

Kaye Kye-Sung Chon: a source of inspiration for many generations to come

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Introduction

This portrait tells the story of a young boy in Chonju, South Korea who imagined travelling the world looking at the world map in his bedroom. Learning about new people and places always intrigued him, to the point that he once had over 200 pen pals in 86 countries around the world. The passion to travel led him to the realm of hospitality and tourism. He is the youngest of a large family of six children. That young boy became one of the most iconic professors of our time: Professor Kaye Chon. It is not a simple task to put down such a man's lifetime of hard work, contribution and influence into a few thousand words. This portrait is a tribute to Kaye Chon: the internationally respected professor, the researcher, the change maker, the visionary, the traveler, the mentor, the supervisor, the pioneer. He is a true change maker in every sense of the word.

We are living in a world where change making has become part of our collective consciousness. Change makers have intrinsic sense of empathy for people around them, identify a specific problem to solve, seek an opportunity to tackle, stay persistent and never give up.

I met Chon eleven years ago at the Graduate Education & Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism in Houston, a conference that he founded in 1996. He convinced me to move to Asia where hospitality and tourism industry was and is developing rapidly. He convinced me that it was the right time and right place to be. He even has a term for this: "The Asian Wave". At the time, I thought of him as 'the ultimate marketing professor'. I was very easily convinced to move from USA to Hong Kong after my short conversation with him. I have never looked back. I have the privilege of knowing him and working with him for the past eleven years in Hong Kong.

Our school, The School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM) at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, holds two retreats every year where we get together and discuss the upcoming semester and new developments. Every retreat starts with the Dean's speech. There is a speech that I am sure every colleague remembers very well: the story of Jonathan Livingston Seagull, a seagull that believes it is every seagull's right to fly, to reach the freedom of challenge and discovery. Jonathan Livingston finds his greatest reward in teaching younger seagulls the joy of flight and the power of dreams. The profound life lesson of this book is that one should never stop learning and striving for the best. And that we should see the good in every person and help them to see it in themselves. The story shows the importance of giving back and teaching what you know to others. All the qualities come to life in Chon. Life and teachings of Jonathan

Livingston are very similar to Chon's life and teachings. They are to live beyond one's surroundings, surpass the limitations in one's life and turn them into strengths. Chon mentioned many times that Jonathan Livingston Seagull, a book he read when he was a young boy, was very influential to him throughout his life.

His academic career

For a boy imagining to travel the world, studying hospitality and tourism was the right choice. Such programs were not available in Korea at the time. Therefore, he traveled to the United States and attended Georgia State University, graduating "summa cum laude" at the head of his class in 1984. Kaye Chon completed his master's degree at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) in 1985. He stayed with UNLV for one year as a lecturer before he moved to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University for his Ph.D. (1986). During his time at Virginia Tech, he specialized in marketing and strategic management and consumer behavior aspects of travel and tourism. He joined the faculty of Virginia Tech after completing his Ph.D. (1990). During his four and half years of Ph.D. study, he was also employed as a full time tenure track Instructor. Upon completion of his Ph.D., he was immediately offered tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor but he decided to return back to UNLV to teach and direct graduate studies and research. His career development was at an unprecedented speed because he had jumped from the rank of an instructor to an associate professor, skipping the normal six years of assistant professorship which is a norm in the U.S. universities. Before assuming his current position (2000), he was Professor and Director of Research and Director of Tourism Industry Institute at the University of Houston's Conrad N. Hilton College in the United States.

Today, Kaye Chon is the Dean and Chair Professor, Walter Kwok Foundation Professor in International Hospitality Management at the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), SAR China. During his tenure at PolyU, the Hotel and Tourism Management department became an independent school by being separated from the business school. Under his leadership and guidance, SHTM rebuilt the degrees offered, become renowned in research and scholarship and strengthen its ties with the industry. His change maker skills were once again in place in the creation of Hotel ICON, a hotel unlike any other. Chon's vision was to be at the forefront of teaching and research in hospitality and tourism. In 2011, Chon's vision of building a teaching and research hotel that is purpose-built and purpose-driven came true. Hotel ICON is not just a teaching and research hotel. The building houses PolyU staff quarters, Hotel ICON and the School of Hotel & Tourism Management. Chon's vision and mission are explained in his words in the prologue of his book titled "Leading the way: The story of SHTM and Hotel ICON":

... I had a vision to build a teaching and research hotel that would not only raise standards of hospitality and tourism education locally and regionally, but also for SHTM to become an international leader and pioneer through innovations. I am truly thankful I was allowed to realize my vision and eternally grateful for the people who helped me achieve this.... With the introduction of Hotel ICON as a launch pad for students' dreams, our vision is for them to become leaders not just in Hong Kong but also around the world. I eagerly await the day when they too will become icons of our industry.
(Chon, p. 5)

The School received the prestigious "McCool Breakthrough Award" for its educational approach with the hotel at its center (2012). Chon received the McCool Breakthrough Award again in 2017 for his role in the annual Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism. He is the founding chairman of the conference series, which is deemed to be an innovative approach to graduate education.

