

Human capital issues in Malaysian MICE industry from the expert's perspective

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Abstract

Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition (MICE) industry faced quite intense challenges due to its growth and demand in the industry. Besides, the industry encounters a problem related to human capital, such as insufficient talents, which gives a negative impact on the industry. The objective of this study is to explore and understand human capital issues in the MICE industry. This research was conducted using the qualitative method to explore the related issues in the Malaysian MICE industry. The data obtained from the interview session and document analysis. Respondents were identified using the purposive sample and snowball techniques among meetings and exhibition management experts in the industry. Thematic analysis was employed to find the themes for this study. Several issues identified which are lack of industry awareness, insufficient skilled staff, generation Y, alignment of the industry with the university, internship and lack of networking among stakeholders. The findings are useful for the stakeholders of the MICE industry to recognise the talents and retaining the workforce in the industry.

Keywords:

MICE; human capital; expert perspective; thematic analysis; Malaysia

1 Introduction

Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exposition (MICE) industry today is quite competitive globally. A report by Allied Market Research stated that the global MICE industry recorded the value of US\$752 billion in 2016 and expected to reach US\$1245 billion in 2023. The industry registers compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.5% in 2017 to 2030. However, the Asia-Pacific region forecasted a higher growth rate of 8.6% for the period of 2017-2023. This growth is due to the ease of visa restrictions, better investment infrastructure for business and high demand for commercial aviation further trigger the growth of the MICE industry in the Asia-Pacific region.

Due to the business tourism market competitiveness, Malaysia has secured 958 international business events or MICE events amounting to MYR6.11 billion of economic impact over the past eight years (MyCEB, 2017). Due to the growth and demand of the industry, there are a lot of opportunities for the event planners in Malaysia to do their business. Instead of focusing on just leisure travel, Tourism Malaysia is also promoting the destination to attract business travellers. Out of 150 countries, International Convention and Conference Association (ICCA) reported that Malaysia has improved from the 35th position in 2014 to the 30th position in 2015 (ICCA Country & City Ranking, 2015). However, with the increasing opportunities for MICE events in the market, the local organisers are facing the problem of labour shortage to cater to the market needs.

As a result, the consequences are losses as national income and destination competitiveness. This related issue also was addressed during the Malaysia Business Event Week 2014 organised by Malaysian Convention & Exposition Bureau (MyCEB). It is the primary concern for the stakeholders to have good cooperation with each other to solve the human capital problem. This issue in line with MyCEB report that presented during the Business Events Academic Council (BEAC) on March 2016. Therefore, this study is conducted to identify what does the MICE industry need regarding human capital from the perspective of industry players to overcome the related human capital issues and possible solution.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Human Capital

An organisation is operating through a variety of sources such as financial, social and human capital. The difference between one organisation and another is their asset that can enhance the value of the organisation. There were also a few arguments that highlighted issues about the model and theory to explain human capital. Schultz (1961) defined human capital as an investment or expenditure to acquire people who have useful skills and knowledge of productive superiority. Human capital is the asset of the company, and it has also helped in maintaining the competitive advantage of the company (Bhattacharya, Doty & Garavan, 2014). In addition, human capital also refers as the accumulation of competencies such as skills and knowledge, which play an

essential role in increasing the performance of the company (Kucharcikova, Tokarcikova, & Blaskova, 2015). ; Backman, 2014) as well as for the individual platform of acquisition of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAOs) that are beneficial for their work (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011). Based on the explanation and definition given, it shows that human capital plays a vital role in an organisation to be successful and compete with competitors. Most business literature has highlighted the importance of human capital in generating the success of a company or industry. The management of human capital will reflect the contribution of the worker's performance to the organisational performance (Baron, 2011; Wang, Hwang & Lin, 2011). Therefore, it is evident that human capital is an asset for every industry to be sustained and improved.

