Original Research Article

Creating a high-performance exhibitor team: A temporary-organization perspective

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A B S T R A C T

Participation in business events such as meetings, conventions and exhibitions is costly, and building a high-performance team is vital. This study examines the key influential factors of team performance from the perspective of the "temporary organization". Using a sample of 516 individuals employed by exhibitors attending trade shows, we demonstrate that "servant leadership" and "swift trust" are the two crucial factors in improving an exhibitor team's performance. Specifically, two dimensions of servant leadership, namely conceptual skills and commitment to the growth of people, contribute directly to team performance. Swift trust not only has a positive direct influence on team performance but is also a partial mediator between servant leadership and team performance. The results have implications for managers seeking to create a high-performance temporary team.

1. Introduction

Business events such as meetings, conferences and exhibitions can play an important role in a destination's economic development, especially in its hospitality and tourism industries (Alberca-Oliver et al., 2015; Hanly, 2012; Jin and Weber, 2013; Jones). According to Jones and Li (2015), business travelers usually spend money more than their leisure counterparts; business events help to extend the utilization period of hospitality facilities outside holiday peaks; and exhibition and conference facilities provide value for residents and enhance the attraction of a destination. There is increasing recognition of this contribution that business events make to a destination's development, and consequently there has been significant growth of the exhibition industry infrastructure globally in recent years. The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI, 2018) reported that global venue space reached 34.8 million square meters in 2017, an increase of 7.7% over 2011. The Asia Pacific region has seen a surge in venue projects in recent years, driven primarily by China, which accounts for 70% of exhibition venue space in the region. Globally, China is now the world's second largest provider of exhibition venues, only behind the USA.

Despite the importance of business events for destinations around the world (Getz, 2008; Getz and Page, 2016; Kelly and Fairley, 2018),

hospitality research lags behind the growth in the conventions, conferences and exhibitions industry. Participation in business events such as trade shows has significant cost implications, and therefore creating a high-performance team is vital for the exhibitors (Alberca-Oliver et al., 2015). A trade show is a temporary event, and an exhibitor's team participating in the event is a temporary organization. Unlike the event organizers, the members of an exhibitor's team collaborate only for a short period and they are mostly not familiar with each other, which poses specific challenges to leadership and trust building among team members (Tyssen et al., 2013). However, little is known about how to overcome these challenges and increase the performance of an exhibitor team. The present study thus attempts to narrow the above research gap by focusing on the issues of leadership and trust within an exhibitor team from 'temporary organization' perspective.

Temporary organizations are prevalent in both the business and leisure tourism industries (Getz and Page, 2016), and can take the form of, for example, a group supporting a package tour (Wang et al., 2010; Wong and Lee, 2012), a team organizing an event, an on-site co-ordination team, and an exhibitor team (Chi et al., 2018; Szmigin et al., 2017; Yolal et al., 2016). In such temporary organizations, 'servant leadership' is essential in motivating members to achieve high team performance (Elbaz and Haddoud, 2017; Gu et al., 2017; Wong and Lee,

2012). A servant leader relies on personal charisma and moral character, rather than formal power, to motivate staff (Tyssen et al., 2014). Servant leaders go beyond self-interest, care about each individual in the team and are good at fostering two-way exchange and communication (Neubert et al., 2016). We expect that servant leadership will positively influence the performance of a temporary exhibitor team. Moreover, for a temporary organization to achieve high performance, 'swift trust' is also a pre-requisite (Meyerson et al., 1996). Swift trust is a unique form of immediate trust that team members have to develop from the beginning of the project, because they have limited past working relationships to rely on and they do not have enough time to build trust gradually (Meyerson et al., 1996). As such, swift trust tends to be fragile (Hyllengren et al., 2011; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999), and servant leadership is likely to be instrumental in generating swift trust within a temporary team.

In this study, we develop and test a conceptual model of the influences of servant leadership and swift trust on the performance of exhibitor teams and their relationships through a survey of exhibitors' staff in China. By doing so, we make three significant contributions to the hospitality and tourism literature. First, to the best of our knowledge, this is among the first studies to adopt a temporary organization perspective to examine an important hospitality and tourism management issue. Temporary organizations are unique and require different management mechanisms, and this study offers new insights into the mechanism of successfully managing a temporary team to achieve high performance (Meyerson et al., 1996). Second, we examine the role of swift trust in building a high-performance team, which, along with the concept of the temporary organization, has largely been ignored in the hospitality management literature. Third, the results of our study demonstrate the key role of servant leadership in a temporary organization, thus extending the application of the theory of servant leadership from the context of permanent organizations (Hsiao et al., 2015; Qian et al., 2016) to temporary organizations, in settings such as business events (Getz and Page, 2016).

