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### Is Internship Influencing Hotel Management Students' Perception about Hospitality Industry?

Debadatta Jagannath<sup>1</sup>, Rajiv Mishra<sup>2\*</sup>, Subhabaha Pal<sup>3</sup>, Namrata Mishra<sup>4</sup> and Mantun Kumar Singh<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Researcher, Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal University, Manipal, E-mail: [debaj18@gmail.com](mailto:debaj18@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor - Hospitality & Tourism, Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal University, Manipal

\* corresponding author : E-mail: [rajiv.mishra@manipal.edu](mailto:rajiv.mishra@manipal.edu)

<sup>3</sup> Assistant Professor – IT & Systems, T. A. Pai Management Institute, Manipal, E-mail: [subhabaha@tapmi.edu.in](mailto:subhabaha@tapmi.edu.in)

<sup>4</sup> Lecturer, Udupi Institute of Hotel & Tourism Science, Mangalore University, Manipal – 576 104, Karnataka, India  
E-mail: [namrata\\_0586bvp@yahoo.co.in](mailto:namrata_0586bvp@yahoo.co.in)

<sup>5</sup> Head & Dean, Faculty of Commerce & Business Management and Director, University Department of Management, Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribag, E-mail: [professor.dr.mk.singhbvu@gmail.com](mailto:professor.dr.mk.singhbvu@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** Internship is an important component in any hotel management course. Many studies reveal that internship enhance the employability aspect of the students in vocational courses. The true nature of the professional world is revealed to the hotel management students through the internship program. Through experiencing the internship program, the students get a glimpse of the industry where they are supposed to work in future part of their lives. Many pros and cons of the professional world get exposed to them during this period. Any study is yet to be done which try to expose the change of perception of the students about several issues relevant for the hotel industry before and after the internship program. This study is an initial attempt in that direction. 328 hotel management students spread across India have been surveyed twice before and after the internship in order to understand whether they embrace similar views about the issues relevant in hotel industry before and after the internship program. The changes of views on certain issues are also observed separately for boy and girl students.

**Keywords:** Hotel Industry, Internship Program, Perception Change

### INTRODUCTION

As per (Baum, 1993), 'Tourism is about people'. Human interaction between travelers and tourism industry professionals is an essential element in the success of enterprises, destinations, and the tourism/hospitality industry overall (Barbara *et al.*, 2003). The Tourism and Hospitality Sector is growing worldwide at a rapid

rate especially from the last two decades (Parikshat *et al.*, 2011). As per (Parikshat *et al.*, 2011), the travel and tourism industry is one of the largest and most dynamic industries in today's global economy expected to generate a substantial portion of the total GDP. The growth of travel and tourism industry calls for trained manpower which is highly essential for meeting the growing industry demand. The increasing importance of the tourism sector calls for countries to make use of an organized method to facilitate talent planning and development with the collaboration of the industry, government and educational institutions to make sure that the industry's potential in the coming years are fulfilled (WTTC, 2015).

Creation of properly skilled manpower in hospitality industry requires training them in the real industry scenario as hospitality industry needs vocational training. Hence, internship component is a very important part in the hospitality curriculum. Many studies have been made in regard to the importance of the internship component in the hospitality industry. 'Learning by doing reinforces classroom understanding by contextualizing knowledge' (Clark *et al.*, 1998). Internship facilitates that theory is directly proportional to practice, and vice versa (Ciofalo, 1988), thus providing a meaningful link between what is learned in a classroom and what is practiced in the industry. Industry professionals believe that hospitality students who partake in internship programs are more employable (Petrillose & Montgomery, 1998).

When the students join the hospitality course, they come with huge expectations about the industry. At the time of the joining the hospitality course, students have little idea about the important questions like how their personal life will be affected by professional life, what will be the physical working condition in the hospitality industry, how much prudent it will be to invest in the hospitality management course, how much will be add-on benefits in working in hospitality industry, what will be career advancement opportunities in the hospitality industry and many more. The theoretical and practical sessions in the hospitality institute don't answer these questions to them much. The first glimpse into the inside of the hotel industry is obtained by them when they go for the practical internship. Before internship, these students use to learn enough about the working procedures, etiquettes and other skills required in the hospitality industry. The internship component help them to understand the real world of the hospitality industry and how actually the industry works. Many studies have been made on the aspect that how internship help the students to acquire necessary skills useful for the industry. Internships plays a significant role in hospitality and tourism students' attitudes toward pursuing a career in the industry upon graduation (Richardson, 2008). Fox (2001) considered internship as an opportunity to close the gap between college-learned theory and practical reality. It is an opportunity to test skills, interests, and career choices in real working situations while obtaining an edge on "inexperienced" job market competitors (Davies, 1990; Neuman, 1999). The internship "is an opportunity to have an intensive, work-based exposure to a broad range of operations within a company" (Crossley *et al.*, 2007).

