



## A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF TOURISM AND TRAVEL SERVICES STUDENTS' INITIAL INDUSTRY EXPERIENCES DURING INTERNSHIP PERIOD\*

Eren GÖNÜL<sup>1\*\*</sup>  
Mehtap TÜRKAN<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

Tourism education establishes an important link between theory and the realities of the service sector; internship programs are considered a crucial element in providing students with their first authentic encounters with professional life. This study explores how tourism and travel services students' initial internship experiences influence their perceptions of the industry, motivation levels, and evolving career orientations. Using thematic analysis of unstructured research diaries, the internship process is interpreted as a multidimensional form of learning that promotes emotional, cognitive, and social growth. The analysis identified five key themes: motivation and psychological state; work environment and managerial relations; education and professional development; customer relations; career perceptions and future planning. The findings indicate that motivation is significantly influenced by managerial behavior, perceived fairness, and workload distribution. Internships are revealed to be transformative experiences that help students develop self-efficacy, adaptability, and a sense of professional identity. Framing internships as identity-building processes rather than mere vocational obligations, this study highlights the value of mentorship-based and equity-oriented approaches that strengthen the link between tourism education and industry realities.

**Keywords:** Tourism education, Internship experience, Qualitative research, Professional identity development, Student motivation

**Jel Codes:** J24, L83, Z32

## TURİZM VE SEYAHAT HİZMETLERİ PROGRAMI ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN STAJ SÜRECİNDEKİ İLK SEKTÖR DENEYİMLERİNİN NİTEL BİR ANALİZİ

### Öz

Turizm eğitimi, teori ile hizmet sektörünün gerçekleri arasında önemli bir bağ kurmakta; staj uygulamaları ise öğrencilerin profesyonel yaşamla ilk gerçek karşılaşmalarını sağlayan önemli bir unsur olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Bu çalışma, turizm ve seyahat hizmetleri öğrencilerinin ilk staj deneyimlerinin sektör hakkındaki algılarını, motivasyon düzeylerini ve gelişen kariyer yönelimlerini nasıl etkilediğini araştırmaktadır. Yapılandırılmamış araştırma günlüklerinin tematik analizi kullanılarak, staj süreci; duygusal, bilişsel ve sosyal gelişimi teşvik eden çok boyutlu bir öğrenme biçimi olarak yorumlanmaktadır. Analiz sonucunda, motivasyon ve psikolojik durum; yönetim ve işyeri ilişkileri; eğitim ve mesleki gelişim; müşteri etkileşimi ile geleceğe yönelik kariyer algılarını kapsayan beş temel tema belirlenmiştir. Bulgular motivasyonun; yönetim davranışları, algılanan adalet ve iş yükü dağılımından derin bir şekilde etkilendiğini göstermektedir. Stajların, öğrencilerin öz yeterlilik, uyum sağlama ve mesleki kimlik duygusu geliştirmelerine yardımcı olan dönüştürücü deneyimler olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Stajları sadece mesleki yükümlülükler olarak değil, kimlik oluşturma süreçleri olarak ele alan bu çalışma, turizm eğitimi ile sektör gerçekleri arasındaki bağı güçlendiren mentorluk temelli ve eşitlik odaklı yaklaşımların değerini vurgulamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Turizm eğitimi, Staj deneyimi, Nitel araştırma, Mesleki kimlik gelişimi, Öğrenci motivasyonu

**Jel Kodları:** Z32, J24, L83

\* Ethics Committee Approval of this study has been taken from Aydın Adnan Menderes University Ethics Committee for Social and Human Sciences with the date and number of 10.10.2025/ E-21315140-050.01-2500048180

<sup>1</sup> Asst. Prof. Dr., Aydın Adnan Menderes University Didim Vocational School ORCID: 0000-0003-4668-5490

\*\* **Corresponding Author** (Sorumlu yazar): erengonul@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> PhD Lecturer, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Gelibolu Piri Reis Vocational School