2.2 Human Capital in the Tourism Industry

Tourism and hospitality industry encounter the labour issue, and it has become the main concern for the industry. Problems such as labour turnover and staff shortages investigated in this industry. The MICE industry is considered to provide attractive and appealing employment opportunities for new entrants and existing employee (McCabe, 2012). However, the author added that the industry is also facing labour turnover, mobility, and shortages of good quality people in the industry. Furthermore, he explained that without suitable and proper quality workforce can affect the organisational performance and reputation. Ladkin (2011) agreed that there was an interest in human capital study in the tourism industry and suggested for further exploration on this perspective. Furthermore, the MICE industry is one of the main components that contribute to the growth of the tourism industry, and it is timely to explore the related human capital issues in the MICE market.

2.3 Human Capital Issues

Human capital management has its issues and challenges that are faced by companies, industries, and countries. Some of the problems are labour issues and economic downturn. Most human capital studies often associated with labour issues such as unemployment and turnover. The issues are job entitlement, life privacy, work-life balance and the benefits of works (Long & Perumal, 2014). The performance of the company relies on human capital, which is the employee. According to Shegnan and Kahl (2015), one of the top five challenges of human resource management is the work-life balance. They also found a significant relation between work-life balance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. They explained the crucial work-life balance among the workers that will affect the other two factors, which are job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Since the turnover of employees is one of the human capital issues, it is essential to address the job satisfaction issues of the worker. Antrobus and Mottram (2012) identified the issues related to human capital. The issues are labour cost; human resource effectiveness and optimisation; industrial relations (IR) regulation and employment law; shortage of skilled labour, and workplace safe and healthy. According to Long and Perumal (2014), there is a significant relationship between human resource management (HRM) practices and the turnover intentions of employees. Therefore, it

is essential to identify and explore the importance of the human capital of the company, industry or country to reduce and solve the problems.

McCabe (2012) mentioned that the MICE industry considered as attractive opportunities to work for new entrants and existing employees. However, the industry is also facing high levels of labour turnover, mobility and shortage of quality staff through the human capital flow. Human capital flow means a process of recognising the workers react to employee mobility (Reilly, Nyberg, Maltarich & Weiler, 2014). This statement is supported by the study of McCabe (2012) that mentioned this situation happened due to rapid movement and turnover of the key employees to other company and industry. The author also explained the attraction and retention of an excellent employee to human resource practice and talent development are vital for the industry. Other than that, the industry people are seeking suitable candidates that match the vacancy available for them. These issues are often related to the graduates of event management to get a job in the industry. The needs or skills that employers need to possess should be identified from both perspectives (Junek, Lockstone & Mair, 2009). They also mentioned the set of skills acquired from the industry and students' perspectives are communication skills, problem-solving and stress management. Besides, Junek et al. (2009) also stated the set skills required from their study, which are personality, cultural fit, working in a team, individual expertise and experience.

Some of the problems encountered by the MICE industry are low salary, challenging work environment and lack of opportunity for growth and development (Baum, 2015). The researcher further elaborated that the year of 2014/15 had different working pace compared with the year 2006/07 that led to employment problems. The MICE industry is also facing the same challenges and issues encountered by the tourism industry as the nature of work is similar. Therefore, it is essential to explore and understand the issues of human capital from the perspective of the MICE key players/experts to address the human capital issues in Malaysia, which is not just limited to the turnover issue. The outcome could assist the industry stakeholders in solving and reducing the issues related to human capital in Malaysia's MICE industry.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study was carried out based on a qualitative method, which in-depth interviews and document analysis (Creswell, 2015; Kumar, 2014; Stake, 2010) were used to collect the data and get more in-depth information from the 20 industry experts/key players identified through purposive and snowball sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted where each informant was asked and given a set of similar questions (Hennink et al., 2011). Thematic analysis approach was undertaken to analyse the data for this study. This study intends to explore and understand the context of human capital issues in the MICE industry from these research inquiries:

- i. What are the related issues encountered by the industry players related to human capital in MICE business?
- ii. How do the related human capital issues affect the workforce in the MICE industry?

