

Internship Practices in the Hospitality Sector in India: A Career Benefit or Precarious Experience

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Abstract: An internship is a phase of work experience offered by an organisation for a stipulated period. In present academic system, a student earns academic credit through internship, considered as a major tool for increasing academic grade rather than just experiential learning. The stakeholders/hospitality industry professionals are directly involved to offer experiential learning for the students however, may alter/change or break the schedule/program which in turn the actual objectives of overall learning may get hampered subsequently could mislead the students to know the authentic practice and idea of selection related to their trade/department. The objective of this research is to find out the role of internship for career benefit of students and their attitude towards internship. This research also suggests the strategic interventions required for solving current problems and future needs on stakeholders' approach to develop internship practices as career-oriented experience. In this process the researcher reviewed various articles, discussed with research scholars and collected primary data from 148 respondents (Hospitality management students) from four leading colleges of India and analysed through statistical tools (t test, percentage method, multiple regression) to come to the conclusion. The study findings suggest that the cooperation and change in stakeholders (Hospitality establishments and professionals engaged) approach on internship program is necessary to make the students development more effective for their career advancement/ employability.

Keywords: Hospitality Program, Internship, Academic Credit, Experiential Learning

Introduction

For hospitality education, internship is one of the major components. Nowadays, internship in hospitality education is more structured and career oriented, may be paid or unpaid but strictly under proper supervision of subject/trade experts by authorised hospitality professionals from the leading hospitality establishments. Internship programme in hospitality education is beneficial for the students for their career advancement with skill-based experiential learning (Petrillose & Montgomery, 1998; Neuman, 1999; Ko, 2008). It provides a practical sense of working in any hospitality establishment with responsibility and commitment to complete a particular job as per the need of the stakeholders. In this process, interns are able to identify the issues/problems related to their job and learn how to handle

those through experience without depending only on the theory taught. Right designing of the internship program and proper training is one the important parameters for hospitality establishment. However, the interns are not much satisfied with their experience and consider it as a precarious journey within their management course due to unprofessional approach by many hospitality establishments resulting in drop out from this profession. Working environment, long working hours, poor interpersonal relationship, lack of supervision, poor remuneration, lack of motivational approach, lack of benefits etc. are the factors which contribute to students' decision to change the trade or industry upon graduation (Pavesic, and Brymer, 1990; Busby et al., 1997). Many studies have been conducted on the efficiency of internship programmes which have pointed out the trend of its deterioration over the years (Cannon & Arnold, 1998; Lee & Chao, 2013). The short-term training or outdoor catering is another area, which needs to be schedule as per the preference and proper understanding of interns in their course curriculum where selection and assignment should be based on proper trade knowledge, training and department/area specialisation. The regulatory body and the stakeholders involved in policy and planning should value the internship programme and its importance in hospitality and future employability rather a precarious experience for the interns.

Problem Statement

Internship program is one of the beneficial assignments for hospitality interns where interns could gather knowledge and experience from skill-based experiential learning under proper guidance. There is a gap between the knowledge acquired in an educational institution and proper execution of the same in an industry. Due to lack of supervision and unprofessional approach from related stakeholders, this much-needed experiential learning is viewed as a redundant perilous journey for the interns.

Background

In 1970s and 80s, many universities and colleges all over the world started offering internships in a variety of fields including hospitality for the experiential learning of the students and made this more attractive by including internship as course credits (Spradlin, 2009). Hospitality and tourism have been a key factor in employment generation. One in 15 jobs accounting for 6% of world output and 7% of capital investment is generated by these sectors and counting (UNWTO, 2014). The growth of Indian hospitality industry was experienced 8.8% between the years 2007-2016 and considered the second growing hospitality market in the world. The Union Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has projected that there is a prerequisite of about 2.03 lakhs of hospitality specialists in the industry but only approximately 22,000 hospitality graduates pass out annually from various colleges (Alok, 2014).

Recognising the importance of hospitality education in India, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India started Institutes of Hotel Management (IHMs) and Indian Institutes of Tourism & Travel Management (ITTMs). While IHMs could fulfil the work force demand in catering and hotel sectors, ITTMs fulfilled the same demands in the travel and tourism sector. Further, National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT) established under an Act of Parliament, started its journey as autonomous body from 1982.

