

Factors Affecting Internship Satisfaction among Tourism Majors: A Case Study

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Abstract: This study investigates the major factors affecting internship satisfaction among tourism majors and identifies the key elements that enhance it. Methods including Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), pilot testing, and Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) were used. The findings reveal that the working environment has the greatest impact on internship satisfaction, followed by job attitude and career expectations, while perceived supervisor support has an insignificant effect. The study concludes that fostering a positive job attitude, aligning internships with career expectations, and establishing a favorable working environment are crucial for enhancing internship satisfaction.

Keywords: Perceived supervisor support; Working environment; Job attitude; Career expectation; Internship satisfaction

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries, contributing significantly to global economic growth. The tourist sector added roughly 27 million new jobs in 2023, a 9.1% rise from 2022 to 2023 ^[1]. Furthermore, it noted that over 285 million foreign visitors came to the country in the first quarter of 2024 ^[2]. Consequently, there is a high demand for knowledgeable workers to sustain the tourism industry's competitiveness and prosperity.

Vocational education focuses on mastering certain skills with a framework of 60% practice and no more than 40% theory. Universities are under pressure these days to incorporate elements linked to skills into their curricula to prepare students for the workforce ^[3]. The importance of internships for students' academic education and for building their connections to the industrial sector is growing daily.

Internships as a type of experiential learning where students apply classroom knowledge to real-world scenarios, helping them integrate and refine their skills ^[4]. Well-structured internships provide benefits like applying academic knowledge in practical settings, enhancing interpersonal skills, increasing self-awareness, gaining insights into the work environments of their chosen fields, and pursuing career goals ^[5].

Although many studies have demonstrated the beneficial effects of internships in the tourism industry, they

also highlighted the detrimental effects of low-quality internships, which can negatively influence students' future career choices. The study found that most workers in the tourist industry lacked formal training in the field, and students with tourism education often worked in other sectors. Little or no pay, strained relationships between employees and supervisors, ineffective communication, a disorganized workplace, minimal delegation, extended work hours, and an overall stressful work environment were the most frequent factors that led to a negative perception of internships^[6-7]. On the other hand, according to certain research, interns in the tourism industry were not able to match the expectations of the employers in the industry^[8-9].

Using the subjects of this research as an example, statistics show that while the employment rate for tourism majors has been roughly 93% over the last two years, the actual professional matching rate is only 52%. It would be interesting to investigate why graduates with tourism majors choose not to work in fields relevant to their degree. Therefore, this study will explore this issue, with internships as a starting point.

2. Literature review and proposed hypothesis

2.1. Internships for tourism major students

The initial internship program was credited to the University of Cincinnati in 1906, while internships first appeared in the United States at the beginning of the 19th century^[10]. An internship was characterized as a short but meaningful period of real-world experience during which students received training and acquired useful job experience in a particular subject or potential vocation of their choice^[11].

Selecting a career in tourism major seemed to be difficult. As a result, the internship programs offered students exceptional chances to acquire their first employment because this important credential would make it less difficult and quicker for them to join the workforce^[12]. Internships had several benefits for students enrolled in tourism and hospitality programs, including serving as a "stepping stone to full-time work, a crucial source of income, and possibly a graduation requirement"^[13].

2.2. Internship satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as the degree to which people are content with their occupations and their feelings towards various aspects of their jobs^[14]. It was a favorable attitude about one's work that emerged from an assessment of the work's qualities^[15]. Job satisfaction was an opinion that stemmed from workers' efforts and should be seen as a measure of how people felt about both the intrinsic as well as external aspects of their occupations^[16]. Due to its correlation with high turnover rates and other unfavorable effects such as: dropping out, poor performance, diminished morale, insufficient contributions to the team, less collaboration, and less commitment to an organizational goal. An important metric for assessing an internship's efficacy was student satisfaction throughout their work experience^[17]. This, in turn, affected students' employment decisions following graduation^[18].

