

**Knowledge Creation and Research Production in Swiss Hotel Schools: A Case Study of the
Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the obstacles that Swiss hotel schools face to knowledge creation and scientific research in tourism and hospitality. A case study approach was adopted to analyze the research practices of the Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL). Multiple sources of data were collected for the case study, including the documentation of Swiss higher education governance, brochures of educational programs from selected hotel schools including EHL, and archive records about research output from EHL. This study shows that knowledge creation and research production is largely constrained by Swiss higher education regulation. Also, not only are Swiss hotel schools trapped by a vocational ethos, but they are also unwilling to break it because of the priority to legitimize their educational programs. We argue that the EHL research practice is a lens through which we can portray an alternative approach to knowledge production and transfer in Swiss hospitality education.

KEYWORDS:

Knowledge creation, research production, hospitality education, Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne, Switzerland

Introduction

Swiss hospitality and tourism education dates back to 1893, exemplified by the foundation of the world's first hotel management school—the Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL). Swiss hospitality educators aspired to address the needs of the tourism industry at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, when Switzerland was among the most popular destinations, particularly for the British leisure class and affluent travelers. Tourism had become increasingly important for the Swiss economy before and after this period, particularly in impoverished mountainous areas. Between 1850 and 1880, the gross added value of tourism tripled and, by the late 1890s, accounted for about 3.5% of Swiss GDP¹, which then rose to 6% of GDP² in the aftermath of World War I in 1918. In response, Swiss hospitality education programs were established to train professionals to deliver a high standard of hospitality services and professionalism. The tradition of excellence and professionalism has been practiced and inherited by generations of Swiss professionals and educators for more than a century and forms what is now known as Swiss hospitality.

As the Swiss economy shifted from tourism³, hospitality education, which historically propelled

¹ Source: Swiss National Fund Project “Geldmenge und Wirtschaftswachstum 1851–1913” (estimated by Halbeisen & Lechner, John, Muff, Projer, Püntener et Ritzmann)

² Source: www.fsw.uzh.ch/histstat/wg_ch/ritzmann_david.

³ As of 2011, the gross added value of tourism was 2.9% of Swiss GDP (Source: Federal Statistical Office (FSO), Tourism Satellite Accounts: *Tourism output, intermediate consumption and gross value added in Switzerland*. <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/10/02/blank/key/03.html>). In comparison, the gross added value of financial services accounted for about 5.8% of Swiss GDP (Source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), National Accounts: Industries production account. <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/en/index/themen/04/02/02.html>). However, it is worth noting that there are regional differences. A study conducted in 2001 in Wallis (Valais), where many ski resorts are located, shows that the gross added value of tourism accounted for up to 25.4% of GDP in the region (Source: Le Tourisme en Valais, « Etudes sur la valeur ajoutée » Etat du Valais, 2001).

the industry, has evolved as an important export and established its global fame over the decades (Becker & Kolster, 2012). During the past decade, it was estimated that 15,000 students were enrolled in independent vocational hotel/tourism management schools and 6,500 in hotel/tourism educational programs offered by the Universities of Applied Sciences⁴. Mostly driven by the development of hotel schools, the growth of student enrollment doubled in this period.

Vocational hotel schools, among others, attracted most international students, accounting for a whopping 79.6% of the total student population, followed by hotel programs offered by universities with 57.7 %, while tourism schools recorded less than 10%⁵. In addition to direct international enrolment, Switzerland has started to export its hospitality and tourism education programs through establishing certified schools and programs abroad to train local hotel employees⁶ and industry practitioners.

Underpinning the success of Swiss hospitality education is the tradition of professional education, which creatively blends practical arts and sciences with industry-related applications (Chen & Dellea, 2015; Formica, 1996). While the reputation of Swiss hospitality education has been well acknowledged and the education mode is appraised as one of the competitive advantages of Swiss higher education (Becker & Kolster, 2012), knowledge creation and academic research have long been overlooked by Swiss hotel schools. A lack of research endeavors becomes strikingly evident and detrimental when elite Swiss hotel schools were

⁴ These estimations were based on figures regarding student enrollment and graduates from the Federal Statistics Office of Switzerland. The data for vocational schools were however less comprehensive and required some extrapolations. Federal Statistics Office (FSO), Education and Science:

<http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/themen/15.html>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ EHL has developed an elite network of eight certified schools outside Switzerland as a means of transferring EHL-specific practical knowhow and hospitality skills (“savoir-faire” and “savoir-être”) with the vision of spreading Swiss hospitality excellence around the world.

notoriously displaced by their counterparts in North America and a burgeoning group of young institutions in Asia and Australia in research-based rankings (e.g., Severt et al., 2009). Despite being the pioneer in hospitality education, Swiss hotel educators seemed to have not been involved in or been bothered by the development of tourism scholarship over the past few decades, coupled with the longstanding debate on whether tourism/hospitality should be seen as a discipline (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981; Jovicic, 1988; Leiper, 1981; Tribe, 1997). While the US and Asian institutions are embarking on a race toward consolidating their research, no evidence has yet to suggest that Swiss hotel schools as a whole will join them in the near future.

