



Journal of Hospitality, Leisure,
Sport & Tourism Education

Vol. 10, No. 2.

ISSN: 1473-8376

www.heacademy.ac.uk/johlste

ACADEMIC PAPER

A study of the effects of internship experiences on the behavioural intentions of college students majoring in leisure management in Taiwan

Chin-Tsu Chen (cathy80249@hotmail.com)

Department of Tourism and Leisure Management, Vanung University, Tao-Yuan, Taiwan, and
Institute of Business and Management, National Chiao Tung University, Taipei City, Taiwan

Jin-Li Hu (jinlihu@gmail.com)

Institute of Business and Management, National Chiao Tung University, Taipei City, Taiwan

Cheng-Cai Wang (ericwang@mail.vnu.edu.tw)

Department of Tourism and Leisure Management, Vanung University, Tao-Yuan, Taiwan

Chun-Fu Chen (mark0617@ms7.hinet.net)

Department of Business Administration, National Taipei College of Business, Taipei City, Taiwan

DOI:10.3794/johlste.102.294

©Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education

Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to explore the positive and negative effects of the internship experience on the behavioural intentions of college students in Taiwan. The results of this study suggest five major types of experience; sensory, affective, creative cognitive, physical and relational; have different effects on satisfaction, willingness to return to the original internship organisation, willingness to work, willingness to recommend the internship organisation to other students, ability to move between departments during the internship, whether to continue with studies or suspend schooling, career transition, complaints to colleagues within the internship organisation and external complaints.

Chin-Tsu Chen is a senior lecturer in the Tourism and Leisure Management Department at Vanung University, Taiwan. She is also currently a doctoral student at National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan. She received her BS and MS degrees in Recreational Management from Springfield College, USA. Her research interests include leisure behaviour, leisure education, and hospitality management.

Jin-Li Hu is a professor and Director in the Institute of Business and Management, National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan. He received his PhD in Economics from State University of New York at Stony Brook, USA. His current research interests include decision sciences, and efficiency and productivity. He has published more than ninety journal articles.

Cheng-Cai Wang is associate professor of Tourism and Leisure Management at Vanung University, Taiwan. He received his MS degree in Environmental Engineering from National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan. His research interests include environmental planning and management, ecotourism, and leisure behaviour.

Chun-Fu Chen is associate professor in the National Taipei College of Business, Taiwan. He received his PhD in Management Science from National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan. His current research interests are in the areas of leisure behaviours, management of innovation, and strategic management. He is also involved in many national research projects and presents at academic conferences. He has been published in Asian Survey, Electoral Studies, International Journal of Management, and other journals.

Keywords: leisure management; internship; experiences; behavioural intentions

Introduction

One of the main goals of higher education (HE) is to prepare students for a future career (Santiago, 2009). Traditionally, college education emphasises teaching theoretical knowledge, but industry demands practical skills and practice. After graduating from college; here defined as an institution of higher learning that grants the bachelor's degree in liberal arts, science or both; many Taiwanese students experience the frustration of not being well prepared for their desired career. Therefore, internship has become a major factor in the curricula and has been actively pursued as a viable procedure for bridging the theoretical world of academia and the practical world of industry. Internship is profession-oriented and aims to prepare students with work-related skills and expertise related to their future career. It is a process in which students are involved in real work situations, enabling them to establish career development goals. By working in industry during their college years, students have the opportunity to apply knowledge learned in the classroom and gain practical perspectives regarding work and society.

From the point of view of students, internship helps to familiarise them with practical skills, enhance social relationships, motivate future learning and develop a socially acceptable personality (Calloway & Beckstead, 1995). College students are open to changes, and their behavioural intentions, attitudes and values are still developing. Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996) stated that behavioural intentions can be categorised into positive and negative aspects. The positive behavioural intentions include loyalty and the willingness to offer more. Negative behavioural intentions include transition, internal complaints and external complaints. Behavioural intention in this research article refers to the possibility that students will work in the leisure industry after participating in the internship programme.

College years are essential for establishing true values and a positive attitude to life (Huang, 1993). The internship programme provides students with the opportunity to discover their job interests and objectives through real work experience under professional guidance. The internship experience and behavioural intentions are basic aspects that colleges include to facilitate the acquisition of appropriate career values and enhance personal development.

