



Research Paper

Internship Satisfaction of Tourism and Hospitality Management Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at examining internship satisfaction of tourism and hospitality management students. The study was conducted among hospitality students of the University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani, Ghana. This study uses a descriptive research design with questionnaire being the main instrument in capturing primary information from respondents. A total of 80 respondents were captured for the study using a simple random sampling technique. The study constructed five factors to examine satisfaction; individual factors, university support, organizational environment, job characteristics and contextual factors. It was revealed that organizational environment and individual factors had the most significant impact of satisfaction. The study further recommends that education institutions should ensure that students are placed in workplaces that have the capacity to guide their students to put their theoretical knowledge into practice. Also, future studies should include qualitative study in assessing the satisfaction of students on internship.

KEYWORDS: Internship, satisfaction, curriculum, industry, programme, practical.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The tourism and hospitality education in Ghana plays an important role, supporting the industry's development by ensuring the continuous supply of quality human resources. Therefore, in order to bridge the gap between the students' experience and requirements of employees, the curriculum of tourism and hospitality education has been designed in a way that internship has become an integral component of all tourism and hospitality programmes (Kim & Park 2013). The curriculum of tourism and hospitality management programmes are much more practical and industry oriented that requires internship.

Hacioglu, Kasli, Sahin, and Tetik (2008) opines that human resource needed to be employed in tourism and hospitality industry should have adequate professional training. Therefore, educational institutions offering tourism and hospitality education are required to train qualified personnel for the industry (Lam & Xiao, 2000). Studies on students' internships posit that industrial learning plays a vital role in enhancing the preparation and success of students in an entry-level job market (D'Abate, 2010; Knouse & Fontenot, 2008; Saltikoff, 2017). Tourism and hospitality management students during their internship programme however, learn and equip themselves with industrial skills (Dani, Kukreti, Negi, & Kholiya, 2020).

The internship critically develops students' workplace skills, assisting them in blending theoretical knowledge with actual industrial experience (Bayerleio, & Jeske, 2018). The combination of classroom theory studies with exposure to industrial environment impact a full understanding of job requirements, requirements enhances social skills and build self-confidence among the student interns (Lee, 2008). Roney & Oztin (2007) argue that, internships create opportunities for students to form an opinion towards the industry. Zopiatissand Constanti (2007), further add that it helps the students to observe the industry and understand the working environment in a better way.

In Ghana, tourism and hospitality management students are required to undertake an internship program in any approved tourism and hospitality establishment. This is done during the long vacation holiday, which usually last for a period of three months. However, these internship programs have always been criticized and poorly organized (Lee & Chao, 2008). As argued by Cook, Parker, and Pettijohn (2004), student interns always face some problems during their internship period and these arise from time of placement search to the end of

their attachment period. It is argued that institutions fail to prepare students adequately in order to cope with the challenges and demands of work in this sector (Lam & Ching, 2007). Dissatisfied intern, as a result, decide to leave the hospitality industry (Cho, 2006; Jenkins, 2001). Therefore, the work of Internship Coordinators is critical for the success or failure of an internship program. Therefore, this study is to examine tourism and hospitality management students' satisfaction with internship programs captured in their curriculum as a requisite program required for graduation.

II. LITERATURE

2.1 Internship for tourism and hospitality management students'

According to Zopiatis (2007), internship is defined as a structured and career-relevant supervised professional learning experience, being it either paid or unpaid, within an approved tourism and hospitality organization, under the direct supervision of at least one practicing hospitality professional and one faculty member, for which a student can earn academic credit. As posit by LeMasitre and Pare (2004), most students encounter difficulties when going through the transition from college to the industry to begin their professional careers. As such, internship has been an absolute necessity in tourism and hospitality management education, as it creates opportunity to close the substantial gap between college-learned theory and practical reality (Fox, 2001; Randall & Good, 1991).

Career choice in the tourism and hospitality industry appears to be problematic. Therefore, Collins (2002) is of the view that internship programs are unique opportunities for students to land on their first jobs, since this valuable qualification will help them enter the job market faster and easier. Yaffe-Bellany (2020) add that for students of tourism and hospitality programmes, internships contain multiple values from a "stepping stone to full-time work, a vital source of income, and even a graduation requirement".

