

Question 1 (500 words)

Why are you applying to the HEC MBA Program now? What is the professional objective that will guide your career choice after your MBA, and how will the HEC MBA contribute to the achievement of this objective?

As a child, the story of Paumotu people living in poorer areas of Papeete saddened me. Lack of local jobs had pushed these islanders into Tahiti's unskilled workforce and living conditions were poor. The black pearl development, years later, created a miracle by providing a sustainable activity to the islands: it allowed inhabitants to stay and gave them world recognition. Today, with globalisation triggering more migrant labour, my long-term goal is to encourage similar miracles around the world. Luxury companies can support this vision, as few other industries stresses as much the importance of uncompromisingly sublimating high-quality raw materials with craftwork mastery rooted in tradition. The social rewards, already established in Europe, are increasingly observed outside such as in Polynesian islands with black pearls and in Morocco with argan oil. I hope to accelerate this trend by promoting luxury items from untapped countries to the developed world. In this respect, Asia's long history and refined traditions provides ground for unique opportunities.

Five years ago, in a study about the concept of luxury in China, the Comité Colbert issued a recommendation for luxury brands to use the Internet as a "high-impact way of informing the Chinese about a brand, its history and its cultural background". Upon graduating, my aim is to assist European luxury brands in executing this recommendation through a position of e-business strategist in either a consulting firm or a luxury conglomerate. In this, I will take advantage of my bicultural French-Chinese understanding and experience in e-business.

As a French person of Chinese origins, and with my move from Tahiti to France as a teenager freeing me from the apprehensions about relocating to faraway distances, I was eager for international mobility. For many years, working for Accenture provided opportunities matching my interest and I embraced an intense international career. But recently, the recent realisation of how rare and precious my French-Chinese biculturalism is made me decide a transition to a new career as a bridge between Europe and Asia.

But a career change needed to be a logical evolution from past experiences. As an Internet consultant, I guide my clients through innovative concepts toward the right e-business decisions and away from trend confusion. In this context, I know that the skills I have accumulated are relevant and will remain so in tomorrow's world. With my career aspirations maturing, I now realised that I must complement my knowledge of e-business consulting with knowledge of the luxury sector and China's business practices. An MBA was the answer.

Selecting the right one was the next step. The HEC MBA, with the school's prominence in France, close contacts with French luxury companies and academic recognition in Corporate Strategy, is probably one of the world's best MBA for my target industry transition. Additionally, HEC's leadership in the internationalisation of MBAs, with the Tsinghua University Dual-degree programme providing an excellent opportunity to better understand China in business terms, makes me believe that the HEC-Tsinghua Dual-MBA is uniquely fitted to my professional objectives.

Word count: 500

Question 2 (250 words)

What do you consider your most significant life achievement?

Today, transgenders are probably one of the minorities most discriminated against. A few years ago, as a young consultant on holidays, I volunteered at the PASTT, an association working for the insertion of transgender people. At that time, they needed help to set-up a website for the association. What started as a standard consulting exercise – requirements analysis, design, delivery, training and handover – then became a life changing experience.

At the PASTT, kind-hearted visits from “normal” people were rare and many of the women there – I consider them to be women – eagerly opened their lives to me over a cup of tea. To my attentive ears came vivid stories, often happy, sometimes emotional. Occasionally, allusions of hardship would bubble up with silent tears. The psychological support room, aid leaflets and condoms stacked up to the ceiling were evidences of their reality.

As agreed, I realised a framework for their website, covering various topics from AIDS protection and self-defence to hair removal and beauty tips. But another realisation operated inside me. Although I had no prior prejudice against transgenders and had heard of them often being sex workers, I was little prepared for the strength of emotions found within everyone. Indeed, I learned that stereotypes often hide a broad spectrum of individual truths, and that an attentive ear can be someone’s lifeline.

In the end, I took away many thanks of appreciation and, most importantly, the intimate conviction that discriminations of all kinds are never acceptable.