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

2.1. The characteristics of a temporary organization

Temporary organizations are ubiquitous in the hospitality and tourism industries, for example in the form of a tour group (Tsaur and Ku, 2018; Wang et al., 2010; Wong and Lee, 2012) or an exhibitor team. According to Getz and Page (2016), there are four major types of events: business; sports (Chi et al., 2018); cultural (e.g. festivals) (Yolal et al., 2016); and entertainment (Szmigin et al., 2017). Business events are often referred to using the acronym MICE, for 'meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions', although 'incentives' (usually some sort of reward for staff for instance involving a hotel stay) are not particularly relevant in the present context. The focus of our study is on the exhibitor's teams participating in a trade show.

The nature of a temporary organization is that they last for a short period of time and the teams that participate in the specific activities are temporary. Hanisch and Wald (2014) identified five main characteristics that distinguish temporary organizations from permanent organizations: temporariness, uniqueness, ambiguous hierarchies, heterogeneity and diversity, and informal coordination. First, in a temporary organization, members are aware of the short-term nature of the team, which often results in less motivation for actions that require a long-term orientation, such as commitment to the organization and trust building among team members (Lindner and Wald, 2011). Second, their temporary nature confers a higher degree of uncertainty and risk than permanent organizations usually have to deal with. Third, members of the temporary organization are likely to have different hierarchical positions and roles in their respective permanent organization, which may result in role conflicts. Fourth, most temporary organizations are composed of diversely skilled individuals. Fifth, coordination

in temporary organizations is generally based on informal mechanisms such as trust, rather than formal ones, such as organizational hierarchy (Meyerson et al., 1996).

An exhibitor team at a trade show has all the characteristics of a temporary organization. Most trade shows last less than a week, but the exhibitor typically organizes its team two weeks before the show, and the team continues to function for two more weeks to follow up the event (Søilen, 2013). Thus the typical team lasts for about 5 weeks. There is, though, a lot of variation, depending on the tasks required before and after the show. For example, participating in an overseas exhibition requires the team prepare for a longer time than for a domestic one; taking new products to an exhibition requires the team to have longer preparation time than for established products; and an exhibitor team participating in an important trade show is likely to be formed earlier than a team involved in a less important show. Moreover, the size of a given exhibitor team will very likely change over the course of its existence. At the start, there may be only an exhibiting coordinator who is responsible for the event, and team members will join and leave at different stages in accordance with the work at hand. The leader of an exhibitor team is normally a mid-ranked manager, and the team members could be of similar rank, such as managers from the research and development department, the manufacturing unit, or the after-sales service department, while occasionally they could be of higher rank, such as the chief sales director. Most of the time, team members are temporarily hired or are volunteers from the hosting city who help with marketing, reception, translation and other work. Many team members have other work to do in addition to the exhibiting job, and will continue to have to report to their usual managers as well as the exhibition team leaders. This adds to the challenge of leading such a temporary team (Søilen, 2013).

Given the unique characteristics of a temporary organization, 'servant leadership' and 'swift trust' are prominently important. Managing a temporary organization requires a leader who inspires the team members by providing a vision and who allows for learning and autonomous decision making (Tyssen et al., 2013). This servant leadership style is particularly appropriate to temporary organizations because, as outlined above, they have a less formal hierarchical power structure than permanent organizations. Swift trust between leader and team members will be necessary for the team's mission to be accomplished given the short-term nature of the project (Meyerson et al., 1996).

2.2. The influence of servant leadership upon exhibitor team performance

Servant leadership is a leadership style that focuses on the growth and development of the followers, for the benefit of the wider community that both leaders and followers are embedded in (Avolio et al., 2009). The concept was first proposed by Robert Greenleaf, who stated that "the servant-leader who is encountered as a 'servant' first, is in fact, a great leader" (as cited in Reinke, 2004). Servant leadership is believed to be an effective leadership style in fostering followers' commitment, engagement, organizational citizen behavior, and performance (Carter and Baghurst, 2013; Newman et al., 2017).

Previous studies in the hospitality sector show that leaders with high moral values have a positive effect on employees' innovative behavior (Dhar, 2016). The study by Hsiao et al. (2015) indicates that servant leadership contributes to employees' psychological capital, which in turn contributes to service-orientated organizational citizenship behavior. Qian et al. (2016) recently showed that servant leadership positively influences employee service-oriented behavior and subsequently service performance. In addition, the results reported in the hospitality literature demonstrate that servant leadership can lead to positive outcomes in terms of service climate (Huang et al., 2016) and helping behavior (Zou et al., 2015) directed at both internal and external stakeholders (Bavik et al., 2017). Indeed, servant leadership ultimately results in increases more generally in service quality

(Koyuncu, et al., 2014), service performance (Qian et al., 2016) and firm performance (Huang, et al., 2016).

In order to clarify the concept, Spears (1996) described ten characteristics of a servant leader: foresight, conceptualization, listening, stewardship, empathy, persuasion, healing, awareness, commitment to the growth of people, and community building. Efforts have since been made to develop a measurement scale based on Spears's list (Liden et al., 2008). While scholars have identified many characteristics and dimensions of the servant leader, not all of them have the same influence on individual or organizational performance; and their effects on performance also differ across contexts and settings (de Waal and Sivro, 2012). For example, among Liden et al.'s seven factors, "helping subordinates grow and succeed" and "emotional healing" were the ones that resulted in subordinates' organizational commitment (Liden et al., 2008).