Students are mostly considered to be the main beneficiary of internships, although there are of course numerous benefits to academic institutions and the industrial firms. Internship programs provide an opportunity for students to gain hands-on, practical experience, as well as develop and acquire skills and knowledge that cannot be obtained within a normal classroom environment (Boger & Lim, 2005; Chi & Gursoy, 2009; Clark, 2003; Mello, 2006; Van 't Klooster, van Wijk, Go & van Rekom, 2008). Zopiatis and Constanti (2012) are of the view that, students do not only gain actual learning experience but also a better sense of self-awareness of the practicalities of the real world.

Thiel and Hartley (1997) add that it's afford student with training under both academic and practitioner supervision. They further posit that the supervise internships allow students to gain interpersonal skills with industry workers. Anderson and Sanga (2019) conclude that educational institutions offering tourism and hospitality programme and industry partners need to contribute to developing an internship program that can ensure student learning outcomes meet academic rigor and industry needs.

2.2 Students satisfaction towards internship.

Since internships are becoming more widely used as learning tools for students to help fill the gap between classroom learning and the practice of business. It has therefore, become important to understand what aspects of these experiences make them the most worthwhile (D'abate, Youndt & Wenzel, 2009). Hussien and Lopa (2018) define internship satisfaction, internship satisfaction is defined as the extent to which interns perceive and feel about the different aspect of their internship program. According to Farmaki (2018), student satisfaction with the internship experience has emerged as a key indicator in evaluating the effectiveness of an internship. Internship satisfaction influences students' career choices after graduation (Robinson, Ruhanen, & Breakey, 2016) and the development of tourism and hospitality career identity (Mooney & Jameson, 2018).

Generally speaking academic institutions, hospitality establishment and the students themselves are the factors involve in contributing to students satisfaction with internship (Chen et al., 2018; Chen & Shen, 2012; Cho, 2006). Academic institutions are involve in internship planning, academic supervisor, performance evaluation, and relevance of the internships to the curriculum design (Chen & Shen, 2012; Hussien & La Lopa, 2018; Ko, 2007; Tse, 2010). Also, from hospitality establishments perspective, researchers explored factors such as working conditions and environment, working relationships and social interaction, help from colleagues and supervisors, skill training and learning experiences (Chen et al., 2018; Hussien & La Lopa, 2018; Ko, 2008; Lam & Ching, 2007; Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2013; Singh & Dutta, 2010; Tse, 2010). Lastly, from the student perspective, self-initiative, self-commitment and dedication, autonomy, personal growth, and appreciation and feedback were investigated as determinants of students' internship satisfaction (Chen & Shen, 2012; Hussien & La Lopa, 2018; Lam & Ching, 2007; Singh & Dutta, 2010; Tse, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to provide students with practical projects that can increase the satisfaction level with regard to their internship experiences.

