

Analyzing Hospitality and Tourism Learners' Perception of Massive Online Open Courses

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Abstract: The recent development of technology provides emerging opportunities for higher education in the digital era. Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) have been recently burst and proved to be a good way for teaching and learning. Nevertheless, limited attention has been paid to learners from various levels of electronic learning (e-Learning) in higher education in hospitality and tourism, particularly from Asian perspective. To fill this research gap, the present study explores learners' perceptions and expectations of MOOCs among hospitality and tourism students in Hong Kong to facilitate teaching and learning of hospitality and tourism education in the MOOCs-based model, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the knowledge of the relationship between different levels of learner and acceptance of MOOCs. Through adopting focus group interviews, learners' perceptions and expectations from three groups have been identified. Findings of the present study provide practical implications for the design and development of MOOCs, and the overall picture of MOOC learning in hospitality and tourism education.

Keywords: e-learning, Gen Y, higher education, hospitality and tourism education, MOOCs, motivation factor, online learning

INTRODUCTION

Since 2000, Hong Kong has been ranked as one of the top tourism destinations in the list of World Tourism Organization. Accordingly, the hospitality and tourism industry in Hong Kong became one of greatest growing economic sectors (Song, Wong, & Chon, 2003; Tsui et al., 2021), although Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) hit the inbound tourism to Hong Kong to some extent. The hospitality and tourism industry is people oriented and labor-intensive market, nonetheless, it is always suffering from quality labor shortage (Yurur et al., 2021). Hence, hospitality and tourism-related education becomes particularly important to overcome the aforementioned problem. Driven by a knowledge-based economy and new technologies, educational reforms are being pushed forward, meanwhile learners' characteristics have been changing

constantly. For example, Boisevert (2000) identified that practical training is one of the major critical success factors in hospitality and tourism industry.

The digital revolution has been bringing unprecedented change to the world of education. An increasing number of educators and researchers have been discussing “*Changing education paradigm*”(Robinson, 2011). E-Learning was introduced in 1980s with the increasing ownership of personal computers used in schools and homes. In 2008, the term MOOCs was firstly brought up by Cormier, D. of the University of Prince Edward Island (Mehaffy, 2012). The internet learning, online education or e-Learning revolution of the past couple of decades have been reflected in MOOCs. According to Deale (2015), MOOCs are different from traditional teaching and learning models, as the courses are operated in unlimited enrollment, widespread delivery, and no prerequisites. While MOOCs have been gaining increasing attentions from academia, many universities initiate in developing or already launched their own MOOCs.

Some studies (Christensen, 2010; Christensen et al., 2011) have argued that MOOCs will change the world of education. For example, Agarwal, A. the founder of MOOC provider edX (one of the largest MOOC providers), believes that they are providing fairness education with “borderless, gender-blind, race-blind, class-blind, and bank account–blind”. On the other hand, Bates (2014) thought MOOCs are not a big deal, just one of other modes of educational broadcasting or distribution, which does not affect the existing education system. Dayna (2013) pointed out that MOOCs’ completion rates are typically lower than 10%, with a high participation dropout beginning in the first week. Although some hospitality and tourism institutes promote using MOOCs for teaching and learning the purpose, many hospitality and tourism educators are still not familiar with MOOCs, as Franklin (2015) indicated that technology will play a major role in higher education, but traditional institutions may continue to be around for the foreseeable future.

Ross et al. (2014) pointed out there are a lot of educators and learners participating on MOOCs with various learning background, prior knowledge; and expectation would be the matters affect the existing theory of teaching and learning, showing that the application of modern information technology is bringing tremendous changes meanings of teaching and learning. During this huge online educational change, the educator should consider how to work with different audiences, as well as in-depth perceptions and expectations understanding are of great importance for MOOC activities, as well traditional teaching and learning activities. Nevertheless, limited attentions have been paid to the role of implementing new information technologies in the hospitality and tourism learning sphere. Also, limited attention has been paid to customized training to meet the preferences and needs of the concurrent employees. As a result, the present study aims to explore learners’ perceived and expected learning of MOOCs in hospitality and tourism education among different levels of study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hospitality and Tourism Education In Hong Kong

As the nature of the hospitality and tourism industry is people oriented, interpersonal skills are vital for its success (Millar et al., 2010; Fakhridinovich & Khalimovich, 2022). Due to the increasing number of tourist arrivals in Asia (World Tourism Organization, 2000), a fast-growing hospitality industry requires an ever-increasing number of competent, professional and committed manpower to strengthen and operate the facilities. Hence, ensuring the hospitality and tourism graduates to be well prepared for the industry is the responsibility of hospitality and tourism educators.