The major concerns in business settings are practical skills and expertise. Students learn practical work and social skills, become more independent, and increase their social experience through the internship programme. In Taiwan, leisure management has recently become a popular educational subject in colleges, and the students majoring in it have increased in number, from 9,083 in 1993 to 64,190 in 2007, or 4.89% of the total number of college students in Taiwan (National Policy Foundation, 2008). In addition to the regular curriculum, students are required to participate in internship programmes and work part-time in the relevant industry for up to one year. The internship experience is crucial in developing self-recognition and a positive attitude, as well as enhancing social relationships and practical skills. Students are well-prepared for joining the work force and the abilities learned through the internship are critical for their future success.

Previous studies suggest that many graduates are unable to handle the pressure of work-related challenges (Wang, 2002). West and Jameson (1990) suggested that the more internship experience students get during college years, the less likely they are to want to work in that field on completion of their studies. Fox (2001) stated that a bad internship experience is likely to deter young students from joining the industry. According to Waryszak (1999), students will feel frustrated if the internship programme is not fulfilling and rewarding; therefore, they may not want to stay in the same career area. To determine the effect of internship on students majoring in leisure management, a quantitative study of the students' internship experience was undertaken. This study explored the internship experience from students' perspectives, and further analysed the effect of internship experience on their behavioural intentions.

The research aimed to provide valuable data for colleges, internship organisations and vocational education agencies to assist with developing better approaches and comprehensive systems for planning internship programmes. The survey in this research was targeted at students majoring in leisure management who had completed their internship programme. The hypotheses of the research were as follows:

1. A positive internship experience significantly affects behavioural intentions.
2. A negative internship experience significantly affects behavioural intentions.

Literature review

Taiwanese college HE traditionally emphasises teaching theoretical knowledge. Once engaged in their career, students who have graduated from college often realise that the real-world work situation is vastly different from the theory they learned (Huang & Huang, 2004). Consequently, colleges have begun to work with industries to arrange internship programmes so that students can become acquainted with business operations and the work environment. Internship is part of the college/industry co-operation programme through which students at universities in Taiwan are offered workplace learning opportunities, in partnership with leisure organisations. Their education takes place both in college and in industry, with the intention of reinforcing both learning and career development through providing an effective internship experience.

Terms and statements in the leisure service industry

The leisure service industry is a complex and multi-faceted one, encompassing a number of dimensions. The leisure service industry in Taiwan has been defined as: “any industry which provides relative products or services to people who are engaged in leisure activities” (Wu, 2003, p. 30). For the purposes of this study, the leisure industry was divided into the leisure and entertainment industry, and the tourism and recreation industry.

The leisure and entertainment industry caters for everyday leisure pursuits and includes sectors such as: the computer games industry, publishing industry, music industry, entertainment industry, and food industry. Activities such as shopping, watching movies, singing Karaoke, reading, having coffee and listening to music, are also encompassed within the leisure and entertainment industry. The tourism and recreation industry provides services that people need when travelling. It includes the transportation, hotel, food service and tourist agency sectors. It provides every service people might need from the beginning to the end of a holiday.

Internship

According to Beggs, Ross, and Goodwin (2008), internship courses provide learning opportunities for undergraduates to experience professional practice and activities associated with knowledge application. Thus, as Fox (2001) stated, internship is an opportunity to close the gap between learned theory and practical reality. Most colleges in Taiwan that have a Leisure Management Department require students to participate in an internship programme to help them gain practical work experience, learn to apply concepts they have learned and prepare for their future careers. Colleges that require internships usually have established policies regarding the programmes which regulate matters such as minimum hours, work duties, credits and means of assessment (Huang & Huang, 2004). According to Busby (2003), the framework for internship programmes differs between institutions, with programme hours varying from 12 weeks to 12 months. The internship is a defined part of the curriculum, a professional practicum which is implemented by arranging for students to gain actual experience through working in industry. Through practical experience, students learn the characteristics of jobs and develop advanced skills. In this study, internship is defined as the process of students working in the industry to gain credits for the programme in accordance with the college’s bylaws.

Internships help students develop skills of critical self-reflection and identify future career perspectives. The internship experience increases students’ abilities, works to their future

advantage (Collins, 2002), and also enhances communication and co-operation between academic institutions and industries. Colleges may benefit by improving their overall academic performance through exposure to new technology and service concepts from industry. Internships can help students learn further practical perspectives on the subject, and increase their skills and expertise. The internship programme also expands the possibilities for research co-operation between institutions and industries (Busby, 2005).

A valuable internship programme prepares students for successful and fulfilling careers. According to Davies (1990), internship is a great opportunity for students to integrate knowledge and skills. The learning experience in an internship affects students' learning outcomes and attitudes towards their future careers. Fox (2001) suggested that a bad internship experience could cause students to change their career path. Neuman (1999) stated that students engaging in internship programmes can gain in-depth career perspectives, which may give them an advantage over those without internship experiences.

