



Enhancing Learning Performance of students in Tourism major at Ba Ria - Vung Tau University

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ABSTRACT: Ba Ria - Vung Tau University, a tourism education institution in Vietnam, has implemented a multifaceted approach to optimize the learning performance of its tourism management students. This article examines the university's strategies, which include curriculum design and relevance, integration of technology and digital literacy, experiential learning and industry partnerships, mentorship and career guidance, fostering student engagement and well-being, and a continuous improvement and evaluation process. The university's comprehensive initiatives aim to prepare the next generation of tourism professionals by enhancing their knowledge, practical skills, and overall competitiveness in the dynamic and rapidly evolving tourism industry.

KEYWORDS: Tourism education, Learning performance, Curriculum design, Technology integration

INTRODUCTION

Ba Ria - Vung Tau University, located in the dynamic coastal province of the same name, has long been a hub for tourism education in Vietnam. As the tourism industry continues to grow and evolve, the university has recognized the need to continuously enhance the learning experience and performance of its tourism management students. This article examines various strategies and initiatives implemented by Ba Ria - Vung Tau University to optimize student learning and prepare the next generation of tourism professionals.

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Curriculum Design and Relevance

At the heart of enhancing learning performance is ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant and responsive to the needs of the tourism industry. The tourism management program at Ba Ria - Vung Tau University has undergone regular reviews and updates to align with the latest trends, technologies, and best practices in the field.

The teachers are constantly evaluating the curriculum to ensure that it provides our students with the knowledge and skills they will need to thrive in the dynamic tourism landscape. This involves close collaboration with industry partners to understand their evolving requirements and incorporate them into our course offerings.

One key aspect of the curriculum revision process has been the incorporation of more case studies, simulations, and project-based learning opportunities. These experiential learning activities allow students to apply their theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios, developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills that are highly valued by employers.

The teachers have found that students retain information better and are more engaged when they can actively participate in the learning process. By exposing them to authentic tourism management challenges, teachers are better preparing them for the realities of the industry.

Integrating Technology and Digital Literacy

In the rapidly digitizing world of tourism, Ba Ria - Vung Tau University has also placed a strong emphasis on enhancing the technological and digital literacy of its students. The university has invested in state-of-the-art learning management systems, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies, and specialized tourism management software to provide students with hands-on experience.

Tourism is an industry that is being transformed by technological innovations, from online booking platforms to virtual tours and hotel management systems. It is crucial that students are not only comfortable with these technologies but also understand how to leverage them to improve efficiency, enhance the customer experience, and drive business growth.

The university has integrated the use of these technologies into various courses, allowing students to develop practical skills in areas such as revenue management, destination marketing, and customer relationship management. Additionally, the university has



partnered with industry leaders to provide guest lectures and workshops on the latest digital trends and tools, further strengthening the students' preparedness for the digital-driven future of tourism.

The university believes that by equipping students with strong digital competencies, they are not only enhancing their learning performance but also making them more attractive to potential employers.

Experiential Learning and Industry Partnerships

In addition to curricular reforms and technological integration, Ba Ria - Vung Tau University has placed a strong emphasis on providing students with authentic, hands-on learning experiences through industry partnerships and internships.

The university recognizes that classroom-based instruction, while essential, can only take students so far. To truly prepare them for the realities of the tourism industry, The university needs to create opportunities for them to apply their knowledge in a real-world setting. The university has established a network of partnerships with leading tourism organizations, hotels, and travel agencies in the Ba Ria - Vung Tau province and beyond. These partnerships allow students to participate in internships, job shadowing programs, and collaborative projects, gaining valuable insights and practical skills.

The students can work alongside experienced professionals, observe the inner workings of tourism businesses, and contribute to ongoing projects. This exposure not only enhances their learning but also helps them develop a deeper understanding of the industry and build professional connections that can benefit their future careers.