2.3 Framework

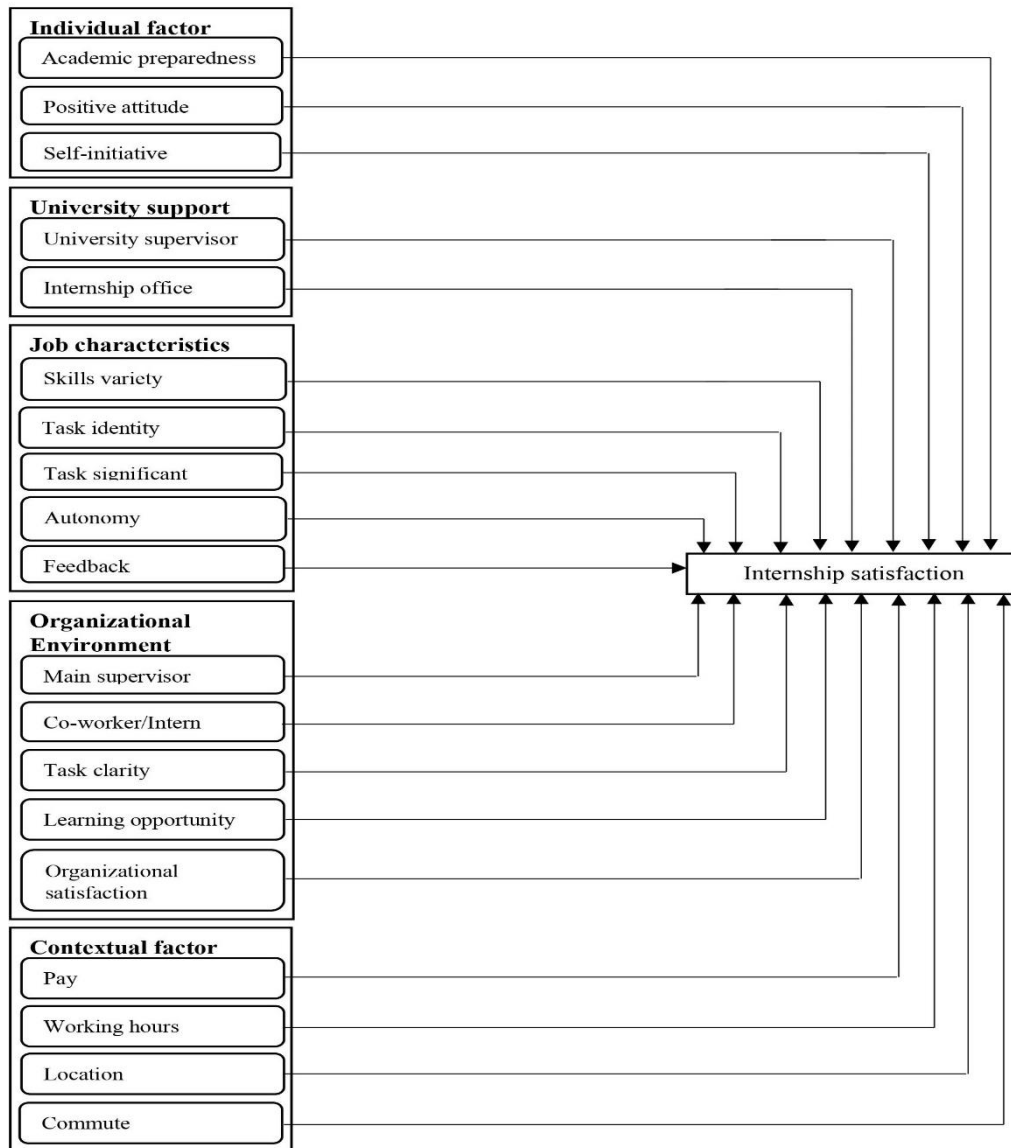


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

This current paperproposes framework from the study of Trochim (2005).The proposed framework includes five constructs involving individual factors, university support, job characteristics, organizational environment and contextual factor.Job characteristics are a set of variables concerned with "what an employee does at work". Hackman and Oldham's (1980) describe these job-related factors as skill variety, task identity, task significance, the amount of freedom employees give in choosing the order of their tasks and how they will complete them and the amount of information employees are given about the effectiveness of their work outcome.

Individual factors also refer to the characteristics of student interns that lead tosatisfaction. Such characteristics include academic preparedness,positive attitude, and self-initiative (Arif, 2007; Kok, 2000). Gupta and Burn (2010) posit that, qualities regarding internshipexperience itself affect the satisfaction level that student perceives. In otherwords, student interns with a general understanding of the industry; who have positive attitude towards internship; and who are self-initiative tend to find the internship experience as satisfactory.

According to Smits (2006),interns with good universitysupport had a higher training input and satisfaction levels than thosewho receive inadequate university support. Regular visits of university supervisors as well as having frequent consultations between them are very important for a successful internship program (Hussein, & Lopa, 2018). A supportive relationship between universitysupervisor and an intern is critical to each intern’s performance and satisfaction(Klee, 2011).

Further, organizational environment describes internship areas such as main supervisor support, co-workers support, learning opportunities, career development opportunities, networking opportunities, and organization satisfaction (D'Abate et al., 2009). In the working environment, opportunity to learn is an important predictor of internship satisfaction. Ellickson (2002) added that promotional opportunities in the workplace exert powerful effects on job satisfaction.

More so, various contextual factors need to be considered when looking at interns' satisfaction. Rothman (2003) suggests that flexible work hour contributes to students' satisfaction and that a lengthy commute may result in dissatisfaction. Fisher and Shaw (1994) also added that the location of the internship may contribute to interns' satisfaction.