The internship is an integral part of a student's career development and may have numerous positive impacts on students (Lam & Ching, 2007). Lerner (1988) noted that internship can provide students with experience in specific areas of career interest and ultimately increase their potential to have a successful career. Educators believe that real life experiences and professional development are the most beneficial aspects of the internship programme for college students. A study by Mihail (2006) pointed out that while students are still in college, internships can help them to develop the critical core skills demanded by global markets including: communication, time management, self-confidence and self-motivation. The internship experience offers students a means of learning about real world situations. Nefstead (1982) suggested that students can develop positive self-image and healthy self-esteem from a positive overall internship experience.

None of the above studies specifically investigated the effects of the internship experience on the behavioural intentions of students majoring in the leisure field and the purpose of this study was to partly fill this gap by investigating the perspectives of students who had completed their internship programme.

Experience

Schmitt (1999) proposed an integrated conceptual framework of experiential marketing and suggested how it affects behaviours, based on the psychological theorising of individual consumers. He identified five key consumer experiences: sensory, affective, creative cognitive, physical and relational. In Schmitt's theory, emphasis is placed on the marketing of experiences, but his ideas have wider potential for exploring the experiential dimensions of internships.

In designing this study the five types of experience proposed by Schmitt (1999) were referred to in the development of a scale for evaluating internship experiences. The original meanings were extended in scale and the themes were derived from interviews with students who had completed internship programmes. The research also drew on the work of Zeithaml et al. (1996), as discussed earlier in the paper, in investigating student's behavioural intentions and how these are influenced by internships.

Methods

To investigate the factors of internship experience and behavioural intentions, an initial questionnaire was designed based on the literature review, and 10 students were selected using a purposive sampling method. These students, who had previously completed internships, were then interviewed by the researcher. Before the interviews, the researcher helped the interviewees to better understand the meanings of terms and interview topic guides, in order to ensure a consistent interview process. The interviews encompassed topics related to internship experience, behavioural intentions after the internship and personal data.

Based on data from the interviews, the key factors of internship experiences and the behavioural intentions were classified into positive and negative aspects. The sample descriptive statistics were explored through 10 factors: college system, college year when joining the internship programme, age, gender, educational background, related work experience prior to internship, work location, industry type, work time and work duties.

Following this initial study, the questionnaire was examined and modified by three experienced professors from the Department of Leisure Management. A purposive sampling method was employed to identify 50 students for interview who had finished their internships. Using their responses to the questionnaire, correlation analysis was performed with factors of internship experience and behavioural intentions, and the five least selected correlation coefficient items were removed. The relative factors of internship experience were then analysed using factor analysis, and the two items with factor loading less than 0.4 were removed.

The final questionnaire was devised with face validity and construct validity, and had four different parts: positive factors of internship experience, negative factors of internship experience, behavioural intentions after internship, and personal data. The first three parts of the questionnaire were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, and the personal data were assessed on a nominal scale.

The study subjects were college students majoring in leisure management in Taiwan. Students who had registered in the autumn of 2009 and the spring of 2010 and had completed the internship programmes were included in the study. Six hundred and fifty surveys were sent out and 611 were collected, giving a 95% response rate. There were 68 incomplete surveys leaving 543 effective surveys and the data was analysed with SPSS 12.0.

Results and discussion

Sample analysis

Students from technology colleges accounted for 77.1% of the sample; with general college students making up the remaining 22.9%; 54.5% of the sample were female, 45.5% male. The most common age of the sample population was 21, accounting for 44.0% of the sample, and those aged 22 accounted for 35.6%. 54.8% of the group majored in non leisure/tourism-related departments while 30.7% of the group majored in tourism-related departments. 45.8% of the sample frame population did not have any work experience in the food service industry prior to the internships: 46.1% were in southern Taiwan, and 29.1% were in northern Taiwan. The duration of the internships was about six months, accounting for 52% of the total. The positions students held in internships were also taken into account: 59.8% were assigned to fixed positions while 38.7% were assigned to shifting positions.

The research adopted descriptive statistics and regression analysis to evaluate the effects of various factors of positive and negative experiences on behavioural intentions.