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

There were two types of data collection conducted to meet the research objectives of the study. The researcher used a semi-structured interview session and document reviewing from the job advertisement. For the interview session, the key-informants were identified from the Malaysian Association of Convention and Exhibition Organizers and Suppliers (MACEOS) website. The researcher had listed down the potential respondent's contact details such as email and phone number to set the appointment with them. The appointment for the interview session was set up through a telephone conversation and follow up through email. Since the respondents were the industry players and most of them were the management teams of the companies, constant follow up through email and phone calls were conducted as a reminder. In total, the researcher had approached 20 respondents, but there were only 14 respondents confirmed to be part of the study. Other than that, the researcher also contacted the association (MACEOS) to support the study by providing the contact of the committee. They were ten committee members who participated as the respondents of the study. The other four respondents were gained through the contact of the MACEOS member, and it is known as snowball sampling.

Other than the interview session, document review method was selected to support the present findings from the interview (Glaser & Strauss, 2012) that can assist in clarifying the participant's statement. There were 22 job advertisements from Jobstreet.com reviewed by the researcher, and all of the advertisements were focusing on the junior level positions in the MICE industry. Theoretical coding was used to explore relevant themes from the literature, while thematic analysis was used to identify new themes that have not been previously discussed within the literature. After obtaining the data from the interview session and document review, the researcher began to analyse the data based on the thematic analysis. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were conducted between 1 to 2-hour sessions. The Nvivo11 software was used to analyse the methodical organisation of data and management of ideas (Bazeley, 2007) for the findings.

3.3 Ethical considerations

The researcher conducted a brief explanation to the participant of the study that their participation was voluntarily, and each respondent signed a consent form. The participants had no obligation to respond to any questions that they were not comfortable. A set of questions was sent to the respondents through email to provide a broad outline of the subject that would be discussed during the interview session. The respondents were also aware that the interview session would be conducted for 1 to 2

hours. The researcher also ensured them the information about the respondents would be confidential and anonymous throughout the process.

3.4 Study credibility

The credibility of the instrument based on reliability and validity. The data was collected through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and the role of the researcher as an active participant in the study (Cresswell, 2015). All four elements were used to increase the credibility of this study. First, the researcher has more than four years' experience and involvement in the MICE industry as an academician and actively participates as one of the committee members of Business Event Academic Council (BEAC) established under Malaysia Convention and Exposition Bureau (MyCEB), Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia. Second, the study was carried out over 12 months. Third, the researcher had an intense observation, and data collection was performed once the key-informants identified and secured. Lastly, data from observation, in-depth interview sessions, and document analysis were used to support the worthiness of the findings.

4 Results and Discussions

4.1 Respondent Profile

The researcher had approached 20 industry experts in the MICE industry, but only 14 respondents agreed to participate in the interview. Table 1 exhibit the summary of respondents' profile.

Table 1: Respondents Profile

No	Gender	Job Title	Years of Exp.	Type of MICE Services
1	Female	Director	16	Conference/Meeting
2	Male	General Manager	20	Conference/Meeting
3	Male	Sales Director	12	Exhibition
4	Female	Project Leader	10	Conference/Meeting
5	Female	HR Manager	10	Conference/Meeting
6	Male	General Manager	26	Exhibition
7	Female	Project Leader	10	Conference/Meeting
8	Male	Chief Executive Officer	43	Conference/Meeting
9	Male	Director	15	Exhibition
10	Female	Senior Project Manager	10	Exhibition
11	Male	Director	15	Exhibition
12	Male	Project Manager	10	Exhibition
13	Female	Director	12	Conference/Meeting
14	Female	Director	13	Conference/Meeting

The respondents comprised of different services in the MICE industry covering Conference/Meeting (57%) and Exhibition (43%). The results indicated that male and female respondents have equal representation, seven male (50%) and seven females (50%). Majority of them holding Top Management (64%) and the rest were Senior Manager (36%) positions with working experience ranges between 10 to 43 years in the MICE industry. Based on the respondents' profile, the key players in the Malaysia MICE industry are considered as quite matured in the business, highly knowledgeable and experienced in their job.