Research output is one of the most important and visible indicators to rate academic programs and the reputation of institutions (Jogaratham, 2005b). Academic research, above all else, can lead to the development of tourism and hospitality as a scientific field and enhance teaching quality (Crouch & Perdue, 2015; Frechtling, 2004; Hall, 2005). Despite being the world's first and one of the best hotel schools, EHL was ranked the 83rd based on research output from 2002 to 2006, far behind its counterparts in North America and Asia, let alone other Swiss hotel schools (Severt et al., 2009). We therefore aim to explore knowledge creation and research production in tourism and hospitality as well as the nature of this knowledge. In particular, we aim to identify the factors that affected research production in the Swiss context. Moreover, we focus on knowledge creation and research production at EHL as a case study, illustrating how and to what extent EHL can break a range of barriers to perform its various knowledge creation activities.

Literature Review

We reviewed the literature in two aspects. First, we reviewed studies on the discussion of how knowledge is created and disseminated in tourism and hospitality as well as the relationship between knowledge creation and disciplinary research. Second, we reviewed studies that addressed the obstacles or facilitators of knowledge creation and research production in the fields of tourism and hospitality. When reviewing these studies, we regard hospitality and tourism in the same arena of academic exploration. In the early stages of tourism and hospitality scholarship, there was no clear-cut distinction between the two despite their differences. A number of top journals still publish both tourism and hospitality papers, such as *Tourism Management* and the *Journal of Travel Research* and the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, to name a few. A number of subject/program rankings have also treated tourism and hospitality as the same disciplinary area. In what follows, we will spell out the differences between hospitality, hotel and tourism wherever necessary.

Knowledge Creation and Transfer in Hospitality and Tourism

Tribe (2010) argued that the advent of the tourism academy can be attributed to the extraordinary growth of tourism as well as its various impacts on the society. While later than the development of the industry, scholarship in tourism and hospitality can be traced back to the early 1970s when academic research on tourism proliferated, of which half have been produced since the 1980s (Graburn & Jafari, 1991). Cooper (2006) classified two types of knowledge in tourism and hospitality, namely tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge, depending on how the knowledge is created, transferred and used. Tacit knowledge is the experience and expertise that are amassed

by a master and then passed on to his apprentices in work practice (Cooper, 2006). It signifies the vocational ethos as one of the fundamentals in hospitality education. Despite abundant tacit knowledge having been accumulated by tourism enterprises and the industry, it is difficult to be disseminated and therefore to reach a large audience beyond the enterprise or the industry itself (Cooper, 2006). Since tacit knowledge is difficult to codify, it tends to be easily dismissed (Cooper, 2006). By contrast, explicit knowledge usually represents the interest of an organization, which is hoarded and codified in various forms in a company, from databases to customer directories (Cooper, 2006). It can thus be easily retrieved and transferred (Cooper, 2006).

The tourism and hospitality industry is nonetheless characterized by a huge number of small enterprises and operations across a variety of sectors, which makes knowledge transmission difficult (Cooper, 2006). In addition, the continuity of knowledge absorption is affected by the vocational foundation of the industry, such as poor management of human resources (Cooper, 2006). Due to different cultures in which knowledge is transferred as well as different vocabularies used to code the knowledge, a lack of trust arises between knowledge creators and users (Davenport & Prusak 1998; Hjalager 2002). Since the master's competence largely depends on the tacit knowledge amassed during his career, he would be reluctant to share or communicate it (Cooper, 2006). A second constraint is that tacit knowledge by definition is possessed by the master and has not been disseminated to the rest of the enterprise, and therefore it is difficult to be questioned or discussed (Cooper, 2006). Therefore, not only is tacit knowledge difficult to be transferred but managing its owners also becomes challenging (Cooper, 2006). A number of factors that prevent explicit knowledge from reaching a broad

audience include the fragmentation of the tourism and hospitality industry, the dominance of small businesses in the industry, and the vocational nature of hospitality and tourism education (Cooper 2006).

Such a dichotomy of knowledge creation was also discussed by Tribe (1997, 2010) yet in a different taxonomy. According to Tribe (1997, 2010), one type is disciplinary knowledge, which is grounded in specific scientific fields and created in higher education institutions, and the other is extra-disciplinary knowledge, which is created by various organizations, including enterprises, governments, and consultants in the industry. Extra-disciplinary knowledge is derived from, and aims for, problem solving, and therefore is context-specific (Tribe, 1997, 2010). It more or less overlaps with both tacit and explicit knowledge in Cooper's (2006) taxonomy. Some argue that extra-disciplinary knowledge's contribution is minimal to the body of knowledge in academia, as the problems under research are company- or sector-specific and have a limited scope (Cooper, Shepherd, & Westlake, 1994). Since creators do not aim to delve into the abstract or conceptual matter of tourism or hospitality, extra-disciplinary knowledge production does not advance the body of disciplinary knowledge (Cooper et al., 1994). Extra-disciplinary knowledge has often been overlooked by academia because it is not disseminated through academic journals nor does it aim to seek validation from higher education. Such a dismissal, as Tribe (1997) pointed out, could create a schism between the two types of knowledge production.