Reliability and validity of the positive and negative experiences scale

The researcher analysed 18 items of the factors of positive experiences, using principal components analysis to identify the factors. In order to maximise the differences within each factor after rotation, the researcher applied varimax to conduct orthogonal rotation. Based on Kaiser's (1974) method, the researcher adopted the factors in which eigenvalues were more than 1 as archetypes. After defining each item, the researcher looked at Schmitt's (1999) key consumer experiences: sensory, affective, creative cognitive, physical and relational. The accumulated variation for these five archetypes was 55.27%. Cronbach's α were 0.90, 0.87, 0.78, 0.82 and 0.84 respectively, matching standard validity and reliability. Applying the same method, the researcher analysed 25 items for factors of negative experiences of internships. The accumulated variation for sensory experiences, affective experiences, creative cognitive experiences, physical experiences and relational experiences was 57.31% while the

separate Cronbach's α for these items were 0.90, 0.84, 0.88, 0.86 and 0.77 respectively, matching the standards of validity and reliability.

Analysis of the extent of agreement with factors of positive and negative experiences

The mean and standard deviation (SD) of the 24 factors were analysed. The data indicated that most of the students "strongly agree" or "agree" with the following three factors: "the affirmation of customers from the internship made me feel a strong sense of accomplishment" (4.08), "the internship made me face the reality of society" (4.17) and "the internship increased my social experiences" (4.16). However, for other factors the sample frame population mostly replied with "neither agree nor disagree" or "agree" (Table 1).

Aspects of factors of positive experiences	M	SD
<i>Factor 1: Affective experiences</i>		
The internship enabled me to make many friends, expanded my vision, and made me feel that the effort was worth it.	4.00	0.84
The memories that the internship gave me made me feel that the hard work was worth it.	3.90	0.81
The results of the internship made me feel that it was worth it to spend time and effort.	3.74	0.87
<i>Factor 2: Sensory experiences</i>		
The affirmation of customers from the internship made me feel a strong sense of accomplishment.	4.08	0.80
The internship cultivated my spirit of service for the leisure industry.	3.83	0.74
The internship made me feel satisfied because I could apply what I had learnt.	3.73	0.87
I believe that the internship could help me obtain employment.	3.69	0.83
<i>Factor 3: Physical experiences</i>		
The internship made me face the reality of society.	4.17	0.77
The internship increased my social experiences.	4.16	0.79
The internship increased my tolerance and patience for the management of tasks and work.	4.00	0.76
The internship helped me improve my personal words and deeds.	3.75	0.76
<i>Factor 4: Relational experiences</i>		
The internship gave me the desire to influence the people around me to improve their level of understanding of the leisure culture.	3.59	0.76
The internship gave me the desire to change the viewpoints of those who had a negative opinion of the leisure industry.	3.58	0.83
The internship gave me the desire to think like the employers in the leisure industry regarding how to improve the overall quality of the leisure industry.	3.56	0.76
<i>Factor 5: Creative cognitive experiences</i>		
The internship helped me to reflect on my career planning.	3.91	0.80
The internship aroused my intention to live a better life.	3.87	0.81
The internship inspired me to strengthen my own abilities and improve my own values.	3.87	0.76
The internship made me think whether I should continue staying in leisure industry to obtain employment.	3.66	0.84

Table 1: Analysis of the extent of agreement with factors of positive experiences

According to the survey, the students did not show a high extent of agreement on the 24 factors of positive experiences. However, the results indicated that the affirmation of customers during the internship made the students feel a strong a sense of accomplishment.

Moreover, the internships also helped the students increase their social experiences and gain a sense of social realism.

The mean and SD of the 20 factors of negative experiences were analysed. The results demonstrated some agreement on a number of the factors of negative experiences. The surveyed students in general replied with “agree” or “neither agree nor disagree” for the following factors: “I had unpleasant feelings because my position as an intern made it possible for me to be ordered around by others” (3.05); “the internship made me feel that I was low-cost labour, which gave me unpleasant feelings” (3.11), “the internship changed my work values” (3.48), “the internship made me disapprove of the payment and fringe benefits of the leisure industry” (3.05), “the internship made me feel that I still lack the ability to enter the workplace” (3.08) and “the internship made me feel that my work ability did not meet the needs of the leisure industry” (3.10). However, for other factors, the students generally responded with “disagree” or “neither agree nor disagree” (Table 2).