The change maker, the visionary and the pioneer professor

Universally beloved by his students, Chon is the recipient of teaching excellence award twice. As a dedicated researcher, he won research excellence award four times. His many awards include the John Wiley & Sons Lifetime Research Award from International Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (I-CHRIE) and the Martin Oppermann Memorial Award from International Society of Travel & Tourism Educators (ISTTE). Among his many awards, some of the notable ones are "Most Outstanding Alumni in 30 Years," award by his alma mater Georgia State University's Cecil B. Day School of Hospitality Administration (2003); the Howard B. Meek Award from I-CHRIE for his lifetime contribution to education and scholarship in hospitality and tourism (2007); and United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Ulysses Prize (2011). Professor Chon is the first recipient of this prize in the Asia Pacific region. He is also the first recipient of University of Delaware's Michael D. Olsen Research Award. Recently, he was awarded the recognition award of his outstanding contribution to the study of tourism by the organizing committee of the 8th World Conference for Graduate Research in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure, 24-29 May 2016, Bodrum, Turkey.

The change maker, the visionary and the pioneer in Chon surfaced in many facets of his academic life. He brought many 'firsts' to Asia. He is the founder of the Annual Conference on Graduate Education and Graduate Students Research in Hospitality, Asia Tourism Forum, China Tourism Forum, Asia Pacific Forum for Graduate Students Research in Tourism, and Asia Pacific CHRIE (APacCHRIE) Conference. Professor Chon is the past President and Chairman of the International Society of Travel & Tourism Educators and former member of the Executive Board of Pacific Asia Travel Association.

The term "Asian Paradigm", the new wave of hospitality and tourism education, is best explained by Chon (Martin, 2017). In his own words, Asian paradigm is integration of Asian values and cultural elements in services management along with maintaining a balance between learning conceptual/analytical skills and putting these ideas into practice. In fact, Chon teaches the very coveted "Asian Paradigm in Hospitality Management" class in the Doctor of Hotel and Tourism Management (D.HTM) program at SHTM. He also gives lectures all around the world on this topic. Asian paradigm is about center of gravity of world tourism shifting to Asia, both in quality and quantity. This subject covers many interesting topics that explain what Asian paradigm is and how it affects the world tourism. Some example topics of the class are to analyze the factors which have contributed to the unique development of hospitality management in Europe, North America and Asia relative to socio-economic and cultural factors, to develop a deep understanding of the influence of Asian lifestyles and culture on the provision of services and development of service culture in Asia, and to make a critical evaluation of the unique aspects and transferability of the hospitality management concepts peculiar to Asian context to other

parts of the world. The impact of this class and a compelling lecturer can be reflected in the following quote coming from a student in his class:

Asian Paradigm is a very interesting and inspiring subject designed and delivered by Dean Kaye Chon, who is one of the most passionate and charismatic teachers I have ever met along my study journey. You can easily feel Dean Chon's strong passion and infectious enthusiasm in world of hospitality during his lectures. This subject provided me opportunities to meet hotel managers and executives in Hong Kong and Thailand during a 7-day residential workshop. The insightful sharing from Dean Chon and various speakers help me to develop a deep understanding of the development of Asian hospitality from different perspectives. I am proud to be an Asian, as I can witness the formation of 'Asian Paradigm' and the power of 'Asian Wave' in the hospitality industry.

Chon's teaching insights and innovations keep on giving generations of hospitality and tourism management students the competitive advantage and new perspectives. Students and employers are the beneficiaries of his capacity to see around corners, sharing unheard new approaches and concepts.

Academic works

At the beginning of his academic career, Chon's research was mainly focused on consumer behavior, especially on product image and customer satisfaction in the hospitality and tourism domains. Later on, his research stream expanded to include a broader perspective of marketing and strategic management related issues. These issues include but not limited to service quality enhancement, customer satisfaction strategies, business and convention tourism, and strategic management of community based tourism. Chon has authored/edited ten books and has published over 200 refereed journal articles, book chapters, conference proceeding publications and professional journals.

