A Competency Model for Travel Customizer in China: A Study Based on Online Recruitment Advertisements

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ABSRTACT   The customized tour will inevitably become the important travel mode in China in the future; therefore, the demand of customized tour talented person is ever-increasing, it is also urgent to train the customized tour talents. Travel customizer is the core position of the customized travel firms. On the basis of the competency onion model, this study uses the methods of content analysis to analyze 113 travel customizer recruitment information published by customized travel companies. This study divides the competence of travel customizer into the inner level of personality, the middle level of professional awareness and qualities, and the outer level of knowledge, skills and professional abilities, and further divided it into 34 third-level indicators.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Nowadays, the ever-increasing demand for individualization and diversification of tourism is becoming more and more obvious in China. The post-80s, post-90s and middle-to-high-yield families have become the main consumer groups in the tourism industry. These groups are extremely familiar with the application of mobile connection. The major tourists are not just for sightseeing, they need more depth and rich tour experience and high-quality service. The quality and individuation of customer demand will challenge the production and supply mode of the tourism industry, and call for the tourism industry to launch new tourism organization form. The customized tour can provide tour route product tailored to the interests of customers, it's a customer-led travel itinerary design. In particular, along with the rapid development of tourism e-commerce, the mass customized tour has become possible.

China has the largest and most growing middle-income group in the world, which is estimated to have surpassed 400 million people in 2017 and will grow in 2018. According to the research report on 2018 China's Internet Industry Report released by Iresearch in 2018，the transaction volume of the online travel market attained 8 billion Yuan in 2017, with an online adoption rate of 7.9 percent. It can be predicted that the customized tour will become the development trend of tourism. In China, there are some innovative and entrepreneurial firms with rather mature customized travel services; meanwhile, traditional travel agencies can start the customized tour business through CTRIP online network. So some new positions are created，such as travel customizer. And the demand for the talent of the customized tour is on the rise. At present, there is not a scientific standard to measure the qualification of customized tour talent, whether competent for the position or not. Therefore, it is very necessary to study the competency model of customized tour talents. The competency model itself is an important tool for human resource management. The competency model of customized tour talents is not only helpful to the internal management of customized tour firms ,including the recruitment and assessment, but also it can apply the competency model into the development of teaching model and vocational training, and help to train qualified personnel for the development of the industry.

1.2 The theoretical basis

The competency model refers to the combination of the competency characteristics of an individual or an organization that is competent for a task.

On the existing theory, there are three typical models: Spencer's iceberg model [1], Boyatzis's competence onion model, and competency dictionary. The onion model is put forward by American scholar Richard Boyatzis, based on the depth and extensive study of David McClelland's theory of quality [2]. In the onion model, the personality and motivation of competency are located in the innermost layer of onion structure, which is the most difficult to observe, evaluate and acquire. self-image, values, and attitudes are in the middle and are easier to observe, evaluate and cultivate than personality and motivational factors. Knowledge and skills lie at the outermost layer of onion structure and are easiest to observe, evaluate, and cultivate. [3]

This research attempts to construct the competency model of customized tour enterprise based on onion model.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research methods

The emergence of the mass customization tour is relatively late in China. The position of the customized tour firms lacks the professional standard ,and the definition of performance are different, it is difficult to scientifically carry on the sampling and differentiate good performers and underachievers, therefore the common methods of research becomes difficult. According to the previous studies about "competency", the common methods of competency analysis are mainly behavior event interview, job analysis and expert discussion; these methods are limited in the research of customized tour competence. To sum up, this study uses content analysis to find the knowledge of "quality" through the online search of job advertisements for travel firms and the analysis of "quantity" of job information. Content analysis was first used in communications as a method of objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the content, a process of deducing the exact meaning from the meaningful words represented, content analysis is now widely used in many fields of research. [4]

This study chose the recruitment information as the data analysis source to facilitate the use of the content analysis, a scientific and rigorous method. Also, for the following reasons: **(1)** Online recruitment is the most commonly used way for firms to recruit, through several well-known recruitment website registration, login, easy access to recruitment information; **(2)** The recruitment information is a highly condensed language of the enterprise, customized tour firms for the core competency of personnel requirements through the post responsibility, according to the business characteristics, it can be made a more accurate definition. The recruitment information of different customized tour firms reflects the core business characteristics of firms and the differences of qualities.

