

Extended marketing mix of the United States Work and Travel Program

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Abstract: Internships, on-the-job training, and even apprenticeship programs in both local and international venues have been deemed necessary in delivering programs. Their goal is to expose the trainees within the industry trends and practices. The students will hone their competencies for a higher chance of grabbing an employment opportunity after graduation. Using the Five Marketing Mix Model, this study assesses the respondents' United States Work and Travel Program (USWAT) program experience and perception. This study utilized a 16-item questionnaire and descriptive statistics, percentage and frequency distribution, and weighted mean and inferential statistics of Kruskal-Wallis as tools for analysis. The study's findings revealed that the majority of the respondents agreed that the program was beneficial to them in several ways. In addition, the study showed that the respondents generally have varying views and assessments of the program. The study found a significant difference when age, gender agency, and expenses are concerned. Hence, there is no significant difference in assessing the marketing mix (except the program aspect) when the school is concerned. Thus, the study suggests that the inclusion of the other stakeholders shall help to have a more in-depth analysis of the program.

Keywords: *US Work and Travel Programs; Internship; Training Programs; Higher Education Institutions*

I. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Quality education, or even just simple education, has always been an issue for many people worldwide. Several environmental factors in today's industries and academic scenes have also created ripples in the concept of quality education. Learning among students in Higher Education is usually applied through several methods, from the most conventional classroom-based instruction to the most unconventional off-campus and e-learning approaches. As such, many of the world's scholars agree that training experiences are essential to a student's professional development (da Silva and Teixeira, 2013; Torres and Nagal, 2015), as these experiences help to further direct students towards their preferred field/s of specialization and future careers. Internships or on-the-job training have been deemed to be the most relevant in providing

students holistic professional education and development set in a more realistic environment which enhances the development of the required industry-related and required competencies (Kaseorg and Pukkonen, 2015; da Silva and Teixeira, 2013; Narayanan et al., 2010). Over the years, it has become a valuable tool to maintain the relevance of one's education to the community and the industry as students can obtain more realistic expectations of what to expect after graduation and the realities of work-life situations of their chosen profession or career (Sisselman-Borgia and Torino, 2017).

1.2 Literature Review

The US WAT program or the Work and Travel Program (WAT) is a cultural exchange program of the United States which offers the experience of cultural exchange to college students while remaining as productive members of society (thus, the "work" portion of the program). This program has been ongoing in the Philippines since the early 1990s but gained popularity in the early 2000s with the boom of international internships with neighboring Asian countries such as Singapore. As the popularity of the US WAT program continues to increase, more and more institutions succumb to the potential that the program can provide their students and the prestige that their institutions also gain with the program's popularity.

Aside from impacting higher education institutions with the acquired learnings of students undergoing the program, internships can also affect the organizations with which the students have their internships, as evidenced in a case study by Jaminki and Krastina (2017) on Lapland UAS. These impacts were said to be seen by the soft skills learned by mentors of student interns, which include improvements in communication and collaborative skills, motivation, and patience (Jaminki and Krastina, 2017). Several studies also revealed that students typically acquire more learnings when immersed and engaged in the experience rather than having passive participation in the process (Sendall, et.al., 2016). In hindsight, the educational benefits of having hands-on experiential learning in higher education have been widely recognized, even by people in the industry (Beard & Wilson, 2013; Stirling, et.al., 2017).

Internship programs are usually products of collaborative engagements between HEIs and organizations within the industry whose purpose of creation are aimed towards the skill development and career enhancement of students (Kaseorg and Pukkonen, 2015; Narayanan et al., 2010) to be able to close the gap between theory and practical reality

(Mihail, 2006 as cited by Kaseorg and Pukkonen, 2015). It provides students a venue to hone their skills while interacting with experienced professionals (Beebe, et al., 2009) and provide opportunities for the practical application of knowledge and learned theories (Koc et al., 2014; Chang and Chu, 2009), becoming a bridge between classroom learning and industrial practice (Fong et al., 2014; Jiang & Tribe, 2010; D'abate, et al., 2009).