Aspects of factors of negative experiences	M	SD
<i>Factor 1: Sensory experiences</i>		
The internship made me feel that I was low-cost labour, which made me feel unpleasant.	3.11	1.01
I felt unpleasant because my position as an intern made it possible to be ordered around by others.	3.05	0.96
I felt unpleasant because my position as an intern made it possible to be treated unequally.	2.93	0.95
The job content of the internship failed to make me learn more.	2.60	0.97
I could not adapt to the environment of the internship.	2.48	0.86
The internship made me feel that it was simply work, and I could not learn knowledge or skills from it.	2.48	0.95
I could not adapt to the life of the internship.	2.46	0.91
<i>Factor 2: Physical experiences</i>		
The internship changed my work values.	3.48	0.88
The internship made me disapprove of the payment and fringe benefits of the leisure industry.	3.05	1.00
The internship made me disapprove of the vacation system of the leisure industry.	2.89	0.89
The internship made me disapprove of the frequent overtime work of the leisure industry.	2.87	0.93
The internship made me disapprove of the work environments of the leisure industry.	2.69	0.86
<i>Factor 3: Affective experiences</i>		
As a whole, the internship made me feel nervous.	2.75	1.00
The internship made me feel stressed.	2.54	0.98
As a whole, the internship made me feel frustrated.	2.46	0.91
As a whole, the internship made me feel miserable.	2.42	0.96
<i>Factor 4: Creative cognitive experiences</i>		
The internship made me feel that my work ability could not meet the needs of the leisure industry.	3.10	0.98
The internship made me feel that I still lacked the ability to enter the workplace.	3.08	0.99
<i>Factor 5: Relational experiences</i>		
The internship made me learn the inveteracy of society.	2.49	1.03
The internship made me feel that I was not socialised for early exposure to society.	2.36	0.94

Table 2: Analysis of the extent of agreement with the factors of negative experiences

The results suggested that the majority of students did not show significant agreement about the factors of negative experiences. In other words, they did not encounter these negative experiences. However, some of the surveyed population had unpleasant feelings because they were often ordered about as interns, and on occasion they even felt like they were only low-cost labourers. The internships thus caused them to change their work values, and disapprove of the payment and fringe benefits of the leisure industry.

This result was in accordance with the theory of Elkins (2002), who suggested that satisfactory internships can provide students with excellent work experiences and skills while terrible internships, in which students undertake only insignificant chores, may do the opposite. These phenomena should be taken into consideration and reviewed by the internship organisation. More importantly, higher education institutions (HEIs) should also establish strong and beneficial ties with the internship units, and develop internships and industry-specific education (Inui, Wheeler, & Lankford, 2006). According to this research, the internships made some students feel that they had insufficient abilities to enter the work force and that their skills could not meet the needs of the leisure industry. As a result, students were inspired to strengthen their own knowledge, skills and abilities after their internship experience.

Analysis of the extent of agreement for each behavioural intention

To study the behavioural intentions of students after their intern experiences, the mean and standard deviation (SD) of the items were analysed. For the following statements, the students expressed negative reactions and answered “disagree” or “neutral”: “after experiencing the internship, my internship unit caused me to have thoughts of changing my internship unit” (2.82), “after experiencing the internship, I had thoughts of suspension of schooling” (2.11) and “after experiencing the off-campus experiences, I desire a career transition (e.g. pursuing further education, switching my career to work as teaching staff, etc)” (2.86). For other questions, they answered mostly “agree” or “neither agree nor disagree” (Table 3).

The majority of the sample population did not express extreme attitude changes after experiencing their internships. Few of them thought about changing their internship units or making career transitions. They preferred to finish their internships in their original units and tended to go back to their former education institutions to finish their academic degrees.

Aspects of behavioural intention	M	SD
After experiencing the internship, I am still willing to engage in the leisure industry.	3.53	0.89
I was satisfied with the overall internship experience.	3.49	0.88
After experiencing the internship, I will recommend other people to engage in the leisure industry.	3.41	0.84
When I faced a problem during the internship, I would complain to people other than those at the internship unit.	3.30	0.98
After experiencing the internship, I am still willing to return to the original internship unit for employment if there is an opportunity.	3.26	1.00
When I faced a problem during the internship, I would complain to the supervisor or my colleagues.	3.13	0.99
After experiencing the off-campus experiences, I would like to have a career transition (e.g. pursuing further education, switching my career to work as teaching staff, etc.)	2.86	1.00
After experiencing the internship, my internship unit caused me to have thoughts of changing my internship unit.	2.82	1.12
After experiencing the internship, I had thoughts of suspension of school.	2.11	1.08

Table 3: Analysis of the extent of agreement on behavioural intention

The effect of factors of positive experiences on behavioural intentions

The positive aspects of experiences; sensory, affective, creative cognitive, physical and relational; were used as five independent variables. Behavioural intentions; satisfaction with experiences, willingness to return to the original unit, willingness to work, willingness to recommend (the internship organisation to other students), unit transition, consideration of suspension of schooling, career transition, internal complaint and external complaint; were set as the dependant variables. Regression analysis was then carried out (Table 4).