The Hong Kong government invested in the hospitality and tourism development but not much in higher education. In total, there are only two institutions major focusing hospitality and tourism programs in Hong Kong under publicity-fund subsidy (JUPAS, 2016), that is, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Vocational Training Council (VTC), which act as a major role in providing the working forces need for the long term and fast growing in Hong Kong. Hospitality and tourism higher education acts a critical role in preparing future employees and senior executives for the industry in Hong Kong, as Lo (2006) believed the increase in tourist arrivals over the years pushed government and businesses in these sectors to make provision for expansion of businesses. In Hong Kong, hospitality and tourism education is divided into a wide range of programs at different levels of study offered by government funded institution, self-financed education unit, a private company, corporation, organization and association.

Competency is a broad term for skills, and it is defined as a bundle of skills, abilities, and knowledge that are used in the actual industrial workforce. McLagan and Suhadolink (1989, p.77) stated that competency is: *“An area of knowledge or skill that is critical for producing key outputs...internal capabilities that people bring to their jobs which may be express in a broad, even infinite array of on-the-job behaviors”*. Hospitality graduates are expected to enter the hospitality industry with necessary competencies (Millar et al., 2010). Furthermore, expectations have also identified important interpersonal skills (O'Halloran, 1992).

Background of E-Learning & Theoretical Framework

E-Learning is one of the valuable alternatives of face-to-face classroom teaching for decades. The term e-Learning appeared in the middle 1990s along with developments in the World Wide Web (WWW) and the interest in asynchronous discussion groups. Garrison (2011) described that e-Learning is to create a community of independent learning in any time and location through the use of information and communications technology (ICT). Additionally, recent technological developments and the spread of the internet are having a notable

impact on the education process: transforming educational curricula, learning materials and instructional practices (Sigala, 2002).

Instructivist learning theory is a teacher-centered model of learning that suggests knowledge exists independently of the learner, and is transferred from the teacher to the student, which is viewed as a passive recipient. Constructivist theory is student focused, rather than teacher focused. That is to say, the student constructs new knowledge through analysis of information and reference to experience and understanding. The ladder base identifies e-Learning applications that give access to instructional material through supporting constructivist approaches in the learning process (Table 1). Opportunities for social learning and the construction of knowledge, where learners are active in creating their own knowledge and understanding, can be offered through Web 2.0 technologies, discussion boards, and other social networking sites. The ladder also identifies the key supports needed for engagement in e-Learning (Moule, Ward & Lockyer, 2010).

Table 1. e-Learning ladder

		Constructivist Learning			
Group Working (Composition)	Facilitation	Longevity of Engagement	Social Networking for Education e.g., Facebook		Information Communication Technology Access
			Wikis		
			Virtual "Chat" Classroom		
			Blog, E-mail discussions, Discussion Board		
			Video Conferencing, Synchronous Transmission		
			Interactive Learning Media e.g., CD-ROM, The Web		
			Information Gathering e.g., Databases, Course Notes		
			Instructivist Learning		
				Information Technology Skills	
				Technical Support	

(Source: Adapted from Moule, 2007)

The advantages, challenges, and opportunities of e-Learning have been exploited as well as widely mentioned, for example, flexibility in terms of time and place of delivery, continuous professional development, catalyst for institutional transformation (Poehlein, 1996), while its relevance and advantages for hospitality and tourism education has been acknowledged at present (Christou & Sigala, 2000; Chandra et al., 2022). For example, Sigala (2002) indicated that the Internet in general and e-Learning, in particular, offers great flexibility to match specific conditions of work within the hospitality and tourism sector. Moreover, Cho and Schmelzer (2000) stated that e-Learning prepares students of the hospitality and tourism programs to think critically, solve problems and make straight decisions, while being technologically competent. Cantoni et al. (2009) pointed out the distinction between formal and informal training, where neither curricula nor proper courses are offered, but a large variety of learning experiences, very often not explicitly labeled as teaching or learning.

