

# Students' Experiences of the Tourism and Hospitality Industrial Attachment Programmes: Lessons from the University of Botswana

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## ABSTRACT

Industrial Attachment Programmes have been perceived to be valuable in well-established business faculties in developed countries. However, this value has not been fully researched in developing countries. This study therefore aims to explore the benefits and enhancement features of the Tourism and Hospitality Industrial Attachment Programme at the University of Botswana, as perceived by students, from a developing country perspective. A qualitative case study approach was adopted to analyse 131 student reports that were purposefully selected. Content analysis, based on the researchers' language and interpretive abilities was employed to draw insights from various sections of the reports. Overall students perceived to have benefited from an accumulation of operational skills and knowledge in food preparation, food service and housekeeping. Key enhancement features as recommended by students were with the administration and organization of the Industrial Attachment Programme, especially the introduction of an internship plan.

**Keywords:** Industrial Attachment Programme, Benefits, Enhancement features, Tourism and Hospitality, University of Botswana

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background Information

Many institutions that offer tourism and hospitality education at undergraduate and postgraduate level, patently perceive Industrial Attachment Programmes (IAP) to be of significant value to a student, the faculty and the community at large (Templeton, Updyke & Bennett, 2012; Singh & Dutta, 2010; Weible, 2010; Ram, 2008). Although different faculties across the globe define IAP variously (Weible & McClure, 2011), they portray a concept that entails a period of engagement with an industrial assessor or organisation before a student completes a programme of study. The period also varies amongst different faculties.

Tourism has been recognized as one of Botswana's largest economic sectors (Republic of Botswana, 2000) and one of the most important paths for achieving the country's economic diversification goals (African Development Bank/Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, 2008). Although viewed as a panacea for its economic woes, Botswana's Tourism sector has always had to grapple with pressure from several competitors in the

region such as from the Seychelles, Mauritius, South Africa, and Namibia (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2013), just to name a few. Some of these countries offer a similar nature based product with Botswana and some are even geographical neighbours to Botswana (Mahachi, 2014). One of the key areas that need improvement in order to curb some of this competition is the skill and expertise of the human resource which has been discovered to be professionally deficient (Botswana Tourism Board, 2009). The development of the Tourism and Hospitality degree programme at the University of Botswana, in the Faculty of Business, was one of the measures aimed at improving the skill and expertise of the Tourism sector in the country (Department of Tourism & Hospitality Management, 2009). Furthermore, the IAP was adopted in the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree programme to assist with the acquirement of requisite skills and expertise (Manwa, Chipfuva & Mahachi, 2011). At the time of research in 2011, the IAP was divided into three phases. The first phase was undertaken during the first year of study. The second and third phases were undertaken in the second and third years of study respectively. At the end of each phase, students were expected to submit qualitative reports to the Departmental Industrial Attachment Coordinator. These reports are then distributed to different lecturers for assessment as with many other IAPs at similar universities (Ballinger & Lalwani, 2000).

## Statement of Purpose

This study adopts the general term of Tourism to denote “tourism and hospitality” aspects in the discourse of IAP. Although some research has underscored the significance of IAP to enhancing students’ careers (Templeton et al., 2012; Weible, 2010; Cho, 2006), in practice, there is still limited research that focuses on the value of IAP’s based on students’ perspectives, especially in the field of Tourism and from a developing country perspective. Furthermore, literature on students’ views has usually been glossed over emphasizing instead of obtaining feedback from faculty and participating organizations. This paper argues for the need to obtain feedback from students about their internship experiences. This is in contrast to some studies that utilize some proxies such as supervisors’ views, or faculty opinions and similar others that rely on students’ verbatim perspectives of IAP. The understanding of students’ experiences based on students’ reports is important as it assists in forging better ways of improving their experiences in the current programmes as well as their future work experience. In addition, there has never been any formal evaluation of the Tourism and Hospitality Management Internship programme since its inception in 2006 and as such this study served as an exploratory step towards subsequent evaluation of the IAP. In order to address these gaps, the study therefore evaluates the importance of the Tourism IAP from the perspectives of students’ as expressed in their reports. The objectives of the study were threefold:

- i. To identify students’ perspectives of the benefits of the Tourism IAP
- ii. To understand how students’ perceive their IAP experiences could be enhanced and
- iii. To extract lessons for faculty and industry based on student’s experiences of IAP.

Findings from this study could assist faculties and participating organisations to understand the importance of IAP experiences and how these could be used to address specific expectations from students. This review also provides insightful lessons for any country that elevates the significance of the tourism sector in its economic diversification efforts.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: literature review follows after this section. This is then followed by the research design section. Thereafter, the findings are provided and the discussion ensues. Finally the conclusions are provided at the end.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews related literature on students benefits from tourism and hospitality IAP experiences and enhancement features that have been used by similar institutions to improve students' IAP experiences.

