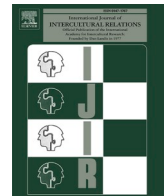




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# Intercultural competence in tourism and hospitality: Self-efficacy beliefs and the Dunning Kruger effect

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to measure intercultural competence (awareness) of tourism and hospitality employees who tend to be in continuous interaction with intercultural customers. By comparing the results of a self-report awareness test/scale with the results of a knowledge-based test, the study shows that employees not only have extremely low intercultural competence, they also exaggerate their intercultural awareness/competence. Hence, in addition to the implications for intercultural competence/awareness of tourism and hospitality employees and for the businesses for which they work, the study has also implications regarding the measurement ability of self-report scales/tests.

## Introduction

The famous quote “Culture eats strategy for breakfast” (as cited in [Koc, 2020](#), p. ix) by the management guru Peter Drucker emphasises the overriding influence of culture on business and management. Culture has an important influence not only on the attitudes and behaviours of people but also on the processes and systems people establish and manage. Hence, ignoring cultural differences may have significant negative implications for the efficiency and effectiveness of businesses. For instance, a lack of awareness of the cultural differences, between the French, European, and the American customers, cost Disney over \$4 billion in their Euro Disney (Disneyland Paris) project ([Matusitz, 2010](#)).

Tourism and hospitality are probably the two most relevant fields of study from the perspective of culture, as these industries involve continuous and intense multi-cultural social contact and interaction between customers, employees, and managers ([Gibson & Zhong, 2005](#); [Koc, 2017](#); [Lieberman & Gamst, 2015](#)).

The influence of culture on tourism and hospitality is particularly important for two main reasons. First, tourism and hospitality activities are increasingly becoming international in nature with the participation of more and more people from different countries and cultures ([Koc, 2020](#); [Mihalić & Fennell, 2015](#)). Second, tourism and hospitality services take place in a social servicescape ([Koc, 2019a](#); [Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003](#)) within which intense and frequent social contact or interactions take place between service providers and customers, and among service providers themselves ([Boz, Arslan, & Koc, 2017](#); [Dolnicar, Grabler, Grün, & Kulnig, 2011](#); [Koc, 2003, 2013](#)). Due to this intense social contact and interaction, tourism and hospitality industry businesses are often referred to as people businesses ([Kim, Wang, & Mattila, 2010](#)).

The incongruences and incompatibilities between people due to their different cultural backgrounds may cause conflicts and misunderstandings during social interactions ([Cushner & Chang, 2015](#); [Weber, Sparks, & Hsu, 2016](#); [Koc, 2020](#)), and may result in

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unsatisfactory customer experiences. For instance, a service provider's lack of knowledge about the fact that the expressions of people from individualistic cultures are more controlled (Safdar et al., 2008) may cause misunderstandings and misperceptions during communication.

Research shows that the social contact and interaction between the service personnel and customers often form the basis of service quality evaluations of customers (Koc, 2006; Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Rauch, Collins, Nale, & Barr, 2015). For instance, while 14 % of customer switching is related to dissatisfaction with actual products/services, i.e. to the technical aspect of quality, 67 % of customer switching is related to dissatisfaction with social exchanges between the customer and service personnel, i.e. to the functional aspect of quality (Doyle, 2008). In line with this finding, most of the service quality elements (e.g. reliability, responsiveness, and empathy) in the service quality models such as SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988) are to do with service encounters and social interaction between the service providers and the customers. According to research (Koc & Bozkurt, 2017; Solomon, Surprenant, Czepiel, & Gutman, 1985; Wang & Mattila, 2010) customers' perceptions of service interactions significantly influence their service quality evaluations and satisfaction. Based on the above background this study aims to measure and compare intercultural competence/awareness scores of tourism and hospitality employees in a self-report scale/test compared with a knowledge-based test. The main motivation behind the study is that self-report tests or scales may reflect the participants' claims or self-perceptions or self-efficacy beliefs rather than their actual levels of competence/awareness. The actual measurement of service employees' intercultural competence/awareness levels may be significantly important in tourism and hospitality and tourism as service environments in these industries are increasingly becoming international and multicultural.

### Intercultural awareness, intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity

Although the concepts of awareness, competence, and sensitivity have different meanings, quite often the concepts of intercultural awareness, intercultural competence and sensitivity tend to be used interchangeably to refer to knowledge, and attitudes required to interact effectively with other cultures.