III. STUDY AREA

The study area for this research paper is the University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR), Sunyani, Ghana. UENR is located on longitude 7.3502° N, and latitude 2.3430° W. The university was established by an Act of Parliament, Act 830, 2011 on December 31, 2011. It is a public funded national institution which seeks to provide leadership and management of energy and natural resources and be a centre of excellence in these critical areas. The University approaches its programmes and research emphasizing interdisciplinary collaboration and taking into account, areas such as economics, law and policy, management, science, technology and engineering as well as social and political issues affecting energy and natural resources. The university offers various degree and diploma programmes in tourism and hospitality management. Currently the university runs a four (4) year programme in BSc. Hospitality Management and a two (2) year programme in Diploma in Hospitality Management.

IV. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study adapted a descriptive research design using a quantitative research approach. Data for the study were collected from a random sampling of tourism and hospitality management students of UENR from April 2021 to May 2021. A total of 80 respondents were used for this study. A structured questionnaire was the main instrument used. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part sort for students' demographic information whereas the second part measures internship satisfaction based on factors proposed in the framework; individual factors, university support, job characteristics, organizational environment and contextual factors. The last part constitutes ~~items that was~~ [items that were](#) also used to determine respondents' internship satisfaction. Respondents were to give their response based on a five (5) point likert scale. Statistical Package for Service Solution (SPSS) version 21 was used for analyzing the data. The study made use of descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis and linear regression analysis with results being presented in tables for easier understanding and interpretation.

V. RESULTS

Finding from this study revealed that 88.8 % of respondents were female students and 11.2 % of the respondents were male students. The findings of this study also revealed the majority of students (80.0 %) to be aged between 20 to 25 years. The study also revealed the majority (82.5 %) to have participated in only one internship program. Concerning sectors within the industry where students have had their internship program, results indicated that (50.5 %) of students have had their internship programs within the accommodation sector of the tourism and hospitality industry. This was followed by restaurant, where (25.7 %) of respondents indicated to have had their internship in restaurants. However, findings indicated that the least of respondents had their internship program in banks and at parks. Both places recorded a percentage score of (1.9 %). In total, findings show the majority of students (86.3 %) have spent between 1 to 3 months on internship programs.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Gender		N	%
Gender	Male	9	11.2
	Female	71	88.8
Age (years)	Below 20	4	5.0
	20 - 25	64	80.0
	26 - 30	10	12.5
	Above 30	2	2.5
No. of internships participated	One	66	82.5
	Two	8	10.0
	Three	6	7.5
Internship placement	Accommodation (Hotel, Resort, Motel, Inns etc.)	55	50.5
	Restaurant	27	25.7

	Parks	2	1.9
	Travel and Tour Agency	11	10.5
	Government Regulatory Agency (MoT, GTA, FDA, etc	7	6.7
	Hospitals	3	2.9
	Banks	2	1.9
<i>Total period spent on internship</i>	1 - 3 months	69	86.3
	4 - 6 months	5	6.3
	7 - 9 months	1	1.3
	More than 9 months	5	6.3

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2021.

5.1 Descriptive analysis on satisfaction attributes

This study conducted a descriptive analyzes on the factors contributing to tourism and hospitality management students 'internship satisfaction. Twenty (20) items captured under five (5) factors were analyze to determine each items mean and standard deviation. The item "the internship has given on the job learning opportunity scored the highest mean (mean = 4.19). This was followed by "I have learnt a lot about the tourism and hospitality industry" (mean = 4.17) and "studying tourism and hospitality has so far given me the skills needed to perform well in the industry" (mean = 4.16). However, the least recorded items were items "working hours were flexible" (mean = 3.41), "commuting to my workplace was hustle free with less amount spend on transport" (mean = 3.22) and "I was offered with financial incentive" (mean = 2.77).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on satisfaction attributes

