Shaping Futures for the Hotel Industry: Certified Internships and Commitment Toward Career Development

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Abstract

This scholarly investigation explores the impact of hotel industry hallmarks, internship service quality, and the mediating role of mentorship on undergraduate hotel management students' commitment toward careers in the hospitality industry. A quantitative, cross-sectional design utilizing a self-administered survey questionnaire was employed. The sample and unit of analysis comprised hotel management students from Universitas Negeri Padang, West Sumatera, Indonesia, who had completed certified internship programs. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the proposed hypotheses. The findings revealed that the hallmarks of the hotel industry such as demanding work environments, extensive responsibilities, limited career advancement, and minimal recognition did not exert a negative influence on students' commitment toward career. Conversely, the quality of internship service experience exhibited a strong positive effect on students' professional commitment. The study also established a causal relationship between industry hallmarks, service quality, and mentorship. Notably, mentorship was found to significantly mediate the relationships between both hallmarks and service quality with students' commitment toward career. These findings offer critical insights and carry significant implications for students, academic institutions, industry practitioners, and policymakers.

1. Introduction

The unstoppable rapid expansion of the hotel industry mirrors broader trends in economic development and globalization, necessitating a workforce that is both highly skilled and adaptable. This service industry presents a wealth of diverse and stimulating career opportunities for students in hospitality management. Papageorgiou et al. (2024) posit that the industry's robust growth trajectory and its potential to offer dynamic professional pathways particularly benefit individuals with formal education and specialized training in hospitality. Hospitality

management students, therefore, are strategically positioned to excel within this increasingly complex and demanding field, as their academic background aligns with evolving industry standards and heightened global consumer expectations. This context creates fertile ground for students aspiring to establish careers in the hotel industry upon graduation (Chinasa & Ozgit, 2024; Grobelna, 2022). In this regard, commitment toward career is an individual's intrinsic motivation and enduring dedication to achieving specific professional aspirations and goals. It embodies a personal investment in career development, shaped by one's values, interests, and long-term vision (Çavuş et al., 2025). In the context of the hotel industry, this commitment can be expressed through various pathways, including a focused pursuit of roles in hotel management, operations, marketing, or human resource management. Moreover, it may extend beyond employment into entrepreneurial ambitions, such as establishing a hotel business or innovating within the hospitality sector (Altin, 2025). This form of commitment not only signifies a desire for professional success but also reflects a proactive orientation toward career advancement within the dynamic and service-driven environment of the hotel industry. In this regard, commitment toward career refers to an individual's psychological attachment and sustained motivation to pursue long-term professional goals, often influenced by personal values, interests, and perceived career opportunities (Ferdian, Zahari, Hanafiah, et al., 2024; Joshi, 2025; Zhu et al., 2021). It reflects an enduring dedication to career advancement and development, fostering proactive behaviors such as skill enhancement and goal-setting (Almustafa et al., 2025; Clements & Kamau, 2018).

To foster students' commitment toward career within the hotel industry, a range of innovative initiatives has been implemented to bridge the divide between academic preparation and industry expectations. Boon et al. (2024) and Askren & James (2021) highlight the integration of experiential learning through internships, cooperative education, and hands-on training as pivotal strategies. Concurrently, institutions are strengthening collaborations with industry stakeholders by introducing mentorship programs, expert-led workshops, and guest lectures, which serve to expose students to emerging trends and essential competencies (Ferdian, Zahari, Abd Fatah, et al., 2024). Additionally, the adoption of technology-enhanced tools such as simulation software and virtual reality enables students to engage in immersive hotel management scenarios, thus enhancing their technical acumen and adaptability to digital transformation within the sector (Gouveia, 2023). Hospitality programs are also placing heightened emphasis on soft skill cultivation, including communication, intercultural fluency, and problem-solving, often facilitated through group projects and role-playing exercises (Velasco et al., 2024). These initiatives are further reinforced by the inclusion of sustainability-oriented modules that align with the growing imperative for eco-conscious practices in hospitality (Ezeudoka & Igwe, 2025).

In the Indonesian context, the Certified Internship Program serves as a strategic initiative designed to bolster student employability and align academic training with practical industry needs. Particularly relevant to the hospitality sector where operational proficiency and industry exposure are paramount, the Certified Internship Program typically spans two academic semesters. According to Azar et al. (2020), the program offers structured, industry-based learning experiences that cultivate both technical capabilities and interpersonal competencies essential for navigating the multifaceted hospitality environment. Wood (2024) assert that this duration is deliberately structured to afford students comprehensive immersion in core hotel functions, including front office operations, food and beverage management, housekeeping, and guest relations.

Aligned with these objectives, students undertaking the Certified Internship Program inevitably encounter defining aspects of the hotel industry, including hallmarks of the hotel industry (challenging work conditions, substantial responsibilities, limited career advancement, and minimal recognition) (Mejia & Wickey-Byrd, 2023; Wagner & Tragschitz-Köck, 2025). These experiential factors play a critical role in shaping students' perceptions and ultimately influence their career aspirations within the sector (Giousmpasoglou & Marinakou, 2021).