Although scholars have identified many characteristics and dimensions of a servant leader, not all of the dimensions have been shown to have a direct impact on individual or organizational performance. Moreover, the effect of each dimension on performance differs across contexts and settings (de Waal and Sivro, 2012). For example, Liden, et al. (2008) found that only "helping subordinates grow and succeed" has a positive impact on subordinates' organizational commitment. While Harwiki (2016) found that empowering followers is the most important characteristic of a servant leader to increase employee performance.

Most of the previous empirical studies, however, investigated servant leadership within permanent rather than temporary organizations. It is not known, therefore, which characteristics of servant leadership will improve the performance of a temporary organization, and how. Using the widely acknowledged seven-dimension model of servant leadership (Liden et al., 2008) as a reference, the authors undertook a preliminary study by interviewing with 20 exhibitor managers to explore their thoughts about the most important dimensions of servant leadership for the success of a temporary exhibitor team.

Among the seven dimensions, two were mentioned frequently and deemed highly relevant to the performance of temporary organizations by these exhibitor managers: having conceptual skills and being willing to help subordinates grow. It is interesting to note that these two dimensions identified from the interviews are consistent with the findings of Wong and Lee (2012) that the key issues to manage a package tour group (another type of temporary organization) for tour leaders are concern for tasks and concern for group members.

Among the other five dimensions of the model, "emotional healing" was found to have a negative impact on individuals' commitment to the organization (Liden et al., 2008). "Creating value for the community" and "behaving ethically" are difficult to observe or evaluate within a short period of time, and so were not deemed relevant to the context of the present study. The ambiguous hierarchies and the heterogeneity of a temporary organization imply that all team members are experts in their area of responsibility and they have a sense of control over what they are doing (Hanisch and Wald, 2014). Thus, the need to be empowered in a temporary organization is much less than it is in a normal organization. "Putting subordinates first" requires the leader to prioritize the satisfaction of subordinates above anything else (Liden et al., 2008), which may result in distraction from the team goal. As such, this dimension was not considered to be useful by the exhibition managers in terms of increasing team performance. Therefore, this study focuses on the two dimensions of servant leadership that are most relevant to the context investigated: conceptual skills and commitment to the growth of people.

Conceptual skills are those skills that enable leaders to understand thoroughly the team's missions and tasks, which equip them to support their team members (Liden et al., 2008). It is an ability to analyze things, predict changes, identify opportunities, and detect threats (Carmeli and Tishler, 2006). The ambiguous hierarchy of temporary organizations and the characteristic of informal coordination result in

less formal hierarchical power and authority for the leader, which means the leader needs to rely on personal charm and professional abilities to gain trust and respect from the team members. A leader with good conceptual skills can think beyond daily operations (Spears, 2004) and is clear about the organization and its tasks, which lead to persuasion, foresight and good communication (Alexander et al., 2017).

In addition, trade shows are dynamic and intensely competitive, which can generate high degrees of stress and anxiety and a lack of assuredness among staff (Waldman et al., 2001). Exhibiting managers who have good conceptual skills often have a thorough understanding of company strategy as well as the team mission and objectives for the exhibition, which enables them to tell whether the team is on the right path and to assist team members effectively. Furthermore, with good conceptual skills, the leader can identify opportunities and find solutions to problems in uncertain situations, as well as provide vision, confidence and assurance for the team members (Waldman et al., 2001). Therefore, we propose that:

H1. The team leader's conceptual skills directly and positively influence exhibitor team performance.

Servant leaders show genuine concern for their subordinates' professional development (Liden et al., 2008). They try to achieve good organizational performance by looking after the followers' well-being. They provide the necessary mentoring and support to foster their personal growth. It has been found that, more so than other dimensions of servant leadership, "helping subordinates grow and succeed" is of great value in increasing staff commitment to the organization (Liden et al., 2008) as well as in enhancing perceptions of group efficacy (Hu and Liden, 2011).

Because trade shows are temporary events, staff often have a short-term orientation, focusing on fulfilling tasks instead of pursuing quality (Lindner and Wald, 2011). The ambiguous hierarchies and heterogeneity can further increase the management challenge (Iles and Hayers, 1997). In such situations, leaders with a commitment to subordinates' personal growth invest time and effort in understanding and supporting their team members, which can greatly increase their power of persuasion and inspiration. Moreover, the exhibitor managers frequently mentioned in the primary interviews that people are much more motivated to do their job if they believe the work at hand will benefit their long-term career. Therefore, we propose that:

H2. The team leader's commitment to the growth of people directly and positively influences exhibitor team performance.