### Benefits of IAP and Students' Perceptions

The value that IAP adds to an undergraduate student has been well recognised in literature (Templeton et al., 2012; Weible, 2010; Ram, 2008). IAP is an experiential type of learning in which students are engaged for some time with an industrial supervisor relevant to their study. Students learn processes of work similar or exceptional to their line of study, which they can apply later in life or in their careers. According to Singh and Dutta (2010), IAPs are "instrumental in formulating the key competencies required by the graduates at the time of final placements." In the case of the University of Botswana, the specific objectives of IAP at the Faculty of Business (Faculty of Business, 2012:2) are:

- i. To help students appreciate the practical applications of what they have learnt over the previous three years on the programme
- ii. To prepare students for integration into both the formal and informal employment sectors
- iii. To expose students to different organisational cultures and systems
- iv. To develop confidence and self-assurance in students by giving them the responsibilities to seek their own placement, work in a new and different environment, and report back to the Faculty regarding their learning experiences.
- v. To help students sharpen their communication, interpersonal and project management skills
- vi. To develop a working relationship with the business community for whom our degree programmes are designed
- vii. To allow the Faculty to gauge the quality of its programmes by way of feedback from the host organisations, the industrial attachment supervisors and the students.

These objectives are indicative of some of the expected benefits from IAP. For instance Objective Two of the Faculty Manual emphasizes the importance of IAP in preparing students for both formal and informal employment. This is one benefit that is discussed elsewhere in detail in this study.

In general, review of related literature generates at least three main categories of IAP benefits in Tourism; skills and knowledge related benefits, career-related benefits and remunerative benefits. These three can further be distinguished by whether they are student oriented, organizational, and academic or faculty focused (Cho, 2006).

Skills have traditionally been classified into three: interpersonal, technical and conceptual (Yukl, 1989). Interpersonal or human skills relate to knowledge of human behaviour,

empathy, social relations and communication (Nordhaug, 1998). On the other hand technical skills refer to the knowledge and ability of using specific tools and equipment to perform a task whilst conceptual skills are related to the ability of critical analysis, creativity and problem solving. These types of skills have been widely used in studies that discuss human-capital issues according to Nordhaug (1989). Although such skills have been studied separately in prior studies it is imperative to note that benefits of IAP are usually non-exclusive.

IAP aids the development of general and technical skills amongst students (Ju, Emenheiser, Clayton & Reynolds, 1998). Ju et al. (1998), in particular noted the improved general operational knowledge through internship amongst Korean hospitality students. General knowledge development was also ranked higher after internship than before internship in a study of hotel management students (Cho, 2006). The development of soft skills such as effective communication, social interaction and team work was evident in Schambach and Dirks (2002). Students also had increased opportunities of interacting with faculty members during internship especially during supervision (Toncar & Cudmore, 2000). Benefits can also be directed towards the personal growth of the student. Of notable benefit has been the development of self, that is, self-confidence, self-awareness (Toncar & Cudmore, 2000) and self-discipline (Zopiatis, 2007) amongst students.

Specific skills and knowledge attainment is usually linked to a students' academic goals. Students majoring in hospitality for instance, are most likely to note hospitality related skills and knowledge benefits from IAP. IAP also aids in the development of technical task skills (Cho, 2006). For instance, students had high expectations and perceptions of developing technical skills through internship (Lam & Ching, 2007). Busby, Brunt and Baber (1997) employers' survey also identified technical skills such as the use of global distribution systems as one benefit that tourism students would acquire during industrial placement. The provision of technology training is also especially important as students use cutting-edge equipment that they will utilize in their chosen field (Harris & Zhao, 2004). The hospitality industry, like other service industries, besides being people-centered, is technology-reliant. Innovations in technology associated with guest services such as check-in and check-out require appropriate training. As such it is indispensable for students to not only gain access to such technology but to be well-versed in its use, through IAP for instance. Knemeyer and Murphy's (2002) research is important because it identified the provision of technology training as an important benefit from IAP. This is an area that has least been studied in prior studies (e.g Schambach & Dirks, 2000). Overall IAP reinforces understanding of course work taught (Schambach & Dirks, 2002), by imparting practice of classroom-based learning to students (Cho, 2006; Walo, 2001). The accumulated skills and knowledge as taught are practiced during IAP experiences.

IAP also aids in the attainment of career-related benefits. Career-related benefits include a clarification and verification of career goals, contacts with potential employers and exposure to working role models (Schambach & Dirks, 2002). As such, undertaking IAP should be looked at as a sharpening tool on what the career life will be like for the student (Carson, 2013).

IAP helps map the personal characteristics of students, vis-à-vis the requirements of the industry and gives them a feel about the working conditions (Singh & Dutta, 2010). Studies that actually elicited for students' self-assessment of IAP provided some insight into what students reflect about IAP. In Barnett's (2012) study, the significance of internship serves as

a means for students to develop realistic expectations about work likely to, in turn, ease their transition from business student to a career profession. In a similar assessment of a tourism career fair, Silkes, Adler and Phillips (2010) found that most students agreed that participation in the career fair increased students' knowledge about their specific areas of interest. Furthermore, Silkes et al. (2010) found that student interest in hospitality and tourism careers increased as a result of attendance at the career fair. This finding does relate well with the IAP experience in Tourism as students' interests in a tourism career can be motivated by exposure to IAP. Students can thus evaluate their suitability to the industry for future career development (Cho, 2006; Cheng, Wu, Lai & Sun, 2004).

