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Enhancing Hospitality Education: Exploring Hospitality Management Students' Experiences in Educational Tours through Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract

This study explores the role of educational tours in hospitality education, emphasizing their potential to enhance students' professional growth, lifelong learning, and overall development. Recognized as valuable experiential learning opportunities, these tours bridge theoretical knowledge and real-world practice. Despite their widespread use, there is limited understanding of how such experiences influence student development, particularly regarding barriers to participation and support strategies. The purpose of this research is to examine hospitality management students' experiences during educational tours, identify participation barriers, and propose strategies to improve support, safety, and communication, thereby maximizing educational outcomes. Anchored in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), which describes learning as a process involving concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation, the study explores how students engage with, reflect on, and learn from their tour experiences. Employing a qualitative narrative inquiry design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and reflective narratives, providing in-depth insights into students' personal stories and lived experiences. Thematic analysis revealed six key themes: professional growth, educational development, barriers to participation, challenges in enjoying the experience, support strategies, and communication methods. Findings suggest that targeted interventions in these areas can significantly enrich experiential learning and foster personal and professional growth. The study recommends that hospitality programs implement structured support, improve safety protocols, and enhance communication channels to facilitate more meaningful experiential learning, better preparing students for their future careers.

Keywords: Experiential learning, Hospitality education, Student support strategies, Safety and preparedness, Educational tours

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Introduction

Educational tours are a fundamental component of hospitality management education, serving as experiential learning platforms that connect theoretical knowledge with real-world industry practices. These trips allow students to immerse themselves directly in industry environments, providing invaluable opportunities to observe service operations, interact with industry professionals, and experience diverse cultural settings firsthand (Goh, 2011). Such experiential exposure is crucial in developing practical skills, fostering cultural sensitivity, and understanding

customer perspectives elements essential for preparing students to navigate the complexities of the hospitality sector.

In an ideal scenario, educational tours would be carefully designed to maximize their educational impact. They would be accessible to all students, regardless of financial background or personal circumstances, ensuring equity in experiential learning opportunities. These tours would be conducted in safe, well-funded environments with clear objectives, offering meaningful activities that promote active engagement, reflection, and internalization of industry practices. Well-structured tours would facilitate a seamless integration of classroom learning with real-world application, transforming students from passive recipients of knowledge into confident, proactive industry-ready professionals (Dembovska et al., 2016). An ideal educational tour would inspire curiosity, encourage critical thinking, and foster a deeper understanding of industry challenges and opportunities.

However, the current reality often diverges from this ideal. Many students encounter significant barriers that limit their full participation and learning during these trips. Financial constraints can prevent some students from participating altogether, while safety concerns such as unfamiliar environments or inadequate supervision may discourage engagement or cause hesitation. Additionally, a lack of detailed, reliable information about destinations, activities, or logistical arrangements can diminish students' preparedness and the educational value of the experience. These obstacles not only hinder active participation but also impact the depth of reflection and internalization of industry practices. As a result, students may leave these tours less confident, less culturally aware, and less prepared for real-world challenges than they could be if these barriers were addressed (Kuang et al., 2024; Nadarajah et al., 2021).

Despite the recognized importance of educational tours, existing research primarily emphasizes logistical and organizational aspects, such as planning, funding, and safety protocols. Few studies delve into the personal experiences, perceptions, and internal challenges faced by students themselves. This gap is significant because understanding students' subjective experiences what they find valuable, challenging, or discouraging is essential for designing more effective and inclusive educational tours. Without listening to students' voices, efforts to improve these experiences risk missing key insights that could enhance engagement, learning outcomes, and overall satisfaction.

To address this gap, this study employs narrative inquiry, a qualitative approach focused on capturing and analyzing students' personal stories. By exploring their accounts, the research aims to uncover common challenges, perceptions of value, and suggestions for improvement. These insights will help bridge the gap between the current, often limited, experiences and the ideal of a well-designed, accessible, and impactful educational tour. Ultimately, this research seeks to inform educators and industry professionals on how to better structure experiential learning activities that foster meaningful engagement, cultural awareness, and professional readiness, thereby better preparing students for their future careers in hospitality. This study is guided by three research questions: What are the experiences of hospitality management students participating in educational tours? What are the key challenges faced by hospitality management students before and during educational tours? And what strategies can be implemented to enhance the effectiveness of educational tours?