Firsthand exposure to departmental operations through internships provides students with vital operational insight (Nguyen et al., 2023). The quality of services received during these internships encompasses the effectiveness of training, the level of support provided, the relevance of assigned tasks, and the overall work environment. High-quality experience marked by structured learning, constructive feedback, and respectful treatment—positively influence student satisfaction and strengthen their interest to the industry (Nguyen et al., 2023). In contrast, poor service quality can result in dissatisfaction and diminished interest in pursuing a career in the field (Al-refaei et al., 2024; Shoukat et al., 2025). Besides, scholars argue that mentoring not only influences program selection decision making, but determine subsequent job or career selection among the graduates (Anthony et al., 2023; Y. Liu et al., 2023; Ramaprasad et al., 2022). In this regard, the role of immediate managers and supervisors during internships is deemed critical in influencing students' future engagement with the hotel industry. They act asa conduit that reinforces aspirations and desires.

While career intentions in the hotel industry have been widely examined, particularly in relation to the influence of internships on shaping students' perceptions and motivations (Farmaki, 2018; Robinson et al., 2016; Sihombing, 2021), there remains a notable gap in understanding how specific industry characteristics and the quality of internship services directly affect undergraduates' commitment to pursuing hospitality careers. Despite growing recognition of the pivotal role that hallmarks of the hotel industry such as customer-centric values, innovation, and service excellence play in influencing career aspirations, few studies have systematically

investigated their impact alongside internship quality. Furthermore, while mentorship is acknowledged as a valuable developmental tool, its mediating role in the relationship between hotel industry hallmarks, internship service quality, and students' career commitment has only recently begun to receive holistic academic attention (Gannon et al., 2021; Goh & Richardson, 2024). With that, this study aims to investigate the influence of industry hallmarks, internship service quality, and mediating role of mentorship in shaping undergraduates commitment toward career. This study is expected to yield actionable insights for academic institutions, hotel operators, and policymakers in enhancing educational frameworks, optimizing internship design, and fostering sustained student commitment in hotel industry careers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Commitment toward Career

Commitment toward career is distinctly linked to an individual's attitude toward their chosen profession or vocation (Chuang et al., 2007; Kim & Spears, 2022; Maxwell et al., 2010). This vocation often embodies one's passion and motivation in performing professional duties. (Ahmed, 2019; Hngoi et al., 2024) reinforced this view, emphasizing that commitment toward career encompasses personal attitudes, career identification, job involvement, and career planning. These components collectively contribute to career stability when commitment emerges as a key determinant of occupational significance (Swami et al., 2024; Tilly et al., 2022; Zhu et al., 2021). It is argued that individuals are likely to make substantial investments in their careers when driven by strong levels of commitment and expectation. Those exhibiting high commitment toward career generally experience greater career satisfaction (Popoola & Fagbola, 2023; Young et al., 2023; Zhu et al., 2024). According to (F. Liu et al., 2022) and (Birtch et al., 2021), committing to a career reflects certainty and confidence in one's choice, accompanied by a positive outlook on future professional prospects. Commitment also denotes one's identification with and engagement in their profession (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2022; Rangus et al., 2020), typically characterized by the development of and dedication to career goals (Son & Kim, 2021). Blau (1985, 1988, 1989) conceptualized and validated a career commitment scale, defining it as one's attitudinal orientation toward their vocation or field. Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2024) further asserted that commitment toward career is rooted in intrinsic work attitudes, which manifest in observable external behaviors. Highly committed individuals tend to align their efforts with personal career aspirations, demonstrate loyalty through valuing their work, and invest significantly in acquiring pertinent professional knowledge (Lin et al., 2018; Sharma & Akram, 2024). (Lousky et al., 2024) added that such individuals often devote considerable time to developing employment-related skills.

2.2 Hypotheses Development

The hotel industry is frequently characterized by adverse working conditions, burdensome job responsibilities, and limited opportunities for career progression factors that often discourage intern students from pursuing long-term careers in the field. Numerous studies have highlighted the negative implications of such hallmarks on students' career perceptions. For instance, interns commonly report dissatisfaction with the demanding and stressful nature of hotel work environments, which often lack proper support and recognition (Mensah et al., 2021; Vo et al., 2022). Exposure to high workloads and long, irregular hours during internships tends to lead to emotional exhaustion and reduced professional motivation (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Wen et al., 2022). In addition, the lack of clear career advancement pathways and insufficient mentorship further erodes students' confidence in the viability of a career in hospitality (Preko & Anyigba, 2024). When interns are relegated to repetitive or low-skill tasks, they often perceive the industry as exploitative and lacking in professional value (Lopez, 2019; Roney & Öztin, 2007). These negative internship experiences can significantly diminish students' commitment to the industry, resulting in a high turnover intention and a shift toward alternative career paths (Lee & Chao, 2013; Y.-F. Wang et al., 2014). Thus, the unfavorable hallmarks of the hotel industry frequently deter students from envisioning a future within it. Based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1:   The hallmarks of the hotel industry lessening undergraduate toward future commitment toward carer in hotel industry

