

# The Comparison of Employee Value Proposition between MICE Industry and MICE Higher Education in China—Based on TEFI Value Set

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**Abstract**—This article using the value set developed by Tourism Education Future Initiative (TEFI) as an analysis tool for identifying: (a) What are the values that MICE education program are promoting? (b) What are the main skills, competences, and values those employers of MICE industries are looking for? Findings illustrate the difference between the supply side and the demand side of MICE talents in today's China MICE industry. Research brings empirical evidence to the importance of value-based teaching in MICE program in China.

**Index Terms**—China, MICE, TEFI, value education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Though China has the second largest economy in the world behind the US, the job market in China is still tough for those new university graduates. Yet, in spite of this, companies still complain that they can't find talented people. The significant gap remains between the academic studies offer and industry expectations. Same situation was reported in MICE industry in China. In order to solve this problem, there is an urgent need to reform China's current education system, which has been struggling to provide high-quality talents with skills and knowledge that meet the demand of the industry.

Events industry emerged as an important sector in China during the latter part of the twentieth century and developed quickly. A total of 7319 exhibition events were held in 292 Chinese cities in 2012. The expectations for the quantity and quality of graduates from MICE (meetings, incentive tour, convention, and exhibition) undergraduate education programs have increased to meet the anticipated increased demand for skilled labor. Bachelor programmes of MICE were first set up in China in 2003. Until now, there are almost 60 universities have the major. MICE management education has emerged as an alternative to the related disciplines of tourism, leisure and hospitality. But compared with other mature majors, the construction of curriculum system and formation of talent cultivation plans for MICE program are still in the exploratory stage. This study focuses on how value proposition differ between MICE industry and MICE education in China, and compares those values proposition with TEFI value set which will benefit China's MICE higher education from a future and international point of view.

To fill the gap between the MICE industry and MICE

education in China, this paper seeks to answer two research questions from the perspective of the TEFI value framework:

Q1: What are the values that MICE education programs are promoting?

Q2: What are the main skills, competences, and values those employers of MICE industries are looking for?

## II. BACKGROUND

As Martin Luther king once said: Education must enable a man to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of his life [1]. Though higher education in general has several purposes, the most important are to promote citizenship and to train good members of society. Therefore, values education is now fully considered as an important part of most higher education. In Taylor's (1994) view, values education encourages reflection on choices, exploration of opportunities and commitment to responsibilities, and for the individual in society, to develop values preferences and an orientation to guide attitudes and behavior [2]. International education thoughts on values education have been accepted in contemporary western countries, widely affects all aspects of school education.

Universities face a severe challenge to remain both attractive to students and an important source of highly skilled graduates for the industry, which are driving more people to view higher education through a pragmatic, job-focused lens. In tourism education field, a number of innovative and experienced educators together with some industry leaders found the Tourism Education Futures Institute (TEFI) in 2007. They reached an agreement on a new paradigm labeled value-based tourism education which can help universities adapt to societal and industry changes in current and future [3], [4].



Fig. 1. The TEFI values.

Source: TEFI, 2009, A values-based framework for tourism education: Building the capacity to lead (White Paper).

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An important output of TEFI is the set of five values-based principles, namely stewardship, mutuality, ethics, professionalism, and knowledge that tourism students should embody upon graduation. Fig. 1 shows the content of those five values.

These values do not represent only a theoretical framework but also a practical instrument that educators can use subsets of the five value principles to integrate into their pedagogy as appropriate [4], [5].

### III. VALUE EDUCATION

Values are dreams and ideals that a society wants to accomplish [6]. Without proper values, people cannot perform behaviors which the society promotes. In Newmann’s point of view, dynamics for modern quality teaching ranged from the instrumental (e.g. sound technique, updated professional development) to the more aesthetic and values-filled. To some extent, a person’s ‘value condition’ is indispensably allied to his/her ‘knowledge condition’[7]. According to Thomas (2014), “the students often catch the spark of understanding that their dreams, their visions, and their values can transform the world around them. Then they seem motivated, animated, and ready to learn and contribute.” The more the students to explore their internal, the better they can understand of the fundamentals of business, of people, organizations, and systems [8].

One of the big questions in values education is which values should be taught. But answers to this question are different from one society to another. Therefore, many educators suggest that local communities should be involved in identifying and defining the values to be covered in the goals of education [9]. Previous studies conducted in MICE industry context have showed that both employers and students agreed that communication, analysis and ethics are seen as the building blocks of student employability [10].