MOOC Overview & Quality Assurance on MOOCs

MOOC concept appeared since 2008 and is an online course for any participants and open access to the web via the internet (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016). The idea is to share knowledge via a largescale open online course and is often free to mass public. New York Times Magazine declared the year 2012 as “*The Year of MOOC*” and became a very timely topic in 2012 (Pappano, 2012). Coursera, Udacity, and edX are the leading providers as summarized as follows (Table 2):

There are two main common types of MOOCs: (1) xMOOC which is content-based and (2) cMOOC which is connectivist MOOCs (Lugton, 2012). MOOCs are commonly based on traditional lecture formats as known as “xMOOCs” – a term inspired by Harvard University, which used the prefix ‘x’ to indicate (offline) courses in the university’s course catalog for which online versions were available; and ‘x’ stands for ‘eXtended’. There are some xMOOCs have online discussion forums that allow participants to engage with each other. However, such interactions are not essential or integral to the course (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016). The aforementioned type of MOOCs is based on a traditional approach to education and learning, namely the knowledge transfer model. The term xMOOCs was suggested by Siemens (2012). Many of the courses that continually to be appeared on popular platforms, such as Coursera, edX, and Udacity are based on behaviorist pedagogical strategies. The aforementioned courses are relatively closed, in a sense that they have a predetermined schedule and assignments to the learners, and the educational material used (i.e., electronic documents, video lectures, quizzes, and regular tests) are available from the institution. Some xMOOCs include discussion forums; however, they are not promoted and extensively used to support peer interaction and collaborative learning activities. Other researchers have presented different taxonomies and classifications. For example, Clark (2013) identified eight types of MOOCs based on the different pedagogies followed. Taxonomy based on pedagogy and they are not mutually exclusive:

1. Transfer MOOCs – where existing classroom lectures are transferred to a MOOC
2. Made MOOCs – which make of video and interactive material and made exclusively for the purpose of offering it as a MOOC
3. Synch MOOCs – with a fixed start and end date
4. Asynch MOOCs – which don’t have fixed start and end dates and have more flexible assignment deadlines
5. Adaptive MOOCs – which provide personalized learning experiences, based on dynamic assessment and data gathering on the course
6. Group MOOCs – where the focus is on collaboration in small groups
7. Connectivist MOOCs – emphasis on connection across a network of peers
8. Mini MOOCs – which are much smaller than the traditional massive MOOC and less time intensive with shorter videos and shorter courses

Table 2. The big three MOOC providers

Provider:	COURSERA	UDACITY	EDX
Profile:	For-profit with Stanford roots; 146 partner universities from 29 difference countries or regions, including many Ivy league schools from the US. Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) are both on the list from Hong Kong.	For-profit with Stanford roots but there is no universities affiliation. It so-called "University by industry".	A nonprofit with M.I.T. and Harvard roots with the UC Berkeley and more. Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), University of Hong Kong (HKU), and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) are both on the list from Hong Kong.
Courses:	1,841 courses in different subjects, including computer science, mathematics, business, humanities, social science, medicine, engineering, education.	Courses are mainly in computer science, mathematics, physics, and business. Nanodegree programs.	1,278 courses across various subjects.
Assessment:	Software grades multiple choices, quizzes, homework, problem sets.	Software grades tests, problem sets, programming assignments.	Open response assessments, peer assessment.
Academic integrity:	Agreeing to an honor code with terms.	Agreeing to an honor code with terms.	Agreeing to an honor code with terms.
Social interaction:	Online forums and study groups, meet-ups organized by students.	Online forums and study groups, meet-ups organized by students.	Rudimentary.
Study pacing:	Self-pacing with cut-off time	Self-pacing	Self-pacing and Schedule
Certification:	Verified certificates: Signature Track certificates. Accepted by offering universities.	Certificates according to academic performance. It recognized by industry leaders.	Verified certificate: offer MicroMasters, Professional certificate, and Xseries program. Accepted by offering universities. The certificates require verifying personal identity.
Level:	Beginner Intermediate Advanced	Beginner Intermediate Advanced	Introductory Intermediate Advanced

(Source: Coursera, 2016; Udacity, 2016; edX, 2016; The New York Times, 2012)

Yousef *et al.*(2014) re-categorized MOOC into four major types: cMOOC, SmOOC, bMOOC, and xMOOC (Figure 1 & Figure 2). In cMOOC, the 'c' stands for 'Connectivist', and it was prevalent since the implementation of the old courses (Cormier, 2008). cMOOC is rooted in the principles of connectivist teaching and learning (Siemens, 2003), and they put emphasis on learners' engagement, self-direction, creative ty, and social networking to enhance learning. The main objective is to harness the advantages of connectivist and

social practices of building knowledge within learning communities. cMOOCs use open educational resources and materials while they promote autonomy, interaction, co-creation and knowledge sharing among members, through various platforms such as Learning Management System (LMS, as known as Moodle, Blackboard), blogs, wikis, and e-portfolios.

