



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Tourism and Hospitality Internships in Higher Education: A Conceptual Framework to Implementation

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ABSTRACT

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The tourism and hospitality sector, as one of the fastest growing and dynamic industries, relies heavily on skilled, well-trained, and competent professionals. Internship training programs serve as a vital bridge between academic learning and real-world experience, equipping students with essential skills, enhancing their employability, and preparing them for global workforce challenges. This study explores the design and execution of internship programs, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between academic institutions and industry experts to align educational goals with sector expectations. A conceptual framework is proposed to optimize internship satisfaction for all stakeholders, focusing on clear training objectives, cross-training opportunities, mentorship, and consistent feedback mechanisms. Key recommendations include the integration of field visits, the development of interactive platforms to connect students with industry professionals, and the incorporation of multicultural awareness into the curriculum. Academic institutions must design structured and updated programs to meet the sector's evolving needs, while employers should ensure comprehensive inductions, cross-department exposure, and mentorship for interns. Challenges such as gender bias, turnover, and gaps in skills alignment are addressed with actionable solutions, including enhanced feedback systems and targeted research. This study underscores the transformative potential of internships in shaping competent graduates who can effectively contribute to the tourism and hospitality industry while fostering stronger academia-industry partnerships.

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest and fastest-growing industries in the world is the tourism and hospitality sector. The industry is highly labor-intensive and provides various possibilities for individuals in multiple subsectors. The performance of the business is highly dependent on hiring the right people and ensuring that the employees are well-trained as the sector depends mainly on human capital and employee quality [1]. The industry contributes to the development of gross capital, the dissemination of knowledge, and how to manage businesses with modern technologies and enhancements in living standards. Many developing nations have acknowledged the potential effect of how the tourism industry boosts the country's economy, especially as a source of employment and foreign cash flow from other countries. Therefore, it is important that cooperation among stakeholders, including students, instructors, service providers, and government officials involved work together to provide good education and training [1]. According to the Hospitality Worldwide Industry Report as of 2023, the worldwide hospitality industry was estimated to be worth 4.7 trillion dollars in 2023 and was expected to reach 5.8 trillion dollars by 2027, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.5 percent [2]. Tourism is a labor-intensive service sector that depends on having qualified workers

to provide, run, and oversee the tourism product to survive, and this trend is predicted to continue [3]. This is because effective communication between service providers and service users is the foundation of the tourist industry.

The tourist sector provides excellent job prospects for a variety of worker types. The global nature of the tourist business impacts management skills, knowledge, and the environment. Employees must collaborate with individuals from all over the world. The globalization of tourism also affects the operational staff, who must possess a wide range of social, communication, and operational abilities. Employers are looking to higher education institutions in this context to find skilled workers with academic knowledge and practical expertise [3]. The tourism industry does not just rely on good facilities, equipment, and resources, it relies heavily on its employees. For the success of the tourism business, the employees must have the right skills, knowledge, attitude, and willingness to take action to build a solid foundation for a profitable organization. The dynamic relationships formed in the tourist business necessitate the ongoing development of new skills and expertise in the sector. Tourism education is categorized into two parts; programs offered by institutions of higher learning and programs offered by businesses in the tourism sector which focus on practical and hands-on training for its employees [3]. To succeed, the tourism and hospitality sector relies heavily on its talented, passionate, and dedicated personnel. Due to socioeconomic and political unpredictability, ongoing changes in the global economy, and rising employee mobility, the sector faces significant challenges in attracting and maintaining such skilled, informed, and competent workers. As a result, improving graduate employability has become a pressing need, prompting colleges to focus more on resolving this issue by including skill-development components in their courses. An internship program is essential because it provides students with a work-integrated learning experience that increases their employment opportunities [4]. Teaching is essential in assisting colleges and universities to meet their goals of working better, being more efficient, and enhancing student learning. In tourism and hospitality, teaching also helps connect what is learned in school with real-world business practices, making it easier for students to apply academic knowledge in the industry [1]

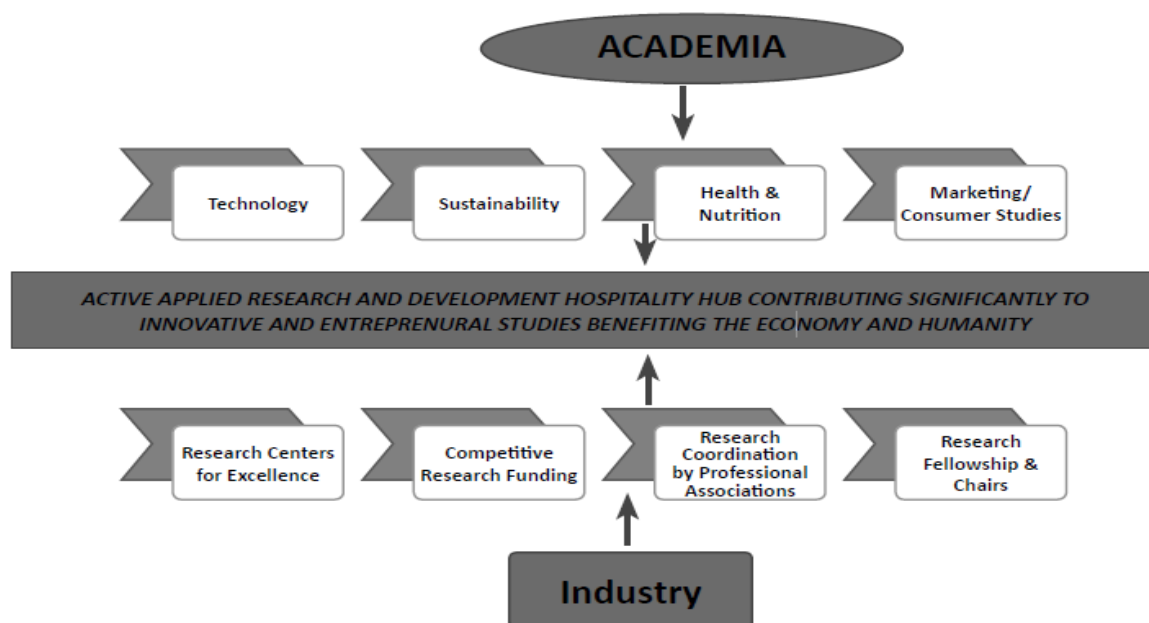


Figure 1: Tourism and hospitality internship and academia [1]

An internship program is one of the most crucial elements of any contemporary, competitive educational curriculum. Additionally, it gives students a chance to put ideas and techniques they have learned in class to the test, internships also add valuable resources to their academic experience that they may and should utilize when collaborating with classmates, instructors, and staff [5]. Back in the late 1970s, internships were not given much support or attention because they did not seem to fit well into the traditional academic system, despite the clear benefits for students, schools, and businesses, internships were often overlooked and under-supported. Today, both the tourism industry and educational institutions have come to see internships as much more valuable than they

did before and there is a greater recognition of the vital role they play in preparing students for real-world work [5]. Dahanayake et al (2019) defined internship as "a brief period of practical work experience where students receive training and gain invaluable job experience in a specific field or potential career of their interest. internship is essential in helping students make the connection between their regular education and the real world of work. It is an effective way for students to acquire a variety of skills through internships. It also has to do with experiential learning that enhances the student's personal and professional development. Moreover, this training is beneficial as it can help the students discover and choose their future occupations with the help of internship programs. While their internship experience will confirm their aim towards the tourism and hospitality business, some students rely on their internship. The rewards of internship training programs vary depending on the stakeholders involved as such the collaboration between the academic institution, industry, and students is essential for a successful internship. Additionally, internship training enhances relationships with the industry which may lead to collaborative projects, research opportunities, and other long-term partnerships that guarantee industry demands are included in the curriculum and, thus, make academic institutions more competitive [5]. The main elements that define an internship are 1) study internships that allow the students to take part in the courses to earn academic credit, 2) internships can be paid or unpaid, 3) the length of time the student spends at the internship location differs as length or duration of internship training varies, and 4) the involvement of both companies and universities in the administration and supervision of internships. These factors help define what makes up an internship experience. For internship training to be effective and successful, the following key aspects should be put in place.

1. Provide Supervision: Provide a mentor or supervisor to guide the interns.
2. Feedback: Offer regular feedback on their work to help them improve.
3. Challenging Tasks: Assign tasks that are difficult enough to promote learning.
4. Broader Exposure: Allow the interns to see and understand various parts of the company.
5. Clear Goals: Set clear goals so the interns know what they are expected to achieve. These elements help make the internship a valuable learning experience [5].

The contemporary hospitality internship has its roots in the American hotel industry's founder E.M. Statler who saw the need to expose students to the reality of the work-life. According to the Council of Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (CHRIE), internships in hospitality provide relevant on-the-job experience in line with the hospitality field such as hotels and restaurants which involves operational or management positions. These internships are supported by all stakeholders with guidance and supervision guaranteed by the industry experts and the academic community [6]. Almost all reputable hospitality programs include at least one internship experience in their curriculum, internships have become a crucial component of modern-day contemporary hospitality education. However, the structure and how these internships are managed varies in numerous ways. Researchers have identified essential elements that could affect internships, including program length, compensation, evaluation methods, academic credit weight, the opportunity to work and engage in different departments, and the roles of everyone participating in the program. Internships in the hospitality sector have become widely accepted and a popular topic of research which is the subject of this study and has earned the confidence of academics as a crucial component of the modern hospitality and tourism curricula [6].

The importance of students obtaining real-world experience outside of the classroom has long been emphasized. An internship is a familiar format for these kinds of activities. As practicum-based educational experiences, internships are seen to be a useful first step in fusing classroom instruction with practical experience. Graduates of a successful academic program focused on travel and tourism have superior learning, knowledge, skills, and the capacity to satisfy industry demands [7]. Internship training and programs provide students the chance to interact with experts in their chosen sectors of work and help them develop their skills to get along with a variety of workers in business settings. internships are beneficial as they help the students develop in the area of soft skills including being professional, self-belief, confidence, and the ability to interact and communicate well with everyone. Internships also enhance employment possibilities post-graduation. However, they also make postgraduate study less likely as the student may want to continue working instead of further studies

[7]. Due to the addition of practical experience in their field to their academic education, students are more confident when applying for jobs than before their internship program—additionally, organizations and professionals in the business gain from internships.

