Constructing a Trade Show Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale from a Stakeholder Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to construct and validate an Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale that accounts for the significant roles of three key stakeholders (i.e., trade show visitors, exhibitors, and organizers) in a trade show context through a pilot test, scale purification and validation. The final instrument consisted of 46-items representing 3 dimensions and 12 sub-dimensions of exhibitors' satisfaction. Reliability, unidimensionality, content validity, construct validity, discriminant validity, and predictive validity of the scale were tested and established using 930 responses from 4 trade shows in China. The resulting instrument was found to be superior to existing instruments in that it comprehensively measures exhibitors' performance at a trade show and explains a large portion of exhibitors' overall satisfaction. A major contribution of this study is that it introduces stakeholder theory as a guiding framework for measuring satisfaction in the trade show industry.

Keywords: trade shows; stakeholder theory; exhibitors; satisfaction.

Introduction

Researchers have conducted extensive studies with trade show exhibitors to identify key determinants of their satisfaction (Jung, 2005; Lee & Back, 2009). Results have been used to help exhibitors better manage their trade show experience (Dekimpe, François, Gopalakrishna, Lilien, & van den Bulte, 1997) and trade show organizers provide better service to exhibitors (Jin & Weber, 2013). However, these results have been derived from observational outcome indicators (e.g., booth traffic) or sales leads collected at the show that have not been clearly defined or shown to be reliable and valid (Gopalakrishna & Lilien, 1995; Kerin & Cron, 1987). They also have been found to be weakly related to exhibitor overall satisfaction and intention to return to the trade show (Hansen, 2004; Jin, Weber, & Bauer, 2012). As a result, the trade show performance literature lacks a comprehensive conceptual framework for the determinants of exhibitor satisfaction, as well as scales with adequate evidence of reliability and validity (Hansen, 2004).

An additional limitation of previous trade show studies is that most have focused on exhibitors, failing to acknowledge the roles of the other two key stakeholders—trade show organizers and visitors (e.g., Berne & García-Uceda, 2008; Bruhn & Hadwich, 2005; Jin & Weber, 2013; Reinhold, Reinhold, & Schmitz, 2010). Exceptions include studies by Herbig, O'Hara, and Palumbo (1997), Munuera and Ruiz (1999), and Jin et al. (2012), all of whom

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accounted for either organizers or visitors and their impacts on trade show exhibitor performance. However, there have been no studies on the intricate relationships between all three key stakeholders in the trade show industry.

Stakeholder theory, introduced by Freeman in 1984, recognizes that successful performance of a business is partly dependent on key stakeholders who are external to the organization. In a trade show setting key stakeholders or "actors" are visitors (i.e., professional buyers), exhibitors, and organizers. Face-to-face contact is a key feature of a trade show that distinguishes it from other types of business to business (B2B) marketing and is one of its most valuable features (Godar & O'Connor, 2001). Through face-to-face interactions, exhibitors and visitors share their common interests, discuss industry trends, build relationships in a cost-effective way, and adopt specific roles throughout the purchasing process, should it occur (Kang & Schrier, 2011; Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995). Face-to-face interactions also involve organizers whose customers are visitors and exhibitors (Jin et al., 2012; Jung, 2005). Thus, the eventual success of a trade show depends largely on its ability to meet the objectives of all three key stakeholders (Gopalakrishna, Roster, & Sridhar, 2010; Lin, 2011).

The trade show literature lacks a comprehensive conceptual framework, valid and reliable scales, and an understanding of the interactions between the three key stakeholders. This gap makes research on key determinants of satisfaction for exhibitors difficult. Thus, the specific objectives of this study are to: 1) construct an Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale (ESS) that accounts for all three key stakeholders in the trade show industry and 2) empirically examine the scale's reliability and validity. It is expected that trade show organizers will be able to use the proposed ESS in their post-show evaluation to identify what has the most influence on exhibitor overall satisfaction and positive behavioral intention. This study could also advance the development of a comprehensive conceptual framework on measuring satisfaction that accounts for key stakeholders in the events management field.

Satisfaction in trade shows

Most studies on satisfaction in the trade show context have focused on overall satisfaction (Lee & Back, 2009; Lee & Beeler, 2009; Oh, 1999). Overall satisfaction is conceptualized as "an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good or service over time" (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994, p. 54). The major problem with using overall satisfaction is that it does not address the specific dimensions of satisfaction and, as such, corresponding managerial implications are limited. For example, an exhibitor overall satisfaction with a trade show might be 1 out of 5, with 5 being "extremely satisfied." Without knowing the satisfaction levels associated with each specific dimension of the trade show, organizers have no idea how to fix problems or improve their service quality.

The main benefit organizations receive from satisfied customers is generally higher profitability (Kang & Schrier, 2011). Results of previous studies have indicated that satisfied customers show positive behavioral intentions, such as having a greater intention to return (Bowen & Chen, 2001; Jung, 2005; Servert, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007) and a higher likelihood to share positive comments about their experience (Zhang, Qu, & Ma, 2010). Because trade show participation is a major cost for exhibitors, being satisfied with a trade show could lower their uncertainty, increase intention to return, and minimize their constraints to future participation. This contention lacks empirical evidence, particularly with

respect to trade show participation behavior and overall satisfaction levels (Pearlman & Mollere, 2009).

Previous literature on visitor and exhibitor overall satisfaction with trade shows has focused on one or two stakeholders and ignored the complex interactions between all three stakeholders (i.e., visitors, exhibitors, organizers). For example, most studies on exhibitors' satisfaction and positive behavioral intentions have focused on exhibitors' self-performance and/or the interactions between exhibitors and visitors (Jin et al., 2012). Few have included the role of key stakeholders such as organizers and visitors who may shape exhibitors' satisfaction and positive behavioral intention.

