



Exploring the Experiences of Tour and Travel Alumni in Job Hunting

Imawaty Daiki¹

¹Politeknik Pariwisata Makassar, Jl. Gn. Rinjani Jl. Metro Tj. Bunga No.1, Tj. Merdeka, Kec. Tamalate, Kota Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan 90224, Indonesia

*Corresponding author's email : imawatydaiki@gmail.com

Abstract

Becoming an alumnus marks the beginning of life for students in their pursuit of employment. Career orientation is the primary goal for graduates to develop the knowledge and skills they have acquired during their studies, although alumni often face challenges in finding jobs. Competition and problems in the job market are common occurrences. Issues frequently arise in the quest for stable income without relevant solutions. Moreover, companies sometimes view alumni as lacking sufficient experience in their fields, thus limiting their opportunities to achieve their career goals. This study aims to explore the experiences of Tour and Travel alumni in seeking employment within the tourism industry, both in formal and informal sectors. The research focuses on understanding the challenges faced by alumni, the relevance of the skills acquired during their studies to labor market demands, and the strategies used by alumni in their efforts to secure suitable employment. This study employs a qualitative method, conducting interviews with several alumni to gain insights into the challenges and strategies they encounter as they enter the workforce. The results of the study revealed that most alumni face various challenges, such as intense competition in the tourism industry, a lack of practical work experience during their studies, and market dynamics that have shifted due to technological advancements and the impact of the pandemic. In addition to technical skills like travel management and customer service, non-technical skills such as communication, negotiation, critical thinking, and adaptability are highly sought after by companies. Some alumni recognize the need to develop networks and participate in additional training or certifications to enhance their competitiveness in the job market. While some alumni struggle to find jobs in the tourism sector, many successfully find employment in other fields that require similar skills, such as hospitality, logistics, and event management. This research provides recommendations for educational institutions to strengthen internship programs and increase collaboration with the industry. Additionally, alumni are advised to continuously update their skills and leverage digital opportunities in their job search.

Keywords: Alumni, tour and travel, job search, skills, tourism industry, challenges, job strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The job market in Indonesia in the future will undoubtedly have increasingly complex competition and challenges. The globalization that is right before our eyes serves as a catalyst for individuals to enhance their performance and capabilities. Every individual has a good and well-thought-out plan for their future, including recent graduates. Alumni, according to the Online Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI), are individuals who have attended or graduated from a school or higher education institution. Meanwhile, an alumnus according to the same dictionary is defined as a person who has attended or graduated from a school or university. Every student, especially recent graduates, hopes to work in a field that aligns with their skills or expertise. However, hope does not always align with reality, as the difficulty in finding jobs due to the limited job market creates anxiety among recent graduates, given the increasing level of competition and the rising cost of living. Especially if one does not possess adequate abilities or skills that match the demands of the available job field. The scarcity of job opportunities is not proportional to the number of workers, which demands job seekers to be more skilled in their fields.

In the job market, it is crucial in Indonesia that companies not only compete with competitors but are also compelled to find the right quality of workforce that meets the qualifications or faces stiff



competition to secure employment. This also creates problems for alumni who are expected to compete and possess qualifications that have been set by each company. (Putra & Handoyo, 2018). According to Latif, Yusuf, and Effendi (2017), every graduate from higher education institutions is expected to develop a work-ready personality. A person's ability to work according to their area of expertise is also one of the very crucial conditions for both companies and prospective employees. (De Cuyper, Van Der Heijden & De Witte, 2011).

The tourism industry is one of the sectors that continues to grow rapidly and has a significant impact on global economic growth. (Hakim, 2018; Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, 2022). Along with this growth, the demand for qualified labor in the tourism sector is also increasing. (Hadi Mahmudi et al., 2020; Sinulingga et al., 2018; Wulan & Handyaningrum, 2020; Yulianto et al., 2023). Along with this growth, the Tour & Travel study programs at various educational institutions have become increasingly popular, producing graduates who are ready to pursue careers in the tourism sector. However, although career opportunities in this industry seem vast, the reality is that the job search process for recent graduates, including alumni from Tour & Travel, often faces various complex challenges.