However, though this program initially aims to explore and understand the culture via student exchange, some studies mentioned that the US WAT is not helping the students develop intercultural skills and the skills needed to meet the challenges of this 21st century as well as such a possible conflict with the providers as mentioned by (Puriran, et al. 2020), and acquisition of learnings both hard and soft skills. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the respondents' perceptions and experiences of the program.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

This study aims to assess the US WAT program as experienced by the interns. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents based on the following:
 - 1.1. Age
 - 1.2. Gender
 - 1.3. School / College / University Affiliated
 - 1.4. US WAT agency provider
 - 1.5. Total cost/expenses incurred
2. What is the assessment of the respondents to the US WAT program in terms of:
 - 2.1. Product (US WAT program availed)
 - 2.2. Price (Total cost of the program)
 - 2.3. Place (Location of Internship/destination)
 - 2.4. Promotion (program orientation, agency support, assistance, etc.)
 - 2.5. People (agency, school, host establishment personnel)
3. Is there a significant difference in the respondents' assessment of the US WAT program when grouped according to profile?

1.3. Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the assessment of the US WAT program when the respondents were grouped according to its profile.

2. Methodology

This paper used a descriptive quantitative research approach. Survey Questionnaire as the research tool to elicit data from the respondents following the variables adopted from the Marketing Mix to evaluate the program.

Both descriptive (percentage and frequency distribution & weighted mean) and inferential statistics (Kruskal-Wallis) were utilized in this study.

A total of one-hundred twenty-nine (129) respondents were considered for the study. Respondents for the study were selected using a random stratified sampling approach using Slovin's Formula with 95% assurance and a 5% margin of error to ensure that they were adequately distributed among the three (3) participating HEIs.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings below present the demographic profile of the respondents, the assessment of the US WAT program, and whether there is a significant difference in the assessment of the US WAT program.

Table 1: Normality Test using Shapiro Wilk Test

	Sex	Statistic	Df	Sig
Respondents	Male	.462	52	<.001
	Female	.305	77	<.001

Table 1 showed that the p-value is less than .05 considering the Sex of the respondents where (Male = <.001 and Female = <.001), therefore, the result suggests that the data is not normal, which means a non-parametric statistic shall be imposed.

Results of the survey conducted among the student participants of the US WAT Program show the profile of the respondents. Data in the Table 2 showed that the majority of the 129 respondents are aged between 18 – 22 years of age (63.6%), female (56.7), and are from HEI A (69.9%). In addition, the majority of the respondents participated in the programs offered by Agent B (62 %), compared to those who participated under agent A (38%) and were able to incur costs falling somewhere between Php 151,000 to Php 200,000 (45%), followed by those who incurred costs falling somewhere from Php 201,000 to Php 250,000 (38%).

Table 2 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

AGE	Frequency	Percent
18 -22	82	63.6
23 -27	43	33.3
28 -32	4	3.1
Total	129	100.00
GENDER	Frequency	Percent
Male	52	40.3
Female	77	56.7
Total	129	97.00
SCHOOL	Frequency	Percent
HEI'S A	90	69.8
HEI'S B	21	16.2
HEI'S C	18	14
Total	129	100.00
US WAT AGENCY	Frequency	Percent
Agent A	49	38.0
Agent B	80	62.0
Total	129	100.00
TOTAL COST INCURRED	Frequency	Percent
P 100,000 - P 150,000	7	5.40
P 151,000 - P 200,000	58	45.00
P 201,000 - P 250,000	49	38.00
P 251,000 - P 300,000	11	8.50
P 301,000 and Over	4	3.10
Total	129	100.00

Looking into the respondents' assessments of the marketing mix of the US WAT program they availed, results presented in Table 3 show that in terms of program (product), the majority of the respondents Strongly Agree that the program is credited by their school (4.38) and that it is very much appropriate for hospitality students (4.26).

In addition, the majority agree that the price of the program is affordable (3.51) enough and does not carry any additional charges or hidden fees (3.70). Promotions for the said program are agreed to have been set to orient interested student and their parents (4.18) while at the same time providing for the necessary brochures and marketing media to provide information (3.98) – showing real effort to market the program (3.90). Respondents also agree that the US State where they have gone for their internship provided a good learning environment (4.08). The companies with which they have been accepted were top-rated / high-quality establishments (3.97). As for the people the respondents encountered, the majority believe that all were supportive of the program's objectives (4.09), accommodating and courteous (4.08), and are supportive, highly skilled, and knowledgeable (4.09).