Literature Review

Experiential Learning in Hospitality Education

At the heart of effective hospitality education lies experiential learning hands-on experiences that bring classroom theories to life. These real-world encounters are essential for helping students understand the nuances of hospitality management and develop practical skills that are vital for their careers. Educational tours stand out as a powerful example of such experiential learning. They allow students to step into actual hotel and restaurant environments, bridging the gap between what they learn in textbooks and what they will face in the industry. Beyond boosting their grasp of core

concepts, these tours also help students build soft skills like communication, teamwork, and adaptability traits that are indispensable in today's fast-paced, globalized hospitality landscape (Shamy & Ahmed, 2024).

Research consistently shows that students value these tours highly. They see them as more than just visiting their opportunities for active learning and personal growth. Shamy and Ahmed (2024) highlight that educational tours embody the "learning by doing" philosophy, giving students practical, hands-on experiences directly related to their studies. These experiences also expose students to diverse hospitality environments, helping them become more adaptable and culturally aware of qualities increasingly important in a connected world. While specific research on adaptability and cultural awareness within the context of tours is limited, the overall benefits are clear: immersive experiences prepare students not just academically, but also socially and culturally, for the global challenges ahead.

Of course, making these tours successful requires careful planning. Organizing effective educational trips involves overcoming logistical hurdles and ensuring the activities align with learning objectives. This highlights the importance of strong institutional support and thoughtful coordination (Longyue et al., 2024). When well-executed, these tours can create engaging, meaningful experiences that set students up for success in their future hospitality careers.

Student Perceptions and Personal Experiences

Students' views and personal stories are central to understanding how impactful educational tours truly are. For many, these trips are more than just field visits they're transformative experiences that connect classroom knowledge with real-world practice. Students often report feeling more confident and motivated after participating in these tours, emphasizing the tangible skills they gain and the increased engagement they experience through direct industry exposure (Shamy & Ahmed, 2024).

Personal narratives reveal that students who enjoy positive tour experiences tend to develop a stronger sense of connection to hospitality principles. This deeper engagement encourages reflection on their future goals within the industry. Many students share that immersive tours inspire them, fueling their passion and determination to excel academically and professionally. However, despite these benefits, challenges such as logistical planning and curriculum alignment still need to be addressed to maximize the potential of these learning opportunities (Norris & Norris-Parish, 2024).

Challenges and Barriers in Implementing Educational Tours

While educational tours are invaluable, implementing them isn't without its hurdles. Common obstacles include limited funding, logistical complexities, and difficulties coordinating with industry partners (Ostapchuk et al., 2024). Effective execution often depends on collaboration across various stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality sectors, something that doesn't always happen smoothly (Gehrke & Hansen-Magnusson, 2024).

Other barriers include restricted access to quality venues, insufficient training for faculty members, and a lack of institutional support all of which can diminish the impact of these experiences (Bektaş et al., 2024). Additionally, resource limitations and curriculum integration issues further complicate efforts to embed tours seamlessly into hospitality programs (Kuang et al., 2024). Overcoming these challenges is crucial if we want to harness the full potential of experiential learning and give students the immersive, practical experience they need to thrive in industry.

Factors Influencing Effectiveness and Innovation in Educational Tours

The success of educational tours depends on several key factors, especially the ability to keep students engaged through innovative and interactive approaches. Recent studies suggest that experiential learning becomes even more impactful when it incorporates technology virtual tours, for example, can supplement physical visits and help students who face logistical barriers (Drăguleasa et al., 2024; An & Ríos, 2024).

