understand the global "Meetings Industry", UNWTO (2006) published reports on assessing the economic significance of the meeting industry (mainly about business events) in 2006 and 2014, and while they failed to provide a detailed statistical analysis sufficient elements were identified that meant data could be elicited from Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA).

Davidson (2004) commenced the *EIBTM 2003 Industry Trends and Market Share Report* in 2004, which not only presented some key industry trends but also identified the main destinations and consumers of international business events. The report was renamed as *IBTM Trends Watch Report* in 2012, and the structure largely remains unchanged, except for some recent emerging phenomenon (e.g., technology-related trends in 2010, and e-sports in industry trends in 2019). It is noted that some themes have been repeated in those reports, for example sustainability first appeared in 2003 and remained critical in 2019; technology was also repeated in many of them, which in 2010 was about onsite internet access and social media, while in 2019 was about 5G, smart cities, AI and big data.

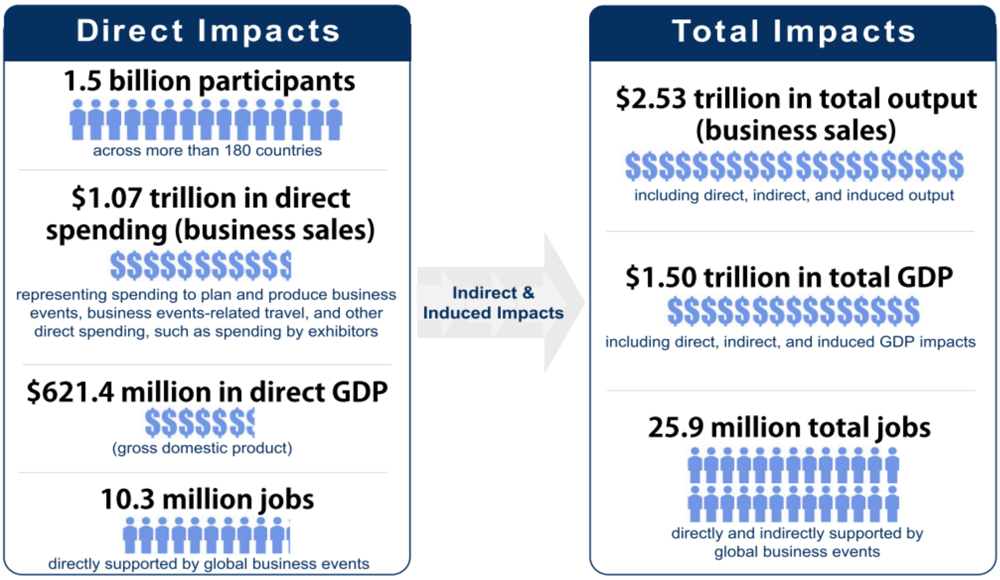
Each of these reports brings together the “latest” and “authoritative” data from different organizations or agencies and have great value for readers to understand the trends and development of the industry. However, given the various data sources used, there remains a need to synthesise the data into an integrated whole to address the problem of data consistency.

In comparison to those previously mentioned reports, data from *Global Economic Significance of Business Events* were used in this study because it “represents the first-of-its-kind analysis” of the industry (Events Industry Council, 2018c, p. 4), in which the data were processed by research organization using the following steps:

> *Analysed existing studies on business events impacts in 15 countries, as well as third-party industry data across more than 180 countries;*
>
> *Developed an econometric model of the relationship between economic and travel-industry data sets and business events industry impacts to estimate business events activity in countries in which the business events industry has not been previously quantified; and*
>
> *Combined the results of existing studies and modelled relationships to prepare global estimates.*

According to this report, as shown in Figure 2.1, the business event industry generated direct spending of more than US$1.07 trillion and attracted about 1.5 billion attendees from 180 countries and regions in the year 2017. The direct spending encompasses the "spending to plan and produce business events, business events related travel, and other direct spending, such as spending by exhibitors" (Events Industry Council, 2018c, p. 9). Individual average spending of business events participants reached US$704. Meanwhile, it directly employed 10.3 million people and generated the direct GDP of US$621.4 billion. The total impacts of the business event industry was more significant, which generated US$2.5 trillion business sales, created 26 million jobs and contributes US$1.5 trillion to global GDP, which ranks the industry the 13th largest economy globally. It is also worthy to note that the top 50 countries accounted for 96% direct spending with the value of US$1.03 trillion throughout this industry.

Figure 2.1 Direct and total impacts of global business events



Source: Events Industry Council (2018c)

The report also indicated that North America, Western Europe and Asia accounted for 91.2% of total direct spending generated by the business event industry in 2017 with the spending of $381 billion (35.6%), $325 billion (30.3%) and $271.4 billion (25.3%) respectively. The share of the rest of the regions was less than 10% of total direct spending, which included Latin America & the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. However, in terms of business event participants, Asia was the largest market in which 482.7 million attendees participated in business events in this region, followed by Western Europe and North America, hosting 444.4 million and 329.7 million event attendees. Though Asia accommodated the most participants, its direct spending was the lowest among the top three regions, which implies that economic contribution per participant is smaller than those in North America and West Europe. Meanwhile, the report also showed that the business event industry accounted for a significant amount of direct employment globally with a total of 10.3 million employees. In addition to this employment opportunities are also generated indirectly (Connaughton & Swartz, 2014).

The development of the industry and the significance of hosting and staging various business events have been extensively researched and reported (Brown, Getz, Pettersson, & Wallstam, 2015; Carlsen, 1999; Convention Industry Council, 2012; Crouch & Ritchie, 1997; ICCA, 2013; Li, 2013; Mair, 2012; Melbourne Covention Bureau, 2017; Pearlman & Mollere, 2009; Sumithra & Mishra, 2016; UNWTO, 2014; Weber & Ladkin, 2005; Yang; & Gu, 2012). In North America, Dubin (2011) confirms that the size of the event industry has grown significantly, which provides more choices that will assist further growth. Likewise, Carlsen (1999) argued that the growth rate of the business event industry in Australia and Asia was much higher than tourism growth was in the 1990s.

To understand the development of the industry from a longitudinal perspective, data from ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association), UIA (the Union of International Associations) and UFI (Union of International Fairs) serve as an integral complement to this "first-of-its-kind analysis" (Events Industry Council, 2018c). Four dimensions are now discussed, namely: 1) the growing market size; 2) the expansion of venue capacity; 3) the increase of event organizations/associations, both regional and international; and 4) the growing research interests of the event industry to illustrate development.

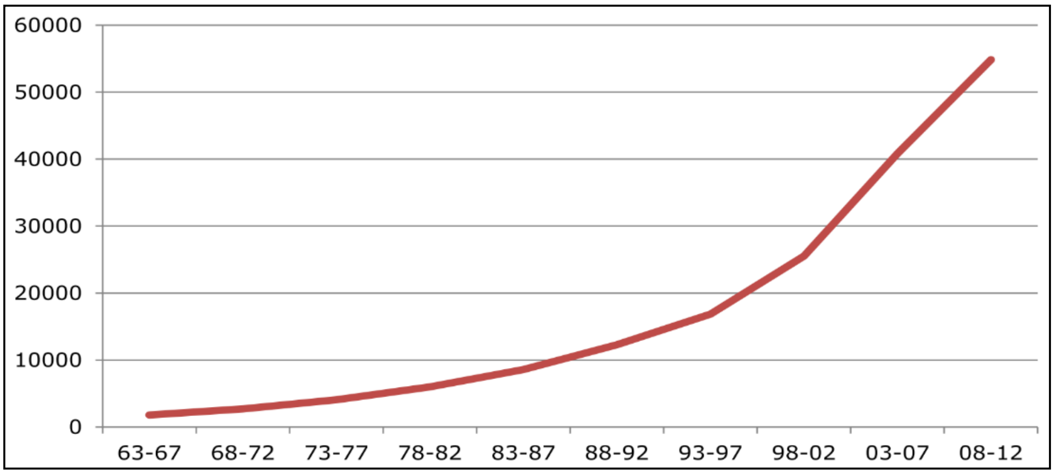
First, market size growth of exhibition and conference sectors.

Modern influential business events commenced at the early stages of the 20th century (Bowdin et al. (2011), and despite stagnation during the World Wars, the industry has generally experienced a history of growth since then. No organization collects all data of business events throughout the world. With the aim of revitalizing international trade by enhancing collaboration among countries in Europe, UFI was founded after the World War I. By 1937, UFI only had 33 members; while in 2017, its members had increased to 750. At present, about 31,000 exhibitions are organized annually in the world, which involves 4.4 million exhibiting companies and attracts over 260 million visitors (UFI, 2018b). The yearly expenditure generated by exhibitors and visitors was about US$ 109 billion and it was estimated the exhibition industry would provide 680,000 direct jobs in

2018. UFI data usually was used by researchers to justify the importance and the scale of the industry (e.g., Sarmento & Simões, 2018).

Likewise, the conference sector also has experienced enormous growth since the 1960s (see Fig 2.2). The development of the conference sector is mainly documented by the ICCA and UIA. After reviewing data from 1963 to 2012, ICCA (2013) indicates that its database "has grown exponentially by approximately 10% each year, which means the number of meetings doubled every ten years"(p.12). In the first five years of its review period, there were only 1,795 meetings, while in the last five years prior to 2012 the number surged to 54,844.

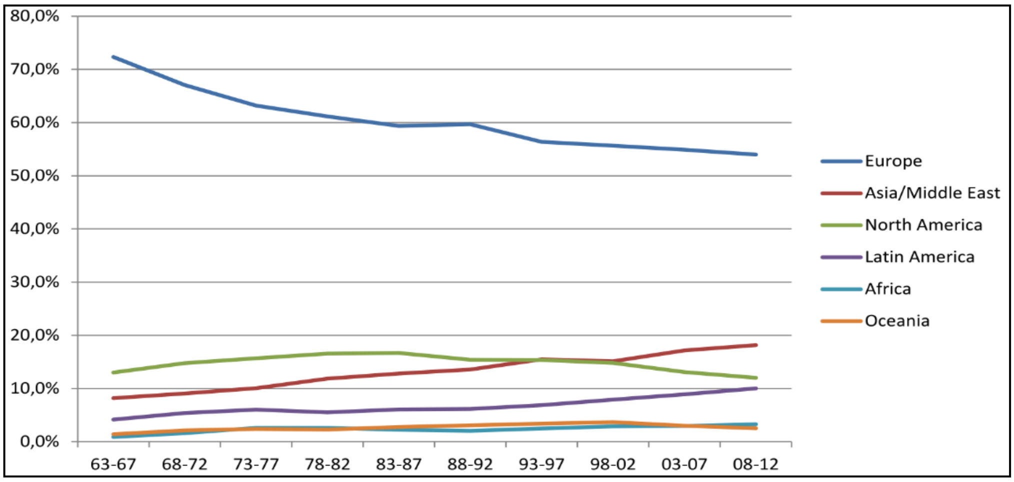
Figure 2.2 Number of meetings 1963-2012, 5-year aggregated data



Source: ICCA (2013, p.12)

However, the regions and countries vary significantly in their performance (see Figure 2.3). In the past 50 years, the conference industry in Europe has experienced a 20% decrease of global market share, a decline not caused by a falling number of hosted conferences, but rather by the rapid growth of other regions. For its part, North America, in the first 25 years, experienced a continuous growth in market share, but a constant decline in the recent decade of the 21st century. On the other hand, both Asia/Middle East and the Latin American regions have sustained consistent growth. The growth trend of these regions does not, however, reflect the total market share. For instance, though Europe saw a decline in world share, it retains nearly a 55% global share, larger than all other regions. Therefore, the decline or growth of the market share is not significant enough to change the overall landscape of the conference industry.

Figure 2.3 Market share per region by the number of meetings



Source: ICCA (2013, p.12)

It can also be observed that the development of the conference industry is unbalanced between different countries. According to ICCA, among the top 20 countries that have hosted the most conferences in the past 50 years, eleven are European countries, three are North American countries, three are Asian Countries, two are South American countries, and there is one Australasian country (Australia). From the perspective of conference numbers, the USA has been the leading country for half a century, followed by Germany, UK, France, Italy and Spain. A few Asian and South American countries have seen impressive growth, but they are not yet comparable to their counterparts in Europe and North America.

It should be noted that the report was based on the ICCA database, which is usually affected by the nature of its membership and the criteria used for data collection. Given the different criteria, the market share of different countries in the UIA database is very different from that of ICCA. Table 2.3 shows the data collected from 2014 to 2018 by UIA, which indicate the top hosting contries remain very stable. For five years, the 13 countries listed have been among the top 10 interntional meeting destinations, which differs ICCA data. However, the share of international conferences hosted in Asia has grown by about 5%, those in European have fluctuated around a 30% share, and that of North America has slightly shrunk during the past five years. In addition, statistics from specific countries (e.g., Australia and the US) also illustrates the growth of the whole business event industry. For specific data please refer to BECA (2015) and Events Industry Council (2018b).

Table 2.3 Top 10 international meeting countries

	2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
Country	Rank	Number	Rank	Number	Rank	Number	Rank	Number	Rank	Number
Singapore	1	1177	3	802	3	997	4	736	3	850
Korea Rep	2	854	1	1105	1	953	2	891	4	636
Belgium	3	849	2	804	2	888	3	737	2	851
USA	4	592	5	536	4	702	1	930	1	858
Japan	5	579	6	425	5	523	5	634	5	624
Austria	6	472	4	545	7	423	10	383	7	539
France	7	455	9	337	5	404	6	590	6	561
Spain	8	441	7	379			7	480	8	513
UK	9	329							10	354
Germany	10	296	8	343	8	279	8	472	9	439
Netherlands					9	390			11	350
Thailand			10	301	10	332			15	280
Italy							9	385	12	330
Total		11,240		10,786		11,000		12,350		12,212

Source: Created by author with information on UIA website (UIA, 2019)

The fact that data collected by such organizations and countries based on different criteria may cause the following problems:

(1) The use of different data collection criteria will lead to analytical problems,

(2) Data of different international organizations usually overlaps to some extent, which will make it difficult to assess the size and value of the global market,

(3) Data of the influential organizations might mislead some countries to focus and adopt the data that looks good to them, and neglect the development problems they are facing.

Despite the flaws, the data have justified the significance of the business event industry and provided strong support for trend analysis and academic research. In addition the industry's growth is strongly supported by developing infrastructure (Wu & Weber, 2005), and therefore venue capacity growth is another critical factor.

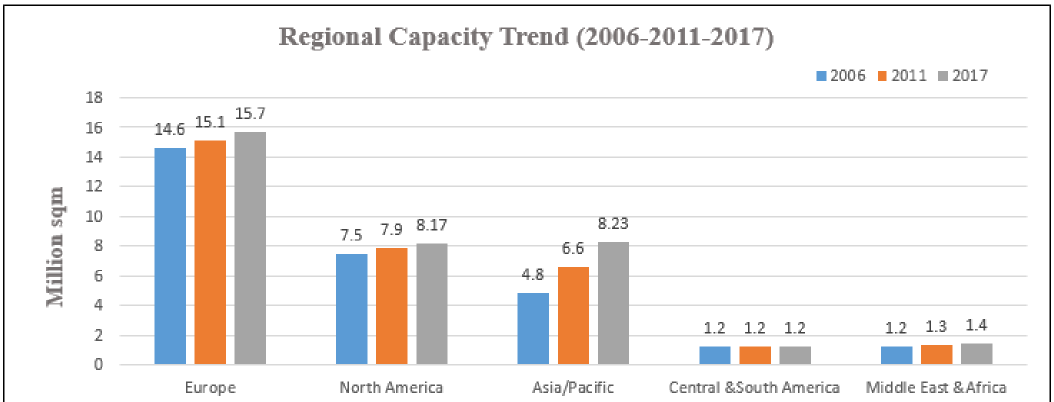
Second, the growth of venue capacity.

Business event venues are diversified, ranging from hotel meeting rooms to conference centres, from private commercial entities to outdoor public squares, from sports stadiums to educational/community halls. Venues are an antecedent of event quality, and can impact event satisfaction and the attendees' experience (Michelini, Iasevoli, & Theodoraki, 2017).

Therefore, the development of venues has needed to match the development of the business event industry. Rogers (2013) recorded that in the nineteenth century event venues were developed or transformed from other functions to meet the growing needs of the event industry in the UK and USA. Carlsen (1999) also pointed out that in the 1990s both Australia and Asia have developed significant event infrastructure for the industry, including "dedicated convention centres" and "venues with a difference" (p.53). In the past decades, "it is not just in Europe, Australasia and North America that major investments are being made", and as Rogers (2013) argued, "large-scale infrastructure projects have been undertaken throughout much of Asia and the Pacific rim, in the former East European countries, in the Middle East, and in a number of African countries, particularly South Africa, and in South America" (p.10).

However, there is limited data to show the global trend of venue development. The major source is UFI reports. According to UFI (2014, 2018) data, the number of venues with an indoor area of more than 5,000 m^2 has increased from 1,140 in 2006 to 1,212 in 2017; and the total global indoor exhibition space has increased from 29.2 to 34.8 million m^2. Yet, the growth is not well balanced among the different regions (see Fig 2.4), and the market share has changed significantly in the past twenty years.

Figure 2.4 Regional Venue Capacity Trend



Market Share		Europe	North America	Asia/Pacific	Central &South America	Middle East &Africa
	2006	50.0%	26.0%	16.0%	4.0%	4.0%
	2011	47.0%	24.6%	20.5%	3.8%	4.1%
	2017	45.2%	23.5%	23.7%	3.6%	4.1%

Source: Figure created by author with statistics of UFI (2014); UIA (2019)

From 2006 to 2011, Europe and North America were dominating the market with more than a 70% market share. However, the fastest growth rate occurred in the Asia/Pacific and the Middle East. When investigating the market from 2011 to 2017 (UFI, 2018a), due to rapid growth, both the ranking of venue capacity and market share had changed. Though Europe was still in first position, North America was replaced by the Asia Pacific region in second place, and the Middle East and Africa were in fourth place leaving Central & South America in last position.

For the conference sector, besides the convention centres, resorts and hotels are another venue provider (Ryan & Barnett, 1995; So, Li, & Lehto, 2011). Therefore, the conference sector is sharing venues with exhibitions; and they are largely accommodated by resorts, hotels and other forms of accommodation (e.g., universities, bookstores). According to Hotel Analyst (2017), in 2012, the global hotel industry involved about 13.4 million rooms; in 2015, it had increased to 15.7 million rooms. Moreover, there were 11,547 projects spread across 196 countries under construction in 2016, representing nearly 2 million rooms. The growing number of hotels also facilitated the growing conference sector by providing sufficient and diversified conference venues.

Given the importance of venues as infrastructure to support and stage events, another dimension to explain the development of the event industry is the establishment and development of regional or international event organizations.

Third, the development of event organizations.

The development of the business events industry is not only associated with the support of governments for its significant contribution to global and local economies (Davies, Coleman, & Ramchandani, 2013; S. S. Kim et al., 2003; Mistilis & Dwyer, 1999), but is also greatly influenced by the existence of international and regional events organizations.

As table 2.4 shows, most early organizations originated in Europe and North America, and they performed a critical role in developing the industry and improving the industry's visibility. This history also reflects the maturation and advancement of the events industry in these regions. Organizations headquartered in the Asia/Pacific, South America and Africa developed much later and appeared to be less influential.

Table 2.4 Professional Event associations

Name	Headquarter	Founded
International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE)	Dallas, TX	1928
Event Industry Council (EIC) (Known as CIC before 2017)	Washington, DC	1949
Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA)	Chicago, Illinois	1957
Association Internationale des Palais de Congrès (AIPC)	Brussels, Belgium	1958
International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA)	Amsterdam, Netherlands	1963
International Association of Professional Congress Organisers (IAPCO)	London, UK	1968
Meeting Professionals International (MPI)	Dallas, TX	1972
Meetings & Events Australia (MEA) (originally MIAA)	Sydney, Australia	1975
Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC)	Hannover, Germany	1978
Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (ABPCO)	Willersey, UK	1981
Confederation of Latin American Congress Organizing Entities and Related Activities (COCAL)	Buenos Aires, Argentina	1985
Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI)	Johannesburg, S. Africa	1987
Meetings Industry Association (MIA)	Harborough, UK	1990
Eventia	Birmingham, UK	2006
Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI)	Paris, France	1925
Incentive Research Foundation (IRF)	McLean, VA	1987
Society of Incentive Travel Executives (SITE)	Chicago, Illinois	1973
American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)	Washington, DC	1920
Asian Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (AACVB)	Bangkok	1983
British Association of Conference Destinations	Birmingham, UK	1969
Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI)	Washington, DC	1914
The International Special Event Society (ISES)	Chicago, Illinois	1987
International Association of Congress Centres (AIPC)	Liège (Belgium)	1958
Meetings & Events Australia	Sydney, Australia	1975
The Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA)	Chicago,	1958
The Society of Incentive & Travel Executives (SITE)	Chicago,	1973
European Federation of Conference Towns (EFCT)	Brussels, Belgium	1966
Confederación de Entidades Organizadores de Congresos y Afines de América Latina (COCAL)	Buenos Aires, Argentina	1985

Source: Rogers (2013, p. 5), Krugman and Wright (2006, pp. 197-198) and related websites.

Regardless when they were established, the location of their headquarters, and the power or influence and number of memberships, the event organisations listed in Table 2.4 have assisted or influenced the development of the event industry in the following ways:

- Organize events for event business and professionals. Many of these organizations offer communication opportunities for their memberships and the public, which largely increase the efficiency and effects of events. For example, UFI's Annual Global Congress provides opportunity for its members to network with peers, and "gain insight into topics of strategic interest, on the current industry trends and challenges that the exhibition industry is currently facing" (UFI, 2018a).
- Establish industry standards and criteria for operations and statistics. Both ICCA and UIA establish their statistics criteria for international data collection, and their ranking of countries and cities has become an index for event organizers or planners to make destination choices (ICCA, 2015; UFI, 2016).
- Increase the visibility and significance of the event industry by publications and education. Publications released by different organizations have improved the awareness of the industry for governments and the public. Meanwhile, many provide training courses, diplomas, workshops or seminars, which create educational opportunities for employees and others interested in the industry. The Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) launched by EIC in 1985 has been widely accepted in the world as "the badge of excellence" in the event industry (Events Industry Council, 2018a).
- Recruit and serve the membership. In 1911, UIA had only 150 international organizations; by now, "over 37,500 active and approximately 38,000 dormant international organizations from 300 countries and territories" have been collected in its Yearbook (UIA, 2017). Similarly, UFI's membership has increased dramatically since its establishment in 1937.

In addition, these international organizations have facilitated industry growth by providing services and information for their global members. These services feature prominently in their mission statements. For example, MPI, as the "largest and most vibrant global community", facilitates its members to succeed by "providing human connections to knowledge and ideas, relationships and marketplaces" (Li, 2013, p. 13). UFI targets the following benefits for members: to create a networking platform, to generate insightful research and studies, to offer education/learning opportunities and to market trade fairs and exhibitions globally (UFI, 2018a).

Fourth, the growth of academic research of the event industry.

The development of the event industry is further reflected by the growth of related research and studies. Getz (2012) concluded that in the 1960s and 1970s events studies were just a research topic within the areas of leisure, tourism or recreation study. For example, Formica (1998) found only a few journal articles associated with events management that were published in 1970s. The first event-focused research was, it is thought, published in the Journal of Travel Research and was conducted by Ritchie and Beliveau (1974). Beyond the tourism journal, two years later, Cavanaugh (1976) published an article in the *Journal of Marketing* which mainly discussed the economic objectives of trade shows and the evaluation of the effectiveness.

In the 1980s, event tourism rapidly developed as a separate research topic and "there was a concurrent increase in academic interest in events and consequently, an increase in research being undertaken, focusing on an array of issues pertaining to events and the event industry" (Mair & Whitford, 2013, p. 7). The studies of Gartner and Holecek (1983) and Ritchie (1984) began to analyse the economic impacts and the nature of event impacts; later in this period, mega events like 1986 Vancouver World's Fair, 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics and Adelaide Grand Prix (1986) all stimulated research interest. A number of seminal books were first published in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For example, *The Planning and Evaluation of Hallmark Events* by Syme et al (1989), *Special Events: The Art and Science of Celebration* by Goldblatt (1990), *Festivals, Special Events and Tourism* by Getz (1991) and *Hallmark Tourist Events* by M. Hall (1992).

The 1990s witnessed the "take-off" years of academic institutionalization of event management education (Cecil, Reed, & Reed, 2011; Fenich & Hashimoto, 2010), the advancement of event studies (Brown et al., 2015; Mair & Whitford, 2013), as well as the birth of several event focused academic journals, such as *Event Management* (originally *Festivals Management and Event Tourism*) in 1993, and *Journal of Convention & Exhibition Management* in 1997 (was renamed as *Journal of Convention & Exhibition Management* since 2004). The *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education* was also created during this time in 1992, which also specifically claimed that event-related papers were well suited to their journals. However, the major part of the publications of this time still focused on economic impacts (Crompton, 1999; Fayos-Solá, 1998; Grado, Strauss, & Lord, 1997; Mistilis & Dwyer, 1999). More research has explored the social value of different types of events based on a variety of disciplines and shown that, besides economic benefits, (business) events also have impacts on (re)forming social relations (Holland & Skinner, 1995), enhancing place/culture identity (Green & Chalip, 1998) and promoting social change (Walter, 1981).

Entering the new millennium, mega events have been more attractive than ever, including the Sydney 2000 Summer Olympics, 2002 Korea World Cup, 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, and 2010 Shanghai World Expo, all of which further boosted the event industry in the Asia Pacific region and consequently even more studies emerged. A new event management journal, *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, was created in 2010 and is an important outlet for event research. Meanwhile, a large amount of books regarding event studies and business event management have been published (Ali-Knight, Robertson, Fyall, & Ladkin, 2008; Bladen et al., 2012; Bowdin et al., 2011; Clark, 2008; Deery, Jago, Fredline, & Dwyer, 2005; Fenich, 2012; Getz, 2012c; Mair, 2013b; Rogers, 2013); these books encompass topics of research methods, event studies, specific business event sectors, business event management and impacts, etc. which reflect the development of business event studies and contribute to the accumulation and diffusion of event knowledge.

In conclusion, the growth of academic study, as a reflection of business event industry development, is represented in two aspects: one is the proliferation of the amount of business event research. As Getz indicates, the literature on events has increased in such a manner that it is impossible for anyone to read them all; another is the extension of research scope, which has progressed far beyond the limitation of economic significance and covers the other areas of social impacts (Chalkley & Essex, 1999; Deery & Jago, 2010; Dwyer et al., 2000; Holland & Skinner, 1995; Oshimi et al., 2016), sustainable issues (Collins & Cooper, 2017; Mair & Jago, 2010; Mair & Laing, 2012; Mair & Laing, 2013; O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002; Smith, 2009; Wong, Wan, & Qi, 2015), technology (Hudson & Hudson, 2013; Yuan, Gretzel, & Fesenmaier, 2006), event experience (Liu, Sparks, & Coghlan, 2017; Ryan, 2012; Wood, 2009; Yun & Park, 2015), wellbeing (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011) etc. from a variety of disciplines (e.g., sports, geography, psychology, sociology, business management, etc.) and with more diversified research methods. Consequently, the event studies are being "ushered in a systematic and theoretically grounded line of comprehensive event impact research” (Getz, 2013, p. 15) and are approaching a “maturity” stage.

The next section will introduce the business event industry in China, which is increasingly important in the global market as an event destination and the source of event consumers.

2.2.2 China’s business event industry

As the second largest world economy, China has become the biggest international travellers’ generating country (China Tourism Academy, 2016), as well as being a popular destination for hosting business events (Carlson Wagonlit Travel, 2018; ITB China, 2017; Xia, 2009). In this section, the development phases of Chinese business event industry, the current scale of the industry, and the reasons for the development will be discussed.

Many scholars have tried to separate the development of the Chinese business event industry into several phases or waves (Liu & Xu, 2014; Wang, 2015; Xia, 2009). Recent history indicated that China was involved in wars of different levels, from the Opium to World Wars, including civil war, until the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), which brought the country into an era of peace and development with a short exceptional period of Culture Revolution. Therefore, all the classifications of event development commenced with the founding year of PRC (i.e., 1949). In general, the development of the industry can be classified into four phases:

Phase I (1949-1977): Initial stage

The Chinese participation in the Leipzig Trade Fair in Germany in 1951 and the Industrial Exhibition of German Democratic Republic symbolized the start of PRC business event industry (Wang, 2015; Xia, 2009). However, this embryonic stage lasted for more than two decades.

China participated in more than 400 international exhibitions during this phase with the major purpose of showcasing the achievements of socialism in China. In the same period, more than 100 exhibitions were hosted in China with the aim of enhancing connections with the rest of the world. However, both types of exhibitions were primarily between China and other communist countries, which significantly limited communication with countries of a different ideology.

In regard to conferences, Liu and Xu (2014) pointed out that governmental conferences and that organized by state-owned organizations have dominated the market. It was rare to see any international business conferences, which was mainly due to China's isolated political and economic environment. The Cultural Revolution also had some negative impacts on the domestic industry; fortunately, it did not impede the continuity of participation in international exhibitions.

The situation was changed after the implementation of "Reform and Opening-up" in 1978, which led the development into the second phase.

Phase II (1978-1999): Stable development

During this period, the Reform and Opening-up paved the way for economic development and legislated cultural and social change. The economic development increased the need for business promotion and communication, particularly through business events. Political reform allowed the business event to break previous ideological boundaries and encouraged event organizers to invite exhibitors/attendees from other than socialist countries to participate in business events. For example, in 1978, the Agricultural Machinery Exhibition was successfully staged in Beijing and exhibitors from twelve countries were invited to participate. More Chinese business event brands were established in this phase, such as China Textile Machinery Exhibition, China International Machine Tool Show, and Dalian Fashion Festival, all of which have turned into Asian or world influential business events. After the restoration of China-US diplomatic relationship in 1979, China was invited and decided to attend the 1982 World Expo in Knoxville, Tennessee. More importantly, in 1986, participation in the Schweizer Mustermesse Basel (Basel Sample Fair) marked the adoption of international exhibition practices by Chinese organizers.

The establishment of the socialist market economy after 1992 meant a growing number of exhibitions were permitted and cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou have gradually grown into exhibition centres in China. National level regulations and policies that encompassed the participation of international exhibitions abroad and the staging of international exhibitions in China were issued by the China State Council. Many industry associations were founded and some exhibition centres were constructed at this stage (Xia, 2009). Policies at this phase also allowed foreign companies to co-organize exhibitions with Chinese organizers. Since the 1990s the exhibition sector has increased by 20% in

China. As an example, the great significance of staging business events was illustrated by the 1999 World Horticultural Exposition in Kunming, which invited 69 countries and 26 international organizations to participate, attracted 10 million visitors and generated US$ 1.45 billion by performance and admission tickets (Xia, 2009, p. 107).

According to Liu and Xu (2014), domestic business conferences had begun to outgrow the governmental conference, but private organisation of international conferences were still under strict control and only academic ones were permitted. The establishment of the China International Conference Centre for Science and Technology was a highlight and opened the official channel for the entering of international conferences. In general, the overall development of the conference sector was still constrained by policy, infrastructure, facilities, transportation, and human resource.

Therefore, at this stage, the business event industry developed at a slow to moderate speed, but it gradually moved from a politically dominated environment and started to embrace the free market and laid the foundation for rapid development in the next phase.

Phase III (2000-2007): Rapid development

The development of the industry continued at a rapid pace during this phase, boosted by the improvements of event infrastructure and the surging of private/joint business. As Kay (2005) noted, both the central and local governments invested significantly in the construction of convention centres and venues. In 1992, there was only one large convention and exhibition centre in China, with an indoor space of 50,000 square meters; but by 2003, sixteen centres had been constructed with a total of 1,288,000 square metres of indoor space (Kay, 2005).

Foreign business event companies were increasingly attracted to the Chinese market. For example, German companies and Shanghai jointly invested in the construction of the Shanghai New International Expo Centre in 2001 (Xia, 2009). Later, international exhibition groups like Messe Frankfurt, Messe Dusseldorf and VNU Exhibitions Europe established offices or branches in China. Meanwhile, private companies grew substantially in the business event industry, and accounted for more than 70% of the total events in Beijing and Shanghai (Wang, 2015).

In short, the Chinese business event industry improved in both quantity and quality in this period. The international exhibition companies with global reputations brought not only new business models and sophisticated management practices, but also introduced some globally renowned exhibitions to China. Hence Shanghai won the hosting right for the 2010 World Expo, which symbolized the competence of China to stage mega business events. At the same time, private companies created market competition and vitality. Wang (2015) concluded that at this time more than 3000 exhibitions were staged annually in China; the numbers of organizers have grown from several to more than 200 with a variety of types and international exhibitions hosted in China covered more areas (e.g., machinery, electronics, communications, banking). Similarly, the domestic conference industry has been very active (Liu & Xu, 2014).

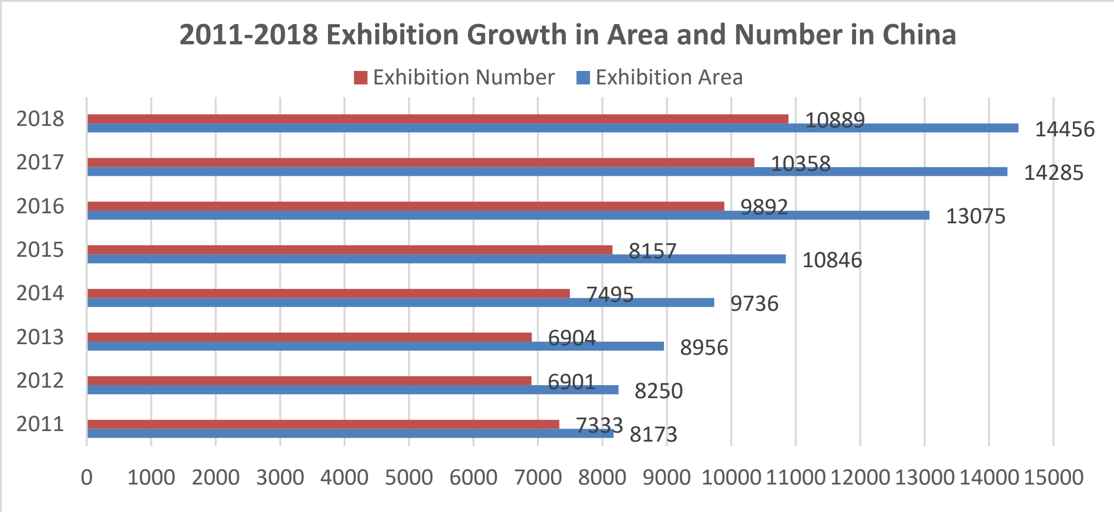
Winning the hosting rights of the Olympic Games and World Expo, and successfully staging the First China Expo Forum for International Cooperation in 2005 provided high expectations for the development of the industry.

Phase IV (2008-present): Competing and sharing globally

During this phase, China has successfully hosted many world renowned events, especially the 29th Olympic Games, 2010 Expo Shanghai, and the Hangzhou G20 Summit, demonstrating that China has become a sophisticated business event destination with a complete supply chain system, and has possessed venues appropriate for hosting international events of different levels and purposes. Concurrently, China has created or initiated many international business events that enables it to compete with the rest of the world (China Import and Export Fair, Guangzhou) and to share the domestic consumption market of China (China International Import Expo, Shanghai). Therefore, at this stage, China is competing both domestically and on a global scale with the rest of the world.

Data from China Convention Exhibition Event Society shows the growth of exhibitions in numbers and areas (see Figure 2.5). It reported that China hosted 11,356 exhibitions, 1.52 million business conference with more than 50 attendees, and 146,000 festivals that attracted more than 10,000 visitors (Asia Pacific Conference and Exhibition Research Institute, 2019). It further stressed that the event industry created nearly 20 million job opportunities and generated about $ USD 100 billion direct output. As for international business events, surveys indicate China ranked 8th in an ICCA list of international conference hosts in 2015, and held the second place regarding its indoor exhibition area of 4.8 million square metres in 2014, which accounted for 15% of the global total of exhibition space (ICCA, 2015; UFI, 2014).

Figure 2.5 Exhibition numbers and areas in China



Source: China Convention Exhibition Event Society (2019)

The significant growth of the event industry in China was primarily determined by: (1) the country's economic growth (World Bank, 2012); (2) government support and investments (China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, 2016); (3) the growth of the business market (Global Business Travel Association, 2015); (4) adequate educated personnel (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015), and (5) a safe environment (World Economic Forum, 2016). Those factors have anchored the status of the Chinese business event industry.

With consistent investment in infrastructure and event venue area by government and private capital, a large number of exhibition/conference centres have been established (see Table 2.5), which greatly facilitated the growth of the industry and the improvement of event quality. Another survey conducted by Global Business Travel Association (2015) showed that 138.5 million domestic business trips were taken for an event purpose in China in 2014 with an expenditure of US$110 billion on these trips.

A qualified workforce and safe environment have contributed to the healthy development of the industry. China has a college student population of 26 million (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015) leading to a ready supply of a highly educated people to enter the work force. Moreover, the CTA (2016) reported that 2307 universities, colleges, and vocational schools had established tourism and event programs with more than 797,000 students on campus. Those students and other qualified personnel assist to improve the quality of service (Draper, Dawson, & Casey, 2011).

Table 2.5 Indoor Exhibition Space over 200,000 m²

Province	2018			2015		
	Rank	Venues	Indoor Space km²	Rank	Venues	Indoor Space km²
山东 Shandong	1	45	155.55	1	31	137.35
广东 Guangdong	2	27	124.38	2	24	104.37
上海 Shanghai	3	9	97.70	3	12	83.48
浙江 Zhejiang	4	22	96.89	5	19	65.84
江苏 Jiangsu	5	30	85.30	4	31	82.03
河南 Henan	6	26	55.83			
四川 Sichuan	7	9	53.17	6	25	61.09
云南 Yun’nan	8	6	36.48			
福建 Fujian	9	8	35.00	11	9	27.45
辽宁 Liaoning	10	11	34.54	7	19	40.01
河北 Hebei	11	15	31.59	10	13	27.55
重庆 Chongqing	12	3	30.52	8	5	30.52
北京 Beijing	13	8	28.96			
安徽 Anhui	14	7	36.30	9	9	27.65
吉林 Jinlin	15	7	25.08			
湖北 Hubei	16	5	24.84	13	5	22.20
陕西 Shaanxi				12	5	22.37
广西 Guangxi				14	5	20.92
江西 Jiangxi				15	3	20.05

Source: China Council for the Promotion of Int'l Trade (2016), China Convention Exhibition Event Society (2019)

Safety is a critical factor for the success of event destinations (Crouch, 2011) and his one dimension mentioned in the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (World Economic Forum, 2016). China ranks 58 among the 141 surveyed countries in terms of safety, meaning China has a relatively positive image in this criterion (see also Xiao & Xiao, 2016. Though traffic is potentially a challenge for foreign travellers (Nelson, 2012), crime rates in China appear less than in many other countries therefore making it a very safe country for staging business events (China Daily, 2017; U.S. Department of State, 2017).

China has grown into a sophisticated and influential business event destination in the global market (ICCA, 2015; UFI, 2014). It attracts more than the regular international business events, attracting landmark events as indicated above, and professional event conventions, including for example, the 83rd UFI Global Congress. Additionally, the establishment, in China, of the UFI first residential office outside Paris (UFI, 2016) and the first ICCA international conference research/training centre (www.gochengdu.cn, 2019) further demonstrates China as an emerging destination of event industry.

Nonetheless, there are several factors impeding the Chinese event industry: positioning, government intervention, weak domestic enterprises, weak global competitiveness and outdated professional education and training (Fenich, 2012). Nonetheless, competition among the five event economic areas, namely the Yangtze River Delta, Pearl River Delta, Bohai Bay Area, Northeast Area and Central China Area, and their key cities is increasingly intensive. To attend to those issues, studies have been undertaken from different perspectives, which have been mainly focusing on exhibition destination competitiveness (Li, 2004; Li, 2007; Zhai, 2009; Ma and Chen, 2014), impact studies (Liu, 2009; Luo and Tao, 2004), satisfaction (Chen, 2013, Guo, 2007; Xu, Yuan, & Hu 2008; Zhang, 2010), and comparative studies of exhibition cities (Xu and Hu, 2011; Qiao and Hu, 2010; Wang, 2007). Researchers also have covered areas of education and curriculum studies (Liu, 2008; Wu, 2007); the role of government (Han, 2012) and even convention destination evaluation (Fang, 2013) in order to gain understanding of the many complexities involved.

2.3 Challenges of the business event industry

Currently, scenarios of global economic activity faces ever-increasing uncertainty: Brexit, the trade war, the refugee problem, Covid-19 and geopolitical and social conflicts are "threatening to create fundamental shifts in the world order, trade and investment flows" (Davidson, 2016, p. 2). In addition, technological disruptions, increasingly high expectations, intensive competition and generational changes are also complications. Therefore, despite the positive trend and outlook in general of the business event industry both globally and regionally (BECA, 2015; Events Industry Council, 2018c; ICCA, 2018; Li, 2013), it is also facing a number of challenges that will influence or potentially impede its development (AEME, 2019; Davidson, 2016; Deery, 2012; Kershaw, 2019; H. Liu, 2017; UNWTO, 2014; Wood, 2018).

The challenges confronted by the business event industry can be summarised as following:

- **Challenge of quantifying business event values**

Different from simply measuring the Return of Investment (ROI), today the overall value of business events requires the organizers to prove the event has met multiple objectives as required by consumers (AEME, 2019). Besides the economic evaluation, the value of destination image, social impacts, sense of belonging, even the wellbeing of attendees requires consideration.

- **Challenge from generational changes**

Different generations may have distinct pursuits of business event service. The increasingly diverse needs and wants of event attendees creates challenges for the organizers and planners as evidenced in a report, "The younger millennial attendee who isn't satisfied with a 'typical' venue or hotel" (AEME, 2019, p. 12). Thus, independent, unique, peculiar event venues are increasingly preferred (H. Liu, 2017). However, those venues usually provide no commission and leave no room for price negotiation. Besides the venue dimension, organizers need bring changes to the content and forms of business events. The generational change creates new demands, and even "a different view of the world" that might need new forms of events to meet expectations (Wood, 2018). To attract and satisfy those attendees with innovative events is one of the major challenges.

- **Challenge from emerging technologies**

The emerging of new technologies itself will challenge the traditional ways of business event management and operations. The adoption of those technologies are supposed to increase engagement and interaction (AEME, 2019). Arguably, this is a demand of new generation attendees (Wood, 2018), however, sometimes technologies merely create additional steps for consumers instead of improving their event experiences (Hodder, McLeod, & Sackey, 2013). Therefore, what technologies are supposed to apply, and how to deploy them into the design and operation of business events remains a challenge.

- **Challenge for delivering optimal experience**

The core of the event product is the experience, including both tangible and intangible components (Nelson, 2009), which makes the evaluation and measurement of event service a difficult task (Abdelazim & Alajloni, 2016). More importantly, the event experience is influenced by numerous factors, such as venue (Michelini et al., 2017; Rashid, Ma'amor, Ariffin, & Achim, 2015), quality of accommodation and food (Lee & Slocum, 2015; Tanford, Montgomery, & Nelson, 2012), speakers, social programs (van Riper et al., 2013), weather (Morgan, 2008), other attendees (Wei, Lu, Miao, Cai, & Wang, 2017), volunteer services (Ma & Draper, 2016) etc. Many researchers have intended to propose a model to measure experience (Abdelazim & Alajloni, 2016), to design and deliver compelling event experiences (Kale, Pentecost, & Zlatevska, 2010), to explore the nature and insight of event experience (Berridge, 2012; Geus, Richards, & Toepoel, 2015), yet the results have a weaker generalizability to other types of business events. That explains the challenge of better comprehending the nature of event experience, and then delivering optimal experience for event consumers (AEME, 2019).

- **Challenge from market competitions**

Recognizing the benefits generated by staging business events (Clark, 2008; The Association of Australian Convention Bureaux, 2013), countries, regions and organizations are all competing in the same circle for bidding for, attracting and staging business events, and the competition becomes increasingly intensive. As Kershaw (2019) indicated, with more and more players entering the marketplace, increased competition is one of the major challenges for event organizers and destinations. However, it is noticeable that both destinations and organizers are competing with their equal-level business peers; some types of events (e.g., World Expo, Olympic Games) can only be staged by destinations with well-developed infrastructure, economic competence, political influence and secure environment (UNWTO, 2014, p. 13).

- **Challenge from cost-control**

This challenge comes from two directions: one is the increased price of hotel, facilities, technology, and human capital (Wood, 2018). For example, in mainland China and Hong Kong, it was expected (prior to 2020) that group hotel rates would increase by 2.65%; and the other is the budget of event operation and staging is insufficient or decreasing (Davidson, 2016; UIA, 2015). Thus, business event organizers are facing a dilemma between creating optimal experiences for attendees which requires a bigger budget to employ proper technologies, hire unique venues, select interesting destinations and invite reputational speakers, and controlling/reducing the cost. To make sure the budget could go further, it is crucial that the organizers or budget makers balance the event consumers' demands, the optimal experience and the limited budget (Kershaw, 2019). This is destined to be a huge pressure for both business event planners and organizers.

- **Sustainability challenges**

The challenge of sustainability that the business event industry is facing can be explained from three perspectives:

First, the challenge from the growing awareness of and increased emphasis on sustainable goals and practices in business event management (Becken & Mackey, 2017; ICCA, 2018; Mair & Laing, 2013). Adopting environmentally friendly operations and practices sometimes suggests increasing costs, which are constrained by the previous challenge.

Second, the offsetting measures of carbon footprint or reduction of carbon emissions lead to extra expenditure or less flights (Becken & Mackey, 2017), and consequently less on-site attendance of business events. That is not a desired result for organizers and attendees.

Third, sustainable practices have been adopted by many events organizers (ICCA, 2018; Mair & Laing, 2013) and have been assessed through Ecological Footprint Indexing (Collins & Cooper, 2017). However, Pofeldt (2019) pointed out that "the majority of respondents … are doing nothing differently" to mitigate climate change. The report indicated that some were not sure about their actions: "Either climate change is not discussed, it is not a priority, they lack the authority to make those decisions, it is viewed in their organization as not being cost effective or it is seen as not needed" (p.4).

- **Challenges from political hostility and economic frictions**

The business event is expected to bring more business travellers to a destination, which is usually perceived as an opportunity to publicise the country as well as a risk to potentially cause problems (Li & Song, 2013). For many countries, policy makers are trying to reduce control and ease the process of visa application to facilitate the international mobility of travellers. However, some countries have employed visa control as a "weapon" against business event attendees due to political and economic frictions with their home country, which places business events in a dangerous situation and creates barriers/difficulties.

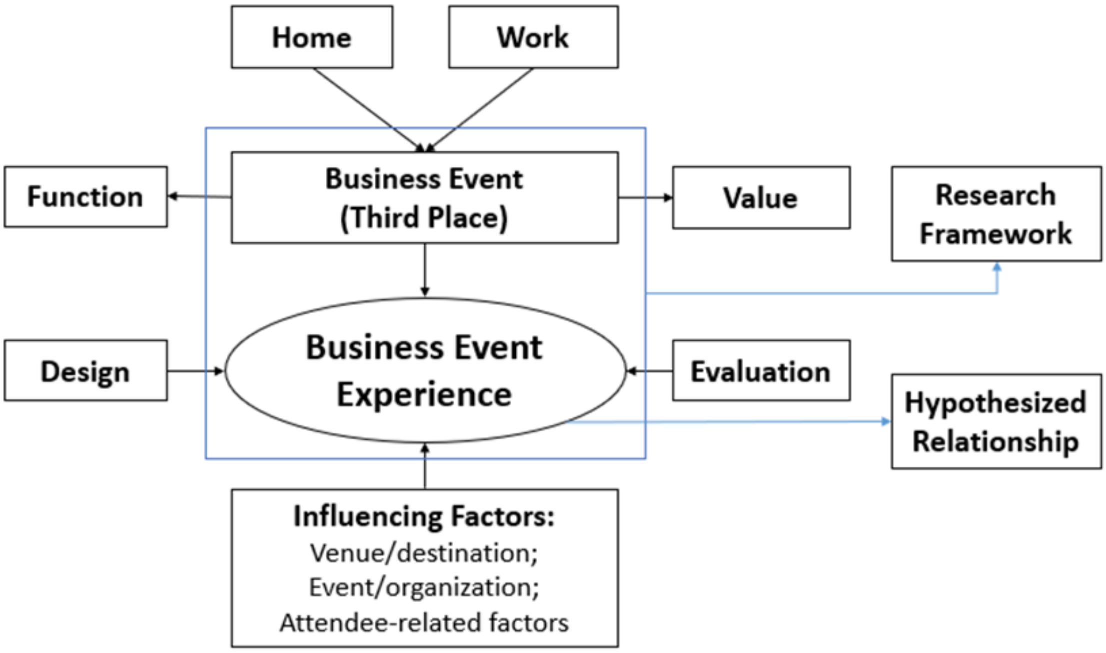
2.4 Chapter conclusion

In conclusion, the chapter first discussed the critical event concepts, then analysed the importance and development of business event industry worldwide and in China. A summary of challenges that are facing the industry concluded this section. Yet it is needed to also state that business events serve more than business purposes; they also generate many social benefits as mentioned previously. However, to view the (business) event as a Third Place will provide a different perspective to understand the nature, as well as to design and deliver memorable business event experience.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

This chapter, as illustrated in Figure 3.1, will discuss the relationship between the Third Place (Oldenburg, 1999) and events, covering the concept and criteria to define a Third Place, as well as previous debates on events as Third Places. From this new perspective, the literature regarding business event experience, which encompasses the overlapped functions of Third Places and business events, various values/benefits of business events, the diverse factors that affect business event experience is now reviewed. These factors are potential contributors to the design and evaluation of business event experience. Then, the ways and methods for event experience evaluation is discussed. Based on these discussions, the chapter intends to discuss the relationships between the constructs of business event experience and establish the proposed hypotheses; then a theoretical framework is created to inform the following research steps.

Figure 3.1 The structure of literature review



3.1 The Third Place and events

3.1.1 Concept and criteria

Considering "the core settings of informal public life", Oldenburg (1999, p. 16) proposed a "neutral, brief, and facile" definition of the Third Place:

The third place is a generic designation for a great variety of public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work.

This concept underscores the balance of the three realms of life experience and their roles in the people's lives. Conventionally, people spend most of their time at home, followed by their workplace, and then the Third Place. The first place, i.e. home, acts as a place for family and personal development, which is regular and predictable; the work environment is the second place where one earns a living and competes/co-operates with others; while the Third Place serves as the setting for social interaction, relaxation, celebration and satisfaction (Campbell, 2017).

Originally, eight characteristics exist for the identification of traditional Third Places (Oldenburg, 1999), which encompass: accessibility, conversations, neutral ground, the role of leveller, the regulars, a low profile, playful mood, and a homey feeling (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 the Characteristics of Third Places

	Characteristics	Explanation
1	Accessibility and Accommodation	• one may go alone at almost any time • acquaintances will be always there
2	Conversation is the Main Activity	Conversation in a Third Place • has rules that fit the democratic order • compliments the levelling process • is a lively game
3	On Neutral Ground	To offer the rich and varied association • to be neutral ground for who may gather • individuals may come and go freely • no one is required to play host • all feel at home and comfortable
4	The Third Place as Leveller	By nature, a leveller • is an inclusive place • pure sociability • people get together for no purpose
5	The Regulars	• are the right people to make place come alive • the acceptance of newcomers is essential to sustain vitality • the order of welcome is doubly important
6	A Low Profile	• physical plainness • not to impress the uninitiated
7	The Mood is Playful	• the playful spirit is of utmost importance • joy and acceptance reign over anxiety and alienation
8	A Home Away from Home	• be different setting from the home • be similar to home in psychological comfort & support

Source: Oldenburg (1999, pp. 22-42)

However, Mikunda (2004) noted the alternative forms of traditional third place – malls, fairs, and expos are deliberately staged in the era of experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), where "convenience entertainment" is designed for "a quick massage of the soul for stressed out customers" (Mikunda, 2004, p. 6). Therefore, for his part, Mikunda stated that a Third Place is a staged habitat that serves the purpose of promotion as well as the function of recharging consumers with emotion. The author further explained the emotion added value:

> *The emotional added value of entertainment in marketing has stood the test of time, both long term as an image-building factor and immediately at the point where things happen; because experiences increase attention levels, residence time and immediately promote sales.*

To "stage" an expected experience at those third places, four guidelines or ingredients exist (Mikunda, 2004, p. 13). First, to increase exposure to a Third Place and make it a landmark. Second, to encourage visitors to move around a place designed for exploring, interacting and associating. Third, plot a concept line that connects different elements of Third Places. Fourth, a core attraction of a Third Place is required to attract the public. Nowadays, those ingredients need to be considered when designing a Third Place.

Both these concepts and criteria are applied to assess whether a location is a Third Place (Lin, Pang, & Luyt, 2014; McArthur & White, 2016; Moody, 2011). For example, Laing and Royle (2013) explored whether bookshops act as Third Places, concluding that the absence of conversation inhibits such a function. However, under the same criteria, Nguyen, Han, Sahito, and Lam (2018) believe that it is appropriate to call "bookstore-café" a Third Place after the examination of its meaning and role for the presence of a café encourages sociality (Laing & Royle, 2013). A library as a Third Place was denied by Oldenburg (1999) due to "exacting, complicated, and expensive internal requirements" (p. 203). Yet modern libraries are welcoming and informal, providing consumers with a place for relaxation, conversation. Consequently, Lin et al. (2014) regarded libraries as Third Places, albeit, strictly speaking the functions of a library does not fully meet the criteria. Therefore, whether a place is a Third Place relies not only on the criteria but also the subjective judgement of the criteria.

Influenced by IT technology, virtual spaces or online communities appear to be increasingly important for netizens. Applying qualitative methods, Moody (2011) and

McArthur and White (2016) suggest that the online community or virtual space offers a "place" for users to develop connectivity by online interactions, thus confirming those spaces as Third Places. However, different from the behaviour in virtual environment, people in physical Third Places may not select who to associate with; and there is no agreement on whether a Third Place should have a physical existence (Sandiford, 2019).

Regardless of the forms of existence – physical or virtual, the Third Place takes people out of their ordinary/mundane spaces of home and work temporarily. Hence it permits people to act different social roles in a home-like, comfortable setting under the regulation of their formed community (Oldenburg, 1999). Various roles may be associated with such spaces, and certain rituals that mark the person (attendee) as a member of that space, such as the wearing of labels, a commonality of interest, and the arcane nature of the "member's" language. The above seems to be a functionalist approach, but the symbolism and structuring of the third place bestows an importance on the experience of occupation of that space.

It is also noted that there is boundary blurring between the first (home), the second (workplace) and the Third Place. For example, technology empowers people to work at home (Jon Hawkins, 2013), an online community accommodates netizens working, socialising and having fun (McArthur & White, 2016) and a bookstore-café serves as a place for associating, as well as being a place for learning and working (Lin et al., 2014). This phenomenon propels researchers to continue exploring the nature of Third Places under the social/technological changes, as well as confirming whether other forms of "places" should be treated as Third Places, especially the different types of events that will be reviewed in the next section (Jon Hawkins, 2013; Purnell & Breede, 2018).

3.1.2 Event as the Third Place

By definition, events are live, social gatherings, usually attached to a place and attracting certain number of attendees, which facilitates and encourages interactions to reach diverse purposes (Getz, 2012b). Whether events could be considered as Third Places provides theoretical underpinnings for the nature and value of events, and directions/guidelines for the designing, operating and staging of events. Then, are events Third Places? To answer the question, specific studies have been conducted to justify if sport events (Shipway, 2012), festivals (Jon Hawkins, 2013) and conferences (Purnell & Breede, 2018) can be viewed as Third Places.

Employing qualitative techniques, Shipway (2012, p. 210) investigated the “lived experience of the sports event participants” to confirm if sports could provide participants with “social experiences and relationships” as Third Places do. The author argued that Third Places are not necessarily declining, rather that traditional Third Places were substituted by alternative Third Places (e.g. sport events) that represents the changing demands of modern society.

In his research, Shipway (2012) observed that running events “ provides a third place that is populated by a diverse population of inhabitants, who are involved in running by their mere presence at a particular running event at a particular time” (p.218). The runners are of a mixture of different social backgrounds and running, as a type of leisure, offers them an “escape” or distinct experience from the first and second place, which becomes the main attraction for their attendance. Meanwhile, running with peers and like-minded people can be companionable and enjoyable (Shipway, 2012, p.213). Therefore, the criteria of accessibility, neutral ground, the role of leveller, a low profile, playful mood and home-like feeling are basically met. Both the event organizers and the frequent runners act to make the place alive, interactive and welcoming.

However, the main activity of a running event, apparently, is not conversation, which makes it doubtful to fulfil this key criterion of the Third Place. Moreover, this was not discussed explicitly in the research. Undoubtedly, verbal conversations between runners did not dominate the behaviour at the event, yet non-verbal conversations presented, from eye contacts, hugs to companionship and encouragement gestures. Hence, in a broader sense, communication is an important activity in this social habitat.

Therefore, taking an interpretive approach, Shipway (2012) concluded that sport events are “fulfilling the needs of the third place” (p.209) and confirmed that Third Places are not in decline but emerge in alternative forms, illustrating the implications of sporting events in creating “wider social benefits” and increasing social capital and sense of community.

Similarly, another two types of event, festivals and conferences, were also examined to check whether those event spaces could be recognized as Third Places. Jon Hawkins (2013) studied two festivals in Australia and New Zealand, discovering that some characteristics of Third Place matched well with the features possessed by festivals, for instance, “access to conversation, the evidence of ‘regulars’, the chance meeting of a ‘friend of a friend’ and a playful mood” (p. 192). The author argued that a high frequency of visits to the festival would be crucial for social interactions and the homey atmosphere.

As festivals are atypical of Third Place, Hawkins (2013) also indicated that at least two characteristics did not fully meet the criteria: accessibility and low profile. For one of the festivals under inspection, it firstly only happened over several days, and secondly required investment for attendance. In other words, it is only accessible to certain groups of people who share similar interests and are willing to incur the expense. The author elucidated that “it is less about the low profile and more about the intended activity that the space facilitates that makes these spaces third places” (Jon Hawkins, 2013, p. 198).

The festivals studied do not match all the criteria raised by Oldenburg, yet they appear to be Third Places as well, especially when taking Slater and Koo’s (2010) argument into consideration. They suggested that, from a contemporary view, broader criteria of “the physical elements, location, appropriateness of the space to meet up with others and a creative programme of events” (p.110) need to be adopted for confirming an event as a Third Place. It is plausible to propose updated criteria, but their broader criteria remain less specific and seldom applied when compared with those of Oldenburg. However, Hawkins (2013) believes that confirming festivals as Third Places in contemporary society has pushed the theory forward.

In the same vein, Purnell and Breede (2018, p. 512) argued that places designed as meeting places are “dynamic rather than static”, which legitimates further examination of “places” that could potentially be Third Places, for example the conference. Unlike most of the previous studies in which data were collected through interviewing people who were at the places, they employed a duo-ethnography method that relies on personal reflections and dialogues between researchers to investigate and analyse whether an academic conference could be regarded as Third Place.

The dialogue and analysis indicated that the conference is a neutral site as the venue or destination will optimize the accommodations and facilities to serve the roles of event; and the conference also serves as a leveller for being inclusive to attendees with same interests and exclusive to others, which forms an interactive community. However, when “accessibility” was involved they consider the hotel (especially the bars and restaurants) as part of the conference experience, in which attendees are allowed to have conversations freely at any time; but when “low-profile” was discussed they separated hotels from conferences, only arguing that a conference is "an expected part of life" (Oldenburg, 1999, p. 37) for academics, which makes their arguments less convincing. Akin to the festivals, frequency of attendance defines the regulars at events; and conversations with regulars and between peers can be welcoming and playful, therefore makes the conference place able to align to homelike feelings. Finally, their decision was "all work together to strengthen the idea of conferences as third places" (Purnell & Breede, 2018, p. 519).

In their study, it is emphasized that what defines the Third Place is "the interaction within places" but not "the places themselves", thus they proposed the "use of space" rather than the "structure of place" as a principle for the designation of Third Places. Therefore, like Jon Hawkins (2013), they also believe the theory has been furthered by their research.

In conclusion, criteria proposed by Oldenburg (1999) were used to assess the characteristics of those "places" – sports events, festivals, and conferences and all are confirmed as Third Places. Therefore, these studies have progressed the theory to better represent the dynamic nature of Third Place and contemporary social changes. Those characteristics that were not fully met were reported as not influencing the core functions of Third Places (see Table 3.2). However, it is not clear why the characteristics that meet the criteria are able to represent the main functions of Third Place, and those challenging the criteria will not influence those functions.

Table 3.2 Confirming Festival and Conference are Third Places

Criteria of Third Place (Oldenburg,1999)	**Festivals** (Jon Hawkins, 2013)	**Conference** (Purnell & Breede, 2018)
Neutral Ground	Criterion Met	Criterion Met
Act as a Leveller	Criterion Met	Criterion Challenged
Conversations	Criterion Challenged	Criterion Met
Accessible	Criterion Challenged	Criterion Challenged
Regulars	Criterion Met	Criterion Met
Low profile	Criterion Challenged	Criterion Challenged
Playful	Criterion Met	Criterion Met
Homelike	Criterion Met	Criterion Met

Nevertheless, it is widely accepted that Third Places are distinctive from first and second places, and the former engage social interactions regarded as essential human needs and enhance “the sense of community” to improve the quality of life and wellbeing (Campbell, 2017, p. 157). In respect of events being confirmed as Third Places, they help to build a specific community with common interests and create personal experiences (Purnell & Breede, 2018).

An equally important part of “Third Place” development is how to apply the theory to the design or creation of events or gathering places, but studies are few in number. Jeffres et al. (2009) suggested that creating Third Places in cities forms an inviting atmosphere and fosters enjoyable interactions among people, thus contributing to the quality of life. Later, Moody (2011) explicitely claimed the application of the theory to designing a museum, which enabled the museum to generate positive impacts on visitors, thereby increasing their “feelings of attachment to the community”(p.6). To form a sustainable relationship between service providers and consumers, Sugiyama, Shirahada, and Kosaka (2015) discovered that five factors are fundamental to the creation or operation of a Third Place, which encompass “shared space, shared objectives, shared time, self affirmation, and economic sustainability”.

This theory has been widely used to confirm whether a Third Place is present using criteria proposed by Oldenburg (1999). Several studies pioneered to prove different forms of events can be considered as Third Places (Jon Hawkins, 2013; Simões Aelbrecht, 2016; Yuen & Johnson, 2017). However, the theory was seldom employed to guide the design or creation of the “place” for optimizing functions, such as promoting social interaction, forming a playful and welcoming environment, enhancing sense of community and improving life satisfaction and wellbeing, especially in event studies.

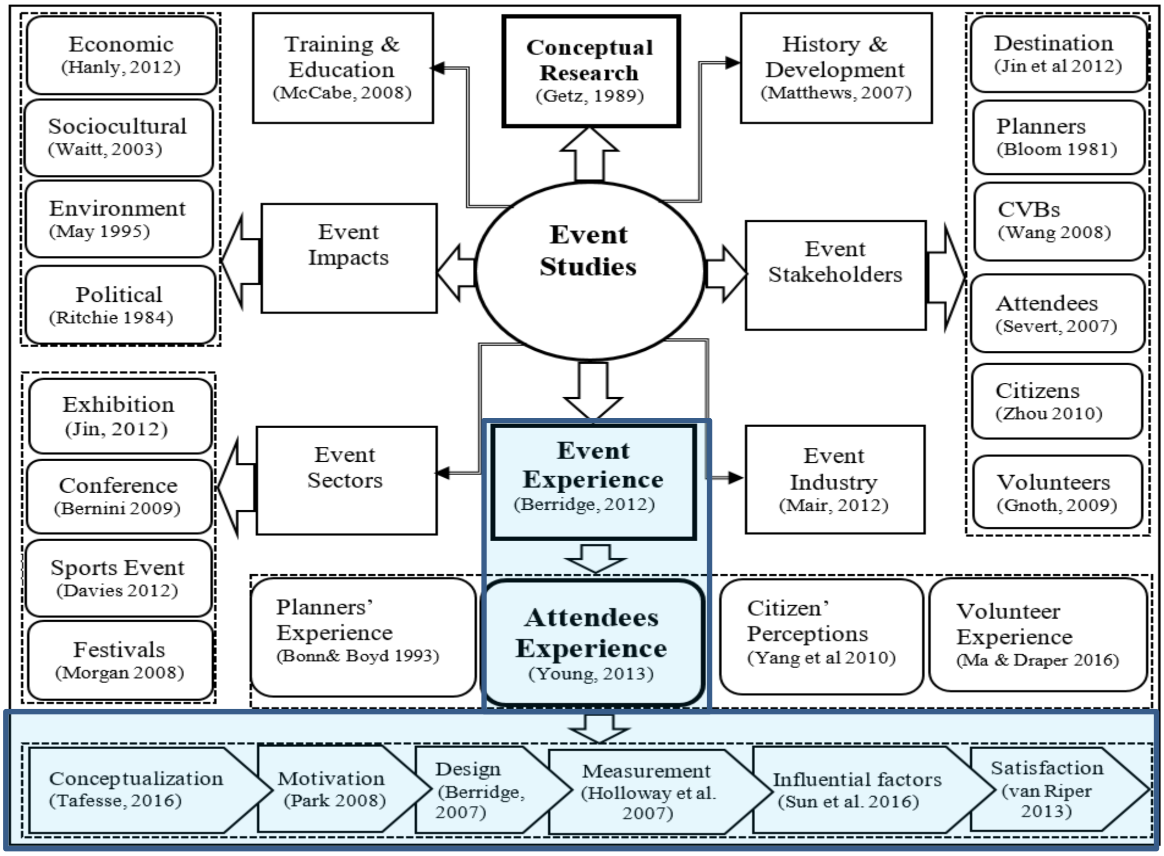
Mair (2013a) argued that there is a shortage of theory building research in business event studies, either through application of theories from other disciplines or creating/building new theories for business events. Concerning this issue, therefore, Third Place Theory in this research is used to (1) investigate whether “business events” meet the criteria of Third Place, (2) examine how the integration of entertainment activities will influence the nature and attendance experience of business events, and (3) identify the significance of applying the theory to assist the design of the event experience. This will be covered in Chapter 6 – qualitative data analysis; but before that it’s necessary to understand the concept, the value of business event experience, as well as the influencing factors.

3.2 Business event experience

As previously discussed in section 2.2, the event industry has experienced significant growth and has evolved into an important economic sector in the world economy (Convention Industry Council, 2012; Events Industry Council, 2018b; ICCA, 2013; Li, 2013; UFI, 2014; UIA, 2016). These studies and reports, like Li (2013) in UK, Events Industry Council (2018b) in USA, Jin et al. (2010) and China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (2016) in China, BECA (2015) in Australia, Sangpikul and Kim (2009) in Thailand, have manifested how the business event industry has generated benefits/value for specific countries or regions in the perspectives of economic contribution, employment improvement, destination branding, and local identity.

The significance of business events is increasingly attracting scholars to explore and investigate this phenomenon from various perspectives. Briefly reviewing the literature, areas/domains of event studies can be displayed or visualized in a mind map (Figure 3.2), which describes the main areas that have addressed by previous research, as well as the current research focus – attendees' event experience as highlighted.

Figure 3.2 Mind map of event study literature



According to Mair (2013a), previous research have focused on North America and provided rich results for understanding business event planners and buyers, yet more studies on attendees are requested, including the distinction between the highly and poorly valued business event attributes, and how event experience will influence their future behaviours.

Indeed, previous studies of event planners have written extensively on the topics of who makes the decisions and the pattern of decision-making (Clark & McCleary, 1995; Clark, Price, & Murrmann, 1996), perception of destination image (Bonn & Boyd, 1993; Oppermann, 1996), skills required for different types of event planners (Casey, 2011), process and competition for event bidding (Getz, 2005; McCabe et al., 2000), conceptualization and investigation of decision making process (Crouch & Ritchie, 1997; Mair & Thompson, 2009), factors and criteria for event site selection (Chen & Lee, 2011; Crouch & Louviere, 2004; DiPietro, Breiter, Rompf, & Godlewska, 2008; Go & Zhang, 1997), and the impacts of sustainability education or knowledge on planners' greening practices (Boo & Park, 2013).

Only limited research have shed light on business event attendees – the ultimate buyers of business event products (Mair, 2013a; Yoo & Weber, 2005), which have concentrated on motivations (Han & Verma, 2014; Mair, Lockstone-Binney, & Whitelaw, 2018; Ngamsom & Beck, 2000; Nicholson & Pearce, 2001; Severt, Fjelstul, & Breiter, 2009), decision-making for event attendance (Jago & Deery, 2005; Yoo & Chon, 2008; Yoo & Zhao, 2010; Zhang, Leung, & Qu, 2007), satisfactory assessment of their attendance and behaviour intentions (Bauer et al., 2008; Getz, O'Neill, & Carlsen, 2001; Kim & Malek, 2017; Kim, Lee, & Love, 2009). Therefore, the attendance experience of those ultimate business event consumers is still somewhat neglected. What consumers can obtain by consuming event product is event experience, which is also what the event organisers or planners can provide for them (Bladen et al., 2012). Getz (2012, 2016) further confirms that event experiences and the meanings attached to them are at the centre of event studies.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate and measure the business event experience. As Mair (2013a) pointed out, China is the "powerhouse" of the event industry, yet as a destination, it has been under-researched, which is also reflected by industry reports in prior sections. This supported the selection of a Chinese business event as a case study, however, the uniqueness of this business event and the trend it represents also justify the case selection. In the following sections, event experience literature, (especially that related to business event experiences), will be reviewed from a Third Place perspective, thereby laying a solid foundation for the research. The review will cover the conceptualization of experience and business event experience, the perceived value or significance, the design and evaluation of business event experience.

3.2.1 Conceptualize business event experience

With the global economy entering a new stage – the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), experiences are becoming increasingly important in the business world, especially for the tourism and events industry, both of which are regarded as manifestations of this new form of economy (Geus et al., 2015; Hayes & MacLeod, 2007; Kale et al., 2010; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011). Consequently, a brief introduction of consumer experience, especially business event experience is needed.

Many researchers have endeavoured to describe the concept in different perspectives, yet no agreements have been reached on the definition of consumer experience. For example, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) suggested "experiential consumption" should include various playful leisure activities, sensory pleasures, daydreams, aesthetic enjoyment, and emotional responses. This concept lists the possible elements to be included when designing and assessing experience products. Similarly, Pine and Gilmore (1998) stated that consumer experiences are "inherently personal responses occurring only in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level" (p. 99), but stressed the subjective feature of experience. This was well accepted by Lemke, Clark and Wilson (2011) who define it as the consumer "subjective response" to the interactions in different stages of consumption.

Another concept proposed by Lewis and Chambers (2000) elucidated that consumer experience is the "total outcome" of experience consumption from the combination of environment, goods, and services purchased, which placed the emphasis on the results/benefits obtained after the consumption. Whereas Poulsson and Kale (2004) emphasized the characteristic of "co-creation" of consumer experience, both provider and consumer contributed to the experience formation. Although the "dynamics between the experience provider and the consumers together define the experience" (Kale et al., 2010, p. 150), it is noted that experiences should be designed for different consumer segments.

Regardless of the ways to explain the concept, Berry and Carbone (2007) argued that creating the right type of experience is important for a business organization to differentiate it from others, as well as build up an interactive relation with consumers in the experience economy, which reflected the shift of consumer pursuits from "functional features and benefits" to "pleasurable experiences" (Schmitt, 1999, p. 53). Events are elemental to the new stage of economy (Getz, 2012), and "increasing numbers of event companies are offering experiential solutions to clients" (Berridge, 2012, p.8). Yet there is still no consensus of the definition of business event experience.

To define the pursued event experiences, marketers and planners need to understand the nature of experiences. Recognizing the shift of consumer needs, in a conceptual work, Schmitt (1999) proposed five dimensions to understand experiential products: (1) sensory experiences, (2) affective experiences, (3) cognitive experiences, (4) physical experiences, behaviours and lifestyles, and 5) social identity experiences that refer to a reference group or culture. Following this lead, Gentile et al. (2007) suggested six aspects of experience: sensorial, affective, cognitive, lifestyle, pragmatic and relational components. Yet, the pragmatic component is not appropriate for tourism and event products, because it is mainly related to the usability of tangible products. Both studies interpret experience in multiple paralleled perspectives that can be categorized as functional and experiential needs of consumers and facilitate the creation and delivery of memorable experiences.

Based on grounded theory, Tung and Ritchie (2011, p. 1377) decoded the essence of tourism "memorable experience" with four key dimensions: (1) affect, (2) expectations, (3) consequentiality and (4) recollection. "Affect" dimension mainly refers to the "positive emotions and feelings associated with the experiences" (ibid, p.1377), yet negative experiences are not often recalled. The second dimension is reflected by how the visitors' expectations have been fulfilled after consuming the tourism products. When visitors' expectations are surpassed by the tourism offerings, they will have a memorable experience; in other words, consumers encounter events that are not planned at the pre-stage, which provides them unexpected experience or "surprise". The dimension of "Consequentiality" has four sub-dimensions: social relationships, intellectual development, self-discovery, and overcoming physical challenges (Tung and Ritchie, 2011, p.1379), which represent the individual perceptions of the "outcome" after the consumption. Recollection is explained as what efforts have been made and behaviours have been taken by visitors to memorise the experience and how do they reflect back to the travel.

In the context of event studies, people attend an event with some anticipation of what experience to collect. In general, Pettersson and Getz (2009) argued that the majority of event attendees are there for the generic appeal, while others for some specific experience. Generic experiences could be provided by any event in one type of events, which “have more to do with the individual’s state of mind and particular circumstances than with the event theme, programme or setting” (Pettersson & Getz, 2009, p. 312). For sport events, festivals and the alike, the generic benefits for attendees are usually entertainment, relaxation, and having fun.

However, business event attendees are expecting business benefits that become the generic experience and are of priority from their purposes, because the essential purpose of a business event is commercially oriented (Getz, 2012). Thus, for business event attendees, having the experiences of entertainment, relaxation, or excitement are more leaning to the side of specific experience. For budget, limited resource, and profit reasons, business event organizers usually prioritize the business goals and ignore/give up other benefits. As the challenges listed in section 2.3, business event organizers are facing the challenges of generational changes, the request of optimal experience, etc. which put the traditional ways of event design and operations at risk to satisfy the current consumers.

In the current society, cities are using entertainment measures to make the place more meaningful and entertaining (Oliver & Raney, 2011), so business event organizers need to take this into account when designing their particular events. Hence “entertainization” has been identified as a new trend for designing and operating business events (Cook, 2019). Thus, including or integrating entertainments into business events and activities is deemed to be an effective practice (Schmidt, 2011). Consequently, making entertaining activities an integral part of business events will possibly (1) satisfy the requests or needs proposed by consumers, (2) create alternative specific experience, and (3) soften the business atmosphere of business event.