In a competitive job market, graduates are not only required to have adequate theoretical knowledge but also practical skills and a strong professional network. Changes in tourism trends, such as the increasing demand for experience-based travel and the advancement of digital technology in travel planning and management, also add challenges in finding suitable employment. Therefore, understanding how Tour & Travel alumni face these challenges becomes important to gain a clearer picture of their journey into the workforce.

The challenges faced by graduates in finding employment are quite diverse. Although the tourism and travel sector is a vast industry that offers many opportunities, there are several obstacles they may encounter. The main challenge is the intense competition from the large number of graduates each year, along with the additional qualifications sought by companies looking for candidates with extra credentials such as special certifications, international experience, or foreign language skills, making alumni with only formal educational degrees feel less competitive.

Based on the description in the background above, the author realizes how important it is, even though the tourism and travel industry offers great opportunities, for Tour & Travel alumni to be prepared to face the existing challenges, whether in terms of competition, adaptation to technology, network development, or the enhancement of soft skills. Proactive alumni who enhance their skills, build experiences, and adapt to industry trends will have greater opportunities for success in job searching. The purpose of this research is as follows: This study focuses on understanding the challenges faced by alumni, the relevance between the skills acquired during their studies and the needs of the job market, as well as the strategies employed by alumni in their efforts to secure suitable employment.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using qualitative methods. This method aims to explore the deep meaning of alumni experiences and provide a holistic understanding. Qualitative research according to (Mulyadi, 2011) is an approach that represents a naturalistic (phenomenological) understanding, while according to (Chairi, 2019) qualitative research is conducted in specific settings that exist in real life (natural) with the aim of investigating and understanding phenomena, namely what happens, why it happens, and how it occurs. The data collection technique through interviews with several alumni of Tour & Travel.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the rapidly advancing era of globalization, the tourism and travel industry has become one of the most developed and dynamic sectors. According to data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the number of international tourists continues to rise each year, creating significant demand for quality travel services and experiences. Alumni from the Tour & Travel study program

have vast opportunities to build a career in this industry, whether in the hospitality sector, travel agencies, event management, or in the field of tourism marketing. However, despite the many opportunities, the challenges in finding a job in this field still exist and need to be understood in depth.

3.1 Challenges faced by alumni

Changes in the industry due to the pandemic have led to significant job reductions that have greatly impacted the tourism and travel sectors. Many travel companies, tour agencies, and hotels have experienced a decline in revenue, with some even going out of business. This has led to a decrease in job opportunities in this sector. The changing trends in tourism have also led to an increasing number of travelers shifting towards digital and virtual tourism, as well as trips that are more focused on health and safety. Alumni who are inflexible or less aware of this trend may struggle to adapt.

As technology advances, many travel companies are starting to rely on online platforms for ticket bookings, virtual tours, and travel management. Alumni who do not possess strong technological skills (such as using travel software, digital content management, or online marketing) will be left behind. Changes in marketing have been replaced by more innovative digital marketing strategies such as the use of social media, SEO (Search Engine Optimization), and paid advertising. Alumni who do not understand digital marketing strategies will struggle to compete in this industry. The limitations of networking in the tourism industry, where professional connections are very important because companies often prefer to recruit from internal recommendations or through already established connections. If alumni do not have strong connections in the industry, they may find it difficult to discover relevant job opportunities. Seasonal work, some jobs in the tourism sector are often only available during holiday seasons or peak travel times, such as jobs as tour guides, hotel staff, or tour operators. This can lead to job instability for graduates. Geography and limited opportunities in certain areas have led to a more developed tourism industry compared to others. Alumni living in areas with few tourists or limited tourism facilities may need to move to another city or country to find suitable employment.