An internship program is essential to curriculum design since it provides students with a smooth transition to the actual work environment and allows them to assess the industry's appropriateness. Students who plan to pursue careers in the travel and hospitality sector might be significantly impacted by successful work experiences [7] and first impressions made during internships have a significant impact on the student's views of potential career options in the hospitality and tourism sector, which may be beneficial or harmful to the sector. The development of internships was based on the principles of experiential learning, practical knowledge application, and hands-on work training, also referred to as apprenticeship. According to available data, the University of Cincinnati's Cooperative Education Program was the first to create and launch a college-based internship program in the United States of America (USA) in 1906. In addition to helping students fund their education, the program allowed them to gain relevant job experience, which was also a prerequisite for their teaching certification [6]. Internships are beneficial for everyone involved, including individual students, host organizations, and academic institutions all stand to gain significantly from internships, regardless of whether they are required or optional, paid or unpaid, structured or not, because they offer a realistic glimpse of work environments, learn about their fields, and build skills that will help them in future jobs that educational institutions cannot [6]. With an understanding of working conditions and fostering relationships with managers, industry experts, and employees in the hospitality sector, internship training is a useful step in preparing students for the field. In addition to helping students make better selections about their careers and plans, internships may help many students transition into full-time jobs by providing them with professional information. In addition to offering more chances for employment and career advancement, internships also allow participants to network within the field by making personal connections [7]. Higher education institutions have begun to see internships as essential elements of modern teaching and learning practices since they are experiential learning opportunities. It includes the approaches, plans, and techniques educators employ to support students' learning and active engagement with the subject matter [6]. A vast majority of higher education institutions worldwide are now offering their undergraduate students the chance to participate in one or more internship programs. Graduate programs are also taking part in this trend. Although internships are now a part of business-related curricula, most literary work focuses on the hospitality and tourist sector, which indicates the industry's well-known vocational aspect [6]. As an essential component of their offerings to students, schools and other institutions of higher learning have included a range of internship structures into their curriculum in the past 4 decades. Additionally, over the past 20 years internships have sparked an increase in research because of the recognition that these experiences may influence the student's academic experiences in school and their professional goals.

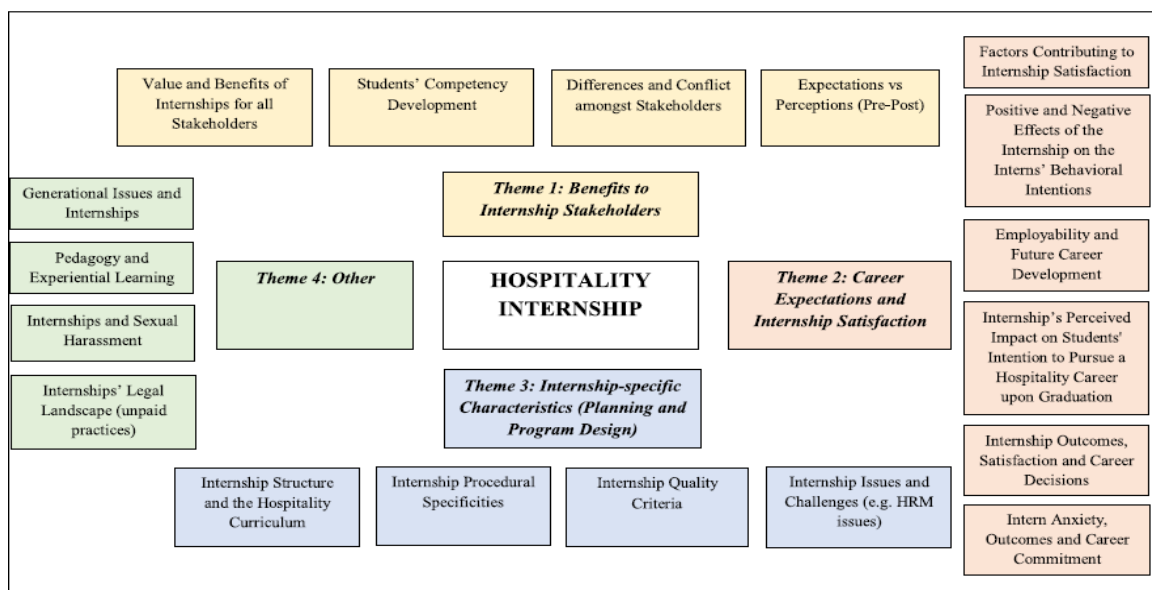


Figure 2: Schematic illustration of hospitality internship training [6]

2.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There are negative aspects to internship training programs. After their internship, students may quit the sector due to improperly designed internship programs, unfair treatment of interns by companies, and compensation disparities. Unpleasant experiences are likely to make students feel bad about working in the field, which will make them less inclined to do so once they graduate. Thus, maintaining students' contentment with their internship experience is crucial [7]. effective supervision, forming alliances, and giving students challenging work benefit their professional growth. Also, by combining the efforts of educators and business leaders, an effective internship may be created, facilitating students' transition from academia to the workplace. When an internship program is disorganized and unstructured, the students participating in the training may complain about the quality of their internship. As a result of inadequate preparation and skills, the students may be unable to match employers' expectations. To increase their abilities of getting hired, these students tend to well-organized internship training programs that could help develop and improve their professional skills. In addition, companies tend to utilize efficient training methods to instruct the students in their internship program, eliminating hesitation in the recruiting process [7].

One of the biggest problems in the industry is that stakeholders do not have a common sense of the meaning, purpose, expectations, and reason for working together to provide education. In this situation, cooperation necessitates communication channels where the stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industries interact and cooperate to tackle the issues confronting the industry [1]. The main obstacles to skills development are low student comprehension due to the language barrier, inadequate training facilities, a lack of trained and qualified teachers, poor implementation of national curricula, and limited student internship placement opportunities. Furthermore, there are certain aspects of the student work experience, such as proper training, orientation, and opportunity to gain managerial and supervisory skills which have been greatly undermined. The impact of internship programs is yet to be fully explored, and experienced, and the potential benefits it could offer to students [4]. Few empirical studies looked at how internship programs affected students in the tourism and hospitality sector and how it affected their plans for future careers. According to the findings, the interviewees were less inclined to seek jobs in the hospitality sector due to their poor working conditions and lack of management training. To improve the structured program that combines classroom learning with hands-on experience, the private sector ought to be included in the design process of the curriculum. Programs for internships should be assessed from the viewpoint of all parties involved. Faculty and industry cooperation should be established to create a well-structured, high-quality internship program to motivate as many new graduates as possible to seek careers in the tourist and hospitality sectors [7]. Understanding their roles before beginning the internship program is a principal factor of effective internship training for both interns and internship supervisors. Effective instruction, encouraging management, and high-quality training are essential to students' self-assurance about their future employment. Additionally, it might help students feel more satisfied and motivated to continue working in the hospitality sector. Interns tend to build good relationships with industry professionals during their training period which could professionally be beneficial to them, but these relationships can be affected by factors, such as poor communication between coworkers, supervisors' unfavourable attitudes, and a hectic work environment. These may make them less inclined and interested to remain in the field for a long time [7]. Abou (2020) asserts that industry leaders and instructors are leading in determining students' propensity to remain in the hospitality sector. They recommended that faculty members post program standards, visit, and confer with students frequently, have more defined goals for internship programs, and provide prompt assistance to students. Abou (2020) went on to say that instructors should collaborate with companies and students to create a structured internship program that considers the interests and requirements of both parties. Intern supervisors and faculty should collaborate closely and meet frequently. this is essential given how frequently interns are easily forgotten after their internship training. More direction is therefore required about the roles and responsibilities of the supervisors attached to the interns. These supervisors have a major influence on the educational value and outcome of the internship program. For instance, when supervisors allow interns to participate in decision-making and give them engaging and challenging tasks, interns are more likely to be satisfied with the educational benefits of the entire internship experience [7]. Furthermore, managers or industry mentors can set up official or informal meetings with student trainees to discuss various topics about their experience, training, or challenges.

management should also offer mentoring guidelines and a leadership development program for supervisors to be perly teach the student trainees. students are more interested in pursuing their careers in the tourism and hospitality industries When it aligns with the values they seek in a workplace. The quality of their experiences and how well they perform in the program play a key role in whether the internship program leaves a positive or negative impression on them [7]. A positive assertion about the tourism and hospitality sector could increase a student's desire and prospect of pursuing a future in the travel and hospitality sector, while a negative statement is likely to have a detrimental impact on those hopes. In comparison to students who did not have internship experience, it is expected that those who did had more ambitious career objectives. Internship satisfaction in the tourist and hospitality sector is associated with the following factors: coworkers, facilities, supervisors, training program, and kind of job. According to the survey, 69% of students are dissatisfied with their job experience, and most students said that after receiving training, their attitudes toward working in the tourist sector shifted negatively [4]. Another similar study looked at the elements that influence how satisfied hospitality students were with internships and the connections between training, work satisfaction, and future career confidence. The findings indicated that the student's work happiness and confidence in future employment are positively correlated with how satisfied they were with the internship program. Additionally, the analysis revealed that the excitement and satisfaction gained from the training were a favorable predictor of participants' confidence in their future careers [4]. Kipreos (2016) investigated how satisfied students were with the internship program offered by the University of Peloponnese's Department of Sport Management in Greece. 60% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the internship program, and over 65% said they thought the experiences they obtained would be useful for their future careers.

Dahanayake et al. (2019) documented the placement impressions of 482 students enrolled in hospitality courses at seven Scottish higher education institutions. After their job experience, the student's perceptions of the sector were highly unfavourable, according to the research. The student's work experience claims that the industry treated its employees poorly, that their efforts were valued more highly than monetary compensation, and that they received little to no training. Another report by Dahanayake et al (2019) stated that around 51 international hotel management students from Manchester Metropolitan University who had undertaken internships in the UK and Europe were surveyed as part of research on the experience, functionality, and worth of student work placements. according to the report, about 85% of the who students participated in the program did not receive thorough training and were not allowed to take on responsibilities at work. the students further expressed their dissatisfaction with the working conditions and atmosphere. Although these students are not eager to leave the tourism and hospitality sector, however, their enthusiasm for the industry has decreased following their internship experience.

On the other hand, the University of Queensland in Australia conducted a study on students' industrial training placement for hospitality and management students. From the analysis of the results, most students were happy with their internship experience. Students also expressed satisfaction with their coworkers, the management, and the favorable working environment. However, the introduction program and the quantity of instruction did not meet the expectations of the students [4]. The survey conducted at Anatolia University's vocational school in Türkiye found that the students were happy with the career advancement opportunities and enjoyed working in the tourism and hospitality sectors. However, the students expressed dissatisfaction among the students regarding the longer working hours, the limited time supervisors spend with the students and their training, and the lack of interpersonal interaction with the host organization [4].

