UNDERSTANDING CONFERENCE ATTENDEE'S EXPERIENCE QUALITY AND VALUE PERCEPTION: THE CASE OF ACADEMIC ASSOCIATION CONFERENCES

by

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B.S., Hanyang University, Seoul, Korea, 2003
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AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Hospitality and Dietetics
College of Human Ecology

KANSASSTATEUNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2013

Abstract

The meeting industry has seen significant growth over the last few decades and has now become truly global. As the number of conferences increases and attendees have so many conferences to choose from, understanding how they evaluate the conference experience is more important than ever. Previous studies have focused on site selection factors, destination perception and image, economic impact, and meeting planner issues, not on the conference experience itself.

Annual association conferences are lucrative because of the large number of attendees they bring to the host destination. In marketing and managing association conferences, host destinations and meeting convention organizers are increasingly interested in how attendees evaluate the conference experience. With the first conceptual model, this study sought to reveal the effect of perceived conference quality dimensions on conference experience quality dimensions. Academic association conference was taken as the context, and data were collected to validate the proposed models. A self-reported questionnaire was distributed to faculty members from twenty randomly selected universities in the United States who attended an academic association conference at least once within the past year. The hypotheses included in the conceptual model were examined based on responses from 370 faculty members in the United States. The proposed relationships were analyzed by using PLS-SEM analysis which involves evaluation of measurement model and structural model.

The results indicated significant relationships among all conference specific dimensions (i.e., professional education and professional & social networking) and all conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement). Moreover, all destination specific dimensions (i.e., site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) had a significant relationship with excitement, but site attractiveness did not have a significant relationship with learning. With the second conceptual model, this study sought to verify the relationships among perceived conference value dimensions, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. This study found that utilitarian value, hedonic value, and social value had significant effects on satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Given that understanding attendee behavior is critical in the meeting industry, this study benefits meeting planners and host destinations with information that allows

them to maximize the conference experience for attendees, and attracting and retaining repeat attendees.

Keywords: Meeting industry, association conference, perceived conference quality, conference experience quality, perceived conference value, satisfaction, behavioral intentions

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Table of Contents

List of Figures xii
List of Tables xiii
Acknowledgements xiv
Dedication xv
Chapter 1 - Introduction 1
Statement of the Problem 3
Purpose and Objectives 4
Hypotheses 4
First Model Hypotheses 5
Second Model Hypotheses 5
Significance of the study 5
Limitations of the study 6
Definitions of Terms 7
References 9
Chapter 2 - Review of Literature 14
The Meeting Industry 14
The Association Conference 15
Perceived Conference Quality 15
Conference Specific Dimensions 16
Professional Education 17
Professional & Social Networking 18
Destination Specific Dimensions 18
Site Attractiveness 19
Travelability 19
Site Environment 20
Conference Experience Quality 20
Learning 22
Effects of Conference Specific Dimensions (Professional Education and Professional & Social Networking) on Learning 22

Effects of Site Attractiveness on Learning 23
Self-esteem 23
Effects of Conference Specific Dimensions (Professional Education and Professional & Social Networking) on Self-Esteem 24
Excitement 25
Effects of Conference Specific Dimensions (Professional Education and Professional & Social Networking) on Excitement 26
Effects of Destination Specific Dimensions (Site Attractiveness, Travelability, and Site Environment) on Excitement 26
Proposed Conceptual Model 1 27
Perceived Conference Value 29
Utilitarian Value 30
Hedonic Value 31
Social Value 32
Satisfaction 33
Effects of Perceived Conference Value (Utilitarian, Hedonic, and Social Value) on Satisfaction 34
Behavioral Intentions (Attitudinal loyalty) 35
Effects of Perceived Conference Value (Utilitarian, Hedonic, and Social Value) on Behavioral Intentions 36
Effects of Satisfaction on Behavioral Intentions 37
Proposed Conceptual Model 2 37
References 39
Chapter 3 - Methodology 49
Population and Sample 50
Survey Instrument Development 51
Study 1: Measurement Identification 51
Study 2: Measurement Identification 55
Pre-Test and Pilot Test 57
Data Collection 57
Data Analysis for Study 1 and Study 2 58

Choosing Measurement Model Mode (Reflective versus Formative indicators 58
Analysis Methodology 59
Structural Equation Modeling 59
Assessment of PLS-SEM Results 61
References 62
Chapter 4 - Relationships among perceived conference quality and conference experience quality 66
Abstract 66
Introduction 67
The Meeting Industry 69
The Association Conference 70
Perceived Conference Quality 71
Conference Specific Dimensions 72
Professional Education 72
Professional & Social Networking 72
Destination Specific Dimensions 73
Site Attractiveness 73
Travelability 74
Site Environment 74
Conference Experience Quality 75
Learning 76
Self-esteem 77
Excitement 78
Proposed Conceptual Model 1 80
Methodology 82
Measures 82
Data Collection 83
Data Analysis and Results 83
Profile of the Sample 83
Model Mode (Reflective versus Formative indicators) 86

Structural Equation Modeling 87
Evaluation of the Measurement Model 88
Evaluation of the Structural Model 94
Hypotheses Testing 95
Discussion and Implications 98
Methodological Implications 100
Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study 102
References 103
Chapter 5 - Relationships among Perceived Conference Value, Satisfaction, and Behavioral Intentions 112
Abstract 112
Introduction 113
Perceived Conference Value 114
Utilitarian Value 116
Hedonic Value 116
Social Value 117
Satisfaction 118
Behavioral Intentions (Attitudinal loyalty) 119
Proposed Conceptual Model 2 121
Methodology 123
Measures 123
Qualifiers for Study Participation 123
Data Collection 123
Data Analysis and Results 124
Profile of the Sample 124
PLS-SEM 124
Evaluation of the Measurement Model 124
Evaluation of the Structural Model 126
Hypotheses Testing 127
Discussion and Implications 129
Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study 131

References 132
Chapter 6 - Summary and Conclusions 140
Research Summary 140
Major Findings 141
Conclusions and Implications 143
The Relationships among Perceived Conference Quality and Conference Experience Quality (Study 1) 143
The Relationships among Perceived Conference Value, Satisfaction, and Behavioral Intentions (Study 2) 146
Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research 148
References 149
Appendix A - Email Letter 151
Appendix B - Survey Questionnaire 153

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Study 1 Proposed Conceptual Model 28
Figure 2.2 Study 2 Proposed Conceptual Model 38
Figure 3.1 Formation of Reflective versus Formative Indicators with the Construct 59
Figure 4.1 Study 1 Proposed Conceptual Model 81
Figure 4.2 Formation of Reflective versus Formative indicators with the construct..... 87
Figure 4.3 Test Results of the Proposed Relationships..... 97
Figure 5.1 Study 2 Proposed Conceptual Model 122
Figure 5.2 Test Results of the Proposed Model Relationships 128
Figure 6.1 Summary of Hypotheses Tests 143
Figure 6.2 Summary of Hypotheses Tests 144

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Data Collection and Analysis Procedure 50
Table 3.2 Desriptions of Measurement of Constructs for the Study 1..... 53
Table 3.3 Desriptions of Measurement of Constructs for the Study 2..... 56
Table 4.1 Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents..... 85
Table 4.2 Variance Inflaction Factor Results 89
Table 4.3-1 Formative Measurement Items & Outer Weights Significance Testing Results..... 90
Table 4.3-2 Reflective Measurement Items and Loadings 91
Table 4.4 DesriptiveStatistics and Associated Measures..... 93
Table 4.5 Structural Equation Model Fit 95
Table 5.1 Measurement Items and loadings 125
Table 5.2 Desriptive Statistics and Associated Measures..... 126
Table 5.3 Structural Equation Model Fit 127
Table 5.4 Standardized Indirect and Total Effects..... 129
Table 6.1 Summary of Hypotheses Tests 142
Table 6.2 Summary of Hypotheses Tests 143

Acknowledgements

"I can do everything through him who give me strength." (Philippians 4: 13). Thank God for the wisdom, perseverance, and patience to successfully complete my dissertation and my graduate study. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to a number of people who made this journey possible.

First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my co-advisors, Dr. Chihyung Ok and Dr. Betsy Barrett, for their excellent guidance, caring, and patience throughout this journey. I was so fortunate to have both of you as my advisors. Appreciation is further given to my dissertation committee members, Dr. Kevin Roberts and Dr. Kevin Gwinner, for their expertise throughout my dissertation writing. I was so blessed to meet and work with you.

Special thanks goes to all graduate students in the Department of Hospitality Management and Dietetics for their love, encouragement, and support, making this process even more enjoyable. This achievement would have been impossible if not for the support and care of all of you. I will miss each of you and the days we spent together at the graduate office.

I offer my most heart-felt thanks to my parents, Gil Dae Choi and Ohk Hee Kim for their unconditional love, encouragement, and support throughout graduate school. I would not be who I am today without their teaching and guidance - diligence, honesty, patience, and appreciation. I would also like to thank my parents in law, Bong Hwan Cho and Sunee Woo for their love and understanding. My deepest thanks goes to my loving husband, Kyu Ha Cho, who is my best friend, greatest supporter, and biggest cheerleader. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine. Last, but not least, my loving gratitude goes to my son, Stephen Cho, with whom I have been pregnant throughout this process of dissertation. Thank you for staying healthy during my pregnancy. You are the best son that a person could have.

Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my father, Gil Dae Choi, my mother, OhkHee Kim, and my husband, Kyu Ha Cho for their unconditional love and support. This study is also dedicated to my son, Stephen Cho, who is a precious gift from God.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The meeting industry has become increasingly important to the hospitality industry (Bernini, 2009; Lee & Back, 2008) with the number of international meetings growing by 60% from 2001 to 2009 (going from 5,186 meetings to 8,294) (Convention Industry Council [CIC], 2011). With increasing attention from the hospitality industry, meeting industry studies have gained a spotlight in the hospitality literature (Lee & Back, 2009). Most previous meeting industry literature has focused on site selection factors (Baloglu & Love, 2001; Bonn, Brand, & Ohlin, 1994; Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Oppermann, 1996a); perception and image of destination (Baloglu & Love, 2001; Oppermann, 1996b); economic impact (Lee & Back, 2005); and issues of meeting planners (Baloglu & Love, 2001; Bonn, Ohlin, & Brand, 1994; Crouch & Ritchie, 1998). Little research has examined attendees' post-conference stage instead of the pre-conference stage (Lee & Back, 2009). Understanding attendee behavior as they evaluate the conference experience is important because attendees, who can, after all, choose to attend other conferences, are the major drivers of economic benefit to both associations and destinations (Lee & Back, 2009; Tretyakevich & Maggi, 2012; Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007).

An association conference involves organized and structured groups of people with similar interests (McCabe, Poole, Weeks, & Leiper, 2000), gathering to provide education and development to delegates in their field (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001). As the number of conferences increases, competition to attract potential attendees becomes fierce (Tretyakevich & Maggi, 2012). Because attendees can choose from a variety of meetings and conferences, understanding how they evaluate the conference experience is more critical than ever before. Host destinations with their convention facilities, hotels, and restaurants derive both direct and indirect benefits from the meetings, especially during the offseason, and they rely on positive word of mouth from conference attendees (Astroff & Abbey, 1998). Therefore, conference organizers, association meeting planners, and host destinations need research to better attract attendees to future conferences.

The service quality model (SERVQUAL) (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985) has been applied extensively in hospitality research. Perceived service quality mainly focuses on service personnel attitudes or professional abilities of service personnel and physical facilities (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Fick and Ritchie (1991), however, contended SERVQUAL does not

sufficiently cover the affective and holistic factors involved in the overall quality of service experience. Additionally, although perceived service quality has been widely studied in the hospitality industry, service experience, which is another related, nuanced factor, has been neglected (Chen & Chen, 2010).

Service experience is the "subjective personal reactions and feeling that are felt by consumers when consuming or using a service" (Chen & Chen, 2010, p. 29). Service quality differs from experience quality, as indicated in terms of measurement; service quality is objective, focusing on environment (external) whereas experience quality is subjective, focusing on oneself (internal) (Otto & Ritchie, 1996). Chen and Chen (2010) also discussed the difference between service quality and experience quality in (1) the scope (i.e., service quality is specific whereas experience quality is more general); (2) type of benefit (i.e., service quality is functional whereas experience quality is experiential/hedonic/symbolic); (3) psychological representation (i.e., service quality is cognitive/attitudinal whereas experience quality is affective).

Additionally, perceived service quality is under the control of supplier (Crompton & Love, 1995), whereas experience quality involves not only attributes offered by the supplier but also opportunity presented by the visitor (Chen & Chen, 2010). As Crompton and Love (1995, p. 12) pointed out, experience quality is the "quality involving not only the attributes provided by a supplier but also the attributes brought to the opportunity by the visitor or recreationist." Therefore, performance quality is service quality at the attribute level, whereas experience quality involves satisfaction at the transaction level (i.e., the psychological outcome resulting from involvement in tourism activities) (Cole & Scott, 2004). Service experience is arguably more influential for customer evaluation and satisfaction (Otto & Ritchie, 2000). Marketers therefore use products and services to create experiences, which enable them to generate unforgettable and inspiring activities for customers (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The hospitality industry is hedonic, generating customer experiences (Otto & Ritchie, 1996), so research into attendee experiences in the conference industry is important both theoretically and practically (Bigné, Andreu, & Gnoth, 2005).

Furthermore, a key construct within the service industry is customer perceived value, used to better understand customers (Jensen, 1996; Ostrom & Iacobucci, 1995). Perceived value is “the consumer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given” (Zetihmal, 1998, p. 14). Holbrook (1994, 1999) referred to perceived

value as an interactive realistic preference experience. That is, value depends not on the characteristics of a product but on how customers interact with a product (Kim, 2009). Perceived value could be viewed as a subjective construct that varies from customer to customer (Wikstom & Normann, 1994; Parasuraman, 1997), culture to culture (Assael, 1995), and time to time (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). Therefore, creating and delivering customer value is a precondition to understanding the behavior of conference attendees that meeting planners and destination organizers need to survive in today's competitive conference marketplace.

As a result, addressing these relationships (i.e., perceived conference quality and conference experience quality; perceived conference value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions) will benefit meeting planners, host destinations, and convention center organizers, giving them insight into the behavior of association conference attendees. Overall, by including these variables, this study contributes to the literature by focusing the attention of academics and businesses on a holistic representation of attendee's behavior.

Statement of the Problem

Both cognitive and affective concepts of consumer behavior are well recognized as parts of customer satisfaction (Wirtz, Mattila, & Tan, 2000). A solely cognitive approach is not enough to model satisfaction, so including emotional (i.e., affective) variables is especially important (Oliver, Rust, & Varki 1997; Wirtz & Bateson, 1999). Conferences can be viewed as experiential consumption, focusing on subjective experiences, so incorporating both cognitive (perceived conference quality) and affective/holistic (conference experience quality) concepts should better explain attendee behavior. However, research on relationships between the cognitive and affective in the conference context is lacking.

Moreover, perceived value is important in business and hospitality research (Oh, 2000; Park, 2004; Williams & Soutar, 2009; Zeithaml, 1998) as a reliable component that influences behavioral intentions. To accurately and holistically represent value, perceived value should be measured with multiple dimensions (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, and social value) (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994; Holbrook, 1994, 1999; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). That is, the utilitarian dimension originates in monetary savings and convenience, and the hedonic dimension in

entertainment and exploration, while the social dimension is realized through status and self enhancement (Rintamaki, Kanto, Kuusela, & Spence, 2006).

Purpose and Objectives

The main purpose of this study was to introduce the concepts of perceived conference quality and conference experience quality, and examine the effect of perceived conference value on satisfaction and behavioral intentions in conference settings. In an attempt to achieve these goals, the author suggests two conceptual models.

The first model was designed to evaluate how perceived conference quality (i.e., professional education, professional & social networking, site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) influence conference experience quality (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement). The second model was developed to examine how perceived conference value (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, and social values) drive behavioral intentions via satisfaction. As a result, the objectives of the study were to discover each effect and/or the collective effects of the antecedent variables on academic association conference contexts.

Hypotheses

The conceptual models of this study included a total of 17 hypotheses: 10 for the first model and seven for the second model. In the first model, relationships among perceived conference quality dimensions (i.e., professional education, professional & social networking, site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) and conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, excitement, and self-esteem) were investigated. In the second model, relationships among the dimensions of perceived conference value (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, and social value), satisfaction and behavioral intentions were examined. To achieve the purpose of the study, the author offers the following hypotheses:

First Model Hypotheses

H1a: Professional education has a positive effect on learning.

H2a: Professional & social networking has a positive effect on learning.

H3a: Site attractiveness has a positive effect on learning.

H4: Travelability has a positive effect on excitement.

H5: Site environment has a positive effect on excitement.

H1b: Professional education has a positive effect on self-esteem.

H2b: Professional & social networking has a positive effect on self-esteem.

H3b: Site attractiveness has a positive effect on excitement.

H1c: Professional education has a positive effect on excitement.

H2c: Professional & social networking has a positive effect on excitement.

Second Model Hypotheses

H6a: Utilitarian value has a positive effect on satisfaction.

H7a: Hedonic value has a positive effect on satisfaction.

H8a: Social value has a positive effect on satisfaction.

H6b: Utilitarian value has a positive effect on behavioral intentions.

H7b: Hedonic value has a positive effect on behavioral intentions.

H8b: Social value has a positive effect on behavioral intentions.

H9: Satisfaction has a positive effect on behavioral intentions.

Significance of the study

Perceived (service) quality, perceived value, and satisfaction have been extensively studied in hospitality research to explain behavioral intentions of customers (e.g., Baker & Crompton, 2000; Petrick, 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002), but studies of conferences are limited. Empirical tests of the quality of a customer's experience are largely limited to hotels, airlines, tours, theme parks, and attractions. Therefore, this study attempts to fill a gap in the research by suggesting two conceptual models for association conferences. The findings provide theoretical and practical implications for understanding components that describe attendee behaviors within the conference participation experience.

Theoretically, this study investigates and develops a robust theoretical model: (1) to understand attendee behavior by examining multidimensional conference quality dimensions and using them to evaluate conference performance; (2) to introduce dimensions associated with the quality of the conference experience such as learning, excitement and self-esteem; (3) to investigate the relationships among perceived conference quality and conference experience quality; (4) to propose multidimensional values in the conference context; (5) to examine the interrelationships among perceived conference value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. Practically, the study benefits meeting planners, host destinations, and convention centers or host organizers by maximizing the attendee conference experiences, allowing efficient product management, and attracting potential attendees while retaining repeat attendees.

Limitations of the study

The first limitation was in how well the data generalizes to other situations. The data was collected from attendees who participated in academic association conferences. Therefore, the findings of the study were limited to academic association conferences and might not apply to other types of meetings (expositions, festivals, and shows).

The second limitation involves using the retrospective approach in collecting data. The data were collected from subjects who had attended a conference within the past year, relying on their memories of the conference. Because conference attendees were the only ones who can provide an evaluation of the conference, relying on their memories seems a reasonably accurate way to collect this data. Retrospective data has often been used to measure attendee behavior in conference studies (Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2012; Ryu & Lee, 2013, Severt et al., 2007). To improve the accuracy of their responses, however, respondents were encouraged to think carefully before answering questions.

The third limitation is the use of self-reported questionnaires. Self-reported questionnaires may result in inflated relationships among variables, which creates common method variance (CMV) in statistical analysis (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). To decrease the effect of CMV, the author guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of subject responses.

The last limitation was the cross-sectional design of the study: the data were collected at one particular point in time, which can only provide a snapshot of the population (Bobko & Stone-Romero, 1998). That is, if another time frame has been chosen, the results might differ.

Definitions of Terms

- The Meeting Industry: The meeting industry involves people (delegates) with common professional or social interests gathering to share or learn ideas or information and hold discussions over their field or industry, and to network with colleagues and friends (Business Tourism Briefing, 2007; Convention Industry Council, 2011).
- The Association Conference: Association conference refers to organized and structured groups of people (delegates) gathering for opportunities of education and development in their fields (McCabe, Poole, Weeks, & Leiper, 2000; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001).
- Perceived Conference Quality: Perceived conference quality is an attendee's evaluation of a conference's overall excellence (Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Min, 2013).
- Conference Specific Dimensions
    - Professional Education: Professional education refers to attendees' gaining new knowledge, keeping up with research/industry trends, and attending sessions with keynote speakers at a conference (Lee & Back, 2008; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Severt, et al., 2007).
    - Professional & Social Networking: Professional & social networking involves activities like finding new professional contacts, gathering valuable information on industry/trends, and seeking job opportunities at a conference (Lee & Back, 2008; Price, 1993).
- Destination Specific Dimensions
    - Site Attractiveness: Site attractiveness refers to local attractions, recreational activities, shopping, and dining (Oppermann & Chon, 1997).
    - Travelability: Travelability refers to ease of access and multiple transportation modes (Lee & Min, 2013).

    - Site Environment: Site environment refers to safety/security and climate standards (Lee & Min, 2013).
- Conference Experience Quality: Conference experience quality is defined as the affective responses of conference attendees to the desired social or psychological benefits or outcomes that attendees experience (cf. Chen & Chen, 2010; Cole & Scott, 2004).
    - Learning: Learning is a unique and personal contextual experience where people gain knowledge, acquire ideas, and construct new visions for themselves and the public (Falk, Ballantyne, Packer, & Benckendorff, 2012).
    - Self-esteem: Self-esteem is "an individual's sense of value or self-worth or the extent to which people value, appreciate or like themselves" (Lane, Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004, p. 249).
    - Excitement: Excitement involves "aspects of an experience that are perceived by visitors to be enjoyable or pleasant" (Packer & Ballantyne, 2004, p. 56).
- Perceived Conference Value: Perceived conference value involves what conference attendees want from a conference and believe that they received from a conference (cf. Woodruff, 1997).
    - Utilitarian Value: Utilitarian value is an evaluation of value combined with quality, the conventional value for money, and convenience characteristics (Chen & Hu, 2009).
    - Hedonic Value: Hedonic value is the impression of value based on emotion and aesthetics (Chen & Hu, 2010).
    - Social Value: Social value involves a social act where symbolic meanings, social codes, relationships, and the conference attendee's identity and self may be produced and reproduced (cf. Firat & Venkatesh, 1993).
- Satisfaction: Satisfaction is defined as "customers' cognitive and affective evaluation based on their personal experience across all service episodes within the relationship" (Storbacka, Strandvik, & Grönroos, 1994, p. 25).
- Behavioral Intentions: Behavioral intentions is "a degree of dispositional commitment" (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001, p. 82).

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Chapter 2 - Review of Literature

This chapter reviews literature on the meeting industry, the association conference, perceived conference quality (i.e., professional education, professional & social networking, site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment), conference experience quality (i.e., learning, excitement, and self-esteem), perceived conference value (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, and social values), satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. The review of related literature involves the constructs and theories that may support relationships between the constructs. Based on the literature review, seventeen hypotheses are developed (10 hypotheses for the first model and seven hypotheses for the second model).

The Meeting Industry

According to Business Tourism Briefing (2007) and Convention Industry Council (CIC, 2011), the meeting industry involves people (delegates) gathering because of common professional or social interests to share ideas or information, to hold discussions about their field, and to network with collegues and friends. The meeting industry is also known as the MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions) industry or MEEC (meetings, expositions, events, and conventions) industry. Meetings typically include "conventions, conferences, congresses, tradeshows and exhibitions, incentive events, corporate/business meetings, and other meetings that meet the aformentioned criteria" (CIC, 2011, p. 3). More specifically, meetings are characterized by length (i.e., mimimum of 4 hours), size (i.e., minimum of 10 participants), and place (i.e., a contracted venue) (CIC, 2011).

The meeting industry has shown remarkable growth in the past decade (Bernini, 2009; Kim, Chon, & Chung, 2003; Weber & Roehl, 2001). According to CIC (2011), in 2009, 205 million people participated in nearly 1.8 million meetings in the United States. In 2009, the meeting industry also contributed $106 billion directly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)(total GDP is $14.1 trillion), creating 1,650 full and part-time jobs (CIC, 2011). Globally, the number of international meetings grew from 5,186 in 2000 to 8,294 in 2009, a growth rate of

60% (CIC, 2011). Consequently, 252 countries now compete for a share in this lucrative market (Union of International Association, 2009).

The Association Conference

Associations use annual conferences as one critical method of communicating amongst association members (Business Tourism Briefing, 2007). Academic and research institutions send individuals to these meetings for a number of reasons: (1) to publish and present their research; (2) to gain publicity for their institutions/programs; (3) to enhance a program's standing and; (4) to attract potentially talented individuals to their institutions (Business Toursim Briefing, 2007).

Associations are characterized by size and membership, which can vary in volume, number, and scope and which can be regional or international (Business Tourism Briefing, 2007). Annual association conferences are highly profitable in the hospitality industry because they bring so many participants to conference destinations, creating local employment, taxes, and investments (Lee & Back, 2008; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Oppermann, 1998). Accordingly, managing and marketing these association conferences is important as the number of association meetings grows, competing to attract more attendees (Loverseed, 1993). Moreover, approximately 30% of an association's annual income comes from revenue generated by annual meetings (Shure, 2004), and conference expenses are paid by association members (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). Associations are therefore becoming more interested in marketing strategies that can continuously attract attendees to their annual meetings (Lee & Back, 2009a). Thus, not only are associations interested in conferences for professional reasons but also for economic ones.

Perceived Conference Quality

Zeithaml (1998) defined perceived service quality as "a global judgment, or attitude, relating to the superiority of the service (p.16)." Perceived quality is a user-based approach (Garvin, 1983), involving "the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or

superiority" (Zeithaml, 1998, p.3). Also, perceived quality of a given service is "a result of an evaluation process, in which the consumer compares his expectations with his perception of the service received" (Grönross, 1984, p. 37). Based on this concept of perceived quality, perceived conference quality can be defined as the attendee's evaluation of a conference's overall excellence (cf. Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2012; Lee & Min, 2013).