The lack of necessary soft skills, such as foreign language proficiency (especially in English, Mandarin, or other languages commonly used by tourists), often becomes an added value. Alumni who lack proficiency in foreign languages may struggle to compete in the international job market. The communication and customer service skills required in this profession in the sector demand excellent communication abilities and customer service skills. Alumni who lack soft skills may struggle to adapt to the demands of the job in the field. Salary expectations that do not match the low income at the beginning of a career; many jobs in the tourism industry offer relatively low salaries, especially for entry-level positions. Alumni who have high salary expectations may feel disappointed or reluctant to accept such positions, thereby narrowing their job opportunities. The lack of experience for senior positions means that alumni need to build years of experience to reach higher-paying roles. For those who have just graduated, this career journey can take quite a long time before they can reach the desired position. In addition, the challenges of permits and legality for working abroad, alumni interested in working overseas often face challenges related to permits, work visas, and differing labor regulations in each country. This can be an additional obstacle, especially for those who are not familiar with the related administrative processes. International certification standards in several countries or international companies require certain certifications that are globally recognized. Alumni who do not have this certification may need more time to meet job requirements.

3.2.1 The relevance between the skills acquired during study and the needs of the job market

The relevance between the skills acquired during studies and the needs of the job market is highly significant in the context of alumni from the Tour & Travel program. Alumni who can integrate theoretical knowledge with practical skills, as well as adapt to changes, will have greater opportunities in finding suitable employment. Therefore, educational institutions need to continuously adapt to industry developments and strengthen their curricula to prepare graduates who



are ready to compete in the job market. The knowledge gained during studies about tourist destinations, culture, and history is very important in providing accurate information to customers and designing attractive travel packages. The skills acquired in travel management can be applied to planning and managing trips, including scheduling, budgeting, and logistics that are essential in this industry. Alumni are often taught to use relevant tools and technologies to facilitate effective communication, and the ability to provide good customer service is key in the tourism industry. Alumni are often trained to interact with various clients and understand their needs. Knowledge of technology is also a plus, as the increasing use of social media and digital platforms in tourism marketing means that graduates with skills in digital marketing and social media management will have an advantage in the job search.

Companies in the Tour & Travel sector are looking for graduates who not only possess theoretical knowledge but also practical skills that can be applied directly. Relevant skills are crucial to meet industry expectations. Flexibility and adaptability are where the job market requires individuals who can quickly adjust to changing trends and technologies. Alumni who possess adaptive skills and are ready to learn will be more sought after by companies. In addition, many projects in the tourism industry involve teamwork. Graduates who have been trained in collaboration and teamwork during their studies will be better prepared to contribute in a dynamic work environment.

3.2.2 Strategies used by alumni in their efforts to secure employment

Building networks and professional relationships (Networking) is very important in the tourism industry, where reputation and professional connections often serve as the key to unlocking job opportunities. How alumni can leverage their networks by joining professional organizations where they can become members of professional associations such as ASITA (Indonesian Travel Companies Association) or IATA (International Air Transport Association), PATA (Pacific Asia Travel Association), which provide access to various industry resources, including training, seminars, and job opportunity information. In addition, this association often organizes networking events where alumni can meet potential employers. Alumni can also attend seminars, workshops, and tourism exhibitions organized by Tour & Travel companies or travel agencies, such as ITB Asia, MATTA Fair in Malaysia, or Travel Mart, which often serve as venues for industry professionals to meet and collaborate. Active alumni attending events like this will have the opportunity to interact directly with industry practitioners and even gain insights into current workforce needs. Being active in online discussion forums, in addition to physical meetings, alumni also often utilize digital platforms such as TripAdvisor or professional discussion forums on LinkedIn to share insights and discuss tourism trends. Active contributions in these forums can enhance the visibility and credibility of alumni in the eyes of potential employers. Building relationships with professors and senior alumni is important because they often have many connections in the job market. Maintaining good relationships with them can provide access to job vacancy information or opportunities to be recommended to recruiters.

