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Mediating Effect of Cross-Cultural Competency on International Experiences and Self-Efficacy among Hotel Employees

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ABSTRACT

Despite the importance of cross-cultural competency in the hospitality and tourism industry, minimal information is available regarding its antecedents and consequences. Accordingly, by uniquely adopting and integrating experiential learning theory and a cultural competency model, the present study explored the mechanisms that underlie cross-cultural competency, international experiences, and self-efficacy. The hypothesized relationships were tested via partial least squares–structural equation modeling using survey data from hotel employees. Results showed that the international experiences of employees positively predicted their cross-cultural competencies (i.e., metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions). Moreover, motivational and behavioral competencies fully mediated the relationship between international experiences and self-efficacy.

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Introduction

International travel has exhibited strong growth, with a worldwide annual increase of 4% over the last seven years and a particularly remarkable growth of 7% in 2017 (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2018). With the rapid globalization of the industry, management and employees are required to interact intensively with customers and colleagues from different cultural backgrounds (Devine, Baum, Hearn, & Devine, 2007). Simultaneously, the international travel boom may uncover unexpected cultural gaps among tourists and employees (Reisinger & Turner, 2002); hence, the concern on whether the hospitality and tourism industry is prepared to cater to guests from a wide range of cultural backgrounds remains. Recognizing the significance of cultural diversity, the industry and international organizations have highlighted the importance of cross-cultural

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competency, which is the ability to adapt to and manage culturally diverse situations (Bruell, 2013; Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2016; UNESCO, 2009).

When learning about other cultures, experience is known to be a particularly effective tool than other forms of learning (Winslade, 2016). Exposure to diverse cultures helps individuals gain cultural values, norms, and beliefs; in addition, international experiences increase a person's familiarity with other cultures, which can eventually lead to a profound awareness of culture, and consequently, to cross-cultural competency (Crowne, 2008; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004).

The experiential learning model proposed by Kolb (1984) claims that individuals can learn and gain desirable learning outcomes through experiences; thus, the theory can conceptually explain that individuals can develop cross-cultural competency through international experiences (i.e., the relationship between international experiences and cultural competency). Moreover, the idea that international experiences and competency in cross-cultural domains (i.e., cultural competency) further lead to employees' perception on general competency can be accurately captured in the concept of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy predicts individual success in work settings (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). It is particularly significant in the hotel industry. Employees must frequently provide service proactively and voluntarily, which requires a substantial degree of self-efficacy (Raub & Liao, 2012). Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) posits that the mastery of experiences enhances self-efficacy.

Prior studies have investigated the overall concept of cross-cultural competency in terms of its definition, components, and measurement instruments (Early & Ang, 2003). The previous hospitality and tourism literature has emphasized the importance of employees' international experiences (Jauhari, 2006). However, investigations on cross-cultural competency as a research construct (e.g., Sizoo, Plank, Iskat, & Serrie, 2005; Sucher & Cheung, 2015) have been minimal. Accordingly, the present study examines the link among international experiences, cross-cultural competency, and self-efficacy in the hotel industry.

Despite the scarcity of empirical research in the hospitality literature, relevant ground theories have been recognized. Kolb (1984) proposed the experiential learning model in which individuals can learn and gain learning outcomes (i.e., cross-cultural competency in the current study). Ang et al. (2007) developed a model that verified the relationship between cross-cultural competency and work-related outcomes.

Thus, the objectives of the present study are as follows. First, it aims to investigate the structural relationship among international experiences, the four subdimensions of cross-cultural competency (i.e., metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral competencies), and self-efficacy. Second, it

intends to examine the mediating role of cross-cultural competency in the relationship between international experiences and self-efficacy.

The present study contributes to the literature by integrating experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) and a cross-cultural competency model (Ang et al., 2007) and by exploring 1) cross-cultural competency via international experiences and 2) the relationship between cross-cultural competency and work-related outcomes, such as self-efficacy.

Theoretical Framework

Workforce Management in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry

Given the labor-intensive nature of the hospitality and tourism sector, workforce management has been emphasized as an essential function in the industry (Grobler & Diedericks, 2009). Moreover, Baum (2008) proposed a complicated “skills bundle” because the industry requires emotional, aesthetic, and informational processes. In this regard, several researchers have investigated competencies in the international context. Kriegl (2000) and Bharwani and Jauhari (2013) drew attention to cross-cultural competency and cultural sensitivity, whereas D’Annunzio-Green (2002) and Velo and Mittaz (2006) added cultural awareness as a key factor in management development. However, the antecedents and consequences of cross-cultural competencies in the context of the hospitality and tourism industry have not yet been examined in the literature.