2.3. The influence of swift trust on exhibitor's team performance

In addition to leadership, trust is another important factor for building a high-performance temporary organization. Trust is generally defined as one's confidence in another's goodwill in a social exchange (Zaheer et al., 1998). It is often regarded as a mechanism of organizational control to complement power and contract (Ouchi, 1980), because trust plays an important role in encouraging cooperation, enhancing satisfaction and commitment, and avoiding fear, greed and resistance in a social exchange (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2012). Trust also stimulates the sharing of information and knowledge, which is essential for a successful collaboration (Robert et al., 2009).

In a permanent organization, trust can be developed and strengthened over time. However, team members of a temporary organization have neither past working relationships nor enough time within the present engagement to build trust. Instead, they need to carry out their tasks by trusting other members from the beginning of the project on the basis of their background, professional credentials and affiliations. This kind of initial or early-stage trust has been termed "swift trust" (Meyerson et al., 1996). Robert et al. (2009) argue that, compared with the concept of general trust, swift trust is an early trusting belief that is based largely on category-based processing, such as one's

organizational role, professional title, age and gender, but not on actual behaviors. Additionally, individual personality factors such as disposition to trust also play a role in developing swift trust.

Swift trust is essential for temporary organizations, because this early trusting belief has "diagnostic" value for the management of virtual teams, in that its presence suggests a high probability of good performance, whereas its absence can be interpreted as an early warning sign of a failing team (Kanawattanachai and Yoo, 2002). Once swift trust has been built, it continues to bias favorably to the overall evaluation of the team even when there is disappointment (Crisp and Jarvenpaa, 2013). We can expect that, for a temporary organization such as a team at a trade show, which consists of diversely skilled staff coming from different departments, swift trust can reduce ambiguity and uncertainty, promote cooperative working relationships and consequently improve team performance. Thus:

H3. Swift trust directly and positively influences exhibitor team performance.

2.4. Servant leadership, swift trust and exhibitor team performance

As an indication of a leader's competence, conceptual skills are seen as the primary driver of swift trust in the leader. A leader who is equipped with conceptual skills is capable of sound judgement and thoughtful decisions (Liden et al., 2008). A leader's conceptual skills thus can make followers feel that they are working effectively towards meaningful objectives, hence the followers will have confidence in the leader and in the team's success (Schaubroeck et al., 2011). We therefore propose:

H4. The team leader's conceptual skills directly and positively influence swift trust within the exhibitor team.

A servant leader emphasizes high-quality relationships with subordinates and is committed to followers' personal growth and career development, which can foster followers' trust in the leader (Chan and Mak, 2014). The members' trust in the leader influences their attitudes toward the other members of the team. With pervasive trust among members, each individual is likely to be more committed to the organization, and to be more active in supporting each other to achieve the organization's goals. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H5. The team leader's commitment to team members' personal growth positively influences swift trust within the exhibitor's team.

Servant leadership produces high team performance because the leader is capable of building a community that is trusting and supportive, which nurtures members' commitment and creativity (Greenleaf et al., 1977). In other words, trust performs a mediating role linking servant leadership to high team performance (Reinke, 2004). Empirically, an earlier study by Dirks (2000) indicated that trust mediates the effect of leadership style on team performance, although it was not specifically about servant leadership and swift trust in the setting of temporary organizations. Our qualitative interviews with participants of exhibition teams suggested that two dimensions of servant leadership, namely conceptual skills and commitment to team members' personal growth, are high influential for building swift trust and subsequently team performance. Therefore, this study extends the theory by providing two further hypotheses in the context of temporary organizations:

H6. Swift trust mediates the effect of leaders' conceptual skills on exhibitor team performance.

H7. Swift trust mediates the effect of leaders' commitment to team members' personal growth on exhibitor team performance.

3. Methods

3.1. Sample and data collection

We collected data from August to December 2016 in 5 representative Chinese cities: a) Shanghai and Guangzhou, both of which have highly developed exhibition industries; b) Dalian and Qingdao, in both of which the exhibition industry is at a medium level of development; and c) Guiyang, a city only just beginning to develop its exhibition industry. We conducted a face-to-face survey with individuals who were attending a trade show as the employee of an exhibitor. Twelve trained research assistants approached potential respondents in public resting areas and invited them to participate. All respondents were ensured that their answers would be confidential and were given a souvenir as a token of our gratitude. A total of 378 employees were recruited to participate in this on-site survey, and 287 valid responses were obtained (75.9%).

In order to control the bias of common method, further respondents were recruited via the internet. Specifically, four researchers joined chat groups established by Chinese trade show organizers on QQ and WeChat (two messaging applications popular in China) and invited members to complete the same survey instrument. From a total of 267 questionnaires distributed online we received 229 valid sets of responses (85.8%). Thus 516 valid questionnaire responses from 145 exhibitor teams were obtained. The sample's profile is presented in Table 1. We conducted a *t*-test analysis to check if there were any differences between on-site respondents and online respondents, and no difference was found. We further conducted a follow-up online survey with 80 randomly selected participants one month later. The results were consistent with the earlier survey responses, which indicates that the responses in the main survey are valid.