Word count: 247

Question 3 (250 words)

Leadership and ethics are inevitably intertwined in the business world. Describe a situation in which you have dealt with these issues and how they have influenced you.

As a team lead on a new project I was responsible for five people. Deadlines were extremely tight and we often worked over eighty hours weekly to meet them. After months, with no shorter workdays, things had clearly gone wrong. Requests to slow down were rejected due to project priorities and people resigned massively. Those who stayed, including myself, suffered but “esprit de corps” prevailed. Eventually, I experienced serious fatigue and stress related health issues and, although considerably hit, took this as an opportunity to prove a definite case. I had previously reported dysfunctions but my medical note further alerted the Human Resources department. Eventually, the project enquiry I helped initiate resulted in a change in management and better work conditions. Turnover dropped. This experience taught me about my own physical limitations but that a failing can become an opportunity to show leadership. It also taught me that the business value of human ethics, and truly respecting people and their wellbeing, is loyalty and support. Throughout my assignment, while the project was plagued by high turnover, and subsequent loss of skills, the people under my responsibility stayed – later providing a decisive case for my promotion to Manager. As one of them said: “Because you showed us you cared” was their reason. Eventually, my interest in people either on or outside of my projects led to my nomination to the role of People’s Advocate for my group at Accenture and I now care for the wellbeing of over sixty people.

Word count: 249

Question 4 (250 words)

Imagine a life entirely different from the one you now lead, what would it be?

If I were not an Internet consultant, in a completely different life, I would live my passion for cooking and the sharing of good food.

I imagine myself being a baker. Following a French institution, I would have completed my apprenticeship as a Compagnon and later set for a world journey to perfect my art. I envision a life where I travel from a country to another, absorbing the local culture and connecting with people through the very symbolic item of bread. The baguettes, sourdoughs, bagels, pitas and rotis of the world, and the traditions surrounding them, would have no secrets for me. When I finally return and settle, I would open a traditional bakery with its bread the result of my travels, encounters and personal creativity.

Through this work, I see myself fighting against the industrialisation of taste which creates soulless food and disconnects people from what they eat. Education would be key and education activities could be realised at schools or in companies. In addition, although the production should match the demand, I would try to always maintain a diversity of breads for sale. The potential daily surplus should not be wasted but instead be donated to charitable organisations to help people in need.

In a completely different life, I would endeavour to make people understand that food should not be and item to be processed and consumed, but instead should be respected and cherished as a cultural treasure bearing the keys to one's society.

Word count: 247

Question 5 (250 words)

Essay A. What monument or site would you advise a first-time visitor to your country or city to discover, and why?

In 1880, Pierre Loti wrote what would become a foundational novel for the Tahitian myth: "Le Mariage de Loti". Today, if you go to French Polynesia, I have no doubt you will visit the islands and their white sand beaches. You may also witness Tahitian folk dances with stories of brave warriors and graceful vahines. You will follow the footsteps of Jacques Brel, Paul Gauguin and many anonymous others who embraced Loti's vision.

Then, if you still have a day to spare in Papeete, you could visit the Fautaua valley.

You will drive past an industrial zone, nestled by the river, and various social housing blocks plagued by casual criminality along with domestic violence, drug and alcohol. Then after a few minutes you will find a small basin, nestled by the mountain rocks. The spot is humble, and would not attract much attention if it were not for the bronze bust of Loti standing in front. This is the place where the myth started.

You could easily picture Loti's lovers meeting by the river rapids or the luxurious tropical forest. Today, you may find children from the neighbourhood happily playing in the fresh water. Some of them with eyes red from the abuse and poverty and yet the stir of their past glory, when the warrior sailors went out and conquered the Pacific islands. You will hear their loud laughter echoed by the valley. And then, standing at the myth's origin, you may understand a bit more about Tahiti.

Word count: 249