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*by Rtdrcvgggg Tfff*

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## The Internship Experience: A European Student Perspective of value

### 1. Experiential Learning and Internship

The term “experiential learning” is defined as the form of learning from life experiences (Kolb, 2014). Experiential learning is the “process through which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kros and Watson, 2004, pg. 283). First mentioned by John Dewey as “learning by doing” (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning was later developed by Kolb and explained as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). According to Conley (2008), experiential learning involves the student discovering, processing, and applying the information they have learned and reflecting upon it. Experiential learning is considered to occur when a student is academically, emotionally and socially engaged (Brzovic & Matz, 2009), while according to Foster and Dollar (2010), experiential learning occurs when the student is working or volunteering in the organization to gain experience before they graduate.

These experiences can include internships, externships, study abroad and other forms of learning outside of the classroom. Experiential Learning Theory, developed by Kolb (1984) helped establish the four-stage learning process, consisting of a set of six propositions: learning is a process, learning is continuous, learning requires conflict resolution, learning is a holistic process, learning is transactional, and learning creates knowledge (Murphy, 2018). Research presented showing the importance of experiential learning and the role it plays in career outcomes of graduates have influenced institutions to consider internships as an important option to be added to curriculum (NACE, 2017). This is appropriate due to the vocational nature of the hospitality industry. The National Survey of Student Engagement demonstrated that 52 percent of seniors have participated in some form of experiential learning rather it a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience or clinical assignment (NACE, 2017).

Among available experiential learning experiences for students study abroad has become popular among students. With 325,339 students having participated in study abroad programs

during the 2015-2016 academic school year, this reflected a 4 percent increase over the prior year and a 46 percent increase over the past decade (IIE). These experiences give the intern an international experience and helps them with their personal growth (Cudmore & Toncar, 2000). Studying abroad has proven to provide an overall positive impact on development in students (IIE). According to the AIFS study in 2018, preliminary data alone demonstrated that 58 percent of students contributed studying abroad to their developed skills and intercultural competencies contributing to obtaining their first job post-graduation (AIFS, 2018). According to the same study, 86 percent stated their experience helped them adapt to diverse workplace environments (AIFS, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> There is a vast and diverse body of internship related research in the tourism and hospitality field (Airey & Tribe, 2005; Toncar & Cudmore, 2000). While students are primarily the main beneficiary of internships, universities, and employer reap numerous benefits as well. Internships allow <sup>10</sup> for students to receive hands on experience and develop skills and knowledge they would not normally obtain in the classroom setting (Breakey, N., Ruhanen, L., & Robinson, R. 2012). Internships enhance teaching and learning for the students participating in them (Appietu, Asimah, & Mensah, 2020). This added value helps to ensure students are industry ready by the time they graduate (Breakey, Robinson & Beesley, 2008). <sup>6</sup> According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) study in 2017, employers and focus groups surveyed resulted in most of the employers seeing internships as an added value to candidate employability. Previous studies done by NACE also found 42.3 percent of seniors who obtained an internship or had experience with an internship received at least one job offer (NACE, 2017). Previous researchers have touched on the value of internships as a recruiting tool for employers (Saltikoff, 2017). <sup>6</sup> The perceived value of internships from the employers' and students' standpoint is proven by the substantial development in student and employer interest in the past 20 years (Hurst & Good, 2010).

## 2. Perceived Value: Give and Get Dimensions

Value is fully represented by the importance and worth an experience, such as study abroad, adds to the student's education (Murphy, 2017). According to Zeithaml (1988, p. 14), perceived value is defined as "the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given". Therefore, value reflects a tradeoff between the most important ideas of what is given to those received (Alves, 2011). Woodruff (1997, p.172) would define value as "customer value is a customer's perceived preference for and evaluation of those product attributes, attributing performances, and consequences arising from use that facilitate (or block) achieving the customer's goals and purposes in usage situations". In this instance the customer would be the intern. In Woodruff's explanation he includes the intern's conception of value and its connection to the desired and received value. Payne & Holt (2001) considers this definition to be the most appropriate representation of perceived value. Value is seen as a function of one or more values, consisting of six independent values making a different contribution based on the current situation (Andel & Botas, 2012).

