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The Impact of Social Media Use Upon the Cross-Cultural Competency Among Employees Within Multinational Companies

Majed Alharthi

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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE UPON THE CROSS-CULTURAL
COMPETENCY AMONG EMPLOYEES WITHIN MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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This study investigated the relationship between social media use and cross-cultural competency among employees in who possess different job positions in multicultural companies in Saudi Arabia. Informed by Social Capital Theory and Uncertainty Reduction Theory, this study used a quantitative method to explore the role of social media in fostering employees' cross-cultural competency. A survey was snowballed to collect the data and resulted in a sample that was predominately Arabic males. For this sample, the study examined seven hypotheses: Three were found to be significant - the difference in the level of cross-cultural competency based on the level of interaction with global content on social media, job position, and job position combined with time spent on social media. Most noteworthy is that contrary to the literature, managers scored lower on cross-cultural competency than non-managers. The remaining four hypotheses were not significant - the difference in the level of cross-cultural competency based on the time spent on social media, time spent and interaction with global content, job position combined with interaction with global content, and the interaction of job position, time spent and global content with cross-cultural competency.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has dominated the world over the last three decades. This growth of globalization has led to increases in the number of multinational and multicultural enterprises and corporations around the world. Multinational corporations first appeared in Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries. However, modern-day multicultural companies (MCCs) did not appear until the 19th century. These companies provided new opportunities and difficulties for employees. This study attempted to help address some of those difficulties by investigating the relationship between social media use and cross-cultural competency among employees in diverse workplaces. The study investigated the differences in cross-cultural competency among employees who use social media based on the time they spend using social media, their level of interaction with global content, and their job position. The goal of this research is to help both companies and employees find ways to build cross-cultural competency and achieve success in the global economy.

The concept “cross-cultural” is a relatively broad subject. Cross-cultural competency is a vital element for international cooperation (Gertsen, 1990). This competency may lead to the success or failure of multicultural companies (Cox & Blake, 1991). In fact, many scholars attribute the majority of failed multicultural companies to cultural conflicts among employees regardless of their positions in the company (Riege, 2005). Although business practitioners might be successful in their domestic markets, they may fail in the international business environment due to their inability to function effectively within a work context that hosts multiple cultures (Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006). Therefore, the existence of cross-cultural competency in

such multicultural workplaces plays an essential role in successful communication among employees and leads to the success of these corporations (Gertsen, 1990).

If cross-cultural competency is lacking in a workplace, this may lead to conflicts. Many examples can explain how the lack of cross-cultural competency can cause problems in a diverse workplace. For example, when an American employee works in Saudi Arabia, he is expected not to shake hands with Saudi women. He can greet her verbally but not shake her hand. Lacking this cultural understanding, the American employee may end up perplexed and this perplexity can negatively affect his relationship with this woman in the workplace. This has happened many times (E. Khan, personal communication, August 5, 2017).

Another prime example of a cross-cultural competency conflict can be found in the way the work structure is perceived between the manager and the team members. In some cultures, such as the Western cultures, the relationship between the manager and the team members is dynamic and negotiable; this is called a Low Power Distance Culture (Hofstede, 1983). That means that a manager can negotiate with the team members about what to do and open the door for suggestions and negotiations. This is usually not the case for Asian and Eastern cultures where the relationship is unidirectional, and the members are expected to abide by the commands of the manager and not negotiate them. This is called High Power Distance Culture. The researcher personally observed an example of this problem in a multicultural workplace in Saudi Arabia. The conflict occurred because the Western leader was expecting his Eastern group members to negotiate some tasks with him. At the same time, the group members understood his comments as commands and, even though they were not convinced, they did not attempt to negotiate, and carried out his 'commands.'

In another example of a cross-cultural competency conflict, Bernstein (2017) noticed that when a person who comes from a culture that relies heavily on verbal or written communication and does not rely on the context (a Low Context Culture) communicates with a person who comes from a culture that relies on other cues in the context and does not appreciate explaining everything (a High Context Culture) a conflict is more likely to happen due to their different understanding of how a message or a task should be communicated. Examples such as these, do not end in a successful diverse workplace, and that is why studying the factors that foster the cross-cultural competency is, indeed, needed.

It has been argued that several factors will foster cross-cultural competency. Some of these factors are knowledge and communications skills. As for knowledge, knowing about another culture can prevent such conflicts or at least soften them. Also, having communication skills (such as adaptability and flexibility) can unstiffen the sharpness of a cross-cultural conflict. The use of social media and the exposure to global content in it can increase knowledge and the communication skills that promote cross-cultural competency. This study, therefore, measures the impact of social media on cross-cultural competency in diverse workplaces among employees.