Experiential Learning Theory

Drawing from Dewey’s foundational theory of experience (Dewey, 1986), researchers have developed a theoretical model for experiential learning (e.g., Jarvis, 1987; Kolb, 1984). Kolb (1984) suggested that experience influences learning and the development of an individual’s ability.

International experiences are defined as interactions or encounters with people from other cultures (Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008). Cross-cultural competency refers to effective management ability in a culturally diverse context (Ang et al., 2007; Early & Ang, 2003) or an individual’s capability to understand cultural issues, particularly in cross-cultural encounters (Alshaibani & Bakir, 2017). Ang et al. (2007) suggested the four core elements of cross-cultural competency: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral. Metacognitive cross-cultural competency is the process of acquiring and understanding cultural knowledge. A person with high metacognitive cross-cultural competency tends to demonstrate cultural consciousness and awareness during inter-cultural interactions. Cognitive cross-cultural competency is the capability to learn a social system in other

cultures. Motivational cross-cultural competency refers to the mental skill to sustain energy for learning and acting in a cross-cultural situation. Lastly, behavioral cross-cultural competency is the ability to implement flexible verbal and nonverbal actions in cross-cultural encounters.

Experiential learning theory posits that the transformation of experience undergoes the process of creating knowledge (Kolb & Kolb, 2009), which is a foundation for competency (Pemberton & Stonehouse, 2000). In the context of international experiences and cultural competency, experiential learning theory implies that international experiences that inevitably involve encounters with different cultures positively suggest cultural competency. Through international experiences, individuals can improve cross-cultural awareness and develop a profound perspective of cultural diversity (Crowne, 2008). Consistent with this proposition, prior research has confirmed a positive relationship between employees' international experiences and cultural adjustment (e.g., Lee & Sukoco, 2010). Top managers from globalizing firms gain confidence to conduct foreign assignments and build cross-cultural competency through their international experiences (Reuber & Fischer, 1997; Selmer, 2002). Li, Mobley, and Kelly (2013) found that acquired international experiences enhance the perceived cultural norm. Chae, Park, Kang, and Lee (2012) reported that the prior international experiences of nurses are associated with their cultural knowledge.

Accordingly, experiential learning theory and the findings of previous empirical studies lead to the following hypotheses:

H1: Employees' international experiences positively predict their cross-cultural competencies (H1a, metacognitive competency; H1b, cognitive competency; H1c, motivational competency; and H1d, behavioral competency).

Cross-cultural Competency Model

Early and Ang (2003) asserted that cross-cultural competency is the process of responding effectively to different cultures, languages, races, religions, and other diversity factors. Thereafter, Ang et al. (2007) developed a cross-cultural competency model with three different outcomes: cognitive, affective, and performance. This model claims that individuals with high cross-cultural competency possess appropriate cultural knowledge and behavior, and they are expected to exhibit high work-related effectiveness (Hong, 2010; Sucher & Cheung, 2015).

In accordance with Bandura's social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is the ability of a person to mobilize motivation and cognitive resources to succeed (Bandura, 2001). In terms of functional aspects, efficacy and outcome expectancies are suggested. Efficacy expectancy is the conviction of an individual's ability to perform successfully. Outcome expectancy is the estimation of a person's behavior toward certain outcomes. A strong belief in one's capability leads to a person's self-efficacy level.

People with high self-efficacy produce significant organizational output (Bandura & Cervone, 1986), whereas those with low self-efficacy perceive the same task as more difficult than it actually is (Sousa, Coelho, & Guillamon-Saorin, 2012). Prior studies have shown that self-efficacy is correlated with various work-related outcomes such as sales (e.g., Barling & Beattie, 1983), service quality (Hartline & Ferrell, 1996), selling a new product (Fu, Richards, Hughes, & Jones, 2010), proactivity and proficiency of leadership (e.g., Strauss, Griffin, & Rafferty, 2009), and work adjustment (e.g., Harrison, Chadwick, & Scales, 1996).

The extant literature uses two different dimensions of self-efficacy: (1) general self-efficacy in generic situations and (2) specific self-efficacy in a given situation (e.g., Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Lee & Bobko, 1994). General self-efficacy, which is an accumulation process of a person's various experiences (Judge, Erez, & Bono, 1998), is a trait-like generality concept (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001). A highly generalized self-efficacy can lead to considerable success across various task domains (Judge et al., 1998). Therefore, considering the context of the present study, general self-efficacy is expected to relate to the four dimensions of cross-cultural competencies.