Students can also benefit from remunerative benefits such as free accommodation, meal vouchers or performance-related bonuses (Busby et al., 1997), monetary rewards and academic credit (Knemeyer & Murphy, 2007). An Australian study by Richardson (2008) revealed that undergraduate tourism and hospitality students had concerns regarding, inter alia, pay and conditions offered within the industry. Although remuneration was widely expected by students in studies by Richardson (2008) and Rothman (2007), Lam and Ching (2007)'s study found that students did not expect monetary gains from internship to be of major benefit.

However in other cases, whilst students expected an opportunity of future employment with the host organisation, the host organisation expected otherwise (Beggs, Ross & Goodwin, 2008). For example in studies by Lam and Ching (2007), and Zopiatis (2007), IAP failed to present the learning opportunities and prospects of future engagement anticipated by students. Zopiatis (2007:69) for instance indicated that some hospitality professionals fail to provide interns with meaningful work, fail to appoint interns to a "qualified on-the-job supervisor, and do not provide them with a positive organizational environment in which they might develop both personally and professionally". Host organisations viewed the experience as an opportunity for students to develop skills and get hands-on experience in order to prepare themselves for employment by other organisations or the broader job market and not by the host organisation. In these cases, students then fail to understand the value of the work-related experience altogether (Aggett & Busby, 2011). Richardson (2008) was also perturbed to find that more than 50% of the respondents in the study were already contemplating careers outside the industry before completion of internship. Of those with work experience in the industry, 43.6% claimed that they would not work in the tourism and hospitality industry after graduation, with 96.3% of the respondents' citing working experience in the industry as the main reason for this decision (Richardson, 2008). Despite these shortcomings and costs, however, IAP has offered students some added advantage during recruitment as employers' rate applicants with internship highly to those without (Taylor, 1988). Students with internship experience are therefore more marketable than those without (Petrillose & Montgomery, 1998). This increases their chances of employability. IAP therefore offers a myriad of benefits, which are not without any challenges or costs that culminate in a graduate's opportunity for employability. Employability is therefore a function of all the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (Eurico, Oliveira & Pais, 2012) that a student will have not only from IAP but from the whole academic programme. However, in order to optimize students' IAP experiences, an enhancement of this plethora of benefits is required.



## Enhancement of Students' IAP experiences

The enhancement of IAP should address questions of “what”, “how”, “who” or “when” for instance. For example, for IAP to be enhanced, what should be assessed needs to be clearly highlighted. Ram (2008) contends that assessment of IAP is usually only based on technical competencies. Aspects of tacit knowing (Polanyi cited in Ram 2008), intuition (Rubin as cited in Ram, 2008) and artistry (Schon as cited in Ram, 2008) are often neglected in assessment. These are also aspects that have been neglected by all the tourism educational institutions interviewed in Botswana by Manwa et al. (2011). In order to enhance the knowledge and skills expected from IAP, Hodges and Ayling (2007) for instance, also suggest an adoption of a portfolio form of assessment, where physical evidence of students' learning, is presented for submission. This form of assessment helps develop in students' amongst other skills, tacit, intuition and artistry skills, and is an accurate measure of students' achievement on IAPs (Ram, 2008).

In their quest to improve students' internship experiences, educators have also adopted a number of strategic courses and plans of action (the “how” aspect). In resolve for instance, the University of Idaho has identified practical and reflexive objectives that could be accomplished by designing a set of academic assignments for business students on internship (Clark, 2003). Academic assignments that target these two objectives have enhanced the educational value of the internship experience ‘beyond what students would gain by simply performing the internship’ (Clark, 2003:475). This is equally essential for tourism and hospitality students considering that the industry is people centred, requiring articulate human relations skills. The University of Queensland's School of Tourism (UQST) has also incorporated a stakeholder theory approach based on relationship management (Solnet, Robinson & Cooper, 2007) to enhance students' internship experiences. This approach has three main initiatives: ‘the creation of a dedicated industry partnerships team; the delivery of an industry-based professional development course on the School's degree programmes; and a new and innovative approach to industry placements’ (Solnet et al., 2007: 68). The professional development course, for instance, is designed for students in their final year of study. This course reconciles the interests of the principal stakeholders, and facilitates the full integration of career services into academic studies by preparing students in resume writing and interview skills amongst other skills (Solnet et al., 2007). Educators are therefore coming up with innovative ways of enhancing IAP experiences.

However the role of enhancing the IAP experience does not only lie with educators. The employer and the student should also play key roles in enhancing IAP experiences. Rothman's (2007) study clearly highlights the need for employers to have an understanding of what the intern should accomplish and that such expectations should be communicated at the beginning of the IAP either from the employer or faculty to the student. Identifying what students expect from IAP is essential in improving the process and outcome of the IAP programme (Cannon & Arnold, 1998). The student should also understand the purpose of IAP in their curriculum and in their career. IAP should therefore not be seen only as a platform upon which skills are enhanced but as a vehicle for career growth.

In summary, this study aims to investigate the types of benefits students perceive they have acquired from internship and explores suggestions of enhancing IAP experiences from the students' reports. An enhancement of the student's experience is a paradigm shift from the traditional approach of only centering IAP on practitioner objectives (Solnet et al., 2007). The suggestions received could be useful in providing structure to the IAP and to its

administration and could be taken into consideration by host tourism and hospitality organizations, the Faculty at the University of Botswana and by similar institutions elsewhere.