This research project is dedicated to examining the use of social media as a tool in facilitating the cross-cultural competency among employees who spend different amounts of time on social media, review different types of social media content (local or global), and possess different job positions (managerial or non-managerial). Therefore, this study aims at adding social media as one of the tools that may function within companies to increase the level of cross-cultural competency that may reduce conflicts among the employees who come from different cultural backgrounds. The study uses two theories to develop its theoretical framework:

Social Capital Theory and Uncertainty Reduction Theory. Ultimately, this chapter starts by providing a background on the topic, then moves to discussing the growth of social media in the business world and its impact, job hierarchy and its impact on the cross-cultural competency, the theories that will be used in this study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, and concludes with research questions, hypotheses, and definitions of terms.

Background of the Study

The growth of globalization, in the last four decades, has led to an increase in the number of multicultural companies and corporations around the world (Lepak & Gowan, 2009). The first multicultural companies began to appear in Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries (Chandler & Mazlish, 2005). As time passed, corporations like the British East India Trading Company spread globally using collaborations in shared businesses located in Africa, East Asia, and North and South America (Lepak & Gowan, 2009). Nevertheless, Jones (2005) stated that the institutions we know today as multicultural companies came to life in the 19th century. These corporations changed the understandings and perceptions of what employees' rights mean in this globalized world. As for multicultural companies in Saudi Arabia, it began with the discovery of oil in the 1930s. Since then, the number of foreign workers has increased considerably.

General Authority for Statistics indicated that Saudi Arabia now hosts more than 10 million foreigners (GAS, 2017). This is a huge number compared to the country's population of 30 million people and reflects the job opportunities and the high living standards Saudi Arabia provides to those international workers (GAS, 2017; Samman, 2003). Most of those foreign employees work in the private sector. The ratio of the foreign to the Saudi workers is 1 to 3 (De Bel-Air, 2014). Hence, it is ranked second, after the United States, in attracting foreign employees (Schuttler, 2015). Since that time, multicultural companies have found their way to

the Saudi market. They employ Saudis and foreign nationals, as well. These foreign workers include westerners such as Americans, Germans, French, etc. and Easterns such as Chinese, Koreans, Egyptians, Syrians, etc.

Impact of Diversity on Workplaces

Hiring employees from different backgrounds, and having them all together under one roof, brings diversity to a workplace, and with diversity comes challenges. There are numerous and unlimited types of diversity within organizations today. The same office within a company may include two individuals who may have diverse cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, religions, and different managerial positions in their company, and this can lead to misunderstanding (Grivastava & Kleiner, 2015). Conflicts could happen in many situations such as in gender-based, language-based, and relationship-based interactions. In gender-based, for example, cultures often have different perceptions on how a colleague from a different gender should be dealt with when it comes to touching, hugging, kissing, physical distance, etc. As for the language-based conflicts, although the official language in many of these multicultural companies is English, language does not stand in a vacuum. Language is directly connected to culture. Some cultures appreciate directness when it comes to language; some other cultures appreciate indirectness. An example of this would be that East Asian cultures do not prefer direct confrontation.

On the other hand, Western cultures prefer directness. A conflict is likely to happen if two people who represent these two cultures come to communicate with each other in a diverse workplace (Berry, 2005). As for the relationship-based conflicts, what is considered an appropriate behavior in one culture, might be considered rude in another culture. This can include eye-to-eye contact, the distance between interlocutors, and displays of emotions. In some

cultures, for instance, displaying emotions of anger, anxiety, fear or frustration in the workplace is viewed as inappropriate. It then can create negative impressions about the person in others who viewed the emotional display. On the other hand, some cultures respect displaying emotions and consider it a positive indicator that the person loves his/her job and/or coworkers. These examples and others illustrate how diversity in a workplace can lead to different types of misunderstanding.

Cross-Cultural Competency in Workplaces

One way to solve such type of conflicts, or at least soften them, is to have cross-cultural competency. Gertsen (1990) defined cross-cultural competency as the employee's ability to effectively function in a culturally diverse workplace, and that this competency consists of three dimensions: first, personal attitudes of the employee; second, employee's knowledge about other cultures and ways of acquiring it; third, employee's effective communication skills that result from his/her knowledge and skills. Cross-cultural competency is, hence, a vital element for success in a diverse workplace (Lunenburg, 2012).