### IV. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Data Collection

In order to identify the values that MICE higher education programs are promoting, we analyzed the content of mission statements of graduate programs around China. We selected 20 representative universities’ MICE program as our samples. The lists of selected universities are provided in Table 1. This list is in no particular order.

The answer to the second question came from exploring the content of 20 job ads in a famous job search engines (www.51job.com) in China that were looking for profiles of graduates with either a background in MICE or in MICE related industries in four first-tier cities named Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen from 1st July 2013 to 5th July 2013. The recruitment companies include state-owned firms, Sino-foreign joint ventures and private enterprises. Nine of those job positions are sales and marketing staff, four are account or project assistants, three are exhibition planners and four are event executors.

#### B. Content Analysis

Content analysis was developed by Lindesmith in 1931.

The method is a phase of information-processing in which content is transformed into data that can be summarized and compared [11]. All statistical calculations were performed with ROST CM, which is an open source software program for content mining [12]. It has the functions of counting words frequency, segmenting words and so on. Based on the assumption that words and phrases mentioned most often are those reflecting important values in the message, the content of mission statements of MICE graduate programs and the content of MICE job ads were processed with ROST CM to count the occurrences of a word in a text.

TABLE I: TABLE OF 20 UNIVERSITIES WITH MAJOR OF MICE IN CHINA

	University	School
1	Nankai University	TEDA college
2	Sun Yat-sen University	School of Tourism Management
3	Guangzhou University	Sino-French School of Tourism
4	South China University of technology	School of Economics and Commerce
5	Shanghai University of International Business and Economics	School of Tourism and Event Management
6	East China Normal University	Business School
7	Xi’an international studies University	School of Tourism
8	University of Shanghai for Science and Technology	Sino-British College
9	Beijing international studies university	School of Tourism Management
10	Shanghai Normal University	Institute of Tourism
11	Donghua University	Xuri School of Management
12	Harbin University of Commerce	School of Management
13	Guangxi University of Finance and Economics	School of Business Administration
14	Chongqing Technology and Business University	School of Economics
15	Yunnan University of Finance and Economics	School of Tourism and Service Trade
16	Sichuan University	School of History and Culture(Tourism)
17	Hainan University	Tourism College
18	Shanghai Institute of Technology	School of Economics and Management
19	Hebei University of Economics and Business	School of Tourism
20	Shanghai Second Polytechnic University	Humanities and International Exchange Faculty

### V. RESULTS

Words and phrases related to value propositions were listed in Table II when it appeared more than 5 times. The content analysis revealed that the higher education programs promote: management, ability, planning, theory, knowledge, applied, comprehensive, innovation, compound, spirit and so on. While the industry pay more attentions to employees’ ability, experience, communication skill, spirit, expression, team-work, positive etc. (see Table II)

#### A. Different Value Propositions between Higher Education and Industry

From the view of MICE higher education program, students’ management ability and planning ability are important as well as the grasp of economic management theory. Universities tend to describe the results of their cultivation in a sort of macro context by using the words of comprehensive, compound, applied. Innovative ability is

emphasized during the process of learning.

When it comes to the key competencies, skills, and values that the employers in MICE industry are demanding, especially for university graduates, communication and expression skills, pressure tolerance, teamwork and cooperation spirits are preferred than other values. This evidence is also supported by Chiru, Ciuchete, Lefter & Paduretu's (2012) study on the United Kingdom and Romanian's tourism companies [13].

