

TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY STUDENTS' LEVEL OF SATISFACTION ON THEIR INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Hospitality internships are integral part of almost all reputable Hospitality programs worldwide. Despite their universal recognition as an essential component of Hospitality education, their value is often superseded by the challenges facing hospitality stakeholders in providing such an experience for the next generation of hospitality professions. The aim of this study is to measure the level of the students' satisfaction on their internships with their experiences on the service provided by the LPU–Laguna's Internship office—Palaestra Consortio—and the actual internship site as contributing factors. It was found out that Internship offices and the industry partners play a vital role in the students' internship. The success of the Internship office would greatly relate with the success of the internship site and vice versa. Both also greatly affect the students' satisfaction with their internship experience in general.

INTRODUCTION

In Tourism and Hospitality establishments, college degree and student internship are important requirements for the new graduates' employment. Hergert (2009) defines internship as an important part of any business school curriculum. He also stated that it plays a crucial role in aiding the students to connect their traditional coursework and the actual workplace. Internships, moreover, as stated by Yiu (2015), are advantageous mechanism for students to develop different skills. Furthermore, it can be synonymously related to experiential learning as it enhances students' individual, civic, and professional growth (Simons et al., 2012). In the Philippines, internship is commonly incorporated to the curriculum of college students, as mandated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). It is an opportunity to practice the actual setting of a specific industry. In fact, the CHED promulgated a list of guidelines for students' internship program. As the objectives were stated in the CHED Memorandum Order No. 23, series of 2009, the internship program aims to offer college students enrolled in Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) in the country the chance to obtain practical knowledge and skills, as well as positive attitudes and values from reputable establishments or industries in the country. A recent study concluded that one of the two most effective experiential learning experiences is through internships (Green et al., 2012), the other one is through live-case projects.

Some Hospitality and Tourism HEIs in the Philippines have developed their own career and internship office services to assist their students' placement for their practicum or also known as internship. On the other hand, some countries like

America have hospitality programs that have developed their own career and placement services that aid students even to the extent of finding job for them (Chi et al., 2008). Lyceum of the Philippines University–Laguna (LPU–L), as one of the leading Hospitality and Tourism HEIs in the country and being the only accredited institution that holds the International Center of Excellence for Tourism and Hospitality Education (THE-ICE), had established its own internship office called “Palaestra Consortio.” The said office, as stated in their internship manual, is aimed at developing strong partnerships with various companies not limited to the purpose of training but also to probable employment of the graduates. It is suggested in the study of Yiu (2012) that it is deemed necessary to establish an internship coordinator just like the “Palaestra Consortio” of LPU–L in order to facilitate communication and to deliver both students and the industry partners with information, and to intervene when different issues arise. The requirements in order to attain the success of the internship offices, as identified by Chi (2008), are mentoring and preparing students for the interview process, reputation and quality of the hospitality program, industry experience of hospitality school faculty, and quality of students’ educational curriculum and courses taught in Hospitality/Tourism Management. All of which are believed to be addressed by the internship office of the HEI stated.

Studies exploring the internship programs are highly essential (Koc et al., 2014). According to the study of Yiu (2012) about Hospitality and Tourism internships, she suggested that direct experience of working in the hospitality and tourism industry may actually cause students to feel negatively about pursuing a career in this field. It is also concluded in a related study that different types of internship experience have different effects on student’s level of satisfaction (Chen et al., 2011). Therefore, this study shall exhibit the measurement of the overall level of the CITHM students’ satisfaction in terms of the service rendered by the LPU–Laguna internship office, the “Palaestra Consortio” and on their actual experiences at the internship site. It is indeed a grateful obligation of the researcher, being one of the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management (CITHM) faculty, to determine how the students reacted on their internship experience most importantly on their level of satisfaction. The purpose is in order to help the Palaestra and the industry partners on possible necessary adjustments to be done in assisting the students in their internship as implicated by the results. The students’ insights played a vital role in guiding the institution for the improvement and sustainability of the internship program as study suggested that it may serve as a method for strengthening university-community partnerships (Simons et al., 2012).