A lot of changes and improvements are currently being made in hospitality and tourism educational institutions in response to the shifting need for competencies and abilities essential to the organization's success. To meet the demands of various clientele, the hospitality and tourism sector frequently includes guest-host interactions and has a highly mobile workforce. The attitudes and actions of workers in the hospitality industry have a significant impact on customer satisfaction and retention. As a result, improving hospitality skills is an essential element in the education, training, and advancement of workers in the industry [9]. the hospitality business needs future professionals with diverse skills and knowledge across different areas and can align with the trends and demands industry. One of the key components of management is understanding how education can provide the human resources that the market requires. Many scholars have emphasized how crucial it is to

be able to recognize the abilities, knowledge, and skills needed by all levels of hospitality management to prepare students for prosperous careers in the sector [9,2]. Five important factors of hospitality were highlighted by Teng (2013) and they are making sure that the guests receive good value for their money, the ability to make the guests feel comfortable and welcome, showing respect and understanding towards different cultures, the ability to build a good relationship with guest and co-workers, and ensuring that the guests feel very satisfied and happy with their experience. These components not only assist service staff in delivering outstanding hospitality quality, but they also assist hospitality firms in creating specialized marketing plans that meet the demands of diverse types of visitors. To improve student professional competency that would be beneficial to the industry, educational institutions should create relevant content for hospitality courses and incorporate it into student learning experiences, as students are the primary source of future employees in the sector [9,10]. To smoothly transfer classroom activities into the industry, a tourism and hospitality degree naturally demands work-integrated learning training programs targeted at certain industries, such as hotel management, marked the beginning of tourism education in the late nineteenth century. However, the field of tourism studies expanded dramatically as a result of growing demand and interest from the public and private sectors. As a result of this growth, specialized travel and tourist departments were established in technical universities and higher education institutions [11].

Tourism and hospitality education are adapting with the ever-changing world by using creative teaching methods, academic institutions can help students create and generate new ideas and approaches that will shape future research, and best business practices. To support this, tourism programs should update what they teach, the mode of teaching and delivery, focusing on new theories and management strategies [12,13]. This shift will help the tourism industry move toward a more sustainable future. According to Della Lucia et al., (2021), the incorporation of human well-being, ethical values, profitability, and social responsibilities into tourist education and management significantly enhances its structure and development [14]. According to Giudici et al. (2020), academic institutions are the epic enter of creative thinking and change at the highest level. They also play a critical role in preparing tourism students to manage an industry that is under growing pressure to become responsible stewards both now and in the future. Additionally, to create the path for the greatest business practices that ultimately serve human objectives and respect human dignity, managers, and entrepreneurs, both present and future, must embrace values-based leadership models [16]. The complete integration of humanistic management into tourist education is made possible by the framework for reforming the tourism curriculum developed by the Tourism Education Futures Initiative (TEFI) [14].

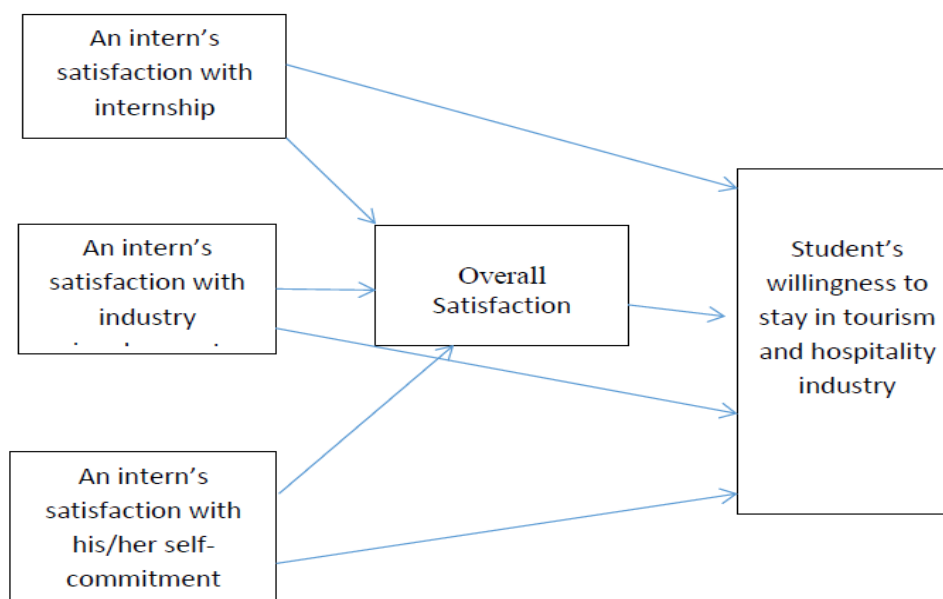


Figure 3: Schematic representation of internship satisfaction [7]

3.0 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this study is to analyze and investigate how educational involvement, industry engagement, student dedication, and internship program design are beneficial to the student's inclination to pursue careers in the tourism and hospitality sector post-graduation. Furthermore, to increase the ability of upcoming generations of tourism managers, leaders, and other stakeholders to embrace alternative models and practices based on the rediscovery of what it means to be human and what matters most to humanity, this paper hopes to enhance and improve internship training experiences in the tourism and hospitality sector. The scope of this study is to give students the information and abilities they need to lead in a variety of hospitality and tourism-related fields, rather than just preparing them to enter the workforce. This means that students are being prepared not just for entry-level roles but for long-term success and growth in their careers. Additionally, this review aims to investigate the elements influencing the career goals of students studying tourism and hospitality by looking at their expectations for the internship, how they felt about the experience, and how those expectations affected their decisions about their careers. Student expectations and views of the internship's fulfillment have a major role in how successful internships are viewed. This research sought to determine how internship experiences affected interns' plans for their future careers. With an analysis of their expectations for the internship, their assessment of the internship experience, and, ultimately, their career-related decisions, it also aims to investigate the elements influencing the career aspirations of tourism and hospitality students.

Importance of internships in tourism and hospitality education

Today, the travel industry is often referred to as the "high-tech" industry as it is a unique combination of the most recent technical advancements and direct customer interaction with different service providers. Travelers are currently the most valuable "asset" of travel agencies and travel destinations. Decisions made in the tourism industry must be prompt, transparent, and professional, to inspire employees. Only highly qualified managers who have received both formal education and hands-on training in tourism organizations and businesses are capable of carrying out this work [17]. Since tourism and hospitality education are a subset of technical education, internships are a prerequisite for students. Therefore, the use of internships in the tourism and hospitality departments is a crucial subject that faces many obstacles and difficulties for students, according to stakeholders. These include inadequate connections between academic institutions and the real-world hospitality industry, which results in ineffective applications. They also recommended increasing internship duration and encouraging industry and teachers to participate in internships [18] actively. The following are some advantages of internship programs in the workplace:

1. Providing students with access to career opportunities and educational advancements.
2. Assisting in developing a new generation of professionals with extensive training and versatility.
3. Selecting among knowledgeable and talented pupils.
4. Contribute to the development of an educated and driven staff.
5. The opportunity to collaborate with students capable of imparting skills necessary for their futures and concerned about their communities. They can also hire qualified staff that can communicate innovative concepts [18]. Furthermore, managers working in the tourism and hospitality sector must have a formal education and continually improve their knowledge and expertise through various innovations. Two approaches for training tourist management personnel the so-called "open" and "closed" models—should be mentioned in this context. One characteristic of the first paradigm is that official and informal education are equally prevalent. Academic institutions like colleges and universities offer formal education, while tourism-related businesses like hotels, travel agencies, tour operators, and national, regional, and local tourism organizations carry out knowledge innovation in collaboration with academic institutions and tourism industry professionals [17]. One characteristic of the second type is that educational institutions are always present. This is less the consequence of a conscious staff development program and more of a result of inertia, a lack of pressure, and global competitiveness.

The most effective means of combining official and informal tourism education programs is through internships that emphasize the operational and management skills essential for workers in

the sector [3]. Internships were initially seen as a way to help offset the shortcomings of a liberal arts degree. They connect to real jobs and allow students to build new skills [6]. Internship programs serve as the initial connection between students and the hospitality business, allowing them to learn about various industrial sectors' working conditions and routines. An internship demonstrates how academic knowledge and practical job skills relate. Internship programs are also called workplace learning, work-related learning, or work-based learning. Internship programs provide students with various benefits, including the chance to make decisions about their future careers that would be impossible without prior experience in the hospitality sector. One popular experiential learning method in the tourism and hospitality industries is internship programs [19]. Not only do internships provide production lines access to highly skilled experts, but they also allow employers to hire students with work experience as permanent staff. An internship program increases a student's marketability and worth.

Along with helping students meet higher-order learning objectives, internships also help them develop other learning benefits like better understanding of the material that leads to better academic performance, networking skills, a set of realistic expectations in the business world, improved social and communication skills, increased organizational and interpersonal cultural awareness, and an increase in positive self-perception, school and learning attitudes, and civic engagement [20]. The value of internships in the tourism and hospitality sector is also highlighted by the kind of services provided. Internship training have shown to assist students to grasp the value of providing outstanding customer service delivery. The development of soft skills and emotional intelligence, essential in the customer-focused hospitality sector, is made possible by internships. To succeed in this dynamic and varied area, the training gives students and aspiring professionals the real-world experience, industry exposure, and networking opportunities they need [21]. Internships are crucial to bridging the gap between academic understanding and real-world application. Internship training programs improve students' knowledge and abilities by enabling them to apply what they have learned in the classroom to practical settings. Through internships, students can develop a professional network in the travel and hospitality sector. Students can network with professionals in the field through internships, which can result in job offers and long-term career advantages. The travel and hospitality sector is incredibly active and varied. Students are exposed to a range of cultures and work settings through internships. Students gain cultural competency and flexibility from this experience, two qualities that are crucial in the current global economy [21].

Students who engage in internship training programs obtain real-world experience in the tourism and hospitality sectors. In addition to fostering a closer relationship between theory and practice, the internship seeks to enhance the student's capacity to use technical and scientific knowledge and procedures in real-world scenarios [17,22]. Internships improve teaching and learning in higher education because they give students special chances to gain useful and employable skills as well as a suitable work culture. Internships provide students the opportunity to gain experience in the hospitality sector firsthand, build their professional abilities, and boost their confidence, and ability to apply theory to practice [23]. Internship programs tend to improve the student's commitment while also enhancing their sense of accomplishment and long-term retention of the knowledge they have gained. It gives the student's academic curriculum a deeper significance. The financial incentive allows students to pay for their studies. Internship programs reduce the culture shock the student may experience in the course of their training and also ease the transition to full-time employment [24]. According to Zhu et al. (2023) and Deng et al. (2023), internships enable students to put their academic knowledge to use in real-world situations, improving their readiness for the workforce. Additionally, internships have been associated with improved independence, self-assurance, and technical skill development, underscoring their significance in preparing students for careers.