According to Barrett, Byram, Lázá, MompointGaillard, and Philippou (2013) cross-cultural or intercultural awareness comprises the sensitivity and respect towards other people's culture and having an understanding of people from different cultures. As a similar term, intercultural competence refers to functioning effectively across cultures (Bergersen & Muleya, 2019; Neuliep, 2018). Likewise, the concept of intercultural sensitivity refers to the ability of an individual to recognise and experience cultural differences, the sensitivity towards cultural differences, and the sensitivity towards differences in the points of view of people in other cultures (Wang & Zhou, 2016). Intercultural sensitivity can be said to form the basis of intercultural competence and intercultural awareness (Koc, 2020). Intercultural sensitivity, as a skill, is believed to be learnt, developed, and can be measured by using scales.

In line with the objective of the study and the rationale behind it, the literature review was carried out in two phases. The first phase explored the intercultural awareness/competence studies in tourism and hospitality in general with a view to establishing the relationship between intercultural awareness/competence and operating efficiently and effectively in international and intercultural tourism and hospitality service environments. The second phase focused on reviewing relevant literature in terms of the methodologies used in these studies, namely to check whether they relied on self-report or knowledge, ability, or skills-based measurements.

The review of the literature in the first phase shows that employees with higher scores in intercultural awareness, competence, or sensitivity appear to perform better in international and intercultural tourism and hospitality service environments (Gukiina, Ntayi, Balunywa, & Ahiauzu, 2019; Sizoo, Iskat, Plank, & Serrie, 2003; Sizoo, 2008; Yang, Cheung, & Li, 2020), and provide better service to customers than the ones who score lower in intercultural awareness, competence or sensitivity (Arli & Bakan, 2018; Khan, Ro, Gregory, & Hara, 2016; Lam & Cheung, 2018; Sharma, Tam, & Kim, 2015; Sizoo, 2008; Stauss, 2016). This may be because service employees with higher intercultural competence scores may be more able to adapt to intercultural service encounters and interact with customers who are from different cultures (Alici, 2020; Lam & Cheung, 2018; Peng & Wu, 2016; Soliman, Lyulyov, Shvindina, Figueiredo, & Pimonenko, 2021; Yurur, Koc, Taskin, & Boz, 2021).

Additionally, service employees who score high on intercultural competence also tend to score significantly higher on a number of various service quality aspects including service attentiveness, revenue contribution, interpersonal skills, job satisfaction, and social satisfaction (Lam & Cheung, 2018; Sizoo et al., 2003; Sizoo, 2008; Yang et al., 2020; Yurur et al., 2021). From a service quality perspective, while attentiveness can be related to responsiveness, empathy, reliability, and assurance, interpersonal skills can be related to empathy and reliability in the SERVQUAL model (Yurur et al., 2021). Hence, service employees may be in a better position to deliver a higher quality of service in terms of some of the service quality dimensions. Research also shows that intercultural awareness or competence has a significant influence on customers' service quality evaluations and their overall satisfaction with the service (Gaur, Sharma, Herjanto, & Kingshott, 2017; Ihtiyar, Ahmad, & Baroto, 2013). Moreover, as intercultural awareness or intercultural competence decreases the level of ethnocentrism and communication apprehension among employees (Chen, 2010; Lee, Crawford, Weber, & Dennison, 2018), it has further added benefits for businesses.

Consequently, it may be put forward that the performance of employees with a high level of cross-cultural or intercultural competence scores tends to be higher than the ones who do not have a high level of intercultural competence scores (Sizoo et al., 2003; Sizoo, 2008). As mentioned above, past research supports the view that employees with higher scores in intercultural competence tend to provide better service to customers (Sizoo et al., 2003; Sizoo, 2008; Khan et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2015; Stauss, 2016).

Based on the premise that customers' perceptions of service interactions significantly influence their service quality evaluations and satisfaction (Koc & Bozkurt, 2017; Solomon et al., 1985; Wang & Mattila, 2010), the recruitment of interculturally competent service staff, and the continual improvement of the intercultural awareness/competence of service staff can be crucial (Yang et al., 2020; Yurur et al., 2021) in tourism and hospitality businesses catering customers from different cultures. Hence, the efficiency and

effectiveness of tools claiming to measure the intercultural competence/awareness, knowledge, abilities, and skills are of paramount importance.

