
The Value of Hospitality Study Abroad Internship for Dutch Students

Abstract

This study empirically examines student interns' experience by considering perceived value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions in the context of the European Union internship experience for international students. The study incorporates the perceived value of the learning experience based on the interrelationships with satisfaction and behavioral intentions for students from a hotel school in the Netherlands. The proposed model was estimated by using PLS path modeling.

The findings of the hypotheses testing show that the value interns get and give is a significant indicator of satisfaction and value. The value of an international internship experience, especially the get component, has a significant effect on the students' behavioral intentions for their international internship experience and satisfaction with their experience. Students' satisfaction is expressed as favorable word of mouth for their university and the internship program. They recommend not only their university but also the international internship program in which they participated. They also recommend the internship university to other students.

Keywords

Work Experience, College, Externships, Food, Hotel

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Focus of Paper: Theoretical/Academic

Kind of submission: Paper

Introduction

Educators have a mission to prepare students for hospitality operations. In response to the industry considering the internship as important, many hospitality programs require students to complete internship prior to graduation. Yet, there is a lack of understanding how students perceive their internship experience. Additionally, many hospitality programs are now offering study abroad internship opportunities as part of their curriculum. This study attempts to discover different value dimensions of study abroad internships by looking at what is given and what is received from the student's perspective.

Although many studies emphasize positive effects of internship experiences for students such as students' improved self-confidence, self-concept and improved social skills, gains in practical knowledge and skills, enhanced employment opportunities, it should not be ignored that internship programs can be unstructured and poorly organized (Jenkins, 2001). No study has yet assessed the value of a study abroad internship experience in hospitality by considering "what the students get" and "what the students give." The purpose of this study is to gain insights into the value dimensions used by hospitality students when they complete a study abroad internship program and to identify which drivers contribute the most to their judgment of value of the experiential learning experience.

Literature Review

Education is considered a service that should provide students with a breadth of experiences. A study abroad internship, were an educational event embraces not only intellectual courses but also experiential learning, is part of the college learning experience. Study abroad internship experiences provide students with an opportunity to get their "feet wet" or just dirty their hands and deliver a taste of reality that students could never find on a college

campus, in a new and different culture. Internship abroad are valued by students because students see it as an opportunity for a hands-on experience that yields learning during a short-term period in which they gain relevant practical experience related to their field of study and visit a different country receive international exposure.

Hospitality employees typically are required to work long hours that include weekends and holidays (Simmons, 2006). Similar to real positions in the industry, hospitality internship positions involve long working hours (Pavesic & Brymer, 1990). Moreover, students often function in highly visible positions that require frequent interaction with guests in hotels or restaurants during their internship period which may cause stress to students (Lam & Ching, 2006). The majority of internship positions are entry-level; interns are mostly placed in the front of the house, doing jobs such as housekeeping, food and beverage serving, or working in kitchens (Chen & Shen, 2012). Many students are put in situations where they are required to interact with various individuals and work long hours, thereby causing a possible burnout (Pavesic & Brymer, 1990).

However, no study has yet assessed the value of an internship experience in hospitality by considering “what they get” and “what they give.” Downey and Deveau (1988) noted that internships are not designed to be used as a pool of free labor for hospitality operations. Students should be compensated for their internship work not only with newly acquired skills but also a financial gain, which will make students work experience more realistic and credible (Downey & Deveau, 1988). The purpose of this study is to gain insights into the value dimensions used by hospitality students when they accomplish an internship program and to identify which drivers contribute the most to their judgment of value.

The concept of value has a long standing tradition in the field of marketing and consumer behavior. The seminal work of Zeithaml (1988) defines value as the overall evaluation that an individual makes of based on perceptions of what is given in exchange for what is received. Such representation of value denotes a trade-off between the most prominent components of what is given in exchange for what is received. In a similar note, Woodruff (1997) argued that the consequences of value perceptions also conceive the value desired and received as well as the connection with the individuals’ goals and objectives.