More specifically, supporting experiences generated from the appeal of accommodation, food supplies, facilities, entertainments, etc.; and the generic experiences are explained as “peak experience” created by enjoying the core activities (Quan & Wang, 2004). The two types of experiences make an organic whole. An empirical research later concluded that event experience involves “multiple experiential elements and outputs (such as satisfaction, emotions, behaviours, cognition, memories and learning)” during the multiple stage of attendees’ interaction with elements of the event environment (Geus et al., 2015, p. 277). This supports the understanding of planned events (Getz, 2012, p.8), in its “intent to create, or at least shape, the individual and collective experience of the audience or participants”. Therefore, the nature of a business event is the experiential moments that are designed or created by organizers or planners. Following the lead of previous experience studies, business event experience can be defined as the overall feelings and outcomes perceived by attendees in the process of interactive consumption, which is usually a subjective evaluation of functional, hedonic, and social values that are delivered by business events.

From a Third Place perspective, the definitions of event experience, especially the business event experience proposed here, have emphasized both the business benefits (functional value) and non-business values that business events can provide (Cook, 2019; Geus et al., 2015; Pettersson & Getz, 2009; Quan & Wang, 2004; Schmidt, 2011). Yet, while the non-business values are usually not prioritized by organizers, nonetheless they can be realized through creating a Third Place for attendees, and in so doing enhance the experience of delegates that in turn creates future attendance and recommendations to others.

3.2.2 Perceived Value of business events

The perceived value or benefits of staging business events are identified by both the hosting destinations/communities (Clark, 2008; Dwyer et al., 2000; The Association of Australian Convention Bureaux, 2013) and individual attendees (Bladen et al., 2012; Fu, Zhang, Lehto, & Miao, 2018; Liu et al., 2017). By designing and operating business events, organizers and planners are expecting financial profits, brand promotion, business growth as well as some social benefits (Jin et al., 2012; Kim, Sun, & Kang, 2015; Lee, McKercher, & Kim, 2009; Reid & Arcodia, 2002).

For a local community or destination, Clark (2008, p.17) summarized that staging international events could bring tangible values/benefits, such as “improved environment, infrastructure and amenities, global exposure, increased visitor economy and tourism, trade and investment promotion, employment and social/business development”, as well as some intangible benefits such as “self-confidence”, “national pride”, “civic engagement" and "ambition to embrace globalisation". When considering the time line when those benefits appeared, Clark (2008) suggested that they could be segmented into "primary" benefits that are more direct and close to the time of staging; and "secondary" benefits that are generated by events in a long term perspective (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Primary and secondary benefits of staging international events

Primary benefits	Secondary benefits
• Alignment of the event with sector and business growth strategies in the city/nation. • Private-public investment partnerships. • Image and identity impacts attracting increased population, investment, or trade. • Structural expansion of visitor economy and supply chain development/expansion. • Environmental impacts (built and natural)	• Post event usages of improved land/buildings. • Connectivity and infrastructure legacies. • Labour market impacts and social economic inclusion. • Secondary impacts in the property market. • Global positioning, events strategy going forwards, project management capability.

Source: Clark (2008, p. 17)

What the attendees expect from the business events is different from that of destinations or communities, since they peruse individual benefits instead of the overall values in general. Yet, from the organizers and planners' perspective, the benefits/values they provided or created by hosting business events are usually what the attendees are seeking (Sperstad & Cecil, 2011). As Sperstad and Cecil (2011) stated, if an event could generate two types of values: 1) value for business and 2) value of the mind, it then would be a successful event. The first type is related to event organisers who care about the return on investment and business growth; and the second type is associated with attendees, and includes emotional value, personal development and behaviour change (see table 3.3).

Regardless of the goals or values they aim to create, events concentrate on "creating a meaningful experience and temporary community for those attending or participating" (Sperstad & Cecil, 2011, p. 315). However, different types of event produce different values and benefits since they are designed with different purposes. For example, the hosting of business conferences aims for networking, education, inspiration, and behavioural change; while exhibitions or tradeshows intend to inform and motivate the employees to promote, as well as consumers to buy products and/or services that reward the organization to some extent. Generally, business events are considered an important approach to improve business results and bring value to the organization (Sperstad & Cecil, 2011).

In their research, with the analysis of qualitative data collected from both European and Asian countries, Mitchell, Schlegelmilch, and Mone (2016) argued that attendees could have two types of values when attending business events: professional and personal values. Professional value is also known as a form of functional value in which the organizations' value is possibly achieved via the attendees' experience of the event; whilst the personal value simply refers to the attendees' values. Professional value encompasses learning value, networking value, innovation value, reputation value; and personal values includes social value, emotional value and hedonic value (Mitchell et al., 2016, p. 102). An organization's professional value is usually mediated by an individual's experience, for example learning value obtained by attendees is highly expected by the organization, because this embodies the absorptive capacity, knowledge transformation and sharing ability of an organization (Mitchell et al., 2016).

Attendees' values were also investigated through research on different types of events. Adopting photo elicitation methodology, Liu et al. (2017) studied a business event of the wine and food trade in Australia with the purpose of capturing "the complexity of customer experience" (p.463). This qualitative inquiry concluded that attendees took this event as an opportunity to obtain the learning value (gain knowledge from experts about eating and drinking), epistemic value (discover new trends in food and wine) and social relational value (bond with friends and family) and emotional value (positive and negative feelings) (Liu et al., 2017, p. 474). Using an empirical approach and multivariate analysis, the way event attributes associated with the attendees' perceived values of a community festival in the US were measured (Fu et al., 2018). The authors identified four dimensions of perceived value:

a) Functional value for price: the economic utility derived from the festival experience due to the reduction of perceived costs;
b) Functional value for quality: the utility derived from perceived quality and expected performance of the festival, related to attributes such as reliability and durability;
c) Social value: the enhancement of social self-concept, which is based on the utility derived from the festival's ability to enhance individuals' social self-concept;
d) Emotional value: the utility derived from the feelings or affective states generated by the festival experience. (Fu et al., 2018, p. 204)

Similarly, Young (2013, p. 30) applied a structural equation model to examine the relationships of three constructs of American association conferences: perceived conference values, satisfaction, and behavioural intentions. Her study found utilitarian (functional) value, hedonic (emotional) value, and social value significantly influence the attendees' satisfaction and future behaviour. The multidimensional values were further explained that "the utilitarian dimension originates in monetary savings"; "the hedonic dimension originates in emotional benefits and psychological aspects"; and the social value emerges from "social status and peer recognition" (Young, 2013, p. 30). The experiential values of the event venue were explored as well, Sung and Lee (2015) suggested that multi-sensed, emotional and functional experiences are the components of the experiential value.

The perceived values show slight differences among different types of events. But it is agreed that the perceived value is a "complex and multifaceted construct" and includes "multiple dimensions"(Lee & Min, 2013a, p. 402). Thus, the business dimension is usually represented by functional values, while non-business dimensions are realised by social and hedonic values that are additionally consistent with the concept of Third Places. More importantly, designing and delivering expected values to business event attendees might be the "unique sales proposition" by which organizers and planners survive and differentiate themselves from others under increasing competition (Clark, 2008; Sung & Lee, 2015; The Association of Australian Convention Bureaux, 2013). Therefore, Third Place theory should be considered when designing or operating business events.

3.2.3 Factors that influence business event experience

When attending business events, attendees pursue various values (Fu et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2017; Mitchell et al., 2016; Sperstad & Cecil, 2011; Young, 2013). The perceived business event experience depends upon the delegates' evaluation of the values and benefits gained from the event (Berridge, 2012; Lee & Min, 2013a; Mair, 2013b; Severt et al., 2007; Young, 2013). Some of those factors are destination/venue-related, others are event-related (Lee & Min, 2013a; Young, 2013), and another group of factors relate to interactions with other event attendees (Mair, 2013b).

3.2.3.1 Destination/venue related factors and the business event experience

An event destination is a geographcial location that provides environment and resources for staging an event (Oppermann, 1996). The event orgnizers select attractive destinations for business events, which then are supposed to attract the targeted consumers; and potential attendees also consider the location or site as a critical factor for their attendence decision-making (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). It is also confirmed by Rogers (2013), that a desirable business event destination should contain “a range of venues, facilities, attractions, support services and appropriate infrastructure”(p. 63), which are the elements that can be employed by organizers/designers to make the business event a Third Place for the various benefits of attendees.

Mair and Thompson (2009) noted that many event studies have placed the destination dimension in the foreground of analysis. For example, Var, Cesario, and Mauser (1985, p. 197) emphasized the importance of destination to organizers, noting that “accessibility and attractiveness constitute by far the most important element in conference venue decisions”. Oppermann and Chon (1997) agreed with them, adding elements like climate, tranportation, and cost as important factors for attendees to consider. Besides those mentioned factors, Lee and Min (2013a) pointed out that opportunities beyond the regular business activities, like shopping, recreation, and attractions have been the appeal for attendees. Similarly, both Yoo and Chon (2008) and Lee and Back (2008) repeated that the destination and its dimensions are critical to the business event consumers’ decision making and satisfaction. Besides, both event organizers/planners and attendees consider risks or safety as important factors when deciding on which destination to stage an event or whether to attend the event or not (Lee & Back, 2008).

Therefore, organizers usually select destinations that are “interesting, exotic, safe, accessible and accepting of all types of delegates” (Jago & Deery, 2005, p. 33), which highlights several dimensions of a destination, namely attractiveness, accessibility, and extra-event activities. Generally, attractiveness means anything that may be attractive to the attendees at the destination, such as landscapes, people, culture, food, business etc.; accessibility is mainly about two things, one is the sufficient modes of transportation, the other is reasonable cost of transport, accommodation, etc.; and the extra-event activities contain social programs, pre/post-event travel, and other recreational opportunities in the destination. In addition, destination image plays a key role in increasing the attendance rate (Oppermann & Chon, 1997) and further influencing the experience of attending a business event. Sometimes, the destination itself becomes an attraction to the potential attendees (Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012). It is also indicated that business event attendees sponsored by employers, usually prefer destinations that provide extra-event activities (Lee & Min, 2013a). These factors create a relaxed and fun environment for attendees while fulfilling their business purposes, which facilitates the shaping of a Third Place.

Therefore, the business event destination is an important dimension from which to evaluate the attendees' satisfaction and event experiences. Event venue and the facilities are important components of a destination, as Rogers (2013) stated. The relationship between venue attributes, facilities and the event attendance or experience has been widely investigated.

Robinson and Callan (2005) studied the importance of venue attributes to the conference delegates in the UK. According to the their survey, attendees perceive more than half of the venue attributes that are important to them belong to the categories of "Competence", "Tangibles–Other" and "service providers"; they also highlight the importance of "value for money" and "the quality of facilities and services". Though the attributes of "Location and Image," and "Leisure Facilities" are considered less important, the authors stated that omission of those factors might lead to attendees' dissatisfaction. Similarly, Wu and Weber (2005) assessed the conference attendees' perception of venue attributes, facilities, and provided services in the Asia-Pacific region. Their research indicates that "ventilation", "audio-visual equipment", and "Comfort of seating" are the highest rated attributes; while supporting attributes like "interior design and decoration", "public telephones" and "food and beverages" are perceived as unimportant (p.403).

It would seem from such studies by European (Robinson & Callan, 2005) and Asian-Pacific researchers (Wu & Weber, 2005) that there are both similarities and differences in the two sets of conference delegates. Nonetheless, generally, the same venue attributes are being selected by the researchers with minor nuances. For example, Wu and Weber (2005) did not include leisure facilities, whereas Robinson and Callan (2005) missed the attribute of "internet access"; and although all were unimportant to attendees, the absence of them might result in dissatisfaction. Wu and Weber (2005) further pointed out that attendees' perceptions of those attributes are not static and may change over time, which requires the organizers or venues to conduct periodic examinations "to stay abreast of their preferences and so maintain a competitive edge" (p.409).

More recently, Jin et al. (2013) stated that the layout of a venue, accessibility and the provided space have significant impacts on event experience. In another study, Abou-Shouk, Zoair, Farrag, and Hewedi (2018) investigated the impacts of venue image on event destination image by applying structural equation modelling in Egypt. They argued that venues serve as a "communicative environment" for event consumers, including visitors and exhibitors; in this environment, “venue design, facilities, staff, available information and comfort” are of positive impact on the promotion of event destination image, as well as the event consumers experience and behaviours (Abou-Shouk et al., 2018, p. 137). They concluded that venue facilities contain the factors of the event facilities, public service facilities, food and beverage provisions, venue space and size, and leisure and entertainment provisions. Rosenbaum and Wong (2009) added that signage system and artefacts are also important attributes of event venues (Bitner, 1993).

In conclusion, as part of the event product, event destination/venue and their various dimensions, as well as related facilities contribute greatly to the decision of event attendance, and they further result in the shaping of business event experience. Some dimensions of destination/venue are exactly what a Third Place requires, including accessibility, inviting settings, as well as extra-event activities. Therefore, these destination/venue related factors are not only of interest in previous studies but also contribute to the design and development of the instrument to measure business event experience in this current study.

3.2.3.2 Event related factors and the business event experience

Other than the destination related factors, the experience is also affected by business event-related factors (Lee & Min, 2013a). Destination or venue factors are considered as part of the “hard” infrastructure, and factors that are related to event and event management belong to the “soft” infrastructure, which usually refers to the service quality (Rosenbaum & Wong, 2009). The studies of event experience and event service quality indicate event related factors include but are not limited to the following: event theme, event program, invited speakers, social activities, event reputation, organizer’s professionalism, staging time, staffing, destination or venue selection, cost control, and event marketing (Knutson, Beck, Kim, & Cha, 2007; Lee et al., 2015; Yoon, Lee, & Lee, 2010). Obviously, these factors are under the organizers’ or designers’ control, informing by Third Place Theory, they could make the business event meet multiple expectations from attendees and other stakeholders.

Yoon et al. (2010) empirically measured how the event quality and values would influence the consumers’ experience and satisfaction. Besides the factors of venues and facilities, their measurement instrument encompasses factors of information service, event program, food and souvenirs. Information service has four items: pre-informational service that is the communication between event organizer and consumers; information delivered by signage; information presented on the pamphlets; and guide services provided by event staff. In respect of the event program, it checks the items of value provided (hedonic, functional, social capital) and the management of the event (organization and operation). Event organizers have the responsibilities of "researching and recommending a suitable venue, helping to plan the conference programme including the social programme, marketing the conference and handling delegate registrations, booking accommodation/housing for delegates, planning an exhibition to run concurrently with the conference, producing a budget and handling all of the conference finances" (Rogers, 2013, p. 65). Though the factors of food and souvenirs are listed separately, they are under the control of the organizers, which indicates these factors are parts of the event management.

In their research, Lee et al. (2015) examined the exhibitions staged in Hong Kong and discovered that "booth design and layout, exhibition logistics, venue services, and show management" are the four dominating determinants of exhibition service quality. Their examination suggested that three of these determinants have significant impacts on event consumers' satisfaction.

For their part, studying both leisure and business events hosted in Macau, Rosenbaum and Wong (2009) adopted four dimensions from SERVQUAL – reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy to measure the event service quality in general. Items included in their instrument are services provided by organizers, employees' responsiveness and willingness to serve, politeness and knowledge of service providers, and the comparison between the service received and promised by organizers (p.411).

In another study of business conferences, Zhang et al. (2007) stated that for many attendees one of the first items to be checked prior to their decision-making was the key speakers**,** because the education/learning expectations are provided by speakers (Lee & Back, 2008; Severt et al., 2007). Kale et al. (2010) pointed out the importance to recruit eloquent speakers to enhance the appeal of the event and the acceptance of the ideas, while Zhang et al. (2007) emphasised the background, reputation and presentation skills of speakers as being a key attraction for a conference, thus increasing the possibility of conference attendance. This is supported by Young (2013) who stated that attendees consider listening to the respected speakers as a "precious opportunity". Speakers also serve as “regulars” in business event to welcome and interact with attendees from a Third Place perspective.

McCarthy and Boyd (2005) have noted that digital techniques enhance the communication and interactions among people that are segmented physically by time and space. Wilkinson, Basto, Perovic, Lawrentschuk, and Murphy (2015) confirm that the conference experience can be shared with more audience and generate international engagement with the adoption of social media. It is also suggested by Hudson and Hudson (2013) that using social media is an effective way to engage the attendees. More recently, Hamdy (2018) discussed the possible application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven techniques as a means of improving event experience, for example, adopting an emotion interpreter to education, human communication and entertainment. Therefore, the adoption of new technology aims to bring enjoyment, entertainment which improve the interaction and communication, as the criteria of Third Places required.

It is also noted that the perception of functional, hedonic, social values are connected with attendees’ expectations or motivations (Mair & Thompson, 2009; Severt et al., 2007; Young, 2013), as well as the characteristics of individual attendees (Mair, 2013b; Yoo & Zhao, 2010), which will be discussed in the next section.

3.2.3.3 Attendee related factors and the business event experience

As previously discussed, attendees are the ultimate consumers of business event service. Whether the event is successful or not largely depends on the consumers’ evaluation of the provided services, while factors related to the consumers have direct impacts on their evaluation of event experiences (Deery et al., 2005; Mair, 2013b; Severt et al., 2009). These factors include 1) demographic factors, 2) psychographic factors (motivation, satisfaction, emotion, etc.) and 3) behavioural factors (engagement, interaction, and personal actions), which are required to be understood and studied for designing successful business events and satisfying the consumers.

Demographic factors

Despite the common analysis of demographics in wider marketing, Mair, (2013b, p.15) notes that among “the under-researched areas of investigation” in the existing literature are demographic features (Mair, 2013b, p. 15). While frequently reported, only a small number of those studies further explore how the demographic features will influence their satisfaction and experience. Yet, in an early study, Grant and Weaver (1996) found that demographic factors such as age, level of income, career stage and previous event experience did impacts on attendees' motivational classifications. Equally, Deery et al. (2005) confirmed the existence of the relationships between conference delegates' expenditure and their demographic features. They identified that attendees' place of origin and occupation were factors influencing their expenditure; place of origin also had impacts on the delegates' satisfaction. The influence of other features of attendees also has been tested, for example gender (Mair, 2013b; Yoo & Zhao, 2010) and career seniority (Han & Verma, 2014; Oppermann & Chon, 1997).

That demographic factors have impacts on event motivations and experience is also supported by Liu et al. (2017), who discovered that the "interactions between the various event components in the ecosystem and their personal characteristics" would assist the co-creation of a unique event experience (p.476). Reports from the Melbourne Covention Bureau (2017, p. 4) also pointed out attendees' desires and needs alter with the demographic (generational) changes:

> *As our younger generation starts attending more and more of these, they will definitely want to see environmental sustainability. They will definitely want to have involved in the format of the event, wellness programs and networking programs, it won't all be about learning there will be some kind of fun as well.*

Hence, in this study, demographic factors like gender, level of position, geographical location etc. are tested for their discriminability of different level of satisfactions. In addition, as previously stated, psychographic features also have been proved as influencing factors of event experience and satisfaction (Severt et al., 2007).

Psychographic factors

It has been recognized that demographics are less than adequate for segmenting the consumer market (Silverberg, Backman, & Backman, 1996) because consumers may share the same demographic category (e.g., gender, education, or income), but the psychographics of these groups (e.g., values, motivations and beliefs) are different (Morgan, Levy, & Fortin, 2003).

The psychographic approach "provides an understanding of tourists by looking at their activities, attitudes, interests, opinions, perceptions, needs, and daily life routine"

(Silverberg et al., 1996, p. 18). Lin (2002) further stated that service providers could categorize consumers on the basis of psychographic factors, like lifestyle and personality. As Lin (2002) explained, services or products are fundamental ingredients of lifestyles that are defined as the consumption options made by consumers (i.e., motivations).

Motivation, as a psychological driver, is helpful to improve the explanatory power of sociological factors (Findsrud, Tronvoll, & Edvardsson, 2018). Mitchell (1982) defined motivation as "…those psychological processes that cause the arousal, direction, and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal directed" (p.81). This concept explains motivation from a physchological perspective. This is confirmed by Iso-Ahola (1982) that motivations are intrinsic factors that arouse, guide and insist on a behaviour. These internal factors are in connection with "an awareness of potential satisfaction" in a future scenario (Deci, 1975, p. 99).

In the view of Schultheiss, Strasser, Rösch, Kordik, and Graham (2012, p. 650), an action is motivated either by the "attainment of a reward" or the "avoidance of a punishment", which is similar to "seeking" and "escape" forces (Iso-Ahola, 1982), and "push and pull" factors (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977, 1981). In the framework, "push factors refer to the specific forces that influence a person's decision to take a vacation (i.e., to travel outside of one's everyday environment), while pull factors refer to the forces that influence the person's decision of which specific destination should be selected" (Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003, p. 170).

Motivation studies are common in the literature, and are often associated with measures of satisfaction. In an early research, Saleh and Ryan (1993) investigated the motivations of event-goers in Canada. According to their research, the event program is one of the critical factors inducing tourists to attend. Specifically, quality of program is in the first priority, followed by the arrangement of programme and accessibility (both in distance and information aspects). There are three interrelated reasons to investigate motives: it helps design a better event experience, it is well linked to satisfaction, and it is an important factor for understanding the attendees' decision-making process (Crompton & McKay, 1997). Using "escape-seeking dichotomy and push-pull factors conceptual frameworks", six motives of attending a festival event in the US are identified: cultural exploration, novelty, relaxation, group socialization, external interaction and togetherness (Crompton & McKay, 1997, p. 425).

Both the findings of the two research projects above indicate that most motivations for people to attend a festival event are on the "approaching" or "seeking" side. This is contrary to the arguments of Iso-Ahola (1982, p. 258) "… that tourism, because of its unique characteristics, represents more of an escape-oriented than approach-oriented activity for most people under most conditions." This implies that motivations may differ between tourists and event attendees. Further explorations show attendees' motivations vary from different types of events. For example, festival visitors' motivations (Crompton & McKay, 1997; Saleh & Ryan, 1993) are mainly focusing on the aspects of relaxation, socialization, and personal development, whilst business event attendees prioritize the business purpose. As shown in Table 3.4, the top ranked motivations for people to attend an exhibition are all business-related reasons.

Table 3.4 Research of factors affecting attendees' exhibition attendance

Authors	Ranked 1	Ranked 2	Ranked 3	Ranked 4	Ranked 5
(Han & Verma, 2014) (US)	Quality of Edu program	Topics of talks	Quality of speakers	Registration cost	Transportation & lodging cost
(Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012) (Thailand)	Discounts and special promotions	Desirable travel destinations	Assessment of products Pre-purchase	Info collection future purchase	Purchase product or services
(Whitfield & Webber, 2011) (UK)	Gaining product info	Meeting specialists	Gaining tech advice	Finding new products	No. of exhibitors
(Kozak & Kayar, 2008) (Turkey)	Info actual products	Info on new products	Info on the market	Info specific products	Make job connections
(Berne & García-Uceda, 2008) (Spain)	Interact with experts	Examine products	Seek distributors	Get a distribution	Evaluate customers
(Breiter & Milman, 2006) (US)	Networking	Info on new products	Quality of exhibitors	Destination image	Reputation of exhibition
(Smith, Hama, & Smith, 2003) (Japan)	Info on new products	Info on the market	Info actual products	Info for buying	Info on new suppliers
(Smith, Gopalakrishna, & Smith, 2004) (US)	Info on the market	Info on new products	Info actual products	Info for buying	Info on new suppliers
(Munuera & Ruiz, 1999) (Spain)	Info on new products	Info on new suppliers	Info on the market	Info on competitors	Info on market prices
(Gramann, 1994) (UK)	Info on new products	Technical info	Info on legislation	Try new products	Info on new companies

Source: the reviewed articles in the table.

For her part, Mair (2010) summarized that the main motivations to attend a conference include: "conference location", "networking opportunities", "cost of attending", "social aspects", "conference and association activities", "personal and professional development", "intervening opportunities", "travelability" and "being directed by employer to attend" (p.179). These factors were employed for designing the survey instrument; and based on the four motivational factors (i.e., travelability, cost and location, employment, and networking and professional development) formed by factor analysis, the research clustered the conference attendees into five categories: "indifferent", "price sensitive delegates", "time and convenience", "employer-driven networkers", and "independent networkers" (Mair, 2010, p. 191). She further explained that each of those groups "potentially has individual needs and wants, and it is important for practitioners to take these needs and wants into account when designing and marketing conferences Mair (2010, p. 190) ."

More research about conference attendees' motivations were displayed in Table 3.5, which mainly contain the following factors: destination/location, networking/social activities, time/financial cost, professional/personal development, and safety and health.

However, event attendees, especially for those attending exhibitions and conferences, are not only interested in the business parts, but also the recreational elements of events. Tretyakevich and Maggi (2012) found that "experience different culture", "opportunity to visit convention destination", "destination image" are the pulling factors; "get away from work routine", "proximity to the city centre" and "availability of free time" are the push factors; and another motivator is the leisure activities provided by organizers, such as excursions, pre- or post- event activities. These identified factors are also crucial for the satisfaction of attendees, and therefore deserves the planners' attentions.

Besides motivations, to understand what inhibit and facilitate attendees when they make their decisions, Ngamsom, Beck, and Lalopa (2001) studied the motivations, inhibitors, and facilitators that affect delegates attendance of international conferences. Their findings conclude that "sightseeing", "self-enhancement", and "business and association activities" are the underlying reasons of their attendance; "conference and personal constraints" and "distance, time, and money" are the inhibiting factors; and "affordability and availability of time", "family/spouse", and "Distance and ease of access" are the major conference facilitators (p.45). Noting the decreasing of financial support for academic conferences attendance, Mair et al. (2018) investigated the motivations and barriers of attendees who attended the CAUTHE (Council of Australasian University Tourism and Hospitality Education) Conference. Similar to the research findings of

Ngamsom et al. (2001), this study discovered that cost, including registration, accommodation and transport expenses, is the highest-rated barrier for conference attendance; by contrast, attendees rated "make professional contacts", "learn about new research developments in their field" and "network with upcoming professionals" with highest scores; besides, social motives like "the opportunity to meet old friends" and "spend time with like-minded people" are considered important (Mair et al., 2018, p. 61).

Table 3.5 Representative research of factors affecting conference attendance

References	Destination /Location	Networking/ Social activities	Cost	Pro/personal development	Safety & health
Var et al. (1985)	Accessibility Attractiveness Emissiveness	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Witt, Sykes, and Dartus (1995)	N/A	N/A	Income Travel cost Conference fee	N/A	N/A
Oppermann and Chon (1997)	Destination image; Climate Accessibility	Peer recognition Prof contacts Per. interactions	Funding Transportation Accommodation	Professional Advancement Desire to learn	Health
Jago and Deery (2005)	Locations and Venues	Networking and Social Events Internet access	Airlines, Accommodation and Food	Internet access	N/A
Zhang et al. (2007)	Attractiveness (Language, nightlife) Accessibility (Visa apply)	Peer recognition Prof contacts Peer interactions	Funding Time Cost (Family/Friend) Monetary Cost (Exhange rate)	Professional Advancement Desire to learn	Health
Lee and Back (2007)	Accessibility Good food Tourist attractions Hotel facilities Desirable weather	N/A	N/A	Safety and health	Safety Security
Yoo and Chon (2008)	Destination stimuli	Professional and social networking	Travelability	Educational opportunities	N/A
Mair and Thompson (2009)	Location	Networking opportunities	Cost Time and convenience	Personal/prof. development	Health and wellbeing
Yoo and Zhao (2010)	Destination	Networking	Travelability	Education	N/A
Yoo and Chon (2010)	N/A	Networking	Travelability		Safety and health
(Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2012)	Extra convention opportunity	Social networking	access quality, time, and convenience	Professional education	N/A
(Lee & Min, 2013a)	Site environment	Networking	N/A	Education	Local safety
(Jung & Tanford, 2017)	Destination image	Networking	Accessibility	Education	Safety and health

Source: Reviewed articles in above table.

As Table 3.4 and Table 3.5 demonstrated, event consumers are motivated with different factors to attend different types of events. In other words, people who attend a conference and those who visit an exhibition have different prioritised motivations. This is strongly supported by Nicholson and Pearce (2001), who found motivations differ from event to event. The list of motivations include essential factors (safety, security), business factors (product, marketing, business networking etc.) and personal factors (learning, extra event activities, escape etc.) that again, employing the concept of Third Place, will largely meet non-business motives, and may therefore create positive emotions and generate satisfied business event attendees.

The consumers' attitude to the designed environment is determined by their "emotional needs and reactions at a given time" (Clarke & Schmidt, 1995, p. 150). Nelson (2009) noted that emotions could be manipulated by employing multi-sensory means in an overarching event theme, which "bring past feelings to the surface with clarity" (p.127). In their investigation of the relationships among service environment, consumers' emotional responses, and the behavioural intentions, Kim and Moon (2009) argued that both "perceived service quality and pleasure-feeling emotion" could represent the possible outcomes of their "exposure to stimuli in the environment" (p.147). Yet, perceived service quality is a cognitive evaluation; and emotions (pleasure-feeling) indicate affective perceptions of stimuli in the environment. Kim & Moon (2009) also pointed out that emotions could mediate the relationship between the service environments and repurchase intention. Therefore, emotions reflect the evaluation of the service environment – the integral part of a provided service product, thus have impacts on the service experience. In line with this, as LaTour and Carbone (2014) confirmed, the "understanding of customers' deepest emotional needs and motivations" lays a foundation for consumer experience management.

Similar to emotion, satisfaction also can be considered as attitude. Churchill and Surprenant (1982) believe that satisfaction is akin to attitude and can be measured as "the sum of the satisfactions with the various attributes of the product or service" (p.493). Clarke (2001, p. 120) also suggests treating "satisfaction as an attitude within the service domain". In attitude studies, Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) view attitude as a tripartite concept, which encompasses cognitive, affective, and behavioural/conative aspects. This view involves into an influential multicomponent model, which evaluates a product or service in the above three perspectives (affective, behavioural, and cognitive), hence the name of ABC model. The cognitive parts of attitude are of beliefs, ideas, and attributes that people perceive an object or a product/service; the affective elements are of feeling or emotions that people have about the objects, products or services; while the behavioural/conative components indicate that how attitudes influence people's actions or behaviours.

Therefore, it is safe to say that satisfaction contains these three components of attitude, the cognitive, affective and conative attitudinal satisfaction. More importantly, this has been adopted and practised in former studies (Agapito, Oom do Valle, & da Costa Mendes, 2013; Clarke, 2001; Pike & Ryan, 2004), which will be employed to investigate the business event attendees' multi-attitudinal satisfaction in this research.

Attention is another factor to be considered when managing event service experience. As Campos, Mendes, do Valle, and Scott (2016) explained, it is a complex process that includes cognitive activities (e.g., info processing), physical response (e.g., eye contact and movement) and neural activities (neuron activation). In this process, people can only concentrate "information processing on a specific set of sensory stimuli at a moment in time" (Ocasio, 2011, p. 1287) due to the "limited information processing capacity" and "information overload", especially when faced with competing and distracting stimuli in the environment. It is noted that attention not only affects "learning and educational performance", "professional realization", "biographical memory", but also has impacts on "social behaviour, academic achievement, and business management" (Campos et al., 2016, p. 1313). They further highlighted the importance of attention in the process of experience co-creation and suggested to integrate attention stimuli when designing memorable event experiences.

Behavioural factors

Behavioural factors have also proved to have impacts on business event experiences, for example engagement (Liu et al., 2017; van Riper et al., 2013), interaction (Poulsson & Kale, 2004; Wei et al., 2017) and on-site behaviour (Choe, Lee, & Kim, 2014; Wei, Miao, Cai, & Adler, 2017).

Poulsson and Kale (2004) stated that experiences arise from the activities and interactions in the process of service consumption. It is reinforced by Dong and Siu (2013) that the interactions between consumers and the various elements of service environment underlie the evaluation of a consuming experience. For business events, they "feature a high level of interpersonal interactions among attendees" who gather together for similar purposes; and the business event experience is determined by "the quality and frequencies of interactions among attendees, including both managerially planned and personally initiated interactions" (Wei et al., 2017, p. 2085). In considering the characteristics of event experience (e.g., co-creation, multiple-dimensional involvement), Liu et al. (2017) suggested that event organizers should "seek to create events that encourage customer interaction and involvement"(p.477). That is exactly what the advocates of Third Place theory seek to offers, arguing that the shared nature of interactivity between business events and Third Places increase levels of engagement and communication.

Involvement or engagement serves as a mediator between a consumer's cognition and his/her event behaviour (Carlson, Rahman, Rosenberger, & Holzmüller, 2016). In other words, satisfactory experience is hard to achieve from the consumption of event service without an active involvement (Huang & Hsu, 2009). Agreeing with this, van Riper et al. (2013) pointed out that "high quality conference experience", that is the high level of satisfaction, is the consequence of favourable social systems that are "created and fostered through attendees' voluntary engagement with other individuals" (p.111). Event attendees are supposed to engage in two perspectives for the co-creation of the expected experience: 1) actively participate the event and programs, and 2) effectively interact with others, including attendees, organizers, volunteers etc. (Campos et al., 2016).

In the same context, how the individual attendee responds to others is crucial for the success and efficiency of event engagement and interaction. Getz (2008) concluded that intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural factors have potential impacts on the attendees' interaction experiences; among them, interpersonal factors potentially harm the interaction because they refuse to or lack interests in communication. Wei et al. (2017, p. 2092) further pointed out that "the other's facial and verbal expressions served as a signal for a genuine interest in an interaction, which could influence the informants' engagement tendency". By hindering or impeding the interaction, the performance of "others" will affect the perception of the event experience. Another point worthy of attention is the misbehaviour of other attendees (Ohmann, Jones, & Wilkes, 2006), which is termed as "unruly behaviour (Getz, 2005, p. 107), and "antisocial behaviour" (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001, p. 146) etc. As Wann et al. (2001) argued this might be subject to cultural differences, however those behaviours are possibly considered as offensive, aggressive behaviours. Though not common to witness in business events, the quality of attendees, as buyers or exhibitors (Chen & Mo, 2012) are proved to be important factors to influence their attendance experiences.

3.2.3.4 Conclusion: factors impacting experience

In this section, three types of factors, namely destination/venue related factors, event-related factors and attendee-related factors that have impacts on the (business) event experience have been discussed. It can be concluded that these factors cover various dimensions of event experience (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Tung & Ritchie, 2011) and should be useful and applicable for designing the event experience, as well as evaluating the event service/experience. Therefore, this review: 1) contributed substantially to the items of the survey instrument used for measuring event experience and 2) seemingly have the potential to play an important role in designing and forming memorable event experiences. As such, Third Place characteristics should be carefully considered and selected by event designers in accordance with the event objectives.

3.3 The evaluation of business event experience

Experiences are becoming increasingly important for any business in the experience economy, especially for the service-oriented sectors, e.g., tourism and events (Berridge, 2012; Getz, 2012; Pine & Gilmore, 1999), in which experiences and meanings form the essence of event products (Ziakas & Boukas, 2014) and serve as the overall outcome after the event service consumption (Lewis & Chambers, 2000). Consequently, it has been widely accepted that only through the creation of memorable event experiences, can the satisfaction and multi-dimensional value of business events be achieved (specifc benefits and values: see section 3.2.2).

The designed business event intends to fulfil the functions of networking, education/learning, professional and personal development, escaping and relaxation, and the sense of community. Therefore, the business events ultimately are "creating a meaningful experience and temporary community" by providing those attendees and participants (Sperstad & Cecil, 2011, p. 315) a place for social interaction, usually through an innovative approach.

As Getz et al. (2001) explained, as an experiential product, an event is produced and consumed at the same time, heterogeneous, and cannot be stored. To form a positive event experience, therefore, is a complex process of interactions between event consumers and the "program, setting, management systems, staff/volunteers, and other visitors" (Getz et al., 2001, p. 380), making the evaluation of event experience a difficult job. However, answering the three questions of what should be evaluated, when is proper to conduct the evaluation, and which methods/models to employ will facilitate the assessment or examination of the business event experience.

3.3.1 What should be evaluated?

The previously discussed definitions indicate that event experience is the orveall outcome after the event service consumption (Lewis & Chambers, 2000), as well as the indivituals' multi-sensory responses (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) to the interactions with different service encounters at the different stages of the consumption (Clark & Wilson, 2011). The overall outcome or results of the event experience consumption is based on the judgement or evaluation of the consuming process, which is supposed to encompass the stages of pre-event, during-event and post-event. This indicates the interactions between attendees and all the possible service encounters (staff, volunteer, peers, environment etc.) during the consumption process which should be measured or assessed for the understanding of event experience (Getz et al., 2001). This is similar to the explanation of SERVQUAL, a popular service quality measurement framework (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988) that has been widely adopted across industries (Oh, 2001). According to Tung and Ritchie (2011), affect, expectations, consequentiality and recollection consist of the event experience. Expectation refers to whether the consumer's expectations have been fulfilled after consuming the event products (Tung & Ritchie, 2011), which also implies service quality is one of the components of event experience that should be evaluated.

When consumers have positive memorable event experience, they are more likely to be satisfied with their consumption (Love & Crompton, 1996). Churchill and Surprenant (1982) also confirmed that satisfaction is akin to attitude and can be measured as the sum of satisfactory perceptions of the service attributes. Therefore, satisfaction is another part which needs to be investigated for measuring the business event experience, and it has been widely examined in previous event experience studies (Bauer et al., 2008; Kim & Malek, 2017; Westwood, Schofield, & Berridge, 2018; Yoon et al., 2010).

It is also discovered that the perceived service quality is significantly influenced by consumers' expectations or motivations (Devesa, Laguna, & Palacios, 2010; van Riper et al., 2013). Meanwhile, motivations have been proved to effect consumers' attitudes to the event service, i.e., their satisfactions (Kruger & Saayman, 2018; Meng, Tepanon, & Uysal, 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Thus, it is necessary to investigate what are the motivations for attendees to attend a specific business event, since people are motivated with different reasons for attending different events, and prioritise their motivations differently considering personal factors and event-maturity factors (Jin & Weber, 2013). Additionally, as Jin and Weber (2013) pointed out, as event management matured, so competition between destinations intensified and consequently reinforced the homogeneity of fundamental supply factors. Therefore, previously important factors (e.g., destination attractions) might become less important and other emergent factors are worthy of more attention. This represents a need for further investigation into the potential motivational factors that influence perceptions of event experience.

In conclusion, service quality and satisfaction are the major components to measure, yet motivation as a pre-determinant is also investigated when evaluating business event experience. In addition, factors like gender, career, education, engagement and cultural difference are usually considered due to their potential impacts on consumers' experiences (Jones, Fanson, Lanfear, Symonds, & Higgie, 2014; Tanford et al., 2012; Weber, Sparks, & Hsu Cathy, 2017). For the current study, the service quality and business event experience will also be investigated from the Third Place perspective.

3.3.2 When is it appropriate to evaluate?

The design/conducting of event experience research is a process that may require the researcher to get involved with an event from the pre-event stage to the post-event stage. However, most of the studies collected their data at the post-event stage (Andersson & Armbrecht, 2014; Choe et al., 2014; Kim & Jang, 2016; Liu et al., 2017), since the attendance experience will not emerge until the consumption is started or completed, as well as the restrictions of time and resources to conduct the specific research.

However, Berridge (2012) employed experience sampling survey that requests the respondents to record their experience throughout the event, which is supposed to provide a more complete experience, yet this entirely depends on how the records are documented and their accuracy. This method is also used by Pettersson and Getz (2009) to explore the spatial and temporal nature of event experiences. Similarly, Carlsen (2011) and Getz et al. (2001) also use service mapping to investigate event experiences, which also requires multi-stage data collection through interviews, logbooks or diaries of respondents, participant/direct observation.

Another example is research conducted by Kim and Jang (2016), in which both on-site survey and experiments have employed to collect the required data. The on-site survey acts as a filter to identify the needed respondents and the experiments were conducted after the event.

Therefore, the evaluation data can be collected at different stages of an event, while the specific choice is subjective to the purpose of the research, the features of the event, and the resources in hand.

3.3.3 Methods for evaluating event experiences

For the investigation of event service quality, methods like service mapping (Getz et al., 2001), festival performance (FESTPERF) (Tkaczynski, 2014; Tkaczynski & Stokes, 2010), Importance-Performance Analysis (Whitfield & Webber, 2011) have been applied.

Service mapping. Using service mapping, Getz et al. (2001) and Carlsen (2011) respectively surveyed a surfing event and a wine cellar service in Australia. Service mapping, according to Bitner (1993, p. 362), "visually displays the service by simultaneously depicting the process of service delivery, the roles of customers and employees, and the visible elements of the service". Yet, service also includes the intangible components, and their assessment often relies on the judgement of the tangible elements when measuring the actual service quality (Carlsen, 2011). Service mapping also enables the researcher to analyse the service processes that provides actionable information for organizers. Therefore, the method "not only identifies elements of the process but also measures the relationship between processes and customer satisfaction" (Carlsen, 2011).

Service mapping can be conducted by visitor interviews, customer-completed log books or diaries, participant observation or direct observation (Carlsen, 2011; Getz et al., 2001), which require many observers to undertake the observation simultaneously and come to a consensus as to the key determinants of a phenomenon. Both of these studies involved many trained students as participant observers. Carlsen (2011, p. 276) concluded that the main advantages of service mapping are:

Closely simulating the actual customer experience.

Multiple observers can be used to ensure that variety of service experiences are covered.

Observers can be trained in service quality and how to evaluate its important dimensions and indicators.

Participant observers can search out various indicators of service quality that other visitors may overlook.

However, Getz et al. (2001) pointed out the existing limitations of this method. First, the trained participant observers are assisting and becoming involved in the research, they might be overcritical; and they are "not experiencing the event in exactly the same ways that customers do" (p.383). Second, there might be a difference between the trained observers and actual consumers in evaluating the event indicators. Third, the complexity of event service (especially a large-scale event) requires a large number of observers and the determination of the quantity of observers also depends on their knowledge about the event studied.

SERVQUAL is an instrument developed for measuring service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988), which compares the differences between the consumers' expectations and their perceptions of service actually received. However, the model is not sufficient for the measurement of service quality across different sectors and contexts; and customization is needed for its wording and specific items according to specific service context (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Therefore, Cronin and Taylor (1992) developed a performance-based instrument – SERVPERF, which is conceded to be efficient (it reduces the number of scale items from 44 to 22) and sufficient for measuring service quality. SERVPERF performs better on convergent and discriminant validity, explaining variations in overall service quality, and data collection; but SERVQUAL has a better diagnostic ability.

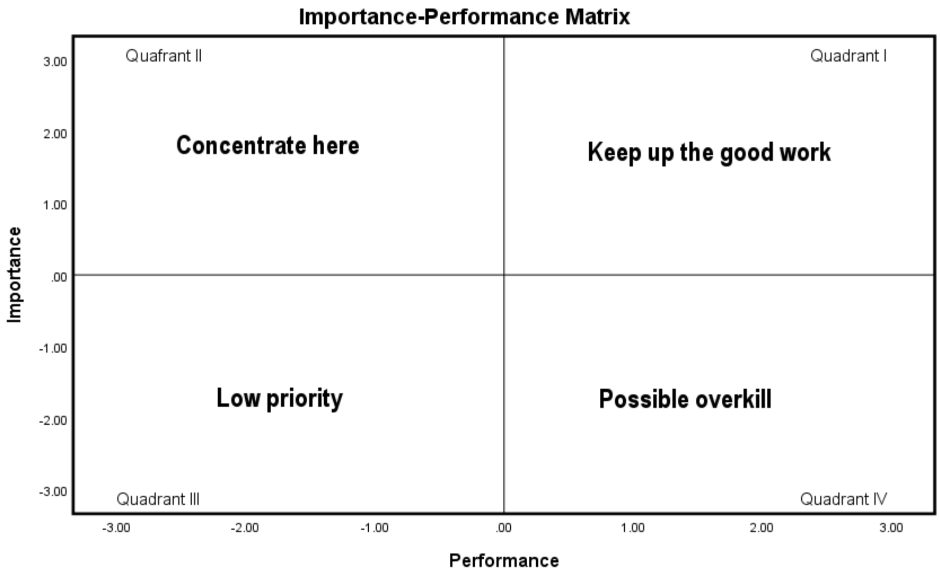
To investigate event service quality, Tkaczynski and Stokes (2005) modified the items of the SERVPERF scale to evaluate two festivals' service quality, which resulted in the formation of FESTPERF. The salient factors of this framework are "Professionalism of festival organisers/personnel", "the Core Service" and "the festival's Environment" that differ from the factors of the previous two scales (Tkaczynski & Stokes, 2005, p 248). Previous studies indicate that specific items are required for measuring a specific type of service. Instead of adopting previously developed scales, Jung (2005) selected 25 exhibition-specific items from previous studies to measure the six dimensions of business event service quality. Among the six generated dimensions, content is the most important factor, yet attendees care most about the "number of participating exhibitors; quality of products or service exhibited; and conferences, seminars and events organized at the exhibition" (p.85). It was also verified that service quality had positive impacts on satisfaction and behaviour. Based on Jung's (2005) research, Wu, Cheng, and Ai (2016) also agree that items/attributes used should be specific to the particular context. They designed a "multidimensional and hierarchical model" that allows attendees to perceive the event service quality through their interactions with sub-dimensions and dimensions (p.569). The relationship among the perceived exhibition service quality, value, emotions and satisfaction were further explored in their research.

Importance-Performance Analysis. Another widely-employed and popular model is Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA), which was introduced by Martilla and James (1977) in the 1970s. It has been popular to measure service/experience quality and applied in different areas, such as retailing (Prajogo Daniel & McDermott, 2011), hotel management (Chu & Choi, 2000), tourism (Kline, Bulla, Rubright, Green, & Harris, 2016; Pike & Ryan, 2004), festivals (Smith and Costello, 2009) and destination competitiveness (Lee, Choi, & Breiter, 2013).

Lai and Hitchcock (2015) stated that IPA is a "simple but effective" technique that analyses attributes on two dimensions: performance and importance. Combining the two dimensions into a matrix facilitates data interpretation and offers guidelines for companies or service providers to identify the proper strategic options to increase competitiveness (Martilla & James, 1977). For business event attendees, the importance of selected attributes for their experience and attributes' performance actually perceived could be measured and tested to justify if they are satisfied with the service or have a memorable event experience.

The original IPA approach includes three steps: (1) a set of attributes describing a product or service is selected or developed; (2) respondents are asked to rate each attribute's importance and performance; and (3), the means of importance and performance of each attribute are calculated and mapped on a two-dimensional map (Lai & Hitchcock, 2015, pp. 242-243). Finally, different strategic actions are proposed for each of the four quadrants in the map.

Figure 3.3 IPA matrix



Source: Martilla and James (1977, p. 78)

Sever (2015, p. 44) explained that the matrix categorizes the attributes into four quadrants or plots to set the strategic priorities in "allocating limited resources" or improving performance. Typically, these four quadrants are indicated as 'keep up the good work' (Quadrant 1), 'possible overkill' (Quadrant 2), 'low priority' (Quadrant 3) and 'concentrate here' (Quadrant 4) (see Figure. 2.7) according to how important (low-high) those attributes are to the attendees and how well they performed in the attendees' perceptions.

Though issues exist in the area of "definition of attributes importance", "criteria of attribute importance" (Ryan & Huyton, 2002), "relation between importance and performance" and "misclassification of attributes", suggestions to avoid these pitfalls have been provided by Oh (2001, pp. 624-626) who argued that the IPA technique is still an effective and well-accepted instrument to measure "how well the company meets customers important concerns on selected attributes and, at the same time, offers guidelines for the company's future resource allocation decisions" Oh (2001, p. 618).

Experiential sampling refers to the process of employing a small number of representatives/observers as a sample to reflect the participated event experiences through "direct, systematic observation, participant observation, and visitor survey" (Pettersson & Getz, 2009, p. 315). The observers are trained for this task and they are requested to report their actions, feelings and interpretations in log books during and after the event. In their research, a team of 25 observers were employed to observe the event attendees "spatially and temporally while enjoying various elements of the host village and four event arenas"; meanwhile, they were also requested to take photographs and make notes which allowed them to have "a more focused evaluation of positive and negative experiences" (Pettersson & Getz, 2009, p. 308). In trying to have an "authentic" experience, and to obtain a more completed record, participative observers attended most of the 16 event days.

This method was also implemented by Berridge (2012) to investigate a small local private event in the UK. Instead of training research assistants, the author invited five attendees as participative observers to conduct the experience sampling survey. They were asked to record their experiences at the event at five stages: "pre-event, 10 minutes after arrival, first entertainment segment, second entertainment segment, and final reflection" (Berridge, 2012, p. 12). Observers were required to handwrite their responses and together with other collected data, the author could analyse and understand the event experience.

However, experiential sampling is costly in both aspects of personnel and financial cost. As indicated previously, 25 observers were used in Pettersson and Getz's research. Because the observers were reflecting and recoding the experience, the process of the data collection is prolonged and complicated, which requires commitment of both the researchers and observers. It is also arguable that the selection of the sample (whom, how many to select), although representative, still require training, and especially if not themselves researchers, variance of interpretation due to inexperience or flawed training may arise (e.g., Berridge, 2012). Noting the shortages of this qualitative method, event experience scales and specific experience evaluation models are more popular in studying attendees' satisfaction and experience.

Event experience scale. As discussed previously, people are motivated by many different factors to attend an event (Mair & Thompson, 2009; Wann, Schrader, & Wilson, 1999) and their experiences and subsequent satisfaction are also being influenced by various attributes (Tanford et al., 2012). Due to the complexity and variability of different event experiences, experience measurement scales have been developed and employed to evaluate the attendees' experience. For example, Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick (2012) developed a scale to measure memorable tourism experience. Bouchet, Bodet, Bernache-Assollant, and Kada (2011) created a sports event evaluation scale (SEES) and Geus et al. (2015) proposed an event experience scale (EES). To measure the specific events, a specific scale is often required because different types of events have their own aims and characteristics. The general event experience scale developed by Geus et al. (2015) contributes to various events experience assessment, but the “one size” scale does not necessarily fit all events. Moreover, EES cannot be completely treated as a general event experience scale, because the scale arose cultural events.

Therefore, the existing scales are usually modified and adapted for measuring a specific event experience. For example Bauer et al. (2008) employed a modified scale to measure the attendees experience at a Hong Kong tradeshow. However, some satisfaction factors (accessibility, safety, cleanliness, accommodation etc.) in their research can be considered as attributes/items that are more generally appropriate for measuring event service quality. On the whole, given the specificity of most events, researchers do tend to create scales pertinent to a given event or programme.

Yet, though different scales differ in themes and items, they share a similar development process recommended by Churchill (1979), i.e., specifying the domain of construct and generation of items, item selection, and scale purification. Usually interview and literature review will be used to generate a pool of items, then a focus group or expert consultation is employed to select the items, and purification is usually conducted by quantitative methods. In the process, reliability and validity of scales will also be tested.

Given this scenario, employing a specific-designed instrument to examine the event attendees’ experience or their satisfaction is common. The study of attendees’ experience of a tradeshow in Hong Kong (Bauer et al., 2008) and sports event spectators’ experience/value in Brazil (Horbel, Popp, Woratschek, & Wilson, 2016) are such examples. In addition, employing a newly-developed instrument to measure the attendance experience of the studied event was adopted by Choe et al. (2014) when investigating how the level of mindfulness affects individual visitors’ perception of their experience. Young (2013) also followed this line to examine the relationship between the salient factors and event experiences; while Wei et al. (2017) focused on how interaction between consumers would affect event experience. Therefore, the specific event experience evaluation model or scale is assumed to be more precise and appropriate for the investigation of a special selected event.

3.3.4 The justification of the research topic

The literature review indicates that business event experience is still under-researched (Berridge, 2012; Mair et al., 2018; Stricklin & Ellis, 2018; van Riper et al., 2013). The representative studies of business event (e.g., exhibition, conference) experience are displayed in Tables 3.6 and 3.7.

These studies indicate that: (1) most are concentrated on traditional research countries/regions (the UK, USA, Australia, South Korea, Europe and Hong Kong, Macau in China); (2) the business event is still an under-researched area, and the research of business event experience is even less undertaken by the researchers; (3) traditional events, like festivals, sports events, exhibitions, and conferences have been widely investigated, while innovative business events are not given enough attention; (4) both qualitative and quantitative methods are adopted in previous research to explore event experience; however, the adoption of a mixed methods approach is supposed to be more appropriate; (5) psychological theories were often applied to study the event experience (satisfaction, peak experience etc.), while Third Place theory has not been used to investigate business event. Hence, this concept is introduced in this study to assess whether it permits a better understanding of the nature of the business event and the interaction between attendees and the event.

Many researchers have advocated a need to further explore and contribute to the understanding and manipulating of business event experience (Hansen, 2004; Jung & Tanford, 2017; Lee & Kim, 2008; Liu et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2016), especially in China. Event studies is not yet a well-recognized area in China. Till now, there is no one Chinese academic journal focusing on event studies. It is also noted that most studies related to event phenomenon have limited their focuses on destination competitiveness/selection (Jin et al., 2012, 2013; Li, 2004; Zhai, 2009), event infrastructure and industry comparison (Qiao & Hu, 2010; Wang, 2004), perceived event impacts (Li & Song, 2013; Luo, 2010; Luo, Chen, & Huang, 2012; Zong & Dai, 2005), and event destination image (Lu, Zhang, & Tang, 2009; Luo & Tong, 2014; Luo & Yang, 2010). Exhibitors' behaviours (motivation, retention etc.) also have been explored (Lu, 2017; Luo & Bao, 2007; Luo & Lu, 2011; Qi, Smith, Yeoman, & Goh, 2018). The dominant research themes also reflect the preference of domestic practitioners, who value the competition between local and/or international competitors, as well as the trend of developing policy for the event industry.

Table 3.6 Representative studies of exhibition (event) experience

Author (Study area)	Theme	Research Methods	Key Findings	Journal
Seringhaus and Philip (1998) Canada	Performance of exhibition stands	Mail questionnaire; Discriminant analysis; T-test	A comparative analysis of exhibiting companies with/out government support. Gov. & independent exhibitors have different characteristics & strategy; do not differ in staff training; the former make less efforts to attract visitors; and the performance is lower than that of independents.	IMR
Munuera and Ruiz (1999) Spain	Trade Fairs as Services	Empirical study; MANOVA	Trade fairs as services offered by organizers, they share the characteristics with service. Objectives of visitors vary according to their business features (p.19), which allow the organizers to improve global service supply.	JBR
Lee and Kim (2008) S. Korea	Trade show performance	Questionnaire; Multiple regression	Variables in each stage (pre, at and post) have a significant and differential impact on multiple dimensions of trade show performance.	IMM
Hansen (2004) France	Trade shows performance	Scale development; SEM	Developed a 16-item scale for measuring the trade show performance and validated the scale.	JBR
Zhang, Qu, and Ma (2010) China	Relationship of Attendees' Satisfaction & Expenditure	Questionnaire; IPA analysis; Paired-sample t-test; Multiple regression	Significant differences exist between attendees' perceived importance and performance of the two exhibitions. "Hotel/Food/Attractions" & "Facilities" were significant predictors for their satisfaction and overall expenditure.	JCET
Whitfield and Webber (2011) The UK	Repeat visitation	Internet-based questionnaire; IPA, regression analysis	IPA indicates exhibitors and organizers should optimize the resource and offerings to enhance attendance rates. Repeat visitation can be reached by increasing the number of exhibitors, networking opportunities and opportunities for obtaining technical advice.	IJHM
Chen and Mo (2012) China Taiwan	Service quality	Questionnaires; Frequency distribution; Path analysis	Six dimensions of service quality were identified: booth management, content, registration, access, booth layout and function, and exhibition and booth attractiveness. The service quality has a positive impact on attendees' overall satisfaction.	TMP
Lee et al. (2015) Hong Kong	Service quality	Empirical study; questionnaire CFA; SEM	Three dimensions of exhibition service quality (booth design and layout, exhibition logistics, venue services) have significant impacts on satisfaction (not show management).	JHMM
Choe et al. (2014) Korea	Mindfulness and experience	On-site survey	Mindfulness contributes to positive customer experience, which in turn increases satisfaction and loyalty; Difference levels of mindfulness discriminate the attendees' experience.	JTMM

Wu et al. (2016) Macau, China	Servcie quality, satisfaction	Convenience sampling, Questionnaire EFA, CFA, SEM	Exhibition service quality, perceived value, and emotions positively affect satisfaction. The quality of access, physical environment, interaction and outcome are the most important dimensions of service quality.	EM
Yi, Fu, Jin, and Okumus (2018) China	Event attachment	Empirical study; Questionnaires; EFA, CFA, SEM analysis	Pull motivation affects exhibition dependence, which in turn affects exhibition identity. While both exhibition dependence and identity had an impact on attendees' loyalty, identity had a greater impact on loyalty.	TM
Kim, Bonn, Lee and Hahn (2018) Japan ROK China	Personality and attachment	self-reported survey; PLS- SEM analysis	Relationships between expo attachment & satisfaction, attachment & revisit, satisfaction & revisit intention were significant. Anxiety attachment moderate relationships between visitor personality traits and expo attachment.	APJTR
Westwood, Schofield and Berridge (2018). The UK	Motivation, experience and behavioural intention	Questionnaire Survey; t-tests and ANOVA, OLS linear regression	Motivations (Socialisation & relaxation; New knowledge & experiences; Prestige & tradition) and Experience factors: (Machinery & livestock; Exhibitors & amenities; Equestrian & main ring events) significantly affect attendees' behavioural intentions attending agri-shows.	IJEFM
Tanner and Künzi (2018) Swiss	Event performance	Event performance index	Investigated the performance of an event from the organizer/destination's view. Six dimensions are suggested for evaluation the performance.	IJEFM
Tkaczynski and Stokes (2010) Australia	Festperf scale development Service Quality	Self-administered questionnaire; EFA, Multiple regression	Created FESTPERF, a three-factor scale. Two of these factors, Professionalism and Environment, predicted visitor satisfaction that may, in turn, lead to repurchase.	EM
Zhang and Xu (2019) Tianjin, China	Exhibition value co-creation (exhibitors and visitors)	Questionnaire, SEM	Transaction and information motivation substantively influence the process of value co-creation that influences the experience value and customer loyalty.	Tourism Tribune

JBR: Journal of Business Research; IMR: International Marketing Review; IMM: Industrial Marketing Management; JCET: Journal of Convention & Event Tourism; IJHM: International Journal of Hospitality Management; TMP: Tourism Management Perspectives; JHMM: Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management; JTMM: Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing; TM: Tourism Management; IJEFM: International Journal of Event and Festival Management; EM: Event Management; APJTR: Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research.

Table 3.7 Representative studies of conference experience

Author (Study area)	Theme	Research Methods	Key Findings	Journal
Wu and Weber (2005) Hong Kong, China	Convention Centre Facilities, Attributes and Services	Interview, Questionnaire IPA analysis	Availability of ventilation, state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment, comfort seating, adequacy of restrooms and helpful staff were perceived as most important attributes by delegates. IPA identified the strengths and weaknesses of a venue in Hong Kong.	APJTR
(Kale et al., 2010) The USA	Conference Experience	Qualitative; Case study; context analysis	Eight items constitute unforgettable experience: planning, resourcing, targeting, anticipating, enabling, empathizing, framing, and engaging.	IJEFM
Berridge (2012) The UK	Event experience design and satisfaction	Mixed Method; Case study approach; SEM analysis	Disjunction exists between organizer's understanding of experience and those of the guests. Organizer show limited awareness of advanced underpinning ideas of experience design, and guests demonstrate a low level of experiential awareness and moderate levels of satisfaction.	JPRA
Tanford, Montgomery and Nelson (2012) Las Vegas-USA	Factors influence attendees' satisfaction	Quantitative on-site survey; Factor analysis; Gap analysis; Regression analysis	Five factors influence attendance/satisfaction: program, networking, external activities, location, and cost; Emotional commitment is the strongest predictor of loyalty, while program satisfaction is a key determinant of intentions to return or switch to a different one.	JCET
Young (2013) The USA	Academic event attendees' experience	Quantitative; PLS-SEM analysis	Significant relations among conference specific dimensions and experience quality dimensions; destination specific dimensions and excitement; Utilitarian value, hedonic value, social value had significant effects on satisfaction and BI	Thesis
van Riper et al. (2013) Colorado- USA	Networking impacts experiences	Mixed methods; Focus group; SEM	Three dimensions of social networking (interpersonal connections, social cohesion, and secondary associations) positively contribute to the performance of conference attributes	ALR
Hodder, McLeod and Sackey (2013)	Communication and attendees' experience	Mixed methods	A new communication tool can change conference experience, research methods, development activities, field-specific discourse. Current tools fail because of their focus on tasks, rather than the complexity of conferences.	ACM Conf.
Lee and Min, (2013) Korea	Convention quality attributes (attendees)	Quantitative; Regression; IRPA; IAA analysis Three-factor theory	Examine the asymmetric effects of convention attribute performance on attendee satisfaction; Three-factor theory suggests priority is given to frustrators, dissatisfiers first, and followed by hybrids/satisfiers/delighters	IJHM
Ryu and Lee (2013) Korea	Academic Conventions Attendees' Behaviour	Quantitative; Questionnaires; Cluster analysis;	Low-tiered SC attendees evaluate a convention negatively. High-tiered evaluate it positively. Differently tiered SC attendees can be discriminated by social networking, social value, and revisit intention. How to cultivate and sustain high SC, promote positive attitude and preference. Self-congruity.	IJHM

Sung & Lee (2015) Arizona-USA	Attendees' experiential value and satisfaction	Quantitative; CFA; SEM (Convention centre)	Basic/excitement service factors positively affect individual experiential values. Enhanced individual experiential values improve overall satisfaction.	JCET
Wei, Lu, Miao, Cai, and Wang (2017) The USA	CCIs and conference experience	Quantitative; Questionnaire; SEM; CFA; Social Identity Theory	Customer-Customer Interactions (CCIs) have impacts on attendees' self-esteem and transcendent conference experiences. Impacts are partially mediated by group ID. Social-emotional support has a bigger impact on transcendent conference experiences.	TM
Wei, Miao, Cai and Adler (2017) The USA	Attendees' experiences during (C-C Encounters)	In-depth interview; Open coding, axial coding and selective coding	Three primary types CCEs; Four dimensions of CCE experiences (p.2096); Customer-Customer Encounters (CCEs) generate instrumental & hedonic values for the attendees.	IJCHM
Jung and Tanford (2017)	Convention attendee satisfaction/loyalty	Meta-analysis	Networking and education are the top contributors to attendee satisfaction. Convention environment is more important for loyalty than satisfaction. Perception of service quality is more important than value for both satisfaction and loyalty.	JCET
Kim and Malek (2017) USA	Relationship of motivation/ satisfaction/loyalty	Quantitative; CFA/SEM	Personal/professional development and location (but not program) are significantly linked with perceived experience; Type of practice (doctor) and Gender are significant moderators of motivation and perceived experience.	JCET
Liu, Sparks and Coghlan (2017) Australia	Event Experiences (Food and Wine Festival)	Photo elicitation; Content Analysis of Photos; Quantitative survey	Sensory experience, discovery, entertainment/ fun, interaction demonstrate a high level of impact on customer experience; Negative experiences include venue layout, vendor availability, program setup, value for money.	EM
Kruger and Saayman (2018) South Africa	Visitor motive & behavioural intentions	Quantitative; SEM	Both push and pull motives significantly influence event visitors' behavioural intentions; satisfied attendees will promote the event.	CIIT
Wood and Kenyon (2018) UK	Shared Emotional Memory in Event Experiences	Case study; Photo elicitation; Paired interviews	Sharing memories (p.165) appears to intensify and alter event experience; Mediated memory is influential role in attitude formation; Emotional congruity creates and strengthens this emotional response in remembering.	EM
(Dragićević, Stankov, Armenski, & Štetić, 2011) Serbia	Evaluation of congress performance.	Case Study; Survey; Descriptive analysis	Attendees were highly satisfied with the congress elements and destination. The majority of them showed great interest to visit the destination again and would recommend it as a meeting destination.	THM

APJTR: Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research; IJEFM: International Journal of Event and Festival Management; JPRA: Journal of Park & Recreation Administration; JCET: Journal of Convention & Event Tourism; ALR: Annals of Leisure Research; IJHM: International Journal of Hospitality Management; TM: Tourism Management; IJCHM: International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management; EM: Event Management; CIIT: Current Issues in Tourism; THM: Tourism & Hospitality Management

Nonetheless, as a new trend, the design and management of event experience is beginning to attract the attention of both Chinese practitioners and researchers. Thus, although still few in number, a handful of studies of business event experience have appeared, including the work of (Cai & Chen, 2013; Yi et al., 2018; Zhang & Xu, 2019) on exhibition experiences and Wang and Han (2019) on conference experiences.

It is worth pointing out that international scholars have contributed significantly to China event studies. This type of research is usually conducted in collaboration between international and Chinese scholars, in many cases between supervisors and Chinese students. For example, research conducted by Jin, Weber, and Bauer encompassed topics of business event profiles (2008), the Chinese exhibition industry (2010), exhibition destination attractiveness (2010, 2012, 2013), and relationship quality between exhibitor and attendees (2012). As shown, their major concentration in China event studies is exhibition-related area, and event experience study is not included.

Therefore, business event experience studies, especially from the attendees' perspective, are strongly required in China (Cai & Chen, 2013; Wang & Han, 2019) in order to understand the end-consumers of business event products (Wu & Weber, 2005). Though motivations, service quality and satisfaction have been investigated before, it is of importance to understand the special but large event market, as well as the relationships among these constructs, especially in the context of an innovative international business event. More importantly, attendees usually consider business events as a continuity rather than an escape from their work; thus, it is also interesting to explore whether the innovative practices of the selected business event would make it a Third Place. Consequently, the review of the literature and the observations justify the research topic of the current research: *An Investigation of a Chinese Business Event Experience – Attendance Motivation, Event Service Quality and Multi-facets of Satisfaction: A Third Place Perspective.* To provide the data required to explore this topic, a business event hosted annually in Hangzhou, China was selected for data collection and detailed investigation of a business event experience from the attendees' perspective.

Responding to the research topic, the relationship between motivation, service quality and different components of event experience (satisfaction) is discussed in the following section, based on the discussion of specific assumptions/hypotheses as subsequently described.

3.4 Hypothesized relationships of business event experience constructs

3.4.1 Motivation and satisfaction

The relationship between motivation and satisfaction has been widely explored in the existing literature. As noted previously by Mitchell (1982) and Deci (1975), motivation as an intrinsic factors assists the attendees having an awareness of future satisfaction, and thus a causal relationship might exist between the two concepts.

In tourism, Dunn Ross and Iso-Ahola (1991) discovered that exploratory factor analysis of motivation and satisfaction items generated similar dimensions that resulted in high overall satisfaction with their trip. Later, Bauer et al. (2008) investigated an international event and identified the factors of motivation and satisfaction. They claim that both motivation and satisfaction are crucial for event attendees' decision-making (Bauer et al., 2008). Therefore, these two studies imply the causal relationship between motivation and satisfaction.

Over the long history of research regarding the two constructs, many previous studies have addressed this causal relationship (Albayrak & Caber, 2018; Kruger & Saayman, 2018; Meng et al., 2008; Prebensen et al., 2010; Ramsbottom, Michopoulou, & Azara, 2018; Yolal, Çetinel, & Uysal, 2009; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). For example, Yoon and Uysal (2005) tested the causal relationships among tourists' push and pull motivations, satisfaction and loyalty. In admitting the presence of the relationship, Prebensen et al. (2010) categorized motivation into body- and mind-related dimensions to further test the relationship, and revealed that only "mind-related motives" have significant effects on satisfaction. Differing from the findings of Prebensen et al. (2010), the study by Meng et al. (2008) shows that a motivational factor has a non-significant effect on visitors' overall satisfaction. Noting the contrary results in the literature, Albayrak and Caber (2018) sought to "clarify the relationship between motivation and satisfaction" by adopting two approaches to test the relationship, the Classic and Performance methods. Their findings indicate that "motivation is not a significant determinant of overall satisfaction" in the Classic model; while in the Performance model, "post experience motivation evaluation is introduced as the determinant of overall satisfaction" in a tourism context (Albayrak & Caber, 2018, p. 201).

Other published studies have also been conducted with the aim of testing the relationship between motivation and satisfaction. Kruger and Saayman (2018) explore the relationship between motivation and behavioural intention (the conative component of satisfaction in the current research). Similarly, another study aimed to investigate the relationship between motivation and "perceived socioeconomic benefits" (Yolal et al., 2009, p. 276), which, it is suggested, applies to the cognitive aspects of satisfaction. As for the affective component of satisfaction, this also has been addressed by Coghlan and Pearce (2010), and in their research the relation between motivation and emotional (affective) satisfaction was again justified.

In addition, Ramsbottom et al. (2018, p. 5), in an event study, take the "expectations from event experiences" as motivation and reveal that motivation "will inevitably affect the co-creation of events and the corresponding satisfaction" for both attendees and suppliers. Moreover, the moderating effects of demographic factors (e.g., age) between motivation and satisfaction have also been tested (Vigolo, Simeoni, Cassia, & Ugolini, 2018).

As shown above, most research has investigated the relationships between motivation and overall satisfaction (Albayrak & Caber, 2018; Meng et al., 2008; Prebensen et al., 2010; Vigolo et al., 2018; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Few studies have addressed the relationships between motivation and single components of satisfaction (e.g., Coghlan & Pearce, 2010; Yolal et al., 2009). Therefore, this research will attend to this issue, and the relationships will be justified with the following propositions:

Hypothesis 1: For business events, attendees' motivation is a determinant of their satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1a: For a business event, attendees' motivation has a significant positive relationship with the cognitive component of attendees' satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1b: For a business event, attendees' motivation has a significant positive relationship with the affective component of attendees' satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1c: For a business event, attendees' motivation has a significant positive relationship with the conative component of attendees' satisfaction.

3.4.2 Service quality (attributes' performance) and satisfaction

Another well-explored area in the previous literature is of the relationship between the service quality (performance) and satisfaction. As early as the 1980s, Churchill and Surprenant (1982) examined how product performance influences the consumer's satisfaction; and their experiment confirms that product performance determines consumer satisfaction. Adopting the model proposed by Churchill and Surprenant (1982), Tse and Wilton (1988) investigated the role of perceived performance in the formation process of consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Similar research findings arise from their research that "perceived performance exerts direct significant influence on satisfaction" (Tse & Wilton, 1988, p. 204). Later, Severt et al. (2007) examine the relationship between attribute performance and satisfaction by employing path analysis. The results of their study also indicate that performance has a positive relationship with satisfaction. More recently, the causal relationship was also studied by Jung and Tanford (2017) with a similar outcome.

In the context of event studies, Yuan and Jang (2008) discovered that the service quality of an event influences satisfaction from the perspective of event attendees, and the satisfaction further exerts impacts on local event product image. To further examine this causal relationship regarding a festival (Abdelazim & Alajloni, 2016) and an exhibition (Lee et al., 2015), both researchers hypothesized a positive relationship between service quality and consumer satisfaction, and their results indicated the existence of this proposed relationship. Besides quantitative exploration, Pegg and Patterson (2010) also analysed this relationship using a qualitative approach. Their data indicate that service offerings of a festival and the atmosphere created by it are considered to contribute to positive event experience or satisfaction.

To be specific, some researchers also address the relationship between service quality and conative components of satisfaction. For example, the relationship between service quality and behaviour intentions (Lee et al., 2015; Rajaratnam, Munikrishnan, Sharif, & Nair, 2014), consumer loyalty (Jung & Tanford, 2017), and word of mouth (Prebensen et al., 2010) have been examined. However, the relationship of service quality with the other two components of satisfaction (cognitive and affective components) are generally neglected, but are investigated in this research study. This neglect provides a justification for the following proposed hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Perceived Business Event Service Quality has a significant positive relationship with attendees' satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2a: Perceived Business Event Service Quality has a significant positive relationship with the cognitive component of attendees' satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2b: Perceived Business Event Service Quality has a significant positive relationship with the affective component of attendees' satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2c: Perceived Business Event Service Quality has a significant positive relationship with the conative component of attendees' satisfaction.

In the proposed model, service quality acts in a mediating role in the relationship of motivation and satisfaction; a view that is supported by Hsieh, Park, and Hitchcock (2015) in their study of museum visitors. They claim that the perceived service quality plays "a full mediating affect" between motivations and loyalty (Hsieh et al., 2015, p. 1518). Similarly, Ng (2013) also confirms the notion that performance quality has mediating effects on the relationship between motivation and satisfaction. This provides the basis for the hypothesis below:

Hypothesis 2d: Perceived Business Event Service Quality has mediating effects on the relationship between motivation and each of the three components of satisfaction.

3.4.3 The Relationships among the three components of satisfaction

Early studies of consumer satisfaction have investigated the determinants or factors that influence satisfaction, as well as the formation process in marketing and service management areas (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Clarke, 2001; Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002; Tse & Wilton, 1988). Satisfaction also has been extensively studied in tourism and event studies (Agapito, Valle, & Mendes, 2013; Coghlan & Pearce, 2010; Jung & Tanford, 2017; Kruger & Saayman, 2018; Meng et al., 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). However, it does appear that very little research has examined the dynamic relationships among the three components of satisfaction.

Among the few studies found, was a study of event attendees' satisfaction; in this study Jung and Tanford (2017) stated that "a positive relationship between convention satisfaction and convention loyalty" is existing (p. 125). Since they use "overall satisfaction" as the outcome construct for analysis in their research, their results imply that the cognitive or/and the affective components have positive relations with the conative component of satisfaction.

Interestingly, the mediating effect of satisfaction has been justified by some studies. Nilplub, Khang, and Krairit (2016) confirm that satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and behaviour intention. Similarly, Lee (2009) found that satisfaction plays a mediating role in the proposed behavioural model, which shows the relationships among motivation, attitude and loyalty. Besides motivation and loyalty, Vo Thanh, Cam Tran, and Dang (2018) also argue that satisfaction has a mediating impact on the relationship between destination image and loyalty. However, those studies failed to explore the relationships among the three components of satisfaction, using instead aggregated measures of satisfaction.

However, the review of previous literature also found research into destination image. Agapito et al. (2013, p. 471) investigated the relationships among the "cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of destination image" with the conceptual model advocated by Gartner (1994). They empirically examined the relationships among the three dimensions of destination image, and the findings of their research confirms the existence of the interrelated relationships. Specifically, the cognitive dimension has significant impacts on the affective dimension; the cognitive dimension has significant impacts on the conative dimension; the affective dimension has significant impacts on the conative dimension, and acts as a mediator between the relationship of "the cognitive and the conative dimension of a destination image" (Agapito, Valle, et al., 2013, p. 473).

Thus, the relationships among the three components of attendees' satisfaction are examined in the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: Within a business event study, the cognitive, affective, and conative components of satisfaction are hierarchically interrelated.

Hypothesis 3a: The cognitive component of satisfaction has a significant positive relationship with the affective component of satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3b: The cognitive component of satisfaction has a significant positive relationship with the conative component of satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3c: The affective component of satisfaction has a significant positive relationship with the conative component of satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3d: The cognitive component of satisfaction mediates the relationship between the motivation and the conative component of satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3e: The affective component of satisfaction mediates the relationship between the cognitive component and the conative component of satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3f: The affective component of satisfaction mediates the relationship between event service quality and the conative component of satisfaction.

3.4.4 The relationship among motivation, service quality and satisfaction

Motivation refers to "an affectively charged state that energizes and directs action aimed at the attainment of a reward or avoidance of a punishment" (Schultheiss et al., 2012, p. 650). In the tourism context, Iso-Ahola (1982) explains that "approach (seeking) and avoidance (escape)" are the "motivational forces" for tourists to consumer leisure products (p.258). As soon as a tourist is aware of the potential satisfaction of consuming leisure activities, he/she will identify the motives to travel. It was previously noted that motivation has a direct positive relationship with satisfaction; meanwhile, as discussed, perceived service quality/attribute performance is positively related with satisfaction. Therefore, a tourist's or attendee's motivations will potentially influence their perceptions of the attribute performance or service quality.