	Constant	Sensory	Affective	Creative cognitive	Physical	Relational	R ²
Satisfaction with experiences	0.61	0.15	0.56**	-0.24	0.13	0.18*	0.29
Willingness to return to the original unit	0.14	0.07	0.57**	-0.17	0.01	0.35**	0.27
Willingness to work	1.06	-0.13	0.21*	0.35**	-0.26	0.51**	0.28
Willingness to recommend	1.53**	0.08	0.14	0.24	-0.32**	0.40**	0.21
Unit transition	3.54**	0.07	-0.55**	-0.62**	-0.16	-0.17	0.09
Thought of suspension of schooling	2.88**	0.04	-0.07	-0.02	-0.33*	0.20	0.03
Career transition	3.35**	0.09	-0.23*	-0.40**	-0.37	-0.01	0.04
Internal complaint	2.65**	-0.25	-0.14	0.29	0.33*	-0.12	0.05
External complaint	2.99**	-0.09	-0.26*	-0.63**	0.10	-0.31**	0.08

Table 4: Regression analysis of the effect of factors of positive experiences on behavioural intentions

*: $p < 0.05$; **: $p < 0.01$

According to the results, sensory experience had no significant effect on satisfaction with experiences, willingness to return to the original unit, willingness to work, willingness to recommend, unit transition, consideration of suspension of schooling, career transition, internal complaint or external complaint.

However, affective experiences had positive influences on satisfaction with experiences, willingness to return to the original unit and willingness to work; but negative influences on unit transition, consideration of suspension of schooling, career transition and external complaint.

This demonstrated that pleasant feelings, learning experiences and valuable efforts were the three most important factors that determined the students' extent of satisfaction with the internships. In other words, if the sample population made friends, gained valuable experience and had great memories from the internships, they felt that their efforts were worthwhile and thus committed themselves to the internship units and the leisure industry. These individuals might be more likely to engage in the leisure industry with less thought of career transition.

Creative cognitive experiences had a positive effect on willingness to recommend, but negative effects on unit transition and external complaint. The internships provided students with opportunities to think about whether they should continue staying in the leisure industry to obtain employment and also inspired them to live better lives. During their off-campus internships, students encountered people from all walks of life and discovered more about society; they were inspired to acquire advanced knowledge and professional skills. Due to this transformation, the students sometimes reconsidered many critical issues in their lives during the internships. They were willing to recommend the leisure industry to others, did not consider career transition and did not complain about the problems they faced during internships to people outside the internship units.

Physical experiences had a positive effect on internal complaint but negative effects on willingness to recommend and consideration of suspension of schooling. This indicated that when the students encountered problems during their internships, they complained to their supervisors or their colleagues, and were not willing to recommend that other people engage in the leisure industry. However, they did not consider suspension of schooling.

Relational experiences had positive effects on satisfaction with experiences, willingness to return to the original unit, willingness to work and willingness to recommend; but a significant negative influence on external complaint. The results illustrated that after experiencing the off-campus internships, students became more passionate about the leisure industry and set it as a goal for future career planning. Accordingly, students who loved the leisure industry did not make career transitions and were willing to return to the original units after their internships; moreover, they did not complain about the problems they faced during internships to other people.

In conclusion, according to the above analysis, the first hypothesis of the research – “a positive internship experience significantly affects behavioural intentions” – was partly supported.

The effect of factors of negative experiences on behavioural intentions

Here the negative aspects of experiences; sensory, affective, creative cognitive, physical and relational; were used as five independent variables. Again, behavioural intentions; satisfaction with experiences, willingness to return to the original unit, willingness to work, willingness to recommend (the internship organisation to other students), unit transition, consideration of suspension of schooling, career transition, internal complaint and external complaint; were set as the dependant variables. Regression analysis was then carried out (Table 5).

The results showed that negative sensory experiences had a positive effect on career transition but negative effects on satisfaction with experiences, willingness to return to the original unit, willingness to recommend and willingness to work. The results implied that if students were treated unequally and were ordered about by others due to their positions as interns, it made them feel that they were low-cost labourers and caused a dislike of the working environment of the leisure industry. Students also reflected that the internships made them felt that it was “simply work”, and they could not gain knowledge or skills. They had unpleasant feelings during these internships and even considered career transitions. Some intended to pursue further education or engage in an industry, rather than the leisure industry.