Just as service quality is judged using different attributes (like tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) (Zeithaml & Britner, 2003), evaluating perceived conference quality requires using different attributes in different dimensions (Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Back, 2008; Lee & Min, 2013; Ryu & Lee, 2013). For instance, Lee and Back (2008, 2010) applied convention quality factors (i.e., professional education, social networking, site selection, and staff service) to examine attendee-based brand equity. Kim et al. (2012) examined the differences between first-time attendees and repeat attendees using two convention quality dimensions (i.e., convention-specific and site-specific). More recently, Ryu and Lee (2013) used different attributes of dimensions of convention quality such as accessibility, extra convention opportunity, site environment, social networking, professional education, and staff service.

Therefore, perceived conference quality should be examined using a number of different dimensions. Building on the theoretical background and empirical approaches of previous research (Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Back, 2008; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007), this study adopts two major categories with five constructs and uses them to measure perceived conference quality: (1) conference specific dimensions that involve professional education (i.e., educational sessions and keynote speaker) and professional & social networking (i.e., interacting and expanding relationships with colleagues and friends); and (2) destination specific dimensions, referring to site attractiveness (i.e., sightseeing and shopping/dining), travelability (i.e., accessibility and public transportation), and site environment (i.e., safety/hygiene standards and climate).

Conference Specific Dimensions

The main reasons to participate in a conference are to gain and present ideas and to develop professional and social networks (Oppermann, 1995; Oppermann & Chon, 1997).

Attendees have the inherent goal to gain skills and knowledge (Butler, 1999) and do not want to feel isolated or excluded (Brown, 2001). Consequently, attendees choose a conference that provides the best opportunity for professional education and social networking (Lee & Min, 2013). Conference specific dimensions are critical dimensions in conference research (Oppermann, 1995; Opperman & Chon, 1997; Price, 1993; Rittichainuwat, Beck, & Lalopa, 2001). For example, conference attendees are motivated by professional education and professional & social networking to attend conferences (Lee & Back, 2008; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Price, 1993; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). More recently, convention quality dimensions (like professional education and social networking) have been used in judging convention quality (Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Kim, 2012; Ryu & Lee, 2013).

Based on theoretical background and empirical approach from the previous study, the study adopts professional education (i.e., learning and keeping up with the changes in the field) and professional & social networking (i.e., developing social network and professional contacts) as the conference specific dimensions.

Professional Education

Professional education involves gaining knowledge and keeping up with research/industry trends through educational sessions and keynote speakers (Lee & Back, 2008; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Severt, et al., 2007). Professional education depends on the motivation to achieve (Lee & Back, 2008), which is a critical benefit of a conference (Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Price, 1993). Professional education has been extensively reviewed in conference studies (Lee & Back, 2008; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Price, 1993; Ryu & Lee, 2013). Educational opportunity is a strong variable in the decision to attend a conference and a large part of evaluating association involvement in conferences (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). Lee and Back (2008) discovered in their study that professional education positively related to brand satisfaction. Yoo and Chon (2008) found professional education significantly influenced the process of deciding to attend a convention. Moreover, professional education has been investigated as an important dimension of perceived quality (Kim et al., 2012; Ryu & Lee, 2013).

Professional & Social Networking

Expanding relationships with colleagues and friends can be a motive to participate in a conference (Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Price, 1993; Lee & Back, 2009b). Conference organizers can facilitate professional and social networking, providing conference activities for finding new professional contacts, exchanging valuable information, and offering access to job opportunities at a conference (Lee & Back, 2008; Price, 1993). Social networking is an important construct in the conference literature (Mair & Thompson, 2009; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Witt, Sykes, & Dartus, 1995). Oppermann (1998) and Yoo and Chon (2008) discovered in their study that networking was highly ranked among variables that influenced the decision to attend a convention. More recently, social networking has been examined as a critical dimension of perceived convention quality (Ryu & Lee, 2013). Also, Kim et al. (2012) used the social networking construct as a quality dimension in evaluating first-time and repeat conference attendees.

Destination Specific Dimensions

Although the main purpose of a conference is to augment knowledge and expand relationships with colleagues (Kim et al., 2012), previous research has often neglected conference destination selection criteria like site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment. Conference participants prefer conferences at a reputable destination (Oppermann, 1998), and conference destination (geographic area) is also a critical part of conference success because favored sites can increase levels of attendance (Lee & Back, 2008; Oppermann, 1995). Therefore, site selection is important in studies of conference management and marketing (Go & Govers, 1999). Lee and Back (2008) proposed site selection as a quality dimension for evaluating attendee-based brand equity. More recently, destination specific constructs (like extra-convention opportunity, accessibility, and site environment) have been acknowledged as convention quality dimensions (Kim et al., 2012; Ryu & Lee, 2013).

Based on the theory and empirical evidence of the literature, this study chose site attractiveness (e.g., sightseeing, shopping/dining, recreation, and entertainment), travelability

(accessibility and multiple transportation mode), and site environment (safety/security and climate) as destination specific dimensions.

Site Attractiveness

Conference attendees are attracted by extra opportunities outside the convention: local attractions, recreational activities, and shopping (Oppermann & Chon, 1997), and site attractiveness is a critical attribute for those attending the conference (Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Ryu & Lee, 2013;Yoo & Chon, 2008). Association conferences are partly or fully supported financially by the organizations sponsoring them, so if attendees and spouses prefer to attend conferences that offer more extra opportunities and spouse/guest programs, that makes this attribute particularly important (Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Min, 2013; Mair & Thompson, 2009). Site attractiveness has been extensively studied in previous research (Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Oppermann & Chon, 1997). Crouch and Ritchie (1998) proposed extra-conference opportunities as a site selection factor in their framework of convention site selection. Var, Cesario, and Mauser (1985) suggested that the attractiveness of a conference destination is critical in selecting conference locations. Lee and Back (2008) and Kim et al. (2012) also investigated extra-conference opportunities as a convention quality dimension.

Travelability

Conferences are held in many countries and many cities throughout the world. Attendees prefer conferences held in well-known places because attendees are strictly limited both in time and money (Oppermann, 1996b); well-known places usually have good access to a variety of types of transportation. Also, this kind of access is strongly related to the cost of travel, making it important in the decision making process (Lee & Min, 2013). According to Oppermann (1998), high travel cost is a barrier in the decision to attend a convention, and destinations with less access (i.e., long travel times and few types of available transportation) lead to higher travel costs (Lee & Min, 2013). Travelability has also been studied in the previous literature (Lee & Back, 2008; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Oppermann & Chon, 1997). Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) proposed “affordability and availability of time” (i.e., transportation) and “distance and ease of access” (i.e., short distance and ease access) as a facilitating factor for conference attendees that

makes it easier for delegates to attend a conference. Also, travelability (or accessibility) is one of the convention quality dimensions (Kim et al., 2012; Ryu & Lee, 2013).

Site Environment

Conference attendees consider site environmental factors such as security, safety, climate, and local people before deciding to attend a conference (Lee & Min, 2013). Recently, attendees have become specially aware of natural disasters, outbreaks of communicable diseases, terrorism threats, and local violence (Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Min, 2013). Climate is critical to that decision as well (Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Min, 2013). For international conferences, climate is more important than for regional conferences (Mair & Thompson, 2009). Site environment has been discussed frequently in previous studies (Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Oppermann, 1996b; Yoo & Chon, 2008). For example, according to Oppermann and Chon (1997), among site selection factors, site environment (safety and climate) is important in the decision making process. Safety environment was a convention quality in another investigation of attendee-based brand equity (Lee & Back, 2008). More recently, Ryu and Lee (2013) examined both safety and climate as convention quality dimensions.

Conference Experience Quality

Experience quality is conceptualized as "tourists' affective responses to their desired social psychological benefits" (Chen & Chen, 2010, p.30). Cole and Scott (2004) defined experience quality as "those benefits or outcomes that people experience as a result of a trip or visit to a tourist attraction" (p. 30). Moreover, experiences are the latest economic offering, distinct from, and frequently more highly valued than goods and services (Pine & Gilemore, 1999). According to King (2002), marketing tourism experience requires more direct engagement with the customer. However, to the author's knowledge, the concept of experience quality has not yet drawn attention in studies of conferences. Drawing on the concept of experience quality, conference experience quality could be defined as the conference attendees'

affective responses to desired social and psychological benefits or outcomes that attendees experience.

In hospitality and tourism studies, a growing body of literature has used the concept of experience quality to better understand customers/visitors. For instance, Otto and Ritchie (1996) developed a scale for experience quality with four items: hedonics (involving affective responses like enjoyment and excitement); peace of mind (the need for both physical and psychological comfort and safety); involvement (need for control, choice, and education in the service offering); and recognition (consumers being treated seriously and thus feeling self-worth, importance, and confidence). They used three tourism sectors: hotels, airlines, and tours and attractions. Kao, Huang, and Wu (2008) proposed four experiential qualities for theme parks: immersion (the consumption process leading consumers to forget time); surprise (freshness, specialty, or uniqueness); participation (the interaction between visitors and product/service); and fun (happiness and enjoyment). Their results indicated that experiential quality has direct and indirect positive influence on satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Pine and Gilmore (1999) categorized four service experiences: education, entertainment, escape, and aesthetics. Finally, Cole and Scott (2004) investigated experience quality with three multi-item scales: entertainment, education, and community benefits, which were the primary benefits offered by tourist attractions.

Customer experience has been a central component of leisure and hospitality research (Scott, Laws, & Boksberger, 2009), so conference studies should incorporate perceived experience quality and focus on more experiential aspects. The first step in designing experience is to analyze and classify existing experience (Scott et al., 2009). Conference participants attend conferences to learn about industry and research trends, enjoy and experience excitement, and increase their self-value. Building on previous research, the author derives conference experience quality dimensions comprising factors unique to the conference context. Therefore, this study adopts and measures conference experience quality using three constructs: (1) learning (i.e., attendees exploring new ideas during the conference, gaining knowledge and constructing new visions for themselves), (2) excitement (i.e., enjoyable or pleasant experiences), and (3) self-esteem (i.e., self-worth).

Learning

Learning continues well beyond formal education, and less structured contexts of learning may provide individuals the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills (Broomhall & Pitman, Majocha, & McEwan, 2010). Learning is the unique and personal contextual experience where people gain knowledge, acquire ideas, and construct new visions for themselves (Falk, Ballantyne, Packer, & Benckendorff, 2012). Travel offers one important lifelong learning context (Broomhall et al., 2010), and travel has been critical in helping some learners develop their skills (Kuh, 1995). However, despite this relationship, the nexus between learning and travel has been neglected in most hospitality/tourism studies (Falk et al., 2012). The conference industry combines learning and travel in what also can be called educational tourism (cf. Falk et al., 2012); conference attendees participate to obtain knowledge, keep up with research and industry trends, and visit site attractions (Lee & Back, 2008).

Learning is recognized in the literature as a motivator for tourists (Crompton, 1979; Iso-Ahola, 1982), which provides a useful starting point for considering learning as part of conference experience quality. Park and Yoon (2009) discussed learning motivation: learning new things, increasing knowledge, experiencing new and different lifestyles, and traveling to destinations. Jang and Wu (2006) considered knowledge-seeking as the most important motivation for seniors who travel. Furthermore, Dube and Le Bel (2003) proposed intellectual pleasure as enjoyment of the complexities around a customer. Involvement has also been proposed as part of experience quality referring to having control, choice, and education in a service offering (Otto & Richie, 1996). Recently, in the tourist experience, learning has become a holistic and satisfying segment (Falk et al., 2012).

Effects of Conference Specific Dimensions (Professional Education and Professional & Social Networking) on Learning

Perceived (service) quality and affective components like experience are positively related to one another (Cole & Scott, 2004). The main purpose of attending a conference is to obtain new ideas and to interact with other professionals (Oppermann, 1998). In addition, conference attendees participate directly and indirectly by presenting research in the educational session, attending keynote speaker sessions, and expanding relationships with others in

attendance, which provides attendees with formal/informal and beneficial information about new industry trends, job opportunities, and other business events. All of this helps create a learning experience. Meeting planners could thus increase the involvement of attendees at a conference by satisfying their desire to learn.

Therefore, integrating both theory and empirical evidence, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1a: Professional education has a positive effect on learning.

H2a: Professional & social networking has a positive effect on learning.

Effects of Site Attractiveness on Learning

Leisure can be serious (Stebbins, 1982), especially if leisure settings offer an educational component like museums, national parks, and heritage sites (Packer & Ballantyne, 2004). Tourists often consider leisure activities as an opportunity for learning and seek out such experiences (Kelly & Freysinger, 2000). Novelty motivates many tourists; they seek stimulation and adventure, new places to explore, and new things to learn (Lee & Crompton, 1992; Mayo & Jarvis, 1981). People often learn to think creatively in responding to unpredictable environmental changes, even when knowledge is not acquired for practical use (Rounds, 2004). However, few studies have attempted to deeply understand what causes some leisure activities (like sightseeing, recreation, and entertainment) to become learning experiences. Such activities enhance destination attractiveness and give conference attendees the opportunity to learn and explore new things.

Hence, based on both theory and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H3a: Site attractiveness has a positive effect on learning.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is "an individual's sense of value or self-worth or the extent to which people value, appreciate or like themselves" (Lane, Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004, p.249). Kitayama and

Markus (1995) indicated that self-esteem is often taken for granted, that people are motivated to feel good about themselves, pointing out that people learn to like themselves and doing so is a sign of appropriate psychological adjustment. Therefore, self-esteem is an important concept in personality studies (Singer, 1984). Self-worth is also motivated by social recognition (Grubb & Hupp, 1968). Self-esteem can be a judgment of oneself (Diener & Diener, 2009), a feeling of pride and confidence. Particularly, the desire to learn is part of self-development and self-actualization (i.e., obtaining a new life perspective) (Falk et al., 2012).

Social opportunities, professional development, and self-enhancement are all potential motivating factors for conference attendees (Mair & Thompson, 2009). Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) suggested networking is an important motivator for conference attendees and is part of self-enhancement, particularly career and leadership enhancement. One experience quality factor that Otto and Richie (1996) proposed is recognition, which is linked to feeling confident and important while being taken seriously. Dube and Le Bel (2003) proposed one pleasurable experience such as social pleasure, which derives from interactions with others.

Effects of Conference Specific Dimensions (Professional Education and Professional & Social Networking) on Self-Esteem

Conference/association activities (educational sessions and social networking) and self-enhancement (personal/professional development) have caused some confusion in the literature (Mair & Thompson, 2009), although with careful measurements in investigation, these two constructs can be closely linked. Most conference attendees are highly motivated to educate themselves, so they want educational opportunities that can increase self-esteem. Social networking also provides opportunities to create self-worth with information about new industry trends, job opportunities, and business events. Pine and Gilemore (1999) proposed that individuals want engaging and personal experiences (i.e., professional & social networking) that boost their self-esteem.

Therefore, integrating both theory and empirical background, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1b: Professional education has a positive effect on self-esteem.

H2b: Professional & social networking has a positive effect on self-esteem.

Excitement

Customers no longer purchase a product solely for its function but also for fun and excitement (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), suggesting that customers make buying decisions not only rationally but also experientially (Kao et al., 2008). Traditional marketing typically focuses on the function and benefits of products, whereas experiential marketing focuses on senses, feelings, thinking, acting, and related values (Schmitt, 1999). As consumers become more willing to spend for reasons other than a product's function, marketing becomes more complicated, and traditional services and marketing practices can no longer satisfy personalized and varied consumer needs (Kao et al., 2008). Furthermore, more and more consumers look at the benefits of enjoyment and pleasure involved in using products/services.

Excitement or entertainment involves "aspects of an experience that are perceived by visitors to be enjoyable or pleasant" (Packer & Ballantyne, 2004, p. 56). Excitement is also an emotional reaction that implies characteristics of feelings ranging from exciting to boring, stimulating to un-stimulating, and interesting to uninteresting (Russell & Pratt, 1980). Any kind of consumption can be framed as play because play indicates an agreement among two or more people that follows a unique set of rules (Grayson & Deighton, 1995). Customers generally look for more playful consumption (Grayson & Deighton, 1995). That is, consumers seek out experiences with fun and fantasy (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Holbrook (1996) indicated leisure, play, and fun as customer values where customers focus on enjoyment. Commonly, visitors seek entertainment (Schauble, Beane, Coates, Martin, & Sterling, 1996), and as marketing becomes more interactive, customers search for more exciting and playful consumption experiences (Grayson & Deighton, 1995).Otto and Richie (1996) proposed hedonics as an experience quality linked to affective responses like memorability, excitement, and enjoyment. Kao et al. (2008) also developed fun (i.e., happiness and enjoyment) as a factor in experience quality. Customer experience is enhanced by entertainment (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and emotional pleasure (Dube & Le Bel, 2003).

Effects of Conference Specific Dimensions (Professional Education and Professional & Social Networking) on Excitement

Museum studies have sparked a debate on education and entertainment (McManus, 1993). Museum organizations usually consider a museum as a scholarly place (i.e., a place of learning instead of entertainment); however, visitors view it as entertainment (Miles, 1986). That is, learning can be a mixture of education and entertainment; the two concepts need not be antithetical. Work, in other words, can be enjoyable. Similarly, conference attendees want opportunities for professional education and professional & social networking, which can be called educational leisure. Moreover, attendees nowadays expect professional education at conferences to be entertaining; attendees have become more sophisticated and more easily bored (Lee & Back, 2009b). Perceptions of higher quality opportunities at conferences (i.e., professional education and professional and social networking) will lead to higher levels of excitement.

Therefore, integrating both theory and empirical evidence, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1c: Professional education has a positive effect on excitement.

H2c: Professional & social networking has a positive effect on excitement.

Effects of Destination Specific Dimensions (Site Attractiveness, Travelability, and Site Environment) on Excitement

Holbrook (1996) has indicated leisure and fun are consumer values, in the sense that customers gain enjoyment and fun from play. Enjoying consumption leads customers to forget time is passing (Kao et al., 2008). More recently, people have begun to seek leisure that is fun, enjoyable, and relaxing, leisure that can decrease work pressure and increase the pace of life (Scott, 2000). This applies to those who attend conferences even as they educate themselves and network with other professionals. Conference attendees obtain excitement from interacting with the environment, particularly any attractions of the destination. Special and unique experiences will surprise attendees, allowing the experience to remain vivid in their memories (Kao et al., 2008). Conference packages not only include airplane tickets, lodging and recreational facilities, but also access to the location and its attractions, safety standards, and climate. Other studies

have mentioned the leisure aspects of participating in a conference, like recreational activities and events, as one motive for attending the conference (Oppermann, 1996a; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Severt et al., 2007). Yoon and Uysal (2005) indicated that destination organizers should consider relaxation, safety, and fun to appeal to the internal motivation to travel, which makes the conference destination critical. Site attractiveness, ease of access and availability of multiple transportation modes, and safety/climate help conference attendees enjoy a conference.

Hence, based on both theory and empirical evidence, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H3b: Site attractiveness has a positive effect on excitement.

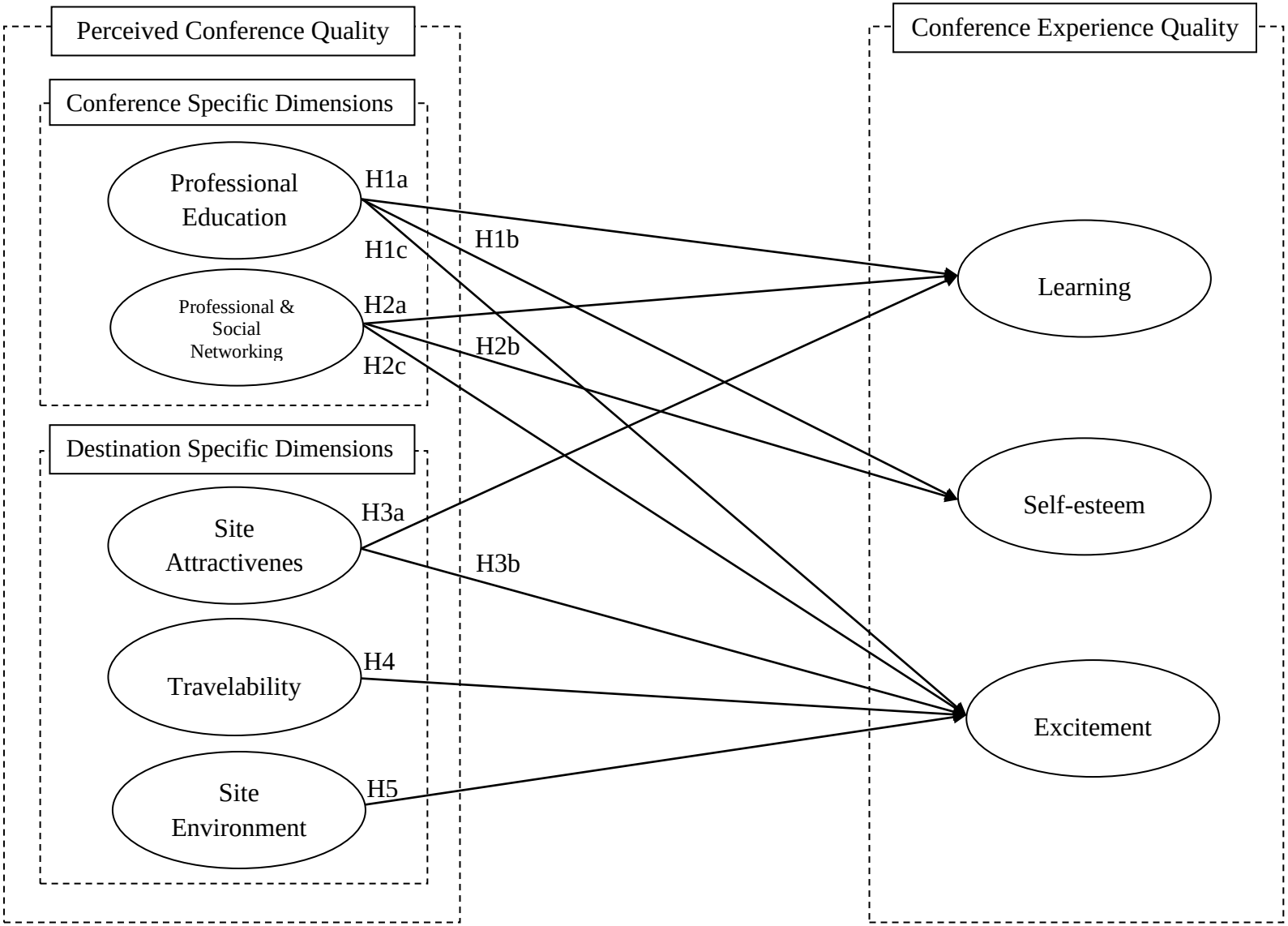
H4: Travelability has a positive effect on excitement.

H5: Site environment has a positive effect on excitement.

Proposed Conceptual Model 1

Figure 2.1 illustrates the focus of the first study. Two dimensions of perceived conference quality (i.e., conference specific dimensions consisting of professional education and professional & social networking and second, the destination specific dimensions consisting of site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) are antecedents of conference experience quality (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement).

Figure 2.1. Study 1 Proposed Conceptual Model



Perceived Conference Value

Perceived value is a key concept in the hospitality literature, accepted and extensively studied for understanding customers (Bojanic, 1996; Jensen, 1996; Ostrom & Iacobucci, 1995; Park, 2004; Williams & Soutar, 2009). Among many other definitions of perceived value, Zeithmal's (1988) definition is built on the utility/functional theory and is frequently cited in the literature: "the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given" (Zetihmal, 1988, p. 14). This functional/economic approach relies on the utilitarian (e.g., price or quality) point of view, which assesses value in a trade-off between quality and cost (Lee & Min, 2013). What is received and given may vary. That is, perceived value could be considered a subjective construct that varies from customer to customer (Wikstom & Normann, 1994; Parasuraman, 1997), from culture to culture (Assael, 1995), and from time to time (Ravald & Grönross, 1996).

In addition to criticizing unidimensional perceived value, Sweeney and Soutar (2001) argued the need for delicate measurement for better understanding of how consumers value products and services. Woodruff (1997) expanded the concept of customer perceived value and contended that perceived value may vary depending on the stage and types of the product or services. He defined perceived value as "what customers want and believe they get from buying and using a seller's product" (p. 140). Significant numbers of researchers have insisted that customer choice is the result of multiple value perceptions and that both scholars and practitioners should consider an approach taking into account various value perceptions (Babin, Darden & Griffin, 1994; Petrick, 2002; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). For instance, Grönroos' (1997) approach is based on a conception of multidimensional perceived value with cognitive and emotional value constructs. Babin et al. (1994) measured shopping value with utilitarian (functional) and hedonic (emotional) value. Gursoy, Spangenberg, and Rutherford (2006) adopted utilitarian and hedonic values to investigate behaviors of festival visitors. More recently, Lee, Lee, and Choi (2011) used multidimensional values like functional and emotional values as mediators between festival quality and behavioral intentions.

Although the literature has identified many value perceptions like utilitarian (functional) and hedonic (symbolic) values, the unique situation of the conference industry requires assessing social value as well. Social value is usually considered as a sub-dimension that contributes to

either utilitarian or hedonic value (Chandon, Wansink, & Laurent, 2000). However, the social concept of consumption could be a reliable part of multidimensional value when customers consume products/services to exhibit social status and achieve social approval (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). For example, Sweeney and Soutar (2001) included measurements like "If I bought or used this item, it would create a favorable impression of me" (p. 213) to assess how the customer perceived social value inherent in consumer durable goods. Social value can also be used to assess multidimensional value perception. For example, Sánchez, Callarisa, Rodríguez, and Moliner (2006) indicated six underlying dimensions of value: four functional values (i.e., the travel agency, the contact staff in the travel agency, the tourist package offered, price), the emotional value, and the social value. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) developed a perceived value scale known as PERVAL to assess the multidimensional value of durable products at the brand level: two functional values (i.e., quality and price value for money), social value, and emotional value.

In sum, building on PERVAL (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001), this study adopts multidimensional value with utilitarian (functional), hedonic (emotional), and social values to investigate conference attendee perceptions of the conference from the following perspective. First, the utilitarian dimension originates in monetary savings; second, the hedonic dimension originates in emotional benefits and psychological aspects (i.e., entertainment and exploration); and third, the social dimension originates in social status and peer recognition. Creating and delivering multidimensional value to conference attendees may be a precondition for meeting planners and conference organizers to survive by attracting more attendees in a competitive marketplace.