Stakeholder Theory and Key Stakeholders in Trade Shows

Freeman, who introduced stakeholder theory in 1984, suggested stakeholders with similar interests form a group and recognized that doing so is important for businesses who must account for their relationship with the external environment. He also argued that a company cannot be self-sufficient because it is dependent on the external environment, which is made up of key stakeholders. Central tenets of stakeholder theory are that businesses: (a) adopt strategies that integrate and maximize all stakeholders' interests (Freeman & McVea, 2001) and (b) actively serve the interests of a broad group of stakeholders to create more value over time (Harrison & Wicks, 2013). Stakeholder theory has been applied in a wide range of disciplines such as strategic management, health care, law, and public policy (e.g., Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & de Colle, 2010; Harrison & Wicks, 2013) and most researchers have used a measure of stakeholder performance as the independent variable, with some measure of outcome performance as the dependent variable (Choi & Wang, 2009; Hillman & Keim, 2001).

According to Mainardes, Alves, and Raposo (2011), the goal of stakeholder theory is to help organizations realize, analyze, and examine the characteristics of individuals or groups influencing or being influenced by organizational behavior. These individuals or groups are referred to as stakeholders and they have clear expectations of their relational experience with the organization, evaluate the results obtained, and act in accordance with the results of the evaluation (Polonsky, 1996). Thus, the performance of one stakeholder is dependent on and impacts the performance of other key stakeholders.

In the trade show context there are three stakeholders: visitors, exhibitors, and organizers (Jin et al., 2012). Trade shows no longer function solely as a venue in which sales are made; instead, they have become a platform for information exchange and networking (Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995; Stoeck & Schaudy, 2005). The evolving function of trade shows has an important impact on trade show operation and behaviors as well as the relationships between visitors, exhibitors, and organizers (Jin et al., 2012).

A potentially viable research paradigm for studying the relationships between visitors, exhibitors, and organizers is the "network research approach" (Axelsson & Easton, 1992; Ford, 1990). Rather than focusing solely on dyadic buyer-seller relationships, the network research approach recognizes that buyer-seller relationships are only one part of the web of relationships. It extends the analysis beyond the buyer-seller dyad and explores the triad of relationships between visitors, exhibitors, and organizers, representing an important step in better understanding the way that trade shows work, and the factors contributing to the success of each stakeholder (Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995).

Understanding the three key stakeholders is important because a common objective of trade show organizers is maximization of the number of exhibitors and visitors. Jung (2005) found that visitors at trade shows were most concerned with the number of participating exhibitors, quality of products or services exhibited, and events organized at the trade show; all of which demonstrated strong interactions with exhibitors and organizers. Lee, Yeung, and Dewald (2010) found that trade show (Business-to-business exhibition) visitors are more motivated than public show (Business-to-consumer exhibition) visitors and expect more from the organizers and exhibitors. Similarly, exhibitors regard trade show participation as a major business investment and expect positive results from visitors and organizers (Hansen, 2004). Hence, the successes of visitors, exhibitors, and organizers are tied together. More recently, Lin, Jiang, and Kerstetter (2015) applied the stakeholder theory at a trade show in the United States and found that all three key stakeholders should be accounted for when evaluating trade show performance. However, their work was exploratory in nature and did not include specific items under each of the three dimensions.

Given that the successes of visitors, exhibitors, and organizers are dependent on each other, there needs to be a conceptual framework built on stakeholder theory that reflects the triad of their relationships. This study intends to do this through the evaluation of trade show exhibitors' performance. We propose that exhibitors' perception of trade show organizers and visitors, along with their perception of self-performance, will determine their overall perception of a trade show experience. The three dimensions of exhibitor satisfaction (i.e., satisfaction with self-performance, visitors, and organizers) are elaborated on in the following section.

Three dimensions of exhibitor satisfaction

Exhibitor's self-performance

Exhibitors' self-performance corresponds to their perception of their own performance at a trade show, which is the most common indicator of exhibitors' trade show performance and is usually measured against pre-set objectives (Hansen, 2004). Companies participate in trade shows with the expectation of benefits (Sashi & Perretty, 1992), which may include sales, qualified leads, networking, and reputation-building. Sales are often considered the ultimate objective of an exhibitor at a trade show and were the primary focus of research on trade shows in the 1990s (Dekimpe et al., 1997; Sarmento, Farhangmehr, & Simões, 2015).

Gopalakrishna and Lilien (1995) analyzed industrial trade show performance using a three-stage model reflecting the multi-activity nature of exhibiting. The three stages were attraction, contact, and conversion efficiency. The results showed that performance was enhanced by different factors for each of the stages and company-controlled activities in trade shows are crucial to exhibitors' overall performance. Dekimpe et al. (1997) extended Gopalakrishna and Lilien's work (1995) by using an attraction effectiveness index, which was computed as the number of attendees from the target audience who visited the booth to talk or obtain literature, divided by the size of the target audience. The key determinants of performance were found to be pre-show promotion spending, size of booth, number of personnel per square foot, and use of vertical trade shows. However, these authors' performance measures do not present a practical way of measuring trade show performance for exhibitors because the data required for the measures are not easily available without a sophisticated system for collecting data on visitors' interests and intentions (Hansen, 2004).

Researchers have recently argued that compared to selling activities, qualified leads and customer relationships are more important during the trade show and could be converted into sales through follow-up activities (Seringhaus & Rosson, 2004). Hansen (1999), who conducted one of the most well-organized and comprehensive studies on exhibitors' self-performance, argued that trade show performance has traditionally been evaluated using outcome-based measures, and the behavior-based measures are ignored. Hansen set up a preliminary trade show performance construct, which included one outcome-based dimension (sales-related activities) and four behavior-based dimensions (information-gathering activities, image-building activities, motivation activities, and relationship-building activities). These five dimensions are the essence of exhibitor performance and it is believed that high values associated with these dimensions lead to a satisfactory overall experience.