3.2. Research instrument

We used a multi-stage process to develop our survey instrument. First, we reviewed relevant studies and selected the scales that measure the relevant factors. A first version of the questionnaire was drafted on this basis. Second, we translated this draft English-language questionnaire into Chinese, and then asked a bilingual scholar to back-translate it into English. Third, to ensure the face validity of the items, we asked three exhibition managers and four professors who had

Table 1
Sample profile.

Individual (N = 516)	%	n	Team (N = 145)	%	n
Gender			**Teamsize**		
Male	48.8	252	≤ 3	18.6	27
Female	51.2	264	4-6	33.8	49
Age			7-10	20.0	29
Below than 25	26.9	139	11-20	8.30	12
25-30 years	40.1	207	21-30	7.6	11
31-35 years	21.7	112	≥31	11.7	17
36-40 years	6.2	32			
41-50 years	4.3	22	**Teamexp**		
51 and above	0.8	4	Once	6.20	9
Exhibitexp			Twice	17.9	26
Once	16.7	86	3 - 4 times	40.0	58
Twice	27.9	144	5 - 9 times	23.4	34
3 - 4 times	33.9	175	≥10 times	12.4	18
5 - 9 times	15.1	78			
≥10 times	6.4	33			

Note: Exhibitexp refers to the individual's exhibiting experience and was measured as the number of times the respondent had participated in exhibitions within the last 2 years. Teamsize refers to the size of the exhibitor team (i.e. number of team members). Teamexp refers to the company's exhibiting experience and was measured as the number of times the company had been an exhibitor within the last 2 years.

Table 2
Construct measures and convergent validity.

Construct	Item	loading	α	CR	AVE
Conceptual skills	My team leader is able to detect if something is going wrong	.654	0.812	0.8167	0.5282
	My team leader is able to come up with solutions to complex problems.	.782			
	My team leader has a clear idea of the team's mission.	.700			
	My team leader is creative in solving problems.	.764			
Commitment to the personal growth	My team leader cares about my career development.	.753	0.851	0.8528	0.5921
	My team leader is helps me to achieve my career goals.	.781			
	My team leader is willing to provide opportunities for my skills development.	.815			
	My team leader pays attention to my career goals.	.726			
Swift trust	Since the establishment of the team:		0.879	0.8804	0.5958
	Members have had confidence in each other.	.778			
	All members of the team have shown integrity.	.794			
	Members have been considerate of each other	.775			
	The teammates have been friendly.	.792			
	Members have been able to rely on each other.	.718			
Exhibitor team performance	Our team is efficient.	.752	0.890	0.8883	0.5705
	Our service quality is good.	.730			
	We are able to adhere to schedules.	.810			
	We are able to adhere to budgets.	.710			
	We are able to resolve conflicts.	.760			
	Overall we perform very well.	.766			

research experience in the exhibition industry to confirm that the questions were understandable and accurately measured the constructs of interest. Fourth, as a pre-test, 25 exhibitor staff completed the questionnaire to ensure that the content, length, and completion time were appropriate.

The questionnaire used in the survey consists of four parts: (1) six questions regarding the respondent (gender, age, exhibiting experience, department, position, and role in the exhibitor team) and two questions about the team (team size and number of exhibitions the team had attended); (2) five items to measure swift trust; (3) six items to evaluate team performance; and (4) four items to measure each of the two dimensions of servant leadership (i.e. conceptual skills and commitment to the personal growth). The items used to measure each construct are presented in Table 2.

The five items measuring swift trust were adapted from the scale of early trusting beliefs developed by Crisp and Jarvenpaa (2013). We adapted the six-item scale of team performance from Ancona and Caldwell (1992). The items measuring conceptual skills and commitment to personal growth were adapted from Liden et al. (2008). All the construct measurement items were presented as a five-point Likert scale (from 5 = "completely agree" to 1 = "completely disagree").

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model

The results indicate that the multivariate data were normally distributed: the skewness and kurtosis of all the items were under the threshold value of 2.0, and Mardia's coefficient was 177.039, which is lower than $\rho (\rho + 2)$ (Bollen and Long, 1993), which is 624 in this study.

We first conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test whether the scale's structure adequately matched the data. Using the maximum likelihood estimation method, we obtained the following model results of CFA, which indicate good model fit: $\chi 2 = 475.935$, degrees of freedom = 219, and $p < 0.001$, CMIN/DF = 2.173, RMSEA = 0.048, CFI = 0.955, TLI = 0.943, NFI = 0.920, GFI = 0.927, PNFI = 0.730.

Table 2 presents factor loadings, composite reliabilities (CR), Cronbach's α, and average variance extracted (AVE) for the evaluation of the reliability and validity of the measurement model. The factor loadings were in the range 0.654–0.815, indicating good individual reliability. Internal consistency was good, with composite reliability

and Cronbach's α values greater than 0.7 for each construct. Convergent validity was also verified, with AVE values over 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Finally, we used Fornell and Larcker's (1981) procedure to test discriminant validity. The square root of each constructs' AVE was higher than the construct's correlations with any other constructs (Table 3), which confirms discriminant validity.