Metacognitive and cognitive cross-cultural competencies are based on cultural knowledge, which is the basic construct of cultural values (Ang et al., 2007). As knowledge increases, the confidence to complete a task also increases (Rehg, Gundlach, & Grigorian, 2012). Imai and Gelfand (2010) found that individuals with high motivational cross-cultural competency are confident because they understand the appropriate behaviors in culturally diverse situations, and consequently, they attain a high self-efficacy level. The preceding discussion leads to the following hypotheses:

H2: Employees' cross-cultural competencies (H2a, metacognitive competency; H2b, cognitive competency; H2c, motivational competency; and H2d, behavioral competency) positively predict their self-efficacy.

International Experiences and Self-efficacy

The current study proposes a positive association between international experiences and self-efficacy in this section. This positive link can trace its conceptual ground from Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which explains that an individual's experiential learning process is the process through which he/she develops and adapts his/her attitude and further performance (i.e., an outcome) through experiences. In addition, the study of Kraiger, Ford, and Salas (1993) offered a stance to view self-efficacy; self-efficacy was presented as one of the affective learning outcomes when the authors proposed several learning outcomes.

Moreover, a number of earlier studies have provided conceptual or empirical support for the positive link. Inkson, Arthur, Pringle, and Barry (1997) established that experience positively influences career development and self-confidence building; here, self-efficacy can be regarded as close to self-confidence. Bandura (2001) asserted that experience develops self-efficacy. Gist and Mitchell (1992) argued that self-efficacy enhances task accuracy and demonstrates a stable attitude by gaining experiences. In addition, the influences of emotional experience (e.g., Litt, 1988) and career experience (e.g., Klassen & Chiu, 2010) on self-efficacy have been presented. Moreover, Tihanyi, Ellstrand, Daily, and Dalton (2000) suggested that the international experiences of employees can reduce anxiety, and thus, ultimately lead to success in work performance and confidence in an organization. In the latter, self-efficacy can be assumed to be enhanced, given that numerous researchers have utilized self-efficacy as a variable to study work-related outcomes and job performance (e.g., Arnold, Flaherty, Voss, & Mowen, 2009; Strauss et al., 2009). Consequently, a conceptual link from experience to self-efficacy can be supported.

However, the direct relationship between international experiences and self-efficacy lacks research attention. Moreover, considering the notion that self-efficacy is constructed with personal motivation and goals, the level and strength of the influence of an experience on self-efficacy may vary (Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

Nevertheless, on the basis of the aforementioned collective arguments, international experiences can also be considered to derive a significant development of work-related outcomes, such as self-efficacy. Hence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Employees' international experiences positively predict their self-efficacy.

Mediating Effect of Cross-cultural Competency

Apart from its direct predicting effect on self-efficacy, cross-cultural competency may mediate the relationship between international experiences and self-efficacy. Prior research has suggested the big five personality traits (e.g., Moody, 2007) and international experiences (e.g., Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepak, 2005) as important antecedents to cross-cultural competency. Several studies have investigated the effects of cross-cultural competency on cultural judgment and decision-making (Ang et al., 2007), cultural adaptation (Ang et al., 2007), task performance (Ang et al., 2007), team performance (Sucher & Cheung, 2015), social networks (Fehr & Kuo, 2008), and creative performance (Darvishmotevali, Altinay, & De Vita, 2018). In a multilevel study, Oolders, Chernyshenko, and Stark (2008) confirmed the possible mediating effects of cross-cultural competency between personal traits and adaptive

performance. Lee, Masuda, Fu, and Reiche (2018) reported that cross-cultural competency mediates the relationship among multiple cultural identities (i.e., home, host, and global identities) in leadership. In summary, empirical evidence suggests the antecedent and consequent variables of cross-cultural competency. From the preceding discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Employees' cross-cultural competencies (H4a, metacognitive competency; H4b, cognitive competency; H4c, motivational competency; and H4d, behavioral competency) mediate the relationship between international experiences and self-efficacy.

Methodology

Data Collection

The present study used data collected from the employees of 14 hotels (i.e., 5 international brand hotels and 9 local brand hotels) in Korea in May 2017 using a convenience sampling method. Baker et al. (2013) indicated that convenience sampling is a common sample selection method at the participants' convenience without using any force. In the hospitality and tourism literature, convenience sampling has been adopted predominantly (e.g., Gu & Siu, 2009; Huertas-Valdivia, Gallego-Burín, & Lloréns-Montes, 2019) to obtain large numbers of questionnaires in a timely manner. In particular, convenience sampling is regarded useful in exploratory research for assessing presumable relationships among variables and guiding detailed investigations in the future (Sarstedt, Bengart, Shaltoni, & Lehmann, 2018).