Furthermore, close collaboration among faculty members, industry partners, and students themselves plays a vital role in designing meaningful and aligned experiences. While some research, like that of (Kuang et al., 2024) focuses on study tours in primary and secondary education limiting direct relevance to hospitality the overarching theme remains integrating educational activities into curricula enhances cultural awareness and contextual understanding.

By focusing on these factors' technological integration, strong partnerships, and purposeful curriculum design we can create innovative, engaging tours that not only teach practical skills but also inspire students to become adaptable and culturally sensitive hospitality professionals.

Research Methodology

Research Design

A narrative inquiry is a research approach that emphasizes collecting and analyzing first-person accounts of experiences or events, typically conveyed through storytelling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This method fundamentally relies on the use of stories to explore human experiences. As Richardson (1995) suggests, narratives should be highly valued when aiming to uncover the most profound and universal aspects of human life. Narrative studies focus on describing individuals' experiences as they are lived and recounted through their personal stories (Creswell, 2013). Central to narrative inquiry is an emphasis on people's lived experiences, considering the context of their community and surroundings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Research Setting

The study was conducted at Eastern Visayas State University, located in Tacloban City and focused on hospitality management students.

Participants and Sampling

The participating students were purposively selected. Fourteen student participants were chosen from those who took part in the field trips conducted in SY 2022-2023 and SY 2023-2024. The criteria for their selection were as follows: (a) they must be students of Eastern Visayas State University; (b) they must be willing to participate; (c) they must be enrolled in the educational tour subject; and (d) they must have participated in the educational tour.

Data Collection Procedure

We carried out detailed face-to-face semi-structured interviews to gather insights from the participants. With their permission, we used an audio recorder to ensure all responses were accurately captured. The interviews concluded once we had collected all the necessary information, guided by probing questions designed to encourage thoughtful and comprehensive answers.

Data Analysis Procedure

Coding is the process of giving meaning to different parts of data, as described by Miles et al. (2014). To do this, we need to carefully go through the entire data set. During this process, we might come across some parts that are not relevant to our research topic, and in those cases, we simply don't code them. The coding process is structured into three levels. At Level 1, you start by reading each sentence carefully and identifying meaningful segments or chunks of data. Each of these meaningful units is labeled with a code a short tag that captures its essence.

Moving to Level 2, you group these codes into broader concepts called categories. Each category can contain anywhere between two to five codes. If a category ends up with more than five codes, it's often helpful to split it into two separate categories to keep your data organized and easier to analyze.

At Level 3, you look at all the categories and classify them into even broader ideas known as themes. These themes represent the overarching patterns or main ideas that emerge from your

data. This layered approach helps us organize complex data in a way that makes it more understandable and meaningful for our research.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical principles by ensuring informed consent was obtained from all participants, emphasizing voluntary participation and confidentiality. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Data was collected and stored securely to protect privacy. The study minimized potential harm by ensuring questions were respectful and non-intrusive.

Results and Analysis

Experience of Hospitality Management Students Participating in Educational Tours.

Theme 1: Professional growth and career progression

Professional growth and career progression are multifaceted concepts encompassing various aspects of an individual's professional development. They involve career planning, self-development, and decision-making processes aimed at improving one's professional status and aligning personal needs with career opportunities (Arhipova & Kokina, 2022). Career growth is influenced by factors at organizational, individual, and social levels (Ni et al., 2022). For professional staff in higher education, unique issues and opportunities exist for career progression and development (Bossu et al., 2018). In hospitality professionals, career growth is perceived as a multi-dimensional concept, including career promotion, goal progress, professional ability improvement, and professional identity development (Ni et al., 2022).

The journey of professional development among hospitality students begins with experiential learning opportunities such as educational tours. These tours serve as a vital platform for enhancing practical skills and cultural understanding, which are crucial for real-world hospitality operations. As P1 shared, *"Participating in educational tours has significantly enhanced my practical skills and cultural understanding, giving me a better grasp of real-world hospitality operations."*

This initial exposure also plays a significant role in boosting confidence. P2 reflected, *"It boosted my confidence and made me feel more ready to enter the hospitality industry,"* illustrating how experiential learning can foster self-assurance necessary for career progression.

