

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The internship program within the hotel industry provides a valuable opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge and practical experience (Natarajan & Raman, 2020), particularly in a culturally unique and dynamic setting such as Japan. Although Japan is known for its industrial and economic power in Asia, Japan's culture has been on the rise globally (Armielia, 2019). Renowned for its distinctive approach to hospitality, known as *omotenashi*, Japan's service culture emphasizes attention to detail and a profound commitment to anticipating guests' needs (Morishita, 2021). Having an internship in this environment allows individuals to develop a comprehensive understanding of the cultural values that shape guest service and operational standards in the Japanese hospitality industry (Wijayanti & Saifudin, 2021).

Over the past decade, the hospitality sector in Japan has experienced significant growth, driven by government initiatives aimed at promoting tourism and the country's rich cultural appeal (Chung et al., 2024). According to the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), the number of international visitors reached a record 31.9 million in 2019, reflecting a steady annual increase (JNTO, 2020). This surge created substantial demand for accommodations and hospitality services, positioning Japan as one of the fastest-growing tourist destinations in the Asia-Pacific region. The Japanese government has set an ambitious target of welcoming 60 million international tourists by 2030 under its Tourism Vision to Support the Future of Japan (Japan Tourism Agency, 2021). This strategy prioritizes enhancing tourism infrastructure, elevating service standards, and improving international accessibility.

Most foreign visitors to Japan originate from neighboring Asian countries, including China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. These markets account for a substantial portion of inbound tourism, driven by Japan's renowned

shopping experiences, seasonal attractions, and historical landmarks. Additionally, Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia have become emerging source markets due to relaxed visa regulations and improved connectivity. Among non-Asian countries, the United States remains the leading source of visitors, reflecting a strong interest in Japan's cultural heritage, recreational activities, and unique attractions (JNTO, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact on Japan's hospitality industry, leading to a sharp decline in international visitors. Due to travel restrictions and border closures, the number of foreign arrivals dropped by over 87% in 2020 compared to 2019, according to data from the Japan Tourism Agency (JTA, 2021). Many hotels and tourism-related businesses had to temporarily close, reduce their operations, or focus on attracting domestic tourists to survive. The industry had to adapt quickly to new health and safety measures, placing greater emphasis on hygiene and social distancing to regain traveler confidence.

To support the struggling hospitality sector, the Japanese government introduced the Go To Travel campaign. This program provided subsidies for travel, accommodation, and other related expenses to encourage residents to explore different regions within Japan (Japan Times, 2020). Although this initiative temporarily boosted domestic tourism, the full recovery of the industry depends on the return of international tourists and the easing of global travel restrictions.

Interning in Japan's hospitality sector during this period of recovery offers a unique opportunity to understand the challenges and strategies involved in navigating post-pandemic tourism. By engaging directly with guests and participating in operational roles, interns can observe how the industry strives to regain its pre-pandemic momentum while maintaining the essence of Japanese hospitality. This experience equips interns with valuable insights into the complexities of managing hospitality operations in a rapidly changing environment and prepares them to excel in an increasingly competitive and globalized industry.

## **1.2 Purpose**

The internship program offers a real experience in the working environment, allowing the writer to implement her learning from the past four semesters into a professional field. It aims to build a deep understanding of the hotel industry while mentally preparing the writer for a future career in hospitality. During the internship, the writer will gain irreplaceable hands-on experience, as well as insights into the workings of the professional field and a comprehensive understanding of various aspects of the hotel industry. The writer will observe the contributions of different roles within the department, enhance skills and knowledge, and provide insight into the diverse career opportunities. Engaging in internships not only encourages skill development and industry knowledge but also opens the doors to networking opportunities, career advancement, and potential full-time employment within the hospitality sector. With this internship program, the writer was able to:

### **a. Hands-on Experience:**

Internships provide an opportunity to work in various departments of a hotel, this hands-on experience allows writers to gain insight into the daily operations of the hotel and develop practical skills applicable to the industry.

### **b. Networking Opportunities:**

Internships enable writer to connect with professionals in the field, including hotel managers, supervisors, and industry experts. Building a network within the hospitality industry can open doors to future career opportunities and provide valuable mentorship and guidance.

### **c. Skill Development:**

Internships offer a platform for individuals to develop and enhance essential skills required in the hospitality sector, such as communication, customer service, problem-solving, and time management. The writer has the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge gained from academic studies to real-world scenarios and further refine their skills.

### **d. Industry Insights:**

Internships provide firsthand exposure to the inner workings of the hotel industry, including market trends, guest expectations, and operational challenges. This insight helps interns understand the dynamics of the industry and prepares them to navigate its complexities effectively.

e. Potential Job Offers:

Successful completion of an internship may lead to job offers or opportunities for further employment within the hotel industry. Many hotels prefer to hire interns who have demonstrated dedication, competence, and a good fit with the organization's culture during their internship period.

f. Personal and Professional Growth:

Internships provide a platform for personal and professional growth, allowing individuals to challenge themselves, learn new skills, and gain confidence in their abilities. The experience gained during an internship helps individuals develop a strong work ethic, adaptability, and resilience, which are valuable traits in any career path.

### **1.3 Period and Procedures**

The internship program is mandatory for all Hotel Operations students as they reach their fifth semester as well as one of the requirements for the students to graduate. The internship program occurs for 6 months, starting from 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2024 – 31<sup>th</sup> December 2024 with a minimum of 800 working hours or 100 working days. The writer chose to be in the food and beverage service department, and fulfilled all the requirements including having an active student status, completing 75 SKS, and having a GPA above minimum standards, which is 2.75 GPA. Following an internship briefing that is provided by the campus, the writer can understand the procedures needed before and after the internship program. After the briefing, the writer equipped herself with the necessary knowledge and skills, including CV writing, interview preparation, and other courses related to the internship program. The writer was able to do well in preparing her Internship Program.

Below is the process of taking the Internship Program:

1. The writer needs to complete KM 1, which contains details about the desired internship hotel and department. This document should be submitted to the Hotel Operations administration for the creation of KM 2, which will then be signed by the Head of the Hotel Operations Program, the process will takes 1-2 working days.
2. After receiving KM 2, the writer sent it along with a Cover Letter, CV, GPA, and supported certificates to the preferred hotel via email.
3. The writer applied to the hotel on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, and received feedback from the hotel on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 for the qualification criteria.
4. The writer sent all the documents containing all the qualified criteria to the hotel on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024, and wait for any updates from the hotel.
5. The hotel reviewed the documents for one week.
6. The writer scheduled for an interview with the hotel's Director of Food and Beverage via Microsoft Teams on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
7. The writer received an acceptance letter from the hotel on on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
8. The writer filled out inquiry sheet and preparing documents for visa application, including photocopy of passport, certificate of enrollment, attestation letter, and ID photo.
9. The writer completed online application form through Marriott website to generate the writer's system ID.
10. The writer signed the documents of agreement with school and student on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
11. The human resources filed the visa application on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
12. The internship visa approved on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. The writer receive the COE form, uniform measurement form, physical job descriptions form, and the hotel's grooming standard.
13. The writer applied the visa stamp application process on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
14. The writer received information about the orientation schedule on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
15. The visa stamp application was approved on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

16. The human resources gave information of the procedures the writer need to prepare once the writer arrive in Kyoto (Resident registration, opening bank account, report “my number” to HR).
17. The writer started the training day on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.
18. The writer finished her internship on December 31<sup>st</sup>,2024.
19. Finally, on January 6<sup>th</sup> 2025 the writer submitted the Internship Report and prepared for the presentation.