Utilitarian Value

Chen and Hu (2010) defined utilitarian value as an evaluation using both the conventional value of money and convenience characteristics. This utilitarian perception is based on the hypothesis that consumers are rational problem-solvers (Bettman, 1979). That is, the utilitarian point of view focuses on practical and product-centric thinking (Rintamaki, Kanto, Kuusela, & Spence, 2006) and is derived from attributes of both quality and price (Babin et al.,

1994; Holbrook, 1994, 1999; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). For instance, utilitarian value can be fulfilled for a consumer when the perceived price is lower than at competing stores (Rintamaki et al., 2006). Consequently, saving money provides utilitarian value, which may reduce the pain of paying (Chandon et al., 2000).

Basically, price and quality form the foundation for utilitarian value in the economic/cognitive utility theory (Lee & Min, 2013; Sheth, Jagdish, & Barbara, 1991). Practical needs may be satisfied by utilitarian (functional) value (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). Functional value for quality/performance is not included in this study because functional value overlaps the psychographic factors of conference quality dimensions, so price and value for money (e.g., travel cost and registration fee) are included as the utilitarian value in the conceptual model to capture economic value of conferences to attendees. That is, attendees see that a conference has utilitarian value when the cost of the conference is economical.

Hedonic Value

In the early 1980s, consumer researchers became interested in hedonic value as a goal with its own benefits. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) suggested three F's (fantasies, feelings, and fun) that represent the hedonic view of consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) also noted that "hedonic consumption designates those facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one's experience with products" (p. 92). Unlike utilitarian value, hedonic value is more personal and subjective, derived from enjoyment and playfulness (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). When purchasing a product, hedonic value is indicated by increased arousal, heightened involvement, perceived freedom, and fantasy fulfillment (Bloch & Richins, 1983).

Consumers become aware of hedonic value when the act of purchasing is appreciated in its own right. The term, "self-purposeful" and "self-oriented" describe the hedonic value well (Babin et al., 1994; Holbrook, 1999). Also, entertainment and exploration are aspects of hedonic value. Previous scholars have compared today's purchasing experience to a theme park or a theater (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt, 1999; Wolf, 1999). Overall, a store atmosphere can include the environments and events to make the purchasing experience more entertaining,

hence, having hedonic value (Babin & Attaway, 2000; Chandon et al., 2000; Holbrook, 1999; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt, 1999; Turley & Milliman, 2000). Hedonic purchasing value reflects the purchase of potential entertainment and emotional worth (Bellenger, Steinberg, & Stanton, 1976). Therefore, the mere action of staying in a store can create positive emotions and entertainment in consumers.

Hedonic value generally represents experimental value impressions through emotions and aesthetics (Chen & Hu, 2010). Therefore, hedonic value can be regarded as a critical evaluation for conference attendees because they experience emotional and psychological benefits from the conference (Lee & Min, 2013). That is, emotional value reflects affective/emotional states like excitement, pleasure, and disappointment, which are associated with the conference consumption experience (Lee & Min, 2013; Sheth et al., 1991). Hedonic value among conference attendees can be increased by enhancing enjoyment and pleasurable feelings. Conference attendees are pleased to learn and excited to visit the conference destination.

Social Value

Consuming goods and services indicates a social act where symbolic meanings, relationships, social codes, and the customer's identity may be produced and reproduced (Firat & Venkatesh, 1993). That is, consuming goods or services relies on how customers see themselves and how they want others to see them (Sheth et al., 1991; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). The process of purchasing may enhance self-worth, which contributes to social value and leads to intention to purchase (Rintamaki et al., 2006). According to Lee and Min (2013), customers select more prestigious goods and services because of their social image not because of a product’s utilitarian (functional) performance. That is, social value affects the self-image that they seek to demonstrate (Sheth et al., 1991).

Rintamaki et al. (2006) indicated that “self-esteem enhancement is a benefit experienced when symbolic features derived from the company, store, products, personnel and other customers are attached to self in order to define and maintain one's concept of self” (p. 15). Consumers communicate signs of position or membership using social features, thus enhancing their status (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Status seeking probably had its origin in materialism and

is connected to obvious consumption (Babin et al., 1994; Richins & Dawson, 1992; Veblen, 1967). Also, consumers engaging in status enhancement are high self-monitors, mainly concerned with how they play their role (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997) and the impression they give to others.

This same symbolic benefit, however, is part of attending a conference. Attendees express their personal values by attending the conference (cf. Chandon et al., 2000), so social value is important when examining perceived conference value because attendees are motivated, in part, by the need for social networking and feeling accepted by colleagues/friends (Lee & Min, 2013). Attendees interact with each other in the conference environment, so this study includes social value as a critical part of perceived value.

Satisfaction

One generally accepted theory for elucidating customer satisfaction is Lewin's (1938) Expectancy-Disconfirmation theory. This theory suggests that consumers have expectations about product or services before consumption, and they evaluate the product or service at least in part using that expectation. When their perception of the consumption exceeds their expectations of product or service, consumers develop a positive attitude towards the product or service, thus leading to positive behavioral intention (Carpenter, 2007; Tse & Peter, 1988). In contrast, when perception of consumption does not fulfill their expectations, they will develop negative attitudes, leading to dissatisfaction (Ha & Jang, 2010).

Oliver (1997) defined customer satisfaction as “the consumer’s fulfillment response, the degree to which the level of fulfillment is pleasant or unpleasant” (p. 28). Similarly, Hunt (1977) defined satisfaction as "an evaluation rendered that the (product) experience was at least as good as it was supposed to be" (p. 459). Storbacka, Strandvik, and Grönross (1994) defined satisfaction as “customers’ cognitive and affective evaluation based on their personal experience across all service episodes within the relationship” (p. 25). In all these definitions, it logically follows that customer satisfaction is a primary determinant of customer long term behavior (Oliver, 1980). Hence, the hospitality industry, in particular, has put effort into learning about customer satisfaction (Ryu, Han, & Kim, 2008). That is, customer satisfaction is a vital concept

in marketing because it involves the perception of fulfilling the needs and desires of the consumer (Spreng, MacKenzie, & Olshavsky, 1993).

Effects of Perceived Conference Value (Utilitarian, Hedonic, and Social Value) on Satisfaction

Previous hospitality studies have examined the relationship between perceived value and satisfaction, finding that perceived value is an antecedent of satisfaction (Ha & Jang, 2010; Howard & Sheth, 1969; Kotler & Levy, 1969; Woodruff, 1997). Because satisfaction is viewed as cognitive thought processes that trigger affective responses (Ellis, 1962), researchers have proved empirically that a cognitive-oriented construct (perceived value) has a positive effect on the affective-based construct (satisfaction) (de Ruyter, Wetzels, Lemmink, & Mattsson, 1997; Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996; Spreng et al., 1993). Babin et al. (1994), and Jones, Reynolds, and Arnold (2006) both indicated a robust linkage between consumers' perceived values (i.e., utilitarian and hedonic values) and satisfaction. Lee et al. (2011) also noted that utilitarian (functional) and emotional (hedonic) values are strongly related to satisfaction among festival visitors. More specific to the conference industry, Ryu and Lee (2013) found that perceived value is a dependable antecedent of satisfaction.

As mentioned above, as the conference industry possesses unique characteristics, social value is added to represent overall perceived value. In short, to examine its influence on satisfaction, value perception should be conceptualized to include both the functional benefits of performance (i.e., utilitarian value) and non-functional benefits (i.e., hedonic and social values). In-depth consideration of perceived value may stimulate a better understanding of satisfaction (Woodruff , 1997). Therefore, in examining the multidimensional values (utilitarian, hedonic, and social value) of the conference experience, perceived value may have a direct effect on satisfaction in the conference industry context.

Therefore, integrating both theory and empirical backgrounds, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H6a: Utilitarian value has a positive effect on satisfaction.

H7a: Hedonic value has a positive effect on satisfaction.

H8a: Social value has a positive effect on satisfaction.

Behavioral Intentions (Attitudinal Loyalty)

Oliver (1997) defined brand loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior" (p. 392). This definition demonstrates two different perspectives of brand loyalty: behavioral and attitudinal (Bloemer & Odekerken-Schroder, 2002; Yang & Peterson, 2004). Behavioral loyalty refers to repeated patronage of the brand itself (Lee & Back, 2008), and attitudinal loyalty includes "stated preferences, commitment or purchase intentions of the customers" (Mellens, Dekimpe, & Steenkamp, 1996, p. 513).

Of the four stages of customer loyalty development (cognitive, affective, conative, and action) postulated by Oliver (1999), the third stage, conative loyalty, reflects attitudinal loyalty (behavioral intentions), and the final stage, action loyalty, refers to behavioral loyalty that has been reinforced by repeated patronage (Bloemer & Odekerken-Schröder, 2002; Carpenter & Lehmann, 1985). In the conference context, attendees considering repeatedly attending the conference serve as a way of evaluating behavioral loyalty (Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2012). Therefore, this study measures behavioral intentions (attitudinal loyalty) to investigate loyalty among conference attendees while excluding behavioral loyalty.

Attitudinal loyalty and behavioral intentions have been used interchangeably in the marketing and hospitality literature (Dick & Basu, 1994; Yoon, Lee, & Lee, 2010). Behavioral intentions, which is built on the notion of attitudinal loyalty (Lee & Min, 2013), is defined as "a degree of dispositional commitment" (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001, p. 82). However, Lee and Back (2009b) stressed the limitations of attitudinal loyalty in the conference context. For example, situational constraints, like having few alternative conferences or limited time and financial support, may mean that attendees often will not patronize the conference even if they have high relative attitude toward the conference (Lee & Back, 2009b). In spite of the limitations, previous studies have used behavioral intention (i.e., positive word-of mouth intention, revisit intention, and willingness to pay premium price) because such intentions are a dependable proxy for customer attitude (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993; Cronin & Tylor, 1992; Severt et al., 2007; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996).

Most attendees are fully or partly funded by their affiliations (Kim et al., 2012), so willingness to pay a premium price is excluded; it does not adequately serve the dimension of

behavioral intention in the conference context. Therefore, this study uses two dimensions (i.e., positive word-of mouth intention and revisit intention) for behavioral intentions. In line with previous studies, this study conceptualizes positive word-of-mouth intention as talking positively to colleagues/friends about a conference and revisit intention as the desire to participate in a conference in the future.

Effects of Perceived Conference Value (Utilitarian, Hedonic, and Social Value) on Behavioral Intentions

The relationship between perceived value and behavioral intentions has been extensively studied in hospitality research (Chen & Hu, 2010; Lee & Min, 2013; Oh, 2000). Perceived value is a critical antecedent of behavioral intentions (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991; McDougall & Levesque, 2000; Oh, 2000). Lee et al. (2011) demonstrated multidimensional values like functional and emotional values influence behavioral intentions among festival visitors. Also, Chen and Hu (2010) discovered that both symbolic and functional values influenced behavioral intentions positively. Sheth et al. (1991) also stated that five consumption values (functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional) are involved in consumer choice behavior. Gursory et al. (2006) examined utilitarian and hedonic values in festival visitor behavior and found that both affected festival attendance. Conference perceived values among attendees has been particularly dependable as an antecedent of loyalty (Kim et al., 2012; Ryu & Lee, 2013). As attendees perceive higher multidimensional values in a conference, they will be more willing to spread positive word-of mouth to their colleagues and friends and attend the conference again in the future (revisit intention).

Therefore, integrating both theory and empirical evidence, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H6b: Utilitarian value has a positive effect on behavioral intentions.

H7b: Hedonic value has a positive effect on behavioral intentions.

H8b: Social value has a positive effect on behavioral intentions.

Effects of Satisfaction on Behavioral Intentions

Previous studies have indicated a relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty (Pettijohn, Pettijohn, & Luke, 1997), and satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Jones et al., 2006; Oliver, 1997; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). For example, previous studies show satisfied customers are more likely to return to a firm than dissatisfied customers (e.g., Bowen & Chen, 2001; Oliver, 1997). Yuksel and Yuksel (2002) also argued that a high level of customer satisfaction increases customer intention to return. Therefore, satisfaction leads to positive future behavioral intentions (repurchase intention, positive word-of-mouth, and/or willingness to recommend). Our study considers conference attendee satisfaction as having influence on future behavior intentions (in this case, positive word-of mouth intention and revisit intention).

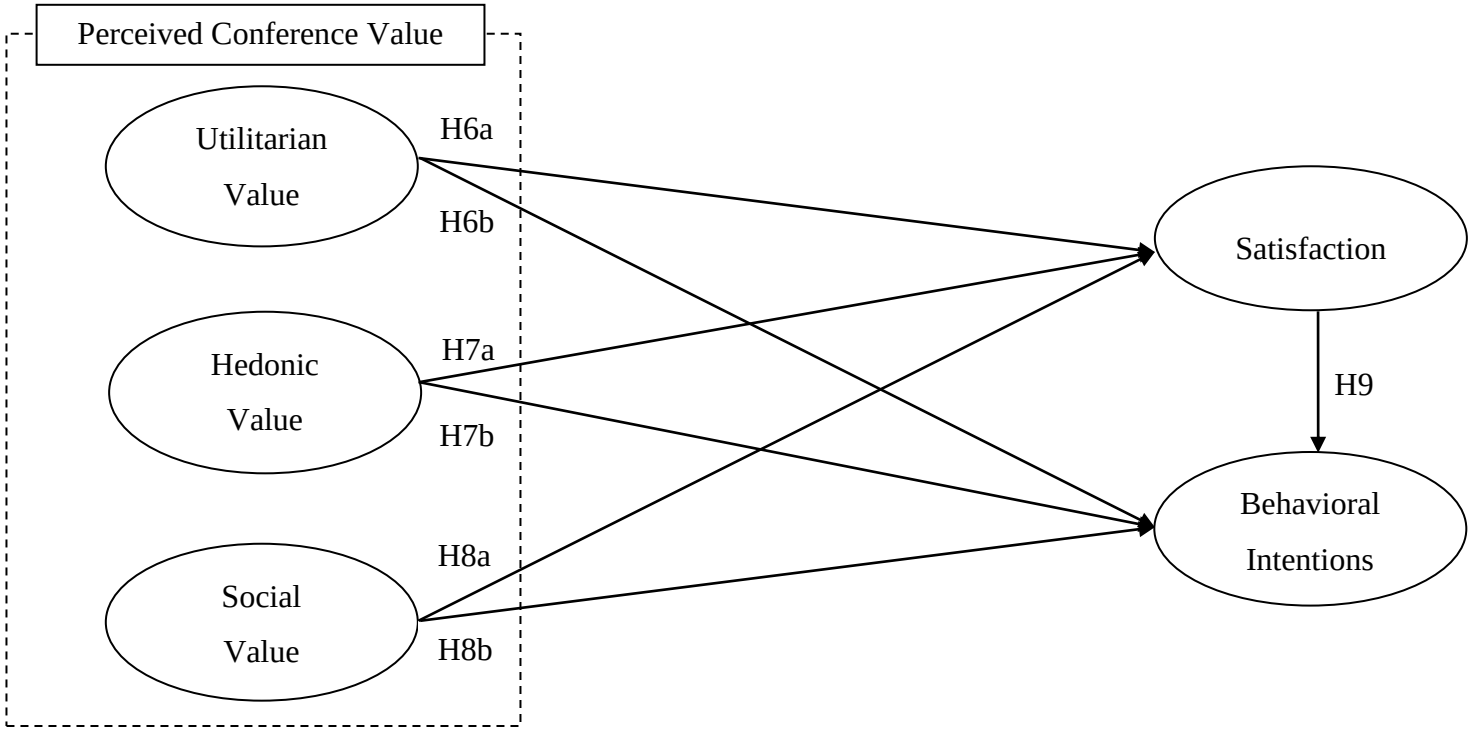
Hence, based on both theory and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H9: Satisfaction has a positive effect on behavioral intentions.

Proposed Conceptual Model 2

Figure 2.2 illustrates the focus of the second study. Three perceived conference value constructs (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, and social values) are antecedents of satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Also, satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived conference value constructs and behavioral intentions.

Figure 2.2. Study 2 Proposed Conceptual Model



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Chapter 3 - Methodology

This chapter discusses research design and data analysis to meet the research objectives (see Figure 3.1). The seven phase procedure involved the following: in phase 1, validated measurements in the literature review were identified; in phase 2, validated measurements were adapted for the academic association conference context to develop an initial questionnaire; in phase 3, the modified questionnaire were sent to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval; in phase 4, upon approval, the contents of initial questionnaire were modified based on review results from hospitality faculty members and graduate students (pre-test); in phase 5, a pilot test was conducted with about 40 faculty members who attended academic association conferences at least once within the past year, and the questionnaire was refined as needed; in phase 6, for the main survey, the final version of questionnaire survey was sent via email to the faculty members who attended an academic association conference at least once within the past year. In phase 7, the data were analyzed to ascertain sample characteristics, check reliability and validity of the construct measures and evaluate the proposed models.

Table 3.1 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

1. Validated Measurement Identification	Literature Review Measurement Identification
2. Questionnaire Development	Measurement Modification
3. Institutional Review Board Approval	Applying for IRB approval
4. Questionnaire Refinement	Content Analysis
5. Pilot Test	Validity and reliability check Measurement refinement
6. Data Collection	Targeting 300 usable responses
7. Data Analysis	Descriptive data analysis Confirmatory factor analysis Tests of the proposed models

Population and Sample

The population for this study was faculty members in the United States who had attended an academic association conference at least once within the past year. This study used faculty members from randomly selected universities in the United States. The survey questionnaires were sent to faculty members via email. Their email addresses, which were provided at their institution websites, were collected by the author.

Survey Instrument Development

To meet the objectives of the study, an email (see Appendix A) linked with the main survey (cover letter and questionnaire; see Appendix B) were sent to university faculty members. The invitation email was designed to encourage participation, first describing the nature and the purpose of the study, followed by a request for participation. The email also assured recipients of anonymity and confidentiality of records. Participants were informed that when the survey was finished, a summary of results would be available at K-State Research Exchange. The names and contact information of the author and a research advisor were listed in the email. In a cover letter to the survey, adding to the information in the email, contact information for The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at Kansas State University was included so participants could see information on the rights of study subjects. This cover letter was designed according to the protocol guidelines for human subjects, using guidelines proposed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Kansas State University.

Study 1: Measurement Identification

Multi-item scales from the literature that were already validated and widely adopted were identified and modified to fit the academic association conference setting. Eight constructs were used in Study 1. First, perceived conference quality dimensions consisted of five constructs: two conference specific dimension constructs (i.e., professional education and professional & social networking) and three destination specific dimension constructs (i.e., site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment). Second, conference experience quality dimensions were consisted of three constructs: learning, self-esteem, and excitement.

Previous conference studies served as a foundation for the scales for perceived conference quality dimensions (e.g., Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Lee & Back, 2009; Oppermann, 1998; Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007; Yoo & Chon, 2008). More specifically, professional education was measured with five items, and professional & social networking with four items, all developed by Kim, Lee, and Kim (2012) and Yoo and Chon (2008). Site attractiveness was tested with five items, travelability with three items, and site environment with four, all developed by Ryu and Lee (2013) and Yoo and Chon (2008). Learning was adapted from past experience quality studies and travel motivation literature (e.g., Falk, Ballatyne, Packer &

Benckendorff, 2012; Hung & Petrcik, 2011; Pearce & Lee, 2005) to fit the conference context; learning was evaluated with five items developed by Frauman and Norman (2004) and Park and Yoon (2009). Self-esteem was adapted from previous tourism studies (e.g., Frauman & Norman, 2004; Lane, Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004; Otto & Ritchie, 1996) to fit the conference context and assessed with four items developed by Hung and Patrick (2011). Excitement was adapted from past studies of experience quality (e.g., Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Pearce & Lee, 2005; Park & Yoon, 2009; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994) to fit the conference context and examined with three items developed by Kao, Huag, and Wu (2008).

All items were assessed on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A total of 33 items were used for the first study. Table 3.2 presents the descriptions of the measurement constructs in this study.

Table 3.2 Descriptions of Measurement of Constructs for the Study 1

Dimensions	Measures	Source
Conference Specific Dimension		Kim et al. (2012); Yoo and Chon (2008)
Professional Education	• The conference offered an informative educational program agenda. • The conference offered helpful session topics. • The conference offered me the opportunity to exchange knowledge and ideas. • The conference offered me the opportunity to keep up with changes (trends) in my profession. • The conference offered me the opportunity to listen to respected speakers.	
Professional & Social Networking	• The conference offered me the opportunity to develop my professional & social networking. • The conference offered me the opportunity to attend social functions (e.g., banquets and receptions) at the conference to expand my networking with others. • The conference offered me the opportunity to meet people I know in my field. • The conference offered me the opportunity to bolster my social networking.	
Destination Specific Dimension		Ryu and Lee (2013); Yoo and Chon (2008)
Site Attractiveness	• This conference site offered an opportunity for enjoying tourist attractions. • This conference site offered an opportunity for shopping.	

	• This conference site offered a variety of restaurants. This conference site offered a variety of entertainment. • This conference destination was very attractive.	
Travelability	• This conference was held in a venue easily accessible from an airport. • The time required to travel to this conference destination was reasonable. • The cost of transportation to this site was reasonable.	
Site Environment	• This conference destination's climate was desirable. • Local people were friendly. • This conference site was safe. • This conference destination was clean.	
Learning	During this conference, ... • I developed my knowledge and skills by attending educational sessions. • I increased my knowledge by gaining new ideas about research in my area. • I explored new ideas at professional and social networking programs. • I increased my knowledge about new products and service available. • I explored new and up-to-date technology.	Frauman and Norman (2004); Park and Yoon (2009)
Self-Esteem	During the conference, ... • I felt self-worth. • I impressed others. • I felt accomplished. • I felt like a better person.	Hung and Patrick (2011)
Excitement	During the conference, ... • I experienced excitement.	Kao et al. (2008)

	• I felt entertained. • I had fun.	

Study 2: Measurement Identification

Five constructs were examined in Study 2. Items on multidimensional perceived value (utilitarian value, hedonic value, and social value) were adapted from Sweeney and Soutar (2001). These value perceptions were modified to fit into the conference context (e.g., Gursory, Spangenberg, & Rutherford, 2006; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2007; Park, 2004; Williams & Soutar, 2009), and each was measured with three items developed by Ryu and Lee (2013) and Sweeney and Soutar (2001). Satisfaction was adapted from marketing literature (e.g., Chen & Chen, 2010; Oliver, 1999; Severt et al., 2007; Westbrook & Oliver, 1981) to fit the conference context and was examined with three items developed by Westbrook and Oliver (1981). Lastly, behavioral intentions, which consist of positive word-of-mouth intention and revisit intention, were adapted from previous marketing and consumer behavior studies (e.g., Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993; Chen & Hu, 2010; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Oliver, 1999; Severt et al., 2007) to fit the conference context and were investigated with six items developed by Kim et al. (2012) and Severt et al. (2007).

All items were measured using seven-point Likert-type scale, anchored by 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A total of 18 items were used for the second study. Table 3.3 lists the descriptions of the measurement constructs in this study.

Table 3.3 Descriptions of Measurement of Constructs for the Study 2

Dimensions	Measures	Source
Perceived Conference Value		Ryu and Lee (2013); Sweeny and Soutar (2001)
Utilitarian Value	• This conference was reasonably priced. • This conference offered value for money. • This conference was a good event for the money.	
Hedonic Value	• This conference was a wonderful event that I enjoyed. • Attending this conference was pleasurable. • Attending this conference made me feel better.	
Social Value	• Attending this conference helped me feel acceptable to the association I engage in. • Attending this conference improved the way I am perceived by other people. • Attending this conference improved the way I see myself.	
Satisfaction	• I was satisfied with this conference. • Attending this conference was a right thing to do. • I was happy to attend this conference.	Westbrook and Oliver (1981)
Behavioral Intentions	• I will encourage my colleagues to attend this conference. • If someone is looking for a good conference, I will advise him/her to attend this conference. • I will say positive things about this conference. • I am willing to attend this conference	Kim et al. (2012); Severt et al. (2007)

	continuously in the future. • I will keep attending this conference in the future. • I will consider attending this conference repeatedly in the future.	

Pre-Test and Pilot Test

A pretest was conducted on the research instrument. For the pretest, the modified questionnaire was sent to six faculty members and graduate students in the Department of Hospitality Management and Dietetics at Kansas State University to examine the accuracy and appropriateness of instructions, questions, and measurements. Based on the feedback, the questionnaire was refined for accuracy of wording and for inappropriate questions. After the pretest, a pilot test was performed using 40 faculty members in the College of Human Ecology at Kansas State University to evaluate reliability and validity of the instrument. The internal consistency of measurements was checked using Cronbach's coefficient alpha with the suggested cut-off level of .70 (Nunally, 1978).

Data Collection

The final questionnaire was sent to approximately 200 randomly selected faculty members from each of twenty randomly selected universities in the United States via email. The author sent an email to request participation in the survey. Faculty members who wish to participate in the survey were instructed to access the survey site. Also, to maximize the response rate, at the end of the survey, the researcher informed to send an iPad mini to winners in random drawings for every eighty participants in appreciation.