## METHODS

### Research Design and Approach

This study is mainly situated in the interpretive paradigm, employing a qualitative thematic content analysis of tourism students' IAP reports of 2009 to 2011. Thematic content analysis was selected as the main criteria for extracting data pertinent to the research because of the need to understand in-depth views and meanings attached to IAP based on students' written expressions, sentiments and comments.

Content analysis refers to a process of gathering and analyzing the text of written or visual material (Okumus, Okumus & Mckercher, 2007). Although content analysis is a methodological tool of analysis that is susceptible to researcher bias (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991), the approach has a number of advantages that include the potential of extending or supporting existing literature (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis also has the advantages of providing insights on human thoughts (Mishra & Jagannath, 2008) as texts and words are placed in documents without any influence from the researcher (Maphosa, 1997). With content analysis, findings can either be expressed qualitatively or quantitatively depending on the purpose of the study (Okumus et al., 2007). With qualitative expression, as with the use of thematic content analysis, in this study, the authors' language and interpretative abilities are important in identifying underlying themes or issues (Cassell & Symon, 1994). Thematic content analysis is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data (Anderson, 2007). This method has been used in other studies that have evaluated the content of internship reports in environmental science (e.g. Cullen, 2005), in accounting (e.g Rothman, 2007) and in tourism and hospitality (Lee & Chao, 2012; Tse, 2010) to mention a few. Tse (2010) used 279 placement reports for tourism and hospitality students to determine the importance and value of internship. This involved a count of attributes and themes emerging from what students wrote about their placement experiences. Attributes were counted and later grouped into themes. Inferences based on these attributes and themes were then made, to identify the importance of work placement. However Tse (2010) is one of the few studies that employed content analysis of reports in Tourism IAP experiences. As such this study adds to the knowledge gap by assessing Tourism IAP experiences as presented in their reports using content analysis.

### Data Collection and Analysis

As mentioned earlier, students' reports provided the first level of feedback of the benefits of IAP; which is a key element in validating and soliciting reliability of interpretative and qualitative studies. Tse (2010) also argues that 'student placement reports...provide the depth and richness of responses that would not be available in student interviews or through a questionnaire survey'. As such students' internship reports were deemed as particularly useful to achieve the purpose of this study. Purposeful or judgment sampling was employed to select suitable reports for content analysis. As a qualitative study, the authors retrieved reports based on their completeness and ability to provide insight on relevant aspects of the

research questions with consent from the Head of Department. Ethically, it was not deemed necessary to contact the students themselves as the analysis was unanimous and represented an official script for reporting feedback from IAP experience. In all, 137 reports were retrieved. Of these, six were excluded because they were reports on students' international exchange programmes that did not conform to the standard adopted by all the other reports.

A thematic analysis approach proposed by Mills, Eurepos and Wiebe (2010) was used in this study. This approach involved:

1. Identification of themes or patterns of meaning
2. Coding and classification of data according to themes
3. Interpretation of the results in common themes

In this study, words and word compounds such as phrases, in the form of adjectives, verbs and nouns were extracted from the reports. The words were then coded and collated into themes. The themes were developed by evaluating the overall meaning or inclined meaning of the phrases based on the authors' interpretative abilities (Cassell & Symon, 1994). Findings derived from the analysis were then expressed either qualitatively or quantitatively (Okumus et al., 2007). In this study narrative presentation and rank order comparison of frequency and percentage rating of the isolated word compounds and themes was also used.

## MAIN FINDINGS

The section is divided into three sub sections. The first subsection provides the general characteristics of the students' reports, that is, the general layout of the reports. Furthermore students' reports were characterised in terms of year of submission, level of study and gender and place of attachment. The last two subsections then provide analysis regarding the benefits and enhancement of IAP experiences.

### Characteristics of the IAP

#### General Layout of Reports

In the case of the UB, there are no stringent guidelines from the Department on how a student secures an attachment place. In most cases, however, placement of students is at the Industrial Attachment Coordinator's discretion. This study also found out that IAP is structured on four sub-components: the individual report, field visits, log sheets and the industrial supervisors' reports. The students' individual report at UB is an aggregation of the following sections, written in this order: 1) Introduction, ii) Background, iii) Management information, iii) Job information, iv) Conclusion and Recommendations, and v) Appendices. Each of these sections is graded separately; though the total grade includes assessment from all the subcomponents of IAP.

#### Students' Reports by Year of Submission, Level of Study and Gender

A total of 131 IAP reports from 2009 to 2011 were purposively sampled and analyzed in 2011. The number of reports represents 61% of total student enrolment for the programme, which stood at 214 between 2009 and 2011 (University of Botswana, 2011). This might imply that were reports that had been archived elsewhere that did not form part of the sample.



The sample was comprised of 46 reports for 2009, 43 for 2010 and 41 for 2011. In all, there were 58 first-year reports, 37 second year reports and 35 third year reports that were analysed. Amongst the reports, 92 (70%) were from female students.

**Students’ Reports by Place of Attachment**

Thirty-six establishments or organisations (Table 1) have offered IAP opportunities for students over the three years. Table 1 shows the categories of establishments and the number of students that served in each of them.