This council coordinates the growth and development of hospitality education in India, and drafts education module and systems for sponsored/affiliated organisations. There are total 21 Central Government affiliated Institutes, 25 State Government affiliated Institutes, 01 Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) affiliated institute, 25 affiliated private Institutes, 14 food craft Institutes and many private colleges and universities offering hospitality management education in India (nchm.nic.in). There are total 733 organisations offering hospitality education in India, among which, most are situated in Delhi NCR (96). As per Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2017-18) there are 1,333 hotels in the star category (along with approved projects) and 57 classified heritage hotels operating in India. Other than hotels, there are various hospitality establishments like, airline industry, cruises, hospitals, restaurants, malls, catering services in Government and private sectors which need hospitality graduates. All these organisations also provide internship to students for their experiential learning.

Objectives

1. To study existing status of internship and its role on career benefits of interns.
2. To examine intern's attitude as per their profile towards internship.
3. To suggest the strategic interventions required for current problems and future needs on internship program.

Review of Literature

Various studies identified internship as one of the important skill-based experiential learning, having many advantages for the course of hospitality management along with providing career advancement for hospitality students (Brooks et al., 1995; Petrillose & Montgomery, 1998; Neuman, 1999; Tackett et al., 2001; Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Ko, 2008; Bukaliya, 2012). There are different research views on internship programmes in terms of the benefits from the perspectives of three main stakeholders; students, institutes and internship providing organisations (Cook et al., 2004; Lam & Ching, 2007). For some authors this internship is just a basic course requirement for students to complete their graduation, and an opportunity to gather knowledge and experience (Seymore & Matthew, 1997; Aggett & Busby, 2011). This internship is also a platform for networking and interacting with the students of other institutes and the same could be beneficial for future study and job search for the students (Beard, 1998). For students, internship is a supervised work experience where qualified supervisors guide the students during the training (Pauze et al., 1989). Parent institutes offering internship also benefited from industry by rapport building, which help in next engagement, industry support and final placement of students (English & Koeppen, 1993). Industry or employers also benefited from internship programmes as they get new ideas, inexpensive help and potential future-ready employees as they could check the performance and capabilities of interns (Cannon & Arnold, 1998; Cates-McIver, 1999; Neuman, 1999; Rothman, 2007). Universities and internship providing organisations benefited both through this internship arrangement by updating of requirements from both the sides, build industry academia relationship (Knouse et al., 1999; Collins, 2001). Internship is generally offered by hospitality institutes after completion of basic study related to field or department, and accordingly students could apply these learned theories in real work situations, which

would lead to a synchronisation in thinking and action (Davies, 1990). Due to the changing demands of the market, there is a need to update the programme as students feel that this skill-based training is beneficial than teaching, right supervision is helpful to learn things properly and proper internship help then to find right job (Cannon & Arnold, 1998; Abdullah et al., 2015). There are differences between stakeholders involved in this internship process due to different needs, expectations and outcomes of internship where these differences bring dissatisfaction amongst interns as the programme is instrumental for their career (Knouse et al., 1999). This internship is not always properly structured and planned as per the need for the interns that results in a bad internship experience and leads to drop out from the trade or change of the industry or trade (Waryszak, 1999; Jenkins, 2001).

Many researchers have identified problems with internships regarding negative attitude of interns. Attitude of interns (Spann, 1994), difficulties in accepting new challenges due to poor supervision (Levine et al., 2006), lack of placement opportunities (Kelley, 1986), long working hours (Pavesic & Brymer, 1990), poor working environment and interpersonal relationship (McMahon & Quinn, 1995), low remuneration and benefits (McMahon & Quinn, 1995), excessive workload (Huyton, 1991) demotivate the interns and affect their career advancement. Studies have suggested that the employers are taking undue advantages from the interns where they are engaging the interns for their cost saving purpose and sometime using interns as casual labours for their benefits rather to train the interns for their career benefits (Huyton, 1991). Number of studies expressed that the internship experience may lead the dropout of interns/ students from hospitality industry, as their expectations are not met properly (West & Jameson, 1990; Barron & Maxwell, 1993; Callan, 1997; Waryszak, 1999; Zopiatis, 2007; Richardson, 2008). There have been several demographic factors, identified by different researchers like gender, family income, education, type of establishments which influencing students' attitudes towards hospitality internship (Gardner, 2012; Rigsby et al., 2013; Higgins & Pinedo, 2018). There are students who love this hospitality profession and possess an affinity on certain subjects. They also scored well in class/examination, but due to poor exposure/internship they lose their interest from the trade (Jenkins, 2001). In many cases, students' perceived status about the hospitality industry didn't match the actual experience which forced them to leave the industry due to unfulfilled expectations (Raybould and Wilkins, 2005).