ITEMS	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
Studying tourism / hospitality has so far given me the skills needed to perform well in the industry	4.16	0.770
The internship has given me on the job learning opportunity	4.19	0.597
The internship has enhanced my self-dependence	4.05	0.794
Supervisors from my department / university do visit to assess my performance	4.15	0.828
Internship coordinator / office provided me with adequate list of establishments to select from	3.65	1.057
Internship coordinator / office was involved in securing internship placement	3.54	1.102
Tasks assigned to me were quite simple and repetitive	3.57	0.911
My internship program was designed in a way that I get the chance to work in all department	3.84	0.974
My internship experience has had an important effect on lives with other people	3.91	0.766
I got the chance to decide on my own how to go about performing my task	3.84	0.920
Tasks assigned to me provide me clue about whether or not I was performing well	4.08	0.671
Assigned supervisor was a model for me	3.64	0.860
Co-workers worked with me to solve problems	3.97	0.763
Assign tasks are always well communicated to me with instructions to follow	4.11	0.675
I have learnt a lot about the tourism and hospitality industry	4.17	0.823
Prefer working with my internship place of work in the near future	3.63	1.048
I was offered with financial incentives (stipends / allowance)	2.77	1.242
Working hours were flexible	3.41	1.027
Interns at my internship workplace are place in a suitable working environment	3.69	0.851
Commuting to my workplace was hustle free with less amount of money spend on transport	3.22	1.113

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2021.

5.2 Factors influencing tourism and hospitality students' internship satisfaction

In order to identifythe key factors affectingtourism and hospitality students' satisfaction with internship, a factor analysis was conducted using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation to find out dimensions underlying the dataset and their subsequent items. The results indicated that all five factors were extracted. However, three items were deleted during the factor analysis process due to cross-loading on more than onefactor. These are items "prefer working with my internship place of work in the near future", "assign tasks are always well communicated to me with instructions to follow" and "Tasks assigned to me provide me clue about whether or not I was performing well".

Results from the factor analysis as shown in Table 3, indicate that the first factor extracted five items with an eigenvalue of 5.523, accounting for 27.616 percent of variance explained and a Cronbach Alpha of 0.719. The second factor extracted three items, recording an Eigenvalue of 1.852 with 9,258 percent of variance explained and a Cronbach Alpha of 0.663. Factor three also extracted three items with an Eigenvalue of 1.604, accounting for 8.022 percent of variance explained and a Cronbach Alpha of 0.678. Further, the fourth factor, recorded an Eigenvalue of 1.342. This accounted for 6.708 percent of variance explained and an Alpha of 0.744. Lastly, the fifth factor extracted four items. This recorded an Eigenvalue of 1.295, accounting for 6.473 and a Cronbach Alpha of 0.610.

Table 3: Factors influencing tourism and hospitality students' internship satisfaction

FACTOR	ITEMS	FL	EV	VE (%)	α
I	INDIVIDUAL FACTORS		5.523	27.616	0.719
	Assigned supervisor was a model for me	0.787			
	My internship experience has had an important effect on lives with other people	0.718			
	Internship coordinator / office provided me with adequate list of establishments to select from	0.571			
	Supervisors from my department/ university do visit to assess my performance	0.513			
	The internship has enhanced my self-dependence	0.467			
II	UNIVERSITY SUPPORT		1.852	9.258	0.663
	I was offered with financial incentive (stipends / allowances)	0.766			
	Working hours were flexible	0.731			
	Commuting to my workplace was hustle free with less amount of money spend on transport	0.701			
III	JOB CHARACTERISTICS		1.604	8.022	0.678
	Co-workers worked with me to solve problems	0.806			
	My internship program was designed in a way that I get the chance to work in all department	0.797			
	The internship has given me on the job learning opportunity	0.409			
IV	ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT		1.342	6.708	0.744
	Studying tourism / hospitality has so far given me the skills needed to perform well in the industry	0.827			
	I have learnt a lot about the tourism and hospitality industry	0.800			
V	CONTEXTUAL FACTORS		1.295	6.473	0.610
	Tasks assigned to me were quite simple and repetitive	0.671			
	Interns at my internship workplace are place in a suitable working environment	0.660			
	I got the chance to decide on my own how to go about performing my task	0.584			
	Internship coordinator / office was involved in securing internship placement	0.470			
<i>Total Variance Explained</i>				58.076	

Note: Factor, FL: Factor Loading; EV: Eigenvalue; VE: Variance Explained; α : Cronbach's Alpha; Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) = 0.731; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Approx. Chi-Square) = 537.443; $p < 0.000$

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2021

5.3 Internship satisfaction.

The study further used three items to determine the satisfaction of tourism and hospitality management student with internship. The item “generally speaking, I am very much satisfied with my internship program recorded the highest mean (mean = 4.06). This was followed by the item “I am generally satisfied with experiences acquired in my internship” (mean = 4.03). The item “at a point I thought of quitting my internship”, recorded the lowest mean (mean = 2.79).