To conduct the survey, the members of the research team directly contacted several hotel managers through their personal networks. Among the contacted hotels, 11 allowed the researchers to conduct a survey with their employees. For the remaining three hotels, the research team directly approached employees and invited those who were willing to participate in the survey. After obtaining their consent to participate, the hotel managers distributed the questionnaires to their employees, whereas the researchers distributed the questionnaires to the employees whom they contacted directly. The survey packet included a cover page that explained the purpose of the study and an assurance of the participants' anonymity and the confidentiality of their answers. The respondents placed the completed questionnaires in sealed envelopes and returned them to their managers or the researchers. The managers then returned the collected survey to the researchers. A total of 230 self-administered structured questionnaires were distributed, and 221 questionnaires were returned. After eliminating unusable responses, 202 valid questionnaires remained (i.e., a valid response rate of 87.9%). The respondents' profiles covered various departments and job

positions, presenting a gender composition of 90 females (44.6%) and 112 males (55.4%) and a department composition of front office (30.2%), banquet sales (19.3%), and food and beverage (17.8%), as indicated in [Table 1](#).

With regard to sample size, various suggestions by scholars, e.g., 200 for multiple regression analysis by Israel (1992), 30 to 500 by Roscoe (1975), and no rule of thumb for a sample size in structural equation models by Tanaka (1987), have been reviewed. Mainly following the rule of thumb of Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010) in which a minimum observation of five times is suggested for the number of variables (i.e., 5 times \times 45 measurement items = 225) and after discussing the maximum number of accepted questionnaires with the hotel managers, 230 questionnaires were distributed.

Operationalization of Measures

The survey consisted of 45 measurement items and eight general questions: 17 questions measured international experiences, 20 questions measured cross-cultural competency, eight questions measured self-efficacy, and eight questions were about the demographics and profile of the respondents. All the participants were working in Korea; hence, the entire questionnaire was translated from English to Korean and then back-translated to English by two bilingual experts to ensure the quality of translation and the equivalence of meaning (Brislin, 1970). To assess international experiences, three academic experts (i.e., two university professors outside the research team and one researcher from the research team) were invited to review Ward's (1996) cross-cultural experience checklist. A total of 17 items were then adopted and used in the present study to fit the hotel employees. These items were measured using a rating scale with "1 (yes)" and "0 (no)" as binary values (Appendix). The total number of "1 (yes)" responses measured the respondents' international experience level. In accordance with Chang (1994) and Chomeya (2010), cross-cultural competency and self-efficacy were measured using a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from "1 (strongly disagree)" to "6 (strongly agree)." A 6-point Likert scale tends to achieve high reliability and discrimination by instructing respondents to choose between "agree" and "disagree" (Chang, 1994; Chomeya, 2010). The present study adopted the 20 items for cross-cultural competency developed by Ang et al. (2007). For self-efficacy, eight items from Chen et al. (2001) were used.

Data Analysis

Several steps were conducted in the analysis: (1) descriptive analysis, (2) exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and (3) partial least squares (PLS)-structural equation modeling (SEM). First, a frequency analysis showed the respondents' characteristics. Second, a principal component analysis (PCA)

Table 1. Respondents' profiles (N = 202).

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>			<i>Job Position</i>		
Male	112	55.4	Staff	57	28.2
Female	90	44.6	Senior Staff	32	15.8
<i>Age</i>			Chief	6	3.0
20–29	56	27.7	Assistant Manager	26	12.9
30–39	65	32.2	Manager	30	14.9
40–49	54	26.7	Deputy General Manager	20	9.9
50 or above	27	13.4	General Manager or Upper Level	23	11.4
<i>Education Level</i>			Others	8	4.0
High school	17	8.4	<i>Employment Status</i>		
College (2–3 years)	42	20.8	Full-time & permanent	160	79.2
University (4 years)	121	59.9	Full-time & contracted	36	17.8
Graduate School	22	10.9	Internship	6	3.0
<i>Department</i>			<i>Work Experience</i>		
Front Office	61	30.2	Less than 1 year	28	13.9
Food & Beverage	36	17.8	1 – less than 3 years	28	13.9
Culinary	14	6.9	3 – less than 5 years	22	10.9
Security Facilities	4	2.0	5 – less than 10 years	32	15.8
HR/Finance/Purchasing	14	6.9	10 years or more	92	45.5
Housekeeping	4	2.0	<i>Hotel Rate</i>		
Banquet Sales	39	19.3	2 Star	12	5.9
Administration Office	15	7.4	3 Star	4	2.0
Fitness & Spa	15	7.4	4 Star	72	35.6
			5 Star	114	56.4