4.2 Interview Analysis

There were 12 interview sessions conducted with the industry players. The researcher used the semi-structured interview, and it took around 1 to 2 hours for the respondents to provide their opinion on this research question: What are the related issues encountered by the industry players related to human capital in MICE business? There were six major issues derived from the interviews.

4.2.1 Alignment between Education and Industry

The alignment between education and industry is critical to university graduates employability. Employers often express their concern on the lack of basic skills and competencies required to be successful in the industry (Capelli, 2014). Most of the respondents addressed the alignment between education and industry. There was a gap in providing the right talent for the industry. This issue happens due to no engagement or rather lack of engagement between these two stakeholders. This outcome was supported by the following respond:

“.....You see your main course title is prosperity...management of hospitality or tourism...is continuous line...under this program would cover events management program...is a bit confusing there...because what you learnt...is only 10% requirement of the industry...so...in this aspect they are not suitable for the industry...totally the university are not producing the right kind of candidate for this industry...there's a big gap..” (Respondent 7)

“...I think we as industry...we have to help ourselves...we are lack for human capital...so we have to do something about it and one of the thing is...education...we have to go out to the university...and said look we've offer you this opportunities...we can't just sit back...and moan...nobody reply my request...why they don't reply my idea...it can't be because of this then we said we have no talent...we are not training them really well...and we not educate them earlier about...in MICE industry...I think...if we could do that...then you should have every 10 students...maybe 5..maybe some of

them would think I want to be in mice...they've already made the decisions...and then...it just look the right...at the moment we have to plant the idea in their head...the exhibition industry is something that you can considered..." (Respondent 6)

4.2.2 *Lack of Networking among Stakeholders*

Networking among stakeholders engage in a variety of activities across numerous areas of higher education, which might include a range of individuals, government official and agencies, foundation and non-governmental organisations (Cleary & Van Noy, 2014). Based on the interview outcomes, ten of the respondents highlighted the issue of lack networking among the stakeholders in addressing human capital issues. Here are some of the statements:

".....both the related government agency (MyCEB) and related associations (MACEOS, ICCA MY) will need to sit down to strategize on speaking / educating MOE the need for a standardize curriculum on event management. What can be done would be a possible general event management course, but one can specialize into a specific field at the end of his studies. That way, the human capital management could be solved. But it would require a lot of ground work to be done with the related Ministries and Agencies to make it work..." (Respondent 3)

".....Government bodies and or agencies involved in capacity building must be made to know that the overall economic impact derived from MICE is far greater multiplier and that MICE produces tourism in the process..." (Respondent 1)

4.2.3 *Internship*

Internship revealed the importance of the MICE industry as an actor in the tourism industry and a driver of the dynamism of the local economy (Della Lucia, 2013). Through internships, undergraduate students take their first steps into a profession and begin to apply the theoretical knowledge acquired during their education to real life situations (Kasli & Ilban, 2013). They added that skills taught at educational institution do not go beyond theories unless they are practiced. In addition, internship creates a strategic partnership between the industry and education sector. It does contribute to social impact to the society by providing internship opportunity for university and college students to gain industry experience prior entering their employment. Five respondents touched on the internship issue. They said the experience that the students obtained from the internship program gave specific impact to the industry. Here are some of the responses addressing this matter:

“.....Internship partners/employers should be given merits/demerits for monitoring both students’ as well as employers’ productivity during internship periods. This will ensure that students are being sent to the right employers who will allow them a more empowering learning experience..” (Respondent 5)

“.....I mean taking interns and that is just part of the process...when we take interns we must have certain reason...some people they take advantage of the interns...they actually turn out people to go out of the industry...that’s the opposite fact...interns...these guys gonna come for 3 months...they gonna back to the college...and they lecturer will say how are you...boring...it just photocopy...prepare coffee and tea...it all takes for the organisation to think and take them on and not treat them badly..” (Respondent 6)