Affective experiences had a positive effect on unit transition, but a negative effect on willingness to return to the original unit. This indicated that if the students felt frustrated, nervous, miserable, or stressed during the internships, they might think about unit transitions. If the students were not satisfied with the overall internships, they might not be willing to return to the original internship units afterwards, even if that were possible.

	Constant	Sensory	Affective	Creative cognitive	Physical	Relational	R ²
Satisfaction with experiences	4.75**	-0.79**	0.10	0.16**	0.04	-0.03	0.25
Willingness to return to the original unit	4.20**	-0.70**	-0.06*	0.14	0.01	0.23	0.15
Willingness to work	4.40**	-0.37**	-0.02	0.00	0.06	-0.01	0.07
Willingness to recommend	4.16**	-0.23*	-0.12	0.03	-0.03	0.05	0.06
Unit transition	0.50	0.58**	0.03	0.04	0.18	0.04	0.21
Thought of suspension of schooling	0.32	0.20	0.11	0.10	-0.07	0.37**	0.21
Career transition	1.15**	0.05	0.31**	-0.04	0.39**	-0.11	0.18
Internal complaint	1.77**	-0.07	0.25**	-0.02	0.34**	-0.03	0.12
External complaint	1.72**	0.06	0.11	0.06	0.34**	-0.02	0.12

Table 5: Regression analysis of the effect of factors of negative experiences on behavioural intentions

*: p<0.05; **: p<0.01

Creative cognitive experiences had positive effects on satisfaction with experiences. This showed that students might feel that they still lacked the ability to enter the workforce and that their work abilities could not meet the needs of the leisure industry.

Physical experiences had significant positive effects on career transition, internal complaint and external complaint. The results indicated that the students had changed their work values as a result of the work environments. They looked positively on items such as frequent overtime work, vacation systems, payment and fringe benefits of the leisure industry. However, some students still complained to their supervisor or colleagues if they faced problems (negative experiences) during internships.

Relational experiences had a positive effect on consideration of suspension of schooling. The result strongly suggested that some of the students were forced to face the inveteracy of society and felt that they were not socialised enough, or that they had not had enough early exposure to society. Consequently, some considered suspending their education.

In conclusion, given the above analysis, the second hypothesis of the research - "a negative internship experience significantly affects behavioural intentions" - was partly supported.

Conclusions

Having undertaken secondary research into the effects of internship experiences on the behavioural intentions of college students, the research target group was interviewed. The results verified that the hypotheses were supported and the research goals were achieved.

In terms of positive experiences of internships, the students agreed that they had made many friends and acquired valuable skills in interpersonal relationships. They had expanded their perspectives during the internships, and believed their efforts were worthwhile. The

results of this study support the views of Inui et al. (2006) who stated that internships can benefit students in various ways, including knowledge management, interpersonal relationships and professional experiences. In terms of sensory experiences, praise from customers during their internships gave the students a strong sense of accomplishment. Students took the opportunity to understand the realities of society and enhance their social experiences. They became more tolerant and patient when managing tasks and work. Analysis of the positive experiences showed that internships also increased the students' ability to critically reflect on professional business (Tribe, 2001) and helped them set future career goals. Students also reflected that they had acquired professional skills and knowledge during their internships.

Following analysis of negative experiences, it appeared that some students had unrealistic expectations of the type of work experience internships would provide and were disappointed when expected to perform what they regarded to be menial tasks. These findings are in line with those of Waryszak (1999) who posited that students will become frustrated if their internship is not fulfilling and rewarding. It is thus important to ensure that students are appropriately prepared for their internship by being made aware of workplace values and expectations.

Higher education is no longer only for the "elite" as it used to be: practical and technical colleges also provide a solid education for professional learning. Therefore, when planning courses for the leisure industry, colleges should focus not only on theoretical knowledge and abstract skills, but also on helping students develop appropriate work values and attain real world experiences. With this approach, colleges could enable students to experience authentic applications of theoretical knowledge and verify academic discourses.

Some students felt that they had been treated as low-cost labourers in their internships. To solve this problem, a stronger system of internship instruction is needed in order to provide better communication channels for the interns. This system is crucial in order for students to adapt to the work and environment of the internships. Further research could compare different student qualities and their differences in terms of satisfaction. In this way, the students, teachers, colleges, and industry could understand more clearly the connection between internships and student satisfaction, and provide more valuable perspectives and suggestions. This prospect has provided a direction for future studies and may help to eliminate the gap between the students and the internship units by complementing each other's roles.