The position of the employees also plays a role in cross-cultural competency because managers are usually more responsible than other employees and have the ability to influence others who occupy less powerful positions in a given workplace (Harvey, McIntyre, Moeller, & Sloan III, 2012). Managerial responsibilities include ensuring effective communication with the rest of the staff, making good decisions, and actions that necessitate workflow and effectiveness (Harvey et al., 2012; Lado, Boyd, & Wright, 1992). Thus, when a manager with cross-cultural competency moves to work in another culture, he/she may be able to facilitate the work smoothly and interact with people, understanding their cultural perspectives (Lunenburg, 2012). Cross-cultural competency may, therefore, lead to the success of the multicultural companies and

ensure effective relationships and communication among the employees (Pausenberger & Nöcker, 2000). Effective cross-cultural communication can be enhanced by gaining awareness and knowledge about other cultures, and one possible trajectory for that can be getting exposed to global content on social media.

Growth of Social Media in the Business World and Its Impact

The notable growth and spread of social media have revolutionized and impacted communication among people (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Social media has established online social networks which are beneficial alternatives for offline networks. Social media may function as a tool of trust by helping people establish new acquaintances, exchange information, and collaborate toward a common objective (Atzori, Iera, & Morabito, 2014). While the literature has tackled the powerful impact of social media in daily life, the value of the use of social media in the workplace is still debatable.

The last few years have witnessed the flourishing of social media within the workplace (Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013). Some researchers view using social media in the workplace positively. They have investigated different dimensions of social media use within workplaces and found that social media has effectively been used for external and internal communication (Pan & Crotts, 2012). Externally, it serves as a needed tool to enhance communication between employees and customers (Gibbs, Rozaidi, & Eisenberg, 2013). Social media changed the way many organizations work when it comes to strategic decisions. While in the past, it was difficult for a company to know the needs of their customers due to differences in their cultural backgrounds, it has now become feasible by engaging the customers through social media. Customers and stakeholders can now comment on their suggestions, and this helps a company to make strategic decisions. Skelton (2012) stated that the Breast Cancer Care (BCC)

Charity used to act like a ‘monarchy.’ With the help of social media, BCC (which has two Facebook accounts, a Flickr account, a Twitter account, a YouTube channel, and a Vimeo account) is now able to take more strategic decisions by engaging the audiences and stakeholders of the charity.

Internally, social media has become part of the daily communication among employees within businesses (Cao, Guo, Vogel, & Zhang, 2016). The use of social media in the workplace not only allows employees to share information but also to develop new relationships and rapport with other employees, as well as increasing the breadth and strength of these relationships (Chiu, Hsu, & Wang, 2006). It allows employees to know detailed information about their colleagues such as personal backgrounds, character traits, hobbies, and interests (Robert & Namusonge, 2015). It also allows employees in a diverse cultural workplace to break cultural differences by getting to know each other’s cultural aspects through their social media posts. Social media also has managed to connect employees with common interests and backgrounds, and can, hence, develop trust (Gulati, 1995). The more people recognize others, the more they may trust or distrust each other (Newton, 1997). For instance, the use of Facebook among undergraduates maintains trust between them in their offline relationships (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Therefore, the literature implies that employees in the workplace will not communicate well with peers they do not trust (Cao et al., 2016).

On the other hand, other researchers view using social media in the workplace negatively. According to Baruah (2012), social media is one of the reasons that lead to poor performance of the employees within the workspace. Garrett and Danziger (2008) found that the use of social media by employees in a workplace led to a poor concentration on the tasks they were performing as they kept sending messages to their colleagues or families while on task. The

studies found that employees used social media to complain about their failure to complete and fulfill some of their work-related tasks (Broughton, Foley, Ledermaier, & Cox, 2013). Broughton et al. (2013) also reported that using social media by employees made them engage in discussions that could be unethical or inappropriate to the organizations. Also, incorrect information that people post about some countries or cultures on social media affects people. For example, sharing false information about other cultures or ethnicities can cause miscommunication and a cultural gap instead of better communication and cultural competency (Shachaf, 2008).

With the above-mentioned discussion of the positive and negative impact of using social media on performance in the workplace, little research has been done on the impact of social media on cross-cultural competency in the workplace. This study is designed to investigate that issue in order to add to the body of knowledge on the subject.

Theoretical Perspective

To discuss social media and its impact on cross-cultural competency among employees in multicultural companies, two theories (Social Capital Theory and Uncertainty Reduction Theory) were found relevant. These two theories help understand and analyze the social relationships among people and in workplaces. The next sections explain the definition of each theory and its connection to the topic and focus of this dissertation.