The quality of service encountered during internships serves as a critical determinant in shaping students' career intentions within the hotel sector. Functioning as a conduit between academic instruction and professional engagement, internships offer students direct exposure to operational realities, enabling them to assess the industry's compatibility with their vocational aspirations (Aggarwal & Mishra, 2024; Ansari, 2025). Positive internship experiences marked by effective mentorship, comprehensive training structures, and substantive task assignments tend to cultivate favorable attitudes, thereby reinforcing students' motivation to pursue enduring careers in hospitality (C.-W. Liu et al., 2024). The perceived quality of service during internships further shapes students' views of the industry's standards and organizational ethos. When interns engage with environments

that uphold high service excellence and institutional support, a sense of professional efficacy and inclusion is fostered both of which are pivotal to commitment toward career (Peng et al., 2024). Additionally, research by Lam et al. (2024) emphasizes that the congruence between internship experiences and career expectations significantly enhances students' intention to remain within the field. In contrast, internships lacking adequate developmental value often provoke dissatisfaction, diminishing interest in the profession (Giousmpasoglou & Marinakou, 2021). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2:   Quality of service experienced influence undergraduates commitment toward career in
        hotel industry

Undeniably, mentoring significantly correlated with career advancement (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021), particularly in business administration (Ahmed, 2019), entrepreneurship (Zeng, 2024), and education (Goh & Richardson, 2024). Mentoring is described as dynamic and reciprocal relation which is covered in psychosocial and career function such as coaching, protection, sponsorship, exposure visibility, and challenging assignments (Kurian, 2024; Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). Studied by Hu et al. (2025), Liu et al. (2011) and McDonald and Wilson-Mah (2022) indicated that mentoring character at the workplace creates a positive attitude and perception of the intern student and new employees. Mentoring not only positively influence interpersonal relationships to the intern students but make a positive evaluation of the organization as a whole (C.-W. Liu et al., 2024). In this sense, the perception of intern on the hallmarks of the hotel industry such challenging work conditions, substantial responsibilities, limited career advancement, and minimal recognition might be changed with mentoring received during their internship. With that, the following hypothesis is proposed;

H3:   Hallmarks of the industry is positively change undergraduate perception by the mentoring

Mentorship is closely associated with a developmental relationship where experienced professionals guide and support the learning of less experienced staff, plays a vital role in transmitting the values and standards that define the hospitality sector (Eissner & Gannon, 2018). Mentoring enhances staff knowledge, emotional intelligence, and customer interaction skills, all of which are critical to providing exceptional guest experiences (Crumpton, 2015). Through mentoring, employees receive guidance and support from experienced professionals, fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement (Toni et al., 2025). This relationship contributes to greater job satisfaction and motivation, which in turn positively influences the quality of service rendered (Kumari et al., 2022). Moreover, mentored employees are more likely to develop a strong service orientation and commitment to organizational goals, aligning with the expectations of guests and service standards (Zhou et al., 2024). Research also suggests that mentoring can reduce service variability by ensuring consistency in procedures and guest handling practices (Uen et al., 2018). In essence, mentoring acts as a strategic tool for enhancing service performance, professional development, and retention—key factors that shape the customer experience in service-oriented sectors like hospitality (Chi & Wang, 2018; Wang & Wu, 2024). Accordingly, it is hypothesized that;

H4:   High quality of service experienced by undergraduates is influence by mentorship

Mentorship has been widely recognized in the literature as a critical factor influencing career interest and development, particularly in professional fields such as hospitality and tourism (Goh & Richardson, 2024). Through mentorship, individuals gain exposure to career possibilities, build self-efficacy, and develop a clearer understanding of their vocational aspirations (Astrove & Kraimer, 2022). Effective mentoring relationships provide both psychosocial and career-related support, which can significantly influence an individual's interest and commitment toward a specific career path (Gong et al., 2022). For instance, mentors serve as role models and provide insight into the realities of professional life, helping mentees navigate challenges and envision future possibilities (Ocobock et al., 2022). In the context of hospitality, mentorship fosters interest by cultivating essential skills, exposing students or junior employees to industry practices, and reinforcing the value of professional engagement (Liu et al., 2024). Research further suggests that mentored individuals demonstrate stronger career planning, higher motivation, and a deeper sense of occupational identity, all of which are fundamental to sustaining long-term interest in a career (Goh & Richardson, 2024). Therefore, mentorship not only nurtures career interest but also shapes an individual's trajectory toward career satisfaction and success.

H5:   Mentorship significantly influence undergraduates commitment toward career

In addition, mentorship frequently functions as a mediating variable in organizational studies by explaining the mechanisms through which antecedent factors influence employee outcomes (Yang et al., 2022). For instance, mentorship mediates the relationship between leadership style and employee performance, where

transformational leaders inspire mentoring behaviors that enhance employee engagement and service delivery (Zhou et al., 2024). Research underscores how mentoring relationships provide both career and psychosocial support, which bridge the gap between organizational support and individual job satisfaction. In hospitality contexts, mentorship has been shown to mediate the effect of workplace environment on service quality, as supportive mentoring helps employees cope with high-pressure service demands and fosters professional development (Luo et al., 2021). Similarly, mentoring can mediate the link between training programs and actual job performance, ensuring that learned skills are effectively transferred to real-world service scenarios (Uen et al., 2018). As a mediator, mentorship not only facilitates individual growth and career progression but also aligns employee behavior with organizational goals, thereby reinforcing positive outcomes such as commitment, retention, and customer satisfaction (Balinda, 2023). Thus, this study proposed that.