### 2.1 The "Get" Dimensions.

The first value dimension is functional value. Functional Value, also referred to as uni-dimensional value is defined by Monroe (1990) as "buyers' perceptions of value represent a trade-off between the quality/benefits they perceive in the product relative to the sacrifice they perceive by paying the price" (p. 46). This reflects the fundamental rationality behind the theory is a functional or utilitarian perception alone, whereby cognitive, and economic decisions are applied to judge the cognitive trade-off amongst the value/benefits and costs (Choi et al., 2010). Interns' expectation is to reap benefits from the internships that they have selected, whether that be career advancement or gained employment (Andel et al., 2012).

The second dimension is social value. Social value is defined as "the perceived utility acquired from an alternative's association with one or more specific social groups" (Sheth, Neman and Gross, 1990, 1991). This dimension involves the inter-personal or group interactions, for interns this is reflected as networking opportunities presented or friendships created during

academic studies (Rivera et al, 2018).<sup>1</sup> In the intern context, social value can be exhibited by an internship selection based on positive feedback from a reference group member (Stafford, 1994).

The emotional value is the third of the value dimensions. It is defined by Sheth et al. (1990, 1991) as “the perceived utility acquired from an alternative’s capacity to arouse feelings or affective states.” For an internship, this is reflected as the emotional fulfillment the internship provides the intern. This can also be seen as the liking or disliking of the company or internship the intern has selected. One derives more value if they like their experience and have a good feeling about it. On the other hand, less emotional value translates to low morale to the internship program.

Additionally,<sup>2</sup> conditional value refers to the specific situation or set of circumstances facing the intern (Sheth et al., 1990). In an intern context, this can be physical items taken away by the intern upon completion of the internship, such as training manuals or employee uniforms (Stafford, 1994). In addition, this can be how students faced specific scenarios in the program and the vital lessons or strategies they experienced in problem solving. Besides, for an intern in an academic standpoint, this can also be the completion of the internship to qualify for their degree (Stafford, 1994). It means that such conditional value is impactful in self-perception about the career.

Furthermore, as the fifth value dimension,<sup>22</sup> epistemic value is defined as the benefits that arise from curiosity, novelty and satisfying a desire for knowledge (Sheth et al., 1990). Epistemic value is relevant to the internship experience because the intern perception relies solely on the experience of the internship, although they may have formed expectations prior to the start of their internship (Darlaston – Jones et al., 2003). The epistemic value also offers a broader intellectual experience during the internship (Stafford, 1994). As critical thinkers, interns should be driven by the passion to learn, think differently and improve their overall experience. The growth of epistemic value is crucial in assessing the satisfaction in internship.

Finally, the sixth dimension is image value. This refers to the image of the organization the intern actually works for provides benefits of status and reflects on the reputation of the

organization. Image means a lot and for interns, a positive brand image impacts positively on their program experience. Precisely, this dimension represents the intern's belief the company providing the internship and the status of the company overall provides added value to the experience (Rivera et al, 2018). While reputable companies have a good brand image, even medium or small companies ought to be conscious on how their brand impacts on the interns.

## 2.2 The "Give" Dimensions.

The "give dimension is what the intern gives to get the internship, not exclusively referring to the monetary cost (Dodds et al., 1991). This dimension is considered the sacrifices the intern will make to obtain the internship and thrive during it, such as, fees, living accommodations, transportation, time and energy (Rivera et al, 2018). The more reasons an intern associates with the program, the more they are committed to successfully competing it. Therefore, the sacrifices are the overall efforts the intern makes in order to experience the benefits of the internship, both monetary and non-monetary (Buttle, 1997, pg. 235).