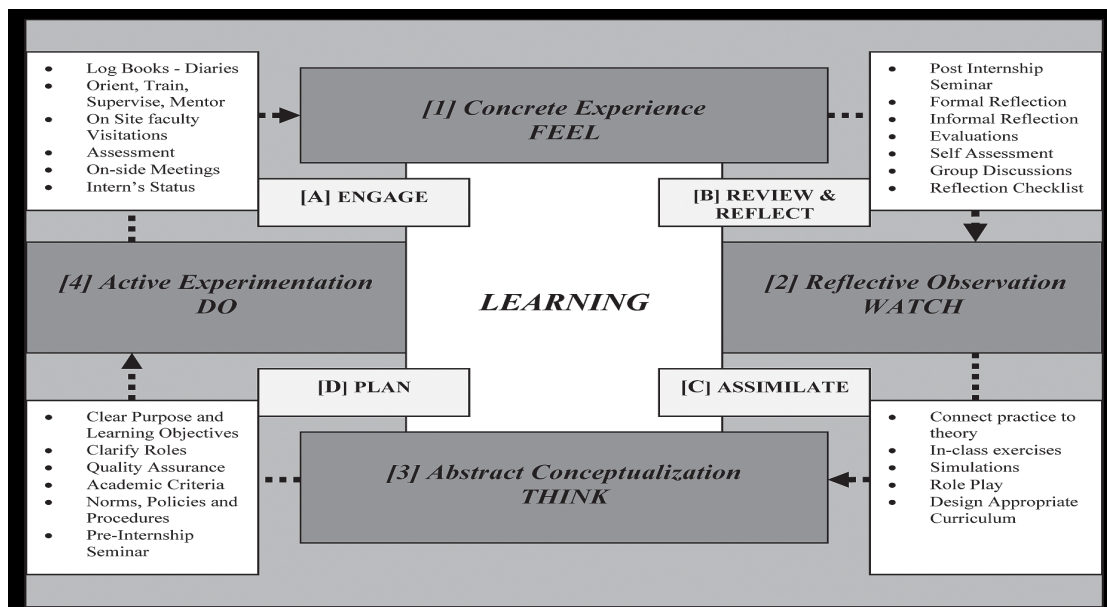


Figure 4: Experiential learning model applied to tourism and hospitality internship practices [24]

Internships serve as a conduit between classroom instruction and real-world application, giving students a better understanding of business procedures and workplace dynamics. Students can enhance their professional identities, build invaluable skills for their future jobs, and acquire critical competencies through organized internship programs [27]. The main reasons why students go for internships are to obtain real-world experiences, develop their competencies, and increase their employability. The desire for adventure, new experiences, personal development, and progress is another principal factor that motivates students to enroll in internship training programs. The drive to participate in student internship programs encompasses more than just developing personal skills; it also includes more general educational and professional goals. Through local and foreign internship experiences, students are motivated by the possibility of broadening their global perspective, improving their professional competence, and gaining various skills and information [28]. Jach & Trolan (2023) Further emphasized the importance of internships in determining students' future paths by fostering leadership skills and educational leadership abilities and offering practical learning opportunities. The development of culturally sensitive leadership, research on employer involvement in internships, and the influence of cultural intelligence on short-term study abroad experiences further demonstrate the numerous advantages that encourage students to participate in internship programs.

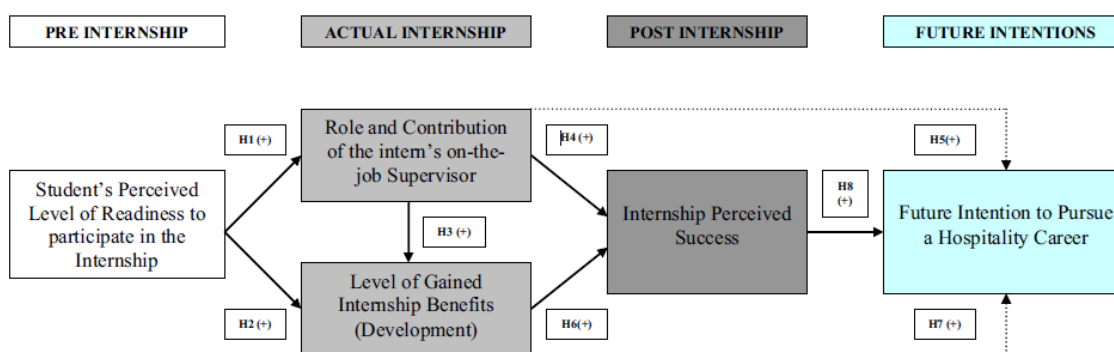


Figure 5: Phases of an internship training program [45]

The motivation for students participating in internship training programs is usually driven by several factors such as the desire for practical experience, gaining intercultural competence, personal growth, and a successful career. These features highlight the benefits with which internship programs provide students with life-changing educational opportunities and equip them for success in a competitive environment [28]. Internship training exposes students to the challenges of the actual world of work, improves their abilities, and refreshes essential knowledge to help them become used to working enthusiastically and collaboratively, moving fast, resolving customer-

related issues, and meeting customer expectations. Thus, some individuals see returning to the sector as a vital learning opportunity [18]. The two main elements that influence a student's decision to pursue jobs in the tourism and hospitality business are the level of service provided by internship programs and industry involvement. To acquire future university positions in the tourism and hospitality industry, students improve their critical thinking abilities, organizational commitment, and experience learning through internship training. Interns' happiness is strongly influenced by the caliber of their hotel management training, which in turn strengthens their favorable career plans. Through their contentment with their internship, the student's career aspirations were also indirectly impacted by their training satisfaction [30]. Internship training programs allow students to transition from school to the workforce, which promotes professional advancement via hands-on learning. The tourism and hospitality business, the university, and the students all gain from internships, which also help students learn in a multicultural workplace and promote collaboration with the hotel and tourist industry. Internships are an extremely useful tool for evaluating students' performance in the labour market and determines whether the training they have received satisfies industry standards [31]. Internships have emerged as a popular hands-on learning opportunity that helps students advance their careers and adjust from college to the workforce. The many advantages of internships make them an important part of the learning cycle. Internships provide students the chance to obtain real-world experience, hone skills that they may not learn in the classroom, and take advantage of networking opportunities that enhance the student's chances of finding employment post-graduation. In addition to this, internships allow businesses to explore new talents thereby lowering recruiting and retention expenses by investigating market possibilities [32]. Through internships, students may experiment with the many work responsibilities and determine whether a certain career path is wise [33].

4.0 BRIDGING ACADEMIA AND INDUSTRY

The gaps between academic and industry research were analyzed by Sobaih et al., (2015) and these gaps included (a) a lack of commitment and interest; (b) confidentiality concerns (c) patents, licenses, and ownership rights; (d) a lack of trust between academia and business; (e) differences with gaining the required knowledge and profitability of the business; (f) free accessibility of academic research; (g) full or part-time research activity; and (h) theory versus practical research. It has been demonstrated that bridging these gaps benefits both parties, the colleges and universities can get access to resources and answers to real-world issues, improving the quality of the research [1]. A study of partnerships between the tourism industry and educational institutions for the effective and efficient delivery of tourism and hospitality education among students conducted by Anderson et al., (2018) they looked at various approaches to how partnerships can help students develop their skills and suggested a framework for productive cooperation among all the stakeholders. The framework put forth by Anderson et al., (2018) for effective collaboration amongst key stakeholders such as government agencies, educational institutions, and leading industry experts calls for the development of skills to meet the needs of various tourism stakeholders. This collaboration should be viewed as a partnership between the sector and education and training providers like colleges, universities, and vocational centres; the government should establish national tourism education curricula that all training institutions can follow and adhere to; universities and colleges should be given all the needed support it needs including proper and adequate facilities, guidelines, and connections with other international organizations and institutions; incentives should be provided to the schools to attract more students to increase enrolment in tourism and hospitality programs [35]. Government agencies can support education in tourism and hospitality by conducting regular evaluation exercises, monitoring, and controlling the adoption of national curricula through inspections, seminars, and surveys of the central admission system; establishing guidelines and regulations for internships and apprenticeships; enforcing pertinent labour laws to encourage the employment of graduates; take part in the management of academic institutions by serving on governing boards and committees; help academic institutions establish and maintain international connections that promote exchange programs; and support academic institutions in researching issues related to tourism and hospitality development [1].

Table 1: Addressing gaps in academia and the tourism & hospitality sector [1]

Gaps	Academic Institution	Tourism and Hospitality Sector
Miscommunication	Create a link across industries to facilitate efficient and effective communication	Create an avenue whereby academic institutions can access, explore, and conduct research.
	The findings of the study should explicitly articulate how the study can be applied in theory and practice	Establish partnerships that are beneficial to all the stakeholders involved.
Lack of educational and hands-on practical training between the academic institutions and the tourism and hospitality industry	Organize boot camps and field trips for the students during summer holidays to gain real-world experience.	Offers students and faculty members the opportunity to work and engage in the activities of the host organization to gain the required skills and knowledge of the sector.
	Providing modern and sophisticated equipment that can help the students develop and investigate novel research topics in line with current trends in the industry	Participating in educational activities such as seminars and workshops organized by academic institutions fostering collaboration and partnership with all the stakeholders.
Mistrust	Build a sense of confidence and reliability between the participating students, academic institutions, and tourism and hospitality experts. Helping the students and host organization understand the rules regarding the internship training and how information regarding the training can be disseminated to all the parties involved.	Organize the activities and tasks of the student interns so that it does not interfere with their academic activities such as classes and exams.
Redundancy	Find study areas that will benefit both parties and stay up to date with industry research demands.	Look in academic and research institutes that are conducting research that will be beneficial to the academic institutions and the tourism and hospitality industry.

Sobaih et al., (2015) identified six major concerns about university-industry cooperation in the hospitality and tourism sectors to better understand the cooperation between academia, industry, and government.

1. There are not so many knowledge-related issues that are likely to motivate hospitality and tourist firms to look for university partnerships because these sectors are not thought of as knowledge-based.
2. Compared to other fields in social science, tourism and hospitality studies are relatively new worldwide. In the United States, for instance, the first PhD in tourism and hospitality management was not awarded until 1951.
3. the hospitality and tourism sector is largely owned by international corporations comprising chains of hotels, restaurants, and entertainment chains like Hilton, Marriott, McDonald's, KFC, and Pizza Hut, with the headquarters predominantly located in the United States, Academic institutions in developing nations are unlikely to be considered as prospects for university-industry collaboration.

4. Most businesses in the travel and hospitality industry globally are small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), making up the majority in this sector. This widespread presence of smaller businesses can also limit opportunities for university-industry partnerships and the fact that governments worldwide are placing more focus on SMEs because of their ability to boost economic growth and create jobs, both of which are vital for developing the country.
5. There are no rules or entry barriers if one wants to venture into the hospitality and tourism industry as they operate anywhere and at any time without requiring any particular qualifications.
6. The tourism and hospitality sectors operate around the clock, suggesting they have little to no time for research. The protocols and routines in universities frequently prevent many industry leaders and key experts from collaborating with them because they want education to evolve and respond swiftly, and they demand things promptly.

The following recommendations were considered to bridge the gap between academics and industry in the hospitality and tourism sector.