The relationship seems explicit but has been examined inadequately in the existing literature. However, Lee, Jeon & Kim (2011) found that motivation has a positive effect on perceived tourism service quality. In an event study, van Riper et al. (2013, p. 103) also confirmed that social networking as a motivation "positively contributes to the performance of various conference attributes". Furthermore, when categorizing visitors according to their motivations, Devesa et al. (2010) did find that differently categorised visitors used differing perceptions of various tourism elements when evaluating service quality. The causal relationship between motivation and service quality has also been investigated and confirmed by Ng (2013) and Nilplub et al. (2016) while noting that that Meng et al. (2008) not only verified the possible existence of a causal relationship between motivation and satisfaction, but also a relationship between service quality/performance and overall satisfaction. Yet, nonetheless all neglected to explore the relationship between motivation and service quality.

Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed to examine the relationships between motivation and event service quality.

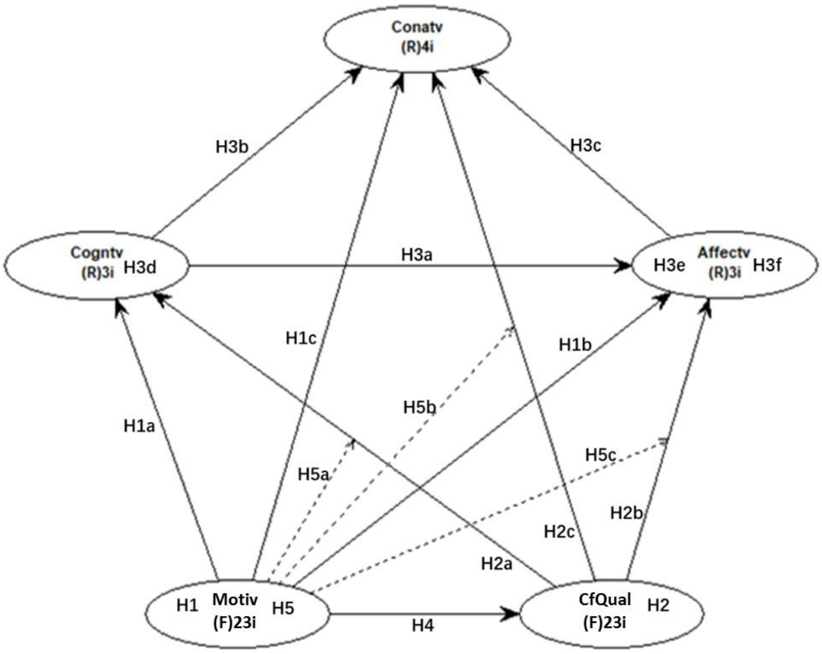
Hypothesis 4: For a business event, attendees' motivation has a positive relationship with the attendees' perceived event service quality.

As discussed above, motivation influences satisfaction; meanwhile, the literature also shows that motivation has impacts on the perception of service quality in tourism and event studies (Nilplub et al., 2016; Olshavsky & Miller, 1972; van Riper et al., 2013). If motivation has impacts on both constructs of service quality and satisfaction, the relationship between them can possibly be moderated by motivation. This has been partially tested by Assaker and Hallak (2013). Their study shows that "Novelty-Seeking Tendencies" as one type of motivation has moderating effects on the relationship of destination image and satisfaction, in which the destination image is defined as the "overall perception of a particular destination" (Assaker & Hallak, 2013, p. 601). In another research of retail services conducted by Luk, Sharma, and Chen (2013), a moderating effect of motivation was found in different retail categories. This forms the basis for the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: **As for business events, attendees' motivation moderates the relationship between the perceived event service quality and the three components of attendees' satisfaction.**

The hypothesized relationships among these constructs, therefore, can be displayed in a proposed theoretical model (Figure 3.4). In this model, "Motiv" refers to reasons that motivated consumers to attend an event, which are the important event attributes in attendees' perceptions. Though some attributes like accommodation or venue facility might not directly motivate them to attend, those factors are necessary and an integral part of their overall motivation. Those factors can be considered as "unspoken" motivations, because they are so elementary that are not necessary to express explicitly, but they are well integrated into the design and staging of an event. "CfQual" means the service quality of the business conference. "Cogntv, Affectv and Conatv" stands for the three components of satisfaction: cognitive, affective and conative components.

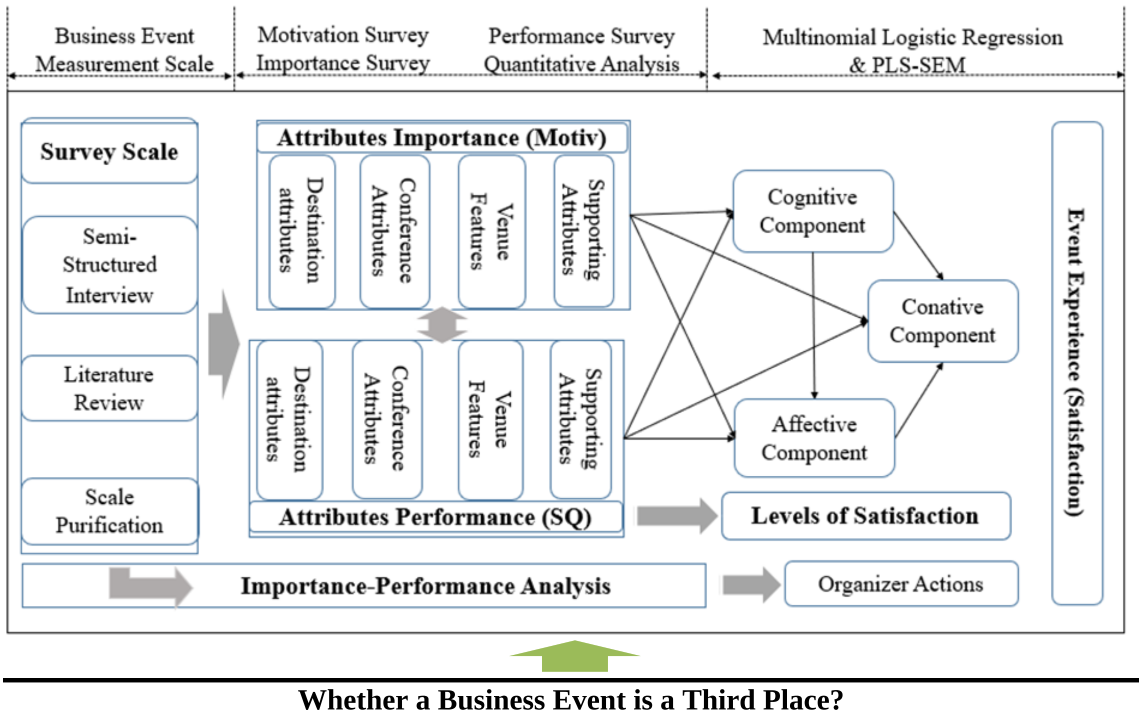
Figure 3.4 The hypothesized relationship among proposed constructs



3.5 Research framework and research questions

To investigate business event experience in China, a research framework is established on the basis of the prior literature review and the preliminary understanding of the event experience, as well as the features of the selected business event (see Figure 3.5), which serves as a roadmap or guide for the conduction of this research.

Figure 3.5 Proposed research framework



Responding to the review of the event experience evaluation, this framework first intends to develop a business event survey instrument with the consideration of the business event's features; the attributes will be derived from previous studies and analysis of respondents' interviews. Meanwhile, the perceived important attributes that attract attendees to visit the event, arguably can be considered as reasons for their attendance, i.e. motivations, will be explored. The perceived performance of these attributes will be measured using the IPA model, which serves as the tool to assess the perceived event service quality. Next, the framework aims to inspect whether the numerical variables (attributes' performance factors) and categorical variables (e.g., gender, place of origin, level of position) have significant impacts on the attendees' satisfactory levels in the application of Multinomial Logistic Regression. Finally, in this model, the relationships among motivation, service quality and satisfaction, as well as the relationships among the three components of satisfaction (cognitive, affective and conative) are examined to better understand the complexity of event experience.

Additionally, qualitative data collected by interviews will be analysed through QDA-Miner. Then a case study method will be employed to justify whether a business event (usually considered as the continuity of work) is a Third Place for the event attendees. Therefore, a mixed research method is adopted in this research for the business event experience investigation, which is further explained in Chapter 4 Research Methodology.

Informing by this conceptual framework, the following research questions are raised based on the literature review and the preliminary exploration of the selected conference:

(1) Whether the business event can be considered as a Third Place for attendees with the innovative changes?
(2) What attributes are of importance that motivate the potential Chinese attendees to consume the business event?
(3) How do Chinese business event attendees evaluate the performances of those attributes?
(4) How do different factors and demographic features influence the attendees' satisfaction levels? and
(5) What relationships are in existence among the factors that determine business event experiences?

3.6 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, the author reviewed the previous research about event, event industry, event experience, evaluation methods, as well as the underlying theory for this research. Some key concepts regarding business events were firstly introduced; the event industry profile and challenges were then presented. After the discussion of Third Place theory and event studies, the definition, perceived value and factors that might affect the business event experience were debated. Next, the design and evaluation of event experience were both discussed. Later in this chapter, the research questions and a conceptual research framework that informs the conduction of this research were proposed. In addition, a theoretical model for demonstrating the complex relationship among the event experience constructs was also established; specific hypotheses were constructed to be tested in Chapter 9.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, research paradigms and methods will be reviewed to justify the approach adopted in the thesis. Responding to the specific research questions (Chapter 1), the objectives of this thesis are:

1. To investigate the nature of the business event through the exploration of this selected case in response to the Third Place Theory.
2. To explore the motivations of Chinese attendees at business conferences and to identify the differences in their motivations according to different demographic features.
3. To evaluate the perceived service quality of the business event from the view of attendees through the comparison of the differences between the perceived importance and performance of event attributes.
4. To explore and elicit how the generated factors and demographic features will affect the business event experiences in the perspective of satisfaction levels.
5. To examine the relationships between the constructs of business event experience and the attendees' multi-dimensional satisfactions.

4.2 Research paradigms

4.2.1 The importance of paradigm

The concept of the research paradigm (Kuhn, 1970, 1962) has been intensively debated and is essential to understanding when initiating a research project (Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 2016; Zahra, 2006). It is also noted that "paradigms" (Kuhn, 1970) are used as "philosophical assumptions," "the way of looking the world" (Mason, 2014), "worldviews" (Creswell, 2014), or ontologies and epistemologies (Crotty, 1998) in the social science research field.

First, every research or study project is guided by philosophical assumptions or paradigms, as affirmed by many researchers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Crotty, 1998; Dann, 1997; Glesne, 2016; Guba, 1990; Johnson & Clark, 2006). More specifically, Jennings (2010, p.35) describes the relationships among paradigm, methodology and research methods in a research project as following:

> *A paradigm is the overlying view of the way the world works; the methodology is the complementary set of guidelines for conducting research within the overlying paradigmatic view of the world, and the methods are the specific tools of data and empirical material collection and analysis/interpretation/ (re)construction.*

This role of the paradigm is confirmed by Creswell and Creswell (2018); namely, that research methodology is informed by paradigms, and specific methods inform the methodology.

People develop their worldviews or philosophical perspectives on the foundation of their disciplinary features, academic community, advisors or mentors, and previous research experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The foundational complexity sometimes makes it hard for researchers to envision the impacts of the paradigms they espouse. Another reason is that "they are embedded in the researchers' suppositions about the nature of reality and knowledge" (Glesne, 2016, p. 5). Therefore, it becomes essential for researchers to clarify which paradigm(s) is/are informing the specific subject, which they intend to study and to communicate with their readers as part of the transparency required by good research reporting.

Second, paradigms reflect the researchers' worldviews, their relationship between researchers and their informants and help justify the methods chosen by researchers to create knowledge. Several definitions illustrate the role that paradigms play in understanding the researcher and the research. A paradigm is "the entire constellation of beliefs, values, and techniques which is shared by members of a given community, and it denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solution, employed as models or examples, it can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzle of normal science" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 175). Similarly, a paradigm also refers to "a group of basic beliefs that is concerned with 'ultimate' or 'first principles,' which are used to describe a person's understanding of the world" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.107). Another definition treats paradigms as "patterns of beliefs and practices that regulate inquiry within a discipline by providing lenses, frames, and processes through investigation" (Weaver and Olson, 2006, p.459). While Glesne (2016, p. 5) conceptualizes a paradigm as "a framework or philosophy of science that makes assumptions about the nature of reality and truth, the kinds of questions to explore, and how to go about doing so." These definitions confirm the relationship among paradigms, research design, research methods, and data collection, and also verify the role of paradigms in determining the research process adopted by researchers.

Third, paradigms emphasise the consistency or coherence of different steps in the research process, and the harmonious compatibility between different levels of research design at the paradigmatic, epistemological and methodological levels. This view has been supported by (Guba, 1990) who recommends that researchers reflect on their philosophical assumptions and choose the methods that are consistent with their assumptions and research subjects.

However, many paradigms coexist currently in the social science area. Guba (1990) noted that the emerging paradigms after positivism are post-positivism, critical theory, and constructionism. Creswell and Miller (1997) have identified four types of paradigms, namely positivism (quantitative), interpretivism (qualitative), ideological theory, and pragmatism. In this set of paradigms, the ideological is an umbrella term that can embrace feminism, critical theory, and postmodern approaches (Creswell & Miller, 1997). Later, Creswell and Clark (2007) conclude five dominant paradigms are in position: post-positivism, constructivism, advocacy and participation, and pragmatism. More recently, G. Jennings (2010) in a tourism research context, treats feminism, postmodernism, and chaos and complexity theory as independent paradigms, which parallel others such as positivism, post-positivism, critical theory orientation and constructionism.

Yet, Guba and Lincoln (1994) proclaim that there is no superiority of one paradigm over another, and therefore the level of compatibility between research subject, methods and paradigm need to be considered. However, the choice as to which paradigm to adopt is suspended until the differentiations among them are highlighted. Guba (1990) suggests that paradigms are characterized by their responses to three basic but important questions about ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Guba, 1990). The three questions suggested are the following (Guba, 1990, p. 18):

> *Ontological: What is the nature of the "Knowable"? Or, what is the nature of "reality"?*
>
> *Epistemological: What is the nature of the relationship between the knower (inquirer) and the known (or knowable)?*
>
> *Methodological: How should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge?*

Furthermore, Heron and Reason (1997, p. 285) have added another question to the list.

Axiological: What is distinctly worthwhile?

By asking and answering these four questions, researchers can understand the differences and similarities between various paradigms so as to match paradigms to a specific research project on the base of their personal research experience and techniques. Moreover, the claim of an adoption of paradigm(s) also allows the audience to have a better apprehension of the research design and research findings, a process that improves communication between the two parties.

In conclusion, Munar and Jamal (2016) stress that knowledge about paradigms enable researchers to have "a better understanding of the history of science and scientific change"; constitute "a lens to examine complex and conflictive processes of scientific knowledge formation in a field"; and "enhance self-reflection and self-understanding in scholarship, similar to placing a torch inside the black box of knowledge production" (p.9).

4.2.2 Paradigms and research methods

As discussed previously, paradigms or philosophical assumptions inform the adoption of research methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Heron & Reason, 1997; Jennings, 2010). That is to say, worldviews held by the researchers determine their preferred research methods. Therefore, an understanding of the concepts and features of different paradigms is the prerequisite for the selection of well-matched methods.

Traditionally, three primary research methods exist for researchers, namely qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2014) as illustrated in Table 4.1. Consequently, positivism and post-positivism incline researchers to a quantitative research method; interpretivism, on the contrary, leans to the choice of qualitative methods (Creswell, 2009; Crotty, 1998; Glesne, 2016; Heron & Reason, 1997; Munar & Jamal, 2016). Yet, again different, pragmatism focuses on the research problem and allows researchers to employ approaches "that work" to explore the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Miller, 1997; Glesne, 2016; Jennings, 2010; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Each paradigm carries its advantages and disadvantages (Jennings, 2010), and the selected method usually betrays the researcher's philosophical perspective even if sometimes the paradigm is not explicitly stated.

Therefore, different research paradigms and the research methods informed by them are discussed in detail below, and the different paradigms will be described regarding the four fundamental questions previously mentioned (Guba, 1990; Heron & Reason, 1997).

Table 4.1 Relationship between research methods and paradigms

Research Methods	**Philosophical Assumptions**	**Inquiring Strategies**	**Data-collection Methods**	**Research Practices**
Qualitative Methods	Interpretivism Critical Theory	Phenomenology grounded theory, ethnography, case study, narrative	Open-ended questions, emerging approaches, text/image data	Position him/herself Collect particular meanings Focus on single concept/phenomenon Bring personal value into the study Study context/setting of participants Validate the accuracy of findings Interpret the data Create an agenda doe change or reform Collaborate with the participants Implement text analysis procedures
Quantitative Methods	Positivism Post-positivism	Surveys and experiments	Closed-ended questions, predetermined approaches, numeric data	Test or verify theories/explanations Identify variables to study Relate variables in question/hypothesis Use standards if validity and reliability Observe and measure info numerically Implement unbiased approaches
Mixed Methods	Pragmatism	Sequential, convergent, and transformative	Both open/ closed ended questions, emerging/ predetermined approaches, quant. /qual. data & analysis	Collect both quant/qualitative data Develop a rationale for mixing Integrate data at different inquiry stages Present visual pictures of the procedure Implement the practices of both qualitative and quantitative research

Source: Adapted and redesigned after (Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

4.2.2.1 Post-positivism and quantitative research methods

Post-positivism

Post-positivism was developed on the base of positivism (Guba, 1990). Positivism has dominated scientific inquiries for many centuries (G. Jennings, 2010), although it was not until the 19th century that its application commenced in the social sciences. As positivists, researchers view the world as "being guided by scientific rules that explain the behaviour of phenomena through causal relationships" (G. Jennings, 2010, p. 36).

Guba (1990) has outlined the underlying belief system of positivism as follows:

> *Ontology: Realist – reality exits "out there" and is driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms. Knowledge of these entities, laws, and*

> *mechanisms is conventionally summarised in the form of time- and context-free generalizations. Some of these latter generalizations take the form of cause-effect laws.*
>
> *Epistemology: Dualist/objectivist – it is both possible and essential for the inquirer to adopt a distant, non-interactive posture. Values and other biasing and confounding factors are thereby automatically excluded from influencing the outcomes.*
>
> *Methodology: Experimental/manipulative – questions and/or hypotheses are stated in advance in propositional form and subjected to empirical tests (falsification) under carefully controlled conditions.*

As for the axiological foundation of positivism, G. Jennings (2010, p. 38) indicates that "knowledge is intrinsically valued," and "propositional knowledge" proposes realities instead of beliefs. Positivists treat "value as excluded from the research process" because they hold an objective epistemological position. In other words, values are external to the research procedure.

As time progresses, critical voices about positivism have been heard. Criticisms are targeted at its belief of the existence of a "fixed reality," and the suitability of the employment of scientific approaches to explore the human condition (Glesne, 2016; G. Jennings, 2010). Glesne (2016, p. 8) has noted that positivists now agree with the viewpoints that "the world is not knowable with certainty, and they accept that measurement is fallible," and complete objectivity is not reachable because of the individuality of the researchers. This is further confirmed by Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 6) that post-positivism challenges the conventional "absolute truth of knowledge" and acknowledges the fact that "we cannot be absolutely positive about our claims of knowledge when studying the behaviour and actions of humans."

As a result, post-positivism emerged as a modification of positivism. It addresses the most problematic criticisms of positivism within the arena of social sciences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Compared with positivism, Guba (1990) suggests that very few differences exist between their underlying belief systems. From the ontological view, post-positivists believe that reality is "out there" but only can be measured and understood to a certain degree. The ontology of this paradigm moves from pure realism to "critical realism" which requires researchers to be critical about their research findings because of the imperfect nature of human beings and the limitation of resources (Guba, 1990). Epistemologically, post-positivists adopt a modified objective stance, that is, the “truth” remains external from the researcher, but it is only approximately knowable (Glesne, 2016). Thus, an inquirer with a post-positivistic worldview intends to employ quantitative methodologies, in which the researcher “begins with a theory, collects data that either supports or refutes the theory, and then makes necessary revisions and conducts additional tests” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 7).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) have pointed out that an obsession with quantitative methods may ruin the very basis of the query about the researched problem, and so lose the chance to catch the real meaning of a social phenomenon. This is so even though post-positivists occasionally adopt qualitative methods in their studies. As realism remains at the central core of their philosophical thoughts, researchers in this paradigm sustain their preferences for quantitative approaches (G. Jennings, 2010; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Creswell and Creswell (2018) further confirm that the post-positivistic worldview guides quantitative research methods and modes of data collection.

Quantitative research methods

As just mentioned, a quantitative research methodology is underpinned by paradigms of post-positivism. This method aims at “seeking explanatory laws that stressed objectivity, generalizability and reliability” (Murshed & Zhang, 2016, p. 438). A research project adopting quantitative methods “involves measuring variables and testing relationships between variables in order to reveal patterns, correlations, or causal relationships” (Leavy, 2017, p. 9).

When it comes to the collection of data, researchers may employ instrument and closed-ended questions to collect data and information. Then, the collected data is analysed by statistical techniques. Murshed and Zhang (2016, p. 438) argue that this method is “numerically oriented, requires precise measurements of constructs and often involves statistical analyses to test pre-specified hypotheses.” Leavy (2017) further suggests that this method serves research well for explanations and evaluation.

For her part G. Jennings (2010, p. 128) concluded that research guided by quantitative methodology carries the following attributes:

- a deductive approach that establishes the nature of truth by testing hypotheses

- an ontological view that sees the world as consisting of causal relationships
- an objective relationship between the researcher and the participants, that is, an objective epistemology
- an axiological position is adopted, which is predicted on valuing propositional knowledge, which contributes to social change of critical realism or pragmatism perspectives are adopted
- an objective epistemology relates to ethics essaying to be value free
- the researcher is primarily viewed as an outsider by study participants
- the research design is structured, systematic and replicable
- the research identifies and tests relationships between variables
- the sampling method is random, with every person in the study population having an equal chance of selection
- data are represented numerically
- data analysis is predicted for statistical analysis
- representation of the findings is based on statistical tables, and graphic representations and the text of the report is written in the third person, using a passive voice
- the report provides findings from the sample that may be generalised to the broader study population (G. Jennings, 2010, p. 128)

With its focus on measuring or experimentally manipulating some controlled variables to answer theory-informed research questions or test the pre-proposed hypotheses, this top-down approach is "most commonly used in explanatory research investigating causal relationships, associations, and correlations" (Leavy, 2017, p. 87).

4.2.2.2 Interpretivism and qualitative research methods

Interpretivism

Interpretivism, often also termed as constructivism, entered the social science research as early as the 18th century (Glesne, 2016), and "assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (the knower and the subject co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24).

The adoption of this paradigm should consider the deficiencies that have been noted (Guba, 1990). First, the theories held by the inquirer impinge on the perceptions of the investigator, that is, theory-ladenness of facts. This has been widely accepted by post/positivistic researchers that “facts are facts only within some theoretical framework” (Guba, 1990, p. 25). Therefore, the foundation for knowing the “reality” needs to be contextual, and that context includes the subjective as well as the objective. Second, there is insufficient evidence for tests that permit the proof of a theory, because of the problem of induction and the nature of social interaction. Third, a researcher is not value free, and the “reality” emerges through a lens of a researcher’s pre-conceived value. Another flaw is the denial of the interactive relationship between the researcher and the researched subjects, especially human respondents. However, most researchers are aware of the fact that “the results of an inquiry are always shaped by the interaction of inquirer and inquired into” (Guba, 1990, p. 26).

The differences between the interpretive social science paradigm and post/positivism have been summarised by (G. Jennings, 2010, p. 40) as:

- There are multiple explanations or realities to explain a phenomenon rather than one causal relationship or one “theory.”
- the research process should be subjective rather than objective
- the use of a qualitative methodology instead of a quantitative methodology
- empirical materials rather than data are collected from an insider’s perspective rather than from an outsider’s perspective
- Empirical materials rather than data are collected in their real world or natural settings as opposed to being collected under “experimental” conditions.

Hence Guba (1990) has described the stance of interpretivists as one of relativism, which is the “key to openness and the continuing search for ever more informed and sophisticated constructions” (p. 26). Researchers in this paradigm believe that realities are multiple and cannot exist independently of people’s minds. Therefore, “human beings construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). From the epistemological view, interpretivists adopt a subjectivist stance, which is the only way to discover and interpret the “reality” or “meanings” that exist in the minds of participants. As for the methodology underpinned by this paradigm (Guba, 1990), it involves two perspectives in the process of the research: the hermeneutic and dialectic. The hermeneutic aims to interpret in more detailed and accurate forms, while dialectic intends to compare and contrast which creates chances for respondents to interact with the others' perceptions. This is different from post/positivists, who exclude value from the research process; a researcher with an interpretive philosophy is subjectively engaged in knowledge creation and believes that "values are inextricably and intrinsically embedded in the research process" (G. Jennings, 2010, p. 41).

Thus, Guba (1990) concludes that interpretivism aims to interpret the "world" that only exists in the minds of people instead of predicting/controlling or transforming the "real" world. Glesne (2016, p. 9) affirms more explicitly that to interpret "the social world from the perspectives of those who are actors in that world" is the goal of the interpretive researchers' work. However, Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 8) warn that the interpretation of the world is influenced by the "historical and cultural norms that operate in individual's lives" and the researcher's personal "background."

Unlike the post/positivists, researchers who hold this philosophical assumption are more often conducting exploratory research and are open to potential constructions, and usually inductively develop a theory instead of starting with it. As an inquirer (Glesne, 2016, p. 9), "You observe, ask questions, and interact with research participants. You may look for patterns in your analyses, but you do not try to reduce the multiple interpretations to numbers, nor to a norm. Your final write up will be quite descriptive in nature." Glesne (2016) indicates the methods that researchers in this paradigm have adopted are qualitative methods. This is supported by G. Jennings (2010, p. 43) that interpretivism requests the inquirers to become "part of the social group being studied, to be (inter)subjective and to use a qualitative research methodology."

Qualitative research methods

As mentioned above, qualitative research methodology is closely associated with the interpretive paradigm, which indicates that researchers who hold this philosophical view for most cases will espouse the qualitative research methods. Nonetheless, the research steps/processes taken by qualitative and quantitative researchers have much in common. For example, they enumerate the research purpose, proposed research questions, selected research methods, collect and analyse data/information and report/interpret their results (Glesne, 2016).

However, qualitative methods “rely on text and image data, have unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse designs” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 179). These methods aim to explore the meaning in depth, the “subjective experiences” of individuals and “their meaning-making processes”, which allow such researchers “to build a robust understanding of a topic, unpacking the meanings people ascribe to their lives—to activities, situations, circumstances, people, and objects” (Leavy, 2017, p. 124). Furthermore, Crotty (1998) has argued that qualitative methods are tending to deploy open-ended questions which facilitates the elicitation of the respondents’ deep understandings of the objects. Researchers are more inclined to undertake fieldwork in the context or settings of the respondents that increases the authenticity and richness of the collected data.

A more complete and detailed list of attributes and characteristics of qualitative research are summarised by G. Jennings (2010, p. 127):

- an inductive approach that establishes the nature of truth by being grounded in the real world
- an ontological view that sees the world as consisting of multiple realities
- a subjective relationship between the researcher and the participants, that is a subjective epistemology
- an axiological position is adopted, which is predicted on valuing propositional, transactional knowledge that will elicit social change and/or emancipation; and experiential, practical and transformative knowledge for participatory paradigms
- a subjective and intersubjective epistemology results in ethics that are value laden
- the researcher is essentially viewed as an insider by the study participants
- the research design is unstructured in order to respond to the field setting, and therefore the research design emerges in the course of field work; the research design is also study-specific since it is grounded in the setting being studied; participatory research will develop research agendas collectively
- the researcher is interested in emblematic themes that arise during the course of the study
- the sampling method is not random, with every person in the study population not having an equal chance of selection unless complete participation is achieved
- empirical material is represented as textual units, both written and visual, rather than numeric representations
- empirical material interpretation/(re)construction is focused on eliciting key themes and motifs associated with the participants being studied

- representation of the findings is usually in "narrative" written form, with the researcher writing in the first person and using an attractive voice; representation using visual and performative texts as well as changes to practice and praxis for participatory research
- The research report reflects a "slice of life" from the study setting and is specific to that study setting only.

These features strongly define qualitative methods as robust means for obtaining rounded and detailed data from limited numbers of respondents; generating meaning in depth with rich descriptions. Therefore, qualitative methods are "most commonly used in exploratory or descriptive research" to explore the nature, meaning, behaviour, attitudes, especially that are few/less studied (Leavy, 2017, p. 124).

Comparison between the features and aims of qualitative and quantitative methods indicates that both of the two methods are supported by their apparent advantages and disadvantages, which suggest their suitability for specific studies. A list of these features is discussed by Jennings (2010, p.130). Moreover, it is also noted that no one of the two methods is perfect and they are different in their weaknesses and strengths. As Steckler, McLeroy, Goodman, Bird, and McCormick (1992, p. 1) concluded:

> *Both the qualitative and quantitative paradigms have weaknesses, which, to a certain extent, are compensated for by the strengths of the other… the strengths of quantitative methods are that they produce factual, reliable outcome data that are usually generalizable to some larger population. The strengths of qualitative methods are that they generate rich, detailed, valid process data that usually leave the study participants' perspectives intact.*

Therefore, the advocacy of mixed methods is emerging in social science research, and it is widely accepted that pragmatism informs mixed methods (Creswell, 2014; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). This is examined in the next section.

4.2.2.3 Pragmatism and Mixed Methods Research

Pragmatism

In the previous two sections, not only their different responses to the fundamental questions, namely the ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological questions, but also the different attributes of post/positivism and interpretivism have been reviewed. Guba and Lincoln (1994) have noted that post/positivist informs quantitative methods, while the interpretive paradigm is associated with qualitative research. Therefore, the debates between these paradigms could refer to the debate between qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Equally, as shown above, both the two approaches have their own strengths and weaknesses (G. Jennings, 2010; Johnson & Clark, 2006; Johnson et al., 2007), and they differ in the procedures of reaching the research objectives. Quantitative paradigm is objective and generates reliable results with the higher possibility of generalization. However, it may fail to capture the deep “real” meaning of the respondents. On the other end, the qualitative paradigm is subjective and generates rich and detailed results, but a poor generalization because of the smaller-size sample (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2016).

Therefore, there is a trend to combine different methods (Creswell, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Mason, 2014; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2015). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 13) suggest that researchers should “move beyond quantitative versus qualitative research arguments” and recognize the findings of mixed methods research that “both quantitative and qualitative research are important and useful.” They further claimed, “mixed methods research sits in a new third chair, with qualitative research sitting on the left side and quantitative research sitting on the right side” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 13).

As for the third research method, it is widely accepted that pragmatism is the philosophical concept used to support mixed methods research (Johnson et al., 2007). According to Morgan (2014), pragmatism, as a new paradigm, “disrupts the assumptions of older approaches based on the philosophy of knowledge, while providing promising new directions” for a more in-depth understanding of the objects under exploration (p.1045). Instead of following the philosophical stereotype, it “replace[s] an older way of thinking about the differences between approaches to research,” which is considered as “social contexts for inquiry” rather than “abstract philosophical systems” (Morgan, 2014, p. 1049). Therefore, pragmatism claims no specific system of philosophy. This freedom empowers the mixed methods researcher to “exert a powerful influence over the beliefs we consider to be ‘meaningful’ and the actions we accept as ‘appropriate” (Morgan, 2014). Morgan also argues that pragmatists believe that “new paradigms create new sets of beliefs that guide new kinds of actions,” and the worldviews created by this paradigm have “widespread impacts on the conduct of inquiry” (p.1051).

Johnson et al. (2007) suggest that in the view of pragmatists: 1) paradigms remain separate and one can be integrated with other research paradigms; 2) pragmatism provides researchers a wide range of theoretical choices. They also indicate the relationship between pragmatism and mixed methods: "We generally argue for what we call pragmatism of the middle as an especially useful philosophy for mixed methods" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 125).

Creswell and Creswell (2018) agree with Johnson et al. (2007) that mixed methods research is underpinned by pragmatism, and it is essential for "focusing attention on the research problem in social science research and then using pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about the problem" (p.10). They have further delineated this philosophical underpinning:

- Pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality. This applies to mixed methods research in that inquirers draw liberally from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions when they engage in their research.
- Individual researchers have a freedom of choice. In this way, researchers are free to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes.
- Pragmatists do not see the world as an absolute unity. Similarly, mixed methods researchers look to many approaches for collecting and analysing data rather than subscribing to only one way (e.g., quantitative or qualitative).
- Truth is what works at the time. It is not based in a duality between reality independent of the mind or within the mind. Thus, in mixed methods research, investigators use both quantitative and qualitative data because they work to provide the best understanding of a research problem.
- The pragmatist researchers look to the *what and how* to research based on the intended consequences—where they want to go with it. Mixed methods researchers need to establish a purpose for their mixing, a rationale for the reasons why quantitative and qualitative data need to be mixed in the first place.
- Pragmatists agree that research always occurs in social, historical, political, and other contexts. In this way, mixed methods studies may include a postmodern turn, a theoretical lens that is reflective of social justice and political aims.
- Pragmatists have believed in an external world independent of the mind as well as that lodged in the mind. However, they believe that we need to stop asking questions about reality and the laws of nature. They would like to change the subject.

- Thus, for the mixed methods researcher, pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 10)

Mixed Methods Research

Informed by the paradigm of pragmatism, mixed methods research locates between the two ends of a quantitative-qualitative continuum. For mixed methods research, both methods and theories are instrumental, and "applicability" to the research problem is the first policy to use. Thus, when mixed methods are applied, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and integrated into a research project, which permits the researchers to have a deep understanding of the investigated phenomenon. Therefore, it is a "problem-centred approach" and "values both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research" (Leavy, 2017, p. 164).

Descriptions of mixed methods research above are consistent with that of Johnson et al. (2007). Johnson and colleagues suggest that "Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. (p.123)"

Consequently, Johnson et al. (2007) have also identified the characteristics of mixed methods research as follows:

> *(1) Partners with the philosophy of pragmatism in one of its forms (left, right, middle);*
>
> *(2) follows the logic of mixed methods research (including the logic of the fundamental principle and any other useful logics imported from qualitative or quantitative research that are helpful for producing defensible and usable research findings);*
>
> *(3) relies on qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, and inference techniques combined according to the logic of mixed methods research to address one's research question(s); and*
>
> *(4) [It] is cognizant, appreciative, and inclusive of local and broader socio-political realities, resources, and needs. (p.129)*

With the recognition of its underlying philosophy and the specific features of mixed methods research, challenges are growing as to its feasibility and credibility (Mason, 2014; Scott, 2014). To resolve this issue, Scott (2014, p. 32) has suggested three supportive arguments for this type of research:

- The first of these is that the different paradigms that have traditionally been associated with qualitative and quantitative research approaches are in essence epistemic, and thus have little to do with the collection and analysis of empirical data.
- A second argument for suggesting that qualitative and quantitative methods and approaches can be combined is an acceptance that these methods and approaches are underpinned by different epistemological and ontological philosophical positions, but these different philosophical positions are not as distinct as they appear to be (Haack, 2008). In other words, their differences can be resolved.
- A third argument for resolving the divide between qualitative and quantitative methods and approaches and thus allowing the development of a mixed methods framework, which is coherent, is what has been called a warranty through triangulation argument. … However, if both are focused on the same research problem and similar conclusions are drawn, then the researcher can have a greater degree of confidence in their findings.

If this type of research is applicable and credible, there remains an issue of how to integrate or mix the two approaches. As observed by Plano Clark, Garrett, and Leslie-Pelecky (2010) "Despite extensive methodological discussions about integration, researchers using mixed methods approaches struggle with translating these discussions into practice and often make inadequate use of integration in their studies" (p.154).

Responding to this issue, Fetters, Curry, and Creswell (2013) suggest that researchers should adopt integration principles and practices at three levels, that is design level, method level, and interpretation and reporting level (p. 2134). In brief, these are summed up as below:

> *Integration at the study design level occurs through three basic mixed method designs—exploratory sequential, explanatory sequential, and convergent —and through four advanced frameworks—multistage, intervention, case study, and participatory.*
>
> *Integration at the methods level occurs through four approaches. In connecting, one database links to the other through sampling. With building, one database informs the data collection approach of the other. When*

merging, the two databases are brought together for analysis. With embedding, data collection and analysis link at multiple points.

Integration at the interpretation and reporting level occurs through narrative, data transformation, and joint display (Fetters et al., 2013, p. 2134).

Reviewing the mixed methods research literature, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) have underlined three strategies for quantitative and qualitative data merging: 1) merging in a discussion, 2) merging with a matrix, and 3) merging by data transformation. This is akin to a third integration level proposed by Fetters et al. (2013). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) indicate that for the first strategy, quantitative and qualitative data will be presented and interpreted at the conclusion and/or discussion stages. This is the most straightforward form of integration. The second strategy is gaining more attention and intends to merge two sets of data by designing matrices to display results visually. The strategy of data transforming is a process in which researchers quantify the qualitative data or make the quantitative data qualified (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The purpose of data transformation is twofold: 1) to increase the compatibility of the two sets of data, and 2) to convert one type of data to another for further analyses (Plano Clark et al., 2010).

To sum up, mixed methods research respects and recognizes the value of the two "old-pattern" types of research, namely qualitative and quantitative methods. However, the "third" research paradigm facilitates the "researchers [to] leverage the strengths of mixed methods" (Fetters et al., 2013, p. 2134), "provide[s] the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results" and "warranted answers to those questions" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 129).

Coming to the practical step of selecting a research approach or methods, it is not only the methodological aspects, like research paradigms, research design, and methods for data collection and analysis; but also the nature of the inquiring objects, inquirer's experience, and the audience of the research that guide the actions of researchers (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Comparing the nature of the current research, the researcher's experience, supervisor's expertise, and the overall design of the project with the proposed guidelines for research methods selection, the researcher will adopt mixed methods research for this current study. The reasons for the selection of this method will now be justified.

4.3 Mixed Methods Adoption: A Justification

As suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 179), there are many factors to influence the selection of research approaches. Generally, these factors can be grouped into three types: 1) research method-centred factors, like paradigms, research design, means of data collection and analysis; 2) research problem-centred, such as research objects; and 3) factors related to people, like the researcher's experience and the audience/readers of the work. Some factors also have been proposed by other researchers. For example, Creswell (2003) argued that a research problem is an issue or concern that needs to be addressed. In addition to research questions, Gu and Ryan (2010) have emphasized that the research context is one of the determinants for the selection of methods. The selection of a research method is an act of judgement (Ryan, 1995). Therefore certain types of research problems demand specific approaches or methods.

As for the reasons to apply mixed methods, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) have identified the following two items: 1) the research goals, and 2) the interdisciplinary trend of research that requires communication and collaboration among different researchers. Mixed methods research empowers the researchers "to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering their specific research questions" and research in a content domain that is guided "by one method often can be better informed by the use of multiple method" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 14).

According to the specific situation of the current research and the personal experience of the researcher, mixed methods research will be adopted for this current research. Reasons for this choice are explained as follows:

First, the research objects are human experiences, specifically the conference attendees' experience. As Leavy (2017, p. 124) has argued that the aims of qualitative methods research are to investigate the meaning in depth, the "subjective experiences" of individuals and "their meaning-making processes." This indicates that the research problem is well matched with the qualitative research aims. It is admitted that qualitative methods facilitate the researcher to obtain "rich, detailed, valid process data that usually leave the study participants' perspectives intact" (Steckler et al., 1992, p. 1). Unfortunately, qualitative research itself fails to predict the future behaviour and test or verify the correlations, or causal relationships between different variables of attendees' experience (Leavy, 2017).

Additionally, Crowther, Bostock, and Perry (2015) confirm that the nature of event phenomenon and the disciplinary progress of event studies request event researchers to consider the new methods that are “more favourable to the character of the subject matter” (p. 103). They have suggested to embrace “a plurality of methods”, adopt “multiple methods within a single study”, and liberate “multiple stakeholder voices” (Crowther et al., 2015, p. 104) in event studies.

The essential goals of this research are to measure the level of the conference attendees’ satisfaction and to predict their future behaviours, which requires the mixing or integrating the quantitative methods with the qualitative and consequently results in a better flfillment of these research objectives.

Second, the research design is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research informed by the research philosophy that inquirers have the freedom to employ any approaches deemed pertinent for collecting and analysing data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the first part of the study, respondents are interviewed, and qualitative data will be analysed by some qualitative methods, such as thematic coding, content and textual analysis; and in the second stage, a questionnaire-based survey will be conducted to collect numeric data for quantitative analysis. The paradigmatic position of the researcher and the data collection methods define this study as being mixed methods research.

Third, the research experience and techniques preparation are also the factors that direct the researcher to apply mixed methods. The researcher is familiar with the qualitative research methods following the completion of his master’s degree while he has been learning and practising quantitative research methods after the commencement of his Ph.D. journey. Also, his supervisors are experienced in both the two research methods, which firmly support the choice and implementation of the mixed methods approach.

Last but not least, the nature of event evaluation or study usually requires the employment of “a range of quantitative and qualitative methods to establish the motives, feelings, and well-being that impacted these events” (Sweeney & Goldblatt, 2016, p. 41). Data collection also involves many different methods, such as crowd counts, ethnography, semi-structured interviews, etc. Sweeney and Goldblatt (2016) also suggest that mixed methods would be “most effective” in achieving event research goals and purposes, given that the adoption of mixed methods approach to event studies is still very limited.

It was for these reasons that a mixed methods approach is adopted for exploring business event attendees' experiences and testing the correlations/relationships between different constructs and conference experience. However, no matter what type of mixed methods approach a researcher decides to select, it is important to understand the distinguishing features of quantitative and qualitative methods, and combine these methods into a coherent research project (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016; Johnson et al., 2007).

More specifically, according to the design of this research, a quantitative dominated, exploratory sequential mixed methods approach is selected. In this approach, the researcher "first begins with a qualitative research phase and explores the views of participants. The data are then analysed, and the information used to build into a second, quantitative phase. The qualitative phase may be used to build an instrument that best fits the sample under study, to identify appropriate instruments to use in the quantitative follow-up phase or to specify variables that need to go into a follow-up quantitative study" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 15).

In the research process, therefore, both qualitative and quantitative data will be displayed, interacted at the different stages. Following the principles enunciated by Fetters et al. (2013), the actual methods used for data collecting will be examined after the introduction of the selected case in next section.

Chapter 5 The Selected Case and Data Collection

5.1 The Case study approach

5.1.1 The concept and requirements

With the objective of investigating Chinese business event attendees' experience through a specific case, a case study method becomes part of the mixed methods adopted in the current research. Case study approach contains similar research designs as mixed methods, for example in embedded case studies: (1) survey within case or (2) case within survey are the two contrasting relationships formed by mixing case study method with survey (Yin & Campbell, 2018). "Survey within case" means survey is conducted under a single case study, that is to identify a case for investigation (the business event), then survey the subunits (the individual attendees) within the single case. In contrast, "case within survey" implies the survey covers multiple cases, and case study one of more cases that have been surveyed. Therefore, survey within case matches this study, in which the researcher usually adopts "holistic data collection strategies" for the main case and then employs quantitative methods (e.g., surveys) to collect data about the embedded subunits. Besides, the mixed methods allow different methods to be synthesized in one study, in which they "share the same research questions, to collect complementary data, and to conduct counterpart analyses" (Yin & Campbell, 2018, p. 70).

The case study approach has been widely adopted in many disciplines, such as psychology (Borg, 2002; Lowman & Kilburg, 2011), sociology (Simões Aelbrecht, 2016), political science (Gerring, 2004), education (Zhou & Creswell, 2012), marketing (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2006), as well as tourism and event studies (Duffy & Mair, 2018; Gu & Ryan, 2010; Xiao & Smith, 2006). The adoption resides in the nature, the applicability, and the advantages of the approach. The case study approach, as defined, is "an empirical inquiry that closely examines a contemporary phenomenon (the case) within its real-world context" (Yin, 2015, p. 194). This approach is usually adopted to have an in-depth understanding of a complex issue in a real-life context (Crowe et al., 2011). It has evolved into a twofold definition covering its scope and features (Yin & Campbell, 2018, p. 16):

> *A case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context,*

> *especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.*
>
> *A case study copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis, and as another result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion.*

This version of definition speculates the nature of the case study method in different dimensions, and points out it encompasses various modes of inquiry with "its own logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis" (Yin & Campbell, 2018, p. 16).

Moreover, Yin (2015) emphasised several points for conducting a case study approach. (1) The multiple sources of data collection. Case study research requires intensive data collection that might involve "multiple sources of evidence", since the specific inquiry depends on the combination of "direct observations in the field", "lengthy interviews with different kinds of informants", "documents and archives (e.g., media and data files)" and "quantitative sub-analysis" (p.194). In other words, the case study does not confine its data collection into a specific method, and mixed method is often used. (2) The selection of the case. Yin (2015, p. 194) specially suggests the selected case to be a "concrete entity (e.g., a person, organization, community, program, policy, practice, decision, or event), existing in a specific time and place." (3) Single case study vs. multiple-case study. With respect to the definitions, both the two types of study meet the requirements. However, whether to choose one or several cases to investigate mainly relies on the nature of the case study and the research questions. (4) Case in an actual setting. The concept of case study also requires the conduction of the research is in the real-world context, which "adds to a fuller and hopefully more accurate understanding of the case. (Yin, 2015, p. 195)"

5.1.2 The benefits and challenges

As mentioned, the choice of research method depends on the proposed research questions. Whether or not the case study is applicable, Yin and Campbell (2018, p.2) suggested when "(1) your main research questions are "how" or "why" questions, (2) you have little or no control over behavioral events, and (3) your focus of study is a contemporary (as opposed to entirely historical) phenomenon—a case," this approach is prefered.

The application of the case study aims to "understand the dynamics" of the phenomenon being investigated within a real-life context (Saunders et al., 2015). Confirming the statements of Yin and Campbell (2018), the approach allows the investigator to have "rich, empirical descriptions and the development of theory" and to identify "what is happening and why, and perhaps to understand the effects of the situation and implications for action" (Saunders et al., 2015, p.185). In the process, qualitative or quantitative research, or mixed methods are implemented to achieve the case insights and understand the dynamics.

The application of the case study approach offers the investigator the following benefits:

> *(1) Capture the complexity of a case, including relevant changes over time, and (2) attend fully to contextual conditions, including those that potentially interact with the case. However, within the evaluation field, case study research can perform an especially valuable additional function: (3) to explain how the "case," usually a planned intervention or an ongoing initiative, works. (Yin & Campbell, 2018, p. 301)*

Therefore, the case study approach is assumed to generate more complete and in-depth results of the studied phenomenon through close and deep investigation; from the longitudinal perspective, the case study also allows the researcher to understand the changes of the case/cases over time.

However, as widely recognized, the case study approach has two common challenges to its quality: credibility and generalizability. These challenges should be addressed, though not entirely dispelled, for a quality case study research, they can be reduced by certain practices (Yin, 2015). To strengthen the credibility of a case study, Yin (2015, p.199) proposed three general ways: "creating an aura of trustworthiness, dealing with concerns over validity, and striving for reliability". These proposed ways can be dealt with individually or in any combination. Trustworthiness can be reached through proving the researcher's presentation is real and fully within the field of the case under investigation, as well as showing the transparency of data collection and data analysis. Usually, validity is linked with the realist paradigm and arises when conducting explanatory instead of an exploratory case study. To improve the research validity, it is required (1) to collect credible data to support the claimed relationships; (2) to examine comparatively the main explanation and plausible rival explanations. To boost reliability, the researcher is required to collect and analyse the data consistently; to assure the reports are representing the reality or reflecting the thoughts of informants (not imagination). Triangulation is another way of improving reliability, which indicates evidence from different sources come to the same finding, thus increase the reliability.

Another challenge of case study research is lack of generalizability. Yin (2015) suggested that by making analytic generalization and focusing on generalization of "case study" instead of "case" would help to increase the generalizability of a case study. First, implementing an analytic generalization implies the findings of a case study is ready for further investigation rather than "being ready to be generalized or applied to a new situation" (p.199). Second, reducing or eliminating the confusion between "case study" and "case/cases" will better convince people of the generalizability, because the case itself is hard to generalize to others, but the abstract ideas/results generated by the case study are generalizable. In addition, findings of single extreme or unusual case study might also "reveal insights about normal processes", consequently, the value of the research can be connected to a large number of similar cases (Yin & Campbell, 2018, p. 55).

5.1.3 The case study application

After the discussion of the nature, concept, advantages and challenges of case study research, it is noted that the case study method is applicable for this current event experience study. First, the research intends to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within a real-world circumstance and to have an in-depth understanding of this complex social phenomenon (business event/experience), with the question of how the event attracts a large number of attendees annually. Second, the case is exactly a concrete entity that is a business event, though having both tangible (venue, facility, and people) and intangible components (service, experience). The Hangzhou Computing Conference can be selected as a case because of its uniqueness instead of its typicality and because the essence of case selection "must rest in the dynamic of the relationship between subject and object' and "typicality will begin and end with the dimensions by which typicality is framed" (Thomas, 2011, p. 514). Third, data for analysis would derive from multiple evidence, such as interviews, observation, historical documents, and survey, which are assumed to generate a deep and full understanding of this business event (experience).

Therefore, a single explanatory case study mixed with surveying methods can be adopted as the research method to investigate why the case event is growing successfully; along with what motivated attendees to visit; how they perceive the provided service quality;

and what relationships among the proposed constructs of the business event experience could be evidenced. In the next section, a unique business event is introduced which is not only the case for investigation, but also serves as the research background for the current study.

5.2 The Hangzhou Computing Conference

5.2.1 Brief history

Originated from an industry forum, the Hangzhou Computing Conference was initially small in size and had very limited influences. It attracted about 200 nation-wide websites' owners/designers to participate the one-day event about ten years ago.

In a few years, this business conference has evolved into a large-scale international event. For example, in 2012 the business conference attracted more than 3,000 attendees and international attendees began to participate. Therefore, together with the World Internet Conference, the World Leisure Expo, and the Westlake Expo, it has gradually become one of the landmark events in Hangzhou, China and has attracted attention both at home and abroad (facebook.com, 2017; Horwitz, 2017; Liu, 2017).

The development of this event can be elaborated in five aspects: 1) the growth of attendees; 2) alterations to the venue and its upgrading; 3) the hybridization of different types of events; 4) the level of internationalization of the event, and 5) the growing support from and the involvement of the local government.

The growing number of the attendees has been well recorded by the company and public media (People's Goverment of Zhejiang Province, 2016; XAJH, 2016; Yunzhuan, 2016). As shown in Table 5.1, except for the year 2011, from 2009 to 2017, the attendees have increased from several hundred to more than 50,000. In addition to the on-site attendees, the number of on-line visitors of the event has also increased dramatically. For example, in 2015, there were about 1.27 million on-line viewers, and it reached 15 million in 2017.

The growth in the attendance numbers, as observed and media reported, is mainly due to successful promotion, along with the content and quality operation of the conference, its national and international visibility, and the influence of the organizers (the Alibaba Group) with domestic attendees.

Table 5.1 The development of Hangzhou Computing Conference

Year	Name	Venue	Size	(Co-)Host	Event types
2009	*2009 Forum of China Local Website Development; (17/10/2009)*	Zhijiang Hotel	200+	Alibaba, Alipay, Taobao.com, PHPWind	Forum & Award
2010	*2nd Summit of China Local and Industry Websites (4-5/12/2010)*	Hangzhou Haiwaihai Int'l Conference Centre	400+	Alibaba Group; Aliyun/Alicloud PHPWind	Summit & Award
2011	*China Mobile Internet Summit (The 1st Aliyun Worldwide Developer Conference) (24/10/2011)*	Hangzhou Haiwaihai Int'l Conference Centre	1000+ 20+ prog.	Alibaba Group; Aliyun/Alicloud	Conference & Competition
2012	*Aliyun Worldwide Developer Conference (8-9/11/2012)*	Hangzhou Haiwaihai Int'l Conference Centre	3,000+ 20+ prog.	Aliyun/ Alicloud	Conference & Competition
2013	*Aliyun Worldwide Developer Conference (24/10/2013)*	Yunqi Town	3,000+ 20+ prog.	Aliyun/ Alicloud	Conference/ Competition/ Entertainment (Night of Developers)
2014	*Aliyun Worldwide Developer Conference (16/10/2014-17/10/2014)*	Yunqi Town	7,000+ 0.8m(online) International 20+ prog.	Aliyun/ Alicloud	Conference/ Competition/ Entertainment (Night of Developers)
2015	*2015 Yunqi Computing Conference (14-15/10/2015)*	International Conference Centre at Yunqi Town	22,000+ 2.2m(online) International 30+ prog.	Hangzhou Municipal Government & Alibaba Group;	Conference Exhibition Competition Music Festival
2016	*2016 Yunqi Computing Conference (13/10/2016-16/10/2016)*	International Conference Centre at Yunqi Town	40,000+ 9.6 m (online) International 100+ prog.	Hangzhou Municipal Government & Alibaba Group;	Conference Exhibition Competition Sports Events Music Festival
2017	*2017 Yunqi Computing Conference (11/10/2017-14/10/2017)*	International Conference Centre at Yunqi Town	50,000+ 15m (online) International 140+ prog.	Hangzhou Municipal Government & Alibaba Group; Ant Financial	Conference Exhibition Competition Sports Events Music Festival
2018	*2018 Yunqi Computing Conference (19-22/09/2018)*	International Conference Centre at Yunqi Town	N/A	Hangzhou Municipal Government & Alibaba Group;	Conference Exhibition Competition Sports Events Music Festival

Source: Aliyun (2017); XAJH (2016); YF Financial (2017)

The growth of the event has required the organizer to improve the level of management, and upgrade the infrastructure of venue and facilities. To fulfil these objectives, the Alibaba Group Event Management Department was established in 2013 (personal communication, July 20th, 2018) for the management and marketing of their business events. The venue of the conference was initially a hotel, then a convention centre, and finally, a specially designed venue – the Yunqi International Expo Centre was constructed by the organizer and the local government (see Figure 5.1). Though the venue is new and permanent it is far from the downtown area, which has been the subject of some complaints by attendees (www.zhihu.com, 2016). However, the venue has a larger capacity and is far more suitable for the event. In 2017, besides the conference halls that were transferred to the organizer in 2015, new buildings were added to the centre, which included the 68,000m^2 exhibition hall, and the outdoor sports venue and facilities. Therefore, the venue provides the organizer and attendees with more space and facilities to communicate and interact. More importantly, the layout and design of the new-build venue makes it possible for the organizer to integrate different types of activities into the event, such as sports event, music festival, competition etc.

Figure 5.1 The special designed venue for the Computing Conference

Source: Photo Courtesy of Aliyun (2017)

It has become a tradition for this event to hybrid different types of activities. However, the level of hybridization and the number of different types of activities integrated at the event has varied throughout different stages in its development process. As shown in Table 5.1, the first three occurrences of the event embraced the forms of forum and competitions. It appears the event successfully combined the two forms, for it not only made the whole event more attractive and participatory but also assured a growing number of attendees. In 2013, a new form of activity – Night of Developers – was added to the event, which was an entertainment event that allowed the attendees (most were website developers then) to socialize, network, relax and enjoy. This activity was developed into a music festival two years later in 2015 and this included many popular musicians and performers being invited to participate. Since 2015, the event started to hybrid more types of events because of the upgrading of the facilities and event spaces. In 2017, sustaining the traditional conference and competition, the event organizer transformed the "Night of Developers" into the "Yunqi Music Festival," and extended the exhibition area. This has changed the event from a typical business forum to a "carnival-style" business event (YF Financial, 2017). This has been enhanced over the years by adding sports events and a "logo badge collection" which encourages attendees, especially the buyers, to interact with exhibitors and to explore more exhibitors.

The practices of integrating different entertaining events into a business event could be partially explained by "festivalization" that refers to the process of exploitation or utilisation of cultural events in modern cities to create a festive and exciting environment (Duffy & Mair, 2018; Getz, 2008). Hence many cities are "using culture, entertainment, and urban amenities to…enhance their locations – for present and future residents, tourists, conventioneers, and shoppers" (Clark, 2004, p. 1), and creating places of "fun" and "meaning" (Oliver & Raney, 2011). Therefore, the practices of integrating entertainment activities into a business event sought to make the event and its environment more enjoyable, interactive, and exciting, thus creating memorable event experiences.

Another dimension to the event's development is internationalization. Given the discussions as to what constitutes a globally international conference, Chinese governmental policies or regulations have specified the criteria for an international conference (Ministry of Finance of PRC, 2012). In these documents, international conference refers to a conference, forum, seminar, symposium etc. hosted in mainland

China (Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan not included) where the attendees are from three or more different countries or regions (attendees from Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan are not counted). Conferences are of three types:

- the conference hosted by local Chinese entities or central governmental bodies;
- the annual conference, assembly and other conferences co-hosted by the Chinese organizers mentioned and international organizations/foreign entities/agencies;
- various types of conferences organized by international organizations/ foreign entities and agencies independently (Ministry of Finance of PRC, 2012; The Chinese Academy of Sciences, 2017).

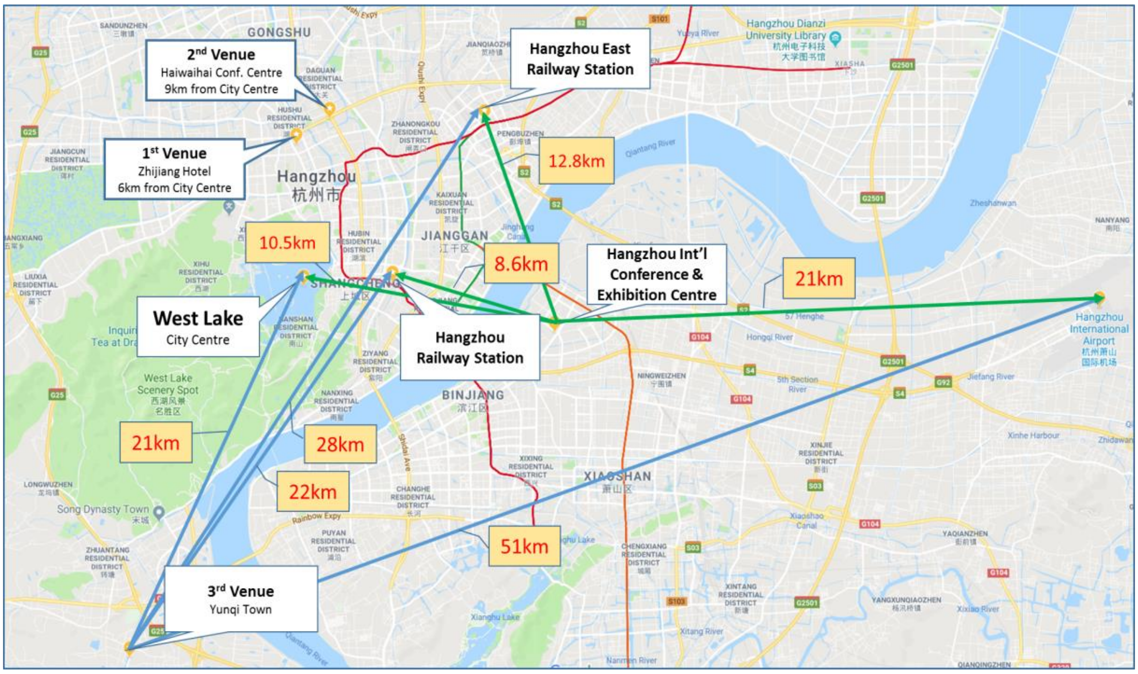
According to this definition or interpretation, the case conference falls into the first category. However, at the outset of its development, it could be observed that the event was primarily a local event until 2014 after which attendees from other countries started to increase. One possible reason is Alibaba Group “went public” in New York on May 6th in 2014, which significantly increased its international visibility and influence (Consumer News and Business Channel, 2014). Since then, more and more attendees abroad have invested time and money to join the conference. In 2017, Xinhuanet (2017) reported that there were several thousand delegates attended the conference, who were from 67 different countries and regions. Therefore, the event is becoming an international event, either in line with the criteria of China or most of the standards of international event organizations (Ministry of Finance of PRC, 2012; UIA, 2016).

Last but not least, is the growing support from the local government. The Hangzhou local government has supported the event industry from as early as 2000 when it restored the Westlake Expo area created in 1929. Those policies favouring the event industry have been continued, and Tang (2011) reported that Hangzhou has become one of the more popular international conference destinations in China. The local government has emphasised the importance of the event industry’s contribution to urban development and internationalization (Hangzhou Municipal Government, 2016b). These policies have resulted in significant investment in infrastructure. The International Conference Centre of Yunqi Town is one of the examples (Figure 5.2).

Consequently, under the supervision of the provincial government, the Hangzhou municipal government started to co-host the event with the Alibaba Group from 2015, indicating the strong support from the different levels of local governments (People's

Goverment of Zhejiang Province, 2016). This support is also evidenced by the presence of and speeches delivered by mayors and governors at the conference. The efforts of the local government and local professional conference organizers (PCOs) have earned the city many event destination awards, among them one of the most important would be winning the hosting right to the G20 Hangzhou Summit in 2016, which further improved the international visibility of the city and marketed its event resources to the global community (Li, 2017).

Figure 5.2 The Alternation of event venues and distance to transport centres



Source: Designed on the map Hangzhou
https://www.google.co.nz/maps/place/Hangzhou,+Zhejiang,+China/

5.2.2 The Hangzhou Computing Conference

Reviewing the hybridizing practices of the event organizers, it is noted that the types of activities encompassed at this event ceased to grow in 2016. The hybridized activities include a conference, exhibition, developers' competition, music festival, and sports events. Since 2016, the organizers may have concluded that including more types of events would not lead to greater attendee satisfaction. Therefore, for three years, from 2016 to 2018, the event has sustained the same types of activities although the content of each activity has been enriched. For example, the music festival was a one-night activity initially, while in the second year, it became a three-night activity and more celebrities/singers/performers were invited. It is the same case for other activities, conference, exhibition, sports events and competitions (refer to Table 3.1). In 2017, the event hybridized five different types of activities: conference (140+ sessions), exhibition (400+ exhibitors), competitions (AI and Developer), a music festival (three-night event), and sports events (three different activities).

Besides integrating different types of activities, another dimension to the hybrid event is the virtual and face-to-face conference. The combination of these two forms has contributed greatly to the success of the event, especially as the virtual techniques are becoming increasingly advanced and sophisticated (Fryatt, Mora, Janssen, John, & Smith, 2012; Sox, Crews, & Kline, 2014). As shown previously in Table 5.1, the first time a virtual conferencing through online live streaming technique was held in 2014, the event attracted 880,000 on-line visitors. In subsequent years the number of on-line visitors kept increasing and reached 15 million in 2017. Together with the F2F attendance on-site, the event has made itself a "top technological event" in the world (Aliyun, 2017). However, this dimension of "hybrid event" is not in the scope of the research, and the focus is on integrating different types of events into a business event.

Both the local public and governments are gratified by the growth and success of the event, which is thought to bring many benefits to the local community from many different perspectives in ways described by various researchers (Gursoy, Kim, & Uysal, 2004; Hanly, 2012; Kim & Petrick, 2005; Yolal, Gursoy, Uysal, Kim, & Karacaoğlu, 2016). However, events may also cause problems due to a high volume of people and consequent high demand for food, accommodation, transportation and leisure activities. Therefore, previous studies have indicated that event organizers, especially for mega events, should emphasize event legacy management, investment efficiency, environmental pressure, potential crimes etc. (Andranovich, Burbank, & Heying, 2001; Baker, 2009; Mair & Jago, 2010; Mair & Laing, 2012; Ryan, 2002).

In conclusion, the selection of this business event as the case to study is subjective to its fast growth, great success in attracting attendees, satisfying different stakeholders, more importantly, its uniqueness and innovative operations. The study of this business event will add knowledge to the existing literature from the perpspectives of knowing Chinese business event consumers, softening of business atmosphere at a business event, as well as considering the business conference as a Third Place for the attendees and provide an new perspective to understand this phenomenon.

5.3 Research design

The knowledge of research paradigms and the information about the specific case pave the road for the research design. To design a research, a researcher needs to identify the "methods and means" to adopt for data collection and analysis (Habib, Pathik, Maryam, & Habib, 2014). It is also considered as a roadmap that signposts the research procedures, such as "designing, compiling, and analysing of information through the conceptual model, variables, and construction of the questionnaire" (Habib et al., 2014, p. 16).

As justified previously, a mixed methods approach was employed because it respects and values both qualitative and quantitative types of research. As a research method, it depends on "combining deductive and inductive designs to generate both quantitative and qualitative data," and "integrating the datasets in some way" (Leavy, 2017, p. 164).

Johnson et al. (2007) have classified mixed methods research into three types: a) "pure" mixed method research, b) qualitative dominant mixed methods research, and c) quantitative dominant mixed methods research (p.123). Reflecting the research problems and means of data collection and analysis, the last type of mixed methods approach is well-matched with this research. Johnson et al. (2007) define this type of mixed methods approach as follows:

> *Quantitative dominant mixed methods research is the type of mixed research in which one relies on a quantitative, post-positivist view of the research process, while concurrently recognizing that the addition of qualitative data and approaches are likely to benefit most research projects (p.124).*

Therefore, in this design, qualitative research is conducted in the first phase, and the findings of qualitative research provide a basis for instrument development in the second phase and then used the instrument to measure/test relationships to a sample (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Edmonds and Kennedy (2016) agree with the description about "exploratory-sequential approach" and further divide the exploratory sequential mixed methods design into the "instrument-development" design, the "theory-development" design, and the "treatment-development" design (p. 202). According to their explanations of these designs, the "instrument-development" design is more applicable to the current research situation, which is illustrated in Figure 5.3:

The instrument-development design is often QUAN emphasized and provides a framework for the researcher to first develop and then test (psychometrically) an instrument on a specific population. With this design, the researcher uses the qualitative results to help construct the instrument and validates the instrument during the subsequent quantitative phase. Either the qualitative or quantitative data (or both equally) may be the primary emphasis of the study (p.202).

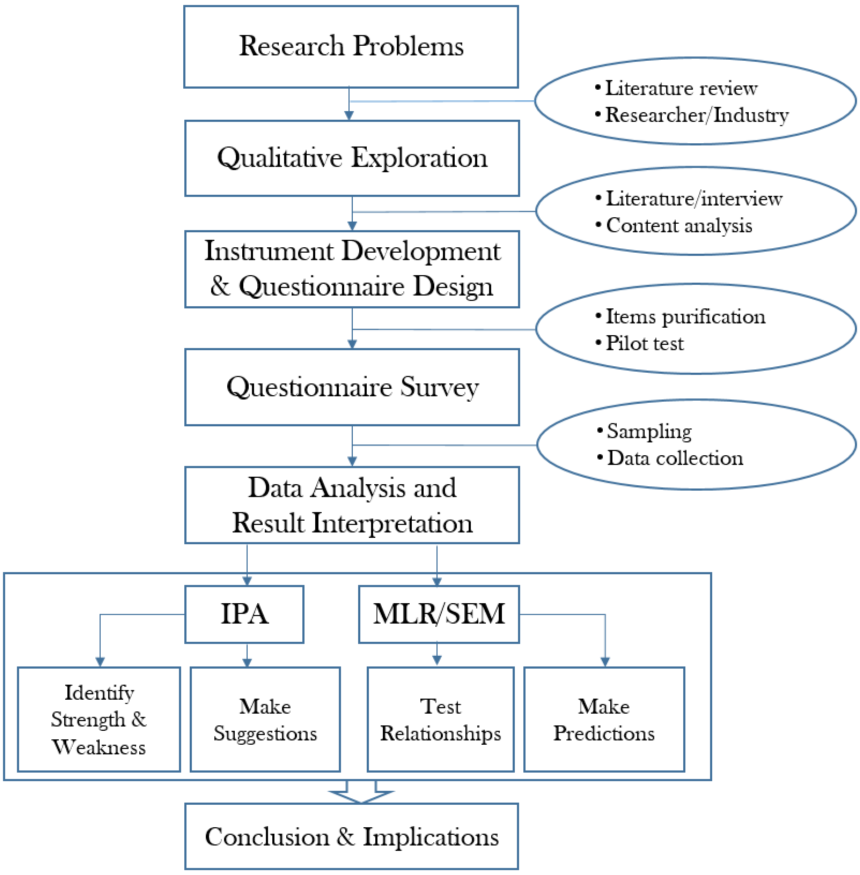
Figure 5.3 Exploratory-sequential mixed methods: Instrument-Development Design

Source: Designed after Edmonds and Kennedy (2016, p. 203), Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 218)

This diagram of instrument-development design is the fundamental basis for illustrating the current research process and establishing the different stages of this research (Figure 5.4), displaying a qualitative study is conducted before the implementation of the quantitative survey, which is supposed to contribute to the understanding of the nature of the business event and facilitate the subsequent development of a scale to evaluate the business event experience. The quantitative data is analysed by applying IPA, MLR and SEM approaches with the purpose of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the conference product, measuring the impacts of different factors on attendees' satisfaction, and investigating the relationships between the conference constructs and the event experiences. Finally, data will be interpreted and reported, and conclusions/implications are proposed for the business event industry.

Similar to the research framework, Figure 5.4 not only shows the simplified structure of this study but also indicates the specific stages/steps for the researcher to follow. The process of the research specifically includes the following eight stages: identify research question; explore the nature and motivations qualitatively; analyse qualitative data; develop the measurement scale and design the survey questionnarie; quantitative data collection; quantitative data analysis; report and interpret the research results; and conclude or summarise the research through discussions of the contributions, implications, as well as limitations.

Figure 5.4 Research process and stages



The mixed methods approach is therefore applicable in these stages because the results of qualitative studies assist the design the quantitative research instruments; the qualitative findings are further verified in the measurement of the event experience; and finally, the two approaches are integrated in the stages of data interpretation and disccusion. Additionally, the questionnaire itself incorporates open-ended questions to retrieve additional textual based data.

5.4 Data collection

To collect research data or information, researchers usually follow the following steps: "setting the boundaries for the study through sampling and recruitment, collecting information through unstructured or semi-structured observations and interviews, documents, and visual materials; as well as establishing the protocol for recording information" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 185). As for the specific methods for collecting data, Jennings (2010) suggests that interviews, participant observation, focus groups, case studies, documentary methods, visual methods, etc. are popular methods for qualitative data collection, while questionnaires are a typical method for quantitative data collection.

However, the choice of the methods for data collection depends on their “strengths and weakness, cost, data availability, and convenience” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 149). Such an observation implicitly emphasises that sampling and respondents’ recruitment are the starting point of the data collection.

5.4.1 Research Sampling

5.4.1.1 Introduction of sampling

This section commences with a brief explanation of sampling methods as an introduction to the modes of sampling adopted and the reasons for those methods being used in the study. Sampling is interpreted as the first step in studying the subjects in any specific research project (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; G. Jennings, 2010; Leavy, 2017). The population being targeted was all the attendees who attended the 2017 Hangzhou Computing Conference. The sample comprised a selection of on-site and on-line surveyed respondents during the conference.

According to G. Jennings (2010), the reasons for sampling are due to the potential factors: the population is too large to study, insufficient human resources for research, a limited and insufficient financial budget, and insufficient time for collecting all data. Sampling techniques allow the researcher to “reduce the amount of data” that one is supposed to collect (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 272), as well as the time required and also expenditures. However, the reduction of data amount implies “more time can be spent designing and piloting the means of collecting these data”, exploration of more detailed information collection, the employment of “higher-quality staff”, and consideration about data collection “from more difficult to reach cases” (Saunders et al., 2015, p.274).

Usually, researchers choose from the two coexisting types of sampling methods, namely random sampling, in which “each individual in the population has an equal probability of being selected (a systematic or probabilistic sample)”; and “nonprobability sample (or convenience sample), in which respondents are chosen based on their convenience and availability” (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p.150).

Researchers tend to agree that, in general, probability (random) sampling is associated with quantitative research and non-probability (non-random) sampling is suitable in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014; G. Jennings, 2010; Suri, 2011; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Random sampling embraces a number of sampling approaches: simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified random sampling, and cluster sampling, whereas non-random sampling includes convenience sampling, purposeful sampling, snowball sampling, expert sampling, and quota sampling (G. Jennings, 2010; Leavy, 2017; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). However, it is agreed that non-random sampling is also applicable to quantitative studies for the reasons provided by Saunders et al. (2015) noted above.

Nonetheless, Given (2008) believes that there is a dichotomy of sampling with probability at one end, and purposive at the other, and hence mixed method sampling lies somewhere between the two ends to form a "Purposive-Mixed-Probability Sampling Continuum" (Given, 2008, p. 84). Mixed method sampling allows researchers to creatively integrate these techniques to meet the research goals and answer the research questions.

5.4.1.2 Sampling techniques adopted

With the overall purpose of generating "a sample that will address research questions" (Given, 2008, p. 86), this study adopted maximum variation sampling with qualitative inquiry process, while in quantitative part purposive and cluster sampling are integrated at different stages in the research.

Qualitative study sampling

Six types of purposive sampling methods exist (typical case sampling, extreme or deviant case sampling, intensity sampling, maximum variation sampling, homogeneous sampling, and reputational sampling) for achieving representativeness or comparability (Given, 2008, p. 82), maximum variation sampling is selected to increase the variety of the respondents which is supposed to generate richer information from their personal conference attending experience.

The necessary criteria for sampling the qualitative research respondents were:

- anyone who has attended a business conference in the past three years
- anyone who would like to share his/her experience
- anyone who agrees to participate in the research and be recorded

Based on these rules, the researcher also combined convenience and snowball sampling to identify and select the qualitative respondents. Starting with the friends who meet the criteria of convenience sampling, snowball sampling was then employed to reach more potential respondents. However, to increase the variety of the respondents from the perspective of gender, career level, conference experience, and nationality, the researcher intentionally choose the potential samples from different backgrounds. By these steps, the collected information aims to add more items to the evaluation scale and facilitates the design of survey questionnaire.

There were no clearly established standards for how large the interview sample should be to generate trustworthy results. Saturation is a commonly used indicator of sufficient sample size in non-random sampling. Saturation is "the point when you have heard the range of ideas and aren't getting new information," or the situation occurs "when there is redundancy in regard to information" (Given, 2008, p. 87; G. Jennings, 2010, p. 149). Saunders et al. (2015, p. 297) suggest that for semi-structured/in-depth interviews, sample sizes from 5 to 25 will serve the purpose of qualitative research.

Quantitative study sampling

Differing from non-random sampling, random sampling "is planned to select a large number of cases that are collectively representative of the population of interest" (Given, 2008, p. 83). For random sampling, selections are made from the following approaches: simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified random sampling, and cluster sampling. Because of the unique characteristics of the research subject, the situation of the sampling site, the limitations of time, budget and human resources, the researcher choose cluster sampling for data collection. It is also confirmed that cluster sampling enables the researcher to generate a more efficient sample with limited resources, which takes geographical cluster/group instead of individual as sampling unit (Given, 2008; Jennings, 2010; Saunders et al., 2015).