However, any study is yet to be done on how the internship component has changed perception about the hospitality industry among the students. This study is an effort in the direction of understanding the change of perception about the hospitality industry among the students through the internship components. The study has been performed on the 300+ students of the reputed hospitality training institutes of India. The students have been interviewed with some specific questions to understand their view about the hospitality industry twice before going for the internship and after finishing the internship component. Their responses to the specific questions are analyzed to understand how much the internship component has changed the perception about the industry among the students. The gender-specific views are also examined in the study.

## **METHODS AND METHODOLOGY**

The study has been undertaken on the 329 students from the 10 leading hotel management schools spread across the 4 regions of India. The students have been surveyed with the same set of questions about their perception related to issues relevant in hospitality industry twice, first before the start of the internship program and second after the end of the internship program. The main purpose behind subjecting the students to go through the same survey twice before and after the internship is getting insights whether the internship component contribute to the change of perception of the students about the hospitality industry. The views of 331 boy students and 98 girl students were also analyzed separately.

The instrument used in the survey consists of 10 questions where the students are required to give a score in the scale 0 to 10. The questions used in the instrument have been used in the studies (Jung Hee, 2008; Bhinder, 2014) primarily aimed to find out the effectiveness of internship. The students were requested to give scores representing their perception about the issue relevant in the hospitality industry. The students were needed to give the score twice before and after the internship program in order to understand whether there were any change in perception about the hospitality industry after the internship.

The students were subjected to the following questionnaire twice and were required to give score based on their perception (before and after the internship program) -

1. Your idea about effect of professional life on your family life. (Example – 0 if family life is spoilt for professional life, 10 if family life is benefitted for professional life)
2. Your idea about physical working condition in industry. (Example – 0 if physical working condition is extremely poor, 10 if it is excellent)
3. Your idea about investing in hotel management course. (Example – 0 if you are completely dissatisfied taking the course, 10 if you are overwhelmed taking the course)
4. Your idea about pay package in industry. (Example – 0 if it is very poor, 10 if it is excellent)
5. Your idea about add-on benefits like free food, perks and other incentives in industry. (Example – 0 if it is very poor, 10 if it is excellent)
6. Your idea about career advancement opportunities in industry. (Example – 0 if career advancement opportunity is nil, 10 if opportunities are vast and varied)
7. Your idea about benefit of internship in professional skill development. (Example – 0 if no benefit, 10 if immense benefit)
8. Your idea about benefit of internship in getting recruited. (Example - 0 if no benefit, 10 if immense benefit)
9. Your idea about entrepreneurship. (Example – 0 if not at all interested to be entrepreneur, 10 if want to be entrepreneur)
10. Your idea about gender equality in hospitality industry. (Example – 0 if there is no equality, 10 if it is ideal situation)

## **HYPOTHESES**

Based on the available data, the following hypotheses are tested –

- H<sub>C10</sub>: Students feel the same about the effect of the professional life on the personal life before and after the internship
- H<sub>C20</sub>: Students feel the same about the physical working condition in hotel industry before and after the internship
- H<sub>C30</sub>: Students feel the same about appropriateness in investing in hotel management course before and after the internship
- H<sub>C40</sub>: Students feel the same about the pay package offered in hotel industry before and after the internship
- H<sub>C50</sub>: Students feel the same about the add-on benefits in hotel industry before and after the internship
- H<sub>C60</sub>: Students feel the same about the career-advancement opportunities in hotel industry before and after the internship
- H<sub>C70</sub>: Students feel the same about the benefit of internship in skill development before and after the internship
- H<sub>C80</sub>: Students feel the same about the benefit of internship in getting placed before and after the internship
- H<sub>C90</sub>: Students feel the same about entrepreneurship before and after the internship
- H<sub>C100</sub>: Students feel the same about gender equality in hotel industry before and after internship
- H<sub>M10</sub>: Boy students feel the same about the effect of the professional life on the personal life before and after the internship
- H<sub>M20</sub>: Boy students feel the same about the physical working condition in hotel industry before and after the internship
- H<sub>M30</sub>: Boy students feel the same about appropriateness in investing in hotel management course before and after the internship
- H<sub>M40</sub>: Boy students feel the same about the pay package offered in hotel industry before and after the internship
- H<sub>M50</sub>: Boy students feel the same about the add-on benefits in hotel industry before and after the internship
- H<sub>M60</sub>: Boy students feel the same about the career-advancement opportunities in hotel industry before and after the internship
- H<sub>M70</sub>: Boy students feel the same about the benefit of internship in skill development before and after the internship
- H<sub>M80</sub>: Boy students feel the same about the benefit of internship in getting placed before and after the internship
- H<sub>M90</sub>: Boy students feel the same about entrepreneurship before and after the internship
- H<sub>M100</sub>: Boy students feel the same about gender equality in hotel industry before and after internship
- H<sub>F10</sub>: Girl students feel the same about the effect of the professional life on the personal life before and after the internship
- H<sub>F20</sub>: Girl students feel the same about the physical working condition in hotel industry before and after the internship
- H<sub>F30</sub>: Girl students feel the same about appropriateness in investing in hotel management course before and after the internship