2.2 Sample selection and research process

Researchers search for "customized" and "travel" or "customized travel" in zhaopin.com, 58.com, 51job.com and ganji.com, four famous recruitment websites in China，and set the date from March 1 to March 31, May 1 to May 31, in 2019, then got 138 pieces of recruitment information. There are four positions in it, and travel customizer is the core position among them. Due to few companies published recruitment information on more than one recruitment website, so 113 pieces of recruitment information is totally valid. Of which, 47 from *Zhilian.com*, 40 from *58.com*, 20 from *51job.com,* only 6 from *Ganji.com*. The job offers came from 96 companies with a customized tour business in 11 cities in China. The 113 pieces of job information were coded. The two researchers independently identified the subject words in the sample, then further analyzed the primary words and merged the synonyms. For example, "good at communication", "communication ability" unified as "communication ability". If the words have low frequency, classified and combined according to the meaning; If few words are controversial, the researchers discuss back and forth to

come to the same understanding; The continuously controversial words are excluded from the scope of the analysis. According to competency onion model and the characteristics of subject words, this study is divided the competency of travel customizer into three categories: the outer, the middle and the inner, each of which has several sub-subject words. Finally, the two researchers conducted a statistical analysis of the subject words, after consulting two HR managers of customized travel companies to examine the encoding results.

3. Analysis Process

3.1 Basic information

3.1.1 Size and nature of business
According to the size and nature of the firms, 62.5% of the firms have 1-49 employees and 17.7% of the firms have 50-99 employees. Companies with 100 people or more make up about 20% of the total. The majority is small and medium-sized firms.93.7% of the firms engaged in the customized tour are private firms, 4 are state-owned firms, accounting for less than 5%, and only 2 are foreign-owned firms.

3.1.2. Statistical qualifications and working experience
In 113 pieces of recruitment information, there is no gender requirement and 96.5% no age requirement. Professional qualifications are also basically no requirements, only one position requires tour guide qualification. With regard to education, 52.2% require college education, 28.3% not limited to education, college or above account for 15.9%, high school or Technical School accounted for 3.5%.It can be inferred that vocational college degree is the mainstream. In terms of working years, 57.5% of the positions were open-ended, 37.2% required 1-3 years of working experience, and only 5.4% required more than 3 years of working experience.

3.2 Competency analysis

This study is divided the competency of travel customizer into three categories: the outer, the middle and the inner, including five parts: professional ability, knowledge and skill, professional quality, professional consciousness and personality, Specific analysis as follows:

3.2.1 Professional ability
As show in table 1,"Communication ability" was at the top of the professional ability with 67.3%, and many pieces of recruitment information mentioned that the travel customizer should communicate with customers in a timely and effective manner. Effective communication requires strong skills and competencies, including proficiency in online communication tools. "Design capacity" mainly refers to the design of travel routes and activities planning, is one of the core business capacity of customized tour. And then, in that order are "Coordination Ability", "Anti-pressure ","Executive power", "Learning power", "Flexibility", "Adaptability". In particular, a few firms have put forward the requirement for travel customizer to have "learning power" , and some firms even describe it as "extremely strong learning power" , which has much to deal with the change in the scope of customized tour business and the change in customer demand, the ability to learn quickly is required.

3.2.2 Knowledge and skills
As illustrated in Table 1, among the factors of knowledge and skill, "computer operation" is the most frequent, which not only requires skilled use of office software operation, internet image processing, but also includes the use of professional software such as travel agency management system. The second is "marketing", which has a lot to do with the core business of customized tourism, including marketing techniques, event planning and so on. "Travel E-commerce" meaning the travel customizer should command the knowledge of famous online tourist firms, including the platform rules, such as *CTRIP,Tuniu, Lvmama, Qunar*, and e-commerce tourism knowledge. Travel customizer should be familiar with quotation, cost control, so "Financial" has certain requirements. "Destination Knowledge", "Business Operation "and "Laws and regulations "are the major knowledge that tourism talent should have, including tourism laws and regulations, including

immigration regulations. "Foreign Language "means having the ability to express in spoken and written foreign languages, which is mainly required by the firms engaged in customized tours abroad, but not for the firms engaged in domestic customized tours. [5]

3.2.3 Professional quality

The professional quality is relatively stable, is formed by comprehensive quality of the talent. As illustrated in Table 2, "Responsibility", "Initiative" and "Recognition " appear more than 40 times in the recruitment information of travel customizer, which is the most important quality for customized tour firms. Next are "Dedication", "Upward mobility" and "Efficiency". "Recognition" means being crazy about travel, love of tourism industry. Only having a love of travel can be better engaged in customized tour, some firms mentioned the value of recognition.

Table 1 The factors of the"Outer"competency

Professional ability	Frequency	Percent	Knowledge and skill	Frequency	Percent
Communication ability	76	67.3%	Computer operation	33	29.2%
Design capacity	49	43.4%	Marketing	25	22.1%
Coordination ability	28	24.8%	Travel e-commerce	24	21.2%
Anti-pressure ability	26	23.0%	Destination knowledge	18	15.9%
Executive power	23	20.4%	Financial	16	14.2%
Learning power	22	19.5%	Foreign language	13	11.5%
Flexibility	15	13.3%	Business operation	9	8.0%
Adaptability	11	9.7%	Laws and regulations	8	7.1%

Source: Drawn up by the authors.