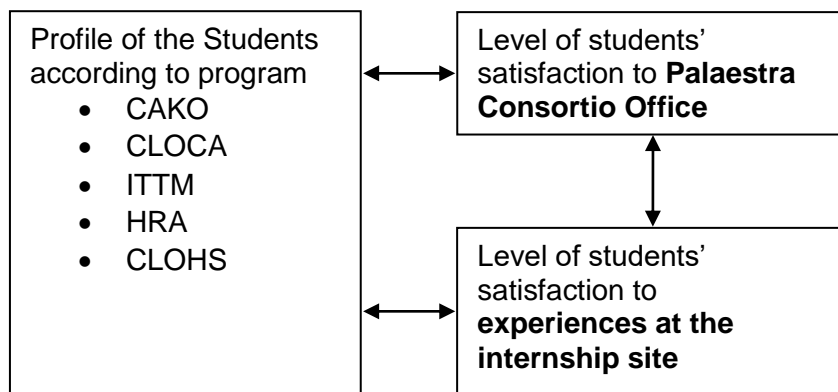
Objectives of the study

The study was purposed to determine the level of satisfaction of CITHM students’ internship experience. Moreover, it was aimed to:

1. Exhibit the profile of the students according to their respective programs.

2. Determine the level of students' satisfaction on the services rendered by the Palaestra Consortio office.
3. Identify the level of students' satisfaction on their experiences at the internship site.
4. Correlate the students' satisfaction on the services rendered by the Palaestra Consortio office with the level of satisfaction on their experiences at the internship site.
5. Determine the significant difference on the level of students' satisfaction on their experiences at the internship site when grouped according to program.

Conceptual framework



Related literature

The relationship between education and internship has been widely discussed. Le Masitre and Pare (2009) stated that most students encounter difficulties when going through the transition from classroom to workplace to begin their professional careers. As such, internship programs offer an opportunity to close the sometimes substantial gap between college-learned theory and practical reality.

A primary goal of Hospitality internship programs is to prepare students to become reflective practitioners who can make good decisions in real life, based on a sound understanding of theory. Petrillose and Montgomery (1998, p. 46) claimed that "experiential education provides the opportunity and environment for students to experience first-hand outside the classroom activities and functions which relate directly to the application of knowledge." As individuals learn in different ways by hearing, seeing, and doing, and appear to learn more effectively through active participation, internships are an effective way of enhancing student learning (Walo, 2011). The potential to link theory and practice provides students with more meaningful learning outcomes. Internships can improve the learning of job skills;

this may later translate into better academic skills and the development of good personal working habits such as time management and self-discipline. Internships provide a real-world experience and help students learn to think and solve problems, and develop their communication skills, all of which are critical components of a good education.

An internship is often considered an absolute necessity in hospitality management education. A hands-on approach to educating hospitality managers not only supports the management principles learned in theory but also provides the opportunity to practice and review one's competence and skills in a real-world environment. Both educators and industry practitioners agree that Hospitality and Tourism Management curricula must blend theory with practice, offering students a variety of learning techniques to develop such skills as relationship building, leadership, communication, team building, and customer relations. A well-structured internship has the potential to help in developing several of the competencies required of Hospitality graduates and, as part of an overall curriculum, has a vital role to play in a student's education.

Hospitality and Tourism researchers have investigated the educational value of an internship in terms of skills, competencies, and career and personal development. Wildes and Mount (2007) highlighted that Hospitality internships are an area of active experiential learning through which participants can develop competence. The practical experience component of a university degree is crucial in delivering skills and competencies for Hotel Management. Similarly, a study of the educational value of hotels identifies a number of essential competencies that can be learned only in a practical setting

Hospitality curricula should include coordinated work experience to enable students to develop the more technical and human relation skills required of the beginning food service manager. Likewise, Knight, in his study of 29 educators, 20 trainers, and 183 trainees, emphasizes the importance of practical experience in developing essential managerial skills among Hotel Management students. Also, in his study of Irish hotel industry managers, Baum (2008) overwhelmingly supported the view that practical work experience in the hotel industry is an essential prerequisite for becoming an effective hotel manager. Busby et al. (2007) interviewed middle managers from 33 organizations involved in supervising placements and showed that communication skills (including a flexible attitude, outgoing nature, ability to deal with the public, and social competence) and technical task skills all had significantly improved by the end of the internship.