Internships or part-time work as initial experience, this practical experience is very valuable, especially for recent graduates to gain real-world experience in the field. Alumni often start their careers through internship programs or part-time jobs at travel companies, airlines, hotels, or travel agencies. This allows them to learn firsthand about industry operations, such as travel management, customer service, and ticket booking. This experience will enhance credibility on the CV when applying for a permanent job. A good track record at an internship or part-time job can also lead to a permanent job offer from the company. Building a network with industry practitioners during internships, alumni have the opportunity to meet professionals in the sector. This contact can be very valuable in searching for job opportunities in the future. Participating in certifications and professional training that can strengthen alumni skills and provide added value in the eyes of recruiters. Certifications that can be pursued include IATA Certification (International Air Transport Association); this certification is important for those interested in working in the airline sector or travel agencies that handle flight tickets. IATA also offers specialized training programs for travel

management and travel agency management. Certification for tour guides for alumni who wish to pursue a career as tour guides is very important, especially certification from official bodies such as the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism or local institutions. This certification serves as proof of their ability to guide tours and manage travel, having undergone training in hospitality management and foreign language training.

Using technology to develop a business, such as creating one's own personal branding, has become an effective way for alumni to stand out among other applicants. Some strategies for building personal branding include creating a digital portfolio. Alumni can create a personal website or blog that showcases their travel experiences, reviews of tourist destinations, as well as documentation of tours they have led or managed. This portfolio can be used to demonstrate their ability to promote tourist destinations and manage tours. Activities on social media that use platforms like Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok to share travel-related content can help alumni build followers and showcase their creativity in documenting their journeys. Travel companies often look for employees skilled in digital marketing and creative content to promote tourism products. An attractive LinkedIn profile is essential; alumni also need to maintain a professional and engaging LinkedIn profile that highlights skills, experiences, and achievements relevant to the tourism industry. They can request recommendations from previous supervisors or colleagues to enhance the validation of their skills.

Alumni should be proactive in seeking job opportunities and preparing applications that stand out among other applicants. By applying to travel companies, hotels, or travel agencies, alumni can directly apply to tour and travel companies, hotels, or airlines. Applying directly shows initiative and a desire to work at the company. By using job vacancy sites specifically for tourism, in addition to general sites like Jobstreet or LinkedIn, alumni can also utilize platforms that are tailored for the tourism industry, such as HOSCO, Hospitality Online, or IndoHHRMA. These sites provide job vacancies in the hospitality and tourism sector. Adjusting your CV and cover letter for each job application should be tailored to the position you are applying for. Alumni need to highlight the skills and experiences relevant to the position. For example, if applying for a tour guide position, it is advisable to highlight experience in guiding tour groups, communication skills, and knowledge of tourist destinations.

Taking advantage of freelance and project-based work, in the era of the digital economy, many graduates are starting their careers by working freelance or on a project basis to gain experience and build their portfolios. Travel planners or travel consultants, many individuals or companies need the services of professional travel planners. Experienced alumni can offer services for creating custom itineraries, accommodation suggestions, and travel recommendations to clients seeking a unique travel experience. Freelance tour guides, many popular tourist destinations, both domestic and international, require local tour guides. Alumni who have certification as tour guides can work freelance to lead groups of tourists and provide guidance on the history, culture, and attractions of the location. Content creators or travel writers, alumni with a talent for writing or creating visual content, can work as freelance writers for travel magazines, travel blogs, or other online media platforms. They can create content in the form of destination reviews, travel articles, or travel guides.

In addition to looking for jobs, some Tour & Travel alumni choose to start their own businesses. They leverage the skills they have learned in the tourism sector by innovating and creating new business opportunities, such as establishing an alumni travel agency that has a deep understanding of tourist destinations and travel logistics, often starting their business as a travel agent. They can offer innovative travel packages, such as cultural tours, adventure trips, or eco-tourism. The strategy used by alumni in the tour and travel industry to find jobs involves a combination of networking, skill development, personal branding, and proactivity in applying for positions. There are also alumni who choose to become entrepreneurs in the tourism sector, utilizing digital opportunities to market their services. With a holistic approach, alumni can enhance their competitiveness in the competitive job market and achieve a successful career in the tourism industry.