was performed with promax rotation to identify the underlying dimensions. Third, PLS–SEM was used to test the proposed hypotheses. PLS–SEM exhibits several key advantages. (1) PLS is desirable for the initial stages of theory building and the addition of new constructs that have not been previously tested (Ali, Kim, Li, & Cobanoglu, 2018; Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). (2) PLS–SEM offers unbiased model estimation with non-normal and normal distribution properties (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). (3) PLS–SEM imposes minimal restrictions on measurement scales, sample size, and residual distribution. PLS–SEM focuses on maximizing the variance explained from endogenous variables (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2012). The present study intends to explore the under-investigated relationships among international experiences, cross-cultural competency, and self-efficacy in the hospitality and tourism context rather than confirm an existing theory. Therefore, PLS–SEM was appropriate for testing the hypothesis. Considering that demographic characteristics may affect cross-cultural competency and self-efficacy (Chae et al., 2012; Klassen & Chiu, 2010), variables, such as gender, age, education, and job position, were controlled.

Results

Characteristics of the Respondents and EFA

A factor analysis was conducted for cross-cultural competency and self-efficacy. However, given that one item exhibited a factor loading lower than 0.4 (BE1: I change my verbal behavior, e.g., accent, tone, when a cross-cultural interaction requires it), this item was excluded (Stevens, 2002). Thereafter, the factor analysis produced a five-factor solution that explained 76.127% of the variance, thereby identifying five domains: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioral cross-cultural competencies, and self-efficacy.

Hypothesis Testing

The validity and reliability of the measures were assessed using multiple approaches (Table 2). All the measurements were subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test their validity. Then, Cronbach's alpha, average variance extracted (AVE), factor loadings, and composite reliability were evaluated. For all the constructs, the Cronbach's alpha and factor loadings reached values above the required thresholds of 0.7 and 0.5, respectively. Composite reliability was above the required threshold of 0.7. AVE exceeded the threshold of 0.5 for all the constructs, thereby confirming convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010). The square roots of the AVE values for each construct were higher than the corresponding interconstruct correlations, thereby confirming discriminant

Table 2. Full measurement model.

Factor and indicators	Standardized factor loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha
<i>International experience</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<i>Meta-cognitive</i>	0.716	0.909	0.909	0.907
(MC1) I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.	0.906			
(MC2) I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me.	0.882			
(MC3) I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.	0.850			
(MC4) I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures.	0.735			
<i>Cognitive</i>		0.598	0.899	0.901
(COG1) I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.	0.774			
(COG2) I know the rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages.	0.875			
(COG3) I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.	0.769			
(COG4) I know the marriage systems of other cultures.	0.747			
(COG5) I know the arts and crafts of other cultures.	0.643			
(COG6) I know the rules for expressing nonverbal behaviors in other cultures.	0.814			
<i>Motivational</i>		0.691	0.918	0.918
(MOT1) I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	0.793			
(MOT2) I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.	0.788			
(MOT3) I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.	0.795			
(MOT4) I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me.	0.899			
(MOT5) I am confident that I can get accustomed to the shopping conditions in a different Culture.	0.876			
<i>Behavioral</i>		0.728	0.913	0.912
(BEH2) I use pause and silence differently to suit different cross-cultural situations.	0.660			
(BEH3) I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it.	0.890			
(BEH4) I change my nonverbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it.	0.869			
(BEH5) I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.	0.964			
<i>Self-efficacy</i>		0.723	0.954	0.954
(SE1) I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.	0.882			
(SE2) When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.	0.868			
(SE3) In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.	0.924			
(SE4) I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind.	0.872			
(SE5) I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.	0.860			
(SE6) I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.	0.869			
(SE7) Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.	0.765			
(SE8) Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.	0.749			

validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Table 3). Subsequently, a nonparametric Stone–Geisser’s Q^2 test was conducted to evaluate the quality of the structural model and its predictive relevance (Geisser, 1974). The Q^2 value was obtained using the blindfolding procedure in PLS–SEM in which a certain number of cases were omitted from the sample; subsequently, the model parameters were estimated to identify the omitted values (Doh, Park, & Kim, 2017). All the Q^2 values were higher than 0 (Table 4), which confirmed that the model exhibited predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2016).