On the other hand, there is also strong support for the views that practical experience prepares students for a career within the industry and influences their future direction contend that the factor having the greatest influence on their career decisions of potential hospitality employees is work experience. For this reason, work-based learning in internships plays a significant role in Hospitality and Tourism students' attitudes toward pursuing a career in the industry upon graduation (Richardson, 2008). Internship, which forms a crucial determinant of a student's orientation to the hospitality industry, is an essential aspect of mapping

his or her personal characteristics to the requirements of the industry (Singh & Dutta, 2010), and so has a significant effect on future career choices. The internship can also strengthen students' desire to work in the industry.

It appears that there is substantial agreement among all three parties—students, employers, and educators—that practical work experience is vital for the future success of Hospitality Management graduates. Education must meet the needs of the industry through the provision of sufficient practical facilities, which can be substituted and/or supported by incentivized industrial training to meet business-oriented purposes. It is presently a standard requirement for Hospitality and Tourism programs to have an internship component in their curricula, and almost all of them do. Hands-on experience cannot be imparted through lectures. It can only be gained through direct activity in the real world (Collins 2012). Such an approach, together with the implementation of an internship program, could result in a fuller development of students' potential.

An internship can be defined as a three-way partnership between the student, the educational institution, and the hosting organization. The tripartite benefits of a formal internship, according to Patterson (2009), are apparent: The students gain real-world experience, the academic program enhances its reputation, and employers have an improved pool of student-applicants from which to draw when recruiting. Hospitality internships provide an experience that benefits all concerned—students, employers, and educators.

Internship has become an integral part of tertiary education. For Hospitality students, an internship represents the very pinnacle of experiential learning. Its importance in developing students professionally and personally has been well documented. Various studies outline the value and variety of benefits enjoyed by students participating in internships, including a better understanding and knowledge of the tasks and practices performed by industry professionals, enhanced employment, and professional growth opportunities, networking with potential employers, learning new concepts, gaining experiences, improving self-confidence, exposure to management activities, and developing the competencies and skills demanded by the industry.

Students view internships as a credible means to land their first job. According to Toncar and Cudmore (2008), internships combine a resume-building, career “test drive” with a hands-on, learning-by-doing work experience and provide students with the opportunity to integrate theory and practice. Lock (2009) agreed that students benefit from time spent on an internship and note that such placements “have enhanced their understanding of their own life choices, enabled the acquisition of transferable skills, and provided a tangible link between theory and application” (p. 482). Students view internships as valuable learning experiences for which they should receive academic credit, financial compensation, and a final grade. Wildes (2007) noted that students who had completed an internship before graduation subsequently experienced less anxiety and higher perceived self-efficacy and demonstrated increased general and specific skills in the workplace.

Montgomery (2008) reported the findings of a survey conducted by 42 hospitality employers associated with the Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education, which identifies four essential benefits of an internship: (1) development of real-world experience, leadership skills, initiative, and judgment; (2) exposure to the industry; (3) enhancement of customer and employee relations; and (4) provision of recruitment opportunities for successful interns. From the employer perspective, an internship provides access to a pool of workers who are usually enthusiastic and dedicated to the industry, and brings fresh ideas to the workplace. It is also frequently viewed as an important recruitment and retention tool (Ju et al., 2008). Work ethic, attitude, and technical competence are more easily assessed during a semester or summer-long internship than they are during a one-hour interview of a prospective employee. The internship therefore provides a golden opportunity to “try before you buy” for students whom a company might wish to recruit after graduation without making any long-term commitments. Internships also afford direct involvement in training future managers. Students who have been interns learn quickly and represent a flexible economic resource, thus, providing low-cost assistance with routine duties (Coco, 2009). Various studies found that most student interns are offered a full-time position upon their graduation by the organization sponsoring their placement. Hence, an internship is a very effective recruiting strategy for industry employers.

Internships provide an organization with a cost-effective vehicle for meeting strategic recruitment, selection, training, and retention goals, practices such as these provide an avenue through which hospitality establishments may enhance their image and, thus, respond to the needs of the community. In a study of Fortune 500 recruiters, McNeilly (2012) showed that approximately 40 percent of respondents reported that certain components of the internship, including leadership experience and teamwork, cannot be taught in a classroom. The employment know-how gained through internships helps with induction, which ultimately increases staff performance and retention. In the specific context of the highly labor intensive hospitality industry, internship programs have been instrumental in filling labor shortages during peak seasons, allowing employers to consistently provide optimal customer service.

Through internships, an employer is given the opportunity to examine a student’s performance and ability to handle not only day-to-day responsibilities but the unexpected situations that arise in almost every workplace (Cook et al., 2004). Student interns are thus viewed by the industry as a readily available, easily transformed, and specifically trained workforce that can be a valuable source of labor in today’s economy (Kent, 2005).