H6: *Mentorship mediate the relationship between hallmarks of the hotel industry and undergraduates commitment toward career*

H7: *Mentorship mediate the relationship between quality of service experienced and undergraduates commitment toward career*

3. Methodology

This investigation employed a quantitative methodology via a cross-sectional design, utilizing a self-administered survey questionnaire. The target sample and unit of analysis comprised hotel management undergraduates from Universitas Negeri Padang, West Sumatera, Indonesia, who had completed their internship programs. The survey instrument was systematically organized into three sections: Section A captured the demographic profiles of respondents; Section B encompassed constructs measuring the independent variables, namely hallmarks of the hotel industry, service quality experience. Section C measure the mentorship while Section D assessed the commitment toward career. All measurement items for both independent, mediating and dependent variable were meticulously adapted from established scales developed by Ferdian et al., (2022), Ghosh and Jhamb (2021), Goh and Richardson (2024), Kukreti and Dani (2021) and Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000). Minor modifications were made specifically tailored to the study's context.

Participants were required to convey their perceptions using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The survey instrument was also made available in Bahasa Indonesia, meticulously translated from its original English version by a certified linguistic specialist to ensure semantic precision. A preliminary pilot study was undertaken to ascertain the instrument's reliability and construct validity prior to its formal deployment. Data collection was administered digitally via Google Forms. Respondents were informed on the study's objectives and the intended use of the data. Assurances of strict confidentiality and anonymity were explicitly conveyed, ensuring that no individual could be identified through the aggregated dataset. Ultimately, the study successfully garnered 312 valid responses.

A slight majority of the respondents were female (n = 164, 53%), surpassing their male counterparts (n = 148, 47%). The participants were drawn from three academic cohorts: the 2019 intake (n = 140, 45%), the 2023 cohort (n = 97, 31%), and the 2024 batch (n = 75, 24%). Predominantly, respondents fell within the 21–24 age bracket (n = 249, 80%), while the remaining proportion (n = 63, 20%) belonged to the 17–20 age group. Furthermore, over half of the respondents completed their internships at four-star hotels (n = 206, 66%), followed by placements in five-star establishments (n = 58, 19%) and three-star properties (n = 48, 15%).

To unravel the interplay among the study's constructs, the analysis employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in accordance with the methodological prescriptions of Hair et al. (2021)and Ramayah et al. (2016), utilizing SmartPLS version 3.1.1. The evaluation process encompassed two key stages: the measurement model, which scrutinized the relationships among latent variables, and the structural model, which examined the causal linkages between exogenous and endogenous constructs within the proposed framework.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

4.1.1 Measurement Model

The reflective measurement model underwent a rigorous evaluation across four pivotal dimensions: internal consistency reliability, indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The analytical outcomes are encapsulated in Table 1, which presents outer loading coefficients, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, composite reliability indices, indicator reliability scores, and Cronbach's Alpha metrics. All measurement items demonstrated robust and statistically acceptable loadings onto their respective latent constructs, ranging from

0.716 to 0.879, thereby affirming indicator reliability. Convergent validity was substantiated through AVE values, with hallmark of hotel industry (AVE = 0.611), quality of service experience (AVE = 0.651), mentorship (AVE = 0.704), and commitment toward career (AVE = 0.682) all surpassing the established threshold of 0.50. Accordingly, the model satisfies the criteria for convergent validity and is likewise confirmed to possess discriminant validity. The measurement model is visually represented in Figure 1, while detailed factor loadings and associated metrics are provided in Table 1.
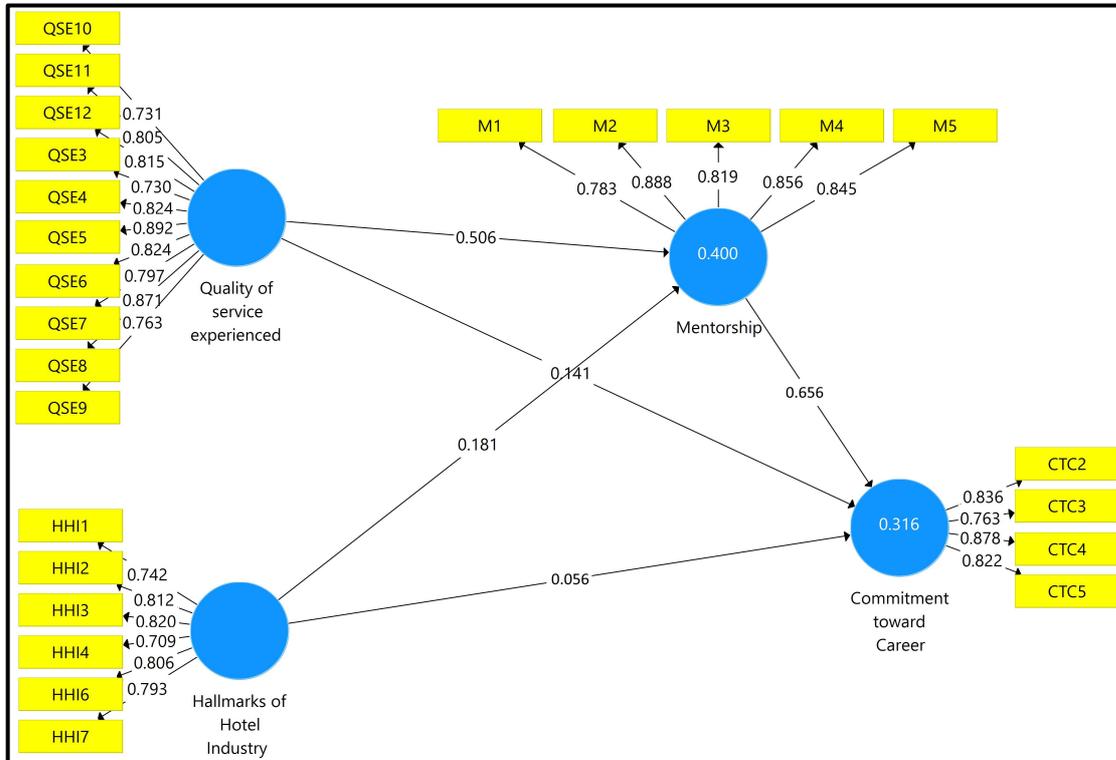