To date, Chon has supervised more than 40 postgraduate students for their research and continue to do so. His postgraduate students are scattered all around the world. Some notable ones are Dr. Joanne Yoo (Associate Professor at the Department of Hospitality Business Management at the University of Delaware, USA), Dr. Hera Oktadiana (Head of Hospitality and Tourism Management, BINUS University International, Jakarta, Indonesia), Dr. Miguela Mena (Professor and former Dean at the Asian Institute of Tourism, University of the Philippines Diliman, Philippines). It was not possible to reach most of his postgraduate students but those reachable has the following to tell about Chon as an advisor and mentor:

I learnt a great deal about international academic life and issues from Kaye Chon, in particular in the field of hospitality and tourism. During my Ph.D. study, he appointed me to assist him in the secretariat of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism (IAST) for the period of 2014-2016. He invited me to come to the Academy biennial conference in Rhodes Island, Greece in May 2015 where I met the most prominent tourism professors from all over the world. My experience working in the Academy's secretariat has - directly and indirectly - contributed to my Ph.D. study as well as to my research publications. I am very much in debt to Kaye Chon for giving me such a great opportunity. I also learnt from him about managing people and a tourism school. Although I was the head of hospitality and tourism departments in two universities in Jakarta, Indonesia, before undertaking a doctoral degree at SHTM, I learnt more from him about running and managing such a world class tourism school. I had a better understanding of how he brought SHTM into the

world top tourism institution. He is not only an excellent academic, but he is also a great business person. He has wonderful global connections with both the hospitality and tourism academic and the industry people. His character and personality have inspired me to become a professional academic in hospitality and tourism arena at the international level.

Kaye Chon significantly influenced my professional life. Without his supervision and guidance, I would not have completed my Ph.D. He motivated and encouraged me all throughout my Ph.D. studies. Being Kaye Chon's editorial assistant for different journals, I learned the rudiments of academic publication. I was introduced to the blind review process and communicated with many editorial board members. Kaye Chon gave me books to review and co-authored journal articles with me. He encouraged me to submit papers to conferences and international journals. He introduced me to various journal editors and book authors. I owe my initiation to academic publication to Kaye Chon. Kaye Chon's career path was my inspiration and aspiration. Various opportunities opened for me after obtaining Ph.D. and for having Kaye Chon as Ph.D. supervisor. I would not reach my current academic position of Professor and former Dean of University of the Philippines Asian Institute of Tourism if not for Kaye Chon's guidance, mentoring and role model.

I still can't forget Kaye Chon's advice to my hesitation by sharing the quote from Richard Bach's book Jonathan Livingston Seagull: "The gull sees farthest who flies highest". This teaches me about the purpose of life, that we are put on earth to strive and to reach for perfection in whatever we choose to do. Up until now for more than 10 years after graduation, his advice has been the driving force for me as his Ph.D. student and follower in seeking fulfillment from my professional life and seeing beyond the world around me. Moreover, he himself is a true living example of who is not content to make small improvements but strove to make GIANT leaps in the world of hospitality education.

As his former Ph.D. student, I found that Kaye Chon is a kind-hearted, warm and caring person. He does not only care about the study and any academic matters. He also concerns about his students' wellbeing. He is very supportive to his students and staff. People may think that he is quite serious. Indeed, he has a good sense of humor. I always enjoy having discussions with him, either concerning academic or non-academic issues. From what I know, he is quite religious, has interest in sport (he has a black belt in taekwondo), is a good dancer (yes, he danced at a conference in the Hotel ICON Hong Kong), and always maintains a good health. I am very impressed with his strong long-term memory. He remembers a great deal about his staff and students, such as their educational background and work experiences.

Jafar Jafari tells the story of the birth of the Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing:

I have known Kaye Chon since the last century. Moons ago, he contacted me through Dr. Olsen when he was studying for his Ph.D. In his initial telephone contact with me, he wanted to start a journal, inquiring about the processes involved in the making and shaping a journal, how to find publishers and work with them, etc. We discussed this plan on a few occasions with me and soon after the Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing arrived. Based on this and many more occasions of collaborations I have had with Kaye, I know that he knows what he wants, he get advice where and when he can, and, voila, the outcome unfolds. This has been his operation style in the field of practice and later in the world of academia. When he zooms on an innovative project, he defines it, brings the right ideas/people together and without much delay, he gives birth to still another creative outcome, be it a curriculum, a building, a bridge connecting seemingly disconnected forces, and more. Significantly, Kaye is among the few in hospitality and tourism who knows the field of practice and halls of academia and further knows how to bring them together as a new mélange—to everyone's advantage.

Following is the contribution from Dr. Jinsoo Lee, the managing editor of Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, on Chon's academic contributions:

Kaye Chon's contribution to academic research is remarkable. His early research works are frequently cited in the tourism, hospitality and convention literature, contributing to the development of subsequent research papers. For example, his research about "convention participation decision making process"

published in 1997 offers fundamental concept to the convention literature, thus numerous MICE studies subsequently adopt the concept to further advance the MICE literature. Another example of his scholarly contribution is that together with his co-authors, he published a paper on the concept of self-image congruence in top-tiered marketing journal (Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science) in 1997. His paper is still widely cited and appreciated by scholars using the theory of self-image congruence.