Overall, the measurement model seems reliable and valid.

4.2. Hypothesis testing

We estimated the structural model in Fig. 1 using the maximum likelihood method and AMOS 21.0. To increase the rigor of the results and to control for the influence of individual and team factors, gender, age, exhibition experience, team size and team experience were used as control variables. The framework used in this study recorded high R-squared values: 0.648 for exhibitor team performance and 0.474 for swift trust. This indicates that our model adequately explains the dependent variable, exhibitor team performance.

Table 4 shows the estimation results. Conceptual skills have a significant, positive effect on exhibitor team performance (t = 3.238, $p < .01$), and so does commitment to the personal growth (t = 3.606, $p < .001$). Thus, H1 and H2 were supported. Swift trust positively and significantly influenced exhibitor team performance (t = 7.311, $p < .001$). Thus, H3 was supported. In addition, after controlling for gender, age, exhibitexp, teamsize and teamexp, both conceptual skills (t = 5.473, $p < .001$) and commitment to the personal growth (t = 3.297, $p < .001$) had a positive and significant effect on swift trust. Thus, support was found for H4 and H5.

Table 3
Discriminant validity test.

	1	2	3	4
1. Conceptual skills	**0.727**			
2. Commitment to personal growth	0.706	**0.769**		
3. Swift trust	0.658	0.600	**0.772**	
4. Team performance	0.698	0.668	0.727	**0.755**

Notes: The square roots of AVEs are shown in bold on the diagonal; and the remaining values are correlations between constructs.
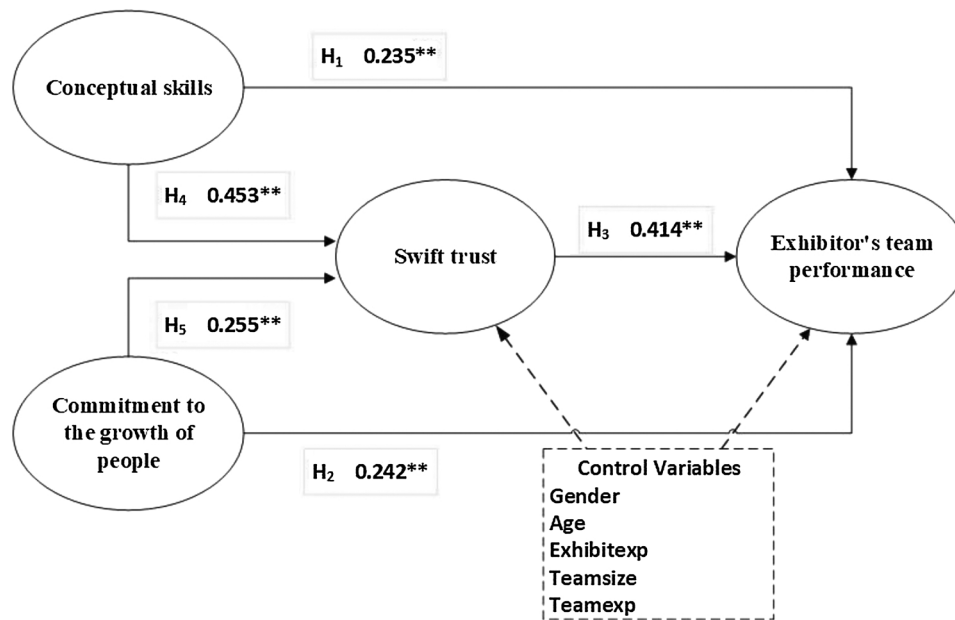
Fig. 1. Structural model results.
Note: the results are based on the sample size of 516.

Table 4
Structural model assessment and hypotheses testing.

Hypotheses	Path coefficients	t value	Test result
H₁: Conceptual skills →(+)Exhibitor team performance	.235**	3.238	Accepted
H₂: Commitment to personal growth →(+)Exhibitor team performance	.242***	3.606	Accepted
H₃: Swift trust →(+)Exhibitor team performance	.414***	7.311	Accepted
H₄: Conceptual skills →(+)Swift trust	.453***	5.473	Accepted
H₅: Commitment to personal growth →(+)Swift trust	.255***	3.297	Accepted
Control Variables			
Gender→Exhibitor team performance	.013	.379	
Age→Exhibitor team performance	−.014	−.408	
Exhibitexp→Exhibitor team performance	−.051	−1.373	
Teamsize →Exhibitor team performance	.044	1.275	
Teamexp →Exhibitor team performance	.098**	2.769	
Gender→Swift trust	.017	.431	
Age→Swift trust	−.020	−.475	
Exhibitexp→Swift trust	−.015	−.343	
Teamsize →Swift trust	.128**	3.202	
Teamexp →Swift trust	−.006	−.150	
Number of observations	516		

Note: *** $p < .001$; **$p < .01$.

4.3. Mediating effects of swift trust

We follow the framework of Baron and Kenny (1986) and the procedure of Hopwood (2007) to test the mediation effects.