Data Analysis for Study 1 and Study 2

Choosing Measurement Model Mode (Reflective versus Formative indicators)

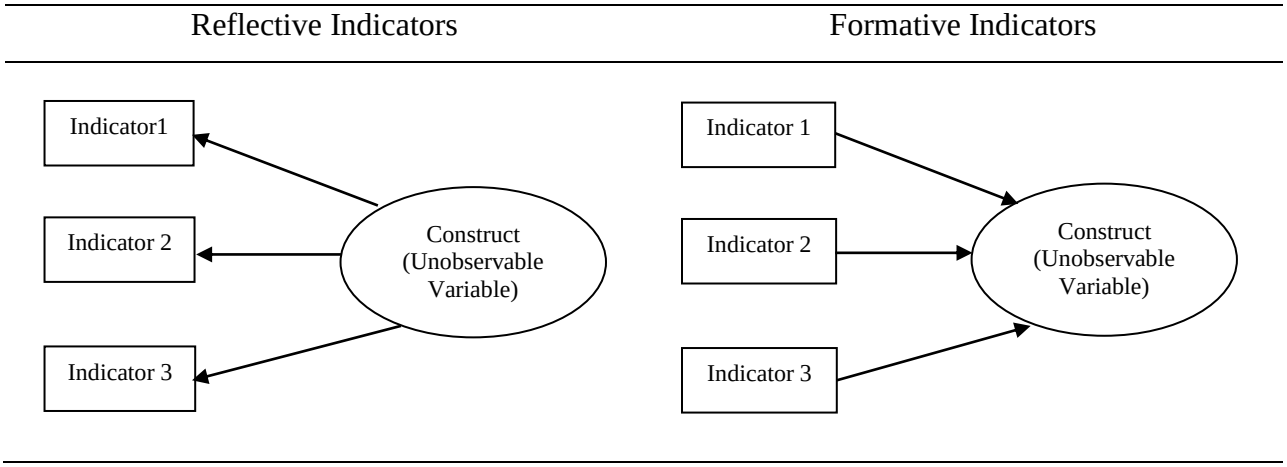
To measure a construct (unobservable variable), the researcher needed to measure indicators that cover different sides of the construct (Haelein & Kaplan, 2004). Bollen and Lennox (1991) differentiated the two groups as reflective and formative indicators: (1) reflective indicators depend on the construct and (2) formative indicators cause the formation of or changes in the construct. As Haenlein and Kaplan (2004) noted, "reflective indicators can be expressed as a function of their associated latent variables and formative indicators are not influenced by but influence the latent variables" (pp. 288-289). In sum, reflective indicators should have high correlations because they depend on the same construct (unobservable variable); however, formative indicators have a positive, negative, or zero correlation because changes in one indicator doesn't necessarily imply a similar directional change in others (Chin, 1998a; Hulland, 1999).

Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2014) also presented guidelines for choosing the formative/reflective measurement model. When causal priority comes from the indicators to the construct, use formative, and use reflective in the reverse situation (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001). If the construct is a trait of a combination of the indicators, use formative, and if the construct is a trait explaining the indicators, use reflective (Formell & Bookstein, 1982). If the indicators represent causes of the construct, use formative, and if the indicators represent consequences, use reflective (Rossiter, 2002). When the evaluation of the trait changes and all items do not change in a similar manner, use formative, and use reflective if the situation is reversed (Chin, 1998). Lastly, if all items are not mutually interchangeable, use formative, and if they are, use reflective (Jarvis, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2003).

In the current research, all exogenous variable constructs in study 1 were a combination of indicators that represented causes of the construct. As a result, using formative measurement model indicators for exogenous variable constructs and reflective measurement model indicators for endogenous variable constructs was appropriate: in Study 1, five exogenous variable constructs (i.e., professional education, professional & social networking, site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) were measured formatively, and three endogenous variable constructs (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement) were measured reflectively. In Study 2,

three exogenous constructs (i.e., utilitarian value, hedonic value, and social value) and two endogenous variable constructs were measured reflectively (i.e., satisfaction and behavioral intentions). Figure 3.1 shows how indicating variables and construct (unobservable variable) are formed for the reflective and formative indicators measurement model.

Figure 3.1 Formation of Reflective versus Formative indicators with the construct



Analysis Methodology

The data was collected using the Qualtrics survey system, and statistical data analysis was performed using SPSS (ver. 20) (IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY) and Smart PLS 2.0.M3 (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005). The measurement model for Study 1 consisted of eight constructs with 33 measurement items (10 hypotheses), and the Study 2 consisted of five constructs with 18 measurement items (7 hypotheses).

Descriptive analyses were conducted to analyze demographic information (gender, age, education level, faculty rank, faculty field, portion of conference funds, type of the conference) of the samples.

Structural Equation Modeling

Structural equation modeling (SEM) allows the researcher to examine the latent variables (unobserved variables) (measurement model) with indicators at the observation level and investigate the relationships among latent variables (structural model) on the theoretical level

(Hair, Sarstdet, Ringle, & Mena, 2012). To investigate the relationships in SEM, there are two approaches: covariance based SEM (CB-SEM; Jöreskog, 1978, 1993),which uses the maximum likelihood (ML) estimation procedure, and partial least square (PLS-SEM; Lohmöller 1989; Wold 1982, 1985), which uses ordinary least squares (OLS) regression method (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; Hair et al., 2014; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstdet, 2011). Both methods share the same roots (Jöreskog & Wold 1982), but each should be used appropriately in different research contexts depending on the characteristics and objectives of the study (Hair et al., 2014).

There are several reasons to choose between CB-SEM and PLS-SEM. First, according to Hair et al. (2011), CB-SEM is more appropriate to analyze the data when (1) "the goal is theory testing, theory confirmation, or the comparison of alternative theories" (p. 144); (2) "error terms require additional specification" (p.144); (3) the model is non-recursive; and (4) the study needs a global goodness-of-fit criterion. On the other hand, according to Chin, (1998a), Hair et al. (2011), and Teo, Wei, and Benbasat (2003), PLS-SEM is the more appropriate to analyze the data when (1) the objective of the study is to anticipate key target constructs or figuring out key "driver" constructs; (2) the structural model has formatively measured constructs; (3) the structural model has many constructs and indicators; (4) the sample size is small and/or data is not normally distributed; (5) the goal of the study is to use latent variable scores in subsequent analyses; and (6) the research model is in an early stage of development and has not been tested widely.

This study used PLS-SEM as an appropriate technique for several reasons. First, exogenous variables in current research (i.e., professional education, professional & social networking, site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment for Study1) were measured formatively. Second, review of the previous literature involved few empirical tests of multiple conferences in different professions, which indicates the research model is in the early stages of development and has not been tested widely. Therefore, PLS-SEM was more suitable to analyze the data for this research to estimate both quality of the measurement model and the interrelationships of the constructs of the structural model.

Assessment of PLS-SEM Results

The analysis of PLS-SEM follows a two-step stage with separate evaluations: (1) evaluation of the measurement model and (2) evaluation of the structural model. The first step is to assess the reliability and validity of the measurements, and the second step is to evaluate the structural model estimates (Hair et al, 2011; Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009).

First, a measurement model evaluated the adequacy and accuracy of measurement items (reliability and validity). Collinearity of indicators of formative measurement model indicator constructs (exogenous variables) were checked by indicating VIF values below the threshold value of 5 (Hair et al., 2014). Convergent validity for reflective measurement model indicators were evaluated using average variance extracted (AVE) of .5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010). Also, convergent validity for formative measurement model indicator constructs were estimated by the threshold of .80 (Hair et al., 2014). Lastly, discriminant validity for reflective measurement model indicators were measured by comparing squared correlation of the paired constructs with the AVEs of each construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Second, the structural model was evaluated to examine the explanatory power of the model (i.e., relationships among/between the constructs and predictive capabilities of the model) (Hair et al., 2014). To test the significance of the path coefficient of the SEM, the researcher used the bootstrap technique to determine the significance of the structural paths: the number of a bootstrap samples was 5,000 (a large and prespecified number), and the number of bootstrap cases was 370 (equal to the number of valid observations) (Hair et al., 2011). R-squared (R^2) and Redunduncy tests were used to estimate the path among latent variables: (1) R^2 was used to indicate effect size (R^2 greater than 0.26 is considered a large effect size, greater than or equal to 0.13 and less than 0.26 is considered a medium effect size, and greater than or equal to 0.02 and less than 0.13 is considered a small effect size (Cohen, 1988); (2) Stone-Geisser's Q^2 value (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974) was estimated to measure the model's predictive relevance (the model must be able to accurately predict the data points of reflective measurement model indicators of endogenous constructs) (Hair et al., 2014). An endogenous construct's Q^2 (cross-validated redundancy measure) value of more than zero shows the path model's predictive relevance for this specific construct (Hair et al., 2011).

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Chapter 4 - THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PERCEIVED CONFERENCE QUALITY AND CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE QUALITY

Abstract

This study sought to describe the relationships among perceived conference quality dimensions (i.e., professional education, professional & social networking, site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) and conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement) in the academic association conference setting. The conceptual model for this study used responses from 370 faculty members in the United States who attended an academic association conference at least once within the past year. Data was collected by using the Qualtrics survey system, and the proposed relationships were analyzed using PLS-SEM estimation (also called PLS path modeling), which involves evaluating the measurement and structural models. The results of data analysis indicated significant relationships among all conference specific dimensions (i.e., professional education and professional & social networking) and all conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement). Moreover, all of destination specific dimensions (i.e., site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) had a significant relationship with excitement, although site attractiveness did not have a significant relationship with learning. Further discussion and managerial implications of the findings along with directions for future studies are provided.

Keywords: Academic association conference, conference quality, conference specific dimensions, destination specific dimensions, conference experience quality

Introduction

The number of international meetings grew by 60% between 2001 and 2009 (5,186 meetings to 8,294). This trend has continued (Convention Industry Council [CIC], 2011). Consequently, the meeting industry has become an increasingly important segment of the hospitality industry (Bernini, 2009; Lee & Back, 2008). With such impressive growth, the hospitality industry and academics have given more attention to meeting industry studies, as can be seen in the hospitality literature (Lee & Back, 2009a).

As the number of conferences increases, the competition to attract potential attendees has become fierce (Tretyakevich & Maggi, 2012), even among association conferences. An association conference involves organized and structured groups of people with similar interests (McCabe, Poole, Weeks, & Leiper, 2000), gathering to provide education and development opportunities to those in the field (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001). Because attendees can choose from many meetings and conferences, understanding how they evaluate the experience is more critical than ever. Host destinations, with their convention facilities, hotels, and restaurants, derive both direct and indirect benefits from the meetings, especially during slow seasons, relying on positive word of mouth from past conference attendees (Astroff & Abbey, 1998). Therefore, conference organizers, association meeting planners, and host destinations need recommendations based on research to attract attendees for future conferences. Understanding attendee behavior is important because attendees are the major drivers of economic benefit to both associations and destinations (Lee & Back, 2009a; Tretyakevich & Maggi, 2012; Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007).

Most previous meeting industry literature has focused on site selection factors (Baloglu & Love, 2001; Bonn, Brand, & Ohlin, 1994; Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Oppermann, 1996a); perception and image of destination (Baloglu & Love, 2001; Oppermann, 1996b); economic impact (Lee & Back, 2005); and issues of meeting planners (Baloglu & Love, 2001; Bonn, Ohlin, & Brand, 1994; Crouch & Ritchie, 1998). Little research has focused on the post-conference stage instead of the pre-conference stage (Lee & Back, 2009a).

The service quality model (SERVQUAL) (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985) has been applied extensively to evaluate service performance in hospitality research. Perceived service quality mainly focuses on service personnel attitudes or professional abilities of service

personnel and physical facilities (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Fick and Ritchie (1991) contended SERVQUAL may not sufficiently cover affective and holistic factors involved in the overall quality of service experience.

Service experience is the "subjective personal reactions and feelings that are felt by consumers when consuming or using a service" (Chen & Chen, 2010, p. 29). Service quality differs from experience quality; service quality is objective, focusing on the environment (external) whereas experience quality is subjective, focusing on the self (internal) (Otto & Ritchie, 1996). Further, Chen and Chen (2010) argued that service quality and experience quality differ in (1) scope (i.e., service quality is specific whereas experience quality is more general); (2) type of benefit (i.e., service quality is functional whereas experience quality is experiential/hedonic/symbolic); and (3) psychological representation (i.e., service quality is cognitive/attitudinal whereas experience quality is affective).

Additionally, while the supplier can control perceived service quality (Crompton & Love, 1995), experience quality involves not only attributes offered by the supplier but also opportunities presented by the visitor (Chen & Chen, 2010). As Crompton and Love (1995) pointed out, experience quality is the "quality involving not only the attributes provided by a supplier but also the attributes brought to the opportunity by the visitor or recreationist" (p. 12). Therefore, performance quality is service quality at the attribute level, whereas experience quality involves satisfaction at the transaction level (i.e., the psychological outcome resulting from involvement in tourism activities) (Cole & Scott, 2004). Service experience arguably has more influence on customer evaluation and satisfaction (Otto & Ritchie, 2000). Marketers, therefore, use products and services to create experiences, which enable them to generate unforgettable and inspiring activities for customers (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Because the hospitality industry is hedonic, generating customer experiences (Otto & Ritchie, 1996), research into attendee experiences in the conference industry is important both theoretically and practically (Bigné, Andreu, & Gnoth, 2005).

Both cognitive and affective concepts of consumer behavior are well recognized parts of customer satisfaction (Wirtz, Mattila, & Tan, 2000). A solely cognitive approach is not enough to model satisfaction, so including emotional (affective) variables is critical (Oliver, Rust, & Varki 1997; Wirtz & Bateson, 1999). Conferences involve experiential consumption, focusing on subjective experiences, so incorporating both cognitive (perceived conference quality) and

affective/holistic (conference experience quality) concepts should better explain attendee behavior. However, research on the interrelationships between the cognitive and affective in the conference context is lacking.

As a result, addressing the effects of perceived conference quality including conference specific dimensions (i.e., professional education, professional & social networking) and destination specific dimensions (i.e., site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) on conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement) will benefit meeting planners, host destinations, and convention center organizers by giving them insight into the behavior of association conference attendees. In the following, a brief overview of the meeting industry and the association conference is introduced followed by literature on focal constructs on conferences and research hypotheses. Further discussion and managerial implications of the findings along with directions for future studies are provided.

The Meeting Industry

According to the Business Tourism Briefing (2007) and Convention Industry Council (CIC, 2011), the meeting industry involves people (delegates) gathering together because of common professional or social interests to share ideas or information, to discuss issues in their field, and to network with collegues and friends. The meeting industry is also known as the MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions) industry or MEEC (meetings, expositions, events, and conventions) industry. Meetings typically include "conventions, conferences, congresses, tradeshows and exhibitions, incentive events, corporate/business meetings, and other meetings that meet the aformentioned criteria" (CIC, 2011, p. 3). More specifically, meetings are characterized by length (i.e., mimimum of 4 hours), size (i.e., minimum of 10 participants), and place (i.e., a contracted venue) (CIC, 2011).

The meeting industry has grown remarkably in the past decade (Bernini, 2009; Kim, Chon, & Chung, 2003; Weber & Roehl, 2001). According to the CIC (2011), in 2009, 205 million people participated in nearly 1.8 million meetings in the United States. In 2009, the meeting industry contributed $106 billion directly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (total

GDP is $14.1 trillion), creating 1,650 full and part-time jobs (CIC, 2011). Globally, the number of international meetings grew from 5,186 in 2000 to 8,294 in 2009, representing a growth rate of 60% (CIC, 2011). Consequently, 252 countries now compete for a share of this lucrative market (Union of International Association, 2009).

The Association Conference

Associations use annual conferences as one critical method of communicating amongst association members (Business Tourism Briefing, 2007). Academic and research institutions send individuals to these meetings for a number of reasons: (1) to publish and present their research; (2) to gain publicity for their institutions/programs; (3) to enhance a program's standing and; (4) to attract potentially talented individuals to their institutions (Business Toursim Briefing, 2007).

Associationsare characterized by size and membership, which can vary in volume, number, and scope and which can be either regional or international (Business Tourism Briefing, 2007). Annual association conferences bring many participants to conference destinations, creating local employment, generating tax revenues, and encouraging investment (Lee & Back, 2008; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Oppermann, 1998). Accordingly, as more association meetings occur, the competition to attract more attendees is fierce, which means managing and marketing association conferences well is important (Loverseed, 1993). Moreover, because approximately 30% of an association’s annual income comes from revenue generated by annual meetings (Shure, 2004), and conference expenses are paid by association members (Oppermann & Chon, 1997), successfully hosting of annual association conferences is critical for an association’s continuing existence. Associations are, therefore, becoming more interested in marketing strategies to attract attendees to their annual meetings (Lee & Back, 2009b). Thus, associations are not only interested in conferences for professional reasons but also for economic ones.

Perceived Conference Quality

Zeithaml (1998) defined perceived service quality as "a global judgment, or attitude, relating to the superiority of the service" (p.16). Perceived quality is a user-based approach (Garvin, 1983), involving "the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority" (Zeithaml, 1998, p.3). Using this concept of perceived quality, perceived conference quality can be defined as the attendee's evaluation of a conference's overall excellence (cf. Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2012; Lee & Min, 2013).

Just as service quality is judged using different attributes (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003), evaluating perceived conference quality requires using different attributes in different dimensions (Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Back, 2008; Lee & Min, 2013; Ryu & Lee, 2013). For instance, Lee and Back (2008, 2010) applied convention quality factors (professional education, social networking, site selection, and staff service) to examine attendee-based brand equity. Kim et al. (2012) examined the differences between first-time attendees and repeat attendees using two convention quality dimensions (convention-specific and site-specific). More recently, Ryu and Lee (2013) used different attributes of dimensions of convention quality: accessibility, extra convention opportunity, site environment, social networking, professional education, and staff service.

Perceived conference quality should be examined using other dimensions as well. Building on the theoretical background and empirical evidences found in previous research (Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Back, 2008; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007), this study adopts two major categories with five constructs and uses them to measure perceived conference quality: (1) conference specific dimensions involve professional education (i.e., educational sessions and keynote speakers) and professional & social networking (i.e., interacting and expanding relationships with colleagues and friends); and (2) destination specific dimensions involve site attractiveness (i.e., sightseeing and shopping/dining), travelability (i.e., accessibility and public transportation), and site environment (i.e., safety/hygiene standards and climate).

Conference Specific Dimensions

The main reasons to participate in a conference are to gain knowledge and present ideas as well as develop professional and social networks (Oppermann, 1995; Oppermann & Chon, 1997). While skills and knowledge are essential (Butler, 1999), attendees also do not want to feel isolated or excluded (Brown, 2001). Opportunities for professional education and professional and social networking are significant motivators for attending conferences (Lee & Back, 2008; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Price, 1993; Rittichainuwat, Beck, & Lalopa, 2001). Attendees likely will choose a conference that provides the best opportunity for both professional education and social networking (Lee & Min, 2013). More recently, convention quality dimensions (i.e., professional education and social networking) have been used to judge convention quality (Kim et al., 2012; Ryu & Lee, 2013). Thus, this study adopts professional education (i.e., learning and keeping up with changes in the field) and professional & social networking (i.e., developing social network and professional contacts) as conference specific dimensions.

Professional Education

Professional education involves gaining knowledge and keeping up with research/industry trends through educational sessions and keynote speakers (Lee & Back, 2008; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Severt et al., 2007). Professional education is a critical benefit of attending conferences (Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Price, 1993) and is extensively reviewed in the research (Lee & Back, 2008; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Price, 1993; Ryu & Lee, 2013). Yoo and Chon (2008) found professional education significantly influences the decision to attend a convention. Professional education has also been investigated as an important dimension of perceived quality (Kim et al., 2012; Ryu & Lee, 2013). Lee and Back (2008) confirmed that professional education positively related to conference brand satisfaction.

Professional & Social Networking

Expanding relationships with colleagues and friends is a strong motive to participate in a conference (Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Price, 1993; Lee & Back, 2009a). In fact, Oppermann (1998) and Yoo and Chon (2008) discovered that networking was highly ranked among variables that influenced the decision to attend a convention. Conference organizers can facilitate

professional and social networking, providing activities that allow finding new professional contacts, exchanging valuable information, and offering access to job opportunities at a conference (Lee & Back, 2008; Price, 1993), all of which encourage participation in annual association conferences.

Destination Specific Dimensions

Although the main purpose of a conference is to augment knowledge and expand relationships with colleagues (Kim et al., 2012), conference destination specific attributes like site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment greatly influence the decision to attend a conference. Conference participants prefer conferences at reputable destinations (Oppermann, 1998), which makes geographic location of the conference a critical part of conference success because favored sites can increase attendance (Lee & Back, 2008; Oppermann, 1995). Therefore, site selection has been an important dimension in studies of conference management and marketing (Go & Govers, 1999). Lee and Back (2008) suggested site selection was a quality dimension for evaluating attendee-based brand equity. More recently, destination specific constructs (i.e., extra-convention opportunity, accessibility, and site environment) have been acknowledged as convention quality dimensions (Kim et al., 2012; Ryu & Lee, 2013).

Based on the empirical evidence in the literature, this study chose site attractiveness (e.g., sightseeing, shopping/dining, recreation, and entertainment), travelability (accessibility and multiple transportation mode), and site environment (safety/security and climate) as destination specific dimensions.

Site Attractiveness

Conference attendees are also attracted by extra opportunities outside the convention: local attractions, recreational activities, and shopping (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). Attendees and their accompanying guests prefer to attend conferences that offer extra opportunities and guest programs (Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Min, 2013; Mair & Thompson, 2009). Site attractiveness is, therefore, a critical attribute for those attending the conference (Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Ryu & Lee, 2013; Yoo & Chon, 2008). In fact, site attractiveness has been

extensively studied in previous research (Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Oppermann & Chon, 1997). Var, Cesario, and Mauser (1985) suggested and confirmed that attractiveness of conference destinations is critical in selecting conference locations. Crouch and Ritchie (1998) also found that extra-conference opportunities were important to selecting a convention site. Many researchers thus incorporate extra-conference opportunities as a convention quality dimension (e.g., Lee & Back, 2008; Kim et al., 2012).

Travelability

Conferences are held in many countries and many cities throughout the world, but attendees prefer conferences in well-known places because such places are usually easily accessible through a variety of transportation types (Oppermann, 1996b). Accordingly, meeting planners consider accessibility as an important attribute when selecting a conference site (Oppermann, 1996b). Accessibility is also strongly related to cost, which is important in the decision making process (Lee & Min, 2013). According to Oppermann (1998), high travel cost is one barrier to attending a convention; destinations with less access (long travel times and few types of available transportation) lead to higher travel costs (Lee & Min, 2013). Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) suggested that attendees consider "affordability and availability of time" and "distance and ease of access" as a facilitating factor for conference attendees to attend a conference. Recent studies have considered travelability (or accessibility) as a convention quality dimension (Kim et al., 2012; Ryu & Lee, 2013). In assessing travelability of a conference destination, as in previous studies, this study relies on accessibility, reasonable travel time, and available transportation types as travelability attribute (Mair & Thompson 2009; Yoo & Chon, 2008).

Site Environment

Conference attendees also consider site environmental factors like security, safety, climate, and local people before deciding to attend a conference (Lee & Min, 2013). Recently, attendees have become especially aware of natural disasters, outbreaks of communicable diseases, terrorism threats, and local violence (Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Min, 2013). Climate has become part of the decision to attend as well (Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Min, 2013). However, climate is more important for international conferences than regional conferences (Mair &

Thompson, 2009). Previous studies have discussed site environment in some detail (Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Oppermann, 1996b; Yoo & Chon, 2008). For example, according to Oppermann and Chon (1997), among site selection factors, site environment (safety and climate) has been important in deciding to attend a conference. Safety was identified as a convention quality in an investigation of attendee-based brand equity (Lee & Back, 2008). More recently, Ryu and Lee (2013) used safety and climate as a convention quality dimension. Therefore, in line with prior research, this study includes site environment (desirable climate, friendly local people, and safe and clean destination) as a critical element of destination specific dimensions.

Conference Experience Quality

Experiences are the latest economic offering, distinct from, and frequently more highly valued than, goods and services (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Experience quality is conceptualized as "tourists' affective responses to their desired social psychological benefits" (Chen & Chen, 2010, p.30). Cole and Scott (2004) defined experience quality as "those benefits or outcomes that people experience as a result of a trip or visit to a tourist attraction" (p. 30).

In hospitality and tourism studies, a growing body of literature has used the concept of experience quality to better understand customers/visitors. For instance, Otto and Ritchie (1996) developed a scale for experience quality with four items: hedonics (affective responses like enjoyment and excitement); peace of mind (the need for both physical and psychological comfort and safety); involvement (need for control, choice, and education in the service offering); and recognition (consumers being treated seriously and thus feeling self-worth, importance, and confidence) from three tourism sectors: hotels, airlines, and tours and attractions. Kao, Huang, and Wu (2008) proposed four experiential qualities for theme parks: immersion (the consumption process leading consumers to forget time); surprise (freshness, specialty, or uniqueness); participation (the interaction between visitors and product/service); and fun (happiness and enjoyment). Their results indicated that experiential quality has both direct and indirect positive influence on satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Moreover, Pine and Gilmore (1999) categorized four service experiences: education, entertainment, escape, and aesthetics. Cole and Scott (2004) also investigated experience quality using three multi-item scales:

entertainment, education, and community benefits, the primary benefits offered by tourist attractions.

This concept carries over into the conference experience. Conference participants attend conferences to learn about industry and research trends, increase their self-value, and experience and enjoy excitement. Building on previous research, the author derives conference experience quality dimensions comprising factors unique to the conference context. Therefore, this study adopts and measures conference experience quality using three constructs: (1) learning (i.e., attendees explore new ideas during the conference, gaining knowledge and constructing new visions for themselves), (2) self-esteem (i.e., self-worth), and (3) excitement (i.e., enjoyable or pleasant experiences).

Learning

Learning is the unique and personal contextual experience where people gain knowledge, acquire ideas, and construct new visions for themselves (Falk, Ballantyne, Packer, & Benckendorff, 2012). Learning is recognized in the literature as a motivator for tourists (Crompton, 1979; Iso-Ahola, 1982), which provides a useful starting point for considering learning as part of conference experience quality. Travel offers an important lifelong learning context (Broomhall, Pitman, Majocha & McEwan, 2010), and travel has been critical in helping some learners develop their skills (Kuh, 1995). Jang and Wu (2006) found, among seniors, knowledge-seeking was the most important motivation to travel.

The conference industry combines learning and travel in what also can be called educational tourism (cf. Falk et al., 2012); conference attendees participate to obtain knowledge, keep up with research and industry trends, and visit site attractions (Lee & Back, 2008). In addition, conference attendees participate directly and indirectly by presenting research in educational sessions, attending keynote speaker sessions, and expanding relationships with others, which provide attendees with formal and informal opportunities to gain information about new industry trends, job opportunities, and other events. All of this helps create a learning experience.

