

35th International Society of Travel & Tourism Educators (ISTTE) Annual Conference, “Global Strategies in Tourism & Hospitality Education”, Hangzhou, China, October 12-14, 2016

The 35th ISTTE Annual Conference was successfully held at the Dragon Hotel, Hangzhou, China on October 12-14, 2016. As a tradition, the ISTTE annual conference is held out of the U.S. every fourth year. This is the second time in history ISTTE brings its annual conference to Asia and it has been 12 years since the ISTTE 2004 was firstly hosted in Hong Kong. As the hosting city, Hangzhou is renowned for its cultural and natural landscapes, unique cityscape, and the symbolic views of West Lake. With a history of 4,700 years, it is one of the central cities of the Yangtze River Delta. As Chinese always say: “In heaven there is paradise, on earth there’s Hangzhou,” which makes the city even more fascinating. The 2016 conference was organized by the School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM) at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (The PolyU). For over 35 years, SHTM has refined a distinctive vision of hospitality and tourism education and become a symbol of excellence in the field. SHTM has long been a supporter of ISTTE and it successfully held the ISTTE 2004 annual conference in Hong Kong.

This year’s theme was “Global Strategies in Tourism & Hospitality Education”. It provided a forum for international educators on different levels, scholars, researchers, industry executives, corporate trainers, consultants, vendors, administrators, and government officials to explore contemporary issues related to travel and tourism from a global perspective. This year’s conference consisted of three general sessions, two workshops, two keynote speeches, 32 stand-up presentations and eight poster presentations. In terms of the presentations, five themes were formed, namely, 1) emerging issues in travel, tourism and hospitality education and training; 2) innovative and creative teaching and learning methodologies; 3) international travel and tourism issues and trends; 4) curriculum design and development; and 5) factors impacting the travel and tourism industry. Unlike previous conferences, this year’s conference accepted submissions in Chinese to encourage more Chinese-speaking educators to share their views and to add diverse insights to the ISTTE portfolio. As a result, 12 Chinese papers and one Chinese poster were presented.

Before the conference officially started, on October 11, 2016, a pre-conference session took place in Tourism College of Zhejiang, one of the co-organizers of the conference. Chaired by Dr. Jack Lo from The PolyU, Mr. Vince Accardi from Marketing and Business Development, Tourism HR Canada, Professor Linda Wei from Zhejiang Business College and Professor Yunsong Xu from Tourism College of Zhejiang shared their opinions on “Opportunities and Challenges of Vocational Education in China”. The opening ceremony was held in the evening in the Dragon Hotel. Professor Kaye Chon and Professor Xiaobo Wu, respectively from The PolyU and Zhejiang University, gave welcoming speeches to all the conference delegates.

The first day of the conference highlighted the current trends and innovations in global tourism education, covering two general sessions, two workshops, one roundtable session, one English stand-up presentation, one Chinese stand-up presentation, and one poster session. In the first

general session, “Past Presidents' Panel”, Professor Kaye Chon, Professor Cathy Hsu both from The PolyU and Dr. Nicole Davis from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, who is also the current President of ISTTE, discussed about the “Developing Trends in Global Tourism Industry and Education”. In the second general session chaired by Professor Jenkins from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, speakers including Mr. Nixon Chung from Camloy International Ltd. and The Place Shanghai, Ms. Kathy Pugh from edX, Professor Hanqin Qiu and Professor Peter Yuen both from The PolyU, shared their views on the topic “Changing Education Landscape in a Digital World: Innovation, Development and Implications”. A keynote speech was delivered during the lunch by Ms. Cathy Yu, who is the Deputy General Manager of the Dragon hotel. She talked about the “Collaboration between Academics and Industry Practitioners” from the perspective of an industrial professional. In the afternoon, two inspiring workshops were conducted, focusing on how to make your classroom come alive and how to achieve active learning in the face-to-face classroom. A roundtable session, chaired by Professor Hanqin Qiu was carried out to discuss the challenges and opportunities of developing bilingual book series in relation to students, authors, and the publisher. The informative day was ended with a complimentary evening show, named “Eternal Love – Song Cheng”. The show presented several renowned legendary stories in ancient Hangzhou and brought audiences back to the old times of the city.

On the second day, the conference program commenced with a general session on “Quality Assurance for Higher Education”. This session was chaired by Professor Cathy Hsu, and speakers, including Professor Billy Bai from University of Nevada Las Vegas, Professor Robert Bosselman from Iowa State University and Professor Chaozhi Zhang from Sun Yat-Sen University, shared their viewpoints from both the Western and Eastern perspectives. During the lunch, Mr. Truman Huang, the CEO of Wintour gave a keynote speech regarding “E-marketing Development and its Implementation in Higher Education”. In the afternoon, a panel session was organized by one of the conference co-organizers, School of Management, Zhejiang University. The session took place in the Zijingang Campus of Zhejiang University and was chaired by Professor Wanfei Wang from Zhejiang University. Dr. Lisa Slevitch from Oklahoma State University, Professor Haiyan Song from The PolyU, Professor Youcheng Wang from University of Central Florida and Professor Lingqiang Zhou from Zhejiang University exchanged their opinions on “Managerial and Executive Talent Development”. A campus tour was arranged after the panel session.

In the evening, the ISTTE 2016 conference was concluded by an award-conferring closing dinner hosted in the Dragon Hotel. Upon the recommendations from the paper review committee, two best conference papers were selected and awarded:

- Best Paper Award: “The Separation of We and Others by Food: An Exploratory Study on the Culinary Footprints of Chinese and Western Tourists” by Yunzi (YaaYaa) Zhang, Hugo Tang and Liping Cai from Purdue University, USA;
- Best Poster Award: “Food Tasting as an Experiential Learning Experience” by Kara Wolfe from Bradley University, USA, Amelia Estepa Asperin from North Dakota State University, USA and WooMi Jo from University of Guelph, Canada.

Two individual awards were also presented. Professor Kaye Chon was honored with the “Martin Oppermann Memorial Award” for Lifetime Achievement by ISTTE to recognize his lifelong achievements and contributions to tourism education and research. Professor Cathy Hsu and Professor Hanqin Qiu both received “2016 Program Co-Chairperson” in recognition of their leading forces behind the success of this conference. In addition, items donated from conference delegates were displayed and open for bidding during the silent auction session. The finalized winning bidders were announced in the closing dinner as well.

On the last day of the conference, another roundtable session was carried out with the topic of “Co-operations and Joint Degrees: A Discussion of Innovative Models and Challenges Involved”. Professor Florian Hummel and Professor Markus Raueiser from the Cologne Business School participated in the discussion and shared their innovative examples of international collaboration as well as its challenges, pitfalls and accreditation issues.

In conclusion, the conference served as an effective and active platform for educators in different levels and industrial professionals in the field of tourism and hospitality to exchange opinions, get reunion, and move forward. Looking into the future, 36th ISTTE annual conference will be held on October 15-17, 2017 in Charleston, South Carolina, USA. We look forward to another great conference!