

## Conference Paper

# New Media Usage and the Intercultural Communication Competence among Hospitality Students in Surakarta

Sri Hastjarjo<sup>1</sup> and Anita Rahayu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>International Hotel Management School, Surakarta, Indonesia

## Abstract

This paper aims to address the readiness of hospitality students to face the challenges in the multinational trade and business environment by analyzing the level of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) among the students and how the use of new media for intercultural communication activities impacts on the development of ICC.

**Keywords:** hospitality education, intercultural communication, new media, students

Corresponding Author: Sri Hastjarjo; email: sri.hastjarjo@staff.uns.ac.id

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## 1. Background

The implementation of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 raises many questions about the challenges and impacts faced by enterprises in the region. This in turn questions the readiness of education/training institutions in preparing and equipping students with the necessary competencies for meeting the demands of a competitive multinational trade environment. In [7], reported that higher education graduates provide more satisfactory performance to their employers. In [9], proposed that, in order to meet the challenges, education institutions need to prepare their students to recognize their own culture and to respect other cultures different from their own- in other words the students must be equipped with intercultural communication skills. Intercultural Communication Competencies (ICC) is one of the capabilities that workers and professional need to facilitate their operations in the globalised economic system. Vocational education institutions, especially in the hospitality industries, would need to equip their students with the necessary ICC.

### 1.1. Intercultural Communication Competence

In [5, 6], defined intercultural communication as the study of communication from the cultural perspective, focusing on the value of effective interaction between individuals



of different cultures. Furthermore, [8] identified seven categories for effective cross-cultural communication, including display of respect, orientation to knowledge, empathy, role behavior, interaction management, tolerance for ambiguity, and interaction posture.

Other scholars have proposed instruments to measure the intercultural communication competence (ICC). In [2], identifies four dimensions in intercultural communication competence: personal attributes, communication skills, psychological adaptation, and cultural awareness. To measure those dimensions, [3] developed an instrument into which they include five traits: intercultural confidence, intercultural attention, intercultural empathy, ethnocentrism, and intercultural tolerance.

## 1.2. New Media Use

In the practice of intercultural communication, media is becoming an important channel for the participants [1]. The development of new media has presented a platform called "virtual community" in which people meet, share interests, and exchange social support using the internet [10]. In [4], argued that during intercultural communication, the use of new media (social networking sites) affects the participants' interactions with the dominant culture as well as their in-group communication.

This paper aims to address the readiness of hospitality students to face the challenges in the multinational trade and business environment by analyzing the level of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) among the students and how the use of the new media for intercultural communication activities has an impact on the development of ICC.

## 2. Method

A quantitative approach was used in the data collection and analysis. The sample (N = 256) was taken from the students of International Hotel Management School (HIS) in Surakarta, Indonesia from all classes (2013, 2014, and 2015). Data collection was conducted from May-June 2016, using self-administered questionnaires.

The research instrument comprised three main variables: demographics (year enrolled, sex, internship, interest), new media use in intercultural communication (using Likert scale), and intercultural communication competence (modified from [3]; using Likert scale). The data were analyzed using descriptive, simple linear regression, and Chi-square statistics.

Demographics	Frequency (Percent)			
Sex	Male		Female	
	150 (52.6)		135 (47.4)	
Enrolled to an Internship	Yes		No	
	138 (48.4)		147 (51.6)	
Interest in industry	Hotel	Tourism	Culinary	
	142 (49.8)	58 (20.4)	85 (29.8)	
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
New Media Use	8	25	12.15	2.881
Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC)	51	80	63.13	5.967
<b>Dimensions of the ICC</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
Intercultural Attention	7	15	11.06	1.534
Intercultural Confidence	10	20	14.09	1.845
Intercultural Empathy	6	14	10,35	1.453
Ethnocentrism	6	15	11,09	1,881
Intercultural Tolerance	12	20	16.53	2.004

TABLE 1: Description of the research variables (N = 285).

### 3. Finding and Discussion

The finding of the study will be divided into three main parts: the description of the variables, the effect of demographic factors on the level of ICC, and the effect of new media use on the level of ICC.

#### 3.1. Description of the Variables

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistic of each variables measured in this study, including the breakdown of the ICC dimensions. The media use variable consists of 7 items. The ICC scale consists of totally 24 items, divided into five dimensions: IC attention (3 items), IC confidence (4 items), IC empathy (3 items), ethnocentrism (3 items), and IC tolerance (4 items).