Leisure can be serious (Stebbins, 1982), especially if leisure settings offer an educational component (i.e., museums, national parks, and heritage sites) (Packer & Ballantyne, 2004). Tourists often consider leisure activities as an opportunity for learning and seek out such experiences (Kelly & Freysinger, 2000). Site attractions at a conference destination could foster learning, thus combining tourism and education. Novelty motivates many tourists; they seek stimulation and adventure, new places to explore, and new things to learn (Lee & Crompton, 1992; Mayo & Jarvis, 1981). Such activities give conference attendees an opportunity to explore new things and increase learning. Hence, based on the argument, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1a: Professional education has a positive effect on learning.

H2a: Professional & social networking has a positive effect on learning.

H3a: Site attractiveness has a positive effect on learning.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is "an individual's sense of value or self-worth or the extent to which people value, appreciate or like themselves" (Lane, Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004, p.249). Kitayama and Markus (1995) indicated that people are motivated to feel good about themselves. This makes self-esteem an important concept in personality studies (Singer, 1984). Self-esteem can be a judgment of oneself (Diener & Diener, 2009), a feeling of pride and confidence. Particularly, the desire to learn is part of self-development and self-actualization (i.e., obtaining a new life perspective) (Falk et al., 2012). Self-worth is also motivated by social recognition (Grubb & Hupp, 1968).

Social opportunities, professional development, and self-enhancement all potentially motivate conference attendees (Mair & Thompson, 2009). Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) suggested networking was an important motivator for conference attendees, and networking is part of self-enhancement, particularly career and leadership enhancement. Another experience quality proposed by Otto and Richie (1996) is recognition, which is linked to feeling confident and important while being taken seriously.

According to Mair and Thompson (2009), conference/association activities (educational sessions and social networking) and self-enhancement (personal/professional development) are closely linked. Most conference attendees are highly motivated to educate themselves, so they want educational opportunities that can increase self-esteem. Pine and Gilmore (1999) suggested that individuals want engaging and personal experiences (professional & social networking) to boost their self-esteem. Accordingly, based on the arguments, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1b: Professional education has a positive effect on self-esteem.

H2b: Professional & social networking has a positive effect on self-esteem.

Excitement

Customers no longer purchase a product solely for its function but for fun and excitement (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), which indicates that customers make buying decisions not only through rational but also for experiential reasons (Kao et al., 2008). Traditional marketing typically focuses on the function and benefits of products, whereas experiential marketing focuses on senses, feelings, thinking, acting, and related values (Schmitt, 1999). Traditional services and marketing practices can no longer satisfy personalized and varied consumer needs (Kao et al., 2008). More and more consumers look at the benefits of pleasant adventures and enjoyment involved in using products/services.

Excitement or entertainment involves "aspects of an experience that are perceived by visitors to be enjoyable or pleasant" (Packer & Ballantyne, 2004, p. 56). Excitement is also referred as an emotional reaction that implies characteristics of feelings ranging from exciting to boring, stimulating to un-stimulating, and interesting to uninteresting (Russell & Pratt, 1980). Customers generally look for more playful consumption (Grayson & Deighton, 1995). That is, consumers seek out experiences that provide fun and fantasy (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Holbrook (1996) indicated leisure, play, and fun were customer values that focus on enjoyment. Commonly, visitors and customers search for more exciting and playful consumption experiences (Grayson & Deighton, 1995; Schauble, Beane, Coates, Martin, & Sterling, 1996).

Otto and Richie (1996) proposed hedonics as an experience quality linked to affective responses like memorability, excitement, and enjoyment. Kao et al. (2008) also developed fun (happiness and enjoyment) as a factor in experience quality. Customer experience is enhanced by entertainment (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and emotional pleasure (Dube & Le Bel, 2003).

Museum studies have sparked a debate on the conflict between education and entertainment (McManus, 1993). Museum organizations usually consider a museum as a scholarly place (i.e., a place of learning instead of entertainment); however, visitors view it as entertainment (Miles, 1986). However, learning can be a mixture of education and entertainment, that learning can provide pleasure; the two concepts need not be antithetical. Similarly, conference attendees want opportunities for professional education and professional & social networking, which can be called educational leisure. Moreover, attendees nowadays have higher expectations of professional education at conferences to be delivered as an entertaining manner; attendees have become more sophisticated and more easily bored (Lee & Back, 2009a). Perceptions of higher quality opportunities at conferences (i.e., professional education and professional & social networking) will lead to higher levels of excitement.

Holbrook (1996) has indicated leisure and fun are consumer values; customers gain enjoyment from play. Enjoyable consumption leads customers to forget time is passing (Kao et al., 2008). People seek leisure that is fun, enjoyable, and relaxing, leisure that decreases work pressure and increases the pace of life (Scott, 2000). This applies even to those who attend conferences to educate themselves and network with other professionals. Conference attendees obtain excitement from interacting with the environment, particularly any attractions of the destination. Special and unique experiences will surprise attendees, allowing the experience to remain vivid in their memories (Kao et al., 2008). Conference packages not only include airplane tickets, lodging and recreational facilities, but also access to the location and its attractions, safety standards, and climate. Other studies have noted the leisure aspects of participating in a conference; indeed, recreational activities and events are one motive for attending conferences (Oppermann, 1996a; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Severt et al., 2007). Yoon and Uysal (2005) indicated that destination organizers should consider not just the professional aspect of a conference, but relaxation, safety, and fun, which appeal to the internal motivation to travel. This makes conference destination critical. Site attractiveness, ease of access and availability of multiple transportation modes, and safety/climate help conference attendees enjoy a conference.

Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1c: Professional education has a positive effect on excitement.

H2c: Professional & social networking has a positive effect on excitement.

H3b: Site attractiveness has a positive effect on excitement.

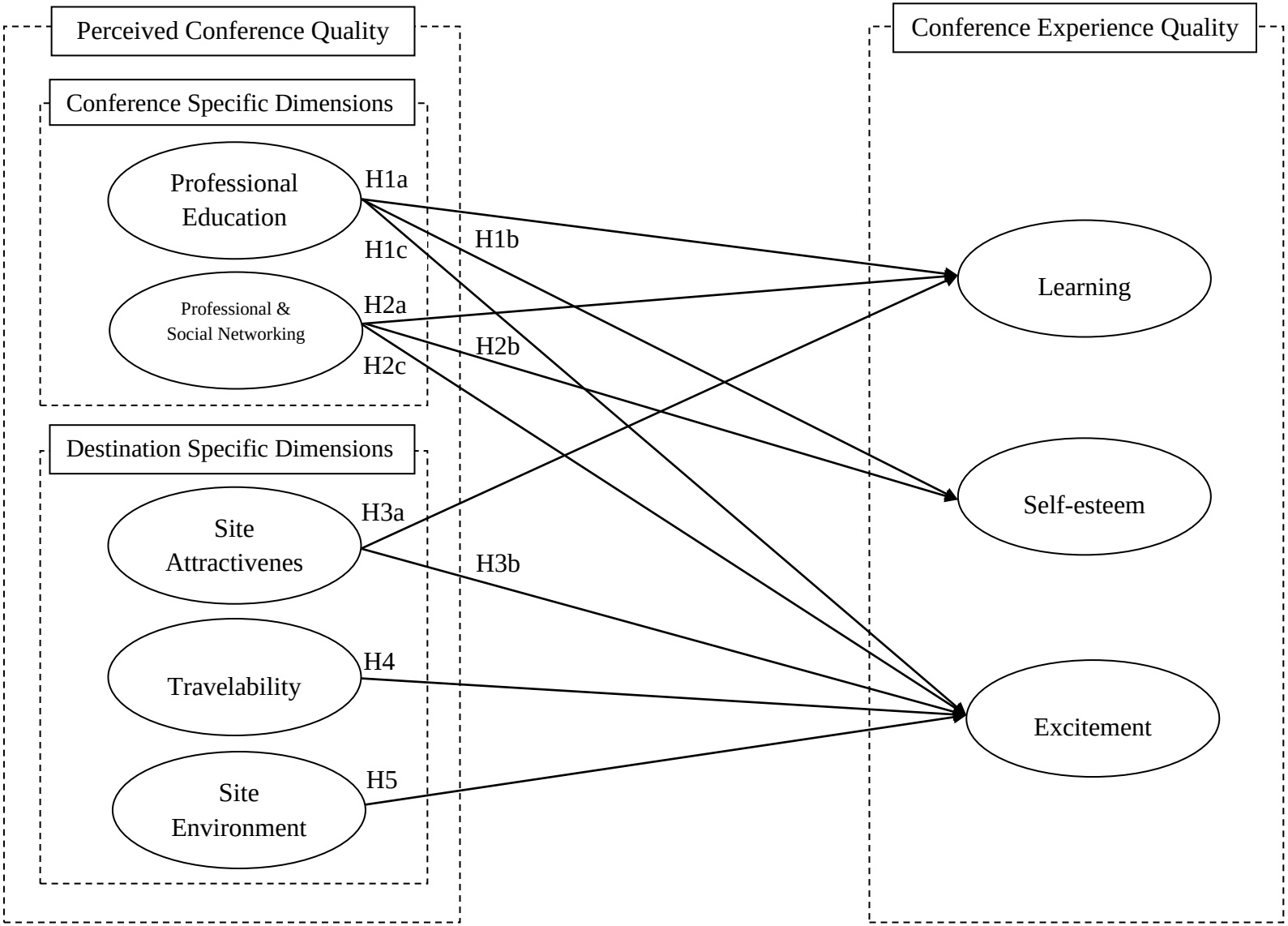
H4: Travelability has a positive effect on excitement.

H5: Site environment has a positive effect on excitement.

Proposed Conceptual Model 1

Figure 4.1 illustrates the focus of this first study, which examined the effects of perceived conference quality (i.e., conference specific dimensions consisting of professional education and professional & social networking; and destination specific dimensions consisting of site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) as antecedents of conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement).

Figure 4.1. Study 1 Proposed Conceptual Model



Methodology

Measures

Multi-item scales from the literature that had already been validated and widely adopted were identified and modified to fit the academic association conference setting. Eight constructs were used in this study. First, perceived conference quality dimensions consisted of five constructs: two conference specific dimension constructs (i.e., professional education and professional & social networking) and three destination specific dimension constructs (i.e., site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment). Second, conference experience quality dimensions consisted of three constructs: learning, self-esteem, and excitement.

Previous conference studies served as a foundation for the scales for perceived conference quality dimensions (e.g., Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Lee & Back, 2009a; Oppermann, 1998; Severt et al., 2007; Yoo & Chon, 2008). More specifically, professional education was measured with five items, and professional & social networking was measured with four items developed by Kim et al. (2012) and Yoo and Chon (2008). Site attractiveness was tested with five items, travelability with three items, and site environment with four items developed by Ryu and Lee (2013) and Yoo and Chon (2008). Learning items were adapted from past experience quality studies and travel motivation literature (e.g., Falk et al., 2012; Hung & Petrcik, 2011; Pearce & Lee, 2005) to fit the conference context; learning was evaluated with five items developed by Frauman and Norman (2004) and Park and Yoon (2009). Self-esteem items were adapted from previous tourism studies (e.g., Frauman & Norman, 2004; Lane et al., 2004; Otto & Ritchie, 1996) to fit the conference context; self-esteem was assessed with four items developed by Hung and Patrick (2011). Excitement items were adapted from past studies of experience quality (e.g., Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Pearce & Lee, 2005; Park & Yoon, 2009; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994) to fit the conference context and examined with three items developed by Kao et al. (2008).

All items were assessed on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A total of 33 items were used for this study.

Data Collection

The targeted population for this study included faculty members in the United States who attended an academic association conference at least once within the past year. The respondents were asked to select and identify an academic association conference from within the past year and to answer all questions based on the selected academic association conference.

Email addresses of 3,700 faculty members from randomly selected universities in the United States were collected by the researcher from their institution websites. From this group, 256 emails were returned to researcher because of incorrect email address or with out-of-office automatic return email. This left a total of 3,444 faculty members in the survey pool. Of these, 417 faculty members answered the questionnaire (12.1% response rate). Of the 417 respondents, 37 responses were disqualified because they were incomplete, and 10 respondents were disqualified because they didn't attend an academic association conference at least once within the past year. As a result, 370 respondents were used for analyses (10.7% valid response rate).

Data Analysis and Results

The data was collected using the Qualtrics survey system, and statistical data analysis was performed using SPSS (ver. 20) and Smart PLS 2.0.M3 program (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005). The measurement model for this study consisted of eight constructs with 33 measurement items (10 hypotheses). Descriptive analyses were conducted to analyze demographic information (e.g., gender, age, education level, faculty rank, faculty field, portion of conference funds, type of the conference) of the sample.

Profile of the Sample

Of the 370 faculty members who participated in the study, approximately half (n = 186) of the respondents were female. In terms of age, those 40-49 years old (27.8%, n = 103) accounted for the largest proportion of respondents, and 20-29 years old (2.2%, n = 8) the smallest proportion of respondents. For faculty rank, the highest percentage category of respondents were professor (35.1%, n = 130) followed by assistant professor (31.9%, n = 118)

and associate professor (30.5%, *n* = 113). In terms of respondent's field, 24.9% (*n* = 92) were in social science, followed by business (21.1%, *n* = 78) and education (15.4%, *n* = 57). For funding, 64.9% (*n* = 240) of the respondents got three quarters to full support and 17.8% (*n* = 66) of the respondents got zero to a quarter support of the expenses from their institution or employer. International conferences and national conferences were equally represented (both 47.8%, *n* = 177), followed by regional conferences (4.30%, *n* = 16). Table 4.1 summarizes the demographic profile of the survey respondents in this study.

Table 4.1 Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

Sample Characteristics	Frequency (N = 370)	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	184	49.7
Female	186	50.3
Age		
20 - 29	8	2.2
30 - 39	100	27
40 - 49	103	27.8
50 - 59	92	24.9
60 or older	67	18.1
Faculty Rank		
Instructor	2	.5
Adjunct Professor	2	.5
Assistant Professor	118	31.9
Associate Professor	113	30.5
Professor	130	35.1
Other	5	1.4
Faculty Field		
Business	78	21.1
Education	57	15.4
Engineering	26	7.0
Humanities	39	10.5
Law	18	4.9
Medicine	27	7.3
Natural Science & Mathematics	33	8.9
Social Science	92	24.9
Funding		
None - 25%	66	17.8
26 - 50%	18	4.9
51 - 75%	44	11.9
76 - 100%	240	64.9
Other	2	.5
Type of Conference		
Regional Conference	16	4.3
National Conference	177	47.8
International Conference	177	47.8

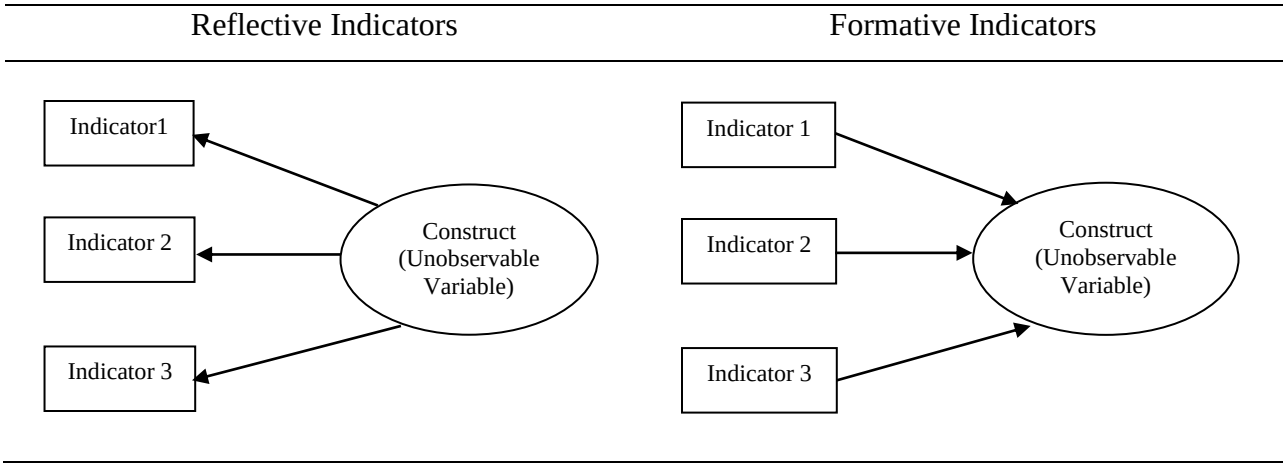
Model Mode (Reflective versus Formative indicators)

To measure a construct (unobservable variable), the researcher needed to measure indicators that cover different sides of the construct (Haelein & Kaplan, 2004). Bollen and Lennox (1991) differentiated the two groups of indicators as reflective and formative: (1) reflective indicators depend on the construct, and (2) formative indicators cause the formation of a construct or changes in the construct. In addition, Haenlein and Kaplan (2004) stated that "reflective indicators can be expressed as a function of their associated latent variables and formative indicators are not influenced by but influence the latent variables" (pp. 288-289). In sum, reflective indicators should have a high correlation because they depend on the same construct (unobservable variable); however, formative indicators could have a positive, negative or zero correlation because change in each indicator doesn't necessarily imply a similar directional change in others (Chin, 1998; Hulland, 1999).

Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2014) presented guidelines for choosing a formative/reflective measurement model. When causal priority comes from indicators to the construct (causes of the constructs), using a formative model specification is suggested, but if indicators represent consequences using a reflective model specification is suggested (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001; Rossiter, 2002). Consistently, if the construct is a combination of traits of the indicator, the use of formative measurements is recommended, and if the construct is a trait explaining the indicators, the use of reflective indicators is suggested (Formell & Bookstein, 1982). Lastly, if items are not mutually interchangeable (low correlation), use formative, and vice versa (Chin, 1998; Jarvis, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2003).

In this research, all exogenous variables showed a combination of indicators that represented causes of the construct. As a result, formative measurement specification was used for exogenous variables and reflective measurement specification for endogenous variable constructs: five exogenous variable constructs (i.e., professional education, professional & social networking, site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) were measured formatively, and three endogenous variable constructs (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement) were measured reflectively. Figure 4.1 shows how indicators and constructs (unobservable variables) were used in the measurement model.

Figure 4.2 Formation of Reflective versus Formative indicators with the construct



Structural Equation Modeling

Structural equation modeling (SEM) allows examining latent variables (unobserved variables) with indicators at the observation level in the measurement model; it also allows investigating relationships among latent variables (structural model) on the theoretical level (Hair, Sarstdet, Ringle, & Mena, 2012). To investigate the relationships in a structural equation model, two approaches can be used: covariance based SEM (CB-SEM; Jöreskog, 1978, 1993), which uses the maximum likelihood (ML) estimation procedure; and partial least square (PLS-SEM; Lohmöller 1989; Wold 1982, 1985), which uses ordinary least squares (OLS) regression-based method (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; Hair et al., 2014; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstdet, 2011). Both methods share the same roots (Jöreskog & Wold 1982); however, each should be used appropriately in different research contexts, depending on the characteristics and objectives of the study (Hair et al., 2014).

Choosing between CB-SEM and PLS-SEM requires understanding when each is appropriate. First, according to Hair et al. (2011), CB-SEM is more appropriate to analyze the data when (1) "the goal is theory testing, theory confirmation, or the comparison of alternative theories" (p. 144); (2) "error terms require additional specification" (p.144); (3) the model is non-recursive; (4) the study needs a global goodness-of-fit criterion. On the other hand, according to Chin (1998), Hair et al. (2011), and Teo, Wei, and Benbasat (2003), PLS-SEM is more appropriate for analyzing data when: (1) the objective of the study is to anticipate key target constructs or determining key driver constructs; (2) the structural model has formatively

measured constructs; (3) the structural model has many constructs and indicators; (4) the sample size is small and/or data is not normally distributed; (5) the goal of the study is to use latent variable scores in subsequent analyses; (6) the research model is in an early stage of development and has not been tested widely.

This study used PLS-SEM as an appropriate technique to satisfy the research purpose for several reasons. First, exogenous variables in current research (i.e., professional education, professional & social networking, site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) were measured formatively. Second, previous literature indicates few empirical tests of multiple conferences in different professions, which means the research model is in the early stages of development and has not been tested widely. Therefore, we used PLS-SEM to analyze our data to estimate both the quality of the measurement model and the relationships of the constructs of the structural model.

PLS-SEM analysis follows a two-step stage that involves separate evaluations: (1) evaluation of the measurement model and (2) evaluation of the structural model. The first step is to assess the reliability and validity of the measurements, and the second step is to evaluate the structural model estimates (Hair et al, 2011; Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009).

Evaluation of the Measurement Model

The measurement model was evaluated to see that measurement items were adequate and accurate (reliability and validity). Before conducting data analysis, collinearity of formative indicators (exogenous variables) was checked. The results shown in Table 4.2 show *SA_2* (i.e., this conference site offered an opportunity for shopping) had the highest variance inflation factor (VIF) value of 3.009, and all VIF values were consistently below the threshold value of 5 (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 4.2 Variance Inflation Factor Results

PE		PSN		SA		TR		SE	
Indicators	*VIF*	*Indicators*	*VIF*	*Indicators*	*VIF*	*Indicators*	*VIF*	*Indicators*	*VIF*
PE_1	2.545	*PSN_1*	1.967	*SA_1*	2.517	*TR_1*	1.321	*SE_1*	1.322
PE_2	3.642	*PSN_2*	1.828	*SA_2*	3.009	*TR_2*	1.597	*SE_2*	1.848
PE_3	2.529	*PSN_3*	1.805	*SA_3*	2.229	*TR_3*	1.271	*SE_3*	2.527
PE_4	2.534	*PSN_4*	2.383	*SA_4*	2.888			*SE_4*	2.310
PE_5	2.159			*SA_5*	1.969				

Note: PE = professional education; PSN = professional & social networking; SA = site attractiveness; TR = travelability; SE = site environment; VIF = variance inflation factor.

Table 4.3-1 shows the variables used in this study and the original outer weights estimates, *t*-values, and corresponding significance levels of formative measurement model indicators. The significance levels show all formative measurement model indicators were significant except (1) the third item of professional education; (2) the first item of professional & social networking ; (3) the second, third, fourth items of site attractiveness; (4) the second item of travelability; and (5) the third and fourth items of site environment. However, Hair et al. (2014) indicated that "the default report of the SmartPLS software also provides their outer loadings and *t*- values in the results table for the outer loadings" (p. 158). Using this information, we found that the lowest outer loading (relationships between constructs and indicator variables for reflective constructs) of these eight indicators was 0.460, and all *t*-values were more than 2.57 which shows the significance of the outer loading ($p < .01$). In addition, previous research and theory provided support for the relevance of these indicators for capturing professional education, professional & social networking, site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment dimensions (Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Lee & Back, 2009a; Oppermann, 1998; Severt et al., 2007; Yoo & Chon, 2008). Therefore, although some indicators of outer weights were not significant, this study retained the formative indicators (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 4.3-1 Formative Measurement Items & Outer Weights Significance Testing Results

Construct and scale items	Outer Weights (Outer Loadings)	*t*- value
Professional Education		
The conference offered an informative educational program agenda.	.305 (.840)	2.602**
The conference offered helpful session topics.	.337 (.908)	2.623**
The conference offered me the opportunity to exchange knowledge and ideas.	-166 (.705)	.882
The conference offered me the opportunity to keep up with changes (trends) in my profession.	.264 (.836)	1.823*
The conference offered me the opportunity to listen to respected speakers.	.391 (.855)	3.485***
Professional & Social Networking		
The conference offered me the opportunity to develop my professional & social networking.	.173 (.772)	1.178
The conference offered me the opportunity to attend social functions (e.g., banquets and receptions) at the conference to expand my networking with others.	.271 (.801)	2.310*
The conference offered me the opportunity to meet people I know in my field.	.260 (.778)	1.803*
The conference offered me the opportunity to bolster my social networking.	.483 (.923)	3.022**
Site Attractiveness		
This conference site offered an opportunity for enjoying tourist attractions.	.823 (.941)	3.757***
This conference site offered an opportunity for shopping.	-.123 (.575)	.518
This conference site offered a variety of restaurants.	-.196 (.460)	.868
This conference site offered a variety of entertainment.	.044 (.600)	.176
This conference destination was very attractive.	.433 (.831)	2.176***
Travelability		
This conference was held in a venue easily accessible from an airport.	.818 (.921)	4.391***
The time required to travel to this conference destination was reasonable.	-.265 (.548)	.907
The cost of transportation to this site was reasonable.	.556 (.705)	2.088*
Site Environment		
This conference destination's climate was desirable.	.231 (.634)	1.766*
Local people were friendly.	.521 (.905)	3.202**
This conference site was safe.	.232 (.799)	1.150
This conference destination was clean.	.255 (.770)	1.330

Note: *p<.05, **p <.01, ***p<.001

As for reflective indicators, Table 4.3-2 shows the standardized factor loadings and their *t*-values, which indicate the unidimensionality of each construct. The factor loadings of reflective indicators were equal to or greater than .692, and all factor loadings were significant at $p < .001$, with *t*-values ranging from 7.618 to 22.993.

Table 4.3-2 Reflective Measurement Items and Loadings

Construct and scale items	Standardized Loading	*t*- value
Learning		
I developed my knowledge and skills by attending educational sessions.	.833	15.544***
I increased my knowledge by gaining new ideas about research in my area.	.802	16.601***
I explored new ideas at professional and social networking programs.	.790	13.352***
I increased my knowledge about new products and service available.	.722	9.431***
I explored new and up-to-date technology.	.692	10.837***
Self-esteem		
I felt self-worth.	.875	12.657***
I impressed others.	.806	7.618***
I felt accomplished.	.910	15.179***
I felt like a better person.	.749	8.777***
Excitement		
I experienced excitement.	.870	20.548***
I felt entertained.	.906	22.993***
I had fun.	.890	21.111***

Note: ***$p<.001$

Table 4.4 shows descriptive statistics and other associated measures for constructs. Composite reliability of constructs that used reflective measurement items was higher than .70, ranging from .878 to .918, which showed adequate internal consistency (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Taham, 2006).

