

**REGIONAL TOURISM COOPERATION:  
Factors Influencing the Performance of  
Regional Tourism Cooperation in China**

Xiang Feng

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# **REGIONAL TOURISM COOPERATION: Factors Influencing the Performance of Regional Tourism Cooperation in China**

**REGIONALE SAMENWERKING  
OP HET GEBIED VAN TOERISME:**

**Factoren die van invloed zijn op de effectiviteit van  
regionale samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme  
in China**

## **Thesis**

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*To my husband*



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## Acronyms

China-SSS	China Spring Travel
CITS	China International Travel Service
CNTA	China National Tourism Administration
CYTS	China Younger Travel Service
EXPO (the)	Shanghai World EXPO 2010
FTR	Functional Tourist Region
FUR	Functional Urban Region
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICL	Inter-city level
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
MoU	Memo of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRD	Pearl River Delta
SAR	Special Administrative Region
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SME	Small or Medium-sized Enterprise
TCY	Tourism City Summit of the Yangtze River Delta
ULC	Urban Life Cycle
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
UTS	Urban Tourist System
WTO	World Tourism Organization
YRD	Yangtze River Delta
ZDN	Zhedongnan Tourism Alliance



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Honestly speaking, in my childhood I did have no intention to be so ‘research’. Perhaps because I was born in a typical Chinese family: a papa professor, a mama house-leader, and the kid me who was the ‘only hope’ of the family. To be a national famous violinist was the top family target at that moment: I spent ten hours per day during the school holidays to practice violin instead of reading or thinking as many PhDs usually did in their childhoods. Another reason could be that when my papa’s female colleagues, those PhDs, visited my family and talked to me, in most cases I intended to run away. They were so alien-like: always asking me how and why, repeating one sentence for three times, wearing heavy glasses, staring straightly at me to find answers out of my eyes, and upon most occasions, looked like sixty although their true ages were only thirty.

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## Abstract

Tourism cooperation at a Chinese regional level is a new phenomenon that has received much governmental and scholarly attention in recent years. This thesis examines regional tourism cooperation in China from a governance perspective. The research objective was formulated as *identifying factors in international literature to explain the Chinese situation: identify a set of factors of particular importance for the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*.

A theoretical framework is formulated, with eight factors, which are identified in international governance and tourism literature and are of particular importance for the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. The first four factors (political-economic features of tourism, commitment, leadership and motives) are related to the pre-cooperation process. We argue that practitioners of cooperation can face failure if they ignore these four factors while engaging immediately in cooperation. The last four factors (representation of stakeholders, involvement mechanisms, areas of cooperation and implementation structure) are related to the during-cooperation process. We argue that during cooperation, these four factors should be kept in mind to secure effective performance of regional tourism cooperation in China. In combination, we consider the above-mentioned eight factors as the most important factors influencing the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. Furthermore, the collective actions of these eight factors lead either to positive or negative cooperative outputs, such as the increase or decrease in the number of regional tourists.

The theoretical framework was applied to three typical cases of tourism cooperation in the Yangtze River Delta Region: the Tourism City Summit of the Yangtze River Delta region, the Zhedongnan Tourism Alliance, and the projects catalysed by the Shanghai World EXPO 2010, each reflecting one prominent regional tourism cooperative modality in China (e.g. the long-term conference, long-term alliance and short-term project modalities). The empirical studies modified the eight factors identified in the literature with new explanations in the Chinese context. The thesis shows that these

eight factors with the ‘new explanations’ are essential to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China, including: 1) the consistency between the goal of cooperation and the operational capacity or the political communication power of involved tourism bureaus; 2) more detailed actual commitment of primary stakeholders’ engagement; 3) a mechanism to secure the attendant equality of less-power primary stakeholders to access the cooperative resources; 4) collective motives of cooperation to be more quantitative, short-term response, and oriented to optimize the individual interests; 5) the representation of small or medium-sized travel agencies, economic chains or single hotels, and regional based tourism attractions (if they are defined by the cooperation as the primary stakeholders) in the decision-making process; 6) the consultative mechanism to incorporate opinions of secondary stakeholders into those of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process; 7) more priorities of cooperation, which incorporate clear action plans and explicit task descriptions; and 8) a stable attendance record of stakeholders, an institutionalized daily operational office, more qualitative indicators to evaluate the performance of cooperation, and a stable internal funding mechanism to secure the daily operations.

The study is based on the Chinese context, which may limit its application to the case studies outside China. Importantly, however, this does not imply that the generalization and application of this research is problematic. The study can trigger research initiatives of other academics if their future studies require the incorporation of theories in a local context. In addition, the research findings are not rigidly confined to the tourism sector. It may be also applicable to other sectors concerning public-private partnerships at different spatial levels.

In the future more studies weighing the importance of the identified factors for the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China can be expected. The relevance of other factors such as social, psychological and communication factors to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China may also be identified; or tests whether the current theoretical framework developed based on experiences in China would also work in Europe and other developed countries.

***Regionale samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme:  
Factoren die van invloed zijn op de effectiviteit van  
regionale samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme in China***



## Samenvatting

Samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme op regionaal niveau in China is een nieuw verschijnsel dat de afgelopen jaren sterk in de belangstelling staat bij zowel de overheid als de wetenschap. In dit proefschrift wordt regionale samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme in China onderzocht vanuit een governance-perspectief. Het doel van het onderzoek was om *in de internationale literatuur factoren aan te wijzen die de Chinese situatie kunnen verklaren en te bepalen welke factoren speciaal van belang zijn voor de effectiviteit van regionale samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme in China.*

Er is een theoretisch kader geformuleerd met acht factoren die ontleend zijn aan de internationale literatuur over governance en toerisme en die speciaal van belang zijn voor *de effectiviteit van regionale samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme in China.* De eerste vier factoren (politiek-economische aspecten van toerisme, commitment, leiderschap en motieven) hebben te maken met het proces dat voorafgaat aan de samenwerking. We betogen dat de samenwerking kan mislukken als partijen onmiddellijk gaan samenwerken zonder deze vier factoren in acht te nemen. De laatste vier factoren (vertegenwoordiging van belanghebbenden, betrokkenheidsmechanismen, samenwerkingsgebieden en implementatiestructuur) hebben te maken met het proces dat zich tijdens de samenwerking afspeelt. We betogen dat men zich tijdens de samenwerking van deze vier factoren bewust moet zijn om een effectieve regionale samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme in China te bewerkstelligen. De effectiviteit van regionale samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme in China wordt het meest beïnvloed door de combinatie van bovengenoemde acht factoren. Verder leidt de collectieve werking van deze acht factoren ofwel tot positieve of tot negatieve resultaten van samenwerking, zoals een toename of afname van het aantal toeristen in een regio.

Het theoretisch kader is toegepast op drie typerende gevallen van samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme in het gebied van de Jangtsekiangdelta:

de topconferentie over toerisme in de Jangtsekiangdelta, de toerisme-alliantie Zhedongnan en de projecten die ontstonden naar aanleiding van de wereldtentoonstelling Expo 2010 in Shanghai. Deze drie casussen zijn elk een voorbeeld van een prominente vorm van regionale samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme in China (de langlopende conferentie, de langetermijnalliantie en het kortetermijnproject).

In het empirisch onderzoek zijn de acht factoren die in de literatuur werden gevonden aangepast op basis van nieuwe verklaringen uit de Chinese context. Uit het onderzoek blijkt dat deze acht factoren met de ‘nieuwe verklaringen’ essentieel zijn voor de effectiviteit van regionale samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme in China. Het gaat om de volgende factoren: 1) de samenhang tussen het doel van de samenwerking en de operationele capaciteit of het vermogen tot politieke communicatie van de betrokken toeristenbureaus; 2) de gedetailleerdere werkelijke betrokkenheid van primair belanghebbenden; 3) een mechanisme om minder machtige primair belanghebbenden in gelijke mate toegang te bieden tot de samenwerkingsvoorzieningen; 4) gezamenlijke motieven om samen te werken die kwantitatiever, meer op de korte termijn en op het optimaliseren van de individuele belangen gericht zijn; 5) de vertegenwoordiging van kleine of middelgrote reisbureaus, economische ketens of aparte hotels en toeristische attracties uit de regio (indien ze aangemerkt worden als primair belanghebbenden) in het besluitvormingsproces; 6) een raadplegingsmechanisme waarbij de mening van secundair belanghebbenden ook wordt betrokken bij het besluitvormingsproces; 7) meer samenwerkingsprioriteiten die duidelijke plannen van aanpak en expliciete taakomschrijvingen omvatten; en 8) een stabiele aanwezigheid van belanghebbenden, een vast dagelijks operationeel kantoor, meer kwalitatieve indicatoren om het resultaat van de samenwerking te evalueren en een stabiel intern financieringsmechanisme om een goed dagelijks functioneren te garanderen.

Het onderzoek is gebaseerd op de Chinese context, waardoor het mogelijk beperkt toepasbaar is op casestudy's buiten China. Dit betekent echter zeker niet dat de generalisatie en toepassing van dit onderzoek problematisch is. Het onderzoek kan leiden tot onderzoeksinitiatieven van andere wetenschappers als hun toekomstig onderzoek het toepassen van theorieën in een lokale context vereist. Bovendien zijn de onderzoeksresultaten niet uitsluitend van toepassing op de toerismesector. Ze zijn wellicht ook toepasbaar op andere sectoren waar sprake is van publiek-private samenwerking op verschillende ruimtelijke niveaus.

In de toekomst kunnen er meer onderzoeken verwacht worden die zich richten op het belang van de gevonden factoren voor de effectiviteit van regionale samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme in China. Mogelijk blijken ook andere factoren, zoals sociale, psychologische en communicatiefactoren, relevant voor de effectiviteit van regionale samenwerking op het gebied van toerisme in China. Vervolgonderzoek kan ook toetsen of het huidige theoretisch kader, dat is ontwikkeld op grond van de ervaringen in China, ook bruikbaar is in Europese en andere ontwikkelde landen.

# 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

Tourism is recognized worldwide as a critical sector that provides significant potential for economic growth and employment. The transformation of economy in developed countries from a Fordist manufacturing-based economy to a post-Fordist service-based consumption economy gives an impulse to tourism. The EU tourism industry generates more than five per cent of the EU GDP in 2010, with about 1.8 million enterprises employing approximately 9.7 million jobs (EUROPA 2010). In developed countries, in order to grow the tourism industry, tourism cooperation among destinations at a regional level becomes gradually more important in the ever-competitive globalized world. Policies introduced in developed countries also lead to the promotion of regional tourism cooperation (March and Wilkinson 2009).

The rationale for developed countries to introduce various arrangements of tourism cooperation at a regional level is multifold. A more coordinated approach can minimize the fragmented nature of tourism development (Barry and Robins 2001), offer high-quality tourist experience (Jackson and Murphy 2006), bring together and harmonize the local, regional and national interests (Tosun and Jenkins 1996), avoid the cost of solving conflicts among stakeholders (Bramwell and Sharman 1999), or achieve both economic and social benefits (Inskeep 1994). It can also lead to the pooling of knowledge, expertise and capital, a greater coordination of relevant policies, increased acceptance of the resulting policies, and more effective implementation (Araujo and Bramwell 2002). As some examples, the Scandinavian Tourist Board was built as a joint initiative by the national tourist boards of Denmark, Norway and Sweden to boost lucrative, high-end tourism to Scandinavia. During the European

Capital of Culture 2010, the 'Ruhr Metropolis' project was jointly initiated by 11 cities in the Ruhr area in Germany to promote the Ruhr area as an integrated tourist destination. Besides those, the international literature identifies several other tourism cooperative arrangements among localities, such as a Regional Tourism Council organizing monthly meetings via outside funds (Smith et al. 1986), a Regional Tourism Company jointly established by public authorities and private sectors (Greer 2002), a Regional Tourism Alliance with national government taking the leadership (Reid et al. 2008), or a regional tourism cooperative project with outside funds (Greer 2002; Ioanides et al. 2006).

Socialist China is different from the rest of the world in terms of its political, geographical, economic, demographic and cultural background. However, tourism in China is also booming. China is poised to become the world's second largest travel and tourism economy after the United States by 2015 (WTTC 2010). Similar to Europe, tourism cooperation at a Chinese regional level becomes more and more popular. In recent years, regions in China have launched tourism cooperative arrangements among public sectors, between public and private sectors or among private sectors. The focus of cooperation covers many scopes, such as joint marketing, joint product development and information sharing.

Push and pull factors explain intensified regional tourism cooperation in China in the literature (Jackson 2006). On the push side, regional tourism cooperation is supported by the political power. Because of the globalization process, cities and regions in China have undergone a restructuring since the late 1970s (Luo and Shen 2009). Since then, regions have gradually shown up in national development strategies. This is evidenced by the announced 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2006-2010). In this plan, eight Chinese regions are highlighted as development engines for Chinese economy in the coming decades, including the specification of a role for the tourism sector. Since the 1980s, governments at various levels especially at the central level have recognized the importance of regional tourism cooperation in enhancing the attractiveness in a competitive economy. As a consequence, political support has been granted to develop regional tourism cooperation (Zhang et al. 1999). On the pull side, the booming regional tourism cooperation is said to be accelerated by some spatial-economic factors, such as the gradually intense inter-city relations, the increased purchasing power of local residents, an amended

national holiday policy<sup>1</sup> and the upgraded customer-friendly regional transportation systems (Gao 2011).

There is a development disparity between coastal and inland regions in China (Jackson 2006). The Yangtze River Delta (YRD) and the Pearl River Delta (PRD) regions are the first two coastal regions benefiting from the national open-door policy. These two regions represent a new model of urban agglomeration: the polycentric mega-city region, which is similar to the East England in UK, the Randstad in the Netherlands, and the RhineRuhr and Rhine-Main in Germany (Hall 2007). Concerning tourism cooperation, the PRD and YRD regions are the forerunners in China showing the initiatives of cooperation in the early 1980s. Modalities of cooperation in these two regions, such as organizing conferences, creating collaborative organizations or projects, have often been copied by the other regions in China. Since the PRD region has a unique political feature,<sup>2</sup> the YRD region appears to be the appropriate case to increase our insights into tourism cooperation at a Chinese regional level.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Opportunities and challenges always stay together. Regional tourism cooperation has encountered many challenges, as already being identified in international literature. Some challenges are brought by the tourism industry itself, such as the extremely fragmented nature of tourism (Long 1991), the different small business players (Selin and Chavez 1995), and the interfaces of the tourism industry with diverse other industry areas (Araujo and Bramwell 2002). Some challenges are generated by collective actions, such as the unequal power and competition between stakeholders (Long 1991; Selin and Chavez 1995), the large number of players (Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Ioannides 2001), the interactions and influences between different sectors (Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Hall and Jenkins 1995; Selin and Chavez 1995), the dynamics of stakeholder relationships (Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Hall and Jenkins 1995), the interactions between different levels of governance (Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Ioannides 2001), the distrust between stakeholders (Ioannides 2001), or time-consuming (Presenza 2005).

Meanwhile, different geographic scales add more challenges to the cooperation at a regional level. Stakeholders from involved provinces

may encompass local independent municipalities, individual provinces, as well as others located outside of these provinces such as the national government, banks, airlines or investment companies (Gray 1989). In addition, in developing countries, the complex bureaucracies and rivalry between government departments (Long 1991), the limitation of democracy to business, political and professional elites are more likely to be present, which in turn fragment regional tourism cooperation (Tosun 2000). In this sense, challenges to regional tourism cooperation in China or in other developing countries may be more severe than those in developed countries.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, it is good to look at how China in practice deals with these challenges. Regional tourism cooperation in China is fairly successful if only based on assessing the number of cooperative arrangements. A bold conclusion based on this number may be very deceptive if we take a close examination of the achievements of regional tourism cooperation in China. In practice we see several tourism cooperative arrangements, at a Chinese regional level, fail. Some failed efforts, even though there is a wish to cooperate between public and private stakeholders, were too ambitious or virtual to achieve tangible results. Some failed efforts remained stuck in declaring good intentions. However, few efforts have been made to improve the current loose and informal cooperative structures (Zhao 2009). In addition, there is a vacuum between public and private tourism sectors (Gao 2011). Most of the successful achievements of private sectors are not the results of either public-private cooperation or public-public cooperation but those of private initiatives (Gao 2011).

Chinese tourism has gradually attracted attention by researchers in the fields of tourism policies (Zhang et al. 1999), or conference and exhibition destinations (Go and Govers 1999), inbound tourism market (Lai et al. 2006), and tourism companies (Xiao 2006). Few concerns have been placed on studying tourism cooperation at a Chinese regional level.<sup>4</sup> As for the international research on regional tourism cooperation in the other context, understanding how cooperation forms (Palmer and Bejou 1995), how to balance stakeholders' values (Selin and Chavez 1995) and how to build appropriate cooperation ventures (Selin 1999) has lagged behind the realities. Although there are some exceptions such as Araujo and Bramwell (2002) and, Greer (2002), which shed light on tackling the challenges, research findings of those exceptions are based on a political-

economic context different from China. Therefore, the applicability of these international findings to the Chinese practice can be doubted.

In Chinese literature, regional tourism cooperation is a popular topic. A significant number of Chinese articles have been published. However, many are case studies, project statements or elaborations of successful stories. We can hardly find the in-depth theoretical concepts, research frameworks and scientific models to explain the success and failure of tourism cooperation at a Chinese regional level. Moreover, most theories Chinese scholars applied to deal with the above-mentioned challenges were developed in western countries (Xue 2003). Without deliberation of the applicability of western theories to China's unique political-economic context, the validity and rigor of such research is in doubt (He 2008). Therefore, the numbers of Chinese publications in the field of regional tourism cooperation only serve to illustrate how regional tourism cooperation attracts the scientific attention, but does not imply a scientific understanding of why success and failure coexist in China. No scientifically proven frameworks exist that can be applied to the Chinese context to handle how cooperation can reach its initial goals or missions. In this sense, there is a need for a scientific framework to explain why currently in China some tourism cooperative arrangements at a regional level are successful while others encounter failure.

### 1.3 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The study intends to build a scientific framework that can be applied to the Chinese context. We focus on finding factors from international literature to handle the challenges mentioned in section 1.2 and to explain how tourism cooperation at a Chinese regional level can reach its goals or missions. Therefore, the main objective of this study is formulated as *identifying factors in international literature to explain the Chinese situation: identify a set of factors of particular importance for the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*. The effectiveness is defined in our study as the production of the intended or expected results. In other words, the effectiveness in this study is to check whether the goals or missions of the cooperation are reached.

Tourism industry, in many respects, is a highly political business, which supports further research into the roles and scopes of governments and governance actions (Svensson et al. 2006). Our theoretical

framework incorporates insights from different schools, especially the governance theory with focus on partnership forming, process tracing and stakeholder interaction. In addition, tourism industry in China is unique because of the specific tourism administration, a leading role of the Tourism Bureau and the booming tourism economy (He 2008). In our study, the specific political-economic context of China □ a powerful governmental system and the fast economic development □ is incorporated.

The main research question of this study is *how do Chinese regions cooperate in the field of tourism and what are the conditions for successful tourism cooperation?* This is an explanatory rather than an exploratory<sup>5</sup> research because we hope to learn more about a subject that has lacked serious attention up to now. In this investigation, we mean to elaborate several propositions that are used for the empirical investigation, where three typical cases of tourism cooperation in the YRD region are selected to conduct the comparative analysis of their effective performance. Our study is structured along with the following related research questions:

- 1) What is regional tourism cooperation?
- 2) What is tourism cooperation in the Yangtze River Delta region?
- 3) Which factors influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China in the preparatory stage?
- 4) Which factors influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China during the cooperation process?
- 5) Why do some Chinese cooperative efforts achieve the effectiveness while others encounter failure?
- 6) Which factors derived from various western theories and concepts affect the performance of regional tourism cooperation in China and how?

#### 1.4 Outline of This Thesis

The thesis is divided into ten chapters. The sequence of the thesis follows the flow of the research questions proposed in section 1.3. Chapter 1 introduces the general research background, problems, objectives and research questions of the study. Chapter 2 *Regional Tourism Cooperation: An Introduction* deals with the first research question *What is regional tourism cooperation?* Starting with a definition of regional tourism cooperation, we

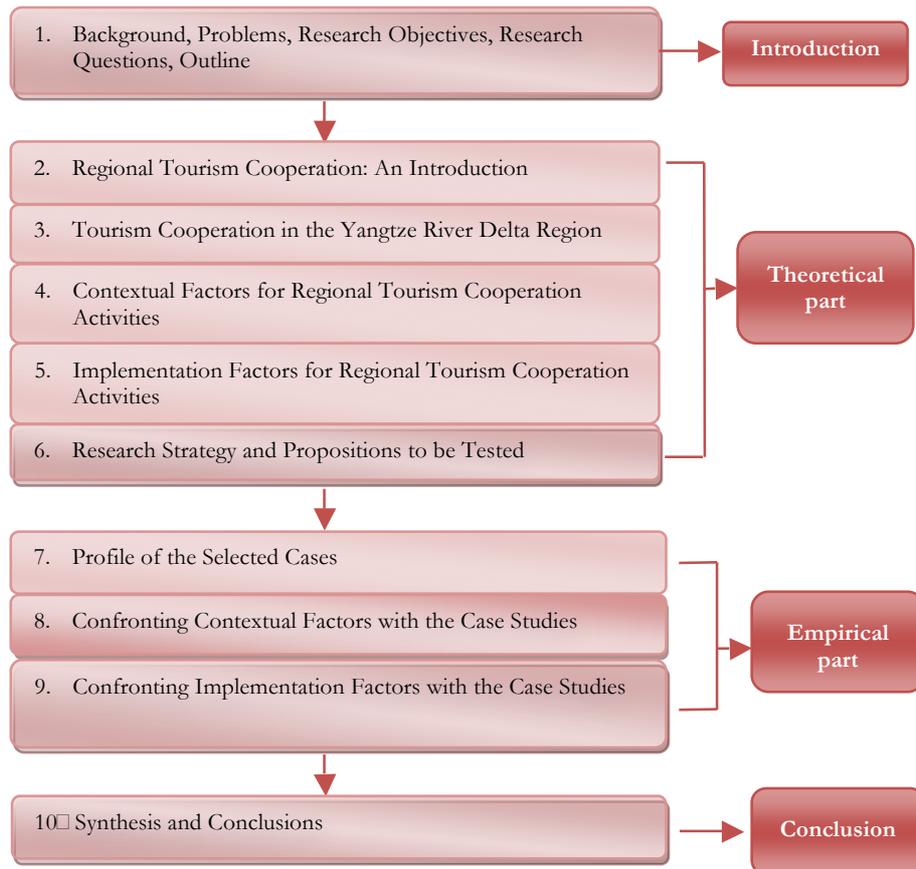
explain the needs for tourism cooperation at a regional level based on the concepts of the Urban Life Cycle (Van den Berg 1987), the Functional Tourist Region (Russo 2002; Van der Borg 1991) and the Urban Tourist System (Van den Berg et al. 1995). Through a review of international literature on governance and tourism studies, we put partnership, stakeholders and the process of cooperation formation in the centre and discuss the needs to identify factors, which are relevant to the effectiveness of tourism cooperation at a Chinese regional level.

Chapter 3 *Tourism Cooperation in the Yangtze River Delta Region* builds up our understanding of the Chinese practice in the field of regional tourism cooperation, based on the assumption that elaborations of the Chinese context can contribute to formulating the theoretical framework of the study. We first discuss the political-economic background of tourism industry in China. After an overview of the performance of tourism cooperation in eight Chinese regions respectively, we focus on the Yangtze River Delta region, presenting detailed elaborations on the geographic location, regional economy, regional industrial structure, regional tourist resources, political support, regional tourism master plan and cooperative modalities.

In chapter 4, *Contextual Factors for Regional Tourism Cooperation Activities*, we deal with the third research question, *Which factors influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China in the preparatory stage?* Given the diversity of regional tourism cooperative arrangements, there is a range of factors mentioned in international literature. However, instead of presenting a full-fledged version, we discuss the factors that can be adapted to the Chinese situation. In total four contextual factors (political-economic features of tourism, commitment, leadership and motives) are elaborated, mainly explaining who is involved in cooperation and why?

In chapter 5 *Implementation Factors for Regional Tourism Cooperation Activities*, we deal with the fourth research question, *Which factors influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China during the cooperation process?* Following a similar principle of selection as applied in chapter four, we identify another four factors, which are also relevant to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. These four factors are elaborated on following the implementation sequence, decision-making and then operation. These four factors mainly elaborate on what areas cooperation performs and how to cooperate. At the end of this chapter, the theoretical framework of this study is presented.

**Figure 1.1**  
*Depiction of the structure of the study*



In chapter 6, based on the theoretical framework, we formulate nine propositions that deal with the fifth research question, *Why do some Chinese cooperative efforts achieve the effectiveness while others encounter failure?* The research methodology including case study and data collection is discussed as well.

The empirical part of our study consists of three chapters (chapters 7-9). It deals with the sixth research question, *Which factors derived from various western concepts and theories affect the performance of regional tourism cooperation in China and how?* Chapter 7 contains profiles of the three selected

cases of the Yangtze River Delta region, including the ‘Tourism City Summit of the Yangtze River Delta’ (the TCY Summit), the ‘Zhedongnan Tourism Alliance’ (the ZDN Alliance) and the ‘projects of cooperation catalyzed by the Shanghai World EXPO 2010’ (the EXPO). Chapter 8 contains a comparative analysis of the contextual factors that influence the performance of tourism cooperation of the three cases. Chapter 9 analyses the relevance of the implementation factors to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in the three cases.

In chapter 10 (the last chapter), we formulate some empirical and theoretical conclusions of the study, summarize the adaptation of the empirical studies to the propositions, and provide suggestions for future research.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The new holiday policy was launched in early 2008. According to this policy, Chinese citizens have more short-term statutory holidays. Before that, the statutory holidays for Chinese citizens were dispersed over four months with seven single-day holidays taken over a three-month period and one three-day holiday taken in one month. Now the amended statutory holidays for Chinese citizens are dispersed over seven months with seven single-day holidays taken over two months and one three-day holiday each month for five months.

<sup>2</sup> Hong Kong, as one of the main cities in the PRD region, is a Special Administrative Region (SAR) in China. It has a different political and economic system from mainland China: ‘high degree of autonomy’ in all matters except foreign relations and military defense (Hong Kong government 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Similar comments can be found in Araujo and Bramwell (2002); Ashley and Roe (1998); Desai (1996); Few (2000); He (2008); Su et al. (2007); Tan (2005); Wu (2006); Yan (2007); Zhang (2006); Zhou et al. (2004).

<sup>4</sup> Jackson (2006) is an exception, using the cluster theory and Porter’s diamond framework to identify the economic potentials of tourism industry in west China.

<sup>5</sup> Explorative research is defined by Van Dijk (2007a: 54) as research that aims to seek insights into new phenomena, without using a theoretical framework or trying to test hypotheses.

## 2

## Regional Tourism Cooperation: An Introduction

This chapter deals with the first research question, *what is regional tourism cooperation?* First, we formulate a definition of regional tourism cooperation.<sup>1</sup> Second, we discuss the necessity of regional tourism cooperation based on two assumptions. The first assumption is that general urban and tourism concepts can be applied to regions with different political and economic background, including regions in developing countries such as China. The second assumption claims that the ‘city’ is a basic operational unit to perform regional tourism cooperation. The Urban Life Cycle concept (Van den Berg 1987) discusses how the changing circumstances and challenges bring cities in a region to cooperate. The Functional Tourist Region concept (Russo 2002; Van der Borg 1991) and the Urban Tourist System concept (Van den Berg et al. 1995) jointly elaborate the functional economic linkages among tourist products of different cities.

Based on the challenges confronted by tourism cooperation at a regional level in China and the theoretical gaps between Chinese and international literature, the third section of this chapter discusses the need to develop a scientifically proven model that can be applied to the Chinese context. By reviewing the governance theory and the literature concerning governance in the tourism sector, we place partnership, stakeholders and the process of cooperation formation in the centre, leading our research to determine factors based on international literature to explain how tourism cooperation at a Chinese regional level can reach its goals. Meanwhile, we admit that the existing influential factors, which have evolved over the years in capitalist economies, may not be suitable for the unique political economy of China at its current stage of rapid development. Therefore we note at the end of this chapter, in accordance with our main research objective, that adjusting the factors identified in inter-

national literature, which are of particular importance for the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China is necessary.

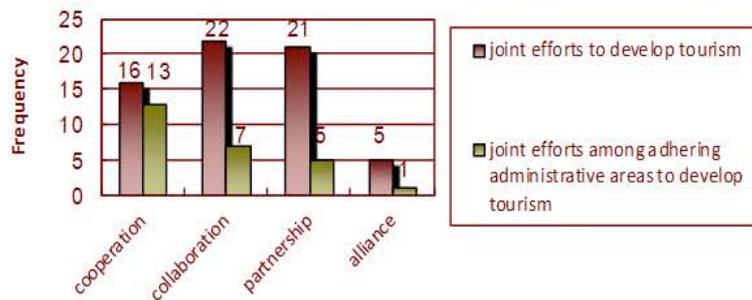
## 2.1 Toward a Concept of Regional Tourism Cooperation

There is no universal definition of regional tourism cooperation.<sup>2</sup> The ambiguity of geographical scale and the types of joint efforts create obstacles and confusions for cross-cultural and international comparative studies.<sup>3</sup> Tosun and Jenkins (1996: 520) propose that ‘the most appropriate and useful definition depends on the particular purpose to be served or the objective of inquiry’. Hence we present our own definition of regional tourism cooperation, which allows us to determine the factors influencing the effectiveness of this cooperation.

### 2.1.1 Region

There are no common accepted definitions of a region in the literature. Regions have been defined as various political-administrative boundaries, such as supranational areas (Fagence 1996; Ghimire 2001; Ioanides et al. 2006; Rodriguez and Portales 1994; Schlüter 1991; Travis 1980), provinces (Baidal 2004; Barry and Robins 2001; Berry and Ladkin 1997; Braun 2004; Carmen and Eva 2002; Carte et al. 2010; Clarke 1981; Jones et al. 2003; Seckelmann 2002; Sola 1992; Such and Zamora 2006; Zahra and Ryan 2007), inter-city areas (Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Backman et al. 1991; Hudman 1978; Ioannides et al. 2006; Jackson and Murphy 2006; Koo et al. 2010; Lovingood and Mitchell 1989; March and Wilkinson 2009; Smith 1987), cities (Ahn et al. 2002; Guisan et al. 2002; Loukissas 1982; Pearce 1980) or areas consisting of local communities (Jackson and Murphy 2006; Kemper 1979; March and Wilkinson 2009; Zhang and Murphy 2009). Regions also differ in whether an independent administrative authority governing a whole area is present.<sup>4</sup> In this study, following some scholars (Gan and Smith 1992; Jackson 2006; Jones et al. 2003; Kerr and Wood 2001; Pearce 1990; Reid et al. 2008; Sola 1992; Verbeke and Spee 1995), a region is defined as *an area inside a country which consists of several sub-national authorities<sup>5</sup> featuring close geographical proximity and economic relations where no independent administrative authority of the whole area is present.*<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 2.1**  
 Number of international tourism articles published from 1978 to 2010  
 concerning 'joint efforts in general' and 'joint efforts  
 among neighboring administrative areas'



*Note:* We collected articles via the online database Science Direct where 'tourism cooperation', 'tourism collaboration', 'tourism partnership', 'tourism alliance' were typed respectively as key words into the 'title' column to gather information dated from 1978 to 2010. We chose 1978 as the starting year because this is when China opened to the world. In order to compare international and Chinese literature, in this study the publication year of all the literature we reviewed started from 1978.

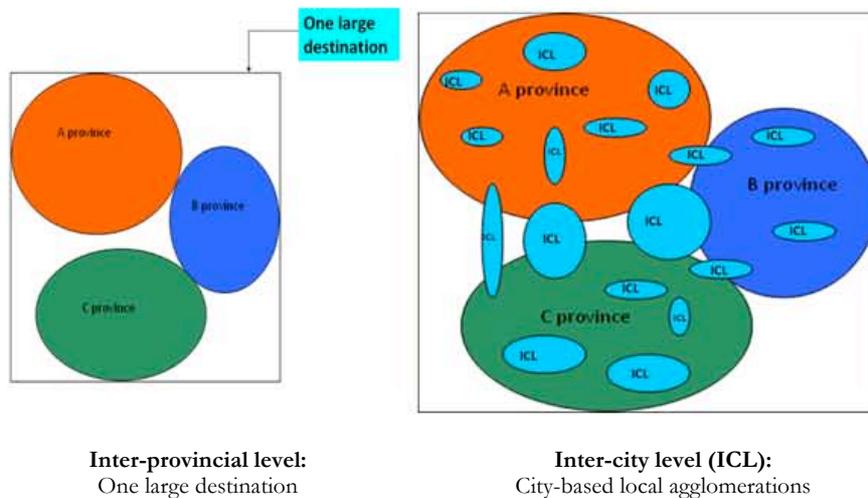
### 2.1.2 Cooperation

In the field of tourism a variety of terms, such as cooperation, collaboration, partnership and alliance have been used to describe different collective actions. Collaboration is the most commonly used term in tourism literature.<sup>7</sup> Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engages in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain (Wood and Gray 1991).<sup>8</sup> 'Partnership' is another popular term to describe a joint relationship in the field of tourism.<sup>9</sup> It is defined as a form of cooperation between parties with similar objectives but different (complementary) qualities, where each contributes resources and share in the investment risks (Van Dijk 2008). If we look at the terms describing tourism interrelations across geographic administrative boundaries, the term 'collaboration' retains its leading position, while the term 'cooperation' replaces 'partnership' in popularity (see figure 2.1).<sup>10</sup> It is easy to understand because in an area across geographic administrative boundaries, joint efforts between stakeholders might be related to politi-

cal relations in some cases, which in turn may bring challenges to set up closer or more concrete relationships.

Considering various arrangements of tourism cooperation at a regional level, we include different types of collective actions, loose or tight. In other words, the term ‘cooperation’ is used in this study to represent all types of collective actions of tourism at a regional level. It is interchangeable with such terms as ‘collaboration’, ‘partnership’, ‘alliance’, or ‘coalition’. We define ‘cooperation’ as the *involvement of stakeholders working interactively on common objectives through either informal or formal arrangements*. Typically, this process involves the exchange of ideas and expertise and/or pooling, sharing of appreciations or resources (e.g. information, money, labor, rules, norms, etc).

**Figure 2.2**  
 Geographic scale of Regional Tourism Cooperation



Based on the above definitions of a spatial scale where tourism cooperates (region) and the types of joint efforts (cooperation), we define ‘Regional Tourism Cooperation’ as *a process that involves different stakeholders across sub-national administrative boundaries to work interactively on common objectives through either informal or formal arrangements*. Typically, this process in-

volves the exchange of ideas and expertise and/or sharing of resources (e.g. information, money, labor, rules, norms, etc). The final objective of this process is to obtain positive economic, social and natural returns from tourism industry. (In)Formal cooperative arrangements can take place either at an inter-provincial level where a region is regarded as one large destination<sup>11</sup> or at an inter-city level where small agglomerations of cities are formed (see figure 2.2).

## 2.2 The Need for Regional Tourism Cooperation

The definition of tourism is controversial as well. In general, there are two common stances: supply side and consumption side definitions. The UNWTO and OECD represent the consumption side definition. For instance, UNWTO (2009) reviews tourism as a phenomenon with great economic relevance. It comprises activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. OECD (2008) considers tourism as a function with different purposes such as recreation, visiting family and friends, business, education and medical care. On the supply side, Van der Borg (1994) suggests that tourism is an evolving economic system embedded in a certain geographical place. We do not treat these two definitions as a dichotomy; rather we consider complementary. For the present study, we adopt the supply side definition since this definition not only conceptualizes tourism as a product but also highlights tourism as a process (Russo 2002).

Two economic incentives, namely the spatial-economic incentives of cities inside a region and the micro-economic incentives of tourist products in different cities, are discussed to assure the need for tourism to cooperate at a regional level. The elaboration of these two incentives is based on two assumptions, as explained in the introduction to this chapter.

### 2.2.1 Spatial-economic incentives of cities to cooperate

We argue that in a certain region, spatial-economic incentives of cities stimulate them to cooperate in different economic areas, including tourism. According to Klaassen et al. (1981) and Van den Berg et al. (1982), Functional Urban Regions (FURs) are metropolitan areas or daily urban systems. They are formed by the geographical distribution of population

and economic activity between and within the individual components of urban systems. Van den Berg et al. (1982, 1987) further developed the Urban Life Cycle (ULC) concept to conclude that those FURs evolve in a sequence of stages. Such evolution can be conceptualized in a model of urban development due to the dynamic behaviors of the main actors<sup>12</sup> in an urban arena. The Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) development, globalization, demographic changes, value differences and education influenced such evolution (Van den Berg et al. 1987).

During the first stage ‘urbanization’, fast-growing towns form a spatial functional entity. Socioeconomic activities such as living, working and shopping proceed for the most part within city borders. During the second stage ‘suburbanization’, suburban cities on the outskirts of large metropolitans or towns find their population growing fast, while large central cities or towns of agglomerations are losing inhabitants. When entering the ‘counter-urbanization’ stage, the entire agglomeration is losing inhabitants and employment, mostly to smaller agglomerations some distance away. Facing those challenges, metropolitans start to re-attract urban actors when re-urbanization comes to the stage (Van den Berg et al. 1982). The ‘re-urbanization’ stage is the stage in the information era. Cities in this stage mainly face challenges brought by the knowledge economy, networks, growing social exclusion, ICT, trade liberation, new location factors (such as attractiveness and accessibility), and competition between cities and regions. In 2009, Van den Berg added a new development stage to the Urban Life Cycle concept, called the ‘balanced, harmonious and sustainable development’ stage. This is the fifth stage induced by new requests based on quality of life, social value, sustainable development and climate change. In this stage, city officials come to accept a vision of developing a balanced city. Meanwhile, private sector interests are increasingly converging with cities.

The ULC concept is relevant not because of its popularity among Chinese scholars (e.g. Bao 1994; Gao 2011; He 2008; Lin 1998). It reveals the necessary functional economic connections between cities. There are hardly any complementary functional relations between cities in the urbanization stage (Van den Berg et al. 1982). However, thanks to the evolving inter-relations between city actors, cooperation gradually performs a very important role in setting up functional economic connections between cities in the later stages. At present, most major met-

ropolitan cities in Europe, like Paris and London, have entered into the fifth stage (Van den Berg 2009). In China, many big cities like Nanjing, Hangzhou and Tianjin only entered the second stage (He 2008). However, some metropolitan cities like Shanghai, Guangzhou and Beijing are in the process of transforming from the second to the third stage (Gao 2011). No matter which stage Chinese cities are in or where they are located, the inevitable movements of urban actors help cities realize that cooperation can increase their self-competitiveness. This perspective has become one of the prominent incentives to bring cities together to work on a regional level. Many Chinese cities express similar statements in their city's development strategies, where tourism, as an important industrial segment, is positioned as one of the possible areas to cooperate (Gao 2011).

### 2.2.2 Internal economic incentives to cooperate

We assume that regional tourism cooperation develops in an urban context. Therefore two urban concepts are discussed to elaborate further the internal economic linkages between tourist products of different cities. The first urban concept is the Functional Tourist Region (FTR) concept introduced by Van der Borg (1991). This concept developed based on the Functional Urban Region (FUR) concept<sup>13</sup> where the most important quality of a FUR is its ability to exceed administrative boundaries (Antikainen and Vartiainen 1998). According to this concept, a Functional Tourist Region (FTR) is an area having the tourist function of a certain destination. Russo (2002) takes a heritage tourist city as an example to elaborate how a FTR 'outsizes' a city itself and diffuses into surrounding territories. Russo (2002) discusses that when it was not possible to satisfy the growing demand by building new hotels and facilities or reconverting old buildings in the city center, the growth occurred first at the city boundaries and then at greater distances from the city. Regarding the value of the FTR concept to tourism cooperation at a regional level, it focuses on explaining regionalized features of tourist behavior and on elaborating on the economic relations between tourist products. According to this concept, neighboring cities are functionally connected with each other by tourist activities, either in competitive or cooperative ways. Consequently, neighboring cities form a Functional Tourist Region, which is an area of tourism economic activities directed toward central destinations.

The Urban Tourist System (UTS) concept developed by Van den Berg et al. (1995), explains the regionalized features of tourist products of different cities in a region. In this concept, a tourist product system consists of five interrelated and interdependent tourist products. The primary tourist products refer to the elements that represent the main reasons for a visit to a locality. The complementary tourist products include hotels, restaurants and other hospitality service products. The other three tourist products include the image of a destination (e.g. a fashion city, a port city), and the external and internal accessibility (e.g. transportation, tourism information).

Combining the implications of both FTR and UTS concepts, functional economic connections between tourist products of different cities can be identified. For example, Van der Borg (1991) and Russo (2002) each discuss the functional economic connections of five above-mentioned tourist products between cities. Both of them choose Venice as an example: tourists who spend their whole day visiting inside the city occupy hotels, restaurants and other entertainment facilities in neighboring towns at night.

In addition, beyond the above-mentioned economic incentives, behavior of long-haul and short-haul tourists also causes cities to cooperate in the field of tourism. A tourist who is on a long-haul (more than 1500 miles) trip to a city destination tends to visit more destinations close to the city within his limited travel period (Teye 1988). For residents of a city, due to the logistic restrictions and time limitation, neighboring cities may be the primary destination for their short-period holidays. Demands of both international long-haul and intra-regional short-haul tourists reflect, to some extent, the potential market incentives for cities of a region to set up cooperative arrangements.

To conclude, incentives such as the development of cities (see the Urban Life Cycle concept), the internal economic connections of tourist products (see the FTR and UTS concepts), and the potential requirements of tourists (Teye 1988) all confirm our previous arguments, noting that tourism cooperation at a regional level is necessary. More regional cooperative arrangements are expected to be achieved in order to generate more mutual benefits for cities inside a region. As such, different tourism cooperative arrangements at a regional level may attract the attention of researchers, practitioners and policymakers alike.

## 2.3 Need to Identify Main Influential Factors

We first discuss the challenges for regional tourism cooperation, followed by a comparative analysis of the current research of regional tourism cooperation reflected in international and Chinese literature. The next section elaborates in detail international theories and frameworks developed for regional tourism cooperation. Our intention is to analyse these theoretical inputs and formulate our main research focus.

Tourism cooperation is not a new phenomenon (Selin and Chavez 1995). However, the current performance of tourism cooperation is often described as ‘underdeveloped cooperative arrangements’ (Bramwell and Lane 2000). We acknowledge that some phenomena can bring challenges for tourism cooperation,<sup>14</sup> including the unequal power, the competition, distrust and dynamic relationships between different stakeholders, the bureaucratic inertia, the interactions and influences between different public sectors, and the interfaces of the tourism industry with other diverse industrial areas. Regional tourism cooperation certainly is not an exception. Stakeholders with an interest in a region will encompass local independent municipalities as well as others with interests focusing outside the region, such as a national government and companies locating outside of the region such as banks, airlines and investment companies (Gray 1989). This complexity adds more challenges to tourism cooperation at a regional level when more than one city is involved. Furthermore, the situation in developing countries can be even worse (Desai 1996). Regional tourism cooperation in developing countries may face more external and internal problems, which may be difficult to overcome, than developed countries (Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Few 2000). Complex bureaucracies and related jealousies within governments in developing countries, limitation of democracy to business, political or professional elites have fragmented the cooperation process (Tosun 2000). Are there any theoretical conclusions to handle those challenges, presenting a scientific approach to explain how tourism cooperation at a regional level reaches its goals or mission?

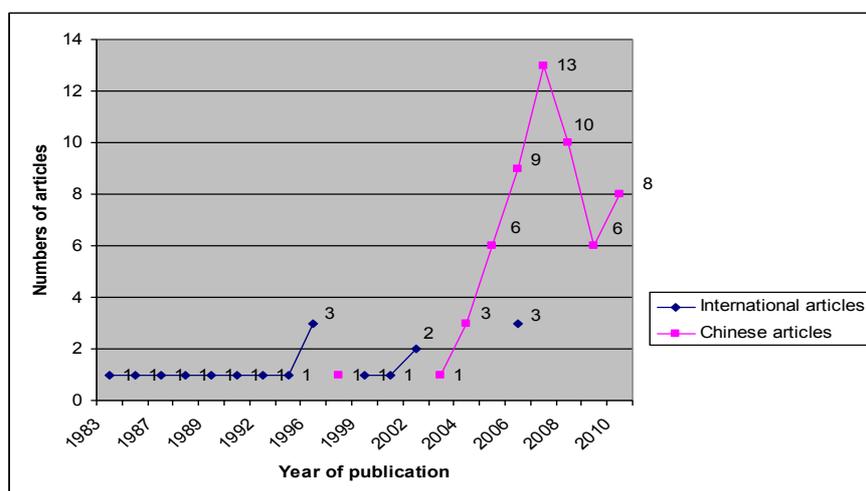
### 2.3.1 Implications of international and Chinese literature

Tourism cooperation can lead to the pooling of knowledge, expertise and capital, a greater coordination of relevant policies, the increased acceptance of resulting policies and the more effective implementation

(Araujo and Bramwell 2002). Since the 1980s, tourism cooperation has become a focus in international literature. Fifteen years later, a number of Chinese scholars recognized the value brought by tourism cooperation and positioned tourism cooperation as a key research topic (see figure 2.3).

**Figure 2.3**

*Comparison of articles published (1978 to 2010) in international and Chinese journals, concerning tourism cooperation across administrative boundaries (cooperation at an inter-provincial level excluded)*



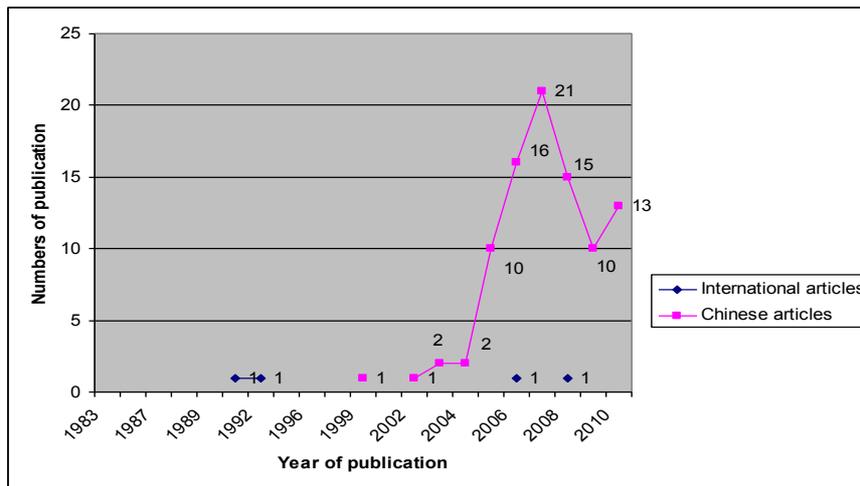
*Note:* International journals are those available on Science Direct search channel; Chinese journals are 'core Chinese periodicals' accredited by the Chinese Academy, available on China Knowledge Internet (CNKI). We chose 1978 as the start year as 1978 is the year China opened to the rest of the world. In order to compare the international and Chinese academic achievements, the publication years of the literature we reviewed started at 1978.

Since the 1990s, the increasing importance of the external forces in society has made it logical to plan at a 'regional' scale (Jackson and Murphy 2006). Tourism has gained increasing currency as an agent for regional economic development (March and Wilkinson 2008). Araujo and Bramwell (2002) suggest at the end of their article five future concerns in the field of tourism cooperation. Among them, 'more emphasis on regional scale studies' is given the first priority.<sup>15</sup> In that sense, studies car-

ried out by Arroll (1993), Chirathivat (1996), Fagence (1996), Gan and Smith (1992), Ghimire (2001), Hall and Braithwaite (1990), Holder (1992), Ioanides et al. (2006), Jackson (2006), Jackson and Murphy (2006), Lee (1987), McCann (1983), Pearce (1990), Reid et al. (2008), Roberts and Simpson (1999), Smith et al. (1986), Soininen and Lindroth (2006), Svenssen et al. (2006), Teye (1988), Tosun and Jenkins (1996), Van der Borg (2006) and, Yacoumis (1989)<sup>16</sup> are the forerunners.

**Figure 2.4**

*Comparison of articles published (1978 to 2010) in international and Chinese journals, concerning tourism cooperation at inter-provincial level*



Note: Same note as figure 2.3.

Tourism cooperation especially regional tourism cooperation is a popular 'scientific' term in Chinese literature. As reflected in figures 2.3 and 2.4, compared to international literature, more Chinese academic literature has been published on this topic. However, we find that the contributions of Chinese literature are much poorer than international literature as far as developing theoretical concepts, designing research frameworks and presenting theoretical or empirical recommendations are concerned. The academic achievements of Chinese literature have lagged far behind the developments in the 'practical world', especially in the are-

as of how externalities influence cooperation (Wu and Gu 2004), how partnerships are formed (Ma 2007), how to balance stakeholders' value (Liu 2008) and how to realize effectiveness of cooperative arrangements (He 2008). Most of the existing Chinese articles put research concerns on empirical studies and only described the development histories and performances of concrete cases (Gao 2011). In short, the reference value generated by Chinese articles is limited.

Meanwhile, Chinese scholars tend to define effective performance of regional tourism cooperation instead of explaining why and how to achieve the effectiveness. The applicability of academic recommendations remains little studied. Therefore, implementation measures recommended in Chinese literature are far from practical. For example, number of Chinese scholars (e.g. He 2008; Ma et al. 2007) suggests that the Yangtze River Delta (YRD) region should develop an integrated tourism image. It is very easy to make such a suggestion. However, when we consider the practical aspects, it is difficult to generate an integrated destination image covering the prominent tourism features of all 25 metropolitans in the YRD region. In addition, Gao (2011)<sup>17</sup> identifies the 'unscientific tradition' of Chinese literature: most theories Chinese scholars applied were developed in western countries. Chinese academics put those theories into direct use while ignoring the applicability or feasibility of those theories to the Chinese situation, a political-economic environment different from where those western theories are rooted.

Therefore, rather than giving another empirical or descriptive study of regional tourism cooperation like most Chinese literature, we focus on explaining how tourism cooperation at a Chinese regional level reaches its initial goals. We intend to discover the main factors that address the reasons why some tourism cooperative arrangements at a Chinese regional level are successful while others encounter failure. 'Effectiveness' in this study is defined as the production of the intended or expected results. 'Main factors' in this study refer to those indicated in international literature but can be applied to the Chinese context.

### **2.3.2 Governance theory**

In international literature, we find two categories of theories applied to identify factors that influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation.<sup>18</sup> One category is led by the 'cluster theory'. The cluster theory

fosters a regionally-based tourism organizational structure within which local tourism businesses and supporting industries interact cooperatively and competitively (Jackson and Murphy 2006). Such theory presumes leaders come from business companies, indicating that governments mainly play important supportive roles in formalizing and institutionalizing the links and relationships between tourism companies. Jackson (2006) uses the cluster theory to identify relations of tourism companies in the west area of China. Jackson (2006) suggests that in the future, the competitiveness of regional tourism industry in China depends on the leading roles of private tourism sectors with support from the Tourism Bureau. We totally agree with this 'ideal' conclusion, which highlights the roles of private tourism sectors in China. However, currently and in the near future, due to the fact that the Tourism Bureau<sup>19</sup> still plays a dominant leading role in regional tourism industry in China (Gao 2011), we doubt the relevancy of the cluster theory to our study.

'Governance theory' represents the second category of theories. Tourism industry is in many respects a highly political business, which motivates further research into the roles and scopes of governments and governance actions (Svensson et al. 2006). Governance has become a popular theme in the course of the 1990s (Braun 2008). The complexity, dynamics and diversity of present society implies that governments functioning in one-way traffic between public and private actors are no longer satisfactory (Kooiman 1993). However, the popularity of governance has not led to a common understanding of governance (Braun 2008). One can easily get confused by different expressions of governance such as 'New Governance', 'Corporate Governance', 'New Public Management', 'Good Governance', 'International Interdependence', 'Socio-cybernetic System', or 'New Political Economy'. In the study, we prefer not to include all these expressions but to discuss a selection of contributions that help us understand the essential elements of governance in tourism sector.

The governance theory well explains the transformation of public administration. It is suited for handling some aspects of a destination, such as multi-actor complexity, resource dependency between actors, and public-private dimensions (Svensson et al. 2006). There are two foci of the governance theory, including the operational process and the multiple stakeholders with varying objectives (Braun 2008). With the development of the governance theory, governance in the tourism sector has

caught the attention of international scholars. Most scholars come to the consensus that governance in the tourism sector tends to include multi-stakeholders in the whole process of tourism planning, management and evaluation. Concerning the groups involved in the governance of the tourism sector, some scholars emphasize the roles of private organizations (Appelman 2004; Nordin and Svensson 2005) and some, the roles of public organizations and communities (Trousdale 1999). Concerning the forms of governance in the tourism sector, some scholars support an inter-organizational partnership that is, a tight form of multi-stakeholder partnerships.<sup>20</sup> Some think that both loose and tight formations of partnerships are suitable to realize governance in the tourism sector.<sup>21</sup> Concerning the activities of governance in the tourism sector, some scholars focus on tackling tourism in public policies, regulations or regimes,<sup>22</sup> some on handling the challenges brought by the external contextual factors,<sup>23</sup> the challenges brought by the decentralization, devolution and fragmentation of responsibilities, and the challenges brought by the privatization of tourism-related functions.<sup>24</sup> More relevant to this study, some researchers apply the governance theory to study the effectiveness of tourism cooperation at a regional level (e.g. Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Greer 2002; Reid et al. 2008; Roberts and Simpson 1999; Smith et al. 1986). In this study, we follow this international literature and assume that the governance theory can be well suited for improving our understanding of the dynamics of tourism cooperation at a regional level, particularly at a Chinese regional level.

It is not our intention to revive here the lengthy general debate on governance in the tourism sector, but rather to highlight some key elements of governance, which link governance theory with regional tourism cooperation. By combining the concepts developed by Van Dijk (2008) and Paskaleva-Shapira (2001), we define governance as *a concept, which is broader than government and includes relevant stakeholders in the stages of initiation, planning and implementation*. This concept is focused on the balance between public and private sectors, which can both play the important leading, facilitating or coordinating roles in formulating cooperative arrangements. Multiple stakeholders are involved in the whole process of a regional tourism cooperative arrangement, including the stages of initiation, planning and implementation. Not Governments, industries or communities are exclusively in charge of cooperation. The interdependency between them is crucial.

Of course, such a broad definition of governance can be criticized, but it is relevant for our discussions about regional tourism cooperation. The ‘partnership’, ‘stakeholder’ and ‘process’ are highlighted as three key elements in this concept. It falls in line with several authors studying governance in the other industrial sectors (e.g. Braun 2008; Langen 2004). ‘Partnership’ describes the rules, procedures and mechanisms of governance. It is an important foundation and effective form of tourism governance. It builds collective responsibilities for tourism planning, decision-making, problem solving, project implementation and evaluation.<sup>25</sup> If we dig into the core of the appearance of regional tourism cooperation, we find that ‘stake’ is a vital issue (Ghimire 2001) functioning as a stimulating-mechanism for regional tourism cooperation. It contributes to understanding conditions for public or private actors involved. In addition, ‘dynamic process’ is one of the foci of governance (Shapira 2001). The ‘process’ element traces the stages of cooperative formations. Better understanding of the governance process, which surrounds the destination development, is one important but often neglected field of research (Svensson et al. 2006). In this study, in order to analyse tourism cooperation at a regional level, we regroup the three stages mentioned in the concept of governance: we rename the initiation stage the ‘pre-cooperation process’, which means before cooperation starts. We call factors from this process ‘contextual factors’. Our study proposes another term ‘during-cooperation process’, which means when cooperation starts. In the concept of governance as we formulated above, the ‘during-cooperation process’ is equal to two stages mentioned in the governance concept, planning and implementation. We call factors from the during-cooperation process ‘implementation factors’.

### 2.3.3 Research frameworks developed in the literature

In the literature, some studies have combined the governance theory with the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation and have highlighted the above-mentioned three key elements of governance. Rather than copying the frameworks developed in these studies as our theoretical framework, we intend to develop, based on these frameworks, a new alternative, which fits the Chinese situation.

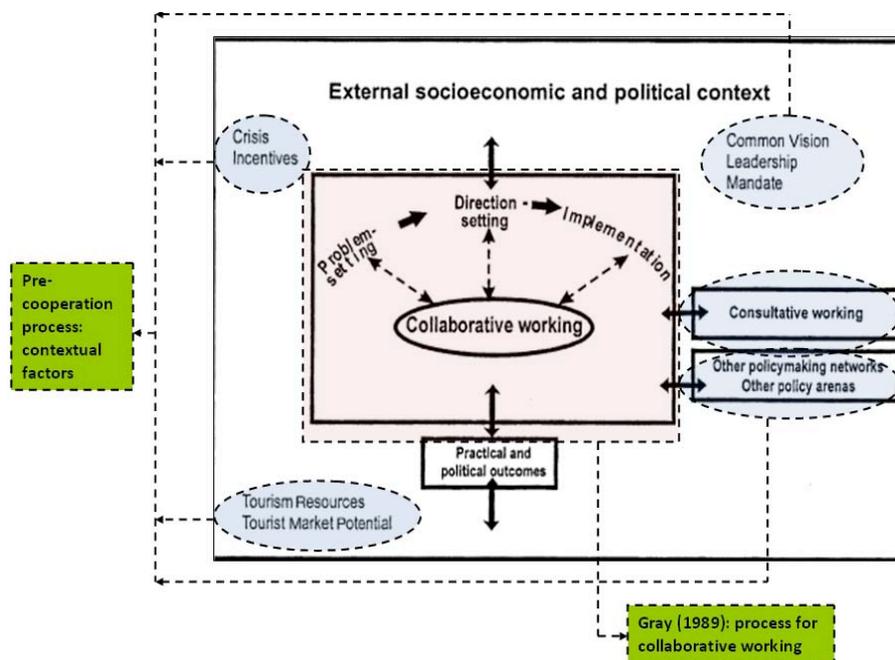
Smith et al. (1986) is an important contribution to study the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation. By adopting the governance theory, Smith et al. (1986: 421) proposes a ‘process’ framework that dis-

cusses a whole duration of tourism cooperation at the inter-city level. Although the paper divides the process into nine stages from initial understanding to final implementation, the entire process of cooperation can still be restructured into two main periods, in accordance with our study. In the first period before cooperation starts, factors identified to influence the effectiveness of cooperation include understanding establishment, preliminary position statement, commitment to tourism cooperation programmes, market and resource analysis, conceptual planning, attempted plan approval, master planning and final commitment. In the implementation period when the cooperation performs, the influential factors are discussed in three areas, including regional marketing, upgrading and educating the local industry, and documenting the region's tourism related facilities. This framework developed in Smith et al. (1986) provides a good example to understand how regional tourism cooperation comes into existence. However, detailed explanations of the factors influencing the effectiveness of cooperation are not sufficient. Meanwhile many research concerns in Smith et al. (1986) are on discussing the pre-cooperation process with few left for the during-cooperation process.

By adopting the governance theory, Araujo and Bramwell (2002: 1143) design a 'process' framework of tourism cooperation at the inter-city level. The whole process of cooperation can be re-divided into two stages, the pre-cooperation process and the during-cooperation process. The factors are an essential fundamental base to influence the effectiveness of the entire cooperation process, including the external socioeconomic sub-factors (e.g. crisis, incentives, tourism resources, tourist market potential, common vision, leadership, mandate, consultative working) and the political sub-factors (e.g. factors introduced by other policymaking networks or other policy arenas). However, the framework formulated by Araujo and Bramwell (2002) puts too much focus on explaining the external factors of the pre-cooperation process. How these external factors influence the effectiveness of process has not been well explained. In addition, Araujo and Bramwell (2002) follow Bramwell and Sharman (1999), Jamal and Getz (1995), Selin and Chavez (1995)<sup>26</sup> and divide the operational process of regional tourism cooperation into three steps, the problem setting, direction setting and implementation. This division copies the framework created by Gray (1989) (see figure 2.5).

The elaboration of this operational process is largely descriptive; remaining in the ‘telling nice stories’ stage.

**Figure 2.5**  
Processes involved in a tourism development partnership

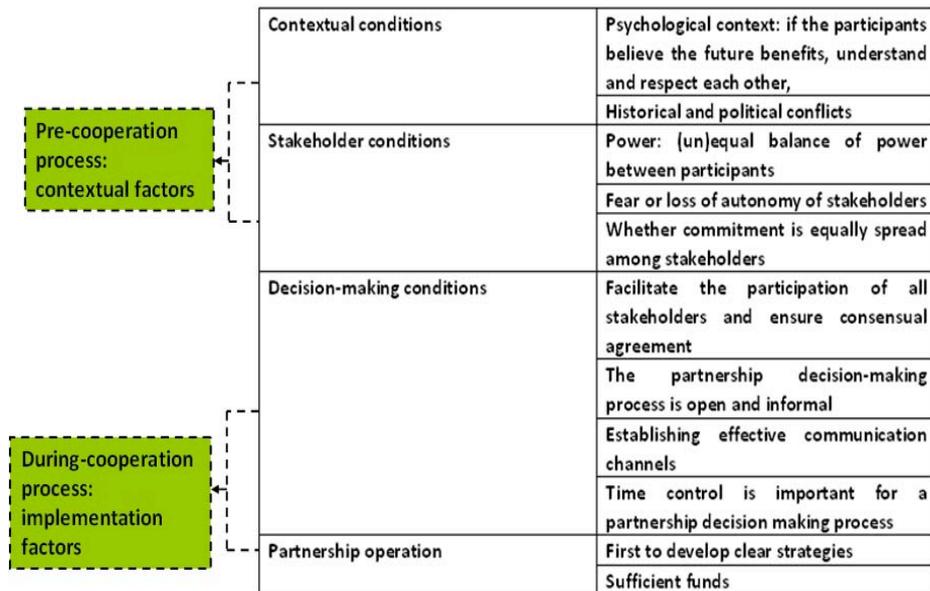


Source: Adapted from Araujo and Bramwell 2002.

Note: Dashed lines and areas added by author.

Greer (2002: 363) claims a framework of ‘conditions influencing the development of tourism partnerships’. Four factors influencing the effectiveness of tourism cooperation at the inter-city level are discussed in detail, including contextual factors, stakeholder factors, decision-making factors and operational factors. The four sets of factors can be regrouped into two sets of factors in relation to two cooperative stages (see figure 2.6), including the contextual factors of the pre-cooperation stage and the implementation factors of the during-cooperation stage. When elabo-

**Figure 2.6**  
 Framework of conditions influencing development of tourism partnership



Source: Adapted from Greer 2002.

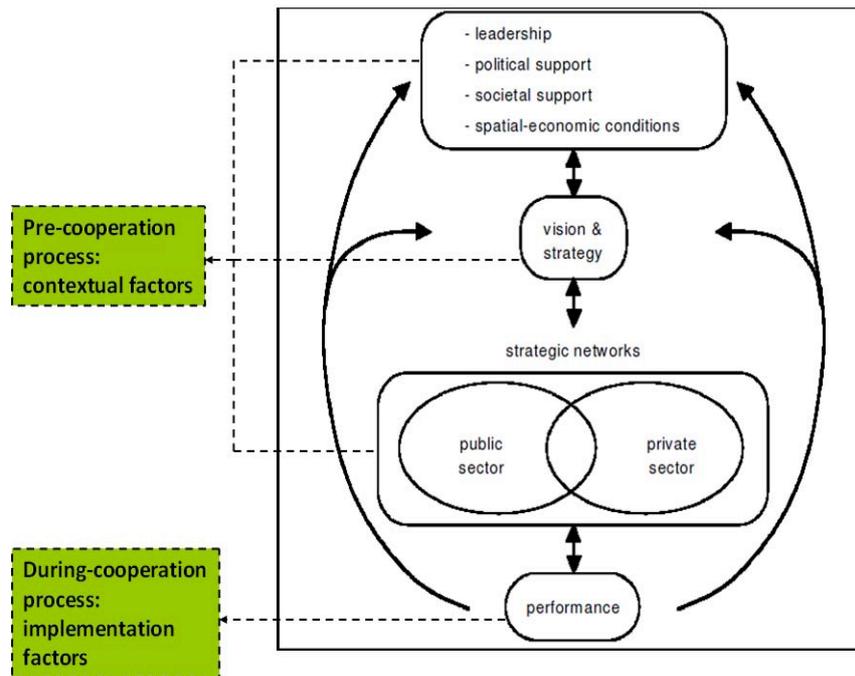
Note: Dashed lines and areas added by author.

ating the contextual factors, the research focus has been on discussing the influences brought by historical and political conflicts, mutual understanding, mutual respects, equal balance of power and equally spread commitment between stakeholders. Consensual agreements, open dialogue between stakeholders, effective communication channels, time control, clear strategies and sufficient funds are highlighted as the main components of the second set of factors. Compared to the frameworks mentioned above, the factors identified in this framework are more focused. However, we still find that some factors elaborated in Greer (2002) are too broadly explained. For example, it is difficult for us to find in Greer (2002) a clear explanation about the ‘informal decision-making process’, ‘sufficient funds’, and ‘effective communication channels’. Those concepts need further elaboration. Following Greer (2002), Reid et al. (2008) propose a ‘Strategic Tourism Alliance Framework’ to explain

how potential competitors set up a regional tourism marketing alliance and why the cooperation is operated successfully through multiple agreement periods. Factors of the two main processes (e.g., the pre-cooperation and during-cooperation processes), which influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation are identified.

Besides the above-mentioned theoretical frameworks concerning governance and regional tourism cooperation, some other theoretical frameworks concerning governance theory are also relevant to our study. These frameworks are not designed for regional tourism cooperation specifically, but they do present some general understanding of the governance theory and elaborate explicitly how effective governance launches and partnership performs in a certain geographic area. The 'Organizing Capacity' concept developed by Van den Berg et al. (1997) is a prominent representative. The 'Organizing Capacity' is defined as the ability to enlist all actors involved and, with their help, to generate new ideas and to develop and implement a policy designed to respond to fundamental developments and create conditions for sustainable development. After studying the factors identified in the theoretical framework of the 'Organizing Capacity', it is easy for us to restructure those factors that are interrelated and coherent with each other into two main processes (see figure 2.7). This framework elaborated in detail how governance functions in the initiation stage when factors such as leadership, political support, societal support and spatial-economic conditions are taken into account. Meanwhile, when governance performs, this Organizing Capacity framework explains how important the vision, strategy and strategic networks are. In this sense, the factors identified in this framework are focused and structured. However, these factors are formulated and have been tested by western cases in the western context. They all have western explanations. Hence, they can hardly be applied directly to the Chinese practice, which functions in the Chinese context, a different context compared to the western world.