Studies suggested that despite some negative aspects of internship programme, it could be beneficial for the students if it is structured and planned properly, ensuring that students are able to strengthen their passion, learn efficiently and are motivated effectively for their career (Ju et al., 1998). A good internship in a particular organisation ensures a job in the same organisation only (Collins, 2001). Good internship program in hospitality industry helps to shape the career of hospitality graduates and ensures lower attrition and greater retention of students in this industry that is beneficial for hospitality industry and national aspiration (Tse, 2010).

Research Methodology

Research Design

The scope of the study is adequate to know the attitude/opinion of hospitality management

students towards internship program as a part of their experiential learning. In this process four colleges from India; one private college approved by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) from Durgapur, one college under IHMCTAN from Kolkata, one college affiliated to a foreign university from Mumbai, and one private university from Bangalore were considered based on the affiliation status and students' diversity. Selection of colleges was done as per research scholar's judgement and their rankings based on different surveys. For the survey, data was collected directly from the students of above-mentioned colleges as they are engaged for internship programmes with various leading brands in hospitality sectors in India. Data on students' opinions/attitudes on different impacts like working environment, remuneration and benefits, industry supervision and learning experience was collected from questionnaire through enquiries, interviews and meetings.

For this survey, the researcher followed random sampling in a systematic manner (different strata from India) and a total of one hundred sixty students (40 students from each colleges) were selected. After applying filters and adopting other appropriate techniques to reduce response error researcher managed 148 (92%) usable completed questionnaires for this research. The observation was focused on students' involvement, participation and opinion (negative) on internship programmes and their outcome. An in-depth interview was conducted with students on four main aspects of internship like working environment, remuneration and benefits, industry supervision, and learning experience to know the impact of internship on career development. The survey was self-administered and the questionnaire was divided into three main parts. The first part includes profile base of the students (respondents) in terms of their social demographics. Second part had open ended questions on four areas viz. working environment, remuneration and benefits, industry supervision and learning experience. The last part was on overall internship experience. Many studies (McMahon & Quinn, 1995; Chen et al., 2011; Marinas et al., 2018) had demonstrated the same factors/ sub factors (positive/negative aspects of categories).

In this study, research investigator considered three-opinion index (negative) for each four categories considering internship program and outcome on career advancement. The last part includes 4 variables to examine the role and contribution of internship for the resolution of the current problems to address future needs of the interns. For each item, respondent used five-point Likert scale to rate their opinion and attitude, where '1' indicates strongly disagree to '5' indicates strongly agree (1-Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Undecided, 4- Agree, 5- Strongly Agree). Test on research instrument (questionnaire) was done through reliability test and the values for four factors (working environment, remuneration and benefits, supervision, and learning experience) ranked within 0.71 to 0.82, (Cronbach's Alpha on the same set of questionnaire for pilot survey for the responses of students on internship impacts by SPSS) considered satisfactory. Andy Field (2005), any value "between" 0.7 to 0.9 considered as highly reliable and satisfactory. Finally, the data was systematically arranged, tabulated and analysed by statistical software SPSS (version 16.0).

The 't' test has been used to know the significantly different scores of overall opinion/ attitudes of students towards internship impacts. Multiple regression techniques have been used to study the joint influence of selected group variable of students' attitude on overall attitude.

Findings and analysis

The study was confined to students' attitude on hospitality internship in India. The profile of respondents (students) is represented in Table 1. Out of total 148 respondents, 102 (68.91%) were male and 46 (31.09%) were female as there were a smaller number of female students engaged in hospitality education especially in hotel management courses. In terms of medium of education, English medium students (60.81%) outnumbered vernacular medium students (39.19%) as English is the official language of communication in hospitality industry and majority of students nowadays come from English medium background. More than the half of the surveyed respondents' (51.35%) monthly family income was above Rs. 50,000 INR per month, 32.43% students hailed from family with an income between Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 50,000 per month, and a small number (14.86%) came from families with a monthly income below Rs. 25,000. Respondents reported more from urban places (56.75%) than from city/town (43.25%). Majority of the students (60.81%) were good in college education and secured more than 60% marks in their examination. Majority of respondents' internship preference was hotels (80.40%) than other hospitality sectors.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents (Students)

Description		Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Gender	Male	102	68.91
	Female	46	31.09
Medium of Education	English medium	90	60.81
	Other medium	58	39.19
Family income	Below 25,000	22	14.86
	25000 -- 50000	48	32.43
	Above 50,000	78	51.35
Residence	Urban	84	56.75
	Town/city	64	43.25
College education before internship	Less than 60% in examination	54	39.19
	More than 60% in examination	94	60.81
Types of establishments	Hotels	119	80.40
	Other than hotels	29	19.60