The study is about conference experience satisfaction at the 2017 Hangzhou Yunqi Conference. Research design espouses a face-to-face questionnaire delivery to survey the attendees with a loosely implemented random sampling. A sample is required because there are more than 50,000 attendees in total at the four-day event, and it is not possible to survey everyone in the limited time with a small number of people collecting data.

A further complication is that there were more than two entrances; each entrance had more than five lanes to enter the event, which makes the survey difficult if following traditional random sampling. Therefore, cluster-style sampling was used whereby the researcher and assistants survey the necessary areas where attendees usually cluster, for example in the rest area, the conference room, the dining area. One complicating factor was that attendees were present at different times in different areas. For instance, there were often no attendees in the dining area beyond the dining time. Within this circumstance, a USIM (user stationary, interviewer mobile) method of sampling (Veal & Burton, 2014, p. 327) was used to survey the attendees in different areas at different times. Usually, researchers survey randomly in the clusters. However, for this study, the researcher decided to survey all accessible respondents in the clusters. Since attendees choose which dining area to eat, and which area to rest, as well as which seminar to join or exhibition stands to visit, this then is a self-selecting sample. Therefore this way of sampling sustains the high level of representation and generalisability. Tests of sample size are reported in the following chapters reporting statistical findings.

5.4.2 Qualitative data collection

5.4.2.1 Data collection methods

To collect rich and good-quality data at the stage of the qualitative study, a semi-structured interview approach was employed in this research. As for the specific modes of semi-structured interviews, both internet-based audio interviews and face-to-face interviews were conducted.

Researchers claim that there are two reasons for the employment of semi-structured interview method to collect qualitative data (Bamball & While, 1994, p. 330):

> *First, they are well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers.*
>
> *Second, the varied professional, educational and personal histories of the sample group precluded the use of a standardized interview schedule.*

In this case, it was also thought that the subject of "experience" is complex and perhaps sensitive, and attendees' backgrounds were often diverse. This was thought to inhibit the usefulness of a standardized interview. For example, some respondents are top managers with a rich experience of attending conferences, while others occupy a junior level position with limited conference attendance experience. Thus, the semi-structured interview is more suitable for it gives the researcher some freedom to reword each question, as well as the ability to probe further when required (Hutchinson & Wilson, 1992). More importantly, probing serves as an "invaluable tool for ensuring reliability of the data" (Bamball & While, 1994, p. 331). Specifically, it is concluded that probing provides the chance for researcher 1) to clarify the interesting and relevant questions proposed by interviewees, 2) to explore sensitive issues, 3) to elicit valuable and complete information, 4) to check the inconsistencies, and for interviewees 5) to recall information in the questions (p.331). Another benefit of using probing is to increase opportunities for interaction between the interviewer and interviewees to form a rapport and lower the risk of socially desirable answers.

Four different modes of the semi-structured interview are commonly used, namely face-to-face, telephone, email and MSN messenger (Opdenakker, 2006). For this study face-to-face and internet-based audio interviews were used, and both have similarities in that the interviewer initiates the agendas for discussion. Opdenakker (2006, p. 7) stresses the advantages of a face-to-face interview, which provides "social cues" to assist communication, such as voice, intonation, facial expressions and body language and "give the interviewer a lot of extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee."

The use of internet-based audio interviews has been questioned as to what extent does this enable the interviewer to collect rich and quality data? Responding to these criticisms, Irvine, Drew, and Sainsbury (2013, p. 88) argue that a) the level of importance of non-verbal information varies in different types of research; b) the modes saves time and travel costs and generates greater anonymity around sensitive topics; c) people are well-used to the way of communicating by telephone both in informal and formal settings. Eventually, some sceptical voices are silenced because "rapport" can be achieved by internet-based audio interviews (Stephens, 2007), especially given today the greater use of video in smartphone communications.

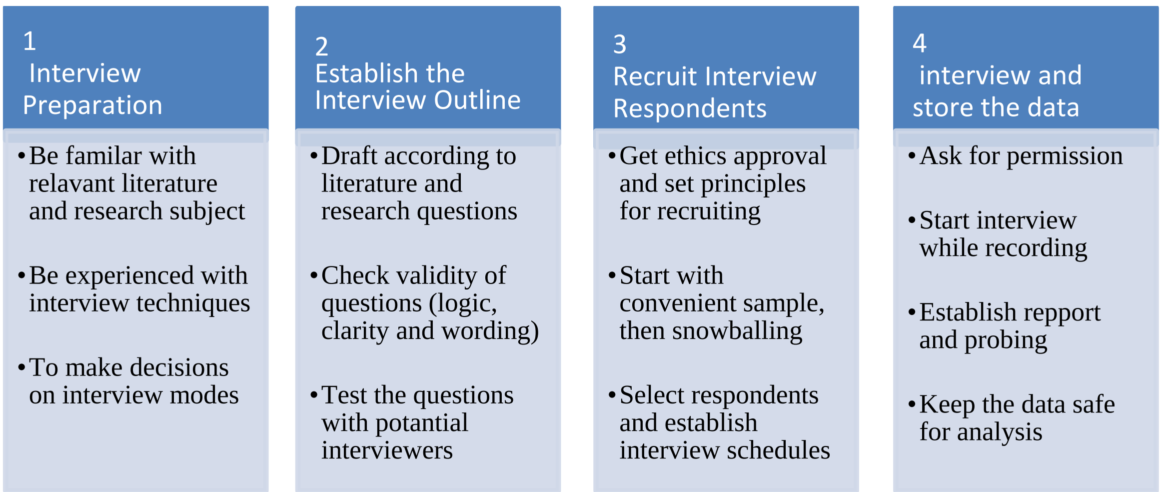
To assure the quality and reliability of the collected data, Irvine et al. (2013, p. 88) suggest that more responsive inputs or interactions of researcher create a better quality of information. For the same purpose, Lazarsfeld (1954) advocates that interview questions should comply with the three principles: 1) specification, which refers to the focus of each question; 2) division, which defines the appropriate sequence and wording of questions;

and 3) tacit assumption, which assists the comprehension of the true/hidden meanings behind the interviewees’ answers. In addition, Bamball and While (1994, p. 332) argue that “interviewer friendliness, approach, and manner towards respondents” will facilitate significantly in “securing validity and reliability of the data,” which indicates that the quality of the interview data is largely relying on the skills and qualifications of interviewers.

5.4.2.2 Qualitative data collecting process

The selection of the data collection methods sets the rules for the data collection process. First, the semi-structured interview requires the researcher to be familiar with the research area and to be experienced in interviewing techniques (Irvine et al., 2013). Usually, previous literature allows the inquirer to obtain the knowledge of the research themes, as well as the techniques needed for data collection. The following step is to design or establish the outline questions for the semi-structured interview. Questions should be in line with the criteria proposed by Lazarsfeld (1954); meanwhile, researchers should be allowed to probe new and emerging issues during the interview. The third stage is to recruit respondents and make appointments with them to conduct the interviews. Then, the recorded interviews are stored and sorted out, which allows researchers to process and analyse information in the near future. The brief process of data collection is illustrated in Figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5 The process of semi-structured interview



5.4.2.3 Qualitative data collecting results

Following the interview process, after the literature review, an outline of questions and responses was constructed (see Table 5.2). In general, 17 questions are listed in the outline, and probing questions elicited fuller answers. It is noted that several questions and responses reflected criteria pertaining to the notion of Third Places, e.g. criteria like "neutral ground", "leveller", "low profile" etc., and respondents' views on speaker and staff referred "conversation" and "accessibility". More importantly, further probing explored feelings about extra-event activities, which explain whether the attendees consider the business event as a "playful place".

Table 5.2 Outline of semi-structured interview questions

1	When did you attend the last business conference? Name, location, venue type, duration?
2	Would you please name the reasons/purposes for attending the conference?
3	What do you expect from the conference? Did the conference meet your expectation?
4	If the experience starts from the intension of attendance to the end of the conference, how do you think of the conference experience in general?
5	Did the conference require fees for registration? Price Value? Payment?
6	How do you think of the conference venue? (conference centre /hotel)
7	Where did you stay during the conference? How do you like the accommodation?
8	How do you comment on the conference organization process? Recall schedule.
9	How do you like the way of communication? What methods for communication?
10	How do you think of the keynote speakers?
11	How do you think of local citizens/staff/volunteers?
12	Did you enjoy the attendance at the conference?
13	What impacts does this conference have on your life/work?
14	Will you attend the conference again? Recommend/share/discuss?
15	If you are not going to attend a conference, what could be the reasons?
16	Would you please tell me your position/size of your company (team)/ years in the field?
17	The best conference and worst conference you have attended.

Before conducting the interviews, a two-stage ethics application was made to the Waikato Management School Ethics Committee: the first stage relating to the qualitative component and the second for the survey once the final questionnaire was created. To protect the privacy of the respondents, their names, company names were not required. Given the principles for recruiting respondents included anyone attending the Computer Conference who possessed an interest in business conferencing, the research focus meant the larger proportion of participants are Chinese, but others were recruited to generate items 1) that may be missed or omitted by Chinese respondents, and 2) that may be useful and valuable for the international attendees.

A total of 28 respondents were recruited and interviewed, of whom 17 were Chinese, and the remainder were non-Chinese nationals. Interviews were conducted in Chinese and English over two months from May 9th to July 10th, 2017 in New Zealand. Some of the interviews were conducted face to face; for others that were hard to reach or schedule a meeting, interviews were completed by on-line media.

Several repetitions of responses began to emerge within the first several interviews; however new items kept increasing with the growing number of interviewees. From the 20th respondent onward, new items appeared occasionally and then another eight interviews were conducted for further confirmation of sample saturation. It was noted that when several English-speaking respondents from different nations were included, their answers generated very limited new information, and new items ceased to emerge in the last few interviews. Therefore, the sample size achieved saturation.

While conducting the interview, the conversations were recorded by multi-media devices with the permission of the interviewees. These recordings were saved on the hard disk of a university computer and password protected.

5.4.3 Quantitative data collection

5.4.3.1 The design of the questionnaire

The first stage was to create an evaluation scale, which is then embedded into a subsequent questionnaire. Guidelines for scale development have been recommended by researchers (Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 1991). The process usually involves the following steps: 1) to generate initial items; 2) to screen and refine the items using expert panels; 3) to pre-test the items for purification; 4) to finalize the scale; and 5) to conduct a field survey for validation (Shilpa & Rajnish, 2013).

Scale generation and initial purification. The scale items are mainly derived from two resources: prior literature (e.g.,Geus et al., 2015; Jago & Deery, 2005; Jung & Tanford, 2017; Lee et al., 2015; Mair, 2013b; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Rogers, 2013; Wu & Weber, 2005) and 28 semi-structured in-depth interviews.

To establish the initial items pool, the researcher started with a literature review to identify and define the constructs and items that exert influences on the attendees' conference attendance experience. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, event experience refers to the process of interaction between event attendees and the elements of the event environment that involves “multiple experiential elements and outputs” at different event stages (Geus et al., 2015, p. 277). Therefore, the attributes/items related to the business event destination, venue, organization, speakers, accommodation, food service, engagement, and ICT (Internet communication techniques) are considered for inclusion to form the scale, and which reflect the concept of business events and Third Places.

In order to increase the items that are important for the business event attendees in their event consumption process, the initial scale is trying to be more inclusive. The major principles for the selection of these items are: 1) items used by previous event studies, especially business event studies; 2) items that are of importance for the attendees to experience the event; 3) the items discovered from qualitative inquiry. Therefore, the items related to different dimensions of business event (for here the conference) and perceived by consumers as important for their attendance are mainly derived from the existing literature, yet qualitative inquiry also contributes some unique items for the scale (see Appendix 5.1) which resulted in 79 items for measuring different conference dimensions, as well as 10 items for satisfaction evaluation, 89 items in total.

As shown in Appendix 5.1, the items emerging from the interviews are largely overlapped with those from the previous studies (see section 6.4). The different items that are not well covered previously are mainly concentrated on food service at the event (location, service, price, diversity); speakers (reputation, presentation skill, quality of content, reachable); importance of entertainment activities (as ancillary activities), follow-ups, and the destination as a headquarter of a renowned company (organizer). Therefore, the attendees will interact with the items that are perceived important to them within the event environment (Pettersson & Getz, 2009) which reflects their event experiences.

The initial items pool was sent to four experts (including the supervisors of the researcher) who have domain knowledge of event and tourism experience to assess the appropriateness and importance of these items for measuring the specified content. Under each dimension, the items are supporting the theme or content, with not many changes; however, the deleted or merged items are those with repeated meanings, and thought to be not important for or irrelevant to the business conference. After the process of content validation, the initial items were reduced to 35 (including 10 items for satisfaction evaluation), which serve as the scale to measure the conference attributes (see Table 5.3).

The 25 items were reworded respectively for creating the scale to measure the perceived "importance" and "performance" of the attributes/items by the attendees; meanwhile, the 10 items for satisfaction remain unchanged. For example, in the "importance" scale the attractiveness of the destination is expressed more in general as "The attractiveness of the host city"; but in the "performance" scale, this item is reworded as "I felt Hangzhou is an attractive city" which is more specific for them to evaluate.

Scale refinement and validation. To refine and validate the scale, a pilot test before the data collection is usually conducted. However, this was not applicable in this study, because the selected conference is organized annually in the middle of October and there is no time for the researcher to conduct a pilot test before the commencement of the conference. As the questions were drawn from previous research (see Table 5.3) they are considered to be valid although they are applied in different studies. Additionally, the quality of the scale has been checked and content validated by the experienced panellists. The scale was refined and validated with the collected data, and the final analysis was implemented with the refined scale instead of the original one.

Table 5.3 The Purified the Scale Items with Content Validity

Important Dimensions	Items	References
Destination (3 Items)	I felt the destination is an attractive city.	Oppermann and Chon (1997); Var, Cesario, and Mauser (1985); Jago and Deery (2005); Kim and Malek (2017); Yoo and Chon (2008);
	There were plentiful flights/trains to & from the city.	Jago and Deery (2005); Mair and Thompson (2009); Severt et al. (2007); Oppermann (1996); Jago and Deery (2005); Ryu and Lee (2013);
	Destination provides various activities for recreation, visit and shopping.	Severt et al. (2007); Rogers (2013); Lee and Min (2013a); Jago and Deery (2005); Jago and Deery (2005); Yoo and Chon (2008); Severt et al. (2007); Oppermann and Chon (1997); Zhang et al. (2007);
Accommodations (3 Items)	The hotel staff provided a responsive service.	Jago and Deery (2005);
	I felt the hotel rooms offered good value for money.	Jago and Deery (2005); Lee and Fenich (2016)
	My hotel offered easy access to the conference venue.	Crouch & Ritchie(1997); Lee and Fenich (2016)
Dinning Places (3 Items)	I thought the restaurants offered good quality food.	Jago and Deery (2005); Westwood et al. (2018); Yoon et al. (2010); Wei and Huang (2013)
	I thought the restaurant staff were responsive in the service.	Getz et al. (2001); Yoon et al. (2010); Wei and Huang (2013)
	I thought the cost of the meals offered me good value for money.	Jago and Deery (2005); Westwood et al. (2018); Yoon et al. (2010);
Conference Management (7 Items)	I was pleased with the conference opportunities for professional networking.	Jago and Deery (2005); Mair and Thompson (2009); Severt et al. (2007);Lee and Min (2013a); Kim and Malek (2017); Westwood et al. (2018); Yoo and Chon (2008); van Riper et al. (2013)
	I was pleased to be able to catch up with friends and colleagues.	Geus et al. (2015); Lee and Min (2013a); Yoo and Chon (2008); Severt et al. (2007)
	I thought the conference had high quality content.	Geus et al. (2015); Severt et al. (2007); Kim and Malek (2017); Yoo and Chon (2008)
	I felt I was better able to keep up with industry trends though this conference.	Mair and Thompson (2009); Lee and Min (2013a); Kim and Malek (2017); Westwood et al. (2018); Severt et al. (2007)
	The social functions (e.g. concert, night run) pleased me.	Jago and Deery (2005); Mair and Thompson (2009); Severt et al. (2007); Mitchell et al. (2016)

	I felt there were opportunities to find new business partners.	Mair and Thompson (2009); Lee and Min (2013a); Mitchell et al. (2016); Yoo and Chon (2008); Severt et al. (2007); van Riper et al. (2013)
	The conference was a welcome break from my regular work.	Geus et al. (2015); Mitchell et al. (2016); Westwood et al. (2018); Severt et al. (2007);
	The organizers have prompt after-conference following-ups.	Mitchell et al. (2016); Interview (CHN7; CHN13)
Speakers (3 Items)	I thought the key speaker(s) had interesting things to say.	Geus et al. (2015); Mitchell et al. (2016);
	I felt the key speaker(s) had good presentation skills.	Mitchell et al. (2016)
	I believe the key speakers have a high reputation.	Yoo and Chon (2008); Interviews (CHN3; CHN10)
Conference Venue (3 Items)	The conference venue provided well-functioning facilities.	Getz et al. (2001); Rogers (2013); Robinson and Callan (2005); Wu and Weber (2005); Kim and Malek (2017); Ryu and Lee (2013);
	The conference venue was easy to access and close to transport centres (Airport/Station).	Jin et al. (2013); Rosenbaum and Wong (2009); (Lee & Kim, 2008); Ryu and Lee (2013);
	The conference venue had clear/effective signage.	Getz et al. (2001); Rosenbaum and Wong (2009); Yoon et al. (2010);
ICT Application (2 Items)	The conference app/website was user friendly.	Hudson and Hudson (2013)
	WIFI was fast and stable during the conference.	Jin et al. (2013); Weber and Ladkin (2003)

Satisfaction (10 Items)	I believe this conference offered value for money.	Kim and Malek (2017); Yoon et al. (2010); Severt et al. (2007); Ryu and Lee (2013);
	I was satisfied with this conference.	Kim and Malek (2017); Yoon et al. (2010); Ryu and Lee (2013);
	I increased my understanding of knowledge, concepts, and trends.	Geus et al. (2015); Yoo and Chon (2008);
	Attending this conference was pleasurable.	Kim and Malek (2017); Mitchell et al. (2016); Yoon et al. (2010);
	Attending the conference increased the sense of belonging.	Ryu and Lee (2013); van Riper et al. (2013);Duffy and Mair (2018); Ryu and Lee (2013);
	Attending the conference expanded my business networks.	Kim and Malek (2017); Mitchell et al. (2016); van Riper et al. (2013);
	I will share my conference experience on my social media.	Geus et al. (2015); Mitchell et al. (2016); Yoon et al. (2010);
	I will employ the learned skills/knowledge in my jobs/life.	Kim and Malek (2017); Yoon et al. (2010);
	I will encourage colleagues and others to attend this conference.	Kim and Malek (2017); Mitchell et al. (2016); Yoon et al. (2010); Ryu and Lee (2013);
	I am willing to attend this conference next time.	Mitchell et al. (2016); Westwood et al. (2018); Yoon et al. (2010); Ryu and Lee (2013);

The final questionnaire employed for data collection includes five parts: 1) the perceived importance of conference attributes (importance scale 25 items); 2) the performance of those identical attributes (performance scale 25 items); 3) the previous experience of attendees (9 questions); 4) satisfaction (10 items); and 5) demographic information (8 questions). There are 80 questions all together in this questionnaire, 75 close-ended questions and 5 open-ended questions (see Appendix 5.2 Questionnaire). The importance, performance and satisfaction scales are measured with a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (extremely unimportant/disagree) to 7 (extremely important/agree), because of its superior convergent and discriminant validity (Maddox, 1985). The data collection process is reported in the next section and the specific analyses are shown in the multinomial logistic analysis section. Similarly tests of data reliability are also reported in the chapters reporting the statistical analysis.

5.4.3.2 Quantitative data collection Process

The process of quantitative data collection required identifying the sample to survey, the permission of the organizers to undertake the survey, the delivery and collection of the questionnaires, the data input to analytical software, and the proper storage and protection of the collected data.

It has been noted that the target population of this research are the attendees of a large-scale hybrid conference in Hangzhou, China. Therefore, the sample is the attendees that randomly appear at some designated survey areas. Business conferences differ from academic events at which organizers and attendees are more supportive for research; it is difficult to persuade the organizers to officially accept the survey and to obtain support from attendees who are time-conscious and business-oriented. However, the recognition by conference organisers and institutional recognition of the survey at the conference was thought important to increase the response rate to the survey. Thus, a crucial task was to obtain permission from conference management. Fortunately, with the support and assistance of friends and colleagues, the survey was approved by the organizer a few days before the opening of the conference. With their approval, the researcher and the research assistants were allowed to survey on-site, and posters were permitted to be posted at the information centre that identified the survey as a legitimate part of the conference.

The collection of data was conducted by the researcher with the support of one of the supervisors with a number of assistants who were trained a week prior to the opening of the conference. These people were made aware of the research topic and the content of questionnaires, and possessed the skills of approaching and encouraging respondents. Traditionally, a self-completion questionnaire has a low response rate (Jennings, 2010), yet nonetheless assistants are requested to track respondents and the numbers of non-respondents, and to provide explanations and encouragement when necessary. In addition, an on-line survey was also conducted, thereby permitting respondents to have another means of participation if they wished. Small incentives provided by organizers consistent with Chinese custom were also provided to attract respondents and assure the return of the surveys. One category of the incentives are small note-books or pens which might be used during the conference; another type is the conference badge with its logo, which was very popular among the attendees (half the number of these badges were donated by organizer, the rest were bought by the researcher).

5.4.3.3 Quantitative data collection results

During the conference, 1450 paper-style questionnaires were delivered to the conference site, and 1362 were returned; the initial response rate was 95%. Nevertheless, the actual number used for analysis was 1122, that is, 240 were excluded due to incomplete information or the respondent was a student-attendee identity. In addition, 202 on-line surveys were completed. Consequently, there a total of 1324 actual survey forms that were prepared for data analysis. The data were input into the software (SPSS) after the completion of data collection.

5.4.4 Data analysis techniques

Numerous techniques can be used to analyse both qualitative and quantitative data. For this current study, techniques should be selected for the two distinctive but integrated researches.

For qualitative data, techniques such as coding for content analysis is widely used, and they are also employed for this research. The development and improvement of software performance allow these techniques to be implemented with computer software, which not only makes the process faster and more efficient but also enables the researcher to make comparisons precisely and conveniently. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest that many popular qualitative computer software programs exist, such as Provalis and QDA Miner (http://provalisresearch.com/); QSR NVivo (www.qsrinternational.com/), and

Atlas.ti (www.atlas.ti.com/), etc. All of these software programs are appropriate for the qualitative data analysis.

The quantitative data analysis is determined by the research design and research purposes. As indicated previously, the selection of analytical methods is also defined by the design of the questionnaire. The research aims to explore the factors or variables that influence the conference attendance experience and to propose suggestions or results for practitioners to adopt in the industry. Therefore, the IPA model is applied to identify the service gaps between the importance and performance of the surveyed items. Moreover, in order to test and confirm the relationships between the variables, SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) is going to be employed to meet the research objectives. Again, computer software is powerful and efficient for this type of data analysis, and specifically, for this study WarpPLS will be in used to test the relationships of the salient variables.

5.5 Chapter conclusion

This chapter first justified the adoption of mixed methods that informed by the paradigm of pragmatism to investigate business event experience. The study took a unique business event, the Hangzhou Computing Conference as a case to investigate attendees' experience, which was introduced after the discussion of the case study approach. Then, the research framework was presented, and the rest of this chapter introduced the methods of sampling and the methods for collecting both the qualitative and quantitative data using interviews and surveys. Finally, the data analytical instruments or techniques that would be employed in the following chapters were also introduced here.

Chapter 6 Qualitative Query of Business Event Experience

6.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 3, the application of mixed method has many advantages. This chapter will focus on qualitative inquiries. First, it describes the data collection process, the respondents' profile, and the data trustworthiness. Second, the qualitative data will be analysed by textual analysis software – QDA Miner, and the results will be compared with the existing business event attributes. Third, applying the case study method, this chapter also intends to answer the first research question: "Whether the business event can be considered as a Third Place?" Finally, a conclusion briefly summarises this chapter.

6.2 Qualitative data collection and features

6.2.1 Qualitative data collection

Of the many qualitative sampling methods (Given, 2008) designed to achieve a better degree of representation, maximum variation sampling was selected to increase the variety of respondents. This approach arguably improves the richness and inclusiveness of collected data. Consequently, the criteria specified for selecting respondents in this research included anyone who: 1) has attended a business conference in the past three years, 2) would like to share his/her experience, and, 3) agrees to participate and be recorded. For pragmatic reasons, convenience and snowballing sampling methods adopted.

Interviews are predominately adopted for qualitative data collection, especially when seeking descriptions of experiences. Koskei and Simiyu (2015, p. 108) have stated, "Interviews are a systematic way of talking and listening to people and are another way to collect data from individuals through conversations."

Structured interviews permit small changes in the wording, order, and number of questions to ensure the standardization or consistency of the stimuli to participants (Hutchinson & Wilson, 1992). On the other hand, semi-structured interviews usually start with a list of key questions that cover the key issues or themes, but the questioning permits a change in the wording, rephrasing and the order according to the practical circumstances of the interview (Koskei & Simiyu, 2015). More importantly, in the scenario of semi-structured interviews, “Additional questions can be asked and some may be questions that have not been anticipated in the beginning of the interview” (Koskei & Simiyu, 2015, p. 110). Therefore, a semi-structured interview was used in this section of the study, which enabled the researcher to respond and react suitably with a certain degree of flexibility (Bamball & While, 1994). Yet, it is worthy to note that an interviewer with limited experience or improper training may fail to ask “prompt” questions, and consequently miss some relevant data that should be collected (Koskei & Simiyu, 2015).

To implement the interview, a researcher has several choices: face-to-face (F2F) interviews, interviewing by telephone, and by internet/online tools (Opdenakker, 2006). Given that, while the F2F interview is the most frequently employed, other techniques of interviews – especially the internet or online-based forms are being increasingly used. Often these latter forms of interviews are more efficient, economic, and free of space/place limitation (Opdenakker, 2006). Irvine et al. (2013, p. 8) also justify the use of internet/online based interviews to gather rich and quality data. In this case, due to limitations of time and budget, (created in part by the short time span of the researched event), both F2F interviews and internet-based audio interviews were employed in this study.

The semi-structured interviews took place from May 9th to July 10th, 2017, both in Chinese and English. The interviews were based on questions derived from the literature and past observation of the event and personal experience of attending conferences, and followed the steps proposed in Chapter 3 (Figure 3.4). Altogether, 28 respondents participated and both types of interviews were recorded with permission and safely stored as required by the University ethics procedures. The duration of the interviews varied from half an hour to more than two hours, with the average length about 1.5 hours. According to the criteria of data saturation (Given, 2008; G. Jennings, 2010), the data collected from those 28 interviews were found sufficient for analysis.

6.2.2 Respondents’ profiles

After the completion of the interviews, a brief analysis of the respondents’ profiles was undertaken. The details of each respondent can be checked in Table 6.1 and the results are displayed in Table 6.2. It is noted that more female respondents were interviewed in the qualitative sample (64%). Among the interviewees, more than half (57%) are in midcareer, with corresponding positions in their organizations. It indicates, in general, that the longer a person has been in an industry, the higher the position he/she occupies, and indeed the percentage of respondents with short and long career histories also matched their managerial posts. The majority of the interviewees had attended several business conferences (82%), and only 18% had infrequent conference attendance. The sampled interviewees have diverse backgrounds and were able to provide rich information or data about their conference experiences.

Table 6.1: The Profile of the 28 Interview Respondents

Sample No.	Gender	Career history	Conf. exp.	Nationality	Position
1 YH	F	Medium	Some	CHN	Medium
2 SYY	F	Long	Rich	CHN	High
3 CHY	F	Medium	Rich	CHN	Medium
4 ZHRI	F	Short	Several	CH-NZ	Low
5 WNDY	F	Medium	Some	CHN	Medium
6 JYU	M	Short	Several	CHN	Low
7 LME	F	Short	Some	CHN	Low
8 XXH	F	Medium	Rich	CHN	Medium
9 JYD	F	Long	Rich	CHN	High
10 MCH	F	Medium	Rich	CH-NZ	Medium
11 GYH	F	Short	Several	CHN	Low
12 LYP	M	Medium	Rich	CH-NZ	High
13 ZHY	M	Medium	Several	CHN	Medium
14 XZ	M	Long	Rich	CHN	High
15 QCH	M	Short	Several	CHN	Low
16 JYZ	F	Long	Rich	CHN	High
17 DUZ	F	Long	Rich	CHN	High
18 WCH	M	Medium	Some	CHN	Medium
19 MK	M	Medium	Some	CHN	Medium
20 STF	M	Medium	Some	CHN	Medium
21 H-T	M	Medium	Some	CHN	Medium
22 XXY	F	Medium	Rich	CHN	Medium
23 TNA	F	Long	Rich	NZ	High
24 MAI	F	Medium	Some	VIET	Medium
25 MTN	M	Medium	Some	NZ	Medium
26 NCH	F	Medium	Some	IND	Medium
27 JW	F	Medium	Rich	Korea	Medium
28 AMD	F	Long	Rich	NZ	Medium

Notes: Career history – “Short”:1-2 years; “Medium”: 3-5 years; “Long”: more than 6 years. Conference attendance – “Several”: 1-3 conference per year; “Some”: 4-10 conference per year; “Rich”: more than 10 conference per year. The position was self-reported by interviewees.

With the purpose of investigating a Chinese business event experience, the majority of the respondents are Chinese (79%); however, considering the homogeneity of the motivations of business event attendees, the interviews also included some non-Chinese respondents to provide more information and enable a brief comparison of the gathered data between the two groups.

Table 6.2: General Features of the Interviewees

Attributes	Sub-attributes	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	10	36%
	Female	18	64%
Career history	Short (1-3 years)	5	18%
	Medium (4-9 years)	16	57%
	Long (10 years+)	7	25%
Experience	A Few (1-3/year)	5	18%
	Some(4-6/year)	10	36%
	Rich(7+/year)	13	46%
Nationality	Chinese	22	79%
	Non-Chinese	6	21%
Position	Low	5	18%
(self-reported)	Medium	16	57%
	High	7	25%

6.2.3 Data trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of qualitative data and study has been a key issue for researchers. One of the best known criteria was proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which includes: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Interpretations of these criteria and measures to meet them have been discussed as illustrated in Table 6.3 (Cope, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Shenton, 2004; Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008).

The research design, collection and analysis of the qualitative data adhere to these criteria of research trustworthiness. First, the research methods (mixed methods) and qualitative data collection methods (semi-structured interview, secondary documents) used were well established and are widely employed. The interviewees were invited through snowballing methods and personal business contacts. Informants were familiar with the research topic and knew the investigator, and hence a rapport was established before the interviews. In order to improve the representativeness of the informants, maximum variation sampling method was adopted to ensure some diversity in the interviewees' background. Though member checking was not fully conducted, any subsequent lack of clarity was confirmed with the informants (who had agreed to be contacted) concerning issues of data accuracy. In addition, the interviews were recorded with permission and transcribed word by word by the investigator and research helpers, then all the transcriptions were proofread, which confirmed the consistency and accuracy of the data. Therefore, data credibility was achieved. Second, the qualitative data collection process was well documented, including the sampling method, the place and means of data collection, the implementation of interviews and the data storage and processing. The process or procedure recorded for the conduction of data collection increased the dependability of the research. Third, the qualitative research also provided rich information about the background of the study – a business event in China, as well as the interviewees' selection criteria and the outline of the initial questions, therefore the results or findings of this research should be transferable to similar events in similar environments or different events/environments for comparison. Fourth, the previous dimensions of trustworthiness contributed to confirmability (objectivity); meanwhile, the discussions or interpretations were derived from the data provided by the respondents, not from the investigators' personal ideas or imaginations.

Table 6.3 Trustworthiness and Means to Establish

Dimensions	Interpretation	Means of Establishing Trustworthiness
Credibility	*The confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. Also, the congruence of the findings with the reality.*	*The adoption of well-established methods;* *Prolonged engagement (investigator & participants);* *Persistent observation (identify features & elements that are most relevant to the problem);* *Triangulation (different data sources, investigators and methods of data collection);* *Member check (feeds back to respondents with data, interpretations and conclusions);*
Dependability	*Dependability refers to the constancy of the data over similar conditions*	*Audit trail (report the processes in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work)*
Transferability	*The degree to which the results of qualitative research can be applied to other contexts or settings with other respondents.*	*Thick description: Provide sufficient information on the informants and the research context to enable the reader to assess the findings' transferability.*
Confirmability	*The degree to which the findings of the research could be confirmed by other researchers.*	*Exemplify the findings were derived directly from the data instead of one' imagination.* *Provide rich quotes from the participants that depict each emerging theme.*

Source: Sinkovics et al. (2008); Cope (2014); Shenton (2004); Korstjens and Moser (2018)

It is also argued that CAQDAS "facilitates transparency in the dialogue between researcher and textual data, therefore improves confirmability through external audit" and "enhances creative views on data which by its very nature requires flexibility, fluidity and continual renegotiation" (Sinkovics et al., 2008, p. 695). It also allows the researchers to manage and analyse large volumes of data with formalised procedures/methods to investigate their data. Sinkovics et al. (2008, p.695) further suggested that "the formalised and collective bargaining between multiple, international researchers not only makes coding and retrieval much faster and more efficient, it also enhances the transparency of the process of conducting qualitative data analysis and supports theory building." Therefore, adopting CAQDAS will improve the trustworthiness of a research with procedural advantages and formalisation of processes.

6.3 Qualitative data analysis methods and CAQDAS

Qualitative research is generally considered as "a set of interpretive activities that seek to understand the situated meaning behind actions and behaviours, and rely heavily on the researcher as a unique interpreter of the data" (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012, p. 818). This has been confirmed by Creswell (2014), who reasons that the qualitative researcher aims to explore and perceive a specific social phenomena, and researchers are enabled to interpret this phenomena by comparing, categorizing, and contrasting the research objects in the investigative process. It additionally allows the researcher to "enter" the respondents' world for an immersion of their life settings and observe/understand the respondents' views and behaviours. In general, qualitative research intends to "make sense" out of the collected data, no matter the type of text, image or personalities.

To fulfil the goals of qualitative research, that is to understand the specific social event, the collected data need to be analysed by proper methods and techniques. Smith and Firth (2011) conclude that qualitative data can be analysed by the following three categories of methods:

1) *Sociolinguistic methods, such as discourse and conversation analysis, that explore the use and meaning of language.*
2) *Methods, typified by grounded theory that focus on developing theory.*
3) *Methods, such as content and thematic analysis, that describe and interpret participants' views. (p.54)*

As indicated in the previous section, the qualitative data are collected mainly by semi-structured interviews. Regardless of the methods to be employed for data analysis, a basic set of rules for conducting the analysis have been suggested. Specifically, those principles include "transcribing the interviews; immersing oneself in the data to gain detailed insights into the phenomena under investigation; developing a data coding system; and linking codes or units of data to form overarching categories or themes that can lead to the development of theory" (Smith & Firth, 2011, p. 54).

Considering the role of qualitative research in the design of a mixed methods study, the study primarily focused on content analysis with the guidance of suggested principles for qualitative data analysis. Traditionally, qualitative text was manually analysed with highlighters, post-it stickers to label the collected data, and then sorted into thematic or meaningful categories. This approach, however, is disadvantageous in some aspects, such as limiting "the ability of the researchers to share the coded materials with research collaborators and gatekeepers"; making "it difficult to go back and forth between data and codes" when the text is large; and restraining "the retrieval of coded materials" (Chandra & Shang, 2019, p. 22).

Therefore, researchers are gradually shifting to a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS)-based approach. The facilitating role of the software in qualitative data analysis is increasingly crucial (Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Le, 2014). Moreover, the adoption of the CAQDAS-based approach has advantages (e.g., enhanced transparency, improved coding efficiency) and disadvantages (e.g., potentially making the process rigid and inflexible, distancing researchers from the data, and posing technical obstacles); for detailed discussion one can refer to Chandra and Shang (2019, pp. 24-25).

CAQDAS programs can be divided into "two categories including tools that emphasize the manual handling of data (e.g., NVivo and Atlas.ti) and tools that provide automated analysis based on statistical properties of text (e.g., Leximancer)" (Sotiriadou et al., 2014, p. 219). While Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) believe that these tools are designed for "statistical content analysis" or interpretive analysis, and suggest users combine the usage of bibliographic software for citation management. Many commentators remind readers that those programs/tools only serve as a facilitator, the actual analysis, how to use the program and how to interpret the results, still depends on the researcher (Humble, 2012).

The features, pros and cons, and differences of existing CAQDAS programs have been introduced (Derobertmasure & Robertson, 2014; Edwards-Jones, 2014), compared (Sotiriadou et al., 2014) and fully discussed (Humble, 2012; Winsome St & Johnson, 2000). As noted, for this research, a quantitative dominated, exploratory sequential mixed methods approach was selected. In this approach, the qualitative research is more exploratory in intent and facilitates to "build an instrument that best fits the sample under study" in the following quantitative phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 15). This research will primarily use QDA Miner because:

> *QDA Miner is an easy-to-use qualitative data analysis software package for coding textual data and graphical, annotating, retrieving and reviewing coded data and documents. The program can manage complex projects involving large numbers of documents combined with numerical and categorical information. QDA Miner also provides a wide range of exploratory tools to identify patterns in coding and relationships between assigned codes and other numerical or categorical properties. (Provalis Research, 2017)*

To explore the relationships of those arising themes/topics, Leximancer, another qualitative data analysis program was also employed. The results of qualitative analysis and interpretation are described in the following section.

6.4 The results of qualitative exploration

The transcribed text is large, and some information can be filtered for low relevance to the research questions. First, after carefully reading the text and getting familiar with the content, the text is segmented according to thematic features, such as motivation, the evaluation of speakers, the evaluation of venue, the criteria of good conference etc., which themes emerged from both the questions asked and the answers given by informants. In other words, the analysis took a deductive path, since the preliminary themes had been identified by the literature review. Then, the specific texts related to this content were analysed through the CAQDAS programs.

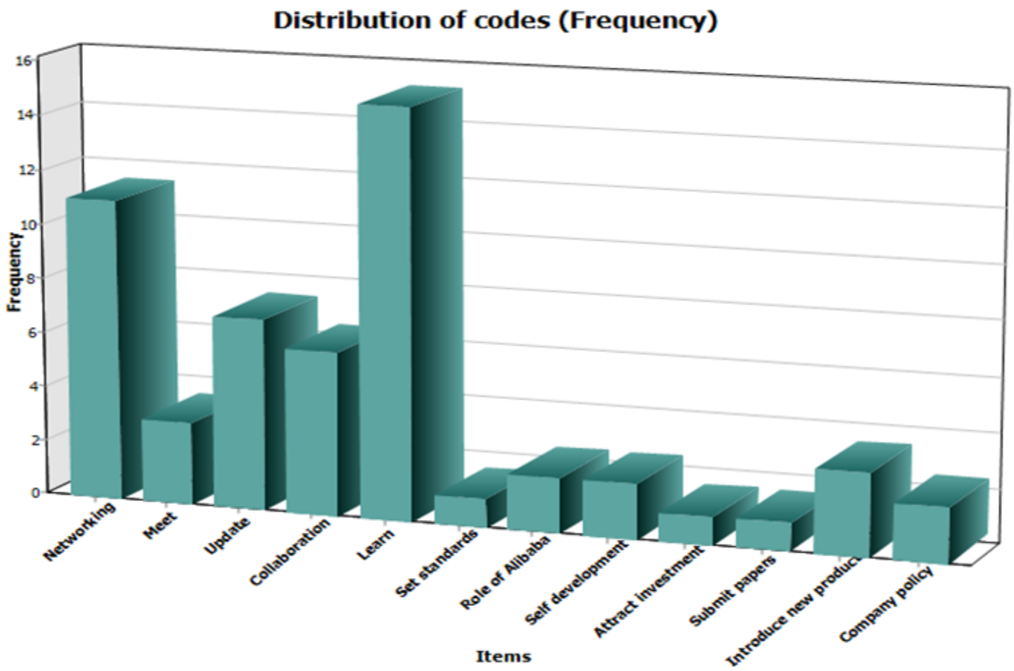
6.4.1 Motivations to attend business conference

The initial results from the QDA Miner analysis indicate that respondents are motivated to attend a business conference for the reasons shown in the word cloud (Figure 6.1). The figure generated by the software says that "development", "company", "industry", "people", "learn", "communicate", "speakers", "networking", "award", "collaboration" etc. are the important motivations for attendance. To triangulate the automatically created codes, the investigator also went through the text data and discovered the similarities that can be used to code the text.

Figure 6.1Motivations of the Business Conference Attendees

To generate a more meaningful and logical result, the text for motivation analysis was coded and processed again through the program. The following codes are used to code the text: meet, networking, update, collaboration, learn, set standards, self-development, attract investment, submit papers, introduce new product and company policy. The results for the second analysis are displayed in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2 Coded Motivations of the Business Conference Attendees



It indicates that the most mentioned motivations to attend a business conference is to learn and network; the second group of important motivations are seeking business collaborations and updating industry information; then comes the third group that includes "meet business partners", "introduce new product", and "company supportive policy". It is noteworthy that the frequency of appearance only shows the popularity of this motivation, but not necessarily the most important one. For example, Respondent 17 explicitly expressed that networking (communicate with peers) is the first priority of her attendance, and next to this is "learning" opportunities at the conference. The remaining motivations are less mentioned from the perspective of frequency of mention, but still serve as the source of items for the subsequent questionnaire.

The motivation of learning/education has been well reported previously (Jung & Tanford, 2017; S. Kim et al., 2012; Yoo & Chon, 2008). It is further confirmed by the respondents who attended a business conference in this research. As a senior businessperson (owner of a travel business) claims:

> *The first is to communicate with peers; the second we can learn a lot from this [conference]. Because in Hangzhou, after the G20 Summit, there will be more international conferences. Then, I'd like to see how other companies operate those conferences. After all, Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou are ahead of Hangzhou. (Respondent17, DUZ)*

Another senior executive of a governmental agency also confirms this viewpoint:

> *One, professional development, two is to understand the retail space, it's my role in the chamber here. I am involved with retail sector and I am keen to learn and understand some of the changing environment and challenges for retail. Particularly with the online phenomenon, how do you bring e-commerce, brick the walls together? (Respondent23, TNA)*

Similarly, networking has been recognized as an important reason for people to attend a business event (Han & Verma, 2014; Mair et al., 2018; Ngamsom & Beck, 2000; Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012). This is supported by the words of Respondent 4, "Networking is very important in our industry … [M]y own expectation is networking and to know some peers in the industry" and Respondent 28, "Largely I go for networking. Yes, that's the main reason."

The motivations above are inclined to the personal (e.g., learning) or personal-business (networking) mixed reasons. While the following several motivations are purely business oriented, such as business collaboration, meeting business partners, and product introduction, which are confirming the findings of Rittichainuwat and Mair (2012), Whitfield and Webber (2011) and Smith et al. (2003) when studying motivations of exhibition attendance. As Respondent 21 states,

> *It is to understand the diverse culture of Amazon, because after all, you are in a department doing things in a corner. Through the conference, you can understand the collaboration between different departments, and how various systems work. (Respondent 21, H-T)*

Respondent 26 further added, "The reason was I was looking for collaboration opportunities. That was the only reason."

The motivations of meeting business partners are illustrated by Respondent 16, "My purpose is to find some suppliers. I can directly meet some suppliers." and Respondent 13, "Because we need to meet customers, the main purpose is to communicate and get to know our sellers, including many big customers who need to get in touch and communicate face to face." Respondent 13 also stated "to introduce our new advertising product at the conference" is a primary reason for attending the conference.

Another important reason for attending a business event is imposed by the employer. According to the interviews, most respondents are sponsored by their company/organization to attend the specific conference. As Respondent 19 put it, many attendees are usually "asked to participate". These motivations confirmed the items drawn from previous literature that were employed to construct the scale.

6.4.2 The evaluation of the key speakers

An analysis of the attendees' evaluation on the speakers or the question of what makes a good speaker was undertaken due to the emphasis given to such speakers. The software package provides a detailed word list and a word cloud indicating the importance of having a good speaker by the frequency of mentions as displayed in Figure 6.3 and Table 6.4. However, the text data were further examined to confirm the codes that can be used to define "good speakers".

Figure 6.3 Word Cloud of the Most Repeated Features

Table 6.4 Most Repeated Features of Speakers

	FREQUENCY	% SHOWN	%PROCESSED	%TOTAL
CONTENT	24	1.43%	1.18%	0.40%
INDUSTRY	23	1.37%	1.13%	0.39%
MAKE	17	1.01%	0.84%	0.29%
TIME	17	1.01%	0.84%	0.29%
EXPERIENCE	16	0.95%	0.79%	0.27%
INFORMATION	14	0.83%	0.69%	0.23%
SPKEAKER	14	0.83%	0.69%	0.23%
COMPANY	13	0.77%	0.64%	0.22%
PRESENTATION	13	0.77%	0.64%	0.22%
LISTEN	12	0.71%	0.59%	0.20%
SHARE	12	0.71%	0.59%	0.20%
AUDIENCE	11	0.65%	0.54%	0.18%
KEYNOTE	11	0.65%	0.54%	0.18%
TALK	11	0.65%	0.54%	0.18%
BUSINESS	10	0.60%	0.49%	0.17%
LEVEL	10	0.60%	0.49%	0.17%
SPEAK	10	0.60%	0.49%	0.17%
THING	10	0.60%	0.49%	0.17%
TOPIC	10	0.60%	0.49%	0.17%
ATTEND	9	0.54%	0.44%	0.15%
ATTENDEES	9	0.54%	0.44%	0.15%
RELEVANT	9	0.54%	0.44%	0.15%
ROLE	9	0.54%	0.44%	0.15%
SESSION	9	0.54%	0.44%	0.15%
CONFERENCE	8	0.48%	0.39%	0.13%
CUSTOMERS	8	0.48%	0.39%	0.13%

Combining the table and the figure, it suggests that the "content" of a speech lies at the core of the attendance experience, which is delivered by quality speakers. This is emphasized by Berridge (2012, p. 200) that "the choice of speakers, and leaders of syndicate or workshop sessions" is important for the success of a conference. Han and Verma (2014) also pointed out that the quality of speakers is what the exhibition visitors consider most when they make their decisions.

However, speakers should make sure the "presentation" is "relevant" to the audience and "topics" of "sessions" need to stick to the "theme" which are supposed to provide cutting-edge "information" of this "industry" and indicate the trends. As specified by one of the interviewees (Respondent 23, TNA):

> *[Speakers are] incredibly important. Sometimes, you will have people that they will go just to hear a keynote speaker, so your keynote speaker has to deliver on multiples, all of levels, you know. So far, as it needs to be relevant, needs to be timely, needs to be potentially not always challenging, but give someone something to stimulate the thinking and have takeaways, whatever their takeaway might be. ... I think that, once again, their ability to connect the audience. Um, so that gives you a certain level of engagement. The message or the story that they're trying to tell, and their ability to deliver this.*

Meanwhile, the keynote speakers are also expected to set the "tone" for the conference, and then "share" their ideas and successful "experience" with attendees. Besides, the professional way of speech "delivery", the excellent presenting "skill" and the attractive topics are essential to meet the consumers' requirements. As described by a female engineer (Respondent 1, YH):

> *In fact, most of the talk is about their own career development process, and then the result is that you can get encouragement from it, confirms that female engineers are as good as males, and can make a very good achievement. The whole theme of the conference was this. ... I still remember that my mentor talked about why he changed from SDE to manager. He spoke very well about the change of his mentality, and I think his words arouse echo in audience, since everyone might face with such a situation.*
>
> *[Speakers should] have practical and useful stuff to share; then the speech style, I don't like the plain and dry ones. Just hope they have a little bit of passion, [otherwise] you will easily fall asleep. And what they say should be reflective of the audience, you can relate to him... It all depends on their presentation skills, which can make a difference. If [they] just read the speech, in fact, not many people would like to listen to, too boring, they should know*

how to design good PPTs. From the PPT prepared, the content of the speech and the presentation form, I can tell how the speakers valued the presentation.

Therefore, besides the presentation skills and speech qualities, other items emerged related to speakers that have seldom appeared in previous research. These items include "great achievements" (Respondent 1, YH; Respondent 18, WCH; and Respondent 20, STF), "great reputation" (Respondent 9, JYD), "great presentation skills" (Respondent 1, YH), "focus on the speech topic" (Respondent 1, YH; Respondent 25, MTN), "speakers show up accordingly"(Respondent 3, CHY), and "reachable after conference" (Respondent17, DUZ), which are considered as part of the scales.

6.4.3 Overall evaluation of the business conference

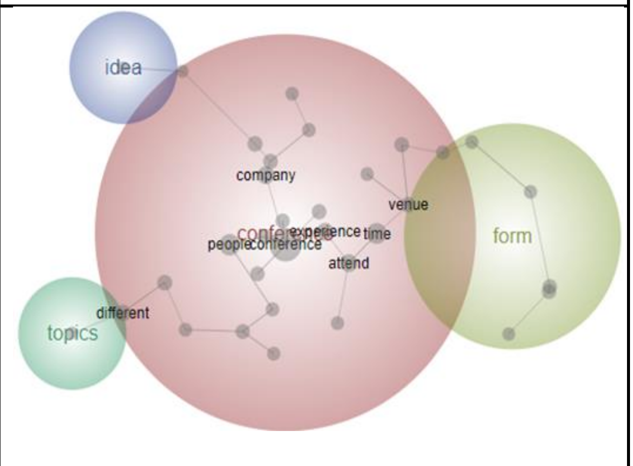
Differing from the previous sections, here aggregated data are processed to investigate respondents' overall impression or evaluation of the business conference they attended. The initial analysis indicates that two paired words ("conference" and "good") have dominated in the first level of analysis, with the word "conference" associated with the word "good" being common. As shown in the figure "good" was mentioned 38 times as the adjective to describe "conference", which implies that they have perceived the attended conference as a "good conference". In the interviews, when people responded by giving scores out of ten – the lowest score given by one respondent was 6, but many gave higher marks including 10 out of 10. From another perspective, the self-reported results from the interviewees displayed that they had a good perception of the business conference performance.

To further explore the respondents' perceptions or evaluations of those conferences in general, the initially identified two words were excluded for inspecting what were the components that lead to this overall conclusion, thereby creating another word cloud (see Figure 6.4). It shows that components like "people", "company", "venue", "time", "content", "organization", "communication", and "service" have contributed to their general impressions. Some of the items are similar to the evaluation of speakers, because "content" and "people" are directly related to speakers' performance.

In this context, "people" means peer attendees by most of the interviewees, except Respondent 7 who refers to "people" as the potential employees; "company" also has several nuances, it means "company support" for Respondent 6 and Respondent 28, "promoting company" for Respondents 12 and 18, and the "organizing company" for Respondent 7. Most have rated the "venue" performance very highly and agreed that "content" of the conference is the key to a good conference. As for "time", many express their intentions of attending that conference "next time" if they "have time" (Respondent 27), but others indicate that everything is "on time" (Respondent 28). Meanwhile, the seamless "organization", effective "communication" (Respondent 12), and "high-quality services" are also appreciated attributes (Respondents 27 and 9). Those factors that might affect their evaluation of the conference have been supported by other scholars, for example Wei et al. (2017) discussed the importance of customer–customer interaction at a conference; both Rittichainuwat and Mair (2012) and Smith et al. (2004) recognized promotion of product or company is one of the major motives of attendees. It is also noted that Getz et al. (2001), Wu and Weber (2005) and Jin et al. (2013) have suggested the importance of venue performance (e.g. facility, location, signage etc.) for the success of a business event. These components were also employed to build a scale to measure the business event experience.

Figure 6.4 Overall Evaluation

Figure 6.5 Three Underlying Dimensions of Evaluation



In order to identify the underlying dimensions of those components, CAQDA program – Leximancer suggested three components – the form of the conference, the ideas found there and the topics (See Figure 6.5). One also finds many respondents have stated their views on the conference (session) or speech topics.

> *It's a very good program, they've got good speakers, um, on topics that are relevant to me. (Respondent 28, AMD)*

> *Sometimes, they have some topics, I don't think they are good, for example they talk about gender discrimination. They claimed that many women actually can have similar performance to men, even better performance, therefore do not discriminate against them. …for three days, it is quite large in scale, and there are various small sessions with different topics. I suspect they didn't have a good review of the topics; such topic (gender discrimination) should not come to us. (Respondent 1, YH)*

> *It's about interacting in groups. Each group comes up with some suggestions according to different topics, and finally reports and summarizes at the conference. (Respondent 12, LYP)*

This indicates that a minority expressed some reservation as to whether the topic of gender discrimination, was wholly appropriate to the primary function of the conference, especially given that one conference segment was mainly for female engineers. Another area that attracted some reservations was the use by some of the international event organizers who were using platforms such as Facebook that are not readily accessible in China. As experienced by Respondent 9, the channels provided by the organizers were not working properly and have a detrimental impact on the communication:

> *Because the conference has recommended four hotels and provided some hotel links. I don't know why, but it is not accessible here in China, so I can't open the links. …and they use Facebook and Twitter as media to communicate, so we can't open it either. (Respondent 9, JYD)*

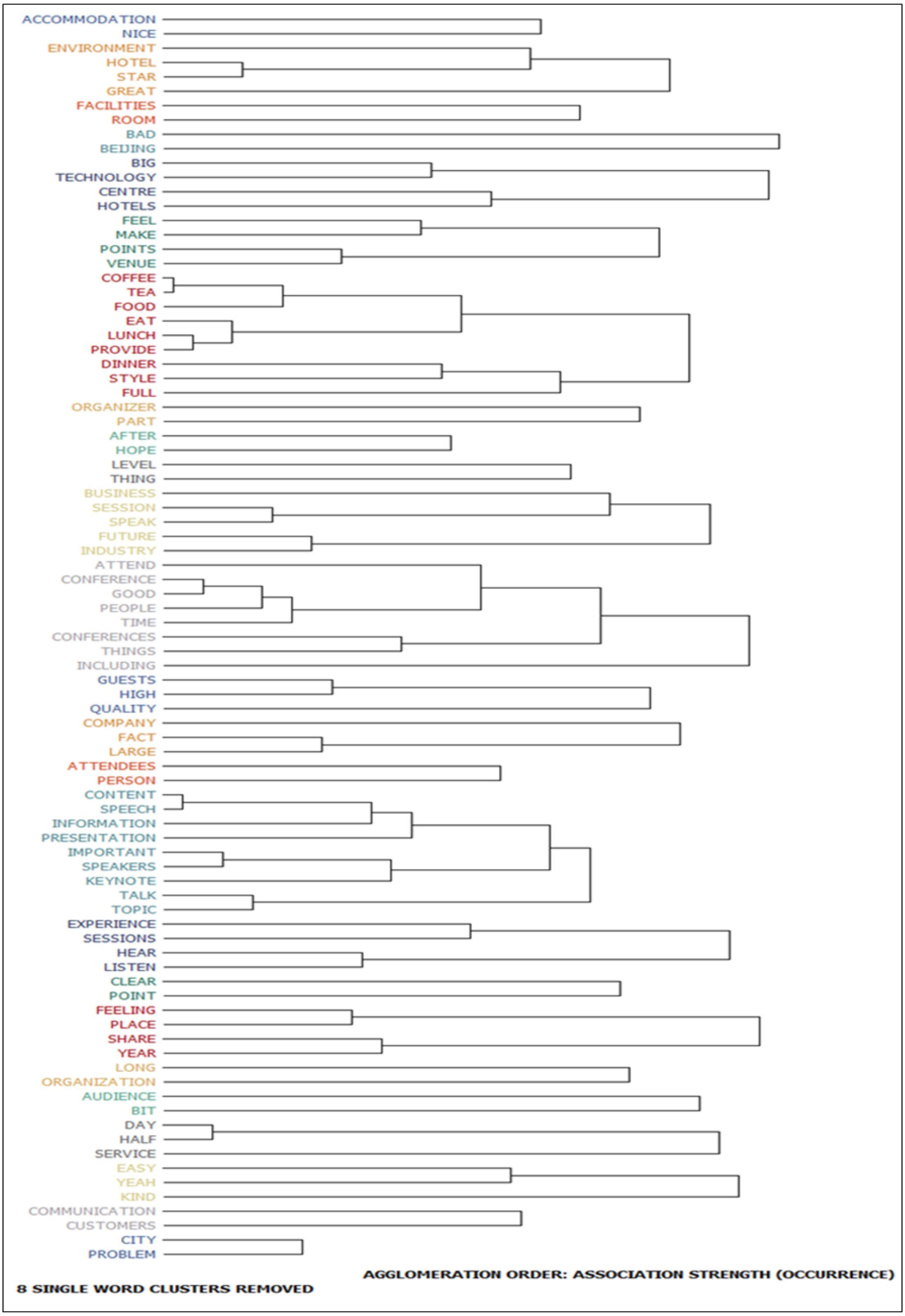
Efficient and effective communications between the organizers and attendees are essential for the creation of a memorable experience. Information can be delivered via signage, pamphlets, as well as on-site staff (Yoon et al., 2010). Yet, it must be remembered that the effectiveness of communication also relies on the attendees' willingness to engage/involve with the means of information delivery (Geus et al., 2015).

However – the text is quite heterogeneous in the topics that are covered – and effectively what makes the conference "good" is the range of activities and topics in that the organisers have sufficient variety to meet the disparate individual needs of the attendees.

6.4.4 The criteria used for evaluating business conference

With the understanding of their overall evaluation of attendance, it is necessary to find what criteria respondents were using to assess those business conferences. To fulfil this goal, the data relating to the themes of venue, speakers, organisation, operations and accommodation that were generated through reviewing the literature were aggregated and again subjected to analysis.

Figure 6.6 Dendrogram Main Themes/Criteria from the Aggregated Data

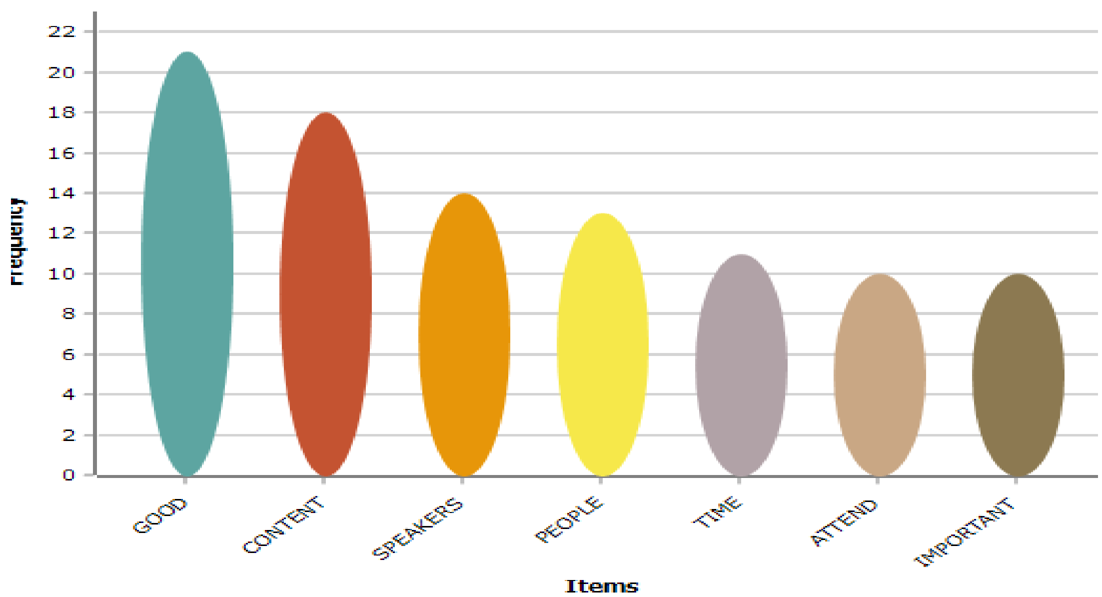


The dendrogram represents the hierarchical clustering of the evaluating criteria generated from the software analyses (Figure 6.6). Therefore, the diagrammatic presentation indicates that each cluster is a possible criterion for measuring the conference. After a merger of the similar themes, the evaluation standards or the indicators can be summarised as below (not limited to):

- Accommodation/Hotel
- Food/Drinks
- Venue (location) and Facilities
- Technology Usage
- Organizer (program design, operation, communication)
- Conference Content
- Peer Attendees
- Speaker: Topics, Content of the speech and Presentation Skills
- Conference Service
- Destination

The extracted criteria might not be complete, but sufficient to indicate the important attributes for evaluating their attendance experience. Those are also supported and auto-explained by the concurrence table (Appendix 6.1) that indicates the key pairings within the text data.

Figure 6.7 Primary Themes around Keywords



However, respondents were also asked to specifically state what criteria they used to evaluate a conference. Analysing data is confined to this question, the software generated a precise result built around the seven words (see Figure 6.7), which include “good”, “content”, “speakers”, “people”, “time”, “attend” and “important”, which is largely in line with the examination of the text. The dendrogram of the seven words are connected as one cluster as shown in Figure 6.6, which can be interpreted as “Good content and speakers are important for people to attend a conference and event for a repeated time”. Therefore, the most important criteria for the assessment of the business conference in this study are “conference content”, which could have a broad coverage of different conference attributes (Geus et al., 2015; Kim & Malek, 2017; Severt et al., 2007), and “speaker” that mainly focuses on the reputation, topic of speech, and presenting skills, as discussed in previous section.

The two key criteria were well described by Respondent 10, “I think I care most about the content of the speech; meanwhile the speaker should have the qualification to deliver this speech. For example, it is not appropriate for an Asian market manager to share about the American market. Therefore, I think this is also the reason why we will participate in the TEC conference.” He also assumes that organizers are responsible for the selection of speakers and the quality of the conference content, “We also believe that the organizer will carefully review and choose speakers from different perspectives to give speeches. My experience in the past few years is that they did a good job. They even invited people from outside the industry to talk to you about the problems we are facing in our industry, while other industries have already faced problems … So, it is up to the organizer to decide who will be invited to speak or what topic to do.” (Respondent 10, MCH)

Another senior industry practitioner also confirms the importance of those two themes,

> *Listen to some of the speakers. I think that's great. Because basically it is the people of some key positions of some benchmark companies in the industry to share most. In fact, it is mainly in several aspects. One is that it has so many paralleled sessions, and each one has a big theme, whether it is about finance, new retail, or the application of big data technology, so it has various themes. Second, we are a deep user of Alibaba cloud, so external speakers are the influential users, they do use and pioneer in the using of the cloud and some models. Of course, they will review the things prepared in detail to see if the content is in line with the requirements of the conference. (Respondent 14, XZ)*

Thus, it is clear that speeches delivered by speakers are components of or contributors to “conference content”. Consequently, it is argued that those two attributes lie in the core of event service management, which have been emphasized by many respondents as well as some existing literature (Mitchell et al., 2016; Severt et al., 2007).

Though the core criteria are of great value to the organizers and the attendees (van Riper et al., 2013), oversimplified lists will often not be enough to monitor and assess the service quality, and to solve problems during the conference. Thus, ancillary themes or criteria were further explored through the software. Figure 6.8 displays the results with a word cloud that arises from the analysis.

Figure 6.8 Ancillary Criteria for Evaluation

Besides the core themes/criteria of "speaker" and "conference content", other criteria are also important for the attendees to evaluate the business conference, such as "Attendants" or "Colleagues", "Atmosphere", "Programs", "Venue", "Organization", "Destination" and "Food", "Hotel" which are largely in common with the themes from the overall evaluation, except for the last one (Table 6.5).

Table 6.5 Comparison the themes from Criteria Data and Aggregated Data

	Themes from Reported Criteria	Themes from Overall Evaluation
1	Content	Conference Content
2	Speaker	Speaker: Topics, Presentation Skills
3	Hotel	Accommodation/Hotel
4	Food/Cocktail	Food/Drinks
5	Venue	Venue (location) and Facilities
6	Organization –social programs	Organizer (program design, operation, communication, technology usage)
7	Destination	Destination
8	Attendees; Colleagues	Peer Attendees
9	Atmosphere	Conference Service

First, hotels, food and drinks are among the essential elements that require organizers' attention (Lee & Fenich, 2016) and have impacts on the event experience (Wei & Huang, 2013).

One interviewee has provided useful comments on the accommodation used at the conference. "The accommodation is comfortable, it has a nice atmosphere, a scenic area next to it, nice air, and you can go for a walk at night" (Respondent 18, WCH). However, he did not fully enjoy the food provided, though no negative words, "The food and drinks in the hotel were not too bad. It was very rich, very popular. There were a lot of food, looks beautiful, but you do not really want to eat. It is not as special as Sichuan food." A business owner believes that at a business conference her team considers "food is a minor issue", and "During the conference time, everybody is in a rush, for communication reason, we won't eat complicated ones" (Respondent 17, DUJ). Some respondents also pointed to the different dining habits between western and eastern consumers (Respondent 1, YH, Respondent 10, and MCH). Regardless of their attitude and comments on food and accommodation, these services are clearly basic service to any provision for the attendees.

Second, the conference venue has impacts on the evaluation of the entire business event. One of the respondents commented thus when asked about his assessments of the conference venue:

> *[The] venue is great, 9 out of 10. It's a five-star hotel with a large conference hall and separate accommodation. The environment is nice and comfortable. In the evening, there are barbecue, volleyball, table tennis, badminton, billiards. But it's an hour and a half drive. Not convenient for individuals. It's in the suburbs. (Respondent 18, WCH)*

A female attendee also commented on the conference venue and believed that besides the physical parts, the services offered at the venue also add value. For the physical aspects, she says,

> *The experience of the conference centre was really fantastic. ...because the layout was perfect for the conference I attended. They had really great spaces for the conference sessions. The rooms were well set up from different styles of seating which might suit people's different styles of learning or attention spans.*

Then she continues to add some explanation about the service provided on site,

> *They had a lot of extra little touches which were really nice for the comfort of the delegates. You know, there was water on the table. There were lovely lollies on the tables, but nice little touches around, um, sort of aroma therapy to give you energy. …there were plenty of staff. And they all committed to make sure we knew where we were going to look for our rooms. So yeah, it was an exceptional conference venue.*

Organization and operation is definitely another important criterion to measure the service provided at the conference (Borodako, Berbeka, & Rudnicki, 2015; Ferdinand & Williams, 2013). While people perceive and evaluate the conference organization differently, for example Respondent 1 reviewed the details of that conference attended,

> *Since some of their topics were not that good. What I am very satisfied is the theme of this conference, which is very good, and it suits me very well to attend. Besides, it can obviously benefit me. Besides, the organization of the conference was very smooth. All the staff, including the volunteers they recruited, did a good job. However, the food is terrible. (Respondent 1, YH)*

Instead of listing the details, Respondent 10 simply gave a high rating points and nice words, "Well, in terms of the organization of the conference, I think it's pretty good. I would give it 10 points." Yet Respondent 14 presented his arguments and justifications,

> *I am satisfied with the [operational] process. I'm paying more attention to the content of the conference. I think the entertainment events are great. Since this is mainly a technical event. This will assist the attendees to better participate and interact with the organizer. That is really good practice. It's more of an opportunity for communication than a conference. Alibaba has always had the attribute and label of entertainment. However, this activity allows for more people have a better way to participate in and improve participants' satisfaction with the conference. (Respondent 14, XZ)*

In contrast, Respondent 15 believes "when you have an obstacle, you can get what you want" is the standard for good organization and it is "a detail but not easy to fulfil". Respondent 17 concludes that if the organization meets her initial expectations, then the operation of that conference will be highly rated.

Fourth, the destination is a controversial theme among the respondents, one group believe that a destination is an important criterion for them to make decisions and when evaluating the conference, while the other group argue that destination is not important for them, what they truly care about are the content, and the business benefits.

For example, a female interviewee (Respondent 28, AMD) considers destination is equally important to the content of a business conference.

> *Look, there's a huge one. My husband is a doctor, he's a paediatrician. And each year, um, I will go and see what paediatric conferences there are around the world. And for example, when there was one in Istanbul, Turkey's on my bucket list, I say to him, "Right, there's paediatric conference in Turkey. Have a look at the program and see if it's educational content for you". So, if we're looking educationally, the destination is really important. So, um, and that would be the same for people coming into New Zealand to an international conference. The destination is almost as important as the content.*

The other view of the destination is that the location is secondary as long as the content or speaker is attractive enough, people will attend the conference. This implies two points, one is the attendee is not interested in recreational activities (Respondent14, XZ); or he/she has rich travel experience, in which case many destinations are no longer attractive to him/her (Respondent 10, MCH).

As reported in the previous section, "people" who attend a conference together will mutually influence each other through communicating and exchanging ideas (W. Wei et al., 2017). Respondent 2 states this clearly,

> *After the communication, we will increase our acquaintance with peers and at least jump out of the original social circle. They come to conference with the same purpose themselves. They are all studious and open-minded.*

Besides, previous research also shows that personal achievement will develop, and a sense of "communitas" will be formed with the share of cultural values, ideas, etc. (Morgan, 2008).

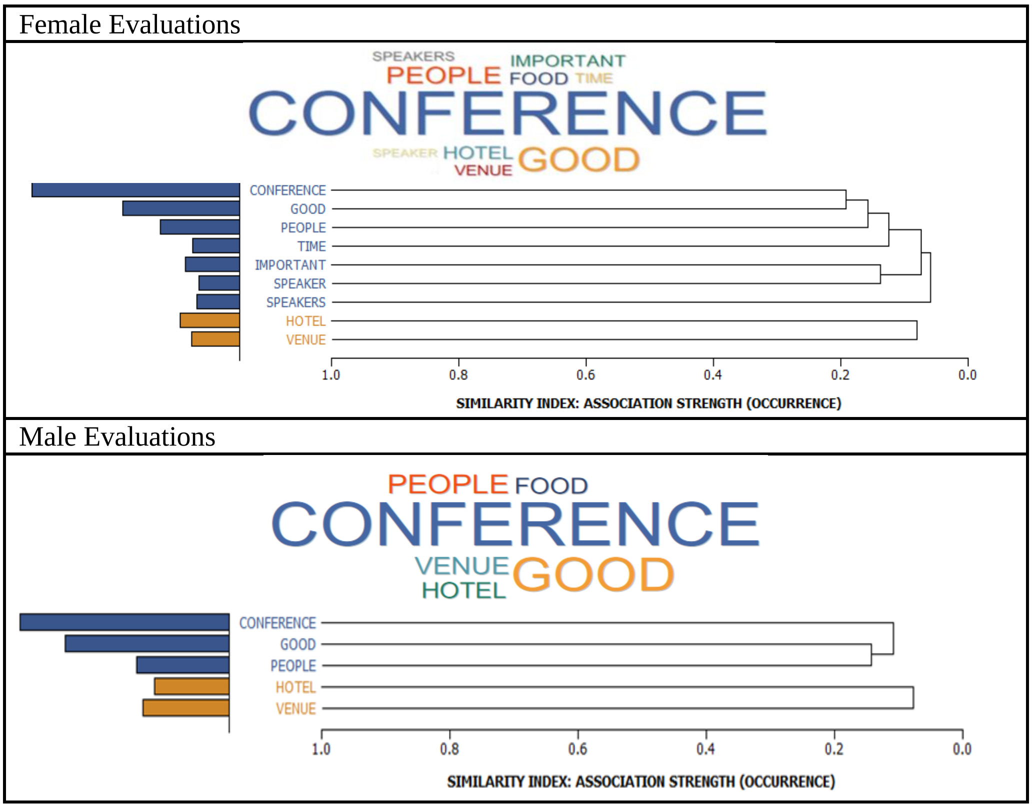
No matter whether expressed in an explicit or implicit way, interviewees were happy with social programs and entertainment activities. This is the last theme to report on in this section. Those programs and activities can create such a favourable environment or atmosphere that it allows the attendees to communicate, to network, to learn, to think, and to relax. The importance of the creation of those environmental or atmospheric attributes have been emphasized (Pettersson & Getz, 2009; Pielichaty, 2015). Respondent 1 and Respondent 23 are examples among others that explicitly expressed the value of creation of such an environment.

The criteria employed by respondents to evaluate the business event are presumably the important attributes for the actual attendees to measure their perceived experience. It is also indicated that what have been drawn from prior literature are overlapping with items/factors that emerged from the qualitative analysis. Therefore, these items are crucial for the creation of the measurement scale.

6.4.5 Gender difference on the conference evaluation

Behavioural differences are often thought to exist between the two genders, such as travel information searching (Kim, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007), pay gap (Ferreira Freire Guimarães & Silva, 2016), and even online shopping behaviour (Hasan, 2010). For more gender differences in tourism, one can refer to a review paper (Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, & Arcodia, 2017).

Figure 6.9 Primary Factors Comparison of Female and Male Evaluations



To explore the differences of conference evaluation between genders, this research also sited gender data separately in the software, and the results are displayed in Figure 6.9. The results of the two displays are almost identical. Both considered good speakers, venue and hotel, and food are important to people who attend the conference. Similarly, the secondary factors that were generated when isolating the primary factors are also homogeneous in nature. Therefore, it can be concluded that gender did not appear to be a discriminatory variable.

6.4.6 Other meaningful findings

Besides the findings in the previous sections, which were mainly obtained by using the QDA Miner program, other meaningful factors also arise from the qualitative data being carefully read repeatedly. These factors/items below are also included in the scale development except for the perceptions of event as a continuity of or escape from their work.

6.4.6.1 The recreation/entertainment factors

This factor or criterion is not explicitly expressed by the interviewees, but many enjoyed the activities organized by the conference hosts and the recreational resources provided by the conference destination. More importantly, the respondent who does not show any interest in visiting destinations did comment on the entertaining activities that were integrated into a business conference:

> *Another point is the entertaining style of the business conference; this is a tradition of Alibaba style. Alibaba must be a company with entertainment elements in the future. For example, a concert designed for the conference by employing related technology. It has this type of design, which includes Jack Ma's speech, sports, and pop singers' performance. In fact, you can tell that Alibaba can really collaborate with the start-ups, like my company, which is more interactive, stylish. Therefore, the entertaining aspects is more to display that they're good at letting us know about the latest technologies and even find the latest trends in a more open and ready way. (Respondent 15, XZ)*

6.4.6.2 Price insensitive and time sensitive

This factor comes from the questions like "Do you think the price is reasonable?", "How much did you pay for the registration?", "What would be the reasons for you not to attend a conference?" and "Will you spend some time to visit the destination?"

Their answers to those questions are supporting this theme or factor. Many, for example Respondents 1, 14 and 17, indicate that they do not really think about the price of the registration, as they have claimed many times. What concerns them most is the content and the speakers at the conference. Some (Respondents 3, 10 and 20) also explain their busy schedule and the first most important thing they consider is “time” when they make their decisions to attend a conference or stay for a couple of days to visit the destination.

6.4.6.3 Level of position and benefits for attendance

Another interesting point is both the junior-employees and senior executives agree that the benefits of attending some types of conference cannot be optimised if the level of the attendees and the content the conference are not matching well. In other words, the organization should evaluate both the conference and the people who attend this conference, and make sure the business he/she gets involved in are closely related with conference theme.