The average variance extracted (AVE) for all reflective indictor constructs was well over the .50 cut off for all constructs (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, convergent validity was well established for reflective measurement model indicators. Moreover, for all formative measurement model indicator constructs (i.e., exogenous variables), all analysis yielded a path coefficient ranging from .804 to .852, which is above the threshold of .80,

providing support for the convergent validity of the formative measurement model indicator construct(Hair et al., 2014).

Lastly, discriminant validity for the reflective measurement model indicator constructs were evaluated by comparing the AVE values and squared correlations (R^2) between the two constructs of interest (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results showed AVE for each construct was higher than all of the squared correlations (R^2) between any pairs of constructs, showing the well-established discriminant validity of the measurement.

Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics and Associated Measures

	No. of Items	Mean (S.D)	AVE	Path Coefficient	PE	PSN	SA	TR	SE	L	S	E
PE	5	6.053 (.977)	FMM	.852	FMM	.481[b]	.307	.239	.372	.587	.353	.437
PSN	4	6.132 (.854)	FMM	.812	.231[c]	FMM	.271	.259	.332	.432	.347	.425
SA	5	5.281 (1.348)	FMM	.817	.094	.073	FMM	.175	.398	.238	.162	.377
TR	4	5.319 (1.137)	FMM	.804	.057	.067	.030	FMM	.230	.198	.143	.257
SE	4	5.699 (.948)	FMM	.815	.138	.110	.158	.052	FMM	.271	.172	.408
L	5	4.764 (1.227)	.593	RMM	.345	.187	.057	.040	.073	**.878**[a]	.413	.516
S	4	5.077 (.960)	.701	RMM	.125	.120	.026	.020	.030	.171	**.903**	.579
E	3	5.066 (1.187)	.790	RMM	.191	.181	.142	.066	.166	.266	.335	**.918**

Note: AVE = average variance extracted; FMM = formative measurement model; RMM = reflective measurement model; PE = professional education; PSN = professional & social networking; SA = site attractiveness; TR = travelability; SE = site environment; L = learning; S = self-esteem; E = excitement.

a. composite reliabilities are along the diagonal; b. correlations are above the diagonal; c. squared correlations are below the diagonal

Evaluation of the Structural Model

The proposed structural model with eight constructs was estimated using Partial Least Square-Structural modeling (PLS-SEM). R^2 and Redundancy was used to estimate the path among latent variables.

The most commonly used assessment criterion for a structural model is the coefficient of determination (R^2 value) (Hair et al., 2014). It reveals the amount of variance in endogenous variables that can be explained by all exogenous variables related to it (Hair et al., 2014). That is, R-squared (R^2) indicates effect size: That is, R-squared (R^2) indicates effect size: R^2 greater than 0.26 is considered a large effect size, greater than or equal to 0.13 and less than 0.26 is considered a medium effect size, and greater than or equal to 0.02 and less than 0.13 is considered a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). In this study, for learning, the R^2 value was .348 (large effect), followed by excitement (R^2 = .308, also a large effect), and self-esteem (R^2 = .160, a medium effect).

Second, Stone-Geisser's Q^2 value (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974) was estimated to measure the model's predictive relevance, to see if the model could predict well the data points of any reflective indicators of endogenous variable constructs (Hair et al., 2014). If an endogenous construct's Q^2 (cross-validated redundancy measure) value is larger than zero, the path model's predictive relevance for this specific construct is satisfactory (Hair et al., 2011). In this study, all endogenous latent variable constructs were larger than zero (learning = .171, self-esteem = .076, excitement = .103), which indicates the path model had predictive relevance for all constructs. As shown in Table 4.5, fit indices provided by PLS-SEM showed the proposed model had adequate fit.

Table 4.5 Structural Equation Model Fit

	$^{a}R^2$	Redundancy
L	.348	.189
S	.308	.077
E	.160	.107

Note: L = learning; S = self-esteem; E = excitement.
a. R-Squared

Hypotheses Testing

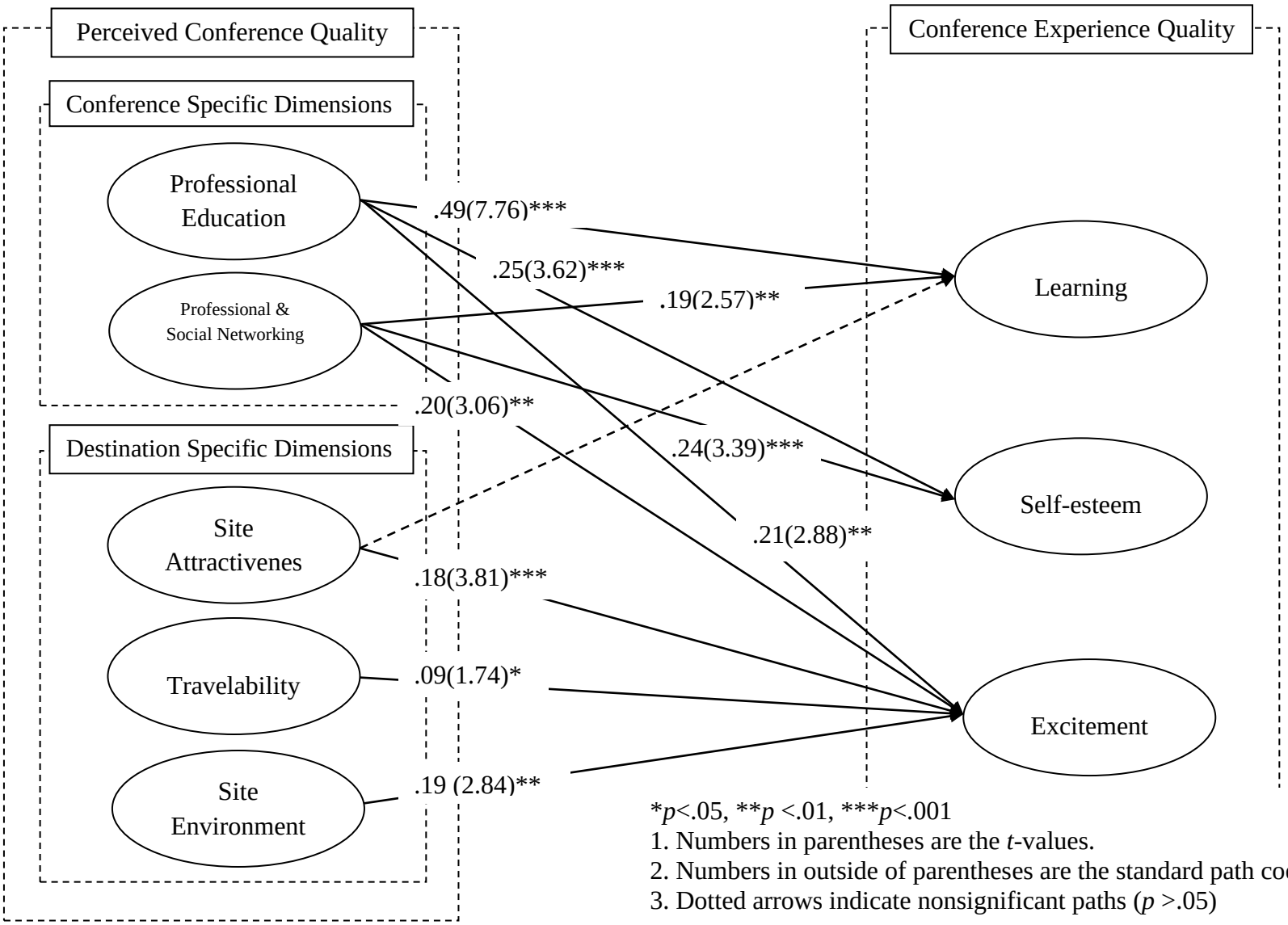
The significance of the path coefficient of the proposed structural model was tested with the eight constructs shown in Figure 4.3, which shows standardized coefficients and their *t*-values (at least $p < .05$) in the model.

The sign and significance of each path coefficient in the structural model was estimated to test the ten hypotheses. For the relationships among conference specific dimensions (i.e., professional education and professional & social networking) and conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement), the results show the following. Hypothesis 1a, which predicted a positive relationship between professional education and learning, was supported by a positive standard coefficient of .49 ($t = 7.76$, $p < .001$). Hypothesis 1b proposed a positive relationship between professional education and self-esteem; it was supported by a positive standard coefficient of .25 ($t = 3.62$, $p < .001$). Hypothesis 1c, which predicted a positive relationship between professional education and excitement, was supported by a positive standard coefficient of .21 ($t = 2.88$, $p < .01$). Moreover, hypothesis 2a proposed a positive relationship between learning and professional & social networking; it was supported by positive standard coefficient of .19 ($t = 2.57$, $p < .01$). Hypothesis 2b, which predicted a positive relationship between self-esteem and professional & social networking, was supported by a positive standard coefficient of .24 ($t = 3.39$, $p < .001$). Hypothesis 2c proposed a positive relationship between excitement and professional & social networking; it was supported by positive standard coefficient of .20 ($t = 3.06$, $p < .01$). In summary, all relationships among conference specific dimensions (i.e., professional education and professional & social

networking) and conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement) were significant.

Furthermore, for the relationships among destination specific dimensions (i.e., site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) and two of the conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning and excitement), the test results revealed the following. Hypothesis 3a, which predicted a positive relationship between site attractiveness and learning, was not supported. However, hypothesis 3b, which predicted a positive relationship between site attractiveness and excitement, was supported by a positive standard coefficient of .18 ($t = 3.81$, $p <.001$). Hypothesis 4 proposed a positive relationship between travelability and excitement and was supported by positive standard coefficient of .09 ($t = 1.74$, $p < .05$). Hypothesis 5, which predicted a positive relationship between site environment and excitement, was supported by a positive standard coefficient of .19 ($t = 2.84$, $p < .01$). In summary, relationships among destination specific dimensions (i.e., site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) and excitement were found, but no relationship between site attractiveness and learning was found. Overall, nine of the ten hypotheses were supported by the data.

Figure 4.3 Test Results of the Proposed Relationships



*p<.05, **p <.01, ***p<.001
1. Numbers in parentheses are the t-values.
2. Numbers in outside of parentheses are the standard path coefficients.
3. Dotted arrows indicate nonsignificant paths (p >.05)

Discussion and Implications

This study found relationships among conference specific dimensions (i.e., professional education and professional & social networking) and conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement); professional education had a positive influence on learning, self-esteem, and excitement (H1a, H1b, and H1c). In other words, as conference attendees see that the conference offers an informative educational program, helpful session topics, opportunities to exchange knowledge and ideas, opportunities to keep up with trends in the profession, and opportunities to listen to respected speakers, attendees are more likely to (1) have learned new knowledge/ideas and skills; (2) feel fulfilled, as if they have accomplished what they intended, that they have impressed others; and (3) have experienced excitement, feel entertained, and had fun during the conference.

Education programs at academic association conferences are usually tied to education and keynote speaker sessions, which may include updating industry trends and presentation of research developments within the industry. With competition to attract attendees continuously increasing, associations and meeting planners must take a deeper look at the structure of educational programs and consider a strategic approach to implementing new programs to better engage attendees. For example, various educational program formats such as panel discussions, interactive sessions, and small group discussions could use the interests and characteristics of the attendees to meet educational needs. Thus, meeting planners must know the characteristics of attendees (audience) and adjust the sessions to their interests. Finding out which programs were most favorably received at previous conferences might help meeting planners develop better educational sessions. Therefore, in designing the conference sessions, meeting planners should focus on a variety of programs with an informative educational program agenda, helpful session topics, and respected speakers sessions to stimulate attendees' desire to develop knowledge, self-worth, and excitement.

Second, professional & social networking had a positive relationship with learning, self-esteem, and excitement (H2a, H2b, and H2c). When conference attendees see that the conference offers attendees opportunities to develop professional & social networking, opportunities to attend social functions (e.g., banquets and receptions), opportunities to meet people in the field,

and opportunities to bolster social networking, attendees (1) explore and increase knowledge in the area; (2) feel that they have accomplished something important; and (3) feel entertained and have fun during the conference.

Many academic associations mishandle conference social functions like banquets and receptions because they use volunteers and hire temporary staff, both of whom may lack the knowledge and experience to make social functions work positively for attendees. Mandatory volunteer training sessions/event briefings could help increase the quality of volunteers and employees, giving them the skills to meet the needs of conference attendees. Meeting planners could go over rules and regulations and answer questions for volunteers and staff. Taking the time to do this before the conference starts is better than trying to fix misunderstandings later. Therefore, associations must provide adequate education and training to their staff to help attendees willing to professionally and socially interact with others to bolster attendees' social networking. After all, attendees expect professional & social networking opportunities at social functions, and the association should see that they get what they expect by adding regular refreshment breaks at the conference to allow peer networking (i.e., structured networking sessions).

Third, with regards to the relationships among destination specific dimensions (i.e., site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) and two conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning and excitement), site attractiveness did not have a positive relationship with learning (H3a) but did have a relationship with excitement (H3b). In particular, when attendees see that the conference site offers opportunities to enjoy tourist attractions, shopping, and entertainment, they felt excited, but site attractiveness itself did not positively affect learning at the conference itself. One possible explanation is that conference attendees had less opportunity to explore and learn new things while actually traveling to destinations and participating in leisure activities like sightseeing and entertainment. Travelability did have a positive influence on excitement (H4 and H5), so when the conference was held in a venue easily accessible from an airport, and travel time to the conference destination and cost of transportation to site was reasonable, conference attendees enjoyed the conference more. Third, site environment did have a positive relationship with excitement (H5). That is, attendees enjoyed the conference when the conference was held in a safe and clean environment, with a desirable climate, and friendly local people. The finding was consistent with Oppermann's

(1995) result that conference site alone could increase attendance level. This suggests that sightseeing, cost of travel, and safety were important factors for attendees when choosing a conference venue. Attendees these days are especially more aware of outbreaks of communicable diseases, terrorism threats, natural disasters, and climate (Lee & Min, 2013; Mair & Thompson, 2009), so meeting planners should consider site environment when selecting a conference destination. Moreover, attendees enjoyed conferences with extra conference opportunities such as shopping and local attractions, which was consistent with the earlier findings of Oppermann and Chon (1997) and Ryu and Lee (2013). Associations could also promote and increase attendee/guest programs such as sightseeing and shopping opportunities. Lastly, especially during this economic recession, attendees consider accessibility because it is closely related to the cost of travel.

To sum up, management should provide (1) valuable education sessions and social networking opportunities to increase attendee's learning, self-esteem, and excitement (2) conference site that is attractive (with a variety of restaurants, entertainment, tourist attractions, and shopping), easily accessible with reasonable transportation costs, and safe and clean environment to increase attendee's excitement.

Methodological Implications

In general, this study sheds light on the effects of various perceived conference quality elements like conference specific dimensions (i.e., professional education, professional & social networking) and destination specific dimensions (i.e., site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) on conference experience quality elements like learning, self-esteem and excitement at academic association conferences. Specifically, these findings contribute to the methodology in existing conference marketing literature in the following four ways.

First, this study proposes dimensions associated with the quality of the conference experience: learning (i.e., increasing/developing knowledge by attending the conference), self-esteem (i.e., feeling self-worth), and excitement (i.e., experiencing excitement) to the academic association conference context. Customer experience is a central element of tourism and

hospitality studies (Scott, Laws, & Boksberger, 2009), so conference studies should incorporate perceived experience quality with the more experiential aspects of conference attendance.

Second, this research applied perceived conference quality elements proposed by several studies (e.g., Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Lee & Back, 2009a; Oppermann, 1998; Ryu & Lee, 2013; Severtet al., 2007; Yoo & Chon, 2008) and conference experience quality elements (e.g., Frauman & Norman, 2004; Hung & Patrick, 2011; Kao et al., 2008; Park & Yoon, 2009) to multiple academic association conferences where respondents came from different fields. To date, empirical tests of multiple conferences in different areas remain sparse. Previous studies have collected data from respondents at one specific conference, which means that perceived conference quality constructs and conference experience quality constructs must be customized when applied to different conference contexts.

Third, this study uses formative measurement model indicator constructs. The formative measurement model assumes that the indicators cause the formation of or changes in the construct; change in each indicator doesn't necessarily imply a similar directional change in other indicators (Bollen & Lennox, 1991; Hulland, 1999). In this study, all exogenous variable constructs (i.e., perceived conference quality dimensions) were measured formatively. For example, availability of shopping, various tourist attractions, entertainment, and restaurants at the conference site caused the formation of the "site attractiveness" construct. Also, each indicator did not necessarily mean a similar directional change to form the construct "site attractiveness". For instance, shopping is not always available with other tourist attractions and entertainment at conference site.

Fourth, recently, many marketing and management studies have applied PLS-SEM (e.g., Fornell & Cha, 1994; Hulland, 1999), which, when compared to CB-SEM (Barroso, Carrión, & Roldán, 2010), offers several benefits for sample size, requirements of distribution, variable type, and the complexity of the model. In this respect, this study is the first to attempt to use PLS-SEM technique to analyze the data to meet the research purpose in conference studies. The researcher used SmartPLS program to perform structural equation modeling and to estimate both quality of the measurement model and the relationships of the constructs of the structural model.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study

Although this study has achieved its research objectives, it also revealed some limitations that provide room for future research.

First, the data was collected from attendees in the United States who participated in academic association conferences. Therefore, the findings of the study were limited to academic association conferences and might not extend to other types of meetings (expositions, festivals, and shows) and to other continents.

The second limitation involved using the retrospective approach in collecting data. The data was collected from subjects who attended a conference within the past year, relying on their memories of the conference. Because conference attendees were the only ones who can actually evaluate a conference, relying on their memories seemed a reasonably accurate way to collect this data. Retrospective data has often been used to measure attendee behavior in conference studies (Kim et al., 2012; Ryu & Lee, 2013, Severt et al., 2007). To improve the accuracy of their responses, however, respondents were encouraged to think carefully before answering questions.

As mentioned earlier, the concept of conference experience quality has been rarely studied in the conference industry. This study introduced learning, self-esteem, and excitement constructs as conference experience quality dimensions to measure academic association conference attendee's experience. Future research may test the conceptual model in this study (1) in different conference segments (i.e., exhibitions, festivals, and events) to reveal attendees' segment-specific responses to experience quality dimensions; (2) the influence of each conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement) on attendee's behavioral intentions (i.e., word of mouth and intention to revisit), which could provide a better understanding of attendee behaviors within the conference participation experience.

In addition, even though PLS-SEM has already gained popularity and has become a more extensively used method in marketing studies (Hair et al., 2012), it may not be the best approach in other situations. The particular empirical context and purposes of an SEM study may mean PLS-SEM's unique methodological features are a better suited alternative to the more extensively studied CB-SEM approaches in the hospitality and conference research.

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Chapter 5 - THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PERCEIVED CONFERENCE VALUE, SATISFACTION, AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

Abstract

The study investigated the relationships among value dimensions (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, and social value), satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in academic association conferences. The data was collected from 307 faculty members in the United States who attended an academic association conference at least once within the past year. A theoretical model was proposed and then examined using PLS-SEM analysis. The results of data analysis indicated significant relationships among perceived conference value dimensions, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. More specifically, the findings suggest that attendees consider hedonic aspects as a more important determinant when choosing an academic association conference than utilitarian and social values. Moreover, hedonic value affected attendee satisfaction and behavioral intentions more strongly than utilitarian and social aspects. These findings help understand conference attendee behavior, providing researchers and practitioners with insights into how effectively to design an academic association conference.

Keywords: Academic association conference, utilitarian value, hedonic value, social value, satisfaction, behavioral intentions.

Introduction

The number of international meetings grew 60% from 2001 to 2009 (Convention Industry Council [CIC], 2011), making the conference industry one of the fastest growing and most lucrative segments of the hospitality industry (Bernini, 2009). However, as the number of conferences and meetings increases, attendees have more choices in the variety of meetings and conferences. Therefore, understanding attendee behavior has become a critical issue. Unfortunately, understanding attendee behavior remains under researched compared to other hospitality sectors in conference studies (Lee & Back, 2009a; Tretyakevich & Maggi, 2012; Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007). For example, past studies of conferences have mainly concentrated on meeting planner issues (Baloglu & Love, 2001; Crouch & Ritchie, 1998), site selection factors (Baloglu & Love, 2001; Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Oppermann, 1996a), and destination image perception (Baloglu & Love, 2001; Oppermann, 1996b).

One key construct within the service industry is customer perceived value, which is used to better understand customers (Jensen, 1996; Ostrom & Iacobucci, 1995). Perceived value is "the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given" (Zeithaml, 1998, p. 14). Holbrook (1994, 1999) referred to perceived value as an interactive relativistic preference experience. That is, value depends not on the characteristics of a product but on how customers interact with a product (Kim, 2009). Perceived value could be viewed as a subjective construct that varies from customer to customer (Wikstom & Normann, 1994; Parasuraman, 1997), culture to culture (Assael, 1995), and time to time (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). Therefore, understanding how to create and deliver value is a precondition to understanding the behavior of conference attendees; meeting planners and destination organizers need information about perceived value to survive in the conference marketplace, which has become extremely competitive.

Moreover, perceived value is already recognized in business and hospitality research (Oh, 2000; Park, 2004; Williams & Soutar, 2009; Zeithaml, 1998) as a reliable element that influences behavioral intentions. To accurately and holistically represent value, perceived value should be measured using multiple dimensions (like utilitarian, hedonic, and social values) (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994; Holbrook, 1994, 1999; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). The utilitarian dimension originates in monetary savings, and the hedonic dimension in entertainment and exploration,

while the social dimension is realized through status and self enhancement (Rintamaki, Kanto, Kuusela, & Spence, 2006). These value perceptions could also be considered in the conference industry from the following perspectives: (1) economic aspects such as reasonable price/value for money (utilitarian value), (2) emotional benefits such as enjoyable and pleasant feelings (hedonic value), and (3) psychological benefits like peer recognition (social value) at the conference.

The main purpose of this study was, therefore, to examine the effect of perceived conference value on satisfaction and behavioral intentions in academic association conference settings. In an attempt to achieve these goals, the author developed a conceptual model to examine how perceived conference value dimensions (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, and social value) drive behavioral intentions via satisfaction.

Perceived Conference Value

Perceived value is a key concept in the hospitality literature, accepted and extensively studied to better understand customers (Bojanic, 1996; Jensen, 1996; Ostrom & Iacobucci, 1995; Park, 2004; Williams & Soutar, 2009). Among many other definitions of perceived value, Zeithmal's (1998) definition, built on the utility/functional theory, is frequently cited in the literature: "the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given" (Zetihmal, 1998, p. 14). This functional/economic approach relies on the utilitarian point of view, which assesses value in a trade-off between quality and cost (Lee & Min, 2013). What is received and given, as stated earlier, may vary by customer, culture, and time (Wikstom & Normann, 1994; Parasuraman, 1997; Assael, 1995; Ravald & Grönross, 1996).

Along with their criticism of unidimensional perceived value, Sweeney and Soutar (2001) argued the need for delicate measurement to explain how consumers perceive value from acquisition and use of products and services. Woodruff (1997) expanded the concept of customer perceived value and contended that perceived value may vary depending on the stage and types of the product or services. He defined perceived value as "what customers want and believe they get from buying and using a seller's product" (p. 140). Several researchers have insisted that customer choice was the result of multiple value perceptions, and, therefore, both scholars and

practitioners should take these value perceptions into account (Babin et al., 1994; Petrick, 2002; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). For instance, Grönroos' (1997) approach uses a conception of multidimensional perceived value that has cognitive and emotional value constructs. Babin et al. (1994) measured shopping value with utilitarian (functional) and hedonic (emotional) value. Gursoy, Spangenberg, and Rutherford (2006) adopted utilitarian and hedonic values to investigate behaviors of festival visitors. More recently, Lee, Lee, and Choi (2011) used multidimensional values like functional and emotional values as mediators between festival quality and behavioral intentions.

Although the literature identifies many value perceptions such as utilitarian (functional) and hedonic (symbolic) value, the unique situation of the conference industry requires assessing the social value of attending conferences. Social value has usually been considered as a sub-dimension of either utilitarian or hedonic value (Chandon, Wansink, & Laurent, 2000). However, the social meaning of consumption could be a critical dimension in understanding value, particularly when customers consume products/services to exhibit social status and achieve social approval (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Sweeney and Soutar (2001) actually included a measurement: "If I bought or used this item, it would create a favorable impression of me" (p. 213) to assess how the customer perceived the social value inherent in durable consumer goods. Social value can also be used to assess multidimensional value perception. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) developed a perceived value scale known as PERVAL to assess the multidimensional value of durable products at the brand level: two functional values (quality and price value for money), social value, and emotional value. More recently, Sánchez, Callarisa, Rodríguez, and Moliner (2006) conceptualized value with six underlying dimensions: four functional values (the travel agency, the contact staff in the travel agency, the tourist package offered, price), the emotional value, and the social value.

In sum, building on PERVAL (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) and Sanchez et al.'s (2006) conceptualization, our study adopts multidimensional value with utilitarian (functional), hedonic (emotional), and social values to investigate conference attendees' value perceptions of the conference. First, the utilitarian dimension originates in monetary savings; second, the hedonic dimension comes from emotional and psychological benefits (i.e., entertainment and exploration); and third, the social dimension originates in social status and peer recognition.

Creating and delivering multidimensional value to conference attendees is a precondition for meeting planners and conference organizers to survive in a competitive marketplace.

Utilitarian Value

Chen and Hu (2010) defined utilitarian value using both conventional monetary value and convenience. This utilitarian perception is based on the proposition that consumers are rational problem-solvers (Bettman, 1979). That is, the utilitarian point of view of value focuses on practical and product-centric thinking (Rintamaki et al., 2006) and is derived from attributes of both quality and price (Babin et al., 1994; Holbrook, 1994, 1999; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). A consumer feels an item has utilitarian value when the perceived price is lower than at competing stores, which may reduce the pain of paying (Chandon et al., 2000; Rintamaki et al., 2006). Thus, for association conferences, if attendees perceive the cost of the conference as reasonable and economical, they have received utilitarian value.