Table 2 presents the attitudinal measurement of hospitality students towards internship impacts in terms of 13 items broadly grouped under four categories of working environment,

remuneration and benefits, industry supervision, and learning experience impacts with three statements within each subhead. The last statement measures the overall attitude towards impact of internship experience on experiential learning and career development. Of the total 12 variables, 11 statements have recorded mean value more than mid value (3) on five-point scale, along with the overall attitude having mean value above 4. This points to the acceptance of importance of internship on experiential learning and career development. The one impact statements, which reported mean value less than 3 but more than 2; 'the role of supervision during internship which was not made the interns ability to perform as per the need of the industry'. The review outcome from various literatures and below mentioned table shows clearly the status of hospitality internship and its effects on hospitality students in India.

Table 2: Students' Opinion Towards Hospitality Internship

A. Working Environment (W.E)		Mean	SD
W.E 1	I felt demotivated because, as an intern, I was treated unequally during internship	3.88	1.02
W.E 2	The internship made me condemn the working atmosphere of the hospitality industry	3.16	0.98
W.E 3	I felt unpleasant as an intern to be ordered by others always	3.72	1.11
B. Remuneration and benefits (R.B)			
R.B 1	The internship made me feel that I was low-cost labor, which made me feel uncomfortable	3.68	1.16
R.B 2	The internship made me disapprove the status of payment and fringe benefits of hospitality industry	3.74	1.08
R.B 3	I felt unpleasant as an intern for not being allowed any medical facilities, overtime payment and required leaves during internship	3.32	1.14
C. Industry supervision (I.S)			
IS 1	Insufficient supervision during internship made my impression that it was simply a work, and I could not learn proper knowledge or sufficient skill from it.	3.37	1.07
IS 2	I felt the supervision of my work during internship could not meet the need of industry standard and require further practice.	2.87	0.97
IS 3	The internship made me feel that devoting time to interns by seniors/supervisors was difficult due to time constraint for busy nature of the industry	3.78	1.09
D. Learning experiences (L.E)			
L.E 1	The job structure and content of internship failed to make me acquire more	3.47	1.12
L.E 2	The internship made me feel that I still lack the capability to enter workplace	3.29	0.99
L.E 3	I felt that the internship altered my work standards	3.80	1.09
Overall Attitude			
OA	Overall impact: Internship experience impacts employability and career development of hospitality students	4.02	0.93

The demographics for which overall attitude has more impacts on internships (on career development) were female (4.23), urban students (4.32), and students who have done internship from hotels (4.34). There is less impact on male (3.94), students from city/town (4.01) and students who completed internship from establishments other than hotels (3.93). The t-value for all significant at 0.01 & 0.001, i.e. $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.001$. In terms of the family income

as demography related with internship impact, mean value of students’ family income more than Rs. 50,000/pm (4.14) is higher than, students’ family income was less than Rs. 50,000/pm (3.93) with $t=1.79$. From the above table, it is clear that profile base of the students has impact on internship and affects their career development as “t” value reaches to significant level in most of the cases which satisfies the second objective of the study.

Table 3 shows that the Overall Attitude (OA) on the profile base of respondents (students) witnessed statistically significant difference (hospitality students) by applying ‘t’ test.

Table 3: Based on demographics significantly different scores of Overall Attitude of respondent

Demographic profile		S	Mean	SD	t-value	P Value
Gender	Female	46	4.23	0.94	2.37*	0.02
	Male	102	3.94	0.91		
Family income	Above Rs. 50,000/	78	4.14	0.92	1.79	0.13
	Below Rs. 50,000/	70	3.99	0.89		
Residence	Urban	84	4.32	0.84	-2.59**	0.01
	City/town	64	4.01	0.96		
Types of establishments	Hotels	119	4.34	1.02	2.78***	0.00
	Other hospitality establishments	29	3.93	0.87		

$p \leq 0.05$ (*) $p \leq 0.01$ (**) $p \leq 0.001$ (***)

Moreover, multiple regression techniques have been applied to know about joint influence of selected independent variables of students’ attitude on hospitality internship based on overall attitude. All the accepted variables of hospitality internship were gathered into five major sets on the link/ relationship with each other i.e. working environment (W.E 1-3), remuneration and benefits (R.B 1-3), industry supervision (I.S 1-3), learning experiences (L.E1-3) and students Overall Attitude (OA) on hospitality internship. Finally, with the help of “t” test regression coefficients have been tested.