TABLE II: FEATURE WORDS IN MICE PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENTS AND MICE JOB ADS

Feature words in MICE program mission statement			Feature words in MICE job ads		
No.	Words	Frequency	No.	Words	Frequency
1	MICE	99	1	Ability	56
2	Management	61	2	Communication	22
3	Ability	31	3	Experience	16
4	Planning	26	4	Spirit	15
5	Theory	20	5	Sale	14
6	Activity	18	6	Expression	13
7	Economy	17	7	Team-work	13
8	Knowledge	17	8	Pressure	10
9	Service	14	9	Marketing	9
10	Organize	14	10	Endurance	9
11	Enterprise	13	11	Management	9
12	International	11	12	Proficiency	8
13	Convention	11	13	Project	8
14	Marketing	11	14	Market	8
15	Project	10	15	Coordination	7
16	Operation	9	16	Industry	7
17	Exhibition	8	17	Adaption	7
18	Practice	8	18	Character	7
19	Management Science	8	19	Cooperation	7
20	Design	7	20	Learning	7
21	Applied	7	21	Optimistic	6
22	Comprehensive	7	22	English	6
23	Economics	6	23	Operation	6
24	Skill	6	24	Conscientious	6
25	System	6	25	Awareness	6
26	Innovation	6	26	Positive	6
27	Advanced	6	27	Client	5
28	Commerce	6	28	Agility	5
29	Culture	5	29	Initiative	5
30	Compound	5	30	Software	5
31	Communication	5	31	Independence	5
32	Business	5	32	Responsibility	5
33	Scientific Research	5			
34	Spirit	5			

“Innovative ability” seldom appears in the recruitment ads for graduates. Though previous research has suggested that the MICE industry in China is short on talents, which is referring primary to the core talent in the talent system consist of core talent, assistant talent and support talent. Core talents are people who can plan and organize an event. But graduates cannot become core talents until they accumulate a wealth of industry experience. Innovative and planning ability are the main value propositions aimed at core talent.

Thus, though “abilities” are emphasized both by higher education and industry, they refer to different abilities. Such different value propositions lead to the dilemma: the MICE enterprises cannot find appropriate graduates and feel lack of

talents on the one hand and the graduates from MICE higher education reluctant to do basic work, eager to display their management ability, planning ability and innovation ability on the other hand.

*B. The Comparison between TEFI Value and Value Propositions of Chinese MICE Higher Education*

Contrast the value propositions of Chinese MICE higher education with TEFI value set, the grasp of knowledge, management ability, planning ability and innovation spirits which the former emphasized belong to professionalism value and knowledge value in TEFI value set. But the content of stewardship, ethics and mutual respects were seldom mentioned in MICE program mission statements. Even in the field of professionalism value and knowledge value, the description of service consciousness, initiative and critical thinking are lacking.

*C. The Comparison between TEFI Value and Value Propositions of Chinese MICE Industry*

Contrast the value propositions of Chinese MICE industry with TEFI value set, communication and coordination ability, expression ability, team-work spirit, positive and responsibility which the former emphasized are almost included in the mutual respect value and professionalism value in TEFI value set. For responsibility in stewardship value and honesty in ethics value, some MICE enterprises also demand. But no one used “critical thinking”, “creativity”, “innovation” and similar words in their job ads among the 20 sample companies. This means for knowledge value in TEFI value set, it is not highlighted by MICE enterprises when they recruit graduates. One thing to note the aspects of service to the community and sustainability in stewardship value did not appear in their job ads either.

VI. CONCLUSION

Research in the field of MICE human resources is often discussed the problem from the view of MICE enterprises or from the view of universities. There have been limited published researches that provide empirical evidence on the gap between the MICE education and the MICE industry.

In conclusion, the TEFI value set indicates changes in both orientation and result of MICE higher education in China.

*A. Orientation of MICE Higher Education*

Now, almost every university is positioning its MICE program as cultivating core talents in MICE industry and hope its students become industry elite. In fact, to become the industry elite need long-term practice in the industry. Higher education should cultivate the student's potential to become the industry elite, rather than the elite itself. TEFI value set not only reflect values that MICE industry stand for in China, but also the cornerstone on which a student can grow into a MICE industry elite. In this sense, the cultivation of MICE talents should base on the current situation and face the future by research on the possible changes and factors may have effects on future MICE industry. In the long run, MICE education should help students to acquire basic values that can accommodate them to future trends of MICE industry development.

### B. Learning Outcome of MICE Higher Education

A learning outcome is the particular knowledge, skill or behavior that a student is expected to exhibit after a period of study. Learning outcomes reflect a nation's concern with the level of knowledge acquisition among its student population [14]. The Chinese MICE higher education pays more attention to, by far, the acquisition of knowledge and skills. But both the MICE industry value proposition of their employees or the TEFI value set strengthens the change of behavior. Because MICE industry is one of the service industries, attitudes and behaviors of practitioners determine their performance. So, in order to cultivate the talents that the MICE industry needs, Chinese MICE program should learn from the TEFI value set, put behavior change the same important position with knowledge and skill, improve curricula, teaching methods, and the design of learning environments, shape students into well-rounded people on the basis of value education.

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