Vocational Ethos and Disciplinary Dilemma in Research Production

In addition to the industrial obstacles, there are two specific constraints in knowledge production

and transfer in hospitality and tourism (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Cooper, 2006). One is the vocational-orientation of hospitality education and the other is an elusive disciplinary landscape in hospitality and tourism research that has haunted researchers and educators for decades. Many scholars have concluded that hospitality research seems to be limited to a vocational nature and action orientation, therefore it becomes more difficult to create knowledge in hospitality than in disciplinary fields (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Morgan, 2004; Tribe, 1997). Airey and Tribe (2000) further argued that this constraint is exacerbated by an enormous preoccupation in hospitality with operational work rather than with disciplinary inquiries. Many scholars therefore advocate that hospitality education needs to embrace a liberal and reflective orientation to advance research by breaking its vocational and practical orientation (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Morrison & O'Mahony, 2003). To liberate it from functionalism and pragmatism, many argue that hospitality research requires delving into theories as well as constructing a common epistemological basis and conceptualization (Jones, 1996; Keiser, 1998; Morrison, 2002).

Among the disciplinary obstacles is a lack of consensus among researchers on the scope and disciplinary boundary of tourism studies (Taylor & Edgar, 1996). Because of the complexity of the hospitality phenomena, many argued that hospitality research needs to draw on and synthesize a comprehensive range of disciplines in social sciences to transcend disciplinary boundaries (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Jafari & Ritchie, 1981; Oppermann, 2000). These disciplines incorporated economics, geography, sociology, anthropology, and political science to name a few, on which tourism studies can be based and therefore advanced (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981). Xiao and Smith's (2006) review of tourism studies published in leading academic journals showed that there were more than 27 disciplines involved and also a transition of predominant

disciplines from the late 1970s to the 90s. Xiao and Smith (2006) concluded that the involvement of multiple disciplines contributes to the study of tourism. Yet the fact that tourism academics have diverse disciplinary backgrounds indicates that the field of tourism studies is fragmented, and thus tends to be dismissed in mainstream academia (Tribe, 2010).

An attempt to establish tourism as a single discipline also emerged following the wide application of Jafari and Ritchie's (1981) multidisciplinary approach to tourism studies (Leiper, 1981; Jovicic, 1988). The ultimate objective was to legitimize tourism studies to equal mainstream disciplines, such as economics and sociology. Yet Tribe (1997) argued that tourism studies are incapable of establishing their own unity, concluding that "the attempt to legitimate tourism studies by packaging it up as a discipline not only fails on logical grounds (i.e., tourism studies do not pass the test), but is also an empty and fruitless one (i.e., disciplines are not the sine qua non of knowledge production)" (p. 646). Tribe's (1997) assertion sheds light on a number of critical issues in tourism research, such as how the tourism phenomenon is conceptualized, how tourism studies are developed, as well as why divisions exist among academics and between academics and industry practitioners. In response, Tribe (1997) articulated the complex relationship between tourism as a phenomenon and as a scientific field. He concluded that the former represents the external world of tourism (world I), while the latter consists of both tourism academia (world II) and objective tourism knowledge (world III). It takes worlds II and III to capture, describe and explain world I (Tribe, 1997).

Research Collaborations, Network Effects, and Research Productivity

As an essential part of knowledge development, research collaboration has played a pivotal role in knowledge creation, acquisition and dissemination (Racherla & Hu, 2010; Tribe, 2010; Ye, Li, & Law, 2013). Scientific collaboration is vital in research production, especially for fields like tourism, which is characterized by complex problems, dynamic growth of knowledge, and specialized areas of expertise (Racherla & Hu, 2010; Tribe, 2010; Ye et al., 2013). With a focus on co-authorship in tourism academia, Racherla and Hu's (2010) study found that multiple collaborations among tourism researchers were positively associated with their research productivity. One reason would be that the development of the research network has a spillover effect that makes its members better off in exchanging research ideas and sharing resources (Racherla & Hu, 2010). An alternative explanation was that people prefer to collaborate with highly productive researchers, and therefore expand the network as well as scale up the network effects. Ye et al. (2013) found that research collaborations among tourism and hospitality scholars were also positively associated with their research output, and these collaborations were dominated by certain critical scholars in the field.

Racherla and Hu's (2010) study showed that inter-disciplinary collaboration was facilitated by researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds because the disciplinary boundaries are permeable. For instance, they found that research collaborations were dominated among closely related disciplines, such as marketing and strategy. Nevertheless, Howey, Savage, and Verbeeten (1999) found that research in hospitality and tourism were not as much intermingled as we would expect. They also found that research citations were identified more within disciplines than across disciplines, and most citations were to sources outside the hospitality and tourism areas entirely (Howey et al., 1999). These findings indicate that tourism and hospitality may diverge,

as conceived by academics (Tribe, 1997), in the first place on their ontological grounds.