Furthermore, the university has incorporated field trips, site visits, and guest speaker sessions into its curriculum, enabling students to engage with industry practitioners and immerse themselves in the realities of the tourism sector. These experiential learning opportunities are invaluable in bridging the gap between theory and practice. By seeing firsthand how tourism businesses operate and hearing from industry experts, students gain a more holistic understanding of the industry and the challenges it faces.

Mentorship and Career Guidance

Recognizing the importance of personalized support and guidance, Ba Ria - Vung Tau University has implemented a robust mentorship program for its tourism management students. Each student is assigned a faculty mentor who provides academic and career-related counseling throughout their studies. The mentorship program is designed to help students navigate the complexities of their academic journey and identify their unique strengths, interests, and career aspirations. By fostering these one-on-one relationships, teachers are able to provide more personalized support and ensure that each student is maximizing their learning potential.

The mentors not only assist students with course selection, academic planning, and research projects but also offer guidance on internship and job opportunities, resume building, and interview preparation. They also help students explore various career paths within the tourism industry, ensuring that they are well-informed about the diverse range of employment options available to them. The faculty members are not only accomplished academics but also have extensive industry experience. They are able to share valuable insights and connect our students with professional networks that can greatly enhance their future career prospects.

In addition to the mentorship program, the university's career development center provides comprehensive support, including job fairs, career workshops, and one-on-one counseling sessions. This holistic approach to student support has been instrumental in helping tourism management students successfully transition from academia to the workforce.

Fostering Student Engagement and Well-being

Recognizing that student learning and performance are not solely dependent on academic factors, Ba Ria - Vung Tau University has also placed a strong emphasis on fostering a vibrant and supportive campus community that caters to the overall well-being of its tourism management students. The university understands that a positive and engaging learning environment is crucial for students to thrive.

The university's tourism management student club, for example, organizes various events and competitions that allow students to apply their knowledge in practical settings, develop leadership skills, and network with their peers. These activities include tourism-themed case competitions, hospitality industry simulations, and tourism product development projects. Participating in these extracurricular activities has not only been a valuable learning experience for students but has also helped them build strong interpersonal and teamwork skills. These are precisely the kinds of skills that are highly sought after by employers in the tourism industry.

Furthermore, the university has placed a strong emphasis on student well-being, offering a range of counseling services, mental health support, and wellness programs. These initiatives aim to help students manage the stresses of academic life and maintain a



healthy work-life balance, ultimately enhancing their overall learning performance. By addressing the holistic needs of our students. The university is creating an environment that fosters not only academic excellence but also personal growth and development. This, in turn, enables tourism students to thrive and become well-rounded, highly competitive professionals.

Continuous Improvement and Evaluation

Recognizing that enhancing learning performance is an ongoing process, Ba Ria - Vung Tau University has implemented a comprehensive system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its initiatives. This includes regularly gathering feedback from students, industry partners, and faculty members to identify areas for improvement and inform future strategic planning. The university collects data on various performance indicators, such as student satisfaction, academic achievement, employment rates, and employer feedback. This information is then analyzed and used to refine the tourism management curriculum, update teaching methodologies, and enhance the overall learning experience.

The perspectives of students in Tourism major at Ba Ria - Vung Tau University

Students in the Tourism programs at Ba Ria - Vung Tau University have valuable insights to share on how to improve our learning experience and performance. From the curriculum to co-curricular activities, there are several areas where the author believes changes could have a significant impact.

Revising the Curriculum

Many of us feel that the current curriculum, while comprehensive, could be enhanced to better prepare us for the dynamic tourism industry. A, a third-year student, explained, "The coursework is certainly relevant, but it often feels too theoretical. We need more opportunities to apply what we're learning in real-world, practical settings."

B, another student, agreed, "I think we should have more electives and specialization tracks. Tourism is such a broad field, and we should be able to tailor our studies to our specific interests and career goals, whether that's hotel management, event planning, or sustainable tourism development."