2.3. Perceived supervisor support and internship satisfaction

Interns' opinions on how much their supervisors valued their contributions and were concerned about their social welfare were referred to as supervisor support. Perceived supervisor support occurs when an employee feels that their supervisor appreciates their work and is concerned about their well-being^[19]. This support could come in the form of new resources that could assist them in balancing the demands of their jobs and their families. As a result, research specifically focused on how managers, acting as organizational agents,

helped staff members. Research showed that doing so resulted in better employee retention, organizational commitment, and work output ^[20]. Performance among employees was demonstrated to be correlated with a supervisor's support ^[21]. Through job satisfaction, supervisor support enabled employees to become more devoted and loyal ^[22].

Supervisor support emerged as the greatest and strongest indicator of internship satisfaction based on the findings of structural equation modeling ^[23]. Supervisors who provided support enhanced the job satisfaction and commerce career intentions of students ^[24].

H1: Perceived supervisor support has a significant impact on internship satisfaction.

2.4. Working environment and internship satisfaction

The physical state of the workplace and its social context were two dimensions that made up the working environment ^[25]. The majority of companies paid little attention to the workplace culture, which had a negative impact on workers' productivity. A safe workplace includes employment stability, positive relationships with coworkers, a desire to perform well, acknowledgment of accomplishments, and involvement in the company's decision-making process ^[26]. Job satisfaction could have been impacted by a variety of workplace variables, including pay, working hours, independence of employees, organizational framework, and management-employee communication ^[27]. Work environments that offered support enabled employees to carry out their regular responsibilities with greater efficiency, utilizing their expertise, abilities, and resources to deliver superior services ^[28].

The results showed that work environments, specifically, opportunities for learning, assistance from supervisors, and organizational satisfaction, were thought to be the most significant component in achieving interns' satisfaction ^[29]. The survey indicated that the most significant factor influencing internship satisfaction proved to be the work environment ^[30].

H2: The working environment has a significant impact on internship satisfaction.

2.5. Job attitude and internship satisfaction

The ideas, emotions, and convictions that guide one's behavior at work are referred to as job attitudes. Attitudes regarding jobs were the sentiments interns had toward various facets of the workplace. They asserted that several factors, including personality, compatibility with the environment, job features, psychological arrangement, fairness in organizational work relationships, and stress, influenced an individual's attitude toward their work ^[31]. How workers saw and assessed the work environment was influenced by the attitudes of the workforce ^[32]. Given that people spent the majority of their waking hours at work, that work was fundamental to whom they were, and that job attitude had a significant impact, job attitude represented social beliefs. They might have been among the more important social attitudes ^[33]. The tourism business was sometimes described as a "people industry", one that depended on employees of organizations providing services to customers. Thus, from the perspective of service users, staff represented the company. ^[34]

The study demonstrated a positive association between attitude and job satisfaction, indicating that having a favorable attitude toward work increased job satisfaction ^[35]. Additionally, student satisfaction with their internship operated as a mediating factor between the work attitude of hospitality students and their aspirations for their careers ^[36].

H3: Job attitude has a significant impact on internship satisfaction.

2.6. Career expectation and internship satisfaction

The majority of earlier research investigated the factors that affected expectations for careers from the viewpoints of individuals. It found that factors such as personal interests, preferences, background information, educational attainment, race, ethnicity, and gender all had an impact on employees' career expectations [37–39]. People who looked for and acquired helpful career guidance and information, along with boosting their competitiveness through education and training, were more likely to stick to their professional goals [40].

Students who had great expectations for their career prospects were satisfied with their jobs and inclined to pursue retail careers [41]. Career expectations were positively correlated with job satisfaction [42].

H4: Career expectation has a significant impact on internship satisfaction.

3. Methodology

Students majoring in tourism who had completed their internships or were currently completing them were included in the study. The Academic Office provided a sampling frame with a total of 110 students. A questionnaire consisting of two components and five parameters was constructed. The first section of the questionnaire, which included questions about gender and the internship or employment phase, was designed to gain a deeper understanding of the respondents' personal information. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of five criteria: satisfaction with the internship, career expectations, job attitude, working environment, and perceived supervisor support. A five-point Likert scale was used.

First, three specialists and a group of 30 students were chosen to participate in the validity and reliability test. After that, a total of 110 surveys were distributed using WJX, an online questionnaire tool. Of these, 100 valid questionnaires were collected. Using Jamovi for MLR analysis on 100 valid responses revealed a significant relationship between the variables.