ORCID: 0000-0003-2243-0063

**Başvuru Tarihi** (Received): 01.02.2026 **Kabul Tarihi** (Accepted): 29.04.2026

## Introduction

The tourism industry, with its labor-intensive structure and customer-oriented service approach, is highly dependent on a qualified workforce (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000, p. 253; Baum, 2007, p. 1383). The constantly changing dynamics of the sector, the diversification of customer expectations, and the growing emphasis on service quality require tourism employees not only to possess professional knowledge and skills but also to demonstrate adaptability to the industry's evolving environment (Barron, Maxwell, Broadbridge & Ogden, 2007, p. 121). In this context, tourism education plays a critical role in training the qualified labor force needed by industry. Developing the professional competencies of tourism students should not rely solely on theoretical instruction but must also be supported by opportunities for experiential learning. Consequently, internship programs have become an indispensable component of tourism education curricula (Stansbie, Nash & Chang, 2016, p. 19).

Internship experiences allow students to apply theoretical knowledge acquired during their education in real work settings while simultaneously shaping their initial impressions of the industry and their perceptions of professional identity (Busby, Brunt & Baber, 1997, p. 109). Richardson (2008, p. 36) notes that the tourism industry's challenges—such as long working hours, low wages, and intense workloads—can negatively influence students' attitudes toward the sector. However, a well-structured internship process can enhance students' professional motivation, strengthen their commitment to the industry, and guide their career planning (Gursoy, Rahman & Swanger, 2012, p. 32). In this regard, internships are recognized as essential learning experiences through which students both develop professional skills and construct their perceptions of the tourism sector.

The increasing expectations regarding human resources within the tourism industry have also underscored the importance of collaboration between educational institutions and businesses (Olçay & Düzgün, 2015, p. 50). Particularly in Tourism and Travel Services programs, the experiences students gain during internships are decisive in shaping their intentions to work in the sector after graduation (Aksu & Köksal, 2005, p. 436). Thus, the quality of internship processes carries strategic significance for both students' personal and professional development and for the sustainability of the industry (Baum, 2007, p. 1383). Research in international literature indicates that internship experiences are critical factors influencing students' career choices and their duration of employment within the tourism sector (Waryszak, 1999, p. 34; Ruhanen, Robinson & Breaky, 2013, p. 68). Similarly, in Türkiye, internship programs have been shown to play a vital role in enhancing students' professional competencies (Olçay & Düzgün, 2015, p. 54).

The internship experiences of tourism students contribute not only to professional knowledge acquisition but also to the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills (Kay & Moncarz, 2004, p. 286). Positive experiences during internships strengthen students' intentions to remain in the sector, whereas negative experiences may lead to demotivation and a tendency to leave the field (Wan, Gao, Eddy & Ng, 2023, p. 36). In Türkiye, the labor-intensive nature of the tourism sector, the high seasonal workload, and the diversity of customer profiles create an even more complex context for students' internship experiences (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000, p. 251). In particular, factors such as managerial attitudes, working conditions, customer relations, and team interactions directly influence students' perceptions of the internship process. Therefore, internship programs should be regarded not merely as professional requirements but as critical processes that shape students' future paths within the tourism industry (Emir, Arslan & Kılıçkaya, 2008, p. 288).

This study aims to analyze the first industry experiences of tourism and travel services students during their internship process through a qualitative approach, revealing how their perceptions and motivations toward the tourism sector are shaped. Based on the thematic analysis of diaries kept

by students throughout their internship period, the study examines these experiences through the participants' own narratives. In doing so, it contributes to the literature in three main ways: by offering a qualitative and student-centered perspective on first internship experiences, by providing process-based insights that go beyond the predominantly quantitative orientation of previous studies, and by demonstrating how internship experiences shape not only professional learning but also motivation, self-efficacy, and emerging career orientations. In this respect, the study also offers practical implications for improving the quality of internship programs in tourism education.