Also, he contributes to academic research with editorial activities. He serves as editor-in-chief for Journal of Hospitality of Tourism Research (1996 to 2008), Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing (1990 to present), and Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research (1996 to present) while serving as an editorial board member and consulting editor for several academic journals. In his recent article (Chon, 2016), he explains how The Asia Pacific Tourism Association was born 22 years ago and how this association created a new wave of tourism research in Asia Pacific through his involvement and conferences held in various locations throughout Asia. Chon also explains how proud he is to take the leadership to create Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research in 1996. The importance of this journal is in its focus in the Asia Pacific region, the fastest growing region for world tourism.

He dedicates himself to creating research outlets and platforms for hospitality and tourism scholars to exchange and develop research. Despite a demanding responsibility for managing School of Hotel and Tourism Management as Dean, he still closely manages two SSCI Journals as an editor-in-chief and constantly updates editorial policies and to enhance the quality of scholarly works in tourism and hospitality. His editorial dedication consequently brings the standing of journals to the next level, which, in turn, further advances academic research in tourism and hospitality.

Looking at Professor Chon through the eyes of others

With a career expanding across two continents and three decades, Chon has touched the lives of students, faculty, staff and alumni. He has consummate abilities as a leader and mentor. For his many gifts to our community, integrity and compassion mark his splendid deanship. A number of colleagues and friends that know Kaye Chon for a relatively long time along with his students were invited to comment on how he influenced their professional lives.

It was Kaye Chon's persuasive skill that prompted me to leave a comfortable position and relocate to Hong Kong. He inspired me to return to my own field (tourism and hospitality) after being more focused on university management. He showed me what remarkable transformation can be achieved through the exercise of strong and effective leadership at the local (discipline-specific) level. I have found it a wonderful experience to be part of a leadership team when the leader is inspiring and brilliant... He is constantly proposing new ways of looking at things and new angles. He's a supreme story-teller. He truly values the human touch and cares deeply about his students and colleagues.

A gentleman who works hard, is focused, and persistent.

He is a leader not only in research and academics but also in attracting best people to join the school as a team, to form a 'dream team'. To form a dream team, apart from the personality, you need to have a charisma in terms of managing people, especially the leading academics. I think he has all these abilities which other people don't have... sometimes people think he is cold because he has to give some tough decisions in his leadership position. In fact, he is a very caring person. Sometimes people do not see that side of him.

I've worked with Kaye Chon for about 11.5 years. Kaye Chon is a role model for me as he is a visionary and multi-talented leader. He is not only a good speaker and salesman but also an innovative hospitality manager. With his influence, a "can-do" attitude is deeply rooted in my mind. Moreover, Kaye Chon often "thinks outside the box" and I've learnt to look at a problem from different angles and to explore creative solutions. Kaye Chon is a good mentor who has left footprints in my professional life.

Kaye Chon is fair and firm. He sets high standards, for everybody, and everybody gets the same treatment. He seldom bends rules, but if he bends a rule, he always explains the reasons behind clearly. He is very innovative. He often 'disrupts' old way of doing things and comes up with new way of doing things. New way of doing things often means that he connects different resources and opportunities, to offer higher value and to do things more smartly. As a leader, communication is important. Kaye Chon is good at communicating complex ideas in a simple way. He is also good at communicate the same idea to different people in different ways, so that the idea makes good sense to the audience.

Kaye Chon has a quality possessed by successful leaders and that is he is an astute judge of character. There is very little turnover within the School of Hotel and Tourism Management partly due to the attention paid to hiring the right person in the first place. He also stays engaged with the faculty and cares about their success. Engaged leaders are generally respected and successful leaders and Kaye stays involved with his faculty.

Among his many accomplishments and successes as Dean of the School of Hotel & Tourism Management, his thoughtful role as leader, administrator and mentor has been exceptional by all measures. Kaye Chon shaped and strengthened the school for almost two decades. He consistently challenges others to do their very best while generously answering his own challenge by doing many extraordinary things. His sharp intellect, global perspective and creativity are recognized and respected in Hong Kong and worldwide. A cadre of colleagues praise his personal sincerity, professionalism, attention to detail, dedication and perseverance.

Conclusion

Kaye Chon is respected by students and colleagues alike as a fine teacher, researcher, mentor and administrator, totally dedicated to his profession. He has been a mentor to generations of students, providing a challenging and supporting environment to promote their personal, intellectual and professional growth. We admire his people-person skills, salute his can-do attitude and unfailing support he generously shares with people. The lifetime inspiration of Professor Chon can be summarized with the words of Eleanor Roosevelt that he frequently quotes himself: "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams". His reach extends beyond his achievements. He has changed the way the world looks at hospitality and tourism education in Asia, thereby ushering an Asian Wave of hospitality to the world. We thank him and honor his outstanding service to hospitality and tourism education and research.

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