Fig. 1 *Measurement model*

Table 1 *Measurement model*

Indicators	Code	Outer Loadings	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Hallmarks of Hotel Industry (HHI)			0.873	0.904	0.611
	HHI1	0.742			
Item Removed: HHI5	HHI2	0.812			
	HHI3	0.820			
	HHI4	0.709			
	HHI6	0.806			
	HHI7	0.793			
Quality of Service Experience (QSE)			0.940	0.949	0.651
	QSE3	0.730			
	QSE4	0.824			
Item Removed: QSE1, QSE2	QSE5	0.892			
	QSE6	0.824			
	QSE7	0.797			
	QSE8	0.871			
	QSE9	0.763			
	QSE10	0.731			
	QSE11	0.805			
	QSE12	0.815			
Mentorship (M)			0.895	0.922	0.704
Item Removed: M6, M7	M1	0.783			
	M2	0.888			
	M3	0.819			
	M4	0.856			
	M5	0.845			
Commitment toward Career (CTC)			0.843	0.895	0.682
Item Removed: CTC1	CTC2	0.836			
	CTC3	0.763			
	CTC4	0.878			
	CTC5	0.822			

Note: At p<0.05, every factor loading is noteworthy

Table 2 presents the reliability coefficients for all measured constructs, each exceeding the benchmark of 0.70, thereby affirming satisfactory internal consistency and psychometric reliability (Hair et al., 2017). The standardized factor loadings for all items were statistically significant (p < 0.05) and consistently surpassed the 0.70 threshold, reinforcing the robustness of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2017).

As delineated in Table 1, all constructs exhibited AVE values above the critical minimum of 0.50, thereby confirming convergent validity. Furthermore, discriminant validity was substantiated through two criteria: the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios, reported in Table 4, all fell below the recommended ceiling of 0.90 (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2015), and the square roots of AVE for each construct exceeded the corresponding inter-construct correlation values (Chin, 1998). Collectively, these results robustly affirm the discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 2 *Heterotrait-Monotriat ratio assessment*

	Hallmarks of The Hotel Industry	Quality of Service Experience	Mentorship	Commitment Toward career
Hallmarks of The Hotel Industry				
Quality of Service Experience	0.666			
Mentorship	0.532	0.665		
Commitment toward Career	0.624	0.248	0.201	

4.1.2 Structural Models

To evaluate the proposed hypotheses, the second phase of the PLS-SEM procedure involved structural modeling, or path analysis. This analytical stage aimed to ascertain the direct influence of hallmarks of the hotel industry, service quality experience during internships, and mediting effect of mentorship on commitment toward caereer. Table 3 delineates the computed path coefficients, corresponding T-statistics, and significance levels derived through the bootstrapping procedure. Path relationships were deemed statistically acceptable when their significance reached a confidence level of at least 95%, thereby affirming the robustness of the hypothesized structural associations.

Table 3 *Path coefficients, observed T-statistics, and significance thresholds*

	Path Analysis	Path Coefficient B	T Statistics	P Values	Result
H1	Hallmarks of Hotel Industry -> Commitment toward career	0.048	0.960	0.169	Rejected
H2	Quality of service experienced -> Commitment toward career	0.185	3.607	0.000	Accepted
H3	Hallmarks of Hotel Industry -> Mentorship	0.146	1.928	0.027	Accepted
H4	Quality of service experienced -> Mentorship	0.509	7.270	0.000	Accepted
H5	Mentorship -> Commitment toward career	0.661	10.862	0.000	Accepted

*p<0.05

Result of H1 showed insignificant relationship between hallmark of hotel industry and undergraduates commitment toward career in the hotel industry (β: 0.048, t: 0.960, p=0.169.). The low beta value suggests a very weak association, while the p-value greater than 0.05 indicates that this relationship is not statistically significant. This means that the hallmark of the hotel industry such as long working hours, high pressure, or limited career progression do not appear to meaningfully influence undergraduate commitment toward career in hotel industry. H2 is amply substantiated when a significant relationship appears between service quality experience and undergraduates commitment toward career in the hotel industry ($\beta = 0.185$ and $t = 3.607$, $p = 0.000$). The beta value indicates a moderate yet meaningful effect, suggesting that students who are exposed to high-quality service experiences during their internship are more likely to develop a stronger commitment to pursuing a career in the hotel sector.