## 1. Literature Review

The tourism industry, with its labor-intensive structure and customer-oriented service philosophy, is among the fields that require the highest level of qualified human resources (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000, p. 253; Baum, 2007, p. 1384). The dynamic nature of the sector, the diversification of customer expectations, and the emphasis placed on service quality necessitate a workforce equipped not only with professional knowledge but also with multifaceted skills such as adaptability and communication (Kay & Moncarz, 2004, p. 295; Barron et al., 2007, p. 122). Therefore, tourism education holds strategic importance in cultivating a workforce compatible with industry demands. Within this process, not only theoretical knowledge transfer but also practical learning opportunities that prepare students for the professional environment are considered essential (Stansbie et al., 2016, p. 26). At this point, internship programs emerge as an indispensable component of tourism education, offering students their first professional encounters with the industry. Internships allow students to test their theoretical knowledge in real working conditions, develop professional identity, and shape their perceptions of the sector (Busby et al., 1997, p. 105). Well-structured internship programs enhance students' motivation toward the sector, strengthen their professional commitment, and play a guiding role in their career planning (Smith, Clegg, Lawrance & Todd, 2007, p. 131; Gursoy et al., 2012, p. 34). Conversely, low wages, long working hours, or negative managerial attitudes can diminish motivation and lead students to distance themselves from the industry (Richardson, 2008, p. 26).

International studies emphasize that internship experiences play a critical role in shaping students' career preferences. Waryszak (1999, p. 37) found that students' satisfaction levels with internships increase their intentions to remain in the sector, while Ruhanen et al. (2013, 63) highlighted that internship experiences are shaped by the congruence between expectations and reality. Similarly, Barron and Maxwell (1993, p. 6) argued that hospitality students' perceptions of the industry image are largely influenced by their internship experiences, and Brown et al. (2014, p. 60) demonstrated that internships contribute significantly to the development of service-related skills. More recent studies suggest that in the post-pandemic era, internship experiences should equip students with new skills such as flexibility, digital competence, and intercultural communication (Siow et al., 2021, p. 276; Xu, Tavitiyaman, Kim & Lo, 2022, p. 279).

Comparable tendencies are observed in Türkiye, although structural challenges such as seasonal workload fluctuations, low wage policies, and high employee turnover rates continue to affect internship processes (Aksu & Köksal, 2005, p. 444; Olcay & Düzgün, 2015, p. 54). Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000, p. 255) found that students' attitudes toward working in the tourism sector are significantly shaped by their internship experiences. More recent research demonstrates that students' intentions to remain in the sector are closely related to workplace conditions, managerial attitudes, and the diversity of customer profiles (Olcay & Düzgün, 2015, 50). Furthermore, internships are emphasized as contributing not only to professional growth but also to the development of students' social and cultural skills. When national and international literature is compared, it is evident that internships play a decisive role in students' professional development and perceptions of the industry (Emir, Pelit & Arslan, 2010, p. 157). However, while international

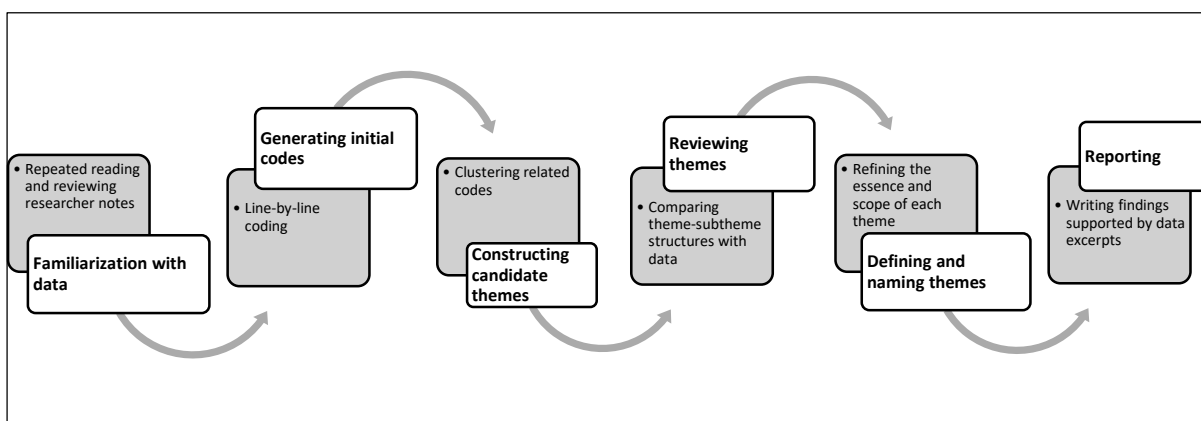
studies predominantly focus on the effects of internships on satisfaction levels and career continuity (Richardson, 2008, p. 25; Ruhanen et al., 2013, p. 66), studies in Türkiye tend to concentrate on students' motivation, intention to remain in the industry, and adaptation to the labor market (Olçay & Düzgün, 2015, p. 53). Moreover, the structural conditions of the Turkish tourism industry appear to make students' experiences more complex and multifaceted than those discussed in international contexts.