**Table 1: Student Intake by Place of Attachment, 2009-2011**

Category of Establishment	Number of Establishments in Category	Number & percentage of students in category
Accommodation Service Providers	26 (72%)	83 (63%)
Educational Institutions	1 (3%)	19 (15%)
Transport Providers	1 (3%)	10 (8%)
Government Agencies	3 (8%)	7 (5%)
Tour Operators	3 (8%)	7 (5%)
Game Reserves and Conservancies	1 (3%)	3 (2%)
Other	1 (3%)	2 (2%)
Total	36 (100%)	131 (100%)
n=131		

Table 1 clearly indicates that students have been exposed more to hotel and lodge experiences from accommodation service providers (represented by 72% of attachment places) than to travel and tourism experiences in institutions such as travel agencies, tour operators and even government tourism agencies.

**Benefits of IAP-An Interpretation of Students’ Perceptions**

Based on the authors’ language and interpretative abilities, an analysis of the IAP reports yielded at least 141 phrases with similar adjectives and verbs. These were used to construct nine main themes. The phrases in each theme were then counted manually. Themes were then ranked by the frequency of phrase mentions as in Table 2.

**Table 2: Benefits of IAP**

Ranking	Theme	Number of Phrase Mentions
1	Operational Skills and Knowledge	331
2	Social Relation Skills	210
3	Clarification of career goals	141
4	Self-management skills	90
5	Enhancement of Programme Content	53
6	Supervisory Skills	42
7	Work-based General Knowledge	41
8	Exposure to Future Employability	21
9	Ability to generate new ideas	14

### **Operational Skills and Knowledge**

An accumulation of such skills is echoed by 331 phrases captured under this theme (Table 2) such as: “I have improved and learnt how to prepare various menu items”, “I learnt how to serve food at the restaurant”, “I was exposed to booking systems”, “I learnt how to use washing machines and dryers”, “I learnt how to make beds”, “I learnt how to prepare and serve cocktails”, “I have gained experience in organizing events”, “I now know how to compile value added tax”, “I have gained experience in tour guiding and animal tracking”, “I can now design a menu” and “I now know how to repair tables and chairs”.

### **Social Relation Skills**

The development of social related skills also emerged with higher prominence in the reports (210 mentions, Table 2). This theme was comprised of attributes such as: “I developed good communication skills”, “it has helped improve my presentation skills”, “it improved my negotiation skills”, “internship boosted social skills”, “my interpersonal skills were improved”, “I developed people skills”, “I have managed to have good relations with other members of staff”, “I have developed public relation skills” and “I managed to network with others”.

### **Clarification of Career Goals**

Students perceived that through IAP, they now know what they want to achieve in life. In a way IAP has clarified their career goals. This theme, had attributes such as “I could test my interests before making career decision”, “I have gained relevant experience for my future career path”, “Industrial attachment has helped clarified my career goals”, “I now know that I want to be in this industry” and “I can seek employment in the industry on graduation”, received a third place ranking. The theme was developed from 141 phrase mentions (Table 2)

### **Self-Management Skills**

The theme was developed in response to 90 words and phrases that described the students' individual related emotions, growth and development. Phrases such as “I developed empathy skills”, “I am more confident of what I do”, “I developed self-assurance”, “I also developed self-esteem”, “internship enhanced my personal growth”, “I was able to express myself” and “I became aware of myself and what I need”, were used.

### **Enhancement of Programme Content**

The enhancement of programme content theme was developed from attributes such as: “internship reinforced what I learnt in class”, “internship enhanced my knowledge of some subjects”, “it made some courses easy to understand”, “and “industrial attachment helped me relate theory learnt in class with the actual work”. There were 53 phrases and words that were used to develop this theme.

### **Supervisory Skills**

Forty two attributes such as, “internship enhanced my leadership ability”, “it helped me to make decisions”, “it improved my supervisory skills” and “it helped develop my organizing skills”, were isolated and used to develop the supervisory skills theme. A further scrutiny of the reports reflected that those students who reported enhancement of supervisory skills referred to managerial tasks that would mainly be carried out at smaller establishments (one star and two star establishments). This could be due to the reason that some of these operations are family owned operations, where the owners would not only run but also manage the operations. As such an intern, when attached at such an establishment, would most likely gain more exposure to management skills than an intern who is attached to a

specific, non-managerial department in a three, four or five star establishment. This is confirmed by limited exposure to managerial tasks received by students at higher star ranked establishments upon further analysis of the reports as is indicated in Table 4.

### **Work-based General Knowledge**

One other importance of engaging students in IAP is the exposure they gain of industrial practices and processes. A respondent described the internship as having helped them “adapt to the working conditions of the industry”. However one other respondent was sceptical on the amount of exposure gained as they indicated that “we did not get enough exposure because employees felt threatened by us, thinking that we are going to take their jobs when we finish.” This clearly indicates a conflict of expectations amongst students and host employees, a conflict that traditionally exists between these two main stakeholders. Amidst such controversy however, the theme on work-based general knowledge was developed from 41 attributes such as: “familiarisation with working environment”, “exposure to work”, “prepares us for the world of work”, exposure to working environment”, “gained work experience”, “made me understand the industry”, “adapt to the working conditions”, “made me understand work”, “widened knowledge of tourism and hospitality lingo” and “can understand real life situations”.

### **Exposure to future Employability**

Students’ mentions of employability benefits only occurred 21 times. This included phrases like, “I now have connections to higher ranked people”, “it helped boost my CV”, “I can sell myself better”, and “it has made me more marketable”. IAP therefore had a modest approach in preparing students for future employability within the industry.