Furthermore, the hands-on nature of these tours allows students to develop skills that are difficult to acquire solely through classroom instruction. P5 emphasized this point, stating, *"Participating in the educational tours helped me develop hands-on skills that I couldn't learn in the classroom, such as customer service and team coordination."* This practical exposure helps bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Observing real hospitality practices during the tours not only enhances practical skills but also provides students with a clearer understanding of industry expectations. P8 noted, *"The educational tour helped me observe real hospitality practices, which improved my practical skills and gave me a clearer understanding of industry expectations."* Such observations are critical in shaping professional identity and understanding industry standards.

Applying learned concepts in real-world situations further consolidates skills and confidence. P10 shared, *"Participating in the educational tours gave me the opportunity to apply what I learned in class to real-world situations, improving my practical skills. These experiences made me feel more confident and industry-ready."* This transition from classroom to real-world application signifies progress toward goal achievement and professional identity development.

Continued practical exposure during these tours significantly enhances understanding of hospitality management practices. P12 expressed, *"The educational tour provided me with practical exposure to hospitality management practices, which enhanced my skills and*

understanding of the industry. The experience made me feel more confident and prepared to pursue a career in hospitality." Such experiences contribute directly to career promotion and self-development.

The increasing effect of these experiences is a marked improvement in practical skills and readiness for professional careers. P14 said, *"Participating in the educational tours allowed me to observe real-world hospitality operations, which significantly improved my practical skills."* This ongoing development aligns with the broader concept of career growth as a multi-dimensional process involving skill enhancement, confidence building, and identity formation.

Theme 2: Educational development and lifelong learning

The concept of educational development lifelong learning is emphasized as an essential tool for personal and professional growth, enabling individuals to continuously update and enhance their skills in a rapidly globalizing and changing world (Tryhub, 2023; Hamburg, 2021).

Educational development and lifelong learning is an essential component of professional growth in the hospitality industry and is developing a deep understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. Participants reported that their experiences during educational tours significantly enhanced their cultural awareness and sensitivity, which are vital qualities in a global hospitality context.

P2 highlighted this by sharing, *"Understanding cultural differences."* Building on this, P3 noted, *"I also gained a deeper appreciation for different cultures, which is essential in the hospitality industry."* Recognizing the importance of cultural diversity, P4 stated, *"I also learned to appreciate cultural diversity, which is vital in this field. These experiences have made me more confident and better prepared for future employment."*

Exposure to diverse cultural practices further contributed to participants' adaptability and sensitivity. P5 expressed, *"It also exposed me to different cultural practices, making me more adaptable and culturally sensitive."* Similarly, P7 emphasized, *"I also gained a better understanding of different cultural practices, which is important in the global hospitality industry."*

The immersive nature of these experiences broadened participants' perspectives. P9 shared, *"It also allowed me to immerse myself in different cultures, broadening my perspective and cultural awareness."* This enhanced cultural insight is crucial for effective communication and service in the hospitality sector.

Participants also recognized that gaining valuable insights into various cultural practices helped them become more culturally sensitive and open-minded. P8 remarked, *"It also exposed me to diverse cultures, making me more open-minded and culturally sensitive qualities essential for a career in hospitality."* P10 echoed this sentiment, stating, *"I also gained valuable insights into different cultural practices, which are crucial in the hospitality industry."*

Finally, P12 mention the significance of cultural exposure: *"It also taught me to appreciate and adapt to different cultural settings, making me more culturally sensitive."* P14 expressed that, *"It also exposed me to different cultural practices, helping me become more culturally sensitive and adaptable qualities essential for a successful career in hospitality."*

The Key Challenges Faced by Hospitality Management Students Before and During Educational Tours.