Institutional Characteristics and Research Output

Since tourism can be conceptualized in a wide range of disciplines, tourism academics are clustered and institutionalized within university departments that house the corresponding disciplines (Tribe, 2010). The effects of university departments, or departmentalism, are profound in research activities, including allocating time and funding to a research topic and prioritizing a research project to fit the strategy of a particular department (Tribe, 2006, 2010). Therefore, depending on which department the program/faculty is housed in, the discourse of tourism studies can vary substantially (Tribe, 2010). Despite the business of tourism being the primary focus of tourism studies, faculty who study tourism in geography, sociology and anthropology, for instance, have focuses that have little to do with the business of tourism. While departmentalism makes tourism studies benefit from intellectual stimulation and freedom, thereby facilitating research production (Tribe, 2006), it somewhat impedes the allocation of research funding to the areas and topics that are deemed relevant and meaningful to researchers (Lyotard, 1984; Tribe, 2010).

At the institutional level, research productivity can be explained by a wide range of characteristics from education system, faculty composition, to the availability of doctoral research (Hall, 2005; Jogaratnam, 2005ab; Lee & Law, 2011; Severt et al., 2009). Lee and Law (2011) found that research productivity in tourism and hospitality was positively related to faculty size, a higher composition of senior researchers, the number of supporting staff as well as

the availability of doctoral programs. Evidence cannot be more compelling and evident than in Severt et al.'s (2009) ranking of the world's top 100 hospitality/tourism programs, in which those schools that topped the list had more research faculty and staff. Kyvik and Smeby (1994) also found that research productivity of faculty was associated with whether they supervised graduate students. A lack of research faculty and doctoral programs in most European hotel schools may explain why these schools lagged behind in the race for research output, which in turn affected their rankings. By contrast, evidence from mainland China and Taiwan has shown that research output gradually increases when tourism and hospitality programs are offered at the postgraduate level (Horng & Lee, 2005; Huang & Hsu, 2008; Tsang & Hsu, 2011).

The growth in research output over the period 1992 to 2006 in Asia can be attributed to an increasing number of universities that established research teams in tourism and hospitality (Severt et al., 2009). This was accompanied by a transition from professional education to university-level or even doctorate education (Horng & Lee, 2005), suggesting that hospitality research needs to break the barrier of its vocational ethos (Tribe, 1997). Lee and Law (2011) also argued that an institution's autonomy of offering independent tourism/hospitality programs can boost its research productivity. As the research community within an institution expands, cross-institutional collaboration can also be consolidated (Ye et al., 2013; Ye, Song, & Li, 2012). Over the past two decades, tourism and hospitality research has been dominated by multi-author, multi-university studies, and for this reason research productivity is significantly associated with the breadth and depth of research collaboration between authors in different disciplines as well as between institutions (Ye et al., 2012, 2013).

Education Governance and Research Output

Although the relative quality of tourism and hotel schools is reflected in the quality of educational programs, research output plays an increasingly important role in determining the reputation of these schools (Jogaratham, 2005ab; McKercher, 2007, 2008; Severt et al., 2009). Severt et al.'s (2009) tourism and hospitality school ranking was based on research performance, in which university-level hotel and tourism schools in North America, Asia and Australia dwarfed a vast majority of their European counterparts. Because of considerable research output at the UK-based schools, they displaced their continental counterparts, particularly Swiss hotel schools, which have well-established hospitality and tourism programs and longer history in hospitality education (Page, 2003; Severt et al., 2009). One reason would be that these schools are specialized in vocational training and professional education, with no aim to focus more on research (Formica, 1996; Page, 2003). Yet at a time when tourism and hospitality programs are expanding to include postgraduate education, pursuing research has become a strategy for hotel schools to keep competitive in higher education as well as to meet the needs of the industry (Horng & Lee, 2005, McKercher, 2002; Rivera & Upchurch, 2008).

Beyond the institution's autonomy of offering educational programs, the transition of education mode from the vocational level to the university level has much to do with education governance and policies. For instance, Australia saw establishing university-level tourism and hospitality education as part of its national policy (McKercher, 2002). Most senior Australian tourism academics believed that postgraduate programs could be a catalyst to rejuvenate traditional vocational-level tourism and hospitality education, which suffered unstable growth in student

demand (McKercher, 2002). According to Horng and Lee (2005), the transformation of vocational schools into universities in Taiwan helped reposition hotel and tourism schools through incorporating comprehensive curriculum, advancing collaboration and strengthening tourism and hospitality research. Law, Leung, and Buhalis (2010) pointed out that the academic leadership of the United States in tourism and hospitality is due to the dominance of the US-based academics in serving as editors and editorial board members of academic journals in the field.