### **Ability to formulate new ideas**

Students also highlighted improved ability to formulate new ideas and thoughts as expressed through 14 statements such as “I became more initiative”, “I could even suggest new ideas to my colleagues”, and “I became more creative”, in their reports. On further analysis of the reports, the study observed an accumulation of such abilities with students who were mainly attached at one of the educational institutions for events management. Maybe, in future, there is need for research that analyses the relationship between the development of creativity or initiative abilities and event management tasks.

### **Enhancement of students’ IAP Experiences**

Adjectives, nouns, and verbs or phrases with such, highlighting students’ remarks of how the IAP experience could be enhanced were also isolated from the reports. These were then grouped, by similarity and nature resulting in 52 phrases with three main themes (Tables 3 and 4). These themes, as observed, revolve around two main IAP stakeholders: the faculty and industry.

### **The Administrative & Organisational Theme**

A number of remarks were used to construct this theme as highlighted in Table 3. Most students perceived that they could benefit from an extended IAP period. This recommendation was ranked first, at a frequency of occurrence of 49 phrases (Table 3). This meant the eleven continuous weeks of IAP which students undergo at each level of study, were not sufficient for them to grasp all the operations they are exposed to. The need for regular supervision also received higher mention (Table 3; 44 mentions). One student specifically indicated in their report that “faculty never calls to see if students have arrived at

the host organization like it is stated in the manual and at times they do not even show up to see if students are getting the right exposure”.

**Table 3: Administrative & Organisational Theme**

Theme	Student Remarks	Number of Mentions
Administrative & Organisational	Increase duration of Internship	49
	Follow up students on attachment/regular supervision	44
	Orientation of students before they go for attachment/induction	14
	Students should be given opportunity for specialization	12
	UB and host organization’s interaction in the progress of the student	11
	Offer opportunity for international placement	8
	Exposure to other places of attachment	7
	Students should attend management meetings	5
	Consider students personal interests before placement	4
	Host organization should have good reporting structures	4
	Exploitation should be avoided	4
	Empower students to work alone	3
	Students should select their own places of attachment	3
	Inform host organization staff of importance of interns	2
	Exposure to expectations of the industry before we are attached	2
	Our recommendations should be considered	2
	Feedback session should be introduced	2
	Progression from one department should be organized by host organization not student	1
	Coordinators should show appreciation on behalf of UB	1
	Host should be informed of importance of internship	1
	Host should be notified on time	1
	Exposure of place of attachment beforehand	1
	UB should be aware of what students do on attachment	1
	Modification of log sheets to suit individual programmes	1
	Should have bilateral agreements with Hotels	1
	Reduce duration of internship	1
	Assessment of host organizations (how they treat students) should be done	1
<b>Total Mentions</b>	<b>179</b>	

Some students also mentioned the need for IAP orientation (Table 3; 14 mentions). At least, suggestions for students to select their own area of specialization, for international placement and for exposure to other places of attachment were also mentioned 12 times, 8 times and 7 times, respectively in all the reports (Table 3). As one of these students stated, “it is not necessary for us to go for attachment every year because we do exactly the same thing”. The monotony associated with repeated exposure to the same industrial practices especially in hospitality institutions, could be reduced if students receive autonomy in selecting their own areas of specialization and places of attachment, which might be lacking and inappropriate especially for first year tourism students.

### Task Oriented Theme

A number of remarks were also expressed by students as to what they are expected to do and how they should perform when on attachment. Students suggested that the faculty should be “very objective on aspects that should be covered” or “specify areas of concentration to the host organization”. A number of phrases were used to describe such guidelines by students:

“training checklist”, “training plan”, “timetable”, “programme”, “clear stipulations”, “training guide”, or “plan”. Whichever terminology used, the importance of an IAP plan could never be over-emphasised as phrases detailing the need for an IAP plan were mentioned 41 times throughout all the reports (Table 4).

**Table 4: Task Oriented and Programme Content Related Themes**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Student Remarks</b>	<b>Number of Mentions</b>
Task Oriented	Have a timetable/guidelines/review/assessment plan;	41
	Stipulate clear instructions; specify areas of concentration to students; should be very objective on what students are expected to do; have internship manual	
	Monetary rewards	9
	Token of appreciation & certificates	8
	Offer interns accommodation	5
	Rewards for exceptional behaviour	4
	Issue out uniforms and equipment	3
	Strict adherence to working hours	3
	Promote team work	2
	Have rest facilities for interns on split shifts	2
	Counseling should be offered	2
Total Mentions	77	
Programme Content Related	Include more management content	32
	Have more practical courses to prepare students for attachment	28
	Construct a hotel school for practice / training centre	9
	Duties allocated should be relevant to the courses taught	2
	Evaluate host organization to see if they meet programme requirements	2
	Emphasize foreign language learning	1
	Consideration of research related internship	1
	Introduce guiding courses	1
Total Mentions	80	

Only a few suggestions (17 mentions) for the introduction of a reward system were also highlighted by students (Table 4). Of these, nine were indicative of monetary related benefits, whilst eight were suggestive of non-monetary rewards such as tokens of appreciations and certificates of participation. Some students, though not many, also suggested rewards for exceptional behaviour (4 mentions).