Non-monetary sacrifices consist of the aforementioned, time, energy and effort exuded during the internship (Cronin et al., 1997). This can be in the form of working late nights to complete a project, time spent researching for an internship and the energy put into doing tasks. Study abroad opportunities also provide other stressors for the interns such as missing time spent with their family, friends and significant others. These are a part of the non-monetary sacrifices an intern is presented and must weigh what they give or sacrifice against what they will receive in terms of benefits the internship has to offer.

## 3. Student Satisfaction and loyalty intention

As a business philosophy, customer satisfaction is about value creation, anticipation and management of expectation so that the customers are able to fully experience fullness that their needs have been satisfied (Dominici and Rosa, 2010). It is evident that internship programs have become an increasingly essential aspects for hospitality education and successful completion is a step closer to realization of career goals (Hussien & Lopa, 2013). In the internship program, in which students are critical stakeholders (customers), satisfaction is a critical component in the

overall perception of the program. Based on their experiences and perceived utilities in the internship program, students would ascertain whether the program have been satisfactory or not (Henneberry & Radmehr, 2020).

In a recent study, Chen et al. (2018) outlined that employability was a crucial factor that increased internship satisfaction among students in the hospitality program. In the same study, researchers established the primary goal of hospitality internship programs is to ensure that students are easily absorbed in the job market. The totality of student experiences in internships, including international students, is the commitment that reflect on employability. The triage of employability entails student's satisfaction with the school, student's satisfaction with the company as well as student's satisfaction with self-commitment (Chen et al., 2018).

Additionally, Marinakou (2016) in a Greek study concluded that student satisfaction in internship programs was shaped by working in a professional environment, social interaction with staff/supervisors, their learning experience as well as their perception towards working conditions. For instance, when students find the internship environment as professionally organized and fulfilling, they rate it highly. On the flipside, exposure of student to poor pay, long working hours as lack of proper coordination erodes their confidence and would be less satisfied in the internship program (Marinakou, 2016). In agreement, Ruslan et al. (2021) found that in student internships, organizational environment, contextual factors and job characteristics would shape the satisfaction levels.

Furthermore, positive internship experiences are linked to loyalty intention among students in the hospitality industry (Stansbie et al., 2013; Murphy, 2018). Just like satisfaction, loyalty is a critical element especially to the institutions. During internships, students provide universities with funding opportunities in their enrolment. High levels of loyalty intention would mean that better funding, instructional quality as well as dedicated behaviors (Murphy, 2018). Besides, word of mouth reference is key for high loyalty where other students are motivated to join universities to experience professional training including in internship. Overall in the hospitality industry, players need to be conscious of whether internship experiences incline towards loyalty as it is essential to brand perception in the market (Ezeuduji et al., 2017; Christou, & Chatzigeorgiou, 2019).

Essentially, loyalty intention is shaped greatly by several dimension of value that students' experience or perception in the course of their program (Murphy, 2018. Emotional value for instance, plays a role where more affective commitment would mean students affiliate strongly to the university. On the other hand, students are able to accrue social value (sum of social benefits) in the program and this informs how loyal or attached they are to the university and the company they work for. For instance, a student would readily talk well about the institution they work to their peers if they are accorded opportunities for social and professional interactions. In turn, these interactions incline more to the employability perception. On the converse, if the internship attracts less emotional value or social value, students are less likely to refer their peers to their university.

Finally, it is important to determine that both satisfaction and loyalty are critical elements but moving targets that cannot easily be achieved. University administrators and managers of hospitality firms have a role to reimagine internship programs and where possible implement strategies that maximize the utilities of students (Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2013; Eurico et al., 2015). These strategies include among others facilitation of professional linkages, proper work structuring and improving the working conditions. As students' satisfaction and loyalty intentions improve, so does their employability perceptions upon completion of the internship programs.

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