The structural model was finally estimated using a consistent bootstrap resampling method, and p -values were obtained (Figure 1). Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d were supported: international experiences positively predicted metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral cross-cultural competencies ($\beta = 0.377$, $\beta = 0.448$, $\beta = 0.416$, and $\beta = 0.267$, respectively; $p < .01$). Thus, employees with diverse global experiences are expected to possess better knowledge regarding appropriate behavior and confidence in the cross-cultural context.

Meanwhile, Hypotheses 2a and 2b were not supported ($\beta = 0.223$ and $\beta = -0.144$, respectively; all $p > .05$). Hypotheses 2c and 2d were supported. Motivational and behavioral competencies positively predicted self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.377$ and $\beta = 0.209$, respectively; all $p < .05$). That is, knowledge-based skills exert a relatively limited predicting effect on employees’ self-efficacy compared with motivational and behavioral competencies. For the control variables, gender negatively affected metacognitive competency and self-efficacy ($\beta = -0.169$ and $\beta = -0.171$, respectively; all $p < .05$).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlations.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean	SD
1. Working experience	1.000						6.86	3.83
2. Meta-cognitive	0.397**	0.846					3.94	1.00
3. Cognitive	0.419**	0.670**	0.773				3.39	0.95
4. Motivational	0.419**	0.720**	0.674**	0.831			3.94	1.10
5. Behavioral	0.266**	0.500**	0.452**	0.575**	0.853		4.19	0.98
6. Self-efficacy	0.173*	0.493**	0.358**	0.517**	0.420**	0.850	4.53	0.90

Note. Items on the diagonal (in bold) represent squared root of AVE scores. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 4. Results of predictive relevance.

	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (1-SSE/SSO)
Meta-cognitive	808.00	698.691	0.135
Cognitive	1212.00	1077.11	0.111
Motivational	1010.00	879.64	0.129
Behavioral	808.00	762.366	0.056
Self-efficacy	1616.00	1176.99	0.272

Notes: SSO refers to sum of squares of observations for one manifest variable; SSE refers to sum of squared prediction errors for one manifest variable.

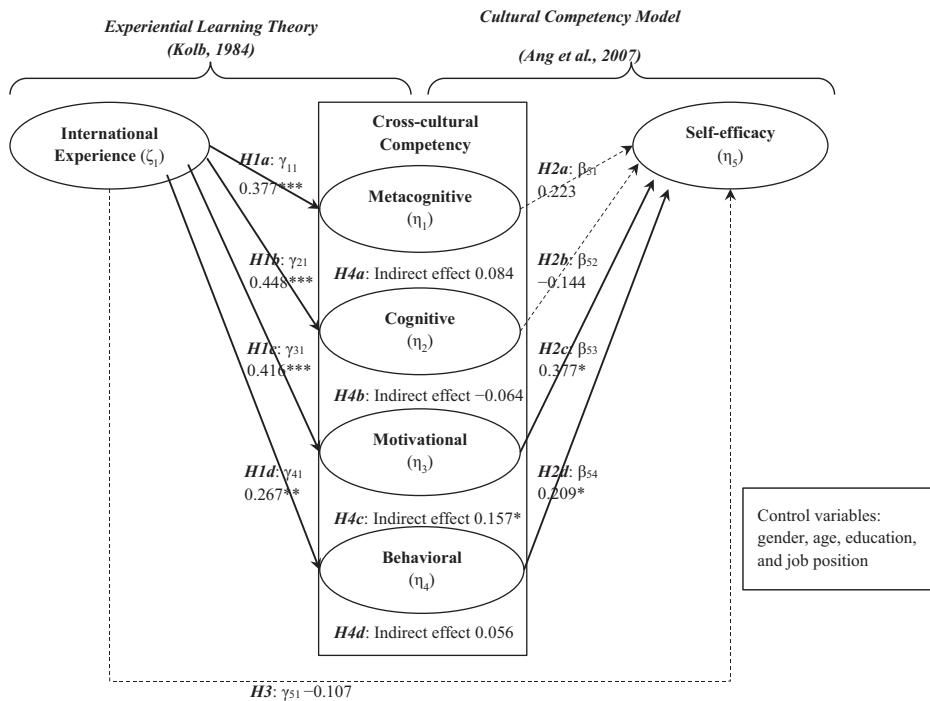


Figure 1. Results of the structural model. $N = 202$, the number of bootstrap resamples = 5,000. For simplicity, the paths related to the control variables are not shown in the figure. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