After the establishment of the relationship between service providers' efficiency and effectiveness and their intercultural awareness/competence scores in the literature, as mentioned above the second phase of the study investigated the methodologies of the studies which established this above relationship. This investigation showed that all the above studies used self-report as a measurement tool, i.e. no study resorted to knowledge, ability, or skills-based measurements. Although this reliance on self-report measurement tools in the literature further strengthens the rationale for this study, it also necessitates a more solid establishment of the relationship between intercultural awareness/competence and operating efficiently and effectively in intercultural environments.

To this end, the literature was further investigated to establish the above-stated relationship with a view to see whether this relationship could be supported by findings obtained by measurements other than self-report. This further review, though not in tourism and hospitality, showed that in various fields of activity intercultural training, which can be considered as a means to develop intercultural competence, had a positive influence on various aspects of people operating in intercultural service environments (Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012; Lefley, 1985; Pedersen, 2010; von Behren, 2015; Scheltinga, De Louw, & Bulnes, 2017; Presbitero & Toledano, 2018).

The findings of Lefley (1985); Pedersen (2010); Behrnd and Porzelt (2012); von Behren (2015); Scheltinga et al. (2017), and Presbitero and Toledano (2018) indicated that i) people's ability to perform in intercultural service environments increased after receiving intercultural training, and ii) people who received intercultural training performed better in intercultural environments than those who did not receive intercultural training.

Against this backdrop, given the fact that self-report measurement tools in certain cases may only measure people's claims, self-perceptions, or their self-efficacy beliefs, (Hoskin, 2012; Kormos & Gifford, 2014), this study aims to measure and compare tourism and hospitality employees' self-report and knowledge-based (actual) intercultural competence/awareness scores. The consequences of over-reliance on self-claims and self-efficacy beliefs are explained in the below section to be followed by the method of the study.

Bandura (1997) argues that self-efficacy beliefs influence many aspects of behaviour, ranging from the course of action taken to the effort put forth. Self-efficacy beliefs can be defined as an individual's beliefs about his/her capabilities to learn or perform behaviour at a defined level (Bandura, 1989). According to Bandura (1997) people always engage in predicting the occurrence of events (e.g., the achievement of an objective) to control the events that may influence their daily lives. Regarding the controlling of the environment, self-efficacy beliefs tend to be the most influential determinant of human activity (Niu, 2010; Carter, Nesbit, Badham, Parker, & Sung, 2018; Nguyen, Jefferies, & Rojas, 2018). Niu (2010) research found that self-efficacy beliefs of tourism and hospitality employees significantly influenced commitment to their tourism and hospitality career.

Kruger and Dunning's research (Kruger & Dunning, 1999), based on four consecutive studies, found that people who perform poorly or lack skills in a particular field are likely to exaggerate/inflate their abilities (self-efficacy) and performance. In general, people tend to have an inability or incompetence in terms of being aware of their awareness of their skills and evaluating their level of performance. This is mainly to do with the fact that they lack metacognition, metamemory, metacomprehension, and self-monitoring skills (Folk, 2016). People who may be incompetent in terms of certain skills and abilities tend to be unable to make correct judgments as they lack the skills to recognize correct judgment (Folk, 2016; Kruger & Dunning, 1999). Kruger and Dunning's (1999) study showed that the lowest-performing participants often inflated or overestimated their skills and competencies, while participants who performed well tended to underestimate their abilities and performance. It was also seen that those people who were incompetent in terms of skills and abilities were less likely to recognize competence or expertise in others (Kruger & Dunning, 1999).

Therefore, attempts to measure people's skills and abilities based on self-report tests may have problems, as they may represent their self-claims, self-perceptions, rather than the actual situation. Koc and Boz (2014) argued that self-report tests measure people's perceptions relating to themselves and therefore may result in biased responses as people;

- i) may engage in impression management, i.e. a type of goal-directed conscious or unconscious behaviour where people try to influence the perceptions of others through regulating and controlling information in social interaction;
- ii) may have hidden motives, which even they themselves may be unaware of (Hall, Johansson, Tärling, Sikström, & Deutgen, 2010; Johansson, Hall, Sikström, & Olsson, 2005; Rahn, Krosnick, & Breuning, 1994); and
- iii) may have remembering (memory) problems as retrospective-self reports may cause biases due to memory lapse, rationalisation tendencies, and consistency factors (Smith, Bolton, & Wagner, 1999). Boz and Koc (2020) study showed a significant difference between the ability-based and self-report measurement of emotion recognition abilities of tourism and hospitality employees, which form a significant proportion of emotional intelligence, of tourism and hospitality employees (Koc, 2019b).