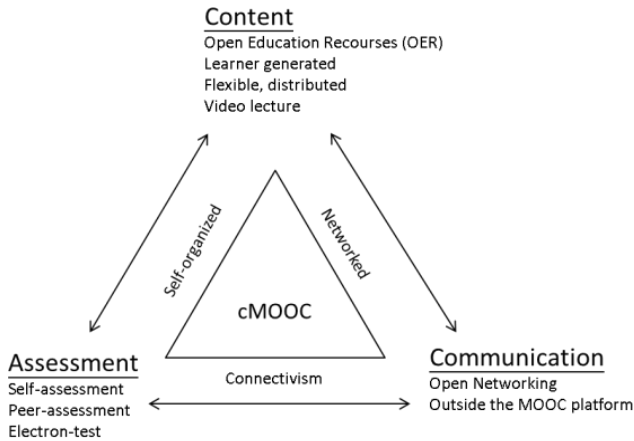


Figure 1: Key concepts of cMOOCs

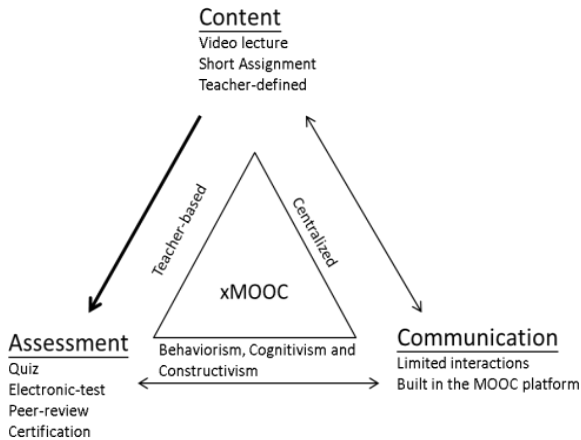


Figure 2: Key concepts of xMOOCs

(Source: adapted from Yousef *et al.*, 2014)

bMOOCs / sMOOCs / SPOCs / Hybrid MOOCs

New forms of MOOCs have also emerged with time passing by, such as sMOOCs, which refer to small open online courses with a relatively small number of participants (Figure 3). Blended MOOCs (bMOOCs) is as hybrid

MOOCs including in-class, face-to-face, and online mediated instruction, which shows the different types of MOOCs and their underlying learning theories (Yousef, et al., 2014). Small Private Online Courses (SPOCs) gained steam near the end of 2013. University California (UC) Berkeley professor, Armando Fox, the acronym denotes a MOOC scaled down to the local level, as SPOCs provide a smaller offshoot of the massive open online course, facilitating a more private learning environment that encourages more one-on-one engagement between the instructor and the student (Online Course Report, 2016).

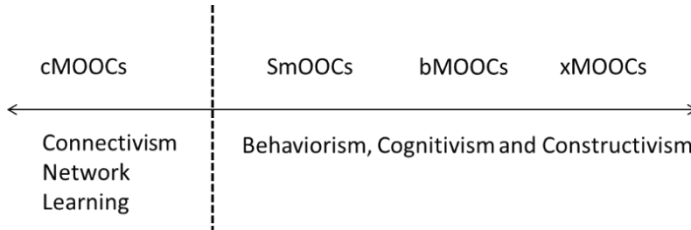


Figure 3: MOOC types

(Source: adapted from Yousef *et al.*, 2014)