Theme 3: Challenges to participation and engagement in educational tours

One of the most significant challenges faced by participants in educational tours was financial constraints. Many students expressed concerns about the high costs involved, which often limited their full engagement and participation in planned activities. P1 shared, *"One of the biggest challenges I faced before and during the educational tour was the lack of sufficient funds, which made it difficult to participate fully in all planned activities."*

Similarly, P2 noted, *"Before and during the educational tours, I struggled with the high costs involved, which sometimes limited my participation or the activities I could join."* The issue of limited financial resources was a common concern among participants, affecting their ability to

maximize the tour experience. P3 explained, *"the limited financial resources of some students prevented us from maximizing the tour experience or joining all planned activities."*

Participants also reported that financial worries created anxiety and affected their confidence in participating fully. P4 shared, *"Before the tour, I often worried about the expenses involved, which made me nervous about whether I could afford to join or participate in all activities."* The costs associated with transportation and accommodation were particularly challenging, as P6 pointed out, *"Financial constraints were a big hurdle for me, as the costs of transportation and accommodation sometimes exceeded my budget, limiting my participation."*

Managing tour-related expenses also caused stress and sometimes limited engagement in certain activities, as P8 described: *"One of the biggest issues was managing the costs associated with the tour, which caused stress and sometimes limited my participation in certain activities."* P10 added, *"Financial limitations prevented me from joining some parts of the tour, and I often felt unprepared because I didn't have enough information about what to expect."*

Further concerns included safety and uncertainty about travel arrangements. P12 expressed, *"Financial constraints also limited my ability to participate in some activities, and I often felt unsure about how safe the travel arrangements were."* Finally, P14 reiterated, *"The main challenges I faced were the high costs involved, which affected my participation."*

Theme 4: Challenges to enjoying the tour experience

A recurring challenge faced by participants was the lack of detailed and comprehensive information about the tour destinations. This shortage of information hindered their ability to prepare properly and diminished their confidence, affecting their overall experience.

P1 explained, *"I often encountered limited access to detailed information about the tour sites, local culture, and safety protocols, which made it harder to prepare and feel confident about the experience."* Similarly, P2 shared, *"I often found it difficult to access comprehensive and accurate information about the tour destinations, which made it hard to prepare adequately and sometimes caused anxiety about the trip."*

Participants emphasized that insufficient information about the destinations, including cultural norms and safety protocols, left them unprepared and anxious. P4 stated, *"I felt there was a lack of sufficient information about the destinations, including cultural norms and safety protocols, which sometimes left me unprepared and anxious about the trip."*

This lack of clarity also led to confusion during the tours. P5 noted, *"The main challenge I faced was the lack of detailed information about the tour locations, which made it hard to prepare and sometimes caused confusion during the trip."*

Before the tours, participants struggled with obtaining expectations and planning effectively. P7 remarked, *"Before the tour, I struggled with obtaining enough information about what to expect, which made me anxious."* The difficulty in accessing accurate information affected their mental and practical readiness, as P9 observed, *"Lack of accurate and comprehensive information about the tour sites made it difficult to prepare mentally and practically."*

Further emphasizing this issue, P13 explained, *"One major challenge was the lack of clear and detailed information about the tour destinations, which made it difficult to prepare adequately."* P12 summarized, *"Limited information about the destinations."* Lastly, P14 highlighted the impact of unreliable information: *"The lack of detailed, reliable information about the tour sites, making it hard to plan and feel secure during the trip."*

Strategies That Can Be Implemented To Improve the Effectiveness of Educational Tours.

Theme 5: Strategies on student support and engagement

To enhance the effectiveness and impact of educational tours, participants proposed several strategies aimed at improving student support and increasing engagement.

P1 emphasized the importance of preparation, stating, *"To improve the effectiveness of educational tours, I believe implementing detailed pre-tour briefings and providing comprehensive informational materials about the destinations would help students prepare better and feel more confident."*

Building on this, P2 suggested the use of technology, recommending, *"Creating a centralized online platform with up-to-date information about the tour destinations,"* to ensure students have easy access to relevant details.

Addressing financial barriers, P6 proposed, *"Providing financial aid or discounts for students with limited resources can help make educational tours more accessible. Establishing partnerships with sponsors or local businesses could help subsidize costs."*

For better information dissemination, P7 recommended, *"Creating a comprehensive digital guidebook or app with updated information about the destinations,"* to support students' understanding and preparation.