**Programme Content Related Theme**

In this theme, the option of incorporating more practical courses in the programmes that prepares students for attachment was mentioned 28 times (Table 4). This in a way tallies with results that were obtained from the analysis of the operational benefits (that were major) gained by students whilst on IAP. The high requirement of operational related skills from IAP in the analysis, justifies students’ recommendations of the need for incorporating more practical courses in the programme. This also justifies their recommendation for the construction of a hotel school or training centre at the University (Table 4; 9 mentions).

In summary, the content analysis has managed to reveal three main underlying themes and attributes as emphasized by students that could be used to inform tourism and hospitality training at UB and similar institutions.



## DISCUSSION OF MAIN FINDINGS

This study is an important point of reference for IAPs in developing countries, especially in Southern Africa, since these have received anecdotal attention in literature. Being the first university to offer a tourism and hospitality management programme in Botswana, it was only imperative that a review of the IAP at UB, be done, in order to assess its effectiveness in creating value in students' experiences. This paper therefore extends and adds onto the limited application of qualitative and interpretative approaches, specifically the use of thematic content analysis, as a different technique that has received less empirical representation in tourism education (Tse, 2010).

The main goals of the study were attained. The purpose of IAP in Tourism and Hospitality Management at the University of Botswana was clearly highlighted. Students' perceptions of what they have acquired from the IAP were isolated and so were their recommendations of how IAP experiences could be enhanced. Finally a number of lessons emerged for the faculty and industry.

The study confirms that the structure used for IAP feedback is quite similar to the structure of IAP at other universities. At Bilkent University for instance, industrial training grading for tourism students also comes from three sources: project submittals and performance reports from the organization and university supervisors (Collins, 2002). This is important in terms of benchmarking with similar institutions elsewhere and transferability of tourism students at the UB.

The study also revealed that, students' placement for the IAP has been heavily skewed towards hospitality experiences in hotels, lodges and other accommodation facilities, than with other tourism experiences, mainly due to arrangements at department level, as placement for most students is pre-arranged with some hotels in the vicinity. Such arrangements, though noble, restrict students' autonomy for specialization in other areas of the industry, considering that the nomenclature adopted for the degree is in both Tourism and Hospitality Management. This also has a bearing on students' overall inclination upon graduation, as they are most likely to select careers in hospitality due to their IAP exposure. However IAP experiences in hospitality set ups are believed to be the foundation of any tourism student. The two, tourism and hospitality, are inseparable and as such, having prior solid foundational knowledge in hospitality is equally important for a tourism student (Pantelidis, 2014). Even in some countries such as the Mediterranean countries the two are viewed as part of the same continuum (Pantelidis, 2014) and are inseparable.

However, even if the accommodation service providers comprised of 72% (26 in number) of all the institutions that have offered IAP places to UB tourism students between 2009 and 2011, this is a noticeably low figure considering that Botswana had 331 registered tourist accommodation facilities by 2011 (Botswana Tourism Organization [BTO], 2012a). There were also 93 registered tour operators (BTO, 2012b) and 30 registered travel agencies (BTO, 2012c), that could equally have provided avenues for training. Of these travel agencies and tour operators, only four had absorbed students on IAP between 2009 and 2011. These results indicate a trend that is skewed towards a few identifiable organizations in the country that offer places for tourism IAP; possibly due to the opinion that the university may have not approached the majority of companies, or the majority of these companies are reluctant to offer places for attachment. Another reason could possibly be due to geographical dispersion of some hospitality facilities which are located in remote areas accessible by chartered

aircraft. Despite such arguments, the observation portrays a trend, not surprising though, that is evocative of Botswana's limited stakeholder involvement in tourism education especially from industry, that is attributable to foreign domination in ownership of tourism and hospitality facilities (Manwa et al., 2011). Botswana's tourism industry has been censured for adopting the "high value low volume" strategy, which has left most tourism and hospitality facilities in foreign ownership (Mbaiwa, 2005). A review of such strategy might however change the scene of tourism education in the country that currently lacks conspicuousness of industry involvement.

The results of the study also indicate that the current IAP has failed to meet some of its objectives, which are mainly generalised in the context of tourism students. There were no section-specific guidelines for tourism students in the current Faculty Manual since the manual is a general guideline for all faculty students including those majoring in Marketing, Management, Accounting and Finance. Considering that tourism is an applied subject area (Solnet, Robinson & Cooper 2007), which requires the development of close links amongst the three main stakeholders: students, academics, and industry (Carson, 2013; Cooper & Westlake, 1998), the absence of section-specific guidelines only results in ambiguity and vagueness in as far as assessing students', lecturers' and industry's expectations is concerned. For instance the current IAP fails to prepare students for integration into the informal employment sector (which is Objective Two of the Faculty Manual), as very little mention was made for prospects of entrepreneurship for instance. In addition, since most students were attached to hospitality institutions which in most cases have similar organisational cultures, students were not exposed to the different organisational cultures and systems that exist in the broader industry as expected: meaning Objective Three of the Faculty Manual was not met to some extent. However the rest of the objectives in the Faculty manual were met to some extent in the context of tourism students.