Table 4: Internship satisfaction

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
At a point I thought of quitting my internship	4.06	0.817
I am generally satisfied with experiences acquire in my internship	4.03	0.749
Generally speaking, I am very much satisfied with my internship program	2.79	1.155
Overall score	3.63	0.907

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2021

5.4 Significance of satisfaction factors on internship satisfaction.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to explore how all the five extracted factors influence internship satisfaction. As shown in the table below, the first factor, that is “individual factors recorded ($\beta = 0.28, p < 0.23$). The second factor, “university support” recorded ($\beta = -0.178, p < 0.130$). Job characteristic, which is the third extracted factor recorded ($\beta = 0.024, p < 0.841$). Factor four, “organizational environment” also recorded ($\beta = 0.421, p < 0.004$). The last factor “contextual factors” recorded ($\beta = 0.082, p < 0.418$).

Table 5: Significance of satisfaction factors on internship satisfaction

Dependent variable	Independent variables	β	t	p
Internship satisfaction	<i>F1</i> : Individual factor	0.276	2.326	0.023
	<i>F2</i> : University support	-0.178	-1.530	0.130
	<i>F3</i> : Job characteristics	0.024	0.201	0.841
	<i>F4</i> : Organizational environment	0.421	3.013	0.004
	<i>F5</i> : Contextual factors	0.084	0.418	0.418

VI. DISCUSSION

Questionnaires were administered to students pursuing various undergraduate and diploma programmes in hospitality ~~in~~ at UENR. The study reveals the majority who had participated in the survey to be female students (88.8%). This affirms the findings of Lam and Ching (2007) which reports that there are more females than males pursuing various academic programmes in tourism and hospitality. Further to that, majority of the respondents have undertaken only one internship programme, with the majority (50.5%) having had their internship within the accommodation sector on the tourism and hospitality industry. Current finding contributes to the study Seyitoğlu and Yirik (2015). However, all respondents have spent at least between one to three months on internship.

The classroom teaching only gives students theoretical knowledge of the industry. It is therefore, the internship exercise that exposes students to practical and industrial knowledge. The study developed 20 items to determine the satisfaction of respondents. Descriptive statistics on the satisfaction attributes showed that majority of the respondents (mean = 4.19) agree to the fact that “internship has given me on the job learning opportunity”. This finding affirms numerous studies which are on the view that internship gives students on the job training and opportunities for the to land on their first job after school (Boger & Lim, 2005; Chi & Gursoy, 2009; Clark, 2003; Mello, 2006; Van Klooster, van Wijk, Go & van Rekom, 2008).

A factor analysis conducted deleted three items. This was as a result of double loading. However, all five factors were extracted. Holding all other independent variables constant, organizational environment had the most significant impact on internship satisfaction ($\beta = 0.421$). This was followed by individual factors ($\beta = 0.276$). However, university support ($\beta = -0.178$), job characteristics ($\beta = 0.024$) and contextual factors ($0\beta = 0.084$) did not have any significant impact on internship satisfaction. This current study supports the findings of Klee (2011) and D’Abate et al. (2009), on organizational environment and individual factors having a significant impact on internship satisfaction.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study was conducted to examine tourism and hospitality management students’ satisfaction on internship. The study revealed that majority of the respondents were females who have had an internship for a period between one and three months, with most having undertaken their internship within the various accommodation sector of the industry. Twenty (20) items were constructed to measure internship satisfaction. Factor analysis deleted three (3) items as a result of double loading. However, all five (5) factors were extracted. It was revealed that organizational environment and individual factors were the most to have a significant impact on internship satisfaction. Generally, in terms of mean, respondents are satisfied with their internship programme. The study recommends that education institutions should ensure that students are placed in workplaces that have the capacity to enable their students to put their theoretical knowledge into practice. Also, future studies should include qualitative study in assessing the satisfaction of students on internship.

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