According to Gaskell and Mills (2014), “*Quality*” is a contested term but two important factors are: (1) The quality of the teaching and learning and (2) The quality of the final qualification. There are four major issues which have been used to challenge the acceptability of e-Learning or MOOCs are: (1) Quality and quality assurance processes; (2) Outcomes; (3) Access; and (4) the perceptions of stakeholders. One way of ensuring the quality of teaching and learning for students at any institution is comparable is for distance teaching and campus-based teaching and institutions to have the same quality assurance frameworks (i.e., Outcome-based teaching and learning) and processes. This is the case now for higher education in many countries and regions such as the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore (Gaskell & Mills, 2014). Certifications in hospitality and tourism have been around for years and continue to grow in number and scope. Purpose on progress in careers, hospitality managers may be required or wish to complete a number of industry related certifications offered by American Hotel and Lodging Association, such as Certified Hotel Administrator, Certified Room Division Executive, Certified Food and Beverage Executive, Certified Hospitality Housekeeping Executive, Certified Hospitality Facilities Executive, Certified Hospitality Trainer, Master Supplier, Spa Supervisor, Guest Service Gold, or a number of other certifications (Educational Institute of American Hotel and Lodging Association, 2014). In summary, it is evident the development of tailor-made MOOCs could meet the needs of next generation students.

METHODOLOGY

Method

The present study adopted an exploratory research design in qualitative approach. Interview was adopted as interview is considered the most common and inductive approach for qualitative research method; and interviews could be considered conversations in which a researcher gently guides a conversational direction in an extended discussion. The researcher elicits in depth and the details about the research topic by following up on answers by the interviewee knows and is willing to share (Rubin& Rubin, 2005).

The hospitality and tourism learners are identified as students who are studying in universities and high education institutions, as well as the practitioners who are working in the industry. Targeted age range are those who were born between 1977 and 1994 (Gen Y), the major workforces in future, about 71 million population around the world (Social Marketing, 2004). The targeted students are from both public and private institutions (i.e., publicly-funded and self-financed programs). Another group from the industry includes Gen Y working forces for hospitality and tourism in Hong Kong. In the present study, focus group interviews were divided into five groups from group 1 (QF level 4) to group 4 (QF level 7), and group 5 (working forces) - Table 3.

Table 3. Focus group interview sampling

Group Number	Target Group	QF Level	Group Size	Source	Method
GP5	Hospitality and tourismpractitioners	-	4 – 6	Industry	Focus group
GP4	Doctoral degree	7	4 – 6	PolyU	Focus group
GP3	Master’s degree	6	4 – 6	PolyU	Focus group
GP2	Bachelor’s degree	5	4 – 6	PolyU, CIHE	Focus group
GP1	Associate degree, Higher diploma	4	4 – 6	IVE, CBCC	Focus group
Note: All the interviewees are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ without any prior MOOC learning experience ▪ born in Generation Y 					

Data Collection

Data were generated recently from students who are studying post-secondary hospitality and tourism programs (QF level 4 or above) at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), School of Hotel & Tourism Management, Vocational Training Council, Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE), Department of Hotel, Services & Tourism Studies, Caritas Institute of Higher Education (CIHE), and Caritas Bianchi College of Careers (CBCC). The group from the industry includes Gen Y working forces who are working in the

hospitality and tourism in Hong Kong. All the interviewees did not have prior MOOC learning experience. Focus group interview were then employed, as focus group interviews can provide insights into how people think and provide a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied. The main interview question of the present study is “What are your ideas and thoughts about studying hotel and tourism management through MOOCs?” Data were then analyzed inductively from particulars to more general perspectives which are called themes, dimensions, codes, or categories (Creswell, 2012). Analysis was based on the transcripts generated from each interview’s audio records. After that, categorizing strategies such as coding and thematic analysis were applied. The data were then revised and summarized.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Perspectives from Sub-Degree and Undergraduate Learner (Associate Degree/ Higher Diploma And Bachelor’s Degree)

Familiarity

A few participants said they did not hear the word “MOOC” and knew very little regarding e-learning. They thought MOOC is not popular in Hong Kong. Some participants described that MOOC is a Moodle-like platform (Moodle is a free and open-source learning management system) by putting all the teaching and learning materials online. Nearly all participants perceived MOOC or e-Learning was just an informal way to study, and it was only an alternative or second choice in their perceptions. Examples are provided as follows: *“I don’t know any about MOOCs. Our secondary school teachers didn’t talk about it. Although e-learning is a way to study, people would feel that study online is a form of informal way...or not a common way”* said by a participant. Another interviewee expressed a view on the discipline of hotel and tourism management relies on tradition, *“Human touch is very important, e-learning maybe not suitable”*. All the participants agreed that MOOC provides high quality knowledge contents in a flexibly way. However, many participants believed that traditional university cannot be replaced by MOOC.