4.2.4 *Lack of Industry Awareness*

Awareness of Malaysia as a suitable destination for MICE events has only recently began picking up as the Government began making concerted and cohesive efforts to develop this lucrative tourism sector (The Star Online, 2011). This report added that the MICE industry was recognized as a catalyst for economic growth in the 10th Malaysia Plan (2011-2015). However, the event management profession was still being defined as emerging, due to the lack of recognition from professional bodies (Getz, 2002). This may create confusion amongst the general public, with a perception that amateurs can provide an equivalent service to that of trained professionals (Bouchon, Hussain & Konar, 2015). All of the respondents were addressing this issue during the interview session. They said there was a lack of industry awareness among graduates and the public. This industry only has known among the stakeholders in the industry itself. The term ‘sexy’ converted as being attractiveness. Hence, stating the fact that the industry was lack of recognition and do not seem attractive to most. Here are some of the responses on this matter:

“.....I think there is capital in Malaysia...it’s just that we have to be sexy...first of all we need to tell them we are there...at the moment we are not sexy because nobody know we are there...so we need to do the first bid..” (Respondent 6)

“.....the lack of awareness in the MICE industry is making it difficult in employing young graduates...” (Respondent 3)

4.2.5 *Generation Y*

The modern workforce consists of employees from very distinct generations with the latest addition of Generation Y taking a prominent position in the changing world of work (Parvin & Ding Ding, 2017). These authors added that individual's work values are influenced by generational experiences, but work values are not homogenous among the same generation. Moreover, the intra-generational work values change overtime and vary from one individual to another. It is common belief that each generation carries a set of work values which is distinctive to one another (Silva et al., 2015). There were five respondents mentioned Generation Y as part of human capital issues. For them, due to this generation's characteristics, they faced difficulty in performing in this industry. These are the responses provided by them:

“.....the younger generation is Generation Y...so their attention span is much shorter and they expect thing to move very fast...but in reality of meeting industry sometimes very often for it to be busy...” (Respondent 7)

“.....The younger generations who are our future employees are simply demanding, they lack basic industry understanding and are impatient to grow financially...” (Respondent 5)

4.2.6 *Insufficient Skilled Staff*

MICE event industry in Malaysia has grown rapidly since middle of 1990's and become highly competitive. Due to this market competitiveness, Malaysia has secured 958 international business events or MICE events amounting to MYR6.11 billion of economic impact over the past eight years (MyCEB, 2017). In line with this market competition to bid and win MICE events internationally, the industry requires competent and skilled employees for their companies. There were two respondents who commented on this issue. This issue was raised due to the competition that they faced in the industry. Good talents hardly stay longer in a company. Often being taken by the competitors because of insufficient skilled staff. Here are the responses on this matter:

“.....talent...of course for the good staff the competitors will try to take them and join the competitor...” (Respondent 7)

“.....I think about MICE industry we are still lack of those qualify...qualified MICE organizer la...then once they set up new company...they start dig other company staff...steal other company staff...they come and approach la...better package...try to steal...that is common...I would say very common...that is another reason of the turnover la..” (Respondent 9)

There were two sub-issues identified from the discussion on the insufficiently skilled staff issue. The two related issues discussed as follow:

4.2.7 Problem to Retain Talents

MICE industry is the special event sector in Malaysia that contributes to tourism economic growth (Wee, Mohamed, Aminudin, & Saidin, 2018). These authors added that due to the growth and demand of the industry, there are a lot of opportunities for the event planners in Malaysia to do their business. Besides, about 8,000 job opportunities for this sector will be available in the next ten years (Department of Statistic, 2013). However, in Malaysia, the industry faced difficulty in retaining their talent in the company. It was due to the differing reward system and competition among companies in the industry. Some of the responses related to this matter are:

