

# Integrating Ideological and Political Education into “Tourism E-Commerce” Courses in Applied Undergraduate Universities: A Core Literacy Perspective

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## Abstract

Against the global higher education trend of “whole-person development,” this study investigates the integration of Ideological and Political Education (IPE) into “Tourism E-Commerce” curricula at applied undergraduate universities, grounded in core literacy theory. Drawing on validated international frameworks (e.g., OECD key competencies) and China’s policy directives, we propose a “Four-Step Integrated Model” to systematically embed ethical, innovative, and socially responsible competencies into tourism e-commerce education. Using a mixed-methods design (curriculum analysis, case studies, surveys with 120 students, and 15 semi-structured interviews with faculty), we demonstrate how this model aligns disciplinary knowledge with socialist core values, enhances critical thinking, and prepares students for dual contributions to industry innovation and national development. Quantitative results show significant improvements in ethical awareness ( $\Delta = 0.9, p < 0.001$ ) and professional identity ( $\Delta = 0.8, p < 0.001$ ); qualitative insights reveal that contextualized IPE enhances engagement but faces challenges in industry collaboration and faculty training. Findings provide actionable strategies for fostering “ethically competent, innovative, and socially responsible” tourism professionals.

## Keywords

Core Literacy, Ideological and Political Education (IPE), Tourism E-Commerce, Applied Undergraduate Education, Whole-Person Development

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Background and Significance

Since the 2010s, global higher education has prioritized cultivating “T-shaped talents”—professionals with deep disciplinary expertise and cross-cutting competencies (e.g., ethical leadership, digital literacy, social responsibility) (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2023). In China, this aligns with national “core literacy” initiatives, defined as the knowledge, skills, and values required for all-round development (Ministry of Education (MOE), 2016).

Tourism e-commerce, a dynamic intersection of tourism, information technology, and business, is a cornerstone of China’s digital economy. However, rapid industry growth has exposed ethical challenges: data privacy breaches (e.g., misuse of tourists personal information), online fraud (e.g., counterfeit travel bookings), and unsustainable practices (e.g., over-commercialization of cultural heritage) (UNWTO, 2022). Addressing these requires “Tourism E-Commerce” courses to move beyond technical skill-building to instill professional ethics and social responsibility—key components of core literacy. This study thus explores how to systematically integrate IPE into this course to cultivate “ethically competent, innovative, and socially responsible” tourism professionals.

### 1.2. Research Objectives

This study aims to:

- 1) Develop a theoretical framework linking core literacy, IPE, and tourism e-commerce education.
- 2) Design and validate a practical “Four-Step Integrated Model” for embedding IPE into “Tourism E-Commerce” curricula.
- 3) Evaluate the model’s effectiveness through empirical analysis of student outcomes (ethical awareness, professional identity) and faculty experiences.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Core Literacy: Global and Chinese Perspectives

Core literacy, defined by the OECD (2005) as “key competencies for all,” has evolved into a global educational priority. The OECD identifies three domains: interactive competence (collaboration across diverse groups), tool-mediated interaction (using digital/linguistic tools), and autonomous action (goal-directed behavior). In China, the Core Literacy Research Group (2016) adapted this framework to local contexts, emphasizing three dimensions: autonomous development (e.g., self-directed learning), cultural foundation (e.g., humanistic literacy), and social participation (e.g., responsibility). These frameworks align with global trends while integrating socialist values such as patriotism and collectivism (Chen, 2019).

For applied undergraduate universities, core literacy transcends technical skills. This holistic approach ensures graduates thrive in both local and global environ-

ments.

## 2.2. Ideological and Political Education (IPE) in Higher Education

Globally, “values education” (VE) shares IPE’s focus on ethical and civic development (Noddings, 2013). However, IPE is uniquely rooted in China’s political context, emphasizing alignment with socialist core values (e.g., “prosperity, democracy, harmony”) (MOE, 2020). In higher education, IPE has shifted from “political indoctrination” to “contextualized, student-centered integration” (Wang & Liu, 2021).

In tourism education, prior studies (Mowforth & Munt, 2015) highlight IPE’s role in addressing industry-specific ethical challenges (e.g., overtourism, cultural commodification). Yet, few studies have explored IPE integration in “Tourism E-Commerce”—a field where technical skills evolve rapidly, but ethical guidelines remain underdeveloped.