1. To ensure that when students graduate from colleges and universities, they are more aware of what the industry standards and demand as such educators and the industry need to work closely together for efficient and effective training. The level of service provided to visitors will be greatly enhanced by this.
2. Regular conferences, seminars, and workshops to exchange ideas should be held. Both the students and teachers would be prepared for such an event. They would acquire a great deal of theoretical and practical information. This will ensure that the graduates of the universities are not a mismatch when they join the workforce.
3. Frequent industry excursions should be introduced to students. Colleges and universities should plan frequent field visits to the workplace for teachers and students. This will expose them to current industry trends and best practices [34].

Table 2: Fostering collaboration between academic institutions and the tourism and hospitality industry [1]

Academic Institution	Tourism and Hospitality Industry
Utilizing case studies and tourism and hospitality projects to create real-world learning experiences in the classroom.	Provide more employment opportunities for the teachers and students such as internships, and part-time jobs that align with their interests and academic field giving them hands-on practical experiences.
Incorporate real-world projects in the curriculum where the students can collaborate with real clients. This is to help the students apply their theoretical knowledge to practical use.	Mentors, supervisors, and the staff of the host organization should develop a good working relationship with the student interns.
Examine new research prospects for the study that are relevant to the field.	Engage in campus events including information sessions, evaluating student portfolios, conducting interviews, and mentoring. this is to establish a presence in the academic institutions and foster partnerships between the students, faculty members, and industry experts.
Stay connected with the current trends and demands of the industry.	Reallocate the funds from one department to another to better support the participants in the cause of the training.

5.0 DEVELOPING COMPETENCIES THROUGH INTERNSHIPS

Competency encompasses a person's behaviour and performance as well as their knowledge, skills, attitudes, abilities, traits, and characteristics that are not only relevant to the work they do or the position they hold. Competency is achieved by concurrently using a variety of abilities at various degrees of complexity. This suggests that competency in the tourism and hospitality industry includes not just lower-level work-related abilities but also more sophisticated, higher-level skills and mastery that are better characterized as the "art" of hospitality [9]. According to research by Raras et al. (2024), human resource managers' assessments of the skills of graduates in Malaysia's tourism and hospitality fields indicate that teamwork is regarded as the most crucial skill, while technology use is regarded as the least significant skill. Additionally, another study identified key hospitality management competencies that managers in the industry need to discover that the industry favours graduates with soft competencies, particularly those related to building strong relationships with customers and collaborating well with others. In addition to prioritizing soft skills, graduates need to arm themselves with abilities acquired from education and training. Aside from hard and soft competencies, however. Since graduates acquire information during their education, their attitude toward working in the industrial sector is seen as a significant factor. According to their findings, graduates who want to work in the hotel sector need to be more customer-focused and possess strong human resource management abilities. Consequently, they recommend that educational institutions prioritize the development of general managerial skills [36]. Raras et al. (2024) further stated that in addition to offering courses that can help students develop soft skills like decision-making, problem-solving, teamwork, initiative, and interpersonal skills, higher education institutions that offer tourism and hospitality programs must establish programs that promote human resource management abilities and expose students to real-world industry experience. At the same time, additional skills like organizing tasks efficiently, peaking efficiently and effectively, delivering impactful presentations, good working relationships with colleagues, and essential knowledge in employing technology tools may also be acquired at the college level. Kay et al., (2000) determined the competencies of hospitality managers utilizing the Sandwith model and Hu (2010) conducted research on the creation of core competencies for creative culinary development.

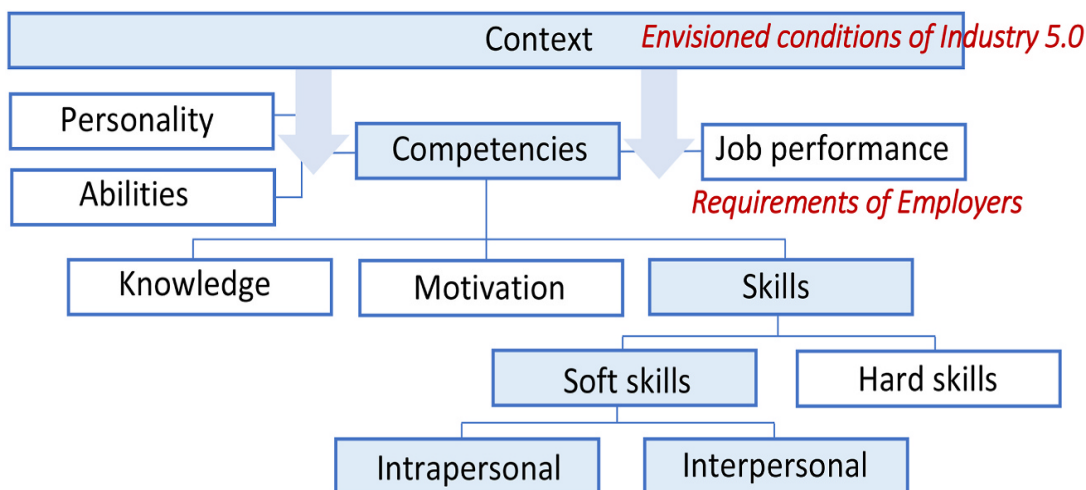


Figure 6: Schematic illustration of conceptual perception of soft skills [39]

The generic skills framework is another competence study paradigm created by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) in 2003. Nine skill categories are listed in the model including Taking responsibility for actions and managing time and goals, Expressing ideas clearly and understanding others effectively, Collaborating well with others to achieve the desired goals and objectives, finding and providing solutions to challenges, Being proactive and coming up with new ideas, Setting priorities and managing tasks effectively, Adapting to new information and improving skills, and Displaying positive traits like integrity, resilience, and flexibility [36]. Sisson et al., (2013), a hospitality management curriculum should emphasize leadership, good and efficient communication, customer service, work habits, ethics, team building, dispute resolution, and goal-setting skills. Graduates should concentrate on these skills rather than operations- and company-

specific applications if they want to succeed. Teaching students the skills that are now needed helps them land their initial job while teaching them higher-order concepts helps them land later employment and succeed in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Additionally, the research stated that when recruiting graduates for entry-level roles in the tourism and hospitality industry, it is important that the students prioritize teamwork, the ability to listen properly, excellent verbal and written skills, the ability to project a confident and professional image, and the ability to empathize and relate with guests' experience. However, business management, hospitality products and services, and industry-specific terminology were deemed secondary. Consequently, productivity and tangible work-processing abilities are subordinated to interpersonal skills [40]. According to Adeyinka-Ojo (2018), the interpersonal, people-oriented, or behavioural abilities needed to use academic or knowledge skills and technical skills in the workplace are known as soft skills. When a front desk or heart of the house employee helps a visitor select a room, that is an example of soft skills. Soft talents were divided into four categories: (a) communication skills; (b) management/organization; (c) leadership/people/relationship skills; and (d) cognitive abilities and knowledge. Soft qualities like creativity and self-assurance, professionalism, effective written and verbal communication, ICT skills, time and self-management, collaboration and interaction, dependability, and a willingness to learn are all factors that increase a graduate's employability [41,42,43,44].

Soft skills can help students meet their post-graduation academic and career goals. Incorporating these skills into the teaching process has become a crucial aspect of education. The reason for this is that the tourism and hospitality sectors need employees who possess various abilities that appear to be included in the employability and career readiness categories [43,45]. Gaining these soft abilities enables students to take initiative, contribute to success at work, and more effectively adjust to the culture of the business [43,44]. Asefer et al., (2021) stated that Soft skills are character traits that improve a person's relationships and performance at work, while hard skills are often task or activity-specific. Along with social shamefulness, it also relates to varied degrees of linguistic proficiency, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism. The technical prerequisites for a job, known as hard skills, are complemented with soft skills. It may also be a crucial component of the company, particularly if it interacts with consumers directly.

Table 3: Soft skills required for internship training [42]

Group	Soft Skills
Interpersonal	Communication Collaboration Management skills Cross-cultural competence Dispute resolution and mediation
Individual	Educational competence Devoted and dedicated to the job. Being professionally ethical on the job The ability to develop new methods and processes that will enhance product and service delivery. Personal awareness; to have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the students.
Process-based	Customer centricity Critical thinking ability The ability to adjust and remain efficient regardless of the changes and challenges in the workplace. The ability to be focused on achieving the desired results.

6. PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INTERNSHIPS

6.1 Pre-internship preparation

According to Zopiatis et al. (2013), before sending students for internship training in the tourism and hospitality sector, the academic institution of learning should create a framework that will guide the activity and provide everyone involved in the program with an understanding of the concept. This framework needs to encompass the goals, purpose, and mission of their internships in tourism and hospitality, among other things. A practical framework should (a) take into account the features of the specific setting, (b) satisfy the requirements of all parties involved, and (c) maintain the program's ethical standards. The study further stated that every academic institution of higher learning has its approach to tourism and hospitality internship practice, the specific operational environment, and how the experience is included in the program's curriculum. It is crucial to remember that there is no singular comprehensive definition, model, or structure for internships that all educational hospitality institutions may adhere to. Each academic institution must design the program based on its curriculum and distinctiveness to determine how it plays out [46]. Academic coursework should be assigned to an internship program in a way that fairly evaluates and rewards the performance and workload of the student based on the length of each practice and the intricacy of each job category. Students who desire to participate in internship training programs must meet a clear set of eligibility requirements and internship prerequisites to be eligible to participate. Additionally, the values, objectives, and standards of the internship experience should be outlined in a formal internship course outline corresponding to the experience's curricular component. This course outline should be used as a learning agreement between the student intern, the tourism and hospitality employer, and the educational institution [46]. Academic institutions should always organize mandatory pre-internship workshops and seminars for all intending students in various internship programs. Tourism and hospitality students should attend a pre-internship seminar or workshop to help them prepare for the internship program. The workshop aims to prepare each student mentally for internship participation and impart pertinent knowledge. The lecture should be done a few weeks before the organization's hiring event.