The conceptualization of value in an educational context is seen by various authors as the overall student’s evaluation of the utility of the service based upon the perception of that which is received and that given (LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1999; Ledden et al., 2007). For example, Leblanc and Nguyen (1999) posited that, in an education context, six different value concepts can be identified. First, a functional value exists and can be related to the student’s expectations that their field of study will gain them career employment or advancement. Secondly, the social value represents the benefits from inter-personal/group interactions which in an educational context can relate to friendships and networking opportunities. Thirdly, the emotional value is one that is formed by the benefits received from an affective state or sense of achievement. Fourth, conditional value arouses from benefits derived in a specific situational context. According to Unni (2005), the perception of value in an educational setting also encompasses a conditional value.

A resemblance among these four value perceptions is that they are they relate to the get component of value. In addition to what a student gets from an educational experience, Ledden et al (2007) posit that a give component also exists. For example, they argue that the concept of give comprises of both monetary and non-monetary considerations. These reflect the sacrifices student makes in terms of course fees, transportation, time, energy, and effort to name a few.

This study is investigating the relationship between students perceive value of the internship experience and perceived sacrifice (monetary and non-monetary) with the overall internship satisfaction and behavioral intentions. The following research hypothesis were tested.

Hypothesis 1: Students’ perceived value (get component) of the internship will have a positive impact on the overall satisfaction with the internship experience.

Hypothesis 2: Students’ perceived value (get component) of the internship will have a positive impact on the behavioral intentions.

Hypothesis 3: Students' perceived value (give component) of the internship will have a positive impact on the overall satisfaction with the internship experience.

Hypothesis 4: Students' perceived value (give component) of the internship will have a positive impact on the behavioral intentions.

Hypothesis 5: Students' overall satisfaction with the internship will have a positive impact on the behavioral intentions.

Methodology

Online questionnaires were distributed to students at a Dutch hotel college, after they completed their study abroad internship, in order to assess their experiential learning experience. The sample responses included 114 students from one of the largest hospitality programs in the Netherlands. By conducting the survey soon after the completion of their internship the researchers avoided recall bias or influences from peers. The survey instrument was composed of three sections. The first section included questions related to the five value dimensions related to what students get from the study abroad internship learning experience. The value dimensions for the students "give" component included question about monetary sacrifices (3 items) and non-monetary sacrifices (3 items). The last section of the survey contained questions pertaining to the personal background of the students, such as the location of their internship, the duration of the internship, and certain socio-demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, and type of degree.

The proposed model is tested using partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The researchers used Partial Least Squares Data Analysis to validate and test the hypothesis. The research model incorporates both reflective and formative measures. This is done to comply with the fundamental propositions of the theory of consumption value. According to Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991), the get dimension of value is formative in nature because of their axiomatic propositions. First, the get dimension is a function of multiple values. Second, each value dimension makes a differential contribution. And third, the value dimensions are independent. Thus requiring a formative model rather than reflective.

Other constructs such as satisfaction and behavioral intentions are reflective in nature. Therefore, following the recommendations from Hair, Ringle, Hult, & Sarstedt (2013) the model is less restrictive and does not require a normal distribution since it uses bootstrapping to estimate standard errors.

Results

The objective of this study was to advance the knowledge about the externship experience by identifying several value dimensions that consider what the student "gets" and "gives". This suggests that the externship experience provides opportunities for self-realization and is taken very personal by students.

The results from the survey indicate that the most important functional aspect of the externship is that students consider it a good investment in their educational future. Students also perceive that such experience will help their personal development and carry out work either in their current job or future job. To a lesser degree, students also feel this will help them achieve their career goals, lead to a possible promotion or earn a better salary.

A resemblance among the previously discuss value perceptions is that they are they relate to the get component of value. In addition to what a student gets from an educational experience, Ledden et al (2007) posit that a "give" component also exists. For example, they argue that the concept of "give" comprises of both monetary and non-monetary considerations. These reflect the sacrifices student makes in terms of course fees, transportation, time, energy, and effort to name a few.

The biggest non-monetary sacrifice made by students is related to the time away from their families. This means that students perceive that a sacrifice is made by the loss opportunity to participate in family events. To a lesser degree, student perceptions about sacrificing personal interests or socializing with friends are significantly lower than family sacrifices.