## 3. Theoretical Framework: Core Literacy and IPE in “Tourism E-Commerce”

### 3.1. Conceptual Foundations

This study adopts a synergistic framework, where:

Core literacy provides overarching goals (ethical decision-making, adaptability); IPE serves as the vehicle to achieve these goals by embedding socialist values into disciplinary content; Tourism e-commerce acts as the applied context, requiring students to balance technical expertise with social responsibility.

### 3.2. The “Four-Step Integrated Model”: Operationalizing the Framework

To bridge theory and practice, we developed the “Four-Step Integrated Model”, grounded in core literacy and IPE principles.

1) Contextualized Introduction: Leverages students’ prior experiences to reduce resistance to abstract values (Noddings, 2013). Use Alibaba’s Fliggy platform (a familiar industry tool) to introduce data ethics: “How should user data be collected and shared responsibly?”

2) Seamless Embedding: Integrates values into technical content to avoid “two separate classes” (Wang & Liu, 2021). When teaching e-commerce algorithms, discuss algorithmic bias: “How might biased algorithms affect marginalized tourist groups?”

3) Experiential Extension: Encourages application of values in real-world contexts to deepen understanding (Kolb, 1984). Task students with designing an eco-tourism app for a local ethnic minority community, requiring collaboration with community leaders to address cultural preservation.

4) Reflective Alignment: Facilitates metacognition to connect learning to long-term goals (Schön, 1983). Guide students to reflect: “How does today’s lesson on

fair pricing align with China's rural revitalization strategy? How will this skill benefit my career?"

## 4. Research Methodology

### 4.1. Research Design

This mixed-methods study employed a sequential explanatory design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018):

1) Phase 1 (Quantitative): Pre- and post-course surveys measured changes in ethical awareness (5-point Likert scale,  $\alpha = 0.89$ ) and professional identity ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ).

2) Phase 2 (Qualitative): Semi-structured interviews ( $N = 15$  faculty) explored challenges in IPE delivery; curriculum analysis ( $N = 3$  courses) identified IPE integration patterns.

### 4.2. Participants

1) Students: 120 second-year tourism management students from three applied undergraduate universities: Zhejiang Vocational College of Tourism (comprehensive tourism vocational college), Guilin Tourism University (tourism-focused applied undergraduate institution), Shandong Vocational College of Tourism (technology-integrated tourism college).

2) Faculty: 15 IPE-trained instructors (10 males, 5 females; teaching experience: 3 - 15 years), all certified in "curriculum-based IPE."

### 4.3. Data Collection

1) Surveys: Administered at Week 1 (pre-test) and Week 16 (post-test) of a 16-week course.

2) Interviews: Semi-structured, focusing on IPE design, delivery challenges, and student engagement.

3) Curriculum Analysis: Reviewed syllabi, lesson plans, and case studies to map IPE integration.

### 4.4. Data Analysis

1) Quantitative: Descriptive statistics (means, SDs) and paired t-tests (SPSS 26.0) analyzed pre/post differences.

2) Qualitative: Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using NVivo 12.0 identified recurring themes (e.g., "contextualization effectiveness," "industry collaboration gaps").

## 5. Findings and Discussion

### 5.1. Model Effectiveness: Quantitative Evidence

Survey results showed significant improvements in key outcomes:

1) Ethical awareness: Increased from 3.2 (SD = 0.7) to 4.1 (SD = 0.6) ( $t = 8.2, p <$

0.001). The “data privacy protection” item showed the largest gain ( $\Delta = 1.0, p < 0.001$ ).

2) Professional identity: Increased from 3.5 (SD = 0.8) to 4.3 (SD = 0.5) ( $t = 7.9, p < 0.001$ ). The “pride in future career” item had the highest post-test mean (4.5).

3) Core literacy integration: 89% of students reported “connecting course content to national strategies (e.g., rural revitalization),” and 76% could cite examples of “social responsibility in tourism e-commerce.”

## 5.2. Model Implementation: Qualitative Insights

Faculty interviews highlighted two key themes.

### 5.2.1. Strengths: Contextualization Drives Engagement

Teachers emphasized that situational IPE (e.g., using Hangzhou’s “City Brain” smart tourism system) made abstract values tangible. A faculty member from Zhejiang Vocational College noted: “When students saw how data ethics directly impacts tourist trust in Fliggy, they began discussing responsibility as a real skill—not just a test topic.” Another from Guilin Tourism University added: “Designing eco-tourism apps for local communities forced students to grapple with cultural preservation, making ‘social responsibility’ a lived experience.”

### 5.2.2. Challenges: Industry Collaboration and Faculty Capacity

Two barriers emerged:

1) Limited industry involvement: Only 30% of cases were co-developed with tourism enterprises (e.g., a Ctrip collaboration on “online complaint resolution”), limiting the realism of ethical dilemmas.