The exhibitor-visitor link

Exhibitors (i.e., sellers) and visitors (i.e., buyers) use trade shows to develop new business relationships and work on existing business relationships (Blythe, 2002). Visitors also attend trade shows to reduce their social and technological distance from exhibitors (Ford, 1980). Direct contact between seller and buyer is one of the key features that distinguish trade shows from advertising and promotion. Furthermore, trade shows differ from sales calls because the contact is initiated by the buyer rather than the seller (Munuera & Ruiz, 1999).

Early research on the exhibitor-visitor link focused primarily on selling activities (Bello, 1992; Cavanaugh, 1976; Gopalakrishna & Lilien, 1995; Williams, Gopalakrishna, & Cox, 1993). Tanner and Chonko (1995) found that the primary goal of exhibitors was to get sales. More recent studies (e.g., Sarmento, Farhangmehr, & Simões, 2015; Seringhaus & Rosson, 2004) found that getting sales was no longer the primary goal of exhibitors and visitors.

Godar and O'Connor (2001) found that visitors attend trade shows for reasons (e.g., reinforce contact and support industry) weakly related or unrelated to purchase intentions. Borghini, Golfetto, and Rinallo (2006) documented the increased importance of information search among trade show visitors and argued that it poses challenges to the way exhibitors traditionally manage their trade show participations or measure returns on trade show investments. Their finding also led to the conclusion that exhibitors need to take good care of potential buyers but also need to dedicate sufficient attention to visitors who are not interested in an immediate purchase. Furthermore, Bello (1992) pointed out that the characteristics of visitors influence the type of information exchange taking place at a trade show. Bello found that visitors holding higher ranking positions are more likely to engage in purchase decision-making and obtaining transaction information, while visitors in lower ranking positions are more likely to obtain technical information. Similarly, Bello and Lohtia (1993) found that the visitor's job level positively related to the final purchase decision while firm size negatively related to purchase decision. Thus, visitors' job level and job function play an important part in exhibitors' success at trade shows.

The exhibitor-organizer link

Exhibitors are more valuable than visitors at industrial trade shows because organizers collect most of their revenue from exhibitors. Hence, it is in the organizers' best interest to cater to the needs of and deliver satisfactory services to exhibitors. The conceptualization of trade shows as services is manifest for all key stakeholders of trade shows (Gottlieb, Brown, & Drennan, 2011). Previous research has demonstrated that trade show visitors (Konopacki,

1996; Munuera & Ruiz, 1999), exhibitors (O'Hara & Herbig, 1993), and organizers (Munuera & Ruiz, 1999) identify trade shows as having a substantial service component. Thus, the link between exhibitors and organizers corresponds to exhibitors' perception of service quality delivered by organizers.

Adopting Brady and Cronin's (2001) multi-level model of service quality, Gottlieb et al. (2011) established a model to examine trade show visitors' perceptions of trade show effectiveness. The model proposes that interaction quality, environment quality, and outcome quality are factors that influence perceptions of service quality and suggests that trade show effectiveness mediates the effect of perceived service quality on perceptions of overall service outcomes. The same approach could also apply to exhibitors' perception of service quality delivered by organizers. Jin et al. (2012) investigated the relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers in view of its potential to significantly affect the success of a particular trade show. The results indicated that relationship quality between exhibitors and organizers is critical for the successful and sustainable development of trade shows.

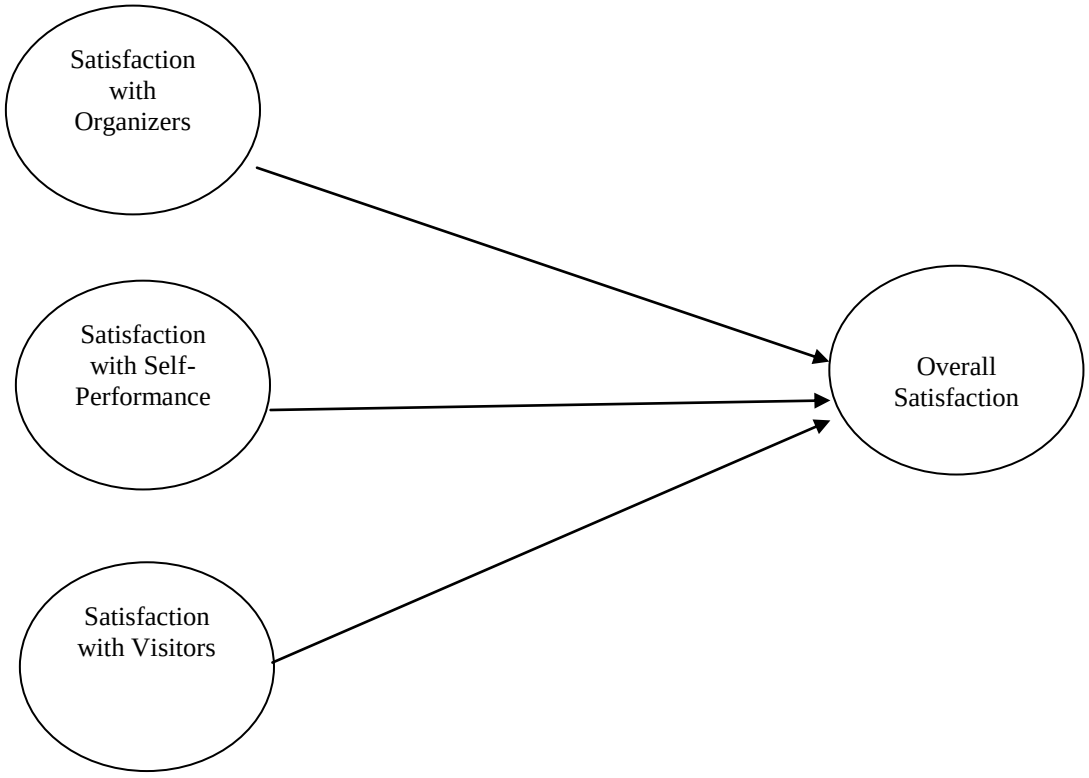

Figure 1. Dimensions of exhibitors' satisfaction

China's trade show industry has witnessed rapid development in recent years. Convention centers are being built all over the country and the government is extremely supportive of the