Employability

Employability was not the major concern but academic articulation. Some participants reflected *“If MOOC issued certificate could help to admit university that will be perfect”*. Most of participants felt that a university degree or higher degree would help to seek a better job in hospitality and tourism industry in Hong Kong, as they commented that *“Certificate is an entry ticket for employment.”*

Reputation

All participants expressed that they prefer to join a world-class program from top-ranked universities on MOOCs without any prerequisites. One of the

participants said that *“I can never have a chance to admit those top universities around the world, for example Cornell University from USA... but I can take a course on MOOCs”*. University ranking was quite important to learners who are willing to enroll a course in MOOC platform.

Length of study

Participants reported on some courses found in MOOCs are only 6 weeks, it was a bit rush for them. They preferred a similar setting in university semester basis, i.e., 12 – 14 weeks. One participant pointed out 2 – 3 hours per week may not be enough for study and suggested the length of study could be longer with tutorial session or more learning activities.

Social networking

Participants emphasized on face-to-face communication. Some said that online learning was led to lack of communication in colleges. One participant pointed out *“Real life, face to face social networking is very important in school life, not IG (Instagram) Facebook one...”*. *“Assessments and examinations are quite a lot, I want someone could answer my questions in-person”*. Findings reflected that if a teacher or a tutor delivering in face-to-face format would be better. Some other participants described MOOC as *“lack of inter personal communication”* and *“lack of teamwork”* elements which were the core competencies in hospitality and tourism industry. *“Face-to-face interaction”* was still preferable. They also stated that *“...teacher-student relationship and student-student relationship are important”*.

Prerequisite

All participants are welcomed there were no prerequisites on MOOCs. No admission requirements allow unqualified learners had an opportunity to have a taste on courses from higher education, as one participant pointed out *“Education for all”* and *“Equal opportunity”* was promoted on MOOCs.

Study pacing

MOOCs provide anytime and anywhere features which was widely accepted. However, self-paced mode on MOOCs is contradiction. On one hand, MOOCs provide flexibility for learners to self-regulate, on the other hand, it may cause to study failure. Most participants explained that they lack confidence on their *“self-discipline”* or *“self-motivation”* to complete the course.

Time preference

Convenience was definitely a preferable reason. The learners are able to access educational content on when they like. A participant expressed *“So I can sleep more instead of get up so early to go to school...save a lot of transportation time”* moreover, another participant echoed *“I prefer study at midnight...more concentrated”*.

Perspectives from postgraduate learner (Master's degree and Doctoral degree)

Familiarity

All participants heard about MOOCs and several interviewees had enrolled before but not actually completed. They had difficulty distinguish MOOCs and other online degree programs offering from overseas universities and they all believed MOOC is a new trend in teaching and learning. As one participant explained, *"I am not sure what could MOOCs make a huge difference, but of course it is a new trend in education"* and another participant echoed *"No one can escape from this IT era, nowadays...we have no choices"*. Another participant also pointed out *"we can find some relevant subjects on MOOCs, to taste, to learn something new..."* *"I think comfort is a strong advantage, I can spend few hours a day and set up an inspirational studying environment in my home. All I need is a large desk and a nice, comfortable chair."*

Reputation

All participants agreed the reputation of university is important. Examples are provided as follows: *"People love ranking, especially rank high...internationally recognized,"* *"Universities pay a lot of effort for chasing ranking...I think MOOC is the same"* Many responses were echoed.

Length of study

Most participants felt MOOC course should run as intensive mode. Examples are provided as follows: *"The course cannot be too long..."* said by a participant. *"Less is more...give more time for research and self-study..."* echoed by another participant.

Social networking

All participants enjoyed using electronic communication. Examples are provided as follows: *"I can use chatroom anytime and anywhere which is saving time and convenience...if MOOC provides WhatsApp (instant messaging) would be better..."* *"We all use WhatsApp for group project and assessment nowadays..."* All participants appeared to accept social networking via electronic means.

Study pacing

Examples of study pacing are provided as follows: *"I can start browsing through interesting online courses and programs,"* *"I can manage my self-paced learning means that I can start completing the targets at any time,"* *"I can arrange a learning schedule that meets my own needs."* Self-regulated pacing was preferable noted by all participants. *"Flexible learning hour is excellent for part-time learner...life-work-learn balance..."* agreed by all participants.