“.....Keeping good people is difficult as the industry is unable to compete with the salary scale offered by corporate employers. Lack of good people means existing employees need to be versatile and willing to work the extra hours to make up for shortage of assistance...” (Respondent 5)

“.....we’ve got a lot...a lot...of...I would say more than 10 colleagues steal...and kidnap by our competitor...industry is very small...that’s why stealing staff is very limited...due to this issues we try to offer retain package to counter back..” (Respondent 8)

4.2.8 Readiness of Talent

Over the past decade, employers have progressively called for institutions to produce better-skilled graduates with the wish list of desired graduate attributes seeming ever extended (Tomlinson, 2008). In order to equip students with better skills sought by employers in the market, Malaysia government had taken the initiative by embedded volunteerism element in Malaysian national education policies (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Particularly in the event industry, volunteers become one of the significant factors contributing to the success of an event and their participation as event volunteers provide them with the necessary skills required by the MICE event industry (Wee, Mohamed, Aminudin, & Saidin, 2018). Other than that, there was one of the respondents who mentioned the readiness of talent to face big scale event. Here is the feedback:

“.....The main issue pertaining to human capital will be the readiness of the workforce to handle major sized events where insufficiently trained or experienced staff can lead to a decline in services and delivery rendered. This can lead to Malaysia’s effectiveness in securing future mega MICE events if the industry is not fully equipped and capable...” (Respondent 1)

Based on the interview analysis, six major codes emerged as one theme related to issues of human capital in Malaysia’s MICE industry. The six major codes were alignment between education and industry, lack of networking among stakeholders, internship, lack of industry awareness, Generation Y and insufficient skilled staff. Also, there were two sub-themes emerged from the interview analysis on an issue related to insufficient skilled staff, as indicated in Figure 1.

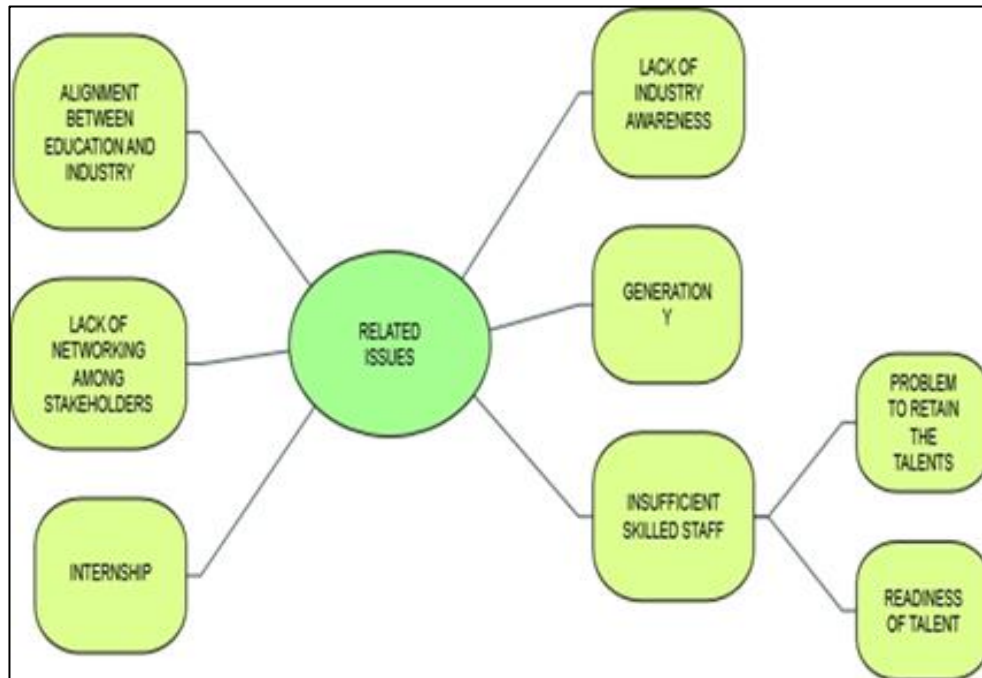


Figure 1: Issues related to human capital in the MICE industry

In summary, six significant issues related to human capital in the Malaysia MICE industry raised by the key players during the interview. They are alignment between education and industry, lack of working among stakeholders, internship, lack of industry awareness, generation Y, and insufficient skilled staff. There are two sub-themes related to insufficient skilled staff also raised, which are a problem to retain the talents and readiness of talent.