For example, Respondent 11, an entry-level staff of a communication company, aims to “know the basic knowledge and fundamental skills” when attending a conference. While a business owner insists that,

> *I feel it is useless [for elementary level employees to attend this conference], they cannot understand much of the content. I rather spend money to sponsor my administrative-level colleagues, since they can understand the conference and gather all sorts of information and resources for us. (Respondent 17, DUJ)*

6.4.6.4 Cultural differences on food and language

The qualitative data also indicate that when hosting an international conference, some cultural differences need to be noted, though the differences of culture could make contributions to visitor experiences (Kim & Ritchie, 2014). In this study, at least two cultural issues caused some discomfort for the international attendees.

One is the dining culture. One of the respondents is a female Chinese computer engineer, who has attended a conference that was hosted outside China. She describes her horrible dining experience:

> *I am expecting food can be served with a higher standard. Well, it does offer lunch, but I’m not used to western style food. So generally, I eat outside. And they didn't provide sufficient food, just salad, and I didn't feel full with salad, so I went out to eat and came back to have coffee. I am not used to just have*

salad as meal. It's just grass. (Laugh) I ignored it and walked away, and the food was not attractive. As for the dessert, they had too much sugar in it, it didn't taste good anyway. (Respondent 1, YH)

However, another western senior executive (Respondent 23) argues that a light lunch, like salad, is perfect for attending a conference. Observation also shows that to have some dessert after a meal is like a ceremony to conclude the dining activity.

Another issue is language barriers. Attending an international conference without an interpreter, if you don't understand the language, it is like being in a room with just noises. Inviting a human simultaneous interpreter might increase the cost quite a lot, but with the development of Artificial Intelligence and other related technologies, the cost of using automatic translations is getting increasingly lower. It is highly suggested to employ an interpreter for an international conference; otherwise, the language barriers could cause worries, pressures, even anxiety for attendees from other cultures. As Respondent 1 describes,

I am quite happy to attend the conference, but not sure about enjoying. Because the working language at the conference is English, and there must be something I don't understand, that would be the moment of pains and struggles. Sadly, they didn't offer a simultaneous interpreter for the international attendees. (Respondent 1, YH)

6.4.6.5 Perceptions of the relationship between work and conference

Business conference attendees have distinct attitudes towards the relation between work and business conference, ranging from "Escape from Work" to "Extra Work Load" (Figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10 Dichotomous Relation between Work and Biz Conference Attendance

One respondent was at the "suffering" end – "Extra Work Load"; she claims, "It's my extra work to attend the conference that my boss requests. After all, I can do nothing but the conference, and I need to catch up with my own work after the conference

(Respondent 5, WNDY).” While Respondent 28 is indicating enjoyment especially as it was a break from the usual work environment and offered many opportunities to relax and have fun, as follows:

> *So, in the morning, there's the option to go for a walk along the way…to go on bicycles down to Hamilton gardens, have a twenty-minute yoga session, and cycle back again. That was a real highlight for me, set up for the day. Um, and then there was a function at the function hotel. They had food stations, and as I mentioned, the lovely, non-alcoholic punch station and beautiful food. It was fantastic. And there was also the opportunity to hire costumes, because the next night we were going out to Hobbiton movie set for [another] function… after a couple of drinks or towards the end of the evening, most people had hired a costume, even those that didn't really want to get into it. That was fantastic… lots of opportunity to move around, network, talk to people, but also you could sit down and have your food and relax. That’s nice.*

Between the two extremes, a neutral attitude lies in the middle; respondent 15 is one such representative. She surmises that “to attend a conference is a continuity of my work, but it provides me a special environment, where your phones, email are encouraged to be shut off. Under this circumstance, the attendees are able to concentrate on the related business. I think such a space for thinking is luxurious.”

The perception of the business conference as an “escape from work” or “extra work load” is strongly influenced by how the event organizers understand business events’ functions and the specific design of the event. The more an event enables attendees to network, relax, and interact, the easier a feeling of belongs and community to be formed, and the more they feel the event is an escape of their regular environment and work, which indicates the characteristics of a Third Place (Oldenburg, 1999). The results reported above, especially those relating to the entertainment factor, provide some evidence for the notion that attendees could generate the sense of being in a Third Place when attending the event. This is now further explored.

6.5 Is business event a Third Place?

6.5.1 The relationship between events and Third Places

Both the concepts/meanings of business event and the Third Place have been introduced and discussed in Chapter 3. They share some similar essential functions and characteristics, such as place/space for people to meet, to interact, to exchange and to form a community; both of them are different from the First Place (home) and Second Place (work); they are common in welcoming members, presenting regulars, and encouraging conversations (Getz, 2012; Oldenburg, 1999).

Meanwhile, they differ in many perspectives. The Third Place 1) was originally conceived as existing for pure sociability with no work or family/home purpose, 2) is dominated by the spirit of play and joyfulness, 3) is different from home but provides homey feelings and 4) has low profile from the physical aspects and the topics discussed. In comparison, business events are usually recognized for its business benefits and functions, because the sector contributes most among all the different sectors of event industry to the global economy (Bladen et al., 2012) and their essential purpose is "to promote, market or directly engage in commerce, or otherwise meet corporate objectives" Getz (2012, p.60). Therefore, business events must have a purpose, and often business purpose dominate the event. It is also noted that business event usually need an admission ticket or invited by the organizer, otherwise it is not accessible; the topic/theme of a business event is often of importance for the attendees and other stakeholders; besides, business events are generally hosted in places with characteristics or requirements. Therefore, it is difficult to consider a business event as a low profile place. Most business events are goal-driven and efficiency dominates the operations, which typically results in a formal, busy, and even stressful environment. Undoubtedly, they are different from home but hardly achieve homey feelings for attendees.

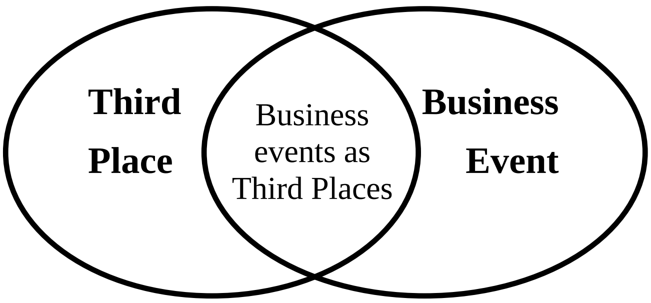
However, business events provide more than business impacts, especially when explored from the attendees' perspective. Sperstad and Cecil (2011) stated that events generate values for both organizations and attendees; and attendees would obtain emotional value, personal development as well as behavioural changes for their attendance. Similarly, Mitchell et al. (2016, p. 102) suggested that events could produce professional and personal value for attendees; and personal value is composed of social value, emotional value and hedonic value. Social rational value refers to the bonds created with friends or colleagues, while at the conference, the like-minded peers; emotional value means the positive and negative feelings (Liu et al., 2017), yet hedonic value is not common for business event.

As a place for people to communicate and exchange information/ideas, to promote business/product, to receive education/knowledge, and to collaborate on issues/solutions (BECA, 2015), business events are creating “a meaningful experience and temporary community” (Sperstad & Cecil, 2011, p. 315), as well as an interactive social contexts (Foley, Edwards, & Schlenker, 2014) for attendees. Therefore, non-business outcomes generated through attending business events are beneficial for the well-being and satisfaction of attendees (Foley et al., 2014), which features are also expected from social interactions at a Third Place (Jeffres et al., 2009).

Therefore, given the differences between them, the offerings of a business event are in line with the key features of the Third Place’s definition, which refers to various “public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work” Oldenburg (1999, p. 16). The Third Place serves as the setting for social interaction, relaxation, and celebration (Campbell, 2017). More specifically, eight original characteristics have been proposed to identify a Third Place (Oldenburg, 1999): accessibility, conversations, neutral ground, the role of leveller, the regulars, a low profile, playful mood, and a homey feeling (see Table 3.6).

Consequently, the relationship between business events and Third Places can be described that the two concepts have overlaps that are mutually inclusive (Figure 6.11); some business events are possible to be considered as Third Places, and some forms of Third Places can be business events. However, according to conventional concepts, a Third Place is unlikely to be a business event, yet by accepting an alternative concept (Mikunda, 2004) and broader criteria (Slater and Koo, 2010) of the Third Place, other forms of events have been confirmed as Third Places as listed below (Jon Hawkins, 2013; Purnell & Breede, 2018; Shipway, 2012).

Figure 6.11 The relationship between business events and Third Places



6.5.2 Is the selected business conference a Third Place?

As discussed previously, different forms of events have been investigated by scholars to confirm if they are Third Places. Specifically, sport events (Shipway, 2012), festivals (Jon Hawkins, 2013) and academic conferences (Purnell & Breede, 2018) were checked as examples with the recognition of the dynamic nature of the Third Place's concept and criteria. Then, it is important to explore if a business event can be considered a Third Place, which will influence the understanding of the nature of business event, as well as the principles employed for the designing of a business event.

Using the data that collected from a business conference through the methods of participative observation and secondary documents, this section will discuss if the selected case event– the Hangzhou Computing Conference, can be considered a Third Place. As observed at the event, many innovative measures were taken to increase the interaction and soften the business style of the event, which presumably would increase the confidence of accepting it as a Third Place. Practically, this section will compare the offerings of this event and the characteristics of a Third Place (considering the dynamic of concepts and criteria) to examine if the business conference is a Third Place.

The observational comparison between the event offerings and the criteria is displayed in detail in Table 6.6, which illustrated most of the features of this business conference matching the criteria of the Third Place. Those features that partially or did not meet the criteria were nonetheless sustained by the practices of the conference organizer, specifically through the entertainization of the business conference.

The adoption of social programs, like gala dinner, trips etc. (Ardani, 2017; Bauer et al., 2008) do increase the opportunities for attendees to network, relax, and interact. The integration of entertainments like sport events, music festival into a business conference creates more Third Place-related characteristics, for example "homelike place", "playful" and even "low profile". Therefore, the Hangzhou Computing Conference is positively to be considered as a Third Place with the recognition of the dynamic of its concept and criteria, and the innovative practices of the event organizer. This is supported by Mikunda (2004), who suggested that staged events should be considered as the alternative forms of traditional third place, such as malls, fairs, expos. Moreover, the innovative practices of this business conference also provided solutions for other types of events to meet the criteria of the Third Place (Jon Hawkins, 2013; Purnell & Breede, 2018; Shipway, 2012).

Table 6.6 The comparison between the event offerings and the Third Place criteria

Third Place Criteria		The practices of Hangzhou Computing Conference
1	On Neutral Ground	This conference 1) takes a neutral ground that is open to everyone who are interested in the event; 2) attendees decide what time, which day to come and leave, but curtesy and respects are necessary to others; 3) importantly, the entertaining activities moderate the pace, atmosphere and feeling of this business conference, make attendees feel comfortable.
2	Leveller	This conference acts as an inclusive place because anyone may register for it; onsite programs are not open to everyone except tickets were bought or registrations were completed prior that. Yet, attendees gather for a/multiple purpose(s) instead of no purpose. Notably, no such interaction without any purpose in modern society. Sociability was encouraged at the event.
3	Conversation	The conference not only allow people to have conversation, but also create opportunities and programs, providing facilities and settings for facilitating attendees' conversations.
4	Accessibility	Anyone who registered may come individually or with a group at any time during the staging of the event; attendees are supposed to meet peers, colleagues, even friends at the event.
5	The Regulars	Reputational speakers, performers, organizers and peers are those who make the place alive; every time/year new attendees are expected, and the regulars usually welcome them cordially. Consequently, to know business partners, establish relationships, form a community and create a sense of belongings.
6	A Low Profile	Business events usually are hosted in venues with great features and intend to bring interesting and important topic(s) for the attendees. Though it did not meet this old-fashioned principle, this will not influence the results, because for the same group of people with similar background/interest, what the conference provided was "common" and can be regarded as "low profile".
7	The Mood is Playful	Unlike typical business conference, it integrated many entertaining events, which changed the "tone" of the event from pure business to a more light-hearted, playful and exciting event. To some extent, these measures improved the quality of experience, reduced the anxiety and alienation.
8	A Homey place	The qualitative data indicated that attendees had distinct perceptions of business events, either the continuity of their work or an escape from work. Thus, with no doubt, business events are place away from home. To make the business event a homey place, the organizers innovatively designed the event that presented psychological comfort and support.

Source: Author onsite observation; YF Financial. (2017), Fang (2017), and Wan (2019).

Indeed, as Jeffres et al. (2009) indicated that Third Places "foster community and communication among people outside of home and work, yet we have little empirical evidence that speaks to the subject, or their importance for a community's quality of life"(p.333). In his criteria, Oldenburg (1999) also specified the benefits of creating a Third Place for communities, such as promoting interaction and sociability, inceasing community senses, inclusiveness and member's well-being. Most of these objectives are also pursued by business event organizers, therefore it is important to employ this theory in designing and operating a business event, which presumably leads to the satisfaction of the consumers and the success of the business event.

Additionally, Carlson et al. (2016, p. 901) endorsed the entertainization practices used by this business conference. They argued that engaging event attendees with “enjoyable activities” and embedding “social features” in the design and planning process would “foster socialisation and opportunities for consumer-to-consumer interactions and instil normative beliefs and values to enable social cohesion and perceptions of sociability to be formed” (Carlson et al., 2016, p. 917). The interactions, sociability, enjoyment will help to establish friendships (Foley et al., 2014), which contribute to 1) the attendees’ wellbeing, conference attendance, retention of staff members, professional collaborations, and capability of creativity and innovation.

Meanwhile, when adopting this theory and the entertainization practises, it is essential to keep the commercial features and functions, as well as the business goals/purposes, because this is the means to maintain a business event as a business event instead of others. In other words, the enjoyable entertainments must be integrated into a business event carefully, make sure the entertainment activities are matching and connecting well with the theme and content of the business event.

6.6 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, the qualitative data have been analysed by mainly employing one of the popular CAQDA software packages, QDA Miner. The chapter reviewed the process of qualitative data collection and reported the respondents’ profile. After the justification of the methods of qualitative data analysis, specific analyses have been conducted, results were displayed and explained in section 6.4, which include motivations, criteria for evaluating business conference, gender comparison, and other meaningful findings. Those results discovered in this section were then used to inform the development of the measurement scale and the design of the survey questionnaire for quantitative data collection, as well as the discussion with quantitative analyses in the following sections.

The qualitative analysis indicated the attendees’ perceptions of business event attendance are distinct, either “extra workload” or “escape from work”. Thus, responding to the Third Place Theory in literature review and the first research question, whether the case business event is a Third Place was checked, which results in the confirmation of the business event as a Third Place, especially with the innovative design and operations.

Chapter 7 Descriptive Analysis

7.1 Introduction

Descriptive data analysis usually covers univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis (Gayle Jennings, 2010, p. 299). This stage also has been described as an "exploratory analysis" (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 511) that allows the researcher to "determine the general trends in the data" (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 206), such as frequency, variances to items on a measuring scale, and the examination of the quality of the collected data.

In this chapter, the results of quantitative data collection will be firstly reported. Following this, sample features or characteristics are analysed from the aspects of gender, age group, position, seniority, education and geographical origins. To determine the existence of relations between variables, cross-tabulation is employed to analyse the data. Then, this chapter presents the descriptive analysis results, such as the rating of the perceived importance of the business conference attributes, the perceived performance of these attributes, and the responses from the respondents regarding the impressions of the conference and things that need to change next time. At the end of this chapter, the reliability of the collected data is checked with Cronbach's Alpha test and Guttman Split-Half Coefficient test; and sample adequacy is tested as well by KMO and Bartlett's Test.

7.2 Quantitative Data collection Results

On the conference site, 1450 paper questionnaires were distributed to the attendees during this event, which was strongly supported by the conference organizer. The researcher was not only allowed to collect data on the conference site, but also permitted to set up posters at the reception centre. It was thought that this promotion and the professional appearance of the questionnaire, as well as the organiser's support, improved the participation rate and encouraged the respondents' confidence in the data collecting process.

As Table 7.1 shows, during the four-day event, 1362 questionnaires were returned; the initial response rate was 95%. Nevertheless, the actual number used for analysis was reduced to 1122 in order to guarantee the data quality, that is, 240 were excluded due to 1) the incomplete information; 2) the single-level choice in a scale; or 3) the respondent was a student. This resulted in the response rate of 77.5% for the paper questionnaire survey. Though another 202 on-line surveys were completed, it was thought not numerous enough to permit comparison with the onsite data, and KMO tests showed that the initial data was adequate for quantitative analysis. Consequently, in the thesis only data collected at the conference site were used for analysis.

Table 7.1: Questionnaire Distribution and Collection

	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Collected	Questionnaires Valid	Effective Response Rate
Paper Survey	1450	1362	1122	77.4%
Online Survey	N/A	202	202	100%

7.3 General features of the sample

The questionnaire included questions about the informant's demographic profile, career features and frequency of attendance at conference. Given the variety of the attendees' originating cities and countries, maps also were employed to illustrate the geographical coverage of domestic and international attendees, and thus gave a visual representation of the sample from the geographical perspective.

7.3.1 Demographic profile of the sample

Of the respondents, male respondents accounted for a much larger proportion (72.4%) than their female counterparts (27.6%), and the ratio was much higher than expected when observing the conference. However, this may have been due to the organiser's support being more directed at industry attendees rather than the general public, who may have attended for reasons of general interest or to view the entertainment aspects of the proceedings. Additionally, it does seem that more female entrepreneurs are involved in the high-tech industry in China, so they also show great interest in such high-tech-related events, like the Hangzhou Computing Conference, female data implied a higher than average rate of such interest (Gao, 2017).

In respect of age, 54.8% were aged between 20 to 29 years old, followed by respondents aged between 30-39 years old (36.9%). Respondents aged above 40 years old only accounted for 8.3% of the sample. In terms of educational attainment, the majority had a bachelor's or higher degree (97.4%). Table 7.2 presents the specific information of the sample's demographic features.

Comparing the sample's characteristics and the overall attendees' profile as supplied by the conference organizers, the sample appeared to represent the business attendees, especially by age and gender. The registration information (Gao, 2017) stated that female attendees accounted for 24.2% of the total: the percentage in the sample is slightly higher (27.6%). Though the classification of age groups between the sample and the official data differ a little. Attendees who were born after 1980 form the majority of the target population (80%); in the sample, respondents who are older than 40, roughly equal to people who were born before 1980, occupied 8.3%, which leaves the rest of the respondents at 91.7%. In short, the sample characteristics match sufficiently well with the target population to permit results to be generalised.

Table 7.2: Sociodemographic Features of Sample

Features		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender				
	Male	699	72.4	72.4
	Female	267	27.6	100.0
	Total	966	100.0	
Age				
	20-29	613	54.8	54.8
	30-39	413	36.9	91.7
	40-49	85	7.6	99.3
	50-59	8	.7	100.0
	Total	1119	100.0	
Education				
	Doctoral	32	2.9	2.9
	Master	240	21.5	24.4
	University Degree	814	73.0	97.4
	High School	19	1.7	99.1
	Others	10	.9	100.0
	Total	1115	100.0	

7.3.2 Sample Characteristics Regarding Career Stage

Table 7.3 indicates most respondents (62.4%) at this conference considered themselves as being at the "medium level" of management in their organization; however, 14.3% identified themselves as having a low-level position, and 23.3% held senior positions. Despite their stated rank in the relevant businesses or organisations, respondents with working experience less than five years accounted for 47.4% of the sample, while others who had work experience of more than ten years accounted for 34%. The data also showed that most attendees (71%) had a frequency of attending conferences of less than five times per year.

Table 7.3: Features of Sample Regarding Career Stage

Features	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Perceived Position in Organization			
Low Level	155	14.3	14.3
Medium Level	676	62.4	76.7
High Level	252	23.3	100.0
Total	1083	100.0	
Seniority (years working)			
Entry Level	239	22.3	22.3
Assistant Level	270	25.2	47.4
Associate Level	199	18.5	66.0
Mid-Senior level	218	20.3	86.3
Senior Level	147	13.7	100.0
Total	1073	100.0	
Entry Level: 0-2 years, Assistant Level: 3-5 years, Associate Level: 6-9 years; Mid-Senior Level: 10-14 years; Senior Level: 15years+			
Frequency of Attendance			
Infrequently	723	71.1	71.1
Low Frequency	238	23.4	94.5
Medium Frequency	47	4.6	99.1
High Frequency	9	.9	100.0
Total	1017	100.0	
In previous three years: Infrequently: 1-5 times; Low Frequency: 6-15 times; Medium Frequency: 16-30 times; High Frequency: 31-60 times.			

7.3.3 Geographical Allocations of Sample

As a high-profile tech-conference, this business event in Hangzhou attracted attendees from all over the world, and while the great majority were domestic respondents from China, there were 16 different countries represented in the sample. Therefore, the respondents can be categorised as international attendees and Chinese domestic attendees. Both categories had a wide geographical coverage, and were widely dispersed with reference to their locations of origin. Table 7.4 and Figure 7.1 illustrated the features of international respondents, while Table 7.5, Figure 7.2 and Figure 7.3 show the geographical profiles of domestic respondents.

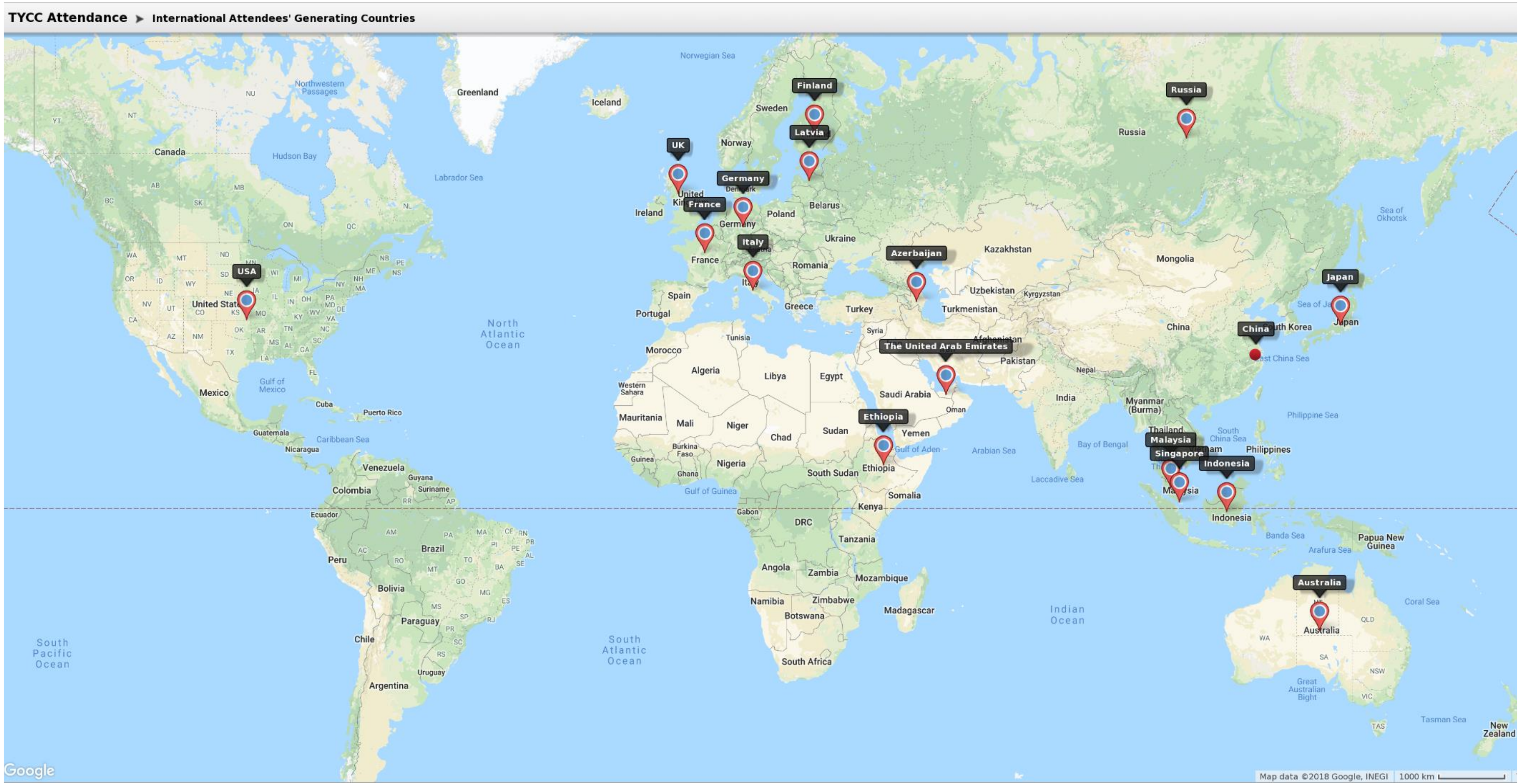
7.3.3.1 *International attendees by country*

However, the international delegates in the sample numbered only 29 international attendees; but they came from a variety of countries, such as the USA, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Finland, Latvia, Netherlands, The United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, Azerbaijan, Australia, and Ethiopia. In short, they were from every habitable continent other than South America. Though they would not be included for analysis, the data indicated an embryonic global reputation for the event.

Table 7.4: Generating Cities and Countries of International Respondents

Region	**Country**	**City**
Europe	France	Paris
Europe	UK	London
Europe	Germany	
Europe	Italy	
Europe	Russia	
Europe	Finland	
Europe	Latvia	
Asia	Singapore	Singapore
Asia	Malaysia	Kuala Lumpur; Kedah
Asia	Indonesia	Jakarta
Asia	Japan	Tokyo
Asia	Azerbaijan	
Middle East	The United Arab Emirates	Dubai
North America	USA	Portland; San Jose
Oceania	Australia	Sydney
Africa	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa
6 Regions	15 Counties	12 Cities

Figure 7.1: Map of International Respondents' Counties



7.3.3.2 Domestic attendees by city and province

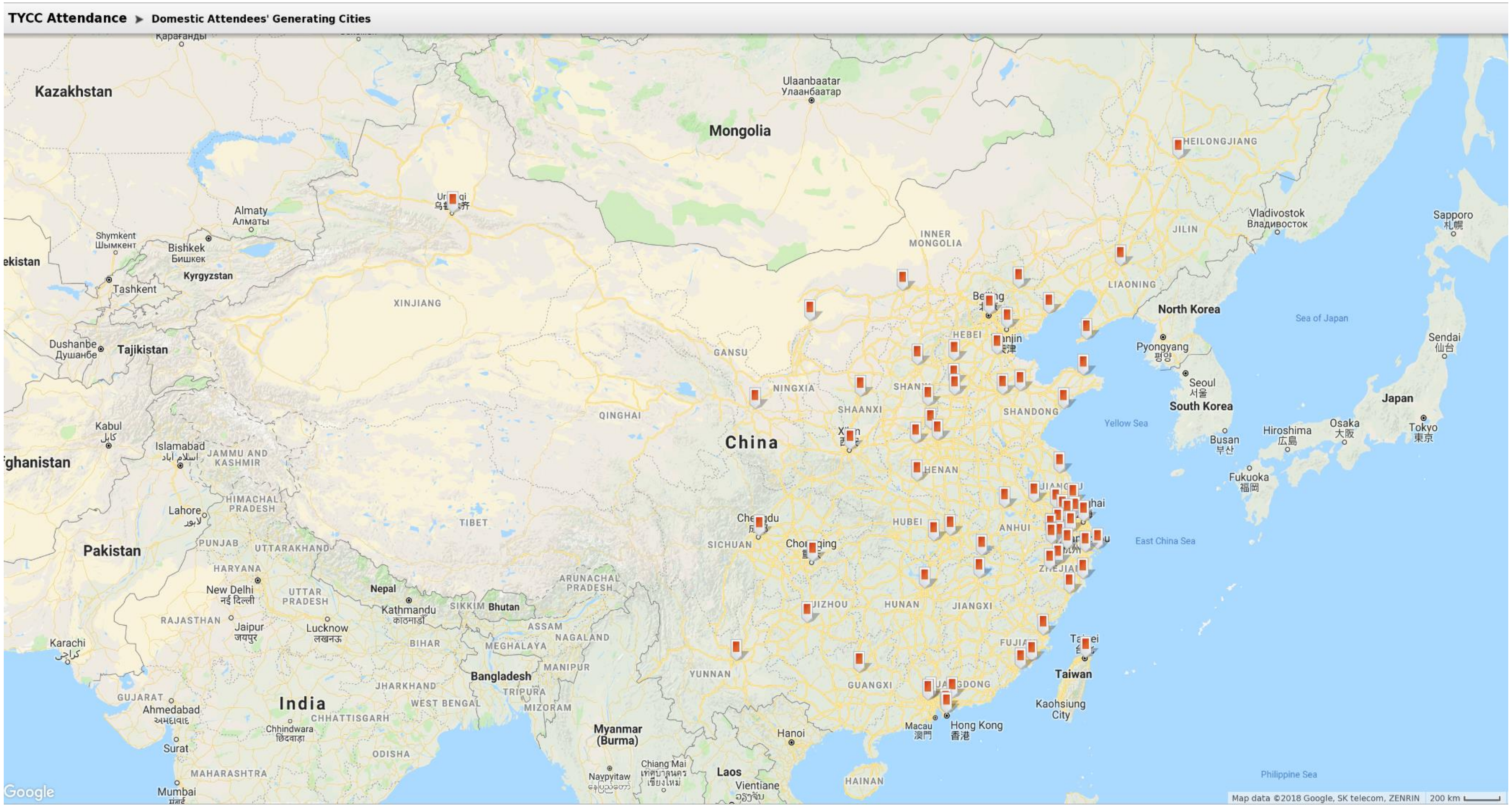
The Chinese domestic attendees came from 26 different provinces and SARs of China; more specifically, they were primarily from 67 different cities (Figure 7.3).

This is illustrated from data inputted into qualitative data analysing software (NVivo12.0), and a word cloud of attendees' generating cities was created according to the number of the respondents of the cities (Figure 7.2). It indicated that Hangzhou, Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Wuhan, Nanjing were the major origins of the domestic respondents. Further analysis showed (Appendix 7.1) that Hangzhou as the host city generated 36% of the respondents, followed by Shanghai (16.6%), Beijing (12.43%), Nanjing (3.23%), Guangzhou (2.66%), and Shenzhen (2.56%).

Figure 7.2: Word Cloud of Attendees' Generating Cities

The location of and percentage of attendees from the generating cities further imply two trends: 1) the closer is the conference generating city to the host city, the more local attendees will attend the conference; 2) the more developed is the industry (cloud computing and net-economy) in the generating city, the more attendees will be attracted. The distance between generating cities and destination, and the indicative layout of the generating cities was displayed in Figure 7.3.

Figure 7.3: Map of the Generating Cities and Provinces of Domestic Respondents



7.3.4 Cross-tabulation between age and other features

Features of the sample as shown in Tables 7.2 and 7.3 can be further described as follows:

- Most respondents were 20-29 years old (54.8%); if the age group between 30-39 years old was added, the percentage of respondents under or equal to age 40 reached 91.7%.
- More male respondents (72.4%) than females (27.6%) attended this conference.
- Respondents had high educational levels, 97.4% of them were holding a university or higher degree; 24.4% of them had a master's degree, and nearly 3 percent had a doctoral degree.
- Respondents who perceived their organisational status at the "medium level" formed the majority of the sample (62.4%).
- The respondents with different years of working experience were relatively equally distributed in the sample.

However, the relationships between these features have not been displayed, which is the premise for the following analysis that examined the interdependence of the variables at this stage. Cross-tabulation analysis is appropriate for pre-checking such issues. Crosstabs between different sociodemographic variables indicated the following results (see Table 7.5, Table 7.6 and Appendix 7.2):

- Age of respondents is positively related with their level of position or status in their organization, i.e., older informants tended to have more senior positions (See Table 7.5);
- Among the majority of young respondents, the younger females tended to be more proportionately numerous than their younger male colleagues.
- Age and education level was first negatively related and then positively related to age. That is, respondents between the ages of 30-39 had the best education level (51.6% doctoral degree owners and 48.3% master's degree owners in their education group), while the much younger and older respondents tended to have lower educational attainment. In short, an inverted U relationship existed between the variables.
- Those between the age groups of 20-29 years old and 30-39 years old were the most active attendees as revealed by other data examined later.
- Perceived organizational status and conference attending frequencies were not significantly different between the genders (see Table 7.6).
- Of the females, 50% tended to the category of fewer working years. Of the males, 30% fell into this classification.
- No obvious relations were found between perceived level of position and education; or between age group and the types of sponsorship.

As presented in Table 7.5, cross-tabulation showed that 57.1% of respondents in the age group of 50-59 (n=7) self-classified themselves as senior management, followed by those in the age group of 40-49 years (n=84, 47.6% of the total). For ages 30-39 (n=401), 31.7% considered themselves to be in high-level positions and by comparison only 13.8% of the youngest age group (n=589) thought they occupied a senior high-level position. By the same token, the younger age group respondents perceived their positions as being at the lower levels of seniority. However, the perception gaps between different age groups for the medium-level positions were not as obvious as the other two levels. For example, the majority of respondents (more than 60%) of both age groups of 20-29 and 30-39 felt they held intermediate management posts and more than 40% of the respondents of both 40-49 and 50-59 age groups had a similar perception of their job status.

Table 7.5: Crosstab between Age and Level of Position

Age * Position Crosstabulation (Chi-Square: 134.993, P <0.001)						
			Level of Position			
			Low Level	Medium Level	High Level	Total
Age Group	20-29	Count	137	371	81	589
		Expected Count	84.5	367.2	137.3	589.0
		% within age group	23.3%	63.0%	13.8%	100.0%
		% within Level of Position	88.4%	55.0%	32.1%	54.5%
	30-39	Count	15	259	127	401
		Expected Count	57.5	250.0	93.5	401.0
		% within age group	3.7%	64.6%	31.7%	100.0%
		% within Level of Position	9.7%	38.4%	50.4%	37.1%
	40-49	Count	3	41	40	84
		Expected Count	12.0	52.4	19.6	84.0
		% within age group	3.6%	48.8%	47.6%	100.0%
		% within Level of Position	1.9%	6.1%	15.9%	7.8%
	50-59	Count	0	3	4	7
		Expected Count	1.0	4.4	1.6	7.0
		% within age group	0.0%	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
		% within Level of Position	0.0%	0.4%	1.6%	0.6%
Total		Count	155	674	252	1081
		Expected Count	155.0	674.0	252.0	1081.0
		% within age group	14.3%	62.3%	23.3%	100.0%
		% within Level of Position	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 7.6 indicates that there were slight differences in perceptions of their level of seniority by gender. In the female group (n=256), 23% positioned themselves as low-level, 61.3% medium-level and 15.6% high-level. On the other hand, in the male group (n=677), 13% of male respondents thought they were at low-level positions, 62.5% at the intermediate level and 24.5% at high-level.

Table 7.6: Crosstab between Gender and Level of Position

Gender * Level of Position Crosstabulation (Chi-Square:18.600, P <0.001)						
			Level of Position			
			Low Level	Medium Level	High Level	Total
Gender	Male	Count	88	423	166	677
		Expected Count	106.7	420.9	149.5	677.0
		% within gender	13.0%	62.5%	24.5%	100.0%
		% within Level of Position	59.9%	72.9%	80.6%	72.6%
	Female	Count	59	157	40	256
		Expected Count	40.3	159.1	56.5	256.0
		% within gender	23.0%	61.3%	15.6%	100.0%
		% within Level of Position	40.1%	27.1%	19.4%	27.4%
	Total	Count	147	580	206	933
		Expected Count	147.0	580.0	206.0	933.0
		% within gender	15.8%	62.2%	22.1%	100.0%
		% within Level of Position	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Crosstab analysis between gender and frequency of attendance (Appendix 7.2) indicates that gender had little influence on the respondents' conference attending frequency. In other words, in both groups the percentages attending conferences in the categories of "Infrequently", "Low Frequency", "Medium Frequency", and "High Frequency" were similar. For example, in each group, respondents who attended a conference infrequently accounted for more than 70% (male 70.8%; female 73.9%); with low frequency, male 23.4% and female 23.5%; medium frequency, male 5.3% and female 2.1%; and high frequency, male 0.5% and female 0.4%.

7.4 Descriptive analysis of measurement scales

As mentioned in chapter 5, the main body of the questionnaire includes three scales that measure the experience of the attendees who attended the Hangzhou Computing conference in 2017. The first scale is designed to measure the perceived degree of the importance of the items regarding the conference in the eyes of the attendees. The second scale evaluated attendees' perceptions of conference-related items' performances during the event. Finally, the purpose of the third scale is to assess attendees' satisfaction and potential future behaviour after the conference. The descriptive statistics of the three scales are displayed in the following sections.

7.4.1 Perceived importance of business conference attributes

As shown in Table 7.7, the first scale contained 25 items relating to the perceived importance of conference attributes, again measured by a 7-point Likert scale, with "7=

extremely important”. Among the 25 items, which covered the aspects of conference destination, venue, organization, speakers, and ICTs, the data revealed that attendees believed that to “keep up with industry trends” was the most important conference function (Mean=6.22, SD=1.031). This was followed by the second most important item, “high quality content” of conference (Mean=6.20, SD=1.134). The respondents also considered that “speakers have interesting things to say” (Mean=5.99, SD=1.096) and “speakers have high reputation” (Mean=5.94, SD=1.233) were very important signals for them in their decision to attend a conference. Moreover, they valued the items of “conference venue has clear and effective signage” (Mean=5.91, SD=1.240) and “conference venue has quality facilities” (Mean=5.89, SD=1.181) quite highly. Meanwhile, the top 30% most highly rated items also included the “opportunities to look for a business partner” (Mean=5.83, SD=1.278) and “assist the professional networking” (Mean=5.82, SD=1.294).

Table 7.7: Perceived Importance of Conference Attributes

Descriptive Statistics of Scale 1				
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skew
1.12 The conference enables attendees to keep up with industry trend	1106	**6.22**	1.031	-2.000
1.4 There should be high quality content offered by a conference	1112	**6.20**	1.134	-1.921
1.13 Key speaker(s) has interesting things to say	1109	**5.99**	1.096	-1.357
1.8 Key speakers have a high reputation	1117	**5.94**	1.233	-1.655
1.22 The conference venue has clear and effective signage	1105	**5.91**	1.240	-1.328
1.9 The conference venue has quality facilities	1115	**5.89**	1.181	-1.290
1.5 The conference should offer opportunities for a new business partner	1111	**5.83**	1.278	-1.296
1.3 The conference should assist attendees in professional networking	1109	**5.82**	1.294	-1.236
1.1 The attractiveness of the conference host city	1121	5.79	1.335	-1.334
1.11 Key speakers possess good presentation skills	1113	5.75	1.197	-1.109
1.25 The organizers have prompt after-conference following-ups.	1063	5.71	1.273	-1.128
1.17 The hotel I stay in has easy access to the conference venue	1108	5.63	1.407	-1.195
1.2 There are sufficient flights/trains to & from the conference city	1117	5.57	1.487	-1.088
1.24 A user-friendly conference app/website is available to attendees	1115	5.51	1.396	-1.026
1.7 A fast and stable Wi-Fi connection is made available to attendees	1116	5.45	1.588	-1.013
1.23 The venue is easy to access/close to transport centres (Airport)	1115	5.43	1.516	-1.055
1.16 Restaurant staff are responsive in the service they provide	1102	5.30	1.396	-.814
1.18 The meals are value for money	1109	**5.28**	1.404	-.755
1.19 The restaurants provide good quality food	1100	**5.28**	1.415	-.827
1.15 The hotel I stay in gives me value for money	1105	**5.21**	1.432	-.713
1.14 The staff of the hotel I stay in are responsive to my requests	1109	**5.19**	1.401	-.758
1.6 The conference offers good social programmes (dinner, concert)	1112	**5.10**	1.465	-.637
1.10 The conference allows attendees to catch up with friends/ colleagues	1109	**4.94**	1.479	-.620
1.20 The destination provides activities for recreation, visit and shopping	1109	**4.78**	1.582	-.510
1.21 The conference offers attendees an opportunity to ‘escape’ regular work	1109	**4.77**	1.608	-.565

However, the respondents agreed that for a business conference the least important reason for them to attend was “opportunity to escape from regular work” (Mean=4.77, SD=1.608). Second to this reason, “activities for recreation, visit and shopping” at the destination were considered not important (Mean=4.78, SD=1.582). Surprisingly, for surveyed respondents, the item of “catch up with friends and colleagues” (Mean=4.94, SD=1.479) was also relatively poorly rated. “Social programs”, “responsiveness of hotel staff”, “hotel value for money”, “food quality in restaurant” and “meals value for money” also fell into the 30% lowest rated items below the mean score of 5.30.

7.4.2 Perceived performance of business conference attributes

The second scale was designed to permit comparison with the first scale and contained the same number of items to measure respondents’ assessment of conference performance. Performance also was measured by 7-point Likert scale, with “1=extremely disagree” and “7=extremely agree” with the lead items. As Table 7.8 showed, descriptive statistics of this scale indicated that the item of “Hangzhou is an attractive city” received the highest assessment of the items (Mean=6.09, SD=1.263). The second was “I felt I could better catch up with industry trends through this conference” (Mean=5.91, SD=1.146). Respondents then agreed that “(I thought) the speakers have great reputations” (Mean=5.85, SD=1.219). Though not listed as the most important items, both “there were sufficient flights/trains to and from the city” (Mean=5.69, SD=1.409) and “Hangzhou provided various activities for recreation, visit and shopping” (Mean=5.64, SD=1.308) were the subject of favourable scores. The last three well scored items in the top 30% items with the mean score higher than 5.57 were “I thought the conference had high quality content” (Mean=5.63, SD=1.294), “I thought the key speaker(s) had interesting things to say” (Mean=5.62, SD=1.167) and “I felt the key speaker(s) had good presentation skills” (Mean=5.61, SD=1.171).

However, at the other end of the scale, respondents admitted that the item of “The conference venue was easy to access and close to transport centres” (Mean=4.33, SD=1.855) received the worst scores. Similarly, they also expressed their lower agreement to the statement of “The hotel I stayed in had easy access to the conference venue” (Mean=4.68, SD=1.740). Meanwhile, they also allocated low ratings to the following statements, “I thought the restaurants offered good quality food” (Mean=4.69, SD=1.646), “I thought the meals were value for money” (Mean=4.73, SD=1.641), and

"That a user-friendly conference app/website was available to attendees" (Mean=4.77, SD=1.662).

Interestingly, some items that respondents perceived as having low importance also gained low mean scores for performance. Yet the items "The destination provides activities for recreation, visit and shopping" and "The attractiveness of the conference host city", while not perceived as important factors that influence the delegates' attendance, were nonetheless among the best performing items, especially for the destination city for respondents who strongly agreed that "Hangzhou is an attractive city".

Table 7.8: Perceived Performance of Conference Attributes

Descriptive Statistics of scale 2	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skew
2.1 I felt Hangzhou is an attractive city	1114	**6.09**	1.263	-1.801
2.12 I felt I could better keep up with industry trends though this conference	1100	**5.91**	1.146	-1.384
2.8 I thought the speakers have great reputation	1079	**5.85**	1.219	-1.391
2.2 I felt there were sufficient flights/trains to & from the city	1077	**5.69**	1.409	-1.316
2.20 Hangzhou provided various activities for recreation, visit and shopping	1075	**5.64**	1.308	-1.092
2.4 I thought the conference had high quality content	1100	**5.63**	1.294	-1.087
2.13 I thought the key speaker(s) had interesting things to say	1077	**5.62**	1.167	-.902
2.11 I felt the key speaker(s) had good presentation skills	1077	**5.61**	1.171	-.979
2.9 The conference venue provided quality facilities	1107	5.57	1.336	-1.067
2.3 I was pleased with conference opportunities for professional networking	1087	5.44	1.417	-.964
2.22 The conference venue had clear and effective signage	1097	5.37	1.542	-1.144
2.5 I felt there were opportunities to find new business partners	1082	5.28	1.396	-.794
2.21 The conference offered me an opportunity to 'escape' my regular work	1058	5.25	1.509	-.834
2.25 I felt the organizers had prompt after-conference following-ups.	1003	5.24	1.459	-.698
2.6 I was happy with the social functions (e.g. gala dinner, concert, night run).	1073	5.03	1.521	-.682
2.14 The staff of the hotel I stayed in were responsive to my requests	962	5.03	1.455	-.660
2.7 I thought Wi-Fi was fast and stable during the conference	1026	5.01	1.664	-.793
2.15 I felt the hotel I stayed in gave me value for money	966	**4.95**	1.503	-.638
2.10 I was pleased to be able to catch up with friends and colleagues	1079	**4.94**	1.508	-.625
2.16 I thought the restaurant staff were responsive in the service they provided	998	**4.89**	1.531	-.666
2.24 That a user-friendly conference app/website was available to attendees	1070	**4.77**	1.662	-.583
2.18 I thought the meals were value for money	1036	**4.73**	1.641	-.565
2.19 I thought the restaurants offered good quality food	1043	**4.69**	1.646	-.559
2.17 The hotel I stayed in had easy access to the conference venue	1002	**4.68**	1.740	-.507
2.23 The conference venue was easy to access and close to transport centres	1090	**4.33**	1.855	-.299

7.4.3 Measurement of satisfaction and behaviours

Satisfaction and future behaviour are conventionally measured for investigating the consumers' level of satisfaction and their intentions of revisiting or sharing their experience (Berridge, 2012; Love & Crompton, 1996). Both satisfaction and behaviours were again assessed on a 7-point scale, with "1=extremely disagree" and "7=extremely agree", complete with a non-response option, 0=do not know/cannot express a view/ not appropriate. Table 7.9 shows that the respondents not only were quite satisfied with the conference, but also had a positive feedback regarding their future behaviour.

Respondents highly agreed with the statements of "I believe this conference offered value for money" (Mean=5.88, SD=1.233) and "I increased my understanding of knowledge, concepts, and trends" (Mean=5.87, SD=1.139). From the perspective of future behaviour, they strongly agreed with the items of "I am willing to attend this conference next time" (Mean=5.83, SD=1.408) and "I will employ the learned skills/knowledge in my job/life" (Mean=5.79, SD=1.244). The items that had relatively lower mean scores were "I will share my conference experience on my social media" (Mean=5.42, SD=1.618) and "The Conference has expanded my business networks" (Mean=5.07, SD=1.467).

Table 7.9: Satisfaction and Future Behaviours

Descriptive Statistics of Scale 3				
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skew
4.1 I believe this conference offered value for money.	1113	**5.88**	1.233	-1.337
4.3 I increased my understanding of knowledge, concepts, & trends.	1111	**5.87**	1.139	-1.234
4.10 I am willing to attend this conference next time.	1081	**5.83**	1.408	-1.494
4.8 I will employ the learned skills/knowledge in my jobs/life.	1106	**5.79**	1.244	-1.261
4.9 I will encourage colleagues and others to attend this conference.	1107	5.74	1.349	-1.281
4.2 I was satisfied with this conference.	1107	5.60	1.226	-1.003
4.5 Attending the conference increased the sense of belonging.	1105	5.52	1.243	-.753
4.4 Attending this conference was pleasurable.	1102	5.48	1.250	-.778
4.7 I will share my conference experience on my social media.	1095	**5.42**	1.618	-1.082
4.6 Conference has expanded my business networks	1090	**5.07**	1.467	-.565

7.5 Data reliability and adequacy

The reliability and adequacy of the collected data are essential for a researcher to continue his/her data analysis and interpretation. Therefore, reliability of the scales used for data collection and the size of the sample are tested before conducting a statistical analysis.

If a measurement for data collection is reliable, it indicates the consistency of the responses from different subjects (Hazzi & Maldaon, 2015; Leavy, 2017), which also requires that items in the scale are not highly correlated, which may cause the problem of overfitting or multi-collinearity (George & Mallery, 2003). Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) is an accepted measure of reliability, because Cronbach's alpha is applicable for both "binary type and large-scale data" (Hazzi & Maldaon, 2015, p. 58) and is used to measure the scale's internal consistency, as well as the degree of correlation among items (Bajpai & Bajpai, 2014).

With respect to the values of reliability categories, George and Mallery (2003) suggested in the rules of thumb that Cronbach's alpha coefficient values larger than 0.7 is acceptable, 0.8 is good, and 0.9 is excellent.

To test the adequacy of sample size, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test is usually conducted. Conventionally, KMO value larger than 0.5 indicates the data is adequate to carry out the factor analysis (Verma, 2012), and also the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity should be statistically significant (Williams, Brown, & Onsman, 2010).

Therefore, Cronbach's alpha, KMO test and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were calculated to the adequacy of the sample size with reference to the collected data.

7.5.1 Reliability

As mentioned in chapter 5, the questionnaire contains three scales that measured the importance, the performance of the conference attributes, and satisfaction and future behaviour of the respondents. For the reliability tests, they should be implemented one after another according to the requirements of the Cronbach's alpha test. Test results showed that the Cronbach's alpha values of scale 1 (0.930), scale 2 (0.947) and scale 3 (0.931) are higher than 0.9, which signified the scales were excellent in the perspective of reliability (see Table 7.10).

Table 7.10: Reliability of scales by Cronbach's alpha

Reliability Statistics		
	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Scale 1 The importance of conference attributes	.930	25
Scale 2 The performance of conference attributes	.947	25
Scale 3 Satisfaction and future behaviour intentions	.931	10

To further explore the interval consistency of each scale, the researcher ran split-half tests, in which the scale is divided into two parts and consistency between-groups are examined (Table 7.11). Test results indicated that all the split parts of the three scales were consistent. For scale 1, the first part (13 items) had the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.915 and the value of the second part (12 items) was 0.918; as for scale 2, the value of the two parts (part1=13 items; part2=12 items) were 0.866, 0.908. In the third scale, both part one and part two contained five items with the value of 0.918 for the first part and 0.854 for the second.

Table 7.11: Interval Consistency of Two Parts in Each Scale

Reliability Statistics			**Scale 1**	**Scale 2**	**Scale 3**
Cronbach's Alpha	Part 1	Value	.915	.866	.918
		N of Items	13	13	5
	Part 2	Value	.918	.908	.854
		N of Items	12	12	5
	Total N of Items		25	25	10
Correlation Between Forms			.741	.703	.806
Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Equal Length		.851	.826	.893
	Unequal Length		.851	.826	.893
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient			**.848**	**.821**	**.892**

7.5.2 Adequacy

The results of KMO tests showed that the KMO value of scale 1 (to measure the attributes' importance) was 0.939; for the second scale KMO equals 0.954; and the value for the last scale was 0.938 (see Table 7.12). According to Hutcheson and Sofroniou (1999), if the KMO value is higher than 0.5, that means the sample size is sufficient for factor analysis. The KMO values of the scales in this study were all above 0.9, which are characterised as being "superb" (Norusis, 1990). That is to say, the data collected from the 1122 respondents were adequate or appropriate for future statistical analyses.

KMO results also met the "rules of thumbs" proposed by Neuman (2006, p. 241) for checking the adequacy of sample size and the formulae designed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970, p. 607).

Table 7.12: KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sampling Adequacy

KMO and Bartlett's Test		**Scale 1**	**Scale 2**	**Scale 3**
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin		.941	.948	.938
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	12433.320	11469.051	10677.892	7302.968
	300	300	300	45
	.000	.000	.000	.000

Other tests of importance include those relating to missing data and distribution scores. Later editions of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) permit examination of missing data. As seen in the above tables indicating the mean scores, the rows labelled "Valid N (listwise)" indicate the number of respondents who answered all the items. Of the 1122 respondents, 940 of them answered all the questions, meaning therefore that there was a need to examine patterns of non-response. Two questions emerge: 1) what is the level of non-response? and 2) is the pattern of non-response randomly distributed across the items and the informants? If the answer is that non-response is found amongst more than 5% of the informants and if it is non-random, then this has implications as to how such omissions might be dealt with when coming to multi-variant analysis.

SPSS permits two forms of analysis. The first is both numeric tables and graphs of missing data, and the second offers various forms of imputing values to missing cases. The graphs for the three scales are found in the appendices (see Appendix 7.3). It is sufficient to state at this point that generally non-responses were a small proportion of the total and randomly distributed. Given this, it was felt imputing a mean score to the missing case rather than using regression techniques or variance-based likelihood ratios, was quite legitimate. However, equally it was felt that in a couple of cases (as will be discussed below) a case did exist for excluding two items from any further analysis.

With reference to the sampling adequacy, the advent and popularity of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis has given rise to the need to consider the size power effects and the numbers of manifest and latent variables that might be used in modelling. Westland (2012) is one who has provided algorithms to test these aspects, and his algorithm was used.

The results were: to undertake multiple regression calculations with an effect size of 0.02 (the generally accepted strictest criterion) with a desired power level of 0.8 (again, the conventional strictest criterion) with potentially 4 latent variables, then the estimated required sample size is 597 (see www.danielsoper.com). With 20 individual items (or manifest variables), the number is 1,061 respondents. In short, by this test the sample size is sufficient. If structural equation modelling is being considered, then the current sample is marginally small when using the Westland algorithm to detect effect size, but if the anticipated effect size is marginally relaxed to 0.15 then the current sample meets the required size of 693 with 5 latent variables and 15 manifest variables, and does so for a series of alternative assumptions including more than 10 latent variables and 45 manifest variables. Consequently, the sample size is robust.

However, various assumptions are related to many of the multivariate forms of analysis, and one of the more important is normality of distribution. In tourism this is often missing. Key statistical tests for distribution include skew, kurtosis, the Wilkes-Shapiro test and the Kolomogorov-Smirnov (K-S) tests. Of these the K-S test is usually preferred for large samples. In all cases the K-S test was found to have a probability where $p<0.001$, implying a rejection of the null-hypothesis that the data has a normal distribution (see Appendix 7.4). This result therefore means that some tests are not suitable for the data – including covariance-based tests that are incorporated into software programmes such as AMOS and Lisrel. Therefore, in this research, according to the data distribution features and the researched phenomenon, the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) is adopted to investigate the event attendee's experience. The survey data will be processed and analysed in Warp PLS, which provides possibilities to examine the non-linear relationships.

7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the descriptive data analysis results were reported. The sociodemographic features of the sample were first analysed and presented, which indicated that the sample comprised more male attendees (72.4%), more young attendees (less than 40 years old), and their education levels were relatively higher (most of them holding university degree or higher). The sample was also overwhelmingly domestic in nature and well represented the overall population, i.e., the total conference attendees.

Crosstabs analysis found that the older the respondents, the more likely they would hold senior positions. However, as shown in the sample many are considered young to hold such positions (54.8% under 29; 91.7% under 40) when compared with traditional industries. Many start-ups are owned by young people and their similar-age colleagues; thus, age might not be the reason to dominate the positions they have in the company. Yet, under similar conditions, the more years you work for an industry, the more experience you have, and the higher position you would occupy. It is also pointed out by interviewees that the position of an attendee in his/her organization will influence the results/experience of his/her attendance. For example, Respondent 11, GYH admitted that:

> *…if you are middle or senior [level] managers, what the company means to them may be different from what it means to elementary employees. People like me as elementary employees, in the first two years …I just want to know something about the industry and get some basic skills.*

A female business owner (Respondent 17, DUZ) also believed that the value of sending elementary level employees to some higher level conference would be reduced because those attendees might not have the competence to fully understand the content, to collect suitable information and to establish valuable business connections.

It also showed that respondents between ages 30-39 held the highest level of education. However, gender had no significant impacts on the percentage of each perceived position level in their respective gender group. Interestingly, among the young respondents in the sample, females seemed to be more proportionately numerous than their male counterparts, which arguably indicated that the cloud computing/high-tech industry is accepting more female employees, and they have showed great interest in the related business events.

Then descriptive statistics of the three scales, as explained previously, were displayed, and the highly rated and lower rated items were reported. For the importance construct, business-related items, learning-related items, as well as venue-related items are considered the most important for them to attend this business event, which has been supported by previous studies, for example Lee and Back (2007), Yoo and Chon (2008) and Mair and Thompson (2009).

This chapter also conducted the tests for data reliability and sample adequacy. Cronbach's alpha and split-half tests were employed to verify reliability of three measuring instruments. KMO tests were used to check if the sample was adequate for factor analysis. Tests results indicated Cronbach's alpha value were excellent; and KMO values were superb. Finally, the data were examined for sample size and distribution effects.

Briefly, this chapter reported the features of the collected dataset and the sample; it also tested the reliability and adequacy of the sample size. Consequently, this chapter proved the data to be sound for statistical analysis in the next stage.

Chapter 8 Statistical Analysis (1)-IPA Analysis

8.1 Introduction

Responding to the second and third research questions, this chapter first aims to identify what attributes are perceived important by attendees for their attendance of the business event; then, an IPA analysis will be conducted with the initially collected data to investigate the attendees' perceived service quality of this business conference. To start the chapter, the IPA application in this research is first justified; then the steps of implementing an IPA analysis are described in accordance with previous literature. Following these steps, an IPA analysis is subsequently conducted (the measurement of attributes' importance is included), and the findings are reported. Thereafter, the findings are discussed and the implications identified.

8.2 IPA and its application

As a "technique for measuring attribute importance and performance" (Martilla & James, 1977, p. 77), IPA was developed four decades ago to evaluate automobile dealer's service. By measuring the importance and performance of the service attributes, mean gaps between them are identified, and cross-points are displayed on a two-dimensional grid. According to Martilla and James (1977), the IPA model not only demonstrates the areas on which a firm needs to concentrate and those areas that have overconsumed resources, it also allows the results to be easily interpreted by, and be useful for, management decisions. Since the development of Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA), it has been extensively applied and is still used in service industries for measuring service gaps (Lai & Hitchcock, 2015).

As mentioned in Chapter 3, this model has been applied in many different areas, such as hospitality, health, tourism, marketing, etc. As a typical component of the service industry (Park & Noland, 2013; The World Trade Organization, 1991), tourism and event sectors are suitable areas in which to apply IPA analysis. In addition, many previous studies regarding tourism/event service quality and customer satisfaction have adopted IPA. Kline et al. (2016) applied IPA to test how expectations influence cultural tourists' perception of an experienced performance; Cheng, Guo, and Ling (2016) investigated relationships of park visitors' satisfaction and the service performances in Taiwan by employing IPA analysis. From the aspect of destination, Dwyer, Dragićević, Armenski, Mihalič, and Knežević Cvelbar (2016) evaluated the importance of tourism activities that supported the tourism industry in Serbia with a focus on industry perceptions. For their part, Go and Zhang (1997) surveyed meeting planners to identify where Beijing, as an international convention destination, should concentrate its efforts and resources to increase its competitiveness. Convention center's service priorities have also been explored by using IPA analysis (Breiter & Milman, 2006). Additionally, IPA analysis was also used to measure tour guide service.

Therefore, both the subject of this study (event industry) and previously conducted research indicate the legitimacy of the IPA application in measuring the service quality of this business conference from the perspective of attendees. The questionnaire in this study was also designed to elicit the attendees' perceptions of importance and performance of conference attributes.

Since its existence, IPA has been criticized for both its conceptual ambiguity and the questionable reliability of its results. Oh (2001) criticized the traditional IPA model as having the following issues:

(1) Lack of a clear definition of the concept of importance.

(2) The absence of a clear criterion variable for IPA framework as a whole.

(3) Mixed uses of importance and expectation.

(4) Lack of research on absolute versus relative importance.

(5) The implications of relationships between importance and performance and among the attributes.

(6) The absence of guidelines for developing a set of attributes to be used.

(7) Use of unidirectional versus bi-directional measurement scales for the concept of importance.

(8) Use of actual means versus scale means in constructing the IPA grid.

(9) Potential misclassifications of attributes on the IPA grid.

(10) A philosophical issue related to strategic suggestions.

Some of these issues also were pointed out by Arbore and Busacca (2011). For example, how to decide "the most suitable means of calculating and distributing performance and importance scores along the axes of the matrix" (p.411), which might lead to inconsistent interpretations of the results; and the relationship between performance and customer satisfaction also was questioned as it was not always linear and symmetric. They also went further in suggesting that IPA was not fit for the purpose of identifying customer acquisition and retention. According to them, the level of importance of an attribute might change when the relationship (between customers and service/product) changed. Another point was the "low priority" zone attributes with a low rating of both importance and performance which might yet also be causes of customers' dissatisfaction.

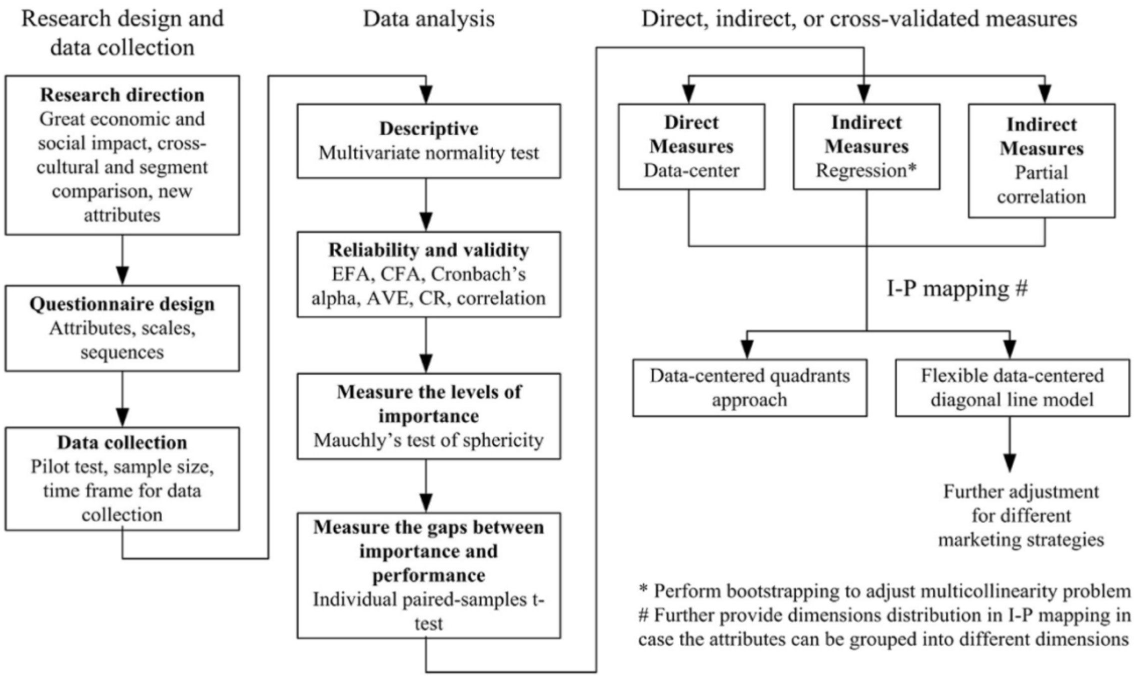
While recognizing these potential deficiencies in the IPA model, suggestions and modifications have been made to address these. Oh (2001) argued that before an IPA research, one should give a clear explanation about importance and performance. He further indicated, "Clear definitions will not only eliminate confusion between importance and expectation but also provide a basis for precise interpretations of study results, thereby improving the value of the obtained information" (p 624). At the same time, researchers should ideally comply with agreed-upon criteria for measuring the importance and performance, such criteria having been suggested by scholars (e.g.Oliver, 1997; Ryan, 2002). This will improve the reliability and comparability of importance and performance through consistency of usage. It is also important for a researcher to select one set of attributes to measure both importance and performance, though "consumers may not know how important a particular attribute is to their decisions until they actually experience the attribute" (Oh, 2001, p625).

Arbore and Busacca (2011, p. 416) also provided practical suggestions to avoid the mentioned issues. These suggestions included: 1) to ensure an adequate number of scale points; 2) to ensure adequate sample size; 3) to avoid multicollinearity problems before starting any analysis; 4) to run the analysis on customers with homogeneous preferences; and 5) to conduct sensitivity analyses regarding the separation levels of the measurement scales.

Recently, noticing the traditional IPA model has problems in its reliability and validity, Lai and Hitchcock (2015) proposed a robust IPA research framework for tourism studies (Figure 8.1). The framework covered the whole process of IPA research, from research design and attribute selection to data validity/reliability checking and the final I-P mapping and interpretation. Before the development of their framework they compared different methods of analysing the collected data (regression, EFA, CFA, PLS), different standards to measure the importance and performance (direct and indirect), and different ways of presentation of I-P mapping (scale-centred, data-centred, diagonal line model, three-factor theory model etc.). Furthermore, to validate the framework several empirical surveys have been conducted. However Lai and Hitchcock (2015) made assumptions that importance and performance "are two independent variables" and the relationship between them is "linear and symmetric," which has been questioned by Arbore and Busacca (2011). They also failed to indicate which way of measurement was superior, as they claimed that was not the purpose of their research.

Yet Lai and Hitchcock (2015) provided, usefully, the steps for data analysis when conducting an IPA research, which is described in Figure 8.1 and section 8.3 below.

Figure 8.1: IPA Research Framework



Source: Lai and Hitchcock (2015) p.249.

8.3 The steps of IPA analysis

Despite the mentioned shortcomings, the apparent features of IPA analysis, such as its simplicity, explicit demonstration of results, and easy interpretation have meant the model has retained a usefulness among many different disciplines (Draper et al., 2011; Lee, Yen, & Tsai, 2008; Sever, 2015; Zhang & Chow, 2004). For the study of consumers (attendees in events), this model is capable of capturing individual perceptions from consumers of service attributes (Arbore & Busacca, 2011; Sever, 2015), which are intuitive but meaningful for the service providers, or in a larger scale, the destinations. Hansen and Bush (1999) agreed with the described characteristics of IPA and defined it as a practical but straightforward instrument.

Though there are no explicit and standardized procedures for conducting an IPA analysis, many researchers follow the steps as shown below (Arbore & Busacca, 2011; Go & Zhang, 1997; Lai & Hitchcock, 2015):

- *Select applicable research subject*
- *Choose the proper scale points*
- *Identify a set of attributes regarding research*
- *Design a questionnaire based on the attributes and research questions*
- *Calculate the required sample size with the number of attributes*
- *Draw a sample and collect data*
- *Decide the measurement, either direct or indirect*
- *Plot IPA matrix with the previous measurement*
- *Analyze the matrix and interpret the results*

Conventionally, the IPA model was a three-step analysis, which started with the selection of a group of attributes as service/product measurements; then surveyed the participants with questions about their perceptions of the importance and performance of the selected attributes; and finally, calculated the means of the two variables and plotted a two-dimension matrix. After these actions, suggestions of future managerial actions were given according to the results and interpretations of the cells in the matrix (Lai & Hitchcock, 2015). However, to combat the limitations identified above (Arbore & Busacca, 2011; Oh, 2001), a more complete series of steps for IPA research is preferred.

To do this entailed the following procedure. First, the research subject is the attendees' perception of the conference service quality, which is arguably a part of their consuming experience that requires eliciting the subjective feelings of the respondents. This establishes criteria appropriate for application to their ratings of conference attributes. As for the scale, arguably a seven-point scale was enough because it tends to create more variance than a five-point scale that is appropriate for Chinese cultural predispositions and indeed respondents appeared comfortable with the seven-point scale. It is noted that Arbore and Busacca (2011) suggested a nine or ten-point scale, but it was felt this might increase the level of difficulty for the respondents by offering too many choices.

By reviewing the previous literature and interviewing various conference attendees, 25 attributes of importance and performance were selected as measurements to evaluate the service quality perceived by attendees. A questionnaire was then designed including the paired questions of importance and performance plus questions on demography, future behavior, expenditure and conference attending frequency (see Appendix 5.2). The sample size was large enough for statistical analysis as explained above. Just to ensure this a “worse case” scenario of 25 and six items in sets 1 and 2 (to cope with the criteria being used for the individual items and socio-demographic variables) was checked using the formula:

$$Y=B_0+ (\text{Set 1}) + (\text{Set2})$$
$$Y=B_0+ \underbrace{(B_1X_1 \ldots B_nX_n)}_{\text{(Set 1)}} + \underbrace{(B_{n+1}X_{n+1}\ldots B_{n+1}X_{n+1})}_{\text{(Set 2)}}$$

that Soper (danielsoper.com) recommends for calculating sample size for undertaking hierarchical multiple regression. The results again indicated that the sample was large enough using the usual criteria for power level and effect size, but as noted, when it came to using logistic regression Gaussian errors did emerge.

One reason for the use of indirect measurement is the inconsistency of respondents’ rating before and during their consumption of the service or product which is not uncommon in the tourism literature. However, the current research employed this pair of measurements to evaluate the respondents’ satisfaction **after** the event, which ensured their understanding of the questions and overcame the problems of attempting assessments during the convention. While scholars have expressed concerns about measuring the two variables at the same time because they can inflate the rating of importance or adjusting their rating after the consumption (Bacon, 2003; Oh, 2001), in this case, as the respondents were mostly business people, they were found to possess a clear focus about both reasons for attending the conference and their evaluations. Therefore, direct measurement, that is median values of the importance and performance were used to identify the X-axis for importance and Y-axis for performance. Eventually, the two-dimensional IPA matrix was plotted and is presented in the next section.

8.4 The results of IPA analysis

Following the research steps, means of respondents’ rating scores about importance and performance of conference attributes were calculated, and the mean difference and the ranking of the importance/performance attributes are shown in Table 8.1. A paired independent sample *t*-test was conducted through IBM SPSS 25, indicating that most of the mean differences were statistically significant at 0.05 level.

Table 8.1: Importance and Performance: Means and Paired Sample t-test

Label	Statement of Conference Attributes	I-Rank	Mean		P-Rank	MD	Paired Sample *t*-test (I-P)	
			I	P			t	Sig.
V12	Keeping up with industry trends	1	6.22	5.91	2	-0.31	8.43	<.0001
V4	Conference offers high quality content	2	6.20	5.63	6	-0.57	14.14	<.0001
V13	Speaker(s) has interesting things to say	3	5.99	5.62	7	-0.36	9.97	<.0001
V8	Key speakers have a high reputation	4	5.94	5.85	3	-0.08	2.17	0.030
V22	Venue has clear and effective signage	5	5.91	5.37	11	-0.53	10.52	<.0001
V9	Conference venue has quality facilities	6	5.89	5.57	9	-0.32	7.63	<.0001
V5	Opportunities for new business partner	7	5.83	5.28	12	-0.55	12.97	<.0001
V3	Professional networking	8	5.82	5.44	10	-0.38	7.88	<.0001
V1	The attractiveness of the host city	9	5.79	6.09	1	0.30	-7.37	<.0001
V11	Speakers have good presentation skills	10	5.75	5.61	8	-0.14	3.50	<.0001
V25	Prompt after-conference following-ups	11	5.71	5.24	14	-0.47	9.74	<.0001
V17	The hotel has easy access to the venue	12	5.63	4.68	24	-0.95	14.89	<.0001
V2	Sufficient flights/trains to/from the city	13	5.57	5.69	4	0.12	-2.07	<.0001
V24	User-friendly conference app/website	14	5.51	4.77	21	-0.74	12.32	<.0001
V7	Fast and stable Wi-Fi connection	15	5.45	5.01	17	-0.44	7.92	<.0001
V23	Venue is easy to access and close to transport centres	16	5.43	4.33	25	-1.10	17.10	<.0001
V16	Restaurant staff are responsive	17	5.30	4.89	20	-0.41	7.73	<.0001
V18	The meals are value for money	18	5.28	4.73	22	-0.55	9.45	<.0001
V19	Restaurants provide good quality food	19	5.28	4.69	23	-0.58	10.48	<.0001
V15	The hotel gives me value for money	20	5.21	4.95	18	-0.25	4.90	<.0001
V14	The hotel staff are responsive	21	5.19	5.03	16	-0.16	3.51	<.0001
V6	Offer good social programmes	22	5.10	5.03	15	-0.06	1.63	**0.104**
V10	Catch up with friends and colleagues	23	4.94	4.94	19	0.00	0.66	**0.511**
V20	Destination provides various activities for recreation, visit and shopping	24	4.78	5.64	5	0.86	-16.28	<.0001
V21	Conference offers attendees an opportunity to 'escape' regular work	25	4.77	5.25	13	0.48	-7.61	<.0001

Note: I=Importance; P=Performance; MD=Mean Difference; Sig. < 0.05.

As shown in Table 8.1, the mean scores of importance attributes were arranged in descending order, and the rank of the mean score of corresponding performance attribute is also displayed. Accordingly, the top-ranked essential conference attributes that attendees perceived as important are as follows:

Keeping up with industry trends (V12);

The Conference offers high-quality content (V4);

The speaker(s) has/have interesting things to say (V13);

Key speakers have a high reputation (V8);

The venue has clear and effective signage (V22);

Conference venue has quality facilities (V9);

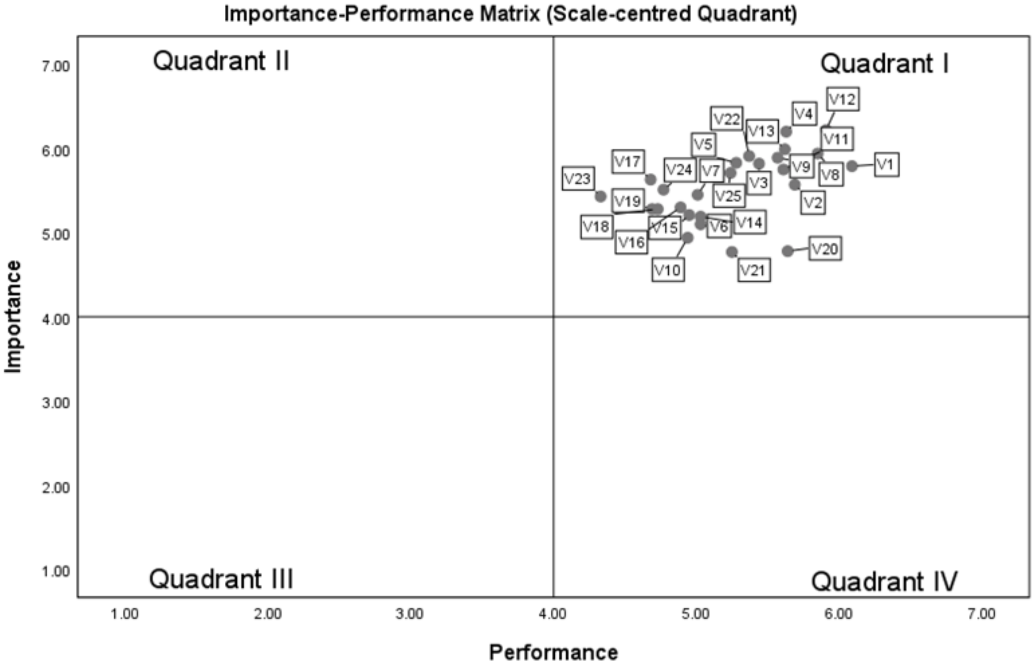
Opportunities for new business partner (V5);

Professional networking (V3).

These attributes can be basically grouped into learning opportunity, speakers' attractiveness, program quality, venue management, and networking, which are similar to previous studies regarding event motivations in different cultural backgrounds. Among these attributes, learning opportunity, program quality, and networking are the most reported attributes/factors in the attendees' perceptions (Breiter & Milman, 2006; Kozak & Kayar, 2008; Saleh & Ryan, 1993; Whitfield & Webber, 2011). Yet, speaker attractiveness and venue management are not common in their high ranking lists (Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Zhang et al., 2007). However, Han and Verma (2014) did report in their research that the quality of speakers was the third highest ranked item for a business event attendance; but their results also indicated that cost was a determinant. Besides, many studies also suggested that destination and safety/health issues are important factors/reasons for attendees to consider before they come to visit an event (Jung & Tanford, 2017; Lee & Back, 2007; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Oppermann & Chon, 1997). Therefore, the majority of the items that are perceived as important by Chinese business event attendees are similar to those in other cultures. Some research also explained motivations by dimensions/factors (Lee & Back, 2007; Lee & Min, 2013; Yoo & Zhao, 2010), which will be addressed and discussed in the next chapter.