Moreover, the actual measurement of the level of abilities is also important as the overconfidence resulting from high self-efficacy beliefs may cause individuals to relax and reduce their future effort, concentration, and performance (Vancouver, Thompson, Tischner, & Putka, 2002; Vancouver, Thompson, & Williams, 2001; Vancouver & Kendall, 2006). People with high self-efficacy beliefs relating to any type of skill and ability tend to contribute less of their efforts (paying attention, exerting effort, etc.) to the task at hand, which in turn, may result in sub-standard performance. This overestimation of abilities usually results in an underestimation of a given task, lowering one's input and resources for tackling the task (Carver & Scheier, 2000; Verhaeren, 2012). Service employees with high or inflated self-efficacy beliefs may feel overconfident and content (Carver & Scheier, 2000; Fakehy, 2013; Powers, 1991; Vancouver & Day, 2005) as well, and they may not be interested in developing their skills, and engaging in self-development activities such as participating in training sessions, allocating resources such as money, time and effort (Fakehy, 2013; Ganzach, 2016; Vancouver & Day, 2005). Based on the above, this study aims to measure and compare tourism and hospitality employees' levels of intercultural

awareness based on self-report and knowledge/awareness-based tests.

## The method

This study investigates and compares the results of self-report and knowledge-based tests of intercultural awareness abilities of 150 tourism and hospitality employees working at hotels and restaurants on the Aegean Coast of Turkey. The reason for choosing this region is that this region attracts mainly international tourists (Ayyildiz, 2020). Resorts such as Kusadasi, Bodrum, and Marmaris in this region are among the top international tourist resorts in the world (UNWTO, 2020). Hence, employees working in this region tend to have a significant amount of experience of serving international customers and exposure to cross-cultural or intercultural service encounters.

The participants were asked to be present at a hotel's conference hall, hired specifically for this study, to participate in the study on ten different days spanning over a period of two weeks, to make sure that they were able to allocate their free time for this exercise. Ten sessions were held, each of which comprised 15 employees, to ensure social distance, as the study was carried out in August 2020, i.e. during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was also ensured that the employees were from different tourism and hospitality businesses and they did not know each other, as the study was implemented on ten different days.

In each of the ten sessions, the employees were taken to the hotel conference hall, and seated individually at a desk, as if they were taking part in an examination. First, the tourism and hospitality employees were asked to complete Goodman (1994) Cross-Cultural Awareness Test, a self-report cultural awareness together with questions aimed at measuring their willingness to spend time, money, and effort to improve their cross-cultural awareness skills. The Cross-Cultural Awareness Test consists of 15 items relating to what the participant knows or does not know about other cultures. For each statement they were asked to indicate their response by assigning a value between 1 and 5; where 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 mean definitely no, not likely, not sure, likely, and definitely yes, respectively. The scores were to range between 15 and 75 ( $15 \times 1 = 15$ ;  $15 \times 5 = 75$ ), and the scores of 50 and above indicated a relatively good degree of cultural awareness (Goodman, 1994).

As stated above, the test also included items to measure the intentions of employees to develop their intercultural awareness by allocating resources in the form of i) money (to pay money to attend a course on intercultural training), ii) time (attending panels and meeting on intercultural knowledge, skills, and abilities), and iii) effort (reading books on the above topics) to develop their intercultural awareness. In the development of the items, four psychology and four organisational behaviour experts were consulted. The experts were asked to scrutinise the items based on their suitability for the dimension, comprehensibility on a scale of 1–5. The responses provided by the experts provided were above 4. After the pre-test, one item was deleted and the analysis was carried out with three items.