P9 highlighted the value of feedback, stating, *"Encouraging feedback from students after each tour can help organizers identify specific issues and improve future tours, making them more effective and responsive to student needs."*

To increase engagement during the tours, P10 suggested, *"Implementing a flexible tour schedule that allows students to participate in activities they are most interested in can increase engagement and satisfaction."*

Finally, P12 stressed the importance of clear communication, recommending, *"Establishing a clear communication plan, including regular updates and contact points, can ensure students receive timely information and feel supported throughout the tour."*

Theme 6: Strategies on communication and feedback

Effective communication and responsive feedback mechanisms are essential for ensuring student confidence, safety, and satisfaction during educational tours. Participants proposed several strategies to enhance communication channels and incorporate student input.

P5 highlighted the value of preparatory engagement, stating, *"Offering preparatory workshops on cultural awareness, safety procedures, and travel tips before the tour can help students feel more prepared and reduce uncertainties."* This proactive approach helps set clear expectations and reduces anxiety.

P8 emphasized ongoing communication, noting, *"Ensuring that safety protocols are explicitly communicated and practiced during the tour, including emergency procedures, health protocols, and travel safety, can help mitigate safety concerns."* Clear and consistent messaging is vital throughout the tour.

Encouraging feedback is crucial for continuous improvement. P9 suggested, *"Encouraging feedback from students after each tour can help organizers identify specific issues and improve future tours, making them more effective and responsive to student needs."*

Establishing structured communication plans can further support transparency and support. P12 recommended, *"Establishing a clear communication plan, including regular updates and contact points, can ensure students receive timely information and feel supported throughout the tour."*

Involving students in the planning process enhances responsiveness. P13 shared, *"Encouraging student involvement in the planning stages, including feedback sessions and suggestion boxes, can help tailor the tours to address student concerns about safety, costs, and information."*

Discussion

The findings of this study largely align with existing literature on experiential learning in hospitality education, reaffirming the crucial role of educational tours in fostering students' professional growth, skill development, and lifelong learning. Consistent with the work of Shamy and Ahmed (2024), the research participants reported that their involvement in educational tours significantly contributed to their career development. These immersive experiences, they explained, help bridge the gap between classroom theories and real-world industry practice. Additionally, themes of personal growth and increased confidence echoed prior research, which often describes these tours as transformative, boosting students' motivation, engagement, and their connection to hospitality principles an idea also supported by Norris and Norris-Parish (2024). Such parallels highlight a broad consensus that experiential learning through tours is invaluable for cultivating soft skills like communication, teamwork, and adaptability qualities that are essential in today's fast-paced, interconnected hospitality industry.

However, this study also offers nuanced insights that expand current understanding, particularly regarding challenges faced by students' areas less emphasized in the existing literature. While previous research acknowledges logistical and institutional barriers (Ostapchuk et al., 2024; Bektaş et al., 2024), the findings highlight specific student-centered challenges related to participation and engagement, both before and during the tours. These include difficulties related to logistical support, motivation, and maintaining interest throughout the experience. Such insights suggest that, beyond organizational hurdles, addressing individual-level barriers is essential to maximize the benefits of educational tours. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of strategies aimed at improving communication and providing targeted support to students in an area that broadens the current discourse by advocating for tailored interventions designed to enhance engagement and learning outcomes.

In addition, the research contributes to fresh perspectives by proposing concrete strategies to boost the effectiveness of educational tours. These include enhancing student support systems and establishing more effective communication channels. While these ideas complement the broader literature on experiential learning, they also add a practical dimension by offering actionable solutions for educators and program coordinators. The focus on feedback mechanisms and ongoing support aligns with recent calls for more interactive, responsive pedagogical approaches (Drăguleasa et al., 2024; An & Ríos, 2024). Notably, the findings highlight the potential of integrating technology such as virtual tours to mitigate logistical barriers and deepen student engagement, broadening access for those facing physical or resource constraints (Drăguleasa et al., 2024; An & Ríos, 2024).