- H<sub>F40</sub>: Girl students feel the same about the pay package offered in hotel industry before and after the internship
- H<sub>F50</sub>: Girl students feel the same about the add-on benefits in hotel industry before and after the internship
- H<sub>F60</sub>: Girl students feel the same about the career-advancement opportunities in hotel industry before and after the internship
- H<sub>F70</sub>: Girl students feel the same about the benefit of internship in skill development before and after the internship
- H<sub>F80</sub>: Girl students feel the same about the benefit of internship in getting placed before and after the internship
- H<sub>F90</sub>: Girl students feel the same about entrepreneurship before and after the internship
- H<sub>F100</sub>: Girl students feel the same about gender equality in hotel industry before and after internship

**Paired T-test are performed in order to test each of the hypotheses.**

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the paired T-test are mentioned below –

**Table 1**  
**Study on Perception Changes based on Internship among Students (boys and girls)**

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Assumption</i>	<i>t-Statistic</i>	<i>Significance Probability</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
H <sub>C10</sub>	Students feel the same about the effect of the professional life on the personal life before and after the internship	2.449	.015	Significant	After experiencing internship program, the students get a feeling that personal life is hampered by professional life
H <sub>C20</sub>	Students feel the same about the physical working condition in hotel industry before and after the internship	.885	.377	Non-Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>C30</sub>	Students feel the same about appropriateness in investing in hotel management course before and after the internship	.110	.912	Non-Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>C40</sub>	Students feel the same about the pay package offered in hotel industry before and after the internship	-1.916	.056	Non-Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>C50</sub>	Students feel the same about the add-on benefits in hotel industry before and after the internship	-.304	.762	Non-Significant	No change in student perception

*contd. table 1*

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Assumption</i>	<i>t-Statistic</i>	<i>Significance Probability</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
H <sub>C60</sub>	Students feel the same about the career-advancement opportunities in hotel industry before and after the internship	.106	.916	Non-Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>C70</sub>	Students feel the same about the benefit of internship in skill development before and after the internship	-4.488	.000	Significant	After experiencing internship program, the students get a better perception about contribution of internship in enhancing skill
H <sub>C80</sub>	Students feel the same about the benefit of internship in getting placed before and after the internship	-6.979	.000	Significant	After experiencing internship program, the students get a better perception about contribution of internship in getting placed
H <sub>C90</sub>	Students feel the same about entrepreneurship before and after the internship	1.008	.314	Non-Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>C100</sub>	Students feel the same about gender equality in hotel industry before and after internship	-.579	.563	Non-Significant	No change in student perception

**Table 2**  
**Study on Perception Changes based on Internship among Boy Students**

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Assumption</i>	<i>t-Statistic</i>	<i>Significance Probability</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
H <sub>M10</sub>	Boy students feel the same about the effect of the professional life on the personal life before and after the internship	.112	.921	Non-Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>M20</sub>	Boy students feel the same about the physical working condition in hotel industry before and after the internship	.899	.369	Not Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>M30</sub>	Boy students feel the same about appropriateness in investing in hotel management course before and after the internship	.224	.823	Non-Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>M40</sub>	Boy students feel the same about the pay package offered in hotel industry before and after the internship	-2.566	.011	Significant	After experiencing internship program, the boy students get an impression that expected pay packages in hotel industry would be higher than what they thought earlier

*contd. table 2*

*Is Internship Influencing Hotel Management Students' Perception about Hospitality Industry?*