Social Capital Theory (SCT)

Social Capital Theory, which has been used in different disciplines, emphasizes social relations and associations. Social Capital is a theory that examines concepts such as social exchange and embeddedness, social resources, culture, social networks and support (Hirsch & Levin, 1999). Many researchers have found that Social Capital Theory helps to explain and/or

study social interactions in their fields (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Although there have been various definitions of what forms Social Capital, the most commonly used definition is “the goodwill that is engendered by the fabric of social relations and that can be mobilized to facilitate action” (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p. 17; Glenane-Antoniadis, Whitwell, Bell & Menguc, 2003). This definition, in particular, reflects a number of important notions. First, it highlights the concept of ‘social’ relationships and associations. Second, the term ‘goodwill’ suggests that Social Capital is built on reciprocal relationships and mutuality (Glenane-Antoniadis et al., 2003; Putnam, 1995). Third, the term ‘fabric’ is closely related to the organizational and business atmosphere. It denotes networks that are formulated via relations established within business contexts (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Glenane-Antoniadis et al., 2003).

Social Capital Theory fits this study since the nature of communication between multicultural employees within the multicultural companies and what affects such communication can be understood and analyzed by this theory. This theory also influenced the way the questions in the research instrument were worded and asked. It asks questions about the role of social media in bridging cultures and building networks among employees in a diverse workplace.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT)

Uncertainty Reduction Theory is the second theory used in this research as it plays a role in understanding how cross-cultural competency can help reduce uncertainty and anxiety about other cultures that exist in the same workplace. Berger and Bradac (1982) defined uncertainty as a status that “can stem from the large number of alternative things that a stranger can believe or potentially say” (p. 7). When people are uncertain about how to react based on a given situation that involves another culture in a workplace, this can result in a number of alternatives

(Gudykunst, Yang, & Nishida, 1985). In other words, this situation leads to a status of “uncertainty.” The way, then, to avoid this status of uncertainty is through gaining information about that culture.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory fits this topic because it plays a significant role when examining relationships. Since uncertainty has been identified as an important construct, necessary to the study of communication, it is beneficial to use it to discuss the results of this study to know if exposure to global content on social media can increase the level of cross-cultural competency to reduce uncertainty between cultures in a diverse workplace.

Statement of the Problem

Most large organizations consist of employees from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This is particularly the case for multicultural companies which typically employ people from many countries. Communication between individuals within these multicultural companies can be impacted by their background and culture, which can lead to misunderstanding or conflict situations. Although there must be standards for these companies that hire multicultural employees, it is still expected that communication issues may exist. Cross-cultural competency plays an essential role in avoiding conflicting situations in a workplace. Also, it can boost the ability of individuals to function effectively in a workplace that hosts employees from different cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural competency itself can be enhanced using social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc. This research aims at surveying how using social media can impact employees’ level of cross-cultural competency.

Purpose of the Study and Methodology

The proposed study investigated the difference in cross-cultural competency among the employees who use social media in multicultural companies in Saudi Arabia. It investigated if

the use of social media may encourage cross-cultural competency in such a diverse workplace. This research employs a quantitative survey method. Using snowballing sampling, the participants were drawn from different multicultural companies in Saudi Arabia. There was an assumption that these participants use social media, and that this may positively or negatively affect cross-cultural competency in a diverse workplace. The researcher contacted professional associates that work in multicultural industrial companies and asked them to complete the survey and start snowballing it. They were asked to send an email invitation with the survey link to the people they know that may work for multicultural companies, and also post the invitation links on their social media accounts. The main characteristic of this targeted group was that they come from different countries and cultural backgrounds. The total number of participants that started the survey was 310 participants, and the total number of those who met the criteria to participate and completed the survey was 241. The result indicated that most of the participants were Saudis (79.25%), and males (96.27%) with over 90% of the respondents from Arabic countries. The proportion of women (3.7%) was about half that of the percentage of women in the Saudi workforce (7%). The initial snowball began with professional contacts in the industrial sector where the proportion of women is less than the national average. As a result, the findings of the study are limited in their applicability to the general population, however, they are valuable in understanding the cross-cultural competency of Saudi and other Arabic males. Thus, they help to highlight an important sector of the workforce in multicultural industrial companies in Saudi Arabia which was the key focus in this study.