As mentioned in the beginning of this section, the best-performed attributes differed in ranking and included "The attractiveness of the host city", "Keeping up with industry trends", "The key speakers have a high reputation", "Sufficient flights/trains to/from the city", and "Destination provides various activities for recreation, visit and shopping". The ranking of the two variables suggested that it was worthwhile to continue to an IPA analysis.

Figure 8.2: IPA Matrix with Scale Mean Coordinate System

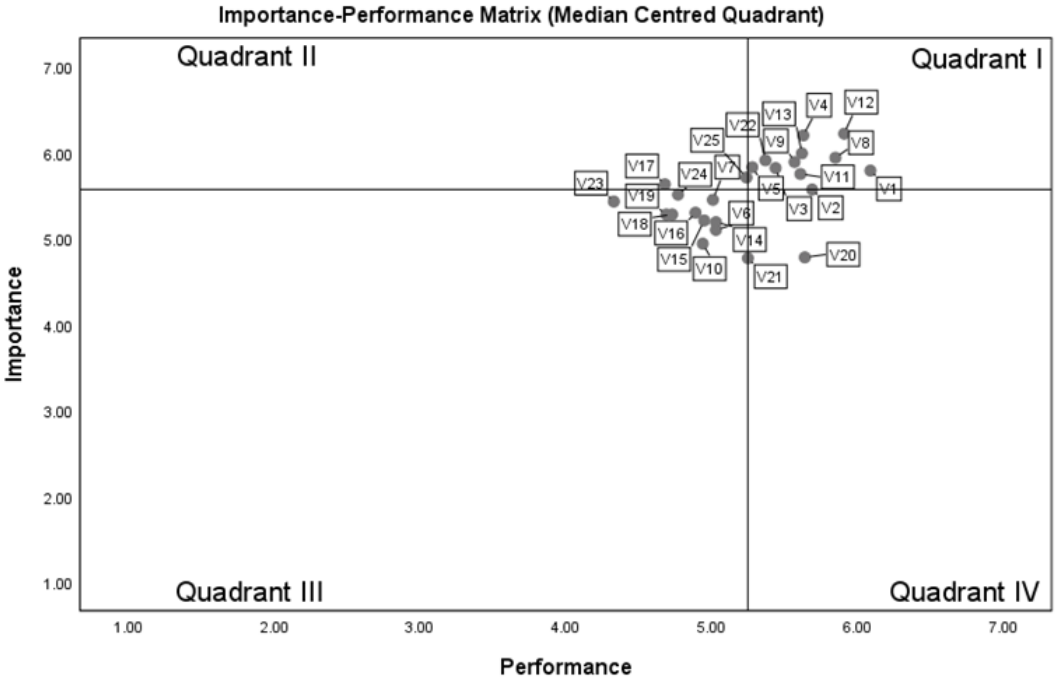


Besides the statistically significant attribute pairs, paired sample t-test also showed that the mean differences of the two pairs of "Offer good social programmes" and "Catch up with friends and colleagues" were not significant. Then the data were input into a new SPSS data sheet, and an IPA matrix created with the X and Y axis reference lines of scale mean, median of importance and performance scores, and z-scores, which have been displayed in Figure 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4. The comparison among the three figures indicated that different choices of reference lines would lead to different results and distinct interpretations of the same dataset, which a research should avoid.

In Figure 8.2, the coordinate system was defined by scale mean, which was 4 at both X and Y-axis. The entire cross points were scattered in Quadrant I that signified the overall mean scores of importance and performance rated by respondents were higher than the scale mean. In this case, according to the conventional interpretation, the IPA matrix suggested that customers were satisfied with the services provided by the organizers, which further implied that the conference was very successful and the organizers did an excellent job, all these should be sustained and "keep up the good." While this is satisfactory for the conference organizers, it fails to clearly identify areas that may require improvement, and probably overstates the levels of client satisfaction.

As shown in Figure 8.3, the matrix was then anchored with median scores of importance and performance, which was supposed to be more suitable for mapping the scattered plot, because mean scores tend to reflect degrees of skew while the median is, possibly, a better measure of the "average" perceptions in this instance.

Figure 8.3: IPA Matrix with Median Score Coordinate



To better present the results, Figure 8.4 was created by changing the scale of X and Y-axis in the coordinate, which was easily observed and interpreted. Referring to this matrix, the Quadrant I, which often was interpreted as "Keep up the good work" captured ten attributes:

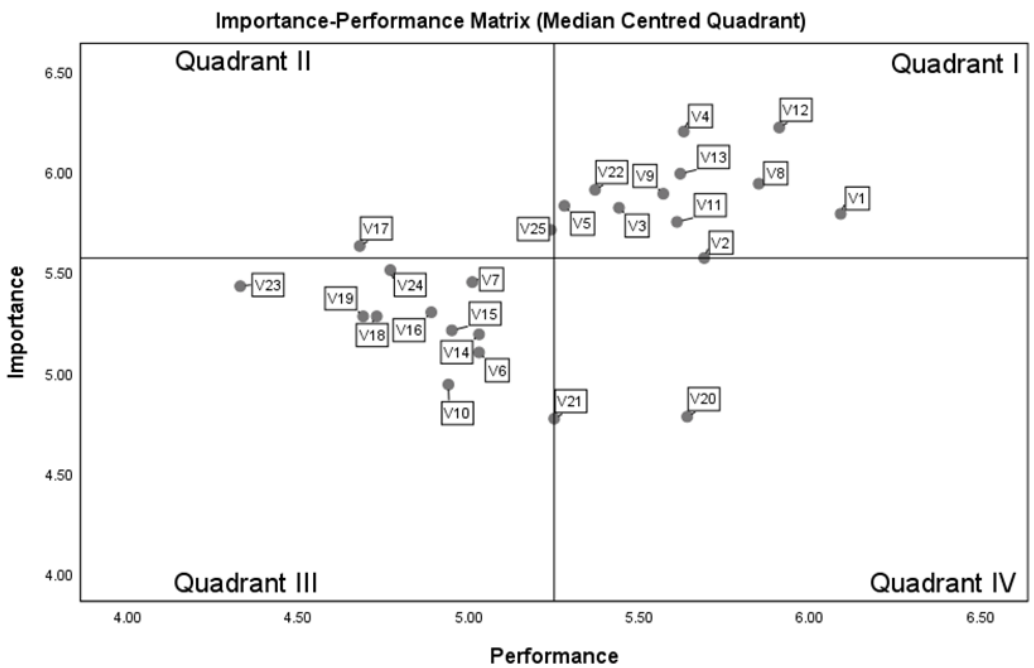
- Keeping up with industry trends (V12)
- Conference offers high quality content (V4)
- Speaker (s) has interesting things to say (V13)
- Key speakers have a high reputation (V8)
- Venue has clear and effective signage (V22)
- Conference venue has quality facilities (V9)
- Opportunities for new business partner (V5)
- Professional networking (V3)
- The attractiveness of the host city (V1)
- Speakers have good presentation skills (V11)

On the contrary, the "Low priority" quadrant also captured ten attributes as listed below:

- User-friendly conference app/website(V24)
- Fast and stable Wi-Fi connection (V7)
- The venue is easy to access and close to transport centres(V23)
- Restaurant staff are responsive (V16)
- The meals are value for money (V18)
- Restaurants provide good quality food (V19)
- The hotel gives me value for money (V15)
- The hotel staff are responsive (V14)
- Offer good social programmes (V6)
- Catch up with friends and colleagues (V10)

In addition, one attribute “The hotel has easy access to the venue” was located in Quadrant II and one attribute “Destination provides various activities for recreation, visit and shopping” in Quadrant IV. However, the attribute V2 “Sufficient flights/trains to/from the city”, V21 “Conference offers attendees an opportunity to ‘escape’ regular work” and V25 “Prompt after-conference following-ups” were on the boundary of Quadrant I/IV, Quadrant III/IV and Quadrant I/II respectively, which initially created some degree of ambiguity. The decision as to these three attributes will be explained in the following discussion section.

Figure 8.4: IPA Matrix with Median Score Coordinate System

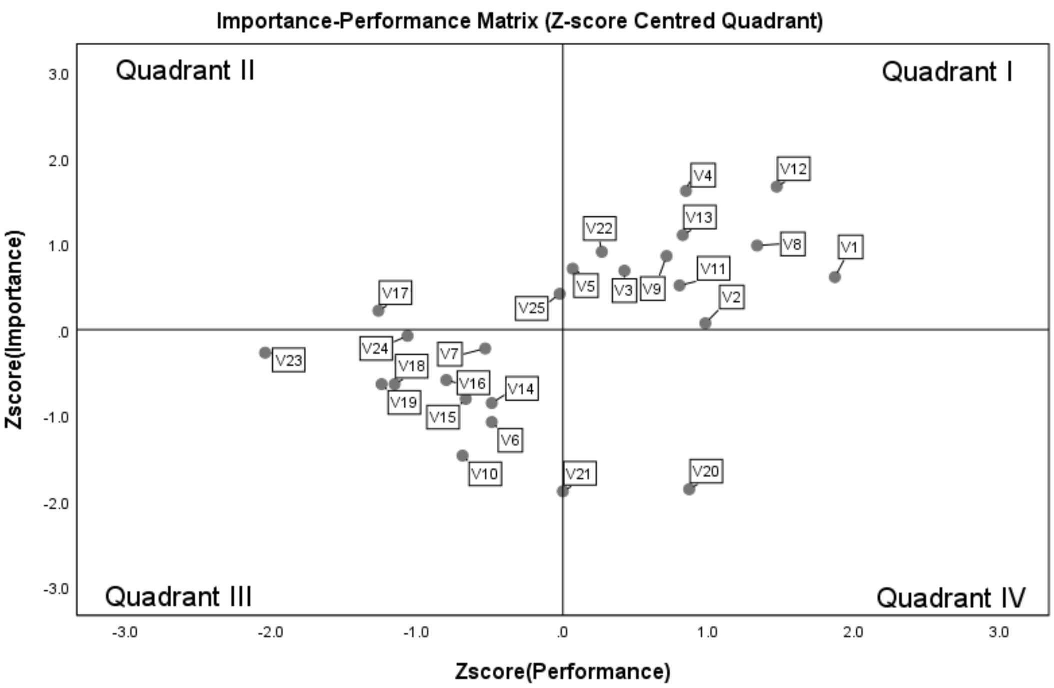


Using z-scores to plot an IPA scattered map is another choice (see Figure 8.5). Z-scores, also known as standardized scores, allows the researcher to compare the values of raw data between two different situations. Meanwhile, z-scores not only make the data of two variables more comparable but also locates the cross point of X and Y axis at the center of this coordinate system. Using the standardized value, the ambiguities associated with variables V5 and V17 (“Opportunities for a new business partner” and “The hotel gives me value for money”) effectively disappeared, thereby permitting a more precise interpretation of results showed on the IPA matrix.

As displayed in Figure 6.5, all the ten attributes in Quadrant I could be categorized as the “Keep up the good work” group and are similar to the results of Figure 8.4. The only difference was that V2 “Sufficient flights/trains to/from the city” was more likely to be located in Quadrant I.

For Quadrant III, attributes distributed in Figure 8.5 and Figure 8.4 were exactly the same. The remaining two Quadrants are also similar, and V2 “Sufficient flights/trains to/from the city” is no longer problematic. It seems that when using median value or z-score to create a IPA matrix little distinct difference emerges, but the latter is clearer and more acceptable both in visual effect and statistical comparison as shown in Figure 8.5.

Figure 8.5: Matrix with z-score Coordinate System



8.5 The interpretation of the results

Instead of interpreting the results with the conventional IPA interpretations, the author first reinterprets the meanings of the four quadrants of IPA matrix in this section; then, the modified interpretations are used to explain the results in section 8.5.2.

8.5.1 Reconsidering the interpretation of IPA matrix

The traditional interpretations of the four quadrants are "keep up the good work" for Quadrant I, "Concentrate here" for Quadrant II, "Low priority" for Quadrant III and "Possible overkill" for Quadrant IV (Martilla & James, 1977, p. 78). Many researchers accepted these explanations and retained views in their work (Dwyer et al., 2016; Go & Zhang, 1997; Perna & CustÓDio, 2008; Sever, 2015; Zhang & Chow, 2004). Some scholars have redesigned the Matrix employing diagonal line or combined quadrants with a diagonal line, but their interpretation of the results remained unchanged (Caber, Albayrak, & Matzler, 2012; Lai & Hitchcock, 2015). However, according to the three-factor theory (Kano, 1984), attributes are classified into three categories: basic factors, performance factors, and excitement factors (Füller & Matzler, 2008). Matzler, Bailom, Hinterhuber, Renzl, and Pichler (2004) suggested that basic requirements should be fulfilled, for failure to do so would be detrimental to overall satisfaction. It is argued there is a need to improve the performance scores since the better the performance, the higher the level of satisfaction. Additionally, keeping positive performance generates more positive influences on satisfaction than the negative.

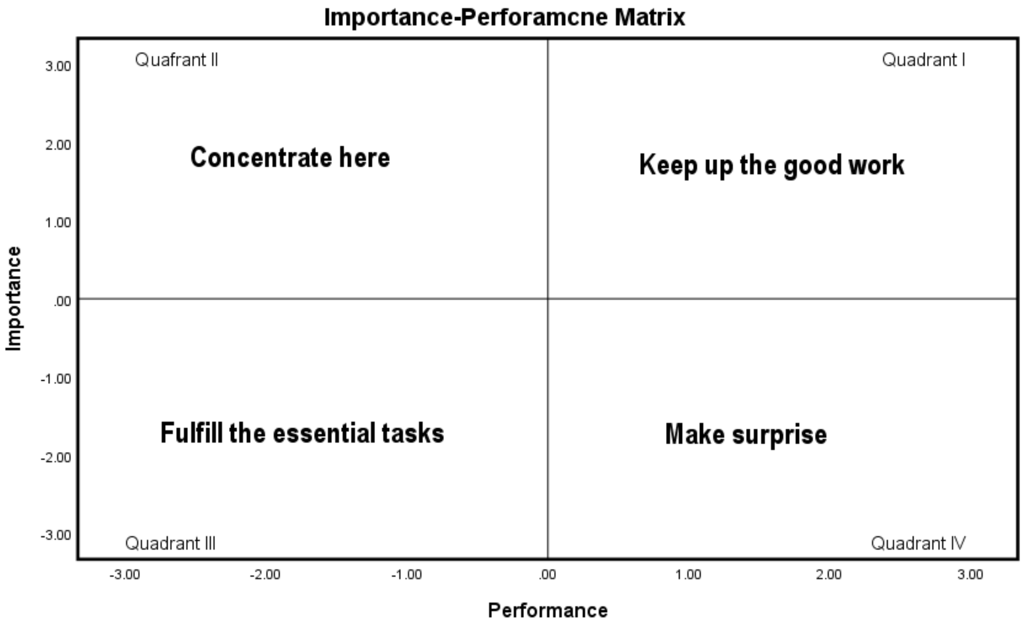
The three-factor theory argued that fundamental factors might have less impact on generating additional factors but where they are lacking the result is dissatisfaction on the part of attendees (Kano, 1984). While, in the IPA matrix, Quadrants III (low importance and low performance), and IV (low importance and high performance) are traditionally classified as being "Low priority" and "Possible overkill," there are good reasons to question this. The attributes used to measure importance and performance are often pre-selected as being necessary for the research, and the unimportant attributes have been filtered out, thereby creating hidden data biases that may underestimate the importance of lower scoring items.

As shown in Figure 8.2, if the scale means are used to create the cross-over point, then most attributes fall into Quadrant I, implying no need to change policies. When median scores are employed, the distribution of the coordinates are allocated in different

Quadrants (Figure 8.3), yet the attributes located in the quadrants with low importance does not mean they lack importance, it shows they are relatively lower than the overall mean score. Indeed, for some individual attendees, they may possess a high level of importance, hence:

1) The "Low priority" may mislead the organizations in their choices of actions, since these attributes are still relevant, and if not accounted for by the conference organizer may adopt policies that lead to dissatisfied delegates.
2) The "Possible overkill" suggests organizations reduce the investment or withdraw resources from these attributes, which may again mislead the way of making decisions. These attributes may become factors that surprise the consumers and bring them delights (Matzler et al., 2004). The question is to what degree is there a correlation between an attribute's importance as perceived by delegates and their expectations (Ryan, 1999). Can delegates effectively assess the importance of an attribute not yet experienced, and it is possible that creating "delights and surprises" will generate positive impacts on re-consumption and word of mouth recommendations (Crotts & Magnini, 2011).
3) Even though the rating of importance is low in a scale, it simply implies that compared with the more important attributes, they are deemed less critical – but such an assessment may nonetheless be based on the assumption they are present. Their absence may well cause dissatisfaction – that is, they only become important if absent.

Figure 8.6: Modified Interpretation of IPA Matrix



Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the interpretations of the IPA matrix. In the modified version (see Figure 8.6), the former groups of “Keep up good work” and “Concentrate here” remain the same. The major changes are found in the attributes with mean scores that are lower than overall mean scores, which are “Low priority” and “Possible overkill,” and the modified versions of these two group are “Fulfil the essential tasks” and “Make surprise”.

8.5.2 The interpretation of the results

Following the modified interpretations, the attributes are now categorized into four different groups, and the corresponding actions that conference organizers may need to consider are now identified.

8.5.2.1 Keep up the good work

According to Figure 8.5, ten attributes were identified in Quadrant I, to which the attribute of “Opportunities to know new business partner” can also be added. Among them, four attributes could be subgrouped as Conference Designs, which includes “Keeping up with the industry trends,” “Professional networking,” “Opportunities for a new business partner,” and “Conference offers high-quality content.” These items are also proved to be important for business event attendees to make their decisions. Han and Verna (2014) discovered the education program, topics of the speeches and the quality of invited speakers are most important items, and following them are the cost of registration and transportation. However, in the current research, cost was not considered as an important/decisive factor by the attendees. From another perspective, it can be concluded that these items are all business related factors which are usually the essential goals for business event attendance, which confirms the findings of previous research (Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012; Berne & García-Uceda, 2008; Smith, Hama, & Smith, 2003), albeit the specific orders of the items might be slightly different. In their research, Breiter and Milman (2006) reported that what ranked the first was business networking instead of information about industry trends or product information (Whitfield & Webber, 2011; Munuera & Ruiz, 1999).

Three of them relate to a subgroup of Qualified Speakers that encompassed “Speaker(s) have interesting things to say,” “Key speakers have a high reputation,” and “Speakers have good presentation skills.” Speakers are the providers of “quality content” and they sometimes are direct attractions for the attendees, as Zhang et al. (2007) discovered, many attendees would check the speakers first before their decision-making. Similarly, Kale et al. (2010) argued that the recruitment of quality speakers would increase the appeal of the business event. Given that, Zhang et al. (2007) also agreed that the background, reputation and presentation skills of the speakers are crucial for satisfying the attendees.

Two of them were about Venue Management that covered the aspects of “Venue has clear and effective signage,” “Conference venue has quality facilities.” This indicates that selected venue and provided facilities are important to the event delegates (Rogers,2013), which also has been reported and confirmed by Robinson and Callan (2005) and Wu and Weber (2005) in their studies of business events.

“The attractiveness of the host city” and “Sufficient flights/trains to/from the city” cluster as an individual factor in this group. It is recognized that destination is one of the priorities to consider for both the event planners and consumers (Mair and Thompson, 2009). The role of the destination and its dimensions also was reconfirmed by Yoo and Chon (2008) and Lee and Back (2008).

Table 8.2: Attributes Need Keep Up the Good Work

Conference Designs	Keeping up with industry trend (V12)
	Professional networking (V3)
	Conference offers high quality content (V4)
	Opportunities for new business partner (V5)
Qualified Speakers	Speaker has interesting things to say (V13)
	Key speakers have a high reputation (V8)
	Speakers have good presentation skills (V11)
Venue Management	Venue has clear and effective signage (V22)
	Conference venue has quality facilities (V9)
Destination	The attractiveness of the host city (V1)
	Sufficient flights/trains to/from the city (V2)

The high rating of the eleven attributes’ performances indicated that the conference organizer has done an excellent job in conference design, selection of speakers, destination selection, and the event venue management (Table 8.2). The performance of these attributes should be sustained. Arguably, future performance could be improved since the repeat buyers of the conference product may shift in the criteria for their assessments in having a carry-over “halo effect.”

8.5.2.2 Concentrate here

The IPA matrix showed that “Prompt after-conference following-ups (V25)” and “The hotel has easy access to the venue (V17)” were the attributes with high importance but low performance. Usually, these attributes are the principal focus of the service providers, which implies that efforts should be concentrated here. Presumably, such action will have the potential to improve levels of satisfaction, especially the event venue as discussed by Robinson and Callan (2005).

However, it should be noted in this study that as the questionnaire was implemented as attendees were leaving the conference, they had not yet experienced the follow up that usually occurs. Consequently, assessments for this item may have been premature. However, this item was specially mentioned by the interviewees in the qualitative study which was not fully recognised in previous studies.

The other attribute of hotel access to venue also possesses some possible ambiguities. Despite the provision of a non-response item, it is possible that some who were local attendees and had not used the hotel had provided a score. However, 156 respondents (13.9%) did not answer the question. Another possible reason for the score was that the main hotel was far from the venue, although, for this specific conference, the organizer provided scheduled buses from the designated hotels to the conference venue. Therefore, the travel distance and travel time were possibly significant reasons for the low-performance score.

Given that the two attributes were important for attendees, it does imply that the conference organizers need to improve the supply of accommodations that are relatively close to the conference venue or consider a fixed venue that overcomes the problem.

8.5.2.3 Fulfill the essential tasks

As argued in the previous section and displayed in Figure 8.6, the attributes with low importance may not contribute a lot to the attendees’ satisfaction, but will undoubtedly lead to dissatisfaction if absent. Therefore, the organizers should ensure these essential requirements are provided to an excellent standard to control and minimize the possible negative influences.

Further analysis of these factors showed that they tended to be attributes of accommodation service, food service, ICT support, and get-away opportunities (see

Figure 8.4). These attributes are not at the foci of attention or indeed of reasons to attend, but without the support of these elements, the core purpose of attendance could not be achieved. For example, if the recommended accommodation was hard to find and it was challenging to obtain transportation, attendees would complain, and it would negatively affect their rating of the other attributes, and eventually ruin their overall experience (Respondent 28, AMD).

Those elements have been addressed by many scholars, yet the level of importance in their research varied distinctly. For example, Ngamsom et al. (2001) stated that accommodation and transport expenses were defined as barriers for consumption; while Quan and Wang (2004) classified accommodation, food supplies, facilities etc. as supporting elements to form the non-peak experience. However, the current interpretation is more suitable and meaningful for the organizers to understand the importance of these elements.

With respect to this situation, organizers should be clear that attributes with low importance ratings do not necessarily mean that they could be ignored, especially, assessment scores are less than the importance ratings (refer to the z-score).

8.5.2.4 Make surprises

There is another reason as to why the attributes with low importance scores cannot be ignored, and that is their potential to "make surprises" by providing unanticipated services that outperform expectations. Again, the "Possible overkill" interpretation implied that the service providers were wasting their time, resources or people to do something unimportant. However, under the competitive environment, companies have to identify some factors where they can outperform others and keep their relative advantage in the market. The attributes here are such factors that have a high level of performance even while having a low level of importance in the minds of delegates.

Though the items, such as "opportunity to visit convention destination", "get away from work routine" and social programs have been mentioned in previous studies, the interpretation of them were simply a motivational factors for the event attendees (Quan & Wang, 2004; Tretyakevich & Maggi, 2012). Yet, the new interpretation could recognize the nuances and the value of these attributes; therefore, provides practical and clear directions for organizers to surprise their consumers.

It is tempting to surprise the consumers, while at the same time the service provider should evaluate strengths and resources that are fundamental to achieving the goals. For example, in this conference, "Sufficient flights/trains to/from the city" is one of the "surprises" for the attendees because they indicated they felt it was easy and convenient to travel to the conference destination. In some cases, this attribute can switch to being one with importance, which would then require the organizers or destination to spend time to resolve. Though the importance of this attribute has been raised when evaluating with z-score, which is more likely to move up to Quadrant I. Another factor "surprise" them was "Destination provides various activities for recreation, visit and shopping," which indicated that attendees agreed that opportunities for recreation, sightseeing, shopping were sufficient in the destination. As long as time allowed, they may enjoy these recreational activities. Because of the variety of the recreational resources, the attribute of "Conference offers attendees an opportunity to 'escape' regular work" also could be considered as a factor to create surprise.

In short, these factors allowed the conference organizers to "surprise" delegates and thus contributed to higher levels of satisfaction than might otherwise have been the case.

8.5.3 The implications of the IPA results – a Third Place view

The IPA analysis was conducted by surveying the perceptions of attendees on the importance and performance of the conference attributes. The design of the survey was based on the interviews of attendees and previous literature, and data reliability was checked before statistical analysis. Therefore, the results of this analysis will contribute to the improvement of event management or resources distributions among the different factors, and indicates further actions of "concentrate here," "keep up good work," "fulfil basic tasks" or "make a surprise". This last item does help to create a Third Place.

First, for the organizers, IPA analysis suggested they should keep their advantages of conference design and operation in the aspects of "Conference offers high-quality content," "Keeping up with industry trends" and "Professional networking," etc. Meanwhile, they should ensure the speakers are qualified for the next time since the performance of speakers in this conference was described as "have an interesting thing to say," "with a high reputation" and "have good presentation skills." These factors are connected well with the criteria of Third Place Theory. For example, the quality of content and the industry trend are in line with the "conversation" criterion, the networking opportunities match the “leveller” criterion, and the speakers might serve both the “conversation” and “regular” criteria, which indicate that the organizer has done well in these aspects to improve the service quality by applying the Third Place unconsciously.

The organizer also needs to concentrate the work of following-up and improving the access from accommodations to the venues; features associated with the formation of a community and the improvement of accessibility. Follow-ups could include emails eliciting feedback, or delivering documentation promised during the conference time. Those actions will possibly create a sense of community between organisers and delegates. However, to improve the infrastructure sometimes depends on more than one stakeholder in the conference industry. For example, the local government, the hotel industry, and the organizers may all be involved. In many cases, conference organizers play the role of coordinating and integrating, and not investment in construction. Therefore, the support from other stakeholders is essential to improve the performance of those conference attributes.

In addition, the organizers also should ensure the provision of the essential elements that are an integral component of the conference experience. Notably, many of these elements including accommodation, food services, and get-away opportunities, while contributing to the “playful” and “homelike” settings required by Third Places, are usually considered less important in business events. Yet while respondents score the importance of these factors with low scores, organizers should be aware that failing to meet these needs may lead to dissatisfaction due to non-performance, and, equally, surpassing expectations may favourably surprise attendees. Therefore, it is necessary for organizers to pay attention to these seemingly less important elements and reconsider the value of them.

Second, for the destination, since attendees perceived the host city as an attractive city, local government and destination management organizations should maintain the image and characteristics of the city. Given the fact that many cities are competing for hosting important events in China (Chen, 2006; Wan, 2011), destinations also need to keep improving and consolidating the differences and features of the host city. Escape from daily work may not be considered as necessary as for other travelers, but for the business conference attendees, they usually have a busy life and tightly scheduled routines, and hence the opportunities for recreation, leisure, networking events are appreciated by them. Yet again, this implies that the business event environment can serve a “Third Place” role.

Anecdotal evidence also suggested that many business delegates prefer to take their annual leave when they plan to attend a conference at an attractive destination, which was consistent with Lee and Min's (2013a) suggestion that event consumers can be attracted by non-business activities when time permits. Therefore, on the one hand, destinations should ensure the functions of city infrastructure that are fundamental to the satisfaction are indeed present, and on the other hand, destinations also need to provide some surprises for their visitors. For example, delegates were surprised about the phenomenon of cars stopping for pedestrians to cross the road on designated crossing lines, which has been proposed by many cities but only Hangzhou practices this successfully in China.

For venue management, venue operators and/or organizers should keep up the “good work” on “Venue has clear and effective signage” and “Venue has quality facilities,” which effectively increase accessibility (another “Third Place” feature). These are supporting factors for a successful conference and the satisfaction of the conference attendees (Wu & Weber, 2005).

The IPA analysis majorly assists the organizers, destinations, and destination marketing organizations to make decisions for the future to improve the service quality of the business event and create a “Third Place” setting for the attendees, so meeting their multiple purposes and expectations.

8.6 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, the items that perceived important by attendees were reported through examining the means of items; IPA analyses and the rationale behind the analyses were subsequently described.

The analysis found that (1) this conference has performed well in the areas of “conference design and operation”, “invitation of qualified speakers”, “venue management” and “destination selection”; (2) there were two attributes that are important but were poorly rated, and which required the organizers immediate attention; and (3) the importance of other attributes have been rated low, but it is suggested that the organizer should “fulfill the essential tasks” and “make surprises” for the attendees with the consideration of the organizer’s strengths and resources.

More importantly, the analysis discovered that the quality of speakers is one of the most important factors for evaluating the business event. Speakers are one of the most important providers of quality conference content because they generate learning value for attendees (Young, 2013). As part of the attendees, speakers are also important for the interactions between the attendees (W. Wei et al., 2017).

The analysis also found that Hangzhou as a traditional tourism destination (Xu, 2016; Zhou & Ryan, 2008) possesses advantages in providing opportunities of recreation, leisure, sightseeing, and cultural or educational events. This was confirmed by the respondents' feedbacks of this survey. It should be noted that the local government has strived to convert the city from a tourism destination to an international convention or conference destination, and has greatly improved the infrastructure for conference and events (China Daily, 2017; ChinaDaily, 2016; Hangzhou Municipal Government, 2016a; Li & Wood, 2016; Xinhuanet, 2016). The endeavours of the local government also satisfied the attendees on the aspects of destination accessibility which are fundamental for developing the event industry (Young, 2013). However, the IPA analysis does not show the relationships between the attributes and delegate satisfaction. This issue forms the next chapter where additional statistical analysis examines this aspect of the research questions.

Chapter 9 Statistical Analysis (2) Multinomial Logistic Regression and PLS-SEM Analysis

9.1 Introduction

With regards to the third and fourth research questions, this chapter uses two statistical analyses – 1) Multinomial Logistic Regression (MLR) and 2) the PLS-SEM. MLR analysis intends to understand how the performance of different factors (generated from factor analysis) and the various demographic features will affect the levels of satisfaction of event attendees. Afterwards, the PLS-SEM analysis is conducted to examine the relationships of different event experience constructs: the motivations (important reasons for attendance), the perceived service quality (the performance of event attributes) and three different components of satisfaction.

Chapters 7 discussed the descriptive statistics and additionally assessed the reliability of data by using tests such as the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy. A missing data analysis was also carried out in Chapter 7 and finally it was stated that the assumption of normal distributions being present had to be rejected.

This last finding has significance for undertaking more detailed statistical analysis. Much of that analysis seeks to go beyond simply stating the degrees of importance or unimportance that respondents attach to the items to further examine the relationship between variables with the objective of establishing patterns of determination. Thus, for example, one can ask questions such as how important socio-demographic factors are in explaining evaluations of the hybrid events.

In doing this, it is important to appreciate a key nature of the different sets of statistics. Descriptive statistics establish the overall importance of items to the respondents, but any item on which there is a large degree of agreement as to that item's importance (or lack of), will fail to have any discriminatory power. For example, the item "The conference enables attendees to keep up with industry trends" in Table 8.1 obtains an overall mean score of 6.22 out of a possible mean score of 7.00. The skew statistic of -2.0 and a histogram also implies that respondents tend to uniformly rate the item highly. Given this, the item shows relatively little variance and so would fail to discriminate between the respondents.

The statistics of determination on the other hand are about discrimination. Hence, when one writes of an item having high discriminatory power – it means that the item can distinguish between respondents – not that it possesses overall importance.

Consequently, a first test is often to establish patterns of relationships (or correlations) between the items used in the scale. Are there correlations between items that permit one to clearly distinguish dimensions, or factors? Hence, a further test of the statistics is an exploratory factor analysis to find if such dimensions exist (Aldrich & Cunningham, 2015). It is exploratory because the process is atheoretical – that is, there is no assumed or conceptual relationship being considered – one is simply trying to find if there is a pattern of dimensions within the items used.

This procedure is used because generally the items are selected on the basis of a theory or series of proposals that assume relationships do exist. Consequently, although the statistical process is atheoretical, undertaking an exploratory factor analysis is often the first stage in developing any theoretical structures in the data - or seeking to confirm that any evidence is not contrary to such a structure (Aldrich & Cunningham, 2015).

The questionnaire – as described in Chapter 5 comprised three main scales that related to (1) statements about what was important for them to attend the conference, (2) assessments of the conference performance and (3) the satisfaction of attending the conference. Each section was subjected to exploratory factor analysis. A common procedure was used, and these comprised:

1) The use of principal components analysis with varimax rotations using SPSS 25.0. Varimax rotations are conventionally used because it maximises the sum of the variances of the squared loadings between the scores on the items – in short it could say that it seeks to maximise the ability to distinguish between the dimensions by heightening the role of variance.
2) Prior to deciding the components of the factors, the commonalities are examined. Commonalities are measurements of just how much of the variance in a single item is being explained by the factors derived from step (1) above. Items that are thought to be “poorly” explained can then be dropped from a subsequent analysis.

3) The next issue in any subsequent statistical analysis is whether to use solely the aggregated factor score or to retain the individual items. Thus, in a regression analysis often the factor scores will be used as by definition these are aggregates of the underlying dimension. However, there remains the use of individual items and one argument for doing so is that the disaggregated approach may provide what might be termed a slightly more nuanced approach. Reasons for diverging from the conventional approach can include points about the nature of the scales used (are they nominal or ordinal data?), but more basically, what is the research question and what is it that the researcher is seeking to achieve? One advantage of modern computing power is that it is possible to very quickly adopt both approaches and assess which helps understanding the most. For discussions on these issues one can see Schraw and Dennison (1994) and Pett, Lackey, and Sullivan (2003) among others. Today, however, many researchers will adopt both exploratory and confirmatory factor analytics (EFA and CFA) – although as discussed in section 9.3 the use of partial least squares CFA is being adopted as an extension of exploratory analysis.

9.2 MLR analysis

9.2.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of Scale Items

EFA is a process to reduce the number of variables by forming new dimensions or factors, which are representations of the original variables (Brown, 2009). Meanwhile, as mentioned above, EFA also displays the correlations between the variables and the newly formed factors. By employing EFA, the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable is simplified, which is demonstrated with using of a smaller number of items (i.e., the factors) without sacrificing the model's power of the explanation. Hence, groups of highly correlated items are more clearly identified as an "explanatory" dimension. Table 7.13 shows the adequacy of the survey sample for further statistical analysis. Results of EFA analyses of the three scales are displayed below.

9.2.1.1 EFA Results of Scale 1 (Importance of Items for Attendance)

With the 25 items, the first scale aims to explore the reasons that are important for conference attendance. EFA analysis first identified five factors, while two items (1.2 and 1.7) were problematic. Another EFA was conducted after the deletion of those items, and then five new factors were discovered.

Initial EFA results

Conventionally, those factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 indicate that one factor can at least explain a single item (Aldrich & Cunningham, 2015, p. 294). For this scale as displayed in Appendix 9.1, the eigenvalues of components 1 to 5 are greater than one with their total explanation of 60.7% of original variances, therefore these components are selected as extracted factors.

The scree plot (see Appendix 9.1) that pictures the eigenvalues and the 25 components on the y-axis and x-axis, which is a widely accepted method to select the appropriate number of components (factors) when interpreting the factor analysis. Usually, the factors above the "elbow" portion will be selected. Therefore, the scree plot provides additional proof for the decision of 5-components solution for this factor analysis.

In factor analysis, "communalities" mean the percentage of each initial item extracted by the newly formed dimensions. A large communality value indicates a strong influence by an underlying construct. Usually, the extraction of the original item lower than .40 is not appropriate for inclusion. As shown in Appendix 9.1, item 1.7 "A fast and stable Wi-Fi connection is made available to conference attendees" was not loaded on any factor, implying it is not worth being retained as possessing discriminatory power.

Moreover, item 1.9 (The conference venue has quality facilities) were not aligned with the remaining items in the factor on which it loaded on for a reasonable interpretation of the factors (See Appendix 9.1). Therefore, items 1.7 and 1.9 were both excluded for further analysis.

EFA results after the problematic items deleted.

After the deletion of these two items, another EFA analysis was conducted. The KMO value was .934 (>0.6) which indicates the data is sufficient for further analysis. As for the communalities, not a single item's extraction value was lower than 0.4. Therefore, the 23 items are sustained for analysis. As Table 9.1 presented, there are 5 components having eigenvalues which are greater than one. The scree plot graph also indicated that 5 factors are above the "elbow", which indicates the analysis extracted five factors from the 23 variables. Moreover, the Cumulative percentage of the factors' explanation power is 62.4%, which is higher than the previous analysis.

Table 9.1: EFA Eigenvalues and Extraction

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Sq. Loadings			Rotation Sums of Sq. Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	**8.732**	37.965	37.965	8.732	37.965	37.965	3.983	17.318	17.318
2	**2.101**	9.136	47.101	2.101	9.136	47.101	2.682	11.662	28.980
3	**1.424**	6.192	53.293	1.424	6.192	53.293	2.645	11.498	40.478
4	**1.088**	4.731	58.024	1.088	4.731	58.024	2.604	11.321	51.799
5	**1.008**	4.383	62.407	1.008	4.383	62.407	2.440	10.607	**62.407**

Total Variance Explained

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The extracted five factors by Principal Component Analysis, as showed in Table 9.2, include the factor of accommodation and food (Items 1.14, 1.15, 1.16, 1.17, 1.18, 1.19), the factor of speakers (1.8, 1.11. 1.12, 1.13), the factor of business opportunity (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5), the factor of entertainment opportunities (1.6, 1.10, 1.20, 1.21) and the factor of conference organization (1.22, 1.23, 1.24, 1.25).

Table 9.2: Second EFA Results of Scale 1

Rotated Component Matrix [a]

	Component 1	2	3	4	5
1.15 The hotel I stay in gives me value for money	**.771**				
1.16 Restaurant staff are responsive in the service they provide	**.759**				
1.17 The hotel I stay in has easy access to the conference venue	**.731**				
1.18 The meals are value for money	**.731**				
1.19 The restaurants provide good quality food	**.692**				
1.14 The staff of the hotel I stay in are responsive to my requests	**.657**				
1.13 Key speaker(s) has interesting things to say		**.744**			
1.12 The conference enables attendees to keep up with industry trend		**.742**			
1.11 Key speakers possess good presentation skills		**.711**			
1.8 Key speakers have a high reputation		**.602**			
1.3 The conference should assist the attendees in professional networking			**.789**		
1.5 The conference offer opportunities to look for a new business partner			**.688**		
1.4 There should be high quality content offered by a conference			**.636**		
1.2 There are sufficient flights/trains to & from the conference city			**.551**		
1.1 The attractiveness of the conference host city			**.468**		
1.20 The city provides various activities for recreation, visit and shopping				**.746**	
1.10 The conference allows attendees to catch up with friends & colleagues				**.671**	
1.21 The conference offers an opportunity to ‘escape’ their regular work				**.647**	
1.6 The conference offers good social programs (e.g. gala dinner, concert)				**.584**	
1.24 That a user-friendly conference app/website is available to attendees					**.734**
1.25 The organizers have prompt after-conference following-ups.					**.686**
1.22 The conference venue has clear and effective signage					**.627**
1.23 The venue is easy to access and close to transport centres					**.602**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Therefore, the five factors are named and interpreted as the follows (the reliability is presented for each factor below):

Factor 1: Accommodation and Food (**Cronbach's α=.966; 6 items)**

Factor 2: Speakers (**Cronbach's α=.97; 4 items**)

Factor 3: Business Benefits (**Cronbach's α=.96; 5 items**)

Factor 4: Entertainment Opportunity (Cronbach's α=.96; 4 items)

Factor 5: Conference Organization (**Cronbach's α=.93; 4 items**)

These generated factors overlap with most of the factors discussed in chapter 8 when IPA analysis was conducted. Previous studies indicated that education, networking, cost of registration and accommodations, and conference programs etc. are important factors that attract/motivate people to attend a business event (Berne & García-Uceda, 2008; Munuera & Ruiz, 1999; Ngamsom, Beck, & Lalopa, 2001; Quan & Wang, 2004; Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012; Smith, Hama, & Smith, 2003; Whitfield & Webber, 2011). However, these factors differ from the five attendance factors obtained by Yoo and Chon (2008): destination stimuli, professional and social networking opportunities, educational opportunities, safety and health, and travelability.

In this research, speakers and entertainment opportunity differ from conventional factors. Among others, Han and Verna (2014), Kale et al. (2010) and Zhang et al. (2007) discussed the importance of speakers in their studies of a business event. Han and Verna (2014) pointed out the quality of speakers is as important as the topic of the speeches and the quality of the program content (Tanford, Montgomery & Nelson, 2012). Zhang et al. (2007) also argued that speakers would be one of the first elements potential attendees would look at prior to making a decision to attend. From a Third Place perspective, speakers serve as "regulars" and create topics for "conversation". Therefore, organizers would need invite speakers with a background closely related to conference theme, and who had a good reputation, as well as sophisticated presentation skills (Kale et al., 2010).

The entertainment opportunities are usually related to social programs, such as a gala dinner, pre/post event trip etc. (Ardani, 2017; Bauer et al., 2008). In their study, Fenich, Scott-Halsell, Ogbeide, and Hashimoto (2014) also discovered that Millennials want edutainment at an event, which allows the purpose of education and entertainment to be satisfied simultaneously. However, the entertainment opportunities in this research functioned differently, and served as attractions to attendees, as well as being a facilitator to encourage, promote the interaction and communication, assist the audience to understand the new technology, and to display the possible application of those technologies and the values that the conference intends to convey. The integration of entertainments into the business event especially improves the degree of "playfulness" associated with the event, creating a sense of a "Third Place" outside the continuity of regular work. To some extent, the entertainment activities are equally important to the business programmes and have become an integral part of the event that attracts people to the Alibaba Computing Conference as for some, there is an anticipation of having fun.

9.2.1.2 EFA Results of Scale 2 (Conference Performance)

Following the same procedure, an initial EFA was conducted for the second scale that related to items of conference performance. In Table 7.13, the analysis results show that the value of KMO is 0.948 and there is statistical significance with the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, indicting the appropriateness of implementing a factor analysis (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). The EFA analysis displays that the Eigenvalues for four components (factors) are greater than 1, and these explain 58% of the total variance (see Appendix 9.1). Yet the factors generated are difficult to name and interpret.

Table 9.3: Eigenvalues and Variances Explained of Scale 2

Total Variance Explained									
Compon	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Sq. Loadings			Rotation Sums of Sq. Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	**9.400**	40.871	40.871	9.400	40.871	40.871	4.101	17.832	17.832
2	**2.172**	9.442	50.313	2.172	9.442	50.313	2.970	12.912	30.744
3	**1.114**	4.842	55.155	1.114	4.842	55.155	2.850	12.391	43.135
4	**1.077**	4.682	59.837	1.077	4.682	59.837	2.662	11.575	54.710
5	**.946**	4.113	63.950	.946	4.113	63.950	2.125	9.241	**63.950**
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Resetting the analysis to five factors not only make the interpretation more acceptable, but also increase the explanation rate of the total items from 58.3% to 62.2% (see Appendix 9.1). The Commonalities and Rotated Component Matrix indicated that items of 2.7 (I thought Wi-Fi was fast and stable during the conference) and 2.9 (The conference venue provided quality facilities) were not suitable for further analysis, since 2.7 was an isolated item, and item 2.9 was not consistent with the remaining items of the factor to create a coherent pattern of response. The two items were therefore delated with the results shown in Table 9.3.

Table 9.4: EFA Extracted Factors of Scale 2

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
2.15 I felt the hotel I stayed in gave me value for money	**.802**				
2.16 I thought restaurant staff were responsive in the service they provided	**.788**				
2.14 The staff of the hotel I stayed in were responsive to my requests	**.746**				
2.18 I thought the meals were value for money	**.685**				
2.19 I thought the restaurants offered good quality food	**.648**				
2.17 The hotel I stayed in had easy access to the conference venue	**.622**				
2.11 I felt the key speaker(s) had good presentation skills		**.758**			
2.13 I thought the key speaker(s) had interesting things to say		**.742**			
2.8 I thought the speakers have great reputation		**.682**			
2.12 I felt I could better keep up with industry trends though this conference		**.669**			
2.22 The conference venue had clear and effective signage			**.711**		
2.23 The conference venue was easy to access and close to transport centres			**.671**		
2.25 I felt the organizers had prompt after-conference following-ups.			**.644**		
2.21 The conference offered me an opportunity to 'escape' my regular work			**.613**		
2.24 That a user-friendly conference app/website was available to attendees			**.469**		
2.3 I was pleased with the opportunities for professional networking				**.783**	
2.5 I felt there were opportunities to find new business partners				**.778**	
2.4 I thought the conference had high quality content				**.634**	
2.6 I was happy with the social functions (gala dinner, concert, night run).				**.491**	
2.10 I was pleased to be able to catch up with friends and colleagues				**.445**	
2.1 I felt Hangzhou is an attractive city					**.750**
2.2 I felt there were sufficient flights/trains to & from the city					**.734**
2.20 Hangzhou provided various activities for recreation, visit and shopping					**.578**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

Consequently, with the meanings reflected by the items, the five factors are named and interpreted as shown in Table 9.4, while Cronbach's α values are reported as being:

Factor 1: Evaluation of Accommodations & Food (Cronbach's α=.903; 6 items)

Factor 2: Evaluation of Speakers (Cronbach's α=.849; 4 items)

Factor 3: Evaluation of Business benefits (Cronbach's α=.833; 5 items)

Factor 4: Evaluation of Organization (Cronbach's α=.803; 4 items)

Factor 5: Evaluation of Destination (Cronbach's α=.746; 3 items)

These factors generated from the performance scale differ slightly from the motivational factors. Entertainment does not appear as a factor, but those items "hide" in the factors of conference organization and destination offerings. In general, these factors are consistent with those generated from the importance scale.

9.2.2 Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis

9.2.2.1 The adoption of Multinomial Logistic Regression

Regression analysis refers to the calculation of "the coefficient of determination and regression equation using one independent variable", which can be employed to predict or forecast the causal effect relationship between the dependent and independent variables (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 547). It indicates not only the significance of the relationships between the mentioned variables, but also the strength of impact of independent variables on a dependent variable. However, when the dependent variable is categorical, regression or multiple regression is not suitable because they require continuous dependent variables with normally distributed data (Pallant, 2011).

One of the aims of this study is to investigate the impacts of the continuous variables (i.e., respondents' evaluation of conference performance, age) and categorical variables (e.g., gender, education) on the categorical dependent variable (different level of satisfaction). Given the data are not normally distributed as discussed in Chapter 5, multinomial logistic regression (MLR) is adopted here for data analysis. MLR has the capability of predicting the "probability of category membership of a dependent variable based on multiple independent variables" (Mahrous & Hassan, 2016, p. 1046) and does not require the independent variables to be continuous. Furthermore, the MLR accepts independent variables that are dichotomous or continuous, or a mix of them in the model (Pallant, 2011). More specifically, Starkweather and Moske (2011) argue that MRL neither requires strict consideration of sample size, nor the assumptions of normality, linearity or heterogeneity of variance of predicting variables. The key tests thus become the values of the coefficient of determination, the beta coefficients (weightings of the independent variables, and an analysis of the residuals i.e., the difference between the expected values of the determined variable, and the actual, observed value).

9.2.2.2 Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis

Before the analysis, multicollinearity was checked between the independent variables. The tests between the five variables showed that all the VIF values were between 1.544 and 2.696, which were lower than 3, indicated acceptable degrees of independence existed between the variables. Then, the relationships between the continuous independent variables (evaluations of the conference performance) and the logit transformation of the dependent variable (the satisfaction) were examined. The results displayed that the R-squared values were lower than 70% (68.5%), which is thought acceptable in view of the above noted comments of Starkweather and Moske (2011). Finally, the MLR analysis was conducted after these tests and the results are showed below.

As shown in Table 9.5, the “Final” row explains whether the added variables are statistically significant to improve the previous model (Intercept Only). The *p* value being smaller than 0.001, rejects the null assumptions and signifies the model with added predictors is statistically significant in better predicting the dependent variable than the intercept-only model.

Table 9.5: MLR Model Fitting

Model Fitting Information				
	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	613.240			
Final	297.867	315.373	38	.000

Like R^2 in ordinary least-squares linear regression, pseudo R^2 measures the proportion of variance that can be “explained” by the model. There is more than one form of calculated pseudo R^2 in multinomial logistic regression (see Table 9.6) provided by SPSS. Each has its own properties. The Nagelkerke pseudo R^2 is commonly reported as being the most apposite for these forms of data (Nagelkerke, 1991, p. 692).

Table 9.6: Pseudo R^2 of the Model

Pseudo R-Square	Cox and Snell	Nagelkerke	McFadden
Value	.521	.685	.514

Following this, the MLR analysis tests the model fit through examining the chi-square of the model. The larger the chi-square was, the poorer the model fit the data. As showed in Table 9.7, the Pearson and the Deviance chi-square tests do not give the same results. The p value of Pearson chi-square was significant at 0.001 level, so rejecting the null assumption that the model fits the data. While, Deviance chi-square test provides the opposite results. When there is discrepancy between the results of chi-square and deviance statistics, over-dispersion is more likely to happen. However, “over-dispersion doesn’t affect the model parameters (b values) themselves but biases our conclusions about their significance and population value" (Field, 2018, p. 1128). Therefore, the model fit information (Table 9.7) was the major one to refer to for the further steps of analysis, since the final model significantly improved the predictive effect and further analyses proceeded.

Table 9.7: Model Goodness of Fit

	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Pearson	20029.575	816	.000
Deviance	297.867	816	1.000

Therefore, the likelihood ratio test was computed to test the proposed model specification, as shown in Table 9.8. Specifically, the likelihood ratio test examines the significance of the incremental contribution of each independent variable. The results indicate that most ordinal variables in this model significantly discriminate between the three different categories/levels of satisfaction, because the log-likelihood ratio is significant, and the degrees of freedom do not increase when any independent variable in the model is omitted (Field, 2018). However, none of the nominal variables has this discriminating ability.

Table 9.8: Likelihood Ratio Tests

	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
Effect	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept	297.867[a]	.000	0	.
Accommodation &Food	301.845	3.978	2	.137
Speakers	304.196	6.329	2	**.042**
Business Benefits	306.319	8.452	2	**.015**
Conference Organization	324.301	26.434	2	**.000**
Conference Destination	310.361	12.494	2	**.002**
Gender	299.411	1.544	2	.462
Level of Position	305.633	7.766	4	.101
Frequency of Attendance	304.435	6.568	6	.363
Geographical ID	302.490	4.623	6	.593
Education Level	307.546	9.680	6	.139
Age Group	300.423	2.557	4	.635

The chi-square statistic is the difference in -2 log-likelihoods between the final model and a reduced model. The reduced model is formed by omitting an effect from the final model. The null hypothesis is that all parameters of that effect are 0.

a. This reduced model is equivalent to the final model because omitting the effect doesn't increase the degrees of freedom.

Yet the likelihood ratio test only checks the overall effect, which indicates the predictors that "significantly improve the model's ability to predict the outcome category, but not specifically which categories it helps to predict" (Field, 2018, p. 1176). Thus, the log odds ratios (Exp B) were employed to investigate the power of predicting variables. Two steps are required to 1) distinguish between pairs of satisfactory levels of conference attendees (i.e., high-level of satisfaction vs. low-level of satisfaction and medium-level satisfaction vs. low-level of satisfaction), and 2) determine the contribution made by changing the odds of being in one category rather than another (Table 9.9).

Table 9.9: Parameter Estimates

Levels of Satisfaction		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
High level of satisfaction	Intercept	-6.486	5252.614	.000	1	.999	
	Accommodation and Food	.453	.241	3.543	1	.060	1.573
	Speakers	.580	.301	3.696	1	**.055**	1.785
	Business Benefits	.763	.315	5.874	1	**.015**	2.144
	Conference Organization	1.284	.278	21.375	1	**.000**	3.609
	Conference Destination	.715	.235	9.274	1	**.002**	2.045
	[Gender=1]	-.647	.612	1.119	1	.290	.523
	[Gender=2]	0^b	.	.	0	.	.
	[Level of Position=1]	-1.817	.926	3.849	1	**.050**	.163
	[Level of Position=2]	-1.018	.640	2.530	1	.112	.361
	[Level of Position=3]	0^b	.	.	0	.	.
	[Frequency of Attendance=1]	-12.670	5252.613	.000	1	.998	3.143E-6
	[Frequency of Attendance=2]	-11.924	5252.613	.000	1	.998	6.631E-6
	[Frequency of Attendance=3]	-12.048	5252.613	.000	1	.998	5.859E-6
	[Frequency of Attendance=4]	0^b	.	.	0	.	.
	[Geographical ID=1]	2.286	1.820	1.578	1	.209	9.837
	[Geographical ID=2]	2.110	1.847	1.304	1	.253	8.246
	[Geographical ID=3]	2.330	1.807	1.663	1	.197	10.278
	[Geographical ID=4]	0^b	.	.	0	.	.
Medium level of satisfaction	Intercept	-24.842	8666.052	.000	1	.998	
	Accommodation and Food	.388	.245	2.511	1	.113	1.475
	Speakers	.688	.302	5.182	1	**.023**	1.989
	Business Benefits	.080	.317	.063	1	.802	1.083
	Conference Organization	.491	.266	3.427	1	.064	1.635
	Conference Destination	.027	.220	.015	1	.903	1.027
	[Gender=1]	-.731	.625	1.366	1	.242	.482
	[Gender=2]	0^b	.	.	0	.	.
	[Level of Position=1]	-3.031	1.329	5.201	1	**.023**	.048
	[Level of Position=2]	-.856	.630	1.845	1	.174	.425
	[Level of Position=3]	0^b	.	.	0	.	.
	[Frequency of Attendance=1]	.833	8666.052	.000	1	1.000	2.301
	[Frequency of Attendance=2]	2.174	8666.052	.000	1	1.000	8.789
	[Frequency of Attendance=3]	.551	8666.052	.000	1	1.000	1.735
	[Frequency of Attendance=4]	0^b	.	.	0	.	.
	[Geographical ID=1]	17.948	.654	753.566	1	**.000**	62357537.934
	[Geographical ID=2]	17.446	.633	758.945	1	**.000**	37737510.051
	[Geographical ID=3]	17.846	.000	.	1	.	56302649.535
	[Geographical ID=4]	0^b	.	.	0	.	.

a. The reference category is: Low level of satisfaction.
b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.
c. Floating point overflow occurred while computing this statistic. Its value is set to system missing.

Consequently, at this stage, taking attendees that have a low-level of satisfaction as the reference category, two log odds ratios were reported by MLR analysis: 1) the log probability of high-level satisfaction versus low-level satisfaction, and 2) the log probability of medium-level satisfaction versus low-level satisfaction. The first set of coefficients is displayed in “High-Level of Satisfaction” row, where results show that the evaluations of “speakers, business benefits, conference organization and conference destination”, and their “level of position” are statistically significant to discern the attendees between the low-level satisfaction and the high-level satisfaction. Each is discussed below.

Speakers: Speakers performance significantly predict whether the attendees are having a high- or low-level satisfaction, b=0.58, Wald χ^2=3.696, p<0.05. The odds ratio suggests that as the speakers’ performance increased by unit, the change in the odds of being high-level satisfied rather than low-level satisfied is 1.785. This means if the speakers are perceived to have well, attendees are more likely to be located in the high-level satisfaction category. This is firmly supported by Kale et al., (2010) who argued that the recruitment of quality speakers would increase the appeal of the business event. It is also confirmed by Third Place Theory that speakers as “regulars” would make place come alive and form a welcoming atmosphere, thus optimising the attendees’ experience at the event (Oldenburg, 1999). However, for most event satisfaction studies, speakers are not discussed, though their performance could possibly be included in the service delivery or the quality of the program (Lee & Back, 2008; Severt et al., 2007). Therefore, as an individual attraction/appeal (Kale et al., 2010), both the quality and performance of speakers require attention from the event organizers as they are more likely to improve attendees’ level of satisfaction.

Business benefits: The business benefits generated by attending this conference predict the attendees’ levels of satisfaction, either high level or low level, b=0.763, Wald χ^2=5.874, p=0.015. The odds ratio indicates that a unit increase of business benefits will lead to 2.144 times change in the odds of having a high-level satisfaction. Specifically, it implies that if conference can present more business benefits to attendees, they are more likely to be the high-level satisfied consumers.

This is in line with the findings of many business event studies. For example, Lee and Kim (2008) captured multi-dimensional factors that would influence a tradeshow performance and subsequently the attendees’ satisfaction, which include: sales-related, image-building, information-gathering, and relationship-improvement factors. All these factors are business related that will generate business benefits/values. Tanford et al. (2012) identified five factors that could predict the event consumers’ satisfaction:

program, networking, external activities, location, and cost, among which the event program (content) and networking are the prioritised goals of their attendance. Yet, they also found some other factors related to destination, social program etc. that might have impacts on the attendees' satisfaction. More recently, in their research of an agriculture tradeshow, Westwood, Schofield and Berridge (2018) stated that both motivational and experience factors significantly affect consumers' satisfaction and behaviour. Elements contained in experience factors are associated with business goals that have been expected to achieve. Therefore, similar to other studies, this research also confirms that keeping and increasing the business benefits that attendees are pursuing will largely improve the possibility to have consumers with high-level satisfaction.

Similarly, both the **conference organization** (b=1.284, Wald χ^2=21.375, p=0.0001) and the **destination performance** (b=0.715, Wald χ^2=9.274, p=0.002) predict the high- and low-level attendance satisfaction ratings significantly. Every unit of improvement in the performance of those two factors, the odds of being high-level satisfied for the attendees is increased by 3.609 and 2.045 times respectively. Thus, the attendees are more likely in the high-level satisfied category rather than the low-level, if the conference organization and the destination perform well. Conference organization mainly refers to the coordination of the resources, designing and organizing the programs, as well as the provision of relaxing and entertaining opportunities. Many studies have obtained similar findings that event organization would influence the consumers' satisfaction (Dragićević, at al., 2011; Kale et al., 2010; Tanford et al., 2012; Wu & Weber, 2005), yet they did not use the term event organization but offered a description of what components were included in their research to evaluate event performance/satisfaction. One can note that the integration of entertainment elements was not mentioned. Advocates of Third Place theory suggest that these elements will satisfy the attendees by offering them "playful" and interactive environment, so leading to a higher level of satisfaction, a view endorsed by the organisers of the Hangzhou conference. It is also noted in previous research that destination (host city and venue) plays an important role in creating satisfied consumers (Dragićević et al., 2011; Kim & Malek, 2017; Tanford et al., 2012; Young, 2013). In their studies, business event destinations or locations were perceived important for attendees' level of satisfaction which, to a certain extent, confirmed the finding of this research.

For the nominal variables, only the "level of position" is identified statistically significant to predict whether the attendees are in the category of high-level satisfied or low-level satisfied, b= –1.817, Wald χ^2=3.849, p=0.05. This suggests that attendees with a low-level of position [Level of Position=1] in their organizations are less likely [1/0.163=6.1times] to belong to the category of high-level satisfaction. This result is consistent with the qualitative findings. For example, Respondents 11 and 17 indicated that attendees holding different levels of seniority had different expectations of the business event, and therefore their satisfaction level might differ even if they were provided with identical content/services. However, Fenich et al. (2014) argued that the Millennials from different continents are a very homogeneous group, and one general/similar marketing strategy will fit them all. That differs from the findings here, but the sample of non-Chinese millennials is really too small to permit a meaningful conclusion. From a precise perspective, the level of position, career experience, gender, as well as cultural background should be examined.

From the second set of coefficients as shown in the "Medium-Level of Satisfaction" row, only one ordinal variable, "Speakers" is identified to be significant in predicting whether the respondents have a medium-level or a low-level satisfaction, b= 0.688, Wald χ^2=5.182, p=0.023. The results indicate that if the performance of speakers invited by the organizer increases by one unit, then attendees are more likely (1.989 times) to be medium level satisfied rather than low-level satisfied. This further illustrates that speakers' performance is one of the more important elements for attendees (Kale et al., 2010) to have a relatively high level of satisfaction.

The testing of the four nominal predicting variables in "Medium-Level of Satisfaction" sets found that both "Level of Position" and "Geographical ID" are of significance in the prediction of the satisfaction categories of attendees as being medium level or low level. A linear relationship is suggested whereby those in their first positions and those in higher positions tend to avoid the medium level of satisfaction, and the higher the rank the more the satisfaction, and vice-versa, as was proposed above. The results also indicate when comparing with attendees by regions, those from "Hangzhou-Local" and "Yangtze Delta Region" are more likely to be medium-level satisfied rather than low-level satisfaction. The results indicated that in both tests the attendees with low positions would not have medium/high levels of satisfaction at this business event. It is noticeable that the research discovered that attendees from different parts of China experience different levels of satisfactions at this event, and in general, people from regions that have better internet technology industry and are closer to Hangzhou tend to have higher levels of satisfaction.

As for the categorical factors, as shown in Table 9.9, gender and frequency of attendance fail to discriminate between satisfaction levels. It is also noted that the factor of "Accommodation and Food" does not significantly predict whether the attendees are high-, medium- or low-level satisfied in the two sets of tests. These results were supported by the qualitative analysis: Respondent 17 also stated that food was not their focus, and neither was accommodation. This finding contradicts the work of Zhang et al. (2010) and Wei and Huang (2013) suggested that food and accommodation were significant predictors of attendees' satisfaction.

Additionally, to check the model classification accuracy, the overall percentage accuracy rate was compared to chance accuracy (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). The classification accuracy rate is 86.9% (Table 9.10), which greater than the proportion of chance accuracy criteria (calculated) of 59.9%. The proportion by chance accuracy percentage was calculated by squaring the number of cases in each group and then summing the proportion of cases in each group ($0.15^2 + 0.093^2 + 0.757^2 = 0.604$). To confirm the multinomial logistic model is useful, following the procedures proposed by (Arundina, Azmi Omar, & Kartiwi, 2015, p. 285), the classification accuracy had improved by 11.4%, and it can be concluded that the criteria for classification is satisfied and the model is useful.

Table 9.10: Classification Accuracy

Classification				
	Predicted			
Observed	Low level of satisfaction	Medium level of satisfaction	High level of satisfaction	Percent Correct
Low level of satisfaction	49	6	9	76.6%
Medium level of satisfaction	8	10	22	25.0%
High level of satisfaction	7	4	313	96.6%
Overall Percentage	15.0%	4.7%	80.4%	86.9%

9.2.3 Conclusion of MLR analysis

Given the data are not normally distributed (see Chapter 7), this chapter adopted multinomial logistic regression analysis (MLR) to investigate the relationship between the predictor variables (continuous and categorical variables) and the categorical target variables (the three different levels of satisfactions). To prepare the analysis, EFA analyses were conducted to explore the potential factors of scale one and scale two. The results of those analyses indicated that five factors were extracted from the importance scale, while the performance scale was stipuated to form five factors, which are presented in Table 9.11. Each of the extacted facors meets the acceptable reliability criteria, i.e., Cronbach's α >0.7 (George & Mallery, 2003), indicating the appropriateness of employing them to conduct further statistical analysis.

Table 9.11: EFA Analysis and Factors Extracted

	Factors Extracted	Cronbach's α	Items
Five Factors	Speakers	.970	4
	Accommodation and Food	.966	6
Items Important for Conference Attendance	Business Benefits	. 960	5
	Entertainment Opportunity	. 960	4
	Conference Organization	.930	4
Five Factors	Accommodations and Food	.903	6
	Speakers	.849	4
Evaluation of Conference Preformance	Business benefits	.833	5
	Conference Organization	.803	4
	Destination	.746	3

The five factors, generated from Scale one, represent the important factors or reasons to motivate the attendees' attendance. Motivations are important factors that influence the event-goer's decision on their attendance. For the second scale, the EFA analysis also generated five factors (see Table 9.4) similar to the five factors of the first scale and so representing an evaluation of the conference attributes.

After the EFA analysis, both independent ordinal variables (e.g., level of position, frequency of attendance) and depedent variable (satisfaction) were recoded and prepared for MLR analysis. Then, taking the five evaluation factors, the categorial variables (e.g., gender, geograpghical ID, etc.) as independent variables and the level of satisfaction as depedent variable, a multinomial logistic regression (MLR) was conducted and the results of the regression indicate that the first four factors "Speakers", "Business Benefits", "Conference Organization" and "Conference Destination" in this model significantly discriminate between the three different categories/levels of satisfaction.

More specifically, the MLR results suggest that in the first set of results (High-Level of Satisfaction row in Table 9.9) the evaluations of "speakers, business benefits, conference organization and conference destination", and the attendees' "level of position" in their organization are statistically significant to distinguish the two different categories: low-level and high-level satisfied consumers. With the second set of results (Medium-Level of Satisfaction row in Table 9.9), only the factor of “Speakers” is identified as the significant predictor to tell whether the conference attendees have a medium-level or a low-level satisfaction. The second set of results also prove that both “Level of Position” and “Geographical ID” significantly predict which categories are the attendees likely to belong, that is medium-level or low-level satisfied categories. Finally, the classification accuracy is improved by 11.4% compared with the chance accuracy, which further verifies that the model is applicable and useful.

In response to the overall design of this research, this section answered the question of how different factors and demographic features influence the attendees’ satisfaction levels. Presumably, the higher levels of satisfaction the attendees perceived, the better or more positive event experience they would have. To achieve higher levels of satisfaction, the factors of business benefits, conference organization, and the performance of speakers and destination all make statistically significant contributions. It also conveyed the message implicitly that social programs or entertainments provided via event organization and destination have fulfilled the attendees’ “value of mind” (Sperstad & Cecil, 2011), which is associated with emotional value, personal development and behavioural change. The selected business event has achieved both value for business and value of mind by providing a quality event programme, and integrating various forms of entertainments into the business event (YF Financial, 2017). The results also suggest that factors related to Third Places significantly discriminate between the attendees’ levels of satisfaction. These factors also facilitate the formation of a playful and fun environment, a meaningful experience, as well as a professional community (Foley et al., 2014), substantiate claims for the business event as a Third Place for attendees.

9.3 Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Using WarpPLS

As shown in the previous section, the use of logistic regression was able to make predictions about the satisfaction level of event attendees. Variants of regression analysis indicates the existence of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, and the strength of the relationship (Lowry & Gaskin, 2014; Verma, 2012), but do not directly measure interactions between the determining variables. To do this requires structural equation modelling (Lei & Wu, 2007). Employing WarpPLS 6.0, the research not only examines the causal relationships among the constructs, but also explores the mediating effects of performance and the affective component of satisfaction, along with the moderating effects of motivation.

9.3.1 Structural equation modeling (SEM)

Structural equation modelling (SEM) has been defined as "a very general statistical modeling technique" (Hox & Bechger, 1998, p. 354) that is employed to test hypotheses, predict realities, validate and develop theoretical constructs with empirical data (Lei & Wu, 2007; Nunkoo, Ramkissoon, & Gursoy, 2013). Those theoretical constructs are represented by latent (unobserved) variables, and the relationships between thee constructs are displayed by path analysis (Hox & Bechger, 1998). Lowry and Gaskin (2014) confirm that SEM is essential "in testing the utility of causal theories" (p.125) and to assist theory development. Furthermore, they point out that advantages of the application of SEM lie in:

> *1) The ability to include latent (unobserved) variables in causal models. Thus, the researcher may model abstract constructs comprised of many indicators (observed variables), each of which is a reflection or a dimension of the latent construct; and*
>
> *2) Enabling the researcher to estimate complete causal networks simultaneously. (Lowry & Gaskin, 2014, p. 125)*

As for SEM analysis, Lei and Wu (2007) conclude that when the research purpose is to investigate the relationships among unobservable constructs with many measurement indicators; or when the data is "experimental and non-experimental," or "cross-sectional and longitudinal," this approach of analysis is applicable. SEM adopts a confirmatory approach to examine the causal relations among these multiple variables, which aims to judge "whether a hypothesized theoretical model is consistent with the data collected to reflect this theory" and "the consistency is evaluated through model-data fit, which indicates the extent to which the postulated network of relations among variables is plausible" (Lei & Wu, 2007, p. 34). Consequently, it has been widely accepted that SEM could be viewed as a combination of path analysis and factor analysis (Hox & Bechger, 1998; Lei & Wu, 2007; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012).

In path analysis, several multiple regression models are implemented at the same time to predict the potential observed outcomes. Lei and Wu (2007, p. 34) argue that path analysis “provides a more effective and direct way of modeling mediation, indirect effects, and other complex relationship among variables.” They also state that this approach models the structural relations between dependent and independent variables, and among each of those variables. Therefore, path analysis can be treated as a “generalized SEM” or “a special case of SEM” to test the hypotheses about “directional influences or causal relations” (Lei & Wu, 2007, p. 34). However, path analysis assumes that the independent variables are estimated with no error, which is unlikely to be true in social science. Consequently, the coefficients measured by path analysis might be somehow biased or misleading when the errors of measured variables are not considered, which indicates that “unreliability artificially reduces our estimates of the effects of one variable on another” (Keith, 2019, p. 377). Hence, path analysis is employed to “separate the common variances of the observed variables from their error variances thus correcting the coefficients in the model for unreliability” (Lei & Wu, 2007, p. 34).

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is used in SEM differs from EFA in that the factors in CFA are supposed to be known, and these correspond to the latent constructs. Meanwhile, Lei and Wu (2007) confirm that CFA allows an indicator to load on multiple factors, and residuals or errors to correlate. Therefore, SEM refers to a combination of the measurement model and the structural model (Hox & Bechger, 1998; Lei & Wu, 2007; Tarka, 2018), and so “denote(s) the conceptual distinctions between components of latent variable SEMs” (Keith, 2019, p. 390).

More specifically, two forms of SEMs exist. Lowry and Gaskin (2014, p. 130) indicate that “covariance based” (CB-SEM) and “least squares based or components based” (PLS-SEM) are the two forms, and their constructs are represented by “factors” and “components” respectively. Lowry and Gaskin (2014) argue that the majority of “the characteristics and advantages” of CB-SEM are applicable to PLS-SEM, while the latter has advantages for “preliminary theory building”, and the former has advantages for “model validation” (p.130). Furthermore, they suggest that the adoption of PLS-SEM in research will avoid “factor indeterminacy” and is applicable for both confirmatory and exploratory investigations.

It is suggested that PLS-SEM is more appropriate to apply if the research problem is characterized with the following features (Chin, 1998b; Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2012):

1) The sample size is small, and data are not normally distributed;
2) Research is relatively new, and measurement models are required to be developed;
3) Both the latent variables and predictor variables are large in number in SEM;
4) Formative, reflective models or both of them are in existence between latent and predictor variables;
5) The research is leaning more to theory-development instead of theory testing.

As the phenomenon in tourism and event studies are usually complex with plenty of constructs and predictors, to obtain large sample sizes and to meet the assumption of normal distribution is challenging. Additionally, it has been stated that tourism/event studies are more likely to be in the stage of theory development (Assaker, Huang, & Hallak, 2012; Getz, 2012c; Gayle Jennings, 2010; Kumar & Purani, 2018) given the dynamic nature of the industries and the ever evolving nature of the experiences offered to attendees. Therefore, it was concluded that PLS-SEM is suitable for the investigation of the tourism and event phenomenon being studied in this thesis.

9.3.2 The choice of WarpPLS

Given its advantageous features, PLS-SEM has been extensively applied in various fields of research and this trend has been sustained for more than a decade. Those fields of application include information systems (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010), healthcare (Joukes, Cornet, de Bruijne, de Keizer, & Abu-Hanna, 2018), and climate change (Ortega-Egea, García-de-Frutos, & Antolín-López, 2014). Business research is also included, such as marketing (Joe F Hair et al., 2012), accounting (do Nascimento & da Silva Macedo, 2016), and management research (Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & Kuppelwieser, 2014). In addition, PLS-SEM is also widely used in tourism and event studies (Assaker et al., 2012; Kazár, 2014; Kumar & Purani, 2018).

To conduct PLS-SEM analysis, many different software packages are available (do Nascimento & da Silva Macedo, 2016; Tarka, 2018). Brewster (2011, p. 5) conducts comparisons between two dominant software for PLS-SEM, that is, SmartPLS and WarpPLS, “on the basis of the operating system, data preparation, the graphical interface, algorithm methods available, reporting, and general comments regarding the use of each”, and provides suggestions for researchers who will employ this technique.

Brewster (2011) explained that SmartPLS is a program that is Java based and independent of the operating system, in which data is stored in a “comma separated variable” format. Quality of the data is affirmed by a validation sequence that is provided by the program. The results can be reported in both text modes and graphical models. The author suggests reasons as to why SmartPLS is used extensively (Brewster, 2011, p. 5):

> *SmartPLS is developing rapidly and gaining popularity, in part due to its ease of use. The mechanics of constructing and manipulating a model as indicators, constructs, and paths are added or dropped (e.g. computing effect size, f^2) is easy to learn in SmartPLS. SmartPLS also is a full-featured PLS program that requires minimal additional calculation or data manipulation outside of the program to evaluate a model both on a measurement and structural level.*

In contrast, WarpPLS is a program that is MATLAB based and recognizes data directly from “Excel files as well as tab-delimited or comma-delimited text files”; inputted data is “pre-processed to identify and correct any problems”; and the main menu of this program “employs a step-by-step process as the model is created and executed” (Brewster, 2011, p. 5). However, the two programs, WarpPLS and SamrtPLS, are sharing several similarities, such as being easy to learn, many algorithms are available, and the results are possible to be reported both textually and graphically.

Another critical difference between these two programs is they deal with different functions, linear with SmartPLS and nonlinear with WarpPLS (Brewster, 2011; Kumar & Purani, 2018). As Kock (2018, p. 5) states that WarpPLS is the earliest one “to explicitly identify nonlinear functions connecting pairs of latent variables in SEM models and calculate multivariate coefficients of association accordingly.” The algorithms in WarpPLS identify a relationship defined by a function, whose first derivative is an “S-curve” relationship; if it is refused, then attempts to identify a “U-curve” relationship; and if it is denied again, the algorithm continues automatically to examine an optimal linear relationship.

Kock (2017) argues that WarpPLS provides both classic PLS algorithms and factor-based PLS algorithms for the modelling. Kock (2013, p. 5) further explains, “Factor-based PLS algorithms generate estimates of both true composites and factors, fully accounting for measurement error.” These algorithms are equivalent to those in CB-SEM but combine the “best of both worlds” (e.g., the precision of CB-SEM and nonparametric features of classic PLS algorithms). Another point that needs to be mentioned is the five steps of implementing and using of this program have been specified by the program writer (Kock, 2010, 2013, 2018), which makes the program user-friendly and easier to master for practical application.

In respect of the research questions that aim to explore and measure the event experience of international conference attendees, with the nature of the survey data as described previously and the advantages of WarpPLS as discussed above, it was decided to use this nonlinear modelling program to investigate the relationships between the observed variables and latent variables.