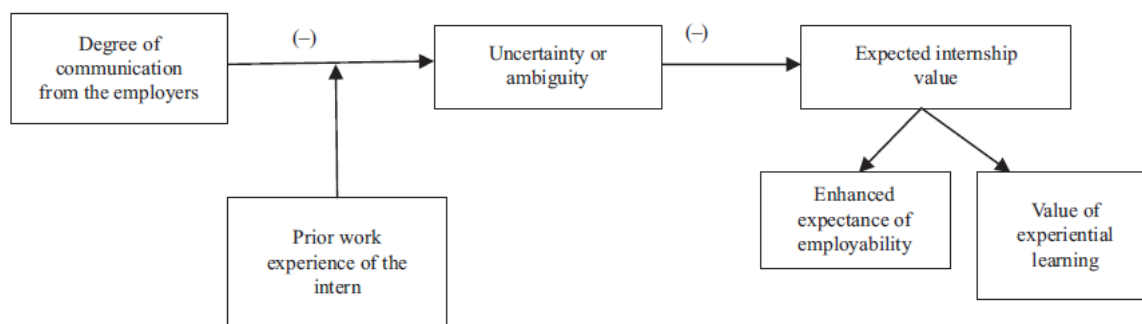


Figure 7: Schematic representation of pre-internship program [47]

6.2 During internship

Student interns should be exposed to the topics listed in the learning agreement during the internship training. The academic component involves the proper procedures for evaluating, recording, and informing all parties concerned of the efficiency and effectiveness of the internship training experience [46]. The agreement ensures that all obligations are met by reaffirming the stakeholder's commitment to the internship training. Furthermore, for the internship period, the host organization must be dedicated to the practice and take charge of the intern's orientation, training, supervision, and evaluation. Additionally, on-the-job supervisors should provide the interns with frequent, helpful comments during the practice and when it is over. To document the activities of their practical experience, interns are requested to keep a weekly logbook or journal. This personal journal is meant to assist students in maintaining focus on their own experiences, professional development, and reflections on topics brought up during the internship and all the activities and tasks assigned to them. The interns should be assigned a mentor or supervisor from the academic institutions and host

organization throughout their training. Mentoring by a seasoned tourism and hospitality expert provides informal counsel to promote the interns' growth. It is well known that mentoring is an inexpensive strategy that, when used well, may positively impact students' management styles and their understanding of the tourism and hospitality business [46].

The internship coordinator should visit on-site as needed or at least twice during the internship duration. Faculty visits are an excellent way for everyone to assess how well the actual learning process is going in comparison to the predetermined objectives, talk about issues, get more details on policies and performance review techniques, and offer ideas for improvements or plans of action that will increase the practice's worth. During their on-site visits, faculty members ought to get to speak with the student intern privately [46]. Zhu et al., (2023) stated that during internship training, the General management of the tourism and hospitality business implements a three-level management system for the participating students. This consists of three categories, the first category consists of the personnel department which acts as the coordinating agency that manages, controls, and supervises the entire processes during the training. Before the students begin the official internship, numerous rounds of hotel orientation and debriefings are required to increase their capacity and adaptability. During these sessions, senior staff members will educate the students about the hotel's culture, organization motto, and management policies. The second category is the acting department, which is responsible for internship training. Here, the head of the department gives the students pre-internship training, assigning roles and responsibilities to the interns in different departments, and also educating the interns on the code and conducts of the business. Furthermore, the manager then attaches the interns to a more experienced employee who will guide and teach the new interns and introduce them to everything they need to know about the business.

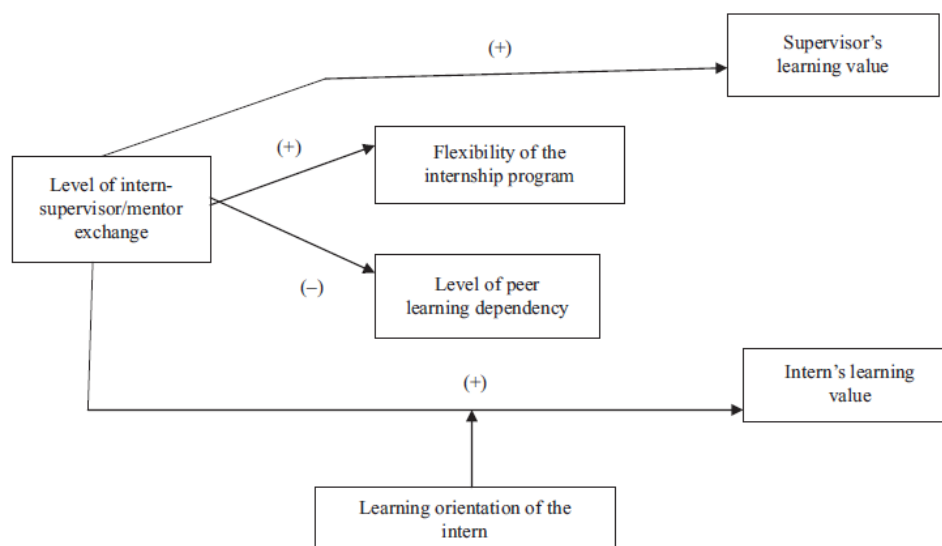


Figure 8: Schematic illustration of major elements during internship training [47]

6.3 Post-internship evaluation

After completing the internship training, interns should participate in a post-internship seminar. The main objectives are evaluating the entire experience and giving the students who recently completed their internship training a chance to reflect on and talk about their experiences with other tourism and hospitality students. Incorporating first-year hospitality students who have not yet completed an internship into the post-internship lecture would be appropriate. This will benefit the first-year students by developing a realistic understanding of the requirements and nature of their future internship activities. The post-internship lecture is very instructive since it allows students to observe what they are doing in the sector up close and learn about the skills needed for a worthwhile experience [46]. The post-internship seminar serves as a platform for students to reflect on and analyze their internship experiences. It includes the following key components: Reviewing students' activities and overall effectiveness during the internship, Collecting insights from both students and internship coordinators to understand the experience from multiple perspectives, Discussing any difficulties or issues encountered during the internship and exploring solutions, Personal Growth

Reflections: Allowing students to articulate how the internship contributed to their professional and personal development, Learning Outcomes Assessment: Evaluating what students gained from their internship in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies. Additionally, students are encouraged to express their questions, observations, emotions, and suggestions related to their experiences. This discussion not only highlights how challenges were addressed but also generates recommendations for improving the program in the future. The seminar fosters learning, growth, and program enhancement [46].

Students are required to author a paper based on their internship experience that analyses the experience and how it affected their professional and personal growth. This article is intended to be insightful, thorough, and deeply personal, offering a look into the personal repercussions of the internship. Student interns can use this self-reflection to integrate their academic experiences with their internship experience and critically evaluate all of the work they have completed. Additionally, it seeks to provide student interns a chance to both personally and professionally showcase their development, advancement, dedication, and vision for their desired careers in tourism and hospitality [46]. Instructors and lecturers should assessment instruments that will allow student interns to assess themselves, their host organization, and the assistance they got from their respective academic institutions in a strictly confidential manner. The evaluations should be summarized for all internship training participants. Proper assessment methods are to be used to review, document, and evaluate the growth, accomplishments, and progress of the interns. The instructor from the academic institutions and host organizations must be able to quantify and assess how the experience affects the student's personal and professional growth. (a) instructors; that is faculty members from the academic institution), and tourism and hospitality experts must take part in the intern's evaluation both during and after the internship training, and (b) all the stakeholders involved not just the students should be routinely reviewed and evaluated following predetermined criteria [46].

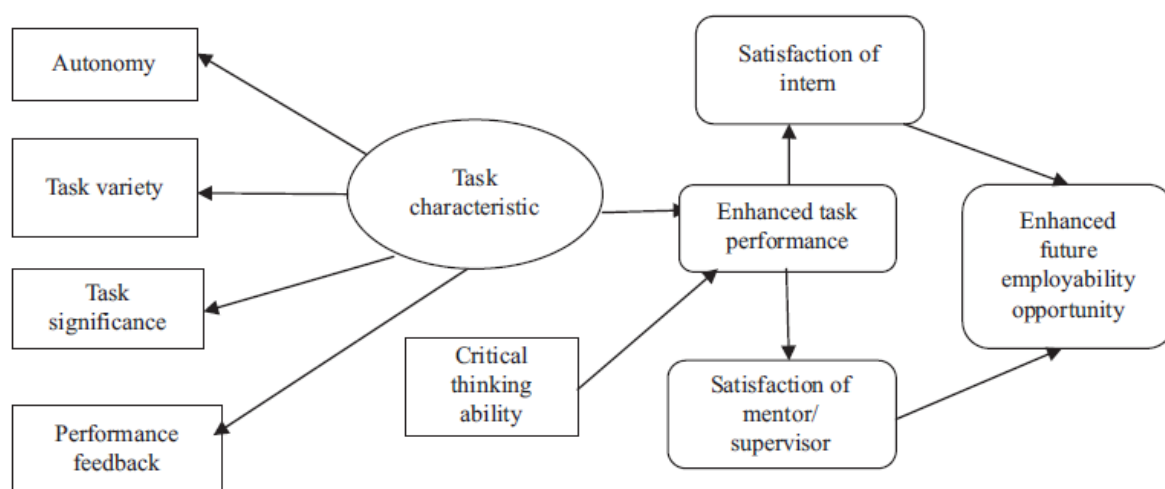


Figure 9: Schematic illustration of post-internship training stage [47]

7. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS IN IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

Effective learning outcomes are the goal of an educational system, and it is expected to occur in a high-quality learning environment composed of physical and psychological resources and service delivery components, which are composed of staff and operations [35]. Quality education consists of healthy students who are prepared to engage in the teaching and learning process, settings with sufficient facilities and resources, content pertinent to knowledge and skill acquisition, learning-facilitating procedures, and results that include attitudes, knowledge, and abilities connected to national educational goals. The biggest problem is inadequate facilities for teaching and learning. It is common knowledge that well-equipped classrooms have an impact on the standard of instruction. Anderson et al., 2018 stated that the unfavorable perception of tourist employment, particularly concerning employment in the operational category, was also shown to be a significant problem.

According to the assertion, Many seek tourism training as a last alternative after failing to get entrance to other sectors. One of the main causes of this negative attitude was the belief that positions in the tourist industry pay poorly and have unfavourable working conditions. Due to the unfavourable perception of jobs in the tourist industry, educational institutions wind up accepting applicants who are not very competent. This has consistently had detrimental effects on graduates' caliber and employment [35]. The majority of workers had the educational credentials needed for the position, but employers also found that they lacked essential skills and were unable to carry out even the most basic duties in their jobs. The gap in skill gap resulted from the educational system, which prioritizes generating graduates with spotless credentials above the necessary skill sets for carrying out their jobs well.

The key components of success any in course are its curriculum and teaching material. In the hotel and tourist sector, trends are changing quickly, thus curricula must adapt to meet market demands. The curriculum ought to incorporate new courses on property management, hospital management, retail shop management, and contact centre management. Having all of the hospitality and tourism education under one roof will be fantastic for consistency and appropriate oversight [47]. The hospitality and tourism industry is a skill-based curriculum, and the internship program must simultaneously emphasize the students' managerial abilities. Developing the students requires the introduction of presentations, case studies, scenario management, panel discussions, demonstrations, and other innovative teaching techniques [47]. According to Farmakin (2018), the success of Internship training is often hampered by administrative problems, such as a lack of funding for educators to visit the host organizations, inadequate university training, low pay, little or no industry support, a lack of mentorship during the internship, and a lack of incentives.