**Figure 2.7**  
Theoretical framework of Organizing Capacity



Source: Adapted from Van den Berg et al. 1997.

Note: Dashed lines and areas added by author.

To conclude, it is our intention to design based on the above-mentioned theoretical frameworks (e.g. Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Greer 2002; Van den Berg et al. 1997) a new alternative, which fits the Chinese situation. Compared to these existing theoretical frameworks, our alternative will continue to adopt the process-oriented approach, but makes a clear distinction between factors of the pre-cooperation process and the during-cooperation process, which can impact the effective performance of a regional tourism cooperative arrangement. Different theoretical tools from the governance and tourism fields are expected to be incorporated to enrich our alternative as well. Our alternative intends to extend the scope of these existing frameworks to a specific con-

text in China where relationships between public and private sectors are different from the context where these frameworks originated.

## 2.4 Conclusions

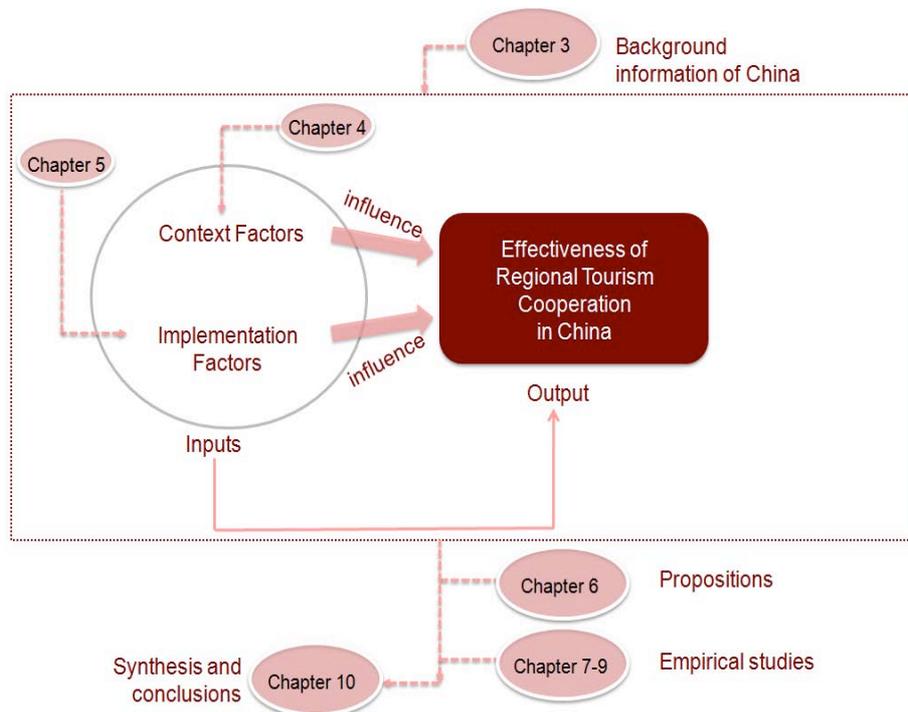
In this chapter, we first proposed a definition of regional tourism cooperation by identifying the geographic boundaries of a region and the types of collective actions. Second we used several concepts to support the argument that tourism cooperation at a regional level is necessary. The concepts we referred to are the Urban Life Cycle concept (Van den Berg 1987; Van den Berg et al. 1982), the Functional Tourist Region concept (Russo 2002; Van der Borg 1991) and the Urban Tourist System concept (Van den Berg et al. 1995).

Following the discussions in the first two sections, we identified the theoretical gaps between Chinese and international literature. We formulated our main objective *identifying factors in international literature to explain the Chinese situation: identify a set of factors of particular importance for the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*. The governance theory with ‘process’, ‘partnership’ and ‘stakeholder’ as three highlights has been claimed theoretically applicable and relevant to our study of regional tourism cooperation in China. Based on the governance theory, the theoretical framework we are going to design in the study is an alternative to the existing theoretical frameworks of Araujo and Bramwell (2002), Greer (2002) and Van den Berg et al. (1997). Instead of copying them, we will further address in our theoretical framework some specific issues missing or poorly developed in those alternatives, including the process of cooperation formation, the role of the actors in cooperation, and the factors impacting the effectiveness of cooperation.

Before designing the theoretical framework of the study, it is necessary to understand the following questions: who are the stakeholders involved in regional tourism cooperative arrangements? Why do they want to be involved? In what areas do they cooperate with each other? How are Chinese regional tourism cooperative arrangements organized? To answer these questions, much attention should be given to the cooperation process and identified factors. In that sense, in the coming chapters, we will follow the implications presented in the above-mentioned theoretical frameworks of Araujo and Bramwell (2002), Greer (2002) and Van den Berg et al. (1997), and divide the performance of regional tour-

ism cooperation into two stages, the pre-cooperation process and the during-cooperation process. We will use one chapter (chapter four) to identify ‘contextual factors’ related to the pre-cooperation process, explaining who is involved in cooperation and why stakeholders are involved. Another chapter (chapter five) will elaborate on some ‘implementation factors’ in relation to the during-cooperation process, claiming such as on what areas cooperation performs and how to cooperate. Before studying these factors in detail, we first move to the next chapter (chapter three) to discuss Chinese practice in the field of regional tourism cooperation. We presume elaboration on the Chinese background can contribute to identify the most suitable factors to Chinese practice.

**Figure 2.8**  
The research framework of the study



From all these discussions, the research framework of the study becomes clear (see figure 2.8): with chapter three illustrating the Chinese background; and chapters four and five, which constitute the main theoretical body of this study, discuss contextual and implementation factors respectively with the adaptation of international theoretical input on the Chinese situation. Based on the final arguments generated at the end of chapters four and five, chapter six formulates some propositions to be tested in the empirical chapters (chapters seven to nine), with each proposition reflecting one western explanation of each factor. Chapter ten, as the last chapter of this study, summarizes major findings and discusses accordingly some empirical and theoretical conclusions.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> All the international and Chinese literature reviewed in this study dates from 1978 to 2010. We chose 1978 as the starting year because 1978 was when China first opened to the world. In order to compare international and Chinese academic achievements, in the study we selected literature published from 1978 to 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Authors have defined 'regional tourism' (Ghimire 2001), 'regional tourism planning' (Araujo and Bramwell 2002), 'development of tourism at a regional level' (Teye 1988), and 'tourism collaboration' (Gray 1989; Jamal and Getz 1995). But apparently, limited definitions of regional tourism cooperation have been formulated.

<sup>3</sup> See Liang et al. (2004); Lu and Yu (2005); Qin (2008); Tan (2005); Wang et al. (2003); Wu and Gu (2004); Xue (2001); Yang et al. (2005); Zhou et al. (2004).

<sup>4</sup> Some authors regard a region as an area with an independent administrative authority (e.g. Ahn et al. 2002; Baidal 2004; Barry and Robins 2001; Berry and Ladkin 1997; Braun 2004; Carmen and Eva 2002; Carte et al. 2010; Clarke 1981; Guisan et al. 2002; Jones et al. 2003; Kemper 1979; Kerr and Wood 2001; Loukissas 1982; March and Wilkinson 2009; Pearce 1988; Roberts and Simpson 1999; Rodríguez et al. 2004; Seckelmann 2002; Sola 1992; Such and Zamora 2006; Teye 1988; Tosun and Jenkins 1996; Zahra and Ryan 2007). Some scholars regard a region as an area without any independent administrative authorities (e.g. Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Backman et al. 1991; Fagence 1996; Gan and Smith 1992; Ghimire 2001; Hudman 1978; Ioanides et al. 2006; Jackson 2006; Jackson and Murphy 2006; Koo et al. 2010; Lovingood and Mitchell 1989; March and Wilkinson 2009; Pearce 1990; Reid et al. 2008; Rodríguez and Portales 1994; Schlüter 1991; Smith 1987; Sola 1992; Travis 1980; Verbeke and Spee 1995; Zhang and Murphy 2009).

<sup>5</sup> In the USA and India, the sub-national authorities are 'states' because of the Federal System. In the Netherlands and China, they are 'provinces' due to the Unitary System.

<sup>6</sup> The reason to define a region as an area with no independent, administrative authority is that this fits better the cases of regional tourism cooperation in China.

<sup>7</sup> Collaboration is used to describe the joint relationship in tourism articles such as Aas et al. (2005); Angella and Go (2009); Bramwell (1997); Bramwell and Sharman (1999); Currie et al. (2009); Fyall and Garrod (2005); Gan and Smith (1992); Gopalan and Narayan (2010); Ioanides et al. (2006); Jackson and Murphy (2006); Jamal and Getz (1995); Mason (2008); McCann (1983); Racherla and Hu (2010); Ravinder (2008); Roberts and Simpson (1999); Sautter and Leisen (1999); Sheehan and Ritchie (2005); Smith et al. (1986); Tosun and Jenkins (1996); Vernon et al. (2005); Yates et al. (2010).

<sup>8</sup> This definition is strongly suggested by Bramwell and Lane (2000) in the book *Tourism Collaboration and Partnerships: Politics, Practice and Sustainability*.

<sup>9</sup> Partnership is used to describe the joint relationship in tourism articles such as Araujo and Bramwell (2002); Augustyn and Knowles (2000); Eastham (2003); Go et al. (2001); GoËymen (2000); Greer (2002); Hall and Braithwaite (1990); Heeley (2001); Klooster et al. (2004); Long (1997); March and Wilkinson (2009); March and Wilkinson (2009); Mason (2008); Reid et al. (2008); Riley et al. (1993); Roberts and Simpson (1999); Saxena (2000); Selin (1999); Selin and Chavez (1995); Svenssen et al. (2006); Walker (1983).

<sup>10</sup> Collaboration is used to describe the joint relationship across geographic boundaries in tourism articles such as Gan and Smith (1992); Ioanides et al. (2006); Jackson and Murphy (2006); McCann (1983); Roberts and Simpson (1999); Smith et al. (1986); Tosun and Jenkins (1996). Cooperation is used to describe the joint relationship across geographic boundaries in tourism articles such as Arroll (1993); Chirathivat (1996); Fagence (1996); Ghimire (2001); Greer (2002); Holder (1992); Jackson (2006); Lee (1987); Pearce (1990); Soininen and Lindroth (2006); Teye (1988); Tosun and Jenkins (1996); Yacoumis (1989). Partnership is used to describe the joint relationship across geographic boundaries in tourism articles such as Araujo and Bramwell (2002); Greer (2002); Hall and Braithwaite (1990); Reid et al. (2008); Riley et al. (1993); Roberts and Simpson (1999).

<sup>11</sup> Tourist destination is defined by UNWTO (2004) as 'a physical space in which a visitor spends at least one overnight. It includes tourism products such as support services, attractions, and tourism resources within one day's return travel time. It has physical and administrative boundaries, defining its management, images, perceptions, and market competitiveness'. In other words, tourism destination is an integrated aggregation, ranging from narrowly defined tourist destina-

tions to towns, cities, regions or countries (Aas et al. 2005). It functions as attractions, windows and accessible gateways.

<sup>12</sup> The urban actors are residents, companies, investors, visitors and government (Van den Berg et al. 1982).

<sup>13</sup> The FUR concept has been discussed in section 2.2.1.

<sup>14</sup> See Araujo and Bramwell (2002); Bramwell and Sharman (1999); Hall and Jenkins (1995); Ioannides (2001); Long (1991); Presenza (2005); Selin and Chavez (1995).

<sup>15</sup> It is said that ‘more research could focus on issues involved in joint working at a regional scale, as most previous studies have examined community or local level collaboration’ (Araujo and Bramwell 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Those studies focus on tourism cooperation across administrative boundaries. Among them, Gan and Smith (1992), Jackson (2006), Pearce (1990), Reid et al. (2008) and Van der Borg (2006) explicitly concentrate their concerns on tourism cooperation at an inter-provincial level. Details are in appendix 1.

<sup>17</sup> Similar comments can be found in He (2008) and Xue (2003).

<sup>18</sup> Besides these two prominent categories, some theories have also been used to study regional tourism cooperation, such as the Inter-organizational theory (Selin and Beason 1991), the collaboration theory (Jamal and Getz 1995) and the innovation theory (Braun 2004).

<sup>19</sup> The Tourism Bureau in this study refers to the public tourism authorities in China.

<sup>20</sup> See Bramwell and Rawding (1994); Goymen (2000); Greenwood (1993); Kerimoglu and Çiraci (2008); Manning (1998); Palmer (1998); Pforr (2006).

<sup>21</sup> See Appelman (2004); Bahaire and White (1999); Dogsé (2000); Nordin and Svensson (2005); Shapira (2001); Trousdale (1999); Yuksel et al. (2005).

<sup>22</sup> See Bahaire and White (1999); Greenwood (1993); Manning (1998).

<sup>23</sup> According to Trousdale (1999), the external contextual factors include the historical experiences, market forces, socio-cultural influences, politics and legislation.

<sup>24</sup> See Bahaire and White (1999); Yuksel et al. (2005).

<sup>25</sup> See Bahaire and White (1999); Bramwell and Rawding (1994); Dogsé (2000); Goymen (2000); Greenwood (1993); Kerimoglu and Çiraci (2008); Manning (1998); Nordin and Svensson (2005); Palmer (1998); Pforr (2006); Shapira (2001); Trousdale (1999); Yuksel et al. (2005).

<sup>26</sup> Jamal and Getz (1995: 190) design a ‘framework of factors critical to successful partnership working’, Selin and Chavez (1995: 848) propose an ‘evolutionary

model of tourism partnership', Bramwell and Sharman (1999: 405) discuss a 'framework of features of stakeholders in the process of tourism collaboration'.

# 3

## Tourism Cooperation in the Yangtze River Delta Region

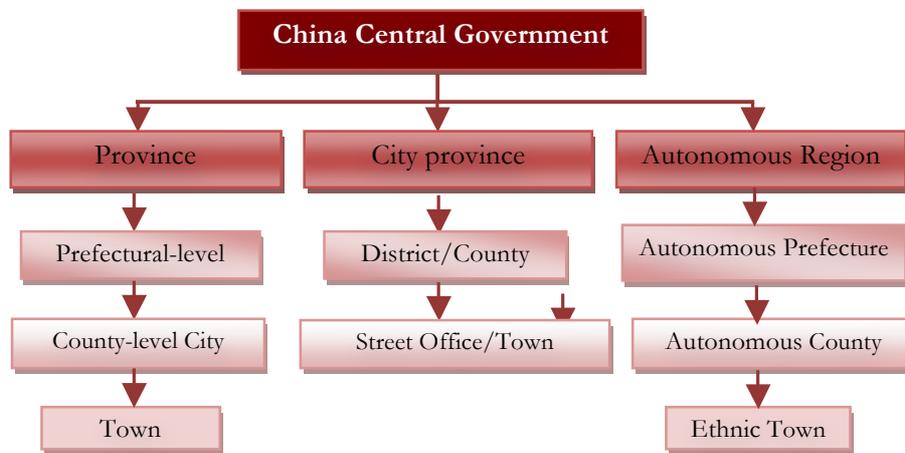
This chapter deals with the second research question *what is tourism cooperation in the Yangtze River Delta region?* The first section discusses the general political and economic background confronted by the Chinese tourism industry. Only the background relevant to regional tourism cooperation is elaborated. The second section gives a general picture of how regional tourism cooperation performs in China by elaborating in detail the cooperative arrangements existing in the eight Chinese economic regions. By comparing these cooperative modalities, the Yangtze River Delta region draws our attention due to its political position, the diversified and dynamic cooperative modalities it presents and the common political-economic context it confronts. Details concerning the arrangements for tourism cooperation in this region are discussed in the next three sections. The last section of this chapter ends with an open question, namely, can we compare the diversified modalities in existence in the Yangtze River Delta region to assess the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China?

### 3.1 General Background

As a country, China is different from the rest of the world in terms of its political, geographical, economic, demographic and cultural background. Tourism in China has experienced four eras of development.<sup>1</sup> The first is the *diplomatic era* from 1949 to 1978 when tourism in China functioned as a pure political tool to serve political rather than economic goals (Xiao 2006). After China launched the ‘open door and economic reform’ policy in 1978, the next 20 years represented the second stage *earning-foreign-currency era* when China recognized that tourism could also contribute to the national economy. With the increased disposable incomes of Chinese citizens, the massive investments in transportation facilities, a policy

launched in 1998 to position tourism as a new boost for the national economy, the year 1999 to 2005 brought the third stage *diverse economic era*. Government’s efforts in this era focused on developing not only international, but also domestic and outbound tourism markets. In 2006, the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Development Plan was published. This plan directed the government focus of tourism from purely economic development to quality. In that sense, from 2006 onwards, tourism industry in China stepped into the fourth era *transition and upgrading era* where the pillar economic position of tourism is reinforced by the central Chinese government. In 2009, the Chinese National Council published a state-level document ‘Suggestions on Accelerating the Development of Chinese Tourism Industry’, which further strengthened the strategic pillar position of tourism in the national economy.

**Figure 3.1**  
Administrative structure in China



Source: Adapted from Van Dijk 2008 and Wu 2002.

### 3.1.1 Administrative structure

Before discussing the administrative structure of tourism industry in China, we first quickly scan the governmental administrative structure in China. Obviously, China has a different structure to implement public administration compared to western countries. China roughly contains five administrative levels (Liu 1996; Van Dijk 2008; Wu 2002), including national, provincial, prefectural city<sup>2</sup>/district, county/block and town levels. In total there are 32 provincial-level administrative bodies, including 23 provinces, 4 city-provinces and 5 Autonomous Regions (details see figure 3.1).

The political decision-making process in China has a typically top down feature. With the economic reform launched in 1978, political decentralization has emerged. The first significant decentralization is the transfer of state controls to provincial and city authorities, leaving local leaders to experiment with ways to increase economic growth independently (Zhang et al. 1999). The other significant decentralization is the involvement of the private sectors in the political decision-making process (Lai et al. 2006) especially large-scale domestic companies with the government background (Xiao 2006).

Tourism is one important economic sector in China and it follows the same administrative regime. In the coming paragraphs, we elaborate on several specific features of Chinese tourism administration, which are relevant to our study on tourism cooperation at the regional level.

The first is the 'top-down' feature. In China, the highest tourism administrative authority is the 'China National Tourism Administration' (CNTA). On each lower administrative level, there is a tourism bureau operating as a government agency and reporting to its higher-level tourism bureau. Concerning regional tourism cooperation, the main tourism authorities are the CNTA and the Tourism Bureau<sup>3</sup> involved at either provincial or city levels. The Tourism Bureau has seven general functions regardless of political level. As formulated by Zhang et al. (1999), the first function involves the provision of infrastructure for tourism development through ownership and operation of tourism business (as an operator). The second is to formulate and implement regulations to run tourism business (as a regulator). The third is to stimulate tourism investment by granting financial incentives (as a stimulator). The fourth is to coordinate activities between different government departments with

respect to tourism (as a coordinator). The fifth is to establish tourism educational institutions and provide tourism education and training programmes (as an educator). The last is to spend money on international promotion of tourism industry (as a promoter). In addition, we add the seventh function 'initiator', because a significant number of development plans of tourism industry in China are still initiated by the Tourism Bureau.

The second specific feature of Chinese tourism administration is decentralization. After the economic reform in 1978, responsibilities of the Tourism Bureau have changed from directly running tourism business to management of public tourism affairs. The Tourism Bureau contracts tourism projects out, such as master plans of tourism development, to private or non-governmental organizations. Meanwhile, the higher-level tourism bureaus have granted more rights and space to lower-level tourism bureaus. However, the 'hierarchy' feelings among tourism bureaus still exist.

The third feature of Chinese tourism administration lies in the ironical fact that the Tourism Bureau is usually deemed an 'appendix', possessing far less power compared with other Political Bureaus<sup>4</sup> whose representative industries make a more significant contribution to the national economy account. When competing with them, in most instances the Tourism Bureau loses bids for governmental financial support. In addition, in most cases there is little space left for the Tourism Bureau to contribute their policy initiatives. Its parallel political bureaus such as the Cultural Conservation Bureau or the Park Conservation Bureau further weakens the administrative power of the Tourism Bureau. This is largely due to implicit institutional arrangements. Tourism attractions, broadly categorized as cultural and natural attractions, are de facto beyond direct management of the Tourism Bureau even though these attractions are one of the reasons why tourists come to a destination. To make it clearer, the Park Conservation Bureau and the Cultural Conservation Bureau, two bureaus administratively parallel to the Tourism Bureau, manage most of the natural and cultural tourist attractions in China, which indicates that the Tourism Bureau has no direct administrative connections with those tourist attractions. If a city tourism bureau organizes a marketing event that involves natural or cultural attractions, the tourism bureau should first go through all the administrative procedures such as sending official requests for approval from the park conservation bureau

or cultural conservation bureau. Once receiving positive feedback, the tourism bureau can start arranging for participation of attractions at that marketing event.

### 3.1.2 Tourism Bureau

China has gradually attracted the attention of researchers. The emerging Chinese cities (Wu 2007), manufacturing industry (Van den Berg et al. 2007), ICT clusters (Winden et al. 2008), shipping and logistics industry (Van den Berg et al. 2008), and other hard industries (Van Dijk 2002, 2006a, 2006b, 2008) have become popular research concerns. In the literature, soft industries like tourism are rarely mentioned. Among those few, studies are concentrated on discussing Chinese tourism policies (Lai et al. 2006), conference or exhibition destinations (Go and Govers 1999), inbound tourism market (Zhang et al. 1999), and hotel or travel agency industry (Xiao 2006). Nearly no studies examine regional tourism cooperation. Jackson (2006) filled the gap to some extent, by using the cluster theory to identify the economic potentials of tourism industry in the western Chinese regions. The conclusion made is that Chinese private tourist sectors can and are expected to play vital and leading roles in the Chinese tourism industry while the Tourism Bureau is expected to function as supporters. We agree with this 'ideal' conclusion. However, our study rather faces the reality. We argue that, unlike what Jackson (2006) pictures in the article, currently and in the near decades, the Chinese tourism industry is and continues to be led by the Tourism Bureau instead of by private tourism companies, for the following reasons.

Given the nature of the Chinese economy (i.e., under the communist rules with strong government controls), it is not surprising to find that currently the Chinese tourism business is still dominated by a few big domestic tourism companies, either government owned or government backed.<sup>5</sup> Performances of three tourism market segments further confirm such statement: 1) most Chinese *tourism attractions* are still managed or have the long-history relationships with government (Gao 2011); 2) *hotel business* is the only one to be fully opened to international competitors (Zhang et al. 1999). Only in this business segment, several international companies also function as market leaders, besides Chinese government-backed companies; 3) *travel business* is still dominated by a few large-scale domestic travel agencies that have a long history with the Chinese government. Even after China entered the WTO, foreign travel

agencies were still not allowed to enter the Chinese market since the Chinese central government intends to protect its domestic travel agencies from intensively international competitions. In June 2003, this situation changed when the CNTA and China Ministry of Commerce jointly issued an Interim Regulation for foreign travel agencies. However, according to this regulation, only by setting up joint-venture travel agencies with Chinese partners can foreign travel agencies operate outbound Chinese tourism business. Otherwise, if these foreign companies set up their branches or representative offices in China, running outbound Chinese tourism business (including travels from China mainland to Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan) is still regarded as illegal. Based on the above discussions of the three tourism segments in China, we can conclude that nearly all of the leading companies in the Chinese tourism industry are large-scale domestic companies with government backing. The others are small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Due to their limited capability of financial, knowledge or other resources, currently they still have little power to influence either tourism markets or tourism policies.

One may raise another question, why tourism SMEs in China cannot rely on the Tourism Industry Association to gain power of scale. This leads to the discussion of a unique Chinese phenomenon. In China, there are strict controls for private sectors to set up NGOs or an Industry Association. Taking a Chinese city as an example, normally the Tourism Industry Association of a city was established by the city's Tourism Bureau before the economic reform in 1978. Members of the association are tourism enterprises of different scales in the city. The association has limited functions. Some functions (such as tourism education and training, ranking, standard issuing), which belongs to tourism industry associations in developed countries are still stated in the Chinese tourism regulations as the main responsibility of the Tourism Bureau. Meanwhile, after the 1978 economic reforms, the association functions as an enterprise and still possesses significant government influence. For instance, the association depends heavily on the Tourism Bureau for the bulk of its funding. Furthermore, high-level managers of the association are still appointed by the Tourism Bureau. In this sense, currently in a Chinese city, the city-level Tourism Industry Association still functions like a sub-agency of the city's Tourism Bureau. The financial and personnel relations between the Tourism Industry Association and the Tourism Bu-

reau mentioned above weaken the independence of the association largely. In turn, it does everything the Tourism Bureau requires.

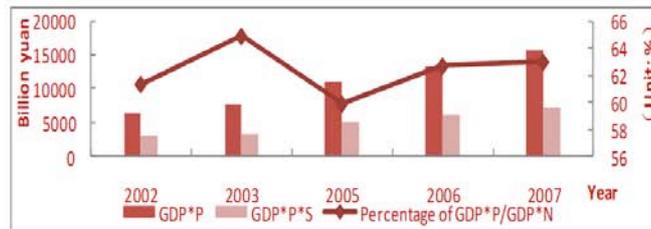
We conclude that China is a country where the Tourism Bureau plays a leading role in tourism development. Meanwhile, a few large-scale domestic tourism companies, in most cases having strong government backing, are the main players in the Chinese tourism market.

### 3.1.3 Economic performance

China started to reform its economy in December 1978. The goal was to transform China's stagnant, impoverished, planned economy to a market economy capable of generating strong economic growth and improving the well-being of Chinese citizens. The success of China's economic reforms has resulted in massive changes in the economy. Average annual economic growth rate in China has been around 10 per cent in the past 30 years. In 2007, the national GDP reached 24.95299 trillion Yuan, 67.5 times more than in 1978. GDP per capita increased to 18,934 Yuan in 2007. After correcting for inflation, this number represents a 48.7 times growth compared to 1978 (Yearbook of China Statistics Bureau 2008).

Of greater relevance to this study is that cities are playing increasingly important roles in China's economy. Rapid urbanization is becoming a key driver for the socioeconomic changes (Van Dijk 2006a). In 2007, urban population in China reached 593.79 million, representing 44.94 per cent of the national population. Compared to the year 1978, this number means 27.02 per cent annual growth rate. In 2007, the overall GDP contribution of Chinese cities reached 15.7284 trillion Yuan, accounting for 63 per cent of the national GDP. This number is 1.44 times that of the year 2002. Also in 2007, the overall GDP contribution of the service industry in Chinese cities rose to 7.2658 trillion Yuan, accounting for 1.5 times the year 2002 (Yearbook of China Statistics Bureau 2008). The service industry gradually and steadily upgrades its economic position in Chinese cities. In 2007, its contribution accounted for more than half of the overall industrial economy (figure 3.2).

**Figure 3.2**  
Main economic indicators of Chinese cities (2002-2007)

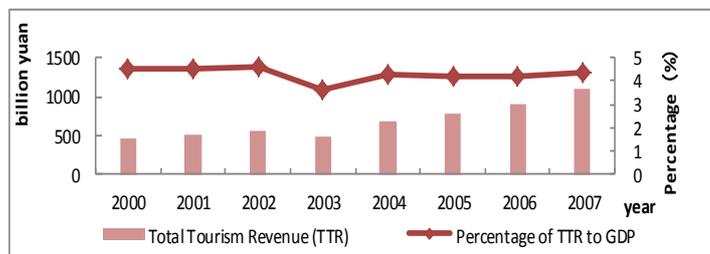


Source: Yearbook of China Statistics Bureau 2003-2008, <http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/statisticaldata/>

Notes:

- 1) Cities include prefectural-level cities and city-provinces
- 2) GDP\*P means the annual GDPs of cities (Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan excluded)
- 3) GDP\*P\*S means the contribution of the service industry to the annual GDPs of cities
- 4) GDP\*N means the annual GDP of the whole nation

**Figure 3.3**  
Total tourism revenue in China and its percentage to the Chinese national GDP (2000-2007)



Source: Yearbook of China Statistics Bureau 2008, <http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/statisticaldata/>

Under the leadership of the Tourism Bureau, tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries in China (Zhang et al. 1999). It is also one of the industries with a very distinct global competitive edge (Lai et al. 2006; Xiao 2006). According to the National Statistics Bureau (2008), in 2000 the total tourism receipts were 451.9 billion Yuan, accounting for 4.56 per cent of the national GDP. In 2007, the total tourism receipts rose to

1.0957 trillion Yuan, representing an increase of 1.4 times the year 2000 (figure 3.3).

As for the international inbound market, there has been a fundamental growth during the previous decades. In the global ranking system, the amount of international inbound tourists to China ranked No. 7 in 1995 and ascended to No. 4 in 2006 when 37.1 billion U.S. dollar tourism revenue was achieved. With the development of domestic transportation facilities, the increase of per capita disposable income of Chinese citizens and an amended public holiday policy,<sup>6</sup> the domestic Chinese tourism market performed exactly like what Ghimire (2001) pictured. He notes that 'increasingly in several developing countries, national tourism has become more important in terms of the total number of tourists and its contribution to national economy than international tourism' (Ghimire 2001: 100). The number of domestic tourists in China increased from 695 million in 1998 to 1610 million in 2007 and tourism revenue increased accordingly from 239.1 billion Yuan to 777.1 billion Yuan. The number of Chinese outbound tourists ranked No. 16 in 1995 in the global tourism ranking system. It ascended to No. 6 in 2006 when 28.24 billion U.S. dollars was spent by the Chinese travelling abroad (table 3.1).

Regarding the primary tourist products,<sup>7</sup> there are adequate and diverse tourist resources in China, with the recent phenomenon of variable combinations of traditional sightseeing activities with new programmes such as event tours, sports tours, industrial tours, medical tours or adventure tours. Concerning the supplementary tourist products, for example hotels, driven by the flourishing tourism industry, China's hotel sector expands rapidly. All the large or medium-sized Chinese cities and scenic spots have hotels with complete facilities and services for both domestic and international visitors. At the end of 2008, China had 14,099 tourist hotels and more than 1.5914 million hotel rooms. As for the travel agencies, in 2003 there were 20,110 travel agencies nationwide, among which 1,970 running the international travel business and 18,140 running the domestic business (China Statistics Bureau 2009).

**Table 3.1**  
Main indicators of the Chinese tourism industry

Indicator	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Number of in-bound tourists (million)	83.44	89.01	97.91	91.66	109.04	120.29	124.94	131.87
Number of out-bound tourists (million)	10.47	12.13	13.44	11.40	16.93	20.26	22.21	26.11
Number of domestic tourists (million)	7.44	7.84	8.78	8.70	11.02	12.12	13.94	16.10
Foreign exchange earnings (billion US dollar)	16.2	17.8	20.4	17.4	25.7	29.3	33.9	41.9
Domestic tourism receipts (billion Yuan)	317.6	352.2	387.8	344.2	471.1	528.6	623.0	777.1

Source: Yearbook of China Statistics Bureau 2008, <http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/statisticaldata/> China Tourism Statistical Bulletin 2008.

## 3.2 Regional Tourism in China

### 3.2.1 Region

In the 21st century, with the political decentralizing trend and the increasing national economy, 'to boost the Chinese economy at a regional level' is one significant national strategy. The 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2006-2010) further confirmed this national strategy where eight economic regions, positioned as eight giant engines of economic development, are officially recognized. These eight regions are identified based on the geographic and administrative boundaries, including four coastal areas (the Yangtze River Delta region, the Bohai Region, the Pearl River Delta region and the Northeast Region) and four inland areas (the Central Region, the Southwest Region, the Northwest Region and the Cross-strait Region). Provinces inside each region share similar or highly interrelated economic, cultural and natural backgrounds (see figure 3.4 and table 3.2).

**Figure 3.4**  
The layout of the eight economic regions in China



Source: Based on the information gathered from the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year National Plan 2006.

**Table 3.2**  
Eight economic regions in China

Name of the region	Provinces included	Number of cities	Population (million)
Yangtze River Delta region	Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang	25	146.85
Bohai region	Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shandong	30	192.77
Pearl River Delta region	Guangdong, Hong Kong, Macao	23	95.44
Northeast region	Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning	34	108.74
Cross-strait region	Fujian, Taiwan	10	36.04
Central region	Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Anhui	57	226.26
Southwest region	Sichuan, Chongqing, Yunnan	27	155.2
Northwest region	Shanxi, Ningxia, Gansu	27	70.08

Source: Based on the Yearbook of China Statistics Bureau 2008.

Notes: 1) Cities here include the prefectural-level cities, city-provinces and the Special Economic Zones. 2) Population of the Pearl River Delta region excludes the population of Hong Kong and Macao. 3) Population of the Cross-strait region excludes the population of Taiwan.

### 3.2.2 Tourism cooperation in the eight regions

Since provinces and cities in a region are geographically adjacent to one another, and they share relatively similar historical and cultural backgrounds, regional cooperation used to be regional competition. However, provinces and cities have increasingly recognized that tourism cooperation can be an alternative to enhance their attractiveness in a competitive national or global economy. In addition, political sectors at the local, provincial and especially at the national levels provide support to develop regional tourism cooperation. Despite the competition and administrative barriers, many tourism cooperative arrangements have occurred in Chinese regions, leading to further integration of the tourism economy. In general, the inter-city and inter-provincial cooperative arrangements in the coastal regions show greater diversity than those in the inland regions do.

*The Pearl River Delta (PRD) region*<sup>8</sup> includes Guangdong province, Hong Kong and Macao. It is the first region to initiate regional tourism cooperation in the 1980s when China started its economic reform. Provinces and cities accept the consensus that they are part of a larger economic and tourist network. Due to the unique economic and political systems of Hong Kong and Macao,<sup>9</sup> all the cooperative activities in the PRD region possess a specific political-economic feature compared to the other regions in China. At the inter-provincial level, the landmark cooperative arrangement set up the Tourism Joint Marketing Office in 1993 in Guangdong province, Hong Kong and Macao. This institutional platform introduced some cooperative activities such as an Annual Joint Conference started in 1998 with participants from both public and private sectors, a Joint E-tourism Information Website ([www.pearlriverdelta.org](http://www.pearlriverdelta.org) and [www.visitgd.com](http://www.visitgd.com)) launched in 2002 and some short-term activities of joint marketing. At the inter-city level, several regional tourism destinations were developed. For example, in 2003 cities of Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Zhuhai jointly developed an integrated metropolitan tourism destination called the 'Vigor Guangdong'.

To conclude, local tourism bureaus, particularly the tourism bureaus of Guangzhou city and Hong Kong have led most of the cooperative activities organized in the PRD region. In addition, cooperation between the private tourism sectors is also active. Examples include the joint efforts of several hotel groups from the three provinces<sup>10</sup> to invest in one

regional hotel project in 2001, the set up of the Guangdong China Travel Agency by the local investors from the three provinces, etc.

*The Yangtze River Delta* (YRD) region includes Shanghai (city-province), Jiangsu province and Zhejiang province. Similar to the PRD region, it is another active region in forming cooperative arrangements to influence the movements of potential tourists. It is the first and only region in China to have a regional master plan, published by the Chinese National Council in 2010. Compared to the PRD region, tourism cooperative arrangements in the YRD region operate in the more comprehensive areas, including improving the internal accessibility, joint marketing, joint development of regional tourist products, the standardization of regional tourism services, sharing of tourism data and information, mutual exchange of local residents to visit the partner cities, etc.

At the inter-provincial level, the main cooperative modality in the YRD region is the statutory political cooperation. Examples include joint efforts of the three provinces (Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces) to issue the 'Opinions of Implementation of Regional Cooperation on Tourism Education and Training' in 2005, the mutual acknowledgement of the 'Tour Guide Certificate within the region in 2005, the joint issue of the 'Regional Tourism Driving Map' in 2005, the joint issue and implementation of the 'Standards of Road Traffic Guidance for Regional Tourism Spots' in 2007, and others. Meanwhile, at the inter-provincial level, 'conference' has emerged as another popular cooperative modality in the YRD region. For instance, the Regional Periodical Joint Conference of Tourism Marketing is where marketing departments of the three provincial tourism bureaus meet twice a year to discuss joint marketing issues. Besides the cooperative modalities mentioned above, the tourism bureaus of the three provinces have also led many short term projects including the joint acknowledgment of the year 1988 and 2003 as the regional tourism theme years, joint participation in the domestic and international travel fairs by presenting regional travel routes and regional travel manuals and, providing integrated high-quality tourism services during the Shanghai World EXPO 2010.

At the inter-city level, the annual-conference modality is prominent in the YRD region. The most famous and influential conference is called the 'Tourism City Summit of the Yangtze River Delta region'. This annual conference began in 2003 with the participation of tourism bureaus, tourism companies and universities from the 18 metropolitan areas in

the region. Meanwhile, the alliance modality is also prevalent in the YRD region. Cases include the Pan-Nanjing Tourism Alliance where Nanjing Tourism Bureau takes a dominating role to cooperate with its neighboring cities; the Tai Lake Tourism Alliance incorporating three cities (Suzhou, Wuxi and Changzhou from Jiangsu province), which jointly share the tourism resource (the Tai lake); the 'Regional Alliance of Tourism Distribution Centers' introduced in 2005 where the tourism distribution centres from the main cities of the YRD region (e.g. Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Wuxi and Wenzhou) cooperate together to share the ticket booking and selling systems. Among these alliances, one interesting phenomenon worthy of further study is a public-private initiative led by the tourism bureau of Ningbo city, which incorporates four neighboring cities via a joint funding system. Besides the public-public and public-private cooperative arrangements mentioned above, private tourism sectors in the YRD region (e.g. travel agencies, tourist attractions, hotels and media) are active in organizing regional cooperative arrangements as well. They started to cooperate at a large scale in 2006, mainly by setting up alliances, organizing conferences or initiating projects.

To summarize, there are many cooperative modalities in the YRD region. Due to the 'common' political-economic context this region bears (compared to the PRD region), consequently other regions in China have copied the modalities developed in this region.

*The Bohai Region*<sup>11</sup> and *the Northeast Region*<sup>12</sup> have loose and symbolic regional cooperative modalities, mainly by signing Memorandums of Understandings (MoUs). The Tourism Bureau leads most of the existing cooperative arrangements. Cooperative activities are concentrated on joint marketing, joint development of tourist products, joint acknowledgement of professional tourism service qualifications, attracting local residents to tour in partner cities or provinces. Because Beijing is too powerful in terms of its political and economic contributions, provinces and cities inside the Bohai Region mainly cooperate by relying on the radiation effects of Beijing. At the inter-provincial level, cooperative activities in both regions are represented by the short-term projects while the Northeast Region has one extra modality copied from the YRD region: the conference modality. At the inter-city level, many MoUs were signed, such as nine cities from Liaoning province agreed to develop a 'golden delta' tourist route in 2002, eight cities from Shandong province released a declaration of Tourism Cooperation on Accessibility Im-

provement in 2004, 11 port cities in the Bohai region released a declaration of Tourism Cooperation on Accessibility Improvement in 2005, three cities (Yanbian city, Changchun city and Mudanjiang city) and two National Protection Zones (Changbai mountain and Jinbo lake) from Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces agreed to set up a tourism alliance in 2007. However, all of these cooperative MoUs have come up with few follow-ups.

Three inland regions, *the Central Region* including Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi and Anhui provinces; *the Southwest Region* including Chongqing City Province, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces; and *the Northwest Region* including Ningxia Autonomous Region, Shanxi and Gansu provinces, began regional tourism cooperation two or three years ago, mainly by signing MoUs among the local tourism bureaus, provincial governments and city governments. For example, Changsha, Zhuzhou and Xiangtan in Hunan province agreed to develop the integrated theme routes in 2007; in Hubei province, Wuhan agreed to cooperate with the other 10 neighboring cities to develop jointly the Pan-Wuhan metropolitan tourism destination in 2008; the same year, nine cities from the three provinces of the Northwest Region (Shanxi, Ningxia and Gansu provinces) released a declaration of Tourism Cooperation on Accessibility Improvements. Similarly to the Bohai and the Northeast regions mentioned above, cooperative arrangements in these three inland regions are still in the taking-off stage: signing MoUs with few follow-ups.

Similar to the PRD region, *the Cross-strait region* confronts a unique political-economic context. The tourism cooperation activities between Taiwan and Fujian provinces are subject to the political stability. At the inter-provincial level, most of the activities were initiated and led by the provincial tourism bureaus, largely featuring political characteristics. At the inter-city level, the cooperative activities are focused on the joint marketing and mutual exchange of local residents to visit the partner cities. The set up of MinTai Tourism Cooperation Zone by the three prefectural cities (Xiamen from Fujian province and Gaoxiong, Jinmen from Taiwan) in 2004 is one of the examples.

To summarize, we claim that there is a development disparity between the coastal and inland regions in China with regard to regional tourism cooperation. Among these regions, the YRD and PRD regions are the top two regions where the cooperative arrangements are more diversified and mature in terms of the modalities implemented and the

areas to launch the cooperation. Comparing these two regions, the PRD region is too special to formulate general suggestions for the other regions in China due to its unique political and economic background. Therefore, the YRD region is chosen as our research object. We intend to continue our study by comparing the different cooperative modalities in existence in the YRD region. At the end of the study, we can make suggestions, via the cases of the YRD region, on how a region can cooperate effectively in the field of tourism in China and what are the conditions for such effective cooperation.

### 3.3 General Background of the Yangtze River Delta Region

This section discusses the background of the YRD region. Concerns are placed on elaboration of the geographic location, regional master plan and regional economy.

**Figure 3.5**  
Location of the Yangtze River Delta region



Source: Adapted from a map of China downloaded from <http://hhnz.freewebspace.com/Introduction.htm> 2009.

### 3.3.1 Location and Regional Master Plan

The YRD region is located in the eastern part of China. People living in this region have historical and cultural inner-connections where in the imperial eras, this region used to be one kingdom with the WU language as the mother tongue. In May 2010, the State Council of China formally approved the implementation of the ‘Master Plan of the Yangtze River Delta region’. This is the first regional master plan issued by the state. In this plan, tourism is highlighted as one important segment of the regional economy. The plan identifies the YRD region to include three provinces: Shanghai (a City Province) in the centre, Jiangsu province (with the capital city Nanjing) in the north and Zhejiang province (with Hangzhou as the capital) in the south (figure3.5).

**Table 3.3**  
*GDP development over the past decades of the YRD region*

Year	GDP (billion Yuan)				Yangtze/Nation %
	Shanghai	Jiangsu	Zhejiang	Total (Yangtze)	
1978	27.281	24.924	12.372	64.577	17.82
1990	75.645	141.650	89.799	307.094	16.56
2000	455.115	858.273	603.634	1917.022	21.43
2001	495.084	951.191	684.815	2121.09	21.90
2002	540.876	1063.175	779.600	2385.961	22.66
2003	625.081	1246.083	939.500	2810.664	23.97
2004	745.027	1551.24	1124.3	3420.567	25.06
2005	914.395	1827.212	1336.5	4078.107	22.18
2006	1036.637	2164.508	1574.251	4775.396	22.65
2007	1218.885	2556.01	1863.8	5638.695	22.86
2008	1369.815	2148.692	2574.115	6092.622	24.23

Source: Based on the yearbooks of Statistics Bureaus of each province and the nation 1978-2008.

**Table 3.4**  
Basic data of the YRD region in 2008

	Shanghai	Zhejiang	Jiangsu	Yangtze	Nation	Yangtze/ Nation
Area (sq. kms)	7037.5	101800	102600	211437.5	9600000	2.20%
Population (million)	18.8846	46.8185	76.765	142.4681	1321.29	10.78%
Number of cities	19	11	13	43	283	15.19%
GDP (billion Yuan)	1369.815	2148.692	2574.115	6092.622	25148.32	24.23%

Source: Based on the yearbooks of Statistics Bureaus of each province and the nation 2008.

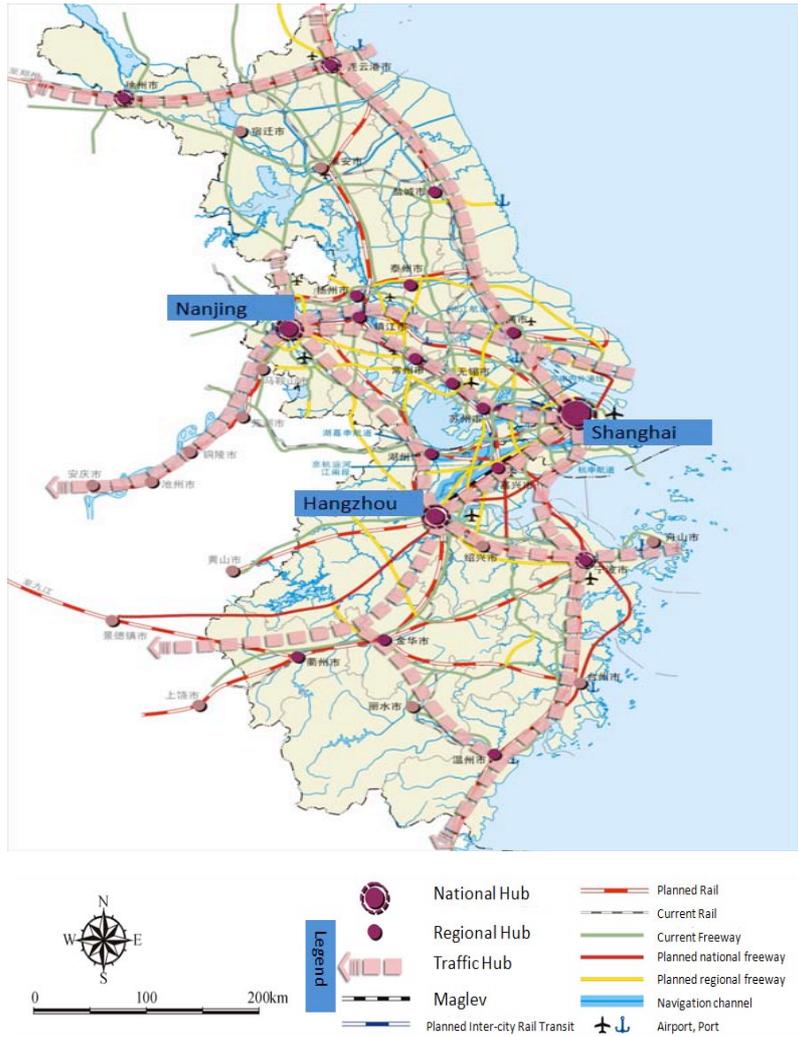
### 3.3.2 Economy

The YRD region has gone through considerable social development and steady economic growth during the previous periods (table 3.3). It is one of the economic centres in China. With 10.78 per cent of the national population occupying, only 2.2 per cent of the national land, the YRD region contributed 24.23 per cent of the national GDP in 2008 (see table 3.4). As the front of the country's policy (opening up to the outside world), the region is opening an extensive and convenient three-hour transportation network (figure 3.6), one of the highest national private vehicle ownership rates, and the complicated inter-city relations among the 25 cities<sup>13</sup> in respect of the labor division, economic coordination and globalization.

### 3.3.3 Industrial structure

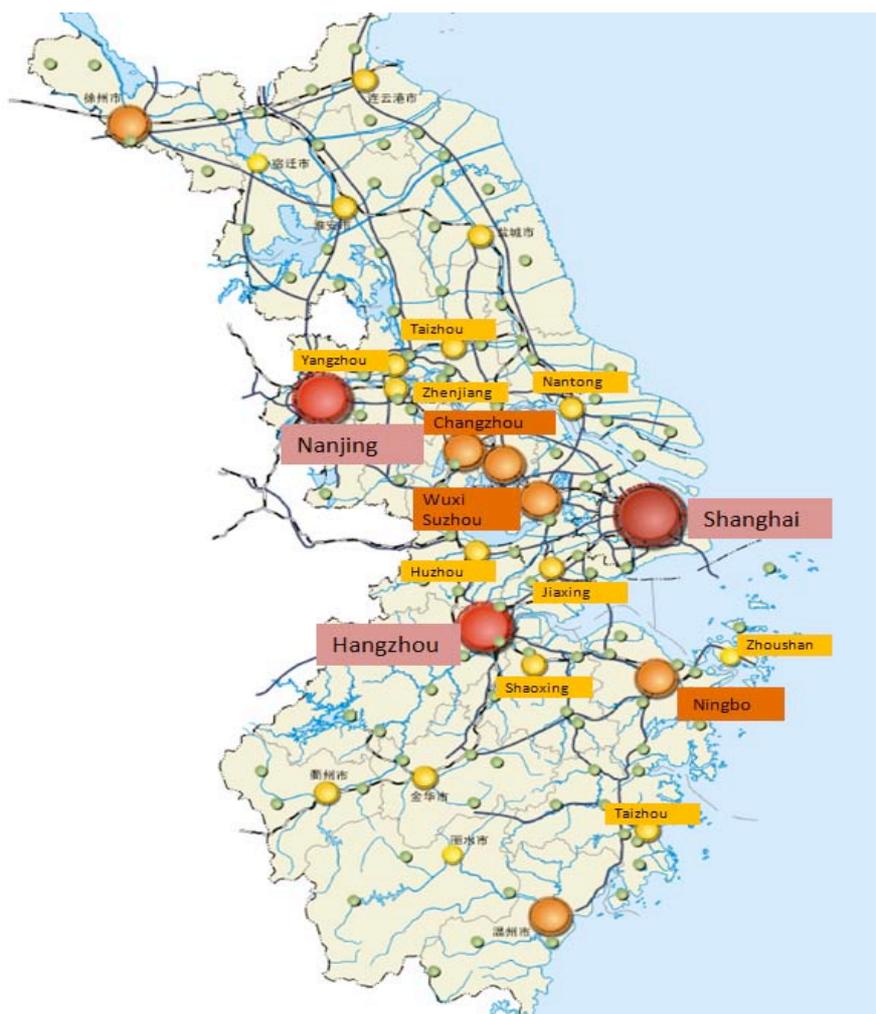
In the regional master plan, the important role of the 16 major cities of the YRD region in developing the regional economy of scale is highlighted. These cities, as indicated in figure 3.7, include Shanghai city province, eight cities from Jiangsu province (e.g. Nanjing, Wuxi, Changzhou, Zhenjiang, Suzhou, Yangzhou, Nantong, Taizhou) and seven cities from Zhejiang province (e.g. Hangzhou, Zhoushan, Ningbo, Taizhou, Shaoxing, Huzhou, Jiaxing).

**Figure 3.6**  
The three-hour traffic system inside the YRD region



Source: Adapted from the Master Plan of the Yangtze River Delta region 2010.

**Figure 3.7**  
Layout of 16 major cities in the YRD region



Source: Adapted from the Master Plan of the Yangtze River Delta region 2010.

**Table 3.5**  
*Proportions of economic contributions of the three industries in the 16 major cities of the YRD region in 2009*

Province	City	Agricultural industry (%)	Manufacturing industry (%)	Service industry (%)
Shanghai	Shanghai	0.8	45.5	53.7
Jiangsu	Nanjing	2.5	47.5	50.0
	Wuxi	1.4	57.6	41.0
	Changzhou	3.1	58.9	38.0
	Zhenjiang	3.6	59.9	36.5
	Suzhou	1.6	62.0	36.4
	Yangzhou	7.5	57.0	35.5
	Nantong	7.9	57.0	35.1
	Taizhou	7.8	58.0	34.2
Zhejiang	Hangzhou	3.7	50.0	46.3
	Zhoushan	10.0	46.2	43.8
	Ningbo	4.2	55.4	40.4
	Taizhou	6.8	52.8	40.4
	Shaoxing	5.2	59.8	35.0
	Huzhou	8.0	57.3	34.7
	Jiaxing	5.8	59.8	34.4

Source: China Statistics Bureau 2009.

Among the 16 major cities (table 3.5) in 2009, Zhoushan was the only one where the agricultural industry still represented 10 per cent of the overall economic contributions of the city's industries. On the contrary, the economic contributions of the agricultural industry in eight cities were less than five per cent. Shanghai is an extreme case where the agricultural industry only contributed 0.8 per cent to the city's economic revenue in 2009. Except for Shanghai, Nanjing and Zhoushan, the manufacturing industry in the other 13 cities reached or exceeded 55 per cent of the city's economic revenue in 2009, with nine cities showing a yearly drop in the manufacturing industry and a steady growth in the service industry. The service industry in Taizhou (Jiangsu province) accounted for the lowest economic contributions. However, it still presented 34.2 per cent of the overall economic gains in 2009.

Therefore, largely, in the YRD region Shanghai is a city presenting an industrial structure pattern of 'service, manufacturing and agriculture' (by

order of size), while other cities in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces retain a pattern of 'manufacturing, service and agriculture'. Moreover, there is an increase in the roles of the service sectors in the region (Van Dijk 2006a): a potential structural transformation appears when the economic poles in the 16 major cities have been gradually shifted away from manufacturing to services. The proportions of the service industries also own the fastest growth rates. The gaps in economic contributions between the service and manufacturing industries are decreasing annually.

### **3.4 A Good Foundation for Cooperation**

Similar to other regions in China, there are rich tourist resources in the YRD region. Regional tourism economy of scale has appeared. There is lots of political support from the national, provincial and local levels for developing regional tourism cooperation. This section discusses in details the good foundations for regional tourism cooperation in the YRD region. In the other seven economic regions of China, similar good foundations are also present.

#### **3.4.1 Rich tourist resources**

The YRD region is known as the 'golden triangle' in the Chinese tourism industry. The metropolitan and fashionable tourism resources in Shanghai; the gardening, historical and humanistic culture in Jiangsu Province; and the landscape and leisure features of Zhejiang Province, are unique attractions of this region (Gao 2011). The histories, cultures, economics, social and natural resources can be made complementary to one another (Zhang et al. 2010). Regarding the primary tourist products, there are comparatively diverse traditional sightseeing attractions in the YRD region (table 3.6). Meanwhile this region is one of the pioneer regions where new forms of tourism attractions such as event, sports, industrial, medical and adventure tours concentrate. Regarding the supplementary tourist products, by the end of 2007, the region has owned in total 2687 luxury hotels, which shared a portion of 19.8 per cent of the national number. There was 3691 travel agencies, which shared 19.5 per cent of the national market by the end of 2007 (table 3.7). Besides the amount, the tourism industry's service standards in the YRD region reached a higher level compared to the other regions in China (Zhao 2009).

**Table 3.6**  
*Tourist attractions in the YRD region*

Category	Shanghai	Zhejiang	Jiangsu	Total (Yangtze)	Nation	Yangtze/Nation (%)
World Heritage	0	0	1	1	38	2.6
National-level Tourist Attraction	22	87	91	200	1287	15.5
National Park	12	85	49	146	1805	8.1
National Industrial and Agricultural Tourism Site	33	49	131	213	NA	NA
National Historical and Cultural Site	5	25	25	55	361	15.2
Chinese Excellent Tourist City	1	27	27	55	306	18.0
Overall Tourist Resources	73	273	322	668	3797	17.6

Source: 'Dictionary of Chinese Tourist Attractions' (China National Tourism Administration, <http://www.cnta.com/>, August 2007); China Ministry of Water Resources, <http://www.mwr.gov.cn/>; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <http://whc.unesco.org/>

*Notes:*

1) Cang Langting 1 one of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou 1 is the world heritage attraction in the region; 2) 'National-level Tourist Attraction' includes 5A and 4A scenic spots. Examples are Tai Lake (Wuxi), West Lake (Hangzhou), Tiantai Mountain (Zhejiang), Yuntai Mountain (Jiangsu); 3) 'National Park' includes National Park, National Holiday Resorts, National Forest Park, National Geo Park and National Water Scenic Area. Examples are Xixi Water Scenic Area (Hangzhou), Sheshan Mountain (Shanghai); 4) Examples of 'National Industrial and Agricultural Tourism Sites' are Bridge Eight (Shanghai), China Leather City (Haining); 5) Examples of 'National Historical and Cultural Sites' are Yu Garden (Shanghai), Huqiu (Hangzhou), etc; 6) Since 1998, the China National Tourism Administration sponsors an annual national campaign called 'Selection of Chinese Excellent Tourism Cities'. Examples are Shanghai, Hangzhou, Suzhou.

**Table 3.7**  
*Supplementary tourist products in the YRD region*

Year	Number of star hotels			Number of travel agencies		
	Region	China	Region/Nation (%)	Region	China	Region/Nation (%)
2004	2251	10888	20.7	2840	14927	19.0
2005	2448	11828	20.7	3146	16245	19.4
2006	2484	12751	19.5	3547	17957	19.8
2007	2687	13583	19.8	3691	18943	19.5

Source: Annual Reports of Chinese Tourism Statistics 2004-2007.

### 3.4.2 Regional tourism economy of scale

‘To attract more long-haul tourists to the region and boost the intra-regional travels of the regional residents’ has been generally accepted as a principle by the provinces and cities within the YRD region (Gao 2011: 69). As one large destination, the YRD region has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in China for both international and domestic long-haul tourists. In 2007, the YRD region in total attracted 603.58 million domestic tourists, which equaled 37.49 per cent of the national total. The overall tourist revenue was 648.3 billion Yuan in 2007, accounting for 27.48 per cent of the national total. In 2009, the region received around 16.61 million international tourists, which totalling 20.7 per cent of the national total (see tables 3.8 and 3.9).

With some catalysts such as the improvement of accessibility, the introduction of the national holiday policy, the increased purchasing power of citizens and the strengthened inter-city relationships, the YRD region has already been the top short-haul tourist destination for the regional residents. In 2007, 48.5 per cent of the domestic inbound tourists to Shanghai originated from Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces; 54.1 per cent of the domestic inbound tourists to Jiangsu province came from Shanghai, Zhejiang province or were the local Jiangsunese; 68.9 per cent of the domestic inbound tourists to Zhejiang province were original from Shanghai, Jiangsu province or were the local Zhejiangnese (Year Report of Chinese Tourism Statistics 2007).<sup>14</sup>

**Table 3.8**  
*Number of domestic tourists to the YRD region and the corresponding economic contributions*

Content	2004	2005	2006	2007
Number of domestic tourists (million)	380.949	436.880	519.277	603.58
Portion to the yearly nationwide domestic tourists (%)	34.56	36.05	37.25	37.49
Economic contribution (billion Yuan)	376.86	446.20	534.50	648.30
Portion to the yearly nationwide economic contribution (%)	29.00	25.09	27.95	27.48

Source: Annual Reports of Chinese Tourism Statistics 2005-2008.

**Table 3.9**  
*Number of international tourists to the YRD region in 2009*

Destination	Arrivals
Shanghai	5 333 935
Jiangsu	5 568 257
Zhejiang	5 706 385
The YRD region	16 608 577
National Total	80 391 944
Percentage (region/Nation)	20.7%

Source: Chinese Tourism Statistics Annual Report 2010.

### 3.4.3 Political support

Similar to the other regions in China, political support for regional tourism cooperation is strong in the YRD region. From the national government, a remarkable document called ‘Guidelines on Further Promotion of the Reform and Openness of the Yangtze River Delta Region’ reflects such support. The State Council issued this document in 2008 in response to growing political interest in tourism as one important engine to develop the regional economy.

From the governments at the provincial level, there are three main periodic regional conferences where regional tourism cooperation as a prominent activity has been widely recognized. Articles, agreements and declarations have been issued at these conferences to give positive support to regional tourism cooperation. Considering the high relevance of tourism industry to the other industries such as transportation, finance or environmental protection, these conferences have also provided negotiation and coordination platforms for tourism industry to discuss relevant issues with the other industries (Luo and Shen 2009). The first annual conference is the ‘Regional Coordination Conference of City Economic Development’ started in 1997. Officials from the 16 major cities in the YRD region participated in this conference, where tourism was one of the six main topics for discussion.<sup>15</sup> The second conference was the ‘Regional Annual Conference of Economic Cooperation and Development’ started in 2001. Regional tourism cooperation was one of the seven major topics<sup>16</sup> discussed during this provincial-level annual conference. High-level politicians and administrators of the three provinces in the

YRD region participate in this annual conference, including the standing vice provincial governors, secretary-generals of different economic fields, directors of provincial development and reform commissions, and department heads of different economic fields from provincial governments. The third conference was a provincial-level conference called the 'Regional Periodical Political Conference' started in 2004. Party and government leaders of the three provinces in the YRD region met regularly to discuss inter-city cooperation issues, with tourism cooperation as one of the main concerns.

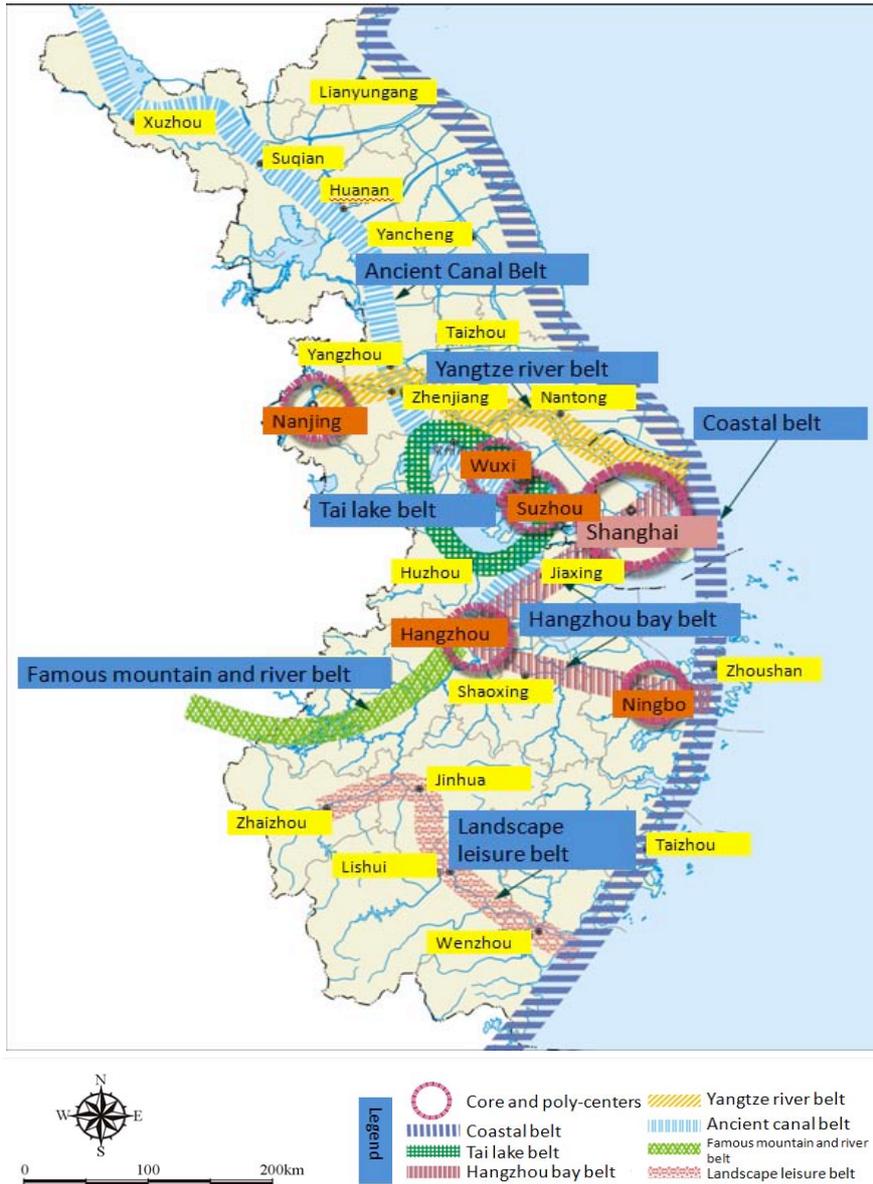
### **3.5 Tourism Cooperation**

The good foundation discussed in section 3.4 ensures the possibility to develop tourism cooperative arrangements in the YRD region. In section 3.2.2, we reviewed briefly the performance of tourism cooperation at the inter-provincial and inter-city levels in this region. This section goes deeper into the existing modalities of tourism cooperation in this region.

#### **3.5.1 Regional master plan**

The concerns of tourism cooperation indicated in the regional master plan are concentrated on developing a core tourism centre, five poly tourism centres and seven tourism belts in the coming years (figure 3.8). Shanghai is the core tourism centre designed to function as the biggest regional tourism hub to express better the radiation impacts of its tourism industry to the whole region. Nanjing, Suzhou, Wuxi in Jiangsu province and Hangzhou, Ningbo in Zhejiang province are regarded as the five poly tourism centres to function as the area tourism hubs and the area radiation centres where, according to the regional master plan, small-scale tourism destinations comprising neighboring cities are expected to be developed in the coming years. Seven inter-city tourism belts are designed based on the shared natural tourist resources where the coordination roles of cities on each belt are highlighted in the plan (see table 3.10).

**Figure 3.8**  
 Tourism master plan of the YRD region



Source: Adapted from the master plan of the Yangtze River Delta region 2010.

**Table 3.10**  
**Cities highlighted on the Seven Tourism Belts**

Tourism belt	Cities
Coastal belt	Shanghai, Jiangsu province: 3 cities, Lianyungang, Nantong, Yancheng Zhejiang province: 5 cities, Jiaxing, Ningbo, Zhoushan, Taizhou, Wenzhou
Tai lake belt	Jiangsu province: 4 cities, Suzhou, Wuxi, Changzhou, Huzhou
Hangzhou bay belt	Shanghai Zhejiang province: 4 cities, Jiaxing, Hangzhou, Shaoxing, Ningbo
Yangtze river belt	Shanghai Jiangsu province: 5 cities, Nanjing, Zhenjiang, Nantong, Yangzhou, Taizhou
Ancient Grand Canal belt	Jiangsu province: 7 cities, Suzhou, Wuxi, Changzhou, Zhenjiang, Xuzhou, Yangzhou, Huaian, Suqian Zhejiang province: 2 cities, Hangzhou, Jiaxing,
Famous mountain and river belt	Zhejiang province: 2 cities, Hangzhou, Qiandaohu Jiangsu province and Anhui province: 1 city, Huangshan
Landscape leisure belt	Zhejiang province: 2 cities, Wenzhou, Lishui, Jinhua, Zhaizhou

Source: Master plan of the Yangtze River Delta region 2010.

### 3.5.2 Modalities of tourism cooperation

We will discuss the main tourism cooperative modalities in the YRD region.<sup>17</sup> There is a variety of cooperative modalities operating in the various tourism areas in this region. The Tourism Bureau plays the important and in most cases, the leading roles in public-private cooperative arrangements. Meanwhile, small and medium-sized travel agencies, compared to the other tourism business sectors, are most active in forming private-private regional cooperative modalities.

