

Honorary Fellow A Citation

Professor Lee Kam-hon, BCom, MCom, PhD

What is marketing and why does it matter? Why is tourism so significant for Hong Kong? The answers form a kind of parable of Hong Kong itself, or indeed of the modern service economy in general: and they come from one of this University's most dedicated servants. But first, who is he?

There can be few more shining examples of loyalty to this University than Professor Lee Kam-hon. In fact by definition that would be impossible. Professor Lee has been at the Chinese University for exactly the length of time that the University itself has existed. 2013 is its 50th anniversary, and it is also the 50th anniversary of his arrival as an undergraduate in the then Department of Business Management. His classmates at school in Macau, where his family lived, all wanted to be engineers, doctors or scientists; but young Kam-hon from an early age had a different and in some ways a deeper sense of how he might contribute to the distinctive future profile of Hong Kong as an innovative economy. His loyalty to this institution has always been combined with a strong sense of how he can best help it to flourish in the local and international contexts.

Lee came to university here rather than in Taiwan, as he had originally intended. This was not just to remain closer to his family, but because he had heard about the business studies program at the new University. He went to United College because that had the reputation of being the "business" college, while New Asia was "arts" and Chung Chi was "science". After that he was in only the second batch of students, 12 in all, to enroll in the new MBA, turning down an offer of employment from IBM in order to do so. After MBA he took up an offer as an Assistant Lecturer at Chung Chi College, turning down an offer from South Sea Textiles although it seemed likely for a while that a bursary from South Sea Textiles would be his only way of affording the PhD in the United States that he so wanted; in the end a University PhD Fellowship (United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia Fellowship via Chung Chi College) came along instead. But Professor Lee always retained his ability to mediate between business and academia, and this ability has been to the benefit of both.

On his return from the PhD, which was at Northwestern University, Professor Lee rose up steadily through the academic ranks from Assistant Lecturer to Professor in the Department of Marketing. Along the way he became in 1987 the Director of that same MBA he had joined as one of its first students 20 years before; six years after that he became Dean of the Faculty of Business Administration. Among his achievements in that role, colleagues might remember his initiative in designing and launching the first Executive MBA of its kind in all of Asia: still to this day one of the jewels in the crown of this University, and one of the most highly regarded EMBA degrees in the world. He set an international research

standard; under his leadership the faculty became the first business school in Asia invited to go through the accreditation process at AACSB International (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International).

He was able to do this largely because of that unusual ability to understand both business and academia, and therefore to see the bigger economic picture. Over his working life at CUHK Professor Lee has taught at or consulted for many companies and policy institutions, including the World Bank, Hang Seng Bank, Coca-Cola (China), Procter and Gamble (Guangzhou), Hong Kong Tourist Association, Du Pont Asia Pacific Ltd, Hong Kong Disneyland, Hyatt International and Shangri-la Hotels and Resorts. Out of this feel for business combined with his academic understanding arose his answer to the primary questions of what marketing is and why tourism matters.

Professor Lee himself defines marketing as the meeting of customer needs better than competitors, at a profit, with an appropriate business mix. And on the macro scale this may mean meeting the needs of a modernizing society. Professor Lee realized well before 1997 that Hong Kong's staple manufacturing businesses were already moving to the mainland; that this trend would greatly increase after the handover; and that the city would for the first time in its history face widespread unemployment if some alternative use could not be found for its cheap unskilled labour. The answer was tourism: hotels, entertainment, leisure attractions in general. The shift from manufacturing to tourism was in fact the leading edge of the wider shift to services and knowledge industries which is now happening on the mainland itself and is the distinctive feature of modern post-industrial economies.

But of course even if tourism as the leading industry of the new service sector can provide employment for a large and relatively unskilled workforce, it still also needs many trained people to take up the leadership role. At the same time the business workforce itself, not just the tourism sector, has to internationalize in order to remain competitive with best practice worldwide.

This means better business schools in general, and better tourism schools in particular, informed by the best marketing theory (especially in cross-cultural marketing, since tourists come from diverse cultures), and accredited to the very highest standard. The culmination of Professor Lee's efforts, having become Director of the School of Hotel and Tourism Management in 2001, was the launching and eventual completion of the Teaching Hotel project and the opening of the Cheng Yu Tung Building in 2011.

All this Professor Lee, now Emeritus Professor Lee, loyally delivered for The Chinese University of Hong Kong—instead of perhaps making a fortune for himself in business! And he also helped to deliver it for Hong Kong, which is now a highly successful service economy, and even for China, since the opening-up of the Chinese tourism market, both inbound and outbound, is a key marker of China's large-scale shift to a services economy.

For his foresight in recognizing the importance to Hong Kong of marketing and tourism, and for his fifty years of loyalty in delivering some of the benefits of this major economic development to this University, it gives me great pleasure, Mr Chairman, to present to you Emeritus Professor Lee Kam-hon for the award of an Honorary Fellowship of the University.

This citation is written by Professor Simon Haines