9.3.3 The proposed hypothetical model of constructs

The relationships between the different factors of motivations, perceived conference performance and the different levels of satisfaction have been explored in the literature review. In this chapter, a proposed model of Motivation (Importance of items to attend), Perceived Event Service Quality (Perceived Performance of Conference Items) and three Components of Satisfaction will be established and explored to examine possible causal relationships among these constructs using PLS-SEM analysis with WarpPLS software.

Figure 3.4 displays the hypothetical causal relationships among these constructs selected on the basis of previous literature. A review of the previous studies tourism and events research reveal satisfaction is influenced by motivations (Albayrak & Caber, 2018; Bauer et al., 2008; Dunn Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991; Yolal et al., 2009), service quality or attributes performance (Jung & Tanford, 2017; Lee et al., 2015; Meng et al., 2008; Severt et al., 2007; Yoon & Uysal, 2005), and the limited numbers of studies that examined the impacts of motivation on perceived event service quality (Ng, 2013; Nilplub et al., 2016; van Riper et al., 2013).

Similarly, literature was found examining causal relationships existing between cognitive and conative satisfaction, or affective and conative satisfaction (Jung & Tanford, 2017; Lee et al., 2015; Lee, 2009; Nilplub et al., 2016; Vo Thanh et al., 2018), yet the relationship between the cognitive and affective has been barely explored. Besides, this model also intends to dissect the mediating effects of the perceived performance of conference items (perceived service quality), cognitive satisfaction, and affective satisfaction; and the moderating effects of motivation between perceived service quality and satisfaction, which have been ignored by existing literature with the exception of the examples of Assaker and Hallak (2013), Luk et al. (2013) and Vo Thanh et al. (2018).

Informed by this hypothetical model showed in Table 3.4, the proposed hypotheses are displayed in Table 9.12. The discussion and establishment of these hypotheses regarding the constructs of event experience have been addressed in chapter 3; therefore, only list of hypotheses showed here.

Table 9.12 List the proposed hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: For business events, attendees' motivation is a determinant of their satisfaction.	
Sub-hypotheses	*H1a:* For a business event, attendees' motivation has a significant positive relationship with the cognitive component of attendees' satisfaction. *H1b:* For a business event, attendees' motivation has a significant positive relationship with the affective component of attendees' satisfaction. *H1c:* For a business event, attendees' motivation has a significant positive relationship with the conative component of attendees' satisfaction.
Hypothesis 2: Perceived Business Event Service Quality has a significant positive relationship with attendees' satisfaction.	
Sub-hypotheses	*H2a:* Perceived Business Event Service Quality has a significant positive relationship with cognitive component of attendees' satisfaction. *H2b:* Perceived Business Event Service Quality has a significant positive relationship with affective component of attendees' satisfaction. *H2c:* Perceived Business Event Service Quality has a significant positive relationship with conative component of attendees' satisfaction. *H2d:* Perceived Business Event Service Quality has mediating effects on the relationship between motivation and each of the three components of satisfaction.
Hypothesis 3: Within a business event study, the cognitive, affective, and conative components of satisfaction are hierarchically interrelated.	
Sub-hypotheses	*H3a:* The cognitive component of satisfaction has a significant positive relationship with the affective component of satisfaction. *H3b:* The cognitive component of satisfaction has a significant positive relationship with the conative component of satisfaction. *H3c:* The affective component of satisfaction has a significant positive relationship with the conative component of satisfaction. *H3d:* The cognitive component of satisfaction mediates the relationship between the motivation and the conative component of satisfaction. *H3e:* The affective component of satisfaction mediates the relationship between the cognitive component and the conative component of satisfaction. *H3f:* The affective component of satisfaction mediates the relationship between event service quality and the conative component of satisfaction.
Hypothesis 4: For a business event, attendees' motivation has a positive relationship with the attendees' perceived event service quality.	
Hypothesis 5: As for business event, attendees' motivation moderates the relation between the perceived event service quality and the three components of attendees' satisfaction.	

9.3.4 Partial least squares SEM Analysis by WarpPLS

Previous sections described both the reasons for implementing PLS-SEM and the employment of WarpPLS. Thus, specifically, this section will attend to the choice of measurement models (reflective or formative), the assessment of the measurement model and construct model, and the tests of the established hypotheses depicted in the previous section by using WarpPLS.

PLS-SEM allows the researcher to evaluate the outer model (measurement model) and the inner model (structural model) at the same time (Hair, Sarstedt, Pieper, & Ringle, 2012). The outer model is set up for the assessments of "the relationships between the indicator variables and their corresponding construct", while the inner model is to present "the relationships between the constructs being evaluated" (Hair et al., 2014, p. 110). When the outer models are being evaluated, the researcher needs to distinguish between reflective models and formative models. The decision of using which outer model is determined by the conceptual underpinnings (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001). The direction of causal relationships between the indicating variables and latent variables are opposite: in reflectively measured constructs, the relational direction is from the latent variables to indicators; while in the formative model, the direction is reversed, that is from the indicators to the latent variables.

To assist the selection of outer model, Jarvis, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2003) raised four sets of questions as criteria for researchers to "distinguish between formative and reflective indicator measurement models". Specifically, the four criteria include: 1) the direction of the causal relationships between constructs and their indicators; 2) the interchangeable features of the indicators; 3) whether the indicators are expected to co-vary; and 4) whether same antecedents and consequences are requested by the indicators. Details of the criteria have been summarised in their research (Jarvis et al., 2003, p. 203).

Under the guidance of those criteria, in this study, Motivation and Conference Service Quality are formatively measured constructs; while the three components of satisfaction, cognitive, affective and conative components are reflectively measured constructs. Furthermore, in the proposed model, motivation and service quality are also formative constructs for the three components of satisfaction because they contribute to the satisfaction constructs as antecedents.

To implement the PLS-SEM analysis, Hair et al. (2014) suggest researchers follow "a multi-stage process" which contains the model specification, data collection and examination, the actual model estimation, and the assessment of results. They further point out that the "three most salient steps" of conducting such research with PLS are: 1) model specification; 2) outer model evaluation; and 3) inner model evaluation (Hair et al., 2014, p. 109). While the first step has been fulfilled in the previous sections when describing potential relationships, the remaining two steps of evaluating the measurement model and the structural model follow.

9.3.4.1 Assessment of Measurement Model

The ease of the use of the software permits the researchers to initially test the reliability of reflective and formative models, and hence this was the first step in the analysis.

9.3.4.2 Reflective measurement model

The first step is to examine the reliability and validity of the reflective model, which is the prerequisite before the construct (inner) model testing. Both the indicator reliability and internal consistency (construct reliability) need to be examined. Indicator reliability is usually measured by the indicator loadings on the constructs. Conventionally, loadings higher than 0.708 are suggested, since this means the indicator's variance can be explained more than 50 percent by the construct, thus indicating the acceptable reliability of the indicators (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The reliability of the constructs can be checked through the Cronbach's alpha or composite reliability (Jöreskog, 1971).

In respect of validity, convergent validity and discriminant validity are both required. Convergent validity examines whether the construct is unidimensional. AVE, (the average variance extracted) is the primary measurement of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity examines whether the constructs that represent theoretically distinct concepts are statistically different (Ringle, Sinkovics, & Henseler, 2009). Two criteria are usually employed to justify the validity of the constructs. One is the traditional criterion that proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981); the other is HTMT, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of correlations developed by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015). However, WarpPLS currently does not provide HTMT results, thus the Fornell-Larcker criterion is adopted to examine the validity. The traditional method speculates that AVE of a construct should be higher than its squared correlations with all other constructs in the model.

Table 9.13 Indicator Loadings and P Value

Combined loadings and cross-loadings						
	Cogntv	Affectv	Conatv	Type	SE	P value
Cogntv1	**0.873**	-0.017	-0.046	Reflective	0.028	<0.001
Cogntv2	**0.884**	0.02	-0.032	Reflective	0.028	<0.001
Cogntv3	**0.677**	-0.005	0.100	Reflective	0.028	<0.001
Affectv1	0.243	**0.889**	-0.106	Reflective	0.028	<0.001
Affectv2	-0.034	**0.903**	-0.03	Reflective	0.028	<0.001
Affectv3	-0.217	**0.856**	0.142	Reflective	0.028	<0.001
Conatv1	-0.194	0.036	**0.747**	Reflective	0.028	<0.001
Conatv2	0.220	-0.201	**0.819**	Reflective	0.028	<0.001
Conatv3	0.022	0.077	**0.890**	Reflective	0.028	<0.001
Conatv4	-0.068	0.086	**0.814**	Reflective	0.028	<0.001

As displayed above (Table 9.13), all the reflective indicators of the three components of satisfaction have values higher than 0.7 on their respective constructs, with p <0.001. Therefore, the results signify the reliability of the reflective indicators.

To verify the internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability results are displayed in Table 9.14. Checking against the criterion suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), both the values of two tests for those three constructs are higher than 0.7, which again confirm the reliability of the constructs.

Table 9.14 Construct Reliability

	Cogntv	Affectv	Conatv
Cα	0.744	0.858	0.835
CR	0.856	0.914	0.890

Cα= Cronbach's alpha; CR= composite reliability

As noted, convergent validity is assessed by AVE. If an AVE value is equal or higher than 0.5, it is acceptable on the premise that the variance being accounted for is better than simply that explained by chance. The results of the test are shown in Table 7.15, that AVE_{Cogntv} = 0.668, $AVE_{Affectv}$ =0.779, and AVE_{Conatv} =0.671. All the AVE values are higher than 0.5, indicating convergent validity.

As before, discriminant validity is examined by Fornell-Larcker criterion, which tests whether the AVE value of a construct is higher than other values in the column of a matrix. Again, in Table 9.15, the highlighted values are the Square Roots of AVE of a construct, which are higher than that of the correlations between the construct and others in the column. Therefore, discriminant validity is confirmed.

Table 9.15 Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity

	Cogntv	Affectv	Conatv
AVE	0.668	0.779	0.671
Cogntv	**0.817**		
Affectv	0.813**	**0.883**	
Conatv	0.745**	0.734**	**0.819**

Remarks: **Significant at .001 level. Diagonal indicate square root of AVEs of constructs.

The Formative Measurement Model

As explained, reflective and formative models differ in the relationships between the indicators and the latent variables. Reflective indicators are correlated and to some extent are interchangeable; while formative indicators are not supposed to be correlated, yet they contribute to the wholeness of the construct. Therefore, it is not an easy decision to remove the formative indicators from the model because this may result in the loss of the meaning of the construct. For the evaluation of a formative model, the following areas need to be examined: 1) the sign and the magnitude of the indicator weights; and 2) assessment of the variance inflation factor (VIF) of the indicators to test the multicollinearity (Henseler, 2017).

Indicator weights refer to the importance of each indicator for determining the latent variables. The table (see Appendix 9.2) displays the degree of importance for each of two constructs in this research, and indicates that all the indicators of motivation and conference service quality are contributing similarly to those constructs, which confirms the formative nature of these indictors. The P values in the table indicate that all formative indicators have significantly influenced their corresponding constructs.

To examine multicollinearity, the variance inflation factors (VIF) results in Appendix 9.2 prove there are no multicollinearity issues in the model, except for one indicator (CfQual15) that is slightly higher than the criterion proposed by Kock (2015). According to Kock, the full collinearity VIFs of 3.3 or lower indicate "the existence of no multicollinearity in the model and no common method bias" (Kock, 2018, p. 71). Further investigation of the outer loading shows indicator (CfQual15) has a value of 0.666 (see Table 9.16), which requires a need to refer to the P value. Its P value is significant at the level of < 0.001, which suggests the appropriateness of retaining this indicator in the model. Besides, the ES values of all the formative indicators are higher than 0.02, therefore they meet the accessible level of this criterion (Cohen, 1988), which also justifies keeping these indicators.

To sum up, the measurement model is reliable and satisfactory, and then the structural model assessment will be examined.

Table 9.16 Outer Loading of Formative Indicators with Higher VIFs

Combined loadings and cross-loadings								
	Cogntv	Affectv	Conatv	Motiv	CfQual	Type	SE	P value
CfQual15	-0.402	-0.082	-0.037	-0.067	**0.666**	Formative	0.028	<0.001

9.3.4.3 Assessment of Structural Model

Once the reliability and validity of the measurement model are verified, an assessment of the structural model becomes the priority. For this four types of parameters need to be examined, namely, coefficients of determination (R^2), path coefficient estimates, effect size (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2). The criteria for examining these areas are presented in Table 9.17, which have been mainly adopted from the work of Hair et al. (2012) and the WarpPLS User Manual (Kock, 2018).

Table 9.17 Criteria for Inner model Assessment in PLS-SEM

Areas	**Criteria**			**Sources**
R^2	substantial	Moderate	Weak	
	0.75	0.50	0.25	Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2011)
	0.67	0.33	0.19	Chin (1998a)
	0.26	0.13	0.02	Cohen (1988)
Effect size f^2	0.35	0.15	0.02	Cohen (1988)
Path coef. estimates	Use Stable 3 method (consistent with bootstrapping) to assess significance; provide confidence intervals			Chin (1998a); (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009)
Predictive relevance Q^2	Use blindfolding; $Q^2 > 0$ is indicative of predictive relevance			(Henseler et al., 2009); (Chin, 1998a)
Observed and unobserved heterogeneity	Consider categorical or continuous moderating variables using a priori information or FIMIX-PLS			Henseler and Chin (2010) Sarstedt and Ringle (2010) Kock, N. (2016)

The General PLS-SEM Model information

The results of this analysis of the general model is displayed in Table 9.15. Before checking specific criteria and indices, the general PLS-SEM model-fit and quality indices are presented below (see Table 9.18). The general results show that APC, ARC, AARS are statistically significant at p<0.001 level, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) is substantially in accordance with Cohen's (1988) criterion. Against the criteria provided by the software, values of VIF, AFVIF are shown to be "ideal" and are not redundant. Here, GoF (Goodness of Fit) index is to measure the model's general explanatory power. According to thresholds suggested by Wetzels, Odekerken-Schrder, and van Oppen (2009), the model has a large explanatory power in general. Simpson's Paradox Ratio (SPR) measures the percentage of paths that are free from Simpson's paradox in a proposed model; while the R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR) index examines the extent to which "a model is free from negative R-squared contributions", which arise simultaneously with Simpson's paradox (Kock, 2018). Therefore, ideally both the value of SPR and RSCR are expected to be 1. Here in this model test, their values are 0.923, and 0.999, which indicate the model is free from these issues. Similarly, the results of SSR and NLBCDR in Table 9.18 also suggest that the model is immune from causality problems. Thus, the results and the value of each measured indices indicate the model's reliability and robustness. However, to verify the validity and predicting power of this model, more specific areas need to be examined as the abovementioned four tests.

Table 9.18 PLS-SEM Model fit and quality indices

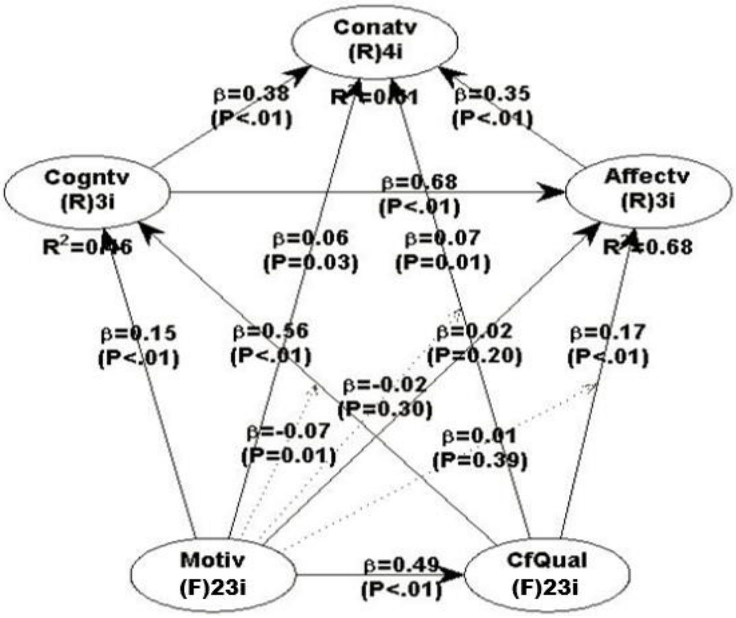
Model fit and quality indices, N=1122
Average path coefficient (APC)=0.234, P<0.001
Average R-squared (ARS)=0.498, P<0.001
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)=0.496, P<0.001
Average block VIF (AVIF)=1.828, acceptable if <= 5, ideally <= 3.3
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)=2.454, acceptable if <= 5, ideally <= 3.3
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)=0.502, small >= 0.1, medium >= 0.25, large >= 0.36
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)=0.923, acceptable if >= 0.7, ideally = 1
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)=0.999, acceptable if >= 0.9, ideally = 1
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)=1.000, acceptable if >= 0.7
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)=1.000, acceptable if >= 0.7

The coefficient of determination R^2

Serving as one of the key criteria, the coefficient of determination R^2 aims to examine the quality of the proposed structural model by calculating the extent of the variances that the exogenous variables could explain in the endogenous variables. Though different criteria exist for measuring the R^2, Cohen's criteria are recommended in the Warp PLS user manual for the measurement. According to Cohen (1988), values of 0.26, 0.13, and 0.02 in PLS path models are regarded as substantial, moderate, and weak. Whether the value is acceptable for the model also relies on the number of the exogenous variables, a moderate value is accepted when the number is less than two, but a substantial value is required when exogenous variables are many in number. Any R^2 coefficients below 0.02 would indicate combined effects of predictors in latent variable blocks are too weak to be considered relevant.

In this proposed model (see Figure 9.1), the the exogenous variables present a high power in explaining the endogenous variables. The values of R^2 for this inner model predicting the three components of satisfaction are 0.46 (cognitive), 0.68 (affective) and 0.61(conative), which means 46% of the variances in cognitive satisfaction, 48% of those in affective satisfaction and 61% of those in conative satisfaction are explained by this model. While the R-squared coefficient for the explanation of service quality is slightly lower in general, the proposed model is satisfactory in its power to explain the endogenous variables.

Figure 9.1 Parameter Estimates of the Structural Model



Path coefficients and P value

The path coefficients (or beta coefficients) refer to the "standardized regression coefficients" between the dependent and independent variables (Henseler, 2017), which indicate the times of unit change in outcome variables caused by one unit change of independent variables. Furthermore, Henseler et al. (2009) believe that the theoretically hypothesized relationships among the latent variables are partially validated by the structural paths.

However, the default algorithms for structural model analysis in WarpPLS "perform nonlinear transformations on the predictor latent variable scores prior to the calculation of path coefficients", except for the Linear algorithm, which will assist the model to find "best-fitting nonlinear functions that minimize sums of squared residuals on a bivariate basis" (Kock, 2018, p. 36). The current research adopted the default resampling method Stable 3 (Kock, 2014; 2018), which can generate consistent and even more precise P values in comparison with other resampling methods (e.g., Bootstrapping, Jackknifing, Blindfolding). Kock (2018) also argues that in the context of PLS-SEM, this default method is capable of yielding reliable results for path coefficients that connected with direct effects (Kock, 2014; 2018).

As Figure 9.1 and Table 9.19 displayed, in the proposed model all the estimates of direct path coefficients are significant at the $p< 0.001$ or $p< 0.05$ level, except the path between Motivations to Affective Satisfaction. Motivation had a significant positive impact on both the cognitive component (0.15) and conative component (0.06) of satisfaction. While the impacts of conference service quality (CfQual) on the three components are 0.58, 0.17 and 0.07 respectively. Additionally, the cognitive component has significant impacts on both the affective (0.68) and the conative components (0.38); and the affective component impacts the conative component with a path coefficient of 0.36. It is also presented that conference service quality is influenced by Motivation substantially with the beta coefficient of 0.49. However, Motivation does not have a significant impact on the affective components of satisfaction.

Table 9.19 Estimates of Path coefficients

Path coefficients and P values						
	Cogntv	Affectv	Conatv	Motiv	CfQual	Motiv*CfQual
Cogntv				0.155**	0.555**	-0.066*
Affectv	0.685**			NS	0.175**	NS
Conatv	0.385**	0.351**		0.058*	0.066*	NS
CfQual				0.491**		

Remarks:
** paths significant at p<0.001 level; * paths significant at p<0.05 level; NS=Not significant.

Predictive validity Q^2

The Q^2 coefficient, also known as Stone-Geisser's criterion Q^2 (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974), is another instrument to assess the structural model, and is a nonparametric technique using blindfolding procedures. It typically serves the purpose of investigating the predictive validity associated with each latent variable block by the endogenous latent variable in the model. It is suggested in the users' manual that an acceptable Q^2 coefficient that measures predictive validity associated with an endogenous variable should be greater than zero (Kock, 2018). As presented in Table 9.20, all the Q^2 coefficients in the model are greater than zero, ranging from 0.242 to 0.685, which indicate the predictive validity or relevance of the proposed model.

Table 9.20 Predictive Validity Q^2 Coefficient

Q-squared coefficients			
Cogntv	Affectv	Conatv	CfQual
0.46	0.685	0.613	0.242

Effect size f^2

The effect size is also a measurement of the inner model, which traditionally was calculated by the function:

$$f^2 = R^2 / 1 - R^2$$

In this function, f^2 stands for effect size, R^2 refers to the coefficient of determination; thus, effect size indicates the impact of an independent latent variable on a dependent variable, which reflects the changes of R^2 in dependent constructs (Ng, 2013, p. 176). However, Kock (2014) argues that the method of calculating the effect sizes proposed by Cohen (1988) is not compatible with PLS-SEM algorithms and tends to result in changes in the weights connecting latent variable scores and indicators, thereby leading to a biased calculated effect size.

Therefore, in WarpPLS, the effect sizes are computed as "the absolute values of the individual contributions of the corresponding predictor latent variables to the R-squared coefficients of the criterion latent variable in each latent variable block" (Kock, 2018, p. 68). To judge the level of effects, scholars can refer to the criteria raised by Cohen (1988) that stipulate the f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate small, medium, or large effects respectively as previously noted.

As displayed in Table 9.21, different levels of effect size f^2 exist among the five constructs. Among these thirteen path coefficients, two are at substantial level, three at medium level, five at small level, and three fall below the bottom threshold (0.02). However, under the same construct, there is at least one effect size f^2 having a value greater than 0.02, which confirms the significant role of each construct in the proposed model.

Table 9.21 Effect Sizes f ² for Path Coefficients

	Cogntv	Affectv	Conatv	Motiv	CfQual	Motiv* CfQual
Cogntv				0.069	0.366	0.023
Affectv	0.558			0.011	0.113	0.003
Conatv	0.286	0.259		0.024	0.038	0.005
CfQual				0.241		

9.3.5 Hypothesis verification

9.3.5.1 The hypothesized direct relations

In other software, a *t* value is commonly provided for the verification of the hypothesised causal relations. However, WarpPLS does not provide this parameter; thus, some research simply judges the hypotheses using path coefficients, standardised error and *p*-value (Susanta, Hendro, Humam Santosa, & Suratna, 2018). Though convenient and simple, to test the hypotheses by the mentioned parameters is questionable; as showed in Table 9.22, for only one hypothesis (H1b) was rejected.

Table 9.22 Hypothesised path estimates

Path		**PE**	**SE**	**P-value**
H1	H1a Motivation→Cognitive SAT	0.155**	0.029	<0.001
	H1b Motivation→Affective SAT	0.025(NS)	0.030	0.201
	H1c Motivation→Conative SAT	0.058*	0.030	0.025
H2	H2a Service Quality→Cognitive SAT	0.555**	0.029	<0.001
	H2b Service Quality→Affective SAT	0.175**	0.029	<0.001
	H2c Service Quality→Conative SAT	0.066*	0.030	0.013
H3	H3a Cognitive SAT→Affective SAT	0.685**	0.028	<0.001
	H3b Cognitive SAT→Conative SAT	0.385**	0.029	<0.001
	H3c Affective SAT→Conative SAT	0.351**	0.029	<0.001
H4	Motivation→ Service Quality	0.491**	0.029	<0.001

Notes: PE=Path Estimates; SE=Standardized Error; SAT=Satisfaction; NS=Not Significant

However, (Kock, 2013, 2018) explains that both Warp2 and Warp3 bivariate causal direction ratios provide evidence for validating the proposed hypotheses. The ratios are generated by “dividing the path coefficient obtained for the reversed link by the path coefficient obtained for the link with the hypothesized direction” (Kock, 2013, p. 83). To interpret the results of these ratios, it is recommended to follow the criteria: ratio > 1 supports reversed link; 1 < ratio <= 1.3: weak support; 1.3 < ratio <= 1.7: medium; 1.7 < ratio: strong (Kock, 2013, p. 84). In other words, if the ratios are greater than one, the proposed hypotheses will be supported. Yet, according to Table 9.23, the hypotheses that were rejected in previous testing are valid here; while (H3a) Cognitive SAT→Affective SAT is rejected.

Table 9.23 The Warp2 causal direction ratios

Warp2 bivariate causal direction ratios					
	Cogntv	Affectv	Conatv	Motiv	CfQual
Cogntv				1.038	1.011
Affectv	**0.998**			1.071	1.003
Conatv	1.000	1.002		1.080	1.002
CfQual				1.049	

Taking those two criteria into consideration, among the direct relations, both the hypotheses of H1b and H3a are rejected in this research. Other proposed links between the independent and dependent latent variables are supported (See Table 9.24).

Table 9.24 Results for hypotheses verification

Path		**PE**	**Hypotheses**
H1	H1a Motivation→Cognitive SAT	0.155**	Supported
	H1b Motivation→Affective SAT	0.025(NS)	Not Supported
	H1c Motivation→Conative SAT	0.058*	Supported
H2	H2a Service Quality→Cognitive SAT	0.555**	Supported
	H2b Service Quality→Affective SAT	0.175**	Supported
	H2c Service Quality→Conative SAT	0.066*	Supported
H3	H3a Cognitive SAT→Affective SAT	0.685**	Not Supported
	H3b Cognitive SAT→Conative SAT	0.385**	Supported
	H3c Affective SAT→Conative SAT	0.351**	Supported
H4	Motivation→ Service Quality	0.491**	Supported

Additionally, what unique is that WarpPLS also provides information about the relationships between modelled paths as “Linear” or “Non-linear” (i.e., warped). Table 9.25 presents the results in detail: H1a, H1c, H2a, and H2c are supported with linear causal relationships; while H1d, H2b, H3s and H3c are supported with non-linear relationships. The relationships between modelled paths hypothesised by H1b and H3a are also displayed, though they are not supported.

Table 9.25 Results of Relationships between Constructs

Linear or Warped relationship					
	Cogntv	Affectv	Conatv	Motiv	CfQual
Cogntv				Linear	Linear
Affectv	Warped (NS)			Linear (NS)	Warped
Conatv	Warped	Warped		Linear	Linear
Motiv					
CfQual				Warped	

Moreover, both the linear and non-linear (warped) relationships can be further explored by specific plots as presented in Figure 9.2 and Figure 9.3. These figures, especially the non-linear ones, not only better visualize the relationships between the modelled constructs, but also examine and describe the causal links more precisely, because for most of the instances that behaviour and experience studies in tourism and event research are not linear.

Figure 9.2 Linear Relationships of the Modelled Constructs

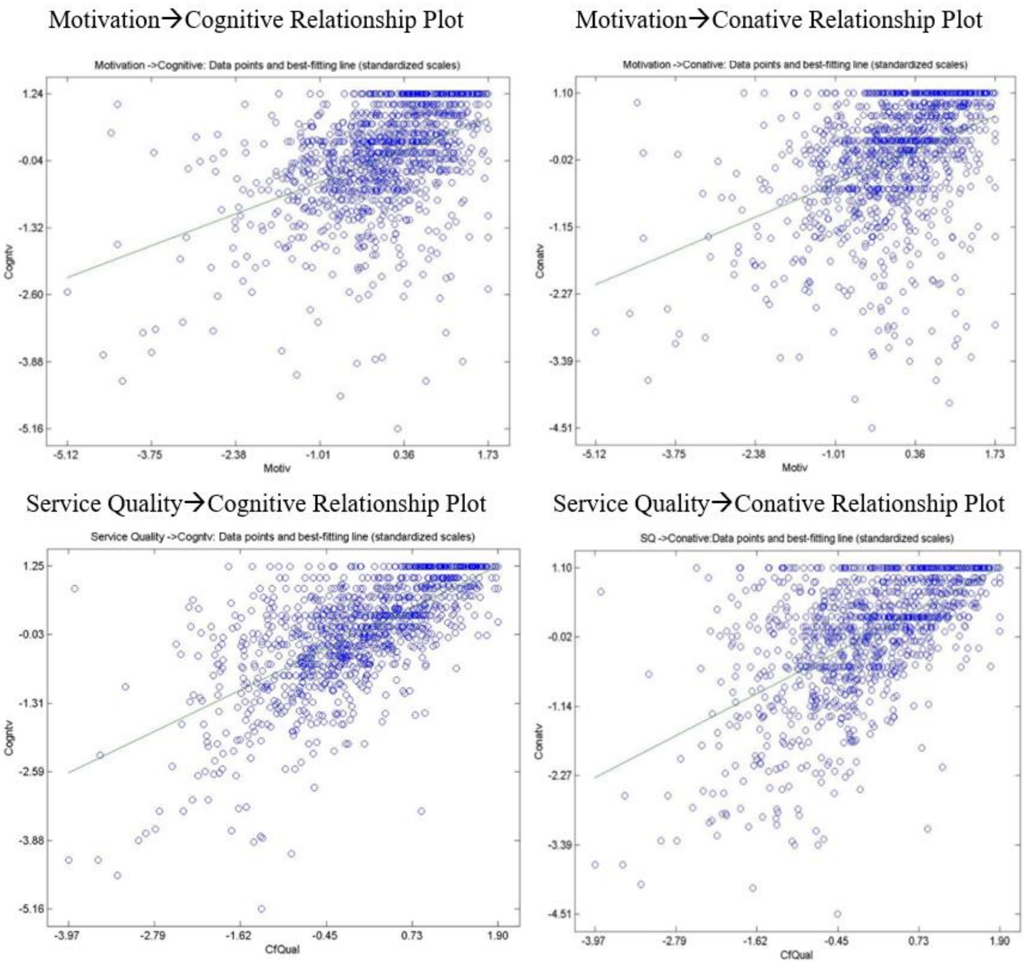
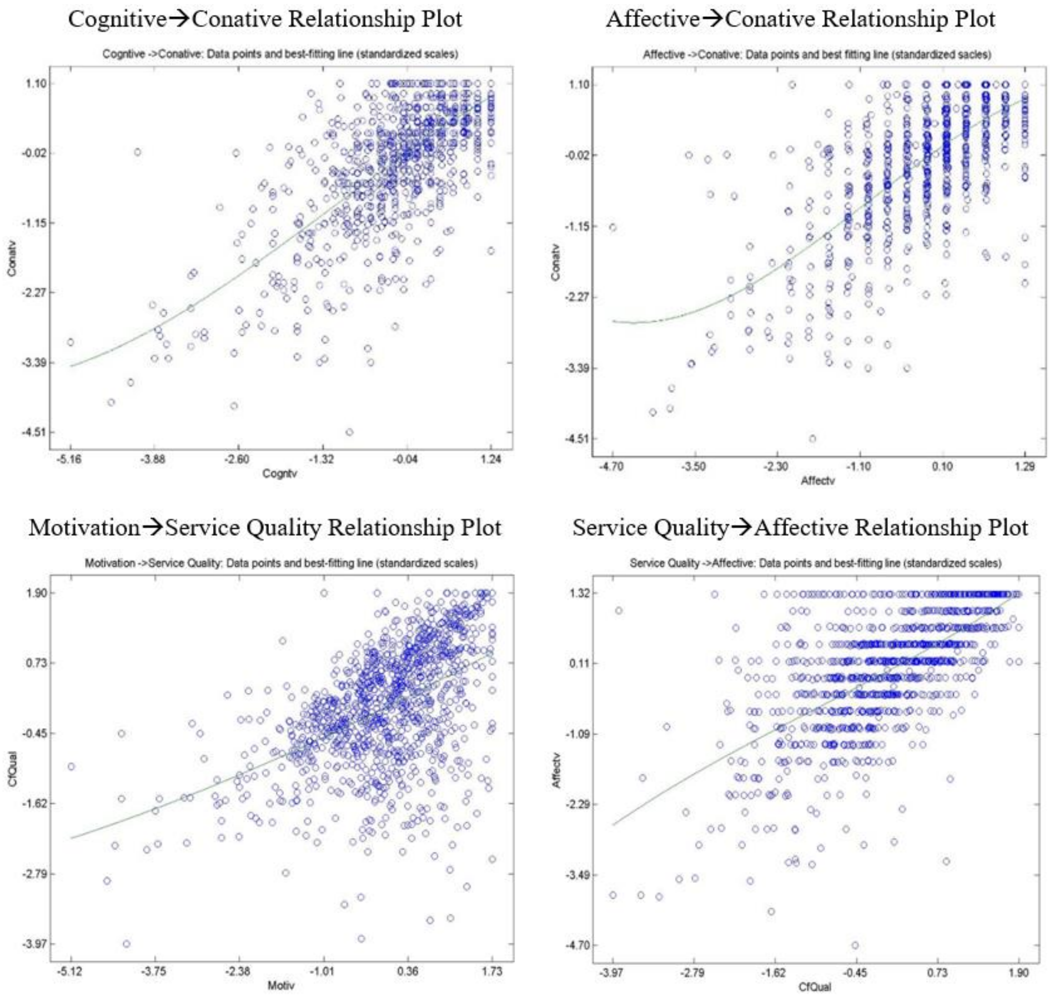


Figure 9.3 Non-linear Relationships of the Modelled Constructs



9.3.5.2 The mediating and moderating hypotheses

Following the criteria established by Baron and Kenny (1986), in WarpPLS the mediating effects are also examined in two models. The first tests the relationship between the two latent variables (X and Y), and the second tests the relationships among the mediator (M) and the two mediated constructs (Kock, 2011). Therefore, the mediating hypotheses H2d, H3d, H3e, and H3f can be examined using these procedures in WarpPLS.

Whether the mediating effects are significant or not is subject to the following specific criteria:

1) *In the first model, the path between X and Y is significant (e.g., $p < 0.05$, if this is the significance level used).*
2) *In the second model, the path between X and M is significant.*
3) *In the second model, the path between M and Y is significant.*

It was found that perceived Service Quality does not mediate the relationship between Motivation and the Affective Component, because the direct link between Motivation and the Affective Component is not supported. However, the other mediation effects assessments for the first model, as shown in Table 9.26, indicate that the path coefficients between Motivation and Conative, Motivation and Cognitive, Service Quality and Conative, Affective Component and Conative, and Cognitive and Conative are significant at levels of $p<0.05$ and $p<0.001$. Therefore, it was thought legitimate to continue assessing the statistical significance of other mediating relationships in the second model.

These calculations and the results shown in Table 9.26 suggest that all the other mediating effects are in existence, that is the mediators partially mediate the two constructs in the models. Yet, among them, in H2d (2), the Service Quality has a higher mediating effects on the links of Motivation and Cognitive component of satisfaction.

Table 9.26 First and Second Model Results of Mediated latent Variables

Model		Hypotheses	β	f^2	SE	P-value
H2d (1)	1st	Motiv→Conatv	0.059*	0.024	0.030	0.023
	2nd	Motiv→Conatv	0.059*	0.024	0.030	0.023
		CfQual→Conatv	0.071*	0.041	0.030	0.008
		Motiv→CfQual	0.491**	0.241	0.029	<0.001
H2d (2)	1st	Motiv→Cogntv	0.443**	0.197	0.029	<0.001
	2nd	Motiv→Cogntv	0.161**	0.071	0.029	<0.001
		CfQual→ Cogntv	0.581**	0.384	0.028	<0.001
		Motiv→CfQual	0.491**	0.241	0.029	<0.001
H3d	1st	Motiv→Conatv	0.059*	0.024	0.030	0.023
	2nd	Motiv→Conatv	0.059*	0.024	0.030	0.023
		Motiv→Cogntv	0.443**	0.197	0.029	<0.001
		Cogntv→Conatv	0.386**	0.288	0.029	<0.001
H3e	1st	Cogntv→Conatv	0.386**	0.288	0.029	<0.001
	2nd	Cogntv→Conatv	0.386**	0.288	0.029	<0.001
		Cogntv→Affectv	0.815**	0.664	0.028	<0.001
		Affectv →Conatv	0.351**	0.258	0.029	<0.001
H3f	1st	CfQual→Conatv	0.071*	0.041	0.030	0.008
	2nd	CfQual→Conatv	0.071*	0.041	0.030	0.008
		CfQual→Affectv	0.646**	0.418	0.028	<0.001
		Affectv →Conatv	0.351**	0.258	0.029	<0.001

Notes: P value significant at *0.05 level, ** 0.001 level.

Moderating effects is another relationship to explore when conducting PLS analysis. Moderating relationships involve three latent variables, the moderator and a pair of variables that are directly linked. The moderators will generate impacts on the changes of relationship between the moderated latent variables. In this research, Motivation is hypothesised to moderate the relationship between “Perceived Service Quality” and “Satisfaction” which includes three components.

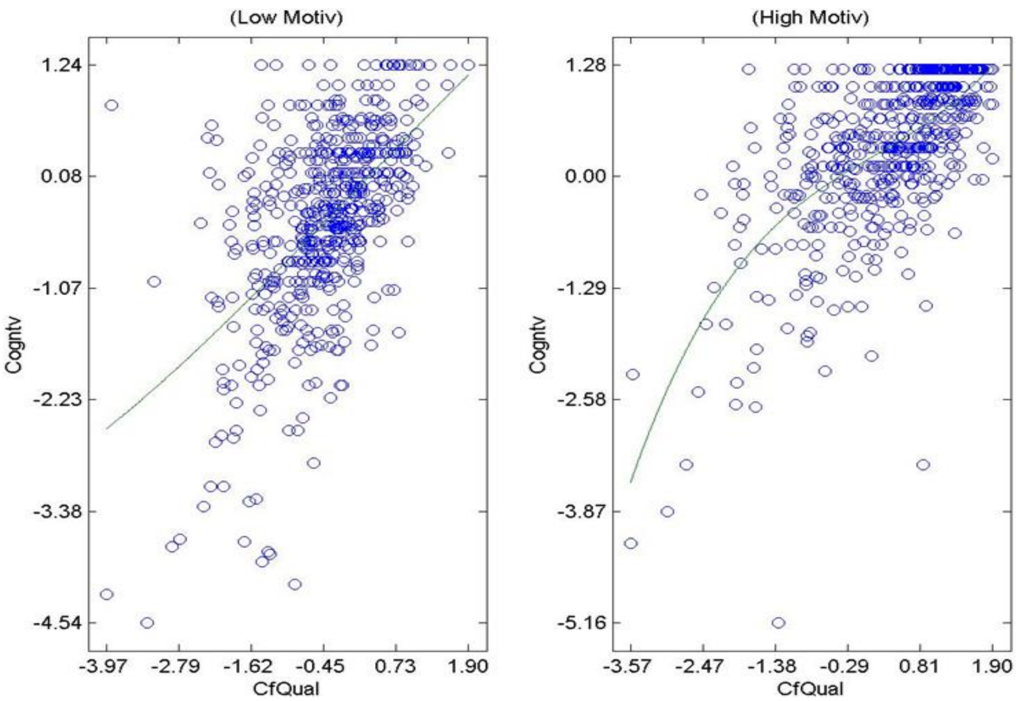
As shown in Figure 9.2 and Table 9.27, Motivation only moderates the relationship between one of the motivational components (the cognitive) and perceived service quality (being used as a proxy for satisfaction). WarpPLS also provides users with different forms of visualization of the moderating effects among the associated latent variables.

Table 9.27 Assessment of Moderating Effects

Moderating Effects of Motivation on Satisfaction				
	Path coef.	P values	SE	Effect Size
Cogntv	**-0.066**	**0.013***	0.03	**0.023**
Affectv	0.009	0.387	0.03	0.003
Conatv	-0.016	0.301	0.03	0.005

One of these allows the researcher to visualize the moderating effect graphs in two-dimensional form "with the best-fitting lines or curves for high and low values of the moderating variable, and the data points used to produce the best-fitting lines or curves, in two graphs shown side-by-side" (Kock, 2016, p. 4). Figure 9.4 displays the moderating effects of Motivation on the relationship between Perceived Service Quality and Cognitive Satisfaction. Since the sign of the path coefficient is negative, their relationship can be interpreted as below:

Figure 9.4 Moderating Effects with High-Low Values of Motivation



One unit change in Motivation will lead to a 2.3% change in the relationship to a reversed direction between Perceived Service Quality and Cognitive Satisfaction. The figure with high-low value of moderating variables also indicates that when the motivations of conference attendees increase, the relationship between the two moderated constructs becomes weaker. In Figure 9.4, the line or curve in the left graph is steeper; while in the right one, when attendees are highly motivated, their perceived service quality first strongly influences their cognitive satisfaction, while the slope changes towards a reversed direction, that is 0 or negative, which indicates that under the highly motivated scenario, the perception of service quality will not strongly influence the cognitive satisfaction.

Besides, another three-dimensional graph is also available for displaying the moderating relationships among the involved latent variables. Compared with other forms, this depicts a moderating relationship more accurately by distorting "the surface around the moderating variable axis, with a multivariate adjustment, and with corresponding changes in the overall inclinations of the sections of the surface representing the direct effect being moderated" (Kock, 2016, p. 6).

Figure 9.5 Three-dimension Graph for Moderating Effect

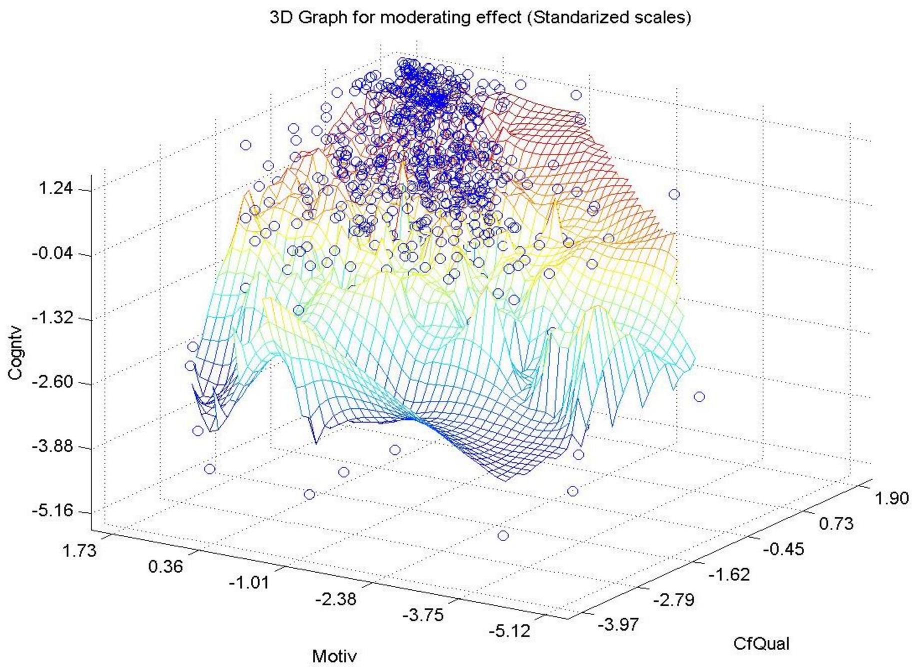


Figure 9.5 illustrates the near-reality changes of the moderating relationships of the three latent variables, especially how Motivation changes will influence the changes of the relationship between service quality and satisfaction. As illustrated, most of the points are located high-inside, which means most of the attendees are cognitively satisfied; basically, the better the service quality they perceive, the stronger motivation they have, the more

satisfied they are. The benefits of this graph are to display the complex relationships in a single three-dimension form and enable the readers to understand the results in a clear visual form.

9.3.6 PLS-SEM conclusion

In this section, PLS-SEM analysis was conducted by WarpPLS, which permits both linear and non-linear relationships between variables. Before examining these relationships, the reasons of adopting PLS-SEM and the selection of WarpPLS were discussed. Thereafter, based on previous literature and theory, three types of hypotheses were proposed, namely direct, mediating, and moderating ones, among the five latent variables (see Figure 3.4).

The five main hypothesized paths were tested by PLS path modeling. Under some of the main hypotheses, sub-hypotheses were also included. Most of the hypotheses were accepted, except for the relationship between motivation and affective satisfaction. In this instance the relationship between cognitive and affective components remains questionable, possibly because of the different criteria and conceptual content of the two variables. In addition, all mediating hypotheses are supported, but the mediators only partially mediate the links between the two mediated constructs. For moderating effects, motivation only moderates the relationship between conference service quality and cognitive component of satisfaction. For specific results, one can refer to Tables 9.25, 9.26 and 9.27 for further detailed information. Therefore, the PLS-SEM analysis by examining the relationships between the different constructs of event experience addressed the fifth research question: what are the relationships of the factors that determine business event experiences.

Unlike the other research reviewed in the initial literature review (e.g.,Abdelazim & Alajloni, 2016; Jung & Tanford, 2017; Lee et al., 2015; Meng et al., 2008; Severt et al., 2007), this section also addressed issues of the non-linear relationships between associated latent variables. The findings are shown in Table 7.24, and Figures 9.2, 9.3 and 9.4. The non-linear relationships arise for both statistical and philosophical reasons. It has been noted that skew exists with a number of the variables and hence linear relationships may well not arise when comparing variables that possess differing levels of skew. In itself, this would cause non-linear patterns to emerge when plotting two such variables against each other. Second, philosophically, when seeking to measure human evaluations, one might have several reasons for believing that non-linear patterns exist, and indeed degrees of irrational responses may arise. Hence, an attendee may attend the event for business reasons, be perfectly satisfied with the business arrangements, but consider the other aspects of this hybrid event an intrusion and an added cost on the business dealings sought. Hence aggregate measures of event evaluation will be lower that might otherwise be the case. In short, the evaluations are of a non-homogenous form of conference/event/exhibition, and this alone may cause difficulties when applying measures derived from more traditional forms of business conferences.

9.4 Chapter conclusion

In conclusion, two statistical analyses, MLR and PLS-SEM, were undertaken to address the last two research questions. The MLR results stated that the model is useful to predict the satisfaction levels of event attendees, yet differences exist between the two sets of examinations: the first set of results (High-Level vs. Low-Level of Satisfaction) indicated that “speakers, business benefits, conference organization and conference destination”, and the attendees’ “level of position” are statistically significant to distinguish the two different categories. The second set of results (Medium-Level vs. Low-Level of Satisfaction) showed only “Speakers”, “Level of Position” and “Geographical ID” significantly predict to which categories were the attendees were likely to belong. On the other hand, the hypothesized direct relations in PLS-SEM analysis were supported except H1b (motivation → affective satisfaction, see Table 9.23; meanwhile, the mediating and moderating relations also were tested to understand the relationships.

Chapter 10 Discussion and Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have presented the various findings derived from analytical methods associated with the pragmatic paradigm and mixed methods research. In doing so, and in accordance with the nature of "pragmatism" where the research questions drive the forms of analysis, at various stages in the thesis, justifications have been provided for the techniques used and sub-sets of research objectives have been discussed. In this chapter, the author aims to further discuss these findings in the process of answering the corresponding research questions, as shown in section 10.2; based on the discussion, the contributions made by the thesis to concepts/theory (section 10.3.1) and potential managerial actions (section 10.3.2), as well as future research suggestions and limitations of this research (section 10.3.3) will be reported in the conclusion section.

10.2 Discussion of the research findings

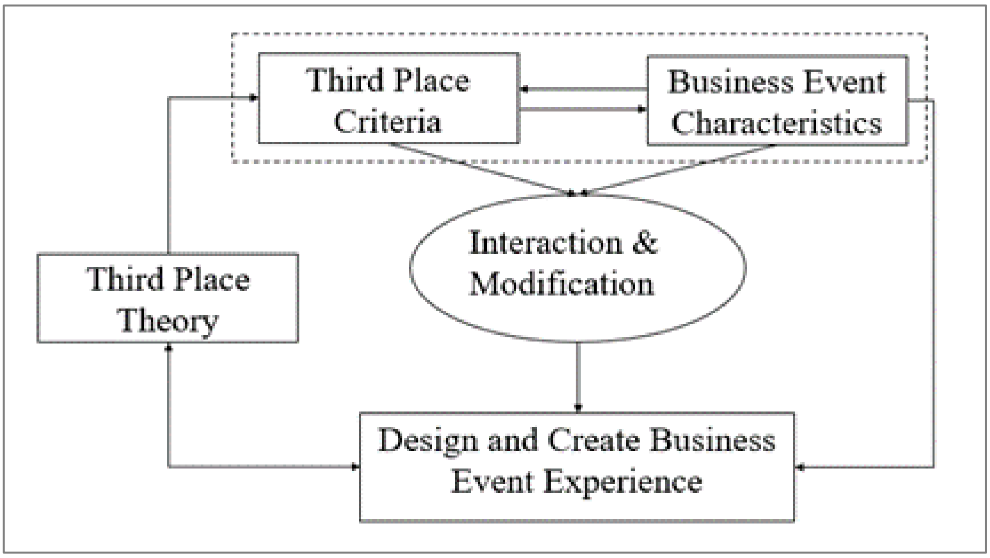
As noted in Chapter 1, this research took a unique carnival-style business event as a case to investigate the Chinese attendees' business event experience through a mixed methods approach. This hybrid business event – the 2017 Hangzhou Computing Conference (China) also provided a background and context to an analysis of event attendees' experience and satisfaction. In an initial pilot stage, 28 interviews with an average interview time of 1.5 hours were conducted and analysed; and in a subsequent quantitative stage, 1122 on-site collected surveys (with a response rate of 77.4%) were collected to implement statistical analysis. The findings of both stages are now discussed.

10.2.1 Business events and Third Places

"Third Places" were originally defined as "public places" that accommodate the "regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings" beyond home and workplace (Oldenburg,1999, p. 16). Usually, eight criteria are used to assess whether a place is a "Third Place". Yet, on entering the "experience economy", Mikunda (2004) believes that alternative forms of traditional Third Places are emerging (e.g., malls, fairs) and proposed modified criteria for the evaluation of "Third Places". Following this, other forms of events also have been studied to substantiate claims that these types of events may be classified as "Third Places" (Hawkins, 2013; Purnell & Breede, 2018; Shipway, 2012).

On the basis of such discussions, and identifying similarities between "Third Places" and business events such as the case study, this study proposes for possible future use a conceptual model (Figure 10.1) incorporating "Third Place Theory" that may help in guiding the design and operations of business events, and as a model for future research.

Figure 10.1 Interactive Model of Third Place Theory and Business Events



First, there are functional overlaps between "Third Places" and business events (Figure 6.11). The benefits of providing a "Third Place" for a community comprising people possessing common interests is a reinforcement of that sense of community and inclusiveness by promoting interaction and sociability, thereby improving members perceptions of well-being (Oldenburg, 1999). Jeffres et al. (2009) reconfirm that "Third Places" "foster community and communication among people outside of home and work" (p.333). Ideally, those functions can be included in business events to benefit the wellbeing and satisfaction of the attendees (Foley et al., 2014), and may lead to expectations being surpassed.

Second, whether a business event can be considered a "Third Place" largely depends on whether the characteristics of a business event match the criteria of the "Third Place". It is noted that different types of events (sports event, festivals) fail to meet all the criteria proposed by Oldenburg (1999). Nonetheless, such studies have extended our understanding of what might be identified as new forms of "Third Places", and subsequently criteria have been modified (Slater & Jung Koo, 2010) in recognition of societal change, and that places for gatherings are "dynamic rather than static" (Purnell and Breede, 2018, p. 512).

For the Hangzhou Conference, many of its features were well-matched with the criteria of the Third Place, primarily through the process of entertainization. That is, the programme integrates entertainments like sport events, games and a music festival into the conference and exhibition. It can be noted that such features are usually lacking in business events that normally focus on business purposes (Breiter & Milman, 2006; Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012; Whitfield & Webber, 2011).

Consequently, the Hangzhou event can simultaneously serve business and non-business functions in the manner espoused by commentators such as Clark (2008), Fu et al., (2018), Liu et al., (2017); Mitchell et al., (2016), and Sperstad & Cecil (2011) to optimize the event experience. It serves as a model where the full potential of business events might be released to generate multiple values for attendees, namely the functional, social and hedonic values (Fu et al., 2018; Young, 2013). Additionally, by verifying business events as Third Places, the practice advances the understanding of both concepts. On the one hand, it refreshes the conventional perception of business events; and on the other hand it extends the notion of the Third Place to a new area.

Finally, based on these thoughts it is suggested that the value and implications of the theory should be recognized by event organizers as well as event researchers. As a result, Third Place Theory ought to be employed in designing, planning and operating business events, and this may lead to the attendees' satisfaction, community support, and consequently the success of the event. Through entertainization, a business event may successfully differentiate itself from others and contributes to the innovation of event. Carlson et al. (2016) have endorsed this practice in business conferences. They suggested that engaging event attendees with "enjoyable activities" and embedding "social features" in the design and planning process would "foster socialisation and opportunities for consumer-to-consumer interactions and instil normative beliefs and values to enable social cohesion and perceptions of sociability to be formed" (p.917).

Therefore, Figure 10.1 suggests similarities exist between "Third Places" and business events; supports the idea of modified principles to verify and direct the design and the operation of business events; indicates that business events underlined with Third Place Theory can fulfil both business and non-business functions, and create multiple values that expected by attendees; and confirms that "Third Place Theory" benefits the design and management of business event.

10.2.2 Motivational reasons for business event attendance

If this is indeed the case, then, in terms of attendees' motivation for attending the Hangzhou Computing Conference, it becomes important to assess the motivations. This was addressed by both the qualitative and quantitative analysis.

From the qualitative data, the findings identified the following as determinants of attendance, namely networking, learning, business opportunities, and listening to the speakers (see Section 6.4.1). Since motivation is one of the most researched areas (Jago & Deery, 2005; Mair &Thompson, 2009; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Weber & Ladkin, 2003; Yoo & Chon, 2008), the author did not identify many new motives, bur some did differ from previous research findings, and these include: to visit the headquarter of a leading company; seeing key speakers possessing great achievements, reputation, and presentation skills; speakers showing up, starting and finishing on time, and being accessible after the conference; the conference website/app carries sufficient information, and there is a prompt follow-up.

In this study, the findings from the qualitative stage contributed to the scale development and design of the subsequent survey. After the finalization of the scales for measuring the event experience, the mean scores of scale items were calculated. It was discovered that the business event attendees rated "keeping up with industry trends", "high quality content", "speakers have a high reputation", "look for a new business partner", and "professional networking" as primary reasons for their attendance, and these can be considered as motives to attend this event. It has been noted that delegates may possess different reasons for attending different forms or types of events (Ngamsom et al., 2001; Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012). For example, exhibition attendees perceive quality of education program, topics delivered by and quality of speakers, cost of registration, and cost of transportation and lodging as the most important motivations (Han & Verma, 2014). In their case, Rittichainuwat and Mair (2012) discovered that the cost-related reasons are top rated, followed by destination attractiveness. However, Breiter and Milman (2006) found that networking and information collection about new products were the primary reasons. Therefore, it seems that the reasons that motivate people to attend an event vary with the types of event, as well as to different events of the same type, and perhaps, upon the nature of the questions to which they have to respond, given a lack of commonality between the scales.

Compared with other conference attendees, Witt et al. (1995, p. 568) emphasise that economic factors of “income”, “travel cost”, and “conference fee” are the main reasons for international conference attendance, but these were not among the important factors influencing attendance in this instance. For her part, Mair (2010) has identified “travelability”, “cost and location”, “employment”, and “networking and professional development” as the critical reasons, which again are distinct from the current research. Those differences further verify the importance of motivational explorations, and confirm the variety of motivations between different events, and the different types of events.

In this study, accommodation and food services, and recreational items are found to be among the least important items. These results largely confirm previous research (Breiter & Milman, 2006; Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012; Whitfield & Webber, 2011). However, accommodation costs have been identified as critical influencers of attendance in some studies (Han & Verma, 2014; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Oppermann & Chon, 1997). The low importance attributed to recreational items also confirms findings of previous research (Ivkov et al., 2015).

Nonetheless, despite these low scores, in the qualitative stage of the research interviewees did use such features to evaluate business events. For example, Respondent 15 highly praised the entertainment activities as not only created an “entertaining style” business conference but also as being an effective means of displaying the latest technologies and trends “in a more open and ready way”. The subsequent statistical analysis also reflected the importance of recreational factors in ways consistent with Third Place perspectives.

10.2.3 Evaluation of service quality with IPA results

10.2.3.1 Summary of IPA analysis

As displayed in Tables 8.1, the analyses of the motivational reasons for their attendance and their perceptions of the conference performance indicate that the most important motivations are “keeping up with industry trends”, “high quality content”, “speaker has a high reputation”, “look for a new business partner” etc. The lowest one-third of the items related to accommodations and food, and recreational factors. Similarly, the attendees perceived “Hangzhou as an attractive city”, “keeping up with industry trends”, “speakers have great reputation”, “provided various activities” etc., as well-performed items, while the hotel and food, the service provided by staff of restaurant, the access of the hotel and venue, and the availability of the conference app or website, etc. were lower rated items according to attendees' perceptions. The differences between importance and performance of the attributes justified the IPA analysis.

Figure 10.2 IPA analysis results

Two items in Quadrant II **Concentrate here**	Eleven items in Quadrant I **Keep good work**
The hotel has easy access to the venue (V17) Prompt after-conference following-ups (V25)	The attractiveness of the host city (V1) Sufficient flights/trains to/from the city (V2) Professional networking (V3) Conference offers high quality content (V4) Opportunities for new business partner (V5) Key speakers have a high reputation (V8) Conference venue has quality facilities (V9) Speakers have good presentation skills (V11) Keep up with industry trend (V12) Speaker(s) has interesting things to say (V13) Venue has clear and effective signage (V22)
Offer good social programmes (V6) Fast and stable Wi-Fi connection (V7) Catch up with friends and colleagues (V10) The hotel staff are responsive (V14) The hotel gives me value for money (V15) Restaurant staff are responsive (V16) The meals are value for money (V18) Restaurants provide good quality food (V19) The venue is easy to access and close to transport centres(V23) User-friendly conference app/website(V24)	Destination provides various activities for recreation, visit and shopping (V20) Conference offers attendees an opportunity to 'escape' regular work (V21)
Low priority Ten items in Quadrant III	**Possible overkill** Two items in Quadrant IV

The IPA Analysis and the results are summarised in Figure 10.2, which allocates the items used in the questionnaire to the different quadrants. Traditionally, the interpretation of items in those quadrants are "keep up the good work" (Quadrant I), "concentrate here" (Quadrant II), "low priority" (Quadrant III), and "possible overkill" (Quadrant IV), and in this case respectively contain 11 items, 2 items, 10 items and 2 items. However, the conventional interpretation of the model was modified with the support of three-factor theory (Lee & Min, 2013b).

10.2.3.2 Discussion on IPA results

Regarding the challenges of the IPA model (Arbore & Busacca, 2011; Oh, 2001), this research first carefully defined the attributes of importance and performance by reviewing existing literature and qualitative exploration; second, chose the proper scale points (7-point) that would be comfortable for the respondents (Bandalos & Enders, 1996; Miller, 1956); third, the reference lines of X and Y axis in the IPA matrix were tested with scale mean scores, median scores, and z-scores to present an easy and clear matrix; and fourth, the research re-defined the traditional interpretations to generate more meaningful and applicable suggestions.

The results of IPA are generally thought to be straightforward, explicitly displayed, as well as easy to interpret and simple to implement (Martilla & James, 1977). However, challenges remain and mainly refer to the appropriate measurements of the attributes and the proper interpretations of the results.

The z-score matrix, as showed in Figure 8.5, was adopted to interpret the results because it uses data that are more comparable and reduces the ambiguity of variables, while retaining the cross point of the axis at the centre of the coordinate. Following (Arbore & Busacca, 2011), this process changed the interpretations of Quadrant III and Quadrant IV from “Low priority” and “Possible overkill” to “Fulfil the essential tasks” and “Make surprise”. Repeating the arguments in chapter 8, for this specific case the attributes located in the quadrants with lower mean scores of importance (QIII and QIV) does not mean they are unimportant, but merely indicates those attributes are less important than others. The attendees have rated the importance of some items relatively high with the lowest mean score of 4.77 out of 7. Therefore, even if the attributes have the lowest score in a group of attributes, they retain a high level of importance for the attendees. Those attributes might not add too much to the attendees’ satisfaction but will undoubtedly lead to dissatisfaction if absent. In this sense, there is no attribute that has a low priority, and organizers should not be misled by any interpretation to the contrary.

Similarly, organizers cannot do too much more to satisfy the attendees; instead they worry about what they have missed or have not done enough, which is illustrated in Quadrant II. Again, the original title of “Possible overkill” might mislead the organizers, since the reductions of investment or efforts on those attributes could possibly place the overall satisfaction at risk. Indeed, those attributes may be the elements that surprise consumers and create delight (Matzler et al., 2004), and generate positive impacts on their re-consumption or positive word of mouth (Crotts & Magnini, 2011).

The modified interpretation also matches the “three-factor structure” of customer satisfaction suggested by Matzler and Sauerwein (2002), namely the three factors are basic, performance and excitement factors. The new interpretation of “Fulfil the essential tasks” is fully supported by the elucidations of “Basic factors”, which “are minimum requirements that cause dissatisfaction if not fulfilled but do not lead to customer satisfaction if fulfilled or exceeded” (Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002, p. 318).The consumers take the basic factors for granted, and usually do not express their high expectation of them, or do not rate them as highly important. Therefore, the organizers definitely need to fulfil those essential tasks instead of considering them as “low priority”.

Another new interpretation of “Make surprise” is well explained by the “Excitement factors”, which “increase customer satisfaction if delivered but do not cause dissatisfaction if they are missing” (Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002, p. 318). Those factors are less-expected or unexpected and might surprise attendees. Thus, in a Third Place view, the attributes located in the “Make surprise” quadrant generate feelings that exceed attendees normal satisfaction, and enable the service provider to differentiate from others.

Therefore, the redefined interpretations of the four quadrants of the IPA model are: “Keep up the good work”, “Concentrate here”, “Fulfil the essential tasks”, and “Create surprises”. The first two interpretations have remained unchanged, while the other two have been re-interpreted. Using this modified interpretation, the results were presented in Chapter 8, which suggest that this business conference has done an excellent job in the following aspects: Conference Design (V3, V4, V5, and V12), Qualified Speakers (V8, V11, and V13), Venue Management (V9, V22) and Destination selection (V1, V2). What the organizer needs to concentrate on are those attributes of post conference follow-ups (V25) and access to the venue (V17).

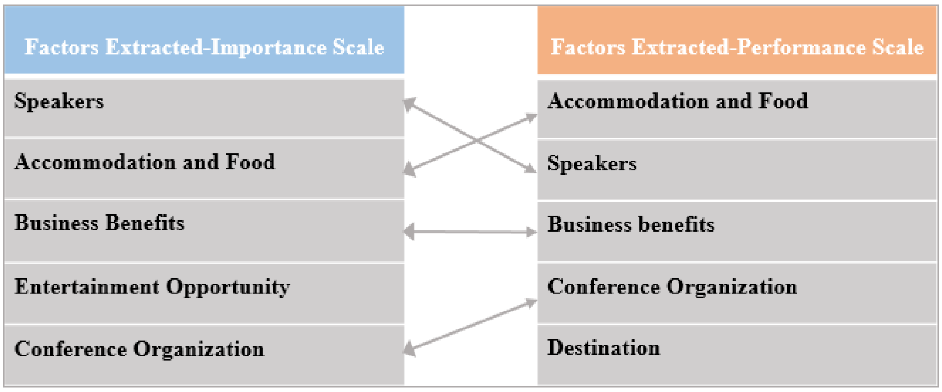
Attributes usually considered of “low priority” are associated with attributes of food, accommodation, ICT support and recreational attributes; however, the new interpretation further informs that those attributes are essential for attendees, which might lead to dissatisfied event consumers if they are ignored by organizers. Meanwhile, for those “possible overkill” items in old-fashioned mind-set, namely destination recreational resources and escape opportunities in this research, will possibly be the factors that create surprises and generate an unexpected memorable experience for those event consumers (Yoo & Zhao, 2010). In other words, they have a low expectation of those attributes, but the performance exceeds their initial expectations, which will not only create surprises for them, but also possibly make up for any service failures of other attributes.

Therefore, in this research what could create surprises for the attendees are recreational resources and escape opportunities, which could be achieved by integrating entertainment activities into the event as practiced by the case business event. Moreover, the direction of Third Place Theory in the process of event design and management will definitely enhance the feelings of relaxation and getaway, therefore better satisfy the business event attendees' multiple objectives.

10.2.4 Factors that affects attendees' levels of satisfaction

The investigation of event experience also aims to understand what factors have significant impacts on the attendees' satisfaction levels. This question was answered by the implementation of multinomial logistic regression (MRL) analysis. The EFA analysis of the importance and performance scales has generated five factors respectively, and that of performance or evaluation was used to conduct the MRL because it can predict the "probability of category membership of a dependent variable" (Mahrous & Hassan, 2016, p. 1046). In this research, the method was used to investigate how continuous variables (i.e., evaluation of attributes' performance, age) and categorical variables (e.g., gender, education) could predict the categorical dependent variable (levels of satisfaction).

Figure 10.3 Extracted Factors from Importance and Performance Scales



Prior to undertaking the MLR analysis, EFA was conducted to extract factors from both scale one (importance) and scale two (performance) and the results are displayed again in Figure 10.3. It explicitly displays that the factors extracted from the two scales share similar meanings except for one factor. The factors of "business benefits", "conference organization" and "speakers" from the importance scale have been partially confirmed by many previous studies (Han & Verma, 2014; Mair, 2010; Ngamsom et al., 2001; Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012; Rogers, 2013). For example, Mair (2010) identifies that, personal development, professional networking, safety and cost are important motivational factors; among them "professional networking" confers "Business Benefits" to some degree. Similarly, Rittichainuwat and Mair (2012) identify the factor of "Business Benefits" and part of the factor of "Conference Organization". Yet, Han and

Verma (2014) suggest that "key speaker" and education are the important factors that attract attendees, which are associated with factors of "business benefits" and "speakers".

However, among the extracted factors, both "Entertainment Opportunity" and "Speakers" are identified as new factors possessing importance for the attendees. The position of the speakers in academic conferences cannot be overemphasized (Mair et al., 2018; Rogers, 2013). As shown in their research, listening to new research was the second highest rated attribute (Mair et al., 2018). While in this research, the results substantiate the view that "speakers" in this business event were of importance for attracting attendees, so too was the factor "entertainment opportunity" as a discriminatory variable. However, it should be noted that the ratings of the entertainment and recreational attributes, had a relatively overall lower score, implying that the discriminatory power lies in the distribution of the scores, with differences of opinion being expressed by the respondents. The following analysis with MLR also indicates that entertainment opportunities significantly predict whether the attendees fall into the high-level or low-level satisfied categories. Taken together the findings indicate: 1) the role of the hedonic needs of the attendees in this business event atmosphere (Morgan, 2008); 2) the entertaining service consumption trend (Chen, 2012) and the change of social values and norms of behaviour (M. B. Oliver & A. A. Raney, 2011); and 3) the potential influence of Chinese culture and behaviour patterns in that many respondents did not seem to explicitly express their hedonic needs.

To summarise thus far with reference to the concept of the Third Place. The data were derived from business attendees, and for them the conventional focus of keeping with trends, networking and being informed by leading industry figures retain their conventional importance. However, the exhibition and parts of the conference are open to the general public, and as noted in the description of the conference, the Hi-Tec concerts and sports events create a milieu of excitement and games playing that is also a key component of the event. Business delegates are not shielded from this. There is evidence that hedonic factors do influence their motivation – but are nonetheless secondary to the main business purposes of the event. For the general public, the Alibaba Hangzhou Conference may be a Third Place, but for business attendees the entertainment is a secondary consideration – but while secondary, this does not mean that they do not gain some enjoyment from it. Thus, the business event as a Third Place meets the business attendees' multi-dimensional purposes, and consequently, attendees derive higher levels of satisfaction that arguably might not be the case in the absence of "entertainization".

10.2.5 Relationships between constructs of business event experience

Differing from most previous studies, WarpPLS was employed to process the collected data and test the relationships among those latent variables by reasons of its advantages (Brewster, 2011; Kock, 2017) as previously discussed. It addressed the last research question: what relationships exist between the different constructs of business event experiences.

The results of the investigation have been summarized at the beginning of this chapter, which conclude that most of the hypothesized direct relations in the proposed model were supported. The results are summarised in the following section.

As for the hypothesized direct relations (see Table 9.23), only one hypothesis was rejected (*H1b*) according to the *p* value criteria, that is attendees' motivation does not have a significant positive relationship with the affective component of their satisfaction in a business event context. While the adoption of WarpPLS suggests other criteria, whether the "Warp2 bivariate causal direction ratio" is bigger or smaller than one (Kock, 2013, p. 84). As shown in Table 9.24, *H3a* was rejected, which indicates that the cognitive component of satisfaction does not have a significant positive relationship with the affective component of satisfaction. Other hypotheses are supported.

In general, the results generated from this research have confirmed four types of causal relationships in the context of a business event, namely, relationship between motivation and satisfaction, perceived service quality and satisfaction, causal relationships among different components of satisfaction, as well as the relationship between motivation and perceived service quality.

What motivates people to attend significantly influences their satisfaction. This has been widely tested and confirmed. As early as 1970s, Deci (1975) has argued that motivation as an intrinsic factor has a potential impact on future satisfaction. Following this, the relationship between the two constructs has been addressed by many researchers. Investigating an international event, Bauer et al. (2008) identified that both motivation and satisfaction are crucial for event attendees' decision-making. Dunn Ross and Iso-Ahola (1991) also identify the connections between motivation and satisfaction in the tourism environment. In admitting the presence of the relationship, Prebensen et al. (2010, p. 858) reveal that only "mind-related motives", such as culture and nature, and escapism have significant effects on satisfaction instead of the “body-related motives”. In an extended way, Yoon and Uysal (2005) further justify the causal relationships among tourists’ push and pull motivations, satisfaction and loyalty.

The results of the current research are consistent with the findings of the above research. However, satisfaction as an attitude (Breckler, 1984; Clarke, 2001) can be treated as a construct with three different components (i.e., cognitive, affective and conative), which enable the researcher to investigate more detailed relationships among independent constructs and different aspects of consumers’ satisfaction. While this way of satisfaction analysis is relatively uncommon the existing tourism and event studies literature there are such studies, for example those of Pike and Ryan (2004) and Agapito, Valle, et al. (2013).

What is usually tested are the relationships between motivation and one component of satisfaction (Coghlan & Pearce, 2010; Kruger & Saayman, 2018; Yolal et al., 2009). In the current research, however, the relationships between motivation and the three aspects of satisfaction were examined at the same time. The findings indicate the motivation positively predicts cognitive and conative satisfaction in a significant manner, which are consistent with Yolal et al. (2009) and Kruger and Saayman (2018); while failing to predict the affective component is contrary to research findings of Coghlan and Pearce (2010). That is to say attendees with stronger motivations are more satisfied in the functional values of the business event (cognitive aspects) and more likely to re-visit the event (conative aspects), but not necessarily establish emotional connections. This too implies limits for concepts conference/exhibitions as Third Places as it seems from this analysis that business delegates remain primarily in a place of business despite being away from home and enjoying the social activity of networking.

It was also found that there are causal relationships among the three components of satisfaction: the cognitive component positively impacts on the affective and conative component; meanwhile, affective component positively affects the conative component of satisfaction. In many situations, it is investigated as the relationship between “satisfaction” and “behaviour”, which aims to test whether the consumers’ satisfaction predicts their future behaviour. For example, a study by Jung and Tanford (2017, p. 125) noted that there is “a positive relationship between convention satisfaction and convention loyalty”. Since they use “overall satisfaction” as the outcome construct for analysis, their results imply that the cognitive or/and the affective components have positive relations with the conative component of satisfaction.

Given the fact that behavioural intention is considered to be an outcome of satisfaction, this suggests that repeated consumption of a certain service/product is an indicator or expression of satisfaction (Breckler, 1984; Clarke, 2001). However, the findings of this research reveal that conative satisfaction can be positively predicted by cognitive or affective aspects of satisfaction; while cognitive aspects do not significantly predict the affective satisfaction. Though the relationships between the three components of satisfaction were explored in the same construct, the results have confirmed studies that test them separately (Hsieh et al., 2015; Severt et al., 2007). Besides, results of this research also partially confirmed the findings derived from destination image research, which often examine the relationships among the “cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of destination image” (Agapito, Valle, et al., 2013, p. 471). This study differs from the work of Agapito, Valle, et al. (2013) as they find that the cognitive dimension has significant impacts on the affective dimension contrary to this study. One potential cause for this is that visual imagery used in destination marketing perhaps “prepares” the visitor in ways different to the situation posed by a conference where physical attributes are of lesser importance than the intangible assets of communication and interaction.

With the tested relationships that motivation has a direct positive relationship with satisfaction; so too does the relationship of perceived service quality and satisfaction. Therefore, consumers’ motivations will potentially influence their perceptions of the service quality. As shown in Table 9.23, this hypothesized relations between them is supported in the business event context. Research conducted by Lee et al. (2011) and van Riper et al. (2013) also suggest that motivations positively contribute to the perceptions of service quality in the tourism and event area. To be more explicit, the stronger motivations the consumers have, the higher degree they will perceive the performance of the service they purchase.

Besides the direct relations discussed above, PLS-SEM analyses by WarpPLS also examined the mediating and moderating effects proposed in the model. As shown in Table 9.27, except for one sub-hypothesis of H2d (Motivation→ Perceived Service Quality→ Affective Satisfaction, all proposed mediating hypotheses are supported. The results identified the importance of the indirect relationships among those constructs, and it is concluded that mediators are crucial to improve the predictive power of the model. In brief, the findings revealed that the following mediating effects were in existence: 1) the perceived service quality partially mediates the relationship between motivation and cognitive/conative satisfaction; 2) the cognitive aspect of satisfaction mediates motivation and conative satisfaction; and 3) the affective satisfaction mediates the relations between the cognitive and conative satisfaction, as well as the perceived service quality and the conative satisfaction.

This current examination further explored indirect relationships among the five constructs. Some of those mediating effects have been confirmed previously, such as the mediating effects of satisfaction between motivation and behaviour, as well as service quality and loyalty (Lee, 2009; Nilplub et al., 2016), and between destination image and loyalty (Vo Thanh et al., 2018). However, Hsieh et al. (2015) and Ng (2013) ascertained the mediating effects of the perceived service quality between motivation and satisfaction. However, the current research differs from these earlier studies by explicitly examining the mediating effects of service quality, cognitive satisfaction and affective satisfaction and separating the cognitive, affective and conative. The current research presents further evidence that service quality is not only directly associated with all three aspects of satisfaction, but also functions as a mediator between motivation and satisfaction. Moreover, the affective component of satisfaction requires attention since it mediates two pairs of constructs, namely: service quality and conative satisfaction, and cognitive satisfaction and conative satisfaction.

The moderators should generate impacts on the changes of the relationship between the moderated latent constructs. In this research, the hypothesised moderating relationships examined whether motivation has impacts on the relationship between “Perceived Service Quality” and “Satisfaction” which includes three components. It is revealed that motivation only moderates the relationship between conference service quality and cognitive component of satisfaction, which indicates that attendees’ motivations have significant impacts on the causal relationship between service quality and cognitive satisfaction. However, motivation does not moderate the other two causal relationships. This is partially supported by Assaker and Hallak (2013), for in their research, motivation has moderating effects on the relationship of “perception of a particular destination” and satisfaction (p.601).