To test the mediating effect of swift trust between conceptual skills

and exhibitor team performance, we first constructed a structural equation model between conceptual skills and swift trust with control variables. The results show good model fit (CMIN/DF = 1.914, RMSEA = 0.042, CFI = 0.977, TLI = 0.965, NFI = 0.953, GFI = 0.969, PNFI = 0.639), and the standardized path coefficient was statistically significant (β = 0.644, T = 9.952, standard error = 0.066). Thus, the first criterion of Baron and Kenny was satisfied.

Second, the model linking conceptual skills to exhibitor team performance also fit the data (CMIN/DF = 2.105, RMSEA = 0.046, CFI = 0.971, TLI = 0.958, NFI = 0.947, GFI = 0.962, PNFI = 0.650). The standardized path coefficients between conceptual skills and exhibitor team performance were statistically significant (β = 0.680, T = 10.291, standard error = 0.065). Thus, the second criterion of Baron and Kenny was satisfied.

Next, we constructed a model linking exhibitor team performance, conceptual skills, and swift trust. The results indicate overall model fit (CMIN/DF = 2.102, RMSEA = 0.046, CFI = 0.964, TLI = 0.953, NFI = 0.934, GFI = 0.944, PNFI = 0.713). Conceptual skills significantly affected exhibitor team performance (β = 0.383, T = 6.450, standard error = 0.064). Swift trust was significantly associated with exhibitor team performance (β = 0.462, T = 7.822, standard error = 0.062).

Table 5 shows the direct, indirect, and total effects of conceptual skills on swift trust and exhibitor team performance. The results indicate that swift trust partially mediates the effects of conceptual skills on exhibitor team performance. Thus, H6 is supported.

We used the same procedure to test the mediating effect of swift trust between commitment to personal growth and exhibitor team performance (Table 6). According to the criteria proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986), swift trust partially mediates the effects of commitment

Table 5
Mediating effect of swift trust on the link between conceptual skills and team performance.

Predicted relationships	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Total effects
Conceptual skills →Swift trust	0.644*	–	0.644*
Conceptual skills →Exhibitor team performance	0.383*	0.297*	0.680*
Swift trust→Exhibitor team performance	0.462*	–	0.462*
Number of observations	516	516	516

Note: * $p < .05$.

Table 6
Mediating effect of swift trust on the link between commitment to personal growth and team performance.

Predicted relationships	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Total effects
Commitment to personal growth →Swift trust	0.595*	–	0.595*
Commitment to personal growth →Exhibitor team performance	0.374*	0.291*	0.665*
Swift trust→Exhibitor team performance	0.489*	–	0.489*
Number of observations	516	516	516

Note: * p < .05.

to personal growth on exhibitor team performance. Thus, H7 is supported.

4.4. Robustness check

Due to the nested nature of our dataset, a robustness check was conducted by re-estimating our results based on a hierarchical linear model (HLM). We firstly define each employee as the first level, and each team as the second level. The $r_{WG}(J)$ mean value for conceptual skills is 0.90 (ICC1 = 0.26, ICC2 = 0.66), for commitment to the growth of people is 0.88 (ICC1 = 0.24, ICC2 = 0.73), for swift trust is 0.94 (ICC1 = 0.29, ICC2 = 0.70), and for exhibitor team performance is 0.95 (ICC1 = 0.30, ICC2 = 0.72). All the $r_{WG}(J)$ values are above 0.70 (Lebreton and Senter, 2007), which suggests that it is appropriate to aggregate individual responses to the team level. All the ICC1 values are greater than 0.20 and ICC2 values are close to 0.70, which indicates that individual ratings are affected by team membership (Bliese, 1998) and the mean rating distinguishes between teams (Lebreton and Senter, 2008). According to prior studies such as Liang et al. (2018), the hierarchical linear model or multilevel linear model should include a random intercept for team level to control for differences between groups (teams). The results are presented in Table 7, and they are highly consistent with our basic model, which indicates the validity of our model selection.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The main objective of this study was to explore the role of servant leadership and swift trust in creating a high-performance exhibitor team. The results not only show that servant leadership and swift trust do lead to high team performance, but also how, and this has implications for hospitality and tourism management theory and for creating a high-performance temporary team.

5.1. Theoretical implications

Unlike ordinary organizations, a tour group or event team is temporary and so has distinctive organizational characteristics (Hanisch and Wald, 2014). Although temporary organizations are common in the hospitality and tourism industries (Getz and Page, 2016), to the best of our knowledge this is the first study to adopt a temporary-organization perspective. By giving full consideration to the features of temporary organizations, we identified two critical factors (i.e. servant leadership

and swift trust) as the determinants of exhibitor team performance. This study thus complements the body of knowledge on the performance of a temporary team and provides a promising theoretical basis for studying other types of temporary teams in the wider hospitality and tourism industries.