Due to the City-Province feature, *Shanghai* takes a leading role mainly on two levels: at the inter-provincial level, Shanghai mainly cooperates with Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces to improve the regional tourist accessibility; at the inter-city level, Shanghai cooperates with other regional cities particularly in jointly marketing regional tourist products. In the *Jiangsu province*, for example the capital city Nanjing, besides running short-term regional joint projects, the popular cooperative modality led by Nanjing is the Pan-Nanjing Tourism Destination, which involves Zhenjiang and Yangzhou, two adjacent cities of Nanjing. Shanghai is a primary destination with which Suzhou or Wuxi cooperates respectively.

Although these two cities share one natural tourism resource—the Tai lake—competition still dominates the interrelationship between these cities. In Wuxi, a private-private cooperative modality has been developed that is worthy of further study; a private regional travel agency association led by a domestic enterprise, the Kanghui Travel Group. Compared to Shanghai and Jiangsu provinces, *Zhejiang province* is more famous for its long history of entrepreneurial culture. The capital city Hangzhou is focused on developing with its neighboring cities the Pan-Hangzhou Tourist Destination. Most of the other cooperative efforts initiated by Hangzhou city are short-term projects. Jiaxing is a city very proactive in marketing, which has developed many joint promotional relationships with the tourism bureaus of other cities in the region. Ningbo chooses Shanghai as its primary cooperation partner and this city has taken a step further by setting up a Tourist Representative Office in Shanghai in 2002. One interesting cooperative modality in Ningbo is a public-private alliance developed by Ningbo Tourism Bureau, which brings four neighboring cities of Ningbo to market jointly the regional tourism packages and develop jointly the integrated regional destination.

To make it clearer, three types of cooperation efforts—public-public cooperation, public-private cooperation and private-private cooperation—have shown up in the YRD region. Cooperative arrangements of each type exist either at the inter-provincial or at the inter-city level. They are represented, in most cases, by three prevalent modalities, namely long-term conferences, long-term alliances and short-term projects.

At the inter-provincial level, besides jointly issuing the regional statutory documents (see discussions in section 3.2.2), the ‘alliance’ is the prominent modality of *the public-public cooperation*. Shanghai Tourism Bureau usually leads this modality. The main idea is to improve regional accessibility jointly. Three well-known alliances, including the Regional Tourism Standardization Alliance, the Regional Tourism Information Alliance and the Regional Tourism Distribution Center Alliance, set up examples. At the inter-city level, the public-public cooperation gets stuck in the form of short-term projects where tourism bureaus of different cities cooperate to attend tourism fairs, jointly print integrated publications, design integrated tourist travel maps, mutually send residents to tour in the partner cities, and so on.

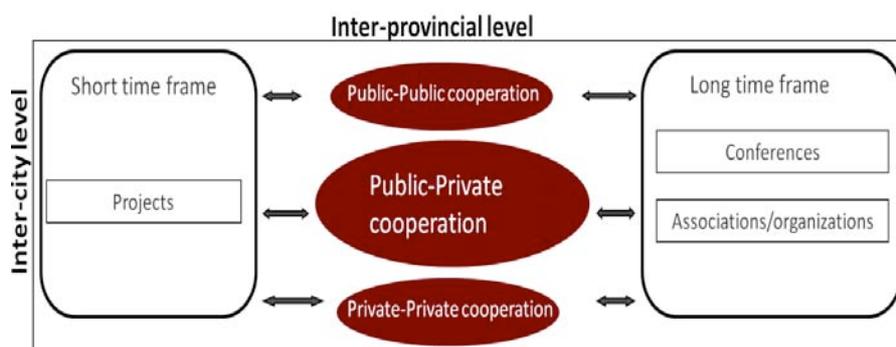
There are two main categories of cooperative modalities of the *private-private cooperation* in the YRD region. One category presents a modali-

ty of 'signing business agreements'. This modality reflects the traditional business chain relations: hotels, travel agencies and tourist attractions in different cities sign a price-cut agreement to realize mutual economic benefits. The other category is worthy of further study, including a regional alliance, a regional conference or a regional project that connect the private sectors together to generate the large economy of scale. As an example, the Eastern China Travel Alliance led by the Kanghui Travel Group integrated the small and medium-sized travel agencies throughout the whole YRD region to market jointly the YRD region as an integrated tourist destination and design new regional travel routes.

More importantly, we recognize the public features of tourism products, which are usually operated by both public and private sectors. It is not surprising to find that in the YRD region; most of the cooperative modalities involve both *public and private sectors* (figure 3.9). Many examples of conferences and projects show such public-private cooperation at the inter-provincial level. The Annual Regional Tourism Joint Conference led by three provincial tourism bureaus; the Regional Periodical Joint Conference of Tourism Marketing where marketing departments of the three provincial tourism bureaus meet together; the joint acknowledgment of the year 1988 and 2003 as the regional tourism theme years; the joint participation of the local tourism bureaus in the domestic and international travel fairs by presenting regional travel routes and travel manuals; and cooperation providing integrated tourism services during the Shanghai World EXPO 2010 are some examples. At the inter-city level, joint conferences, alliances and projects are the three prevalent modalities of the public-private cooperation. The most famous and influential joint conference is the 'Tourism City Summit of the Yangtze River Delta region'. There are two main categories of joint alliances. The Pan-Nanjing Tourism Alliance or the Pan-Hangzhou Tourism Alliance represents the first category where capital cities own the dominant leading and radiating roles involving public and private stakeholders from neighboring cities to cooperate. The Tai Lake Tourism Alliance and the Zhedongnan Tourism Alliance represent the second category where the neighboring cities with similar economic and political power cooperate to build one integrated tourist destination.

In sum, figure 3.9 and table 3.11 present the main cooperative arrangements in the YRD region, involving public and (or) private tourism sectors together.

**Figure 3.9**  
Regional tourism cooperative arrangements in the YRD region



**Table 3.11**  
Main modalities of the regional tourism cooperation in the YRD region

	Inter-provincial level	Inter-city level
Public-Public cooperation	<i>Regional alliances</i> , such as the Regional Tourism Standardization Alliance, the Regional Tourism Information Alliance and the Regional Tourism Distribution Center Alliance.	<i>Regional projects</i> , such as joint marketing, joint product development, joint publication, mutual exchange of people.
Public-Private cooperation	<i>Regional conferences</i> , such as the Annual Regional Tourism Joint Conference led by three provincial tourism bureaus; the Regional Periodical Joint Conference of Tourism Marketing where marketing departments of three provincial tourism bureaus meet together.  <i>Regional projects</i> , such as joint acknowledgment of the year 1988 and 2003 as the regional tourism theme years; since 2003's on, joint participation in domestic and international travel fairs by presenting regional travel routes and travel manuals; cooperation of providing integrated tourism services during the Shanghai World EXPO 2010.	<i>Regional conferences</i> , such as the Tourism City Summit of the YRD region.  <i>Regional alliances</i> , such as the Pan-Nanjing Tourism Alliance, the Pan-Hangzhou Tourism Alliance, the Tai Lake Tourism Alliance, the Zhedongnan Tourism Alliance.  <i>Regional projects</i> , such as the joint attendance to tourism promotional exhibitions.
Private-Private cooperation	<i>Regional alliances, conferences or projects</i> mainly initiated by small and medium-sized tourism companies such as the East China Travel Alliance.	<i>Signing business agreements</i> , for example, hotels, travel agencies and tourist attraction companies in different cities sign a price-cut agreement to realize mutual economic benefits.

### 3.6 Discussion and Conclusions

By reviewing the Chinese administrative structure and economic performance, we acknowledged that China is a top-down decision-making country with subtle internal political reforms (such as decentralizing the central power to the local authorities). The Tourism Bureau owns the comparatively strong leading power over the tourism enterprises in China. In such a political context, Chinese tourism economy has enjoyed great improvements during the previous decades.

As discussed in section 3.1, Tourism in China is regarded as a fundamental development opportunity for the national economy. It has stepped into the upgrading and transition era where national policies are oriented to support new cooperative arrangements to develop more diversified tourist products to meet the various market demands and social requirements. In the 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan, regions are positioned as strategic spatial destinations for the Chinese national economy. Indeed, tourism cooperation at the regional level is not a new phenomenon in China. Since the 1980s, some coastal regions such as the PRD and the YRD regions have had regional tourism cooperation to promote a region as an integrated destination to international and domestic long-haul tourists or to boost the intra-regional travels of local residents. After comparing the cooperative performances in the eight Chinese economic regions, we concluded that the YRD region could be our research object rather than the other regions due to its diversified public-private cooperative modalities and its general political and economic background.

Before commencing an elaboration of cooperative modalities in existence in the YRD region, several unique features of the Chinese tourism industry bear illumination. First, Chinese tourism markets are not fully opened to international investors, indicating that there are fewer international tourist companies that play active roles in regional tourism cooperation. Second, the Chinese Tourism Bureau, a government agency responsible for regulating and managing the tourism industry on a certain spatial level, has overlapping power in managing, or running the Tourist Industry Association. This is partly why small and medium-sized Chinese tourist enterprises have little power to influence political decisions during regional tourism cooperation. This further explains the reason why recently many tourist SMEs have jointly set up diversified pri-

vate-private regional tourism alliances while ignoring or even refusing the involvement of government sectors.

Similar to other regions in China, the YRD region has a good foundation to perform regional tourism cooperation. There are rich tourist resources. A mutual awareness that the YRD region functions as an integrated tourist destination has been commonly accepted by both public and private sectors. Presented as conferences, Memo of Understandings (MoUs), documents or agreements, political support from national, provincial and local governments facilitate the performances of regional tourism cooperation. A regional tourism economy of a certain scale has emerged. With the development of intra-regional accessibility and the rise in disposable income of local population, intra-regional travels have become popular in the YRD region.

Tourism cooperation in the YRD region has existed for more than 15 years. The region owns the first state-level regional plan where the general layout of regional tourism development is presented officially. Public and private sectors in the YRD region are active in jointly forming the diversified cooperative modalities either at the inter-provincial level or at the inter-city level. Some cooperative efforts gained positive feedback but some failed to meet the initial missions. In the failed cases, there is always either a potential vacuum between public and private sectors or rising discrepancies between the actual requirements of the tourism industry and cooperative modalities. Even though the public and private stakeholders have strong wishes to cooperate, by far few sustained outcomes have been achieved. Visions of the arrangements of cooperation are too ambitious or virtual to achieve tangible results. Some failed efforts remain stuck on the level of declaring good intentions of cooperation with few efforts on improving the current loose or informal cooperative structures. In addition, there is a disconnection between the public and private initiatives. Most successful achievements of private sectors are not the result of public-private cooperation or public-public cooperation but those of previous private initiatives and efforts (Gao 2011). The successful performance of the East China Travel Alliance, founded in 2005 by the small and medium-sized travel agencies, is one example.

It is clear that there are many challenges to putting regional tourism cooperative concepts into practice. However, within the last ten years, some successful initiatives to incorporate public and private sectors do

appear. The Zhedongnan Regional Tourism Alliance is such an initiative where governments are taking the leading roles in bringing big tourist companies into the cooperation. The main objective of this alliance is to market the southeast area of Zhejiang province (the ZDN area) jointly as an integrated destination. Although such attempts also face challenges, this is still worth a try.

In conclusion, the discussions in this chapter provide many practical insights into the study of the regional tourism cooperation in China. The reasons why some arrangements are successful while others encounter failure need to be studied. Do the failures emerge because of the fragmented feature of the tourism industry, or the existence of many independent stakeholders? How can the region cooperate practically in the field of tourism instead of symbolically shaking hands or signing contracts? Can we compare the existing successful and failed modalities to find a better solution in balancing the public and private interests in the field of regional tourism cooperation? Which factors can be identified as influential variables of effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China? The answers to these questions will be presented in the following two chapters, which are also the main theoretical parts of this study.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> There are two main approaches to analysing the development history of Chinese tourism industry. One approach uses 'Chinese economic reform' and 'China's entering WTO' as two events to identify the development stages (see He 2008; Wang et al. 2008). We adopt the other approach proposed by Gao (2011), using the leading function of tourism industry as the indicator to identify the development stages of tourism in China.

<sup>2</sup> In this study, a 'city' means a 'prefectural-level city' and a 'city-province'.

<sup>3</sup> As mentioned in chapter two, in this study 'the Tourism Bureau' refers to the public tourism authorities in China.

<sup>4</sup> Such as the Construction Bureau, the Transportation Bureau and the Financial Bureau.

<sup>5</sup> Tourism companies with the government background are companies that used to be owned by governments but have been transformed from government companies to entrepreneurial limited private companies.

<sup>6</sup> This new holiday policy has been launched since the beginning of 2008. According to this policy, Chinese citizens have more short-term statutory holidays. Be-

fore that, the statutory holidays for Chinese citizens had been dispersed into four months with seven one-day holidays taken individually over three months and one three-day holiday taken in one month. Now the amended statutory holidays for Chinese citizens are dispersed over seven months with seven single-day holidays taken over two months and one three-day holiday each month for five months.

<sup>7</sup> Definitions for ‘primary tourist product’ and ‘supplementary tourist product’ have been presented in section 2.2.2 of chapter two.

<sup>8</sup> Details about the performance of regional tourism cooperation in the eight Chinese regions are listed in Appendix 1.

<sup>9</sup> Hong Kong and Macao are two Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in China. They have different political and economic systems from mainland China: ‘high degree of autonomy’ in all matters except foreign relations and military defense (official website of Hong Kong government 2010).

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Guangdong province, Hong Kong and Macao.

<sup>11</sup> The Bohai region includes City Province Beijing, City Province Tianjin, Hebei province and Shandong province.

<sup>12</sup> The Northeast region includes Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning provinces.

<sup>13</sup> In total there are 24 prefectural-level cities in the YRD region.

<sup>14</sup> Data in this paragraph self-calculated based on the Annual Report of Chinese Tourism Statistics (2007).

<sup>15</sup> The others are technology, planning, information, knowledge property and team work.

<sup>16</sup> The others are regional transportation systems, regional information sharing systems, regional tourism cooperation, regional ecology environment systems, regional human resource sharing systems, regional planning and regional credit systems.

<sup>17</sup> These modalities are formulated based on firsthand information, which was collected via five onsite inspections spanning over three years from 2008 to 2010. The firsthand findings are not only based on the survey but also on the face-to-face interviews, and the participant observations of the cooperation-building processes. In turn, the firsthand data allows the study to reveal a number of complex modalities that function in the YRD region.

## 4

# Contextual Factors for Regional Tourism Cooperation Activities

Tourism stakeholders need to be constantly aware of and better comprehend the external environment (i.e. the context) in which cooperation implements (Greer 2002; Ioanides et al. 2006). We claim that such environment should be taken into consideration before cooperation starts. However, what kinds of contextual factors should be taken into consideration when discussing regional tourism cooperation in China? Factors of regional tourism cooperation that have evolved over the years in capitalist economies may not fit the uniqueness of China at its current stage of development. Therefore, by refining and adapting international theoretical inputs to the Chinese practice, which has been discussed in chapter three, this chapter deals with the third research question *which factors influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China in the preparatory stage?* There can be a wide range of factors indicated in the literature, given the diversity of cooperative arrangements. We only discuss the main factors that are relevant for the Chinese situation. Four factors are identified accordingly.

### 4.1 Political-Economic Features of Tourism

Cities are the basic operating units of regional tourism cooperation in our study. Before cooperation, each potentially involved city should have a clear understanding of its functional position in a region. In many cases, tourism cooperation cannot be smoothly implemented, as it has been planned *not* because of the poor leadership, weak organizational systems or sick designs of cooperation frameworks, *but* because of the complex historical, cultural, natural, political and economic features of tourism (Greer 2002; Ioanides et al. 2006). A thorough review of the literature on features of tourism would take too much space here. Instead, we discuss

a selection of features that influences the self-positioning of a destination.

The Commission of the European Communities (2001), World Bank (2002), and Aas et al. (2005) all highlight the importance of understanding the complex political-economic features of tourism before launching regional tourism cooperation. As discussed in chapter 3, to realize economic benefits is the common vision for a city or a province to participate in a regional tourism cooperative arrangement in China. Meanwhile, there are strong government interventions in the tourism industry in socialist China. Political and government actions affect the tourism industry and tourism economy to a large degree. In that sense, we follow the literature and argue that the 'political-economic features of tourism', rather than the other features of tourism, is one of the important and relevant factors to influence the performance of regional tourism cooperation in China. Four prominent political-economic features of tourism are mentioned in the literature to influence destinations to cooperate at a regional level. We further explain each feature as follows.

Chapter 2 defined regional tourism cooperation as a process, which involves different stakeholders across sub-national administrative boundaries to work interactively on common objectives through either informal or formal arrangements. According to this definition, cooperation can take place either at an inter-provincial level where a region is regarded as one large destination or at an inter-city level where small agglomerations of cities are formed. In this study when we talk about the factor 'political-economic features of tourism', instead of saying political-economic features of tourism of involved cities or provinces, we use the expression 'political-economic features of tourism of involved destinations' instead. Sometimes the term 'destination' means 'city' and sometimes it refers to 'province', depending on the requirements of different cooperative arrangements.

#### **4.1.1 Political relations between the Tourism Bureau and other government organizations**

The first political-economic feature of tourism is the political relationship of the Tourism Bureau with other government organizations. It has two meanings. The first is the relationship of the Tourism Bureau with its vertically higher or lower tourism bureaus. Following the typology

proposed by Van den Berg et al. (1997), tourism bureaus involved in regional tourism cooperation in China are from four tiers: supranational organizations (such as UNWTO), the CNTA (China National Tourism Administration), provincial tourism bureaus and city tourism bureaus. Examples of vertical relationships include political policies issued by the CNTA to boost inter-provincial tourism cooperation and, financial support launched by provincial tourism bureaus to develop inter-city tourism cooperative arrangements.

The second meaning of the Tourism Bureau political relationship with other government organizations concerns other political arenas (Greer 2002). Some examples are opportunities or threats brought by other policymaking networks to the tourism industry (Araujo and Bramwell 2002), such as a Company Management Regulation issued by the Ministry of Commerce, which influences the development of tourism companies. A Public Transport Control Act issued by the Bureau of Transportation, which affects the performance of tourism accessibility. A Public Holiday Notice issued by the central Development and Reform Bureau, which influences the holiday choices of local residents. Meanwhile, the less independent the Tourism Bureau is when handling tourism issues is another example that explains the relationships of the Tourism Bureau with other political arenas. Such phenomenon tends to happen mostly in developing countries such as China, Romania, Bulgaria (Roberts and Simpson 1999) or Brazil (Araujo and Bramwell 2002) where other government agencies such as the Cultural Authority and Natural Reserve Authority play a role in managing the tourism industry. Reflected in the performance of regional tourism cooperation, the less independent the Tourism Bureau is when handling tourism business probably adds more obstacles to a cooperative arrangement. For example, the Tourism Bureau has to go through more administrative and bureaucratic procedures to attract companies and then make a cooperative activity happen.

#### **4.1.2 Decentralization of power**

Decentralization of power is a global trend. According to the literature, it has two meanings: 1) decentralization of power from a national level to a provincial or local level (Araujo and Bramwell 2002) and, 2) decentralization of power from the Tourism Bureau to tourism companies or NGOs (Zhang et al. 1991). As for the first meaning, provincial or local tourism

bureaus are presumed to understand regional and local situation better than a national tourism bureau. However, there are always debates to what extent a central tourism bureau should decentralize its power (Araujo and Bramwell 2002). Taking regional tourism planning as an example, is it preferable for a central tourism bureau to decentralize the planning power to provincial or local tourism bureaus more familiar with regional situation? On the other hand, should a central tourism bureau still keep the planning power in hand? The answers are different. One stream of answers claims that decentralizing power makes regional plans more practical (Bramwell and Sharman 1999). The second stream states that general agreements between provincial and local tourism bureaus can hardly be achieved if power is decentralized, because each individual organization prefers to position itself as a key strategic player and 'spot-light' itself as much as possible on regional tourism plans (Ioannides 2001). The last stream of answers is concerned with whether provincial or local tourism bureaus have the operational capability to receive the decentralized power from a central tourism bureau. If lower-level tourism bureaus do not have the capacity to handle those tourism issues once operated by a central government, is it still necessary to decentralize power? Similar concerns are particularly expressed for cooperation in developing countries (Araujo and Bramwell 2002).

As for the second meaning of decentralization of power, namely, outsourcing original functions of the Tourism Bureau to tourism companies or NGOs (Zhang et al. 1991), it is popular in China and other developing countries for the Tourism Bureau to give out several operative functions (such as training, education, marketing survey, hotel ranking, issue service standards) to the Tourism Industry Association, tourism companies, NGOs and universities (Gao 2011). Following the literature, we raise a question accordingly: are private tourism sectors and NGOs in China ready to receive the power decentralized from the Tourism Bureau?

Combining the discussions in chapter 3 about the Chinese context and the above-mentioned elaborations concerning the trends of decentralizing power from central to local tourism bureaus and from the Tourism Bureau to tourism companies and NGOs, we argue that when discussing the decentralization of power in a regional tourism cooperative arrangement in China, 'operational capacity' is the key element to decide to what extent should a central tourism bureau decentralize power to

lower-level tourism bureaus or should the Tourism Bureau hand over power to private tourism sectors and NGOs.

#### **4.1.3 Contributions of tourism to GDP**

The third political-economic feature of tourism describes economic contributions of tourism to GDP of an involved destination. We assume that the higher contribution by the tourism industry to a destination economy, the more influential power the destination's tourism bureau has, and consequently a destination's tourism bureau is more likely to have stronger motives to participate in regional tourism cooperation and promote regional tourism cooperation as a new approach to optimize its tourism industry. On the one hand, the economic contributions of the tourism industry to a destination's economy reflect whether the tourism industry is a pillar industry of such destination. This may lead to one phenomenon when setting up regional tourism cooperative arrangements, that is, motives and enthusiasm of involved destinations are different: some destinations are motivated in presenting, for example, considerable policy support to new regional tourism cooperative arrangements to achieve more economic and social benefits. On the contrary, some destinations tend to support other pillar industries while leaving aside the tourism industry.

On the other hand, the contribution of tourism to the GDP in some countries, like China, is the first and foremost indicator to reflect the political position of a destination's tourism bureau inside a government administrative structure (Gao 2011). In a Chinese region, political status of tourism bureaus of involved destinations is different, with few possessing high political positions and a significant majority having traditionally been displaced in government decision-making and development priorities. Therefore, insights into this political-economic feature (contributions of tourism to GDP) can help explain why the tourism bureaus of some destinations in China enjoy political and financial power to implement regional tourism development initiatives while those of other destinations lose bids for government financial support when competing with other government agencies<sup>1</sup> and only maintain a regional cooperative arrangement on paper.

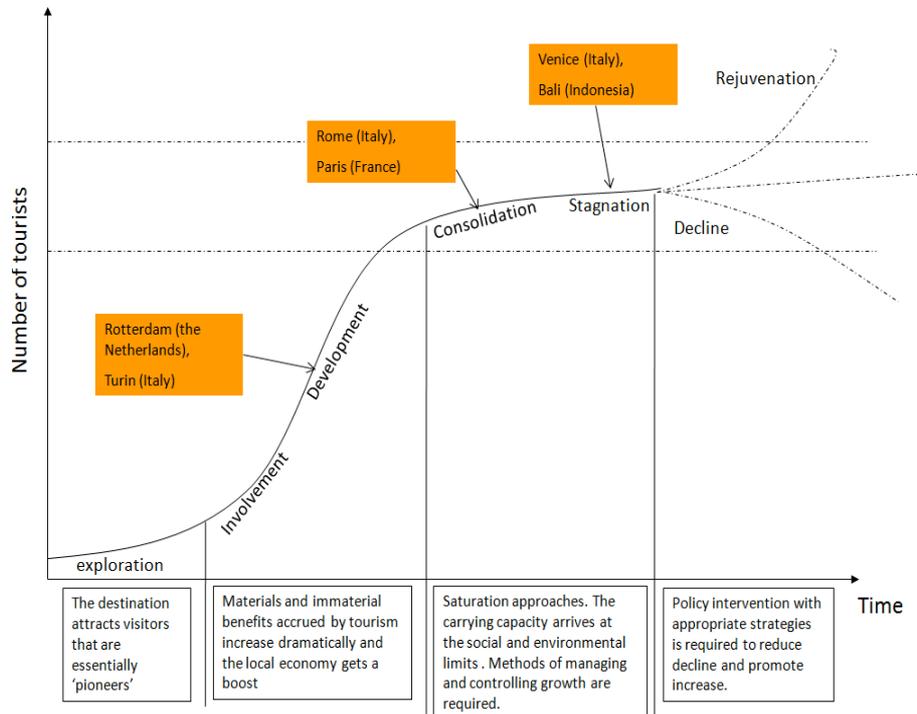
#### 4.1.4 Economic performance of tourism

Cities are the basic operating units of regional tourism cooperation in our study. Inside a region, different cities confront different tourism development stages. Some cities are in the take-off stage while some have already stepped into a stage of stagnation. Therefore, some cities may be complementary with each other while some may compete fiercely with each other. Meanwhile, cities in the different development stages may have different individual interests to participate in regional tourism cooperation. For example, cities in a take-off stage may intend to attract more mass tourists, cities in a development stage may prefer to attract more diversified segments of tourists, and cities in a stagnation stage may aim to attract more business or high-consumption tourists (Russo 2002). Therefore, we follow the literature (e.g. Cooper 1997; Walker et al. 1999) and argue that before starting a regional tourism cooperative arrangement in China, cities of a region should consider their tourism development status.

The Destination Life Cycle Diagram (Butler 1980) can be used to describe the tourism development status of a destination. We assume this concept can also be applied to the Chinese situation. This conceptual frame uses the absolute number of tourists as an indicator (Walker et al. 1999). The focus of this concept is the changing nature of tourist numbers and market composition, rather than the economic, social and physical impacts of changes on a destination (Walker et al. 1999).

The Destination Life Cycle concept suggests that policy reactions and development strategies of a host destination are not static. They differ along with the self-development of a host destination. As explained by Russo (2002), in the earlier stages of development, a city attracts visitors that are essentially 'pioneers'. That flow may never reach a sufficient mass to be economically relevant, but if it does, investments are started in tourist infrastructure, services and promotion and the city becomes a destination for overnight stays. The city eventually enters a stage of take-off, in which the material and immaterial benefits accrued by tourism increase dramatically and the local economy gets a boost. When the number of tourists reaches a certain critical level, the rate of growth decreases and then stagnates. If at that stage policies do not intervene with appropriate strategies, like the 'rejuvenation' of the product mix, decline may follow.

**Figure 4.1**  
An explanation of Destination Life Cycle



Note: Figure is re-explained based on the model originated by Butler 1980. The text explanation is formulated based on Russo 2002 and Walker et al. 1999. Cities listed on this figure are based on Van der Borg 1991 and his presentation made for the Italian-China Executive Training Workshop of Sustainable Environment in 2008 in Shanghai, China.

As indicated in the literature, the value of this conceptual framework to regional tourism cooperation lies in three aspects: 1) where a city locates itself on the diagram can reflect the specific economic identity of a city's tourism in a region; 2) cities involved in cooperation can use this diagram to compare their tourism development status and better understand their own positions and those of their partners (or competitors). For example, if Venice, Bali, Rome, Paris, Rotterdam and Shanghai locate to one region, by positioning these cities in one life cycle diagram (see figure 4.1), a picture of tourism development status for these cities and the whole region becomes clear; and 3) the diagram can help under-

stand that cooperative arrangements may be more complicated in a region with cities from different stages of development than in a region where cities are in the same stage of development. Cities from different development stages may have different alternatives in developing their tourism industries. Some may focus on enhancing tourism growth toward mass tourism. Some may concentrate on developing an 'alternative' tourism product (Greiner 1997). Meanwhile, the tourism market segments of cities may be different as well; some cities intend to attract more backpackers, some mass tourists and some particularly for high-income professionals for example. In that sense, the more different stages cities are positioned, the more diversified interests cities expect to achieve from a cooperative arrangement, thus in turn brings more challenges for the implementation of a regional tourism cooperative arrangement.

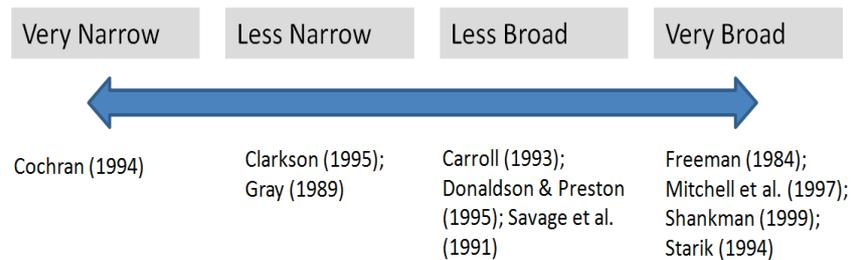
## 4.2 Stakeholders

The concept of stakeholders, as developed by Freeman (1984), seems to be a suitable tool to answer the question: *who is involved in regional tourism cooperation in China?* Three main aspects are indicated in the literature, which are important to understand 'stakeholders' further.

### 4.2.1 Classification of stakeholders

The stakeholder concept suggests that an organization is characterized by its relationships with various groups and individuals, including employees, customers, suppliers, governments, and members of the communities (Freeman 1984). This concept believes that the inter-organizational relationships and other stakeholder linkages are critical to organizations (Stokes 2008). There are various definitions of stakeholders. To the narrowest end, Cochran (1994) restricts stakeholders to groups, which have very direct economic links to an organization. To the broadest end, Freeman (1984) defines stakeholders as those who can affect or are affected by the achievements of the organization's objectives (figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2**  
Different definitions of stakeholders



With respect to regional tourism cooperation, a region can be regarded as an open-social system where interdependent and multiple stakeholders perform. However, the list of potential stakeholders of the tourism industry is inexhaustible. Tourism sells an intangible experience rather than a physical object that can be checked or tested before purchasing (Tosun and Jenkins 1996). Tourism products include more than those directly offering tourism services and experiences (e.g. accommodations, transportation, entertainment, events, tourism booking systems, or other services), but also those involved in providing general amenities such as local government authorities, local business operators (including retailers and service providers and other local producers) and local communities. In that sense, there may be many diversified stakeholders involved in regional tourism cooperation and their interests to participate in regional tourism cooperation may be different. However, we still need to classify stakeholders into different groups to understand their respective roles and interrelationships in a regional tourism cooperative arrangement better.

Stakeholders can be divided into two groups, including public stakeholders and private stakeholders. There are no industries other than tourism where interests of public and private sectors so closely converge (Holder 1992). Therefore, it is not surprising to find that involving both public and private stakeholders into regional tourism cooperation is a popular global concern (e.g. Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Fagence 1996; Gan and Smith 1992; Greer 2002; Hall and Braithwaite 1990; Holder 1992; Ioanides et al. 2006; Jackson 2006; Jackson and Murphy 2006;

McCann 1983; Pearce 1990; Reid et al. 2008; Roberts and Simpson 1999; Smith et al. 1986; Teye 1988).

Based on the degree of formal, official or contractual relationships between stakeholders in a cooperative arrangement, a typology is introduced to divide stakeholders into two types: primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders (e.g. Carroll 1993; Clarkson 1995; Cornell and Shapiro 1987; Freeman 1984). *Primary stakeholders*, or key stakeholders, are those who have an interest in the actions of cooperation and have the ability to influence it (Savage et al. 1991). The focus of this definition is on 'ability', indicating that primary stakeholders should have enough power to influence the performance of regional tourism cooperation. In some instances, primary stakeholders of regional tourism can include governments from all levels, universities or research institutions, tourism companies, NGOs (to provide the funds), local communities, press and media (Smith et al. 1986). In some instances, they can include not only governments but also NGOs, tourism companies and local communities (Roberts and Simpson 1999). Combining the above definitions of primary stakeholders and the discussions in chapter three about the characteristics of Chinese tourism industry, we hereby confine primary stakeholders of regional tourism cooperation in China *only* to the Tourism Bureau at all levels (who provide tourism-related facilities or other public tourism affairs) and tourism companies (who operate regional tourism business). This definition is in line with Holder (1992).

Meanwhile, as for *secondary stakeholders* of regional tourism cooperation in China, we follow Freeman (1984) and define them, or the so-called 'other stakeholders', as those who can affect or are affected by regional tourism cooperation (primary stakeholders excluded). They include tourists, local communities, universities or research institutions, NGOs (except the tourism industrial associations, tourist associations and local community associations), press, media, other government authorities ... almost endless. The reason to give such a broad definition of secondary stakeholders for Chinese cases is that we do not want to neglect any occurring entities that could influence or are influenced by the performance of regional tourism cooperation. The reason to position tourists and local communities as secondary instead of primary stakeholders (as they usually do in developed countries) is because our definition of 'primary stakeholders' highlights the 'ability' factor, which means primary stakeholders should have enough power to influence the per-

formance of regional tourism cooperation. Although we acknowledge the importance of tourists and local communities to the performance of cooperation, they are too individual to form a power of scale or too separate to make a large-scale influence on regional tourism cooperation in China. Moreover, most of the local communities in China lack knowledge and capacity to contribute their ideas to regional tourism cooperation given their histories of exclusion from cooperating with companies and governments. Some of them are even disinterested in being involved as 'primary stakeholders' in regional tourism cooperation since they are preoccupied with their daily economics.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Trust between stakeholders

As indicated in the literature on regional tourism cooperation, trust is an essential feeling between stakeholders. It is expressed primarily in two dimensions. On the one hand, trust means a mutual understanding (Smith et al. 1986) or a shared value (Gray 1989) between stakeholders. On the other hand, trust refers to a belief in cooperative arrangements, or a generalized perception or recognition that individual and/or mutual benefits can be derived from the process of cooperation (Sheehan and Ritchie 2005). A stakeholder may recognize the importance of an issue, but might perceive that self-interest is best served by utilizing a more familiar or known individual tourism strategy than tourism cooperation. Alternatively, a stakeholder may decide that regional tourism cooperation is important, but not as important to its other daily operations that require priority. Following these discussions, we assume trust between stakeholders and trust in cooperation are essential to regional tourism cooperation in China. They can either stimulate or inhibit the performance of regional tourism cooperation in China.

Greer's (2002) comments are more important. He establishes a relation between trust and commitment. If commitment is not equally spread, with some organizations placing more importance on collaboration while others reluctant to engage in cooperation fully, trust between stakeholders will disappear and stakeholders may not work closely to achieve mutual benefits. In that sense, we argue that the realization of equally spread commitment of stakeholders can offer a contribution to build internal trust between stakeholders and the trust of stakeholders to the cooperation. In addition, in China where most cooperative activities are still good intentions (see chapter 3), we further argue that detailed

commitment (such as written and actual commitment<sup>3</sup>) is more helpful than oral commitment to strengthen the trust.

### 4.3 Leadership

According to the literature, leadership is a necessary condition to direct the efforts of stakeholders involved in a cooperative arrangement (Van den Berg et al. 1997). It should be clear, effective, legitimacy acknowledged (Roberts and Simpson 1999), entrepreneurial, formal/legal hierarchical structural (Van den Berg et al. 1997), visionary (Reid et al. 2008), or strong (Reid et al. 2008; Selin and Chavez 1995). We assume leadership is another factor influencing the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. In this section, rather than elaborating on how leadership looks, we follow the literature and elaborate on three prominent aspects of leadership: leadership identification, power exertion and roles of governments.

#### 4.3.1 Leadership identification

How does one identify leadership? To answer this question, we follow the literature and suggest that leadership should be identified by power (e.g. Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Greer 2002; Jamal and Getz 1999; Markwick 2000; Mitchell et al. 1997; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Reed 1997; Robson and Robson 1996; Sheehan and Ritchie 2005; Tosun 2000; Van den Berg et al. 1997). Furthermore, particularly in developing countries, power is the essential precondition to identify leadership of a regional tourism cooperative arrangement (Robson and Robson 1996).

Power is the degree to which an actor has a concentration of or discretionary control over important resources (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). It is the extent to which a party has or can gain access to coercive, utilitarian or normative means, or to impose its will in relationship (Mitchell et al. 1997). It is the source actors can wield and potentially threaten organizations by withholding resources (Sheehan and Ritchie 2005).

In total, there are four main types of power mentioned in the literature to decide leadership in regional tourism cooperation. The *financial power or power to resources* is the most popular power to identify leaders.<sup>4</sup> Such power can be understood as ‘financial and resource capability’ (Van den Berg et al. 1997). The *knowledge or experience power* is another popular

power to decide leaders.<sup>5</sup> It can be understood as the specific expertise (Van den Berg et al. 1997) or ability to function (Aas et al. 2005). In developing countries, due to the trend of political decentralization, difficulties occur if there is a transfer of tourism management affairs to NGOs and local social groupings when there is little tradition of such associations in civil society or of their participation in tourism policymaking (Araujo and Bramwell 2002). Lack of knowledge and experience also explains why in both developing and developed countries especially in developing countries, poor social groups are only consulted instead of being fully involved in regional tourism cooperative arrangements (Tosun 2000). The *power to political resources* is another popular power mentioned in the literature.<sup>6</sup> In developing countries, governments own leadership primarily due to their concentrated political power (Tosun 2000).

Besides the power we mentioned above, there are several other kinds of power influencing the identification of leadership. Although we do acknowledge their existence, we do not discuss them in detail in this study but wait for future elaboration. Those powers may include, for instance, cultural power (Greer 2002), natural power (Angella and Go 2009), personal power<sup>7</sup> (Van den Berg et al. 1997) and sexual power<sup>8</sup> (Robson and Robson 1996).

#### 4.3.2 Balance of power

Nowadays, power is popularly a decisive element to identify leadership. This leads us to the next stage of discussion, that is, how leaders exert their power. We concentrate our concerns on how leader(s), while exerting dominating power, balance the power difference of stakeholders involved in the process of cooperation. The unequal balance of power may cause sensitivity, mistrust or passive emotion between stakeholders (Greer 2002). It is a leader's role to balance the unequal or imbalanced power of stakeholders. The attendant equality of access to cooperative resources within an assumed leadership can be a solution to balance the power (Reed 1997). Reid et al. (2008) follow Reed (1997) and further claim that regional tourism cooperative arrangements should ensure stakeholders have equal votes or rights regardless of their different financial contributions. In that sense, concerning regional tourism cooperation in China, we argue that leaders in Chinese regional tourism cooperation should always bear in mind challenges brought by the dominating power. It is very easy when a larger and more dominant partner over-

shadows some stakeholders. Leaders in cooperation should be more like facilitators among stakeholders and should understand the extent to which they can exert their controls over resources and can balance the power difference (Bramwell and Sharman 1999).

### 4.3.3 Roles of government

International NGOs (Rodriguez and Portales 1994), private Tourism Destination Management Organizations (Sheehan and Ritchie 2005), tourism industry associations (Jackson and Murphy 2006) can take the leading role in organizing and managing tourism cooperation at a regional level. Importantly however, in most literature, governments are regarded as leaders in the process of regional tourism cooperation (Aas et al. 2005; Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Currie et al. 2009; Gan and Smith 1992; Göymen 2000; Greer 2002; Smith et al. 1986; Svensson et al. 2006; Tosun 2000). This finding is consistent with the actual situation in China as elaborated on in chapter 3.

Some literature further explains the leading roles of government. Smith et al. (1986) argue that tourism is a public issue and therefore governments are expected to formulate initiatives and take the leading role in regional tourism cooperation. Greer (2002) proposes that governments should take a strong and proactive role in directing regional tourism cooperation. They are expected to take a more proactive role in facilitating greater cooperation and providing focus and direction for stakeholders by issuing political wills and government policies. Van der Borg (2006) claims that governments should be the leader in formatting partnerships and in formulating strategies since governments account for the wishes of all stakeholders. Svensson et al. (2006) acknowledge that the tourism industry is in many respects a highly political business and therefore governments are designed to take the leading role in the regional tourism cooperation process. Gan and Smith (1992) define in detail the leading role of public tourist authorities in Tunisia during regional tourism cooperation, as initiating and implementing plans and management strategies, strictly controlling private sector standards, training labor forces, promoting tourism, encouraging international investments and providing basic tourism infrastructure facilities.

Combining the literature with the Chinese practice, we conclude that there is a leading role of the Chinese Tourism Bureau leading, facilitating,

and coordinating regional tourism cooperation. Then we have to answer another question, that is, tourism bureaus at which administrative levels are taking leading roles in regional tourism cooperation. There are different perspectives expressed in the literature concerning the answer to this question.

The first group of international perspectives claims that *local governments* should bear more responsibilities and roles in leading regional tourism cooperation. They claim that beneficial economic effects of regional tourism cooperation have the most direct effect at local scales (e.g. Greer 2002; Travis 1980) and local governments have often been seen as driving forces behind regional tourism development (e.g. Jackson 2006; Smith et al. 1986). Greer (2002) claims that regional tourism cooperation can be maintained by formulating an inclusive and integrated tourism strategy, establishing partnership balance, understanding political sensitivities and developing a participative partnership approach at a local level. Jackson (2006) suggests that the role of the national and provincial tourism authorities include providing appropriate facilities (transportation, information, communication, law, educational and economic infrastructure) while the leading power is kept to local tourism authorities.

The second group of international authors argues that *provincial governments* should take the leading role during regional tourism cooperation because provinces are the highest-level authorities directly involved in regional tourism cooperation and it is easier for provincial governments rather than local governments to integrate tourism resources across provincial boundaries. Besides acknowledging the leading roles of provincial government, Araujo and Bramwell (2002) further explain those roles to include initiating cooperation projects, developing strategies, funding, appointing one public agency to operate, encouraging public cooperation among different spatial governments, and market research.

The last group of international authors highlights the roles of *national governments* in leading regional tourism cooperative arrangements. Reid et al. (2008) state that national governments are required to take the leading role in forming and participating in regional tourism cooperation arrangements because they have ultimate financial authority and are responsible for coordination of competitive power compared to provincial or local governments. Tosun (2000) proposes that in developing countries, national governments are supposed to be the leaders in the process of regional tourism cooperation. Tosun (2000) further explains the rea-

sons, noting that in most developing countries, power may be highly centralized in national government with little remaining at the provincial and local levels.

In this study, rather than giving specific judgment about which levels of governments should take the leading role in regional tourism cooperation, we prefer to give a general comment, noting that roles of different tiers of governments differ in regional tourism cooperation cases in countries with different political-economic backgrounds. Therefore, taking regional tourism cooperation in China as a research topic, we propose that power decides the leading role of tourism bureaus at different administrative levels. We cannot draw conclusions for all regions in China on whether local, provincial or national tourism bureaus should be the leader in regional tourism cooperation. Instead, we prefer to propose that in China, leading roles of different tourism bureaus depend on different regional cooperative arrangements, indicating that there are no fixed cooperation leaders. The role of involved tourism bureaus differ from project to project and from time to time. Nevertheless, power plays an essential role in deciding such leadership.

#### 4.4 Motives

As far as regional tourism cooperation is concerned, it is important to know what stakeholders want from cooperation and what their motives to work together are. Each stakeholder will have at least one reason to cooperate. Motives are the foundation and stimulating-mechanism of regional tourism cooperation (Ghimire 2001). They are also the essential element to recognize the ultimate value and obligations of involved stakeholders. As indicated in the literature, concerns about motives are concentrated primarily on two dimensions. That is, what motives stakeholders have and how to balance their different motives.

##### 4.4.1 Motives to cooperate

Motives for cooperation often vary between stakeholders (Reid et al. 2008). They can be popularly held benefits, crisis and visionary leadership of individuals (Palmer and Bejou 1995), or crisis, vested interests and resource independence (Selin and Chavez 1995). Tangible incentives, such as financial support from governments or direct policy support,<sup>9</sup> can also be one kind of motive (Araujo and Bramwell 2002). According

to the literature, there are four popular motives. We assume they can be found in China as well.

The most popular motive of regional tourism cooperation is *to realize mutual economic benefits*, such as attracting more tourists (Ioanides et al. 2006; Palmer and Bejou 1995; Travis 1980), expanding tourist product bases (Gan and Smith 1992; Jackson 2006; Smith et al. 1986), realizing cost effectiveness (Jackson and Murphy 2006; Selin and Chavez 1995; Teye 1988) or achieving considerable economy of scale (Chirathivat 1996; Ghimire 2001; Reid et al. 2008; Yacoumis 1989). The second popular cooperative motive is the *crisis*, meaning stakeholders face the same challenges or conflicts that force them to look for common actions (Ghimire 2001; Greer 2002; Hall and Braithwaite 1990; Palmer and Bejou 1995; Reid et al. 2008; Selin and Chavez 1995). A vicious cycle of product duplication, the SARs in 2003, the global financial crisis in 2008 or such political incidents like 9/11 in the USA are some examples of crisis motives. The third popular cooperative motive is *resource interdependence motives*, which means stakeholders share same/similar physical, economic, social and cultural resources (Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Greer 2002; Selin and Chavez 1995; Svensson et al. 2006; Travis 1980). The last popular indicated motive is *mutual ecological and social benefits*, for instance, motives to achieve sustainable tourism in a whole region (Ioanides et al. 2006; Roberts and Simpson 1999).

#### 4.4.2 Balance between different motives

Rather than elaborating on features of the cooperative motives of stakeholders in detail, we discuss the approaches that balance different motives of stakeholders. During regional tourism cooperation, it is very easy to find the coexistence of independent stakeholders and mutual benefits. This results in the presence of two different types of motives, namely, 'individual motives' and 'collective motives'. The *individual motives* mean that each group of stakeholders merits consideration for its own sake. Participants are independent units with individual identities, perceived interests or legitimate objectives for cooperation. The *collective motives*, or the so-called 'common motives', 'mutual motives', the 'commitment to work together', is the 'recognition by stakeholders that their desired outcomes are inextricably linked to actions of other stakeholders' (Gray 1989). Collective motives are a sense of shared responsibilities, a sense of ownership of decisions and the acceptance of responsibilities for the fu-

ture direction of cooperation (Reid et al. 2008). They are the shared belief that significant benefits can be derived from cooperation between autonomous or independent stakeholders (Sheehan and Ritchie 2005). In short, collective motives can be understood as motives of cooperation. That is, what does a cooperative arrangement expect to achieve.

Collective and individual motives should be mutually inclusive rather than exclusive (Roberts and Simpson 1999). If stakeholders do not recognize the individual interests and attitudes of other stakeholders, it is very difficult to realize a common 'consensus' in a regional tourism cooperative arrangement. Therefore as indicated in the literature, the challenge left for researchers and practitioners is to find a balance between individual and collective motives. If not balanced, the conflicts will inhibit the development of regional cooperative relationships (Greer 2002). In the end, the unbalanced conflicts between individual and collective motives can create a vicious culture, which will definitely bring negative impacts to the cooperation (Angella and Go 2009). The literature shows some concrete suggestions on how to balance individual and collective motives based on two principles: 1) acknowledgement of the presence of collective and individual motives (Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Yacoumis 1989); 2) achievement of both types of motives in a regional tourism cooperative arrangement (Aas et al. 2005; Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Greer 2002; Reid et al. 2008). We assume these suggestions can also be referred by the Chinese practice.

Yacoumis (1989) uses a regional cooperative arrangement at an international tourism exhibition as an example and suggests a practical method to balance the different motives of involved stakeholders: during the international tourism exhibition, always aim to project a regional identity while at the same time allowing each individual destination to pursue its own promotional objectives. Yacoumis (1989) further suggests a philosophy to avoid conflict between individualism and collectivism, noting that regional tourism cooperation is intended to supplement and complement the promotions of individual destinations, not to replace them. Greer (2002) identifies the fears of less dominating stakeholders that their identities may be compromised and diluted in an integrated marketing campaign. A practical approach was proposed accordingly: let the less dominating stakeholders receive a disproportional level of publicity in the international marketing programmes. Greer (2002) also agrees with the comment made by Yacoumis (1989) that while promot-

ing a region as one large destination in the domestic or global markets, competitions are acceptable between individual destinations in the intra-regional market. Reid et al. (2008) follow the same logic and further claim some practical recommendations to balance the individual and common motives of stakeholders during a joint regional tourism marketing arrangement. The suggestions include, for example, cooperation is to assure that stakeholders continue to have their own marketing priorities and brand images, stakeholders (provinces) involved should respect the respective (provincial) tourism brand identities, develop an integrated regional tourism identity and, cooperation does not allow the participants to reduce their original work in their destinations. Furthermore, an 'incremental cooperative approach' is proposed by Reid et al. (2008: 586), focusing on the development of new cooperative projects or on extending the reach of original individual projects in the future.

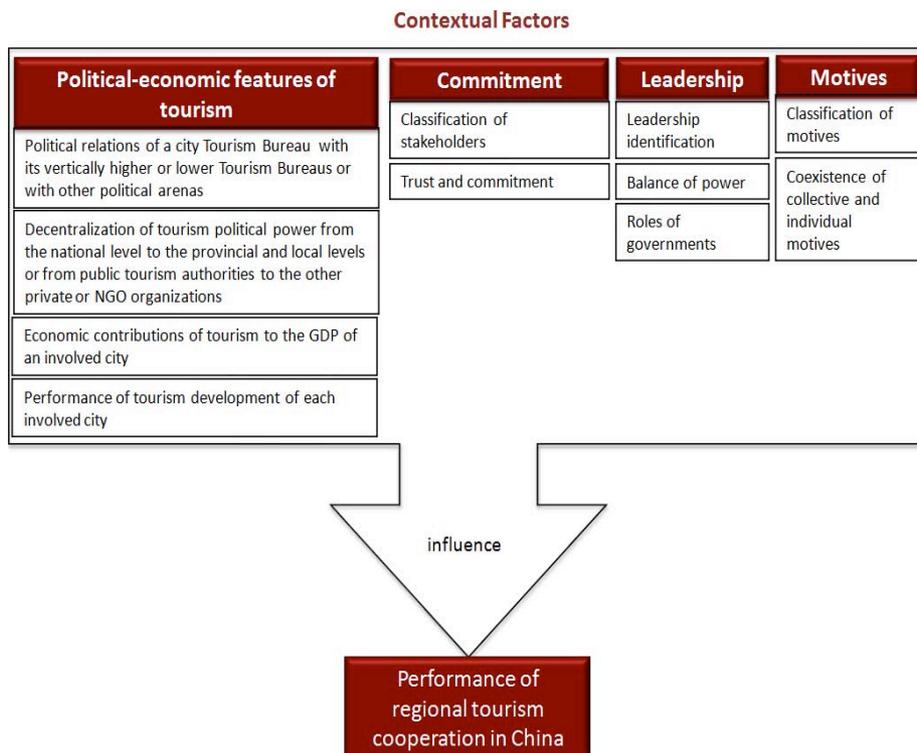
To conclude this section concerning the factor of 'motives', we follow Bramwell and Sharman (1999) and make some comments for regional tourism cooperation in general. We assume Chinese cases are not exceptions. Motives are the reasons involved stakeholders participate in a certain regional cooperative arrangement. Involved stakeholders should keep in mind the individual and respective motives of their partners while trying to achieve the common cooperative motives. This is one of the important preconditions for the success of regional tourism cooperation. One should always bear in mind to what extent individual and collective motives of stakeholders can be balanced. Meanwhile, involved stakeholders are expected to recognize the existence of inequalities between individual and collective motives where consensus and ownership emerge. They should accept the fact that some stakeholders will not agree or embrace enthusiastically all the outcomes. In that sense, cooperation is likely to produce qualitatively different outcomes for them to modify their own development approaches.

#### **4.5 Conclusions**

The study aims to develop a theoretical framework of factors, which are particularly relevant and helpful to improve our understanding of the performance of regional tourism cooperation in China. We have argued that this framework should include two main groups of factors in relationship to two stages of cooperation: the contextual factors of the pre-

cooperation process and the implementation factors of the during-cooperation process. The main body of this chapter explains what the contextual factors are. From the literature, we focused on the most relevant factors that influence regional tourism cooperation in China. Four factors have been identified accordingly, including political-economic features of tourism, commitment, leadership and motives. Figure 4.3 summarizes our main arguments and conclusions concerning these four contextual factors and their impact on regional tourism cooperation in China.

**Figure 4.3**  
Main contextual factors to influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China



First, Chinese regional tourism cooperation cannot perform without political support either from tourism administration or other political arenas. It is necessary to identify to what extent political support can be granted when the operational capability of entities that receive the political support is taken into account. The more varied economic contributions of tourism to the GDP and the more diversified the development stages of the involved destinations; the more diversified the individual motives of destinations to participate in cooperation. Meanwhile, we argue that obstacles occur if a cooperation modality goes beyond the Tourism Bureau and involves other political bureaus of the government. In addition, obstacles occur if a cooperation modality challenges the current operational capacity of the Tourism Bureau.

Second, we argued that trust between stakeholders and their belief in the success of a cooperative arrangement are essential to regional tourism cooperation in China. Since trust is difficult to measure, following the literature we used another word, ‘commitment’, to reflect the trust. Therefore for China, where many regional cooperative arrangements are still good intentions, we argued that trust can be strengthened by equal commitments—either on paper or with actions.

Third, we argued that the leading roles of stakeholders depend on different political, financial, resource or knowledge power. Leaders can be more like facilitators and coordinators between stakeholders. Leaders are expected to understand to what extent they can exert their controls over resources and can balance power differences. Attendant equality of access to cooperative resources within an assumed leadership suggested by Reed (1997) can be a solution to handle the imbalance in the power relationships.

Finally, the acknowledgement of the co-existence of collective and individual motives and the realization of both motives during cooperation are essential to achieve the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. We followed the literature and argued that the ‘incremental cooperative approach’, which focuses on developing new cooperative projects or on extending the reach of original individual projects can be a solution to balance individual and collective motives, since it intends to supplement and complement tourism development of individual destinations.

To conclude this chapter, we argue that in total, the four factors (political-economic features of tourism, commitment, leadership and mo-

tives) form an integrated group to influence the effective performance of regional tourism cooperation in China. With political-economic features of tourism discussing the context where cooperation performs, the commitment factor deals with questions such as who is involved in cooperation? What types of feelings do stakeholders obtain during the preparation period of cooperation? Meanwhile, the leadership factor explains answers to the question, who is taking the role in leading, managing or coordinating cooperation? The motives factor further elaborates in detail what kind of interests stakeholders want to achieve from cooperation. In other words, what are their 'stakes' to be involved in cooperation? We claim that these questions, concerning 'who' and 'why', should be answered clearly before commencing a regional cooperative arrangement. Ignoring the answers to these questions while starting cooperation immediately, practitioners of cooperation would absolutely face failure afterwards. For all these reasons, these four factors will be the centre of the discussion in chapter six when we formulate propositions to be tested in chapter eight.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> 'Other government agencies' refer to other industrial bureaus, such as a Transportation Bureau, a Development and Construction Bureau, a Financial Bureau or a Commerce Bureau.

<sup>2</sup> Similar statements can be found in Yuksel et al. (2005), which discuss the cooperative status of local communities in the process of regional tourism cooperation in developing countries.

<sup>3</sup> 'Actual commitment' can be understood as commitment with actions.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Angella and Go (2009); Gray (1989); Greer (2002); Jamal and Getz (1995); Markwick (2000); Reid et al. (2008); Sheehan and Ritchie (2005); Van den Berg et al. (1997); Vernon et al. (2005).

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Aas et al. (2005); Gray (1989); Reid et al. (2008); Van den Berg et al. (1997); Vernon et al. (2005); Yuksel et al. (2005).

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Angella and Go (2009); Araujo and Bramwell (2002); Greer (2002); Roberts and Simpson (1999); Tosun (2000); Van den Berg et al. (1997).

<sup>7</sup> The personal power means the charisma of public or private individuals who fulfil the function of 'puller' successfully.

<sup>8</sup> The sexual power puts the concerns on the participation capacity of women groups.

<sup>9</sup> Direct policy support can be understood as policies that are directly designed to support the development of regional tourism cooperation.

# 5

## Implementation Factors for Regional Tourism Cooperation Activities

Following chapter 4, this theoretical chapter deals with the fourth research question of the study *which factors influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China during the cooperation process?* In this chapter, we provide perspectives to this question based on the implementation sequence of cooperation: making decisions then operation. Sections 5.1 and 5.2 discuss two factors concerning the decision-making process of cooperation, explaining respectively who should be involved in the decision-making process and how to secure such involvement. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 elaborate on two factors concerning the operational stage of cooperation. Section 5.3 studies the activities of cooperation and section 5.4 describes concrete structures to launch those activities. We adopt the same methodology as we did in chapter 4. Therefore all the factors discussed in this chapter are deduced from the literature while changes are made for China's unique context wherever applicable. The last section of this chapter (section 5.5) combines the conclusions presented at the end of chapter 4 and formulates the theoretical framework of the study, consisting of eight factors, which influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

### 5.1 Representation of Stakeholders

Concerning the implementation of arrangements of regional tourism cooperation, it is important to take the first stage of the implementation process into consideration, namely, the decision-making stage. The importance of the 'decision-making' or 'decision-setting' (Gray 1989) of the performance of regional tourism cooperation has been mentioned in some literature (e.g. Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Gray 1989; Jamal and Getz 1995; Parker 2000; Sautter and Leisen 1999; Selin and Chavez 1995). The research focus of the literature is concentrated on three is-

sues—who are involved in the decision-making process, when and how often the relevant stakeholders are involved and how do stakeholders get involved.

The first question ‘who are involved in the decision-making process’ concerns a discussion on whether decisions are made by a single stakeholder group and disseminated to the other stakeholders or whether decisions are made by direct involvement and interactions of multiple groups of stakeholders. Most international scholars support the latter perspective. From governance theory we understand that multiple stakeholders instead of a single stakeholder group should be brought together in the decision-making process (Svensson and Östhol 2001; Svensson et al. 2006). Chinese regional tourism cooperation is no exception.

However, to what extent should stakeholders be involved in the decision-making process? Scholars hold different opinions concerning this question. Some suggest including all stakeholders in the decision-making process (e.g. Greer 2002; Donaldson and Preston 1995; Roberts and Simpson 1999). Donaldson and Preston (1995) argue that all stakeholders need to participate in determining the direction of the joint cooperative arrangements in which they have a stake. However, some authors introduce conditions for the involvement of different stakeholders in the decision-making process. Holder (1992) states that only when there are vital interests can stakeholders be included in the decision-making process of regional tourism cooperation. As for Chinese regional tourism cooperation, we prefer to combine these two perspectives to ensure that the formulated ‘decisions’ are more practical and reflect more mutual benefits of all influenced stakeholders. We claim that the involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making process is essential, no matter whether they are primary or secondary stakeholders. However, the degree of their involvement in the decision-making process can be different, in view of their different capacity of participation.

When considering the involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making process of regional tourism cooperation, one must also consider the representation of stakeholders (Bramwell and Sharman 1999). Encouraging unequal relationships among public members and supporting the interests of special business groups induces the failure of regional tourism cooperative arrangements (Ghimire 2001). The representation of stakeholders refers to the extent to which the range of participating stakeholders is representative of all relevant stakeholders, or the extent to

which individuals representing a stakeholder group are fully representative of that group (Bramwell and Sharman 1999). For example, the large-scale travel agencies cannot fully reflect the interests of the whole travel industry since their requirements of development are quite different from those of small and medium-sized travel agencies. Following the previous discussion, we argue that cooperation in China must consider the representation of stakeholders.

Meanwhile, we also suggest thinking a bit further about when or how often the relevant stakeholders are involved. 'Full participation' is commonly used to describe how often should stakeholders be involved in the decision-making process of cooperation (e.g. Berry and Ladkin 1997; Commission of the European Communities 2001; Tosun 2000; World Bank 2002). As for regional tourism cooperation in China, we suggest that all stakeholders are expected to be involved in the *whole process* of decision-making, from conception formulation to presentation of final decisions. In addition, all stakeholders involved should be committed to full participation.

## 5.2 Mechanisms to Secure Involvement

Smith et al. (1986) in a paper about the process of setting up a regional tourism organization propose a concept called the 'inclusive involvement' of stakeholders in the decision-making process. This concept is supported by Roberts and Simpson (1999) where the authors use the term 'inclusive planning' to express the need to identify all the stakeholders and bring them into the decision-making process of regional tourism cooperation. On the contrary, instead of applying the same approach to all stakeholders, several authors like Araujo and Bramwell (2002); Gray (1989); Greer (2002); Jamal and Getz (1995); Parker (2000); Reid et al. (2008); Selin and Chavez (1995); and Van den Berg et al. (1997), recommend a different approach to involve less-directly relevant stakeholders. Van den Berg et al. (1997) suggest a complementary mechanism to obtain support from society or political fields. They define 'society' as, directly involved or interested parties, notably the population (community) and other specific market parties (for instance, private investors, Media). They define 'political field' as governments from 'higher' political levels (supranational, national or regional authorities) or from local or lower political arenas. Reid et al. (2008) illustrate a coordinative mecha-

nism to involve other stakeholders (e.g. other tourism bureaus, other tour operators, non-traditional partners, media, etc.) in the formal and traditional public-private decision-making process of regional tourism cooperation.

Taking less developed countries as an example where governments play strong leading roles in regional tourism cooperation, Araujo and Bramwell (2002) discuss a 'consultative involvement' mechanism, which involves local communities, NGOs or other private companies in a formal decision-making process in a regular consultative rather than collaborative way. Yuksel et al. (2005) discuss that in developing countries, some secondary stakeholders of regional tourism cooperation lack the knowledge and capacity to contribute their ideas. In addition, some secondary stakeholders may not be interested in being involved in the decision-making process because they are preoccupied with their daily economics. These opinions are in line with Roberts and Simpson (1999); Timothy (1999); and Tosun and Jenkins (1998), who find that the inclusive approach developed in and for developed countries may fail in the socioeconomic, cultural, administrative or political circumstances of a developing country. China is also considered a developing country. Therefore, we would rather follow the latter perspective mentioned above and introduce two different approaches to involve primary and secondary stakeholders respectively in the decision-making process of regional tourism cooperation.

Concerning regional tourism cooperation in China, based on the previous discussions in this section, we conclude as follows. For all the stakeholders to be involved in the decision-making process of cooperation, the presence of two involvement mechanisms is suggested. Primary stakeholders, namely the Tourism Bureau and private tourism companies are suggested to be fully involved in the decision-making process via a fixed and regular *inclusive mechanism*. Meanwhile, we propose another mechanism to involve secondary stakeholders, those less directly linked to the cooperative arrangements than primary stakeholders are. The channel is called the *consultative mechanism*, which means that, instead of participating directly, secondary stakeholders are consulted on a fixed and regular basis (Bramwell and Lane 1999; Hall 2000) where their ideas and interests are collected as consultative informative resources for primary stakeholders to formulate the final cooperative decisions (Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Hall 1999). The consultative mechanism makes use

of local knowledge to ensure that decisions are well informed and appropriate (Yuksel et al. 1999).

In addition, we introduce a term ‘fixed and regular’ to describe both mechanisms. The reason is that regional tourism cooperation has largely been based on a loose ad hoc basis, making it difficult to formulate and apply a long-term strategic vision for cooperation (Greer 2002). Therefore we suggest that especially in the Chinese context, a fixed and regular mechanism of cooperation is more suitable than a loose, unstable and informal approach. Moreover, following the perspectives of Bramwell and Sharman (1999); Gray (1989); Greer (2002); and Sheehan and Ritchie (2005), we further suggest that inside such fixed and regular mechanisms of stakeholder involvement, an open and effective decision-making environment is expected. ‘Open’ means that stakeholders should actively communicate what they do and are going to do (Commission of the European Communities 2001). They should use transparent language, which is accessible and understandable between the stakeholders (World Bank 2002).

### 5.3 Areas of Regional Tourism Cooperation

The decision-making process comes out with concrete areas of cooperation. The first part of this section elaborates on the importance of vision, strategies and master plans on regional tourism cooperation. The second and third parts discuss the activities of regional tourism cooperation where ‘integrated’ and ‘prioritized’ are highlighted as two key adjectives to describe the areas of cooperation. Similar to section 5.1, arguments for regional tourism cooperation in China are proposed at the end of each part.

#### 5.3.1 Vision, strategies and master plans

Before discussing concrete areas of cooperation, we first illustrate the importance of vision, strategies and master plans, which are regarded as ‘written-on-paper’ expressions to reflect the results of the decision-making process (Selin and Chavez 1995) and to guide the formulation of the concrete areas of cooperation (Berry and Ladkin 1997). Furthermore, there are many diversified stakeholders with different individual motives in an arrangement of regional tourism cooperation (Lai et al. 2006; Roberts and Simpson 1999). Mutual formulated vision, strategies and master

plans can contribute to balance and ease the competing or even sometimes conflicting claims from involved stakeholders (Greer 2002; Ioanides et al. 2006; Travis 1980).

There are some interrelations between the vision, strategies and master plans (Van den Berg et al. 1997): an integral vision of regional tourism cooperation can be translated into both strategies and master plans with concrete objectives to safeguard the integrity and mutual benefits of involved stakeholders. A vision should be common (Selin and Chavez 1995) or integral (Van den Berg et al. 1997). It should reflect the increased interdependency among all the aspects of regional tourism development and reflect the cohesion of mutual and individual motives of involved stakeholders. Strategies should be inclusive and integrated, which establish the balance of partnerships, understand potential sensitivities and develop cooperative approaches (Gray 2002). As discussed by Travis (1980), sub-master plans are complementary to guide regional tourism cooperation (e.g. sub-master plans of cooperative arrangements on an interprovincial level or an inter-city level). In China, the importance of vision, strategies and master plans is also popularly mentioned (Gao 2011; Zhao 2009). In that sense, we argue that all the characteristics discussed above are relevant to the arrangements of regional tourism cooperation in China.

### **5.3.2 Integrated areas of cooperation**

The multiple interests of stakeholders indicate that multiple cooperative options are required to be considered (Gray 1989). Regional tourism cooperation can be arranged in the areas of developing a joint vision (Gan and Smith 1992), formulating joint strategies (Ghimire 2001), making joint plans (Araujo and Bramwell 2002), designing integrated policies (Greer 2002; Ioanides et al. 2006), developing the regional human resources in tourism sector (Fagence 1996; Ghimire 2001; Ioanides et al. 2006; Teye 1988), launching a regional joint research (Greer 2002; Yacoumis 1989), promoting the joint protection of regional environment (Ghimire 2001; Teye 1988), developing the joint conservation and preservation of regional tourism culture (Ioanides et al. 2006; Teye 1988), or launching joint lobbying of a regional tourism issue in a national council (Teye 1988) among others.

Besides these areas, there are three most prominent activities of regional tourism cooperation mentioned in the literature, including joint promotion and marketing (Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Fagence 1996; Gan and Smith 1992; Ghimire 2001; Greer 2002; Hall and Braithwaite 1990; Holder 1992; Ioanides et al. 2006; Pearce 1990; Reid et al. 2008; Roberts and Simpson 1999; Teye 1988; Yacoumis 1989), joint development of tourist products (Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Gan and Smith 1992; Greer 2002; Hall and Braithwaite 1990; Ioanides et al. 2006; Jackson 2006; Jackson and Murphy 2006; Smith et al. 1986; Teye 1988), and joint improvement of regional tourism accessibility (Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Fagence 1996; Gan and Smith 1992; Ghimire 2001; Greer 2002; Ioanides et al. 2006; Roberts and Simpson 1999; Teye 1988).