This research was based on college students' off-campus internship experiences and was intended to provide useful data for HEIs in Taiwan, the industry liaison system and students' off-campus internships. The intention was to explore some of the possible reasons for students' need for multiple career opportunities, as well as the needs of potential employers in the future career market. It also has provided analytical insights and practical suggestions for related units such as HEIs and future researchers. It provides a useful reference point to assist HEIs in developing curricula which deliver practical experience and professional skills to students as future staff for the leisure industry. It highlights the need to plan better for off-campus internships and create appropriate models for internships which will help students with more effective future career planning.

References

- Beggs, B., Ross, C. M., & Goodwin, B. (2008). A comparison of student and practitioner perspectives of the travel and tourism internship. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport, and Tourism Education*, 7(1), 31-39. [doi:10.3794/johlste.71.161](https://doi.org/10.3794/johlste.71.161)
- Busby, G. (2003). Tourism degree internships: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 55, 319-334. [doi:10.1080/13636820300200232](https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820300200232)
- Busby, G. (2005). Work experience and industrial links. In D. Airey & J. Tribe (Eds.), *An international handbook of tourism education* (pp. 93-107). London: Elsevier.
- Calloway, D., & Beckstead, S. M. (1995). Reconceptualizing internships in management education. *Journal on Management Education*, 19, 326-341. [doi:10.1177/105256299501900304](https://doi.org/10.1177/105256299501900304)

- Collins, A. B. (2002). Gateway to the real world, industrial training: Dilemmas and problems. *Tourism management*, 23, 93-96. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(01)00058-9
- Davies, L. (1990). *Experience-based learning within the curriculum: A synthesis study*. Sheffield, England: Council for National Academic Awards.
- Elkins, T. J. (2002). Academic internships with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: An experiential approach to teaching human resource management. *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, 67(3), 40-47.
- Fox, T. (2001). A sense of place. *Caterer & Hotelkeeper*, 189(4160), 30.
- Huang, G. G. (1993). The values of teens. *Test and Counseling*, 119, 2422-2430.
- Huang, I. C., & Huang, P. W. (2004). The relation between practical training values and job involvement: A study of college students majoring in tourism, leisure, recreation, and hospitality. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 10(1), 63-79.
- Inui, Y., Wheeler, D. & Lankford, S. (2006). Rethinking tourism education: What should schools teach? *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 5(2), 25-35. doi:10.3794/johliste.52.122
- Kaiser, H. F. (1974). An index of factorial simplicity. *Psychometrika*, 39, 31-36.
- Lam, T., & Ching, L. (2007). An exploratory study of an internship program: The case of Hong Kong students. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 26, 336-351. doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2006.01.001
- Lerner, M. R. (1988). Commentary: Internship assist college programs. *Community College Journalist*, 16, 21.
- Mihail, D. M. (2006). Internship at Greek universities: An exploratory study. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 18, 28-41. doi:10.1108/13665620610641292
- National Policy Foundation. (2008). *Development of professional talents for Taiwan's leisure industry*. Retrieved October 20, 2011, from: <http://www.npf.org.tw/post/2/4339>
- Nefstead, J. (1982). The effectiveness of the educational administration internship at Mankato State University from 1975-1981. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 43, 1777A.
- Neuman, H. (1999). Internships. *Career World*, 27(6), 16.
- Santiago, A. (2009). Impact of sandwich course design on first job experience. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 18, 205-217. doi:10.3860/taper.v18i2.1323
- Schmitt, B. H. (1999). Experiential marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15, 53-67. doi:10.1362/026725799784870496
- Schmitt, B. H. (1999). *Experiential marketing: How to get customers to sense, feel, think, act, and relate to your company and brands*. New York: Free Press.
- Tribe, J. (2001). Research paradigms and the tourism curriculum. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39, 442-448. doi:10.1177/004728750103900411
- Wang, Y. F. (2002). Evolution of higher education in hospitality in Taiwan. *Journal of Human Ecology and Technology*, 3(4), 453-464.
- Waryszak, R. Z. (1999). Students' expectations from their cooperative education placement in the hospitality industry: An international perspective. *Education + Training*, 41, 33-40. doi:10.1108/00400919910255924
- West, A. J., & Jameson, S. M. (1990). Supervised work experience in graduate employment. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 2(2), 29-32. doi:10.1108/09596119010002179
- Wu, S. L. (2003). *Management of leisure behavior*. Taiwan: Yang-Chih Book Company.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L., & Parasuraman, A. (1996). The behavioral consequences of service quality. *Journal of Marketing*, 60(2), 31-46. doi:10.2307/1251929

Submitted March 2010. Resubmitted November 2011. Final Version March 2011. Accepted June 2011.