Additionally, Farmakin (2018) also stated that the negative internship experiences during training have largely been attributed to differences between industry and student expectations on the roles and duties involved, interns' skills, incentives, and student professional development. Students studying hospitality and tourism typically have great hopes for their careers in the field, but their level of fulfillment often falls short of these expectations. Gad et al., (2020) highlight the challenge associated with internship training programs in the tourism and hospitality sector. He stated that students tend to be confused about who to make the internship arrangements and who to place them; many interns believe that the professors should handle their placement. The impression formed at this time will influence subsequent years spent in the field, whether it is favourable or unfavourable. A bad internship experience would weaken a trainee's intentions to work in the hotel industry. Gad et al., (2020) Further stated that The biggest challenge with internships is the lack of proper preparation and communication. Interns often do not get enough guidance or feedback from both their employers and educators to ensure their training meets the required standards.

Additionally, a heavy focus on theoretical learning makes it harder for students to adapt to the real-world industry environment. Armada et al., (2024) stated that cultural differences, language problems, homesickness, and adjusting to new work situations are some challenges students encounter while on internship training overseas. These difficulties can cause students a great deal of worry and pain, which hinders their capacity to participate completely and gain from the internship experience. Students taking part in overseas internships may also face major logistical challenges, such as housing, transportation, and budgetary limitations. It may be rather difficult for students to navigate new systems and contexts, especially when separated from their accustomed surroundings and support systems. It is incredibly challenging to strike a balance between academic obligations and the demands of practical training, particularly when students have a deadline to meet and must exhibit particular competencies and expertise. Resilience, flexibility, and good relationships with mentors and supervisors are necessary to overcome these obstacles.

Giousmpasoglou et al., (2021) also stated that some or most of the host organizations do not offer incentives. No provisions are made for students to receive any form of remuneration and there is inadequate planning and coordination. The instructors often do not enforce any restrictions or contracts and execute the placements depending on their acquaintances. As a result, students in internships are placed in challenging roles without enough preparation, leading to discontent. Similarly, poor working circumstances that negatively affect students' opinions of the business might be caused by promotions, inadequate compensation and benefits, and improper coworker conduct. Additionally, other studies have shown that students who participate in internship programs that fall

short of their expectations are deterred from pursuing careers in the travel and hospitality business post-graduation [22]. Soffi et al., (2020) found that interns' most frequent problems during their internship program were excessive workloads and low or no incentives. Some managers and full-time employees lacked the necessary training to contribute to and support the internship experience, and provided minimal assistance to ensure that the internship training was meaningful and productive to the students. Moreover, many academic institutions are ill-equipped to guarantee that their students can effectively handle the demands and difficulties of actual industry environment.

8. BENEFITS OF A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR STAKEHOLDERS

Zopiatis et al., (2012) reported that the success of an internship training program largely depends on the balance between the requirements of the host organization, the educational institution, and the participating students. The quality of cooperation and communication between the three main stakeholders and their level of commitment to the program determines how effective the framework would be. It is essential to clearly define their roles, responsibilities, and obligations to the stakeholders involved and it is crucial to remember that sincere dedication can only be fostered when the motivation for the stakeholders' involvement comes from internal rather than external sources. In addition to exhibiting a responsible attitude and a professional manner comparable to that of hospitality professionals, a structured internship framework helps and enables the student intern to be dedicated to the internship program. Intrinsic aspects like curiosity, horizon expansion, aspirations for a successful career, and, most importantly, a desire to learn and experience new things must drive interns' involvement in the practice.

Kalgi et al., (2019) reported that the use of modern-day Technology has significantly improved in the tourism and hospitality hotel sector recently. The knowledge of these technologies is crucial, and more emphasis is placed on the use of computers and property management system software at the academic level as the tools the day to day-to-day research, presentations, teaching, and other activities. More usage and knowledge of contemporary equipment in the kitchen, front desk, cleaning, and restaurant industries should be encouraged in the curriculum. According to Chong et al., (2020), internship work experience helps the students enrolled in the internship program to clarify their interests and define their professional goals. A lot of college students believe that their internship experience is the primary factor shaping their future career choices/intentions. As a result, the internship training provides a realistic preview of the job environment in which the interns who are participating learn valuable insights and information about the company, including details regarding their supervisor, job features, and corporate traits. This hands-on experience provides a better understanding of what is required in their future careers in the tourism and hospitality industry. Bilsland et al., 2020 developed a framework that considers the characteristics of the tourism and hospitality industries as an ecosystem of service providers. The framework suggested three internship practice patterns as a way to cultivate desired service mindsets in interns. With the identification of important work-integrated learning stakeholder elements, the framework examines how different virtual internship and learning models can best equip graduates with the desired skills in the tourism and hospitality industry. Mekawy et al. (2014) emphasize the value of an organized industry-based internship training program. The study incorporates interns' planning duties and perspectives into the internship experience to guarantee the highest satisfaction level. The framework facilitates the integration of planning studies conducted from many perspectives in the tourism and hospitality training fields.

Additionally, it offers a three-tiered monitoring feedback system that allows interns, academic institutions, and host organizations to collaboratively identify and promptly resolve any remedial steps that may be necessary. The academic institutions should actively partake in industry engagements including organizing seminars, meetings with industry experts, workshops for personal development, and other activities that contribute to the development and overall quality of students. Encouraging students to participate in extracurricular and intra-institutional activities, such as cultural or athletic programs, can help them grow as individuals. Students' participation in events such as in-house food festivals, and theme parties can help them improve their leadership abilities, increase their teamwork, and enhance their ability to perform on a large stage. Institutions with commercial facilities like lodging facilities, dining establishments, and travel agencies connected to academic institutions should allow students to work during their leisure time to develop professional skills, boost their confidence, and secure decent employment [47].

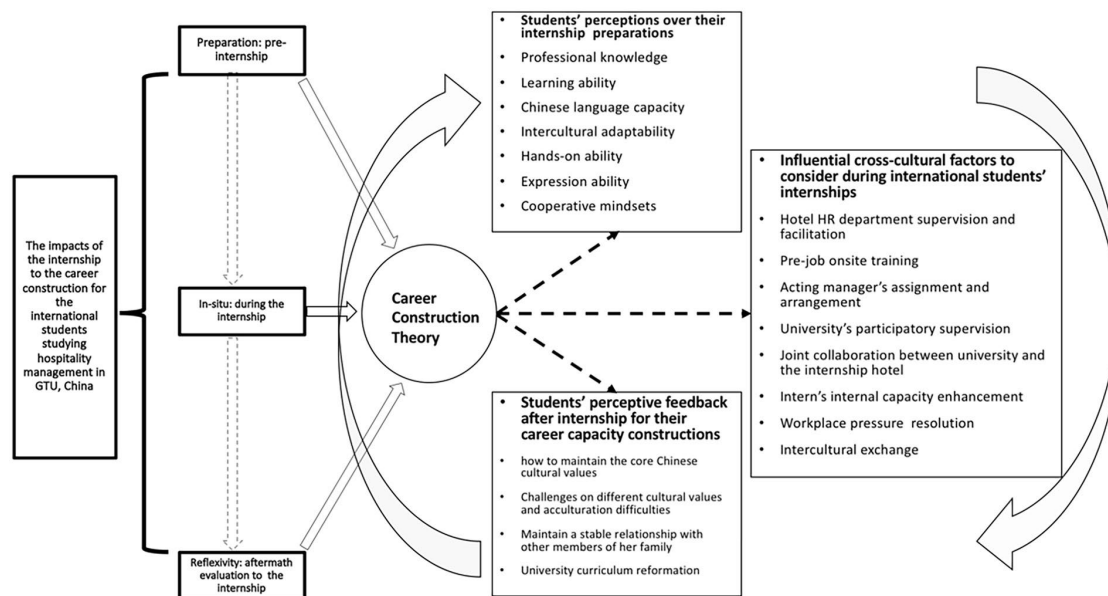


Figure 10: Career trajectory via a well-structured internship program [25]

9. CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

Rosyidi (2021) reported a case study on undergraduate interns' perceptions and attitudes toward careers in Indonesia's tourism industry. The study highlights how students of tourism see themselves taking careers in the sector, the attitudes they have toward the industry post-pandemic, what area of business and workplaces in the tourist sector the interns want to specialize in during and after the internship training, how the participating students intend to use the skills and expertise they have acquired during the training to develop and improve themselves to provide better service quality such as good communication and interaction with guest from diverse cultural backgrounds. The study further outlined nine elements that affect the student's ability and willingness to work in the tourist business and the nine elements include work type, industry-person friendliness, physical working conditions, compensation and benefits, opportunities for growth and advancement, good working relationship with coworkers and managers, and their overall dedication and commitment to the tourism industry. All these tend to have an impact on students' decision to pursue a career in the sector. Atef (2018) studied the tourism and hospitality education management model of Sultan Qaboos University Oman. The model of the study was used to evaluate the student interns who have completed their internship training find jobs, track their career paths post-graduation, and how the academic institutions organize their teaching methods and management structure. The research surveyed the university's tourism department and was carried out on three graduating classes of 2013, 2014, and 2015. primary and secondary data were gathered from the dean of admission and registration to determine the present job status of the students who have graduated from the department, The students were selected because of their employment and positional stability. The employment data was gathered via phone calls and in-person interactions to ensure optimum dependability. El-Houshy(2018). investigated the perceptions and attitudes of hospitality students who are currently enrolled in the faculty of tourism towards the hospitality industry and its career prospects at Alexandria University in Egypt. The study was conducted using a survey with about 203 second-, third-, and final-year undergraduate and postgraduate students. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect and analyze the survey data. The study stated that about 76.5 % of the students voluntarily opted to study tourism and hospitality management. However, most of the respondents were women, and about 64.7% had some prior working experience in the field, while around 32.9% had no working experience. The results of the data collected from the survey are as follows; most students demonstrated a strong interest and dedication to pursuing a career in the tourism and hospitality industry after graduation. About 70.6% of the students said they would work in the sector post-graduation. One of the major reasons the students intend to pursue a career in tourism and hospitality is that they want to apply their classroom knowledge into practice and have the opportunity to meet and interact with different people from different places and cultures, about 5.9% of the students said they had no intention of working in the hospitality business after graduation. The reason they provided was low salary, poor working conditions, and lack of guidance

from senior employees, and 23.5% of the students were still unsure about their interest in pursuing further employment in the sector.