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Assumption</i>	<i>t-Statistic</i>	<i>Significance Probability</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
H <sub>M50</sub>	Boy students feel the same about the add-on benefits in hotel industry before and after the internship	-.562	.574	Non-Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>M60</sub>	Boy students feel the same about the career-advancement opportunities in hotel industry before and after the internship	.093	.926	Non-Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>M70</sub>	Boy students feel the same about the benefit of internship in skill development before and after the internship	-3.964	.000	Significant	After experiencing internship program, the boy students get a better perception about contribution of internship in enhancing skill
H <sub>M80</sub>	Boy students feel the same about the benefit of internship in getting placed before and after the internship	-5.111	.000	Significant	After experiencing internship program, the boy students get a better perception about contribution of internship in getting placed
H <sub>M90</sub>	Boy students feel the same about entrepreneurship before and after the internship	1.339	.182	Not Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>M100</sub>	Boy students feel the same about gender equality in hotel industry before and after internship	-1.008	.314	Not Significant	No change in student perception

**Table 3**  
**Study on Perception Changes based on Internship among Girl Students**

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Assumption</i>	<i>t-Statistic</i>	<i>Significance Probability</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
H <sub>F10</sub>	Girl students feel the same about the effect of the professional life on the personal life before and after the internship	3.999	.000	Significant	After experiencing internship program, the girl students get a feeling that personal life is hampered by professional life
H <sub>F20</sub>	Girl students feel the same about the physical working condition in hotel industry before and after the internship	.044	.965	Not Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>F30</sub>	Girl students feel the same about appropriateness in investing in hotel management course before and after the internship	-.127	.899	Non-Significant	No change in student perception

*contd. table 3*



<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Assumption</i>	<i>t-Statistic</i>	<i>Significance Probability</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
H <sub>F40</sub>	Girl students feel the same about the pay package offered in hotel industry before and after the internship	.523	.602	Non-Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>F50</sub>	Girl students feel the same about the add-on benefits in hotel industry before and after the internship	.130	.897	Non-Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>F60</sub>	Girl students feel the same about the career-advancement opportunities in hotel industry before and after the internship	-.108	.914	Non-Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>F70</sub>	Girl students feel the same about the benefit of internship in skill development before and after the internship	-2.455	.016	Significant	After experiencing internship program, the Girl students get a better perception about contribution of internship in enhancing skill
H <sub>F80</sub>	Girl students feel the same about the benefit of internship in getting placed before and after the internship	-5.179	.000	Significant	After experiencing internship program, the girl students get a better perception about contribution of internship in getting placed
H <sub>F90</sub>	Girl students feel the same about entrepreneurship before and after the internship	-.248	.805	Not Significant	No change in student perception
H <sub>F100</sub>	Girl students feel the same about gender equality in hotel industry before and after internship	.575	.566	Not Significant	No change in student perception

### **MAJOR FINDINGS**

- After experiencing the internship program, the girl students think that professional life hampers their personal life. However, the boy students possess similar view about effect of professional life on personal life before and after the internship. The students as a whole believe after experiencing internship program that professional life affects personal life.
- There is no change in perception about physical working condition in hotel industry among boy and girl students before and after experiencing internship program.
- There is no change in perception about appropriateness in investing in hotel management course among boy and girl students before and after experiencing internship program.
- After experiencing the internship program, the boy students feel that the expected pay package in hotel industry would be higher than what they thought earlier. No significant change in perception about it among girls and combined students.



- There is no change in perception about the add-on benefits in working in hotel industry among boy and girl students before and after experiencing internship program.
- There is no change in perception about the career advancement opportunities in hotel industry among boy and girl students before and after experiencing internship program.
- After experiencing the internship program, both the boy and girl students get a better perception about the usefulness of internship program in enhancing their skills.
- After experiencing the internship program, both the boy and girl students get a better perception about usefulness of internship program in getting placed.
- There is no change in perception about entrepreneurship among boy and girl students before and after experiencing internship program.
- There is no change in perception about gender equality in hotel industry among boy and girl students before and after experiencing internship program.

### SUMMARY

The study highlights the changes of perception of the students about different issues relevant in hotel industry before and after the internship program. The study reveals that girl students feel after experiencing internship program that professional life in hotel industry affects their personal life in a much grave manner than what they thought earlier before internship. After experiencing the internship program, the boy students feel that the expected pay package in hotel industry would be higher than what they thought earlier. After experiencing the internship program, both the boy and girl students get a better perception about the usefulness of internship program in enhancing their skills. After experiencing the internship program, both the boy and girl students get a better perception about usefulness of internship program in getting placed.

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