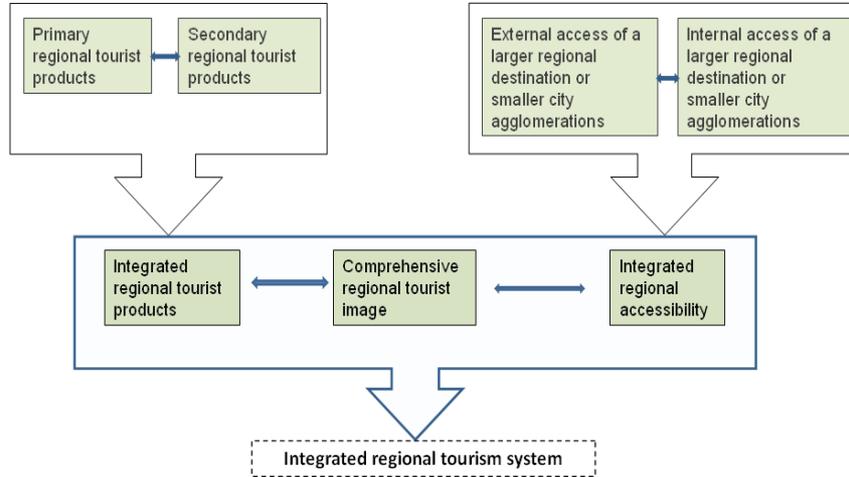
These three prevalent areas of regional tourism cooperation are elementary to the concept of 'Urban Tourist System' (UTS)<sup>1</sup> of Van den Berg et al. (1995), if we enlarge the geographic area from an urban to a regional level. As discussed in the UTS concept, the provision of the *integrated regional tourist products* is one of the most important areas of regional tourism cooperation. There are two categories of regional tourist products. 'Regional primary tourist products' represent the main reasons for a visit to a regional destination. There is a prerequisite to develop such products: the diversification and complement existing and potential tourist products of each involved provinces or cities (Gan and Smith 1992). Ignoring this prerequisite, challenges will appear because similarity and duplicity of the tourist products can add difficulties to develop integrated regional tourist products for the potential markets (Fagence 1996) and can bring more possibilities for the involved cities to compete rather than complement each other (Teye 1988). 'Regional secondary or complementary tourist products' include hotels, restaurants and other hospitality service products.

In the UTS concept, the development of *integrated regional tourist image(s)* is the second most important area of cooperation. Ioanides et al. (2006) claim that joint promotional and marketing efforts are the areas where regional tourism cooperation can benefit. Especially in developing countries, as discussed by Teye (1988), tourism marketing has provided the primary reason for whatever regional cooperation exists. In such marketing and promotional areas, whether in developed or developing countries, regional tourism cooperation can be arranged in forms such as a joint international representation on foreign markets, jointly running

some promotional campaigns, jointly developing promotional products such as regional videos, films or publications and joint image development among others.

The improvement of the *integrated regional tourist accessibility* is the third most important cooperative area mentioned in the UTS concept. External access means the effort to approach a regional destination. Internal access refers to intra-regional accessibility. Both internal and external access depends not only on the quality of hard facilities such as transportation structures and location of terminals, but also on soft facilities such as ticketing, information services, frequency and variety of travel, friendliness of local communities, regional transport policies, regional standardization of tourist facilities, uniform regional quality assurance systems, or uniform regional tourism statistic systems.

**Figure 5.1**  
Adapted framework of the Integrated Regional Tourism System



Source: Adapted from 'Urban Tourist System' framework developed by Van den Berg et al. 1995.

In summary, figure 5.1 well explains the main areas of regional tourism cooperation. The three main areas (regional image, regional tourist products and regional accessibility) are integrated with each other to pre-

sent jointly an integral regional tourism system. From this evidence we conclude, the three areas of cooperation are also relevant and suitable to the Chinese cases.

### 5.3.3 Areas of cooperation with priorities

As discussed in the literature (Chirathivat 1996; Roberts and Simpson 1999; Sheehan and Ritchie 2005), although all three main areas of cooperation mentioned above are expected to be launched, regional tourism cooperative arrangements cannot embrace all these areas at once. Regional tourism cooperative arrangements should have priority (Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Greer 2002; Lai et al. 2006; Mitchell et al. 1997; Smith et al. 1986; Yacoumis 1989). Priorities are the areas of cooperation that are practical and readily implemented (Chirathivat 1996). Priority also means 'urgency': the degree to which stakeholders call for immediate attention (Mitchell et al. 1997). It is the focused area of cooperation where the roles and functions of tourism sectors, partners and areas of regional cooperation and future directions of development are clearly set out (Greer 2002). According to the literature, we argue that as for regional tourism cooperation in China, priorities of cooperation should be taken into consideration as well. When implementing cooperative arrangements in China, it is expected to define clearly the scope of areas of cooperation in the first place and specifically set out what to do first and what to do next.

Some literature shows the prioritized areas of regional tourism cooperation. Smith et al. (1986) comment that at the inter-provincial level, regional tourism cooperation should be launched in the area of joint marketing while at the inter-city level, cooperation should be implemented on joint training in order to upgrade the regional tourism industry, the regional information-sharing systems or the regional tourism facility documenting systems. Araujo and Bramwell (2002) in their framework of the entire process of tourism cooperation at the inter-city level also contribute a very concrete suggestion where joint development of tourism resources and joint tourism marketing are proposed as two primary areas of cooperation. Concerning regional tourism cooperation in China, it is difficult to give a specific and concrete suggestion about what are the prioritized areas of cooperation. However, leaders and stakeholders are the two bodies to decide priorities. They are always requested to bear the

‘priority’ philosophy in mind when implementing a regional tourism cooperative arrangement in China.

## **5.4 Main Implementation Structure**

This section first elaborates, based on Selin (1999), a dimensional frame to distinguish the main implementation structures of regional tourism cooperation. Based on the literature, the second part explains four main implementation structures of regional tourism cooperation by using two attributes of the frame (stakeholder and legal basis). The third part suggests two complementary mechanisms as main supporters to the formal implementation structures of regional tourism cooperation. Some arguments for regional tourism cooperation in China are formulated in the end.

### **5.4.1 Typology of the implementation structure**

Sheehan and Ritchie (2005) use three attributes (formal, official, contractual) to distinguish two types of tourism cooperation. From a marketing perspective, Wang and Fesenmaier (2006) suggest three main types of tourism cooperation via one attribute ‘orientation’. Wang and Fesenmaier (2006) define the first type of tourism cooperation as a ‘strategy-oriented cooperation’, which concerns the more efficient use of scarce resources. The second type is defined as a ‘learning oriented cooperation’ such as learning new ways to conduct marketing. The third type is defined as a ‘social capital-oriented cooperation’ such as strengthening the co-operative spirit of the partners. Selin (1999) suggests a more complicated classification approach to identify tourism cooperation structures via five primary attributes: geographic scale, legal basis, locus of control, organizational diversity and size, and time frame. The numerous combinations of these attributes demonstrate the flexibility of the cooperative structures.

In the study, we follow Selin (1999) and propose a four-dimensional frame to distinguish the implementation structures of regional tourism cooperation (see table 5.1). Compared to the typologies mentioned above, indicators of Selin’s typology are much easier to test. In the frame, ‘legal basis’ is defined as a number of levels of development (Terpstra and Simonin 1993). ‘Formal’ is understood as a contract based agreement (Van Dijk 2008) or a process of coalition formation (Acker-

man and Bower 1976; Murray 1976). A short time frame describes a process of the formation of cooperation: stakeholders are convened temporarily to solve pressing problems or to take advantage of important opportunities, and they return to their original organizations afterwards. By contrast, a longer time frame means cooperative arrangements are permanently institutionalized in the legal forms or other regular structures (Selin 1999).

**Table 5.1**  
*Four-dimensional frame to distinguish implementation structures of regional tourism cooperation*

Attribute	Explanation
Geographic scale	Inter-provincial and Inter-city
Legal basis	From grassroots at one end (least formal) to legally mandated or authorized at the other end (most formal)
Stakeholders involved	Public and public, public and private, private and private
Time frame	Short time frame (temporary, resolve problem) □ long time frame (permanent)

Source: Adapted from Selin 1999.

In the next section, according to the literature, we use two attributes mentioned in table 5.1 (legal basis, and stakeholders involved) to describe the implementation structures of regional tourism cooperation mentioned in the literature. We assume that Chinese regional tourism cooperation is not an exception and follows the same logic as presented in the literature.

#### 5.4.2 Implementation structure

If we use the attribute ‘stakeholders involved’ (see table 5.1) to distinguish the implementation structures mentioned in the literature, we find three main structures: among public actors, between public and private actors or, among private actors. The public-public cooperative structure mainly concerns cooperation between tourism bureaus of different administrative levels. This structure is recognized in such forms as conferences (Lee 1987), organizations (Travis 1980) and short-term projects

(Yacoumis 1989). The private-private cooperative structure mainly concerns setting up clusters or economic chains (Huybers and Bennett 2003). The public-private cooperation is the most popular and prevalent structure of cooperation mentioned in the literature (e.g. Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Fagence 1996; Gan and Smith 1992; Greer 2002; Hall and Braithwaite 1990; Holder 1992; Ioanides et al. 2006; Jackson 2006; Jackson and Murphy 2006; McCann 1983; Pearce 1990; Reid et al. 2008; Roberts and Simpson 1999; Smith et al. 1986; Teye 1988).

If we use the attribute 'legal basis' (table 5.1) to distinguish the regional tourism cooperative structures, in total there are five main structures discussed in the literature, with four structures having the 'formal' characteristics and one structure characterized as 'informal'. According to the literature, a formal structure of regional tourism cooperation is more welcomed. Such structure is a regulatory and systematic framework in a certain time frame, in most instances taking such forms as long-term conferences, long-term organizations and short-term project-based arrangements (Selin and Chavez 1995). Explanations on these three prominent structures are as follows.

#### **1) Association-based structure of cooperation**

As mentioned in the literature, the 'association-based structure of cooperation' is one of the most popularly accepted formal structures of regional tourism cooperation (e.g. Friedman and Miles 2002; Ghimire 2001; Greer 2002; Holder 1992; March and Wilkinson 2009; Palmer and Bejou 1995; Reid et al. 2008; Sautter and Leisen 1999; Selin and Chavez 1995; Sheehan and Ritchie 2005; Teye 1988). Some literature illustrates in detail how such cooperative structure function (e.g. Ghimire 2001; Presenza 2005; Selin and Chavez 1995; Svenssen et al. 2006) and believe that such cooperative structure can make regional tourism cooperation more interactive, dynamic, systematic, integrated, oriented towards objectives and applicable (e.g. Laws and Pelley 2000; Mürstaja 2003; Reid et al. 2008; Smith et al. 1986).

The 'association-based structure of cooperation' can provide a good environment for cooperation (Svenssen et al. 2006). It is defined as a highly instituted legal form characterized with legally binding agreements and assigned roles (Selin and Chavez 1995). This is a corporate-like structure relying more on the marketplace than on politics to guide tourism cooperative arrangements. The main vision of this structure is to

promote the economy of scale. In this structure, formal action plans are designed to monitor and assure cooperative compliance to the goals of the stakeholders. Meanwhile operational committees are assigned to interpret, steer, manage and advise the cooperative arrangements.

There are several concrete examples of this structure mentioned in the literature: a regional tourism marketing organization that coordinates all the resources available for regional promotion (such as airlines or media); an appropriate institutional or inter-agency structure within which responsibilities are assigned, accepted and implemented among public-private sectors; a regional tourism authority set up by public and private tourism sectors after dismissing the local tourism authorities; a structured and formal regional tourism organization; a public owned limited regional tourism company jointly established by the public authorities with private sector membership; a strategic regional tourism alliance, featuring the national leaders, the public-private stakeholders and the coexistence of a management committee and some working committees.<sup>2</sup>

## **2) *Conference-based structure of cooperation***

It is another popular formal structure mentioned in the literature (e.g. Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Roberts and Simpson 1999; Smith et al. 1986). Smith et al. (1986) use a monthly meeting as an example to suggest the importance of a fixed and formal structure in the success of regional tourism cooperation. Araujo and Bramwell (2002) and, Roberts and Simpson (1999) follow this opinion and argue the importance of setting up a fixed and legitimate 'conference' model for regional tourism cooperation and believe this model is an appropriate structure to reflect the effectiveness and efficiency. Convener, or the so-called 'initiator of a conference', can also be called 'mediator' (Campbell 1996; Ioannides 2001). A convener usually derives from a government agency (e.g. the Tourism Bureau), powerful businesses, special interest groups or social groups. It has the potential ability to initiate and facilitate regional tourism cooperation.

As mentioned in the literature, a convener-based cooperative structure has the following characteristics: formal, based on legitimacy, having expertise, resources and authority. Such a structure is a formal structure initiated or facilitated by (a) legitimate organization(s) to bring all the potential stakeholders together in order to achieve the agreements or to formulate workable alternatives. The concrete arrangements of such

structure, as mentioned in the literature, include for example regular face-to-face meetings, annual conferences, formal forums or formal discussion platforms.

### **3) *Project-based structure of cooperation.***

It has been mentioned in the literature as another popular accepted formal structure (e.g. Fagence 1996; Gunn 1994; March and Wilkinson 2009; Selin and Chavez 1995; Witt and Moutinho 1989). Several articles illustrate how such structures function in detail (e.g. Aas et al. 2005; Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Burns and Howard 2003; Ioanides et al. 2006; Vernon et al. 2005). This structure is a time-limited arrangement by setting up a short-term project office owned by either public, private or public-private stakeholders. When the project is finished, the project office vanishes. This type of cooperation is necessary where there are difficulties in agreeing on a common vision or on the long-term goals. However, it is still possible to find common interests in some specific measures of significant importance (Svenssen et al. 2006).

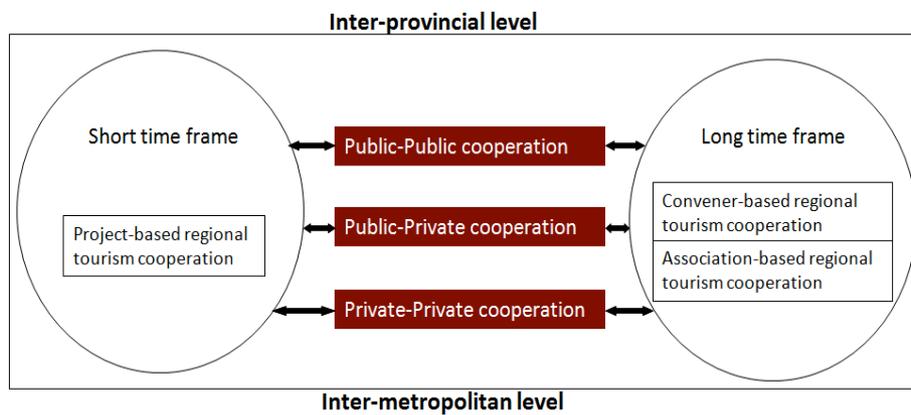
There are several examples of this structure mentioned in the literature: collaboratively development of regional tourism plans (Aas et al. 2005; Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Selin and Chavez 1995; Witt and Moutinho 1989), joint formulation of policies and strategies for regional tourism (Burns and Howard 2003; Gunn 1994; Selin and Chavez 1995; Vernon et al. 2005), jointly tackling with common problems of regional tourism (Selin and Chavez 1995) to name a few.

Besides the three formal cooperative structures mentioned above, according to the literature, there are two other structures to implement regional tourism cooperative arrangements. The first is the oral or unstructured cooperative structure (e.g. Jamal and Getz 1995; March and Wilkinson 2009; Selin and Chavez 1995; Sheehan and Ritchie 2005). The second one is the tightest statutory cooperative structure. Caffyn and Jobbins (2003) explain in detail how laws, licenses, standards or other legal market-based methods such as taxes and subsidies involve stakeholders to participate in regional tourism cooperation. We admit the existence of these two types of implementation structures in China, but in the study, it is not our intention to discuss them, as they are as vague as informal or as tough as statutory. In other words, our study concentrates on the three formal cooperative structures mentioned above, namely, the

conference-based, association-based and project-based structures of co-operation.

Based on international research, we argue that a formal structure is expected for the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. This formal structure can be implemented either at an inter-provincial level or at an inter-city level. In general, this structure mainly includes three types: the long-term association-based, the long-term conference-based and the short-term project-based structures. All three structures are capable of involving stakeholders from both public and private sectors (see figure 5.2). Figure 5.2 developed from the international research findings is consistent with figure 3.10 (see section 3.5.2 in chapter 3), which was designed based on the practice of tourism cooperation in the YRD region. Such correspondence further confirms our assumption formulated at the end of section 5.3.1 that when considering the implementation structures, Chinese regional tourism cooperation is not an exception but follows the same logic as introduced in the literature.

**Figure 5.2**  
*Main implementation structures of regional tourism cooperation mentioned in the literature*



### 5.4.3 Complementary mechanisms to the implementation structure

There are two essential complementary mechanisms mentioned in the literature as the main supporters of the formal implementation structures of regional tourism cooperation (e.g. Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Ghimire 2001; Gray 1989; Holder 1992; Jamal and Getz 1995; Parker 2000; Selin and Chavez 1995). The first important mechanism is the mechanism of evaluation. The proper monitoring or feedback mechanism is essential to the success of regional tourism cooperation (Travis 1980). Selin (1999) highlights the importance of putting more concerns that are theoretical on finding out the outcome-based assessments of cooperation accomplishments in future research of regional tourism. We admit the importance of the evaluation mechanism to the success of Chinese regional tourism cooperation. Based on the literature, we describe such evaluation mechanism as follows.

- 1) Considering the time frame, regional tourism cooperative arrangements are not static but evolving in a process (Mistilis and Daniele 2004). As a result, whatever the forms of the cooperative arrangements, the responsive administration on the result is needed. We follow Reid et al. (2008); Roberts and Simpson (1999); and Selin and Chavez (1995), and argue that the evaluation mechanism should regularly monitor a cooperative arrangement spanning its life-long period of implementation.
- 2) Considering the content of the evaluation, we follow Reid et al. (2008); Roberts and Simpson (1999); and Sheehan and Ritchie (2005), and suggest that the evaluation should cover the full-fledged area of cooperation, including the gaps between the goals and results, the relationships between stakeholders, the daily performance of the main implementation structures, or the future impacts on cooperation.
- 3) Considering the methodology of the evaluation, we admit the existence of the intangible and immeasurable elements in the process of Chinese regional tourism cooperation. Therefore we follow Roberts and Simpson (1999) and presume that the co-existence of the quantitative and qualitative indicators is essential to evaluate the regional tourism cooperative performance in China.

The second important complementary mechanism mentioned in the literature is the mechanism of funding. Cooperation needs the financial resources at its disposal to be efficient (Svenssen et al. 2006). Funding is a critical issue to decide the success of regional tourism cooperation (Smith et al. 1986). The lack of financial resources or necessary funds is the biggest obstacle for the daily operation of a regional tourism cooperative arrangement (Ghimire 2001). Therefore based on these comments, we follow Greer (2002) and suggest that having sufficient funds is one of the most important and necessary conditions for the success of regional tourism cooperation in China. Clear funding mechanisms can help raise sufficient funds. Regarding where the funds come from, we agree with the discussions of Smith et al. (1986) that, working together on a project funded by an outside force was acceptable but in danger when outside funders withdraw the funds. In other words, an over reliance on external funds may be inherently risky because it is beyond the control of involved stakeholders. Therefore, given the uncertainty of the external funding systems, we follow Reid et al. (2008) and Smith et al. (1986) and argue that the set up of an internal funding mechanism where the main funds of cooperative arrangements come from involved stakeholders is essential for the success of regional tourism cooperation in China.

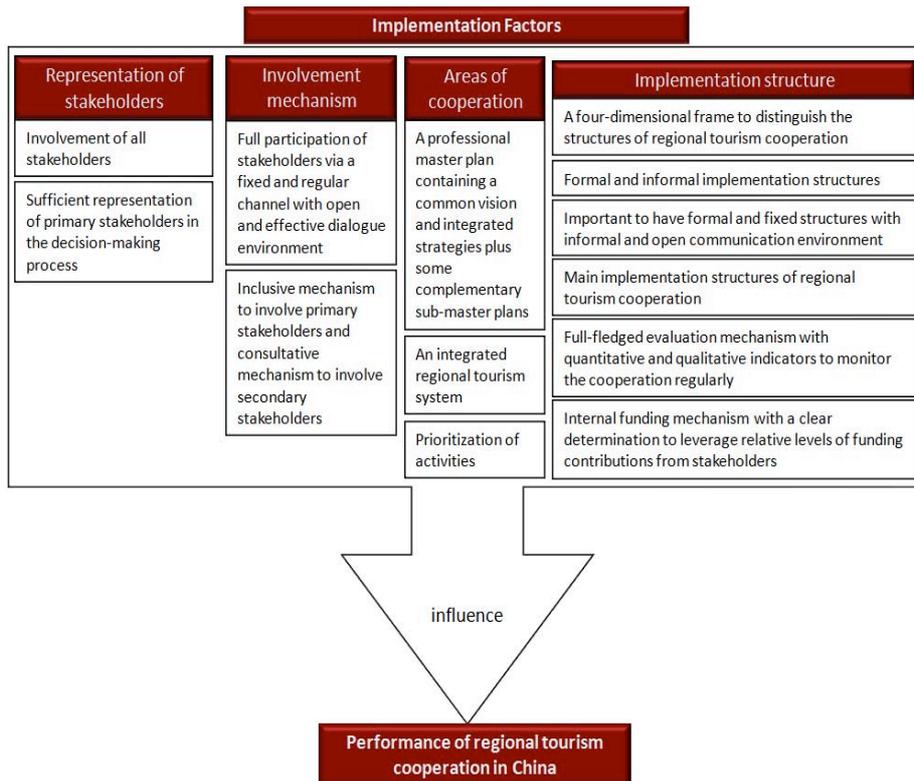
When funds are available, the next question is how to allocate these funds. To generalize, sufficient funds for regional tourism cooperation should be available for involved stakeholders. A balance of the funds allocation should be structured between different activities of the cooperation (such as between the regional marketing affairs and the regional research activities). We claim that although different regional tourism cooperative arrangements have different budgeting or fund allocating systems, all of the financial mechanisms of regional tourism cooperative arrangements should be designed based on the common cooperative motives of involved stakeholders.

## 5.5 Conclusions

This chapter explained in detail the second group of factors affecting regional tourism cooperation in China, namely the implementation factors in relation to the during-cooperation process, which influences the effectiveness of Chinese regional tourism cooperation in China. We focused on the most relevant and important factors in the Chinese situa-

tion. Four factors have been identified, including the representation of stakeholders in the decision-making process, different mechanisms to secure the involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process, areas of cooperation, and implementation structures for cooperation. Figure 5.3 summarizes the main conclusions drawn from these four factors. For each block, some final arguments concerning the relationship of these four implementation factors with the performance of regional tourism cooperation in China are presented.

**Figure 5.3**  
Main implementation factors influencing the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China



First, we argued that the representation of participating stakeholders in the decision-making process, particularly the primary stakeholders (including Tourism Bureaus from all levels and tourism companies), is essential to regional tourism cooperation in China.

Second, we argued that all stakeholders should be fully involved in the decision-making process via different involvement mechanisms. The primary stakeholders including the Tourism Bureaus and private tourism companies are suggested to be involved via the inclusive mechanism while the secondary stakeholders are expected to be involved via the consultative mechanism. Both mechanisms must operate in a fixed and regular way where the open dialogue environment can be found.

Third, we argued that the performance of Chinese regional tourism cooperation is influenced by the content of the cooperative activities. No matter whether regional tourism cooperation is performed at an inter-provincial or inter-city level, it is essential that those regional tourism cooperative arrangements are operated based on the integration of the three main areas of cooperation, the joint development and promotion of regional images, the joint development of regional tourist products, and the joint improvement of regional accessibility. By adapting a concept of 'Urban Tourism System' to the Chinese practice, we further argued that these three primary areas of cooperation could consist of an integrated regional tourism system. Meanwhile, we argued that for the success of the Chinese cases, an integrated master plan of regional tourism cooperation is essential where common vision(s) and translated strategies are presented. The 'integrated master plan' means that on the master plan, an integrated regional tourism system is highlighted. In addition, we agree that regional tourism cooperation in China cannot embrace all these cooperative activities at one time. Therefore cooperation with priorities is suggested, where the scope of cooperative activities are clearly set out or explicitly explained to imply what to do first and what to do next.

Concerning the main implementation structure of cooperation, we argued that, first of all, the more difficulties in agreeing on a common vision and the long-term goals of a regional tourism cooperative arrangement, the more possibilities to run the short-term project-based cooperation. This type of cooperative structure can realize the common interests of significant importance in the short period. However, with too many scattered short-term projects, a lack of consistence and interre-

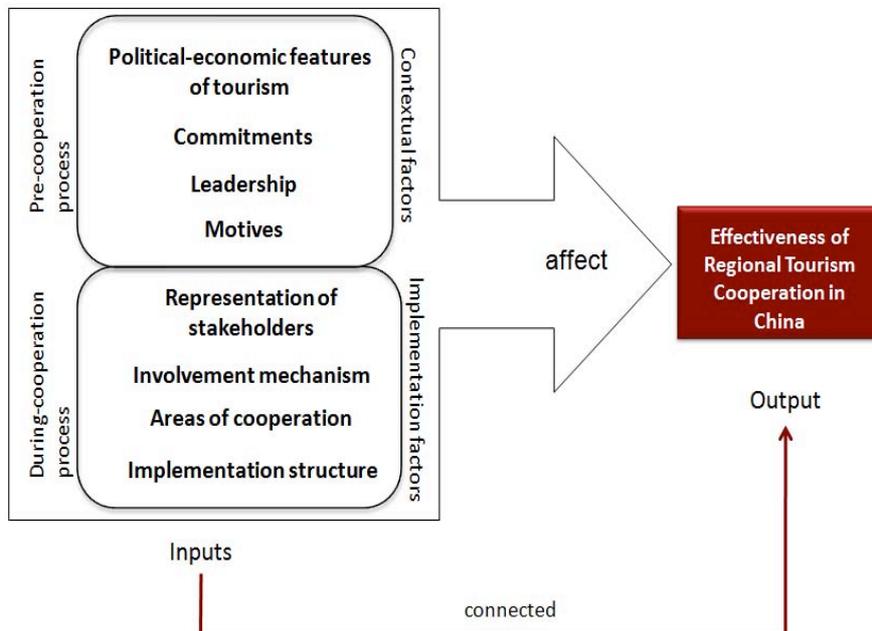
relationships between the projects will probably appear. Therefore, we argued that there is a need to set up a fixed and solid implementation structure to guide the development of regional tourism cooperation. Meanwhile, more arrangements that are cooperative are expected to involve both public and private sectors instead of being limited inside public sectors or private groups. In addition, similar to the arguments made for the decision-making process, we suggested that inside the formal implementation structures, an informal and open culture □ the degree to which the dialogue between stakeholders reflects openness, honesty, tolerance, respect, confidence and trust □ should be created.

Concerning the complementary mechanisms to the implementation structure of cooperation, we argued that the lack of the evaluation and internal-funding mechanisms adds negative influences to the performance and the long-term continuity of regional tourism cooperation. As for the evaluation mechanism, we proposed that the evaluation activities should cover the full-fledged aspects and span the life-long period of implementation and meanwhile, both quantitative and qualitative indicators should be developed. As for the funding mechanism, we proposed that the lack of financial resources or necessary funds is the biggest obstacle to inhibit the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation. The internal funding system is much more stable than the external funding support. Therefore it is suggested to be applied to the Chinese practice. In addition, a clear determination to leverage the relative levels of funding contributions from stakeholders is expected.

To conclude these four factors mentioned above, we argue that in total they form a sequence chain to influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. The first two factors belong to the decision-making process and the last two factors are relevant to the implementation process. With the factor 'representation of stakeholders' explaining who should be involved in the decision-making process, the factor 'involvement mechanism' further illustrates two different mechanisms to secure the involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process. When decisions are formulated, the next step is to implement those decisions. The factor 'areas of cooperation' elaborates on the decisions or on what activities are carried out. The factor 'implementation structure' as the main body of cooperation, answers the question of *how to carry out the activities of cooperation*. We claim that during cooperation, the-

se four factors should be kept in mind to secure the effective performance of regional tourism cooperation in China.

**Figure 5.4**  
The theoretical framework of the study: Eight factors that influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China



Combining the conclusions formulated in chapter 4 and the findings in this chapter, we propose the theoretical framework of this study, consisting of eight influential factors (figure 5.4). We consider these eight factors as eight most important and adapted factors mentioned in the literature to influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. The collective impact of these eight factors leads to either positive or negative cooperative outputs, such as the increase or decrease in the number of tourists to a region. These eight factors are *not* separated *but* connected to each other. In total they form a group, reflecting a sequence of cooperation: from the stages of initiation (the before-cooperation process) to planning, implementation and evaluation (the

during-cooperation process). Some overlaps between these eight factors may exist, indicating that four factors of the pre-cooperation process might also show up during the cooperation process, based on different cases of regional tourism cooperation. However, in this study, we are not going to elaborate on this phenomenon further.

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> This concept has been explained in section 2.2.2 of chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup> The set up of working groups is recommended by Araujo and Bramwell (2002); Gray (1989); Jamal and Getz (1995); Parker (2000); and Selin and Chavez (1995).

## 6

# Research Strategy and Propositions to be Tested

In chapter 2, we regarded regional tourism cooperation as a process. By referring to the Chinese practice discussed in chapter 3, the eight most relevant factors that influence the effectiveness of arrangements of tourism cooperation at the regional level were presented in chapters 4 and 5, based on western theories and literature. In this chapter, referring to the theoretical framework of the study and the arguments formulated based on the literature (as listed at the end of chapters 4 and 5), we formulate two sets of propositions for the effectiveness of tourism cooperation at the Chinese regional level, dealing with the fifth research question, *why do some Chinese cooperative efforts achieve success while others encounter failure?* The first set of propositions concerns four ‘contextual factors’ of the pre-cooperation process, building on the research arguments presented in chapter 4. The second set of propositions concerns four ‘implementation factors’ of the during-cooperation stage, using conclusive arguments formulated in chapter 5. Each proposition reflects one western explanation of each identified factor. The last proposition deals with the interactions between the eight factors and the achievements of regional tourism cooperation. At the end of this chapter, the research methodology is presented, which tests whether the western explanations of eight identified factors are appropriate to deal with how cooperation can reach the initial goals or missions in the Chinese context.

## 6.1 Contextual Factors

As we concluded in chapter 4 and based on the literature, before cooperation can be achieved, it is necessary to study four factors—‘political-economic features of tourism’, ‘commitment’, ‘leadership’ and ‘motives’.

### 6.1.1 Political-economic features of tourism

As indicated in chapter 4, we choose ‘political-economic features of tourism’ as the first factor because currently in China, the ultimate vision for developing regional tourism cooperation is *to achieve mutual economic benefits*. Meanwhile, as a developing country with a comparatively powerful government, political forces in China significantly influence the tourism industry. In this sense, the political-economic features of tourism can be either a stimulator or an obstacle to regional tourism cooperation (Van den Berg et al. 1997). Therefore, we intend to identify to what extent this factor can stimulate tourism cooperation at a regional level in China. Regional tourism cooperation, as defined in chapter 2, includes cooperative arrangements either at an inter-provincial level or at an inter-city level. In this sense, a destination<sup>1</sup> should position itself in a spatial network and clearly understand its position in such network. A self-scan of the strengths and weaknesses of a destination’s tourism performance and a comparison between its tourism performance and the requirements of cooperation may help a destination to understand whether it is qualified to participate in such a regional tourism cooperative arrangement. We argue that self-scans and comparisons can be launched in the three domains.

First, we argue that a destination should recognize that during regional tourism cooperation, each destination has a particular tourism identity. Self-scanning and comparison of tourist numbers with other destinations may offer a help. Destinations participating in regional tourism cooperation may intend to achieve different interests. Some destinations may use regional tourism cooperation to attract more tourists while others may aim to develop more diversified tourist products, or to attract more business and event tourists rather than traditional sightseeing tourists. If cooperation ignores these features and, is designed to achieve a unified goal by harming individual interests, the effectiveness of cooperation may not be reached.

Second, we argue that self-scanning and comparison of the requirements of cooperation in respect to contributions of the tourism industry to a destination’s GDP can help a destination understand that the initiatives of each destination may be different when setting up a regional tourism cooperative arrangement, and initiatives should be coherent with the requirements of cooperation. Some destinations are very proactive by presenting, for example, considerable policy support to arrange new co-

operation while others are reluctant to participate in tourism cooperation. Furthermore, especially in China, the economic contribution of tourism determines the political position of the tourism industry inside a government administration to some extent, which in turn influences the capacity of a destination to participate in regional tourism cooperation. For example, a city with lower GDP contributions of tourism industry may face a dilemma when participating in a regional tourism cooperative arrangement. It is motivated to participate but its tourism bureau has lower political status and always loses governmental bids for subsidies from its city government to develop regional tourism cooperation. Meanwhile in the policy arenas, there is always a small space left for its tourism bureau with lower political status to contribute to the development initiatives or to include regional tourism cooperation as a political strategy. Therefore, we argue that obstacles occur if the cooperation modality goes beyond a destination's tourism bureau and involves the other political bureaus of a destination's administration.

Third, as discussed in chapter 4, decentralization of power is a global trend. In China, the power of organizing regional tourism cooperation is in the process of decentralizing from the central to the local governments, mainly to the city-level governments. But to what extent should the CNTA decentralize its power? The answer is not about whether or how much the CNTA is willing to decentralize power (because the CNTA has already shown willingness), but about the capacity of a destination's tourism bureau to receive the decentralized political power. We follow the arguments elaborated on in chapter 4 that the extent of decentralization of political power is decided by the operational capacity of local tourism bureaus and we argue accordingly that obstacles occur if the cooperation modality challenges the current operational capacity of a destination's tourism bureau.

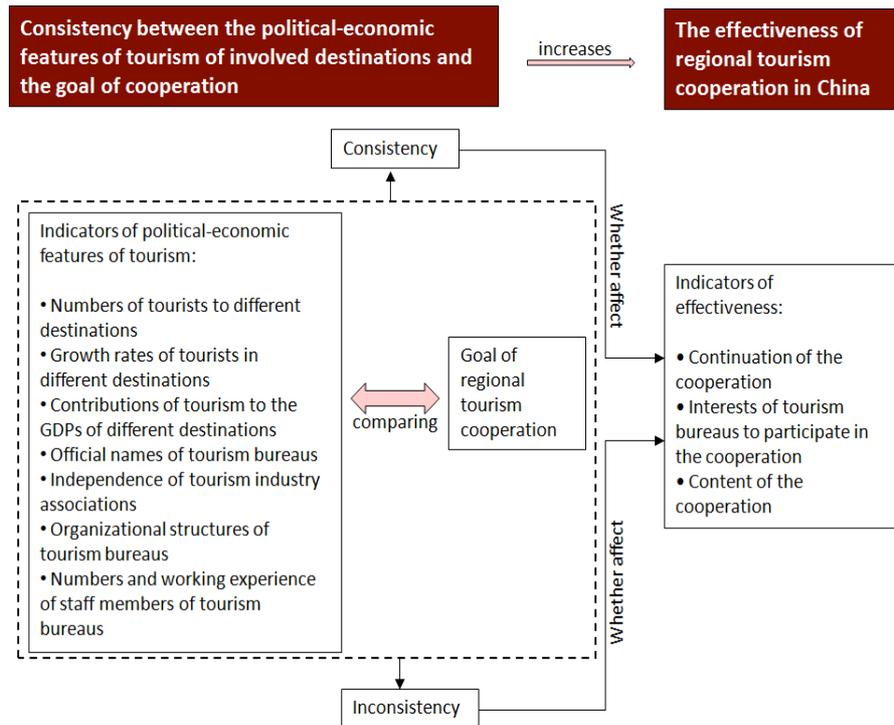
Hence, combining the discussions above, the factor 'political-economic features of tourism' can be explained as 'consistency between the political-economic features of tourism of involved destinations and the goal of cooperation'. The first proposition is formulated accordingly.

P1: Consistency between the political-economic features of tourism of involved destinations and the goal of cooperation increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

This proposition addresses the influences of external political and economic forces to a regional tourism cooperative arrangement. Each destination has its unique political-economic features of tourism comprising three aspects. 1) The economic feature of tourism means numbers and types of tourists attracted by destinations and visitor carrying capacity of destinations. Indicators can be numbers of tourists and growth rates of tourists mentioned in the yearly statistics books of the corresponding destinations. 2) The political feature of tourism means the (un)strong political positions of tourism bureaus within their corresponding government administrations. In other words, the political feature of tourism refers to whether tourism bureaus have power to influence other political bureaus of government administrations. Indicators include contributions of tourism to the GDPs of involved destinations and official names of tourism bureaus of involved destinations.<sup>2</sup> 3) The political feature of tourism also refers to whether tourism bureaus of involved destinations have enough *operational capacity* to participate in the cooperation. We use several variables to explain the operational capacity further, including the independence of the Tourism Industry Association of involved destinations (whether it is an independent organization or an affiliated unit of the Tourism Bureau), the organizational structures of the tourism bureaus of involved destinations and the numbers and work experience of tourism bureau staff of involved destinations.

Meanwhile, we develop several indicators to check whether the goals or missions of the cooperation are reached, as influenced by the factor 'political-economic features of tourism'. 'Effectiveness' is defined as the production of the intended or expected results. Those expected results can be reflected by indicators such as the smooth continuation of the cooperation, the strong interests of tourism bureaus to participate in the cooperation, and the symbolic or realistic content of the cooperation. All the indicators mentioned above can be easily found via desk studies, semi-structured interviews and a survey. As a conclusion, figure 6.1 depicts the above indicators used to test the first proposition.

**Figure 6.1**  
Indicators to test the first proposition



### 6.1.2 Commitment

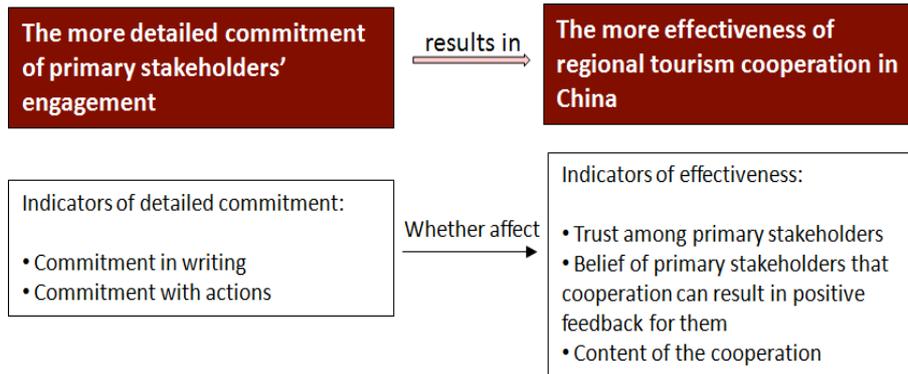
From the literature, we find that a stakeholder may recognize the importance of an issue, but lack of trust in other stakeholders might hamper his motives to continue the cooperation. Meanwhile, a stakeholder may decide that regional tourism cooperation is important but he might perceive that self-interest is best served by utilizing a more familiar or known individual tourism strategy rather than a cooperation strategy. Since trust is difficult to test, in chapter 4 we have used another concept 'commitment' to reflect the trust. Therefore as for China where many regional cooperative arrangements retain good intentions, we argued in chapter 4 that commitment, especially detailed commitment from stakeholders, may offer a contribution to strengthen trust among stakehold-

ers. Meanwhile, primary stakeholders in Chinese regional tourism cooperation, as discussed in chapter 4, include Tourism Bureaus from all levels (who provide public tourism-related facilities and environment) and tourism companies (who operate regional tourism businesses). They all have interest in the actions of regional tourism cooperation and most importantly, they all have abilities to influence these actions. Therefore, based on the elaborations of commitment and the typology of stakeholders, the factor ‘commitment’ is explained as ‘detailed commitment of primary stakeholders’ engagement’. The second proposition is formulated accordingly.

**P2: The more detailed commitment of primary stakeholders’ engagement, the more effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.**

In this proposition, we include two types of commitment—commitment in writing and commitment with actions. Written commitment is expressed in the cooperative agreements, contracts or internal documents with explicit descriptions. Examples of actual commitment include financial contributions of primary stakeholders to the cooperation,<sup>3</sup> proactive participation of high-level managers of primary stakeholder organizations in the arrangements of cooperation and others. Meanwhile, it is important to gain some insight into the effectiveness of cooperation impacted by the factor ‘commitment’, in respect of the strengthened trust between primary stakeholders, the strengthened belief of primary stakeholders that the cooperation can result in positive feedback for them, and the symbolic or realistic content of the cooperation. All the indicators mentioned above can be easily found via desk studies, semi-structured interviews and a survey. To conclude, figure 6.2 depicts the above indicators, which can be used to test the second proposition.

**Figure 6.2**  
Indicators to test the second proposition



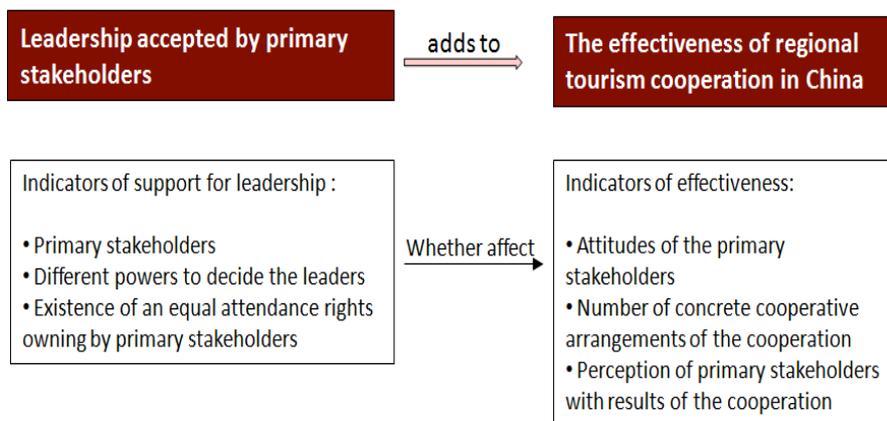
### 6.1.3 Leadership

As concluded in chapter 4, leadership as a necessary factor to direct the efforts of involving stakeholders is also applicable to China, a country where governments play powerful roles in the tourism industry. As discussed in chapter 4, leaders in a Chinese regional tourism cooperative arrangement can be identified based on three kinds of power, the power to finance or resources, knowledge or experience power, and political power. In this sense, in China, leadership is exerted by the Tourism Bureaus. Similar conclusions appear in chapter 3 where we elaborated on the Chinese context. Therefore, when we discuss the factor of leadership, which influences the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China, the main concern is *not* about *who* are the leaders, *but* about *how* can the Tourism Bureau exert its leading role in order to gain more acceptance from the other stakeholders. In chapter 4, we quoted from Reed (1997) that the attendant equality of access to cooperative resources within an assumed leadership could be a solution to gain acceptance from stakeholders. Reid et al. (2008) propose that regional tourism cooperative arrangements should ensure that each member has an equal vote regardless of their different financial contributions. Therefore, following all these discussions, the factor 'leadership' is explained as 'leadership accepted by primary stakeholders'. The third proposition is formulated accordingly.

P3: Leadership accepted by primary stakeholders adds to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

Leadership accepted by primary stakeholders’ has two aspects: 1) in the beginning of cooperation, the comparatively dominant *power* of leaders is the essential element to strengthen the acceptance; 2) in the implementation process of cooperation, the presence of a *democratic system* to ensure the equal rights of the other primary stakeholders to express opinions, initiatives or ideas seems to be crucial. The first meaning can be evaluated by analysing the composition of primary stakeholders and identifying different powers, which decide the leaders in the cooperation. The second meaning can be evaluated by checking the presence of a system, which allows each member to have an equal vote or right to speak out ideas regardless of their different power. Meanwhile, we review some indicators to gain insight into the effectiveness of cooperation impacted by the factor ‘leadership’, including the positive, negative or neutral attitudes of primary stakeholders in the cooperation; the number of concrete cooperative arrangements of the cooperation; the satisfaction of primary stakeholders with the results of the cooperation among others. Similar to the second proposition, all the indicators can be easily obtained via desk studies, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires.

**Figure 6.3**  
Indicators to test the third proposition



#### 6.1.4 Motives

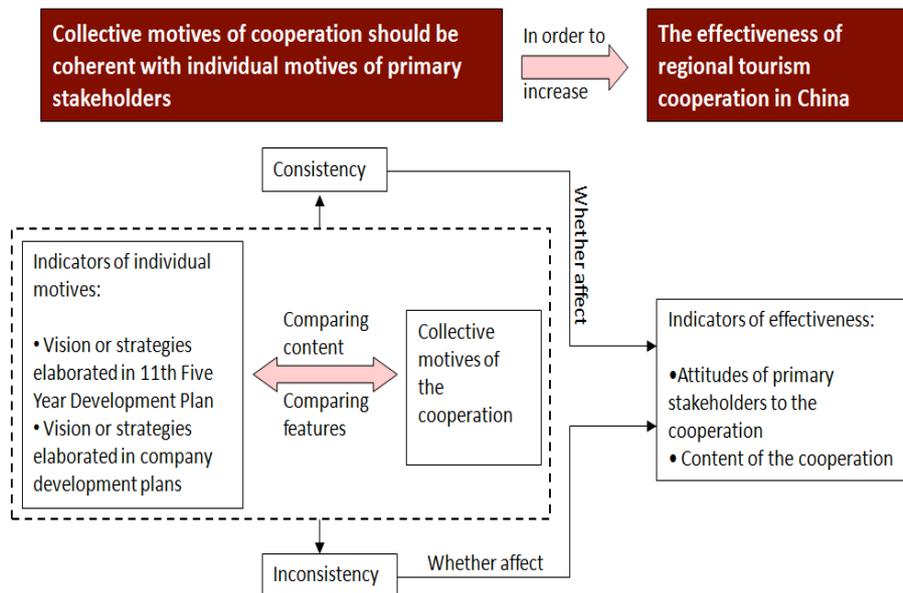
Motives are the foundation and stimulating-mechanism for regional tourism cooperation (Ghimire 2001). During Chinese regional tourism cooperation, it is very easy to find the presence of independent stakeholders and mutual benefits. In chapter 4, we put most of our research concerns *not* on the classification of cooperative motives of different stakeholders *but* on the way to balance the individual motives of stakeholders with the collective motives of the cooperation. Based on the implications from the literature, we argued in chapter 4 that the acknowledgement of the presence of collective and individual motives and the balance of these two kinds of motives are essential to regional tourism cooperation in China. Therefore, starting from this argument, we explain the factor ‘motives’ as ‘the balance between collective motives of cooperation and individual motives of primary stakeholders’. Our fourth proposition is stated accordingly.

P4: Collective motives of cooperation should be coherent with individual motives of primary stakeholders in order to increase the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

To test this proposition, we interview and survey relevant primary stakeholders and review relevant internal documents and secondary sources. Individual motives of primary stakeholders mean that each stakeholder has its own interests to cooperate. We can find those individual motives from the vision and strategies of the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan of corresponding destinations or from the development plans of involved tourism companies. Collective motives of the cooperation are expressed as common motives or shared motives of the cooperation, which can be identified by deskwork and interviews. Meanwhile, the coherency of individual and collective motives can be assessed using (at least) three aspects. 1) By comparing the contents of collective and individual motives. 2) By comparing the features of collective and individual motives, such as short-term interests or long-term interests oriented, collective benefits or individual benefits oriented, easy to be quantified or tend to be qualified. 3) By identifying the presence of the approaches in a cooperative arrangement, which combine individual and collective motives together. As for the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation

with relation to the factor ‘motives’, there are several possible indicators to reflect the expected results of the cooperation, such as vague or realistic content of the cooperation, positive or negative attitudes of primary stakeholders to the cooperation. Figure 6.4 lists the above indicators used to test the fourth proposition.

**Figure 6.4**  
Indicators to test the fourth proposition



To summarize this section, in total four propositions have been formulated to test whether the four contextual factors explained in the literature influence the effectiveness of tourism cooperation at a Chinese regional level. The idea is that each proposition gives some detailed explanations to its corresponding factor, based on the implications from the literature. The case studies may in turn add new Chinese ‘tailor-made’ explanations to the factors, which can be regarded as the theoretical extensions of the study to the existing literature.

## 6.2 Implementation Factors

In chapter 5, we shifted away from the factors influencing the pre-cooperation process to the factors in relation to the during-cooperation process. We named these factors the ‘implementation factors’. In what areas can stakeholders cooperate with each other? How are the regional tourism cooperative arrangements organized? In chapter 5, we answered these two questions by reviewing the literature and referring to the Chinese situation. The conclusions and arguments elaborated on at the end of chapter 5 can give some support to the formulation of the next four propositions.

### 6.2.1 Representation of stakeholders

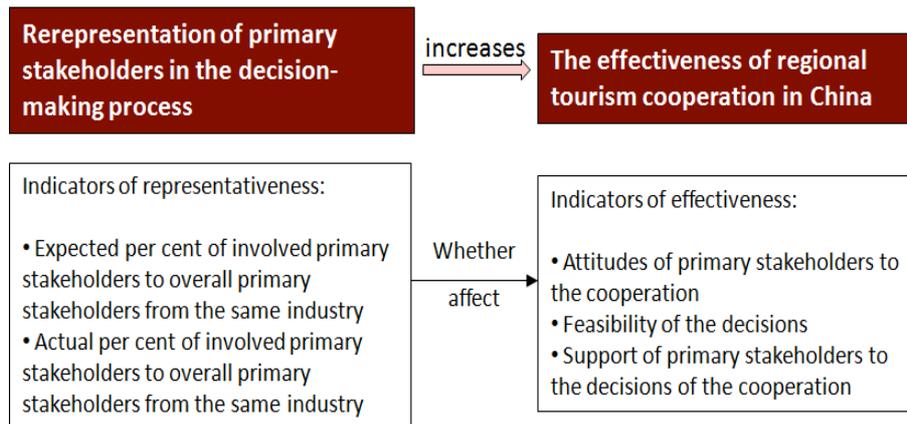
As discussed in chapter 4, primary stakeholders involved in tourism cooperative arrangements at a Chinese regional level include the Tourism Bureaus from all levels (who provide public tourism-related facilities and environment) and tourism companies (who operate regional tourism businesses). They all have interests in the actions of regional tourism cooperation and most importantly, they all have the ability to influence these actions. The representation of secondary stakeholders could also have some impact, but it is most important that primary stakeholders play a role in influencing the implementation of a cooperative arrangement. In chapter 5, we formulated an argument based on the literature and the Chinese situation—representation of the range of participating stakeholders, particularly primary stakeholders—is essential for Chinese regional tourism cooperation. We follow this argument and explain the factor ‘representation of stakeholders’ as ‘representation of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process’. The fifth proposition is formulated accordingly.

**P5: Representation of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.**

In this proposition, ‘representation’ means that stakeholders involved can fully represent all relevant stakeholders. Via deskwork, interviews and questionnaires, this term can be assessed using two aspects: the expected percentage of involved primary stakeholders to overall primary

stakeholders from the same industry<sup>4</sup> and the actual percentage of involved primary stakeholders to overall primary stakeholders from the same industry. Indicators such as the positive or negative attitudes of primary stakeholders to the cooperation, feasibility of the decisions, and support of primary stakeholders to the decisions of the cooperation can be used to check whether the goals or missions of the cooperation are reached, as influenced by the factor ‘representation of stakeholders’.

**Figure 6.5**  
Indicators to test the fifth proposition



### 6.2.2 Involvement mechanism

As discussed in chapter 5, we followed the comments indicated in most of the literature that all stakeholders should be involved in the decision-making process. Therefore, our research focus is *not* discussing who should be involved in the decision-making process, *but* elaborating on ways to bring all stakeholders into the decision-making process and what kinds of involvement mechanisms can be applied. As discussed in chapter 5, Roberts and Simpson (1999) and, Smith et al. (1986) suggest using one involvement mechanism to bring all stakeholders into the decision-making process. On the contrary, Timothy (1999) and, Tosun and Jenkins (1996) find that the involvement mechanism developed in and for a developed country may fail in the socioeconomic, cultural, administrative

or political circumstances of a developing country. Furthermore, Araujo and Bramwell (2002) propose a ‘consultative involvement’ mechanism for less developed countries where government plays a strong leading role in cooperation. Such mechanism involves local communities, NGOs or other private companies to a formal decision-making process consultatively rather than collaboratively. Comparing these two contradictory perspectives, in chapter 5 we argued to support the latter perspective, noting that introducing two different mechanisms to involve primary and secondary stakeholders respectively instead of applying the same involvement mechanism to involve all stakeholders. We prefer to test this argument with empirical studies. Therefore, the factor ‘involvement mechanism’ is explained as ‘applying the inclusive mechanism to involve primary stakeholders and the consultative mechanism to involve secondary stakeholders in the decision-making process’. The sixth proposition is formulated accordingly.

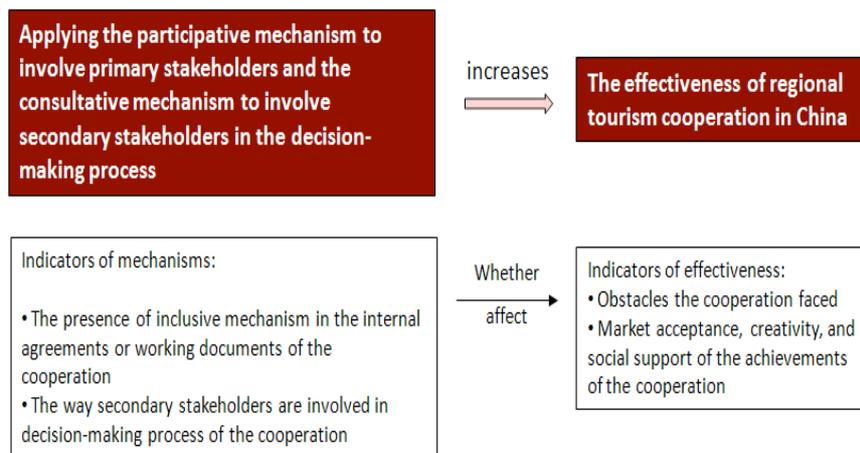
**P6: Applying the inclusive mechanism to involve primary stakeholders and the consultative mechanism to involve secondary stakeholders in the decision-making process increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.**

In our study, primary stakeholders of Chinese regional tourism cooperation include Tourism Bureaus from all levels and private tourism companies. Secondary stakeholders are defined as those (excluding primary stakeholders) who can affect or are affected by regional tourism cooperation. Tourists, local communities (consumers of regional tourist products), universities or research institutions, NGOs (except tourism industrial associations, tourist associations and local community associations), press and media, and other government authorities can be included in the secondary stakeholders’ group. In this proposition, the inclusive mechanism allows stakeholders to be involved directly in the decision-making process via a formal and regular system. By using a case study approach, we can identify the presence of such mechanism in the internal agreements or working documents of the cooperation. The consultative mechanism allows stakeholders to be involved in the decision-making process, but instead of participating directly, secondary stakeholders are consulted on a fixed and regular basis where their ideas and opinions are collected as consultative inputs for the primary stakeholders

who are involved directly in the decision-making process. Via deskwork and interviews, we can determine the ways used in the cooperation to involve secondary stakeholders in the decision-making process.

Meanwhile several indicators can explain the effectiveness of a cooperative arrangement with relation to the factor ‘involvement mechanism’: for instance, obstacles the cooperation faces, market acceptance of the achievements of cooperation, creativity of the achievements of cooperation, and community support to the achievements of cooperation. These indicators can be collected via deskwork, interviews and a survey. To conclude, figure 6.6 depicts the above indicators used to test the sixth proposition.

**Figure 6.6**  
*Indicators to test the sixth proposition*



### 6.2.3 Areas of cooperation

The first and most important result of the decision-making process is the areas to arrange regional tourism cooperation, which will definitely influence the performance of cooperation. As concluded in chapter 5, we highlighted ‘integrated’ and ‘prioritized’ as two key adjectives to describe the areas of cooperation. In chapter 5 we argued that no matter whether

tourism cooperation is performed at an inter-provincial or an inter-city level, it is essential that the cooperation is operated or planned to be operated in an integrated way: to develop and promote jointly the integrated regional tourism images; to develop jointly the integrated regional tourist products; and to improve jointly the integrated regional accessibility. We also argued in chapter 5 that, besides keeping the ‘integrated’ philosophy in mind, there is another need to translate the cooperation vision and strategies from master plans into realistic implementation schemes. In this sense, based on these two arguments, the factor ‘areas of cooperation’ can be explained as ‘an integrated approach towards cooperation with priorities’. The seventh proposition is formulated accordingly. We plan to use the empirical cases to test this proposition.

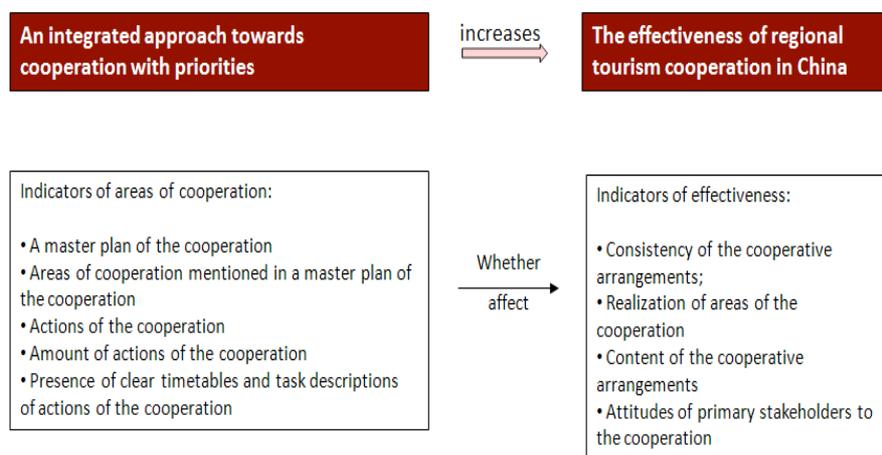
**P7: An integrated approach towards cooperation with priorities increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.**

In this proposition, an ‘integrated approach’ means developing an integrated regional tourism package, including integrated regional tourist image(s), products and accessibility. Meanwhile, we agree that cooperation cannot embrace all the elements of the package at one time, therefore we use ‘priority’ to describe a process that clearly defines the scope of cooperative areas and specifically set out what to do first and what to do next.

An integrated approach towards cooperation with priorities can be assessed with (at least) five indicators via deskwork, interviews and a survey. 1) The presence of a master plan of the cooperation. 2) The areas of cooperation mentioned in a master plan of the cooperation. 3) The presence of actions of the cooperation. 4) The numbers of actions of the cooperation. 5) The presence of clear timetables and task descriptions of actions of the cooperation. Meanwhile, similar to the other propositions discussed, there are four indicators to check whether the goals or missions of the cooperation are reached, as influenced by the factor ‘areas of cooperation’. 1) The consistency of the cooperative arrangements.<sup>5</sup> 2) The realization of areas of the cooperation. 3) The vague or realistic content of the cooperative arrangements.<sup>6</sup> 4) The positive or negative attitudes of primary stakeholders to the cooperation. To conclude, figure 6.7

depicts all the above indicators used to test the seventh proposition in the empirical part of the study.

**Figure 6.7**  
*Indicators to test the seventh proposition*



### 6.2.4 Implementation structure

Regional tourism cooperation needs to be launched via certain implementation structures. As indicated in the literature, there are five main implementation structures including four formal structures (association-based, conference-based, project-based and statutory cooperative) and one informal structure (unstructured verbal agreements). In chapter 5, we raised one argument that eventually, a fixed and formal implementation structure of Chinese regional tourism cooperation is expected and this formal structure can be implemented either at an inter-provincial level or at an inter-city level. Meanwhile, as discussed in chapter 5, there are two complementary mechanisms to support the implementation structure of a regional tourism cooperative arrangement in China. We argued in chapter 5 that the lack of evaluation and internal-funding mechanisms adds negative influence to the performance and the long-term continuity of Chinese regional tourism cooperation. The evaluation mechanism has several features such as the coexistence of quantitative

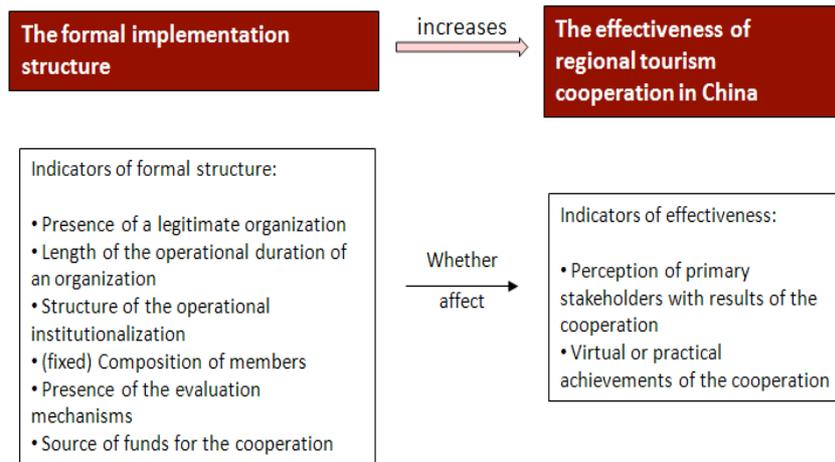
and qualitative indicators, the full-fledged aspects of evaluation and the life-long monitoring period. The funding mechanism can be understood as a mechanism to explain where the daily operational funds of a cooperative arrangement come from. Based on all these arguments, the factor ‘implementation structure’ can be explained as ‘formal implementation structure’. We would like to test the relation of the formal implementation structure with the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. Therefore, we formulate the eighth proposition as follows.

**P8: The formal implementation structure increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.**

In this proposition, a formal structure is defined as a regulatory framework with a systematic structure in a certain time frame (Selin and Chavez 1995). There are (at least) six indicators to assess the formality of a cooperative arrangement. 1) The presence of a legitimate organization, to check whether an organization is settled by legally binding agreements with assigned roles. 2) The length of operational duration of an organization, to check, for instance, whether an organization lasts for years or for a single short period, or when a project is over whether the project office will be closed or continue to exist in another form. 3) The presence of operational committees, management boards, working committees and the daily management procedures of the cooperation, to check the institutionalized management structure of the cooperation. 4) The comparatively permanent (not fluctuating or varying) composition of the stakeholders participating in the cooperation. 5) The presence of the quantitative and qualitative indicators to evaluate the performance, the presence of the full-fledged evaluation approach, and the duration of the evaluation, to check the formality of the evaluation mechanisms of the cooperation. 6) The source of the funds for the cooperation, to check the formality of the funding mechanisms of the cooperation.

Similar to the other propositions, there are some indicators to assess the effectiveness of cooperation with relation to the factor ‘implementation structure’, such as the satisfaction of primary stakeholders with the results of the cooperation, the virtual or practical achievements of the cooperation. Figure 6.8 depicts all the above indicators used to test the eighth proposition in the empirical part of the study.

**Figure 6.8**  
Indicators to test the eighth proposition



To conclude this section, in total four propositions (proposition five to eight) have been formulated, reflecting the relations of the four implementation factors to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

### 6.3 Connecting the Input and Output Together

In the previous sections, we presented eight propositions to show how contextual and implementation factors influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. Other factors may influence the performance of cooperation as well. However, in the study we focus on finding the relationships of the eight factors reflected in the eight propositions to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

As argued at the end of chapter 5, during regional tourism cooperation, eight factors consisting of an integrated group influence the performance of regional tourism cooperation: resulting in either positive or negative cooperative outputs. Hence, we intend to test the ninth proposition (P9), which connects the eight influential factors (as a set of ‘input’) with the performance of cooperation (as the ‘output’). This is the last but also the main proposition of the study. We formulate the ninth proposition as follows.

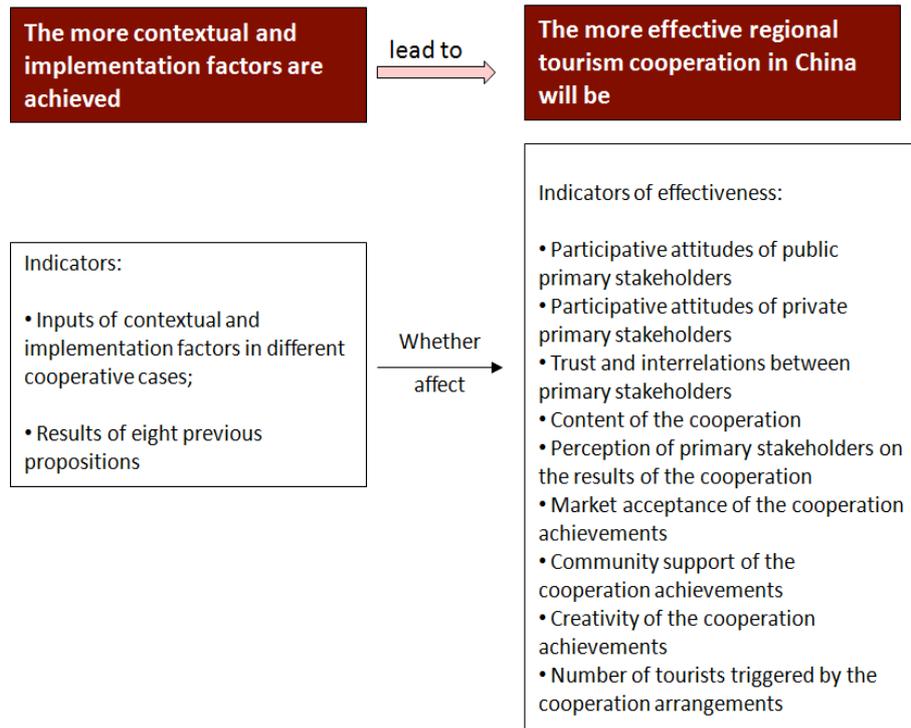
P9: The more contextual and implementation factors are achieved, the more effective regional tourism cooperation in China will be.

We will use the case study approach to review the ‘input’, namely the contextual and implementation factors in different cooperative cases. This review can be launched based on the previous assessment results of the eight propositions.