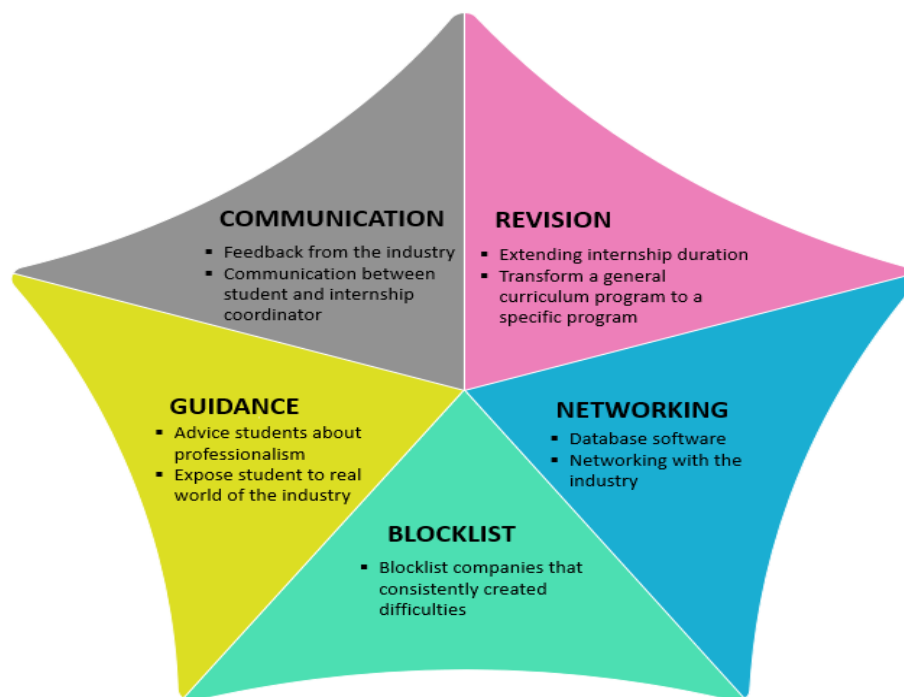


Figure 11: Strategies for improving internships in the tourism and hospitality industry [54]

Kamal Abdien et al. (2019) investigate the benefits of cross-cultural training and cultural intelligence for hospitality students in the Balearic Islands in Spain and Alexandria in Egypt. The study highlights how managers and aspiring employees in the hospitality industry should be culturally intelligent to interact with visitors from various cultural backgrounds. It stated that Cross-cultural training is key to improving students' understanding and adaptation to different cultures. Students from countries different from where their university is located tend to have better cultural intelligence, especially in how they think and behave in artistic settings. Similarly, students who interact with people from other cultures during internships develop higher cultural intelligence, particularly in understanding, adapting, and staying motivated in cross-cultural situations, compared to those who do not have such experiences. Hussien et al., (2018) analyzed how interns in the hospitality industry perceive the elements that affect their level of satisfaction with the training program. The research utilized Qualtrics Software to gather data via an online survey. 100 senior students who had just finished their summer internship made up the sample data. The data was analyzed using AMOS Software and the structural equation modeling (SEM) approach. The study aims to determine how satisfied undergraduate students in a sizable Midwestern hospitality school are with their internship training. The research looked at how student interns of diverse age groups perceived key aspects of their internship training such as supervisors, the internship office, university supervisors, task clarity, learning opportunities, work hours, location, and commute. Compared to older interns, younger interns expressed greater satisfaction with the assistance of their internship office, primary supervisor, task clarity, learning opportunities, and working hours. The findings demonstrated the importance of feedback, independence, academic readiness, support from university supervisors and mentors, flexible work schedules, student initiative, location, and learning a variety of skills are essential in influencing the internship and making it enjoyable. This is important for both organizations hosting interns and businesses in the tourism and hospitality industry, as they can help improve the overall internship experience. Deale et al., (2020) studied how undergraduate students of hospitality and tourism students at a public university in the southeastern United States perceive mentoring. The sampling consists of 370 students from the university. The study utilized the College Student Mentoring Scale (CSMS) (Crisp, 2009) to evaluate students' perceptions of mentoring in hospitality education.

10. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The students should have the chance to experience the real aspects of the tourism and hospitality sector through frequent field visits to prestigious establishments, which academic institutions should organize in coordination with local industry specialists. Academic institutions must ensure that students have reasonable expectations about the kinds of jobs available in the sector, their salaries, prospects for growth and advancement, and career pathways. Academic institutions and industry experts need to collaborate closely to improve and provide a better understanding of the curriculum [54]. Furthermore, the institution can develop and design a website targeting tourism and hospitality students and graduates. The platform can serve as a medium of interaction and communication between students, academia, and industry experts. Furthermore, Effective and excellent communication between the universities and host organizations is necessary to cultivate more productive interactions between the two entities. There should be a plan in place for the regular visits of educational institution officials to internship locations. The students and the academic institutions should continuously communicate to track any issues throughout the training period. For the duration of the internship, a discussion board on the school's e-learning platform can be created where students can engage and interact with university staff and one another [58].

Schools that teach hospitality and tourism should give their students the instruction they need to develop the skills they need to work in a multicultural workplace, raise their cross-cultural awareness, and enhance their cultural competencies and CQ [55]. To guarantee that students get the most out of their internship training, the host organization should make sure all internship programs emphasize cross-training and allow students to serve as many managers or supervisors as they can. An internship job description should be developed that outlines expectations for all the stakeholders involved. The job description should be written in collaboration with the host organization, and the needs of the business, the academic institutions, and the students should be met to provide a better experience [58]. The internship training should include a system reporting mechanism in which students report regularly to the internship program coordinator and principally to one management within their internship workplace. Additionally, a mentorship system should be implemented to facilitate easy and effective communication between the intern and the employer. Under this method, a senior staff person from each participating property will help and mentor interns. For a successful internship experience, assessment and feedback sessions should be conducted during and after the training period [58]. Educational institutions must ensure that students are assigned tasks and positions that allow them to utilize their academic knowledge in solving real-world problems [59]. Smaller firms may provide more prospects for management access and cross-training, so students should consider interning at smaller firms. The students should be proactive and have a good attitude to ensure they get the most out of the program and not rely on their institution or workplace to take care of everything for them [58].

The tourism and hospitality sectors need to keep striving to improve and develop several areas of the working environment in the sector. Some students feel that the industry lags behind other businesses in various areas, especially regarding security, compensation, career possibilities, and advancement. The industry may keep losing their highly qualified and experienced workers except it can alter how people perceive careers and employment in the sector [54]. To help students grasp how each department operates, the employer could arrange frequent meetings with department managers or supervisors to provide them with more access and exposure to management. Additionally, the business should ensure that every intern completes a thorough induction so that they understand the organization well, know their position, and feel accepted [58]. To guarantee that the requirements of the company, the institution, and the students are satisfied, the host organization/employer and the university should collaborate and develop a well-defined internship program. It should outline the training and development opportunities available to interns and make cross-training the program's main focus [58].

The goal of collaboration between academic institutions and tourism and hospitality experts is to foster a mutually beneficial, long-term partnership with the academics and professionals in the business. Collaboration has an incalculable positive impact on the design and execution of internship training activities by pointing out shortcomings and suggesting strategies to close the gap between educational theory and real-world application [54]. The government should implement the necessary procedures and steps to guarantee that tourism and hospitality graduates can join the

sector after graduation. To prevent students from failing to enter the tourism and hospitality business and ending up pursuing employment and careers in other industries, the government, and particularly the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality, ridge the gap between graduation and the beginning of a career in hospitality-related occupations and one way that the government can implement this process must be by setting up a department that can connect recent graduates with recruiters in the industry. A more comprehensive knowledge of the variables affecting internship satisfaction should be possible through future research employing qualitative methodologies. For a more complete understanding of internship satisfaction in the United States, future research should try to expand this survey to all private and municipal colleges [56,59].

11. CONCLUSION

The tourism and hospitality industry is considered one of the fastest-growing and dynamic sectors that heavily relies on skilled, well-trained, and competent employees to maintain high standards and meet the demands of the sector. Internship training programs play a crucial rare crucial gap between academic learning and real-world experience, offering students valuable experiential learning opportunities. These programs enhance students' skills, boost their employability, and prepare them for the future global workforce. Internship training programs provide opportunities for the participating students to gain valuable skills, a better understanding of their career choices, and professional working during and after the training program. Additionally, the training assists academic institutions build stronger ties with industry experts, enhancing the importance of the program program's importance and givingness to motivated and dedicated interns who intend to pursue their careers and full-time employment in the sector. A conceptual framework was proposed on how to structure internships effectively and get maximum satisfaction for all the stakeholders, the framework emphasizes key features such as efficient and effective interaction between the educational institutions, industry experts, and students. The framework highlights the need to develop clear training objectives, cross-training opportunities, supervision and mentorship from the academic institutions and the host organization, and consistent feedback to ensure successful internship experiences. This approach benefits all stakeholders by aligning academic goals with industry expectations, fostering student development, and strengthening partnerships between academia and the tourism and hospitality industry. The study also highlights some of the challenges of internship programs and how these challenges are addressed.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

There has been a growing interest in internship training programs in the past few decades, both among students seeking internship experience and academic institutions to add internship programs to their curriculum as an extracurricular activity. A well-executed internship training program gives students a clearer picture of their future employment opportunities. Internship programs with a high degree of skill diversity, a clear sense of job identity, and task relevance give students a unique opportunity to experience the realities of the working world, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses. Students gain real-world experience through internship training; the experience usually strengthens their conviction and gives them allows them their future professional path. A conducted internship training program also helps students take charge of their careers by providing better opportunities to enhance their decision-making skills. Institutions of higher learning that offer hospitality management or culinary programs, such as universities, hotel schools, and regional technical institutions, believe that they give students the right mix of managerial and technical abilities to meet the demands of the tourism and hospitality industry. Academic institutions should focus on admitting students who are committed to completing their degrees and dedicating themselves to a career in the tourism and hospitality sector. The higher the degree of turnover of the students from the curriculum the more difficult it will be for the academic institution to fulfill its objectives. Students who receive feedback from their supervisors and coworkers at work can better identify their areas of strength and areas for improvement, which helps them shape their career orientations.

One of the most essential elements of tourism and hospitality studies is to provide the sector with skilled and excellent graduates who can successfully integrate, communicate effectively, provide solutions to complex tasks, and manage business affairs. Hence, it is necessary to design a curriculum that integrates tall he stakeholders' processes and procedure. Further research is to be conducted to

shed light on comprehension of multicultural curricular elements. The study also emphasizes the need to address gender bias and inequality in internship training programs and the curriculum by taking into account the practices and systems that led to the creation of gender inequality. More information and analysis of gender-based internship training experiences, especially in fields where gendered habitus tendencies are displayed, can provide insights that help reduce gender segregation both within and outside of academic institutions and the host organization. The educational institutions in collaboration with the tourism and hospitality industry experts should organize seminars, workshops, and software training to equip the participants with the required knowledge and expertise to enhance service delivery and give them a better understanding of the sector and its requirements. Internship programs should be well-structured and coordinated. The curriculum should be updated and revised annually to include recent trends, innovations, and developments in the tourism and hospitality sector, keeping it relevant and in line with industry standards.

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