

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT: AN EXPLORATION OF  
THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES ACHIEVED IN A  
HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the perceptions of six undergraduate students in a hospitality management program internship, and their supervisors at the internship location, on the leadership skills and competencies achieved during their internship experience. The specific competencies and skills that are analyzed are: communication, interpersonal, financial management, information technology and marketing. Internships are of particular importance to the hospitality industry because many of the competencies needed by hospitality managers are enhanced by experiential learning.

A case study design approach was used to analyze data collected through individual interviews, review of documents, and supervisor evaluations. The majority of the interns found that they gained problem solving, analytical and financial skills, as well as interpersonal skills, such as communication, team-building and employee-centered relations. There were opportunities for technical and marketing skill development, but a gap remains between the depths to which these leadership competencies were achieved compared to the other competencies. All of the interns experienced personal growth at the end of their internship and the majority of the supervisors had a favorable perception of the interns' leadership skill development. It is recommended that further research be conducted on larger populations across more diverse hospitality management programs.