Previous research has adopted a dichotomous approach, which separated hospitality and tourism schools that are affiliated with universities focusing on disciplinary knowledge creation from specialized hospitality schools that focus on the transfer of vocational knowledge. Little research has been conducted to unravel the interrelationships between knowledge creation and transfer in a same institution. Second, while Switzerland is a birthplace of hospitality education as well as an important exporter of hospitality education in recent decades, no research has explored knowledge production in Swiss specialized hotel or tourism schools. The question of why disciplinary knowledge creation has lagged far behind that of their US and Asian counterparts has not been addressed. This study thus aims to fill these gaps by identifying the regulatory and institutional obstacles to knowledge creation and, importantly, shed light on how hospitality education can evolve in Switzerland and embrace the trend of disciplinary knowledge production.

Methods

Research Design

We adopted a case study approach to analyze the obstacles that Swiss hotel schools are facing in knowledge creation and research production. We used both descriptive and explanatory approaches to analyze the research practices undertaken by the Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL). EHL was selected as the case for three reasons. First, EHL was the world's first hotel management school and also a pioneer of hospitality education. Its education mode has been adopted by other hotel schools in Switzerland, and has become a world reference for hospitality education. Second, the leading role of EHL in hospitality education makes the analysis of EHL comparable to hospitality education at the global level, which helps identify regulatory differences of higher education between Switzerland and the rest of the world. Third, EHL has established comprehensive hospitality programs, including a Bachelor of Science (BSc), a Master of Science (MSc) and an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA), which make it an ideal case for exploring research and innovation practices.

Despite being criticized for a lack of theoretical underpinnings, methodological rigor, and data reliability and validity in most studies (Seuring, 2006), we argue that the case study approach was best suited to the present study. First, our unit of analysis was specialized hotel and tourism schools in Switzerland, and the number of the schools that fall in this category and meet our criteria is limited. Therefore, a particular case would be superior to a quantitative analysis of these schools. By using the case study approach, we can zoom in on the constraints that EHL is facing and illustrate how EHL can break these constraints to initiate research. Given the importance of EHL in Swiss hospitality education, it is a lens through which we can foresee the strategies that other Swiss hotel schools may adopt to incorporate knowledge creation in their

educational programs. A pursuit of academic research in hospitality would not be credited across Switzerland if it fell short of what EHL expects in the first place, as we shall show that the constraints faced by other schools are more profound than those at EHL.

The Case and Data

EHL was founded in 1893 in Lausanne, Switzerland, which is widely recognized as the world's first and among the best hotel management schools. Its foundation can be traced back to the professional school of the Swiss Hotel Association in the late 19th century. For more than a century after its foundation, EHL had been specialized in providing diploma-based professional education for the industry. It was not until 1998, when it became affiliated with the University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland (HES-SO), did it become the first Swiss hotel school recognized as a university by the Swiss government. It was also the first hotel school in Switzerland to offer the Bachelor of Science (BSc) in hotel management in accordance with the Bologna Agreement. While it has a long history in providing MBA and EMBA programs, it was not until 2014 that a Master of Science (MSc) was launched by collaborating with The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the University of Houston. EHL initiated scientific research as an affiliated school of the HES-SO in 1998, its research activities have been gradually reinforced ever since.

We used multiple sources of data to analyze the constraints on knowledge creation in Swiss hotel schools. Our sources of data were in the three major categories. First, we collected the documentation of higher education governance from both Swiss federal and cantonal

governments, which was used to illustrate the regulatory constraints of hospitality education. The relationships between Swiss hotel schools and public universities can therefore be articulated, from which we were able to identify country-level differences in hospitality education and research. Second, we collected school brochures from 22 Swiss hotel schools, including EHL, which detailed tourism and hospitality programs offered by these schools. We also collected various governmental documents and statistics that formed a picture of the *status quo* of Swiss higher education in tourism and hospitality. This information helped us understand where these schools stand in the Swiss higher education landscape, which can explain why some schools aspire to practice knowledge creation and others do not. Third, we collected archive records about research output from EHL. These archives helped us understand how research is managed at EHL as well as track changes in the institutional characteristics over time. We can thus link the change in these characteristics and knowledge production. All these data were collected and accessed between June and September, 2015.

Analysis

Since the analysis of case study results is based more on opinion than statistical inference, we aimed to construct a narrative of knowledge creation in Swiss hotel schools by collating the data into the structure suggested by the literature (Shuttleworth, 2017). We adopted a three-stage approach to analyze the data. In the first stage, we mapped the data from different sources based on the structure of the literature. Therefore, our narrative of the findings can be linked to the structure of the literature, which helped identify the pattern in knowledge creation and research production. In the second stage, we outlined, by referring to the literature, the institutional and

regulatory landscape that would determine hospitality research and knowledge creation in Swiss hotel schools. This helped address the constraints to undertaking scientific research. In the third stage, we focused on EHL and tried to explain why and how EHL can remove the institutional and regulatory obstacles to knowledge creation. Following Tribe's (1997, 2010) classification, we analyzed both disciplinary and extra-disciplinary knowledge creation at EHL. A comparison can therefore be drawn between EHL and other Swiss hotel schools in understanding the complexity and dynamics of knowledge creation and research production.