H3 was not supported ($\beta = -0.107$; $p > .05$). This result further suggests that experience does not directly affect a person's belief in his/her ability to accomplish a task. To further investigate the mediating role of cross-cultural competency, the present study conducted bootstrapping analysis, because it is more powerful and rigorous than a Sobel test (Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010). If the indirect and direct effects are significant, then the findings indicate the presence of partial mediation. However, if the direct effect is insignificant, then the results confirm full mediation (Hair et al., 2010). The findings indicate that international experiences indirectly predict self-efficacy only through motivational cross-cultural competency (CI: 0.033–0.316; Table 5). Given that no significant direct relationship exists between international experience and self-efficacy, the findings indicate that motivational cross-cultural competency fully mediates the predicting effect of international experiences on self-efficacy. Hence, Hypothesis 4c was supported, whereas Hypotheses 4a, 4b, and 4d were not supported. The mediating role of cross-cultural competency suggests that employees with international experiences demonstrate their self-efficacy only through intrinsic interest, i.e., motivational cross-cultural competency.



Table 5. Hypothesis-testing results.

Regression path	Path coefficient	t-value	p-value
H1a: International experience → Meta-cognitive	0.377	5.059***	0.000
H1b: International experience → Cognitive	0.448	5.765***	0.000
H1c: International experience → Motivational	0.416	5.387***	0.000
H1d: International experience → Behavioral	0.267	3.202**	0.001
H2a: Meta-cognitive → Self-efficacy	0.223	1.633	0.103
H2b: Cognitive → Self-efficacy	-0.144	1.129	0.259
H2c: Motivational → Self-efficacy	0.377	2.583*	0.010
H2d: Behavioral → Self-efficacy	0.209	2.575*	0.010
H3: International experience → Self-efficacy	-0.107	1.656	0.098
Indirect paths	Indirect effect	t-value	Low CI^a
H4a: International experience → Meta cognitive → Self-efficacy	0.084	1.516	-0.017
H4b: International experience → Cognitive → Self-efficacy	-0.064	1.072	-0.19
H4c: International experience → Motivational → Self-efficacy	0.157	2.221*	0.033
H4d: International experience → Behavioral → Self-efficacy	0.056	1.859	0.007
			High CI
			0.201
			0.039
			0.316
			0.125

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, ^a95% confidence intervals (CI) obtained via bootstrapping.

CC: Cross-cultural competency

Discussions and Implications

Discussions

Considering that the hospitality and tourism industry is continuously being globalized in terms of clientele and human capital, cultural diversity is an ongoing issue, which makes the findings of the present study meaningful for workforce management. The hypothesized relationships were developed on the basis of the theoretical framework of experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) and a cultural competency model (Ang et al., 2007) and supported by the empirical data from the present study. The study results are significant because they approve the continuity of experiences that lead to future action constructs (Dewey, 1986) in the hospitality and tourism setting. In the present study, international experiences provide the source of learning. Through experiences, hotel employees observe and interact directly to adapt to a situation wherein they face intensive exposure to culturally diverse customers and colleagues. Real-time cultural experiences may differ from expectations; thus, individuals may utilize cultural norms or knowledge to enhance metacognitive cross-cultural competency. Moreover, international hotel employees exhibit an interest in cultures and people (i.e., motivational cross-cultural competency) and demonstrate appropriate actions when interacting with people from diverse cultures (i.e., behavioral cross-cultural competency). Therefore, international experiences fulfill a significant and unique function in the advancement of cross-cultural competency. Meanwhile, Kolb's (1984) assertion that individuals' varying characteristics (e.g., different personalities, educational backgrounds/experiences, and current job tasks/roles) affect their learning outcomes and levels can possibly explain the insignificant relationship of self-efficacy to metacognitive and cognitive cross-cultural competencies from the study results (Figure 1).

Although a few studies in the hospitality and tourism literature have recognized the importance of international experiences (e.g., Jauhari, 2006; Velo & Mittaz, 2006) and cross-cultural competency (e.g., Kriegl, 2000), these studies were exploratory and identified these skills as required for industry practitioners without conducting further investigation. Therefore, the present study is the first to establish an integrated investigation of hotel employees' international experiences and cross-cultural competency with self-efficacy.