development of the trade show industry. China's indoor exhibition space grew to 4.8 million square meters in 2011, the second highest in the world after the United States (UFI, 2014). Exhibitors' satisfaction with respect to trade shows in China, however, has received relatively little attention. Thus, China is a viable context in which to conduct this study. Based on the literature reviewed so far, it is clear that visitors, exhibitors, and organizers are three key stakeholders of trade shows and their interactions with and perceptions of each other must be accounted for when studying exhibitor satisfaction. Thus, this study intends to construct and validate an Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale (ESS) that accounts for the significant roles of all three key stakeholders in a trade show context (Figure 1).

Scale development

Item generation and content validity

Three dimensions of exhibitor satisfaction were combined to create the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale. To validate the three dimensions, exhibitors were asked to indicate their overall satisfaction with the trade show using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "extremely unsatisfied" (1) to "extremely satisfied" (7). A description of each dimension follows.

Exhibitor satisfaction with self-performance

Hansen's (1999) five-dimension conceptual framework was used to enable exhibitors to document their self-performance. Hansen's framework includes one outcome-based dimension (sales-related activities) and four behavior-based dimensions (information-gathering activities, image-building activities, motivation activities, and relationship-building activities), which were considered the essence of exhibitors' performance. Exhibitors were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with each statement using a 7-point, 18-item scale (1= extremely poor, 7= extremely excellent).

Exhibitor satisfaction with organizers

Based on their own qualitative research and Rust and Oliver's (1994) three-component service quality model, Brady and Cronin (2001) found that service quality is a third-order construct that consists of three primary dimensions: interaction quality, environment quality, and outcome quality. Each of the primary dimensions has three sub-dimensions. Interaction quality contains attitude, behavior, and expertise; environment quality contains ambient conditions, design, and social factors; and outcome quality contains waiting time, tangibles, and valence. While Brady and Cronin's measure has been used in the trade show context and has exhibited excellent reliability and validity (see Gottlieb et al., 2011), the sub-dimension, "waiting time," was dropped in this study because it does not apply to trade show exhibitors. The revised scale used in this study to measure exhibitor satisfaction with organizers included 21 items based on Brady and Cronin's (2001) multi-level model on service quality (Table 1). Exhibitors were asked to rate their level of agreement using a 7-point scale (1= strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

Exhibitor satisfaction with visitors

A 7-point, 12-item scale (1= extremely poor, 7= extremely excellent) drawn from Lin (2011) was used to assess exhibitors' level of satisfaction with visitors. The scale (see Table 1) included four sub-dimensions (i.e., visitors' job level, job function, purchasing authority, and interaction) that have been found to influence exhibitors' satisfaction with visitors (Bello,

1992; Bello & Lohtia, 1993; Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995) and the scale was applied previously at trade shows in China with satisfactory reliability and validity.

Content Validity

Four experts (three from the industry and one from academia) reviewed the three dimensions of the satisfaction scale to ensure content validity (Devellis 2003). The experts suggested eliminating one item (i.e., "motivate customers") and editing three items (i.e., "the trade show's ambience is what I'm looking for in a trade show," "the trade show organizers understand that the atmosphere at the show is important," and "the security provided by the organizers is excellent" in the Ambient Conditions dimension, see Table 1). A total of 50 items were retained to measure the 3 dimensions of the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale.

Purification of the measurement scale

A pilot test of the 50-item satisfaction scale was undertaken using data collected from the 10th China Household Electrical Appliances Trade Fair, which was held from August 22 - 24, 2013 in Zhongshan, China. The Fair hosted 800 exhibitors and over 60,000 visitors (i.e., professional buyers). Three trade show staff were involved with the data collection process and approached every other exhibitor on the trade show floor during the last day of the trade show. A total of 400 exhibitors were approached and asked to participate in a survey. For every exhibiting company approached, the on-site personnel with the highest ranking were asked to fill out the questionnaire. The trade show staff were provided instructions regarding face-to-face interviewing before the Fair and were given a script and told to strictly follow it when surveying exhibitors. The survey instrument included the three-dimension satisfaction scale. Exhibitors were asked to use a 7-point Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement with each of the 50 statements (Table 1). In order to achieve anonymity and elicit honest feedback, particularly in China where individuals tend to be reserved, no demographic information was collected (Stanton, 1998).

Table 1. Pilot study exhibitor satisfaction scale items

Dimension	Sub-dimension	Statement
Self-performance	Sales	S1. Test new product concepts.
		S2. Develop new product/market segments.
		S3. Introduce and evaluate reactions to new products.
		S4. Actual sales at the trade show to customers.
	Information Gathering	IG1. Collect information about competitors' prices, products, and strategies.
		IG2. Collect information in general.
		IG3. Search for information about visitors.
	Relationship Building	RB1. Strengthen relationships with existing customers.
		RB2. Build relationships with new customers.
		RB3. Maintain contact with existing customers.
		RB4. Develop contact with new customers.