As for the ‘output’, namely the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation, we intend to evaluate it by both qualitative and quantitative indicators. The qualitative indicators are those that have been applied to the previous propositions, including 1) the participative attitudes of public primary stakeholders (e.g. tourism bureaus at city or provincial levels), to check whether public stakeholders are positive, passive or moderate with the cooperation; 2) the participative attitudes of private primary stakeholders (e.g. tourism companies); 3) the trust and interrelationships between primary stakeholders, to check whether conflicts exist; 4) the content of the cooperation, to check whether the content of the cooperation is vague (symbolic) or practical (realistic); 5) the perception of primary stakeholders on the results of the cooperation, to check whether stakeholders are satisfied with the cooperation results; 6) market acceptance of the cooperation achievements; 7) community support of the cooperation achievements; and 8) the creativity of the cooperation achievements.

There may be many quantitative indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of cooperation, such as the regional tourist revenue and the regional job opportunities, for example. In the study, we choose only the ‘tourist number’ as a quantitative indicator. There are two reasons. First, tourist revenues in different Chinese cities are not comparable: cities use different methods to calculate and give different definitions for tourist revenues. Second, the increase or decrease of regional tourist job opportunities is a good indicator, but currently such statistics are not available in China. Hence, we choose the number of regional tourists as the quantitative indicator since it is easy to obtain and compare, and it is appropriate to gain some impressions on whether the cooperative arrangements are effective. Similar to the other propositions, figure 6.9 explains all the above indicators to test the ninth proposition.

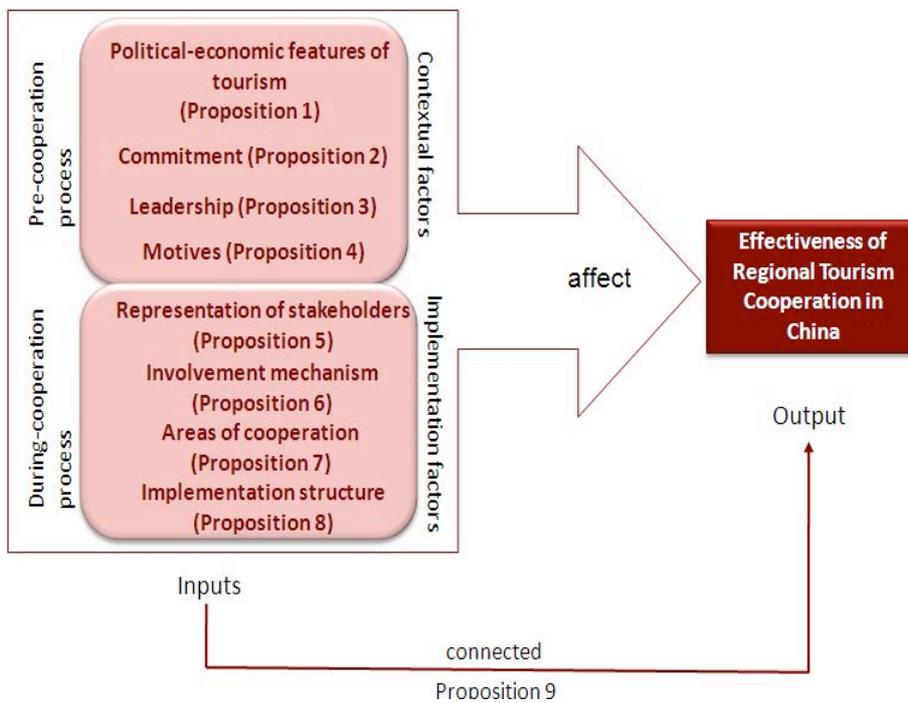
**Figure 6.9**  
Indicators to test the ninth proposition



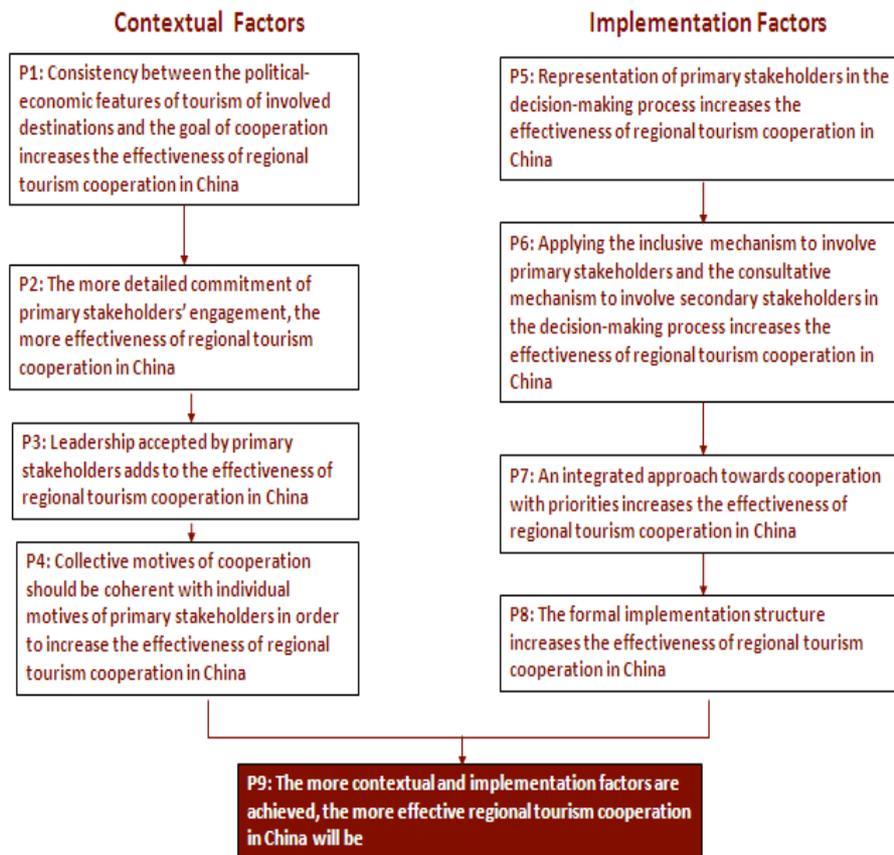
To conclude, in total nine propositions have been formulated to test the influences of eight factors with explanations from the literature on the achievement of goals or missions of tourism cooperative arrangements at a Chinese regional level. These nine propositions can be structured along with the theoretical framework proposed at the end of chapter 5 (see figure 6.10). Meanwhile, these nine propositions also constitute a framework for the forthcoming empirical studies (see figure 6.11). The propositions on the left side of the framework (P1, P2, P3 and P4) will be tested in chapter 8, which deals with the contextual factors. The propositions on the right side (P5, P6, P7 and P8) all relate to the implementation factors and will be tested in chapter 9. At the end of chapter 9, we will combine the empirical findings of the first eight propositions and test accordingly the connection between the eight factors and

the outputs of the Chinese regional tourism cooperative arrangements, where some conclusions can be formulated for the main proposition (P9).

**Figure 6.10**  
*Combination of the nine propositions and the theoretical framework*



**Figure 6.11**  
The nine propositions to be tested in the empirical part of the study



## 6.4 Research Methodology

### 6.4.1 Case study approach

As discussed in chapter 3, three modalities of tourism cooperative efforts (conference, association and project modalities) are prevalent in the YRD region in terms of their relatively large supply of cooperative arrangements. In this study, we intend to choose three different cases □ each one representing one modality □ to test the nine propositions and

illuminate some 'generalized facts' relevant to the other arrangements of regional tourism cooperation in China. Can we improve our understanding of the three different cooperative cases in the YRD region? Whether the influential factors discussed in the theoretical part are relevant and how they impact the effectiveness of the cooperative modalities represented in these three cases? Even though all the cooperative modalities are from the YRD region, can the generalized findings be fruitful for the improvements of the performances of regional tourism cooperation in the other regions of China or in the regions of the other countries?

If we take China as our research choice, it is not so difficult to find out that the data of regional tourism cooperation in China are not sufficient to continue the large-scale quantitative analysis. Meanwhile, as indicated in the literature, most scholars use the qualitative approach to study regional tourism cooperation in other countries (e.g. Araujo and Bramwell 2002; Ghimire 2001; Jackson 2006; Jackson and Murphy 2006; Reid et al. 2008; Roberts and Simpson 1999; Rodriguez and Portales 1994; Smith et al. 1986; Teye 1988; Tosun and Jenkins 1996). Therefore, we follow the same research logic of the literature and consider the case study approach most appropriate to our empirical investigation in China.

The case study approach refers to the empirical investigation of a particular phenomenon in the real life context (Saunders et al. 2003). This strategy involves using one or more cases to create theoretical constructs, propositions and/or midrange theory from the case-based and empirical evidence (Eisenhardt 1989). The case study method was especially suitable when we want to include the contextual conditions of the phenomenon under research and when we intend to obtain holistic understanding, explanation and interpretation of a particular situation and its meaning by collecting data from practitioners' rich experiences (Go et al. 2001). We assume the case study approach, which is typically based on a variety of data sources (in the words of Yin 1994), is appropriate and can provide us with the in-depth understanding of the performance of different tourism cooperative modalities in a Chinese region.

As claimed by Flyvbjerg (2004), the case study is a necessary and sufficient method for certain important research tasks in the social sciences if the case is well chosen. Flyvbjerg (2004) further states that the strategic choice of cases may greatly add to the generalizability of a case study. In our empirical study, we chose three different cases, instead of a sample of three observations. Each of them serves as a distinct experiment that

stands on its own as an analytic unit. As claimed by Eisenhardt (1991), three different cases enable the cross analyses and comparisons that clarify whether an emergent finding is simply idiosyncratic to a single case or consistently replicated by several cases. This is in accordance with the goal of the case study approach: ‘analytical generalization’ (Yin 1994). Therefore although there are some doubts about the case study approach, arguing that it cannot formulate general results from only a few studies, this approach is still appropriate to meet our research objectives, as long as we follow the suggestions made by Yin (2003) to design our case study approach in a proper way, for instance, identifying the units of analysis and specifying questions.

In addition, good social science is problem-driven instead of methodology-driven in the sense that it employs methods that best answer the research questions at hand (Flyvbjerg 2004). Therefore, besides the case study approach, we introduce another approach in this study, that is, the survey. The survey approach uses the relevant quantitative analysis to increase our understanding of the degree to which certain phenomena are present in a given group or how they vary across cases (Flyvbjerg 2004). We claim that, in this study, the case study and the survey are complementary. We expect that, as suggested by Flyvbjerg (2004), a combination of the qualitative and quantitative methods will do the task best. The way to launch the case study and the survey is elaborated on in the next sections.

#### **6.4.2 Selection of the research cases**

Four criteria have been used to select the cases. First, the cases should involve both public and private sectors. As discussed in chapter 3, primary stakeholders involved in most regional tourism cooperative arrangements in China include the Tourism Bureaus at national, provincial and local levels and tourism companies such as hotels, travel agencies and attractions. Hence cases where only public or private sectors participate were not selected. Second, we do not want to involve the small niche players. So the cases should be well known, in the sense that they are popularly reflected in both online sources and academic literature. Third, the case studies should be feasible (or information available), which means stakeholders involved are willing to share their experiences and the secondary data are sufficient and can be easily reached. Fourth, as suggested by Van Dijk (2007a), the cases should have generalizabilities

(or external validities), in the sense that the results of the case studies are applicable to other settings. Besides the four criteria mentioned above, previous research experience and perceptions of the author also influenced the final selection of the cases.

The Tourism City Summit of the Yangtze River Delta region (the TCY Summit), the Zhedongnan Regional Tourism Alliance (the ZDN Alliance) and the Projects catalysed by the Shanghai World EXPO 2010 (the EXPO) were selected as the cases to explore three prevalent modalities<sup>7</sup> of regional tourism cooperation in the YRD region. In chapter 2, arrangements of regional tourism cooperation were defined to perform either at the inter-provincial level or at the inter-city level. All three cases are consistent with this definition, with the TCY Summit and the ZDN Alliance operating at the inter-city level and the EXPO case involving the three provinces.

To give a short description of the cases, the TCY Summit is the first formal regional tourism cooperative arrangement in the YRD region. The ZDN Alliance is similar to a western case elaborated by Reid et al. (2008): the 'Atlantic Canada Tourism Partnership model', which is a successful multi-partner regional alliance for developing export tourism markets. Whether in the west or in China, such alliance illustrates how a tourism alliance is negotiable among potential competitors and operated through multiple agreement periods. The EXPO case explains how regional tourism cooperation is intrigued by a mega event. Provinces in the YRD region cooperate together to provide the integrated regional tourist products to the EXPO visitors during the EXPO period, in order to achieve more economic benefits and set up in the long run the integrated regional tourism image and brands.

The three cases are representative. The TCY Summit has been named by the CNTA as the first advanced modality of regional tourism cooperation in China (Gao 2011). Many other Chinese regions follow the TCY Summit's model and organize similar regional tourism conferences to integrate regional cooperative initiatives. Most inter-city alliances of tourism cooperation in China function similarly to the ZDN Alliance. The assumption that a big event can boost regional tourism cooperation is widely supported by most of the Chinese regions. With the EXPO as a showcase, more provinces in China are exploring appropriate approaches to incorporate big events into their strategies of future development of

regional tourism cooperation. Table 6.1 shows the four characteristics of the three selected cases.

**Table 6.1**  
*Four characteristics of the three cases*

Attributes	TCY Summit	ZDN Alliance	EXPO
Geographic scale	18 cities of the YRD region + 7 guest cities of the neighboring provinces	5 cities of Zhejiang province	Three provinces
Legal basis	Formal (agreement/ contract based)	Formal (agreement/ contract based)	Formal (agreement/ contract based)
Stakeholders involved	Public and Private sectors	Public and Private sectors	Public and Private sectors
Time frame	Long-term (since 2003)	Long-term (since 2004)	Short-term (from 2009-2010)

Source: Based on table 5.1 developed in Chapter 5.

### 6.4.3 Data collection

Explorative research is defined by Van Dijk (2007a) as research that aims to seek insights into new phenomena, without using a theoretical framework or trying to test propositions. Since our study focuses on using three cases of the YRD region to explain the impacts of eight factors on regional tourism cooperation in China, we assume our research is explanatory rather than exploratory. As discussed by Van Dijk (2007a), both quantitative and qualitative data can be used in the explanatory research. In our study, the case studies<sup>8</sup> cover the period from 2008 to 2010. There is limited access to the information on the cases and we could only speak with a limited number of informants, therefore we used a three-pronged research approach to get as much information and data as possible.

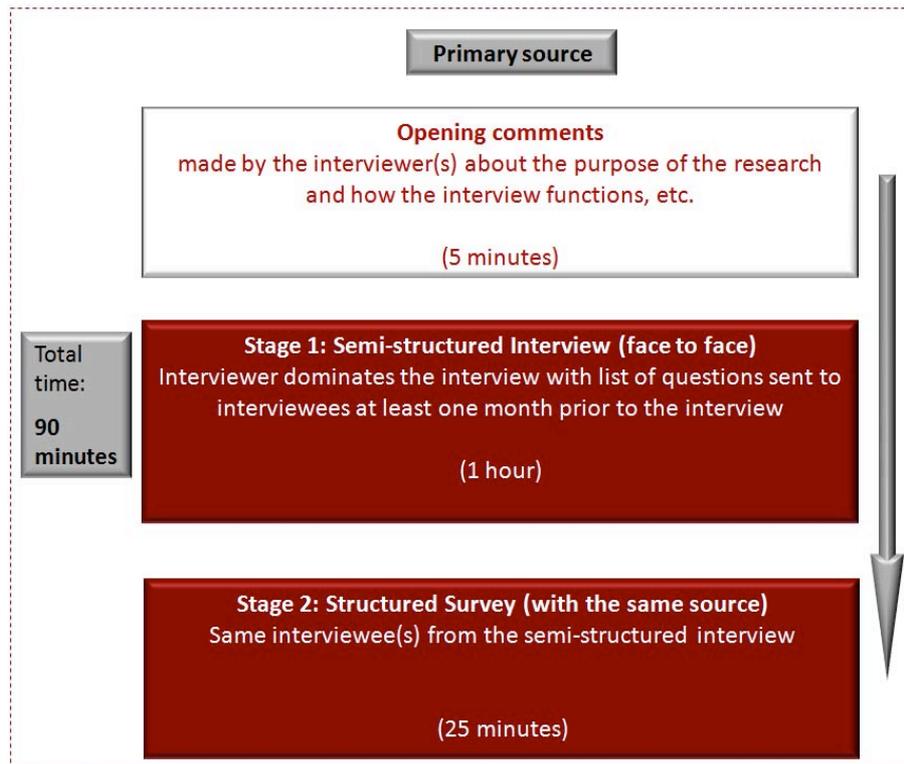
The first prong of the research approach concerns semi-structured interviews with informants. The opinions of informants are assumed the most important source, especially for understanding the factors influencing the effectiveness of the cooperative arrangements. According to Van

Dijk (2007a), ‘interviews’ can help researchers to collect qualitative information in a relative short period through a series of conversations with informants. In our case studies, each interview was semi-structured, face-to-face, tape-recorded and on average lasted 90 minutes (see figure 6.12). In total 132 informants were interviewed (the full list is in Appendix 3). Apart from one-to-one interviews, group interviews were also organized. Although group interviews, as discussed by Van Dijk (2007a), are more difficult to handle since some people may dominate the discussions and certain contributions from other participants may be inhibited, it can still help us to get a variety of personal perspectives, even from the discussions between the informants. Details about the ways we chose the informants are presented in the next section (section 6.4.4).

The second prong of the research approach concerns the survey, using the same source of the interview approach: the 132 informants. At the end of each interview, informant(s) were asked to fill out a structured questionnaire. The reason for taking the survey immediately after the face-to-face interview was, by doing this, unclear questions listed on the questionnaire could be explained promptly, the interpretation differences between the informants could be limited and the more reliable opinions of the informants could be obtained. Compared to the questions raised during semi-structured interviews, questions listed on the questionnaire were more specific and detailed, usually with different scales (for instance, the scale of agree, disagree and no opinion; for evaluating the change of the status of cooperation, the informants were asked to use the scale of increase, decrease and stable). Sample of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix 2.

Besides the two-pronged research approach to collect primary data (procedures are reflected in figure 6.12), the last prong of the research approach is to collect secondary data via sources such as academic literature, internal documents provided by informants (e.g. cooperative contracts, marketing plans, project management documents, communication strategies, internal reports, etc.) and other open sources of information.

**Figure 6.12**  
Two-pronged research approach used in the study to collect the primary data

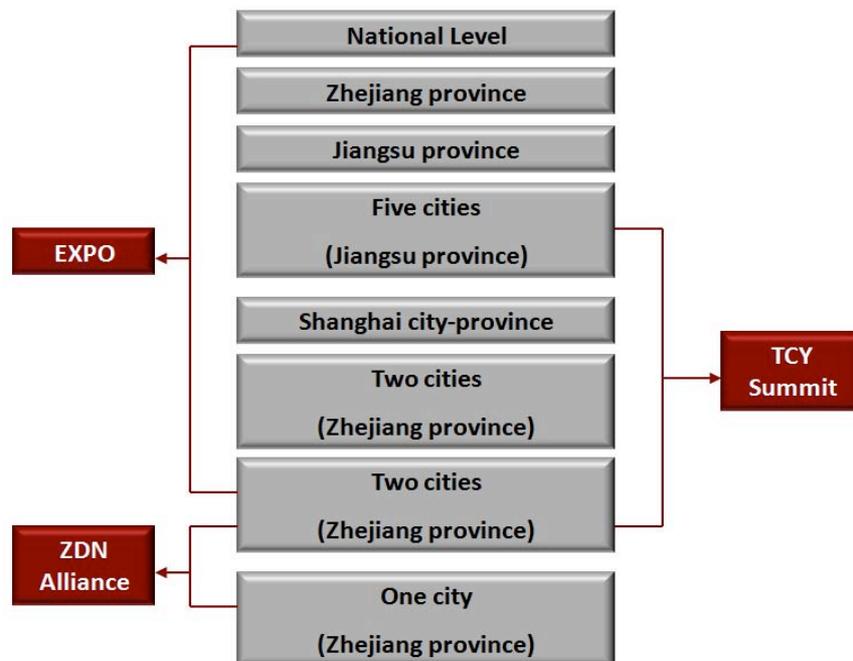


#### 6.4.4 Informant selection

Quality of informants is crucial to the quality of our case studies. Based on the characteristics of regional tourism cooperation, we assume our informants to be stakeholders who are primarily involved in the performances of regional tourism cooperation and are able to provide diverse perspectives. They should include officials from the relevant departments<sup>9</sup> of the tourism bureaus at the national, provincial or city levels; managers of chain or individual hotels; managers of travel agencies running international or domestic businesses; managers of tourism attractions; managers of tourism industry associations and other involved parties. However, we cannot interview them all. In order to speak to the

‘right’ stakeholders who have relatively sufficient and useful opinions, we further draw up three criteria: 1) job position (informants are expected to have a senior position); 2) work experience (newcomers are presumed to have insufficient knowledge); 3) involvement in regional tourism cooperation (informants should be familiar with regional tourism cooperation and have experience in one of the three cases).

**Figure 6.13**  
*Origins of the informants of the three cases*



According to these criteria, an initial list of possible informants was formulated based on internet research. After discussing the list with Prof. Dr Jun Gao<sup>10</sup> who is an embedded academic in the regional tourism economy and three practitioners who have more than 25 years experience in the tourism industry in the YRD region (Mr Guangjian Su from Shanghai,<sup>11</sup> Mr Ge Xiao from Zhejiang province,<sup>12</sup> Mr Xuwen Shao from Jiangsu province<sup>13</sup>), we came up with a final list of informants (see

Appendix 3). Apparently, most informants are involved in at least two of the three cases. Figure 6.13 and table 6.2 describe their involvement and overlap in the three cases. Table 6.3 reflects the background of these informants.

**Table 6.2**  
*Informants of the three cases*

Cases		Number of cities involved	Number of cities interviewed	Number of informants	Average years of work experience of informants
Modalities at Inter-city level	TCY Summit	18	10	120	22
	ZDN Alliance	5	3	34	22
Modalities at Inter-provincial level (3 provinces)	EXPO	25	10	132	25

After contacting the informants, all agreed to be included in the study. For each, an interview and a survey via either group meetings or one-on-one conversations were completed. Thus, we presume that the results of the case studies reflect the opinions of the informants. This is evidence that the informants are only primary stakeholders of the three regional tourism cooperative cases. Future studies would extend to secondary stakeholders. However, the interviews conducted were in depth, providing useful insights and rich data. The invitation to the five university scholars and two senior media practitioners as outside observers offered an extra contribution to improve the validity of the research results.

**Table 6.3**  
*Background of the informants of the three cases*

Component	TCY Summit	ZDN Alliance	EXPO
President/ vice president of a city's tourism bureau	8%	9%	7%
Department of Marketing and Promotion of a city's tourism bureau	12%	9%	10%
Department of Planning and Statistics of a city's tourism bureau	8%	9%	7%
Department of Policy and Legal Affairs of a city's tourism bureau	5%	3%	5%
Department of Information and Public Services of a city's tourism bureau	6%	3%	3%
Department of Administration of a city's tourism bureau	4%	6%	4%
Hotel	18%	22%	16%
Tourist Attraction	13%	15%	12%
Travel Agency	15%	18%	14%
Tourism Association / Tourism NGOs	11%	6%	10%
CNTA (China National Tourism Administration)	-	-	1%
President/ vice president of a provincial tourism Bureau	-	-	2%
Department of Marketing and Promotion of a provincial tourism bureau	-	-	3%
Department of Planning and Statistics of a provincial tourism bureau	-	-	3%
Department of Policy and Legal Affairs of a city's tourism bureau	-	-	1%
Department of Information and Public Services of a provincial tourism bureau	-	-	1%
Department of Administration of a provincial tourism bureau	-	-	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

## 6.5 Structure of the Empirical Study

In this chapter, nine propositions were presented based on the literature. Furthermore, the selection of the cases and the research approaches were discussed. In the next chapter, we provide some basic information on the three cases, the TCY Summit, the ZDN Alliance and the EXPO. Chapter 8 analyses the influential factors with regard to the pre-cooperation process of regional tourism cooperation and tests the empirical applicability of the first four propositions. The results of the case studies with regard to the influential factors of the during-cooperation process are presented in chapter 9, together with the conclusions of the

empirical tests of the next four propositions. At the end of chapter 9, the main proposition is examined, and the relations between the eight influential factors and the outputs of regional tourism cooperation are identified. In chapter 10, major findings of our case studies are discussed, which could be generalized to other regions in China or theoretically to regions in other developing or developed countries.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Here 'a destination' refers to either a city or a province, dependent on different regional tourism cooperative arrangements.

<sup>2</sup> In China, if a destination's tourism authority is called the 'Tourism Council' instead of the 'Tourism Bureau', this means that the president of such organization is at least one of the vice governors of a destination. Such an organization has one standing board there to erase the bureaucratic obstacles, given the fact that the members of such board include directors of a destination's Civil Affairs Bureau, Financial Bureau, Construction Bureau, Transportation Bureau, Cultural Bureau, Land Resource Bureau, Bureau of Parks and Woods, and other county (district) level governments. Hence, compared to the Tourism Bureau, the Tourism Council has more power to influence political decisions. In that sense, the name of a tourism authority of a Chinese destination can reflect, to some extent, the political position of such tourism authority in its corresponding government administration.

<sup>3</sup> This means primary stakeholders financially show their devotion and loyalty to the cooperation.

<sup>4</sup> Here the industry refers to hotel industry, travel agency industry, attraction industry or tourism administration.

<sup>5</sup> This can be used to check whether the cooperative activities follow the same vision of a regional tourism cooperative arrangement.

<sup>6</sup> To check whether the cooperative arrangements only exist on paper.

<sup>7</sup> That is, the conference modality, alliance modality and project modality.

<sup>8</sup> The case studies are partly based on the national-level research project 'Prospective Study of Regional Tourism Development in the Yangtze River Delta region' funded by the CNTA (China National Tourism Administration) from 2008 to 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Such as Marketing, Planning, Policy, Information, Public Service and Administration departments. Other departments such as HR department or financial department are not included.

<sup>10</sup> Prof. Dr Jun Gao works at Shanghai Institute of Tourism, Shanghai Normal University.

<sup>11</sup> Mr Guangjian Su has been the director of the Marketing Department of Shanghai Tourism Bureau for more than 25 years.

<sup>12</sup> Mr Ge Xiao had been the director of Zhejiang Tourism Bureau until his retirement in 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Mr Xuewen Shao has been the director of the Planning and Statistics Department of Jiangsu Tourism Bureau for approximately 15 years.

# 7

## The Three Case Studies

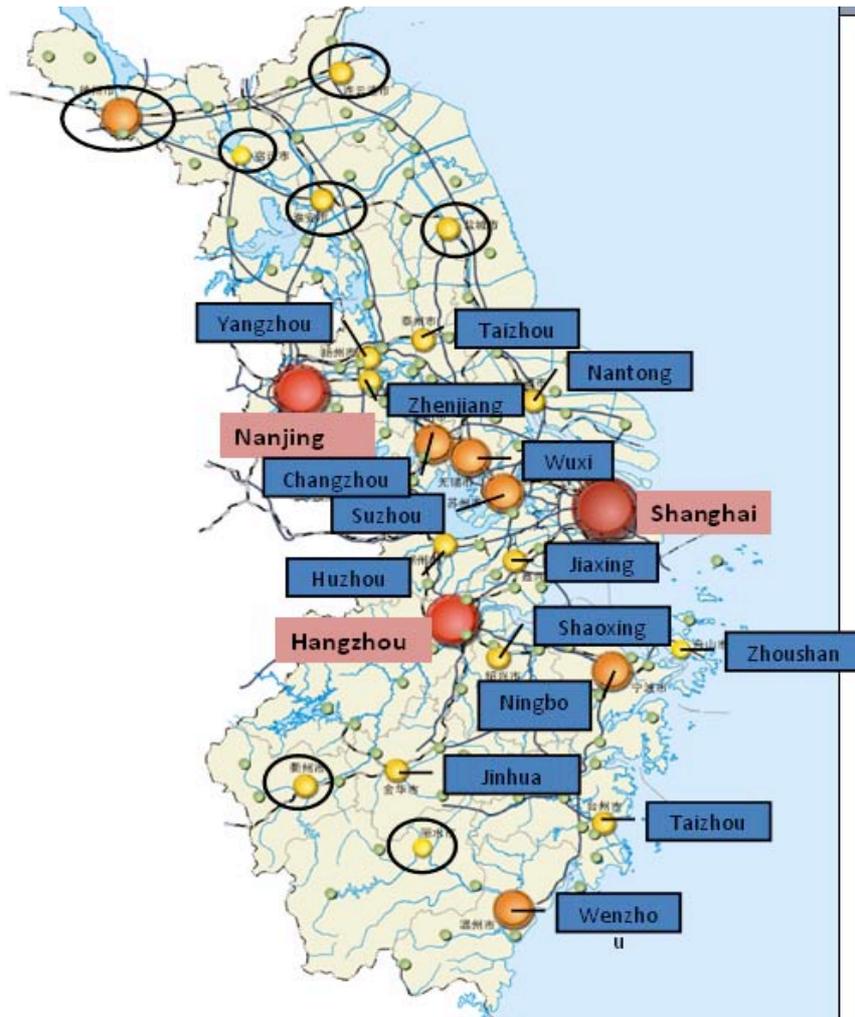
In the present chapter, we introduce the three cases selected to explore the prevalent modalities of regional tourism cooperation in the Yangtze River Delta region (YRD). The Tourism City Summit of the Yangtze River Delta region (the TCY Summit) and the Zhedongnan Tourism Alliance (the ZDN Alliance) operate at the inter-city level and the projects catalysed by the Shanghai World EXPO 2010 (the EXPO) concern the involvement of the three provinces.

### 7.1 Tourism City Summit of the Yangtze River Delta Region

The TCY Summit is a popular case of regional tourism cooperation, operating at the inter-city level. It went back to its origin—the Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation of City Tourism, established by the delta cities in 2001 to enhance the tourism economies of cities by setting up the inter-city cooperation. However, because of its informal and irregular institutional setting, there was no significant progress until 2003, the year when the Asia SARS crisis brought serious challenges to the tourism economy in China. In July 2003, initiated by the tourism bureau of Hangzhou, which is the capital city of Zhejiang province, 15 cities<sup>1</sup> of the YRD region launched the annual TCY Summit to discuss new cooperative solutions to the SARS, to seize the forthcoming after-crisis opportunities, to establish closer inter-city tourism relationships and eventually, to develop a ‘barrier-free’ regional tourism destination.

The full name of the TCY Summit is the ‘Tourism City Summit of the Yangtze River Delta region’. It symbolized the start of formal and regular cooperation between the major cities of the YRD region. It was the first time a tourism bureau took the initiative and a leading role in organizing conferences particularly aimed to discuss regional tourism issues. Before that, tourism was only a minor topic in several regional

**Figure 7.1**  
 Geographic location and scale of 18 member cities of the TCY Summit



Source: Adapted from the Master plan of the Yangtze River Delta region 2010.

Note:



represents a city that did not participate in the summit, including Xuzhou, Lian Yungang, Suzhou, Huainan and Yancheng from Jiangsu province; Zhaizhou and Lishui from Zhejiang province.

conferences organized by different city governments.<sup>2</sup> Due to its forerunner status, formality, abundant media promotion and attendance, the TCY Summit has become a popular example of tourism cooperation in the YRD region. It was also the most welcomed example copied by other Chinese regions.

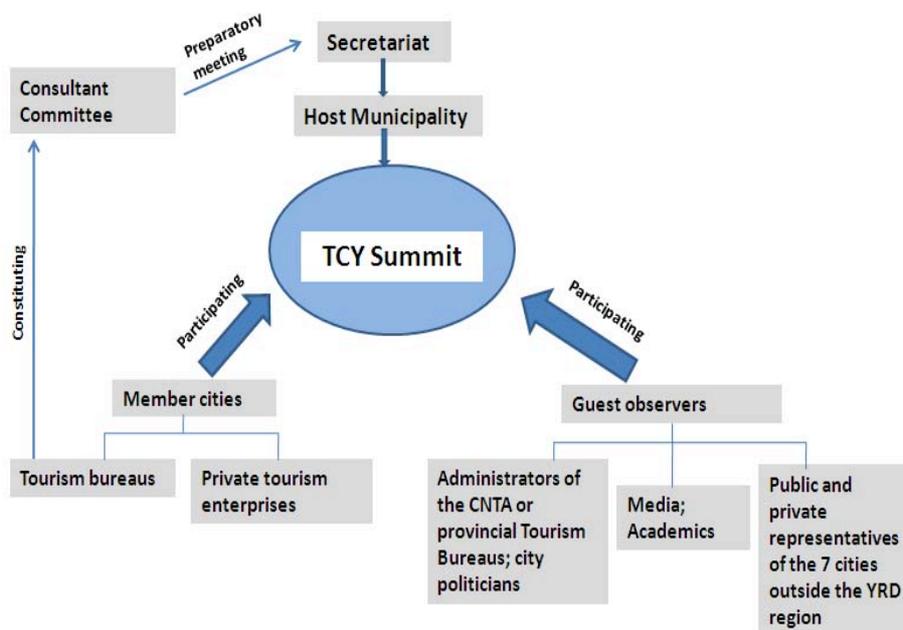
The YRD region contains 24 prefectural-level cities. Shanghai as a city province was counted as one city in this TCY case. Due to the constraints of the geographic distance, 7 of the 25 cities (e.g. Xuzhou, Lian Yungang, Suzhou, Huainan and Yancheng from Jiangsu province; Zhazhou and Lishui from Zhejiang province) have not yet been included in the TCY Summit (figure 7.1). The other 18 cities (e.g. 17 prefectural-level cities plus Shanghai city province) participated in the TCY cooperation and in total they constituted the TCY area, which has the prominent leading position in the economy of the YRD region: covering 62.3 per cent of the YRD regional land. In 2009 the TCY area was inhabited by 103.93 million people and generated 6366.49 billion Yuan, representing 70.1 per cent and 88.7 per cent of the regional figures respectively. In the same year, the area attracted 663.85 million domestic and international tourists in total, equivalent to 95.7 per cent of the overall regional numbers (Yearbook of Zhejiang Statistics 2009; Yearbook of Jiangsu Statistics 2009; Yearbook of Shanghai Statistics 2009).

As described in figure 7.2, the structure of the TCY Summit has been institutionalized. The generally accepted *Constitution* was jointly signed by the 18 member cities during the first annual summit. The tourism bureau of Hangzhou city was the initiator of the TCY Summit. Consequently it became the leader in coordinating and steering the future development of the summit. The highest management body of the summit was the *Secretariat* positioned inside the Hangzhou Tourism Bureau. The annual summit was normally organized once a year in one of the member cities.

Four different groups of stakeholders have been participating in the summit. The presidents or department heads of the tourism bureaus of the 18 member cities constituted the major group of the attendees. Their representatives (politicians and public administrators only) also formed a *Consultant Committee* to organize an internal meeting: once a year around July in Hangzhou before the annual summit started, discussing the arrangement details of the forthcoming summit proposed by the host tourism bureau. This internal meeting, or the so-called 'preparatory meeting', was chaired by the Vice President of Hangzhou Tourism Bureau, who

was also the Chairman of the Secretariat of the Summit. The content of the internal meeting concerned such as the summit topics, the invitation of attendees and the hospitality arrangement among others.

**Figure 7.2**  
*Institutionalized structure of the TCY Summit*



After the internal meeting, the host tourism bureau of the forthcoming annual summit distributed a questionnaire to the tourism bureaus of the rest 17 member-cities, asking for their opinions about the vision, strategies and actions of tourism cooperation in the TCY region in the next working year. After collecting the feedback and summarizing the general findings, the host tourism bureau of the forthcoming summit formulated a *Working Proposal*, explaining the areas where the member-cities could cooperate in the next working year. Only after being confirmed by the Secretariat and the Consultant Committee could this working proposal be transformed into a formal internal document: the yearly

‘Cooperation Declaration’, which was jointly signed by the presidents of the tourism bureaus of 18 member-cities during the annual summit. Until now eight declarations have been published, including the Hangzhou Declaration, the Huangshan Consensus, the Wuxi initiatives, the Jinhua Guidelines, the Nanjing Declaration, the Ningbo Declaration, the Yangzhou Consensus and the Wenzhou Declaration. These declarations were rather the framework documents or strategic guidelines than the working proposals.

The second group to participate in the summit was the business group. This group has been regarded as the most important stakeholders by the summit organizers.<sup>3</sup> It included the directors or high-level managers of travel agencies, hotels and tourism attractions of the 18 member-cities. According to the generally accepted Constitution of the summit, tourism companies have been assumed to be consulted all-year-around, not only during the annual summit but also during other occasions when the public sector met the private sector. The number of private sectors to participate in the summit was not fixed since the summit organizers had little power to make the attendance compulsory for reluctant private tourism enterprises.

The third participating group consisted of guest observers invited by the summit organizers. They were expected to provide support and offer suggestions for the development of the tourism industry in the TCY region. Among those observers, some participated in the annual summit regularly with the 18 member-cities. They were high-level public and private representatives of the seven cities outside but adjacent to the YRD region<sup>4</sup> and are famous worldwide for their natural or cultural resources. Some observers were flexible and attended the annual summit on a temporary basis. Officials from the CNTA and provincial tourism bureaus, city governors, university scholars and journalists fell into this group.

The public sector has taken the dominant role in the TCY Summit, if we look at the numbers of public participants and the responsibilities assigned by the summit organizers to the public stakeholders. Furthermore, when we review the agenda of the summit, the bureaucratic feature of the TCY Summit strengthened. Normally an annual summit lasted for two days, starting with a signing ceremony when the ‘Cooperation Declaration’ was jointly approved by high-level government officials. The main body of a summit was a conference. Most of the keynote speakers were government politicians, and administrators of tourism bu-

reus of 18 member-cities. Representatives from private tourism enterprises or from universities were also invited to deliver speeches, but on a temporary basis. The summit ended with a half-day or one-day business to business Regional Tourism Fair, organized specifically for private participants to develop future business networks with their (potential) suppliers and competitors from the other cities.

By reviewing the content of the yearly cooperation declarations, we can get a clearer picture of the TCY Summit. According to the Constitution of the summit, the annual declarations should be built on the mutual interests of the member cities. During the first summit in 2003, the attendees discussed the advantages of cooperation and shared the perspectives on building regional tourism cooperative arrangements. Politicians of member cities jointly signed the 'Hangzhou Declaration' where the objectives and ultimate goal to organize and to participate in the summit were identified. One objective was very vague. It stated that the summit is to achieve regional integration by enhancing inter-city tourism cooperation. Such a vague objective left little room for cooperation in terms of the interpretations and/or guidance about where the cooperation was going and why in this way. Our accusation of the vagueness and meaningless is not limited to the objective but also the ultimate goal or the overall vision: as it was said in the 2003 Hangzhou declaration, the ultimate goal was to develop the YRD region into the first 'barrier-free' integral tourism region in China. In 2004 during the second annual summit, the members discussed tourism cooperation in six specific fields of regional integration, including tourism transportation systems, tourism industry, tourism markets, tourism information systems, tourism mechanisms and environmental protection. The third summit in 2005 followed the same logic of sharing experience and discussing strategies. Local politicians and administrators discussed with tourism entrepreneurs and tourism academics in the first three summits, mostly by identifying vision and strategies, which were recorded in the three yearly cooperation declarations. Although the contents of the declarations were updated annually and brought the public and private members to a common ground for further cooperation, the actual performance of the tourism cooperation in the TCY region remained more a slogan than the practical results.

It was not until 2006 when the TCY Summit confronted an internal reform to develop actions that are more workable and make the contents of cooperation more practical. Since then, each summit has come up

with a clear theme, to guide all the discussions and presentations during the annual summit in the same direction. The 2006 summit was a grand summit in comparison to the previous ones. The numbers of the member cities increased from the original 15 to 18. The theme of the 2006 summit was 'to set up the six coordination mechanisms to realize the regional tourism integration'. In 2007, the fifth summit chose 'Integrated Tourism Marketing' as its theme. However, when reviewing the content of the declarations and the performances of the TCY Summit in 2006 and 2007, it was difficult to find real reforms. The internal reforms launched in 2006 and 2007 were superficial and symbolic. The so-called reform ended up like a word-game. There were no fundamental ideological and managerial changes in the cooperative mechanism. Evidenced by the two declarations, we found no significant differences in cooperation. For example, the six coordination mechanisms formulated in the 2006 'Jinhua Outlines' included the institutionalization mechanism of inter-city cooperation, the development mechanism of regional tourism products, the promotional mechanism of regional tourism, the sharing mechanism of regional tourism information, the evaluation mechanism of regional cooperation achievements, and the protection mechanism of the regional tourism environment. Compared to the 2004 Huangshan Consensus where the six specific sectors of cooperation were highlighted, the content of the 2006 Jinhua Outlines was more or less the same as that of the 2004 Huangshan Consensus. In other words, the 2006 Outline used different words to repeat the same strategies in the 2004 declaration.

The internal reform of the TCY summit started in 2008 when new development ideas and concrete workable approaches were incorporated into the cooperation declarations. Since then, in each summit several concrete measures to strengthen the interrelationships between the member cities have been introduced and put into practice. In 2008, the TCY region realized a 'three-hour' traffic circle due to the development of the regional transportation systems. The Shanghai World EXPO, an event viewed as a great opportunity for tourism development in Shanghai and its neighboring provinces and cities, was to be held in two years. To seize these opportunities, besides repeating the six previous field development strategies, the 2008 summit set a milestone by introducing three new initiatives of cooperation. The first concerned stimulating more inter-company partnerships of the member cities. The second con-

cerned developing and providing services that are more convenient to the two niche markets, including the individual tourist market and the local resident market. The third was concentrated on using the opportunities brought by the EXPO to develop more joint marketing activities.

**Figure 7.3**  
Some onsite pictures of the TCY Summit



Source: Downloaded from new.sohu.com 2010.

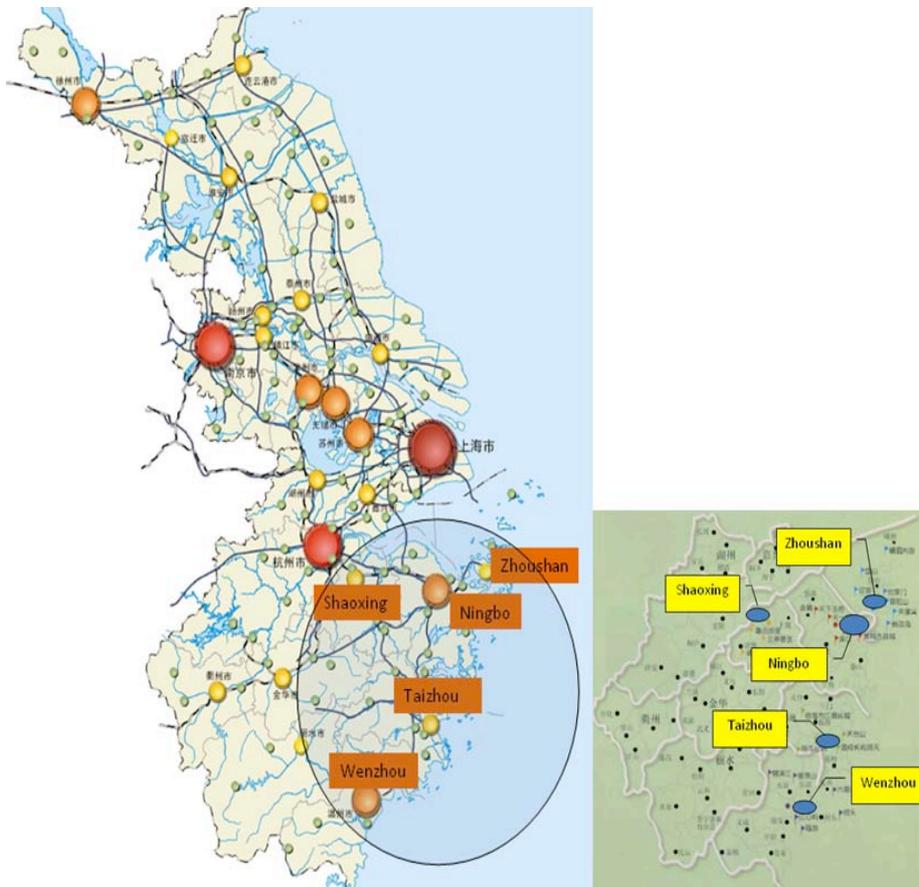
In 2009, the main theme of the TCY Summit was the 'Opportunities of the EXPO to the Inter-City Tourism Cooperation'. It was the first time in history when two concrete cooperative actions with clear statements of responsibilities of participants were incorporated into the annual cooperation declaration. The first concrete action of the cooperation was to integrate the information platforms of the 18 member-cities.

As stated in the 2009 declaration, member cities agreed to list the official tourism websites of the other cities on its own official tourism homepage in a visitor friendly way. Meanwhile member cities agreed to present in its public space (such as tourism information centres, airports, stations, hotels and attractions) the tourism promotional brochures of the other member cities. The second concrete action concerned jointly publishing a picture album entitled 'Visiting the EXPO, Experiencing the YRD region' and promoting the album accordingly home and abroad. Compared to the first action, only the second action had a clear deadline of operation: before 1 May 2010, the opening date of the Shanghai World EXPO 2010.

The 2010 Summit accelerated the internal reform of the TCY Summit. The theme of the 2010 summit 'Integration of tourism information in the post-EXPO era' was more focused compared to the previous ones. Four new initiatives were proposed and listed in the 2010 Wenzhou Declaration, the formulation of the master plan and action mechanisms integrating the tourism information platforms of the 18 member-cities, the set up of a *Cooperation Council* to guide the future performance of the TCY Summit, the set up of a holistic regional tourism web portal in at least four languages (Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean) and the mutual acceptance of city tour cards between member cities. These four initiatives were assumed to be launched in the coming years (still without clear deadlines). In addition, besides the regular agenda of the 2010 summit, one extra event 'Announcement Ceremony of the Top 20 Popular Regional Travel Lines' was added as the last programme of the annual TCY Summit. Jointly initiated by Hangzhou Tourism Bureau (the summit secretariat) and a private tourism enterprise 'CTrip' (the online travel reservation company), 92 regional travel lines were recommended by the 18 member-cities and seven 'observer' cities. On the website of the CTrip, one online voting campaign of those travel lines was organized, lasting for one month before the 2010 annual summit kicked off. Eventually 20 travel routes were listed as the top choices of tourists by up to 80,000 valuable votes. These travel lines covered various market segments, including leisure travel, business travel, cultural travel and natural travel. Compared to the regular programmes of the annual TCY conference, this additional programme brought more initiatives and generated positive reactions of tourism enterprises to participate in the summit. Considering its good performance and strong support from the private

sector, this additional ceremony has become a regular programme in the subsequent annual summits. The winners of the top 20 travel lines would be updated annually via the new-round online voting campaigns.

**Figure 7.4**  
Geographic local and scale of five member cities of the ZDN Alliance



Source: Adapted from the Master plan of the Yangtze River Delta region 2010.

## 7.2 Zhedongnan Tourism Alliance

The Zhedongnan tourism alliance is another case of regional tourism cooperative arrangements in China, operating at the inter-city level. The Zhedongnan (the ZDN) region consists of five cities. They are geographically adjacent to each other and account for about one-third of the land in the Zhejiang province (figure 7.4). Ningbo is an important port city and an economic engine of Zhejiang province. It is on the opposite side of Hangzhou Bay to Shanghai. A bridge constructed in late 2008 cut the driving distance between Ningbo and Shanghai to less than two hours. Ningbo borders Shaoxing to the west and Taizhou to the south, which was once a relatively inaccessible area before the large infrastructure restructurings in the late 1990s. Ningbo is separated from Zhoushan, a city consisting solely of 1,390 islands and 3,306 reefs by a narrow body of water (Yearly Statistics Report of Zhejiang province 2009). Wenzhou is in a mountainous region and since 2009; it has been linked to Ningbo by a fast train connection. Wenzhou is the birthplace of China's private economy and is known for its emigrants who leave their native land for Europe and the United States, with a reputation for being enterprising natives who start restaurants, retail and wholesale businesses in their adopted countries.

The ZDN region is an economic core of Zhejiang province. After three decades of reform and opening to the outside, it has undergone rapid economic growth (see table 7.1). The region began to grow at an accelerated pace at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century when a network of high-speed trains was constructed, which reduced travel time between the five cities to about 90 minutes (table 7.2).

**Table 7.1**  
*Per capita disposable income of urban residents of five cities*

City	Per capita disposable income of urban residents (Yuan)	National ranking
Ningbo	35446.47	13
Wenzhou	28097.32	27
Shaoxing	20282.59	51
Taizhou	17995.30	78
Zhoushan	11736.47	205

Source: Adapted from Gao 2011.

**Table 7.2**  
*Transportation connections of the five cities*

From Ningbo	To Shaoxing	To Zhoushan	To Taizhou	To Wenzhou
By fast-speed train*	1 hour	Not available	40 minutes	1.2 hour
By express way**	1.5 hour	1 hour	3 hours	4 hours

Source: Train information from <http://dongche.cncn.com/>; Expressway information from [maps.google.com](http://maps.google.com)

\* From Ningbo to Shaoxing is by Hangyong railway line. From Ningbo to Wenzhou and Taizhou is by Yongtaiwen railway line.

\*\* From Ningbo to Shaoxing is by Hangyong expressway. From Ningbo to Wenzhou and Taizhou is by Yongtaiwen expressway.

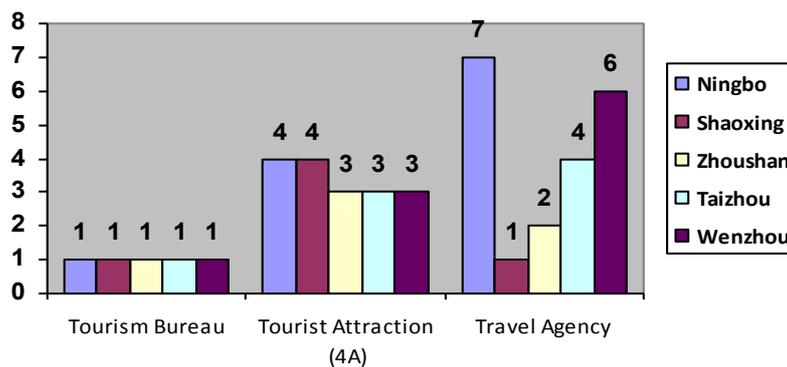
In 2009, the ZDN region shared up to three-fifths of the tourism market of Zhejiang province (Yearly Statistics Report of the Zhejiang province 2009). Private tourism enterprises are more active compared to other regions of China due to their ancient embedded entrepreneurial culture. However, the tourism industry of the ZDN region has encountered some challenges. First, five cities inside the ZDN region attracted many tourists, but not as many as some other cities in Zhejiang province (such as Hangzhou and Jiaxing). Most tourists to the ZDN region were short-haul travelers from neighboring cities. Second, the ZDN region had an image problem. Many people knew (and still know) the region and its member cities as industrial and transportation centres particularly heavy industries. However, they were unaware of the attractiveness of the tourist products in the ZDN region. In fact, there are national-level tourist attractions in the ZDN region, which complement each other: with Ningbo famous for its fashion, Wenzhou for its landscape, Zhoushan for its Buddhist culture, Shaoxing for its humanities and Taizhou for its vitality. However few outsiders knew of the region. Third, the tourist products provided by the five cities were fragmented. With gradually intensifying market competition brought by other cities or other regions, the individual power of a single city seemed too weak and fragile.

Therefore through simple logic, we find little difficulty understanding the rationale behind the cooperative initiatives of the five member cities to build on their strength and promote an integrated tourism brand of the ZDN region. The five cities began to cooperate in an irregular or informal way until the ZDN Alliance was jointly established in 2004.

This was one of the most substantial regional tourism cooperative organizations in China. Compared with the other forms of inter-city tourism cooperation such as the TCY Summit, the ZDN Alliance transformed the irregular structure into a regular formality.

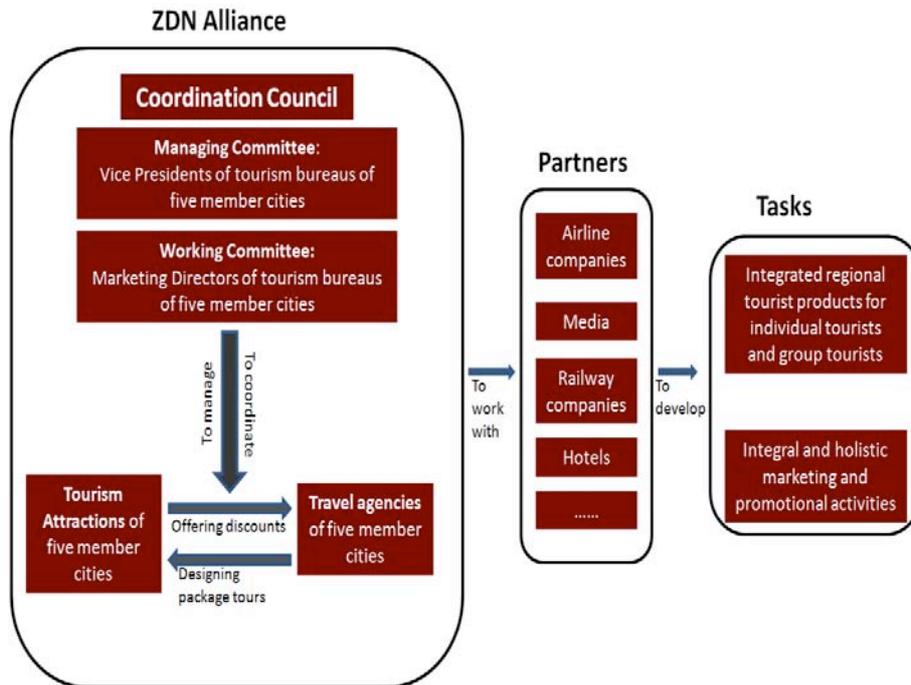
Initiated by the tourism bureau of Ningbo, the primary stakeholders involved in the ZDN Alliance were five tourism bureaus, 17 tourist attractions of 4A or 5A level<sup>5</sup>, and 20 travel agencies of the five member cities (see figures 7.5 and 7.6). The members jointly financed to maintain the daily operation of the alliance. The alliance was an independent foundation operating at arm’s length from the political administration. However, the link with the administration has been very strong: besides direct involvement of the tourism politicians, more than half of the funds of the alliance have come from the tourism bureaus of the member cities. In addition, the alliance has appointed several private companies as designated partners, including the 4-5 star hotels of the five member cities and some airlines or railway companies. The number of partner companies expanded annually. By cooperating with these partners, two main tasks of the alliance have been implemented, namely developing the integrated and diversified regional tourist products and marketing them in a holistic way.

**Figure 7.5**  
*Number of tourism bureaus and tourism companies of each member city involved in the ZDN Alliance*



Source: Based on the data from the promotional brochure of the ZDN Alliance 2010.

**Figure 7.6**  
*Institutionalized structure of the ZDN Alliance*



The public and private members of the alliance jointly signed an 'Internal Cooperation Agreement', which provided guidelines for further performance of the ZDN Alliance. The agreement not only laid down the 'market-oriented' principle of the cooperation, but also stipulated various workable areas, including product design and development, marketing, tourism hospitality services, tourism infrastructure, urban tourism functions, protection of tourists' rights and interests, tourism planning, project construction, information exchanges and mutual exchange of residents to tour the partner cities. To date, several cooperative arrangements of the ZDN Alliance have been carried out in the first two areas, aiming to open new long-haul tourist markets for the ZDN region. In other words, the five member cities of the ZDN region have cooperated to form an integrated ZDN tourism destination, to attract more tourists particularly from abroad.

According to the Internal Cooperation Agreement, the attractions in the member cities were responsible for providing special discounts to the member travel agencies. In return, the member travel agencies were to include member attractions into travel packages and to promote them. The tourism bureaus of the five cities mainly acted as coordinators for the coherent relations between the travel agencies and the attractions, or acted as managers for the maintenance and daily operation of the alliance. Thus, member travel agencies have jointly designed the diversified tour packages for both individual and group visitors, based on the resources offered by the 17 tourism attractions at the 4A or 5A level. The designed packages covered the various market segments, including traditional sightseeing, romance travel, sightseeing, Buddhist pilgrimage, historical tourism, golf and gourmet leisure. Relying on the improvement of the regional transportation systems, especially the regional fast railway systems, four regional 'fast-railway' travel packages were designed and promoted in 2010. In these, not only the group tourists benefitted but also the individual tourists could refer to and come up with independent travel ideas.

As indicated in the Internal Cooperation Agreement, the management unit of the ZDN Alliance was the *Coordination Council* (figure 7.6), which had two committees. The *Managing Committee* consisted of the Vice Presidents of the tourism bureaus of the five cities. It guarded the coherence of the operation of the alliance. The Marketing Directors of the tourism bureaus of the five member cities constituted the *Working Committee*, which was the main operational unit of the ZDN Alliance. The Working Committee was in charge of the regular management and maintenance issues of the ZDN Alliance, including formulating the annual action plans of jointly marketing activities, coordinating the promotional activities of the five member cities, tackling the problems of joint promotion, and managing the usage of joint funds, among others. Based on the 'annual-rotating-seat' principle, the leader of the Coordination Council was selected from the tourism bureaus of the five member cities. Such principle indicates that each year, one member city becomes the leader of the alliance, with its vice president of the tourism bureau becoming the leader of the Managing Committee and its marketing director of the tourism bureau taking the leadership in the Working Committee. Annually, the Working Committee organized an annual internal meeting at the end of the year, to relinquish the chair and to review the yearly

performance of the alliance. During such annual internal meeting, the successor chair introduces next year's working plan and budget arrangement plan. Meanwhile the annual best performance awards go to selected member travel agencies and tourism attractions.

**Figure 7.7**  
*Examples of the achievements of the ZDN Alliance*



Source: Promotional brochure of the ZDN Tourism Package 2010.

In addition to attending the various promotional events (such as international or domestic tourism fairs or exhibitions) to promote the integrated tourist products of the ZDN region, annually the Working Committee organized two different promotional events to market the jointly developed travel packages and promote the integrated regional tourism image (see figure 7.7). An integrated tourism-marketing slogan of the ZDN region became the 'Charming Landscape-China Golden Travel Routes'. Each year, different target markets were chosen. They were the long-haul domestic and international markets, including the PRD region with Hong Kong, Macao and Guangzhou as three major tourist origins<sup>6</sup> (for years 2004-6); the Bohai region with Beijing and Tianjin as two ma-

major target markets (year 2007); the central China area with Hubei, Jiangxi and Hunan provinces as three foci of promotion (years 2008 and 2009); the Fujian province (in the year of 2009); and the Southeast Asian markets. In 2010, instead of going to the target markets to promote, the ZDN Alliance invited tourist companies, railway companies, airlines and media to the ZDN region to experience the integrated regional tourist products onsite, followed by some on-site business-to-business communication meetings.

### **7.3 Projects Catalysed by the Shanghai World EXPO 2010**

Projects catalysed by the Shanghai World EXPO 2010 (the EXPO) show how an event catalysed the development of short-term projects of tourism cooperation at the inter-provincial level. Shanghai was the proud host of the World EXPO 2010, the mega event in the tradition of international fairs and expositions, celebrated in China ever since. The EXPO was held on both banks of the Huangpu River in the inner city of Shanghai from 1 May to 31 October 2010. In total, more than 250 countries and international organizations participated under the theme 'Better City, Better Life' (EXPO Bureau 2010). The EXPO grew to more than an exhibition. It became a show platform for Shanghai and the YRD region for sectors of the economy. For its sake, the significance of this event attracted the attention of Beijing. In December 2009, the State Council issued a statement claiming to 'seize the opportunities brought by the 2010 Shanghai World Expo to expand tourism'. As announced officially by the CNTA at the beginning of 2010, 'Visiting the World Expo' was not only a topic of common people, but also the theme of the year's China Tour. It was clear that the process of the tourism cooperation in the YRD region was accelerated by the EXPO event when the 2010 national plan set the YRD region as a national model for the development of regional tourism.

It proved that the EXPO offered the host city many opportunities to draw the attention of the national and international media to the YRD region. Furthermore, the organization of the EXPO created significant spill over to the region. By the end of the EXPO, more than 73 million people had visited, 5.8 per cent of them were international visitors (EXPO Bureau 2010). Asian visitors occupied the highest percentage (66.7%) followed by visitors from Europe (16.7%), America (12.4%),

Oceania (8.5%) and Africa (0.5%). Many tourists to Shanghai made subsequent tours to the YRD region, which directly stimulated the regional economy, as witnessed by the increase of seasonal turnover of regional scenic spots, hotels, restaurants and leisure places.

**Table 7.3**  
*General features of the three initiatives of inter-provincial tourism cooperation catalysed by the EXPO 2010*

<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>Project 1: Regional acceptance of the Shanghai City Tour Card</b>	
Features of the project	Value share; technical support	
Initiators of the project	Tourism bureaus of Shanghai, Zhejiang and Jiangsu province	
Leader of the project	Shanghai Tourism Bureau	
Tourism bureaus of different cities in the YRD region involved	Suzhou (Jiangsu province); Hangzhou, Shaoxing, Ningbo, Jiaxing (Zhejiang province)	
Types of tourism companies in the YRD region involved (with numbers)	Shops, hotels, attractions, public transport	
<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>Project 2: Set up of information sharing platforms of regional tourism</b>	
Features of the project	Information sharing	
Initiators of the project	Tourism bureaus of Shanghai, Zhejiang and Jiangsu province	
Leader of the project	Shanghai Tourism Bureau	
<b>Name of the project</b>	<b>Project 2: Set up of information sharing platforms of regional tourism</b>	
	Sub-project 1: Information sharing of hotel facilities	Sub-project 2: Information sharing of tour guides in minor languages
Tourism bureaus of different cities in the YRD region involved	Taizhou, Nantong, Yangzhou, Nanjing, Zhenjiang, Changzhou, Wuxi and Suzhou (Jiangsu province); Hangzhou, Ningbo, Jiaxing and Huzhou (Zhejiang province)	Nantong, Yangzhou, Nanjing, Zhenjiang, Changzhou, Wuxi and Suzhou (Jiangsu province); Hangzhou, Wenzhou, Ningbo, Jiaxing, Shaoxing and Taizhou (Zhejiang province)
Types of tourism companies in the YRD region involved (with numbers)	1-5 star hotels (998)	Travel agents or tour guide associations (113)

(Continued)

Table 7.3 (continuation)

Name of the project	Project 3: Official recommendation of regional tourist products		
Features of the project	Product integration; Integral and holistic marketing		
Initiators of the project	Tourism bureaus of Shanghai, Zhejiang and Jiangsu province		
Leader of the project	Shanghai Tourism Bureau		
Tourism bureaus of different cities in the YRD region involved	Sub-project 1: Demonstrated Tourism Attractions for EXPO Theme Experience	Sub project 2: High Quality Regional Tour Packages for EXPO Theme Experience	Sub-project 3: High Quality Regional Travel Packages offered by the locals
	All cities (25 in total)		All cities (25 in total)
Types of tourism companies in the YRD region involved (with numbers)	Tourist attractions (44 in Jiangsu province and 45 in Zhejiang province)	Hotels, travel agencies, catering, transport, etc.	Hotels, travel agencies, catering, transport, etc.

Before the EXPO, tourism suppliers to the YRD region were at best fragmented. Catalysed by the EXPO, the desire to provide qualified tourism packages and services to the YRD region and to develop the integral tourism image of the YRD region led to increased cooperative projects. Among the projects, those of prominence were the three joint initiatives<sup>7</sup> launched by the tourism bureaus of Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. Shanghai Tourism Bureau took the leadership role in all three initiatives due to its host city position of the EXPO. The tourism bureaus of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces shared a common desire to connect with Shanghai to stimulate growth in provincial tourism. Those initiatives catalysed by the EXPO came under the public sector and were more hierarchically top-down from the provincial level (guiding and steering) to the city level (operating). These three joint initiatives included regional acceptance of Shanghai Tour Cards, created by the regional tourism information sharing system and the official recommendation of the regional tourism products to EXPO visitors. They covered about the same as the cooperative areas listed by the TCY Summit on paper. However, they were much more proactive and practical in comparison with its predecessor: the hierarchically arranged TCY Summit. The general features of the three initiatives are in table 7.3.

The first prominent initiative catalysed by the EXPO was the regional acceptance of the Shanghai City Tour Card.<sup>8</sup> To serve the World Expo, Shanghai Tourism Bureau together with Shanghai Municipal Con-

struction and Transportation Commission, launched the Shanghai City Tour Card in June 2009. The card gave holders special discounts at more than 100 local stores, tourist attractions, restaurants, hotels and entertainment. The card was to integrate Shanghai's best tourist resources so that holders could know what is worth seeing. Meanwhile, the card could also be used to pay for the metro lines, buses, taxis and ferries. Thus, the convenience of access for tourists, especially international tourists in Shanghai improved. Since 2010, to provide conveniences to EXPO visitors, with support from the tourism bureaus of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, some tourism attractions in the five cities of the YRD region: Suzhou, Hangzhou, Shaoxing, Ningbo, Jiaxing (details in table 7.4) began to accept the cards. In the cities of Suzhou and Hangzhou, the card was used for public transport as well. Apparently, the success of this inter-provincial cooperative project depended on the recognition of the regional cities that mutual value could be generated by accepting the Shanghai City Tour Card in their local attractions and local tourism facilities. In addition, technical support for the attractions or tourism facilities in the other cities of the YRD region (since the card can only be used in the attractions and facilities with bank-linked POS machines)<sup>9</sup> was another prerequisite for the success of this project.

**Table 7.4**  
*Regional cities accepting use of the Shanghai City Tour Card*

Province	City	Member Companies			Public Transport Usage
		Hotels	Leisure Attractions	Shops	
Jiangsu	Suzhou	7	41	0	Yes
Zhejiang	Hangzhou	3	1	0	Yes
	Ningbo	8	2	0	No
	Jiaxing	13	2	71	No
	Shaoxing	0	6	1	No

Source: Adapted from the website of Shanghai City Tour Card: [www.sctcd.com](http://www.sctcd.com) 2010.