Results and Discussion

The Governance of Swiss Hospitality Education

Education governance in Switzerland is a regulatory obstacle to conducting academic research in hospitality and tourism. According to the International Standard Classification of Education⁷, higher education in Switzerland consists of two categories (Figure 1). One is classified as "5A," incorporating universities offering degree-granting programs. The other is classified as "5B," incorporating institutions offering professional education, including hospitality and tourism education. As one of the major contributors of scientific research, doctorate education, classified as "6A," can only be offered by public universities at the Swiss federal or cantonal level⁸. Since 2015 all tertiary "A" institutions⁹ have been regulated at the federal level by the newly passed

⁷ www.uis.unesco.org

⁸ Switzerland, officially called the Swiss Confederation, consists of 26 cantons. The federal government delegates considerable authority regarding education regulations to the cantons, which makes the governance of Swiss higher education institutions highly decentralized and diverse.

⁹ At the tertiary "A" level, there are two Federal Institutes of Technology, ten public universities, two higher education institutes, seven public Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS), two private independent Universities of Applied Sciences and 17 Universities of Teacher Education. Only the two institutes of technology are regulated by the federal government under the Federal Act on the Federal Institutes of Technology. Universities and other higher education institutions are primarily regulated by the cantonal authorities under cantonal laws.

Higher Education Funding and Coordination Act (HEdA)¹⁰. This act set up the constitution of the Swiss Accreditation Council and the Swiss Accreditation Agency, aiming to ensure education quality of all tertiary “A” institutions. The tertiary “B” level comprises about 150 professional education training (PET) schools, which are comprised of most hospitality and tourism schools. All of these schools are legally authorized and regulated at the cantonal level. However, the PET schools are also subject to a common management scheme at the federal level regulated by the Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training.

Figure 1

We identified a total of 45 institutions in Switzerland that offer hotel or tourism management programs. For further investigation, we only considered 22 specialized hotel and tourism schools, which are either regulated by Swiss authorities, accredited by a trustworthy accreditation agency, or members of the Swiss Association of Hotel Schools (ASEH¹¹). All 22 schools are regulated at the tertiary “B” level or above, offering a wide range of diplomas (higher diploma to postgraduate diploma) and degree-granting programs (bachelors, masters and MBA) (Table 1). Of the 22 schools, eleven are professional education and training schools in hospitality¹² and tourism recognized by Swiss authorities and five are private schools offering higher diplomas (“5B” level)¹³. At the tertiary “A” level, there is one University of Applied Sciences in hospitality management (EHL), two in tourism, and two private schools.

¹⁰ <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/20070429/index.html>

¹¹ <http://www.aseh.ch/>

¹² <http://www.c-es.ch/>

¹³ We only discuss private schools that are members of the Swiss Association of Hotel Schools. Source: <http://www.aseh.ch/>

Table 1

Institutional Characteristics of Swiss Hotel Schools

While most renowned hotel and tourism schools are either public or legally authorized, a number of independent schools are privately owned and require no authorization from the federal nor cantonal authorities. These private schools are subject to laws and regulations pertaining to business activities and have no obligations whatsoever related to education quality assurance. Some private schools are not subject to any regulation from either the federal or cantonal government, nor are their diplomas or degrees recognized by the federal or cantonal authorities¹⁴. Because the priority of a vast majority of private schools is to legitimize their educational programs in different ways, pursuing research is not realistic under the Swiss education governance or necessary to attract students for vocational training purposes.

Among the most important institutions authorized to deliver hospitality education and promote research is the HES-SO. As one of seven regional university associations, the HES-SO safeguards education quality for the affiliated schools and promotes research in applied sciences, including hospitality and tourism. The HES-SO affiliation regards hospitality and tourism education as part of the Swiss higher education and the affiliated schools are authorized to grant academic degrees protected by Swiss federal laws¹⁵. The affiliation also ensures that hospitality and tourism programs can keep abreast with those offered by public universities, which provide

¹⁴ For public institutions or institutions recognized by the Swiss authorities, degrees are protected by Federal Law. The Swiss authorities also ensure the transferability of these degrees through bilateral agreements with other governments.

¹⁵ This also ensures recognition within Europe through the Bologna agreements.

opportunities for research collaboration. Affiliation also makes schools eligible for funding from the HES-SO as well as other public research foundations. Given the fact that an extremely limited number of HES-SO affiliated schools are focused on hotel and tourism management, this affiliation creates a barrier for a majority of private hotel schools that are not HES-SO affiliated to pursuing scientific research in the field of hospitality and tourism.

Knowledge Creation and Research Production at EHL

We adopted Tribe's (1997, 2010) taxonomy of knowledge creation in tourism and hospitality to discuss the engagement of EHL in creating both disciplinary and extra-disciplinary knowledge. We also referred to Cooper's (2006) classification of tacit and explicit knowledge in illustrating how EHL has overcome the obstacles for transferring this knowledge from the institution to the industry, and thereby bridging the academia-industry divide.