It is also worth noting that WarpPLS creates a three-dimensional visualization of moderating effects among the associated latent variables (see Figure 9.5), which depicts a moderating relationship more accurately by distorting “the surface around the moderating variable axis, with a multivariate adjustment, and with corresponding changes in the overall inclinations of the sections of the surface representing the direct effect being moderated” (Kock, 2016, p. 6).

It allows the users to check the non-linear relations among those proposed constructs (see Table 9.25), which reflects the real phenomena in a more precise way given that the non-linear relationships arise for both statistical and philosophical reasons.

10.2.6 Interactive Discussion of Qualitative and Quantitative Results

The application of mixed methods, besides decisions as to the contribution of each at the research design stage, also requires a comparative discussion of the findings from qualitative and quantitative stages. In this specific research, the two sets of the results are generally congruent, but it is felt that the qualitative data also provide some extra insights that go beyond the later empirical examination.

There is a general consensus between the two inquiries that the most important reasons for people to register a business conference are “learning”, “networking”, “quality speakers”, and “business opportunities”, though the orders of importance of those reasons are slightly different; second, qualitative findings also confirm the quantitative results that “food” and “accommodations” might have impacts on attendees’ experience, but they are not the key determinants of consumer satisfaction; third, the textual analysis showing the criteria for conference service evaluation (see Section 6.4.4) largely duplicates the factors extracted from the quantitative data by exploratory factor analysis (see Section 9.2.1.1), thereby implying consistency of views among the different informants. Finally, both qualitative and quantitative results show that gender is not a significant discriminator of business conference consumers’ behaviour. Therefore, these similar patterns of findings from both forms of enquiry reconfirm the validity and credibility of the research.

On the other hand, qualitative data provide additional nuances to explain some of the apparent contradictions. As the MLR analysis discovered in Chapter 9, some recreational factors (primarily referring to the Destination Factor) were found to distinguish between attendees’ degrees of satisfaction, even while the rating of the recreational items are relatively low in the descriptive results. At the time of analysis, it was noted that a distinction can be made between overall importance, and the importance of items as sources of discrimination, and this is one such instance. It was found in the qualitative investigation, that some interviewees spoke of their enjoyment from participating in those recreational activities or entertainment activities made the business event "more interactive, stylish", and enabling business to be conducted in a "more open and readily" environment (Respondent 15, XZ). This again reconfirms the importance of integrating entertainment activities into business events, thus creating a Third Place for attendees to interact, to relax, to have a meaningful experience and to form a professional community. Therefore, the qualitative data offers another perspective from which to look at the nature of the business event, which is that it is not only a platform for business, but also for an opportunity for social interaction, personal development, a "get-away" from work, and a source of pleasure.

10.3 Research conclusion

The primary purpose of this section is to answer the perennial and critical "so what?" question. To be specific, what are the contributions made by the research to theoretical constructs and managerial implications. Following this, the limitations of this research, as well as future research directions and areas of events studies (especially business events) are reported.

10.3.1 Theoretical implications

From a theoretical dimension, this research has epistemological, conceptual, and methodological implications for the existing literature in event and tourism studies, which includes an application of sociological theory –the Third Place Theory, a humanity turn to the business event, the modification of IPA interpretation of event service quality, and the adoption of mixed research methods and non-linear analytical software to investigate a business event.

First, the alternative epistemological view of the studied business event, which is to consider this type of events as a Third Place (Oldenburg, 1999) for the attendees. In a recent review of event and festival research, Mair and Weber (2019) have pointed out that there is a shortage of interdisciplinary work and suggested future research should "incorporate business and social and/or spatial perspectives" (p. 212). They also encourage using theories or concepts from other disciplines, which allows the research to be more outwardly focused and enables the events to fulfil other than narrowly defined objectives (Cudny, 2014). Therefore, this research introduced the Third Place Theory into business event research. This requires not only employing theories beyond business disciplines into event studies, but also offers an alternative view to investigate the business event – it is more than a pure business activity; illustrating and confirming the business event as a Third Place. The event provides a place/space for people who share common interests to interact, socialize, relax, celebrate, and even have fun (Campbell, 2017). Consequently, the place (business event) and the activities (programs, entertainments) enable people to develop, recharge, enhance relationships, form communities and improve their quality of life/wellbeing (Jeffres et al. (2009).

Second, the uniqueness and innovative practices of the selected case prove that a business event can serve as a Third Place, especially when the organizer integrates entertainment activities into the business event. In doing so, the event is softening its commerciality and becoming more "carnival-style", thus leading to the turn of nature of business event – that is the humanity side of business event (Gao, 2017). This is a challenge to the traditional operations of business events. As Getz (2012a, p. 60) explained "The fundamental purpose of this type of event is to promote, market or directly engage in commerce, or otherwise meet corporate objectives." Indeed, the corporate and association meetings are the "business get-togethers" of those organizations for "business communication" and "maximum return on its investment" (McCabe et al., 2000, p. 56). Therefore, the study suggests both academia and practitioners should reconsider and redefine the nature of the business event, which should bring more benefits to different stakeholders as well as releasing the full potential of business events.

Third, to add new knowledge about a Chinese locally initiated business event to the existing event literature, which also responds to the call for event studies from different cultural perspectives (Getz, 2010; Mair & Weber, 2019). The existing literature about Chinese events studies, especially Chinese publications, have primarily introduced and reviewed the western event studies (Dai & Bao, 2003; Wang et al., 2016), engaged in a description and prediction of the Chinese event industry (Dai, 2013; Xia, 2009), assessed motivations to attend an event (Li & Wood, 2016; Lu, 2017; O'Regan, Choe, & Yap, 2017), examined the social and economic impacts of events (Luo, 2010; Luo et al., 2012), looked at destination competitiveness (Qiu et al., 2015), and inspected the innovation (Dawson, Young, Tu, & Feng, 2014) and spatial connections or allocation of events (Fang, Zhang, Wang, & Zhang, 2017; Wu & Dai, 2018). As for the cases that have been studied, exhibitions have been the most researched, while motivation, industry trends, reviews, and impacts remain as the frequently addressed areas. Yet recently, research topics about business events are becoming more diversified, such as business event attachment (Yi et al., 2018), professional attendees retention (Qi et al., 2018), event business model innovation (Zhu, He, & Liu, 2016), and cognitive destination image (Luo & Tong, 2014). Generally, business events credited by international organizations (Yi et al., 2018) , and those that are government dominated and initiated exhibitions (Luo et al., 2012) have attracted most attention in China. Therefore, the study of attendees' experiences of a unique business event in China is necessary and will contribute some new knowledge about business event attendees, as well as the new successful emerging "carnival-style" business event.

Fourth, the adoption of mixed methods to investigate business events. The selection of a research method not only depends on the factors regarding research design, research problem, and research objects (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), but also the research context (Gu & Ryan, 2010). Both the rationale of adopting the mixed methods in event studies and the suitability of applying this method to investigate event experience were discussed in Chapter 4. The adoption of mixed methods to address sports events can be traced back to the 1990s (Jones, 1997). Later this method has also been used to evaluate social cultural impacts of festivals (Robertson, Rogers, & Leask, 2009), to examine the psychological and social wellbeing of music festivals (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011), to identify the key reasons of attendees to visit a consumer tradeshow (Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012), and to inspect the outcomes of a sport event in northern Europe (Ren & Mahadevan, 2018). Additionally, Sweeney and Goldblatt (2016) combined different research methods to examine the general effectiveness of different types of events (e.g., festivals, sports, recreational events) from organizational and individual perspectives.

Those studies have advanced knowledge on specific questions by implementing a mixed method investigation. However, a brief review of event studies indicates the infrequent use of the mixed methods approach in the research of business events, and especially in the exploration of business conferences. Therefore, the current research is thought to be among the first Chinese studies to use mixed methods to examine the complex relationships of business event experiences. The adoption of this method not only generates rich qualitative data to understand the nature of the event that assisted in the designing of a questionnaire based survey, but also provides another dimension to justify and interact with the results of the quantitative analysis, which improves the quality and reliability of the research.

Fifth, the modification of traditional IPA interpretations. Importance-Performance Analysis has been widely employed to measure service quality in many areas because of its simplicity, visual expressivity, and explicit explanatory powers since its appearance 40 years ago (Martilla & James, 1977). However, as discussed in Chapter 8, both its validity and traditional interpretation have been challenged with regard to interpretation and formation of the four quadrants (Coghlan, 2012; Oh, 2001; Ryan & Huyton, 2002). Meanwhile, many modifications have been conducted to improve the model. For example, Breiter and Milman (2006) illustrate the linear relationships between attributes' importance and performance while locating both in a single quadrant (upper right-hand quadrant). They argued that this way of presentation would provide "more powerful visual presentation of the results than the traditional importance–performance matrix" (p.1369).

Later, Arbore and Busacca (2011) and Coghlan (2012) revised the model from both the mode of displaying and interpreting the results. It is worth noting that those two studies believe that different attributes have asymmetric impacts on consumers' perceptions of attribute performance, and thus the critical measurements are no longer the gap between the importance and performance of examined attributes, but the display of relationship between the importance and the power of impacts of the attributes' performance. As for the model's interpretations, Arbore and Busacca (2011) simplify them into a dichotomous choice for management, that is the top-left located attributes are of high priority, and the bottom-right located ones are of low priority, which, to some extent, leave the specific choices to the practitioners and fail to give clear indications to management on other issues. On the other hand, Coghlan (2012) not only adopted the measurement of attributes' impacts on satisfaction, but he also combined the three factor theory and the IPA model together to create a more complex visual display of the results (See Coghlan, 2012, p. 772). He also classified the attributes into four categories and labelled them as delighter, satisfier, hybrid, dissatisfiers and frustrators, which arguably were supposed to be more convenient for management to make decisions. However, to classify and label the attributes remains partially a subjective process. Those modifications are practical and offer progress in some points, but also cause issues. For example, these revisions lead to the loss of the model's simplicity, straightforwardness and applicability, which are the core of this approach.

Therefore, what this current research has contributed to this model is the improvement of its power of explanation without any degradation of its key advantages. Simply, z-score has been used to make the data more comparable and locate the cross point of X and Y axis at the centre of this coordinate system, which guarantees an optimal visual display of the results. Meanwhile, based on three factor theory (Füller & Matzler, 2008), the traditional statements of the results in two quadrants are reinterpreted with sustaining of the interpretations of Quadrant I "Keep up the good work" & Quadrant II "Concentrate here", while Quadrant III & IV are reconsidered as "Fulfil the essential tasks" and "make surprises", instead of "Low priority" and "Possible overkill". Those attributes that were traditionally labelled as "Low priority" are the "dissatisfiers" in the three factor theory, which "are minimum requirements that cause dissatisfaction if not fulfilled but do not lead to customer satisfaction if fulfilled or exceeded" (Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002, p. 318), thus they might be of low importance for the business event attendance, but they will undoubtedly lead to dissatisfaction if absent. Similarly, attributes that are "Possible overkill" equal to those "satisfiers", which might not cause dissatisfaction if not provided, but increase satisfaction and surprise attendees, and turn them into "delight" consumers. The modification will be more helpful for the management to make corresponding decisions and is well supported by Berman (2005, p. 131), who argues that they "Fulfil the basic requirements to 'enter' the market, be competitive with regard to the performance factors to increase satisfaction, and stand out from the rest based on excitement factors to delight the customer."

Sixth, the adoption of WarpPLS in event studies, which enables the examination of both linear and non-linear relationship of the research constructs. Conventionally, linear tests are dominating social science research, especially in research about consumer behaviour predictions (Qiao, McAleer, & Wong, 2009). Though the nonlinear relationship has been discussed when studying how attributes performance influence consumers satisfaction (Matzler et al., 2004), the value or practices of nonlinear examination only attracted the attentions of researchers recently. For example, Isik, Dogru, and Turk (2018) have examined both the linear and non-linear relationships among the market demand, sustainable energy consumption, and destination economic growth. Along a similar line, Tontini et al. (2018) employ both linear and nonlinear methods to explain how the festival attendees evaluate their experience. Their research confirms the advantage of nonlinear method in explaining the attendees' evaluation, and then enables the better offering or improvement of event services to consumers.

10.3.2 Managerial implications

From the managerial perspective, the research itself and the results of the research have significant implications for event organizers, destination management organizations (DMO), and governmental decision-makers. Specifically, those implications encompass but are not limited to the following points.

First, the research provides reliable information for different stakeholders both in China and other counties and regions to understand a specific, novel Chinese business event, and the perceptions of business event attendees in China.

Second, the research strongly suggests the event organizers/planners to adopt the Third Place Theory when design and operate their various types of events, especially business events. The Hangzhou Alibaba event is a hybrid event of integrated business and entertainment components that may well represent a future direction of events fully congruent with Third Place concepts. Using these concepts organizers and conference planners can create conferences and exhibitions that eventually will benefit attendees, the community, the event itself, as well as the relationship between the event organizers and the local governments.

Third, using data about motivations permit organizers to better understand Chinese business event attendees, to design appropriate event programmes and provide satisfactory services while considering cultural differences. Rittichainuwat and Mair (2012) confirm that motivation studies are contributing to the key concerns of business event organizers and other service/product providers (e.g., exhibitor, speaker, performer), that is the successful marketing and staging of the event. By identifying motivations, organizers are more likely to provide services that the consumers truly need and create satisfactory event consumers.

However, when interviewing respondents, motivations are sometimes unspoken or implicitly expressed. For example, in this research, the recreational motivations rated as the lower rated attributes, while the regression analysis indicates that those attributes as an "entertainment" factor are significant discriminators of consumer's satisfaction.

Therefore, such apparent contradictions also justify the use mixed methods for experience studies, which presents more evidence for organizers to make better judgements as to attendees explicitly claimed and unspoken needs. Rittichainuwat and Mair (2012) suggest that event consumers do have many choices, which requires the organizers to establish and enhance the image and prestige of any one event by concentrating on both the quality (destination, programs, theme, speakers, environment are well matched) and quantity (sufficiency and variety of choices of programs) perspectives of the specific business event. As shown in Chapter 5, the practices of the case conference has exemplified the way of making a business event a Third Place by hybridizing entertaining activities into business ones, inviting quality speakers, providing sufficient sessions with great variety, and managing to keep the activities are in line with the theme of the conference.

The fourth implication has two aspects: 1) The revision of the service quality diagnosing model could facilitate event organizers to measure, especially to better interpret the results and take the suggested actions; or the revised model is appropriate to apply to a wider scope of other service industries/sectors. 2) The results of the IPA analysis of Chinese business attendees who attended this business conference provides the organizer with a profile of the event service quality and suggestions for action.

Specifically, as shown in Figure 8.5, the conference has done well and needs to “keep up the good work” on program design, key speaker selection, destination choice and venue management. It is suggested to concentrate on follow-up services and the improvement or ease of the accessibility between hotels and the venue, even though free shuttle buses were provided during the conference. It may be a case of improving the frequency of service. What the organizer needs to fulfil as fundamental tasks are associated with attributes of accommodation, food, ICT support, and “escape” opportunities, which might be not at the centre of their needs and have a low importance rating, but the absence of these elements will lead to the failure of realizing the core purpose of attendance. The attributes that have created surprises for the event consumers are recreational opportunities at the destination and “escape” opportunities while attending the conference.

Therefore, the practices of integrating entertaining activities into the business event are supported by the attendees, which have met their unspoken or implicitly expressed needs. It also successfully softens the tone of business, as many Chinese interviewees have claimed that attending a business conference is more like the continuation of regular work, indeed even imposes an extra work burden. Consequently the practice of entertainization somehow offers them the opportunity to "immerse" themselves in the recreational and entertaining environment. Tretyakevich and Maggi (2012) also believe the importance of considering the leisure motivations of attendees and the specific profiles and features of the consumers when designing the conference and other programs.

Fifth, the quantitative analyses by MLR and PLS-SEM also possess significance for management practices. Following the results of MLR, business conference organizers in China or those targeting the Chinese market should focus on the factors of speakers, business benefits and conference organization as a key to influencing attendees' satisfaction. Meanwhile, because of the nature of the business conference, attendees are usually not price sensitive, and gender and previous experience also fail to distinguish different levels of satisfaction. This also reinforces a need to focus more on the content, speakers and some unspoken needs. To recap, the research results presented many implications for different stakeholders of business events. Besides the traditionally important factors, such as motivation and service quality, which have been confirmed in this research; other factors like entertainment opportunities, speakers, geographical identity are also proved to be significant discriminators or predictors for the attendees' satisfaction.

10.3.3 Limitations and future research suggestions

10.3.3.1 Limitations

First, the methodological limitations are associated with scale development, and stages of data collection. However due to the late approval from the conference organisers, the conventional testing of questionnaire through a pilot study was not possible. Therefore, this research had the scale purified through an expert panel of three tourism and event researchers. Though this way of purification has been practised (Geus et al., 2015) and the reliability and validity testing indicated the integrity of the scale, a pilot test would have been preferred to reduce research uncertainties such as the risk of omitting key questions.

The initial design was to collect quantitative data at three stages, that is, pre-conference, during conference and post conference; but the limitations of time and resources have resulted only in post conference data being obtained, but this is akin to most event research (Lee & Min, 2013; Tanford, Montgomery & Nelson, 2012; Whitfield & Webber, 2011; Wood & Kenyon, 2018). It has been proved that the data collected at the post-event stage are strong enough to have robust research results, but multi-stage data collection would provide more information and record the process of event experiences.

From the perspective of conceptual limitations, it is noted that applications of the Third Place Theory to events and conferences remains at an embryonic state. In addition, despite almost two decades of research, there remains a lack of definitional certainty over the nature of the business event experience. For example, Tung and Ritchie (2011, p. 1377) decoded the memorable experience from a process perspective and suggested four dimensions: affect, expectations, consequentiality and recollection. Yet Gentile et al. (2007) delineated the consumer experience from different sensory aspects without considering the chronological elements. Lewis and Chambers (2000) elucidated that consumer experience is the "total outcome" of their consumption, which focused on the results/benefits obtained, whereas Poulsson and Kale (2004) emphasized the "co-creation" of event experience. Given these differences, this study employed both qualitative and quantitative data to measure motivation, service quality and (levels of) satisfaction, seeking to reflect the business event experiences and address the process, as well as different opinions of attendees.

Finally, a too small sample of international attendees rendered a comparison between domestic and international visitors of little general value.

10.3.3.2 Future research suggestions

In respect of the research context, research findings, and the previous suggested directions, this section aims to propose the following suggestions for future research.

First, both Getz and Page (2016) and Ryan (2015) have pointed out that culture would generate impacts on event consumer experience. Therefore, future study of comparison of the behavioural and attitudinal differences between the domestic and international attendees at an international conference may be merited.

Second, conference design and operations have impacts on event experience at different stages (Getz & Page, 2016). The current research only collected post event data, and ideally further research is recommended by conducting the survey at different stages (Sarmento & Simões, 2018).

Third, future research should include more cases or events for study to improve generalizability. Many studies, including this one, have employed a single case for data collection and analysis, and although the significance of those studies are well-recognized, to "conduct more case studies and cross-case analysis" of event studies is highly encouraged (Getz & Page, 2016, p. 612).

It is noted that the case conference has integrated different types of events, especially sports and entertainment events, into business event, which makes it a typical hybrid event and a Third Place for the general public and professional attendees. However, both this phenomenon and the application of Third Place Theory in business event requires further investigation in the future, to check the reasons, the practices, the pitfalls, and the relationships between this practice and event consumers' satisfaction. The study of such hybrid events as well as the application of the Third Place Theory in event studies is the fourth proposed direction for future research.

Fifth, technologies are playing an increasingly crucial role in facilitating the event operating, organization, and the experience enhancement/improvement, which empowers the organizers with more efficient event management. This has been confirmed and advocated by previous studies (Getz & Page, 2016; Ryan, 2015). While future studies are advised to examine the functions of technologies in three aspects: 1) how technologies (e.g., Smart Management System, AI, VR etc.) empower the organizers for the event management and enhance the attendees' event experience; and 2) how technologies (e.g., eye tracking tech, pulse monitoring device, etc.) facilitate the testing and analysis of event experience; 3) how technologies (instant communication, online communication platforms) can assist the industry to combat unexpected risks or crisis, such as the outbreak of COVID-19 at the end of 2019, which have caused the lockdown of cities and the immobility of people and forced thousands of events to be cancelled.

Sixth, to further explore the collaborative mechanism of different event service suppliers. It has been discovered that the successful growth of the case conference is due in part to its favourable relationships with collaborators, suppliers, and local government. Therefore, it is necessary to further examine the forming, sustaining, and enhancing of the mechanism for adding such knowledge to event management. Meanwhile, event policies, which will contribute greatly to the forming of this mechanism and also deserves an extended exploration. In short, a wider system approach to event development and satisfaction may be required.

Seventh, sustainability has become a current topic. Therefore to produce, consume, and operate sustainably is being extensively urged by academic researchers and pro-environment practitioners (Getz & Page, 2016; Mair, 2012; Ryan, 2015; Sarmento & Simões, 2018; Yeoman, 2013). Thus, research about sustainable event practices, environmental impacts, and countermeasures of climate change mitigation are all part of any future research agenda.

Eighth, to investigate the corporate social responsibility (CSR) of business events, which is connected with sustainability issues, is also highly recommend for future inspection. However, as Porter and Kramer (2006) stated, "The essential test that should guide CSR is not whether a cause is worthy but whether it presents an opportunity to create shared value (CSV) – that is, a meaningful benefit for society that is also valuable to the business" (p. 6). Therefore, future event research is suggested to compare the CSR and CSV, and further explore the meaningfulness of practicing CSV for event organisers.

Ninth, the engagement of attendees, interactions among peers, and communications among different onsite parties are critical for the smooth operation, the creation of positive experience and finally the satisfactory and delight for consumers (Getz & Page, 2016; van Doorn et al., 2010). Thus, the types of engagement, process of engagement, the facilitation and foster of engagement (Sarmento & Simões, 2018, p. 13), and the environment of the engagement are in need of further explorations. It is also noted that Getz and Page (2016) suggest inquiring how volunteers and volunteering are influencing the engagement and event experience.

Last but not the least, the adoption of qualitative and mixed methods to investigate different types of events is thought to possess value. For her part, Mair (2012, p. 138138) noted in a review that most event research is conducted with quantitative methods, which lead to her proposal of considering "more work using qualitative methods". Similarly, Getz and Page (2016) also discovered that many qualitative methods are "under-utilized", and recommended hermeneutics, direct and participant observation, and experiential sampling for the future event studies. Moreover, the literature review also shows a dearth of usage of mixed methods, and it is suggested that future research should also seek to adopt this rigorous method when researching event phenomenon.

10.4 Concluding remarks

This study investigated the business event experience from the attendees' perspective by applying the mixed research methods. It identifies important reasons for event attendance and the criteria of a good conference by qualitative inquiry. The results of the qualitative study have informed the development of the measurement scale and the design of the survey questionnaire. The selected case conference also exemplified that the business events can be treated as a Third Place, and therefore it is practical to use this theory to guide the event design and operation as showed in the interactive model (Figure 10.1). Quantitative examination first described the sample and ranked attributes of their importance and performance; then measured the service quality through the IPA model. The interpretations of the results are modified for a better understanding and meaningful action. Then, multinomial logistic regression was conducted for testing the relations between performance factors and three different level of satisfactions. Finally, PLS-SEM analysis was adopted to examine the complex relationships among the five constructs: motivations, event service quality, and cognitive, affective and conative satisfaction.

In conclusion, the research bridges the research gaps of event experience (satisfaction), Chinese business event studies, the lack of application of interdisciplinary theory, the nature of business event, the adoption of mixed research methods, and the application of WarpPLS for the exploration of (1) the linear and non-linear relationships, and (2) the direct causal relationships and indirect (mediating/moderating) effects. The research is of significant implication on both the theoretical and managerial perspectives. Future research directions for event studies also have been recommended.

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Appendices

Appendix 5.1 Initial Item Pool for Scale Development

Destination (12 questions)	References
Destination is an attractive city	Oppermann and Chon (1997); Var, Cesario, and Mauser (1985); Jago and Deery (2005); Kim and Malek (2017); Yoo and Chon (2008);
Destination is safe	Lee and Back (2008); Jago and Deery (2005); Yoo and Chon (2008);
Destination is clean	Yoon et al. (2010); Yoo and Chon (2008);
City image matches the conference theme	Oppermann and Chon (1997); Interview (CHN9)
Good public transportation in the city (bus, taxi, subway)	Jago and Deery (2005); Mair and Thompson (2009); Severt et al. (2007); Oppermann (1996); Jago and Deery (2005);
Sufficient flights/trains to & from the city	Jago and Deery (2005); Mair and Thompson (2009); Severt et al. (2007); Oppermann (1996); Var, et al. (1985); Jago and Deery (2005); Kim and Malek (2017); Yoo and Chon (2008);
Transportation cost to this city is reasonable	Oppermann and Chon (1997); Zhang et al. (2007); Jago and Deery (2005); Kim and Malek (2017); Yoo and Chon (2008); Severt et al. (2007);
Transportation time to this city is reasonable	Zhang et al. (2007); Jago and Deery (2005); Kim and Malek (2017); Yoo and Chon (2008); Severt et al. (2007);
Residents are kind and hospitable	Jago and Deery (2005);
Visit headquarters (leading company)	Interview (CHN13)
Destination provides various recreation activities, attractions, and shopping sites	Severt et al. (2007); Rogers (2013); Lee and Min (2013a); Jago and Deery (2005); Jago and Deery (2005); Yoo and Chon (2008); Severt et al. (2007);
The destination has pleasant weather	Oppermann and Chon (1997);
Accommodations (6 questions)	
Sufficient and various hotels in the city	Dragićević et al. (2011);
Hotel facilities are in good condition	Weber and Ladkin (2003)
Hotel staff are hospitable	Weber and Ladkin (2003)
Hotel staff provide good service	Jago and Deery (2005);
Hotel room price is acceptable	Jago and Deery (2005); Lee and Fenich (2016)
Hotels are close to the conference venue	Crouch & Ritchie(1997); Lee and Fenich (2016)
Dinning Places (5 questions)	
Sufficient and various dinning places	Getz et al. (2001); Yoon et al. (2010); Wei and Huang (2013)
Restaurants provide good quality food	Jago and Deery (2005); Westwood et al. (2018); Yoon et al. (2010); Wei and Huang (2013)
Restaurant staff provide good service	Getz et al. (2001); Yoon et al. (2010); Wei and Huang (2013)
Restaurants are easy to access	Getz et al. (2001)
Food cost is reasonable	Jago and Deery (2005); Westwood et al. (2018); Yoon et al. (2010);
Conference MGMT (21 questions)	
Conference assists professional networking	Jago and Deery (2005); Mair and Thompson (2009); Severt et al. (2007);Lee and Min (2013a); Kim and Malek (2017); Westwood et al. (2018); Yoo and Chon (2008); van Riper et al. (2013);
Presenting my (team) product/program	Lee and Min (2013a); Westwood et al. (2018);
Exchange ideas and knowledge with others	Geus et al. (2015); Lee and Min (2013a); Westwood et al. (2018); Yoo and Chon (2008);
Catch up with friends and colleagues	Geus et al. (2015); Lee and Min (2013a); Yoo and Chon (2008); Severt et al. (2007);
Conference offers useful quality content	Geus et al. (2015); Severt et al. (2007); Kim and Malek (2017); Yoo and Chon (2008);
Conference has various sessions to choose	Lee and Min (2013a); Westwood et al. (2018);
The conference attracts high-profile attendees	Oppermann and Chon (1997); Zhang et al. (2007); van Riper et al. (2013);
The conference theme is related to my job/career	Lee and Min (2013a); Kim and Malek (2017); Yoo and Chon (2008);
A conference run smoothly, and different sessions connect seamlessly	Kim and Malek (2017); Mitchell et al. (2016); Yoon et al. (2010);
Opportunity to meet and listen to the industry leaders	Lee and Min (2013a); Kim and Malek (2017); Mitchell et al. (2016); Yoon et al. (2010); Yoo and Chon (2008);
Opportunity to keep up with industry trend (new products/technology, future changes)	Mair and Thompson (2009); Lee and Min (2013a); Kim and Malek (2017); Westwood et al. (2018); Severt et al. (2007);
Opportunity to attend social functions (e.g., concert, night run)	Jago and Deery (2005); Mair and Thompson (2009); Severt et al. (2007); Mitchell et al. (2016)
Opportunity to look for new business partners	Mair and Thompson (2009); Lee and Min (2013a); Mitchell et al. (2016); Yoo and Chon (2008); Severt et al. (2007); van Riper et al. (2013);
Opportunity to learn new knowledge	Mair and Thompson (2009); Severt et al. (2007);

Opportunity to explore job opportunities	Mair and Thompson (2009); Severt et al. (2007);
Opportunity to release myself from my regular work (as a rest or vocation)	Geus et al. (2015); Mitchell et al. (2016); Westwood et al. (2018); Severt et al. (2007);
Conference is held in good season	Kaplanidou and Vogt (2010);
If food provided by organizer, variety, quality and proper price are important.	Interview (CHN9; CHN13; nCHN28)
Weather is pleasant during the conference	Oppermann and Chon (1997); Jung and Tanford (2017)
Conference has prompt following-up	Mitchell et al. (2016);
Attendees and organizer communicate well	Mitchell et al. (2016); Yoon et al. (2010);
Speakers (9 questions)	
Speaker has great achievements in the area	Interview (CHN8; CHN10; CHN13)
Speaker has great reputation in the industry domestically or internationally	Yoo and Chon (2008); Interview (CHN21)
Speaker has great presentation skills (interaction, communication, eloquent)	Mitchell et al. (2016); Interview (CHN13)
Speaker can start and finish on time	Interview (CHN13; nCHN26)
Speaker is nice and patient to audience	Mitchell et al. (2016);
Speaker can focus on the speech topic	Interview (CHN4, ; CHN13; nCHN26)
Posted speakers show up accordingly	Interview (CHN15)
Speakers deliver high quality speeches	Geus et al. (2015); Mitchell et al. (2016);
Speakers are reachable after conference	Interview (CHN7)
Conference Venue (9 questions)	
Conference venue provides good facilities which function well	Getz et al. (2001); Rogers (2013); Robinson and Callan (2005); Wu and Weber (2005); Kim and Malek (2017);
Conference venue apply innovative facilities designed for this conference	Jin et al. (2013); Wu and Weber (2005); Abou-Shouk et al. (2018);
The venue is easy to access and close to transportation centres (Airport/Station)	Jin et al. (2013); Rosenbaum and Wong (2009); (Lee & Kim, 2008)
The venue is clean and neatly taken care	Getz et al. (2001);
Venue apply sustainable measures	Mair and Jago (2010); Boo and Park (2013); Mair and Laing (2013);
The venue has good layout	Jin et al. (2013);
The venue has clear and effective signage	Getz et al. (2001); Rosenbaum and Wong (2009); Yoon et al. (2010);
The venue design is unique and impressive	Wu and Weber (2005); Yoon, Lim, and Park (2012);
The venue settings and colour match well with the conference theme	Rosenbaum and Wong (2009); Wu and Weber (2005); Abou-Shouk et al. (2018); Mitchell et al. (2016); Duffy and Mair (2018);
ICT Application (4 Questions)	
App/website is applied in the conference	Lee, Love, and Han (2008); Weber and Ladkin (2003)
App/website is user friendly (easy to access and paly with)	Hudson and Hudson (2013)
App/website provides sufficient conference info	Interview (CHN21)
WIFI is good and stable in the conference	Jin et al. (2013); Weber and Ladkin (2003)
Engagement (3 Questions)	
I engage with others actively	Geus et al. (2015);
I am willing to engage with others	Geus et al. (2015);
The organizer provides interaction activities	Zhang et al. (2007);
Satisfaction (10 questions)	
I believe this conference offered value for money.	Kim and Malek (2017); Yoon et al. (2010); Severt et al. (2007);
I was satisfied with this conference.	Kim and Malek (2017); Yoon et al. (2010);
I increased my understanding of knowledge, concepts, and trends.	Geus et al. (2015); Yoo and Chon (2008);
Attending this conference was pleasurable.	Kim and Malek (2017); Mitchell et al. (2016); Yoon et al. (2010);
Attending the conference increased the sense of belonging.	Ryu and Lee (2013); van Riper et al. (2013);Duffy and Mair (2018);
Attending the conference expanded my business networks.	Kim and Malek (2017); Mitchell et al. (2016); van Riper et al. (2013);
I will share my conference experience on my social media.	Geus et al. (2015); Mitchell et al. (2016); Yoon et al. (2010);
I will employ the learned skills/knowledge in my jobs/life.	Kim and Malek (2017); Yoon et al. (2010);
I will encourage colleagues and others to attend this conference.	Kim and Malek (2017); Mitchell et al. (2016); Yoon et al. (2010);
I am willing to attend this conference next time.	Mitchell et al. (2016); Mitchell et al. (2016); Westwood et al. (2018); Yoon et al. (2010);

Appendix 5.2 Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate why you choose to attend this conference in Hangzhou and how satisfied you are with it. This will enable a PhD student to complete his doctoral thesis. You are encouraged to answer all the questions. All answers will be confidential and data will only be reported in aggregate. It will take about 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

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Should you have any questions about the questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact Guiqiang (Freeman) Qiao on: gq7@students.waikato.ac.nz.

Please indicate how important to <u>YOU</u> are each of the following attributes when attending any conference. Using the following scale: 1=Extremely Unimportant TO 7=Extremely Important	
1.1 The attractiveness of the conference host city	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.2 There are sufficient flights/trains to & from the conference city	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.3 The conference should assist the attendees in professional networking	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.4 There should be high quality content offered by a conference	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.5 The conference should offer opportunities to look for a new business partner	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.6 The conference offers good social programmes (e.g. gala dinner, concert)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.7 A fast and stable Wi-fi connection is made available to conference attendees	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.8 Key speakers have a high reputation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.9 The conference venue has quality facilities	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.10 The conference allows attendees to catch up with friends and colleagues	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.11 Key speakers possess good presentation skills	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.12 The conference enables attendees to keep up with industry trend	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.13 Key speaker(s) has interesting things to say	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.14 The staff of the hotel I stay in are responsive to my requests	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.15 The hotel I stay in gives me value for money	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.16 Restaurant staff are responsive in the service they provide	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.17 The hotel I stay in has easy access to the conference venue	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.18 The meals are value for money	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.19 The restaurants provide good quality food	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.20 The destination provides various activities for recreation, visit and shopping	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.21 The conference offers attendees an opportunity to 'escape' their regular work	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.22 The conference venue has clear and effective signage	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.23 The venue is easy to access and close to transport centres (Airport/Station)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.24 That an user-friendly conference app/website is available to attendees	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.25 The organizers have prompt after-conference following-ups.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1.26 Other important items (Please specify)	

Thinking about THIS conference, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following question. Using the following scale: 1=Extremely Disagree TO 7=Extremely Agree; 0=Do not know	
2.1 I felt Hangzhou is an attractive city	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.2 I felt there were sufficient flights/trains to & from the city	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.3 I was pleased with the conference opportunities for professional networking	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.4 I thought the conference had high quality content	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.5 I felt there were opportunities to find new business partners	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.6 I was happy with the social functions (e.g. gala dinner, concert, night run).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.7 I thought Wi-Fi was fast and stable during the conference	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.8 I thought the speakers have great reputation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.9 The conference venue provided quality facilities	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.10 I was pleased to be able to catch up with friends and colleagues	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.11 I felt the key speaker(s) had good presentation skills	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.12 I felt I could better keep up with industry trends though this conference	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.13 I thought the key speaker(s) had interesting things to say	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.14 The staff of the hotel I stayed in were responsive to my requests	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.15 I felt the hotel I stayed in gave me value for money	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.16 I thought the restaurant staff were responsive in the service they provided	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.17 The hotel I stayed in had easy access to the conference venue	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.18 I thought the meals were value for money	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.19 I thought the restaurants offered good quality food	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.20 Hangzhou provided various activities for recreation, visit and shopping	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.21 The conference offered me an opportunity to 'escape' my regular work	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.22 The conference venue had clear and effective signage	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.23 The conference venue was easy to access and close to transport centres	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.24 That an user-friendly conference app/website was available to attendees	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.25 I felt the organizers had prompt after-conference following-ups.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
2.26 Other items you are satisfied with (Please specify):	

Previous Conference Experience

Fill the blanks or tick the answers according to your own situation.

3.1 Including this one, how many business conferences have you attended in the last three years? ________

3.2 Including this one, how many business conferences have you attended in the last three years? ________

3.3 What was the largest number of attendees at the largest conference you attended? ______________

3.4 Including this time, have many times have you attended this conference? _________Times

3.5 How long you plan to stay in Hangzhou? __________ Days

3.6 What type of ticket did you buy for this conference this year?

15 US$ ☐ 30 US$ ☐ 420 US$ ☐ Other ______________________________

3.7 Who sponsored you to attend the conference?

Company ☐ Yourself ☐ Organizer ☐ Other ______________________________

3.8 With whom did you come to attend the conference?

Colleagues ☐ Friends ☐ Family ☐ Other ______________________________

3.9 What programmes are you planning to attend?

Exhibitions ☐ Seminars ☐ Concerts ☐ Night Run ☐ Other ________________

Was this conference of Value to you – Please indicate the level of agreement with each of the following statements. Using the following scale: 1= strongly disagree TO 7= strongly agree; 0=Do not know)	
4.1 I believe this conference offered value for money.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
4.2 I was satisfied with this conference.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
4.3 I increased my understanding of knowledge, concepts, and trends.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
4.4 Attending this conference was pleasurable.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
4.5 Attending the conference increased the sense of belonging.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
4.6 Conference has expanded my business networks	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
4.7 I will share my conference experience on my social media.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
4.8 I will employ the learned skills/knowledge in my jobs/life.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
4.9 I will encourage colleagues and others to attend this conference.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
4.10 I am willing to attend this conference next time.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0
4.11 Others benefits you perceived (please specify):	

Please give us some information about yourself						
5.1 What is your gender? A: Male B: Female						
5.2 What is your age group? A: 20-29 B: 30-39 C: 40-49 D: 50-59 E: Over 60						
5.3 What is your qualification level? A: High School B: University degree or equivalent C: Master D: Doctoral E: Others						
5.4 Could you please indicate the approximate position of your seniority in your organisation by the scale?						
1=Elementary Level ; 4=Middle Level ; 7=Top Level						
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
5.5 For how many years (approximately) have you been working in total? ______________________						
5.6 What country/city do you work in? (e.g. China/Shanghai) ___________ / __________						
5.7 Please indicate the overall expenses (from you & organization) to attend this conference US$_______						
5.8 Please use three words describe your impression of this conference:						
5.8 Please indicate what changes would you make to improve Hangzhou Yunqi Computing Conference?						

Appendix 6.1 Key Pairings

Concurrence Table Indicates Key Pairings within the Text

NO	TOPIC	KEYWORDS	COHERENCE	FREQ
14	SPEECH CONTENT	SPEECH; CONTENT; TOPIC; PRESENTATION; INFORMATION; SPEAKERS; TALK;	0.445	108
11	COFFEE TEA	COFFEE; TEA; FOOD; PROVIDE; PART; PARKING;	0.425	62
17	YEAR PLACE	YEAR; PLACE; FEELING; COMPANY; SHARE; FACT; FEEL; LARGE;	0.407	65
12	TIME LONG	TIME; LONG; ATTENDEES; CUSTOMERS; LARGE; ATTEND; CONFERENCE; ATTEND THE CONFERENCE;	0.391	138
15	INDUSTRY LEVEL	INDUSTRY; LEVEL; SPECIAL; BUSINESS; FUTURE; LONG; THINGS;	0.390	53
5	STYLE AUDIENCE	STYLE; AUDIENCE; LISTEN; BIT; HOPE; FULL; AFTER;	0.390	47
8	GUESTS FUTURE	GUESTS; FUTURE; POINT; TECHNOLOGY; THING; HIGH; SHARE;	0.390	41
18	SESSIONS TECHNOLOGY	SESSIONS; TECHNOLOGY; ORGANIZING; THINGS; CONFERENCES; EXPERIENCE; HEAR; LISTEN;	0.389	55
3	CONFERENCE ROOM	EASY; KIND; ROOM; FEELING; MAKE; CONFERENCE ROOM;	0.376	51
13	PRETTY GOOD	PRETTY; GOOD; SPEAK; CUSTOMERS; SESSION; BUSINESS; SERVICE; PRETTY GOOD;	0.370	108
4	STAR HOTEL	ENVIRONMENT; STAR; ACCOMMODATION; NICE; GREAT; HOTEL; STAR HOTEL;	0.368	65
1	FACILITIES HOTEL	FACILITIES; HOTEL; HIGH; SERVICE; BEIJING;	0.365	76
6	KEYNOTE SPEAKERS	KEYNOTE; HEAR; SESSION; IMPORTANT; FULL; SPEAKERS; FEELING; KEYNOTE SPEAKERS;	0.362	79
10	CITY PROBLEM	CITY; PROBLEM; AREA; COMMUNICATION; BASICALLY; PRESENTATION;	0.361	38
2	LUNCH DINNER	LUNCH; DINNER; EAT; PROVIDE;	0.359	43
9	HOTELS CENTRE	HOTELS; CENTRE; BIG; CONVENIENT; BIT;	0.357	54
16	POINTS FEEL	POINTS; FEEL; VENUE; BAD; MAKE; AREA;	0.355	78
7	PERSON GREAT	PERSON; GREAT; EXPERIENCE; ORGANIZER; SESSIONS;	0.350	33
19	HALF DAY	HALF; DAY; AFTER; CATERING;	0.347	40

Appendix 7.1 Generating Cities and Provinces of Domestic Respondents

Rank	Province	Cities	Count	Percentage (%)
1	**Zhejiang**			
		Hangzhou	380	36.05
		Jiaxing	11	1.04
		Ningbo	11	1.04
		Wenzhou	5	0.47
		Zhoushan	5	0.47
		Taizhou	2	0.19
		Yiwu	2	0.19
		Anji	1	0.09
		Huzhou	1	0.09
		Jinhua	1	0.09
		Lin'an	1	0.09
		Shaoxing	1	0.09
Sum		**12**	**421**	**39.9**
2	**Shanghai**		**175**	**16.6**
3	**Beijing**		**131**	**12.43**
4	**Guangdong**			
		Guangzhou	28	2.66
		Shenzhen	27	2.56
		Foshan	1	0.09
		Huizhou	1	0.09
Sum		**4**	**57**	**5.4**
5	**Jiangsu**			
		Nanjing	34	3.23
		Suzhou	11	1.04
		Wuxi	6	0.57
		Kunshan	2	0.19
		Nantong	1	0.09
		Changzhou	1	0.09
		Yancheng	1	0.09
Sum		**7**	**56**	**5.3**
6	**Shandong**			
		Ji’nan	16	1.52
		Qingdao	4	0.38
		Yantai	3	0.28
		Zibo	1	0.09
Sum		**4**	**24**	**2.27**
7	**Hubei**			
		Wuhan	18	1.71
		Xiantao	1	0.09
Sum		**2**	**19**	**1.8**
8	**He’nan**			
		Zhengzhou	14	1.33
		Luoyang	1	0.09
		Nanyang	1	0.09
		Jiaozuo	1	0.09
Sum		**4**	**17**	**1.6**
9	**Fujian**			
		Xiamen	7	0.66
		Fuzhou	5	0.47
		Quanzhou	4	0.38
Sum		**3**	**16**	**1.51**
10	**Anhui**	**Hefei**	**14**	**1.33**

11	**Shaanxi**			
		Xi'an	12	1.14
		Yan'an	1	0.09
Sum		**2**	**13**	**1.23**
12	**Hebei**			
		Shijiazhuang	4	0.38
		Cangzhou	2	0.19
		Handan	3	0.28
		Qinhuangdao	2	0.19
		Chengde	1	0.09
		Xingtai	1	0.09
Sum		**6**	**13**	**1.22**
13	**Hong Kong**		**12**	**1.14**
14	**Sichuan**	**Chengdu**	**10**	**0.95**
15	**Tianjin**		**9**	**0.85**
16	**Liaoning**			
		Shenyang	6	0.57
		Dalian	3	0.28
Sum		**2**	**9**	**0.85**
17	**Heilongjiang**	**Harbin**	**8**	**0.76**
18	**Jiangxi**			
		Nanchang	7	0.66
		Jiujiang	1	0.09
Sum		**2**	**8**	**0.75**
19	**Yun'nan**	**Kunming**	**7**	**0.66**
20	**Taiwan**	**Taipei**	**6**	**0.57**
21	**Hu'nan**	**Changsha**	**6**	**0.57**
22	**Chongqing**	**Chongqing**	**5**	**0.47**
23	**Shanxi**			
		Taiyuan	3	0.28
		Changzhi	2	0.19
Sum		**2**	**5**	**0.47**
24	**Guizhou**	**Guiyang**	**4**	**0.38**
25	**Gansu**	**Lanzhou**	**3**	**0.28**
26	**Xinjiang**	**Urumqi**	**3**	**0.28**
27	**Neimenggu**			
		Hohhot	1	0.09
		Wuhai	1	0.09
Sum		**2**	**2**	**0.18**
28	**Guangxi**	**Liuzhou**	**1**	**0.09**
Total	**28**	**67**		**1.00**

Appendix 7.2 Crosstabulation Analysis

Gender * Frequency of Attendance Crosstabulation (Chi-Square:4.323, P=0.229)

			Frequency of Attendance				
			Infrequent	Low Frequency	Medium Frequency	High Frequency	Total
Gender	Male	Count	451	149	34	3	637
		Expected Count	456.5	149.2	28.4	2.9	637.0
		% within gender	70.8%	23.4%	5.3%	0.5%	100.0%
		% within Frequency	71.9%	72.7%	87.2%	75.0%	72.8%
	Female	Count	176	56	5	1	238
		Expected Count	170.5	55.8	10.6	1.1	238.0
		% within gender	73.9%	23.5%	2.1%	0.4%	100.0%
		% within Frequency	28.1%	27.3%	12.8%	25.0%	27.2%
	Total	Count	627	205	39	4	875
		Expected Count	627.0	205.0	39.0	4.0	875.0
		% within gender	71.7%	23.4%	4.5%	0.5%	100.0%
		% within Frequency	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Level of Position * Qualification level Crosstabulation

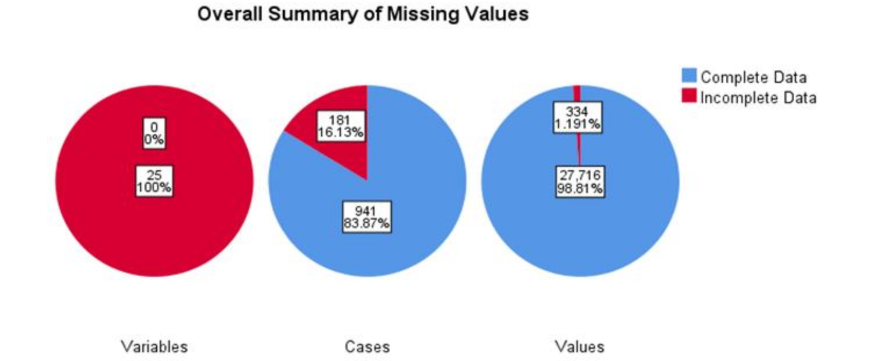
			5.3 What is your qualification level?					
			Doctoral	Master	Uni Degree	High School	Others	Total
Level of Position	Low Level	Count	2	20	128	3	1	154
		% w/n Level of Position	1.3%	13.0%	83.1%	1.9%	0.6%	100.0%
		% w/n qualification level	6.5%	8.6%	16.3%	16.7%	10.0%	14.3%
		% of Total	0.2%	1.9%	11.9%	0.3%	0.1%	14.3%
	Medium Level	Count	17	144	497	8	7	673
		% w/n Level of Position	2.5%	21.4%	73.8%	1.2%	1.0%	100.0%
		% w/n qualification level	54.8%	61.8%	63.2%	44.4%	70.0%	62.4%
		% of Total	1.6%	13.4%	46.1%	0.7%	0.6%	62.4%
	High Level	Count	12	69	161	7	2	251
		% w/n Level of Position	4.8%	27.5%	64.1%	2.8%	0.8%	100.0%
		% w/n qualification level	38.7%	29.6%	20.5%	38.9%	20.0%	23.3%
		% of Total	1.1%	6.4%	14.9%	0.6%	0.2%	23.3%
Total		Count	31	233	786	18	10	1078
		% w/n Level of Position	2.9%	21.6%	72.9%	1.7%	0.9%	100.0%
		% w/n qualification level	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	2.9%	21.6%	72.9%	1.7%	0.9%	100.0%

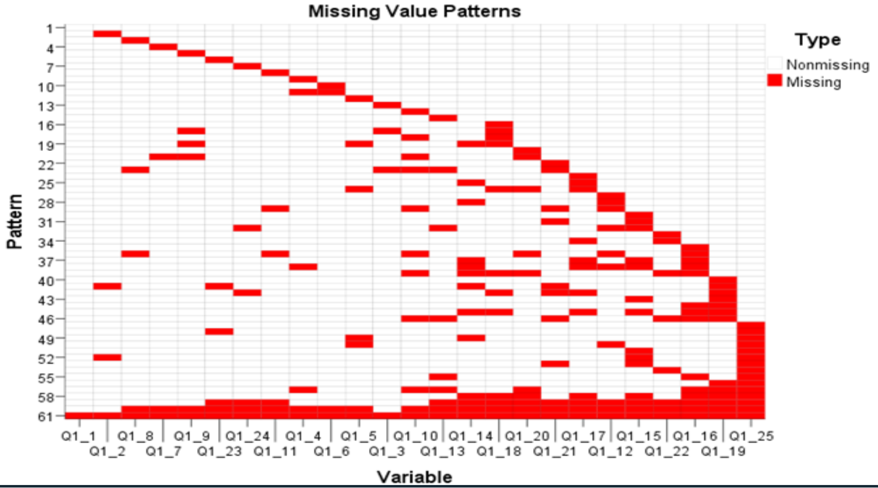
Age group * Who sponsored Crosstabulation

			Who sponsored your attendance				
			Company	Personal	Organizer	Others	Total
Age group	50-59	Count	7	0	0	0	7
		% w/n age group	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% w/n who sponsored	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
		% of Total	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
	40-49	Count	59	12	9	4	84
		% w/n age group	70.2%	14.3%	10.7%	4.8%	100.0%
		% w/n Who sponsored	8.3%	4.5%	12.2%	14.8%	7.8%
		% of Total	5.5%	1.1%	0.8%	0.4%	7.8%
	30-39	Count	281	82	30	6	399
		% w/n age group	70.4%	20.6%	7.5%	1.5%	100.0%
		% w/n Who sponsored	39.4%	30.7%	40.5%	22.2%	36.9%
		% of Total	26.0%	7.6%	2.8%	0.6%	36.9%
	20-29	Count	367	173	35	17	592
		% w/n age group	62.0%	29.2%	5.9%	2.9%	100.0%
		% w/n Who sponsored	51.4%	64.8%	47.3%	63.0%	54.7%
		% of Total	33.9%	16.0%	3.2%	1.6%	54.7%
Total		Count	714	267	74	27	1082
		% w/n age group	66.0%	24.7%	6.8%	2.5%	100.0%
		% w/n Who sponsored	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	66.0%	24.7%	6.8%	2.5%	100.0%

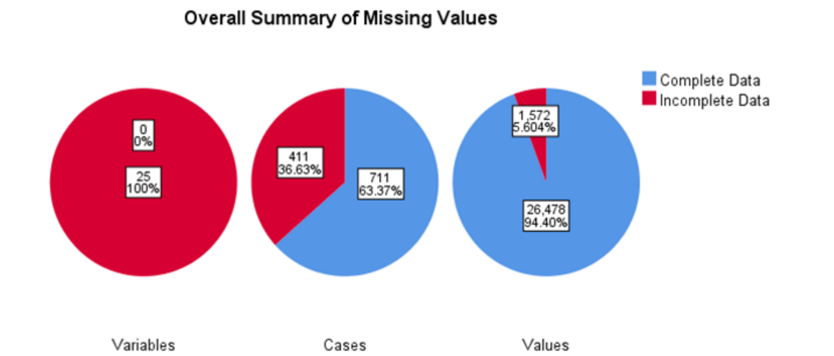
Appendix 7.3 Missing Data Analysis

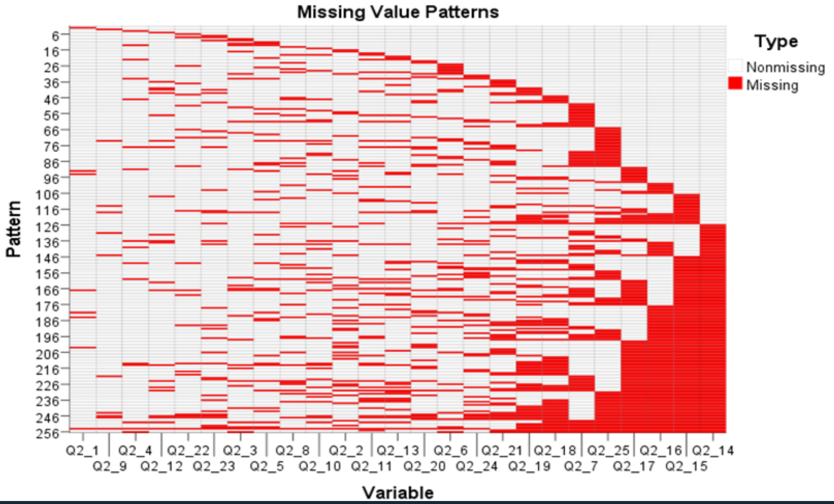
Scale 1 Missing data analysis



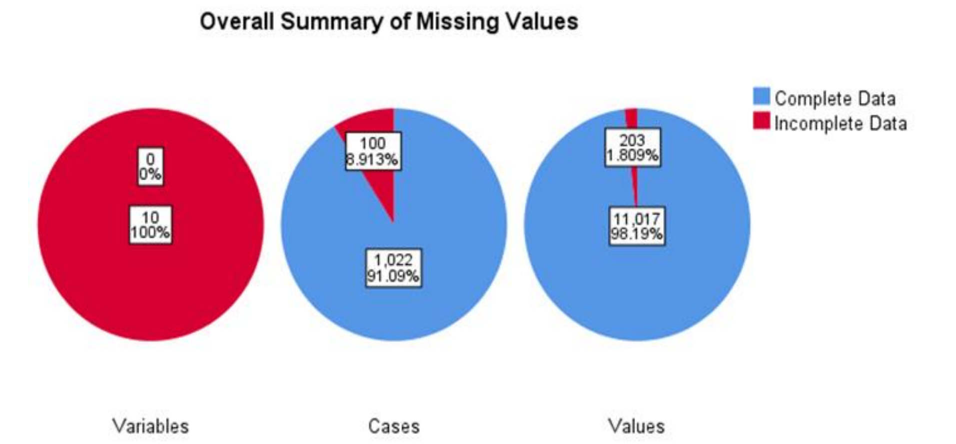


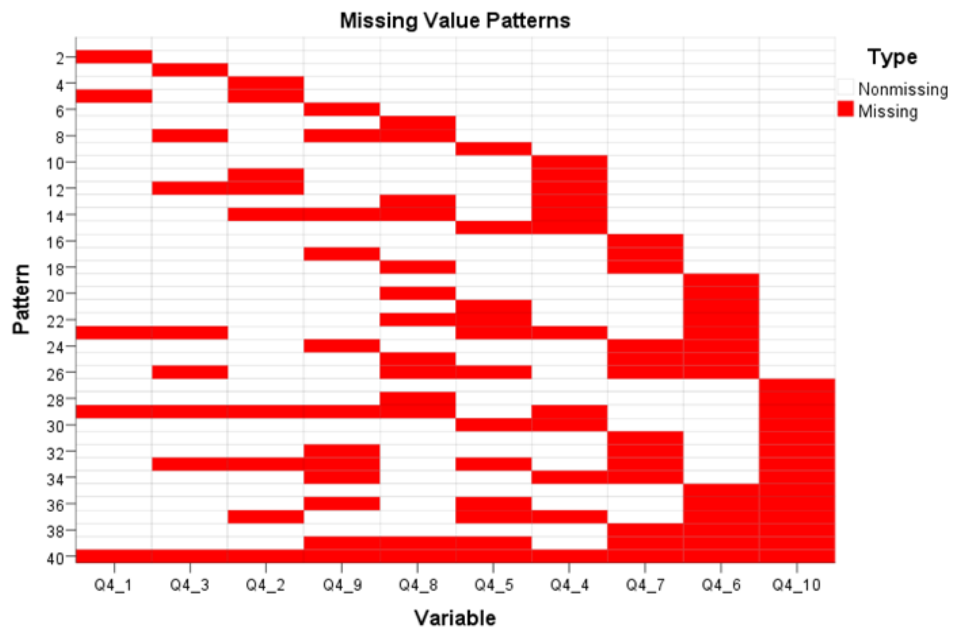
Scale 2- Missing data analysis





Scale 3- Missing data analysis





Appendix 7.4 Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality

Scale 1 Data Distribution Normality Test

	K-S[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Stat.	df	Sig.	Stat.	df	Sig.
1.1 The attractiveness of the conference host city	.222	1121	.000	.816	1121	.000
1.2 There are sufficient flights/trains to & from the conference city	.212	1117	.000	.845	1117	.000
1.3 The conference should assist the attendees in professional networking	.223	1109	.000	.824	1109	.000
1.4 There should be high quality content offered by a conference	.297	1112	.000	.716	1112	.000
1.5 The conference should offer opportunities to look for a new business partner	.221	1111	.000	.821	1111	.000
1.6 The conference offers good social program	.170	1112	.000	.915	1112	.000
1.7 A fast and stable Wi-Fi connection is made available to conference attendees	.193	1116	.000	.852	1116	.000
1.8 Key speakers have a high reputation	.239	1117	.000	.781	1117	.000
1.9 The conference venue has quality facilities	.230	1115	.000	.822	1115	.000
1.10 The conference allows attendees to catch up with friends and colleagues	.183	1109	.000	.921	1109	.000
1.11 Key speakers possess good presentation skills	.229	1113	.000	.851	1113	.000
1.12 The conference enables attendees to keep up with industry trend	.267	1106	.000	.724	1106	.000
1.13 Key speaker(s) has interesting things to say	.225	1109	.000	.809	1109	.000
1.14 The staff of the hotel I stay in are responsive to my requests	.178	1109	.000	.906	1109	.000
1.15 The hotel I stay in gives me value for money	.171	1105	.000	.905	1105	.000
1.16 Restaurant staff are responsive in the service they provide	.176	1102	.000	.897	1102	.000
1.17 The hotel I stay in has easy access to the conference venue	.223	1108	.000	.840	1108	.000
1.18 The meals are value for money	.175	1109	.000	.901	1109	.000
1.19 The restaurants provide good quality food	.179	1100	.000	.897	1100	.000
1.20 The destination provides various activities for recreation, visit and shopping	.174	1109	.000	.928	1109	.000
1.21 The conference offers attendees an opportunity to escape their regular work	.178	1109	.000	.924	1109	.000
1.22 The conference venue has clear and effective signage	.225	1105	.000	.809	1105	.000
1.23 The venue is easy to access and close to transport centres	.197	1115	.000	.861	1115	.000
1.24 That a user-friendly conference app/website is available to attendees	.217	1115	.000	.867	1115	.000
1.25 The organizers have prompt after-conference following-ups.	.211	1063	.000	.848	1063	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction; K-S=Kolmogorov-Smirnov.

Scale 2 Data Distribution Normality Test

	K-S[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Stat.	df	Sig.	Stat.	df	Sig.
2.1 I felt Hangzhou is an attractive city	.280	1114	.000	.729	1114	.000
2.2 I felt there were sufficient flights/trains to & from the city	.236	1077	.000	.822	1077	.000
2.3 I was pleased with the conference opportunities for professional networking	.210	1087	.000	.876	1087	.000
2.4 I thought the conference had high quality content	.223	1100	.000	.860	1100	.000
2.5 I felt there're opportunities to find new business partners	.191	1082	.000	.900	1082	.000
2.6 I was happy with the social functions.	.174	1073	.000	.912	1073	.000
2.7 I thought Wi-Fi was fast and stable during the conference	.192	1026	.000	.894	1026	.000
2.8 I thought the speakers have great reputation	.241	1079	.000	.816	1079	.000
2.9 The conference venue provided quality facilities	.240	1107	.000	.860	1107	.000
2.10 I was pleased to catch up with friends and colleagues	.185	1079	.000	.920	1079	.000
2.11 I felt the key speaker(s) had good presentation skills	.232	1077	.000	.873	1077	.000
2.12 I felt I could better keep up with industry trends though this conference	.253	1100	.000	.814	1100	.000
2.13 I thought the key speaker(s) had interesting things to say	.222	1077	.000	.876	1077	.000
2.14 The staff of the hotel were responsive to my requests	.179	962	.000	.917	962	.000
2.15 I felt the hotel I stayed in gave me value for money	.180	966	.000	.919	966	.000
2.16 I thought the restaurant staff were responsive in the service they provided	.180	998	.000	.918	998	.000
2.17 The hotel had easy access to the conference venue	.162	1002	.000	.921	1002	.000
2.18 I thought the meals were value for money	.179	1036	.000	.923	1036	.000
2.19 I thought the restaurants offered good quality food	.180	1043	.000	.923	1043	.000
2.20 Hangzhou provided various activities for recreation, visit and shopping	.240	1075	.000	.855	1075	.000
2.21 The conference offered me an opportunity to 'escape' my regular work	.200	1058	.000	.890	1058	.000
2.22 The conference venue had clear and effective signage	.244	1097	.000	.851	1097	.000
2.23 The conference venue was easy to access and close to transport centres	.158	1090	.000	.926	1090	.000
2.24 That a user-friendly conference app/website was available to attendees	.162	1070	.000	.919	1070	.000
2.25 I felt the organizers had prompt after-conference following-ups.	.188	1003	.000	.903	1003	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Scale 3 Data Distribution Normality Test	K-S[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Stat.	df	Sig.	Stat.	df	Sig.
4.1 I believe this conference offered value for money.	.228	1113	.000	.813	1113	.000
4.2 I was satisfied with this conference.	.223	1107	.000	.871	1107	.000
4.3 I increased my understanding of knowledge, concepts &trends.	.244	1111	.000	.832	1111	.000
4.4 Attending this conference was pleasurable.	.195	1102	.000	.892	1102	.000
4.5 Attending the conference increased the sense of belonging.	.205	1105	.000	.891	1105	.000
4.6 Conference has expanded my business networks	.165	1090	.000	.920	1090	.000
4.7 I will share my conference experience on my social media.	.215	1095	.000	.847	1095	.000
4.8 I will employ the learned skills/knowledge in my jobs/life.	.240	1106	.000	.832	1106	.000
4.9 I will encourage colleagues to attend the conference.	.244	1107	.000	.826	1107	.000
4.10 I am willing to attend this conference next time.	.253	1081	.000	.785	1081	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Appendix 9.1 EFA Analysis

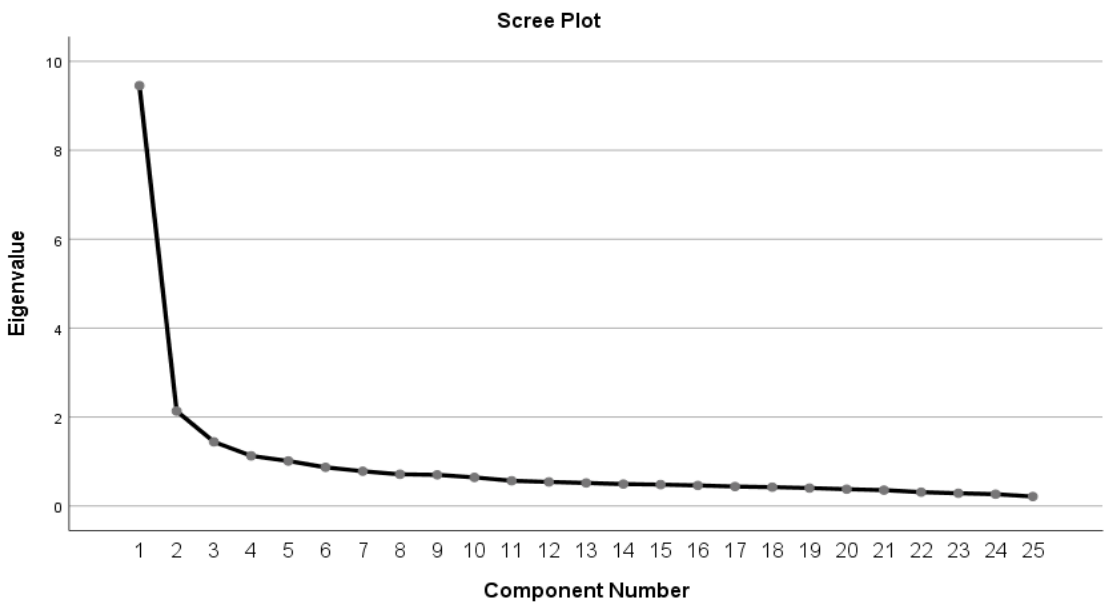
EFA data of Scale 1

Total Variance Explained

Comp.	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	**9.453**	37.813	37.813	9.453	37.813	37.813	4.050	16.200	16.200
2	**2.135**	8.538	46.351	2.135	8.538	46.351	3.204	12.814	29.014
3	**1.442**	5.767	52.118	1.442	5.767	52.118	2.736	10.944	39.958
4	**1.128**	4.511	56.629	1.128	4.511	56.629	2.729	10.917	50.874
5	**1.011**	4.044	60.672	1.011	4.044	60.672	2.449	9.798	**60.672**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Scree Plot of Eigenvalues



Item Communalities

Communalities	Initial	Extraction
1.1 The attractiveness of the conference host city	1.000	.457
1.2 There are sufficient flights/trains to & from the conference city	1.000	.470
1.3 The conference should assist the attendees in professional networking	1.000	.683
1.4 There should be high quality content offered by a conference	1.000	.672
1.5 The conference should offer opportunities to look for a new business partner	1.000	.573
1.6 The conference offers good social programmes (e.g. gala dinner, concert, etc.)	1.000	.568
1.7 A fast and stable Wi-Fi connection is made available to conference attendees	**1.000**	**.362**
1.8 Key speakers have a high reputation	1.000	.538
1.9 The conference venue has quality facilities	1.000	.589
1.10 The conference allows attendees to catch up with friends and colleagues	1.000	.539
1.11 Key speakers possess good presentation skills	1.000	.644
1.12 The conference enables attendees to keep up with industry trend	1.000	.655
1.13 Key speaker(s) has interesting things to say	1.000	.660
1.14 The staff of the hotel I stay in are responsive to my requests	1.000	.646
1.15 The hotel I stay in gives me value for money	1.000	.737
1.16 Restaurant staff are responsive in the service they provide	1.000	.748
1.17 The hotel I stay in has easy access to the conference venue	1.000	.719
1.18 The meals are value for money	1.000	.707
1.19 The restaurants provide good quality food	1.000	.704
1.20 The destination provides various activities for recreation, visit and shopping	1.000	.678
1.21 The conference offers attendees an opportunity to 'escape' their regular work	1.000	.515
1.22 The conference venue has clear and effective signage	1.000	.643
1.23 The venue is easy to access and close to transport centres (Airport/Station)	1.000	.591
1.24 That a user-friendly conference app/website is available to attendees	1.000	.671
1.25 The organizers have prompt after-conference following-ups.	1.000	.670

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
1.15 The hotel I stay in gives me value for money	.766				
1.16 Restaurant staff are responsive in the service they provide	.756				
1.18 The meals are value for money	.728				
1.17 The hotel I stay in has easy access to the conference venue	.727				
1.19 The restaurants provide good quality food	.689				
1.14 The staff of the hotel I stay in are responsive to my requests	.652				
1.13 Key speaker(s) has interesting things to say		.732			
1.12 The conference enables attendees to keep up with industry trend		.727			
1.11 Key speakers possess good presentation skills		.705			
1.8 Key speakers have a high reputation		.628			
1.9 The conference venue has quality facilities		.604			
1.3 The conference should assist the attendees in professional networking			.789		
1.5 The conference should offer opportunities to look for a new business partner			.675		
1.4 There should be high quality content offered by a conference		.401	.630		
1.2 There are sufficient flights/trains to & from the conference city			.559		
1.1 The attractiveness of the conference host city			.452		
1.20 The destination provides various activities for recreation, visit & shopping				.744	
1.10 The conference allows attendees to catch up with friends and colleagues				.668	
1.21 The conference offers attendees an opportunity to 'escape' their regular work				.639	
1.6 The conference offers good social programs (e.g. gala dinner, concert)				.589	
1.7 A fast and stable Wi-Fi connection is made available to attendees					
1.24 That a user-friendly conference app/website is available to attendees					.725
1.25 The organizers have prompt after-conference following-ups.					.683
1.22 The conference venue has clear and effective signage					.618
1.23 The venue is easy to access and close to transport centres (Airport/Station)					.595

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

EFA data of Scale 2

Eigenvalues and Explanation of Original Variances with four factors

Total Variance Explained

Comp.	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Sq. Loadings			Rotation Sums of Sq. Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	**10.150**	40.600	40.600	10.150	40.600	40.600	4.089	16.357	16.357
2	**2.192**	8.770	49.370	2.192	8.770	49.370	4.081	16.325	32.682
3	**1.141**	4.565	53.935	1.141	4.565	53.935	3.330	13.320	46.003
4	**1.090**	4.361	58.295	1.090	4.361	58.295	3.073	12.293	**58.295**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Eigenvalues and Explanation of Original Variances with five factors

Total Variance Explained

Comp.	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Sq. Loadings			Rotation Sums of Sq. Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	**10.150**	40.600	40.600	10.150	40.600	40.600	4.165	16.658	16.658
2	**2.192**	8.770	49.370	2.192	8.770	49.370	3.362	13.448	30.106
3	**1.141**	4.565	53.935	1.141	4.565	53.935	3.180	12.721	42.828
4	**1.090**	4.361	58.295	1.090	4.361	58.295	2.678	10.713	53.541
5	**.963**	3.850	62.146	.963	3.850	62.146	2.151	8.605	**62.146**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

EFA of scale two after deletion of item of 2.7 and 2.9

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.943
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	10498.548
	df	253
	Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained

Comp.	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Sq. Loadings			Rotation Sums of Sq. Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	**9.400**	40.871	40.871	9.400	40.871	40.871	4.101	17.832	17.832
2	**2.172**	9.442	50.313	2.172	9.442	50.313	2.970	12.912	30.744
3	**1.114**	4.842	55.155	1.114	4.842	55.155	2.850	12.391	43.135
4	**1.077**	4.682	59.837	1.077	4.682	59.837	2.662	11.575	54.710
5	**.946**	4.113	63.950	.946	4.113	63.950	2.125	9.241	**63.950**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Appendix 9.2 Indicator Weights and VIF

	Motiv	CfQual	Type	SE	P value	VIF	WLS	ES
Motiv1	0.050	0	Formative	0.03	0.047	1.351	1	0.024
Motiv2	0.060	0	Formative	0.03	0.021	1.573	1	0.034
Motiv3	0.057	0	Formative	0.03	0.028	1.758	1	0.030
Motiv4	0.060	0	Formative	0.03	0.022	2.009	1	0.034
Motiv5	0.061	0	Formative	0.03	0.020	1.804	1	0.035
Motiv6	0.058	0	Formative	0.03	0.025	1.633	1	0.032
Motiv7	0.061	0	Formative	0.03	0.020	1.500	1	0.035
Motiv8	0.060	0	Formative	0.03	0.022	1.657	1	0.034
Motiv9	0.070	0	Formative	0.03	0.009	1.835	1	0.047
Motiv10	0.050	0	Formative	0.03	0.047	1.505	1	0.023
Motiv11	0.069	0	Formative	0.03	0.011	1.954	1	0.044
Motiv12	0.062	0	Formative	0.03	0.019	1.925	1	0.036
Motiv13	0.067	0	Formative	0.03	0.012	1.973	1	0.042
Motiv14	0.075	0	Formative	0.03	0.006	2.430	1	0.053
Motiv15	0.076	0	Formative	0.03	0.005	2.806	1	0.055
Motiv16	0.076	0	Formative	0.03	0.005	2.688	1	0.055
Motiv17	0.074	0	Formative	0.03	0.007	2.327	1	0.051
Motiv18	0.076	0	Formative	0.03	0.005	2.856	1	0.055
Motiv19	0.076	0	Formative	0.03	0.005	3.025	1	0.055
Motiv20	0.055	0	Formative	0.03	0.032	1.996	1	0.029
Motiv21	0.049	0	Formative	0.03	0.050	1.520	1	0.023
Motiv22	0.070	0	Formative	0.03	0.009	1.837	1	0.046
Motiv23	0.067	0	Formative	0.03	0.013	1.808	1	0.042
Motiv24	0.065	0	Formative	0.03	0.014	1.824	1	0.040
Motiv25	0.070	0	Formative	0.03	0.009	1.954	1	0.046
CfQual1	0	0.052	Formative	0.03	0.041	1.561	1	0.024
CfQual2	0	0.052	Formative	0.03	0.040	1.394	1	0.024
CfQual3	0	0.065	Formative	0.03	0.015	1.789	1	0.037
CfQual4	0	0.068	Formative	0.03	0.011	2.007	1	0.040
CfQual5	0	0.071	Formative	0.03	0.008	2.039	1	0.045
CfQual6	0	0.072	Formative	0.03	0.008	1.695	1	0.046
CfQual7	0	0.063	Formative	0.03	0.017	1.458	1	0.035
CfQual8	0	0.061	Formative	0.03	0.021	1.791	1	0.032
CfQual9	0	0.068	Formative	0.03	0.011	1.728	1	0.041
CfQual10	0	0.068	Formative	0.03	0.011	1.597	1	0.041
CfQual11	0	0.074	Formative	0.03	0.006	2.371	1	0.049
CfQual12	0	0.062	Formative	0.03	0.018	1.770	1	0.034
CfQual13	0	0.071	Formative	0.03	0.009	2.067	1	0.044
CfQual14	0	0.077	Formative	0.03	0.005	3.300	1	0.052
CfQual15	0	0.076	Formative	0.03	0.005	3.477	1	0.050
CfQual16	0	0.075	Formative	0.03	0.006	2.773	1	0.049
CfQual17	0	0.073	Formative	0.03	0.007	2.298	1	0.047
CfQual18	0	0.074	Formative	0.03	0.006	3.097	1	0.049
CfQual19	0	0.075	Formative	0.03	0.006	2.927	1	0.049
CfQual20	0	0.054	Formative	0.03	0.035	1.438	1	0.026
CfQual21	0	0.069	Formative	0.03	0.010	1.612	1	0.042
CfQual2	0	0.062	Formative	0.03	0.019	1.612	1	0.034
CfQual23	0	0.066	Formative	0.03	0.013	1.682	1	0.039
CfQual24	0	0.057	Formative	0.03	0.028	1.392	1	0.028
CfQual25	0	0.071	Formative	0.03	0.008	1.659	1	0.045

Notes: P values < 0.05 and VIFs < 2.5 are desirable for formative indicators; VIF = indicator variance inflation factor; WLS = indicator weight-loading sign (-1 = Simpson's paradox in l.v.); ES = effect size.