4.3 Document Analysis

There are two types of documents which were selected to analyse and support the findings from the primary source, which was the interview session. Job advertisement and MyCEB report selected as the other sources, and this approach is known as document analysis. For job advertisement, the researcher chose 22 job advertisements that advertised in Jobstreet Malaysia. The researcher had selected the job vacancy that

related to a junior position in Malaysia’s MICE industry. There were conference producer, project executive, and event coordinator. The researcher analysed the data based on job responsibilities and requirement. The other document to support the findings for related issues was MyCEB report on Business Event (14th March 2016). The advertisements were analysed based on the illustration in Table 2 and 3.

Table 2: Job Advertisement

Data	Skills	Frequency of Skills Listed In The Advertisement
Job Responsibilities Description	Customer Service	72.7%
	Communication Skills	45.45%
	Research skills	18.18%
	Sales skills	54.54%
	Teamwork	36.36%
	Problem Solving	4.54%
	Time management	13.63%
	Challenge-driven	4.54%
	IT skills	4.54%
Passion	9.09%	
Job Requirement	Working experience	77.27%
	Communication skills	95.45%
	Passion	31.81%
	Teamwork	27.27%
	Adaptability	18.18%
	Knowledge	90.90%
	Customer service	13.63%
	Challenge-driven	18.18%
	Problem-solving	22.72%
	People skills	4.54%
	Analytical thinking	4.54%
	Research skills	18.18%
	Time management	22.72%
	IT skills	27.27%
	Venue management	4.54%
	Sales skills	18.18%
Creative	4.54%	

Table 3: Issues from MyCEB Report

Data	Issues
MyCEB report on 'Lack of Business	a. Lack of industry Awareness

Events Workforce'
(14th March 2016)

- b. Most graduates are not aware of job opportunities in the Business Events industry.
 - c. There is a lack of understanding of the requirement of the industry.
 - d. Insufficient Skilled Staff
 - e. Due to the lack of business events workforce to support the industry, the current workforce is mainly made up of workforce from various industry such as Hotel Management, Hospitality or Tourism Management.
 - f. There is an insufficient supply of Business Events specialist in the industry, such as Professional Conference Management (PCM) and Professional Exhibition Management (PEM).
 - g. Alignment between Education and Industry
 - h. To collabourate with universities on Business Events awareness activities
-

Based on the findings obtained from the analysis of the document indicated in Table 2 and 3, there were similarities in the interview data. The same skills and attitude addressed in the job advertisement review. The difference was that some of the skills and attitudes considered a requirement for them to possess and some of it was the task that needs to be performed by them. The most required skills stated in the job advertisement were communication skills, knowledge, work experience, and customer services skills. Surprisingly, the advertisement stated the least requirement for analytical thinking, people skills, creativity, and IT skills. There were different perceptions between two sources of data on the importance of specific skills. However, it is part of the expectation needed for the industry. For the related issues, MyCEB also addressed the same issues which were lack of awareness of the industry, insufficient skilled staff and no alignment between the industry and university. These findings help to support the data obtained through the interview session.

5 Discussions

The study aims to identify the human capital issues in Malaysia's MICE industry that has been encountered by the industry players. Based on the findings obtained from both methods, which are interview session and document analysis, the researcher managed to reflect the findings with the research objectives of the study. The research finds that there are six themes developed related to this study — the information obtained from both methods of data collection. The findings are alignment between education and industry; lack of networking among stakeholders, internship, lack of industry awareness, Generation Y and insufficient skilled staff. Among all of these findings, their main concern is the lack of industry awareness. They have identified this industry as not famous and unknown to Malaysians. Due to this, they do not have the suitable talent for the industry. Most of the current talents come from hospitality and tourism background. For them, the university does not produce a suitable talent for the

industry as the program provided for event management is too general for the MICE industry. The gap occurs between the industry expectation, and university product is significant. It is because they do not have the alignment with these two stakeholders. They say that the industry and university should work together to overcome this issue by addressing the need that the industry requires when producing a talent.