	Image Building	IB1. Demonstrate to customers that we are just as good as our competitors.
		IB2. Enhance customers' image of our company.
		IB3. Convince customers that we are a strong and solid company.
		IB4. Gain advantage over competitors who are not exhibiting.
	Motivation	M1. Train and develop our sales team.
		M2. Strengthen our sales people's motivation (e.g., traveling abroad, break in daily routines, meeting customers at the show and outside the show area).
Organizers	Interaction	A1. You can count on the trade show organizers being friendly.
		A2. The attitude of the trade show organizers demonstrates their willingness to help me.
		A3. The attitude of the trade show organizers shows me that they understand my needs.
		B1. I can count on the trade show organizers to address my needs.
		B2. The trade show organizers respond quickly to my needs.
		B3. The trade show organizers understand my needs.
		E1. The trade show organizers know their jobs.
		E2. The trade show organizers are able to answer my questions quickly.
		E3. The organizers understand that I rely on their knowledge to meet my needs.
	Environment	AC1. The trade show's ambience is what I'm looking for in a trade show.
		AC2. The trade show organizers understand that the atmosphere at the show is important.
		AC3. The security provided by the organizers is excellent.
		D1. This service provider's layout never fails to impress me.
		D2. The trade show's layout serves my purposes.
		SF1. The trade shows' other exhibitors consistently leave me with a good impression.
		SF2. The trade shows' visitors consistently leave me with a good impression.
	Outcome	T1. I am pleased with the quality of our booth.
		T2. I am pleased with the food provided by the organizers.
		V1. When I leave the trade show, I feel that I had a good experience.
		V2. The trade show organizers try to give me a good experience.
		V3. The trade show organizers know the type of experience exhibitors want.
Visitor	Job level	JL1. Overall job level of customers.
		JL2. Job level of existing customers.
		JL3. Job level of potential customers.
	Job function	JF1. Overall job function of customers.

	JF2. The fit of job function of customers to your specific needs.
	JF3. Job function of existing customers.
	JF4. Job function of potential customers.
Purchasing authority	PA1. Overall purchasing authority of customers.
	PA2. Purchasing authority of existing customers.
	PA3. Purchasing authority of potential customers.
Communication	C1. Amount of communication with customers.
	C2. Quality of communication with customers.

A total of 336 exhibitors provided valid feedback, yielding a response rate of 84.0%. To examine response bias, a comparison was conducted between early responders (i.e., first half of the 336 responses collected in the morning of the last day) and late responders (i.e., second half of the 336 responses collected in the afternoon of the last day). There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of the mean scores on each of the three dimensions.

Analyses were conducted to examine the consistency of the items comprising the sub-dimensions of the satisfaction scale (Churchill, 1979). A corrected item-total correlation (CITC) of .30 was used to decide whether or not to delete an item from a sub-dimension (DeVellis, 2012). Cronbach's alpha was used to ensure the reliability of each sub-dimension.

An iterative sequence of calculating CITC and Cronbach's alpha was repeated multiple times. Five items had a CITC lower than the .30 cutoff value: D2—"The trade show's layout serves my purposes," SF2—"The trade shows' visitors consistently leave me with a good impression," T1—"I am pleased with the quality of our booth," T2—"I am pleased with the food provided by the organizers," and JL1—"Overall job level of customers." After sharing these findings with trade show experts, they indicated that: 1) visitors' job level is an important factor in determining exhibitors' satisfaction; 2) exhibitors generally do not associate layout or booth quality with their trade show experience; 3) there is limited food supply at trade shows in China; and 4) the item SF2 is similar to the items in the Satisfaction with Visitors dimension. Thus, the four items other than JL1—"Overall job level of customers" were removed.

The proposed Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale is a third-order construct with three dimensions (i.e., satisfaction with self-performance, satisfaction with organizers, and satisfaction with visitors) and twelve sub-dimensions. Table 2 highlights the descriptive statistics as well as the CITC and alpha coefficients for the 12 sub-dimensions. All but two of the alpha coefficients were higher than, or equal to .65. These coefficients are justifiable when there are fewer items in the sub-dimensions (Cortina, 1993). Indices were generated for each of the sub-dimensions.

Table 2. Pilot Study Results with Revised Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale Items

Dimension	Sub-dimension	Item	Mean (SD)	CITC	Alpha Coefficient
Self-performance	Sales	S1	3.967 (1.208)	.752	.811
		S2	4.464 (1.010)	.676	
		S3	3.771 (.970)	.664	
		S4	3.893 (.937)	.449	
	Information Gathering	IG1	4.015 (.865)	.627	.648
		IG2	4.390 (.877)	.372	
		IG3	3.699 (.915)	.395	
	Relationship Building	RB1	4.280 (.891)	.608	.804
		RB2	4.054 (.929)	.575	
		RB3	4.554 (.876)	.516	
		RB4	3.807 (.829)	.793	
	Image Building	IB1	4.351 (.947)	.717	.811
		IB2	4.482 (.998)	.695	
		IB3	4.789 (.930)	.636	
		IB4	4.199 (.787)	.418	
	Motivation	M1	4.488 (.989)	.513	.657
		M2	4.717 (.725)	.513	
Organizers	Interaction	A1	4.164 (.864)	.358	.826
		A2	4.074 (.926)	.576	
		A3	4.497 (.757)	.520	
		B1	4.116 (.548)	.549	
		B2	3.881 (.775)	.548	
		B3	4.048 (.816)	.684	
		E1	4.164 (.687)	.339	
		E2	4.247 (.758)	.665	
		E3	4.199 (.728)	.587	
	Environment	AC1	4.182 (.807)	.391	.679
		AC2	4.348 (.888)	.328	