Theoretical Implications

The present study has several theoretical implications. First, the study empirically tests and supports the experiential learning model (Kolb, 1984), which indicates that experiences are transformed into certain knowledge, skills, or capabilities (Kolb & Kolb, 2009), and thus, exert a continuing effect on future actions (Dewey, 1986). In the hospitality and tourism discipline,

experience-based training programs are prevalent in the field but rarely examined in the academe. Therefore, the present study is significant to confirm the transformative effect of experiences on skills and capabilities, particularly in mental and behavioral forms; metacognitive, cognitive, and motivational cross-cultural competencies are considered mental; whereas behavioral cross-cultural competency is behavioral (Ang et al., 2007).

Second, the study results posit that the path relationship from international experiences to self-efficacy requires cross-cultural competencies as a full mediator between international experiences and self-efficacy. This fully mediating path offers critical insights into the materialization of the predicting effect of experiences on self-efficacy (i.e., mediators must exist between them) and the limitation of the direct transforming/continuity effect of experiences. Meanwhile, a few prior studies (e.g., Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Litt, 1988) have asserted the direct effect of experiences on self-efficacy. Litt (1988) conceptually proposed that stress experiences influence an increase in self-efficacy when an individual copes with stress in the hospitality setting. Klassen and Chiu (2010) determined that teachers' working years exert an adverse U-shaped effect on their self-efficacy. These studies have attempted to explain the link between experiences and self-efficacy. However, the results of the present study indicate that unknown mechanisms may exist behind the link because of the role of a full mediator. Therefore, certain contexts will limit the direct predicting effect of experiences on self-efficacy.

Managerial Implications

The findings of the present study have practical implications for management and educators. Companies can cultivate their employees' cultural competency by developing various international experience programs, such as internal cross-cultural events, cross-cultural workshops, international conferences, and overseas job opportunities. For example, Hilton Worldwide, through its Diversity and Inclusion Statement, is promoting and further strategically communicating diversity and cultural understanding as its strategic vision; consequently, Hilton Worldwide is considered a genuinely caring group of hotel employees from different cultural backgrounds and races (Hilton Worldwide, 2018). Moreover, companies can sell their organizations as attractive ones, which can become a strong internal marketing tool to promote employees' self-efficacy, pride (Arnett, Laverie, & McLane, 2002), satisfaction (Arnett et al., 2002), and clear role expectation (Ang et al., 2007). On the side of education, educators can utilize various channels, such as exchange programs and overseas internships, for trainees and students to gain diverse international experiences. Crowne (2008) suggested partnerships between companies and universities to offer internships abroad and scholarships to nurture potential talented staff among students. The diverse

international considerations from organizations and educators will ultimately produce a competent global workforce.

Lastly, the results of the present study provide practical insights into human resource professionals with respect to the four subdimensions of cross-cultural competency, unlike in previous studies (Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006; Muzychenko, 2008), in which the subdimensions have been discussed as one bundle. In the current study, motivational and behavioral competencies exert considerable predicting effects. Therefore, increased attention should be given to the following capabilities of employees: enjoyment capability when interacting with people (motivational competency), confidence when socializing and dealing with unfamiliar cultures (motivational competency), and appropriate use of verbal and nonverbal expressions when encountering different cultures (behavioral competency). In this manner, psychological/motivational and behavioral elements in coping with cultural diversity should be boosted in the international work settings rather than merely cognitively understanding cultural differences.

Limitations and Future Study

Despite its contributions, the present study exhibits limitations. Considering that this study was conducted using data from Korea, the results will be limited in the cultural context. Thus, future studies should be performed in different countries and can be extended as a comparison study by investigating various regions and countries.

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Appendix. Scale items and sources

International Experiences (modified from Ward, 1996)

1. I have family members or close relatives from a different race or culture.
2. I have close foreign friends.
3. I have worked closely with a foreign boss or colleague.
4. I have contact with a foreign customer for at least once or twice a week.
5. I have been in a business trip abroad (minimum of 2 weeks).
6. I have participated in cross-cultural education (workshop or seminar) for at least half a day from work.
7. I have participated in an internship or other field training in another country.
8. I have working experience in another country.
9. I have had instructors from a different race or culture in school or other institutions.
10. I have participated in a cross-cultural class or program in school or other institutions.
11. I have been a member of cooperative, team efforts with people from different races or cultures.
12. I have participated in an overseas volunteer program in school or other institutions.
13. I have participated in an overseas exchange student program or language course in school or other institutions.
14. I have spent more than two weeks in another country.
15. I have travelled in more than 3 different countries.
16. I have lived in a foreign country for six months or longer.
17. I have participated in a cross-cultural training program.