

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE IN CONTEXT OF HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Hospitality industry is a major part of tourism sector and has a larger contribution to GDP creation for every nation. Post-Covid, now this sector is concerned about customer satisfaction because in today's scenario customer attraction, as well as their satisfaction, have become extremely important. Increased competition and post-Covid implications have also changed the recruitment criteria for hospitality sector. As customer interaction is an essential part of hospitality work now these organizations are focused to recruit those employees who possess cultural competency skills. Hospitality industry majorly focuses on the human interface and that's why research in the area of cultural competency skills required for efficient cross cultural interaction in hospitality sector has gained the attention of various researchers. Researchers have clearly mentioned the importance of cultural intelligence in hospitality industry during the cross cultural interaction. In this context, to understand why some people act efficiently in multicultural environment Earley and Ang have introduced the term Cultural Intelligence (CQ) which is defined as cultural competency required to interact and communicate efficiently with people of different cultural backgrounds. Present study has been conducted to analyze the importance of cultural intelligence in hospitality sector. The results of the study have practical implications for the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Cultural Intelligence, Service Industry, Hospitality sector

INTRODUCTION

Researchers have highlighted the importance of cultural intelligence in hospitality sector as there is high human interaction in this industry (Frias-Jamilena *et al.*, 2017). Majority of employees working in this service sector deal with individuals having a different cultural background (Frias-Jamilena *et al.*, 2017). This cross-cultural interaction brings challenge for employees to behave appropriately while working (Karroubi, 2014). One of the key factors that positively contribute toward effective cross-cultural interactions is cultural intelligence. Cultural intelligence helps them to perform better in their daily routine work (Jiony *et al.*, 2021). In hospitality sector, for maintaining the high-quality services culturally competent employees are required (Arora and Rohmetra, 2015).

This concept of cultural intelligence has introduced by Earley and Ang in 2003 and defined as individuals' skills required to perform better in culturally varied settings (Ottand

Michailova, 2016; Earley and Ang, 2003). Earley and Ang have further defined its four sub-dimensions i.e. cognitive CQ, metacognitive CQ, motivational CQ and behavioral CQ (Ang et al., 2020). Figure 1 below depicts the four facets of cultural intelligence which were formally introduced by Earley and Ang.

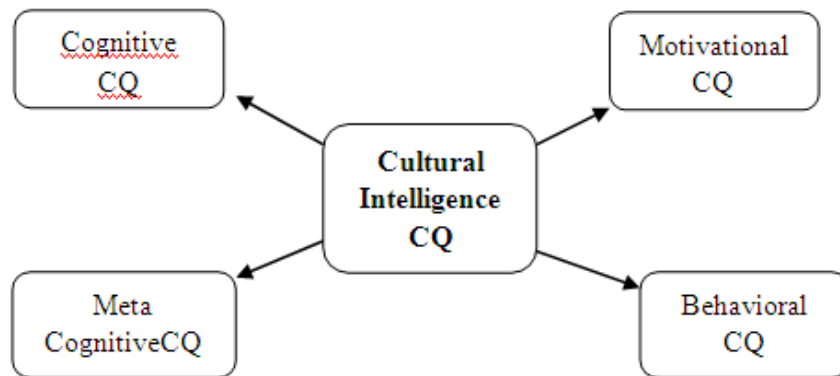


Figure1: Sub Dimensions of Cultural Intelligence CQ (Earley and Ang, 2003)

Cognitive cultural intelligence is associated with the information and knowledge that a person possesses about diverse cultures, about their norms and cultural beliefs and practices (Ott and Michailova, 2016). It helps an individual to know more about the resemblances and variances between the cultures (Brislin et al., 2006). Metacognitive cultural intelligence is associated with the use of cultural knowledge in different cultural settings (Ott and Michailova, 2016). Motivational cultural intelligence is connected with individual's own internal intent and his wish to adjust in new and unacquainted cultural environment. The person having a high level of motivational cultural intelligence puts efforts toward learning about the new cultural ethics (Deci and Ryan, 1985). The other component of CQ i.e. behavioral cultural intelligence is reflected in the day-to-day behavior of an individual while he/she interact with people who come from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Behavioral cultural intelligence is related to spoken and nonverbal communication skills and is reflected in the body language and actions of a person (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008; Ang et al., 2007). Authors opined that people with high level of behavioral cultural intelligence act very wisely while interacting in different cultural settings (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008).