Table 3. Descriptive Summary of the Assessment of the Respondents to the US WAT Program

PROGRAM	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The US WAT Program provides the necessary avenue for enhancing student learning and skills practice.	3.93	1.040	Agree
2. The duration of the program provides enough time for students to acquire the necessary learning and experience.	3.94	0.788	Agree
3. The program is appropriate for hospitality students.	4.26	0.825	Strongly Agree
4. The program is credited by the school	4.38	0.731	Strongly Agree
Over-all Mean	4.13		Agree
PRICE			
1. The program is affordable.	3.51	0.811	Agree
2. The program cost does not carry any additional or hidden fees or charges.	3.7	0.871	Agree
Over-all Mean	3.6		Agree
PROMOTION			
1. Efforts to market the program is evident through several social media.	3.9	0.837	Agree
2. Brochures and other marketing media used provide clear information on the program/s provided.	3.98	0.795	Agree
3. Orientation for interested students and their parents are provided.	4.18	0.723	Agree
4. Continuous assistance is provided to students and their parents from beginning to completion of the program.	3.88	0.866	Agree
5. Further assistance is provided to the student even after the program is completed (e.g. tax refunds, certifications, etc.)	3.77	0.996	Agree
Over-all Mean	3.6		Agree

Continuation- Table 3

PLACE				
1. The host establishment / on-the-job training venue is a top rated / high quality establishment.	3.97	0.883		Agree
2. The US State where on-the-job training venue is located at is capable of providing a good learning environment	4.08	0.806		Agree
	Mean	Over-all	4.02	Agree
PEOPLE				
1. The employees of the US WAT agency and foreign host establishment and HEI's supports the objectives of the program.	4.09	0.765		Agree
2. The employees of the US WAT agency and foreign host establishment are accommodating and courteous.	4.08	0.816		Agree
3. The employees of the foreign host establishment are supportive, highly skilled, and knowledgeable.	4.09	0.771		Agree
	Mean	Over-all	4.09	Agree

Table 4 shows if there would be a significant difference among the assessment of the marketing mix considering the profile of the respondents. The Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed that Age, Gender, US WAT Agency, Expenses Incurred and School specifically the program resulted in .000 p-value, therefore the null hypothesis was rejected or there is a significant difference in the assessment of the respondents on the program when the marketing mix is a concern. On the other hand, School with a respective p-value of (price = .449, promotion = .955, place = .121 and people = .130) is greater than .05 therefore, accepted the null hypothesis or there is no significant difference.

Table 4. Kruskal-Wallis Test – Comparison of the respondent's assessment considering the profile of the respondents.

	Respondents	X²	df	p
Age	Program	81.228	2	.000
	Price	59.722	2	.000
	Promotion	84.954	2	.000
	Place	79.329	2	.000
	People	74.769	2	.000

Continuation Table 4

Gender	Program	71.467	1	.000
	Price	92.974	1	.000
	Promotion	88.809	1	.000
	Place	72.556	1	.000
	People	72.743	1	.000
School	Program	16.829	2	.000
	Price	1.602	2	.449
	Promotion	.092	2	.955
	Place	4.223	2	.121
	People	4.080	2	.130
US WAT Agency	Program	37.484	1	.000
	Price	65.407	1	.000
	Promotion	63.073	1	.000
	Place	49.456	1	.000
	People	47.581	1	.000
Expenses Incurred	Program	90.446	4	.000
	Price	97.560	4	.000
	Promotion	99.686	4	.000
	Place	84.078	4	.000
	People	81.274	4	.000

Decision Rule: When the probability value is less than 0.05, SIGNIFICANT, Reject H_0

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The majority of the trainees were young adults (18 – 22), outnumbered by female respondents. All are under the Higher Education Institutions from selected US WAT agencies, with availed mainly is within 151,000 – 200,000 costs of the training package.

Considering the marketing mix, the respondents assessed that the program of the US WAT is well appreciated, followed by the people (includes the employees and employers), the place (workplace environment), while both price and promotion ended on the last appreciated by the respondents.

The study revealed that the respondents have a significant difference in assessing the marketing mix of the US WAT dimensions in consideration of the samples profile, namely: Age, Gender, Agency, Expenses, and a part of the school, specifically the program. On the other hand, the study found out that there is no significant difference in the assessment of the respondents under the school as the profile in terms of price, promotion, place, and the people.

Based on the findings of this research, a more in-depth assessment of the US WAT program needs to be done that would involve

more schools and more agencies to be able to create a more solid basis of the recommendations for creating a standard checklist for agency providers and the US WAT program itself. As the findings only assess the students' perception, it is also recommended that a study be done to involve all stakeholders – including the US counterparts, the US Embassy, and other people or groups involved in the US WAT program provision.

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