Several students also expressed a desire for more interdisciplinary learning. "It would be great to integrate courses from other programs, like business, marketing, and even language studies," said C. "That would give us a more holistic understanding of the industry and the diverse skillsets required."

Incorporating Real-World Experiences

Beyond the classroom, students emphasized the importance of hands-on learning opportunities. "Internships and co-op placements are invaluable," noted D. "Being able to apply our knowledge in real tourism businesses, whether hotels, travel agencies, or tourist attractions, is crucial for developing the practical skills employers want to see." E, a fourth-year student, shared his experience, "Last summer, I interned at a luxury resort, and it was a game-changer. I got to see firsthand how a successful tourism operation functions, from guest relations to event planning. It really cemented what I've been learning in my courses."

Students also expressed interest in more field trips and site visits. As F explained, "Having the chance to tour different tourism facilities, like airports, museums, or eco-tourism sites, would give us a deeper understanding of the industry's inner workings. It's one thing to read about it but experiencing it in person is so much more impactful."

Enhancing Extracurricular Opportunities

In addition to the curriculum, students highlighted the need for a robust set of extracurricular activities to support their learning and personal development. "The tourism club on campus is great, but I think we could do even more to engage students," said G. "Things like guest speaker events, industry networking mixers, and even tourism-themed competitions would be amazing." H, a second-year student, agreed, "Extracurriculars are crucial for building soft skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. The more opportunities we have to apply our knowledge in practical, hands-on ways, the better prepared we'll be for our future careers."

Several students also emphasized the importance of study abroad programs. As K explained, "Spending a semester or even a summer overseas would expose us to different tourism markets and cultural perspectives. It would enhance our global mindset and make us more adaptable professionals."

Strengthening Faculty-Student Collaboration

While the faculty at Ba Ria - Vung Tau University are highly knowledgeable, students feel there is room for improvement in terms of faculty-student collaboration. "I really appreciate the expertise of our professors, but sometimes the communication feels a bit one-way," said L. "We'd love more opportunities to engage in open dialogues, share our ideas and concerns, and work together to



enhance the program." M added, "It would be great if we could collaborate with faculty on research projects or even co-author publications. That kind of hands-on experience would be invaluable for our academic and professional development." Students also expressed a desire for more mentorship opportunities. "Having a faculty member or industry expert serve as a mentor would be amazing," noted N. "They could provide guidance on course selection, career planning, and even help us build our professional networks."

Improving Student Support Services

Beyond the academic sphere, students highlighted the need for enhanced student support services. "Mental health and wellbeing are so important, but I don't feel like there are enough resources available on campus," said P. "Things like counseling, stress management workshops, and even peer-to-peer support groups would make a huge difference." R said "The demands of the tourism program can be intense, both academically and emotionally. Having a strong support system in place would really help us cope with the stresses and challenges we face."

Students also expressed a desire for more career development services. As T explained, "As we get closer to graduation, we need more guidance on things like resume writing, interviewing skills, and job search strategies. The university could do a better job of preparing us for the transition from student to professional."

Fostering Industry Connections

Finally, students emphasized the importance of building strong connections with the tourism industry. "Networking and industry engagement are crucial for our future success," said Q. "We need more opportunities to interact with tourism professionals, whether through guest lectures, industry site visits, or even job shadowing programs." According to X, "Having that direct exposure to industry leaders and potential employers would be invaluable. It would help us understand the latest trends, challenges, and skill requirements in the tourism sector, and better position us for rewarding careers." Several students also suggested the university could do more to facilitate internships and job placements. If the university had stronger relationships with local and regional tourism businesses, it would make the internship and job search process much smoother.

CONCLUSION

Ba Ria - Vung Tau University's comprehensive approach to enhancing learning performance in its tourism management program is a testament to its commitment to producing highly skilled and adaptable professionals. Through a combination of innovative curriculum design, technology integration, experiential learning opportunities, personalized support, and a focus on student well-being, the university is equipping its students with the tools and experiences necessary to thrive in the rapidly evolving tourism industry.

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