Table 4 illustrates the strength of relationship and its measure between the dependent variable, overall attitude, and all the independent variables like working environment, remuneration and benefits, Industry supervision, learning experiences. The coefficient of determination (R2) for the perceived overall attitude indicated that 61.1% of the variation in guests’ perceived impacts (OA) demonstrated a statistical correlation with the determinants (independent variables). Overall attitude (OA) was indicated by the value of R square- 61.1%. Approximately 61.1% interest in overall attitude is influenced by the different independent variables (W.E, R.B, I.S, L.E) while the remaining approx. 49% are caused by other factors that were not taken into account in this study. When hospitality internship component, such as working environment related impacts, is increased by one unit, the overall attitude (OA) also increases by 0.363, which is significant at 1 percent level. Impacts related to remunerations and benefits, if increased for one unit, then overall attitude (OA) increases by 0.303 which is also significant. Industry supervision related impacts, if increased by one unit, then overall attitude (OA) increases by 0.298. Impact related to learning experiences, if increased by one

unit, then overall attitude (OA) increases by 0.307, which is also significant. With the help of multiple correlation co-efficient, it has been established that overall attitude is influenced by independent variables. This has also been established from the value of $R^2=0.611$ of variation in overall attitude (OA) accounted by joint variables of working environment, remuneration and benefits, industry supervision and learning experiences. There is a positive relationship between independent variables (Hospitality internship impacts) and overall attitude (suggested by R^2) but in this study, it is a function of a number of variables other than selected group variables.

Table 4: Regression equation of Overall Attitude (OA) on design elements like; Scale, Materials, Furniture and its arrangement and Daylight access

Variables	Regression Coefficients	t-value	Multiple Correlation
Working environment	0.363	3.714***	R= 0.717
Remunerations and benefits	0.303	2.897*	(R^2) =0.611
Industry supervision	0.298	3.412**	Adjusted R^2 =0.601
Learning experience	0.307	2.954*	

$p \leq 0.001$ (***), $p \leq 0.01$ (**), $-p \leq 0.05$ (*)

Below are the mean values for four variables of effective hospitality internship (ID1, ID2, ID3 & ID4) collected from the respondents through response mechanism (5-point scale) where these variables address the challenge of the impacts caused by hospitality internship. In view of the resulted research findings, the following conclusion is drawn based on the responses of surveyed sample.

Table 5: Students opinion towards hospitality internship (experiential learning & career

Sl. No.	Variables of Hospitality Internship	Mean
1. HI1	Good internship under right supervision brings satisfaction to hospitality interns.	4.17
2. HI2	Industry-academia cooperation and coordination make the internship program more beneficial for hospitality students.	3.82
3. HI3	Good structured hospitality internship proves to minimise negative impacts on interns, maximising positives that resolves the current problems addressing futuristic needs of hospitality students.	4.31
4. HI4	Interns' opinion and preferences during internship help them to select the right department/trade in future.	3.97

It is clear that HI1 and HI 3 & ID4 statements have measured mean value more than 4 on 5-point scale and the same indicates that good and structured internship with proper supervision plays a major role on benefits of hospitality students for their career development. Interns' opinion and preferences (HI 3, mean value- 3.97) on selection of trade during internship and scheduling the work accordingly will bring more satisfaction and success for the hospitality interns. Finally, HI 2 variable recorded the mean value more than 3.5 (more than the mid value) agreeing the Industry-academia cooperation and coordination would make the internship program more beneficial for hospitality students.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that the impact of internship having differences on the profile base of the hospitality students where the impacts are more in female, urban based and those who opted their internship in hotels than male, city based and those who opted internship in other hospitality establishments. Under four major impact parameters, working environment in hospitality industry affects the interns more where unity of command and division of work is not maintained properly for interns. Insufficient supervision also made the students nervous and stressful and in turn, the internship experience was not very satisfactory for the students that effects the overall learning experiences. Hospitality students experienced poor remuneration and benefits offered during internship and experienced the low wage structure of industry, which also made them further frustrated. Students are confused about internship due to lack of understanding of the value of experiential learning.

Hospitality industry is always service oriented where high standard of grooming, honesty, discipline and effective communication is required as a part of organisational culture. This should not be the motto for the academic institutions to organise and complete the internship as a part of module containing academic credits only. They need to prepare the interns with proper theoretical knowledge and industry culture. Working atmosphere, benefits, safety and security (especially for girls) should be paid adequate attention so that the internship experience will be more effective. All policy makers should participate in the structure and design of hospitality internship and at the same time there should be monitoring system for its execution and effectiveness. Good structured hospitality internship with proper supervision prove to minimise negative impacts on interns, maximising positives that resolves the current problems addressing futuristic needs of hospitality students.

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