Table 2 The factors of the "middle-layer"competency

Professional quality	Frequency	Percent	Professional awareness	Frequency	Percent
Responsibility	55	48.7%	Customer thinking	85	75.2%
Initiative	47	41.6%	Excellent service	75	66.4%
Recognition	43	38.1%	Team spirit	48	42.5%
Dedication	12	10.6%	Innovation	18	15.9%
Upward mobility	11	13.3%	Competition	16	14.2%
Efficiency	11	9.7%	High-quality	13	11.5%

Source: Drawn up by the authors.

3.2.4. Professional awareness

Professional consciousness is the basic consciousness that a tour designer should have, which can be promoted through systematic vocational education and training. As illustrated in Table 2, Among the elements of professional awareness, "Customer thinking" , " Excellent service " and "Team spirit "occupy the top three, followed by "Innovation " , "competition " and " High-quality ". In 113 job postings, the word "client" was the most common word, followed by "service", which was repeated in job duties of offers. Modern business defines "customer" as a group of people who satisfy a need by buying a product or service. This group is likely to repeat purchases, which can bring sustainable profits to the business. The client emphasizes a customer satisfaction-oriented value that integrates and manages all the elements of the client interface in a pre-set of optimal cost-as-a-service portfolio. Therefore, customer service and customer satisfaction is very important for the customized travel firms. [6]

3.2.5. Personality traits

The essential elements of personality traits tend to be more durable and stable, and it is difficult to change through education and training in a short time. Personality traits also put forward specific requirements, "Optimistic", "Meticulous", "Independent" is the most important. Next are "Enthusiasm", "Patience" and "Affinity". These keywords are very important for customized travel quality service and efficient work.

Table 3 The factors of the "Inner" competency

Personality traits	Frequency	Percent
Optimistic	37	32.7%
Meticulous	27	23.9%
Independent	24	21.2%
Enthusiasm	17	15.0%
Patience	13	11.5%
Affinity	11	9.7%

Source: Drawn up by the authors.

3.3 Test of internal consistency

In this study, the purpose of calculating the reliability of encoding is to determine the degree of agreement between the two researchers on the subject words. Kappa Coefficient is used in the reliability test. The Kappa Coefficient is determined by comparing the results of two observations of the same object by two observers or two observations of the same object by the same observer, and the statistical index based on the difference between the consistency caused by randomness and the consistency of actual observation is used as the basis of evaluation. Kappa Coefficient, as an evaluation index, is widely used in the consistency test of unordered classification data and rank data. The Kappa Coefficient ranges from-1 to 1. If K<0, the two observations are not consistent; If k=-1, the consistency is completely inconsistent; If k = 0, the consistency is completely due to random factors; If k > 0, the two observations are more likely to be consistent, because the probability of random factors is less. The larger the K value, the more consistent the two results. When k ≥0.75, the consistency of the results is better. If K<0.4, the consistency is lack. In this study, the intrinsic consistency among the main researchers was tested by Kappa Coefficient. [7]Thirty pieces of recruitment information were randomly selected. The two researchers used the existing coding manual to encode the recruitment information. By comparing the coding results, it was found that K≈0.79 indicates that the reliability of the subject word coding in this study is high enough, the agreement between the two researchers on the subject words was better.

4. DISCUSSION

Based on competency onion model, this study analyzes the content of recruitment advertisement from customized travel firms, and constructs a competency model for travel customizer. The model includes 3 first-lever indicators, 5 second-lever indicators and 34 third-level indicators. Compared with the business of traditional travel agencies, customized travel firms have relatively high requirements to the talents, which are equivalent to three functional roles of consulting, scheduling and marketing. Different customized tour companies define different positions according to business characteristics and size, some divide their organizational structure according to business area, and some design it according to the thinking of process management, break the traditional division of labor model, more prominent intensive, systematic characteristics, so that customized tour talent career development presents borderless characteristics. Therefore, tourism colleges should combine the theory of borderless management to explore the education mode of customized tourism talents, and pour special attention to the improvement of overall quality and core competency. The customized tour firms should introduce borderless management mode to improve management.

5. Limitation

This study is based on recruitment information, due to the differences in enterprise type, business scope and position setting, for example, whether the enterprise is traditional enterprise or innovative enterprise, and whether the main business is domestic or foreign customized, there are differences in the requirements for travel customizer. Therefore, with the expansion of customized tour business, the increase of the number of firms and the standardization of customized tour talent

positions, the competency model needs to be further refined. In addition, the study of borderless management needs to be further deepened because of the higher requirement for the comprehensive quality of the travel customizer.

Acknowledgment

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