Important Employment Factors of MICE Talents in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT
MICE—Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition—is also called the MICE Industry. The development of the MICE industry not only affects its surrounding industries, but also Taiwan’s universities have gradually set up departments related to the MICE industry, such as exhibition, conference, sightseeing, hospitality, leisure, hotel, hotel management, tourism service, tour guide, etc. to train talents. Therefore, the education and training of tourism and MICE professionals has become the focus of attention in the industry currently. This study analyzed the current situation of the MICE industry and the impact of Taiwan’s MICE education on MICE talents based on the literature review, with the aim of integrating the current situation of Taiwan’s MICE industry and clarifying the current situation of MICE education and talents in Taiwan.

KEYWORDS
Conference, Employment, Exhibition, MICE Industry, MICE Talents

INTRODUCTION
MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition) is also called the MICE Industry (Bowdin et al., 2006; Chou & Tsai, 2013; Chen et al., 2014; Fang, 2016).

The development of MICE industry has progressed significantly since China joined the WTO (World Trade Organization) in 2001, and the industry has emerged as a major force in global and regional economic integration. Integration between the Chinese economy and those of its Northeast Asian neighbors has been progressing at a particularly rapid rate (Hu & Jefferson, 2007). Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Shanghai are all located in the Asia Pacific region and are near China. Other nearby cities that have similar economic development backgrounds are all being affected by China’s economic development. The MICE industry covers a wide range, including MICE organizers, exhibitors and visitors. The value of this industry far exceeds the benefits of many industries.

The promotion of MICE in Taiwan started in 2008, when the weakness of Taiwan’s MICE industry was the lack of competent exhibition and conference professionals. Therefore, in the following few years, training MICE talents and obtaining certification became key programs (Chiu, 2015). Taiwan’s fast-growing MICE industry caused many universities to set up MICE courses or related courses in succession in line with the government’s footsteps; they even followed other schools to set up

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MICE courses. However, these are all curriculum models and contents were explored by the schools themselves. Whether they can match the market demand and cultivate grass-roots MICE talents that meet the needs of enterprises is a serious challenge, and this is exactly what this research aims to analyze in depth.

After years of development, MICE operators have found that many basic skills can complement each other and thus have a tendency for gradual integration. Therefore, the education and training of tourism and MICE professionals has become the focus of attention in the industry at present. This study examined the literature of experts and scholars to analyze the current situation of the MICE industry and the impact of Taiwan’s MICE education on MICE talents, with the aim of integrating the current situation of Taiwan’s MICE industry and clarifying the current situation of MICE education and talents in Taiwan.

**MICE INDUSTRY**

The MICE industry started with the 1st World Expo held in the UK in 1851, which caused a great sensation at the time. Europe has since experienced a hundred and seventy years of development, and Germany, the UK, Italy and France have all become the world-famous MICE countries. The MICE industry in Taiwan, which is called the “Three-high” industry, has high growth potential, high added value and high innovation benefits.

It can produce direct benefits to the local economy, including ticket sales and revenue and increased employment opportunities. Because of the multi-integration nature of the MICE industry, holding MICE events can promote the development of related industries such as accommodation, catering, transportation, travel, and decoration, promote the sale of tangible goods and intangible services, form a huge industrial connection effect, and at the same time establish an international image with the function of marketing a country or city (Bowdin et al., 2006; Davidson & Rogers, 2006; Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA, 2014). Compared with Europe and the US, the MICE industry in Asian countries started late and did not rise gradually until the 20th century. At present, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong are well-known, and China and Taiwan have only started stepping up to the plate in recent years (Liu, 2008).

In the 21st century, with the shift of the global economic center of gravity, Asia has gradually become the main stage of the global MICE industry; it has become an emerging industry entering a growth stage in Asia (Chen, 2014).

Due to this rapid growing trend, the Taiwanese government has paid significant attention and started several projects in order to promote this industry.

Table 1 shows the ranking of international conferences in 2014 announced by the International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA) at its headquarters in the Netherlands in May 2015. In 2014, Taiwan held 145 international conferences and was ranked among the four largest conference countries in Asia, setting a record number of meetings in all previous years. Table 2 shows the statistics on exhibition areas sold in Asia in 2014 vs 2013.

According to the above information, Taiwan held 145 international conferences in 2014, ranking 28th in the world and 4th in Asia (after Japan, China, and South Korea), up 3 places from 7th in 2013; 145 international conferences were held in 2014, for an increase of 23 compared with 2013. The Bureau of Foreign Trade of MOEA has been more active in promoting MICE-related programs in Taiwan since 2009 to promote the development of the MICE industry and help fight for international conferences to be held in Taiwan. In addition to Taipei and Kaohsiung, they also visited more than 10 cities, one after another. Important association type international conferences were also held in 2014. All of the above are the key factors for Taiwan to obtain its international conference ranking (Huang, 2015).

With the unique geographic position, natural environment, cultural cuisine and superior high-tech capabilities, Taiwan has advantages in developing MICE industry (Chen, 2014). The government’s
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