Before the EXPO, tourism information of the YRD region was largely absent from the official websites of the city or provincial tourism

bureaus in the YRD region. The second regional cooperative initiative is the set up of two tourism information platforms of the YRD region, including an online platform of regional hotel information and an online platform of regional tour guide information. The cooperation in developing integrated online platforms of regional tourism information was not a new topic in the YRD region.<sup>10</sup> However, due to the various reasons those integrated regional tourism information platforms had not been set up until catalysed by the EXPO. Following recommendations by the tourism bureaus of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, 998 hotels within 90 minutes driving distance from Shanghai were listed on the official homepage of the Shanghai Tourism Bureau in a visitor-friendly format (in Chinese only), covering 1 to 5 star hotels with detailed information such as room numbers, contact information and type of hotel. The second regional tourism information platform concerned the sharing of regional resources for tour guides in minor languages. In cooperation with the tourism bureaus of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, a joint online platform was set up on the official homepage of Shanghai Tourism Bureau in a visitor-friendly format. This platform was entitled the 'Resource Sharing Platform of Regional Tour Guides in Minor Languages'. The three provincial tourism bureaus formulated management guidelines and measures of this regional tour guide platform jointly. The members of this online regional tour guide platform were 113 travel agents or tour guide associations in the YRD region, covering more than 2000 registered professional tour guides in 16 minor languages. Information on the tour guides in minor languages available during the EXPO (usually presented as the addresses of the travel agencies where the tour guides worked) appeared on the official homepage of the Shanghai Tourism Bureau in Chinese. By reviewing the relevant information, travelers could contact the travel agencies directly. The service centre of the online tour-guide platform was set up inside the Education and Training department of Shanghai Tourism Bureau, which also provided free assistance to potential tourists.

After the EXPO, the first two inter-provincial cooperative initiatives catalysed by the EXPO event, as elaborated above, ended. However, the third short-term project catalysed by the EXPO sustained. Detailed explanation concerning the third project is as follows.

**Figure 7.8**  
Official website of Shanghai Tourism Bureau where two regional information platforms are listed on the homepage



Source: Official website of Shanghai Tourism Bureau, [lyw.sh.gov.cn](http://lyw.sh.gov.cn) 2010.

There was a significant shortage of integrated tour packages of the YRD region offered by the regional travel agencies, particularly high-quality packages. Supervisions and administrations of regional tourism markets were deficient as well. Illegal practices by uncertified tour operators and service companies, or bullying and cheating behavior still existed. Meanwhile, many outsiders retain an outdated or very limited picture of the tourism products offered in the YRD region. Tourists from outside of the region perceived few of the cities in the YRD region as favorable tourist destinations. Outsiders associated the other cities in the YRD region with the manufacturing industry or obsolete infrastructures, with poor weather or duplicated modern 'American-style' city landscapes. Actually, thanks to investments and protections, far more cities in the YRD region have developed attractive tourist products. Since most cities in the YRD region were little known to outsiders, it negatively affected the integral tourism image of the YRD region both home and abroad. The

EXPO brought a particular opportunity to tackle those challenges, in view of the increased number of tourists visiting the EXPO and the YRD region.

In this context, the third short-term cooperative initiative was introduced. It was the most prominent inter-provincial cooperative project catalysed by the EXPO where the public and private efforts concentrated. This project concerned the official recommendations of the high-quality regional attractions and tour packages to the EXPO visitors (both individual and group travelers). There were three objectives of this project, including identifying and recommending high-quality tourism products (tourism attractions and tour packages) of the YRD region to EXPO visitors; setting up and strengthening the integrated tourism image of the YRD region; and setting up examples for other tourism cooperative activities of other Chinese regions in the future.

Initiators of this project were the tourism bureaus of Shanghai, Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces. Besides these three public initiators, primary stakeholders involved in this cooperative project included tourism companies, especially large scale, from the 25 cities<sup>11</sup> of the YRD region. This project spanned almost two years, from the end of 2008 to the end of 2010 when the EXPO event closed. Eventually, three main achievements of this project were obtained, including the promotion of regional high-quality attractions, the development and promotion of regional travel packages offered by travel agencies in Shanghai, and the promotion of regional travel packages offered by travel agencies in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. Shanghai Tourism Bureau was responsible for the promotion of these three achievements. Information was provided via the website of the Shanghai Tourism Bureau in four languages (Chinese, English, Japanese and Korean).<sup>12</sup> Shanghai Travel Times, as the only appointed national-wide newspaper, explained in detail the content of these achievements. Inside the EXPO, visitors received information on the achievements from one column of the EXPO map: 'To find and experience the beauty of the YRD region'. All three achievements fulfilled the 'high-quality' requirement jointly formulated by three provincial tourism bureaus.<sup>13</sup> The detailed explanations of these three achievements are as follows.

The first achievement concerned the promotion of high-quality tourism attractions in the YRD region. After several rounds of internal meetings between the three provincial tourism bureaus, 25 local tourism bu-

reaus and relevant tourist companies (e.g. hotels, travel agencies and tourist attractions), in 2008 and 2009, the Shanghai Tourism Bureau officially recommended to EXPO visitors up to 96 high-quality regional attractions, which fit into the theme of the EXPO, 'Better City Better Life'. These attractions were entitled the 'Demonstrated Tourism Attractions for the EXPO Theme Experience', covering all 25 cities of the YRD region and falling into various categories: nature, leisure, culture, shopping, business, adventure among others. These items were officially promoted to EXPO visitors since December 2009.

The second achievement concerned developing and promoting several high-quality travel packages of the YRD region, which incorporated the 96 high-quality regional tourism attractions (the first achievement). The Shanghai Tourism Bureau officially appointed three local travel agencies in Shanghai (Shanghai Dazhong International Travel Service, China-SSS and SH-Holiday) to design and operate some high-quality tour packages. Before being introduced to the EXPO visitors, the travel packages were evaluated based on five indicators introduced by the Shanghai Tourism Bureau, including the unified standards of bus transports, catering services, accommodations and package prices; the theme of the EXPO; the experience; the diversity; and the quality. Therefore, ten tour packages entitled 'High Quality Regional Tour Packages for EXPO Theme Experience' were designed and recommended officially to the public. These travel packages covered about one-third of the 96 recommended high-quality regional attractions.

The third achievement also connected promoting several high-level travel packages of the YRD region. Via the support of the tourism bureaus of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, the Shanghai Tourism Bureau invited tour operators from Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces to recommend 55 regional tour packages. These packages needed years of operational experience, with good reputations and operated by the local travel agencies. These packages were renamed the 'High Quality Regional Travel Packages offered by the locals'. Similar to the ten newly designed tour packages offered by tour operators in Shanghai, quality is the value of the brand of these 55 tour packages.

After the EXPO, the third cooperative project, namely, the official recommendation of the high-quality regional attractions and tour packages was sustained. It has transformed into an annual event called the 'Award Ceremony of Yearly Most Popular Regional Attractions and Re-

gional Travel Packages'. The ultimate goal of this event is to create an integral and holistic tourism image of the YRD region. The first annual event was in November 2010, one month after the EXPO hosted by the tourism bureaus of Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. By referring to the indicators such as the popularity, number of tourists, reputation and service quality, tourists voted for the three achievements of the third project (96 regional attractions, 55 tour packages offered by local travel agencies and 10 tour packages offered by travel agencies from Shanghai) via newspapers or the official homepages of the tourism bureaus of the three provinces. The results were determined based on the votes and the opinions of experts, particularly university scholars. Eventually, 20 popular regional attractions and ten popular regional travel packages were awarded at the first 'post-EXPO' event. The winners not only held the award for a year, but also enjoyed three-year free (inter)national marketing offers from the tourism bureaus of the three provinces. These events, as successors of the third short-term regional tourism cooperative project catalysed by the EXPO, were to be held annually by tourism bureaus of Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> As discussed in chapter 3, in the study, 'cities' include prefectural-level cities and city-provinces. In this case, 15 cities include 14 prefectural-level cities and Shanghai city-province.

<sup>2</sup> Detailed explanation of these inter-city conferences can be found in Luo and Shen (2009).

<sup>3</sup> As discussed, the summit organizers were the tourism bureaus of the 18 member cities.

<sup>4</sup> Including cities of Huangshan, Chizhou, Xuancheng, Chuzhou, Wuhu in Anhui province and cities of Shangrao, Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province.

<sup>5</sup> China National Tourism Administration issues the national standard to rank the quality of domestic tourist attractions, from the lowest level (A level) to the highest level (5A level).

<sup>6</sup> A tourist origin means a destination where (potential) tourists come from.

<sup>7</sup> The general features of these initiatives are listed in table 7.4 at the end of this chapter.

<sup>8</sup> Website of the Shanghai City Tour Card: [www.sctcd.com](http://www.sctcd.com), but only in Chinese. The Shanghai City Tour Card is similar to some European city cards, such as the Amsterdam Tour Card, the Venice Tour Card.

<sup>9</sup> A POS machine is a point of sale/service machine used to conduct retail transactions. It can provide services such as credit card processing, check reading and cash transactions ([www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com) 2010). This device can be found in many tourism-related facilities in China, including tourism attractions, hotels, restaurants, grocery stores, gas stations, metros, etc.

<sup>10</sup> Detailed discussions can be found in section 7.1 about the cooperation declarations of the TCY Summit.

<sup>11</sup> In total, there are 24 prefectural-level cities in the YRD region. In this cooperative initiative, all 24 cities participated. The reason why '25 cities' is because as discussed in chapter 3, in this study 'cities' include prefectural-level cities and city-provinces. Therefore in this case, 25 cities include 24 prefectural-level cities and Shanghai city-province.

<sup>12</sup> The website is [lyw.sh.gov.cn](http://lyw.sh.gov.cn).

<sup>13</sup> Three provincial tourism bureaus jointly formulated some 'high-quality' conditions that the tourism attractions and tour packages should meet (obligatory conditions) or should try to meet (recommended or preferred conditions).

## 8

# Confronting Contextual Factors with the Case Studies

In this chapter, we present our analysis of the effectiveness of three cases of tourism cooperation in the YRD region. The aim of this analysis is to test the first four propositions concerning the impact of four contextual factors on the performance of regional tourism cooperation in China. The chapter follows these four propositions as presented in chapter 6: consistency between the political-economic features of tourism of involved destinations and the goal of cooperation (P1); detailed commitment of primary stakeholders' engagement (P2); leadership accepted by primary stakeholders (P3); balance of collective and individual motives (P4). For each proposition, we begin with a review of the main findings from the three cases, followed by a general analysis comparing the experiences in the three cases. Eventually, each section concludes with discussions based on the desk study, semi-structured interviews and survey results. If necessary, we refer the reader to chapter 6 for more detailed information about the indicators to evaluate the propositions and chapter 7 for background information about the three cases.

### 8.1 Consistency between the Political-Economic Features of Tourism and the Goal of Cooperation

The first factor that can increase the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation concerns the consistency between the political-economic features of tourism<sup>1</sup> and the goal of regional tourism cooperation. What can we learn from the three cases?

As discussed in chapter 4, the Destination Life Cycle Diagram (Butler 1980) is a suitable concept to explain the differences in the economic features of tourism for destinations involved in the cooperation. The number of tourists is an indicator (figure 8.1).<sup>2</sup> The 18 member-cities of the TCY Summit had different capacities to receive tourists. The types of

tourists these cities intended to attract were also different. However, all 18 member-cities shared a common wish, namely, to attract more tourists by competing with the others. Among the 18 cities, Shanghai was in the consolidation stage as reflected in the Destination Life Cycle Diagram. Shanghai received the largest number of tourists (approximately 129.9 million) in 2009, had the lowest growth rate of annual tourists (between 30-40% from 2005 to 2009), and the visitor carrying capacity of Shanghai was approaching the limit. Similar to the other cities in the consolidation stage of the cycle, Shanghai intended to receive more balanced economic and social benefits from tourism by attracting more diversified categories of tourists: not only attracting leisure tourists, but also attracting business and event tourists among others. Hangzhou in Zhejiang province and Suzhou in Jiangsu province were between the development and consolidation stages of the cycle. Both cities received more than 53 million tourists in 2009. From 2005 to 2009, both cities experienced growth rates of more than 55 per cent. Similar to Shanghai, both cities intended to develop a variety of tourist products to attract more leisure and business tourists. However, unlike Shanghai, both cities prioritized strengthening destination brands. The other 15 member-cities were in the development stage of the cycle. Each city attracted less than 40 million tourists in 2009. However, unlike the three cities (e.g. Shanghai, Hangzhou and Suzhou), the 15 cities enjoyed the relatively high growth rates of tourists from 2005 to 2009, with eight cities between 61-90 per cent and seven cities more than 90 per cent (table 8.1). Since their visitor carrying capacity were far from being reached, to attract more mass tourists appeared to be a common objective of these 15 cities.

As described in chapter 7, five member cities of the ZDN Alliance were members of the TCY Summit as well. All of them were in the third stage of the Destination Life Cycle diagram (the stage of development, see figure 8.1). Each member city attracted less than 30 million tourists in 2009. The annual growth rates of tourists in the five member cities from 2005 to 2009 were relatively high, with three cities between 61-90 per cent and two cities more than 90 per cent (see table 8.1). Hence, unlike the member cities of the TCY Summit, the five member cities of the ZDN Alliance had a similar willingness and capacities to receive tourists. The types of tourists the cities intended to attract were also similar, and the visions of the five member cities to develop tourism were coherent

as well. All the cities intended to attract more tourists to their own city destination by competing with the others.

The EXPO is a modality of tourism cooperation at the inter-provincial level, including three provinces of the YRD region, namely, Shanghai city-province, Zhejiang province and Jiangsu province. Comparing the number of tourists, Shanghai was the least visited province with approximately 129.9 million tourists in 2009<sup>3</sup> and the lowest growth rate (35.54%) of tourists from 2005 to 2009. Jiangsu province was the most visited province in 2009 with 302.83 million international and domestic tourists paid visits, resulting in a growth rate of 71.94 per cent from 2005 to 2009. Zhejiang province attracted 249.8 million visitors in 2009, with a growth rate of 90.6 per cent from 2005 to 2009. With the carrying capacity approaching saturation, the potential possibility for Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces to share visitor carrying capacity of Shanghai became apparent with the EXPO bringing more than 73 million visitors within six months to the Shanghai destination (equal to more than 24% of total visitors to Shanghai in 2009).

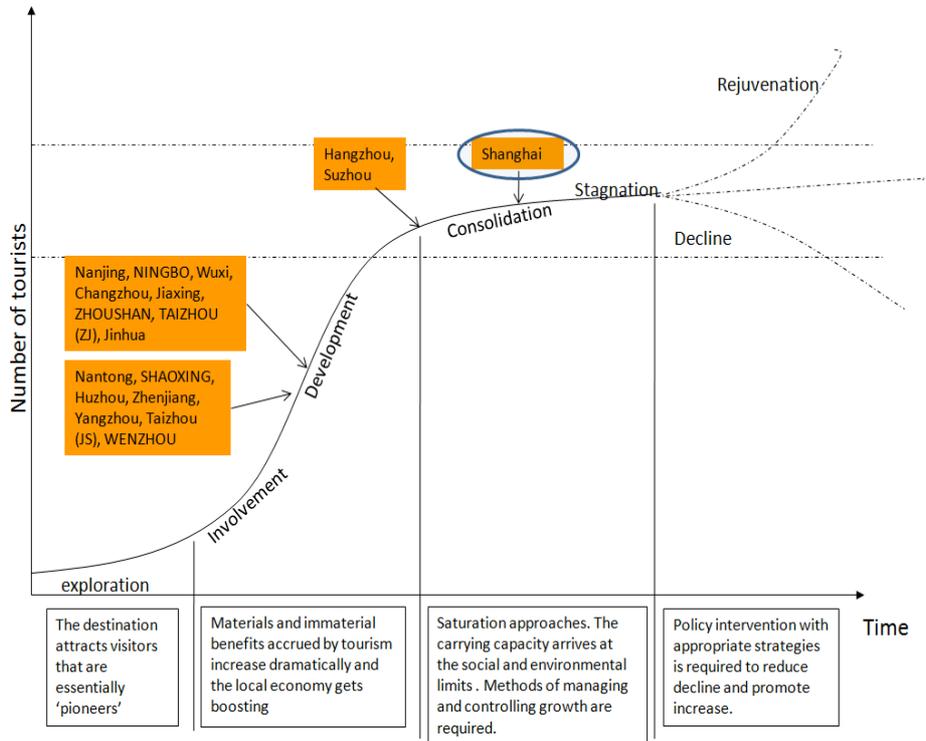
The second political-economic feature of tourism concerns the political position of a destination's tourism authority in its corresponding political administration, reflected by the tourism contribution to a destination's GDP and the name of a destination's tourism authority. In the TCY Summit, nearly all of the tourism authorities of the 18 member-cities had relatively low political positions in the city's administrations.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 8.1**  
**Growth rates of tourists of 18 member-cities of the TCY Summit and 5 member-cities (highlighted in Capitals) of the ZDN Alliance**

The growth rate of tourists from 2005 to 2009	30-40%	41-60%	61-90%	91->100%
City	Shanghai	Hangzhou, Suzhou	Nanjing, NINGBO, Wuxi, Changzhou, Jiaxing, ZHOUSHAN, TAIZHOU(ZJ), Jinhua	Nantong, SHAOXING, Huzhou, Zhenjiang, Yangzhou, Taizhou (JS), WENZHOU
Average tourist number in 2009 (unit: million)	129.90	57.07	37.53	33.91

Source: Yearbooks of Statistics Bureaus of relevant cities 2006-2010; Yearbook of Statistics Bureau of Zhejiang province 2009.

**Figure 8.1**  
18 member-cities of the TCY Summit and 5 member-cities (highlighted in Capitals) of the ZDN Alliance on the Destination Life Cycle Diagram

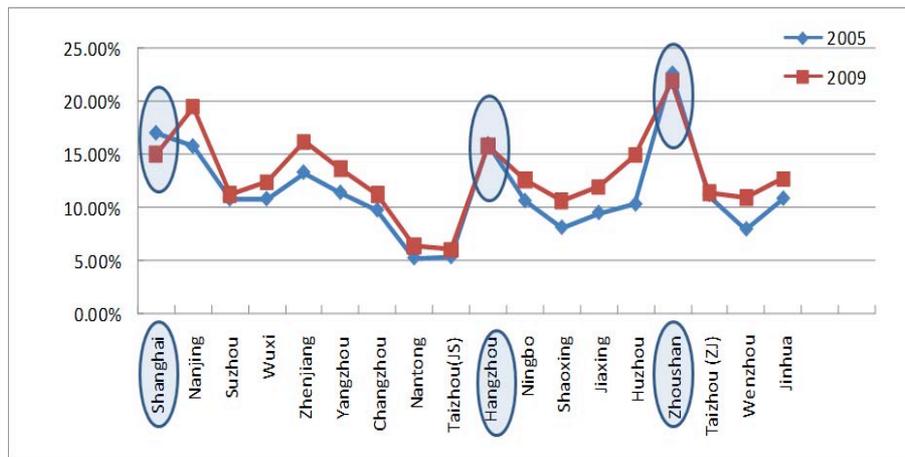


Source: Adapted from Butler 1980; Russo 2002; Van der Borg 1991, 2008; Walker et al. 1999.

First, from 2005 to 2009, tourism contributions to the GDPs decreased in Shanghai, Hangzhou and Zhoushan. The opposite pattern was found in the other 15 member-cities of the TDY Summit (figure 8.2). However, regardless of the decrease or increase, the GDP share of the tourism industry in all 18 member-cities of the TCY Summit was less than 20 per cent, with a majority staying below 15 per cent. This hardly implied that tourism industries in the member cities of the TCY Summit had no future, but it did reflect the status quo: 1) tourism was not the leading pillar industry in the member cities of the TCY Summit; 2) the positions of tourism authorities were not particularly strong within the cities' administrations; 3) a city government might put more emphasis on

the other pillar industries than the tourism industry; 4) a guarantee that the advice of a tourism authority could be adopted by a city’s government or by the other political stakeholders.

**Figure 8.2**  
 Per cent of tourism revenue of member cities’ GDPs in 2009  
 (the TCY Summit)

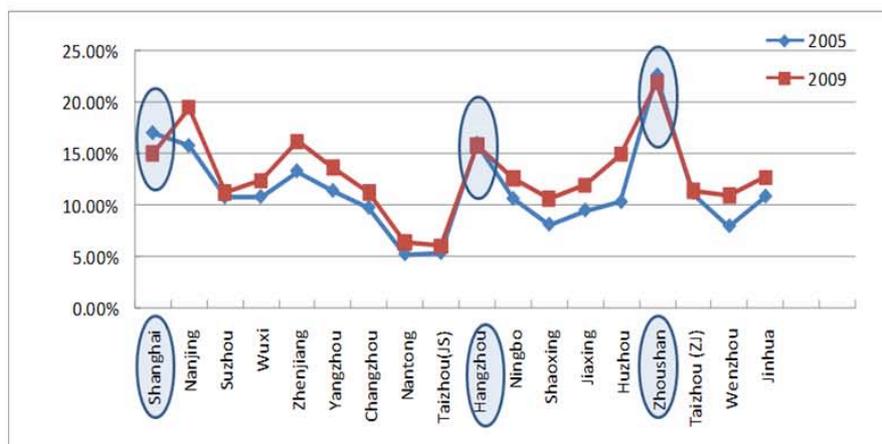


Source: Based on the Yearbooks of the relevant city-level Statistics Bureaus 2010.

Second, as discussed in chapter 4 if a destination’s tourism authority is called the ‘Tourism Council’ instead of the ‘Tourism Bureau’, this means that the president of such an organization is at least one of the vice governors of a destination. Such an organization has one standing board to erase bureaucratic obstacles, given the fact that the members of such boards include directors of a destination’s Civil Affairs Bureau, Financial Bureau, Construction Bureau, Transportation Bureau, Cultural Bureau, Land Resource Bureau, Bureau of Parks and Woods, and other county (district) level governments. Hence, compared with the Tourism Bureau, the Tourism Council has more power to influence political decisions. In this sense, the name of a tourism authority of a Chinese destination can reflect, to some extent, the political position of such tourism authority in its corresponding government administration. In fact, among the 18 member cities of the TCY Summit, only three cities from

Zhejiang province (e.g. Hangzhou, Zhoushan and Shaoxing) had tourism councils. Instead, a majority (13 cities) had tourism bureaus. Nanjing is a pioneering city, which incorporated Nanjing Tourism Bureau with the Bureau of Parks and Woods and set up in 2010 a new tourism authority called 'Bureau of Tourism, Parks and Woods'. However, since this initiative only involved one aspect of tourism (parks and woods), it made no contributions for generating smooth communication and eliminating bureaucratic obstacles between the tourism authority and the other parallel political bureaus of Nanjing.

**Figure 8.3**  
Per cent of tourism revenue of member cities' GDPs in 2009  
(the ZDN Alliance)

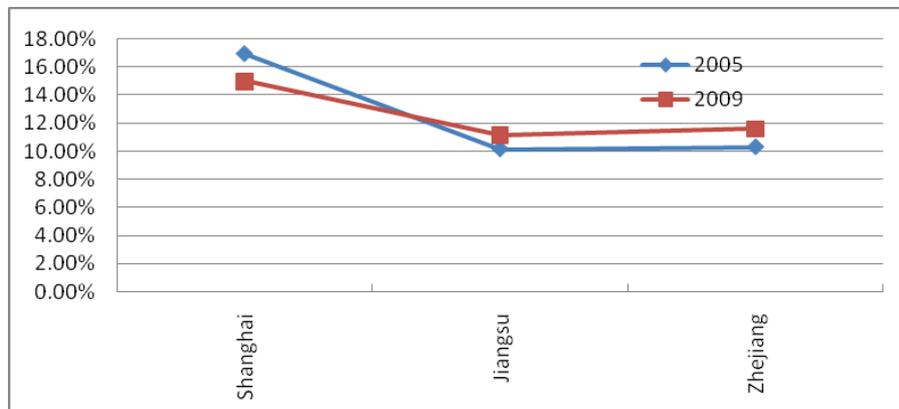


Source: Based on the Yearbooks of the relevant city-level Statistics Bureaus 2010.

In the ZDN Alliance, Zhoushan was an exception. Among the five member-cities, the tourism in Zhoushan enjoyed a relatively strong political position, with regard to the name of its tourism authority (the Tourism Council) and relatively high tourism contribution to the city's GDP (more than 25% in 2009). On the contrary, less than 20 per cent of the contributions of Tourism to the city's GDPs and the naming of the tourism authorities ("Tourism Bureau") reflect the relatively weak political positions of tourism in the other four member cities (figure 8.3). The

EXPO case was consistent with the ZDN Alliance: all the tourism authorities of the three provinces ('Tourism Bureau') are not in relatively strong political positions in their corresponding administrations (figure 8.4).

**Figure 8.4**  
Per cent of tourism revenue of member provincial GDPs in 2009 (the EXPO)



Source: Based on data of Yearbooks of relevant provincial-level Statistics Bureaus 2010.

The third political-economic feature of tourism concerns the operational capacity of the Tourism Bureau to participate in regional tourism cooperation. Tourism bureaus of the 18 member-cities of the TCY Summit share some organizational features. 1) As indicated in the survey results, 50 informants out of 52 claimed that a city-level tourism industry association behaved as an affiliated subsidiary of a city's tourism bureau instead of as an independent agency. 2) There were usually several departments in the Chinese Tourism Bureau, covering the daily business including the internal administration, tourism policy and legal affairs, tourism marketing and promotion, tourism information and public services, tourism planning and statistics, internal human resources, tourism education and training, tourism quality control, and so on. Forty-seven informants out of 52 confirmed the presence of loose interactions between the departments within the Tourism Bureau. 3) Relatively few personnel of a city's tourism bureau: maximum five staff members in each

department. All of the informants complained about lacking enough manpower to work on regional tourism cooperative arrangements. 4) Considering the work experience of the staff members in the Tourism Bureau, from the interviews we got the impression that half of the staff members had more than 20 years work experience. However, the years of work do not equal the expertise or the effectiveness of working. Due to the Chinese situation (domestic tourism education started in 1979),<sup>5</sup> the knowledge level of the staff members still needs further improvement. This statement was confirmed by the survey results where 42 informants out of 52 indicated absence of enough expertise of tourism administrators involved in the cooperation of TCY Summit.

No matter where they were at the city or the provincial level, all the tourism bureaus involved in the ZDN Alliance and the EXPO cooperation have encountered similar organizational and operational challenges as those in the TCY Summit: lack of manpower (supported by all the informants of the ZDN Alliance and the EXPO), lack of creativity and effectiveness of work experience (supported by 13 informants out of 14 in the ZDN Alliance and 61 out of 66 in the EXPO), the loose interaction between the departments of the Tourism Bureau (supported by all the informants in the ZDN Alliance and 60 out of 66 in the EXPO), and insufficient performance of the Tourism Industry Association (supported by all the informants in the ZDN Alliance and 64 out of 66 in the EXPO).

As discussed in chapter 6, since the secondary data of the three cases are insufficient, we use the opinions of the primary stakeholders (gathered via survey) as an important supplement to our understanding about the relationship between the first factors (the political-economic features of tourism) to the effectiveness of cooperation. Table 8.2 shows the relevant survey results. Informants are asked to validate the statements by choosing one of the three possible answers: agree (A), disagree (D) and no opinion (NO). All the statements in table 8.2 were designed explicitly for public stakeholders, namely political officials and administrators from relevant tourism bureaus. Most public informants are involved in at least two of the three cases. However, they were asked to answer the questions case by case instead of giving the general perspectives on all the cases they've been involved in.

**Table 8.2**  
*Statements concerning the first factor (political-economic features of tourism) and the effectiveness of the cooperation*

Statements	TCY Summit			ZDN Alliance			EXPO		
	A	D	NO	A	D	NO	A	D	NO
The cooperation can help the destination to attract more tourists	2	46	4	14	0	0	62	0	4
Obstacles occur if the cooperation goes beyond the Tourism Bureau and involves other Political Bureaus	50	1	1	14	0	0	58	3	5
Obstacles occur if the cooperation challenges the current operational capacity of the Tourism Bureau	49	2	1	13	0	1	56	5	5
The Tourism Bureau is strongly interested in the cooperation.	1	47	4	14	0	0	62	2	2
The content of the cooperation is vague or symbolic rather than being realistic	51	0	1	0	14	0	0	62	4

Source: Based on the survey

Note: The 'destination' in the TCY Summit and the ZDN Alliance refers to the city, while in the EXPO case it refers to the province.

We draw the following conclusions from the case studies concerning the first proposition.

First, destinations involved in the three cases had different capacities to receive different types of tourists. However, they all intended to attract more tourists to their own destinations by competing with each other. We have identified the economic features of these destinations involved in the three cases. If the cooperation ignores these economic features and is designed to achieve a unified goal by harming individual interests, the effectiveness of cooperation can hardly be achieved. The TCY Summit is a bad example in that sense. At first glance, the ultimate goal of the TCY Summit was promising: to develop the YRD region into the first 'barrier-free' integral tourism region in China. If we take a closer look, we realize that 'barrier-free' has another meaning as a complete opening of the tourist markets to other member cities, indicating that tourism identities and competitiveness of the relatively less attractive cities may be compromised or even diluted if the tourism transportation systems and the tourism markets of the TCY region were integrated. These worries were confirmed by the words of many city administrators

during our interviews: ‘the cooperative activities agreed on the TCY Summit seemed to share our original “cakes”<sup>6</sup> instead of bringing new cakes for us’. The sentence reflected the passive attitude of the public primary stakeholders involved in the TCY Summit. Consequently, the actual performance of the TCY Summit remained largely a slogan rather than visible achievements. The survey results further support our deduction (from the interviews) about the negative performance of the TCY Summit. A significant majority of the informants (47 out of 52) hardly showed a positive attitude towards the TCY cooperation. The majority of the informants (51 out of 52) claimed that the content of the TCY cooperation was vague or symbolic rather than practical or realistic, and 46 informants out of 52 lost their confidence in the TCY cooperation and did not believe that the TCY cooperation could bring them more tourists.

However, the ZDN Alliance and the EXPO show the opposite. The ultimate goal of the ZDN Alliance was confined explicitly to opening new long-haul tourist markets for the member cities both at home and abroad. In other words, the ZDN cooperation used the power of scale to bring more tourists and more economic value to the individual member cities. Compared to the TCY Summit, this approach introduced by the ZDN Alliance was in line with the economic features of the member cities of the ZDN Alliance. It avoided destructive competition between the member cities and created a new arena for the cities to cooperate. In that sense, the ZDN Alliance was not a cooperation to share the ‘original’ cakes but to create ‘new’ cakes for the member cities. The survey results further showed the effective performance of the ZDN cooperation. All informants indicated that there were active participative reactions of the city-level tourism bureaus in the ZDN Alliance and the content of the ZDN cooperation was practical and realistic. In addition, all informants believed that the ZDN cooperation has helped the member cities to attract more tourists.

The ultimate objective of the EXPO cooperation was to provide the qualified integrated tourist packages and services of the YRD region to the more than 73 million EXPO visitors. Similar to the ZDN Alliance, this approach also created a new arena for the member provinces to cooperate. In turn, it well avoided the destructive competition between the member provinces and cities. This was also reflected in the survey results where the dominant opinions of the informants (62 out of 66) revealed

the positive attitude of the member tourism bureaus of the EXPO cooperation, the realistic content of the EXPO cooperation, and positive feedback of the EXPO cooperation (e.g. increase in number of tourists in the three provinces during the EXPO event).

Second, a significant majority of the informants of the three cases support the statement that ‘obstacles occur if the cooperation modality goes beyond the Tourism Bureau and involves the other Political Bureaus’ (50 informants out of 52 in the TCY Summit, all in the ZDN Alliance and 62 informants out of 66 in the EXPO). Most of the tourism authorities of the destinations in the three cases have relatively low political positions in the corresponding government administrations. If the cooperation required the involvement of the other Political Bureaus, the effectiveness of the cooperation was much more difficult to achieve, primarily because the Tourism Bureau did not have strong negotiation or coordination power. The TCY Summit is the worst of the three cases in that sense. To realize the ultimate goal of the TCY Summit, the involvement of the other parallel Political Bureaus was requested. The presence of the obstacle-free relations between the Tourism Bureau and the Political Bureau was also required. However, given the current political features of most member cities involved in the TCY Summit, those requirements have hardly been achieved. As a consequence, the tourism bureaus involved in the TCY Summit gradually showed their passive reactions to the participation, which led most of the arrangements of the TCY cooperation to be intention only. The survey results also confirmed some negative performance of TCY Summit (see the last two rows of table 8.2).

The ultimate goal of the ZDN Alliance well avoided the potential conflicts between the requirements of cooperation and the reality of the political positions of the Tourism Bureau. The goal set the margins for the cooperative activities to the joint development of new long-haul tourist markets. Therefore the cooperative arrangements were confined to the marketing departments of the city-level tourism bureaus. There were no requirements for the direct involvement of the other Political Bureaus of a city’s government administration. Similar to the ZDN Alliance, the EXPO cooperation confined the cooperation to the daily business of the tourism bureaus only, which is in accordance with the current political feature of the provincial tourism bureaus: their relatively low political positions in the corresponding government administrations. As

a consequence, both the ZDN Alliance and the EXPO enjoyed the positive feedback. The survey result addressed some positive performances as well (see the last two rows of table 8.2).

Third, a majority of the informants (49 out of 52 in the TCY Summit; 13 out of 14 in the ZDN Alliance; 56 out of 66 in the EXPO) claimed that obstacles occur if the cooperation modality challenges the current operational capacity of the Tourism Bureau. By far most of the tourism authorities of the destinations involved in the three cases lacked the manpower, creativity and effectiveness. The loose interactions between the departments of the Tourism Bureau and the insufficient performance of the Tourism Industry Association also exist. The TCY Summit is the worst of the three cases in that sense. The realization of the ultimate goal of the TCY Summit needed the cooperation to be arranged mainly in the six fields of tourism integration of the TCY region, including transportation, industry, markets, information systems, mechanisms and environment. This went beyond the affairs of a single department of the Tourism Bureau, and required collaboration of more than one department of the tourism bureaus and the independent performance of the city-level tourism industry associations. However, the reality disappointed these requirements, which eventually led to some passive performance of the TCY cooperation: cooperation became a byword for good intentions. A majority of the opinions of the informants also reflected some negative performance of the TCY Summit (see the last two rows of table 8.2).

The ZDN Alliance is the best example of the three cases in this sense. It avoided the potential conflicts between the requirements of cooperation and the reality of the operational capacity of the city-level Tourism Bureau. There were no requirements indicated in the ultimate goal of the ZDN cooperation to involve directly the tourism industry associations and the other departments of the tourism bureaus of the member cities of the cooperation. Moreover, the ZDN cooperation well combined the joint efforts of the five marketing departments of the tourism bureaus of member cities to develop new markets, which could hardly be achieved by the individual efforts of a single marketing department of each member tourism bureau. By doing this, the manpower and wisdom of the five marketing departments of tourism bureaus became integrated. Some effective performance of the ZDN cooperation was addressed in the survey results (see the last two rows of table 8.2).

Under the requirements of the ultimate goal of the EXPO, the cooperation was expected to be arranged in the areas of tourism marketing, tourism training, tourism industry management and tourism information. Relevant departments of the provincial and city-level tourism bureaus were involved. However, unlike the TCY Summit, the EXPO cooperation set up the margins to confine the cooperation within the single-functional departments of the member tourism bureaus instead of across the different functional departments of the tourism bureaus. Therefore, some performance of the EXPO cooperation enjoyed more positive feedback than the TCY Summit (see the last two rows of table 8.2).

The three cases help us understand that the performance of cooperation can be more effective only if the cooperation respects the political-economic features of tourism of involved destinations. Therefore, all our observations in the three cases do *not* lead to the rejection of the first proposition (P1) stating that *consistency between the political-economic features of tourism of involved cities and the goal of cooperation increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*. Effectiveness of the regional tourism cooperation can hardly be achieved if the ultimate goal of the cooperation goes far beyond the reality □ the political-economic features of tourism. The tourist numbers, the tourism contribution to GDP, the political position of the Tourism Bureau in the corresponding political administration, and the operational capacity of the Tourism Bureau can be used to reflect these features.

From the interviews and the survey, we have identified some general political-economic features of tourism of the destinations involved in the three Chinese cases, including the existence of intense competition between destinations to attract more tourists, the relatively low political position of a destination's tourism bureau in the corresponding administration, and the poor operational capacity of a destination's tourism bureau. Meanwhile we have also found that compared to the economic features of tourism of the involved destinations, the consistency of the goal of cooperation and the operational capacity or the political communication power of tourism bureaus of involved destinations has been ignored by practitioners in China. Thus in turn has brought negative impact to the effective performance of the cases. In this sense, such absence should be paid more attention in the future when discussing the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

Combining the discussions above, we incorporate the empirical results concerning proposition P1 and translate this proposition, which is formulated on the basis of the literature, into a more precise statement particularly for the Chinese situation, noting that consistency between the political-economic features of tourism of involved destinations and the goal of cooperation, *especially the consistency between the goal of the cooperation and the operational capacity or the political communication power of involved tourism bureaus* increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

## 8.2 Detailed Commitment of Primary Stakeholders' Engagement

Trust between stakeholders and trust in the cooperative arrangement are essential to improve the effectiveness of Chinese regional tourism cooperation. As discussed in chapter 4, we assume that the commitment of stakeholders, especially of primary stakeholders, can strengthen the trust. Do observations in the three cases reveal the relevance of the detailed commitment of primary stakeholders to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China?

Two groups of primary stakeholders have participated in the TCY Summit. The public primary stakeholders including the presidents or department heads of the tourism bureaus of the 18 member-cities have constituted the first or the major group. The second group was the private primary stakeholders including the directors or high-level managers of the tourism companies of the member cities such as the travel agencies, hotels and tourist attractions. Only the written commitment of the public primary stakeholders existed in the case of the TCY Summit. The commitment is written down in the annual cooperation agreement (e.g. the annual declaration) jointly approved by the presidents of the member tourism bureaus during the annual summit. The content of the commitment is unclear. The relevant responsibilities and tasks of the involved stakeholders blurred. Government officials repeated attending the annual summit and signing the annual declaration. Besides this symbolic action, no actual commitment by the public primary stakeholders was presented. The commitment of the private primary stakeholders was absent as well. A significant majority of the private companies participated in the annual summits on a temporary basis. The summit organizers did not have the

power to make the attendance compulsory for reluctant private tourism enterprises. The lack of written commitment from private primary stakeholders could be one of the reasons.

Initiated by the tourism bureau of Ningbo, the primary stakeholders involved in the ZDN Alliance were five tourism bureaus, 17 tourist attractions of 4A or 5A level<sup>7</sup>, and 20 travel agencies of the five member-cities. The commitment of both public and private primary stakeholders appears in the jointly signed 'Internal Cooperation Agreement', which elaborated the responsibilities of each member (details discussed in chapter 7). Furthermore, two actual commitments of both public and private primary stakeholders have been presented. The public and private primary members jointly financed the daily operation of the ZDN Alliance. Annually the leader tourism bureau financed 150,000 Yuan, other tourism bureaus each financed 100,000 Yuan, the tourism attraction companies each financed 50,000, 30,000 or 10,000 Yuan and the travel agencies individually contributed 5,000 Yuan. Meanwhile, annually the ZDN Alliance organized two large-scale promotional events in different (potential) tourist locations. The vice presidents of the member tourism bureaus always headed these events and high-level managers of the member tourism companies participated as well.

If we regard the 'financial forces' introduced by the ZDN Alliance as a crucial element to show the commitment of primary stakeholders and to strengthen the trust, the 'urgency' introduced by the EXPO case can be pointed to as another catalyst to reinforce the commitment of primary stakeholders. According to the EXPO Bureau (2010), by the end of the EXPO, more than 73 million people had visited the EXPO within six months and a significant part of the visitors showed interests in combining their visits to the other cities of the YRD region. In order to encounter such 'urgent' development opportunity brought by the EXPO, three prominent regional tourism joint initiatives have been established: the regional acceptance of the Shanghai Tour Card, the set up of the information sharing platforms of regional tourism and official recommendation of the regional tourist products. The primary stakeholders of the first initiative included three provincial tourism bureaus, 25 city tourism bureaus and several big tourist attractions and hotels. The primary stakeholders of the second initiative included three provincial tourism bureaus, a large amount of hotels and travel agencies. The primary stakeholders of the third initiative included three provincial tourism bureaus,

25 city tourism bureaus and private tourism companies, especially large-scale tourism enterprises from the 25 member-cities. There were no written commitments in any of the three initiatives. However, the actual commitments have been presented. In the first initiative, officials from the three provincial tourism bureaus committed to approach the regional tourist attractions and hotels, persuading them to adapt the techniques Shanghai City Tourism Card required (e.g. bank-linked POS machines). In the second initiative, the private primary stakeholders showed their commitment by providing promptly the up-to-date information of the regional tourism facilities, especially the available hotel accommodation and tour guides. In the third initiative, primary stakeholders particularly the Shanghai Tourism Bureau and large travel agencies in Shanghai showed the following commitment: the vice president of Shanghai tourism Bureau and heads of the travel agencies in Shanghai travelled frequently to Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces and relevant cities to discuss cooperation issues in detail (e.g. how to combine the tourist attractions, what kinds of tourist attractions can be recommended to the public, how to design new high quality travel packages and introduce them to the public).

Similar to section 8.1, seven relevant statements have been designed in the survey. Informants are asked to validate the statements specifically for the 'case' they are involved in. There are three possible answers to each statement: agree (A), disagree (D) and no opinion (NO). All the statements in table 8.3 were designed for both public and private primary stakeholders, namely the experts from the relevant tourism bureaus and tourism companies. The survey results are presented as follows.

**Table 8.3**  
*Statements concerning the second factor (detailed commitment of primary stakeholders' engagement) and effectiveness of the cooperation*

Statements	TCY Summit			ZDN Alliance			EXPO		
	A	D	NO	A	D	NO	A	D	NO
Commitment written down rather than expressed orally can strengthen the trust between primary stakeholders and their beliefs that the cooperation can result in positive feedback	99	15	6	30	2	2	15	115	2
The more clearly expressed written commitment with responsibilities and tasks, the more strengthened trust between primary stakeholders and their beliefs that the cooperation can result in positive feedbacks	102	8	10	33	0	1	125	5	2
Compared to the commitment written down, commitment with actions can better strengthen the trust between primary stakeholders and their beliefs that the cooperation can result in positive feedback	102	8	10	33	0	1	126	5	1
Combination of written commitment and actual commitment is the optimal choice to strengthen the trust between primary stakeholders and their beliefs that the cooperation can result in positive feedback	118	0	2	34	0	0	130	0	2
The cooperation resulted in positive feedback for primary stakeholders	30	82	8	33	0	1	105	15	12
Primary stakeholders trust each other in the cooperation	28	85	7	32	0	2	102	15	15
Content of the cooperation is vague or symbolic instead of being realistic	110	9	1	0	32	2	5	123	4

Source: Based on the survey

Our proposition is that *the more detailed commitment of primary stakeholders' engagement, the more effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*. Is the 'commitment' a relevant factor for the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation and can we use the insights of the three cases to increase our understanding of this factor?

1) Both the TCY Summit and the ZDN Alliance have written commitment. The written commitment of the TCY Summit was only from the public primary stakeholders and missed the private ones. Moreover the content of the commitment of the TCY Summit was blurred with no clear division of individual responsibilities and promises. The commit-

ment had no practical effects on the reinforcement of the trust between the primary stakeholders and their beliefs that the cooperation can result in positive feedback. On the contrary, the written commitment in the ZDN Alliance contained explanations of the responsibilities and promises from both public and private primary stakeholders. The 'jointly financing' approach further strengthened the commitment. Therefore, it is easy to understand the implications reflected in the survey results: 99 informants out of 120 in the TCY Summit and 30 informants out of 34 in the ZDN Alliance believed that written commitment rather than expressed orally could better strengthen the trust between the primary stakeholders and reinforce their trusts for the cooperation. Meanwhile 102 informants out of 120 in the TCY Summit and 33 informants out of 34 in the ZDN Alliance revealed that the more detailed expressed commitment with clear explanations concerning individual responsibilities and tasks, the stronger the trust between the primary stakeholders and their trust for the success of the cooperation. Concerning the written commitment, the EXPO cooperation was an exception. There was no written commitment from the primary stakeholders in the EXPO cooperation. However, this did not mean that no trust existed between the primary stakeholders. During the semi-structured interviews, the common explanation for the missing written commitment in the case of the EXPO cooperation was identified: 'we had the deep cooperation promises in the hearts and minds. Since time was limited, we escaped the procedure of writing down all the commitments and directly stepped into the next stage: the actual commitment where our commitment to cooperation was expressed by real actions'.

2) There was little actual commitment of primary stakeholders in the TCY Summit. In the ZDN Alliance and the EXPO, the presence of those commitments has been regarded as an important catalyst to strengthen the trust between the stakeholders and their trust of the cooperation. During the survey, a majority of informants (33 out of 34 in the ZDN Alliance and 126 out of 132 in the EXPO) confirmed their support to the statement: 'the commitment should be not only written on paper but also put into practice. The latter can better strengthen the trust between the primary stakeholders and their trust to the success of the cooperation'. Even a significant majority of the informants of the TCY Summit (102 out of 120) wished to have more actual commitment in the future.

3) The combination of written and actual commitment is the optimal choice to strengthen trust between primary stakeholders and their trust in the success of the cooperation. With only unclear written commitment from the public primary stakeholders, the TCY Summit failed to reinforce the trust between the public and private primary stakeholders and their trust in the cooperation. In the words of a politician from Nanjing involved in the TCY Summit for more than five years, 'we hardly trusted the others because none of them have showed the devoted commitment clearly and of course we did not want to be the first one to devote'. As quoted from one company interviewee involved in the TCY Summit: 'we recognized the importance of the cooperation but we perceived that our self-interest could be best served by utilizing a more familiar individual tourism strategy than cooperating'. Those statements were representative and supported by our survey results. Only 30 informants out of 120 believed that the TCY Summit could bring positive benefits for them. Meanwhile 28 informants out of 120 in the TCY cooperation trusted each other. Eventually 110 informants out of 120 in the TCY Summit supported one perspective that the lack of detailed written and actual commitment and the corresponding declining trust was one reason to explain why the content of the TCY Summit was vain or virtual instead of practical or realistic.

On the contrary, the presence of detailed written commitment, supplemented by explicit commitment from both public and private primary stakeholders brought positive effects to the ZDN Alliance. The opinions of a majority of the informants agreed with this statement: 33 informants out of 34 believed that the ZDN cooperation could bring positive feedback to the primary stakeholders, 32 informants out of 34 trusted each other and nearly all the informants of the ZDN cooperation cited the realistic and practical content of the ZDN cooperation. With the absence of written commitment, trust between the primary stakeholders of the EXPO cooperation was reinforced by the compensation of the detailed actual commitment, which brought positive feedback on the performance of the EXPO cooperation. Our survey results addressed this positive issue: 105 informants out of 132 indicated their trust of the cooperation in the EXPO case; 102 informants out of 132 trusted each other in the EXPO cooperation, and 123 informants out of 132 cited the realistic and practical content of the EXPO cooperation.

The observations in the three cases cannot lead to the rejection of our second proposition (P2): *the more detailed commitment of primary stakeholders' engagement, the more effective the regional tourism cooperation in China*. Considering this proposition, the TCY Summit is the worst of the three cases. As indicated, it is important that the written commitment is detailed enough to secure the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation. The absence weakens the trust between the stakeholders and their belief in the cooperative arrangements. The 'financial forces' and 'urgency' can contribute as two catalysts to strengthen the commitment of the primary stakeholders to the cooperation. The three cases, especially the EXPO and ZDN Alliance, further indicated a specific Chinese phenomenon in relation to the factor of 'commitment', noting that the omission of written commitment can be partly compensated when there are detailed actual commitments to reflect cooperation willingness in the hearts and minds of the primary stakeholders. Of course, it would be better to have both. Therefore, with the adaptation of the empirical studies to the proposition, the second proposition (P2) formulated from the literature can be translated into a more explicit statement particularly for regional tourism cooperation in China. That is, the more detailed commitment of primary stakeholders' engagement, *especially the more detailed actual commitment of primary stakeholders' engagement*, the more effective the regional tourism cooperation in China.

### 8.3 Leadership Accepted by Primary Stakeholders

As suggested in the third proposition (P3), the leadership accepted by primary stakeholders can increase the effectiveness of Chinese regional tourism cooperation. Leadership is assumed to be identified mainly by three categories of power: financial power or power of resources, knowledge or experience power, and political power. As discussed in chapter 4, in China currently, the Tourism Bureau is taking a leading role in nearly all of the public-private arrangements of regional tourism cooperation in China. Can we find the evidence to test this proposition from the three cases?

In the TCY Summit, Hangzhou Tourism Bureau was the leader *not* because of its dominant power in respect of the dominant control on resources, finance, knowledge or politics *but* because of its initiator role. In turn, acceptance from the other tourism bureaus to the leadership of

Hangzhou Tourism Bureau was poor. Officials from Shanghai and Nanjing tourism authorities (12 informants out of 14) claimed their declining interests in participating in the TCY cooperation, in some degree because they were reluctant to obey the leadership of Hangzhou. Meanwhile there was an absence of a democratic system in the TCY Summit to exert leadership. The TCY Summit was organized in a stifling and bureaucratic way. The primary stakeholders hardly had equal votes or rights to speak out regardless of the different power: representatives of other tourism bureaus (except Hangzhou Tourism Bureau) expressed their ideas on either the annual preparatory meeting or the annual conference mainly by raising their hands to say yes or no, leaving little space to express their initiatives or suggestions. The only chance for the representatives of tourism companies to express their opinions was during the Q&A sessions of the annual conference. Compared to the number of attendees, the number of question raisers was relatively small.

Given the similar tourism development status of the five member-cities of the ZDN Alliance with respect to the tourism revenue, number of tourists and image problems, the leader of the ZDN Alliance was selected from the marketing directors of tourism bureaus of the five member-cities, based on the 'annual-rotating-seat' principle. Meanwhile the leadership was strengthened by financial contributions. The annual leader (one member tourism bureau) financed the largest amount of the internal budget for maintaining the annual operation of the alliance (150,000 Yuan), which was 1.5 times the contributions of each other tourism bureaus, three to ten times the contributions of the individual tourism attractions, and 30 times that of the individual travel agencies. In that sense, the other primary stakeholders came to accept the leadership with few doubts. Concerning the way to apply leadership, the private stakeholders (member attractions and travel agencies) were the main action bodies (performers) of the cooperation. They were appointed to be in charge of designing and marketing the integrated diversified tour packages for both individual and group visitors, based on the resources offered by the 17 member attractions of 4A or 5A level. The leader (one member tourism bureau) and other member tourism bureaus mainly acted as facilitators or coordinators to maintain the coherent relationships between the member travel agencies and the member tourism attractions, or as managers and supporters for the daily operation of the ZDN Alliance. In that sense, all the members of the ZDN Alliance had equal rights to

speak out regardless of their stronger or weaker political, knowledge or financial power. The equal attendance opportunities for all primary stakeholders besides the leader were present. In addition, such equality spanned the entirety of ZDN cooperation, starting at the beginning by signing the cooperative agreements to evaluation of performance.

In the EXPO case, Shanghai Tourism Bureau took leadership in all three regional tourism joint initiatives. The tourism bureaus of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces shared a common desire to connect with Shanghai to stimulate provincial tourism growth. Shanghai had dominant tourist resources (the host city of the EXPO event) and relatively strong economic and financial power (its unique city-province political status and its leading economic development speed). Therefore, the other primary stakeholders accepted the leadership of Shanghai entirely. However, the way Shanghai exerted leadership during cooperation was disappointing: it behaved more like a hierarchically top-down bureaucrat to the other primary stakeholders. There was the absence of a democratic system to apply the leadership in the EXPO cooperation. Few initiatives from the other primary stakeholders were presented. The public and private primary stakeholders of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces merely fulfilled their responsibilities as supporters to meet what Shanghai required. Taking the second joint initiative as an example, Shanghai Tourism Bureau cooperated with the tourism bureaus of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces to set up a joint online platform called the 'Resource Sharing Platform of Regional Tour Guides in Minor Language'. The members comprised 113 travel agents or tour guide associations in the YRD region, covering more than 2000 registered professional tour guides in 16 minor languages. There was little space for these participating companies to present their suggestions. The Education and Training Department of the Shanghai Tourism Bureau made all the plans, where the service centre of this platform is located.

The third joint initiative of the EXPO cooperation also reflects a similar phenomenon, noting that when the leader (Shanghai Tourism Bureau) took the dominant role, little space remained for the other primary stakeholders to express their opinions. During the EXPO period, Shanghai Tourism Bureau officially recommended two groups of high-quality tour packages to the EXPO visitors. The first group consisted of ten travel packages designed and operated by three Shanghai travel agencies officially appointed by Shanghai Tourism Bureau. The second group

of travel packages consisted of 55 travel packages, designed and operated by travel agencies from Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. Shanghai Tourism Bureau formulated all the planning requirements of these travel packages. Little space remained for the member travel agencies, especially those from Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, to propose their own perspectives. Therefore, the contents of the two groups of tour packages overlapped, which caused the destructive competition between them. In addition, since the power of media exposure, tourist resources and financial budgets was in the hand of Shanghai Tourism Bureau, a significant majority of the media exposures<sup>8</sup> of the tour packages were on the former group, the one operated by local travel agencies from Shanghai. In the words of one Nantong politician (from Jiangsu province): ‘we trusted Shanghai Tourism Bureau as the leader to promote our tour packages but the result really disappointed us. Furthermore we could do nothing to compensate the loss because we did not have the dominant political and financial power to express our ideas.’

There are in total six statements raised for the third proposition (P3). Three answers are possible to the first three statements: agree (A), disagree (D) and no opinion (NO). Meanwhile three answers are possible to the last three statements to check the change in status: increase (I), decrease (D) and stable (S). All the statements in tables 8.4 and 8.5 were designed for both public and private primary stakeholders, namely experts from the relevant tourism bureaus and tourism companies. The relevant survey results are as follows.

**Table 8.4**  
*First set of statements concerning the third factor  
 (leadership accepted by primary stakeholders)*

Statements	Total			TCY Summit		ZDN Alliance		EXPO	
	A	D	NO	A	D	A	D	A	D
Presence of a comparatively dominant power in finance, natural resources, politics, knowledge or experience increases the prestige of the leadership	256	16	14	105	7	29	4	122	5
Lack of support from public and private primary stakeholders erodes the leadership and in the long run reduces the possibility to achieve the original objectives of the cooperation	271	3	12	113	2	30	0	128	1
Stimulating different approaches ensuring that the primary stakeholders have equal rights, regardless of their different power, increases their acceptance to the leadership	264	8	14	109	4	29	2	126	2

Source: Based on the survey

**Table 8.5**  
*Second set of statements concerning the effectiveness  
 of the cooperation impacted by the third factor*

Statements	TCY Summit			ZDN Alliance			EXPO		
	I	D	S	I	D	S	I	D	S
The positive attitude of the primary stakeholders during the cooperation	25	90	5	32	1	1	30	95	7
The number of the concrete cooperative arrangements of the cooperation	20	95	5	32	0	2	-	-	-
The satisfaction of the primary stakeholders with the results of the cooperation	15	100	5	32	0	2	40	79	23

Source: Based on the survey

The following conclusions with regard to the relevance of leadership accepted by the primary stakeholders for the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China can be derived from the three cases.

1) Leadership was clear in all of the three cases. However, the leadership needs the acceptance of primary stakeholders, which is not something that can be imposed on them. Only with acceptance could the leadership be safeguarded and stable cooperation realized. In the TCY Summit, 'initiating the cooperation' could not be the exclusive determinant to the leadership. The leading position of the Hangzhou Tourism Bureau was questioned by the other tourism bureaus of the member cities, especially by powerful cities like Shanghai and Nanjing. The relatively weak power of Hangzhou Tourism Bureau to the finance, tourism resources, expertise and knowledge explained this phenomenon. In the ZDN Alliance, since the five member cities were comparatively similar in power to tourism resources and politics, a new approach was introduced to identify the leader: the 'annual-rotating-seat' principle. Moreover, leadership was strengthened by the differentiated financial contributions of the primary stakeholders. Consequently, the other primary stakeholders in the ZDN Alliance accepted the leadership. In the EXPO cooperation, Shanghai held leadership because it had the dominant power, given the fact that the city was the host destination of the EXPO, which brought 73 million visitors. Therefore, the other primary stakeholders accepted the leadership position of Shanghai Tourism Bureau without any doubts before the cooperation started. Based on these discussions, we conclude that the presence of the comparatively dominant power in finance, natural resources, politics, knowledge or experience can increase the prestige of the leadership before the cooperation starts. Opinions of a significant majority of the informants in the three cases (256 respondents out of 286) are in line with this conclusion.

2) If leadership cannot ensure equal participation during the cooperation, the original acceptance from the primary stakeholders (decided by the power) can be weakened or even disappear. The EXPO cooperation is one example. In the beginning of the cooperation, the leadership of Shanghai Tourism Bureau received sufficient acceptance from the other primary stakeholders. However, the primary stakeholders were disappointed during the cooperation because there was little space left for them to express their opinions when Shanghai Tourism Bureau dominated. As a result, acceptance from the primary stakeholders to the leader-

ship of Shanghai Tourism Bureau gradually weakened during the EXPO cooperation. The case of the TCY Summit serves as another kind of example. In the beginning of the TCY cooperation, doubts about the leadership already existed. The situation got worse during the TCY cooperation since equal attendance rights for the leaders and other primary stakeholders was absent. The ZDN Alliance is the best of the three cases in that sense. The acceptance of the primary stakeholders strengthened as the cooperation progressed. This was backed up by the relatively dominate power of the leadership before the cooperation. During the cooperation, this was backed up by the presence of a democracy system, which allowed the other stakeholders to express initiatives and opinions equally. From these discussions, we conclude that the lack of acceptance from public and private primary stakeholders loosens the leadership and in the end reduces the chance of success for the original objectives of cooperation. Meanwhile, the presence of the approaches to ensure that the primary stakeholders have equal rights regardless of their different power can increase acceptance of primary stakeholders to the leadership. These two findings are coherent with the survey results (see table 8.4).

We conclude that the effectiveness of cooperation cannot be achieved if stakeholders do not accept the leadership. In the beginning of the cooperation, the comparatively dominant power of the leadership is one of the elements to decide the acceptance while in the operational process of the cooperation, the existence of a democratic system to ensure the equal rights of the other primary stakeholders to express opinions, initiatives or ideas seems to be crucial. The TCY Summit case and the EXPO case are two bad examples. During the survey, a majority of the informants of these two cases claimed a decreasing attitude of primary stakeholders during the process of cooperation and a drop in their satisfaction with the results of cooperation (see table 8.5).

Our observations in the three cases do not lead to rejection of the third proposition (P3), noting that *leadership accepted by primary stakeholders adds to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*. The acceptance reinforces the leadership, which can in return promote new initiatives, build bridges between stakeholders and eventually result in the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation. Moreover, with implications from the ZDN Alliance, especially from the EXPO case, which shows the gradually weakened acceptance of the leadership along with the continuation of the cooperation, we translate the third proposition formulated

from the literature into a more explicit statement for the Chinese cases. Noting that leadership accepted by primary stakeholders, *especially the mechanism to secure the attendant equality of less-power primary stakeholders to access the cooperative resources*, adds to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

#### 8.4 Balance of Collective and Individual Motives

As stated in the fourth proposition (P4), we argued that the *concordance of collective motives of cooperation with individual motives of primary stakeholders could increase the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*. Can we get support for this proposition from the three cases?

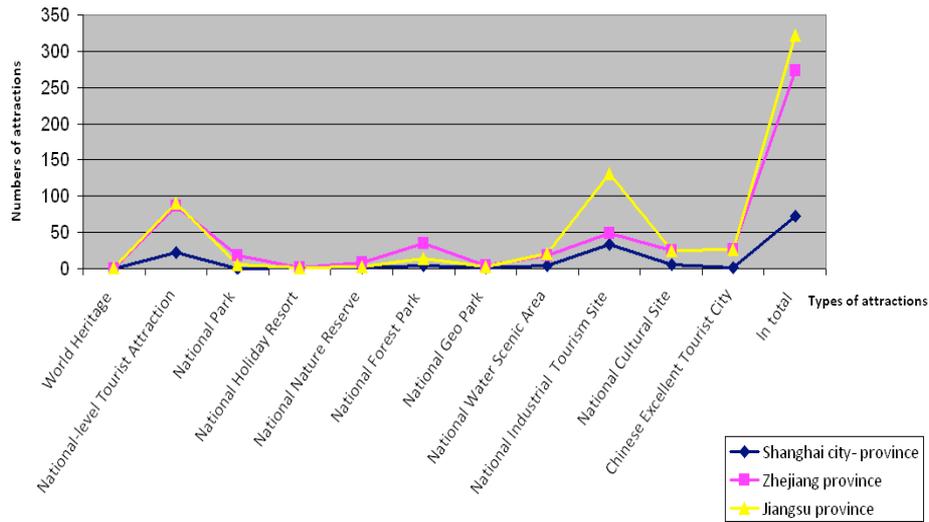
In all three cases, the individual motives of the involved public or private primary stakeholders were similar, with ‘quantitative, short-term, and oriented to optimize the self-interests’ as the three prominent features and ‘competition rather than cooperation’ as the key content. In the TCY Summit, the individual motives of the private primary stakeholders (tourism companies) were short and clear: to obtain as much profit as possible. We found clues to the individual motives of the public primary stakeholders (the Tourism Bureau) of the TCY Summit from the respective city-level 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plans. Almost all the tourism bureaus of the 18 member-cities of the TCY cooperation mentioned two individual interests of the tourism development from 2005 to 2010. The first was to boost the development of the city’s tourism economy where the economic value of the city’s tourism was highlighted. It is easy to understand since currently in China, economic value is still one of the top indicators to identify the political position of a city’s tourism bureau, leading accordingly the political focus of a city tourism bureau on chasing the maximum economic benefits of the tourism industry.<sup>9</sup> The second common individual motives included increasing the competitiveness of a city’s tourism,<sup>10</sup> building a city as a tourism destination,<sup>11</sup> strengthening the tourism image of a city<sup>12</sup> among others. Meanwhile the survey results also revealed some individual motives of the tourism bureaus involved in the TCY Summit. In this case, 115 informants out of 120 indicated their expectation that the result of the TCY cooperation would be easily quantified. A majority of the informants expected the cooperation to take the first priority to optimize individual interests in the short run, and 116

informants out of 120 expected to achieve positive long-term effects for their individual interests.

Individual motives of the involved stakeholders of the ZDN Alliance were similar to those of the TCY Summit, but more consistent. The survey showed, 33 informants out of 34 expected the result of the ZDN cooperation to be easily quantified, and the cooperation to take first priority on optimizing individual interests. Furthermore, 32 informants out of 34 claimed to achieve their individual interests from the ZDN Alliance in the short run. In addition, 32 informants out of 34 expected the ZDN cooperation to achieve the positive long-term effects for their individual interests.

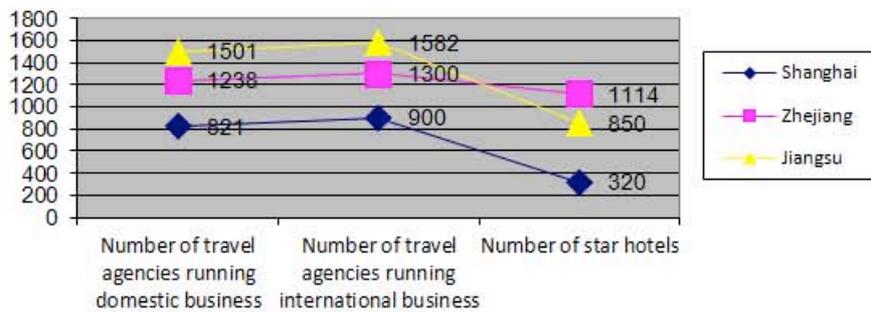
Based on deskwork, we identified that in the EXPO case, the short-term individual motives of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces to participate in the cooperation were to create more economic benefits from the EXPO event, given the fact that Shanghai lacked sufficient tourism resources and facilities to satisfy the 73 million visitors (see figures 8.5 and 8.6). Similar to the discussions about the TCY Summit, from the provincial 11<sup>th</sup> Five-year plans, we found that the long-term tourism development motives of each member province of the EXPO cooperation were similar. These included boosting the development of the tourism economy by highlighting the economic value of tourism, increasing the competitiveness of tourism, building the tourism destinations and strengthening tourism images. Expert opinions of the survey<sup>13</sup> also strongly supported our desk findings.

**Figure 8.5**  
 Comparison of tourism resources of the three provinces in the YRD region (2007)



Source: Adapted from the Yearbooks of the Statistics Bureaus of relevant provinces 2008.

**Figure 8.6**  
 Comparison of tourism facilities of the 3 provinces in YRD region (2007)



Source: Adapted from the Yearbooks of the Statistics Bureaus of relevant provinces 2008.

In sum, we conclude that the individual motives of the public and private primary stakeholders of the three cases—no matter long-term interests or short-term motives—are similar, with ‘quantitative, short-term oriented priority on the optimization of the self-interests’ as the three prominent features.

On the contrary, the collective motives of the three cases were different in contents and features. From the year 2003 to 2007, the collective motive of the TCY Summit was to develop the YRD region into the first ‘barrier-free’ integral tourism region in China by enhancing inter-city tourism cooperation. In 2008, the collective motive of the TCY Summit became more focused on establishing private-private inter-city cooperation between tourist companies. In 2009 and 2010, integration of the information platforms of the member cities was identified as the collective motive of the TCY Summit. The collective motives of the TCY Summit put more concern on promoting inter-city cooperation with few concerns for acknowledging the internal competition. The features of these collective motives were long-term, difficult to quantify and optimized common interests as the top priority. Therefore, comparing the collective motives of TCY cooperation with the individual motives of the primary stakeholders involved in the TCY cooperation, we found huge conflicts and inconsistency, which in turn brought disappointing feedback and inhibited the effectiveness of the TCY cooperation.

On the contrary, the ZDN Alliance and the EXPO are the two best cases in this sense. First, both collective motives of the ZDN and the EXPO cooperation were easy to quantify (e.g. by calculating the increase in the number of tourists) and were easy to achieve in the short-term (e.g. the ZDN Alliance on an annual basis and the EXPO case on a six-month basis). More importantly, both cases found a balance point to put collective and individual motives in concordance: *the incremental cooperative approach*. This incremental cooperative approach puts efforts on developing new cooperative projects (e.g. the EXPO case to provide new choices for the 73 million EXPO visitors who are the ‘irregular’ tourists to the region) or on extending the reach of the original individual projects (e.g. the ZDN Alliance to develop the new long-haul markets). By using the incremental cooperative approach, the final collective motives of both cases were confined to achieve the individual interests. The involved public and private stakeholders continued to have their own marketing priorities and brand image. The two cases respected the individual tour-

ism brand identities and intended to develop integrated regional tourism identities. In other words, the ZDN and EXPO cooperative modalities did not allow the members to reduce their original work in their destinations when promoting the regions (the ZDN and YRD regions) as the integrated destinations in both domestic and global markets. Between the members, the market competition was allowed to exist in both the ZDN and the EXPO cases. Therefore, from the above discussion, we conclude that the collective motives of the ZDN Alliance and the EXPO were coherent with the individual motives of the primary stakeholders involved in both cases.