The benefits of the internship to educational institutions are also numerous. As noted by Bell and Schmidt (2006), the vocational and career outcomes associated with the internship component of a degree in Hospitality and Tourism are used by many universities as a promotional tool. A well-developed internship program can give a Hospitality program a more comprehensive curriculum through which to compete for a larger student intake. The internship also plays a vital role in

assisting universities with student placement at the time of graduation. Prospective students and their parents recognize the need for excellent preparation for post-college employment. Having a well-maintained internship program is an incentive for individuals to choose a particular college or university. The institution will also gain industry credibility when an employer is pleased with a student's performance (Cook et al., 2004).

On the other hand, internships can also strengthen links with the industry. This can enhance collaborative research opportunities, raise an institution's profile, and help to establish long-term working relationships to optimize future graduate employment opportunities (Walo, 2011). Leslie (2011) argued that the increased contact and cooperation between educators and the hospitality industry could enrich the industry's input to future course development and assist educators in keeping abreast of hospitality trends and future plans. Such relationships may provide a channel for testing the compatibility and relevance of academic theory with the operational requirements of the industry. In addition, improved relationships may be extended, with further cooperation, to other fields of mutual concern such as college advisory boards, training seminars, mentoring programs, student field trips, job fairs, and industrial visits (Zopiatis, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

As mentioned, this study explores how Tourism and Hospitality students at the CITHM College of LPU–Laguna perceive the satisfaction level of their internship experiences. This section exhibits the methods engaged in conducting the study.

This study was conducted using descriptive research approach which, according to Hunter et al. (2006), is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. A survey questionnaire which included questions seeking both qualitative and quantitative answers was distributed to determine the level of the students' satisfaction in their internship experience.

In order to explore further the variables used in the study, the researcher collected a vast amount of related literature both from local and foreign settings. The studies compiled was grouped into two: the studies related to the success of internship programs as facilitated by internship offices established in some institutions, as well as the researches that explores the contribution of the industry establishments to the students' internship. Papers about students' satisfaction on their internship experiences were also compiled. The researcher then utilized the internship evaluation form that was answered by the students before they graduated. The students were also interviewed in order to produce qualitative analysis which was also done in order to present the study in a comprehensive manner. After a number of consultation from the statistician and the institution's research director, the answers from the questionnaires were then statistically analyzed.

Having the largest undergraduate population in the institution, the data were obtained from the batch 2015 graduating students of College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management. The college has four specializations, namely: Hotel and Restaurant Administration, Culinary Arts, Tourism, and Cruise Line. The mentioned specializations are also the identified group profiles of the respondents which have acquired 1,000 internship hours as designed in the curriculum. From the total number of 190 graduates, the researcher utilized Yamane's formula in determining the total sample size with 5 percent margin of error. Hence, a size of 130 respondents was achieved, a 68 percent rate of the total population.

In order to explore the level of satisfaction of students' experiences on their internship programs, a standardized evaluation survey form has been utilized. It was given to all graduating students but only a total of 130 respondents was analyzed as the total required sampling size. The internship evaluation form was divided into three parts: the primary part includes the profile of the respondents such as name (not to be mentioned from the results), specialization, specific responsibilities done during internship, total number of hours worked, and some questions for qualitative presentation such as "what particular skills were enhanced in the internship program"; the secondary part includes determining the level of satisfaction with regard to the service and assistance rendered by Palaestra office; and the third part includes and measures their satisfaction on the internship experience at the internship site. A five-point Likert scale was utilized which was equally divided into five interpretation such as "very much satisfied," "much satisfied," "moderately satisfied," "less satisfied," and "not satisfied." Students' insights about their internship in general are also inquired. The advice of the research director of the institution and an experienced researcher, together with a professional statistician, were sought in order to validate the instrument used.

Frequency distribution was employed to summarize the profile of the respondents. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were used in determining the satisfaction level both for Palaestra and the internship site. Descriptive data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 10.0, by the institution's statistician. Pearson Correlation analysis was used to identify if there is any relationship between the Palaestra and the internship site's level of satisfaction, while ANOVA analysis was used in identifying the significant difference on the level of students' satisfaction in their experiences at the internship site, and the service and assistance rendered by Palaestra when grouped according to their program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter comprises the findings of the study presented in tables, further discussed and presented with its congruency in relation to the compiled related studies.