Hedonic Value

In the early 1980s, consumer researchers became interested in hedonic value. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) suggested three F's (i.e., fantasies, feelings, and fun) that represent the hedonic view of consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). They also noted that "hedonic consumption designates those facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one's experience with products" (p. 92). Unlike utilitarian value, hedonic value is more personal and subjective, derived from enjoyment and playfulness (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). When purchasing a product, hedonic value is indicated by increased arousal, heightened involvement, perceived freedom, and fantasy fulfillment (Bloch & Richins, 1983).

Consumers become aware of hedonic value when they can appreciate the act of purchasing in its own right. The term, "self-purposeful" and "self-oriented" describe the hedonic value well (Babin et al., 1994; Holbrook, 1999). Entertainment and exploration are also aspects

of hedonic value. Previous scholars have compared today's purchasing experience to a theme park or a theater (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt, 1999; Wolf, 1999). Overall, a store atmosphere can include themed environments and events to make the purchasing experience more entertaining, and hence, give hedonic value (Babin & Attaway, 2000; Chandon et al., 2000; Holbrook, 1999; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt, 1999; Turley & Milliman, 2000). Hedonic purchasing value reflects the purchase of potential entertainment and emotional worth (Bellenger, Steinberg, & Stanton, 1976). The mere action of being in a store can create positive emotions and entertainment in consumers.

Hedonic value generally represents experiential value impressions through emotions and aesthetics (Chen & Hu, 2010). Therefore, for conference attendees, hedonic value can be a critical evaluation because attendees experience emotional and psychological benefits from the conference (Lee & Min, 2013). That is, emotional value reflects affective/emotional states like excitement, pleasure, and disappointment, which are associated with the conference consumption experience (Lee & Min, 2013; Sheth, Jagdish, & Barbara, 1991). Hedonic value among conference attendees can be increased by enhancing enjoyment and pleasurable feelings. Conference attendees are pleased to learn and excited to visit the conference destination.

Social Value

Consuming goods and services indicates a social act where symbolic meanings, relationships, social codes, and the customer's identity may be produced and reproduced (Firat & Venkatesh, 1993). That is, consuming goods or services relies on how customers want others to see them and affects how they see themselves (Sheth et al., 1991; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Thus, the process of purchase and consumption may enhance self-worth, which, in turn, contributes to social value and leads to intention to purchase again in the future (Rintamaki et al., 2006). Customers may select more prestigious goods and services not just for the product’s utilitarian (functional) performance but for the effect on their social image (Lee & Min, 2013).

Consumers communicate signs of position or membership using social features, thus enhancing their status (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Rintamaki et al. (2006) indicated that “self-esteem enhancement is a benefit experienced when symbolic features derived from the company,

store, products, personnel and other customers are attached to self in order to define and maintain one's concept of self" (p. 15). Consumers engaging in status enhancement are high self-monitors, mainly concerned with how they play their role (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997) and concerned about the impression they give to others.

This same symbolic benefit is a part of attending a conference. Attendees express their personal values by attending the conference (cf. Chandon et al., 2000) and are motivated, in part, by the need for social networking and feeling accepted by colleagues/friends (Lee & Min, 2013). Social value is important to perceived conference value because attendees interact with each other at the conference. Thus, this study includes social value as a critical part of perceived value.

Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is vital to marketing because it involves how the consumer perceives the fulfillment of needs and desires (Spreng, MacKenzie, & Olshavsky, 1993). Hence, the hospitality industry in particular strives to learn about customer satisfaction (Ryu, Han, & Kim, 2008).

Hunt (1977) defined satisfaction as "an evaluation rendered that the (product) experience was at least as good as it was supposed to be" (p. 459). Researchers like Storbacka, Strandvik, and Grönross (1994) consider satisfaction as consumers' cognitive and affective evaluation of personal episodic experience. More recently, Oliver (1997) defined customer satisfaction as "the consumer's fulfillment response, the degree to which the level of fulfillment is pleasant or unpleasant" (p. 28). Such definitions are based on the one generally accepted theory for elucidating customer satisfaction: Lewin's (1938) Expectancy-Disconfirmation theory. This theory suggests that consumers have expectations about products or services before consumption, and they evaluate performance of the product or service at least in part by comparing the performance with their expectations. When consumers perceive that performance exceeds expectations, they develop a positive attitude towards the product or service (Carpenter, 2007; Tse & Peter, 1988).

Hospitality studies have extensively examined the relationship between perceived value and satisfaction, finding that perceived value is an antecedent of satisfaction (Ha & Jang, 2010; Howard & Sheth, 1969; Kotler & Levy, 1969; Woodruff, 1997). Because satisfaction is a cognitive thought process that triggers affective responses (Ellis, 1962), researchers have proposed and proved empirically that a cognitive-oriented construct (perceived value) positively affects the affective-based construct (satisfaction) (de Ruyter, Wetzels, Lemmink, & Mattsson, 1997; Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996; Spreng et al., 1993). More specifically, Babin et al. (1994) and Jones, Reynolds, and Arnold (2006) both indicated a robust linkage between consumer perceived values (i.e., utilitarian and hedonic value) and satisfaction. Lee et al. (2011) also noted that utilitarian (functional) and emotional (hedonic) values are strongly related to satisfaction among festival visitors. More specific to the conference industry, Ryu and Lee (2013) demonstrated that perceived value is a dependable antecedent of satisfaction.

Value perception in this study is conceptualized as including both functional benefits of performance (i.e., utilitarian value) and non-functional benefits (i.e., hedonic and social values). An in-depth consideration of perceived value may provide a better understanding of satisfaction (Woodruff , 1997). Therefore, in examining the multidimensional values (reasonable price/value for money, pleasant feeling, and peer recognition) of the conference experience, perceived value may have a direct effect on satisfaction in the conference industry context.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H6a: Utilitarian value has a positive effect on satisfaction.

H7a: Hedonic value has a positive effect on satisfaction.

H8a: Social value has a positive effect on satisfaction.

Behavioral Intentions (Attitudinal Loyalty)

Oliver (1997) defined brand loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior" (p. 392). This definition demonstrates two different perspectives of brand loyalty: behavioral and attitudinal (Bloemer & Odekerken-Schroder, 2002; Yang & Peterson, 2004). Behavioral loyalty refers to repeated

patronage of the brand itself (Lee & Back, 2008), and attitudinal loyalty includes "stated preferences, commitment or purchase intentions of the customers" (Mellens, Dekimpe, & Steenkamp, 1996, p. 513).

Attitudinal loyalty and behavioral intentions have been used interchangeably in the marketing and hospitality literature (Dick & Basu, 1994; Yoon, Lee, & Lee, 2010). Behavioral intentions, built on the concept of attitudinal loyalty (Lee & Min, 2013), is defined as "a degree of dispositional commitment" (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001, p. 82). However, Lee and Back (2009b) stressed the limitations of attitudinal loyalty in the conference context. For example, situational constraints, like having few alternative conferences or limited time and financial support, may mean that attendees often will not patronize the conference even if they have high relative attitude toward the conference (Lee & Back, 2009b). In spite of these limitations of behavioral intentions, previous studies have used behavioral intentions (i.e., positive word-of mouth intention, revisit intention, and willingness to pay premium price) in conference studies (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993; Cronin & Tylor, 1992; Severt et al., 2007; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996).

Most attendees are fully or partly funded by their affiliations (Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2012), so willingness to pay a premium price was excluded in this study because it did not adequately serve the dimension of behavioral intentions in the context of conferences. We used two dimensions (i.e., positive word-of mouth intention and revisit intention) to represent behavioral intentions. In line with previous studies, this study conceptualized positive word-of-mouth intention as talking positively to colleagues/friends about a conference and revisit intention as the desire to participate in a conference in the future.

The relationship between perceived value and behavioral intentions has been extensively studied in hospitality research (Chen & Hu, 2010; Lee & Min, 2013). Perceived value is a critical antecedent of behavioral intentions (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991; McDougall & Levesque, 2000). Lee et al. (2011) demonstrated multidimensional values like functional and emotional values influence behavioral intentions among festival visitors. Chen and Hu (2010) discovered that both symbolic and functional values influenced behavioral intentions positively. Sheth et al. (1991) also stated that five consumption values (functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional) are involved in consumer choice behavior. Gursory et al. (2006) examined utilitarian and hedonic values in festival visitor behaviors and found that

both affected festival attendance. Conference perceived value (functional, emotional, and social values) among attendees is particularly dependable as an antecedent of loyalty (Kim et al., 2012; Ryu & Lee, 2013). As attendees perceive higher multidimensional values (economical aspects, entertainment benefits, and peer recognition) in a conference, they will be more willing to spread positive word-of-mouth to their colleagues and friends and attend the conference again in the future (revisit intention).

Previous studies have also indicated a relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty (Pettijohn, Pettijohn, & Luke, 1997), as well as between satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Jones et al., 2006; Oliver, 1997; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). For example, previous studies show satisfied customers are more likely to return to a firm than dissatisfied customers (e.g., Bowen & Chen, 2001; Oliver, 1997). Yuksel and Yuksel (2002) also argued that a high level of customer satisfaction increases customer intention to return. Therefore, satisfaction leads to positive future behavioral intentions (i.e. repurchase intention, positive word-of-mouth, and/or willingness to recommend). As attendees become more satisfied with a conference, they will be more willing to encourage colleagues to attend and themselves consider attending the conference repeatedly in the future. Therefore, this study considers conference attendee satisfaction as an influence of future behavior intentions (i.e., positive word-of mouth intention, and revisit intention) in the conference context.

Hence, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H6b: Utilitarian value has a positive effect on behavioral intentions.

H7b: Hedonic value has a positive effect on behavioral intentions.

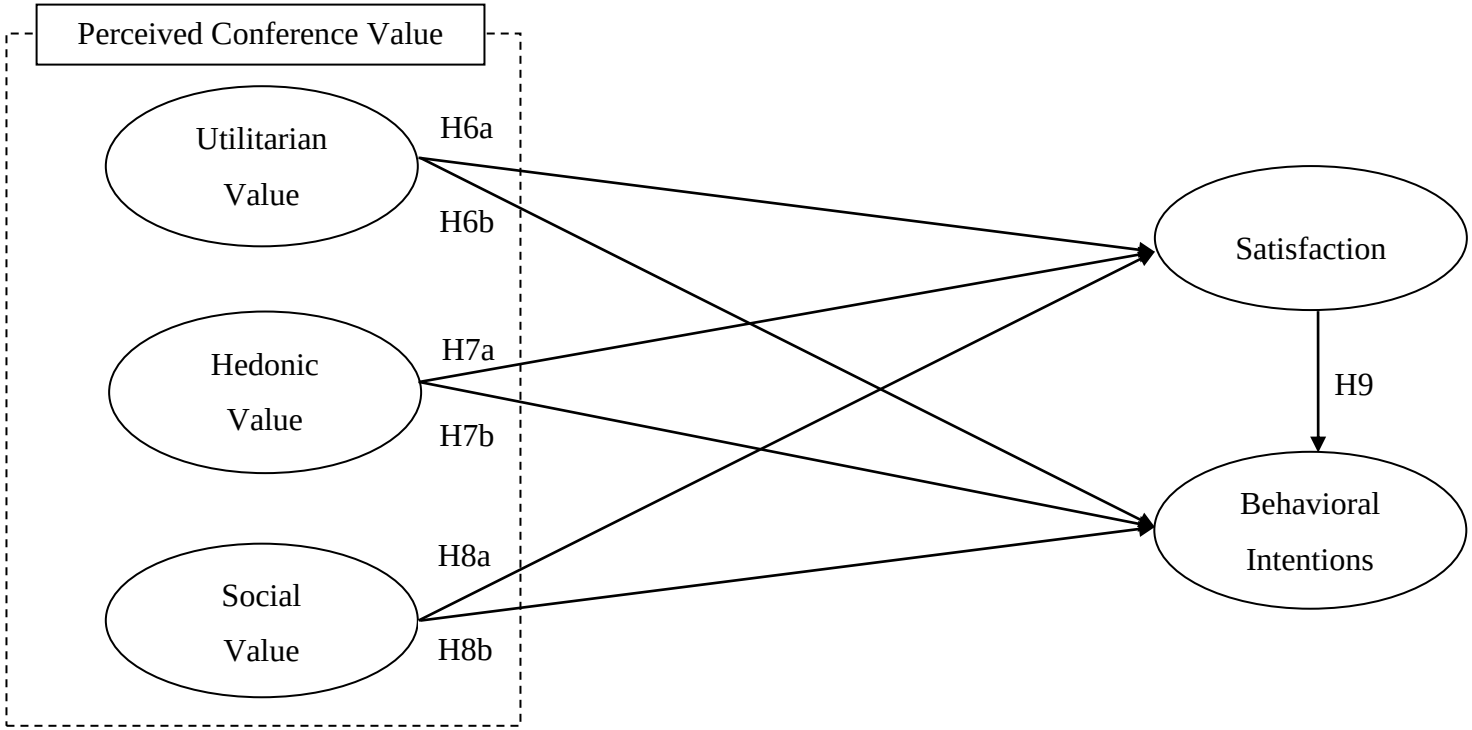
H8b: Social value has a positive effect on behavioral intentions.

H9: Satisfaction has a positive effect on behavioral intentions.

Proposed Conceptual Model 2

Figure 5.1 illustrates the focus of the second study. Three perceived conference value constructs (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, and social value) serve as antecedents of satisfaction and behavioral intentions, and satisfaction is the antecedent of behavioral intentions.

Figure 5.1 Study 2 Proposed Conceptual Model



Methodology

Measures

In general, validated measures from the literature were adapted to the academic association conference setting. A total of five constructs were examined in this study. Items on multidimensional perceived value (utilitarian value, hedonic value, and social value) were adapted from Sweeney and Soutar (2001). These value perceptions were modified to fit the conference context (e.g., Gursory et al., 2006; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2007; Park, 2004; Ryu & Lee, 2013; Williams & Soutar, 2009). Satisfaction was adapted from marketing literature (e.g., Chen & Chen, 2010; Oliver, 1999; Severt et al., 2007; Westbrook & Oliver, 1981) to fit the conference context. Lastly, behavioral intentions, consisting of positive word-of-mouth intention and revisit intention, were adapted from previous marketing and consumer behavior studies (e.g., Boulding et al., 1993; Chen & Hu, 2010; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Kim et al., 2012; Oliver, 1999; Severt et al., 2007).

All items were measured using seven-point Likert-type scale, anchored by 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A total of 18 items were used for this study.

Qualifiers for Study Participation

To obtain relatively accurate responses, mostly retrospective, the study participants were limited to respondents who had attended an academic association conference at least once within the past year.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed to faculty members in the United States who attended an academic association conference at least once within the past year. Participants were asked to choose an academic association conference that he/she had attended within the past year and to respond to all questions based on the selected conference. More specifically, the survey invitation email was sent to 3,700 faculty members from randomly selected universities in the United States. Of this set of emails, 256 were returned because the email address was incorrect or the recipient had an out of town/office automatic return email. Of the remaining 3,444 faculty

members, 417 respondents completed the questionnaire (12.1% response rate). Of these 417 responses, 47 were incomplete; disqualified responses were removed from the target sample. In the end, 370 usable responses were used for data analyses (10.7% valid response rate).

Data Analysis and Results

Profile of the Sample

Of the 370 respondents, nearly half (49.7%, *n* = 184) were male. Regarding age, those 40-49 years old (27.8%, *n* = 103) accounted for the largest proportion of the respondents. Professors accounted for 35.1% (*n* = 118) of the sample followed by assistant professors and associate professors. For respondent's field, 24.9% (*n* = 92) were in social science followed by business (21.1%, *n* = 78), education (15.4%, *n* = 57), and humanities (10.5%, *n* = 39). More than half (64.9%) of the respondents got 76-100% funding from their institute/employer. For type of the conference, international and national conferences were equally chosen (both 47.8%, *n* = 177).

PLS-SEM

To examine the relationships in a structural equation model, this study used partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM; Lohmöller 1989; Wold 1982, 1985) analysis. The PLS-SEM analysis involves a two-step evaluation: (1) evaluation of the measurement model to investigate the reliability and validity of the measurements and (2) evaluation of the structural model to assess the structural model estimates (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011; Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009).

Evaluation of the Measurement Model

To evaluate reliability and validity of the measurement items, the measurement model was conducted. The factor loadings were equal to or greater than .826, and all factor loadings were significant at $p < .001$, with *t*-values ranging from 16.04 to 55.18. Table 5.1 shows variables used in this study, with their standardized factor loadings and their *t*-values.

Table 5.1 Measurement Items and Loadings

Construct and scale items	Standardized Loading[a]	*t*- value
Utilitarian Value		
This conference was reasonably priced.	.916	32.15
This conference offered value for money.	.963	55.18
This conference was a beneficial event for the money.	.945	34.56
Hedonic Value		
This conference was a wonderful event that I enjoyed.	.938	37.69
Attending this conference was pleasurable.	.937	41.28
Attending this conference made me feel better.	.837	26.90
Social Value		
Attending this conference helped me feel acceptable to the association I engage in.	.890	20.12
Attending this conference improved the way I am perceived by other people.	.845	16.04
Attending this conference improved the way I see myself.	.842	18.24
Satisfaction		
I was satisfied with this conference.	.920	38.44
Attending this conference was a right thing to do.	.880	45.17
I was happy to attend this conference.	.927	39.94
Behavioral Intentions		
I will encourage my colleagues to attend this conference.	.826	21.87
If someone is looking for a good conference, I will advise him/her to attend this conference.	.895	23.32
I will say positive things about this conference.	.892	22.19
I am willing to attend this conference continuously in the future.	.871	28.80
I will keep attending this conference in the future.	.898	30.19
I will consider attending this conference repeatedly in the future.	.885	31.04

Note: [a] $p < .001$

Adequate internal consistency of the scales was confirmed by computing composite reliabilities. The composite reliability of the constructs were higher than .70, ranging from .894 to .959, which showed that all constructs in the model have adequate internal consistency (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). The average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs were higher than the suggested value of .50 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Finally, by comparing the AVE values and squared correlation (R^2) between the two constructs of interest, discriminant validity was evaluated (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). AVE for

each construct was higher than all of the squared correlations (R^2) between any pair of the constructs. Table 5.2 shows associated measures for constructs.

Table 5.2 Descriptive Statistics and Associated Measures

	No. of Items	Mean (S.D)	AVE	UV	HV	SV	Sat	BI
UV	3	5.051 (1.421)	.886	**.959**[a]	.644[b]	.477	.685	.647
HV	3	5.106 (1.172)	.820	.415[c]	**.931**	.646	.787	.702
SV	3	4.684 (1.168)	.739	.228	.417	**.894**	.586	.515
Sat	3	5.732 (1.065)	.826	.469	.618	.343	**.934**[a]	.828
BI	6	5.737 (1.610)	.771	.418	.492	.266	.685	**.953**

Note: AVE = average variance extracted; UV = utilitarian value; HV = hedonic value; SV = social value; Sat = satisfaction; BI = behavioral intentions.
a. composite reliabilities are along the diagonal; b. correlations are above the diagonal; c. squared correlations are below the diagonal.

Evaluation of the Structural Model

Evaluating the structural equation model allowed us to investigate the model's predictive capabilities and the relationships between the constructs (Hair et al., 2014). R-squared (R^2) and Redundancy test were used to estimate the path among constructs.

According to Cohen (1988), R-squared (R^2) indicates effect size. R^2 greater than 0.26 is considered a large effect size, greater than or equal to 0.13 and less than 0.26 is considered a medium effect size, and greater than or equal to 0.02 and less than 0.13 is considered a small effect size. In this study, R^2 value for satisfaction was .679 (large effect), and behavioral intentions was .701 (large effect). Also, Stone-Geisser's Q^2 value (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974) was used to assess the model's predictive relevance. If an endogenous construct's Q^2 (cross-validated redundancy measure) value is more than zero, the path model has predictive relevance for this specific construct (Hair et al., 2011). In this study, all endogenous construct's Q^2 (cross-validated redundancy measure) values were more than zero (satisfaction = .260 and behavioral

intentions =.112), which indicates the path model has predictive relevance for all constructs (Hair et al., 2011). Table 5.3 shows fit indices provided by PLS-SEM.

Table 5.3 Structural Equation Model Fit

	$^{a}R^2$	Redundancy
Sat	.697	.260
BI	.701	.112

Note: Sat = satisfaction; BI = behavioral intentions.
a. R-Squared

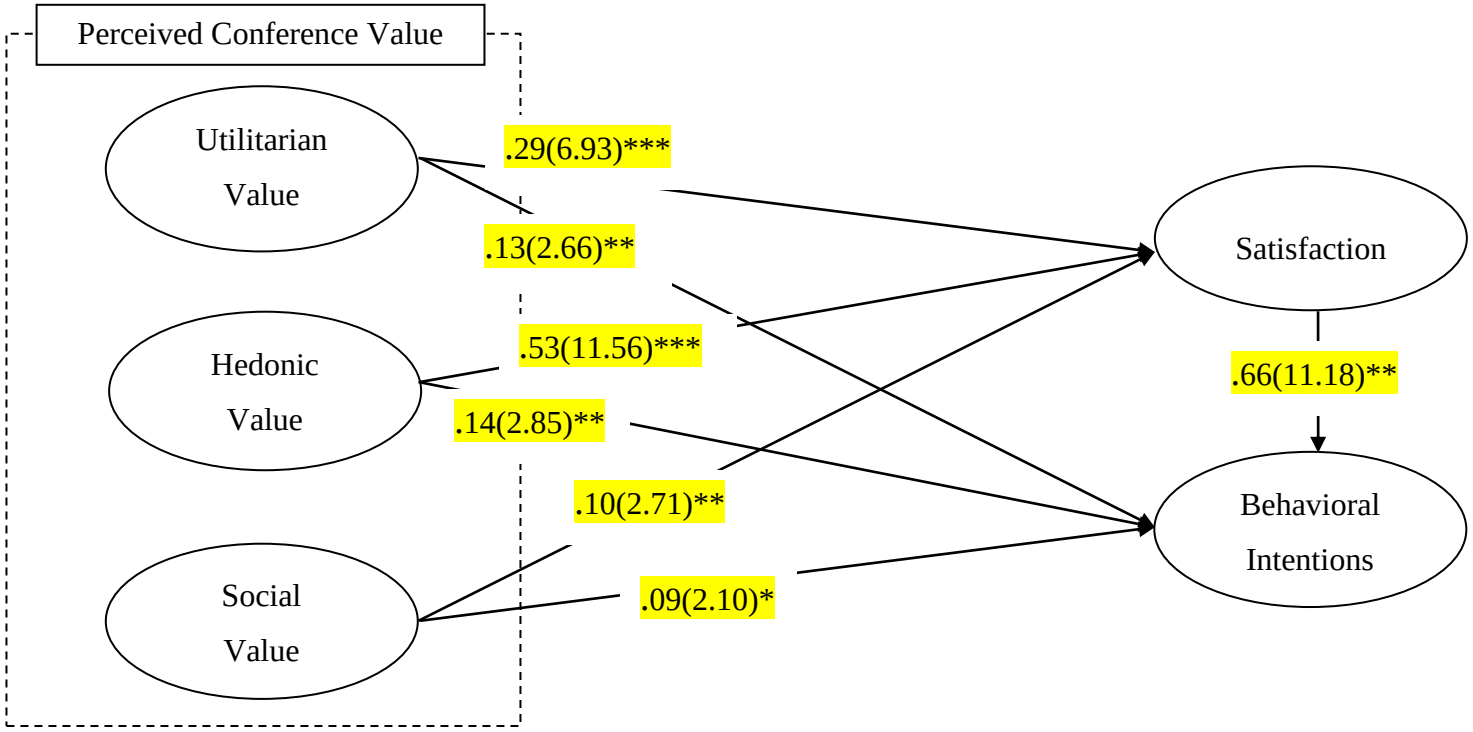
Hypotheses Testing

A structural model was estimated to test hypotheses 6 through 9 (total of seven hypotheses). The proposed model with six constructs was estimated as shown in Figure 5.1, which describes the results with standardized coefficients and their *t*-values.

Hypotheses 6a, 7a, and 8a, which predicted positive relationships among utilitarian, hedonic, and social values and satisfaction, were supported, as shown by a positive standard coefficient of .29 ($t = 6.93$, $p < .001$) for utilitarian value, .53 ($t = 11.56$, $p < .001$) for hedonic value, and .10 ($t = 2.71$, $p < .01$) for social value. Hypotheses 6b, 7b, and 8b proposed positive relationships between utilitarian value and behavioral intentions, hedonic value and behavioral intentions, and social value and behavioral intentions. The hypotheses were supported by a positive standard coefficient of .13 ($t = 2.66$, $p < .01$) for utilitarian value, .14 ($t = 2.85$, $p < .01$) for hedonic value, and .09 ($t = 2.10$, $p < .05$) for social value. Lastly, hypothesis 9 predicted a positive relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intentions; the hypothesis was supported by a positive standard coefficient of .66 ($t = 11.18$, $p < .001$).

In summary, relationships among perceived conference value dimensions (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, and social value) and satisfaction were found. Also, relationship among perceived conference value dimensions (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, and social value) and behavioral intentions were confirmed. Finally, the relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intentions was supported by the data. Overall, as shown in Figure 5.2, all seven hypotheses were supported.

Figure 5.2 Test results of the Proposed Model Relationships



*p <.05, **p <.01, ***p<.001
1. Numbers in parentheses are the t-values.
2. Numbers in outside of parentheses are the standard path coefficients.

Table 5.4 shows all indirect and total effects among variables. Significant indirect and total effects at p <.001 indicates the determining roles of utilitarian, hedonic and social value in satisfaction and behavior intentions.