In the second stage of the study, the employees were asked to respond to 14 cultural awareness knowledge/awareness assessment questions given in a multiple-choice format. This set of questions comprised two questions for each of the seven cultural variables determined. The first two questions attempted to measure knowledge of high-and low context orientation (Hall, 1989). The remaining 12 questions related to Hofstede's (2010) six cultural dimensions of i) power distance, ii) individualism-collectivism, iii) uncertainty avoidance, iv) indulgence-restraint, v) masculinity-femininity, and vi) time-orientation. The reason for choosing Hall (1989) and Hofstede's dimensions in basing the structure of the test was that these are the most commonly used cultural characteristics in intercultural courses (Cardon, 2008; Fantini & Smith, 1997; Nam, Cho, & Lee, 2014), and hence they are expected to be the intercultural variables with which people, in general, are familiar. These dimensions are also the most researched intercultural dimensions

**Table 1**  
Factor Analysis Results.

Items	Cross - Cultural Awareness Scale	Intention to Develop (Allocating Resources)
C-CAT Scale 3	0.72	
C-CAT Scale 1	0.69	
C-CAT Scale 7	0.65	
C-CAT Scale 2	0.63	
C-CAT Scale 9	0.62	
C-CAT Scale 5	0.60	
C-CAT Scale 13	0.60	
C-CAT Scale 11	0.56	
C-CAT Scale 4	0.55	
C-CAT Scale 15	0.47	
C-CAT Scale 6	0.44	
C-CAT Scale 10	0.33	
C-CAT Scale 8	0.33	
C-CAT Scale 12	0.31	
C-CAT Scale 14	0.30	
Int_Dev 1		0.86
Int_Dev 2		0.76
Int_Dev 3		0.73
Cronbach's Alfa ( $\alpha$ ) Value	0.82	0.71
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	0.76	0.61
Explained % of Variance	28	62

by researchers (Koc, 2019a; Steigner, Riedy, & Bauman, 2019). Ferreira and Li (2014) who investigated the frequency of the use of cultural models in top international business journals found that more than 75 % of the studies used Hofstede (2010) and Hall's (1989) variables. Also, to support the view that these are the most commonly used cultural variables a basic Google Scholar search was carried out to investigate the citations to these researchers. The search returned nearly two hundred thousand citations to Hofstede alone, for his works on cultural variables. The above explanations show that it would be more likely that people would be more familiar with the intercultural characteristics relating to these variables.

The knowledge/awareness assessment test and its questions were developed after going through two rounds of review by a team of cultural experts (eight university professors of culture). The cultural knowledge assessment test was also pilot-tested before the study to make sure that they were understandable and user-friendly by the participants. The pilot test was carried out with 15 tourism and hospitality employees who were from different age groups and different educational backgrounds.

## Findings and analysis

Table 1 shows the results of factor and reliability analysis. The results indicated that Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin values obtained for the two constructs measured,

Cross-cultural Awareness Scale and Intention to Develop (allocating resources) were 0.76 and 0.62 respectively. The factors accounted for 76 % and 62 % of the variance, respectively. The factor loadings for each construct ranged from 0.30 to 0.86.

Based on the reliability analysis of the data obtained from the two scales Cross-Cultural Awareness Scale and Intention to Develop (allocating resources) the Cronbach's alpha values were found to be 0.82 and 0.71, respectively. As the reliability scores of all the constructs exceeded the threshold set by Nunnally (1978), all measures demonstrated good levels of reliability (greater than 0.70).

Factor analysis identifies the underlying structure within a set of observed variables (Miyazaki & Fernandez, 2000). SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software was used in the assessment of validity. The construct validity was assessed by identifying the concepts of cross-cultural awareness and intention to develop. In

addition, factor scores were derived from the identified components from the formal survey questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis is initially conducted with rotations to detect the significance of the hypothesised factors (convergence validity). All Eigenvalues are set to greater than one, and the items are reduced to their principal constructs. Finally, a principal component analysis is used as the extraction method for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation.

Table 2 shows the findings regarding both stages of the study. It can be seen in Table 2 that tourism and hospitality employees were able to provide a maximum of 7 correct responses out of a total of 14 questions. This means that almost all employees can be classified as low-performing individuals in terms of actual intercultural knowledge, or awareness/competence. More than half of the employees (81 employees, 54 % of all participants) were able to provide between 0–2 correct responses to the awareness/knowledge questions. This finding is important as the study was carried out with tourism and hospitality employees in a region where these tourism and hospitality employees were in general exposed to frequent and intense intercultural service interactions with international tourists and customers. Hence, these employees would normally be expected to have a relatively high level of intercultural awareness, and familiarity with intercultural characteristics and terms. However, given the fact that due to the relatively high level of power distance in Turkey service jobs, especially in tourism and hospitality, are considered as low-status jobs and are perceived as temporary jobs by employees (Koc, 2020), people may not be highly interested in developing themselves for careers in tourism and hospitality. Also, as employers and managers are aware that it is rather difficult to maintain long-term careers in tourism and hospitality, they themselves may not be highly interested in developing their staff (Koc, 2020).