This study shows that the two dimensions of servant leadership, i.e. conceptual skills and commitment to personal growth, positively affect team performance. This finding is a significant contribution to the tourism management literature because it extends the theory of servant leadership from the context of permanent organizations (Koyuncu et al., 2014) to temporary organizations; and it provides additional insights into the major dimensions of servant leadership that help to improve the performance of exhibitor teams. Our findings strengthen Greenleaf's servant leadership theory, which suggests that an effective leader needs to focus on serving followers by assisting them effectively and caring about their development and growth (Greenleaf et al., 1977).

Moreover, the findings show that servant leadership has both direct and indirect effects on exhibitor team performance, and that swift trust serves as a mediator for the indirect effects. Thus, this study clarifies the specific role of servant leadership in team performance, whereas previous studies have produced inconsistent results. Some authors propose that applying servant leadership directly increases organizational performance (Liden et al., 2008) whereas others argue that it does so indirectly, via mediating factors such as long-term orientation or openness (de Waal and Sivro, 2012).

In this study swift trust significantly contributed to exhibitor team performance, which, along with the concept of the temporary organization, has largely been ignored in the tourism management literature. The finding is consistent with that of Hyllengren et al. (2011) in the context of a temporary military group. Unlike permanent organizations, members of a team, as a temporary organization, do not have the luxury of history or time to develop trust (Meyerson et al., 1996). Swift trust is an early-stage trust and can be fragile, but it is essential for team success (Kanawattanachai and Yoo, 2002), and our findings provide support for the important role of swift trust in creating a high-performance exhibitor team (Crisp and Jarvenpaa, 2013).

5.2. Managerial implications

For temporary organizations, the two main issues are: a) how to inspire and effectively lead individual team members, and b) how to build trust quickly. The findings of our study suggest that the management of such a team need to consider the adoption of a servant

Table 7
Robustness check (results based on hierarchical linear model).

Hypotheses	Path coefficients	z value	Test result
H₁: Conceptual skills →(+)Exhibitor team performance	.207**	5.344	Accepted
H₂: Commitment to personal growth →(+)Exhibitor team performance	.208***	6.093	Accepted
H₃: Swift trust →(+)Exhibitor team performance	.383***	10.195	Accepted
H₄: Conceptual skills →(+)Swift trust	.315***	7.250	Accepted
H₅: Commitment to personal growth →(+)Swift trust	.222***	5.715	Accepted
Number of observations	516		
Number of groups (teams)	145		

Note: *** p < .001; **p < .01.

leadership style and the measures to develop swift trust among members of the team.

A good candidate to lead a temporary team is someone who is oriented to serving others instead of commanding, and who has good conceptual skills and a commitment to the personal growth of team members. An individual who has a good reputation would be the right leader, because the team will not be familiar with each other early on and therefore reputation helps to develop swift trust between leaders and followers, which increases the leaders' powers of inspiration and persuasion (Hyllengren et al., 2011). Training must be provided to the would-be leaders of temporary teams to develop or adopt a servant leadership style. It could include the development of conceptual skills by briefing them on the company's vision and corporate strategy, as well as on the event team's mission and objectives, and preparing them for different event scenarios, so the would-be team leader could provide assurance and confidence for their team members (Waldman et al., 2001). Moreover, role modelling and job shadowing would provide a greater appreciation of the diversity of different roles and jobs, which would help to equip the leader with a servant leadership mind-set and behaviors, such as empowering and supporting subordinates to achieve their full potential in their respective roles.

The findings of our study indicate that swift trust plays a central role in a temporary team's performance. Because the formation of swift trust relies on individual disposition to trust, role-based credentials, good communications and certain organizational attributes (Robert et al., 2009), management should select staff with trusting dispositions, and good professional reputations, encourage timely communications, and make reasonable organizational rules. Building trust at the early stage of a mission is essential, and trust building exercises could be included in the pre-event training or briefing sessions. For exhibitors, the team should be formed as early as possible, to allow time for trust to be built among members, through pre-event meetings, training and other activities. Finally, building a corporate culture of trust within the individual team members' permanent organization could help build swift trust in a temporary one, as a trusting corporate culture provides individuals with security in their professional identity, which will increase the likelihood of generating social and practical support among members of temporary groups.

5.3. Limitations and future research

This study is limited to exhibitor teams participating in trade shows, and caution is needed when generalizing the results to other temporary organizations in the hospitality and tourism industries. Future studies could generate interesting insights by adopting a temporary-organization perspective and adapting our conceptual model to explore the factors determining team performance in other hospitality settings. Moreover, we focus on the influence of servant leadership and swift trust on exhibitor team performance. Although our model has strong explanatory power, there are other organizational factors associated with the performance of a temporary organization, such as group diversity and team emotional authenticity, that were not included in our model, and these factors could be included in the conceptual model in future studies. A self-reported measure of team performance was used in this study. Future studies could use objective measures e based on the exhibitor's goals, such as number of leads or attraction efficiency. In addition, thanks to technology development, novel ways of collecting objective data to measure team performance could be used; for example, researchers could use a mobile positioning system that tracks the paths of trade-show visitors, in order to identify the exhibitor stands they visit and the duration of their visit.

Acknowledgements

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