This study contributes a qualitative perspective to existing literature by analyzing the first industry experiences of tourism and travel services students through data obtained from their internship diaries. This approach provides an alternative to the predominantly quantitative studies in the field and enables a deeper understanding of students' experiences through their own narratives. The conceptual contribution of this study can be evaluated on three levels. First, addressing the relationship between tourism education and internship from a student-centered perspective enriches theoretical diversity in the field. Second, the use of qualitative methods to examine student experiences in a multilayered way fills a methodological gap in the literature. Third, the findings provide practical guidance for both educational institutions and industry stakeholders in restructuring internship programs to be more effective, motivating, and student-oriented—thus enhancing the study's applied relevance.

## 2. Methodology

This study was designed as a qualitative and interpretive inquiry aiming to understand the internship experiences of vocational school students entering the tourism industry for the first time and to explore how these experiences influence their perceptions of the sector. The research employed a process-oriented approach that captured participants' everyday internship practices over time, using unstructured research diaries as the primary data collection tool. Diaries are recommended in the literature as a powerful method for capturing the meaning of subjective experiences within their natural flow (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003, p. 580; Alaszewski, 2006, p. 44; Bartlett & Milligan, 2015, p.14). Accordingly, the study was guided by the principles of qualitative research focusing on the description and interpretation of lived experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, 26; Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 138) and applied thematic analysis techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 593).

**Figure 1:** *Data analysis phases*



**Source:** (Braun & Clarke, 2019)

The collected diaries were analyzed using thematic analysis, and the stages of this process are presented in Figure 1. The analysis began with repeated readings of all diary entries to gain familiarity with the content, tone, and temporal flow of the internship experiences. The coding process was initially conducted inductively in a data-driven manner through line-by-line

examination of the entries, with attention to both explicit statements and recurring meanings across the diaries. These initial codes were then clustered into broader categories representing recurring patterns in the data. The categories were subsequently compared across participants and diary days in order to identify candidate themes and to examine both convergent and contradictory experiences. In the next stage, a deductive comparison aligned with the research questions was employed to refine the scope of the themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 82). Thematic mapping and theme refinement were developed iteratively through repeated analytic cycles (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 593). As a result of this process, five final themes were defined: motivation and psychological state; work environment and managerial relations; education and professional development; customer relations; and career perception and future planning. Throughout the analysis, coding decisions, category revisions, theme merges, and analytic reflections were documented in a detailed audit trail to ensure the traceability, transparency, and dependability of the analytical procedures (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 4). In order to enhance analytic transparency, Table 1 presents illustrative examples of how selected raw diary extracts were translated into initial codes, grouped into categories/subthemes, and ultimately organized under the final themes.