As stated above, a lack of intercultural awareness not only may result in higher levels of ethnocentrism (Chen, 2010; Lee et al., 2018) but may also increase uncertainty and role ambiguities of service employees (Hua, Zheng, Zhang, & Fan, 2019) when serving international customers. In turn, service employees' role ambiguities may increase their level of stress (Bowling et al., 2017), and reduce their level of service orientations (Hight & Park, 2019; Knight, Kim, & Cruisinger, 2007; Lynn & Kalay, 2015). Hence, this finding may have important implications for the efficient and effective management of tourism and hospitality establishments.

**Table 2**  
Descriptive and Frequency Analysis Results.

Knowledge-Based Test Scores		Self-Report	Intention to Develop (Allocating Resources)		
			Intention to Spend Money	Intention to Spend Time	Intention to Spend Effort
Number of Correct Responses (Out of a Total of 14 Questions)	Number of Employees				
0 Correct	17	53.00	3.77	3.17	3.54
1 Correct	32	53.00	3.90	3.44	3.78
2 Correct	32	48.88	3.74	3.73	3.81
3 Correct	33	52.91	3.84	3.56	4.09
4 Correct	25	50.48	3.76	3.20	3.88
5–7 Correct*	11	57.05	4.60	3.21	4.71
Total	150	51.77	3.85	3.44	3.90

\* No employee was able to respond more than seven questions correctly out of a total of 14 questions.

Table 2 also shows that the self-efficacy beliefs of all participants were relatively high (i.e. exaggerated or inflated) as the means in the self-report test ranged between 50.48 and 57.05 out of a maximum score of 75, i.e. relatively much higher than the actual knowledge-based test scores of the participants. As stated above, scores of 50 and above indicate a relatively good degree of cultural awareness (Goodman, 1994). This means that employees tended to exaggerate their intercultural awareness/competence. The fact that the participants can be classified as low-performing individuals in terms of their intercultural knowledge, awareness/competence, and had inflated/exaggerated their self-efficacy beliefs (with scores ranging between 50.48 and 57.05 out of a maximum score of 75), could be stated that, to a large extent, the Dunning Kruger effect (Kruger & Dunning, 1999) was prevalent in their responses.

Moreover, the participants who gave incorrect responses to all of the questions, and the ones who were able to provide only one correct response were overly confident in terms of their self-evaluations in the intercultural awareness test. The means for both of these two groups were 53.00, a score higher than all participants, except for the participants (11 people) who provided 5–7 correct responses. This group had a mean score of 57 (out of a maximum score of 75).

The last three columns in Table 2 show the intentions of employees to allocate resources to develop their levels of intercultural awareness. In general, it may be stated that the participants had a certain level of interest in allocating resources to develop their level of intercultural awareness. However, given the fact the participants performed significantly poorly in the knowledge-based test, their intention to develop would have been expected to be significantly higher. Moreover, the participants who were unable to provide even one correct response in the test had almost the lowest level of intention to allocate any of the three resources of time, money, and effort (3.77; 3.17; 3.54) to develop their intercultural awareness/knowledge.

To a certain extent, the above findings show parallels with earlier studies (e.g. Tasa, Taggar, & Seijts, 2007; Salanova, Lorente, & Martínez, 2012; Salanova, Schaufeli, Xanthopoulou, & Bakker, 2009; Mahmood, 2016; Rigotti, Korek, & Otto, 2018). This means that people who lack competence regarding their knowledge, skills, and abilities in a particular field, may not only exaggerate their knowledge, skills, and abilities (i.e. have inflated self-efficacy beliefs), but also may not be too keen to engage in learning and development activities in terms of allocating time, money, and effort (Carver & Scheier, 2000; Fakehy, 2013; Ganzach, 2016; Powers, 1991; Vancouver & Day, 2005; Verhaeren, 2012). As explained above, there is a positive relationship between the self-efficacy beliefs of employees and their intrinsic motivation in relation to that knowledge (Xanthopoulou, Baker, Heuven, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2008 and 2009; Ganzach, 2016), and performance at work (Tasa et al., 2007; Salanova et al., 2009).