In order to create awareness of the industry, the respondents believe that having good networking among stakeholders will be beneficial for the industry. The stakeholders are the association, government sectors, agency, university and MICE organisation. A good discussion and education among these stakeholders can help to boost the awareness of the industry. For example, the association can work with the government agency and university to provide a good MICE program for future talents. The association can provide their insights to the government agency (MQA) in producing a good guideline or requirement for MICE program. As a result, the accreditation agency (MQA) can provide a better guideline for the university to produce MICE program. Due to that effort, the university can provide talent as expected by the industry. Since the industry is lacking new talent, they also encounter insufficient skilled staff. There is also a high competition among the industry players where the excellent staff can be offered to work by the competitors. If they find a better offer, they will go to the other company. The demand for skilled staff is high in this industry.

The respondents also address the issues related to Generation Y. They mentioned the characteristic of Generation Y, who is impatient, is not ready with this industry. This industry is a busy industry which requires working long hours, performing multi-tasking, and dealing with various behaviours of stakeholders. Some of them mentioned that Generation Y is so ambitious and expect to have a better position in the industry as they believe they are worth it. However, they are not ready with the knowledge and skills expected from the industry. It is more towards an attitude problem. Another issue is the internship program. The respondents identified that some of the talents who did not join this industry due to the experience that they encountered with the MICE companies. Some of the company did not appreciate the interns and treated them as cheap labour, which made them want to leave the industry. The impact of this treatment towards the interns will give a bad image to the industry. They had set their mind that the industry is not good. Therefore, this industry is facing a lack of talent because of the company in the industry itself.

6 Conclusion

The study objective is to understand and identify the human capital issues in Malaysia's MICE industry. This study has shown that there is a gap between the expectations of the industry with the pool of talent available for them. Issues raised from both sources; the interview session and document analysis that there is a lack of talent for this industry. This study was guided by the research objectives, which focused on understanding and identifying human capital related issues. The findings are

beneficial for the stakeholders in the industry to overcome these issues. The industry is expecting the talent to have a passion for doing the job given in the industry. The talents also should be able to adapt to different environment and situation since the industry is a challenging industry. Besides, they also need to be challenge-driven to overcome the obstacle and risk in the job.

In this study, the researcher identified a few codes addressed the identified human capital issues in the MICE industry. Six issues have addressed by the respondents related to human capital. There are related to the alignment between education and industry; lack of networking among stakeholders, internship, lack of industry awareness, Generation Y and insufficient skilled staff. The findings also are supported with MyCEB report during BEAC meetings that these are issues related to human capital. One of the main issues in these findings is the lack of awareness of the industry. Due to this reason, it affects other issues such as insufficient skilled staff. This sub-issue has resulted from the lack of networking among stakeholder and alignment with the university that provides the new talent. The internship program also can give an impact on the industry if the interns are not satisfied with the experience that they have during the program. These findings can help the industry to address and solve the problem of human capital and explore how to overcome it by understanding the need for human capital in the MICE industry.

Findings on human capital related issues in this study can further explore. In the case of human capital needs, the researcher of this study only focused on the findings from the industry players' perspective. The future study can focus on the other stakeholders on the MICE industry such as the suppliers, client, government and university. The findings can help to support this study by having a broad population. Further research can focus on each of the issues to understand more on the situation of human capital in Malaysia's MICE industry. Another important recommendation is to conduct a study on the awareness of Malaysia's MICE industry since all of the respondents are concerned with this issue, which leads to a lack of human capital of the industry.

7 About the author

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