		AC3	4.539 (.887)	.467	
		D1	4.345 (.857)	.518	
		SF1	4.491 (.927)	.466	
	Outcome	V1	3.902 (.881)	.506	.754
		V2	4.166 (.822)	.552	
		V3	4.149 (.758)	.708	
Visitors	Job Level	JL1	4.039 (.829)	.296	.503
		JL2	4.310 (.817)	.348	
		JL3	4.262 (.889)	.314	
	Job Function	JF1	4.313 (.665)	.522	.694
		JF2	4.214 (.819)	.564	
		JF3	4.548 (.863)	.408	
		JF4	4.396 (.898)	.447	
	Purchasing Authority	PA1	4.086 (.774)	.607	.755
		PA2	4.027 (.837)	.692	
		PA3	4.133 (.770)	.469	
	Communication	C1	4.348 (.781)	.413	.582
		C2	4.295 (.699)	.413	

Following the guidelines proposed by DeVellis (2012), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using the reflective model was applied to verify the unidimensionality of the three satisfaction dimensions. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Normed Fit Index (NFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the item regression coefficients were reviewed (Table 3). A good model fit requires the ratio of Chi Square and degrees of freedom to be lower than 5; NFI, TLI, and CFI to be higher than .90; and RMSEA to be lower than .10 (Bentler, 1990; Hu & Bentler, 1998; Steiger, 1990; Tucker & Lewis, 1973). The Organizers dimension had nine distinct sample moments and nine distinct parameters to be estimated, resulting in a saturated model. A saturated model would require further examination of path coefficients and squared multiple correlations to validate the model. The GOF statistics for the three dimensions were satisfactory and all path coefficients were significant and in the expected direction.

Table 3. Goodness-of-fit statistics of the three models

Model	χ^2	χ^2/df	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Satisfaction with self-performance	11.340	3.780	.982	.955	.986	.091
Satisfaction with organizers (saturated)	.000	NA	1.000	NA	1.000	NA
Satisfaction with visitors	3.262	1.631	.993	.992	.997	.043

Scale validation

Following the guidelines proposed by DeVellis (2012) and Churchill (1979), convergent validity, discriminant validity, predictive validity and composite reliability were used to examine the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale. The results of the pilot test with exhibitors at the 10th China Household Electrical Appliances Trade Fair led to the deletion of four items, resulting in a modified 46-item (3 dimension) exhibitor satisfaction scale. The satisfaction scale was included in an expanded instrument that was used to address the following topics and test the scale's validity: exhibitor overall satisfaction, willingness to return, and word-of-mouth effect. Exhibitor overall satisfaction was used to examine convergent and discriminant validity, while willingness to return and word-of-mouth effect were used to examine predictive validity. To detect subtle differences on exhibitor satisfaction, a 10-point rather than a 7-point Likert scale was used with all questions.

The modified instrument was distributed to a new sample of 750 exhibitors at 3 trade shows, following the same guideline used in the pilot study (Table 4). The China International Game & Amusement Exhibition, supported by more than 50 international associations, magazines and professional websites from over 20 countries, is one of the leading trade shows in the amusement industry, where manufacturers display their products and visitors buy quality products or look for business partners. The China Household Electrical Appliances Trade Fair is one of the largest trade shows on household appliances in China, with an annual exhibitor attendance of over 1,500 and visitor attendance of over 160,000. Multiple trade show staff were involved with the data collection process and followed the same protocol used in the pilot study. Overall, 594 valid responses were obtained, yielding a 79.2% response rate.

Nearly two thirds (63.1%) of the respondents had a background in sales and 30.5% had a background in management. Most (84.2%) respondents were department managers or held higher level managerial positions. As for previous trade show experience, 18.5% of the respondents were first-time exhibitors at the trade show where they were interviewed, while 11.7% were first-time exhibitors at trade shows in general. Eight-two percent of the respondents were repeat customers of this particular trade show and forty-nine percent had attended six or more trade shows previously. Table 5 lists the correlation matrix of the variables used in the model. All correlation coefficients were significant and in the expected direction.

Table 4. Demographic profile of the trade shows assessed in this study

	2013 China Household Electrical Appliances Trade Fair (n=336)	2013 China International Games & Amusement Fair (n=91)	2014 China International Games & Amusement Exhibition (n=109)	2014 China Household Electrical Appliances Trade Fair (n=394)
Date	Aug. 22-24, 2013	Oct. 25-27, 2013	Mar. 1-3, 2014	Mar. 12-15, 2014
Location	Zhongshan, China	Zhongshan, China	Guangzhou, China	Zhongshan, China
Frequency	Biannually	Annually	Annually	Biannually
Edition	10^{th}	6^{th}	9^{th}	11^{th}
Exhibition Area (m^2)	41,000	44,000	80,000	45,000
Number of Exhibitors	800	260	350	850
Number of Visitors	65,000	20,000	20,000	80,000

Table 5. Correlation coefficients

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Sales												
2. Information Gathering	.605**											
3. Relationship Building	.742**	.666**										
4. Image Building	.593**	.678**	.634**									
5. Motivation	.396**	.600**	.543**	.816**								
6. Interaction	.660**	.691**	.668**	.723**	.645**							
7. Environment	.710**	.601**	.676**	.597**	.520**	.808**						
8. Outcome	.651**	.627**	.665**	.740**	.645**	.864**	.812**					
9. Job Level	.810**	.577**	.720**	.584**	.382**	.718**	.783**	.728**				
10. Job Function	.788**	.569**	.738**	.597**	.408**	.729**	.754**	.749**	.917**			
11. Purchase Authority	.743**	.651**	.716**	.660**	.527**	.754**	.775**	.806**	.795**	.831**		
12. Communication	.653**	.664**	.701**	.645**	.564**	.755**	.717**	.727**	.733**	.750**	.804**	
13. Overall Satisfaction	.406**	.633**	.441**	.668**	.644**	.655**	.581**	.696**	.464**	.441**	.642**	.581**

*Note: *p* < .05, ***p < .01. N=594*

Convergent validity

Convergent validity was examined by looking at composite reliability, average variance extracted, squared multiple correlation (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and the significance of item loadings on the hypothesized dimensions (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Since the reliability of each sub-dimension within the three satisfaction dimensions (i.e., satisfaction with self-performance, satisfaction with organizers, and satisfaction with visitors)

was established through the pilot study, an index was calculated for the 12 sub-dimensions. Then, a 12-item (i.e., indices for the 12 sub-dimensions), 3-dimensional (i.e., 3 satisfaction dimensions) confirmatory factor model was generated.