Disciplinary Knowledge Creation at EHL

As one of the few hotel schools in Switzerland dedicated to academic research, EHL is left behind by its counterparts in the US and Asia. This situation is exacerbated considering EHL's long history as the world's first hotel school. EHL had already been an established hospitality management school for over half a century when tourism- and hospitality-related research gained prominence as research fields when academic journals such as *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* and *Annals of Tourism Research* were incepted in 1960 and 1973, respectively. After initiating scientific research in 1998, EHL established its Lausanne Hospitality Research Center (LHRC)

in 2014, which was a concrete step to promote academic research in hospitality, tourism and business-related fields. As of 2016, the LHRC had 26 research fellows, all holding PhDs in diverse disciplines from economics, marketing, management, financing, accounting to tourism and hospitality.

A majority of research at EHL falls into the category of hospitality and tourism, accounting, consumer behavior and marketing, finance and real estate, and management. The research outlets include not only top hospitality and tourism journals but also mainstream disciplinary journals, such as the *Journal of Marketing* and the *Journal Consumer Research*. The predominant academic outlets are still top hospitality journals, such as the *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* and the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*. Table 2 shows that over the period 2010–16, the number of publications increased from 56 to 132, and the average contribution, measured by EROS points, also increased. The EROS top score hit a record high in 2016, standing at 84 points. As of 2016, faculty with PhDs made up 24.8% of the teaching staff, and research allocation per person amounted to 9.12 FTE. The increased research output, of course, was sustained by an increasing number of PhD holders as well as research staff who were assigned with research allocation and duties.

Table 2

As suggested by Tribe (2006), such departmental support remains a vital factor in boosting research. Research progress at EHL also confirmed the positive relationship between faculty size and research production (Lee & Law, 2011). The LHRC also functioned as a platform for

research collaboration within EHL and beyond and created a network effect illustrated by Racherla and Hu (2010) and Ye et al. (2013). It is also worth noting that EHL takes a multidisciplinary approach to advancing applied research in hospitality and tourism. Hospitality and tourism research is grounded in a wide range of business disciplines, and EHL aims to promote research that can penetrate these disciplines, particularly marketing, strategy, management, economics, finance, and accounting. On the other hand, applied hospitality and tourism research is used as a reference for mainstream disciplines. Grounding industry-specific research in mainstream disciplines helps consolidate the theoretical foundation of tourism and hospitality research while leveraging it to a disciplinary level. Scientific research sponsored by the HES-SO aims at fostering the transfer of theoretical applications to the industry.

Extra-disciplinary Knowledge Creation at EHL

In 2000, EHL experimented with the concept of Student Business Projects (SBP) for cultivating innovation for the industry. The SBP aims to facilitate the transformation of business ideas from students to enterprises, which is thus different from knowledge production in the industry itself. The SBP is grounded in a trilateral platform that consists of students, clients, and faculty. Underlying the workings of the SBP is the relationship between students as innovators and companies as clients. Faculty serve as mentors in providing expertise and guiding students as they carry out their SBP. Since faculty members are not directly involved in the project nor have direct contact with the clients, the SBP underscores the role of students as the main contributor of innovation. A typical SBP works as follows. A client first proposes the problems it is facing and details deliverables it expects. Then, a team of six students is tasked to a project that might

be of interest to them and to which they can apply their specific skills. The team then works to develop a solution that can be implemented by the client. To develop a well-crafted and feasible solution, students must clearly identify the client's challenge(s), contact the client on a regular basis and apply market research to provide implementable solutions to the client.

The SBP is especially popular among small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups, which crave, yet often lack, the resources to finance innovation. As of 2016, the SBP has served 450 companies and generated a total of 750 solutions for a variety of industrial sectors, including hotels, restaurants, retailing, and banking. Through the SBP, not only student innovation but also the essence of hospitality can spread to other industries for creating a holistic consumer experience. The Swiss watchmaking and financial industries, for example, have started to integrate the hospitality concept into its operations, aiming at providing a luxurious and hospitable experience to customers. The role of research and innovation in facilitating such integration becomes intriguing when the innovators are students. Since students are prospective guests, consumers and users, they actually innovate today for themselves tomorrow.

The hospitality and tourism industry requires various types of innovation, ranging from service production to distribution management while the industry itself may not be able to generate them. Applied research, along with the SBP, can fuel industry development by incubating innovative ideas in institutions and turn these ideas into business solutions. The SBP has addressed the shortcomings of transferring tacit and explicit knowledge as it can reach a large industry audience. The SBP itself is also an innovation, which lends a new model to academia-industry collaboration, in which academic institutions, especially students, become knowledge

creators. According to Tribe (1997), research collaboration between the industry and higher education would help bridge the academia-industry divide. In particular, Jayawardena (2001) called on hospitality educators to publish industry-friendly and action-learned research relevant to specific problems.