Profile of the respondents according to specialization

The student was profiled according to their area of specialization, namely: Cruise Line, Hotel and Restaurant Administration, Culinary Arts, and Tourism. The frequency distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of the students according to specialization

Specialization	N=130	F=100%
Culinary Arts	24	18%
Cruise Line	47	36%
HRA	13	11%
Tourism	46	35%

Table 1 exhibits that majority of the respondents came from Cruise Line specialization. This is due to the combined programs: BSHIM-CLOHS and BSHIM-CLOCA, both are under the said specialization. It was followed by Tourism which traditionally has the highest numbered students under a single program. Culinary Arts garnered a total of 18 percent of the total respondents, while the HRA got the least, considering that it has the smallest number of students under the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management.

Level of students' satisfaction on the services rendered by the Palaestra Consortium Office

The level of students' satisfaction on their experiences with regard to the service rendered by Palaestra Consortium Office was constructed with the following indicators as exhibited in the next table.

Table 2. Weighted mean of the of students' satisfaction – Palaestra Consortium Office

Indicators	WM	VI
Amount of orientation received before placement	4.14	Much Satisfied
Degree of assistance received from Palaestra before placement in the assigned company	4.12	Much Satisfied
Degree of monitoring received from Palaestra during the internship	3.95	Much Satisfied
Assistance and monitoring received from the teacher-in-charge during the internship	3.64	Much Satisfied
CM	3.96	Much Satisfied

Table 2 indicates that the amount of orientation received by the students before their placement has the highest weighted mean. This implies that students' preparedness may rely on the internship office's support and facilitation on their pre-needs. The results revealed corresponds to the study stating that detailed implementation guidelines of Internship Programs and Support from Internship administrators are vital indicators (Chen 2012) in determining the students' satisfaction on their internship.

Level of students' satisfaction on their experiences at the internship site

The level of students' satisfaction on their experiences with regard to the internship site was constructed with the following indicators as exhibited in the next table.

Table 3. Weighted mean of the of students' satisfaction – internship site

Indicators	WM	VI
Willingness of the immediate supervisor to serve as mentor during the internship	4.25	Much Satisfied
Instructional quality of the training received	4.08	Much Satisfied
Quality of the directions received when assigned to unsupervised task	4.06	Much Satisfied
The opportunities available to learn new things	4.36	Much Satisfied
Utilization of knowledge and abilities	4.09	Much Satisfied
Relatedness of the activities or tasks during the internship to the field of specialization	4.12	Much Satisfied
The time allotted for the internship to capture the objectives set by the internship program	3.88	Much Satisfied
Amount of training	3.95	Much Satisfied
Supervision received	4.18	Much Satisfied
Promptness in facilitating the needs of the student	4.03	Much Satisfied
Feedback received from the industry supervisor	3.93	Much Satisfied
Treatment from co-workers	4.10	Much Satisfied
The workplace in general	4.18	Much Satisfied
Coordination of the school and industry partner	3.96	Much Satisfied
Concern and interest in education of the industry partner	4.12	Much Satisfied
Over-all degree of satisfaction	4.10	Much Satisfied
CM	4.08	Much Satisfied

Table 3 exhibits that the opportunities available to learn new things was the greatest indicator among the listed. This is related to what Deuster (2009) had stated in his study that, “Integrating a practical element into higher education enables students not only to acquire knowledge related to their chosen area of study, but also the ability to apply it outside of the classroom” (Deuster, 2009). Moreover, he explained that they are assuming meaningful roles and responding to real issues in ways that have long-lasting impacts on their own lives, as well as the lives of those whom they are serving. With this in mind, applied experiences in society can contribute to students’ personal and intellectual development.

According to *The Conference on Undergraduate Internships*, there are four primary benefits of applied experiences: vocational development, intellectual development, personal growth, and community service.

Correlation analysis of the students’ satisfaction of the Palaestra Consortio Office with their experiences at the internship site

The next table exhibits how the Palaestra Consortio Office is directly related with the students’ internship site or establishment. It explains the relativity between the two as well as how one may affect the other with regard to the students’ satisfaction.