Additionally, the self-efficacy beliefs may cause individuals to be overconfident and be unnecessarily relaxed. This overconfidence and relaxation may cause these employees to take more risks in intercultural service encounters (Llewellyn, Sanchez, Asghar, & Jones, 2008; Prims & Moore, 2017), which in turn may further jeopardise the efficiency and effectiveness of intercultural service encounters.

Another important finding of the study is that employees with a formal university education in tourism and hospitality performed worse (2.44 correct responses out of 14) than employees who studied in other fields (2.95 correct responses out of 14). As it is explained in the practical implications section below, this finding has important implications for tourism and hospitality programme designers and managers at universities.

One final finding of the study was that with experience the intercultural knowledge or intercultural awareness of employees did not seem to increase. The employees with less than a year of experience on average gave 2.59 correct responses, while the employees with 1–3 years of experience, the employees with 4–10 years of experience, and the employees with experience of over ten years were able to provide, on average, 2.13, 2.23, and 2.5 correct responses, respectively. Although these employees had frequent and intense intercultural interactions, their level of intercultural awareness did not seem to improve with experience and continued to remain low.

### Theoretical implications

The findings of the study have a number of theoretical implications as well. As it was shown above, self-report scales may hinder the unravelling of the truth as self-report measurements may reflect self-claims or self-perceptions of people, rather than the actual. This is because they are likely to provide exaggerated responses due to the fact that people may engage in impression management, may have hidden motives and, may lack the ability to make objective evaluations (Johansson et al., 2005; Rahn et al., 1994; Brackett et al., 2006; Cartwright and Pappas, 2008; Hall et al., 2010; Boz & Koc, 2020). Especially in tests measuring awareness, knowledge, ability, and skills, the participants may be more likely to exaggerate their personal evaluations. Quite often this exaggeration may be encountered with the participants who have a relatively low level of performance regarding knowledge, ability, and skills in a specific field.

The findings of this study are not only important from the perspective of intercultural awareness of tourism and hospitality employees. The findings of the study show that self-report scales, especially aimed at measuring awareness, competence, and skills may reflect self-claims and self-perceptions alone, rather than their actual level of knowledge or competence. Based on this fact researchers are recommended to approach the findings arrived at through a self-report test with some caution as they may be different from the actual situation. The study also points out the need for knowledge-, ability- and actual competence-based tests/scales for a more realistic measurement of cross-cultural knowledge, abilities, and competences. Researchers may also resort to the use of scenario-based and experiment-based measurements, mixed methods (triangulation), and psychophysiological tools when collecting data to make sure that they measure what they intend to measure. Further theoretical implications of the study are mentioned below under the heading of Limitations of the Study and the Recommendations for Future Research.

### Practical implications

As explained above, many studies show the importance of employees' intercultural awareness from the perspective of customer satisfaction, revisit intention, customer loyalty, and competitive advantage (Sizoo et al., 2003; Sizoo, 2008; Stauss, 2016; Wang &

Zhou, 2016; Arli & Bakan, 2018; Koc, 2020). However, this study showed that there was a lack of awareness of basic cultural facts among tourism and hospitality employees who regularly served international and intercultural customers. Moreover, it was also seen in the study that with experience the cultural competence of these employees did not seem to increase.

Based on the above it is recommended that tourism and hospitality establishments serving international customers need to make sure that they recruit and maintain staff that have a high level of intercultural competence. Additionally, the intercultural competence levels of staff need to be monitored and measured regularly, and the development initiatives, such as the formal intercultural training programmes with structured teaching need to be implemented. Additionally, the use of tests/scales other than self-report ones is recommended in the measurement of tourism and hospitality employees' intercultural competence. Formal training appears to be relevant in developing intercultural awareness and intercultural competence, as the research showed that the intercultural knowledge or awareness of tourism and hospitality staff did not improve over the years with experience, though they were intensely exposed to intercultural service encounters. As mentioned above, this may also be attributable to the fact in general, service jobs tend to be viewed as temporary jobs by both employees and employers in Turkey, due to the relatively higher level of power distance (Koc, 2020). Practitioners and the stakeholders such as the Ministry of Tourism and academics at higher education institutions are recommended to come together and produce solutions so that tourism and hospitality service jobs are not viewed as temporary jobs by the employees. Also, it needs to be made sure that the employers and managers in tourism and hospitality businesses make longer-term plans regarding their human resource management policies and practices, especially in terms of recruitment, training, and maintaining of staff.