While the literature often discusses barriers like resource limitations and lack of institutional backing (Kuang et al., 2024), this study emphasizes that overcoming these challenges requires not only structural changes but also strategic planning that centers on student experiences. This perspective challenges the traditional view that logistical issues are solely organizational problems, instead highlighting that student perceptions and active participation are fundamental to successful experiential learning. Moreover, the study expands the conversation by advocating for innovative strategies, such as virtual tours, which can supplement in-person experiences and increase accessibility for students facing logistical obstacles.

This study supports and extends existing knowledge by emphasizing the importance of addressing student-specific challenges and proposing targeted strategies to enhance the effectiveness of educational tours. It demonstrates that experiential learning in hospitality education is most impactful when it combines practical, real-world experiences with responsive support systems and innovative approaches. Ultimately, it encourages educators and policymakers to rethink traditional models and adopt more holistic, student-centered strategies aimed at fostering deeper engagement, cultural awareness, and professional readiness among future hospitality professionals.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

This study's findings underscore the importance of experiential learning theories in fostering professional growth among hospitality students. The themes highlight that hands-on, real-world experiences such as educational tours are vital for developing practical skills, cultural awareness, and professional identity. The challenges identified, including safety concerns and informational gaps, emphasize the need for comprehensive support strategies grounded in communication and safety protocols. These implications suggest that educational institutions should integrate structured experiential activities with robust safety and communication plans to enhance lifelong learning and career development, ultimately preparing students for the dynamic demands of the hospitality industry.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of this study emphasize the need for a more student-centered approach to hospitality education. Institutions should focus on developing targeted support strategies that address individual challenges students face before and during educational tours, such as motivation and logistical issues. Implementing effective communication and feedback channels can help educators monitor student engagement and tailor experiences to better meet their needs. Leveraging technology, like virtual tours, offers a way to overcome logistical barriers and provide broader access, ensuring students still gain valuable practical exposure even those facing resource constraints. Building strong partnerships with industry stakeholders can further enhance logistical support and keep the tours aligned with current industry practices. Additionally, designing strategies that cater to diverse student needs such as mentoring programs or preparatory workshops can boost confidence and motivation. Overall, ongoing evaluation and the adoption of innovative approaches will keep experiential learning relevant, engaging, and impactful, ultimately better preparing students for successful careers in hospitality.

Research Limitation and Future Direction

This study's limitations include its reliance on self-reported data from participants, which may be subject to bias and social desirability effects. The sample size and scope may also limit the generalizability of findings to broader populations or different contexts within the hospitality industry. Additionally, the study focused primarily on perceived challenges and strategies without longitudinal data to assess long-term impacts on career progression and industry readiness. Future research should incorporate diverse participant groups, objective performance measures, and longitudinal designs to deepen understanding of how experiential learning influences professional development over time. Future research should explore the long-term effects of experiential learning and educational tours on hospitality students' career development and industry readiness. Investigating how support strategies, safety protocols, and communication improvements influence sustained engagement, and professional growth can provide deeper insights. Additionally, expanding the sample size across diverse educational institutions and industry contexts will enhance generalizability. Longitudinal studies could examine the impact of these experiential learning activities on students' career trajectories. Incorporating objective performance metrics and industry feedback can also strengthen understanding of how these strategies translate into professional success, ultimately informing best practices for experiential learning in hospitality education.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the significant role of educational tours in fostering hospitality students' professional growth, lifelong learning, and holistic development. The findings reveal that hands-on experiences enhance practical skills, cultural awareness, and industry readiness, contributing to career advancement. However, challenges such as financial constraints, safety concerns,

informational gaps, and limited engagement hinder optimal participation. To address these issues, strategic support mechanisms such as effective communication, safety protocols, student involvement, and preparatory workshops are essential. Implementing these strategies can improve safety, increase engagement, and maximize learning outcomes. Overall, experiential learning through well-supported educational tours is vital for equipping future hospitality professionals with the skills, confidence, and resilience needed for industry success.

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