Table 4. Correlation analysis of Palaestra Consortio Office with the students’ internship site

Group	Mean	SD	R	P-value	VI
Palaestra	3.96	0.93	0.434	0.000	Significant
Internship Site	4.09	0.69			

Table 4 shows that there is a direct relationship between the internship office and the internship site where the students had done their practicum. The result is directly congruent to the study of Chen (2012) that neither educators nor industry operators can act alone in developing the necessary resources and programs that will progress a student from school to the real world. The parties involved in an internship program and process include students, employers/supervisors, program coordinators, and the sponsoring university. In order to assess the effectiveness of an internship program, we must acknowledge existing guidelines and evaluate how well these guidelines are adhered to by the parties involved.

Significant difference on the level of students' satisfaction on their experiences at the internship site when grouped according to program

It is aimed in this section to distinguish if there is any difference between the specialization's satisfaction levels with regard to the internship site. It is indeed important to compare their level of satisfaction in order to determine what approach should be given to the specific specialization once identified.

Table 5. ANOVA analysis of students' satisfaction on their experiences at the students' internship site

Group	Mean	SD	f	Sig.	p-value	VI
HRA	3.40	0.78				
Tourism	3.86	0.63				
CAKO	3.94	0.65	0.40	0.81	0.005	Not Significant
CLOCA	4.06	0.84				
CLOHS	4.31	0.79				

Table 5 exhibits that all the specializations under the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management were equally satisfied with their experiences on their internship site although it seems to be possible that the expectations of an internship vary among students. As stated by Jackel (2009), keeping in mind all of the functions and potential benefits of internships, everyone involved in an internship program should have specified roles and responsibilities, the internship office and most importantly, the internship site (Jackel 2011). A student expects an internship to be intellectually stimulating and beneficial for building the skills needed for future employment.

Significant difference on the level of students' satisfaction on their experiences with Palaestra Consortio when grouped according to program

This section displays the difference between the specialization's satisfaction levels with regard to the service given by the Palaestra Consortio Office. As stated in the literature supplied by Jackel (2011), the expectations of an internship vary among students as facilitated by different departments, employers, and universities.

Table 6. ANOVA analysis of students' satisfaction on the service rendered by the Palaestra Consortio

Group	Mean	SD	f	Sig.	P-value	VI
HRA	3.40	0.78				
Tourism	3.86	0.63				
CAKO	3.94	0.65	3.87	0.01	0.005	Significant
CLOCA	4.06	0.84				
CLOHS	4.31	0.79				

Table 6, the last table, implies that among the specializations, the Cruise Line got the highest mean deviation, i.e., they are the most satisfied group. Hence, significant difference among specializations was revealed. Students need to realize and understand the potential value of applied learning before they actually experience it first-hand. To learn how to respond to these conditions, guidance is often recommended. Some internship programs do provide a mandatory seminar that students can take before they start their placement. This course is normally an overview of the internship program and its associated processes. Students can experience the relevance of classroom learning through the situations that confront them during their placement. The pre-placement seminar provides the training and skills that students need to learn in order to correctly respond to situations they can potentially encounter during their placement (Santariano, 2009).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

All CITHM students are much satisfied with the service rendered by the Palaestra Consortio Office especially with the amount of orientation received before placement. All CITHM students are much satisfied with their experiences in the internship site especially with the opportunities available to learn new things.

Palaestra Consortio and the industry partners play a vital role in the students' internship. The success of the internship office would greatly relate with the success of the internship site and vice versa. Among the four CITHM specializations, Cruise Line students have the highest level of satisfaction with the service rendered by Palaestra, while the HRA students have the least level of satisfaction, but still, this indicates that they are much satisfied. The four CITHM programs have the same level of satisfaction with their experiences on the internship site. All programs have no significant difference. Thus, it is good to say that they are all much satisfied.

The Palaestra must continue their efforts especially in the amount of orientation to be given before the students' placement, and fortify the assistance to

and monitoring of the teacher-in-charge during the internship. The industry partners should sustain and continue their effort of providing opportunities to the students in order to learn new things, at the same time, maximize the time allotted for the internship to capture the objectives set by the internship program. The industry partners and the Palaestra should continue to fortify their partnership for the sake of the integral development of all students.

Profiles such as a student's nationality may be explored next time as LPU foreign students are now starting to increase. Future studies about students' level of learning on their internship may be proposed, as well as the readiness of the students in entering the industry as they finish their internship. Qualitative study may also be conducted since such method is rarely done in internships.

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