**Table 1. Illustrative Examples Of The Transformation From Raw Data To Themes**

Raw diary extract	Initial code	Category / subtheme	Final theme
<i>"It's my first day of internship. I'm so excited because I'm finally stepping into the profession I've always wanted. I need to prove myself"</i> (F5).	First-day excitement; desire to prove oneself	Initial motivation	Motivation and psychological state
<i>"The supervisor discriminates in sales. He says I can't sell a certain tour but lets my female colleague sell it"</i> (M1).	Unequal task allocation; perceived discrimination	Perceived injustice	Work environment and managerial relations
<i>"We join the tours we sell. That helps us give more detailed information to customers"</i> (F5).	Learning through direct experience	Experiential learning	Education and professional development
<i>"A guest wanted to leave early because of a funeral. I worked hard to make sure he wasn't charged extra"</i> (M1).	Empathy toward guest; problem solving	Conflict management and empathy	Customer relations
<i>"The front office manager offered me a position for next season"</i> (M3).	Employment opportunity; strengthened career interest	Career orientation	Career perception and future planning

Reliability and validity were established in accordance with the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 299). For *credibility*, direct quotations from the 30-day diaries were incorporated, participant feedback was obtained, and peer debriefing was conducted by two faculty experts—one in human resource management and the other in travel management. For *transferability*, detailed contextual information was provided regarding the setting, sample, and internship processes, and the conditions under which the findings were produced were explicitly reported. To ensure *dependability*, an extensive audit trail documented the research design, coding decisions, and iterative analysis cycles; a code–recode strategy was used to test theme consistency. *Confirmability* was strengthened through the inclusion of reflexive researcher notes, decision logs, and a transparent chain of evidence tracing themes back to raw data, with contradictory or deviant cases reported where appropriate. In addition, data source and temporal triangulation were employed in conjunction with methodological rigor to enhance internal consistency and persuasiveness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 359). Although these procedures strengthened the trustworthiness of the study, some limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted with a small group of students from a single program and within a relatively homogeneous internship context. While this supported in-depth comparison across participants, it

also limits the transferability of the findings to other institutions, tourism fields, and organizational settings. In addition, the data relied on unstructured diaries, which depended on participants' willingness and ability to record their experiences regularly and reflectively.

The study was conducted following the approval of the Aydın Adnan Menderes University Ethics Committee for Social and Human Sciences (10.10.2025/ E-21315140-050.01-2500048180) and after obtaining necessary permissions from the relevant travel agencies. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, emphasizing voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any time, and confidentiality principles. Personal and institutional information contained in the diaries was anonymized, and data protection standards were strictly observed (O'Brien et al., 2014, p. 1247).

### **3. Findings**

The qualitative data obtained from the students' internship diaries were thematically analyzed, and participant narratives were coded into meaningful patterns clustered under five main dimensions: *motivation and psychological state, work environment and managerial relations, education and professional development, customer relations, career perception and future planning*. These dimensions reveal how students perceive their internship experiences, which factors support their professional identity formation, and how the industry influences young employees from multiple perspectives. Each of these dimensions is examined in detail below, supported by direct quotations from participant diaries. This interpretive approach allowed for a multidimensional understanding of the internship experience, linking empirical findings with conceptual depth and theoretical integration.

#### ***Motivation and psychological state***

Participants' reflections reveal that motivation is a dynamic and fragile construct. During the initial days of their internships, most students expressed high levels of intrinsic motivation driven by excitement and the desire to prove themselves. As one participant wrote, *"It's my first day of internship. I'm so excited because I'm finally stepping into the profession I've always wanted. I need to prove myself"* (F5). However, as the process continued, factors such as workload, communication issues with supervisors, and perceptions of organizational injustice gradually reduced motivation. One participant stated, *"The hotel I'm working at is terrible... The staff act superior, like they're above everyone else"* (F2), capturing psychological exhaustion.

Nevertheless, some participants sustained their motivation through positive feedback and supportive leadership. *"Our supervisor encourages us in tour sales and tells us that our results will improve over time. That really keeps us motivated"* (F5). This aligns with Deci and Ryan's (2000, p. 237) self-determination theory, emphasizing that autonomy-supportive feedback fosters intrinsic motivation more effectively than external pressure.