Another implication of the study for the practitioners is for the managers in academic institutions. The study found that the actual intercultural awareness scores of tourism and hospitality employees who studied tourism and hospitality were extremely low (2.44 correct responses out of 14). Perhaps more importantly, their scores were relatively lower than employees who studied in areas other than tourism and hospitality for their university education (2.95 correct responses out of 14). This means that tourism and hospitality managers in academic institutions need to review and redesign their syllabi and course delivery. As tourism and hospitality are becoming increasingly international (Mihalič & Fennell, 2015), and tourism and hospitality services involve intense and frequent intercultural social contact and interactions take place between customers and employees, and between employees (Boz et al., 2017; Dolnicar et al., 2011; Koc, 2013; Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003; Koc, 2019a), prospective tourism and hospitality employees and managers need to be equipped with not only intercultural knowledge/awareness but also with skills and abilities in this field.

### Limitations of the study and the recommendations for future research

Although, in general, a sample size of 70 and above is considered sufficient for a survey (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012; Janes, 2001; Nunnally, 1978) future research may be implemented with groups larger than the sample size of this study (150). Although the study has been carried out with tourism and hospitality employees its findings may be relevant for other services which may involve intercultural service encounters as well. Hence, future research may investigate employees' intercultural awareness in other service fields (e.g. banking and finance, transportation, education, etc.).

Moreover, Koc (2020) put forward that people from low power distance, low masculine, individualistic, and highly egalitarian societies may be more likely to provide more truthful responses compared with people from a high-power distance, highly masculine, collectivistic, and assertive societies. Based on this premise, future research may compare cultures in terms of their responses to self-report and knowledge/ability and skill-based scales/tests.

Also, in the future, test/s claiming to measure knowledge, competence, and abilities are recommended to be designed as knowledge, competence, and ability-based tests, rather than self-report tests which may measure self-claims and self-perceptions alone. As suggested above, researchers are also advised to opt for scenario-based studies, experiments, data triangulation), and psychophysiological tools to arrive at more realistic data in their studies.

This study showed that what people believe or claim to know may be different than they actually know. The study does argue about the usefulness or the practicality of the knowledge the test questions used in the study in real-life situations. Hence, it may be recommended that future studies may concentrate on the assessment of the relationship between knowledge and the outcomes, and as suggested above, the researchers may be recommended to focus more on developing ability-based scales.

Also, when developing scales in the future, the content of the items in a scale may be given further thought in terms of the use of specific terms and terminology. For instance, people or the hospitality staff may be aware/knowledgeable of certain norms, attitudes, and behaviours relating to other cultures, and may interact efficiently and effectively in intercultural service environments, yet may be unaware of specific terminologies and specific terms such as *polychronic*, *power distance*, etc. which were used in both Goodman (1994) Cross-Cultural Assessment Test and the knowledge test used in this study. However, from a different perspective, it may be argued that people who had been through formal educational programmes in hospitality and tourism might be most expected to be familiar with such terminology and concepts

### Conclusions

This study shows that tourism and hospitality employees serving international customers may have a considerably low level of intercultural awareness/competence. This finding has important implications as tourism and hospitality industries are increasingly becoming highly international and intercultural from the perspectives of both demand and supply. By comparing self-report and knowledge-based scales to measure intercultural competence/awareness of tourism and hospitality employees, the study showed that the Dunning Kruger Effect was evident among tourism and hospitality employees in terms of intercultural awareness/competence as they tended to exaggerate their intercultural awareness/competence.

This means that self-report tests and scales rather than measuring the actual level of knowledge or competence, may provide exaggerated results demonstrating the self-claims and perceptions of participants. Hence, especially to measure awareness/knowledge, the development and use of ability and skills awareness/knowledge, ability, and skills-based tests/scales may be recommended than the self-report tests. Additionally, researchers are recommended to use scenario and experiment-based measurements, mixed methods (triangulation), and psychophysiological tools in developing tests and scales.

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