2) Variable faculty proficiency: While 73% of teachers felt confident in technical content, only 47% reported expertise in “values-based teaching.” One instructor admitted, “I know to teach integrity, but designing interactive activities around live-streaming fraud? I need better case banks and training.”

## 5.3. Alignment with Global and Local Theories

The model aligns with Noddings’ (2013) “ethic of care” (emphasizing relational learning) and China’s MOE (2020) “curriculum-based IPE” guidelines. It also addresses gaps in tourism education literature: while Mowforth & Munt (2015) call for IPE in tourism, our model provides a concrete framework tailored to tourism e-commerce, validated across three institution types.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 6.1. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the “Four-Step Integrated Model” effectively integrates IPE into “Tourism E-Commerce” courses, enhancing students’ ethical awareness, professional identity, and core literacy. By rooting values in real-world contexts (e.g., e-commerce platform cases, rural tourism projects) and fostering reflection, the model bridges theoretical learning and practical ethics—critical for cultivating responsible tourism professionals.

## 6.2. Practical Recommendations

1) Faculty Development: Establish “values-based teaching” workshops focusing on case design and reflective dialogue. Encourage participation in national IPE teaching competitions.

2) Industry Partnerships: Co-develop case studies with tourism enterprises (e.g., Ctrip, Fliggy) to ensure ethical dilemmas reflect current industry challenges.

3) Assessment Innovation: Adopt rubrics evaluating both technical skills (e.g., algorithm design) and core literacy (e.g., ethical decision-making), integrating IPE performance into scholarships and faculty evaluations.

## 6.3. Future Research

1) Longitudinal Studies: Track graduates’ professional ethics over 5–10 years to assess the model’s long-term impact.

2) Cross-Disciplinary Comparisons: Compare IPE models in tourism e-commerce with those in engineering or business to identify transferable strategies.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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## Appendix: Survey Questionnaire (Student Version)

Survey on the Effectiveness of Ideological and Political Education in “Tourism E-Commerce” Courses

(Student Version)

Instructions:

This questionnaire aims to understand your perceptions of ideological and political education (IPE) in the “Tourism E-Commerce” course. All responses are anonymous and will be used to improve course design. Please answer based on your actual learning experience. Thank you for your participation!

### Section 1: Demographic Information

(Please check the most appropriate box.)

1. Gender:       Male               Female
2. Age:             18 - 20         21 - 22         23 - 24
3. University:
  - Zhejiang Vocational College of Tourism  Guilin Tourism University
  - Shandong Vocational College of Tourism
4. Major:
  - Tourism Management       E-Commerce     Digital Media Technology
5. Grade:
  - Sophomore                       Junior (Aligned with course timing.)

### Section 2: Ethical Awareness Scale

(5-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Item    Description (Linked to “Four-Step Integrated Model”)    Rating (1-5)

Q1. The “Contextualized Introduction” (e.g., Fliggy data privacy case) made me realize that data ethics is critical for tourism e-commerce platforms.

Q2. The “Seamless Embedding” (e.g., discussing algorithm bias in e-commerce) helped me understand ethical boundaries in tech applications.

Q3. The “Experiential Extension” (e.g., designing eco-tourism apps for rural communities) increased my focus on tourism e-commerce’s social responsibility.

Q4. The “Reflective Alignment” (e.g., linking fair pricing to rural revitalization) helped me connect ethical learning to my career goals.

### Section 3: Professional Identity Scale

(5-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Item    Description (Linked to “Four-Step Integrated Model”)    Rating (1-5)

Q5. I feel proud of pursuing a career in tourism e-commerce.

Q6. Integrating national strategies (e.g., “digital tourism”) in class increased my confidence in the industry’s future.

Q7. The “Reflective Alignment” (e.g., discussing algorithm ethics) clarified my

career direction (e.g., fair pricing or community service).

Q8. The “Experiential Extension” (e.g., community app design) made me more willing to work in grassroots tourism (e.g., rural tourism operations).

#### **Section 4: Open-Ended Questions**

1) Which step of the “Four-Step Integrated Model” (Contextualized Introduction/Seamless Embedding/Experiential Extension/Reflective Alignment) most enhanced your IPE learning? Please provide an example (e.g., “The Fliggy data privacy case in Contextualized Introduction made me realize...”).

2) How would you improve the “Four-Step Integrated Model”? For example, should we add industry expert lectures or adjust case types (e.g., cross-border e-commerce ethics)?