4. CONCLUSION

Most alumni feel that the education they received is quite relevant to the job market. However, there are also those who argue that the curriculum needs to be more aligned with the current needs of the industry, particularly in practical skills and technology. The internship experience during education greatly helps graduates gain an understanding of the real working world. Alumni who have internship experience tend to find it easier to get jobs because they already have a network and understanding of the industry. There are also some alumni who are facing difficulties in finding jobs, especially due to the high competition in the tourism industry, which is very dynamic and often affected by external factors such as the global economy or pandemics.

In addition, the lack of work experience or specific skills poses a challenge for some graduates. Communication skills, the ability to work in a team, and good negotiation skills are important factors in securing a job. Alumni with strong soft skills tend to be more valued by companies. The alumni network, whether with fellow alumni, professors, or industry representatives, plays a crucial role in helping alumni secure jobs. Many acknowledge that recommendations from insiders are very helpful in finding career opportunities. Some alumni choose to work outside the Tour & Travel field due to factors such as job availability, better compensation, or personal interest. This demonstrates the flexibility of alumni in adapting to the changing job market. Digital technology and social media play a significant role in job searching, both for building personal branding and finding job vacancies. Alumni who are skilled in using this technology usually find information and job opportunities more quickly. Some alumni suggest the importance of pursuing additional training or certifications outside of formal education to enhance their opportunities in the job market, especially in specific technical skills. Overall, the job-seeking experience of alumni from the Tour & Travel program is influenced by a combination of educational factors, experience, soft skills, and networking. Success in securing a job often requires extra effort in enhancing skills and expanding professional networks.

REFERENCES

- Ariyanti, L., Lestari, L. A., Maulida, L. N., Damanhuri, A., Aminin, Z., & Mustofa, A. (2023). Pelatihan Travel Writing Bagi Alumni Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris Universitas Negeri Surabaya. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat IPTEKS*, 9(2), 120–124.
- Asykur, A. M., Zulkarnain, D., & Darlinus, D. (2021). Dampak COVID-19 terhadap Penyelenggara Perjalanan Ibadah Umrah (PPIU) di Kota Bengkulu. *SEMB-J: Sharia Economic and Management Business Journal*, 2(1), 43–64.
- BENUA, P. B. D. B. (n.d.). *SENJAKALA PARIWISATA KONVENSIONAL*.
- Ilyas, Y., & Mujito, S. E. (2023). *Manajemen Strategik: Implementasi Strategi dalam Organisasi dan Bisnis*. Selat Media.
- Iramadhani, D., & Amalia, I. (2023). Gambaran Kesiapan Kerja pada Mahasiswa Tingkat Akhir Universitas Malikussaleh yang Terkena Dampak Pandemi COVID-19. *INSIGHT: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi*, 1(4), 732–743.
- Jie, B., Eric, E., Mervyn, D., Anggrianto, V., Kelvin, K., & Gabriella, C. (2023). Pemanfaatan Dan Dampak Penggunaan Teknologi Informasi Pada Bidang Sosial. *Journal of Information System and Technology (JOINT)*, 4(2), 392–397.
- Karim, J., & Muhtar, R. A. (2020). Pengembangan Sistem Informasi Data Alumni Siswa Pada Smk Negeri 1 Gorontalo Berbasis Android. *Jsai Issn*, 2614–3062.
- Lestari, D. A., & Kusumaputri, E. S. (2017). Perceived Employability: Peranan Career Calling dan Strategi Karir Sebagai Mediator. *Psikologika: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Penelitian Psikologi*, 22(1), 89–92.
- Lutfia, D. D., & Rahadi, D. R. (2020). Analisis Internship bagi peningkatan kompetensi mahasiswa. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Kesatuan*, 8(3), 199–204.