H3 revealed a causal relationship between hallmarks of hotel industry and mentorship ($\beta = 0.146$, $t = 1.928$, $p = 0.027$). Although the effect size is modest, the relationship is statistically meaningful. This means that certain hallmark features of the hotel industr such as its demanding work environment, high expectations, and emphasis on service standards may contribute to shaping the quality or presence of mentorship during internships. H4 produced a causal relationship between quality of service experienced and mentorship ($\beta = 0.509$, $t = 17.270$, $p = 0.000$). A high beta coefficient suggests a substantial positive influence, implying that when students are exposed to high-quality service environments, they are more likely to benefit from effective mentorship. Result of H5 showed significant relationship between mentorship and commitment toward career ($\beta = 0.661$, $t = 10.862$, $p = 0.000$). The high beta coefficient suggests that mentorship is a powerful predictor of commitment toward career meaning that undergraduates who receive effective and supportive mentorship during their internships are far more likely to develop strong intentions to pursue a career in the industry.

To assess the research model's predictive capabilities, the R^2 values for commitment toward career were presented. For endogenous constructs, it is recommended to classify R^2 values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 as weak, moderate, and strong, accordingly (Hair et al., 2017). The R^2 value was calculated as 0.316 commitment toward career and 0.400 for hotel mentorship. Referring to Figure 1, the hallmarks of the hotel industry, hotel internship service quality experience and mentorship were able to account for 31.6% ($R^2 = 0.316$) of the variation in commitment toward career. Next, the hotel internship service quality experience and industry hallmarks were able to account for 40.0% ($R^2 = 0.400$) of the variation in hotel mentorship. Increases in R^2 about the percentage of the dependent variable's variance that is still unaccounted for are described by the effect size function (f^2), which is comparable to the conventional partial F-test. Table 4, f^2 column indicated that the relationships had effect sizes.

Table 4 *f² - Factor of the research model*

	f2Commitment toward career	Effect size	f 2 Mentorship	Effect size
Hallmarks of Hotel Industry	0.003	Weak	0.035	Weak
Service Quality Experience	0.014	Weak	0.271	Moderate
Mentorship	0.386	Subtantial		

Notes: The values of f 2 are 0.02 for weak, 0.15 for moderate, and 0.35 for substantial

Table 5 explains the q2 outcome. A single session of blindfolding results in the removal of all 7 data points from the target construct, as shown by an omission distance of 7. The commitment toward career in this study are represented by a q2 value of 0.210 and hotel mentorship is represented by a q2 value of 0.274, which calculated using the omission distance of 7, suggests a middling predictive model. As the value of q2 rises, likewise, the structural model's ability to forecast outcomes is useful.

Table 5 *Test of predictive relevance (q2)*

Independent Variable	Commitment toward career	Hotel Internship Mentorship
Hallmarks of the Hotel Industry Internship Service Quality Mentoring	0.210	0.274

4.1.3 Mediating Analysis

The mediation analysis was conducted using the outcomes of the PLS-SEM algorithm and the bootstrap procedure, applying the direct, total and specific indirect, and total effect values. The mediating effects of mentorship on the influence of hallmark of the hotel industry and service quality of experience toward commitment toward caerre in hotel industry were analyzed and tabulated in Table 6.

Table 6 *Mediating effect*

	Hallmark of the industry	Service of Quality Experience
IV > Med Beta	0.146	0.509
Med > DV Beta	0.661	0.661
IV > Med SE	0.073	0.070
Med > DV SE	0.060	0.060
Sobel test statistic	1.967	6.069
One-tailed probability	0.025	0.000
Two-tailed probability	0.049	0.000
Result	Significant	Significant

*Note: *p<. 05, **p<.01, ***p<0.001*

The H6 indicate that mentorship significantly mediates the relationship between hallmarks of the hotel industry with undergraduates' career commitment ((IV > Med β = 0.146; Med > DV β = 0.661). This was supported by the Sobel test statistic of 1.967, with a two-tailed p-value of 0.049, indicating a statistically significant mediation effect at the 0.05 level. This suggests that although the direct relationship between industry hallmarks and career commitment may be weak, mentorship serves as a meaningful pathway through which these hallmarks influence students' career decisions.

H7 showed that the relationship between service quality experience and commitment toward is also significantly mediated by mentorship (IV > Med β = 0.509; Med > DV β = 0.661). The Sobel test statistic of 6.069 and two-tailed p-value of 0.000 indicate a very strong and highly significant mediation effect. This shows that positive service experiences not only directly impact students' career intentions but also enhance the effectiveness of mentorship, which in turn further strengthens their commitment to a career in the hotel industry.