In this study, there are three independent variables: job position, time spent on social media, and interaction with global content; and only one dependent variable: cross-cultural competency. Regarding the level of measurement, the survey included nominal level questions

such as nationality, gender, and marital status; ordinal level such as time spent on social media and level of interaction with global content; and interval such as age.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In this study, there are two research questions to investigate the differences in cross-cultural competency among the targeted sample.

Research Question 1

RQ1: In Saudi multicultural companies, is there a relationship between social media use and cross-cultural competency among employees?

Considering the existing literature, the predominately Arabic sample, and that the proportion of women, while lower than the Saudi average, is not atypical in the industrial sector given their concentration in education and healthcare, the following hypotheses are used. These explore if social media is related to cross-cultural competency for the specialized population studied. The first question aims at finding the differences among the sampled employees based on the amount of time they spend on social media and their level of interaction with global content. Under this research question, there are three hypotheses:

- H1.1: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency among employees based on the amount of time they spend on social media.
- H1.2: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency among employees based on their level of interaction with global content on social media.
- H1.3: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency among employees based on the amount of time they spend on social media and their level of interaction with global content.

Hypothesis 1.1 tests if time spent on social media makes a difference in cross-cultural competency. Almainan et al. (2015) examined the effect of time spent on social media (especially Twitter) on nurses' updated knowledge in relation to their jobs. They found that time spent did not significantly correlate with the participants' updated knowledge. The results of this hypothesis will examine if the results support Almainan et al.'s results by testing the difference of the level of cross-cultural competency between employees according to how much they spend using social media.

Hypothesis 1.2 tests if exposure to the global content on social media makes a difference in the level of cross-cultural competency. Ogara, Koh, and Prybutok (2014) found that social media content positively correlates with employees' job-related knowledge and awareness. This hypothesis tests the difference in the employees' level of cross-cultural competency according to their level of interaction with global content.

Hypothesis 1.3 tests if the combination of both the time spent on and the interaction with global content social media make a difference among employees in their level of cross-cultural competency. Based on the findings of previous research, as in the findings of Almainan et al. (2015); Ogan and Lane (2010); and others, it is believed that time spent on social media and interaction with global content will influence the level of employees' cross-cultural competency.

Research Question 2

RQ2: In Saudi multicultural companies, what is the relationship between the use of social media, job hierarchy, and cross-cultural competency?

In this research question, the impact of job position is factored into the question of social media use and cross-cultural competency. It is important to remember that the sample is reflective of this particular segment of the Saudi workforce. The second research question

examines the possible impact of social media on cross-cultural competency among the sampled employees who possess different positions in the job hierarchy system in multicultural companies. This question adds one new variable to the previous research question: job position.

Under this research question, there are four hypotheses:

- H2.1: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency based on employees' job positions.
- H2.2: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency based on employees' job positions and the amount of time they spend on social media.
- H2.3: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency based on employees' job positions and their level of interaction with global content on social media.
- H2.4: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency based on employees' job positions, the amount of time they spend on social media and their level of interaction with global content.

Hypothesis 2.1 tests if the job position of the employees makes a difference in their level of cross-cultural competency. Hypothesis 2.2 tests if the job position of the employees, combined with the amount of time these employees spend on social media, makes a difference in their level of cross-cultural competency. Hypothesis 2.3 tests if the job position of the employees, combined with the type of content these employees review on social media, makes a difference in their level of cross-cultural competency. Hypothesis 2.4 tests if the job position of the employees, combined with the amount of time these employees spend on social media and the type of content they review, makes a difference in their level of cross-cultural competency. Fieseler (2015) found that job position does not correlate with employees' cross-cultural competency in terms of using social media. He said that when managers use social media, they do not use it to

educate themselves about other cultures, but they use it for other purposes such as peer support and social image.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been defined to ensure the consistent understanding of terms in this study.

Social Media

Social media is a modern term that defines a variety of networked tools or technologies that highlight the social aspect of the internet that is based on collaboration and creative expression, and is often simultaneously mixed with the terms Web 2.0 and social software (Dabbagh & Reo, 2011; Leonardi et al., 2013). Social media includes all socializing and network-building activities conducted by users over the internet using various resources like images, text, and multimedia content (Reuben, 2008).

Cross-Cultural Competency (CCC)

It is the ability to deal with other cultures across different and multiple dimensions: an affective dimension (personality traits and attitudes), a cognitive dimension (how individuals build-up cultural knowledge), and a communicative, behavioral dimension (being an effective communicator) (Gertsen, 1990). Cross-cultural competency reduces misunderstandings by empowering the employees with tools that make them able to perceive, appreciate, and deal with the different culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). In this study, the researcher asks the participants 11 multiple choice questions that assess their cross-cultural competency such as questions about their interaction with people from other countries or other cultures, their relationship with their co-workers, and their feelings when they deal with co-workers from other

cultures. More details about the measurement of the level of cross-cultural competency will be discussed later in chapters 3 and 4.