Post-Covid, hospitality sector has observed a significant increase in number of customers (Teimouri et al., 2015). This sector is changing very fast and because of this reason satisfaction among clients and providing high-quality services to them has become a key requirement for this industry (Chen et al., 2011). In this sector, employees deal with clients from different cultural backgrounds which emphasized the relevance of cultural intelligence concept in hospitality sector (Frias- Jamilena et al., 2017). Although researchers are making their

contribution in the cross cultural area specifically in cultural intelligence literature but dearth of studies have been found (Arora and Rohmetra, 2010). Studies have also mentioned the need to examine the outcomes of cultural intelligence in this particular sector (Frias- Jamilena *et al.*, 2017; Abooliet *et al.*, 2015).

The present study has been conducted with an objective to analyze the importance of cultural intelligence in hospitality sector. Study has further identified various outcomes of cultural intelligence in hospitality industry.

IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF HOSPITALITY SECTOR

In the following section, in-depth analysis of previous literature has been done. Authors have compiled various studies which depict the role of cultural intelligence in hospitality sector. Studies have cited that in tourism industry particularly in the hospitality sector it is important for the organization to have employees who are culturally intelligent.

In a study, conducted by Lam *et al.* in 2021, researchers have concluded that cultural intelligence is directly linked to employee's job satisfaction. Moreover, cultural intelligence among frontline workers in luxury hotels is important to create a personalized good experience for their customers. Study has highlighted that during Covid scenario how cultural intelligence played an important factor to ensure customer's satisfaction with hotel's services.

Similarly, in another study, researchers have cited the importance of having behavioral and cognitive cultural intelligence among staff workers as these components of cultural intelligence are directly linked to the service quality in hotels. Study concluded that critical evaluation of cultural competent capabilities and skills of employees is essential to maintain high-quality services (Jiony *et al.*, 2021).

Frias- Jamilena *et al.* (2017) have examined the role of tourist's CQ on their level of adaptation in different cultures. Study has been conducted among 503 British tourists in Spain and found that their previous experience of traveling has a positive impact on their level of cultural intelligence. Study has further evaluated the relationship between CQ and destination perceived value and has found a significant positive relationship between the two variables.

Alshaibani (2016) has examined the cultural intelligence of front-line employees working in international hotels in Iraq. Researcher has also analyzed the employees' cultural intelligence and its impact on foreign tourist perception regarding service quality. Results of the study clearly show that there is a positive relationship between the cultural intelligence of employees and their quality of service delivery which is mediated by employee performance.

Aboolietal. (2015) has investigated all the dimensions of cultural intelligence and has confirmed the importance of these dimensions in tourism context. Researchers have further recognized that collectivism positively develops the level of cultural intelligence among individuals.

Rohmetra and Arora (2015) have conducted a cross-sectional study to analyze the relationship between customer satisfaction and cultural intelligence in international hospitality

sector. The results of the study show that there exist a positive relationship between the two variables. Study further concluded that the employees having high level of cultural intelligence are capable to meet the needs of international clients in hospitality sector and thus positively contribute toward the productivity level of the organization.

There are few more studies conducted in hospitality sector which have emphasized the need of cross-cultural training for employees working in hospitality sector (Dewald and Self, 2008; Gamio and Sneed, 1992) as cross-cultural training has positivity related to all the dimensions of cultural intelligence (Kotsaga,2015).

The discussion above clearly demonstrates that cultural intelligence plays a major role in hospitality sector. Literature has supported the fact that all the dimensions of cultural intelligence positively contribute toward organizational efficiency in hotel industry.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The ability to interact cautiously and efficiently with customers is the key skill required for employees working in hotel industry. Researchers have highlighted the need to study the concept of cultural intelligence and its consequences in hospitality industry (Arora and Rohmetra, 2010). In hospitality sector, the organization needs to have employees who are culturally intelligent and can understand the cultural differences so that they can provide better services to customers (Mohsin, 2006).

In the present study, researcher has discussed about the various consequences and outcomes of cultural intelligence. Study has given a theoretical background which clearly depicts the importance of cultural intelligence in hospitality industry. Further study has implications for this sector as results of the study define the positive outcomes of cultural intelligence.

Study further has some limitations also. Firstly, study has only focused on the consequence of cultural intelligence in hospitality sector but in future, researchers can also analyze the antecedents of cultural intelligence. Results of the study are purely based on previous literature. Therefore, in future empirical studies can be done in cultural intelligence in context of hospitality industry.

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