4.2 Discussions

This study attempted to demonstrate the explanatory of hallmarks of the hotel industry, hotel internship service quality and mediating role of mentorship in shaping undergraduates commitment toward career. The results

manifestly indicated that hallmarks of the hotel industry like less pleasant work environments, heavy job responsibilities, slow career development opportunities, and less recognition of work achievement did not giving significant negative impact on Indonesian hospitality interns' students commitment toward career in hotel industry. This implies that these factors may not strongly deter students from pursuing careers in the field. Undergraduates may perceive these challenges as inherent to the industry and are either prepared to adapt or prioritize other factors, such as passion for hospitality, skill acquisition, long-term career goals or no other options. Additionally, positive internship experiences or industry appeal may overshadow these challenges, mitigating their impact on commitment toward career. This finding support (Richardson, 2009) which noted that despite the demanding nature of hospitality work, students often enter the industry with pre-existing passion or a sense of calling that outweighs negative perceptions. Similarly, Spanjaard et al. (2018) emphasized that experiential learning through internships helps students to understand and adapt to industry realities, which could explain the negligible impact of these hallmarks on their career intentions. On the other hand, it contradicts the earlier studies by Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) that challenging working conditions and lack of recognition are significant deterrents for students considering careers in hospitality. Other scholars, including Zopiatis and Theocharous (2013) argued that negative internship experiences often result in students reconsidering their career paths. These discrepancies could arise from differences in geographic, cultural, or institutional contexts and job demand.

This study witnessed that internship service quality influence Indonesian hospitality interns' students commitment toward career in the hotel industry. This indicates that high-quality internships characterized by skill-building opportunities, supportive management, and structured training positively influence students' perceptions of the industry, fostering a sense of competence and alignment with commitment toward career. This corroborated well with Aggarwal and Mishra (2024), who emphasized that well-structured and supportive internships positively influence students' perceptions of the industry and their willingness to pursue long-term careers in it. In other words, poor-quality internships led to student disillusionment and negative attitudes toward the hospitality industry (Chiang et al., 2005).

There is evident from this study that hallmarks of hotel industry have a meaningful influence on the development of mentorship during internships. This clearly indicates that the hallmarks of the hotel industry which may include features such as challenging work conditions, high service standards, hierarchical structures, and operational intensity significantly ease among the undergraduates with the presence or quality of mentorship offered during internships. Although the influence is not particularly strong, it suggests that these industry hallmarks play a role in shaping how mentorship is structured and delivered. The finding aligns with and extends existing literature, while also offering nuanced contrasts. Liu et al. (2024) and Peng et al. (2024)emphasized that the demanding and dynamic nature of the hospitality industry often necessitates strong mentorship to support interns' adaptation and learning. Features such as high service expectations, hierarchical structures, and intense workloads can foster environments where mentorship becomes essential for role clarity and emotional support (Çavuş et al., 2025). This supports the current result by reinforcing the idea that challenging environments can stimulate the need for structured guidance. However, some scholars argue that overly rigid or stressful industry hallmarks may, in contrast, hinder mentorship quality due to supervisors' limited time or lack of training (Erdogan et al., 2025; Malik, 2023). This nuanced outcome highlights the importance of organizational support and mentor preparedness in transforming challenging work conditions into opportunities for meaningful mentorship (Kurian, 2024; Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021).

Similar result emerged in which there is a causal relationship between quality of service experienced and mentorship. This finding suggests that the nature and standard of service undergraduates encounter during their internships significantly shape the mentorship they receive. This means that when interns are exposed to organized, customer-oriented, and efficient service settings, they are more likely to benefit from guided learning, constructive feedback, and role modeling by experienced staff. Conversely, a poor service experience may hinder the mentorship process by limiting learning opportunities and discouraging mentor engagement. This highlights the critical role of operational quality in nurturing effective mentorship during hotel internships. This well align with previous studies that a positive and well-structured service environment enhances learning and facilitates mentorship for hospitality students (Ovais & Jain, 2025; Pantaruk et al., 2025). Quality service settings often reflect a culture of professionalism and continuous improvement, which in turn fosters conditions conducive to effective mentoring (Pantaruk et al., 2025; Toni et al., 2025). Mentors in such environments are typically more engaged and better positioned to guide interns through hands-on tasks, feedback, and emotional support (Ansari, 2025; Y. Liu et al., 2011). Zhu et al. (2024) show that interns who work in high-standard service contexts report greater satisfaction with mentorship and are more likely to gain critical soft skills and industry knowledge.

The study found that mentorship significantly influences Indonesian undergraduates intern student on commitment towards career in hotel industry. This result suggest that in demanding and high-pressure environments like the hotel industry, mentorship becomes a crucial support mechanism to help individuals navigate complex work settings, manage responsibilities, and cope with limited rewards or advancement opportunities. Mentorship can provide guidance, emotional support, and career development strategies, thereby

helping employees or students adapt, stay motivated, and build resilience despite the industry's inherent challenges. The finding well-supported Liu et al. (2024) that mentored individuals reported greater career satisfaction and stronger career commitment and mentionship mentorship enhances career motivation and perceived career success. Peng et al. (2024) noted that mentorship during internships helps students contextualize their experiences, fostering a sense of belonging and career clarity. In fact, it aligning with Goh and Richardson (2024) that effective mentoring during industry training strengthens students' engagement and reduces their uncertainty about future employment in hospitality.