**Table 8.6**  
*Statements concerning the balance of collective and individual motives*

Statements	Total			TCY Summit		ZDN Alliance		EXPO	
	A	D	NO	A	D	A	D	A	D
It is difficult for primary stakeholders to sacrifice their own interests to cooperate (although in the long run the cooperation can bring benefits), unless the cooperation can let primary stakeholders achieve their own interests in a short time	279	0	7	115	0	34	0	130	0
The more conflicts between the collective and individual motives, the more difficult for the cooperation to be continued, or the more possibilities for the content of the cooperation to be vague or unrealistic	276	5	5	116	1	33	1	127	3

Source: Based on the survey.

In sum, the observations in the three cases led us to the following conclusions about the relevance of the balanced motives to the performance of regional tourism cooperation. The desk study, semi-structured interviews and nearly all of the informants of the survey validate and support these conclusions (results are in table 8.6).

First, it is difficult for primary stakeholders to sacrifice their own interests to cooperate (although in the end cooperation can bring benefits), unless the cooperation can let the participants achieve their own interests

in the short term. Second, the more conflict between the collective and individual motives, the more difficult it is for the cooperation to continue, in the other words, the more possibilities for the content of the cooperation to be vague or unrealistic. The TCY Summit is the worst example of the three cases where the conflicts between the primary stakeholders and the requirements of the cooperation were significant and the negative performance of the cooperation followed. The observations of the three cases do not lead to the rejection of the fourth proposition (P4) claiming that *collective motives of cooperation should be coherent with individual motives of primary stakeholders in order to increase the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*. The proposition formulated cannot be rejected, although the statement about the motives of cooperation is still broad.

Meanwhile, the three Chinese cases contributed some explicit additions to make the fourth proposition (P4) formulated from the literature more specific for Chinese practice. In the current Chinese situation, a philosophy is suggested, noting that the cooperation modality is intended to supplement and complement the development of an individual destination, not to replace or damage it. More importantly, the incremental cooperative approach, applied in the ZDN and the EXPO cases, is strongly recommended to the other Chinese cases, given the fact that such a cooperative approach can make the collective motives of the cooperation easy to quantify. It further orientates them to optimize the individual interests of primary stakeholders, and to achieve positive long-term effects for the individual stakeholders, coherent with the individual motives of primary stakeholders involved in the current regional tourism cooperative arrangements in China.

Therefore, combining the above empirical adaptation to the fourth proposition P4, translates it into a more explicit statement for the Chinese case. That is, 'collective motives of cooperation should be coherent with individual motives of primary stakeholders in order to increase the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China, *currently if the collective motives of cooperation are more quantitative, short-term response, and oriented to optimize the individual interests, a regional tourism cooperative arrangement in China is more likely to be effective*'.

## 8.5 Conclusions

The practice and experiences of the TCY Summit, the ZDN Alliance and the EXPO are supportive of the first four propositions. For each proposition, the empirical studies contributed some additional comments, which in turn added some Chinese adaptation to the four 'contextual factors' identified in the literature. We conclude that these four factors, with the 'new Chinese explanations', are essential to achieve effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. The results have some implications on policy and management as well.

However, we also need to be aware of the limitations of our analysis. We cannot ignore that there are other factors to consider before cooperation starts, but we have found support in these three cases for these four factors. Meanwhile we acknowledge that due to the lack of sufficient data, we mainly used the survey to obtain 'quantitative' insights into the effectiveness of the cooperation, which provides some understanding about the relevance between the factors of the performance of cooperation. We follow Gao (2011) and assume that one principle is valid in China, noting that the more time spent on a questionnaire with complicated questions, the less qualified answers can be obtained, if the daily schedules of the informants are tight. Therefore we only use simple scales (such as agree, disagree and no opinion) instead of the more complicated Likert Scale (such as from 1 to 10) to obtain feedback from the informants.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In the cases of the TCY Summit and the ZDN Alliance, the features refer to political-economic features of tourism in different cities. In the EXPO case, it mainly concerns political-economic features of tourism in different provinces since the EXPO case is the cooperative performance at the inter-provincial level.

<sup>2</sup> In this study, it is not our intention to study the application of the Destination Life Cycle Diagram to the Chinese cities in-depth. We only use this diagram to explain the different tourism development stages of cities (or provinces) involved in a regional tourism cooperative arrangement.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Statistics Bureaus of three provinces (2010), Jiangsu province attracted in total 302.83 million tourists and Zhejiang province attracted in total 249.8 million tourists in 2009.

<sup>4</sup> In our study, only the opinions acknowledged by a number of the experts during the semi-structured interviews are discussed and referred.

<sup>5</sup> In 1979, the first Chinese higher tourism educational institute was set up in Shanghai. It is Shanghai Institute of Tourism. At that moment, the educational facilities were low compared to the international standard (SIT History Book 2009).

<sup>6</sup> 'New' cakes can be understood as the regional tourism cooperative arrangements, which intend to attract additional tourists to cities or provinces.

<sup>7</sup> China National Tourism Administration issues the national standard to rank the quality of domestic tourist attractions, from the lowest level (A level) to the highest level (5A level).

<sup>8</sup> Those media exposures include web promotions on the official website of Shanghai Tourism Bureau in four languages (Chinese, English, Japanese and Korean) and other popular websites, newspaper exposure, appearance on the official map of the expo land, etc.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Suzhou's ambition was to make tourism industry one of its pillar industries. Wuxi had a clearer motive that within five years, the economic revenue of the city's tourism industry was expected to be one of the top 10 in China.

<sup>10</sup> In its 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, Shaoxing's motive was to be the leading tourism destination of the Zhejiang province; Shanghai's motive was to be the global tourism destination with international competitiveness and attractiveness.

<sup>11</sup> Hangzhou's motive was to be the leisure destination of the YRD region. Taizhou (ZJ) had similar motive, namely, the leisure and sightseeing destination of the YRD region.

<sup>12</sup> Hangzhou's motive was to strengthen the city's image as the Oriental Leisure Capital, Ningbo's motive was to strengthen the city's image as the Oriental port and fashionable water city.

<sup>13</sup> In the survey of the EXPO case, 130 informants out of 132 suggested the result of the cooperation to be easily quantified; 129 informants out of 132 expected the cooperation to take the first priority to optimize their individual interests in the short run; and 131 informants out of 132 expected the cooperation to achieve positive long-term effects for their individual interests.

# 9

## Confronting Implementation Factors with the Case Studies

In this chapter, we continue our analysis of the effectiveness of the three regional tourism cooperation cases in the YRD region. The structure of the chapter is similar to that of chapter 8. We test empirically the last four propositions concerning the effectiveness of tourism cooperation at the Chinese regional level: the representation of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process (P5); the application of two different mechanisms for the involvement of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process (P6); an integrated approach towards cooperation with priorities (P7); the formal implementation structure (P8). For all of these propositions we present the main observations in the three cases. The last section of this chapter presents the conclusions concerning the main proposition (P9). If necessary, we refer the reader to chapter 6 for detailed information about the indicators to test the propositions and to chapter 7 for background information about the three cases.

### 9.1 Representation of Primary Stakeholders

The decision-making process is assumed the best channel for public and private primary stakeholders to express their opinions. 'Representation' means that stakeholders involved should fully represent all the relevant stakeholders. What is the performance of the three cases as far as the representation of primary stakeholders is concerned?

The vision of the TCY Summit was to develop the YRD region into the first 'barrier-free' integral tourism region in China. This vision required two groups of primary stakeholders from 18 member-cities be involved in the decision-making process. The private primary stakeholders included the directors or high-level managers of tourism companies (e.g. travel agencies, hotels and tourist attractions). The public primary stakeholders included the presidents or department heads of the city-

level tourism bureaus. Moreover, as requested by the vision of the TCY Summit, the departments of the tourism bureaus involved in the decision-making process of the TCY Summit should cover at least six public functions, including tourism marketing and promotion, tourism planning and statistics, tourism policy and legal affairs, tourism information and public services, tourism education and training, and tourism quality control.

Chapter 7 shows that the decisions of the TCY Summit were made via two channels: 1) by the members of the Consultant Committee (e.g. administrators of the tourism bureaus of 18 member-cities) during the Annual Preparatory Meeting; 2) by the representatives of the tourism bureaus of 18 member-cities via the online/telephone survey launched by the tourism bureau that hosted the annual summit. Apparently, representatives from tourism companies have been excluded from the decision-making process of the TCY Summit. In other words, all participants in the decision-making process of the TCY Summit were public primary stakeholders.

From the interviews, we also recognized that even the representation of the public primary stakeholders in the TCY Summit was insufficient. Regularly, only four (maximum) administrators from each member tourism bureau—including one (vice) president and 2-3 (vice) department heads—participated in the decision-making process of the TCY Summit. Obviously, their knowledge and expertise could not cover all the tourism functions required by the vision of the TCY Summit. Furthermore, as elaborated in chapter 8 (see section 8.1); there was a loose interaction between the departments of the Tourism Bureau. During the interviews, we often heard the complaints from the ‘excluded’ government administrators about the TCY Summit: ‘it is inappropriate that the other department of our tourism bureau participated in the decision-making process of the TCY Summit and formulated the decisions of future cooperation on behalf of us. Actually they have few ideas about the expertise we have owned and the challenges we have faced!’

Therefore, it is easy to understand why the enthusiasm and initiatives of the ‘excluded’ public and private primary stakeholders in the TCY Summit declined. The TCY Summit faced obstacles in promoting the sound interactions between the ‘excluded’ and ‘included’ stakeholders. Hence, few practical achievements of the TCY Summit have been

achieved: from the year 2003 to 2010, with many signed agreements, only two small cooperative arrangements<sup>1</sup> have been carried out.

Initiated by the tourism bureau of Ningbo, the primary stakeholders involved in the ZDN Alliance were from five member cities, including five tourism bureaus, 17 tourist attractions of 4A or 5A level<sup>2</sup>, and 20 travel agencies. All the primary stakeholders jointly made the decisions. They jointly designed diversified tour packages for individual and group visitors, and jointly developed marketing strategies and plans. Therefore, the decisions fully reflected the demands of all the primary stakeholders. The enthusiasm of the primary stakeholders to the ZDN cooperation increased annually. A number of achievements<sup>3</sup> have come since 2004 when the ZDN Alliance was set up.

The EXPO is an example to show how an event catalysed the short-term projects of regional tourism cooperation at the inter-provincial level. As discussed in chapter 7, the most prominent project catalysed by the EXPO was the official promotion of regional tourism products. The primary stakeholders of this project included three provincial tourism bureaus, 25 city tourism bureaus and relevant tourism companies. According to one objective of this project, 'to close the perception gap and enhance the regional tourism image to group travelers and individual tourists', involvement by primary stakeholders in the decision-making process was to keep within a certain percentage. Besides full participation of the provincial and city-level tourism bureaus of the YRD region, the 50:50 representative portion of the regional travel agencies (large-scale to SME travel agencies); the 30:30:30:10 per cent representative of the regional hotels (4A or 5A chain hotels, 4A or 5A single hotels, economic chain hotels and economic single hotels); and the 50:50 share of the regional tourist attractions ((inter)national market-oriented to regional market-oriented tourist attractions).<sup>4</sup>

The secondary data concerning the actual attendance records of the primary stakeholders in the decision-making process of this EXPO project was missing. Hence, we use the survey to obtain the information. In the survey, 132 informants were asked to indicate the representative status of the primary stakeholders in this EXPO project. The survey results (see table 9.1) showed that in the decision-making process, few seats remained for the SME travel agencies<sup>5</sup> and the economic chain or single hotels. Their initiatives to participate in this EXPO project were expressed by the large-scale tourism companies. Tourist attractions within

the YRD region as the target market were largely excluded from the decision-making process as well. In the words of the ‘abandoned’ private informants, ‘we just received the paper notices from the city tourism bureau, asking for our support and participation to the EXPO, but nothing more!’

**Table 9.1**  
*Representation of private stakeholders involved  
in the decision-making process of the EXPO cooperation*

Percentage to total tourist companies involved from the same industry*	0-10%	10-30%	30-45%	45-50%	50-70%	>70%	100%
Large-scale travel agencies <sup>6</sup>					20	82	30
(association of) Small or medium sized travel agencies <sup>7</sup>	83	26	23				
Hotels of political-hospitality function <sup>8</sup>	120	12					
Chain hotels of 4A or 5A level <sup>9</sup>		18	76	38			
Single hotels of 4A or 5A level <sup>10</sup>		36	80	16			
Economic chain hotels <sup>11</sup>	35	77	20				
Economic single hotels <sup>12</sup>	52	80					
Tourist attractions orientated in (inter)National markets <sup>13</sup> **					16	99	17
Tourist attractions oriented in regional markets <sup>14</sup> ***	75	27	30				

Note: All the results are formulated based on the results of the survey with 132 informants of the EXPO cooperation.

\* ‘the industry’ means travel industry, hotel industry or attraction industry.

\*\* means visitors to those tourist attractions are mixed by the international, national or regional origins.

\*\*\* means a majority of the visitors to those tourist attractions are from the YRD region.

However, from the interviews, we recognized that in this EXPO project, the interests of the ‘abandoned’ primary stakeholders were different from the ‘inclusive’ stakeholders. Few ‘abandoned’ private stakeholders claimed that the other tourism companies (in most cases the large-scale companies) from the same industry could express their interests. It is easy to understand. Many new, especially niche travel packages have been developed by the SME travel agencies to meet the unique requirements of tourists. The target market of the economic hotels is different from that of luxury hotels: with independent travelers as the main

market. Regional tourist attractions in the YRD region suffered largely from the EXPO since a significant majority of their original potential tourists (regional residents) were attracted by the EXPO event.

**Table 9.2**  
*Actual and expected representation of private stakeholders involved in the decision-making process of the EXPO cooperation*

Public or private organization	Actual percentage to total tourist companies involved from the same industry *	Expected percentage to total tourist companies involved from the same industry *	Reason for absence
City-level or provincial tourism bureaus	100%	100%	-
Large-scale travel agencies	>70%	50%	-
(association of) Small or medium-sized travel agencies	0-10%	50%	Excluded/ poor quality
Hotels of political-hospitality function	0%	0%	Little interests
Chain hotels of 4A or 5A level	30-45%	30%	-
Single hotels of 4A or 5A level	30-45%	30%	-
Economic chain hotels	10-30%	30%	Excluded
Economic single hotels	0-10%	10%	Excluded
Tourist attractions orientated in (inter)National markets	>70%	50%	-
Tourist attractions oriented in regional markets	0-10%	50%	Excluded/ little interests

Note: All the results are formulated based on the results of the survey with 132 informants of the EXPO cooperation.

\* 'the industry' means travel industry, hotel industry, attraction industry or the Tourism Bureau.

If we take a closer look at the reasons to exclude those primary stakeholders from the decision-making process in this EXPO project, answers from the project leader and the 'abandoned' primary stakeholders were different. As discussed in chapter 7, the Shanghai Tourism Bureau is the leader of this EXPO project. It owns the rights to decide the types of primary stakeholders included in the decision-making process. According to the Shanghai Tourism Bureau, the poor performance of

some SMEs (such as the illegal practices of uncertified tour operators, poor services of economic hotels and poor quality regional tourist attractions) was one of the prominent reasons to exclude almost all of the SMEs in the YRD region from the decision-making process. On the contrary, none of the 'abandoned' tourism companies showed disinterest in participating in the decision-making process. From the interviews, we found that most of the small or medium-sized tourism companies were more eager to participate in this EXPO project than the large-scale tourism companies, since the EXPO meant a rare chance for self-development.

Eventually, the decision-making process of this EXPO project was much more like an information platform exclusively for public stakeholders and the large-scale tourism companies. In other words, the decision-making process of this EXPO project was not to bring all the tourism companies and tourism bureaus together (as requested by the vision of the EXPO cooperation) but to set margins to separate the tourism bureaus and large-scale tourism companies from the SMEs. Thus too close a relationship between tourism bureaus and a select group of tourism companies in the decision-making process reduced support from the SMEs to this EXPO project. The enthusiasm of the SMEs to this EXPO project decreased as well. The smooth performance of this EXPO project was hindered accordingly.

Our proposition is that *representation of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*. Can we use the insights from the three cases to test this proposition?

1) Concerning the involvement of public primary stakeholders in the decision-making process of the cooperation, all three cases confirmed the presence of the tourism bureaus of the member destinations. This finding is in line with our assumption discussed in chapter 3 that the Tourism Bureau rather than private tourism companies is taking a relatively dominant role in arranging regional tourism cooperation in China. The TCY Summit is the worst of the three cases, in respect of its insufficient representation of the administrators of the involved tourism bureaus.

2) Concerning the involvement of private primary stakeholders (e.g. tourism companies) in the decision-making process of the cooperation, they are totally excluded from the TCY Summit. In the ZDN Alliance and the EXPO, the large-scale tourism companies were involved to de-

velop cooperative plans and actions jointly with the public stakeholders. Small or medium-sized tourism companies (e.g. the small or medium-sized travel agencies, economic chain or single hotels and regional-based attractions) are excluded from the ZDN and the EXPO cooperation. However, their absence was acceptable in the ZDN Alliance because according to the vision of the ZDN Alliance, the SMEs were not listed as the primary stakeholders of the ZDN cooperation. In the EXPO case, with the booming of the SME travel agencies, the fast development of the economic hotels, and the intense competition between the regional-based attractions, to involve these tourism companies in the decision-making process of the EXPO cooperation became crucial, given the fact that their interests and willingness to the EXPO cooperation were different from the large-scale tourism companies.

3) If we look closer at the reasons for the absence of the tourism companies in the TCY Summit and the EXPO, few of the 'excluded' companies showed their disinterest in being involved in the decision-making process. Therefore their exclusion can be eased if the cooperation organizers take the initiative to involve them in the decision-making process.

4) The success of the ZDN Alliance and the failure of the TCY Summit and the EXPO in terms of maintaining the enthusiasm of primary stakeholders indicate the importance of involving all the primary stakeholders in the decision-making process. The primary stakeholders are identified by the ultimate goal of the cooperation. Their attendance assures that the plans or actions formulated via the decision-making process can fully reflect not only the objectives of the cooperation, but also the self-interests and motives of the primary stakeholders. Hence actions and plans are much easier to launch.

All our observations in the three cases cannot lead to the rejection of the fifth proposition P5 *representation of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*. The representation of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process is a crucial factor when the cooperation is under implementation, which daily practitioners should strive to remember. Moreover, we recognized from the three cases that the small or medium-sized tourism companies have been the most ignored groups in the decision-making process of the Chinese cases. The three cases, especially the TCY Summit and the EXPO cooperation further demonstrated that the absence of

the small and medium-sized tourism companies in the decision-making process of the cooperation could be one of the main reasons why the cooperation presented some negative performance. Therefore, with the adaptation to the empirical studies the fifth proposition formulated from the literature, can this proposition (P5) be turned into a more explicit statement concerning the Chinese practice, noting that representation of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process, *especially the representation of small or medium-sized travel agencies, economic chain or single hotels, and regional based tourism attractions (if they are defined by the cooperation as the primary stakeholders) in the decision-making process*, increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

## 9.2 Two Different Mechanisms for the Involvement of Stakeholders

As discussed in chapter 5, primary stakeholders are the group involved directly in the decision-making process. Secondary stakeholders are involved indirectly in the decision-making process. In this section, we focus on three groups of secondary stakeholders: tourists, local residents and universities.<sup>15</sup> The reactions of tourists to regional tourism cooperation reflect whether the decisions of the cooperation cater to the market requirements. The resident opinions reflect the social concerns of regional tourism cooperation. The incorporation of the opinions of academics into the cooperation decisions can make the cooperation more future-oriented, creative and generate values that are more scientific. Hence we assume that the active involvement of secondary stakeholders in regional tourism cooperation can make the decisions widely acceptable and operational. Since primary and secondary stakeholders are both important to the cooperation, should they be involved in the decision-making process via the fixed mechanisms? As indicated in the literature, besides the representation of primary stakeholders, the presence of different mechanisms (rather than an informal approach on the temporary basis) to secure the involvement of primary and second stakeholders in the decision-making process is crucial to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. Does the absence of those involvement mechanisms influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China? Can we find any evidence from the three cases?

In the TCY Summit, the primary stakeholders have been confined to some administrators of tourism bureaus of the 18 member-cities. The direct involvement of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process has been secured by a fixed and regular inclusive mechanism: the attendance procedure, the types of attendees and the general criteria of decisions have been precisely elaborated in the *Cooperation Constitution*.<sup>16</sup> In this constitution, the way to formulate the decisions has also been explicitly described: 1) decisions concerning the summit topics, the invitation of attendees, the hospitality arrangements should be made during the annual preparatory meeting, which takes place around July in Hangzhou before the summit starts; 2) decisions concerning the vision, strategies and actions of regional tourism cooperation of the next working year should be initiated by the host tourism bureau of the forthcoming annual summit and be proved via the group discussions with the other governmental administrators.

For secondary stakeholders the mechanism to involve tourists and local residents as outside consultants in the decision-making process of the TCY Summit was missing. The university academics or institution researchers were consulted regularly via a fixed mechanism: they were invited formally to attend the annual TCY conference. However, since the cooperation procedure of the TCY Summit is making decisions, formulating annual declarations and then organizing the annual conference, the opinions of the scholars only influenced the next-round decisions of the cooperation. Furthermore, the degree of the consultative involvement of academic researchers in the decision-making process of the TCY Summit was poor. Occasionally few scholars were invited as keynote speakers to present their opinions about the development of the inter-city tourism cooperation in the annual TCY conference. A significant majority of the scholars only participated in the annual TCY conference as attendees, expressing ideas only during the time-limited Q&A sessions or some informal occasions such as cocktail parties or banquets during the annual TCY conference.

There was a fixed inclusive mechanism to involve the primary stakeholders in the decision-making process of the ZDN Alliance. The public and private primary stakeholders jointly signed the *Internal Cooperation Agreement*, which built the guidelines for the decision-making process, concerning the procedures of making decisions, the types of decisions, the rights and responsibilities of primary stakeholders when making deci-

sions among others. According to this agreement, the tourism bureaus together with the travel agencies and attractions were expected to develop joint cooperative plans or actions (i.e., designing the new travel packages). The attractions were required to give special discounts to the travel agencies. The travel agencies were to incorporate the attractions into their travel packages and promote those attractions accordingly. The tourism bureaus acted as the coordinators or facilitators for the coherent relations between the travel agencies and the attractions. However, no consultative mechanisms existed to involve any of the social groups — the tourists, local residents or university scholars — in the decision-making process. In this sense, the ZDN Alliance is the worst of the three cases. The ZDN cooperation was largely a self-amusement behavior between the primary stakeholders. Evidence for this assertion appears when we examined the results of the ZDN cooperation. Although the ZDN cooperation generated fruitful achievements, most of these achievements were still ‘unknown’ to the market. Most of the integrated regional tourism products were short of creative ideas. Hence when evaluating the economic and social turnovers of the ZDN achievements, the results were negative. Fortunately the organizers of the ZDN Alliance already recognized such weaknesses and a number of follow-ups are to be launched in the near future.

Catalysed by the EXPO, there were three prominent regional tourism cooperative projects initiated by the tourism bureaus of Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. They were the regional acceptance of Shanghai Tour Card, set up of the information-sharing platform of regional tourism, and the official recommendation of regional tourist products. We find no presence of the inclusive mechanisms to involve primary stakeholders in the decision-making process of all three EXPO projects. The absence of inclusive mechanisms to secure the primary stakeholders (i.e., the tourism bureaus and large-scale tourism companies) to express their ideas during the decision-making process of these EXPO projects led to a common phenomenon, that is, some primary stakeholders hardly attended the decision-making meetings primarily because they had no clue about when and how to attend. During interviews, the words of one Jiaxing politician (from Zhejiang province) represented a popular perspective, ‘we were informed by Shanghai Tourism Bureau almost two days before an internal decision-making meeting started, which caused a dilemma, noting that either we cancelled the orig-

inally designed activities to attend that meeting or we failed to participate in the EXPO meeting. Sometimes such last-minute behavior is understandable, given everything about the EXPO happened in a short period and in the intense way, however, we were tired about being informed always at the last minute!

In the EXPO cooperation, there was also the absence of the consultative mechanisms to involve local residents in the decision-making process of the three projects. Similar to the ZDN Alliance, the cooperation projects lacked social support: they were more like the self-amusement activities between the primary stakeholders. However, in one EXPO cooperative project, 'the official recommendation of regional tourist products', there was a consultative mechanism to involve tourists and scholars in the decision-making process: the opinions of tourists and scholars concerning the cooperation were gathered during the evaluation stage. Tourists and scholars were asked to vote for the achievements of this EXPO project, namely, the 96 regional attractions and 65 regional travel packages.<sup>17</sup> Eventually the 20 most popular regional attractions and 10 most welcomed regional travel packages were chosen by the tourists and scholars and were awarded as the showcases to the next-round regional tourism cooperative arrangements. This is a good example since feedback from the tourists and academic researchers have been used as suggestive input for the next-round decision-making process when there is a continuation of this EXPO project in the form of an annual ceremony.

Similar to the structure of chapter 8, since the secondary sources of the three cases are insufficient, we use the opinions of primary stakeholders (gathered via the survey) as the important supplement to strengthen our understanding about the relationship between the sixth factor (the involvement mechanism) and the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. Table 9.3 shows the relevant survey results. Informants are asked to test the validity of the statements specifically for the 'cases' they've been involved in. There are three possible answers: agree (A), disagree (D) and no opinion (NO).

**Table 9.3**  
*Statements concerning two different mechanisms to involve relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process*

Statements	TCY Summit			ZDN Alliance			EXPO		
	A	D	NO	A	D	NO	A	D	NO
The presence of a fixed or regular mechanism to secure the involvement of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process of the cooperation is essential to the success of the cooperation	116	2	2	34	0	0	102	22	8
The opinions of secondary stakeholders should be regarded as crucial inputs and be secured by the consultative mechanism when formulating the decisions of the cooperation	96	16	8	34	0	0	83	24	25

In sum, the combination of the desk study, the semi-structured interviews and the survey results of the three cases leads us to the following conclusions.

1) The presence of a fixed inclusive mechanism to secure the involvement of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process of regional tourism cooperation is required. Majority of informants (116 out of 120 in the TCY Summit, all in the ZDN Alliance and 102 out of 132 in the EXPO) explicitly indicated their support to this statement. Normally such mechanism takes the form of internal meetings. Such mechanism can be explicitly mentioned in internal documents (such as the 'Cooperation Constitution' of the TCY Summit and the 'Internal Cooperation Agreement' of the ZDN Alliance) concerning when and how primary stakeholders can participate directly in the decision-making process. In that sense, the TCY Summit and the ZDN Alliance set up two good examples. The situation that happened to the primary stakeholders of the EXPO cooperation may be avoided if similar inclusive mechanisms are introduced.

2) The opinions of secondary stakeholders concerning the cooperation are essential for decision-makers of the cooperation and should be secured by the consultative mechanism. The feedback of a significant majority of the informants were in line with this statement (96 out of 120 in the TCY Summit, all in the ZDN Alliance, 83 out of 132 in the EXPO). The ZDN Alliance is the worst of the three cases in this sense,

given the fact that none of the perspectives of tourists, residents and researchers was incorporated into the decisions of cooperation via a regular mechanism. Consequently there has been a lack of creativity, market acceptance and community support of the designed travel packages of the ZDN Alliance. The sustainability of the achievements of the ZDN Alliance has been questioned as well.

3) The three cases show that currently in China, when there was a consultative mechanism to secure the involvement of secondary stakeholders in the decision-making process of the cooperation, in most cases the opinions of those secondary stakeholders influenced the next round rather than the current formulated decisions of the cooperation. The involvement of university scholars in the decision-making process of the TCY Summit via the regular ‘conference participation’ mechanism, and the involvement of tourists and scholars in the decision-making process of the EXPO projects via the fixed ‘voting’ mechanism set up two examples. However, although the degree of influence of the secondary stakeholders to the formulated decisions is questioned, those mechanisms to involve the secondary stakeholders are still worthy attempts.

In conclusion, the observations in the three cases cannot lead to the rejection of the sixth proposition (P6) *applying the inclusive mechanism to involve primary stakeholders and the consultative mechanism to involve secondary stakeholders in the decision-making process increase the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*. The inclusive mechanism secures the direct participation of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process. The consultative mechanism indicates that only with the incorporation of tourists’ opinions, residents and university researchers, the cooperation decisions can hardly be self-amusement but have practical meaning. We might foresee that secondary stakeholders will play increasingly important roles in Chinese regional tourism cooperation in the future, with deeper economic and political transformation in China. The three cases also reflect the eagerness of the primary stakeholders to obtain social support for the cooperative achievements. However, as discussed in the case studies, when there was a fixed consultative mechanism (see the TCY Summit and the EXPO); the opinions of secondary stakeholders have influenced the next-round decision-making process of regional tourism cooperation. Hence, in the future developing a regular consultative mechanism to secure the involvement of secondary stakeholders to the current rather than the next-round decision-making process becomes a priority.

We combine the above statements into the sixth proposition (P6), which was formulated based on the literature. An adapted expression for the Chinese practice can be formulated, noting that applying the inclusive mechanism to involve the primary stakeholders and the consultative mechanism to involve secondary stakeholders in the decision-making process, *especially applying the consultative mechanism to integrate opinions of secondary stakeholders with those of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process*, increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

### 9.3 Integrated Areas of Cooperation with Priorities

The first and most important result of the decision-making process concerns the areas of cooperation. This definitely influences the performance of cooperation. The seventh factor ‘the areas of cooperation’ highlights ‘integrated’ and ‘prioritized’ as two key features. What do we observe in the three cases?

The general vision of the TCY Summit was expressed during the first annual conference in 2003 and was incorporated into the cooperation constitution accordingly. The vision suggested developing the YRD region into the first ‘barrier-free’ integrated tourism region in China. There were no general master plans to guide the cooperation arrangements of the TCY Summit. However, annually a *declaration of cooperation* described how primary stakeholders should cooperate in the next working year. In that sense, these declarations functioned as sub-master plans to guide the tourism cooperative arrangements of the TCY Summit. In these declarations, the areas of cooperation have been identified, covering a holistic dimension<sup>18</sup> similar to the elements elaborated in the concept of the ‘Integrated Regional Tourism System’ (see section 5.2.2 in chapter 5): the development of regional tourist products (including primary and secondary tourist products), the promotion of regional tourist image, and the improvement of regional tourist accessibility (including internal and external accessibility). Before 2009, the cooperation of the TCY Summit mainly had maintained the status of showing good intentions and signing agreements with few activities. Since 2009, a number of proposals with concrete priorities of the cooperation have been highlighted in the annual declaration. However, most of these priorities still failed to be translated into realistic implementation schemes.<sup>19</sup> Only two of them with clear

project timetables and explicit task arrangements have been put into practice.<sup>20</sup>

In the ZDN Alliance, the public and private members jointly signed the 'Internal Cooperation Agreement', which set up general guidelines for further cooperation performance. This agreement could be regarded as a master plan since it not only laid down the 'market orientation' principle of the cooperation, but also stipulated a holistic dimension where the ZDN cooperation could be launched, including product design and development, marketing, tourism hospitality services, tourism infrastructure, urban tourism functions, protection of the rights and interests of tourists, tourism planning, project construction, information exchange and mutual sending of residents to visit partner cities. Until now, the ZDN Alliance has fixed two main priorities. These priorities have proven fruitful. The first priority concerned developing integrated and diversified regional tourist products for both individual and group tourists. Clear responsibilities were assigned to the member tourism bureaus, travel agencies and attractions. Activities were to be completed within one year. Therefore, travel packages with diversified tourism market segments have been developed, covering traditional sightseeing, romance cruises, beautiful landscape, Buddhist pilgrimage, historical experience, golf and gourmet leisure, and most importantly, the 'fast-railway' experience. The second priority concerned promoting jointly developed travel packages. Similar to the first priority, the second priority also had clear timetables and explicit task arrangements: the activities were launched twice a year, led by a tourism bureau based on the 'annual-rotating-seat' principle and with participation of all the other primary stakeholders. Consequently, an integrated regional tourism image (Charming Landscape-China Golden Travel Routes) has been developed, and many promotional events in five domestic or Asian tourist origins<sup>21</sup> have been organized.

No master plans were present in the EXPO case. There was an absence of general guidelines for the EXPO cooperation. In addition, the intrinsic linkages between the EXPO cooperative initiatives were missing. However, a number of concrete activities have been developed, with clear timetables (to be completed before the EXPO event) and distinct task descriptions for primary stakeholders. Among these activities are three prominent priorities. The first one was regional acceptance of the Shanghai City Tour Card. The card finally gained acceptance by attrac-

tions and public transport in a number of cities of the YRD region. The second one was the set up of the information sharing platforms for regional hotel accommodations and tour guides. As a result, 998 hotels within 90 minutes driving distance from Shanghai were listed on the front page of the official website of the Shanghai Tourism Bureau and a joint online platform entitled 'Resource Sharing Platform of Regional Tour Guides in Minor Language' was set up, covering more than 2000 registered professional tour guides in 16 minor languages. The third was the official recommendation of regional attraction factors. Eventually 96 high quality regional attractions and 65 travel packages were identified and promoted to EXPO visitors.

Similar to section 9.2, a survey was launched to collect the opinions of the informants concerning operational areas of the cooperation. Two tables of questions were designed to improve our understanding of the expectation of the informants concerning future areas of cooperation. In addition, two statements were raised to identify the perspectives of the informants concerning the relationship between the seventh factor (areas of cooperation) and the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation. Tables 9.4, 9.5 and 9.6 show the relevant survey results.

**Table 9.4**  
*Areas where regional tourism cooperation is expected to be arranged*

Area	TCY Summit			ZDN Alliance			EXPO		
	A	D	NO	A	D	NO	A	D	NO
Regional image	116	0	4	33	0	1	132	0	0
Integrated regional tourist attractions	118	0	2	33	0	1	132	0	0
Integrated cooperation among regional hotels or among regional travel agencies	118	0	2	34	0	0	130	0	2
Integrated hardware of regional accessibility*	117	0	3	34	0	0	131	0	1
Integrated software of regional accessibility**	118	0	2	33	0	1	132	0	0

Note: In the first row, 'A' means agree, 'D' means disagree, 'NO' means no opinion.

\*for instance, regional transportation systems

\*\*for instance, regional information systems, regional hospitality culture

**Table 9.5**  
Areas where regional tourism cooperation is expected to be arranged as a priority

Area	TCY Summit (Agreed)	ZDN Alliance (Agreed)	EXPO (Agreed)
<b>Joint marketing</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Joint development of regional tourist products</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>118</b>
Cooperation among regional hotels	6	12	12
Cooperation among regional travel agencies	5	11	14
Joint development of regional tourist image	32	6	6
Unify regional standards of tourism services	20	2	5
<b>Sharing tourism data and information</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>110</b>
Mutual exchange of citizens to travel	4	1	2
Improve regional transportation accessibility	5	1	3
Improve regional hospitality culture	2	2	1

Note: Areas highlighted in bold are the top three priorities of the cooperation suggested by the informants of the three cases

**Table 9.6**  
Statements concerning the areas of regional tourism cooperation in China

Statements	TCY Summit			ZDN Alliance			EXPO		
	A	D	NO	A	D	NO	A	D	NO
Presence of an integrated master plan reflecting the full-scale areas of cooperation is essential for achieving the effectiveness of the cooperation	116	2	2	32	1	1	92	32	8
It is optimal to have the presence of both integrated approach and priorities. However, if there is a request to pick up only one of them to be launched first, it is better to choose the latter	88	20	12	33	0	1	83	24	25

Note: In the first row, 'A' means agree, 'D' means disagree, and 'NO' means no opinion.

The following conclusions with regard to the relevance of an integrated approach towards cooperation with priorities to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation can be derived from the three cases.

1) The regional tourism cooperation is expected to be arranged in full scale. As indicated in table 9.4, a vast majority of the informants of the three cases strongly confirmed their perspectives to develop integrated tourist attractions, to set up relationships between regional hotels, travel agencies or other hospitality service companies, to develop and promote integrated regional tourism image, and to improve regional internal and external accessibility. In that sense, the EXPO case was a bad example. The integrated approach towards cooperation was missing in the EXPO case. In turn, there was no internal consistency between the cooperative arrangements of the EXPO case, which caused duplicated tourism supplies or even worse feedbacks. For example, in the EXPO case there was a large overlap between the group of 10 regional travel packages and the group of 55 regional travel packages. The Shanghai Tourism Bureau officially recommended both groups to the EXPO visitors. The first group was designed and operated by three travel agencies from Shanghai. The second group was introduced by local tour operators from Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. The overlap of the content of these two groups induced vicious competition. With a master plan, generally guide the development of the regional tourism products, such as 'reinventing the wheel' and vicious competition could be eased to some extent. In this sense, the presence of an integrated approach reflecting the full-scale areas of cooperation can be essential for achieving the effectiveness of the cooperation. This statement is in concordance with the opinions of nearly all the informants of the TCY Summit and the ZDN Alliance, even informants in the EXPO case, where the integrated approach towards the cooperation was absent, exclaimed their expectation of the introduction of such an approach (details see the first row of table 9.6).

2) As implied from the three Chinese cases, formulating a generally accepted philosophy of cooperation, for example, in a master plan was insufficient. There was a need to translate the vision and strategies of cooperation from master plans into realistic implementation schemes. Without keeping the 'priority' principle in mind, the cooperation could only remain on paper, thus quashed the enthusiasm of the primary stakeholders and brought the cooperation to its negative end. However,

the presence of action plans hardly equaled the feasibility of the activities. Only with clear timetables and explicit task descriptions, could the priorities begin, on time. In that sense, the TCY Summit and the ZDN Alliance are the worst and the best of the three cases respectively. The TCY Summit is a case with the presence of sub-master plans, which guided the cooperation. However, the priorities of areas of cooperation were missing in the TCY Summit. After seven-years of cooperation, only two small-scale activities have been implemented. Most of the activities of the TCY cooperation formulated in the annual declarations failed to be launched: 1) integration of regional tourism products had not been achieved. The duplicated attractions were still present, which caused vicious competition between the regional tourism attractions;<sup>22</sup> 2) integrated regional tourism image, set up of a regional council and building of a regional information platform were not achieved. The city tour card issued by one city still could not be used in any other member cities. Unlike the TCY Summit, the ZDN Alliance set up a good example. In the ZDN cooperation, an integrated approach towards cooperation (presented by the holistic master plan) and the concrete priorities of actions coexisted. Furthermore, as reflected in the survey results concerning the preference of the informants of the three cases to choose the priorities of cooperation, joint marketing, joint product development, and sharing data or information are the top three priorities (table 9.5), which are in a large degree similar to the priorities of the cooperative activities launched by the ZDN Alliance.

3) It is optimal to have the presence of both integrated approach and planned priorities. However, it is better to choose the latter, provided there is a request to pick up only one of them first. This statement is supported by a significant majority of the informants of the three cases (88 out of 120 in the TCY Summit, 33 out of 34 in the ZDN Alliance and 83 out of 132 in the EXPO). Apparently compared to a master plan, concrete priorities can bring more visible and practical achievements to strengthen the enthusiasm of the primary stakeholders or to continue the cooperation. Furthermore, desk research about the Chinese situation concerning the quality of a master plan of regional tourism cooperation also reinforces this statement. In China, most of the master plans of cooperation, like other master plans of tourism development, are not designed by the tourism bureaus or the tourism companies but outsourced to academics<sup>23</sup> who are capable of conducting master planning on theo-

retical basis yet far from being capable of managing detailed action planning in a more practical way (Zhang et al. 1999). Therefore, majority of master plans of cooperation are too broad and lack clear-cut requirements concerning how specific feasibilities must be surveyed and analysed. In addition, during the interviews we identified the general ignorance of the primary stakeholders to the importance of master plans of cooperation: none of the public and private primary stakeholders in the three cases incorporated the master plans of the regional tourism cooperative arrangements into their yearly self-development plans.

No observations in the three cases can lead to the rejection of the seventh proposition (P7) *an integrated approach towards cooperation with priorities increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*. More importantly, we also learned some specific Chinese explanations of the 'priorities'. Therefore, using the empirical studies, the proposition formulated based on the literature can be translated into a more explicit statement for the Chinese practice, that is, an integrated approach towards cooperation with priorities, *especially priorities, which incorporate clear action plans and explicit task descriptions*, increase the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

#### 9.4 Formal Structure of Implementation

What do the observations in the three case studies teach us about the relevance of the formal implementation structure to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China?

As discussed in chapter 5, the TCY Summit is one example of the conference-based cooperative structure. The TCY Summit was based on legitimacy, with one generally approved Constitution signed by the member cities during the first annual summit to secure the performance of the cooperation. However, the roles of the primary stakeholders were not clearly expressed in the constitution. The structure of the TCY Summit has been institutionalized. The highest management body of the summit was the secretariat positioned inside the tourism bureau of Hangzhou city. The secretariat functioned as a convener to bring all the potential primary stakeholders together to achieve some agreements or formulate some workable alternatives. The representatives of the presidents or department heads of tourism bureaus of the member cities formed the Consultant Committee. It gathered one time around July in

Hangzhou before the annual summit started. Annually the summit was organized once in one of the member cities during the last quarter of the year. The duration of the annual summit was two days. Normally the summit started with a signing ceremony of approved annual declaration of cooperation, used to guide the annual performance of regional tourism cooperation. After a one-day annual conference, the summit ended up with a half-day or one-day business to business Regional Tourism Fair.

The shortcomings of the implementation structure of the TCY Summit were in the aspects of personnel, funds and evaluation. There was no staff working full time for the daily operation of the TCY Summit. The bureaucratic feature of the TCY Summit—public sectors took dominant roles—hampered involvement of the private stakeholders. The number of private sector participants in the summit fluctuated since the summit organizers did not have real power to make attendance compulsory for reluctant private tourism enterprises. Most outside observers<sup>24</sup> participated in the annual conference on a temporary basis. Meanwhile, there was no mechanism to evaluate the achievements of the TCY Summit. The only evaluation-relevant activity was a 10-minute descriptive speech by the (vice)president of the tourism bureau of the hosting city at the beginning of each annual conference, where 3-4 minutes were used to summarize the performance of the TCY Summit of last year—always with positive and complimentary words. The TCY Summit lacked funds as well. The registration fees of the annual conference financed the summit. Besides this source of funds, there were no other financial sources to maintain the daily operation of the summit, or to hire permanent staff. Consequently, except the ‘intensive’ two-day annual conference, the rest of a year the TCY Summit was more like a virtual platform. During interviews, nearly all of the administrators of the tourism bureaus expressed their expectation of financial support from either the national or the provincial tourism bureaus to maintain the daily operation of the TCY Summit. Importantly, however, they claimed no indications of creating a self-funding mechanism.

The ZDN Alliance is one example of the association-based structure of cooperation. The alliance was settled by legally binding agreements—the *Internal Cooperation Agreement*—with assigned roles. Similar to the TCY Summit, the set up of the ZDN Alliance symbolized the institutionalization of inter-city tourism cooperation from irregular and informal to reg-

ular and formal. The management unit of the alliance was the *Coordination Council*. The leader of the coordination council was selected based on the 'annual-rotating-seat' principle from the five municipal tourism bureaus. The council had two committees. The *Managing Committee* consisted of vice presidents of tourism bureaus of five cities. It guarded the coherence of the operation of the alliance. Marketing directors of tourism bureaus of five member cities constituted the *Working Committee*. They were assigned to interpret, steer, manage and advise the cooperative arrangements of the ZDN Alliance. The alliance was an independent public and private cooperation organization, operating independently of the political administration. It was also a corporate-like structure relying more on the marketplace than politics to guide tourism cooperative arrangements. The private tourism companies were the main actors of the ZDN cooperation. The tourism bureaus mainly acted as coordinators or facilitators for the coherent relationship between the member travel agencies and the member tourism attractions.

Comparable with the TCY Summit, the ZDN Alliance did perform well with respect to personnel, funds and evaluation. The number of member travel agencies and tourism attractions expanded annually. However, the composition of the personnel of the original member companies and tourism bureaus involved in the ZDN cooperation was permanent and hardly fluctuated. Such fixed composition of personnel was mainly due to the jointly approved Internal Cooperation Agreement where composition of public and private members was clearly described. Furthermore, a person was hired to work full-time for the alliance. He was assigned to be in charge of the daily maintenance of the alliance, such as the internal information distribution, paper work, statistics and data analysis. Concerning the financial issue, the public and private members jointly financed the daily operation of the ZDN Alliance and the product development and marketing activities of the cooperation.<sup>25</sup> There was an internal evaluation system, which has existed alongside the set up of the alliance. The public and private members were responsible for calculating their respective data according to the unified standard: number of visitors. At the end of each year, members were compared and ranked. Based on the comparison results, the Annual Prize of Excellent Performance and Annual Prize of Best Performance were awarded to the selected member travel agencies and attractions. Meanwhile, the Annual Prize of Excellent Stakeholders was awarded to selected individ-

uals who had made great contributions and proactively devoted to the ZDN cooperation during the year.

The EXPO case is one example of project-based cooperative structure. In chapter 7, we already explained that there were three prominent and prevalent cooperation initiatives catalysed by the EXPO and operated at the inter-provincial level. Each was a time-limited arrangement set up with a short-term project office and the character of public and private involved. The first prominent initiative was regional acceptance of the Shanghai City Tour Card. The card promotional office with strong support from the Shanghai Tourism Bureau and Shanghai Municipal Construction and Transportation Commission, successfully managed to introduce the card into four neighboring cities of Jiangsu and Zhejiang province to serve the visitors of the EXPO. After the EXPO, the card promotional office still existed inside the card management company but the strong political support receded largely. The second cooperative initiative was the set up of the information sharing platforms of regional hotel accommodations and tour guides. When the project was finished, the project office vanished accordingly.

The last prominent initiative of the EXPO case was the official recommendation of regional attraction factors. The Shanghai Tourism Bureau supported the project financially by setting up the EXPO Tourism Promotional Foundation. During the EXPO, the project office composed of public and private stakeholders from three provincial tourism bureaus, 25 city tourism bureaus and relevant regional private tourism companies succeeded in generating a number of achievements.<sup>26</sup> After the EXPO, the foundation disappeared. Importantly however, the cooperation initiative continued to perform in an alternative form: a new project. This new project took the shape of an annual ceremony (the 'Award Ceremony of Yearly Most Popular Regional Attractions and Regional Travel Packages') with plans to continue as a regular event. It was first held in November 2010, one month after the EXPO ended. The management team of this new project consisted of representatives from tourism bureaus of Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. The project invited the tourists and university academics to vote for the tourism products promoted during the EXPO (96 attractions and 65 tour packages). Consequently the 20 most popular regional attractions and ten best welcomed regional travel packages were awarded in the first annual cer-

emony, accompanied by three-year free (inter)national promotion offered by the project management team.

Similar to section 9.3, a survey collected the opinions of informants using a questionnaire concerning the implementation structure of the three cases. Questions were raised to identify the perception and future expectation of the informants concerning the cooperation modality. Table 9.7 shows the relevant survey results.

**Table 9.7**  
*Statements concerning implementation structures of the three cases*

Statements	TCY Summit			ZDN Alliance			EXPO		
	A	D	NO	A	D	NO	A	D	NO
Satisfied with the current implementation structure of the cooperation	32	86	2	34	0	0	64	65	3
What implementation structure is optimal and most suitable to the cooperation	C	O	P	C	O	P	C	O	P
	11	59	50	0	34	0	6	64	62

Note: In the first row, 'A' means agree, 'D' means disagree, 'NO' means no opinion; in the third row, 'C' means conference structure, 'O' means organization (alliance) structure, 'P' means project structure.

The following conclusions with regard to the relevance of the implementation structure to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China derive from the three cases.

1) Apparent from the three case studies is the preference for formal implementation structure. This statement can also explain why the three structures reflected in the three cases have been popularly copied by the cooperative arrangements of the other regions in China. All three cases have been settled by legally binding agreements with assigned roles. Whether lasting for years or a single short period, during the operational period, the implementation structure was institutionalized, with the presence of a council, a working committee or a project office to guide the daily operation. In that sense, comparable with the implementation structures such as an oral commitment, symbolic cooperation or statutory cooperation, the conference, alliance and project structures can make re-

gional tourism cooperation more interactive, systematic, vibrant and integrated.

2) Comparing these three cases, the TCY Summit, which represents the conference structure, is the worst in terms of its transparent joint work, permanent participants, internal evaluation system and funding channel. As elaborated in table 9.6, the informants of the TCY Summit claimed that the future optimal structure of the TCY Summit could be either organizational structure or short-term project structure, with the former gaining a slightly higher supporting record. All of the informants of the ZDN Alliance showed their satisfaction with the current organizational structure. Considering the future implementation structure of the EXPO cooperation, the prevalent perspectives of the informants fell into two groups, with one group supporting the introduction of the organizational structure and the other group insisting on continuing the project structure. Therefore, the lesson we learned from the three case studies and the survey is that the conference structure represented by the TCY Summit is the least welcomed implementation structure currently in China.

3) We know that the long-term organization structure (represented by the ZDN Alliance) or the short-term project structure (represented by the EXPO) may be positive. Nevertheless, what is better? As elaborated in the ZDN Alliance, with the institutionalized structure, corporate-like public and private organizations created some distance from the day-to-day hassle of the administration. In that sense, the organizational structure made it easier to invite leading figures from the private sector to participate. The project structure, as discussed in the EXPO case, is necessary where there are difficulties in agreeing on a common vision and the long-term goals when it is still possible to find common interests in specific measures of significant importance. We cannot say what the exact implementation structure of regional tourism cooperation in China should be. The main lesson from the three cases is that regional tourism cooperation in China requires institutionalized governance with a stable number of participants, permanent staff working in an operation office, and more actual and realistic results rather than symbolic or far-sighted written agreements.

4) The experience of the three cases also supports the need for an evaluation mechanism that can add positive influences to the performance and long-term continuity of regional tourism cooperation in Chi-

na. In that sense, the ZDN Alliance is the best of the three cases. Importantly, however, there is still some space to improve the evaluation mechanisms of the ZDN Alliance, mainly in the fields of introducing more qualitative indicators<sup>27</sup> to analyse performance of the cooperation and the behavior of the primary stakeholders completely.

5) Another lesson from the three cases is that the lack of a clear funding mechanism adds negative impacts to the performance and long-term continuity of regional tourism cooperation in China. The TCY Summit in this sense is the worst of the three cases, with its operation only relying on the registration fees of the summit participants, which in turn brought more potential risks for maintaining the cooperation since such cooperation could survive only if there were sufficient participants to attend the summit. The EXPO case with support from outside funds also faced challenges when the funds recalled after the EXPO. On the contrary, the ZDN Alliance set up a good example. The cooperation was implemented under the financial support of the private and public members who jointly pooled the funds together. Meanwhile the internal funding mechanism of the ZDN Alliance was not based on the one-project-one-funding principle, but on the annual-funding philosophy. In that sense, the autonomy, consistency and independence in disposing the funds brought more freedom and flexibility to the ZDN cooperation.

In sum, the eighth proposition () *the formal implementation structure increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China* cannot be rejected by our empirical studies. Based on the conclusions mentioned above concerning the Chinese practice, we made a further adaptation of proposition (P8) and translate this proposition formulated from the literature into a more particular statement for the Chinese situation. That is, the formal implementation structure, *especially a stable attendance record of stakeholders in a cooperative arrangement, an institutionalized daily operational office, qualitative indicators to evaluate the performance of cooperation, a stable internal funding mechanism to secure the daily operation*, increase the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

## 9.5 Connecting the Input and Output Together

In chapter 8 and the previous sections of this chapter, we empirically tested the relevance of eight contextual and implementation factors to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. The present

section combines the eight influential factors together and sets up a goal to test the empirical applicability of the ninth proposition (P9): *the more contextual and implementation factors are achieved, the more effective regional tourism cooperation in China will be*. What do we observe in the three cases?

**Table 9.8**  
Performance of 8 influential factors and cooperation of the three cases

	TCY Summit	ZDN Alliance	EXPO
<b>Self performance of the individual factor</b>			
Consistency between the political-economic features of tourism of involved cities (or provinces) and the goal of cooperation	--	++	++
Detailed commitment of primary stakeholders' engagement	--	++	nil
Leadership accepted by the primary stakeholders	--	++	--
Balance of collective and individual motives	--	++	++
Representation of involved primary stakeholders in the decision-making process	--	++	-
Application of two different mechanisms for the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process	-	-	-
Integrated approach towards cooperation with priorities	--	++	-
Formal implementation structure	--	++	+
<b>Performance of the cooperation</b>			
Participative attitude of the public primary stakeholders (tourism bureaus on city or provincial level) *	--	++	nil
Participative attitude of the private primary stakeholders (tourism companies)	--	++	-
Trust and interrelations between the primary stakeholders**	--	++	nil
Content of the cooperation***	--	++	+
Perception of the primary stakeholders on the results of the cooperation****	--	+	nil
Market acceptance of the cooperation achievements	--	nil	nil
Community support of the cooperation achievements	--	--	--
Creativity of the cooperation achievements	-	--	-
Number of tourists triggered by the cooperation arrangements	--	++	++

Notes:

\* means whether the stakeholders are positive (with enthusiasm), passive or moderate with the cooperation

\*\* interrelations refer to whether there are conflicts among primary stakeholders

\*\*\* means whether the content of the cooperation is vague (symbolic) or practical (realistic)

\*\*\*\* means whether the stakeholders are satisfied with the results of the cooperation

We combined the evaluations of the three cases in respect of each influential factor in table 9.8. A scale from - - (very bad) to + + (very good) was used, so that a score of nil means neither bad nor good. Concerning the self-performance of individual factors, the TCY Summit shows the worst example of the three cases. None of the eight factors presents a positive score. The ZDN Alliance is obviously the best of the three cases, with nearly all eight factors performing well, except one factor namely the involvement mechanism of the stakeholders (particularly the secondary stakeholders). The EXPO case is moderate across the eight factors, with the political-economic features of tourism, the balance of different motives and the formal implementation structure as the three strengths. If we look at the performance of the cooperation, the TCY Summit shows the worst performance. The primary stakeholders participated in the TCY Summit always showed their passive attitude. Close relations or mutual trust between primary stakeholders were far from being achieved, the cooperation was still stuck on paper with unclear content, few social concerns and market acceptance of the achievements of the TCY Summit were present. The performance of the EXPO cooperation falls in line with the self-performance of the individual factors largely. The ZDN Alliance is the best example of the performance. Importantly, however, the performance of the ZDN Alliance was not as well as the self-performance of the individual factors. The cooperation needs improvement, especially in making use of local knowledge to ensure that the decisions of cooperation are appropriate to the market, social and future needs. In the future, the ZDN cooperation must focus on, not only transplanting information or knowledge of the cooperation to the secondary stakeholders, but also listening and gaining information or expertise from those social groups.

The slight inconsistency between the score of the self-performance of the individual factor and the score of the cooperation performance in the three cases leads us to the following discussion about the interrelations among the eight factors. The eight factors are not isolated. They form an integrated group to influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. Meanwhile, they influence and interact with each other. Political-economic features of tourism can influence stakeholder's motives, the classification and power difference of involved stakeholders and the fields to arrange the cooperation. The roles of trust and commitment among stakeholders can influence the political relation-

ships and the motives to cooperate. The representation of stakeholders can reflect the powers of different stakeholders and different cooperative leaders. Leadership is not fixed and it can change from time to time with other changes in the fields of stakeholder arrangements, political-economic background and motive expression. Leadership can also influence the implementation structure and the involvement mechanism in the decision-making process. How to balance the mutual and individual motives is not only the role of leaders but also the responsibilities of involved stakeholders. Changes in the motives of involved stakeholders during the regional tourism cooperation will definitely influence the political-economic background, classification and representation of stakeholders and leadership identification.

The EXPO cooperation can be used as an example to explain further these internal links. Since the eight factors are connected with each other to influence the final performance of the EXPO cooperation, the enthusiastic attitude of the primary stakeholders may be increased individually by some factors with positive scores,<sup>28</sup> but decreased simultaneously by the other factors with negative scores.<sup>29</sup> Therefore in return, as one indicator of the effectiveness of a regional tourism cooperative arrangement, the ultimate enthusiasm of the primary stakeholders to the EXPO cooperation, as reflected in table 9.8, is moderate (neither good nor bad).

According to internal reports, annually the number of the tourists visiting the ZDN region (via the travel packages designed by the ZDN Alliance) increased more than 10 per cent of the original figures. The private tourism companies involved in the EXPO cooperation reported their positive receipt of EXPO visitors, via different open sources such as media, newspapers and websites. Importantly, however, from the three cases (see the last row of table 9.8), we also identified that the number of tourists (quantitative data) cannot fully reflect the performance of the cooperation, which is why the qualitative analysis is expected to also play a role in this study.

Overall, we conclude that the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China is affected, largely, by these eight factors. This conclusion cannot reject the ninth proposition (P9), noting that *the more contextual and implementation factors are achieved, the more effective regional tourism cooperation in China will be*. These eight factors, including political-economic features of tourism, commitment, leadership, motives, representation of stakeholders, involvement mechanism, areas of cooperation

and implementation structure, are connected to each other. In total they form a sequence of cooperation, from preparation (before-cooperation) to operation and evaluation (during-cooperation). Before commencing a regional cooperative arrangement, some questions should be answered clearly, including under what context cooperation perform. Who are involved in cooperation? Who are taking the roles in leading, managing or coordinating cooperation? What kinds of feelings stakeholders obtain during the preparation period of cooperation? Meanwhile, during cooperation, some questions should be answered clearly as well, such as who should be involved in the decision-making process. How to secure the involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process? What activities are to be carried out; how to carry out activities of cooperation. Ignoring the answers to these questions while starting cooperation immediately, initiators of cooperation will absolutely face failures afterwards.

## 9.6 Conclusions

The experiences of the TCY Summit, the ZDN Alliance and the EXPO do not lead to the rejection of the last four propositions in our research framework. We have argued that the four factors reflected respectively in the four propositions are essential for the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation. By combining with the four factors elaborated in chapter 8, we further tested and did not reject our main proposition *the more contextual and implementation factors are achieved, the more effective regional tourism cooperation in China will be*. All the results have some implications on policy and management.

Just as in chapter 8, we acknowledge the limitations of our analysis as well. We cannot rule out the existence of other relevant factors, which also influence the effectiveness of Chinese regional tourism cooperation, but these are not incorporated in the research framework. Meanwhile we recognize that due to the lack of sufficient quantitative data, the questionnaire survey was used to a large degree to get some insight into the effectiveness of the cooperation, which provides a certain understanding of the relevance between the factors and the performance of cooperation in China.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> These two results are the joint publishing of a picture album 'Visiting the EXPO, Experiencing the YRD region' in 2009, and the organization of an event 'Announcement Ceremony of the Top 20 Popular Regional Travel Lines' in 2010.

<sup>2</sup> China National Tourism Administration issues the national standard to rank the quality of domestic tourist attractions, from the lowest level (A level) to the highest level (5A level).

<sup>3</sup> These achievements include, for example, new integrated regional travel packages, two times per year marketing campaigns, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Details are in the third column of table 9.2.

<sup>5</sup> The SME travel agencies are in most cases presented by SME associations.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. China International Travel Service (CITS); China Younger Travel Service (CYTS); China Spring Travel (China-SSS).

<sup>7</sup> E.g. East China Travel Agency Association led by Kanghui Travel group; China Wanlixing Travel Agency Association, which was set up in 2001 as the first association of SME travel agencies of the Zhejiang province; China YRD Travel Agency Association with the members of SME travel agencies from the 16 cities in the YRD region.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Dahua Hotel Hangzhou in Zhejiang province.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Jinjiang Hotel Group, Hyatt Hotel Group.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Nanjing Gudu hotel; Castel Hotel Suzhou; Diamond Grand Hotel Jiaying.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Jinjiang Inn; Seven-day Inn; Green Hotel Group.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Guilin Garden Hotel Suzhou.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Lingshan Buddhist Scenic Spot Wuxi; Hangzhou Xixi Wetland Park; Xikou Park Ningbo;

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Yuejianglou Tower in Nanjing; Hao River Scenic Spot Nantong; Dinosaur Park Changzhou; Tianyige Museum Ningbo; Suzhou Amusement Park; Nanhu lake Jiaying.

<sup>15</sup> Here 'universities' can be understood as all kinds of research-related institutions.

<sup>16</sup> The Cooperation Constitution of the TCY Summit was jointly signed by the (vice) presidents of the member tourism bureaus during the first annual summit in 2003.

<sup>17</sup> They were officially introduced by Shanghai Tourism Bureau to the EXPO visitors.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. in the '2003 Hangzhou Declaration': to develop the YRD region into the first 'barrier-free' integrated tourism region in China; in the 2004 Huangshan Consensus: to develop tourism cooperation in the six specific fields of regional integration, including tourism transportation systems, tourism industry, tourism markets, tourism information systems, tourism institutions, and tourism environment; in the 2005 Wuxi Initiatives: to realize regional integration by enhancing the inter-city tourism cooperation; in the 2006 Jinhua Guidelines: to set up six coordination mechanisms (institutionalization, product development, promotion, evaluation, information sharing and environment protection) for regional tourism integration; in the 2007 Nanjing Declaration: to develop the integrated tourism market; in the 2008 Ningbo Declaration: to promote the cooperation among tourist companies of the member cities, to design more regional tourist products, to provide more convenient services for the individual tourists and regional citizens, and to develop more effectively joint marketing approaches to seize the opportunities brought by the EXPO.

<sup>19</sup> They are the integration of the information platforms of member cities (planned in 2009); the set up of one 'Cooperation Council' to guide the future development of the TCY Summit (planned in 2010); the creation of an holistic regional tourism web portal in at least four languages (planned in 2010); the mutual acceptance of City Tour Cards among the member cities (planned in 2010).

<sup>20</sup> They are the joint publishing of a picture album 'Visiting the EXPO, Experiencing the YRD region' in 2009 and the 'Announcement Ceremony of the Top 20 Popular Regional Travel Lines' in 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Including the Pearl River Delta (in 2004, 2005 and 2006), the Bohai region (in 2007), the central China area (in 2008 and 2009), Fujian province (in 2009), and the Southeast Asian market (in 2010).

<sup>22</sup> For example, with the 2-hour traffic circle of Suzhou, cities such as Wuxi, Changzhou, Zhenjiang, Nanjing and Nantong all present plenty of rural tourist attractions with similar characteristics and contents of the rural tourist products developed in Suzhou. Hence, the intensively vicious competition among these products appeared.

<sup>23</sup> The main reason is the Tourism Bureau in China still has the traditional 'public to public cooperation' thinking. Therefore, most master plans are out-contracted to public universities instead of private consultancy companies.

<sup>24</sup> Administrators from the CNTA and provincial tourism bureaus, governors of the member cities, university scholars and journalists fall into this category.

<sup>25</sup> Annually the leader tourism bureau financed 150,000 Yuan, other tourism bureaus each financed 100,000 Yuan, the tourism attraction companies each fi-

nanced 50,000, 30,000 or 10,000 Yuan and the travel agencies individually contributed 5,000 Yuan.

<sup>26</sup> For example, the design and promotion of the 96 high-quality regional attractions fitting into the theme of the EXPO 'Better City Better Life'; the development and marketing of the 10 tour packages 'High-Quality Regional Tour Packages for EXPO Theme Experience'; the selection and promotion of the 55 high-quality regional tour packages operated by local travel agencies from Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces.

<sup>27</sup> At this moment, only some quantitative data has been used to evaluate the performance of the ZDN Alliance, such as the numbers of visitors attracted by the cooperative arrangements.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. the consistency between the political-economic features of tourism of involved destinations and the goal of cooperation, the balance of collective and individual motives, and the formal implementation structure.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. the leadership accepted by primary stakeholders, the representation of involved primary stakeholders in the decision-making process, and an integrated approach towards cooperation with priorities.

# 10

## Synthesis and Conclusions

### 10.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, we present the synthesis and conclusions of our study on regional tourism cooperation in China. This study uses the international theoretical perspectives in the Chinese cases. The focus of the study is on identifying the main factors that influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. Three typical cases of tourism cooperation in the Yangtze River Delta Region, the TCY Summit, the ZDN Alliance and the EXPO, were selected to examine the three representative tourism cooperative modalities at a Chinese regional level, including the long-term conference-based cooperative modality, the long-term association-based cooperative modality and the short-term project-based cooperative modality. By reviewing the literature and studying the three cases, eight factors have been recognized as important in explaining how tourism cooperation at a Chinese regional level can reach its goals or missions.

The first section of this chapter discusses some empirical conclusions of the study. In the next sections, the theoretical conclusions of the study are elaborated, including concept development, research method, theoretical framework, the eight factors, and the relations between the eight factors and the achievements of regional tourism cooperation. The last section of the chapter presents conclusions for future studies.

### 10.2 Understanding Regional Tourism Cooperation in China

At present, global studies on Chinese tourism are concentrated on tourism policies (Zhang et al. 1999), the inbound tourism market (Lai et al. 2006), hotel and travel industries (Xiao 2006), or tourism clusters (Jack-

son 2006), with few conclusions focusing on regional tourism development. This study filled the gap by analysing tourism cooperation at a Chinese regional level. This is the 'empirical value' of this study.

The study first elaborated the uniqueness of the Chinese tourism industry in relation to developing regional tourism cooperation. 1) China is a top-down decision-making country with subtle internal political reforms such as decentralizing the central power to local authorities and decentralizing the government power to private tourism companies and NGOs. 2) Chinese tourism markets are not fully open to international competitors, indicating that few international tourism companies play an active role in regional tourism cooperation in China. 3) The Tourism Bureau in China has more power than private tourism sectors in managing public-private regional tourism cooperative arrangements. 4) The Tourism Bureau still has the power to manage or influence the daily operation of the Tourism Industry Association, although it is legally registered as an NGO. 5) Cities gradually play more important roles in boosting regional tourism economy.

For tourism cooperation at the Chinese regional level, there are some good foundations in existence, including rich tourism resources, the regional economy, sufficient political and policy support, increased purchasing power of citizens, a national holiday policy and upgraded customer-friendly transportation systems. In chapter 7, details for three prominent regional tourism cooperative modalities in China were presented, including the long-term conference modality (represented by the Tourism City Summit of the Yangtze River Delta region), the long-term alliance modality (represented by the Zhedongnan Tourism Alliance) and the short-term project modality (represented by the projects catalysed by the Shanghai World EXPO 2010). Now we synthesize the theoretical conclusions of the study.