Since the model evaluation provides evidence of reliability and validity, the results for the hypothesis are presented in Table 1. The complete results are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Structural Model

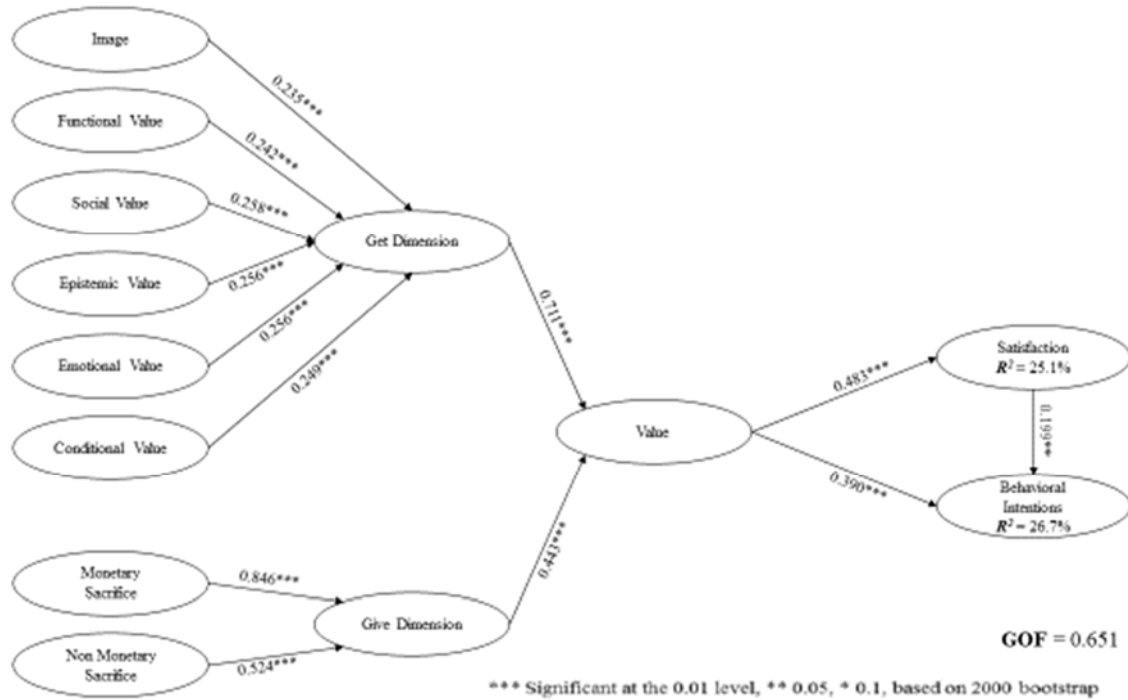


Table 1: Hypothesis Results

Research Hypothesis	Results
H1: Students' perceived value (get component) of the internship will have a positive impact on the overall satisfaction with the internship experience.	Supported
H2: Students' perceived value (get component) of the internship will have a positive impact on the behavioral intentions.	Supported
H3: Students' perceived value (give component) of the internship will have a positive impact on the overall satisfaction with the internship experience.	Supported
H4: Students' perceived value (give component) of the internship will have a positive impact on the behavioral intentions.	Supported
H5: Students' overall satisfaction with the internship will have a positive impact on the behavioral intentions.	Rejected

Discussion

The purpose of this research project is to gain insights into how hospitality students assess value and satisfaction when they complete a study abroad internship program and to identify which attributes of the experience contribute the most to their judgment of the value of the study abroad learning experience considering what the student “gets” and “gives”. One hundred fourteen students from the European Union completed the surveys.

The results from the statistical analysis demonstrate the functional value is the lead dimension of internship value. The results from the survey indicate that the most important functional aspect of the internship is that students consider it a good investment in their educational future. Students also perceive that such experience will help their personal development and carry out work either in their current job or future job. This suggests that the internship experience provides a chance for self-awareness and is taken very seriously by students. This experience seems to give them more self-assurance by fulfilling a desire and goal that offers a chance to “test the waters” or “get the hands dirty” in an international experiential learning experience.

The findings from this study also suggest that the value of the internship experience is also influenced by the image value. Overall, students perceive that the internship experience adds value to their degree, regardless of nationality. In other words, an international experience together with the overall image of the program is considered very important. At the same time, the perceptions from others regarding the student’s university also plays a role in the image value.

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