Overall, interns' motivation levels were influenced not only by personal goals but also by managerial fairness, workload balance, and the degree of social support. These findings suggest that psychological mentoring and emotional support programs are crucial for sustaining young workers' motivation in the tourism sector.

#### ***Work environment and managerial relations***

Most interns identified their relationships with supervisors and coworkers as the key determinant of internship quality. The attitude of managers during the initial days strongly affected students' sense of belonging and adaptation to the workplace. One participant recalled, *"On the first day, our regional manager picked me up from the bus terminal, took me to the dormitory, and showed me around the hotel I'd be responsible for. That helped calm my nerves"* (F2).

However, not all experiences were positive. *"The supervisor discriminates in sales. He says I can't sell a certain tour but let's my female colleague sell it"* (M1). This reflects a breakdown in perceived fairness, resonating with Adams's (1965, p. 276) *equity theory*, which emphasizes distributive justice. Perceived inequity not only reduces satisfaction but also shapes long-term attitudes toward the profession.

In contrast, supportive managers strengthened both the professional and emotional resilience of interns. *"Our supervisor is very friendly. Sometimes he organizes barbecue nights for us at the dorm. It really boosts our morale"* (M5). Such examples illustrate the role of *emotional leadership* in fostering organizational commitment (Wong & Law, 2002, p. 244). Hence, the work environment is not merely a physical space but a social and emotional ecosystem where fairness, support, and communication co-create interns' perceptions of the tourism industry.

### ***Education and professional development***

Participants viewed the internship not only as professional practice but also as a personal learning journey. As one intern expressed, *"We join the tours we sell. That helps us give more detailed information to customers"* (F5)—a clear reflection of Kolb's (1984, p. 21) experiential learning cycle of *learning by doing*.

Some interns, however, criticized the lack of structured training. *"There's a lot of pressure to sell tours, but if they had taken us on these tours first, we could sell them more confidently"* (F2). This points to a theory-practice gap still evident in Turkish tourism education. Others adopted self-directed strategies: *"I'm learning by living through things"* (M2). These spontaneous learning experiences highlight the value of informal, field-based learning as a pedagogical resource.

For some, reflective insight turned the internship into a process of identity formation: *"Whatever job you do, you need to learn every detail. I didn't, and it didn't turn out as I expected"* (F2). Thus, internships function not only as instructional spaces but also as selective mechanisms through which students redefine their career orientations.

### ***Customer relations***

Interactions with customers represented the most direct arena of professional identity development. Participants frequently emphasized the role of empathy and stress management in handling service encounters. *"A guest wanted to leave early because of a funeral. I worked hard to make sure he wasn't charged extra. Thankfully, the hotel helped, and everything went smoothly"* (M1). This demonstrates emotional sensitivity and problem-solving ability in action.

Conversely, some students reported emotional exhaustion when facing unreasonable or demanding guests. *"We get ridiculous complaints. The guest quality is awful. They have money for a vacation but no sense"* (M2). Such responses reflect *surface acting*—suppressing authentic emotions to maintain service decorum—which, as Grandey (2000, p. 106) notes, can diminish internal satisfaction.

Positive encounters, however, built confidence: *"One of my guests hurt his hand in the morning... The hotel staff took great care, and the guests were so happy they extended their stay by two days"* (F3). Successful crisis handling thus reinforced both guest satisfaction and the intern's self-esteem.

Overall, these narratives suggest that emotional intelligence training should be integrated into tourism internship programs to help students manage emotional labor more effectively.

### ***Career perception and future planning***

Some participants experienced the internship as more than a temporary work period—it became a turning point for evaluating their future careers. Diary entries revealed growing self-awareness, shifting expectations, and evolving professional intentions.

Several students saw the internship as the start of their career path. *“The hotel I worked for offered me a job at the reception, but I need to improve my English first”* (M4). Similarly, *“The front office manager offered me a position for next season”* (M3). Such experiences show that internships can open doors to employment and strengthen professional identity and belonging.