To establish convergent validity, the following conditions must be met: 1) all item loadings need to be statistically significant; 2) composite reliability needs to be higher than .70; 3) average variance extracted needs to be higher than .50; 4) and squared multiple correlation needs to be higher than .50 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results indicated that all item loadings were statistically significant ($p < .001$) and the goodness-of-fit statistics for the model were satisfactory (χ^2 (58) = 301.589, p = .000, CFI = .968, TLI = .950, RMSEA = .086). Composite reliabilities for the three dimensions exceeded the cutoff value of .70. Average variance extracted and squared multiple correlation both exceeded the cutoff value of .50. The relevant statistics are presented in Table 6. Overall, the results established the convergent validity of the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale.

Discriminant validity

To test the discriminant validity of the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale, a series of one-factor and two-factor CFA models were conducted and change in chi-square between the one-factor and two-factor measurement models was assessed (Bagozzi, Yi, & Phillips, 1991). According to Hosany and Gilbert (2010), in order to establish discriminant validity, the two-factor model should be significantly better than the one-factor model and, as a result, the difference in the chi-square statistic of two-factor model relative to the one-factor model should also be significant. Results indicated that the two-factor model was better ($p < .001$) than the one-factor model for all pairs of sub-dimensions. For example, combining the Satisfaction with Visitors dimension and the Satisfaction with Organizers dimension into a single factor produced a significantly worse fit (χ^2 (32) = 441.012, $p < .001$, CFI= .914, TLI= .852, RMSEA = .150) than a two-factor model (χ^2 (28) = 178.220, $p < .001$, CFI= .968, TLI= .938, RMSEA = .097). The chi-square difference test also indicated that the two-factor model was superior to the one-factor model. Thus, these results established the discriminant validity of the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale.

Predictive validity

Predictive validity is defined as the ability of the scale to estimate an outcome variable that is external to the measurement instrument itself (DeVellis, 2012; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Researchers have shown that customer satisfaction can lead to positive word-of-mouth (Zhang et al., 2010) and intention to return (Bowen & Chen, 2001; Jung, 2005). Thus, to establish the predictive validity of the scale, the endogenous latent variable—positive behavioral intention—and two observed variables—word-of-mouth and willingness to return—were added to the structural equation model with the three dimensions of exhibitor satisfaction and overall satisfaction. For willingness to return, exhibitors were asked whether or not they would return to the same trade show next year. For word-of-mouth effect, exhibitors were asked whether or not they would recommend the trade show to their colleagues and other companies. Word-of-mouth (mean = 7.757; SD = 1.931) and willingness to return (mean = 7.844; SD = 1.775) were both measured using a 10-point Likert scale (1 = least likely; 10 = most likely). A path from overall satisfaction to behavioral intention was drawn to test the predictive power of the proposed model.

Table 6. Confirmatory factor analysis results

Dimension Sub-dimension	Standardized Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	Squared Multiple Correlation
Self-Performance		.922	.702	
Sales	.824			.679
Information Gathering	.828			.685
Relationship Building	.884			.782
Image Building	.831			.690
Motivation	.821			.673
Organizer		.911	.774	
Interaction	.835			.698
Environment	.869			.756
Outcome	.933			.870
Visitor		.938	.790	
Job Level	.843			.710
Job Function	.872			.761
Purchase Authority	.939			.881
Communication	.899			.809

Standardized path coefficients and squared multiple correlations were examined to establish the predictive validity of the scale. The goodness-of-fit of the model was satisfactory (χ^2 (83) = 452.126, p < .001, CFI= .960, TLI= .942, RMSEA = .088). All path coefficients were statistically significant (p <.01).In particular, the standardized path coefficient from overall satisfaction to behavioral intention was .844 and the squared multiple correlation for the positive behavioral intention was .741, which means that 74.1% of the variance in positive behavioral intention could be explained by the three satisfaction dimensions. Thus, the predictive validity of the Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale was established.

Discussion and implications

The purpose of this study was to construct a valid and reliable Exhibitor Satisfaction Scale (ESS) that accounts for the three stakeholders in the trade show industry. Following a review of the literature, a conceptual framework was proposed to account for the three key stakeholders in the trade show industry. Based on the framework and the scale development procedure recommended by DeVellis (2012) and Churchill (1979), the ESS was successfully constructed and validated. The final scale consisted of 46-items that represented 12 sub-dimensions and 3 dimensions of satisfaction. Reliability, unidimensionality, content validity, construct validity, discriminant validity, and predictive validity of the scale were tested and

established using 930 responses from 4 trade shows in China. The goodness-of-fit indices indicated a satisfactory fit for the proposed scale.

A major contribution of this study is that it introduces stakeholder theory as a guiding framework for measuring satisfaction in the trade show industry. Previous measures focused on one specific stakeholder and ignored the interactions taking place with other stakeholders (Godar & O'Connor, 2001; Jin et al., 2012). This approach was problematic because it failed to capture the significant impacts of all three key stakeholders. No matter how many sales leads exhibitors get during a trade show, if they do not feel appreciated by the organizers or their concerns are not addressed in a timely manner, they might not be satisfied with their overall experience and might choose to skip the trade show the next year. Our model indicated that all three dimensions (i.e., satisfaction with self-performance, and the other two stakeholders) contributed to exhibitors' overall satisfaction, and need to be accounted for. If researchers only focus on one or two dimensions, as has been done previously, a great deal of explanatory power is lost, and the recommendations for improving exhibitors' trade show experience are less comprehensive. Thus, this study contributes to the satisfaction literature by building upon stakeholder theory and introducing a valid and reliable satisfaction measurement scale that is readily available for use in trade show settings.