This study further reveals that mentorship mediated the relationship between hallmark of the hotel industry, quality of service experience and commitment toward career in hotel industry. The finding strongly supported the existing literature which found that mentorship as a vital mechanism that helps individuals interpret and adapt to the realities of the hospitality industry, particularly its demanding characteristics such as long hours, emotional labor, and limited early-career advancement (Zhu et al., 2024). Mentorship offers the guidance and emotional support needed to help students make sense of these challenging hallmarks, thereby fostering resilience and sustained career interest (Bhardwaj et al., 2025). The high-quality service experiences during internships are more likely to contribute to positive career outcomes when coupled with strong mentorship, which helps bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application (Pantaruk et al., 2025). Liu et al. (2024) and McDonald and Wilson-Mah (2022) also found that mentorship enhances the developmental value of internship experiences, encouraging stronger commitment to the profession. Thus, the current study aligns well with the broader academic consensus, reinforcing the view that mentorship is not merely a support function but a transformative influence that enables students to internalize both the strengths and challenges of the hospitality field in ways that promote long-term career commitment.

5. Implications

Although need to further confirm, these findings are significant for students, hospitality institutions, industry stakeholders and policymakers. As for students, they perhaps feel that the hospitality program and industrial training undertaken successfully met their expectations thus, satisfied with their career choice and enchanted with the hotel industry employment. Not harsh to say that experience through industrial training attachment is worthwhile as they end up clearer about what they want after graduation. Students may feel their parents' investments of money in hospitality education, along with the effort and time spent for personal skill development during their study period have been worthwhile.

For academic institutions, these findings underscore the critical importance of strengthening strong partnerships and collaborations with hotels that prioritize delivering high-quality internship programs. Such collaborations are essential to ensure that students not only gain hands-on experience but also feel satisfied and prepared for future careers in the hospitality industry. By working closely with hotels, institutions can align internship programs with students' career goals, offering meaningful experiences that foster both professional development and personal growth. These partnerships should focus on creating structured internship programs that emphasize mentorship, skill development, and opportunities for real-world learning. By doing so, academic institutions can ensure that students are equipped with the knowledge and confidence needed to succeed in the competitive hospitality sector. Collaboration with hotels can help identify and address gaps in the existing internship frameworks, ensuring continuous improvement in program quality. The existing efforts in fostering hotel-academia collaborations should be further strengthened. This includes expanding the network of reputable hotel partners, implementing regular feedback mechanisms to monitor internship satisfaction, and providing tailored support to students during their training. By enhancing these partnerships, academic institutions can play a pivotal role in shaping the future workforce of the hospitality industry while ensuring their graduates are well-prepared and motivated to pursue long-term careers in the field.

For hotels, investing in well-structured internship frameworks is not merely an initiative to support student learning but also a strategic approach to attract and nurture future talent. Internships play a pivotal role in shaping students' perceptions of the industry and their potential career paths. By creating robust programs that prioritize mentorship, provide ample opportunities for skill development, and assign meaningful responsibilities, hotels can significantly enhance the overall internship experience. Such efforts not only contribute to the personal and professional growth of the interns but also leave a lasting impression that influences their long-term career intentions. Additionally, hotels must address common challenges that can hinder job satisfaction, such as unpleasant work environments, excessive workloads, limited career advancement opportunities, and insufficient recognition of achievements. These negative factors can significantly impact employees' perceptions of the industry and their overall career intentions. Proactively tackling these issues is essential to fostering a positive and engaging work culture.

Finaly, policymakers in hospitality education should prioritize the integration of service quality benchmarks into internship frameworks to cultivate a sustainable and motivated workforce. This approach ensures that students are exposed to industry standards early in their training, fostering a culture of excellence and

professionalism. By embedding these benchmarks within internship guidelines, students gain a clearer understanding of expectations while developing the skills and attitudes necessary to meet them.

6. Conclusion

This study successfully highlight the intricate relationship between the hallmarks of the hotel industry, internship service quality, and internship satisfaction in shaping Indonesian hospitality students' future career intentions. Despite the commonly perceived challenges in the hotel industry, such as unpleasant work environments, heavy job responsibilities, slow career development, and limited recognition, it did not significantly deter students from pursuing careers in hospitality. This resilience may stem from students' pre-existing passion for the field and their ability to adapt to industry realities through experiential learning. The study underscores the pivotal role of high-quality internships in fostering positive career intentions. Structured internships characterized by effective mentorship, skill-building opportunities, and a supportive work environment were found to significantly enhance students' satisfaction and professional aspirations. Thus, build stronger collaborations with hotels need to be further strengthen to provide enriching and well-aligned internship experiences. Similarly, for hotels, investing in robust internship frameworks is a strategic move to nurture future talent and improve industry perceptions. Policymakers must integrate service quality benchmarks into internship guidelines to ensure sustainable and motivated workforce development. Ultimately, fostering high-quality internship experiences is key to shaping the future workforce and addressing the evolving needs of the hospitality industry.

This study has several limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, the use of a self-reported and self-administered survey may introduce biases such as social desirability or inaccuracies in participants' responses. Second, the sample is limited to hotel management students from a single institution, Universitas Negeri Padang, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions or institutions. Future studies should consider expanding the sample to include students from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, a longitudinal approach could provide deeper insights into how career intentions evolve over time and after entering the workforce, offering a more comprehensive understanding.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of the paper.

Author Contribution

*The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: **study conception and design:** Feri Ferdian; **literature review:** Mohd Salehuddin Mohd Zahari**; instrument validation and methodology:** Asmar Yulastri; **data collection:** Pasaribu; **analysis and interpretation of results:** Hijriyantomi Suyuthie; **draft manuscript preparation:** Feri Ferdian, Mohd Salehuddin Mohd Zahari. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.*

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