In the analysis, operational skills and knowledge especially in food preparation, food service and housekeeping, acquired from IAP emerged as the highest benefits for tourism students. The dominance of such skills from the reports clearly indicates that students are mainly exposed to the functional aspects of IAP organisations. The attainment of operational skills from IAP is tolerable as students receive limited exposure during the course of their study. As such, students' perspectives were "logical" as long as the University lacks adequate facilities for exposure to the operational aspects of the tourism and hospitality industry. IAP would therefore be the major platform upon which students are exposed to such skills, notwithstanding the efforts that the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management engages in with external stakeholders.

The development of managerial skills, which was emphasised as requiring improvement by most students (Table 4) and is also crucial for the development of a tourism and hospitality management graduate was modestly mentioned. In an earlier study, Mahachi (2012) also found out that tourism students at the University of Botswana had low perceptions of their managerial skills such as coordination and controlling. There could be a link between the low rating received by Mahachi (2012) and the limited exposure to management skills in this study, an area that could be explored further. Overall results from the study imply that even though the programme offered is a management degree, there is very limited exposure to key managerial concepts such as coordinating and delegation, more so from IAP, which is considered a key dais upon which management skills could also be developed.

Although an extension in duration of IAP was suggested under the administrative and organisational theme of IAP enhancement features (Table 3), the revised programme as from 2012 has an extended period for attachment that lasts for six months. However even with an extended IAP period, there is need for frequent or regular supervision from faculty members as suggested by most students (Table 3). Regular supervision is important in order to sustain relations between the student, the academic institution and industry. Regular supervision also instills a sense of “*we care*” from the Faculty, and specifically from the Department when departmental members are responsible for the follow-up. Regular supervision by members of the Department is therefore recommended mainly because of the nature of the industry that requires technical expertise from the supervisor. This stance could also be used to assess tourism students, “on-the-task”, as assessment has mainly been summative in nature.

The need for a clear internship plan that guides students, industry and academics on what is expected of the three parties during tourism IAP was advised and recommended by students under the task oriented theme (Table 4). Although the current Faculty Manual stipulates to some extent students’, faculty and industry’s responsibilities, the manual lacks clarity on what is expected of tourism interns as it assumes a general approach. The manual also fails to show deviation or progression from one cohort to the other. This has created three main challenges in the assessment of IAP for tourism students:

1. Students are most likely to copy from each other, knowing that these reports would be distributed amongst different lecturers for assessment.
2. There is a higher chance of a student replicating a report from previous years, since the requirements of these reports are similar.
3. There is lack of academic progression and maturity between first year and fourth year students considering that they undergo similar assessment.

As such an IAP plan specific for tourism students should be developed. The plan is a tool that would aid communication between the faculty and the host organizations with regard to what is expected of an intern. It reduces vagueness and ambiguity associated with students’ tasks during attachment and provides a structure for assessment. The plan should stipulate the areas or operations, tourism and hospitality related, that a student should be exposed to throughout the entire duration of IAP. The plan should also place more emphasis on managerial training (Table 4; 32 mentions). The tasks or duties emphasised in the plan should accentuate students’ areas of study and should be relevant to their programme. Lack of an IAP plan has resulted in some students like one was saying “being given a task of shredding papers that will be thrown away”. One other student also indicated that “there is a general feeling that the company uses the internship programme to gain cheap labour”. In some cases the host organisation also has no clear guidelines of tasks students are expected to perform whilst on attachment. A clear plan therefore has the potential of reducing ambiguity which currently surrounds IAP assessment and supervision specific to tourism students. The tool when developed could be used to encourage more industry engagement which is currently inconspicuous as previously reiterated. The plan should also show evolution and maturity in students’ expectations with each progressive cohort. The plan should be continuously monitored by the Department for instance and reviewed as and when necessary. However the plan should be developed not only by the Faculty or by the Department but also in consultation with industry and student representatives as suggested by Lam and Ching (2007).

Some students also mentioned the need for IAP orientation (Table 4; 14 mentions). Although the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management should be commended for its annual IAP orientation exercise, Siya, Mahachi, Tsheko and Lenao (2013), argue that such efforts

are not as rigorous as required. As such measures of ensuring that students know what the industry and what employers expect of them should be modified to include even site visits and site orientation before hand. It is also worthy to note that although some hotels, in Botswana do offer induction to new interns, there are also some that still do not provide such an opportunity to interns. There should therefore be combined effort from the Faculty, the Department and Industry in addressing such concerns.

## CONCLUSIONS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In conclusion, the study has highlighted the importance of continuously assessing students' feedback as presented in their IAP reports. It is one thing to submit a report and assess it based on what the students have done, but it is another, to evaluate students' perceptions of their IAP experiences in order to appreciate what they have learnt and what they suggest. After all, IAPs have been used for the professional development of students; in preparation for future work-related activities. And it is only within the context of their study programme that their views on what could shape their future is expressed.

The study, which represents just one case in Botswana, might be limited in applicability of its findings. Further comparative research should be undertaken with similar institutions that offer tourism and hospitality education in the country. Further empirical research is also required to validate some of the observations in the study. For instance, empirical correlational studies on aspects of gender, type of establishment and the type of IAP task with perceived associated benefits could be explored. Would there be statistically significant differences between a hotel's level of service and the perceived benefits from students? Can there be significant association between the level of study or gender and perceived IAP benefits as well? In addition, future research could also consider the department or faculty and the industry's opinions on perceived benefits of internship to students and how these could be enhanced.

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