4. Research findings and discussion

4.1. Validity and reliability result

The effectiveness of the research test is displayed in **Table 1**. The validity and reliability of the measurement tools were evaluated using a pilot test and Cronbach's alpha.

A validity test questionnaire consisting of 29 questions was sent to three specialists, and 7 items were removed during the IOC process. Then a group of 30 students completed the pilot test to analyze the reliability. All items passed the reliability test based on the pilot test findings.

Table 1. Number of measurement items and Cronbach's Alpha of each construct ($n = 30$)

Variable	Before Pilot Test	After Pilot Test	Cronbach's Alpha	Strength of association
Perceived supervisor support	6	5	0.917	Excellent
Working environment	7	4	0.868	Good
Job attitude	7	6	0.898	Good
Career expectation	13	11	0.821	Good
Internship satisfaction	3	3	0.911	Excellent

4.2. Results of multiple linear regression

To confirm the theories, MLR was performed. The outcomes of the MLR techniques used in this research are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. The MLR results on internship satisfaction ($n = 100$)

Variables	<i>t</i> -value	<i>P</i> -value	Stand. Estimate (β)	R^2
Perceived supervisor support	0.84	0.401	0.0802	
Working environment	6.44	< 001	0.6477	
Job attitude	3.03	0.003	0.2920	0.721
Career expectation	-2.37	0.020	-0.1835	

Table 2 indicates that internship satisfaction was significantly impacted ($P < 0.05$) by the working environment, job attitude, and career expectations when utilizing Jomovi to perform MLR analysis. Furthermore, the independent factors accounted for 72.1% of the dependent variable, according to the R square value of 0.721.

Internship satisfaction was positively, significantly, and heavily influenced by the working environment ($\beta = 0.6477$, $P < 0.01$), which is consistent with H2. This finding aligns with earlier research, which indicated that the work environment was thought to be the most significant component in achieving interns' satisfaction^[43]. It means that interns anticipated their internship to be conducted in a professional setting. Improved working conditions had the potential to make interns more motivated and, ultimately, more satisfied.

Internship satisfaction was positively, marginally, and considerably influenced by career expectations and job attitudes, confirming H3 and H4. Students who reported being satisfied with their employment and had optimistic expectations for their career prospects were more likely to enter retail. The results were in line with the previous research that found a relationship between career expectations and organizational commitment^[44]. Additionally, a positive association between attitude and job satisfaction, indicating that having a positive attitude toward work improves job satisfaction^[45].

However, H1 was not supported, as perceived supervisor support and internship satisfaction were not deemed statistically significant.

5. Implications

Students' views towards their jobs and their personal feelings play an essential role in their overall satisfaction. Therefore, educational institutions as well as tourism firms should focus on encouraging students' positive attitudes towards employment through onboarding, ongoing feedback, and support systems. When students' career goals are fulfilled, they are more satisfied with their internships. This emphasizes the importance of aligning internship programs with students' professional goals. Education institutions and tourism firms have a responsibility to ensure that their internship experiences align with students' long-term professional objectives. A positive and encouraging work environment is crucial, as demonstrated by the significant influence of the working environment on internship satisfaction. To enhance intern satisfaction, employers should foster a pleasant work environment, provide the necessary tools, and maintain a good work-life balance.

6. Limitations

This study has various limitations. Initially, 100 tourism major students from a particular institution served as the study's sample. It is possible that the small sample size and certain demographic traits do not accurately reflect the population across academic disciplines or institutions. Secondly, the data used in this study were collected only once, using a cross-sectional approach. This approach restricts the inference of causal links between variables. Lastly, internship satisfaction may be impacted by specific elements that vary across industries.

7. Conclusions

This study examines the variables that affect internship satisfaction. The findings indicate that, although perceived supervisor support has no apparent impact, job attitude, career expectations, and work environment all significantly affect internship satisfaction. These results emphasize the value of internship programs that align with students' career expectations and the development of a healthy job attitude among students. Moreover, fostering a positive and encouraging work atmosphere is critical to raising intern satisfaction. In the future, internship satisfaction can be more effectively understood and enhanced by refining research design and methodology, which will offer useful guidance to businesses and educational institutions.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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