Further, we challenged the traditional approach to measuring satisfaction, which focuses solely on one stakeholder, and demonstrated that multiple stakeholders should be taken into consideration. The results of this study showed that all three dimensions of exhibitor satisfaction (i.e., self, visitor, and organizer) contributed significantly to overall satisfaction. Predictive validity statistics showed that all of the standardized path coefficients from the three dimensions to overall satisfaction were significant and that a sizeable percentage of variance in overall satisfaction (67.6%) and positive behavioral intention (i.e., willingness to return and word-of-mouth, 74.1%) was explained by the three-dimension model. These results indicated that overall satisfaction and positive behavioral intention are better explained when all three stakeholders are taken into account.

In line with previous research on trade show service quality (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Gottlieb et al., 2011), three sub-dimensions of satisfaction with organizers (i.e., interaction, environment, and outcome) contributed significantly to overall satisfaction with standardized loadings ranging from .836 to .934. However, it is not sufficient to only look at service quality when evaluating exhibitor overall satisfaction. Exhibitor satisfaction with self-performance contributed significantly to their overall satisfaction as well. The five sub-dimensions of self-performance (i.e., sales, information gathering, image building, relationship building, and motivation) turned out to be quite significant, with standardized loadings ranging from .821 to .884, further validating Hansen's (2004) five-dimension framework on trade show performance. The four sub-dimensions of satisfaction with visitors also were statistically significant, with standardized loadings ranging from .843 to .940. Consistent with previous research, visitors' job level, job function, purchase power, and communication all contributed significantly to exhibitor overall satisfaction (Bello, 1992; Rosson & Seringhaus, 1995). Visitors' job level was a significant item within exhibitor satisfaction with visitors, which was consistent with previous literature (Bello, 1992). Thus, maintaining it in the scale proved to be a good decision.

Managerial implications

With increased competition trade show organizers must further differentiate themselves by offering user-oriented services (Berne & García-Uceda, 2008). However, information about what makes an effective trade show and what contributes to exhibitors' satisfaction has been limited. With the scale presented in this study, the situation has changed. Trade show organizers can use the ESS to evaluate their trade shows. This is of immense value as a primary objective of trade show organizers is to create effective shows that result in positive outcomes for exhibitors.

Trade show organizers can use the ESS to detect the relative importance of each dimension, sub-dimension, and items within each sub-dimension. Once organizers know which dimensions/items carry the most weight in their particular trade show, they can allocate their limited resources to improve upon or address problems associated with the dimensions/items. In addition, trade show organizers could customize the ESS to fit their particular trade show. Since trade show exhibitors are mostly executives with limited time to spare, organizers could use a modified ESS consisting of the 12 sub-dimensions (e.g., satisfaction with relationship building) rather than the full model with 46 items. Analysis of data at different levels would allow the flexibility of general versus detailed evaluation. Trade show exhibitors could also utilize the ESS to benchmark their performance across different trade shows and evaluate which show to attend next year.

Limitations and future research

Visitors, exhibitors, and organizers are the three key stakeholders in the trade show industry. However, there are other stakeholders that might influence the satisfaction level of exhibitors and their positive behavioral intention. For example, the host city and members of the local community could impact exhibitor trade show participation experience (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). Zhang, Leung, and Qu (2007) pointed out that attractiveness (e.g., friendliness of local people, sightseeing opportunity) and accessibility (e.g., distance of the trip, availability of direct flight) of the convention destination are important in attracting exhibitors. Thus, future studies should integrate other stakeholders into the conceptual framework and develop a modified exhibitor satisfaction scale that accounts for four or more stakeholders in the trade show industry. It would also be interesting to investigate the dynamic impact of stakeholders on one another.

Second, this study only focused on exhibitors' satisfaction. It is expected that the conceptual framework (Figure 1) will be successful with visitors as well. Based on the framework, visitor's satisfaction consists of three dimensions: visitor's satisfaction with self-performance, exhibitors, and organizers. To further validate the framework, future studies should focus on visitor's satisfaction. Based on the results of this study, it is expected that the three dimensions would contribute significantly to visitor's overall satisfaction and positive behavioral intention.

Third, to further establish the predictive validity of the ESS, actual behavior, instead of positive behavioral intention, should be measured. Previous findings have shown that the strength of correlation between positive behavioral intention to actual behavior ranges between .41 and .53 (O'Keefe, 2002). Temporal stability of intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977) and the degree to which the behavior was planned (Sheeran, Orbell, & Trafimow, 1999) are known to influence the conversion rate from intention to behavior. Most trade

shows are held annually and these factors could well come into play during that one-year gap. Exhibitors could change their minds even if they indicated that they would be coming back next year. Furthermore, demographic information (e.g., respondent's gender, age group, location of their companies) and previous experience might also influence exhibitors' satisfaction. Thus, adopting a longitudinal design by collecting data on both positive behavioral intention and actual behavior, as well as non-intrusive demographic information, could strengthen the predictive validity of the measurement scale and provide additional insight into exhibitor satisfaction and decision-making.

Fourth, trade show practices tend to vary across different market environments (Dekimpe et al., 1997). In this study data were collected from trade shows for the household electronics industry and the game and amusement equipment industry, all of which were held in China. Future research should cross validate the conceptual framework and the ESS using trade shows from other industries (e.g., high-tech vs. agriculture industry) and other geographic locations (e.g., developed vs. developing countries).

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