From Table 1, it can be found that the composition of sample is similar between male and female students, as well as between those who have enrolled in the internship program and those who have not. The more significant difference can be seen in the students' interest, which is dominated by the hotel industry (49.8%), followed by the

	Sex		Internship		Interest
<b>Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC)</b>	1.103	sig. 0.576	0.332	sig. 0.847	8.135 sig. 0.087
<b>Intercultural Attention</b>	1.495	sig. 0.474	0.953	sig. 0.621	3.459 sig. 0.484
<b>Intercultural Confidence</b>	4.980	sig. 0.083	3.909	sig. 0.142	2.978 sig. 0.562
<b>Intercultural Empathy</b>	0.352	sig. 0.839	1.009	sig. 0.604	5.602 sig. 0.231
<b>Ethnocentrism</b>	2.486	sig. 0.289	0.421	sig. 0.810	7.180 sig. 0.127
<b>Intercultural Tolerance</b>	0.861	sig. 0.650	2.771	sig. 0.250	1.001 sig. 0.910

TABLE 2: Results of Chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>).

culinary industry (29.8%). The level of new media use for intercultural communication by the students is in the lower level (mean = 12.15).

The mean score of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) among the students is at medium level (mean = 63.13). When the ICC is broken-down into its five dimensions, this study finds that intercultural attention (mean = 11.06), intercultural empathy (mean = 10.35), and ethnocentrism (mean = 11.09) are in the medium level; while intercultural confidence (mean = 14.09) and intercultural tolerance (mean = 16.53) are at high level. We can conclude that the students have a high level of confidence to conduct intercultural communication as well as a high-level tolerance when encountering people from other cultural background.

### 3.2. Variation of ICC Based on Demographic Variables

Table 2 presents the results of Chi-square statistics for determining the differences of ICC scores based on the demographic variables (sex, internship, and interest).

From Table 2, it can be seen that the results of Chi-square tests do not demonstrate any significant differences or variations of both total ICC scores and ICC dimensions among the students. It can be concluded that based on the sex, enrollment in internship program, and interest in industry, there is no difference of ICC level. All the students, regardless of their demographic backgrounds, possess a medium level of Intercultural Communication Competence.

	R	R Square	F	B	t	sig.
Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC)	0.251	0.063	19.059	0.520	4.366	0.000
Intercultural Attention	0.190	0.036	10.603	0.101	3.256	0.001
Intercultural Confidence	0.372	0.139	45.542	0.238	6.748	0.000
Intercultural Empathy	0.195	0.038	11.220	0.098	3.350	0.001
Ethnocentrism	0.001	0.000	0.003	-0.002	-0.540	0.957
Intercultural Tolerance	0.121	0.015	4.223	0.084	2.055	0.041

TABLE 3: Linear regression with New Media Use as the predictor.

### 3.3. Influence of New Media Use on the Intercultural Communication Competence

Table 3 presents the results of linear regression statistic to determine the influence of new media use among the students on their ICC scores.

From Table 3, it can be found that new media use for intercultural communication can be used as predictor of the level of intercultural communication competence ( $t=4,366$ ), despite the quite small effect of new media use on increasing ICC (6,3%). There are still other variables affecting the level of ICC, those variables excluded from this particular study. Although new media use is low, it can be concluded that the model used in this study is sufficient to propose that the use of new media in intercultural communication activities has certain effect on increasing the level of intercultural communication competence.

Comparing the results of each five dimensions of ICC, this study finds that the new media use does not affect the ethnocentrism among the students. The new media use affects the other four ICC dimensions, with the highest score occurring in the IC confidence (13.9%), followed by IC empathy (3.8%), IC attention (3.6%), and IC tolerance (1.5%). The use of new media in the intercultural communication activities has significant effect on boosting the student’s confidence in communicating with other people from different cultural background.

## 4. Conclusion

This paper has described the level of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) among the hospitality students and examined the influence of demographics and new media use on the students’ ICC. This study concludes that:

1. The level of ICC among the students in this study is at medium level, meaning that they still have to be more prepared and equipped with intercultural communication skills in order to face the demands and challenges of the new-multinational industries and enterprises.
2. The use of new media for intercultural communication activities has a proven effect on increasing the level of ICC, especially in boosting the confidence of the students to engage in communication/interaction with other people from different cultural background.
3. The use of new media for intercultural communication activities among the students is at the low level, meaning that the students have not use the new media to start and maintain communication/ interaction with people from other culture.
4. From point b and c of conclusion, this study suggests that the students need to be encouraged and trained to use the new media, especially the social network sites, to initiate, engage, and maintain communication and interaction with people from other culture, in order to increase the students' intercultural communication competence.

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