### 10.3 Concept of Regional Tourism Cooperation

Regional tourism cooperation was not a very well defined concept both in the west and in China. Worldwide studies on this definition were absent, with no clear statements of the geographical territories and the types of joint efforts. In this study, we compared various views from the literature and presented our own definition of regional tourism cooperation, as *a process which involves different stakeholders across sub-national adminis-*

*trative boundaries to work interactively on common objectives through either informal or formal arrangements.* Typically, this process involves the exchanges of ideas and expertise and/or sharing of resources (e.g. information, money, labor, rules, norms, etc).

This definition makes it clear that the final objective of regional tourism cooperation is to obtain positive economic, social and environmental benefits from the tourism industry. Furthermore, the definition emphasizes that the (in)formal cooperative arrangements can take place either at an inter-provincial level where a region is regarded as one large destination or at an inter-city level where small agglomerations of cities are formed. Figure 2.2 explained the definition. In our empirical analysis, the three cases showed that this definition was useful when a 'region' is defined as an area consisting of several provinces and the 'cooperation' is expected to include all kinds of collective actions.

#### 10.4 Adapting International Ideas to Chinese Situation

There are many differences between Chinese and European tourism development cases. One question that springs to mind is: are the international theories appropriate to the European cases also applicable to the Chinese cases? In this study, a research method was developed to identify the 'factors' influencing the Chinese practice. Factors mentioned in the literature cannot be used directly on the Chinese cases: they need a process of 'adaptation'. However, unlike the traditional case study approach 'literature review – propositions – case study – adaptation to propositions' (Yin 1994), this research method introduces one extra stage of adaptation, namely 'literature review – *adaptation* – propositions – case study – adaptation to propositions'. To make it clear, such research method first reviewed the relevant literature and identified some possible factors. Then the first step of adaptation started with formulating propositions. The propositions were designed to reflect some specific western explanations of factors. In other words, some western explanations of the factors mentioned in the literature but are not theoretically relevant to the Chinese background were not included in the propositions. In this sense, before being tested, the propositions were adapted to some extent, based on the combination of literature and understanding of the Chinese background. The second step of adaptation was carrying out the case studies. After testing the propositions in the Chinese cases, factors iden-

tified in the literature have finally obtained new explanations at the end of the study, which are tailor-made and tested empirically applicable for China. Our study showed that this research method of adaptation is appropriate when one studies a geographic area, which to a large extent is different from where the theories originated.

### 10.5 Theoretical Framework

Although regional tourism cooperation becomes increasingly important, it has only recently caught the research attention of scholars (Ioannides et al. 2006). Studies on regional tourism cooperation remain scarce (Ghimire 2001) and have been largely neglected in social science as well as in economics and management (March and Wilkinson 2009).<sup>1</sup> Understanding of how cooperation forms (Palmer and Bejou 1995), how to balance stakeholders' values (Selin and Chavez 1995) and how to build appropriate cooperation ventures (Selin 1999) has lagged behind the realities. Our study made some theoretical conclusions to fill the above mentioned gaps.

As far as the tourism sector and the Chinese situation are concerned, the theoretical framework in the theoretical part (see figure 10.1) is broadly tested to be a useful 'tool' to analyse the performance of regional tourism cooperation in China. As discussed in chapter 2, this framework is an alternative for the frameworks of 'Processes of a Tourism Development Partnership' (Araujo and Bramwell 2002), 'Conditions Influencing the Development of Tourism Partnership' (Greer 2002) and 'Organizing Capacity' (Van den Berg et al. 1997). The most important differences between our framework and those alternatives are as follows.

1) The process oriented approach. Our framework takes the process of regional tourism cooperation into account and makes a distinction between factors of the pre-cooperation process and the during-cooperation process of a regional tourism cooperative arrangement. In those alternatives, such a distinction is lacking (see detailed explanations in chapter 2). This distinction adds to the quality of the framework, in the sense that it is a shift away from the 'status' explanation of the performance of a cooperative arrangement toward the process elaboration, which looks at not only the current implementation but also reasons to set up cooperative arrangements and the foundations where the cooperation rests. Our

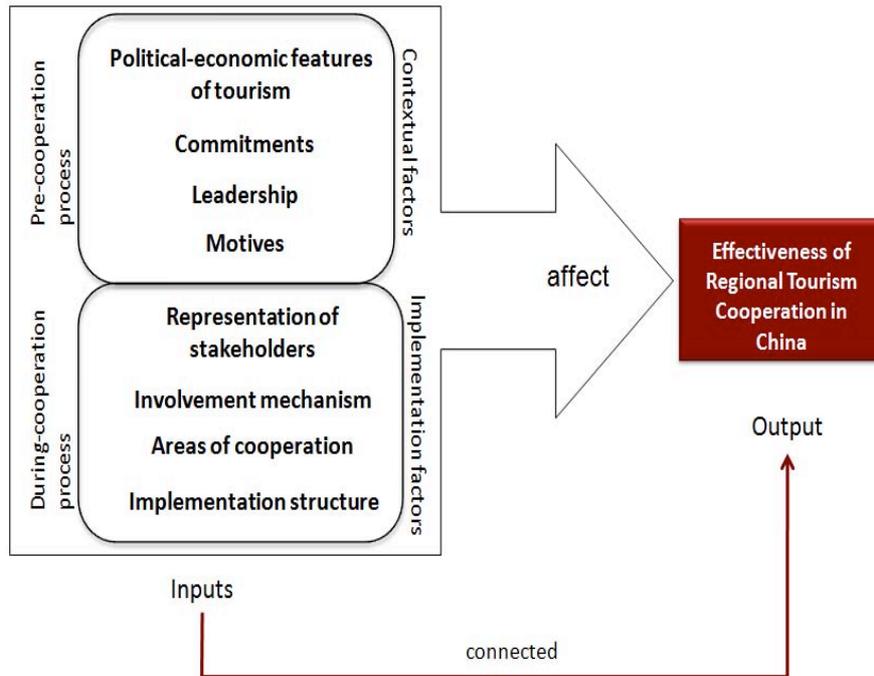
study demonstrated the importance of focusing on the process of regional tourism cooperation.

2) The incorporation of theoretical tools to review the governance and the performance of regional tourism cooperation. The three tools, namely the concept of ‘stakeholders’ (when explaining the factors of ‘commitment’, ‘motives’, ‘representation of stakeholders’ and ‘involvement mechanism’), the concept of ‘Destination Life Cycle’ (when explaining the factor of ‘political-economic features of tourism’), the concept of ‘Urban Tourist System’ (when explaining the factor of ‘areas of cooperation’) enrich our framework.

3) The adaptation to a specific geographic area with a specific political-economic context. The positive incorporation of specific political-economic context to tourism has been acknowledged, but this insight has not been largely used to the tourism cooperation study, especially at the regional level. Eight factors identified in our framework are tested to be appropriate to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in a fast developing country where governments take relatively dominant roles in leading the tourism industry and managing the regional tourism cooperation. In that sense, our framework, compared to those alternatives, makes additional conclusions to the governance theory: the research extends the scope of the governance theory to a specific context where relationships between public and private sectors are different from the context where the governance theory is rooted.

The literature about tourism cooperation and governance in the tourism sector lead the theoretical framework to focus on the cooperation process and identified factors. In this study, four contextual factors related to the pre-cooperation process and four implementation factors related to the during-cooperation process were tested by the empirical studies to be relevant to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. However, after incorporating the theoretical framework with the three case studies, we also find that factors from western literature can be explained differently in the Chinese context. Detailed explanations follow.

**Figure 10.1**  
Theoretical framework of the study



## 10.6 Political-Economic Features of Tourism

In this study, the tourist numbers, the tourism contribution to GDPs, the political position of the Tourism Bureau in its corresponding administration, and the operational capacity of the Tourism Bureau reflect the political-economic features of tourism. Three conclusions concerning political-economic features of tourism were drawn from the case studies. First, most Chinese cities (or provinces)<sup>2</sup> intend to attract more tourists to their own destinations by competing with the others, which indicates that if cooperation ignores such economic features while planning to achieve unified goals by harming the individual interests of the involved destinations, the effectiveness of cooperation can hardly be achieved. Second, most Chinese tourism bureaus have relatively low political positions in their corresponding administrations, indicating that if the coop-

eration requires the involvement of other government agencies besides the tourism bureaus, the effectiveness of the cooperation is harder to achieve. This is an important conclusion since the poor negotiation or communication power of the Tourism Bureau with the other government agencies is generally linked to the threat to the effective performance of regional tourism cooperation. Third, by far most Chinese tourism bureaus lack the manpower, creativity, efficiency and close internal interactions of departments, which indicate that obstacles will occur if regional tourism cooperation challenges the current operational capacity of the involved tourism bureaus.

From all these discussions, the empirical studies have tested and not yet rejected the first proposition (P1), noting that *consistency between the political-economic features of tourism of involved destinations and the goal of cooperation increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*, which is in line with Aas et al. (2005), Greer (2002) and Ioanides et al. (2006) who suggest the importance of understanding the political-economic features of tourism before launching regional tourism cooperation. However, from the case studies, we found that the second and third conclusions above turned out to be most important in the Chinese context. In this sense, rather than being explained in the literature as ‘consistency between the political-economic features of tourism of involved destinations and the goal of cooperation’, the factor ‘political-economic features of tourism’ obtains a different explanation in the Chinese context, that is, ‘operational capacity and the political communication power of involved tourism bureaus’.

## 10.7 Commitment

The concepts ‘detailed written commitment’ and ‘detailed actual commitment’ were incorporated into the framework to study the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. The detailed written commitment is expressed in the cooperative agreements, contracts and internal documents with explicit descriptions. Examples of the detailed actual commitment include money contributions of primary stakeholders to the cooperation,<sup>3</sup> the proactive participation of high-level managers of primary stakeholders in the cooperation among others.

The empirical results showed that it is easy for a stakeholder to cooperate if more detailed commitment of other stakeholders is present.

This finding has tested and not yet rejected the second proposition (P2), *the more detailed commitment of primary stakeholders' engagement, the more effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*, which is in line with the opinions of Greer (2002).

Importantly, however, via the empirical studies we found two elements of the factor 'commitment' more important in the Chinese context. First, the detailed actual commitment is more important than the detailed written commitment in China, given the fact that the former can partly compensate the challenges brought by the omission of the latter. Second, 'financial forces' and 'urgency' can be two important catalysts to reinforce the commitment of primary stakeholders during the process of regional tourism cooperation in China. In this sense, rather than being explained in the literature as 'detailed commitment of primary stakeholders' engagement', the factor 'commitment' has a different explanation in the Chinese context, that is, 'detailed actual commitment of primary stakeholders', which has played a more important role in the Chinese context.

## 10.8 Leadership

The results of the three cases showed that in the beginning of the cooperation, the comparatively dominant power of leaders was one element that determined the acceptance of leadership by primary stakeholders. When leaders could not ensure equal participation during the cooperation process, the original acceptance of leadership by primary stakeholders (decided by power) became weakened or even disappeared (e.g. the EXPO). In one case (the TCY Summit), in the beginning of the cooperation, doubts about the leadership already existed and the situation worsened during cooperation since equal attendance rights for the other primary stakeholders was missing.

Therefore, the empirical studies tested and did not reject the proposition (P3), *leadership accepted by primary stakeholders adds to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*. Importantly, however, the empirical studies made some specific additions to the literature. Unlike Araujo and Bramwell (2002), Mitchell et al. (1997), Sheehan and Ritchie (2005) who suggest that the relatively strong power is the prominent determinant to identify leaders, the case studies found that relatively strong power is the prominent determinant to identify leaders of regional tourism coopera-

tion in China, *but* only before the cooperation starts. During the cooperation, the relatively strong power *cannot* decide *but* might destroy the leadership if a democratic system to ensure the equal rights of the other primary stakeholders to express their opinions, initiatives or ideas is absent. In this sense, although the factor 'leadership' is explained in literature as 'leadership accepted by primary stakeholders', in the Chinese situation the factor 'leadership' obtains a new explanation, as 'mechanism to secure the attendant equality of less-power primary stakeholders to access the cooperative resources'.

### 10.9 Motives

From the case studies, we found that in China first, it is difficult for primary stakeholders to sacrifice their own interests to cooperate (although in the long run the cooperation can bring benefits), unless the cooperation allows participants to achieve their own interests in a short time (e.g. the ZDN Alliance). Second, the more conflicts between collective and individual motives, the more difficult it is to continue the cooperation or the more possibilities to make the content of the cooperation vague (e.g. the TCY Summit). Third, the incremental cooperation approach of developing new cooperative projects to avoid the existing competition between individual and collective interests can be applied to the arrangements of Chinese regional tourism cooperation (e.g. the ZDN Alliance and the EXPO), given the fact that the results of such approaches are easily quantified and oriented to optimize the individual motives of primary stakeholders in the short term.

Our empirical studies presented a Chinese answer to the question raised by Bramwell and Sharman (1999): to what extent the individual and collective motives of stakeholders can be balanced. The three cases followed Greer (2002) and Yacoumis (1989) who suggest the importance of having collective and individual interests coexist in a cooperative arrangement and followed Reid et al. (2008) who introduce the incremental cooperative approach. In this sense, the empirical studies have tested and not rejected the proposition (P4) *collective motives of cooperation should be coherent with individual motives of primary stakeholders in order to increase the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.*

Importantly however, the case studies have shown that the western explanations to the factor 'motives' are only applicable to Chinese cases

when the collective motives of a cooperative arrangement are featured quantitative, short-term responses, oriented to optimize individual interests. In this sense, although the factor 'motives' is explained in literature as 'balance of collective and individual motives', in the Chinese situation the factor 'motives' has a new explanation, as 'collective motives with the features of easy to be quantified, short-term response, and oriented to optimize the individual interests'.

### 10.10 Representation of Stakeholders

The concept 'representation' is the first factor of the during-cooperation process to study the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. This concept is relatively new in the literature (Bramwell and Sharman 1999). It means stakeholders involved in a cooperative arrangement should fully represent all relevant stakeholders. In the empirical studies, we found only one case (the ZDN Alliance) of full representation of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process, which consequently assured that the decisions reflect the requests of cooperation and the self-interests of primary stakeholders. As a result, the actions of the cooperation were feasible and the support from all primary stakeholders to the cooperation was strengthened. In this sense, the empirical studies tested and did not reject the proposition (P5) *representation of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*, which falls in line with Bramwell and Sharman (1999).

Importantly however, we found that small or medium-sized travel agencies, economic chain or single hotels and regional-based attractions have been excluded in all three cases. Such absence was only acceptable when the small and medium-sized tourism companies were not regarded as primary stakeholders of the cooperation (e.g. in the ZDN Alliance). Given the interests of small and medium-sized tourism companies to participate in a regional tourism cooperative arrangement are to a large extent different from large-scale tourism companies, more concerns to involve them in the decision-making process have become crucial. Furthermore, we have identified in the three cases that their exclusion could be eased if the cooperation organizers took the initiative to involve them into the decision-making process.

In this sense, unlike in the proposition (P5) where the factor ‘representation of stakeholders’ is explained as ‘representation of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process’ or unlike Ghimire (2001) who explains the factor ‘representation of stakeholders’ as ‘involving more government agencies in the decision-making process of the cooperation’, the Chinese cases gave a new explanation to the factor ‘representation’ as ‘representation of small or medium-sized tourism companies in the decision-making process’.

### 10.11 Involvement Mechanism

One important conclusion to the factor of ‘involvement mechanism’ resulted from the case studies: the mechanism of decision-making in China is not in line with some theoretical arguments presented by Robert and Simpson (1999) and Smith et al. (1986). The empirical results showed that the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China do *not* depend on the same inclusive mechanism to involve all kinds of stakeholders, as implied in some literature (Robert and Simpson 1999; Smith et al. 1986), *but* on applying different mechanisms to involve primary and secondary stakeholders respectively in the decision-making process of a regional tourism cooperative arrangement in China. The case studies explained: social groups in China (such as tourists or local residents) lack the knowledge and capacity to contribute their ideas to the decision-making process of regional tourism cooperation due to their histories of being excluded from decision-making. In this sense, the empirical studies have tested and not rejected the proposition (P6) *applying the inclusive mechanism to involve primary stakeholders and the consultative mechanism to involve secondary stakeholders in the decision-making process increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.*

Importantly, however, in none of our empirical studies have the residents been involved in the decision-making process of regional tourism cooperation. Although in the TCY Summit, university scholars were involved in the decision-making process via the regular ‘conference participation’ mechanism, and in the EXPO, tourists and scholars were involved in the decision-making process via the fixed ‘voting’ mechanism, the degree of influence of secondary stakeholders to the formulated decisions was poor. In that sense, none of the achievements of the three cases obtained broad market acceptance or social support. The three cas-

es were more like self-amusements among the primary stakeholders. Meanwhile, from the three cases, we identified that currently in China when there were fixed consultative mechanisms to secure the involvement of secondary stakeholders in the decision-making process of regional tourism cooperation (see the TCY Summit and the EXPO), the secondary stakeholders were only asked to present opinions on the results of the cooperation, which in turn only influenced the next-round decision-making process of regional tourism cooperation. In the future, we would like to see ways to develop a regular consultative mechanism to incorporate the opinions of secondary stakeholders into the current formulated decisions.

Therefore, rather than being explained in the literature as ‘applying the inclusive mechanism to involve primary stakeholders and the consultative mechanism to involve secondary stakeholders in the decision-making process’, the factor ‘inclusive mechanism’ has a different explanation in the Chinese context, that is, ‘consultative mechanism incorporating opinions of secondary stakeholders into those of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process’.

### 10.12 Areas of Cooperation

Regional tourism cooperation in China, as reflected in the three cases, is expected to perform in the full range, including product development, image building and accessibility improvement. The absence of an integrated approach towards cooperation can result in inconsistency between cooperative arrangements, the disordered presence of duplicated tourism supplies and other negative feedback. The empirical findings confirmed the applicability of the ‘Urban Tourist System’ concept (Van den Berg et al. 1995) to the Chinese situation, if the geographic area mentioned in the concept is enlarged from a local destination to a region. Meanwhile, our empirical studies also demonstrated that without taking priorities, the cooperation could only stay on paper and consequently hindered the enthusiasm of stakeholders and brought cooperation to the negative end. This finding was in line with the opinions of Araujo and Bramwell (2002), Chirathivat (1996), Mitchell et al. (1997) and Van den Berg et al. (1995). In this sense, the empirical studies have tested and not rejected the proposition (P7) *an integrated approach towards cooperation with priorities increasing the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.*

Importantly, however, our empirical research made two additional conclusions to this proposition: first, an integrated approach towards cooperation with priorities can increase the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China, *only* when priorities are with clear action plans and explicit task descriptions; second, when there is a dilemma to choose either formulating an integrated approach or launching a concrete action as the first priority, the latter is more urgent and applicable to the Chinese situation. In this sense, the factor ‘areas of cooperation’ is explained in literature as ‘an integrated approach towards cooperation with priorities’, but in the Chinese situation the factor ‘areas of cooperation’ obtains a new explanation, as ‘priorities incorporating clear action plans and explicit task descriptions’.

### 10.13 Implementation Structure

No matter whether it lasts for years or for a single short period, during the operational period, the implementation structures of cooperation in the three cases – the long-term conference, the long-term alliance, the short-term project – were institutionalized, with the presence of councils, working committees or project offices to guide the daily operations. Comparable with other structures such as oral communication, symbolic cooperation or statutory cooperation, all three formal structures mentioned in our empirical studies can make regional tourism cooperation more interactive, systematic and integrated. This finding was in line with the suggestion of Selin and Chavez (1995), stating that a regulatory framework with systematic structure in a certain time frame can be an ideal structure to perform regional tourism cooperation. In this sense, the eighth proposition (P8) was not rejected, noting that *the formal implementation structure increases the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China*.

However, we identified three extensions to the factor ‘implementation structure’. First, the results of empirical study demonstrate that the long-term alliance structure (Svenssen et al. 2006) and the short-term project structure (Ioanides et al. 2006) are more applicable in the Chinese situation than the long-term conference structure (Araujo and Bramwell 2002) since those structures are more institutionalized they bring more realistic results. The corporate-like alliance can create some distance from the day-to-day hassle of the administration and make it easier to invite leading figures from the private tourism sector on the board (e.g.

the ZDN Alliance). The project structure is necessary where there are difficulties in agreeing on a common vision and on the long-term goals when it is still possible to find common interests in specific measures of significant importance (e.g. the EXPO). In this sense, it has been claimed in the study, the formal structure of regional tourism cooperation in China, *not only* means the structure with legally binding agreements, assigned role (Selin and Chavez 1995), councils (March and Wilkenson 2008), project offices or working committees (Roberts and Simpson 1999), *but also* means the structure has the more stable attendance record of primary stakeholders when participating in a cooperative arrangement and the more institutionalized office for daily operation. This additional comment to the factor of 'implementation structure' resulted from our empirical research.

Second, the three cases made clear that more qualitative indicators are expected to be introduced to evaluate the performance of cooperation and analyse the behavior of primary stakeholders. In addition, the three cases demonstrated the importance of the introduction of an internal (rather than outside) funding mechanism to secure the autonomy, independence, freedom and flexibility of stakeholders in the cooperation, which extends the expressions of Ghimire (2001) and Greer (2002) concerning the financial mechanisms of a tourism cooperative arrangement at a regional level.

In this sense, rather than being explained in the literature as 'formal implementation structure', the factor 'implementation structure' has a different (more detailed) explanation in the Chinese context, that is, 'a stable attendance record of stakeholders, an institutionalized daily operational office, qualitative indicators for evaluation, and a stable internal-funding mechanism'.

#### 10.14 Relations between the Eight Factors and Achievements of Cooperation

Based on empirical results, we have tested and not rejected the main proposition of this study, noting that *the more contextual and implementation factors are achieved, the more effective regional tourism cooperation in China will be*. A scale from - - (very bad) to + + (very good) was introduced to compare the three cases, in respect of the self-performance of eight individual factors and the effective performance of a regional tourism coopera-

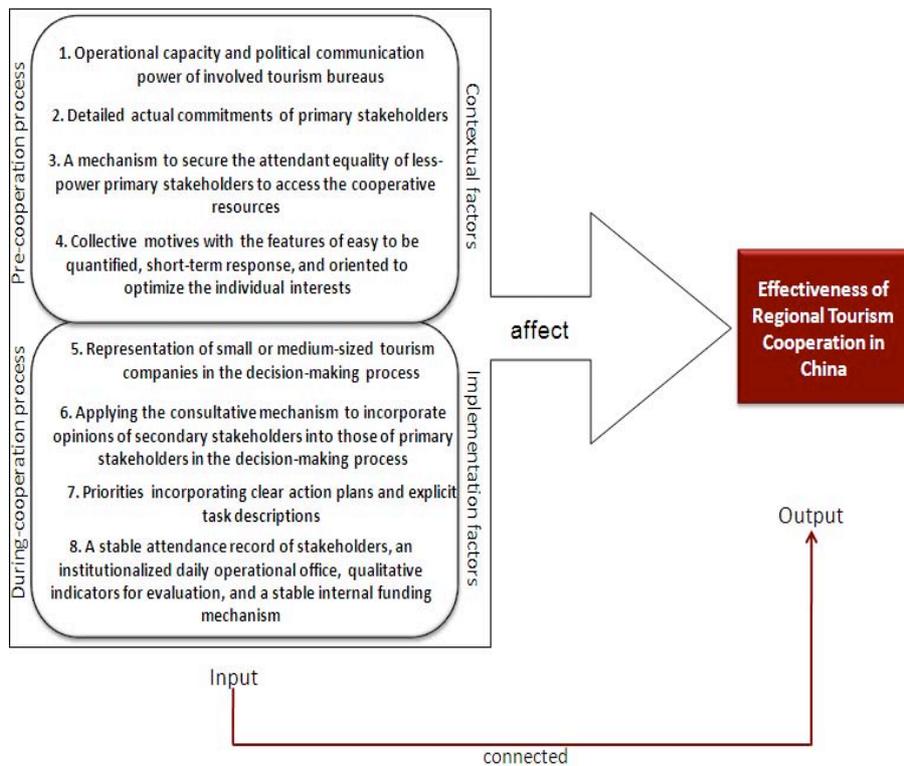
tive arrangement. The number of tourists (quantitative data) cannot fully reflect the performance of cooperation, therefore eight qualitative indicators were introduced as well to reflect the expected results of the cooperation, including the participative attitude of public primary stakeholders, the participative attitude of private primary stakeholders, the trust and interrelations between primary stakeholders, the contents of cooperation, the satisfaction of primary stakeholders to the cooperative achievements, the market acceptance of the cooperative achievements, community support of the cooperative achievements, and the creativity of the cooperative achievements. As a result, we found interrelations between the eight factors and the effectiveness of cooperation in China. More importantly, we have also seen a slight inconsistency when comparing the self-performance of the individual factors with the performance of the cooperation. Such inconsistency reflects on the one hand, the interrelations between the eight factors and on the other hand, the importance of putting these eight factors as a group to influence effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China.

From proposition P1 to proposition P8, each of the eight propositions concerns one factor with the western explanations. Since our empirical studies have not rejected any of the eight propositions, the eight factors indicated in these eight propositions are tested to be equally important to influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. Importantly, however, these eight factors have different explanations in the Chinese context. After the case studies, each of these eight factors has been given a new explanation specifically in the Chinese context.

Comparing the western and the Chinese explanations it is not difficult to find the intrinsic relations between them. Actually, the Chinese explanations are those developed on the basis of the western explanations, which means, the western explanations describe the general features of each factor with no clear elaborations about the context where such factor is rooted. However, the Chinese empirical results help to weigh the features of each factor as indicated in the western explanations and identify accordingly the most important or urgent features of each factor, which are expected to be of more concern to tourism cooperative arrangements at a Chinese regional level in the future. In this sense, we demonstrate that the study has not weighed the importance of eight factors to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China. How-

ever, the study has weighed the features of each factor, which are all tested suitable to the Chinese practice, with some features more important in the Chinese context than the others.

**Figure 10.2**  
*Adapted framework of the study*



Therefore, including the Chinese explanations of the eight factors into the theoretical framework, a new modified scientific model that can be applied to the Chinese context is developed (see figure 10.2). We presume this adapted framework can shed light on achieving the effectiveness of tourism cooperation in the Chinese regions in the future. If we improve consistency between the goal of cooperation and the operational capacity or the political communication power of involved tourism

bureaus, encourage more detailed actual commitment of primary stakeholders' engagement, introduce a mechanism to secure the attendant equality of less-power primary stakeholders to access the cooperative resources, adjust collective motives of cooperation to be more quantitative, short-term responses, oriented to optimize individual interests, increase the representation of small or medium-sized travel agencies, economic chain or single hotels, and regional based tourism attractions (if they are defined by the cooperation as the primary stakeholders) in the decision-making process, apply the consultative mechanism to incorporate opinions of secondary stakeholders into those of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process, develop more priorities of cooperation, which incorporate clear action plans and explicit task descriptions, and last but not least, if we improve a stable attendance record of stakeholders, set up an institutionalized daily operational office, introduce more qualitative indicators to evaluate the performance of cooperation, and create a stable internal funding mechanism to secure the daily operations, more goals or missions of tourism cooperation at a Chinese regional level can be reached.

### 10.15 Conclusions

This research has set out to answer the following question, *how do Chinese regions cooperate in the field of tourism and what are the conditions for such successful tourism cooperation?* By using the insights from various disciplines, in particular governance theory, this study extends the research approach to a regional scale, especially for inter-city and inter-province tourism cooperation.

The research results of this study have some specific implications on China, in respect of policy and management. The modalities of the long-term conference, the long-term alliance and the short-term project analysed in this study can be appropriate in China if government officials and tourism company representatives bear the eight influential factors in mind. In other words, regional tourism cooperation in China is a limited cooperation where influences of political-economic features of tourism, commitment, leadership, motives, representation of stakeholders, involvement mechanism, areas of cooperation, and implementation structure have to be considered. These factors are necessary for the effectiveness of Chinese regional tourism cooperation but insufficient. However,

the ignorance of one factor can definitely hinder the success of cooperation.

We give the EXPO case, which represents the short-term project modality further explanation. As discussed in the previous chapters, the success of the EXPO as a single event with more than 73 million EXPO visitors in Shanghai within six months does not mean the YRD region profited from the EXPO as planned. The quality of regional tourism cooperation was poor in terms of fulfilling the requirements of the eight factors. In the future if there is another event as an attraction, how to make it not only benefit the primary destination, but also spill over more profits out of a single event to a region is a new challenge. Only finding solutions to this challenge can increase the possibilities for more cities to finance together and create a new event. From the study, we suggest that it is difficult to make all the solutions perfect, but the solutions would be more effective if focused on the eight factors identified in this study.

The research is based on the Chinese context, which may limit its application to the other case studies outside China. The theoretical frameworks and empirical results from this research should be applied to another context with caution. Importantly, however, this does not imply that the generalization and application of this research is problematic. China has become such an important country. For the international tourism companies who intend to enter the Chinese tourism market, it is good to know on what conditions the regional tourism cooperation in China can be effective, provided they want to be successful in playing important roles in the Chinese tourism industry. Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that each region needs to develop its own tourism cooperation response, based on its unique local contexts. This study demonstrates the value of governance, supported by a thorough understanding of Chinese local circumstances. In this sense, this study can be used to trigger research initiatives of other academics if their future studies require the incorporation of theories with a local context. In addition, the research findings are not rigidly confined to the tourism sector. We expect that our study—a systematic analysis of factors influence the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China—is also applicable to other sectors concerning public-private partnerships at different spatial levels.

Last but not least, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged in this study. We stipulate that there are more factors in-

volved in influencing the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China, but we have found support in these three cases for the eight factors. Meanwhile we acknowledge that due to the lack of sufficient quantitative data, we mainly used the survey to get some insights into the effectiveness of the cooperative cases, which provides some understanding about the relevance of the factors to the performance of cooperation. The study cannot solve all the problems and is not the best study to provide the exact answers to practitioners or politicians. Further improvements of the study are expected in the future, for instance, more studies weighing the importance of the eight identified factors to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China, more studies on the relevance of the other influential factors such as social, psychological and communication factors to the effectiveness of regional tourism cooperation in China, or more studies testing whether the theoretical framework designed based on the experiences in China also works in Europe and other developed countries.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> We only found a few articles studying regional tourism cooperation such as Araujo and Bramwell (2002); Fagence (1996); Ghimire (2001); Ioanides et al. (2006); Jackson and Murphy (2006); Reid et al. (2008); Roberts and Simpson (1999); Tosun and Jenkins (1996). Details were elaborated on in chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup> The TCY Summit and the ZDN Alliance took place at the inter-city level and the EXPO case took place at the inter-provincial level, where the political-economic features of tourism in involved provinces was considered.

<sup>3</sup> This means primary stakeholders financially promise their devotion and loyalty to the cooperation.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Tables

**Table A1.1**  
*Different definitions of a region in international literature*

Administrative boundaries of a region	An independent administrative authority	
	Yes	No
Supranational level	NA	Travis 1980; Schlüter 1991; Rodriguez & Portales 1994; Fagence 1996; Ghimire 2001; Ioanides et al. 2006
A country / nation	Teye 1988 ; Tosun and Jenkins 1996; Roberts and Simpson 1999; Rodriguez et al. 2004	NA
Inter-provincial level inside a country	Kerr et al. 2001; Jones et al. 2003	Pearce 1990; Gan & Smith 1992; Sola 1992; Verbeke & Spee 1995; Jackson 2006; Reid et al. 2008
A province / sub-national authority	Clarke 1981; Sola 1992; Berry & Ladkin 1997; Barry & Robins 2001; Seckelmann 2002; Carmen & Eva 2002; Jones et al. 2003; Braun 2003; Baidal 2004; Braun 2004; Such & Zamora 2006; Zahra & Ryan 2007; Carte et al. 2010	NA
Inter-city level inside a country	NA	Hudman 1978; Smith 1987; Lovingood & Mitchell 1989; Backman et al. 1991; Araujo & Bramwell 2002; Jackson & Murphy 2006; Ioannides et al. 2006; March & Wilkinson 2008; Koo et al. 2010
A city	Loukissas 1982; Pearce 1988; Guisan et al. 2002; Ahn et al. 2002	NA
Agglomerations of local communities	Kemper 1979; Ahna et al. 2002; March & Wilkinson 2008	Jackson & Murphy 2006; Zhang & Murphy 2009

*Note:* We chose 1978 as the starting year because it is the year China opened its door to the rest of the world. In order to compare with Chinese literature, in this dissertation the publication years of all the literature we reviewed started at 1978.

**Table A1.2**  
*Different expressions describe joint efforts of tourism in literature*

Pub year	Author	Cooperation	Collaboration	Partnership	Alliance
1983	Walker			☐	
	*McCann		☐		
1986	*Smith et al.		☐		
1987	*Lee	☐			
1988	*Teye	☐			
1989	*Yacoumis	☐			
1990	*Hall & Braithwaite			☐	
	*Pearce*	☐			
1991	Collins & Doorley				☐
1992	*Holder	☐			
	*Gan & Smith*		☐		
1993	*Arroll	☐			
	Riley et al.			☐	
1995	Selin & Chavez			☐	
	Palmer & Bejou				☐
	Jamal & Getz		☐		
1996	*Tosun & Jenkins	☐	☐		
	*Fagence	☐			
	*Chirathivat	☐			
1997	Long			☐	
	Bramwell		☐		
1999	*Roberts & Simpson		☐	☐	
	Sautter & Leisen		☐		
	Selin			☐	
	Bramwell & Sharman		☐		
2000	GoËymen			☐	
	Preble et al.				☐
	Augustyn & Knowles			☐	
	Saxena			☐	
2001	*Ghimire	☐			
	Heeley			☐	
	Riege et al.			☐	
2002	*Araujo & Bramwell			☐	
	*Greer	☐		☐	
2003	Huybers & Bennett	☐			
	Mason		☐	☐	
	Eastham			☐	
2004	Klooster et al.			☐	
	Baidal	☐			

2005	Sheehan & Ritchie		□		
	Vernon et al.		□		
	Fyall & Garrod		□		
	Aas et al.		□		
	Chen & Tseng				□
2006	*Jackson & Murphy		□		
	*Ioanides et al.		□		
	Svenssen et al.			□	
	* Van der Borg, et al.*				
	*Soininen & Lindroth	□			
	*Jackson*	□			
2008	* Reid et al.*			□	□
	Angella & Go		□		
	March & Wilkinson			□	
	Ravinder		□		
	Cawley & Gillmor	□			
2009	Currie et al.		□		
	March & Wilkinson			□	
2010	Gopalan & Narayan		□		
	Yates et al.		□		
	Racherla & Hu		□		

Notes:

1) \*author means in the article, tourism cooperates across the administrative boundaries (excluding the provincial boundaries); \*author\* means in the article tourism cooperates across the provincial boundaries, which exactly fits our definition for a region

2) we collected articles via the online database Science Direct where 'tourism cooperation', 'tourism collaboration', 'tourism partnership', 'tourism alliance' were typed respectively as key words into the 'title' column to gather information dated between 1978 and 2010. The reason we chose 1978 as the starting year is because it is the year China opened its door to the rest of the world. In order to compare with Chinese literature, in this dissertation the publication years of all the literature we reviewed started at 1978.

**Table A1.3**  
*Areas of regional tourism cooperation mentioned in the literature*

<b>Areas</b>	<b>International literature</b>
Marketing and promotion <sup>1</sup>	Teye 1988; Yacoumis 1989; Hall & Braithwaite 1990; Pearce 1990; Gan & Smith 1992; Holder 1992; M. Fagence 1996; Roberts & Simpson 1999; K.B. Ghimire 2001; Araujo & Bramwell 2002; Greer 2002; Ioanides et al. 2006; Reid et al. 2008
Product development and bundling <sup>2</sup>	Smith et al. 1986; Teye 1988; Hall & Braithwaite 1990; Gan & Smith 1992; Araujo & Bramwell 2002; Greer 2002; Jackson 2006; Jackson & Murphy 2006; Ioanides et al. 2006
Accessibility <sup>3</sup>	Teye 1988; Gan & Smith 1992; Fagence 1996; Roberts & Simpson 1999; Ghimire 2001; Araujo & Bramwell 2002; Greer 2002; Ioanides et al. 2006
Policy and strategy design and development	Ghimire 2001; Araujo & Bramwell 2002; Greer 2002; Ioanides et al. 2006
Expertise and training <sup>4</sup>	Teye 1988; Fagence 1996; Ghimire 2001; Ioanides et al. 2006
Planning	Gan & Smith 1992; Araujo & Bramwell 2002
Research	Yacoumis 1989; Greer 2002
Environment <sup>5</sup>	Teye 1988
Lobbying activities <sup>6</sup>	Teye 1988

*Notes:*

<sup>1</sup> Such as international representation on foreign markets; joint promotion; participating in international tourism fairs organized by Ministry of Tourism; jointly running some actual promotional campaigns; new promotional product development such as regional videos, films PR publications; image development; etc.

<sup>2</sup> Such as developing a special tourist route.

<sup>3</sup> Such as transport system policies for landing rights, charter flights, and overland international crossing; standardization and regional classification of tourism facilities; cooperation in passport and visa requirements, uniformed quality assurance system, uniformed tourism statistic system, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Such as personnel and manpower training; developing human resources in tourism.

<sup>5</sup> Such as cooperating to develop clean and safe environment, produce conservation, preservation, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Such as cooperating to lobby one tourism issue.

**Table A1.4**  
*Modalities mentioned in the literature concerning tourism cooperation  
 across the administrative boundaries in the recent 30 years  
 (from 1980-2009)*

Modality	Details	Literature
Conference based cooperation	Public-private and community involved regional tourism council by organizing monthly meetings with outside funds	Smith et al. 1986;
	Annual conference	Teye 1988
	Public-private formal forum among Public-private sectors	Roberts & Simpson 1999
	Regular conference	Ghimire 2001
	Regular, face-to-face meetings participating by government organizations at different spatial scales led by a public convener, with civil participation mechanism as an complementary and private sectors show no interest to participate	Araujo & Bramwell 2002
Formal organization	Public-private effective Organization which works closely with other public or private associations	Teye 1988
	Regional tourism marketing organization which coordinates all other resources available for regional promotion, such as airlines, medias, etc. among public actors	Yacoumis 1989
	An appropriate institutional or inter-agency structure within which responsibilities are assigned, accepted and implemented among public-private sectors	Fagence 1996
	By dismissing local tourism authority to set up regional tourism authority with its members from private sectors	Pearce 1990
	A structured and formal mechanism	Chirathivat 1996
	A solid regional organization	Ghimire 2001
	A publicly owned limited company jointly established by public authorities with the membership of private sectors; mechanism for such company should be more open, and encouraging informal negotiation instead of structured and formal	Greer 2002
	Open and informal mechanism within a solid public-private organization	Ioanides et al. 2006
	Strategic alliance with national government taking the leading role among public-private sectors	Reid et al. 2008
	A regional tourism authority among public-private sectors	Roberts & Simpson 1999
Project based cooperation	Funded by participants	Fagence 1996; Ghimire 2001
	with outside funds	Greer 2002; Ioanides et al. 2006
Private associations	Inter-firm networks	Teye 1988; Huybers and Bennett 2003
	Business cluster with government as a supporter	Jackson 2006 ; Jackson and Murphy 2006

**Table A1.5**  
**Tourism resources in the Yangtze River Delta region of China**

P	WH	NTA		NP	NHR	NNR	NFP	NGP	NWS A	NIATS		NHCS	CETC	Total
		5A	4A							Agricul- tural	Indus- trial			
Shanghai	0	3	19	0	1	2	4	1	4	18	15	5	1	73
Zhejiang	0	3	84	18	1	9	35	4	18	24	25	25	27	273
Jiangsu	1	4	87	6	2	3	14	3	21	102	29	25	27	322
In total	1	10	190	24	4	14	53	8	43	144	69	55	55	668
Nation	38	67	1220	208	12	303	730	182	370	NA-	NA-	361	306	3797
Total/ Nation (%)	2.6	14.9	15.6	11.5	33.3	4.6	7.3	4.4	11.6	NA-	NA-	15.2	18.0	17.6

Source: Dictionary of Chinese Tourist Attractions (China National Tourism Bureau, August 2007); Website of China National Tourism Bureau: <http://www.cnta.com/>; Website of China Ministry of Water Resources: <http://www.mwr.gov.cn/>; Website of UNESCO World Heritage Centre: <http://whc.unesco.org/>

**Notes:**

1) In the first row, 'P' means 'Province', 'WH' means 'World Heritage', 'NTA' means 'National-level Tourist Attraction', 'NP' means 'National Park', 'NHR' means 'National Holiday Resort', 'NNR' means 'National Nature Reserve', 'NFP' means 'National Forest Park', 'NGP' means 'National Geo Park', 'NWSA' means 'National Water Scenic Area', 'NIATS' means 'National Industrial and Agricultural Tourism Site', 'NHCS' means 'National Historical and Cultural Site', 'CETC' means 'Chinese Excellent Tourist City'.

2) Data of the National Nature Reserve is from the year 2007, data of National Level 5A Tourist Attraction is from the year 2010, the rest are from the year 2009.

**Table A1.6**  
**GDP and per capita GDP in China (1978-2007)**

Year	GDP (billion Yuan)	Annual growth rate (%)	Per Capita GDP (Yuan)	Annual growth rate (%)
1978	364.52	-	381	-
1980	454.56	11.9	463	10.5
1985	901.60	25.1	858	23.5
1990	1866.78	9.9	1644	8.2
1995	6079.37	26.1	5046	24.8
2000	9921.46	10.6	7858	9.8
2005	18321.74	14.6	14053	13.9
2006	21192.35	15.7	16165	15.0
2007	24952.99	17.8	18934	17.1

Source: Yearbook of China Statistics Bureau (2008) [www.stats.gov.cn/english/statisticaldata/](http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/statisticaldata/)

**Table A1.7**  
*Yearly tourist numbers and its corresponding growth rate (unit: million)  
of 18 member-cities of the TCY Summit and 5 member-cities  
of the ZDN Alliance (cities highlighted in bold and italic)*

Province	Municipality	Year		Growth rate
		2005	2009	
Shanghai	Shanghai	95.83	129.90	35.54%
Jiangsu	Nanjing	33.0.8	56.33	70.32%
	Suzhou	38.13	60.89	59.70%
	Wuxi	27.03	43.77	61.90%
	Zhenjiang	11.98	23.01	92.12%
	Yangzhou	11.37	23.20	104.06%
	Changzhou	13.01	23.73	82.43%
	Nantong	7.58	15.13	99.58%
	Taizhou	4.91	9.40	91.38%
Zhejiang	Hangzhou	34.17	53.24	55.79%
	<b><i>Ningbo</i></b>	<b><i>23.96</i></b>	<b><i>40.42</i></b>	<b><i>68.71%</i></b>
	<b><i>Shaoxing</i></b>	<b><i>15.23</i></b>	<b><i>28.94</i></b>	<b><i>90.03%</i></b>
	Jiaxing	14.07	25.48	81.13%
	Huzhou	10.89	23.47	115.58%
Zhejiang	<b><i>Zhoushan</i></b>	<b><i>10.02</i></b>	<b><i>17.53</i></b>	<b><i>74.99%</i></b>
	<b><i>Taizhou</i></b>	<b><i>16.15</i></b>	<b><i>28.96</i></b>	<b><i>79.31%</i></b>
	<b><i>Wenzhou</i></b>	<b><i>14.22</i></b>	<b><i>29.64</i></b>	<b><i>108.44%</i></b>
	Jinhua	14.12	24.08	70.54%

Source: Yearbooks of the relevant municipal Statistics Bureau (2006, 2010); Yearbook of Zhejiang Statistics Bureau (2009).

**Table A1.8**  
Portions GDP contributions of tourism industry in 16 major cities in 2007

Province	City	2005		2009	
		Tourism revenue (billion Yuan)	City's GDP (%)	Tourism revenue (billion Yuan)	City's GDP (%)
Shanghai	Shanghai	155.10	16.96	223.62	15.01
Jiangsu	Nanjing	37.9	15.71	82.22	19.44
	Suzhou	43.21	10.73	83.0	11.22
	Wuxi	30.16	10.75	61.90	12.4
	Zhenjiang	11.55	13.25	27.0	16.15
	Yangzhou	10.46	11.34	25.28	13.62
	Changzhou	12.62	9.69	28.24	11.21
	Nantong	7.62	5.18	18.33	6.38
	Taizhou	4.34	5.29	9.96	6.03
Zhejiang	Hangzhou	46.51	15.93	80.31	15.75
	Ningbo	25.86	10.57	53.05	12.59
	Shaoxing	11.6	8.05	25.23	10.62
	Jiaxing	10.91	9.44	22.9	11.94
	Huzhou	6.56	10.25	16.58	14.92
	Zhoushan	6.14	22.58	11.65	21.85
	Taizhou	13.91	11.15	23.0	11.36
	Wenzhou	12.76	7.9	26.60	10.9
	Jinhua	11.38	10.79	22.39	12.69

Source: Based on each city's annual statistics reports (2008). Note: Listed in descending order.

**Table A1.9**  
18 member-cities of the TCY Summit and 5 member-cities of the ZDN Alliance (cities highlighted in bold and italic)

Province	Municipality	Name
Shanghai	Shanghai	Tourism Bureau
Jiangsu	Nanjing	Bureau of Tourism, Parks and Woods
	Suzhou	Tourism Bureau
	Wuxi	Tourism Bureau
	Zhenjiang	Tourism Bureau
	Yangzhou	Tourism Development Council, Tourism Bureau
	Changzhou	Tourism Bureau
	Nantong	Tourism Bureau
Jiangsu	Taizhou	Tourism Bureau
	Hangzhou	Tourism Council
Zhejiang	<b><i>Ningbo</i></b>	<b><i>Tourism Bureau</i></b>
	<b><i>Shaoxing</i></b>	<b><i>Tourism Council</i></b>
	Jiaxing	Tourism Bureau
	Huzhou	Tourism Bureau
	<b><i>Zhoushan</i></b>	<b><i>Tourism Development Council, Tourism Bureau</i></b>
	<b><i>Taizhou</i></b>	<b><i>Tourism Bureau</i></b>
	<b><i>Wenzhou</i></b>	<b><i>Tourism Bureau</i></b>
	Jinhua	Tourism Bureau

Source: Based on the official website of each municipality (2010).

**Table A1.10**  
Yearly tourist numbers and its corresponding growth rate (unit: million) of the three provinces of the YRD region

Province	Year		Growth rate
	2005	2009	
Shanghai	95.83	129.90	35.54%
Jiangsu	176.13	302.83	71.94%
Zhejiang	131.06	249.8	90.6%

Source: Yearbooks of the relevant provincial Statistics Bureau (2006, 2010).

**Table A1.11**  
*Per cent of the tourism revenue of the province's GDP (2005, 2009)*

Province	2005		2009	
	Tourism revenue (billion Yuan)	City's GDP (%)	Tourism revenue (billion Yuan)	City's GDP (%)
Shanghai	155.10	16.96	223.62	15.01
Jiangsu	185.55	10.15	379.57	11.14
Zhejiang	137.88	10.3	264.37	11.6

Source: Based on the data of the Yearbooks of the relevant provincial Statistics Bureaus (2006, 2010).

## Appendix 2: The Survey

The aim of this survey is to identify which factors influence the effective performance of regional tourism cooperation in China and how. If you do not know how to answer a question, please leave the question open. We provide explanation support for the unclear definitions or expressions. Provided something is unclear, please feel free to ask us. All the answers will be treated confidentially. Thank you very much for your cooperation!

### General information of the informants

Name of the informant(s)	
Name of the organization represented	
Daily function	
Years of experience in the field of tourism	
Number of employees of organization	

### Political-economic natures of a city (or provincial) tourism (For government interviewees only)

1. Indicate whether you disagree or agree with the following nine statements:

Statements	TCY Summit Opinion	ZDN Alliance Opinion	EXPO Opinion
The Tourism Industry Association has performed as an independent agency instead of an affiliated unit to the Tourism Bureau	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
The connections and relationships between the departments of the Tourism Bureau are loose	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
The Tourism Bureau has enough staff members to participate in the cooperation	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
There are enough expertise of the staff members of the Tourism Bureau in the regional tourism cooperation	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
The Tourism Bureau is strongly interested in the cooperation.	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
The content of the cooperation is vague or symbolic rather than being realistic	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
The cooperation can help the destination to attract more tourists	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion

Obstacles occur if the cooperation goes beyond the Tourism Bureau and involves other Political Bureaus	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Obstacles occur if the cooperation challenges the current operational capacity of the Tourism Bureau	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion

### Trust and commitments of the stakeholders

2. Indicate whether you disagree or agree with the following seven statements:

Statements	TCY Summit Opinion	ZDN Alliance Opinion	EXPO Opinion
Commitments written down rather than expressed orally can strengthen the trust between primary stakeholders and their beliefs that the cooperation can result in positive feedback	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
The more clearly expressed written commitments with responsibilities and tasks, the more strengthened trust between primary stakeholders and their beliefs that the cooperation can result in positive feedback	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Compared to the commitments written down, the commitments with actions can better strengthen the trust between primary stakeholders and their beliefs that the cooperation can result in positive feedback	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Combination of written commitments and actual commitments is the optimal choice to strengthen the trust between primary stakeholders and their beliefs that the cooperation can result in positive feedback	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
The cooperation have resulted in positive feedback for primary stakeholders	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Primary stakeholders trust each other in the cooperation	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Content of the cooperation is vague or symbolic instead of being realistic	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion

### Leadership

3. Indicate your opinions with the following three statements:

Statements	TCY Summit Opinion	ZDN Alliance Opinion	EXPO Opinion
The presence of a comparatively dominant power in finance, natural resources, politics, knowledge or experience increases the prestige of the leadership	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
The lack of support from public and private primary stakeholders erodes the leadership and in the long run reduces the possibility to achieve the original objectives of the cooperation	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Stimulating different approaches ensuring that the primary stakeholders have equal rights, regardless of their different power, increases their acceptance of the leadership	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion

4. Access the degree of change of the following three factors:

Statements	TCY Summit Opinion	ZDN Alliance Opinion	EXPO Opinion
The positive attitudes of the primary stakeholders during the cooperation	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable
The number of concrete cooperative arrangements of the cooperation	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable
The satisfaction of the primary stakeholders with the results of the cooperation	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable

### Motives to cooperate

5. Indicate whether you disagree or agree with the following six statements:

Statements	TCY Summit Opinion	ZDN Alliance Opinion	EXPO Opinion
The result of the cooperation is expected to be easily quantified	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable
The cooperation is expected to take first priority to optimize individual interests	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable
The individual interests are expected to be achieved in the short run	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable
The cooperation is expected to optimize the positive long-term effects for individual interests	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable
It is difficult for primary stakeholders to sacrifice their own interests to cooperate (although in the long run the cooperation can bring benefits), unless the cooperation can let primary stakeholders achieve their own interests in a short time	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable

The more conflicts between the collective and individual motives, the more difficult for the cooperation to be continued, or the more possibilities for the content of the cooperation to be vague or unrealistic	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable	Increase/ decrease/stable
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### The decision-making process 1: Representativeness of relevant primary stakeholders in the decision-making process

6. Choose one of the expressions in the following table in respect of the performance of the cooperation (EXPO case only):

	Actual percentage to total tourist companies involved from the same industry*							Expected percentage to total tourist companies involved from the same industry	Reason for absence (choose one of three expressions)		
	0 - 1 0 %	1 - 3 0 %	3 - 4 5 %	4 - 5 0 %	5 - 7 0 %	> 7 %	1 0 %		Few interests to participate	Be excluded by the cooperation organizers	Others (please indicate)
Large-scale travel agencies											
(association of) Small or medium-sized travel agencies											
Hotels of political- hospitality function											
Chain hotels of 4A or 5A level											
Single hotels of 4A or 5A level											
Economic chain hotels of economic level											
Economic single hotels											
Tourist attractions orientated in (inter)National markets **											
Tourist attractions orientated in regional markets ***											

Note: \* 'the industry' means travel agency industry, hotel industry, attraction industry or the Tourism Bureau; \*\* means visitors to those tourist attractions are mixed by the international, national or regional origins; \*\*\* means the majority of the visitors to those tourist attractions are from the YRD region.

**The decision-making process 2: Involvement of the secondary stakeholders**

7. Indicate whether you disagree or agree with the following two statements:

Statements	TCY Summit Opinion	ZDN Alliance Opinion	EXPO Opinion
The presence of a fixed or regular mechanism to secure the involvement of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process of the cooperation is essential to the success of the cooperation	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
The opinions of secondary stakeholders should be regarded as crucial inputs and be secured by the consultative mechanism when formulating the decisions of the cooperation	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
The presence of a fixed or regular mechanism to secure the involvement of primary stakeholders in the decision-making process of the cooperation is essential to the success of the cooperation	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion

**Areas of cooperation**

8. Indicate in which areas the cooperation is expected to be arranged (multiple choices)

Area	TCY Summit	ZDN Alliance	EXPO
Jointly developing the regional image	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Jointly developing the integrated regional tourist attractions	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Jointly developing the integrated cooperation among regional hotels or among regional travel agencies	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Jointly developing the integrated hardware of the regional accessibility (e. g. regional transportation systems)	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Jointly developing the integrated software of the regional accessibility (e. g. regional information systems, regional hospitality culture)	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion

9. Indicate in which areas the cooperation is expected to be arranged first (multiple choices)

Area	TCY Summit	ZDN Alliance	EXPO
Joint marketing	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Joint development of regional tourist attractions	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Cooperation among regional hotels	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Cooperation among regional travel agencies	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Joint development of regional tourist image	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Unifying regional standards of tourism services	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Sharing tourism data and information	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Mutual exchange of citizens to travel	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Improving regional transportation accessibility	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Improving regional hospitality culture	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
Others (please indicate with descriptive words)	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion

10. Indicate whether you disagree or agree with the following two statements:

Statements	TCY Summit Opinion	ZDN Alliance Opinion	EXPO Opinion
Presence of an integrated master plan reflecting the full-scale areas of cooperation is essential for achieving the effectiveness of the cooperation	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
It is optimal to have the presence of both integrated approach and priorities. However if there is a request to pick up only one of them to be launched first, it is better to choose the latter	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion

### Implementation structure

11. Indicate whether you disagree or agree with the following six statements:

Statements	TCY Summit Opinion	ZDN Alliance Opinion	EXPO Opinion
Satisfied with the current implementation structure of the cooperation	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
The optimal and most suitable modality for the cooperation is the long-term conference structure	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
The optimal and most suitable modality for the cooperation is the long-term organization structure	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion
The optimal and most suitable modality for the cooperation is the short-term project structure	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion	Agree/disagree/ no opinion

## Appendix 3: The Informants

Origin	Organization	Name	Job position	Work experience (years)
Jiangsu Province	Tourism Bureau of Jiangsu Province	Yonghong Wang	President	34
		Bin Lu	Director, Department of Policy and Legal Affairs	26
		Xuewen Shao	Director, Department of Planning and Statistics	27
		Minwen Guo	Director, Department of Marketing and Promotion	25
		Yue Gong	Senior official, Department of General Administration	20
Nanjing Municipality	Bureau of Tourism, Public Utilities and Landscaping of Nanjing Municipality	Jun Xia	Director, Department of Marketing and Promotion	18
		Xian Zhang	Director, Department of General Administration	10
		Jianye Wang	Director, Department of Planning and Statistics	11
		Bo Jin	Director, Department of Policy and Legal Affairs	15
	Nanjing Gudu Hotel	Xuecong Wang	Vice President	25
	Nanjing Grand Hotel	Dunzhi Yan	President	18
	Jinlin Hotel group	Hai Zhou	Vice President	18
	Presidential Palace (Nanjing)	Linsheng Wei	Managing Director	26
	Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Mausoleum	Haiwei Zhang	Director, Department of Marketing	17
	YueJianglou Tower	Yongke Zhou	Vice President	28
	China International Travel Service (CITS Nanjing)	Huoju Cai	Managing Director	20
	Fenghua Travel group Nanjing	Zhenpeng Pan	Vice President	12
	Sainty Tour Group	Yun Wang	Director, Department of Marketing	5

Origin	Organization	Name	Job position	Work experience (years)
Suzhou Municipality	Tourism Bureau of Suzhou Municipality	Feng Lu	Vice President	30
		Caiming Hu	Vice Director, Department of Marketing and Promotion	25
		Min Wu	Vice Director, Department of Marketing and Promotion	22
		Rudong Wang	Director, Department of Planning and Statistics	20
		Yue Pan	Senior Manager, Department of Policy and Legal Affairs	25
	Suzhou Amusement Land	Qiang Xu	Marketing Director	12
	Humble Administrator's Garden	Peizu Zhang	Vice President, Party	30
	Kempinski Suzhou	Lanfang Chu	Marketing Director	8
	Castle Hotel Suzhou	Zhonghua Yang	Vice President	22
	CITS Suzhou (China International Travel Service Co., Ltd)	Fengyuan Cai	Vice President	32
		Haitao Shen	Director, Japanese Session	29
	Suzhou Travel Service Co., Ltd	Zhijun Bao	President	30
	Suzhou CYTS (China Younger Travel Service Co., Ltd)	Minqiang Shen	President	30
	Wuxi Municipality	Tourism Bureau of Wuxi Municipality	Jieping Wang	Party Leader
Jiping Liu			Vice President	30
Weiwei Wu			Director, Department of Public Information and Service	25
Yijun Liu			Director, Department of Policy and Legal Affairs	26
Jiong Wu			Director, Department of Planning and Statistics	22
Xielin Han			Vice Director, Department of Marketing	25
Sheraton Wuxi Binhu Hotel		Xinqi Wang	Senior Executive Manager	26
Wuxi Xihai Garden Hotel		Tianxing Liu	President	24
Wuxi Municipality Tourism Association; Oversea Travel Company Wuxi		Jianliang Hu	Vice Director; General Manager	32
Kanghui Travel Group		Jianjun Ye	President	28
		Xinzhong Zhang	Vice President	24
Lingshan Buddhist Scenic Spot		Guoping Wu	Director	28
Turtle-Head Peninsula Park		Xianping Wang	Vice Director	28

Origin	Organization	Name	Job position	Work experience (years)
Nantong Municipality	Tourism Bureau of Nantong Municipality	Fang Ren	Vice Director	28
		Xiuhua Xu	Director, Department of Marketing and Promotion	26
		Peihong Cao	Vice Director, Department of Marketing and Promotion	21
		Xing Wang	Director, Department of Planning	26
		Hongwei Shi	Senior Manager, Department of Administration	20
	Nantong Municipality Tourism Association	Minghong Wu	Vice President	14
	Kanghui Travel Service	Dong Ji	President	30
	Overseas China Hotel	Yan Li	General Manager	26
	Nantong Grand Hotel	Anqi Wang	Marketing Director	22
	Hao River Scenic Spot	Xinnian Xia	Managing Director	20
Changzhou Municipality	Tourism Bureau of Changzhou Municipality	Fenlong Wang	Vice President	30
		Xiaodong Zhu	Director, Department of Marketing and Promotion	22
		Min Zhang	Director, Department of Planning and Statistics	20
		Limin Guo	Director, Department of Administration	6
		Zhibo Yuan	Senior Manager, Department of Information and Public Service	13
	Changzhou Municipality Tourism Association	Yixin He	General Manager	30
	Longcheng Group	Enming Tian	Vice General Manager	10
	Jinling Mingdu Hotel	Kaiguo Zang	Vice General Manager	10
	CITS Changzhou (China International Travel Service Co., Ltd)	Yuanfeng Liu	General Manager	25

Origin	Organization	Name	Job position	Work experience (years)
Shanghai City Province	Shanghai Tourism Bureau	Shanzhou Shen	Vice President	20
		Guojian Zhu	Director, Department of Policy and Regulation	32
		Guangjian Su	Director, Department of Marketing	36
		Jianzhong Xia	Director, Department of Planning and Statistics	28
		Mode Zhang	Director, Department of Event and Festival	32
		Guangying Pu	Director, Department of Information and Public Service	30
	Shanghai Municipality Tourism Association	Zhenghua Wang	General Manager	36
	Shanghai International Conference Management Organization	Lei Liang	Vice General Manager	20
	Shanghai Tourism Distribution Center	Weirong Yao	General Manager	22
	Shanghai Tourism Training Center	Hongping Wang	General Manager	32
	Shanghai Sea Beach Park	Baoguo Wu	Managing Director	28
	Hilton Shanghai	Chris Xu	Marketing Director	26
	Jin Jiang Hotel	Ming Xu	Marketing Director	30
	Green Hotel Group	Shuguang Xu	General Manager	30
	Shanghai Jin Jiang Tours Co., Ltd.	Wanjun GE	General Manager	34
Shanghai Qiangsheng International Travel Service Co., Ltd.	Peijuan CUI	General Manager	34	
China Spring Travel Group (China-SSS)	Qianhui Xiao	General Manager	35	
Zhejiang Province	Tourism Bureau of Zhejiang Province	Ge Xiao	President	36
		Bingxiong Jin	Director, Department of Planning and Statistics	22
		Wenbin Luo	Vice Director, Department of Planning and Statistics	24
		Yin Zhang	Vice Director, Department of Industrial Communication	25
		Xiongwen Zhang	Vice Director, Department of Administration	25
		Yuren Ruan	Director, Department of Policy and Legal Affairs	24
		Yaner Chen	Director, Department of Marketing and Promotion	24

Origin	Organization	Name	Job position	Work experience (years)	
Hangzhou Municipality	Hangzhou City Travel Committee; Hangzhou Municipality Tourism Association	Hong Li	President	35	
		Hangzhou City Travel Committee	Xiao Han	Director, Department of Marketing and Promotion	30
			Xiubao Li	Vice Director, Department of Marketing and Promotion	30
			Jianming Zhu	Vice Director, Department of Policy and Legal Affairs	25
			Hong Ye	Director, Department of Tourism Image Management	7
			Jian Tang	Senior Manager, Department of Public Information and Service	5
			Hongzhong Zhao	Director, Department of Planning and Statistics	25
	Hangzhou Xixi Wetland Park	Yuanwen Chen	Vice Managing Director	10	
	Hangzhou Municipality Travel Agency Association	Lijun Wang	Secretary General	21	
	CITS Hangzhou (China International Travel Service Co., Ltd)	Lingzhong Zhang	President	30	
	Hangzhou Municipality Hotel Association	Guoliang Xia	Secretary General	30	
	Dahua Hotel	Guowei Yu	Vice General Manager	26	
	Ningbo Municipality	Tourism Bureau of Ningbo Municipality	Shaomin Su	Vice President	26
Daoliang Shao			Director, Department of Marketing and Promotion	12	
Weiguo Liu			Director, Department of Planning and Development	16	
Gang Chen			Director, Department of Policy and Legal Affairs	15	
Xiongying Yang			Director, Department of Public Information and Service	15	
Ningbo Municipality Tourism Association		Li Qiang	General Manager	25	
Shanghai Representative Office of Ningbo Tourism Bureau		Bangmin Dong	General Manager	25	
KangTai Travel Co., Ltd		Xingfu Zhang	Vice General Manager	15	
Ningbo Gardens Travels Co., Ltd		Ting Xu	General Manager	15	
Ningbo Shangri-la Hotel		Junjie Wu	General Manager	26	

Origin	Organization	Name	Job position	Work experience (years)
Ningbo Municipality	Yunhai Hotel	Shuyin Qiu	Marketing Director	10
	Ningbo Hotel	Limin Wang	Marketing Director	10
	Xikou Travel group	Raoguang Chen	General Manager	30
	Tianyige Museum	Yuhong He	Vice General Manager	30
Shaoxing Municipality	Shaoxing City Travel Committee	Sheng Xie	Vice President	30
		Zhihao Li	Director, Department of Planning and Development	25
		Wei Qian	Vice Director, Department of Planning and Development	5
		Feng Zhou	Director, Department of Administration	22
		Hongliang Zhou	Director, Department of Marketing and Promotion	22
	Overseas Travel Co., Ltd	Wei Zhao	General Manager	20
	Shenzhou Travel Co., Ltd	Haibin Hu	General Manager	18
	Radisson Hotel Shaoxing	Xinhua Wu	General Manager	18
	Xianheng Hotel Shaoxing	Limin Ding	General Manager	20
	Luxun Native Place	Dongbo Xu	Vice General Manager	16
Tai Zhou Municipality	Tourism Bureau of Tai-zhou Municipality	Li Chen	Vice President	30
		Fei Ye	Director of Planning and Marketing	25
		Shiyong Xu	Director, Department of Industrial Communication	26
		Chen Zhang	Director, Department of Administration	26
	Tiantai Mountain Park	Renfu Chu	General Manager	28
	Southern Great Wall Scenic Spot	Bo Yang	General Manager	26
	Taizhou Business International Travel Service	Zhiwei Jiang	General Manager	24
	Taizhou East Asia Travel Co., Ltd	Xinhe Chen	General Manager	32
	Taizhou Guomao Hotel	Dakong Jiang	General Manager	32
	Taizhou Kaiyuan Hotel	Jianlong Yu	General Manager	19
Jiaxing Municipality	Tourism Bureau of Jiaxing Municipality	Hongxia Zhou	Vice President	22
		Kaijing Xu	Director, Department of Marketing and Promotion	15
		Fan Jiang	Vice Director, Department of Administration	15
		Xinyu Yang	Director of Planning, Policy and Legal Affairs	20
	Diamond Grand Hotel	Yuan Xu	Vice General Manager	13
	WHWH Economic Hotel Jiaxing	Yongyue Zhu	General Manager	15
	Nanhu Lake	Changjie Dong	Vice General Manager	19

Origin	Organization	Name	Job position	Work experience (years)
Jiaxing Municipality	Wuzhen Water Town	XiongHong Chen	President of Tourism Development Company	14
	Jiaxing Municipality Tourism Association; CITS Jiaxing (China International Travel Service Co., Ltd)	Chuhua Fang	General Manager	26
	Jiaxing Holiday Travel Agency	Mingqing GU	General Manager	28
National Level	CNTA (China National Tourism Bureau)	Decheng Peng	Vice Director, Department of Planning, Development and Finance	22
		Jilin Zhang	Vice Director, Department of Planning, Development and Finance	24
Academy	Chinese Tourism Academy	Peihua Shi	Vice President	20
	Hubei University	Yong Ma	President and Professor, Tourism Research Center	26
	Shanghai Normal University	Jun Gao	Vice President and Professor, Shanghai Institute of Tourism	26
	George Washington University, USA	Liang Yu	Director and Professor, Department of Tourism	24
	Anhui University	Lin Lu	President, Tourism Institute	30
Media	China Tourism Newspaper	Ning Ding	Director, Yangtze River Delta Session	34
	Travel Times	Zuguang Wang	Chief Editor	28



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