Others, however, expressed disillusionment: *“I can’t wait for my internship to end... I don’t want to work after this, but I need the money”* (M4). Likewise, *“They want me back next year, but I turned it down. I got another offer I’ll consider”* (M2). These statements expose the tension between economic necessity and job satisfaction. Thus, the internship did not merely develop professional skills –it also tested students’ personal alignment with the tourism industry. For some, it affirmed career commitment; for others, it served as a critical reflection leading to alternative trajectories. As Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000, p. 262) noted, internship experiences are decisive in shaping tourism students’ intentions to remain in the sector. The career perception and future planning theme illustrates that students experience the internship as a professional mirror. For some, it generates optimism and engagement; for others, it triggers self-questioning and redirection.

Overall, the findings indicate that tourism students’ internship experiences constitute a multidimensional learning process. While initial motivation levels are high, factors such as workload, managerial pressure, and perceived injustice gradually weaken it. Conversely, supportive supervision and positive feedback restore engagement. The work environment directly shapes students’ perceptions of the sector, while experiential learning drives the development of professional knowledge and skills. Customer relations experiences demonstrate the centrality of empathy and emotional labor in professional identity formation. Ultimately, the internship emerges as a transformative space where young individuals mature not only professionally but also emotionally and socially.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study examined the internship experiences of tourism and travel services students through the dimensions of motivation and psychological state, work environment and managerial relations, education and professional development, customer relations, and career perception and future planning. The findings show that internship is not merely a period of practical training, but a multidimensional learning process that shapes students’ professional identity, self-efficacy, and understanding of the tourism sector. The results indicate that students usually begin their internships with high motivation, but this motivation may weaken over time due to workload, managerial pressure, and perceived injustice. In contrast, supportive supervision, fair treatment, and constructive feedback help sustain motivation and strengthen students’ sense of belonging. The findings also show that internships support experiential learning by allowing students to develop professional knowledge, communication skills, problem-solving abilities, and emotional awareness in real service settings. At the same time, customer interactions reveal that emotional labor is a central part of early tourism work experience, with both developmental and exhausting effects.

Overall, the study suggests that internships should be evaluated not only as vocational requirements but also as formative experiences that influence students’ career perceptions and future sectoral commitment. In this respect, the study contributes to the literature by framing internship as a space of professional and personal development rather than as a purely technical training process. Practically, the findings underline the importance of mentorship, fair managerial practices, and emotionally supportive work environments in improving internship quality. Although the study is limited to a small and context-specific sample, it offers in-depth insight into how first internship experiences are interpreted by students. Future research may build on these

findings through comparative, longitudinal, and mixed-method designs in different tourism contexts.

**Authorship Contributions** (Yazar Katkı Oranı): The authors contributed equally to the study.

## References

- Adams, J. S. (1965). Inequity in social exchange. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 2, 267-299.
- Alaszewski, A. (2006). Diaries as a source of suffering narratives: A critical commentary. *Health, Risk & Society*, 8(1), 43-58.
- Aksu, A. A., & Köksal, C. D. (2005). Perceptions and attitudes of tourism students in Turkey. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 17(5), 436-447.
- Barron, P., & Maxwell, G. (1993). Hospitality management students' image of the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 5(5), 5-8.
- Barron, P., Maxwell, G., Broadbridge, A., & Ogden, S. (2007). Careers in hospitality management: Generation Y's experiences and perceptions. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 14(2), 119-128.
- Bartlett, R., & Milligan, C. (2015). Engaging with diary techniques. *What is Diary Method*, 13-28.
- Baum, T. (2007). Human resources in tourism: Still waiting for change. *Tourism Management*, 28(6), 1383-1399.
- Bolger, N., Davis, A., & Rafaeli, E. (2003). Diary methods: Capturing life as it is lived. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54(1), 579-616.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589-597.
- Brown, E. A., Arendt, S. W., & Bosselman, R. H. (2014). Hospitality management graduates' perceptions of career factor importance and career factor experience. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 13(2), 176-196.
- Busby, G., Brunt, P., & Baber, S. (1997). Tourism sandwich placements: An appraisal. *Tourism Management*, 18(2), 105-110.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227-268.
- Emir, O., Arslan, S., & Kılıçkaya, Ş. (2008). Turizm işletmeciliği ve otelcilik programı öğrencilerinin staj uygulamaları hakkındaki görüşlerinin değerlendirilmesi: Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Örneği. *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 10(2), 273-291.
- Emir, O., Pelit, E., & Arslan, S. (2010). Turizm alanında önlisans eğitimi alan öğrencilerin staj öncesi ve sonrası görüşlerinin karşılaştırılması: Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi örneği. *Elektronik Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 9(33), 141-165.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80-92.

- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82.
- Gursoy, D., Rahman, I., & Swanger, N. (2012). Industry's expectations from hospitality schools: What has changed? *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, 24(4), 32-42.
- Kay, C., & Moncarz, E. (2004). Knowledge, skills, and abilities for lodging management. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 45(3), 285-298.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.
- Kusluvan, S., & Kusluvan, Z. (2000). Perceptions and attitudes of undergraduate tourism students towards working in the tourism industry in Turkey. *Tourism Management*, 21(3), 251-269.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
- Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1753-1760.
- Merriam, S.B., & Tisdell, E.J. (2016). *Qualitative Research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1609406917733847.
- O'Brien, B. C., Harris, I. B., Beckman, T. J., Reed, D. A., & Cook, D. A. (2014). Standards for reporting qualitative research: a synthesis of recommendations. *Academic Medicine*, 89(9), 1245-1251.
- Olçay, A., & Düzgün, M. (2015). Turizm sektörünün istihdam niteliğinin öğrencilerin kariyer planları üzerindeki etkisi. *Seyahat ve Otel İşletmeciliği Dergisi*, 12(3), 49-72.
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration And Policy In Mental Health And Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533-544.
- Patton, M.Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (4th Ed.). United States: Sage Publications
- Richardson, S. (2008). Undergraduate tourism and hospitality students' attitudes toward a career in the industry: A preliminary investigation. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 8(1), 23-46.
- Ruhanen, L., Robinson, R., & Breakey, N. (2013). A tourism immersion internship: Student expectations, experiences, and satisfaction. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 12(1), 44-54.
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., ... & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(4), 1893-1907.
- Siow, M. L., Lockstone-Binney, L., Fraser, B., Cheung, C., Shin, J., Lam, R., ... & Baum, T. (2021). Re-building students' post-COVID-19 confidence in courses, curriculum and careers for tourism, hospitality, and events. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, 33(4), 270-287.

- Smith, K., Clegg, S., Lawrence, E., & Todd, M. J. (2007). The challenges of reflection: students learning from work placements. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 44(2), 131-141.
- Stansbie, P., Nash, R., & Chang, S. (2016). Linking internships and classroom learning: A case study examination of hospitality and tourism management students. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 19, 19-29.
- Wan, Y. K. P., Gao, H. Y., Eddy U, M. E., & Ng, Y. N. (2023). Expectations and perceptions of the internship program: A case study of tourism retail and marketing students in Macao. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, 35(1), 30-43.
- Waryszak, R. (1999). Students' expectations from their cooperative education placements in the hospitality industry: An international perspective. *Education + Training*, 41(1), 33-40.
- Wong, C. S., & Law, K. S. (2002). The effects of leader and follower emotional intelligence on performance and attitude: An exploratory study. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(3), 243-274.
- Xu, J., Tavitiyaman, P., Kim, H. J., & Lo, S. K. J. (2022). Hospitality and tourism higher education in the post-COVID era: Is it time to change?. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, 34(4), 278-290.
- Zimmerman, D. H., & Wieder, D. L. (1977). The diary: diary-interview method. *Urban Life*, 5(4), 479-498.