Conclusion

This study has shown that a vocational ethos is deeply ingrained in Swiss hospitality education and knowledge creation. The tradition of pragmatism represents the essence of hospitality education in its pursuit of tacit knowledge production, which was originated from apprenticeship in the Middle Ages and today has led to the founding of a plethora of specialized hotel schools. These specialized schools are different from those housed by universities where academic disciplines constitute the basic units for harboring research. Yet they represent the education mode of hospitality peculiar to Switzerland. It is difficult for these schools to participate in research activities because most of them are excluded not only from the scheme of public research universities but also from the realm of Swiss higher education. The consequence is that these schools are not eligible to pursue their research goals, especially in relation to academic research. These regulatory obstacles not only impede them from obtaining research funding from the HES-SO, for instance, but also decrease the opportunity to collaborate with public universities in interdisciplinary research.

Not only are Swiss hotel schools trapped by this vocational ethos, but they are also unwilling to free from it because of the priority to legitimize their educational programs. These schools are

teaching-based and the majority of them are outside of the university system, but have a long tradition and commitment to training practitioners for the industry. Because of these, a lack of research staff is not a consequence but a choice of Swiss hospitality education. While tourism and hospitality warrants scientific attention, producing research casts doubt among the stakeholders of these schools on whether scientific research is necessary for fulfilling their students' educational aspirations. Our study has shown that the academia-industry divide in the Swiss context not only exists but is also widening.

Our case study of EHL found that EHL has proceeded with academic research in two areas as illustrated by Tribe (1997, 2010). The disciplinary knowledge creation was largely due to departmentalism that accumulates a wide range of resources to research faculty. Having a “5B” status and the HES-SO affiliation, EHL to some extent breaks the regulatory barriers for boosting academic research. On the one hand, extra-disciplinary knowledge in the form of student innovation is created within the school but spread to the industry, thereby linking the industry and institution in knowledge dissemination. On the other hand, EHL's research practices indicate that research production by Swiss hotel schools is extremely limited. For the vast majority of private hotel schools outside of the HES-SO affiliation, academic research is by no means necessary or a strategy for advancing their educational programs. Research collaboration and network are lacking in the field of hospitality despite their importance in boosting research (Racherla & Hu, 2010; Ye et al., 2013).

We argue that the EHL experience is a lens through which we can portray an alternative approach to knowledge production and transfer in the evolution of Swiss hospitality education.

Whether to take such an approach depends on how these private schools see and tackle the challenges they are facing in tourism and hospitality education (Sigala & Baum, 2003). One challenge is that hospitality and tourism's traditional boundaries are being blurred by disruptors such as Airbnb, Uber, and OpenTable to name a few, while Swiss hotel schools have yet to incorporate these changes in their curriculum (Oskam & Boswijk, 2016; Zervas, Proserpio, & Byers, 2016). Managing these new businesses requires revamping traditional hospitality education as the boundary of the business is less linked to traditional hospitality. Second, for leading hotel schools in hospitality education, research should not be an expediency but a strategy to differentiate them from the others, helping them compete not only with their Swiss counterparts but also with the world's leading hospitality and business schools. It would be risky if these hotel schools underestimated or overlooked the importance of knowledge production in the disciplinary area.

For various stakeholders of Swiss hospitality education, the key is to recognize how hospitality education has evolved in recent decades. This means that the vocational aspect should not be the only defining element of hospitality or tourism education as the scope of the industry is expanding to incorporate disruptive hospitality sectors, such as the sharing accommodation businesses, in the sharing economy. These new economies need to be taken seriously as, on the one hand, they have posed challenges for the traditional hospitality industry for which vocational education modes had functioned well for much of the last century in Switzerland. On the other hand, they have blurred the boundaries of traditional hospitality industries through integrating themselves with hospitality and tourism, which is exemplified by the sharing accommodation and platform economies that sell hospitality products and services in a more efficient way. In the

latter case, vocational education exposes its limitations as it plays up knowledge transfer in a narrowly defined area while playing down knowledge creation in areas that may have enormous potential in the future. Above all else, liberating hospitality education to incorporate other forms of knowledge creation should be the priority particularly for hotel school management, educators, and researchers.

This study has a couple of limitations. First, much of the discussion was focused on EHL, and the results therefore cannot be generalized to the vast majority of Swiss hotel schools where disciplinary knowledge production barely exists. Even though EHL has been gradually fulfilling its research aspiration, knowledge production should be better evaluated in the long term, yet our data impeded us from doing such a longitudinal analysis. Second, the data we collected for EHL were focused on disciplinary-based research, yet there are many knowledge creation activities that may have taken place in other hotel schools where publication outlets are not academic journals but workshops, conferences, or research symposiums. These research activities are arguably important as knowledge creation in the field of hospitality and tourism is not necessarily conducted within institutions but outside where industry professionals meet educators. Therefore, future research should expand the scope of knowledge production to those areas to provide a fuller picture of knowledge production and transfer in tourism and hospitality.

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