Table 5.4 Standardized Indirect and Total Effects

	Sat		BI	
	Indirect	Total	Indirect	Total
UV	-	.29	.19	.32
HV	-	.53	.35	.49
SV	-	.10	.06	.15
Sat	-	-	-	.66

Note: UV = utilitarian value; HV = hedonic value; SV = social value; Sat = satisfaction; BI = behavioral intentions.

Discussion and Implications

This study investigated perceived conference value dimensions in academic association conference experiences and their influences on satisfaction and behavioral intentions. In particular, one main objective was to determine whether utilitarian, hedonic, and social value influence satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

First, in the relationships among utilitarian value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, utilitarian value had a positive influence on satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Hypothesis 6a & b). The findings indicated that, if conference attendees perceived the conference was reasonably priced, offered value for money, and was a beneficial event for the money, attendees were (1) more satisfied with the conference and (2) more likely to encourage their colleagues to attend the conference, say positive things about the conference (recommendation), and more willing to attend the conference again in the future. Second, in the same vein, the relationships among hedonic value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions were confirmed: that is, hedonic value had a positive influence on satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Hypothesis 7a & b). In particular, as conference attendees felt the conference was a wonderful event, pleasurable, making them feel better, (1) attendees were more likely to feel happy to attend the conference;

(2) they were more willing to advise others to attend this conference, and they were more willing to attend the conference in the future. Third, social value had a positive effect on both satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Hypothesis 8a & b). Particularly, when attendees felt that attending a conference helped them feel more acceptable to the association, improved the way they were perceived by other people, and improved how they see themselves, (1) they felt attending the conference was the right thing to do, and (2) and they were more positive about this conference in talking to their colleagues and considering attending the conference again.

The major stream of consumer behavior studies show that perceived value has a positive impact on behavioral intentions (Cronin et al., 2000). This study shows that this relationship applies also to academic association conferences, thus extending the existing literature. The data analysis showed that all utilitarian, hedonic, and social value components had a positive influence on attendee satisfaction and behavioral intentions. However, the results indicated that the three different value perceptions affected levels of satisfaction and behavior intentions differently. That is, conference attendees felt satisfied and willing to recommend the conference to their colleagues when they perceived the conference as (1) a wonderful event that they enjoyed; (2) reasonably priced and a beneficial event for the money; (3) a conference that improved the way they were perceived by other people and how they saw themselves.

These findings suggest that attendees consider hedonic aspects more highly than utilitarian and social value when they evaluate an academic association conference. Therefore, from the practical standpoint, meeting planners should seek to enhance overall value perceptions of their attendees by providing sense of their conference's uniqueness as embodied in their symbolic meanings and the emotional arousal and imagery that they evoke.

The greater influence of hedonic value on satisfaction and behavioral intentions does not mean that utilitarian and social aspects are not critical for academic association conference attendees. This study also showed that utilitarian and social value significantly affected satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Thus, as attendees perceived the conference as reasonably priced, they were more satisfied and more willing to attend the conference again. That is, attendees assess their conference experience partly by value for money. Therefore, in order to maximize attendees' perceived utilitarian value, meeting planners should eliminate unnecessary costs to minimize conference price. Professional site and venue selection research would help reduce the cost by helping in selecting a suitable site.

In addition to the utilitarian aspect, if the social aspect made attendees feel more acceptable to the conference/association, they felt happier and more willing to spread positive word-of-mouth and return for future conferences. Attendees perceived a conference as an effective channel for expressing their social value. Therefore, meeting planners could offer education sessions or social networking opportunities because these functions can provide a critical medium for attendees to express social value at the conference.

Lastly, satisfaction had a positive influence on behavioral intentions (Hypothesis 9). If conference attendees were satisfied and happy with the conference, they encouraged their colleagues to attend the conference, said positive things about the conference, and expressed willingness to attend the conference again. This result is consistent with Bowen and Chen's (2001) conclusion that satisfaction affects behavioral intentions. Therefore, to encourage attendees to spread positive word-of-mouth to their colleagues and revisit for the future conference, meeting planners should help attendees feel happy and satisfied.

Limitation and Suggestions for Future Research

Although this study achieved its research objectives and provided beneficial implications, a few limitations deserve mention. The data were collected from faculty members in the United States who attended academic association conferences within the past year, so the findings may not generalize to other regions or other types of meetings (like exhibitions and festivals). Also, the data was collected using retrospective self-report (Veroef, 2003). The weakness of using the retrospective approach is that attendees must rely on their memories. However, to improve the accuracy of their responses, respondents were encouraged to think carefully before answering questions.

This study also indicates a need to continue this research stream. For instance, another study could compare first time attendees and repeat attendees in value perception, satisfaction level, and behavioral intentions (Mohr, Backman, Gahan, & Backman, 1993). This would give conference organizers a better understanding of the differences between the two groups.

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Chapter 6 - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, summarization of the research objectives and major findings from both studies are provided. Also, conclusions and implications of the studies are discussed. Lastly, limitations and suggestions for future study are presented.

Research Summary

The meeting industry has grown significantly over the last few decades (Bernini, 2009). As the number of conferences and meetings increases and attendees have more conferences to choose from, how they assess the conference experience has become more important than ever. However, understanding conference attendee behavior remains under researched compared to other sectors in hospitality and tourism. Past research mainly focused on meeting planner issues, destination image, and site selection factors (Baloglu & Love, 2001; Bonn, Brand, & Ohlin, 1994; Crouch & Louviere, 2004). Because association conferences are lucrative, bringing a large number of attendees to the host destination, meeting planners and host destinations are increasingly interested in how attendees evaluate the conference experience.

Conferences can be viewed as experiential consumption, focusing on subjective experiences, so incorporating both cognitive and affective/holistic concepts would better explain attendee behavior. A solely cognitive approach is not sufficient to model satisfaction, so including emotional (affective) variables is especially important (Oliver, Rust, & Varki 1997; Wirtz & Bateson, 1999). Here, the first study identified the relationships among cognitive concepts like perceived conference quality dimensions (i.e., professional education, professional & social networking, site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) and affective/holistic concepts like conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement).

Additionally, a key construct within the service industry is customer perceived value, which can better explain customers and their behavioral intentions (Jensen, 1996; Ostrom & Iacobucci, 1995; Williams & Soutar, 2009). The second study sought to verify the relationships among perceived conference value dimensions (utilitarian, hedonic, and social value), satisfaction, and behavioral intentions.

Academic association conferences were taken as the context, and data was collected to validate the proposed models. A self-reported questionnaire was distributed to faculty members in the United States who attended an academic association conference at least once within the past year. 370 faculty members in the United States were used for data analyses. The proposed relationships were analyzed using PLS-SEM, which involves evaluating a measurement model and a structural model.

Major Findings

With academic association conferences as the context and data collected with a self-reported questionnaire distributed to 370 faculty members in the United States who had attended an academic association conference at least once within the past year, we tested the hypotheses in the conceptual model. The proposed relationships were analyzed using PLS-SEM analysis, which involves evaluation of both the measurement model and structural model.

Study 1 investigated the effect of perceived conference quality dimensions (i.e., professional education, professional & social networking, site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) on conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement). A total of 10 hypotheses were proposed in this study.

First, testing the relationships among conference specific dimensions (i.e., professional education and professional & social networking) and conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement), the test results gave the following results: (1) Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c predicted a positive relationship between professional education and learning, self-esteem, and excitement and was supported; (2) Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c proposed a positive relationship between professional & social networking, and learning, self-esteem, and excitement; all three were supported. In summary, all relationships among conference specific dimensions (i.e., professional education and professional & social networking) and conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement) were found.

Second, for the hypotheses on the relationships among destination specific dimensions (i.e., site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) and two of the conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning and excitement), test results showed the following: (1)

Hypothesis 3a, which predicted a positive relationship between site attractiveness and learning, was not supported; (2) Hypothesis 3b, which predicted a positive relationship between site attractiveness and excitement, was supported; (3) Hypothesis 4 proposed a positive relationship between travelability and excitement, and was supported; (4) Hypothesis 5, which predicted a positive relationship between site environment and excitement, was supported. In summary, destination specific dimensions (i.e., site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) and excitement were found, but relationship between site attractiveness and learning was not found. Overall, nine of ten hypotheses were supported by the data. Table 6.1 summarizes the results of the hypotheses in Study 1.

Table 6.1 Summary of Hypotheses Tests

	Hypothesis	Result
H1a	PE has a positive effect on L	Supported
H1b	PE has a positive effect on S	Supported
H1c	PE has a positive effect on E	Supported
H2a	PSN has a positive effect on L	Supported
H2b	PSN has a positive effect on S	Supported
H2c	PSN has a positive effect on E	Supported
H3a	SA has a positive effect on L	Rejected
H3b	SA has a positive effect on E	Supported
H4	TR has a positive effect on E	Supported
H5	SE has a positive effect on E	Supported

Note: PE = professional education; PSN = professional & social networking; SA = site attractiveness; TR = travelability; SE = site environment; L = learning; S = self-esteem; E = excitement.

Study 2 investigated the relationships among perceived conference value dimensions (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, and social value), satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. A structural model was estimated to test hypotheses 6 to 9 (a total of seven hypotheses).

Hypotheses 6a, 7a, and 8a predicted a positive relationship among utilitarian, hedonic, and social values and satisfaction, were supported. Hypotheses 6b, 7b, and 8b proposed a

positive relationships among utilitarian, hedonic, and social values and behavioral intentions and were supported. Lastly, hypothesis 9, which predicted a positive relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intentions, was supported.

In summary, relationships among perceived conference value dimensions (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, and social value) and satisfaction were found. Moreover, relationships between perceived conference value dimensions (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic, and social value) and behavioral intentions were confirmed. Finally, the relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intentions was supported by the data. Overall, as shown in Table 6.2, in Study 2, all seven hypotheses were supported.

Table 6.2 Summary of Hypotheses Tests

	Hypothesis	Result
H6a	UV has a positive effect on Sat	Supported
H6b	UV has a positive effect on BI	Supported
H7a	HV has a positive effect on Sat	Supported
H7b	HV has a positive effect on BI	Supported
H8a	SV has a positive effect on Sat	Supported
H8b	SV has a positive effect on BI	Supported
H9	Sat has a positive effect on BI	Supported

Note: UV = utilitarian value; HV = hedonic value; SV = social value; Sat = satisfaction; BI = behavioral intentions.

Conclusions and Implications

The relationships among perceived conference quality and conference experience quality (Study1)

The important findings of this study are the relationships among perceived conference quality dimensions (i.e., professional education and professional & social networking, site attractiveness travelability, site and environment) at the attribute level and conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement) at the transaction level.

First, the relationships among conference specific dimensions (i.e., professional education and professional & social networking) and conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement), showed that professional education had a positive influence on learning, self-esteem, and excitement. More specifically, when the conference offered attendees an informative educational program agenda, helpful session topics, opportunities to exchange knowledge and ideas, opportunities to keep up with changes (trends) in the profession, and opportunities to listen to respected speakers, attendees (1) increased/developed their knowledge/ideas and skills; (2) felt self-worth and a sense of accomplishment, and impressed others; and (3) experienced excitement, felt entertained, and enjoyed the conference.

Academic association conference education programs usually involve educational and keynote speaker sessions, including updating industry trends and presenting research developments within the industry. Thus, as competition to attract attendees continuously increases, associations and meeting planners should take a strategic approach to their educational programs, implementing improved educational sessions. For example, a variety of educational program formats like panel discussions, interactive sessions, video conferences, and small group discussions could use the interests and characteristics of the attendees to meet their educational needs. Thus, meeting planners need to know the characteristics of attendees (audience) and adjust sessions to their interests. Meeting planners should find out what types of programs were most favorably received by attendees of previous conferences to develop appealing sessions. Overall, meeting planners should focus on various programs and informative educational agenda, helpful session topics, and respected speakers to meet the expectations of attendees and enhance their knowledge, self-worth, and excitement.

Second, professional & social networking had a positive relationship with learning, self-esteem, and excitement. When conferences offer attendees opportunities to network, to attend social functions (like banquets and receptions), to meet people in the field, and to socialize, attendees (1) explored options and increased their knowledge; (2) felt accomplished, like they had become a better person; and (3) felt entertained, enjoying the conference.

Many academic association conferences mishandle conference social functions because they hire temporary staff and, in addition, use volunteers who usually lack the knowledge and experience to provide a high quality experience to attendees. Mandatory training sessions/event

briefings could increase the ability to manage on-site operations and meet attendee demands. Meeting planners could go over any rules and regulations and answer any questions that volunteers and staff may have. It is always better to take time and do this before the conference starts than try to fix misunderstandings on site. Therefore, the staff must be able to help attendees in their professional and social interactions to bolster social networking at the conference. After all, attendees expect professional & social networking opportunities at social functions, and the association should see that they get what they expect by adding regular refreshment breaks at the conference to allow peer networking (i.e., structured networking sessions).

Third, with regards to the relationships among destination specific dimensions (i.e., site attractiveness, travelability, and site environment) and two of conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning and excitement), site attractiveness had no positive relationship with learning (H3a), but had effect on excitement. In particular, when attendees perceive opportunities at the conference site to enjoy tourist attractions, shopping, and a variety of entertainment, they felt excited, but site attractiveness itself did not have positive effect on learning at the conference. Travelability, however, had a positive influence on excitement, so when the conference was held in a venue easily accessible from an airport, and travel time to the conference destination and cost of transportation to site was reasonable, conference attendees enjoyed the conference more. In addition, site environment had a positive relationship with excitement (H5). That is, attendees enjoyed the conference in a safe and clean environment, with a desirable climate and friendly local people. The finding was consistent with Oppermann's (1995) result that conference site alone could increase attendance level. This finding suggests that sightseeing, cost of travel, and safety were important to attendees choosing a conference to attend. Attendees are especially aware of outbreaks of communicable diseases, terrorism threats, natural disasters, and climate (Lee & Min, 2013; Mair & Thompson, 2009), so meeting planners should consider site environment when selecting conference destinations. Moreover, attendees enjoyed those conferences with extra opportunities like shopping and local attractions, which was consistent with Oppermann and Chon (1997) and Ryu and Lee's (2013) findings. Associations could promote more attendee/guest programs that include sightseeing and shopping. Lastly, especially during this economic recession, attendees consider accessibility because it affects the cost of travel. Conference organizers must consider the above variables when choosing a conference site to ensure conference attendees enjoy at the conference.

To sum up, management should provide (1) valuable education sessions and social networking opportunities to increase attendee's learning, self-esteem, and excitement (2) conference site that is attractive (with a variety of restaurants, entertainment, tourist attractions, and shopping), easily accessible with reasonable transportation costs, and safe and clean environment to increase attendee's excitement.

The relationships among perceived conference value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions (Study2)

This study investigated perceived conference value dimensions for academic association conferences and their influence on satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

First, in the relationships among utilitarian value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, utilitarian value had a positive influence on satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Hypotheses 6a & b). The findings indicated that, as the conference attendees perceived the conference was reasonably priced, offered value for money, and was a beneficial event for the money, attendees were (1) more satisfied with the conference and (2) more likely to encourage their colleagues to attend the conference, to say positive things about the conference (recommendation), as well as to attend the conference again. Second, and similarly, the relationships among hedonic value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions were confirmed: that is, hedonic value had a positive influence on satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Hypotheses 7a & b). In particular, as conference attendees felt the conference was a wonderful event and pleasurable, making them feel better, (1) attendees were more likely to be glad they attended the conference, and (2) they were more willing to advise others who were looking for a good conference to attend and were more willing to attend the conference again. Third, social value had a positive effect on both satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Hypotheses 8a & b). In particular, when attendees felt that attending a conference helped them feel more acceptable to the association, improved the way they were perceived by other people, and improved the way they saw themselves, (1) they felt attending the conference was the right thing to do and (2) and were more willing to praise the conference to their colleagues as well as consider attending the conference again themselves.

The major stream of consumer behavior studies demonstrated that perceived value has a positive impact on behavioral intentions (i.e., positive word-of-mouth and revisit intentions)

(Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000). The data analysis in this study showed that all utilitarian, hedonic, and social value components positively influenced attendee satisfaction and behavioral intentions, thus extending the focus of the literature to the context of association conferences. Conference attendees felt satisfied and were willing to recommend the conference to their colleagues when they perceived the conference was (1) a wonderful event that they enjoyed; (2) a beneficial event for the money; (3) a conference that improved the way they were perceived by other people and the way they saw themselves.

These findings suggest that attendees considered hedonic aspects more than utilitarian and social values in evaluating an academic association conference. From the practical standpoint, therefore, meeting planners should enhance the overall value perceptions among attendees first by providing a sense of their conference's uniqueness as embodied in symbolic meanings and the emotional arousal and imagery that they evoke.

This does not mean that utilitarian and social values are not critical for academic association conference attendees. This study also showed that utilitarian and social values also significantly affected satisfaction and behavioral intentions. The utilitarian aspect, as attendees perceived reasonably priced conference, meant they were more satisfied and more willing to attend the conference again. Attendees do rely on value for money in assessing their conference experience. Meeting planners should, thus, minimize conference prices by eliminating unnecessary costs. Destinations for conferences require professional site and venue research to reduce costs. Also, in terms of social aspects, as attendees felt more acceptable to the conference/association, they felt happier and more willing to spread positive word-of-mouth and return to future conferences. Attendees perceived conferences as an effective way to express their social value, so meeting planners should plan for social opportunities, either educational sessions or social networking, as a way for attendees to seek social value at the conference.

Finally, satisfaction had a positive influence on behavioral intentions (Hypothesis 9). If conference attendees were satisfied with the conference, they encouraged colleagues to attend, providing positive feedback on the conference. They were also willing to attend the conference again. This result is consistent with Bowen and Chen (2001), who found that satisfaction affects behavioral intentions. Therefore, to encourage attendees to spread positive word-of-mouth to their colleagues and revisit, meeting planners should seek ways to help attendees feel happy and satisfied.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As with any research, this study has limitations. First, the samples and measurement may not generalize to other situations. Data were collected from faculty members in the United States who attended an academic association conference within the past year. Hence, the findings were limited to academic association conference participants and might not generalize to other regions or other types of meetings (e.g., exhibitions, festivals, and trade shows). In this regard, a similar study in different settings and different regions would be worthwhile to establish the validity of our findings across different contexts.

Second, our findings used data collected from a self-reported questionnaire. The weakness of using retrospective approach is that attendees must rely on their memories. To improve the accuracy of their responses, respondents were encouraged to think carefully before answering each question, but future research might use a combination of data collection methods, including qualitative studies (i.e., in-depth open ended interview or direct observations).

Third, the data was collected at one particular point of time, which can provide only a snapshot of the population (Bobko & Stone-Romero, 1998), so another time frame might have produced different results. Even though causal relationships were developed according to theoretical predictions and related research, future research could include longitudinal studies, which would allow stronger causal relationships to be developed.

Lastly, formatively measured items were used for exogenous variables (i.e., perceived conference quality dimensions in Study 1 using the PLS-SEM program. Future research could investigate how each conference experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement) influences attendee behavioral intentions (i.e., word of mouth and intention to revisit), and how value perceptions influence experience quality dimensions (i.e., learning, self-esteem, and excitement) and behavioral intentions at the conference. Both would provide better understanding of attendee behaviors. Such a conceptual model will likely capture a richer picture of conference attendee behaviors for conference organizers.

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Appendix A - Email Letter

Subject: Invitation to survey: Understanding the holistic view of conference attendee behavior using PLS-SEM

Dear

My name is Young Gin Choi, a PhD candidate at the Department of Hospitality Management and Dietetics at Kansas State University. I am sending this email to seek your valuable help with a survey I am currently conducting to understand behaviors of those attending academic association conference. This survey is part of my dissertation research. **Please be aware that you must have attended academic association conference at least once within the past year to participate in the survey.**

Your participation is strictly voluntary. Refusal to participate or stopping at any time will involve no penalty. The questionnaire will take about 15 minutes to complete. **Also, as a token of my appreciation, there will be a drawing for an iPad mini for every eighty participants.** Participants will be automatically re-directed to a separate survey site where their email addresses will be entered. If your email address is selected, you will receive an email asking for your mailing address, so you can receive an iPad mini.

The confidentiality of your response is guaranteed. The survey tool does not link the response to the email address entered for the drawing. Once the drawing is complete and prizes are delivered, the email contact will be deleted. Results will be reported in summary only.

You can access the survey online by clicking here <https://surveys.ksu.edu/....> or by using the following link: <https://surveys.ksu.edu/....>

Thank you in advance for participating in this survey.

Sincerely,

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Appendix B - Survey Questionnaire

June 20, 2013

Dear Respondents,

I am conducting a dissertation research project examining behaviors of academic association conference attendees. **Please be aware that you must have attended academic association conference at least once within the past year to participate in the survey.**

It will take about 15 minutes to complete this survey. Your participation is strictly voluntary. Refusing to participate or stopping at any time will involve no penalty. Submission of a completed questionnaire indicates your willingness to participate. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate. **Also, as a token of my appreciation, there will be a drawing for an iPad mini for every eighty participants.** Participants will be automatically re-directed to a separate survey site where their email address will be entered. If your email address is selected, you will receive an email asking for your mailing address, so you can receive an iPad mini. Your name and contact information will be stored separately from your response so that your response will remain anonymous. You will also have an option not to provide your personal information if you prefer. All responses will remain confidential. No individual responses will be shared.

This study has been approved by the committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB # 6742) on June 17, 2013 at Kansas State University. If you have any question about this study, please feel free to contact me at 785-532-2213 or Dr. Elizabeth B. Barrett, co-chair of my dissertation committee, at 785-532-2208. For questions about your rights as a participant or the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Rick Scheidt, Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, (785) 532-3224, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506.

I appreciate for your participation in this survey.

Sincerely,

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Understanding the holistic view of conference attendee behavior using PLS-SEM: The case of academic association conference

Screening Questions:

1. Have you attended an academic association conference within the past year?
   A. Yes
   B. No (If no, you are not qualified for this particular survey)

2. If yes, please name one academic association conference that you participated within the past year.

   _____

Section A: Conference Specific Dimension

Instructions: All questions in the following are related to your ***experience*** with ***the conference you named***. Please read the following statements carefully and select the number that best reflects your experience using a 7-point scale below (1=strongly disagree- 7= strongly agree). Your answer will remain confidential and information about you will not be identified in any way.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The conference offered an informative educational program agenda.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. The conference offered helpful session topics.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. The conference offered me the opportunity to exchange knowledge and ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. The conference offered me the opportunity to keep up with changes (trends) in my profession.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. The conference offered me the opportunity to listen to respected speakers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. The conference offered me the opportunity to develop my professional & social networking.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. The conference offered me the opportunity to attend social functions (e.g., banquets and receptions) at the conference to expand my networking with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. The conference offered me the opportunity to meet people I know in my field.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. The conference offered me the opportunity to bolster my social networking.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section B: Destination Specific Dimension

Instructions: Please read the following statements carefully and select the number that best reflects your opinion using a 7-point scale below (1=strongly disagree- 7= strongly agree).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. This conference site offered an opportunity for enjoying tourist attractions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. This conference site offered an opportunity for shopping.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. This conference site offered a variety of restaurants.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. This conference site offered a variety of entertainment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. This conference destination was very attractive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. This conference was held in a venue easily accessible from an airport.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. The time required to travel to this conference destination was reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. The cost of transportation to this site was reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. This conference destination's climate was desirable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Local people were friendly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. This conference site was safe.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. This conference destination was clean.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section C: Conference Experience Quality

Instructions: All questions in the following are related to your ***experience*** with ***the conference you named***. Please read the following statements carefully and select the number that best reflects your experience using a 7-point scale below (1=strongly disagree- 7= strongly agree).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
During this conference, ...							
1. I developed my knowledge and skills by attending educational sessions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I increased my knowledge by gaining new ideas about research in my area.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I explored new ideas at professional and social networking programs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I increased my knowledge about new products and service available.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I explored new and up-to-date technology.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I felt self-worth.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I impressed others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I felt accomplished.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I felt like a better person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I experienced excitement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I felt entertained.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I had fun.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section D: Perceived Conference Value

Instructions: All questions in the following are related to your ***experience*** with ***the conference you named***. Please read the following statements carefully and select the number that best reflects your experience using a 7-point scale below (1=strongly disagree- 7= strongly agree). Please remember that you opinion is based on ***the conference you named***.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. This conference was reasonably priced.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. This conference offered value for money.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. This conference was a good event for the money.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. This conference was a wonderful event that I enjoyed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Attending this conference was pleasurable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Attending this conference made me feel better.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Attending this conference helped me feel acceptable to the association I engage in.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Attending this conference improved the way I am perceived by other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Attending this conference improved the way I see myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section E: Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention

All questions in the following are related to your ***experience*** with ***the conference you named***. Please read the following statements carefully and select the number that best reflects your experience using a 7-point scale below (1=strongly disagree- 7= strongly agree).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I was satisfied with this conference.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Attending this conference was right thing to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I was happy to attend this conference.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I will encourage my colleagues to attend this conference.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. If someone is looking for a good conference, I will advise him/her to attend this conference.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I will say positive things about this conference.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I am willing to attend this conference in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I will keep attending this conference in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I will consider attending this conference repeatedly in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section F. Information About Yourself

Instructions: The purpose of following questions is to gather some basic demographic information on participations. Please place a mark in the category that describes you best for the following questions. Your responses are for ***research purpose only***.

1. What is your gender?
   A. Male
   B. Female

2. What is your age group?
   A. 20-29
   B. 30-39
   C. 40-49
   D. 50-59
   E. 60 or older

3. What is your faculty rank?
   A. Instructor
   B. Adjunct Professor
   C. Assistant Professor
   D. Associate Professor
   E. Professor
   F. Other _____

4. What field are you in?
   A. Business
   B. Education
   C. Engineering
   D. Humanities
   E. Law
   F. Medicine
   G. Natural Science & Mathematics
   H. Physical Education
   I. Social Science
   J. Other _____

5. How much funding did you get for this conference?

A. None - 25%
B. 26 - 50%
C. 51 - 51%
D. 76 - 100%

6. What is the size (type) f the conference?
   A. Regional conference
   B. National conference
   C. International conference

Thank you for your participation. I appreciate your time and effort.