Time preference

Examples of time preference are provided as follows: “I will not be bound to physical class session when I opt for online education,” “All lectures and needed materials are provided via online platforms, I can easily access them from the comfort of my home.” “I will not take public transport to get to campus, I will not have to get up early to get dressed for class at 8 am.”

Perspectives from In-service Learner (Hospitality and Tourism Practitioner)

Familiarity

The motivation to learn via MOOC is high. One participant reported that “I saw a course and received an invitation email regarding MOOCs from the Hong Kong Polytechnic university before, but I didn’t actually try it...it looks interesting...particularly it is free of charge.” Most of participants had an e-learning experience from their working environment and it was mandatory for each staff. The common understanding of MOOC is “Reading article, watching video and do some multiple-choice questions.”

Employability

“If my company accepts MOOC credential, that really a benefit for us” said by a participant. Participants appeared to follow their company instructions to choose learning program. A participant expressed *“I will not join a program which is not accepted by my company”*. MOOCs cannot provide hand-on practical training reported by a participant. *“Although MOOC is convenience, it can’t replace face to face training in practical skills...specially in hotel industry, they are very old school and obey tradition practices.”*

Reputation

Regarding reputation, all participants described “Top-ranked University is always preferable...even in online mode...everyone wants a big brand”.

Length of study

A number of participants agreed *“Less is more, MOOC should be efficient and effective”*. Most participants felt 6 weeks pattern was appropriate, in some cases; they may do it in 2 days intensively. Majority of participants preferred intensive learning mode.

Social networking

Participants said that “We are all using WhatsApp and WeChat to communicate nowadays”. Most participants reflected that using online social media was a habit. There was a lot of discussion among the participants about the ways of communication; e-channel was the popular and preferable.

Prerequisite

One of participants was worried about handling computer problems during the study, e.g. Internet connection, software compatibility and commented that “*I am not good at computer and IT...maybe a problem to learn on MOOCs*”

Study pacing

Examples of study pacing are provided as follows: “I can probably study on my leisure time”, “In case some urgent matter from my company... I can rearrange my learning schedule”, “Working in hospitality industry is not easy to study on regular pattern”. All participants believed self-regulated and flexible learning pacing was best fit for them.

Time preference

Most participants preferred whenever necessary on demand. A working mom felt overwhelmed with time pressures and unmet obligations in family. Children are precious, but they require an awful lot of care and management, as one participant stated that “I prefer online classes more because I can spend time with my family and work full-time and those are my main priorities ...”

CONCLUSION & FUTURE RESEARCH

MOOCs have been recently developed, widely adopted in distance education, and emerged as popular mode of learning in 2012 (Pappano, 2014). As limited MOOC study was conducted by previous studies, especially regarding hospitality and tourism context, hence, the present study explored perceptions and expectations of MOOCs through focus group interview. Findings of the present study confirmed that promoting MOOC education remains vague and it is still challenging to find an effective model to follow in practice. Education in this ivory tower has many criticisms of MOOC's voice. The objection is that MOOC will only put short videos on the Internet, carry out multiple choice examinations and some online community discussions. Professors and students also have considerable reservations about the multiple-choice test methods and students' ratings. Other interviewees perceived that these courses and degrees may lead to the devaluation of traditional degrees and the proliferation of different degrees and certificates.

On the other hand, MOOC's impact on second tier and third tier universities is huge, because such a large-scale teaching method will bring about a “Star System”. Students will only attend courses taught by stars, making it harder for second tier and third tier universities to obtain resources, and causing education monopoly. Also, interactivity between teachers and students and campus life in top universities are considered a very important part. Hence, MOOC is still in a preliminary stage of growth; and traditional learning will not be easily replaced by MOOC. However, MOOC platform can provide an unprecedented opportunity for the studious civilian population to enjoy a broader academic world.

The present study has two limitations. One limitation is relating to sampling, as the present study only collected data from particular higher education institutions in Hong Kong. Hence, future studies are expected to include more institutions in Hong Kong or conduct similar studies in other countries and regions. As the present study adopted qualitative study, future studies are suggested to adopt quantitative approach to develop the instruments for different dimensions to commensurate with e-learning and MOOC trends.

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