Multicultural Companies (MCCs)

MCCs are companies that include within its workforce ethnically and racially diverse groups of employees. The employees are integrated across all levels of the company, including managerial and executive positions (Cox & Blake, 1991). In such companies, employees can represent different languages, genders, races, religions, etc. (Edewor & Aluko, 2007).

Multinational Companies (MNCs)

Multinational companies have branches in different countries but with one headquarters in one country (Kogut & Zander, 2003). There are some similarities between the multicultural and multinational companies to the degree that in the literature, the difference was too nebulous, and that in many research papers both are synonymous. However, many research papers that emphasize cultural issues distinguish between them: a multinational company does not necessarily include people from different countries in the same workplace. A multinational company could be a branch of a foreign company with all employees from the same country, while multicultural companies necessitate that the employees in the same branch come from different cultural backgrounds and work in the same workplace (Dunning, 2008).

Summary

This chapter started with an introduction in which the dependent variable (cross-cultural competency) of this study was introduced, defined, and illustrated. This introduction included problems and issues that can arise in a diverse workplace. Several examples (some of which were specific to the Saudi environment) were given to illustrate the problem. These examples presented the positive and the negative situations that are likely to result from diversity in the

workplace. Cross-cultural competency was then presented as a solution for the conflict that may happen due to misunderstanding other cultures. Social media was discussed as one possible factor that may promote cross-cultural competency among employees in a workplace. The theories under which the topic of this study was framed were also introduced. These theories are Social Capital and Uncertainty Reduction. Both were introduced in this chapter but will be detailed in the next chapter. This chapter ends with presenting the study method, research questions, hypothesis, and terms definitions. The next chapter will review the literature existing on the topics ‘cross-cultural competency’ and ‘social media use in workplaces,’ as well as the two theories that frame this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The body of research on multicultural companies has been growing as a result of globalization. This chapter will review the existing literature, as it pertains to this study, in three major sections. The first section discusses how multicultural companies came into existence, how diversity impacts the workplace, and how this diversity creates cross-cultural competency to exist in the workplace. This section then introduces job hierarchy as an independent variable in this study and how it plays an important role in achieving cross-cultural competence. This first section concludes with a discussion of the factors that impact cross-cultural competency in the workplace.

The second section in this chapter deals with social media. It begins with a chronological view of the social media websites and their capabilities, especially in the Arab World and Saudi Arabia. Then, the section discusses the impact of social media on the individual, on society, and on cross-cultural competency in the workplace. The third section reviews the theoretical perspectives that relate to this study, specifically by reviewing five theories. Three of the theories (face negotiation, social penetration, and social exchange) were excluded as the basis for this study because they did not fit the intended purpose of the study. Two theories (Social Capital Theory and Uncertainty Reduction Theory) were accepted and used as the theoretical framework for this study because they supported the purpose of the study.

Globalization and Diversity in Multicultural Companies

The collapse of the Soviet Bloc, the group of countries closely associated with the Soviet Union, has affected the pace of globalization which has increased significantly since the collapse

(Apud, Lenartowicz, & Johnson, 2003; Johnson et al., 2006). Globalization has dominated the entire world, and one of the consequences of this dominance is that the boundaries between different cultures have melted. Globalization has also had a notable impact on workplaces by making them more multicultural (Johnson et al., 2006).

Globalization is a concept that has been defined in many different ways (Mead & Andrews, 2009). It is often defined to facilitate a variety of discussions including those concerning trade, politics, or culture. Mead and Andrews (2009) stated that the multiplicity of definitions is not a negative thing as long as researchers define what they mean in light of globalization. Globalization can be defined as the blurring of a country's boundaries in business activities (Lepak & Gowan, 2009). Other definitions of globalization revolve around the idea of a global culture from a sociological point of interest (Mead & Andrews, 2009).

In general, researchers agree that globalization is a concept that applies to the whole earth (Mead & Andrews, 2009). For organizations to work and accommodate the labor market, they need to embrace the different cultural values and backgrounds that prevail among employees in the workplace (Lepak & Gowan, 2009). Therefore, researchers agree that globalization has contributed to the increasing diversity in the workplace.

Diversity in the Workplace and Its Impact

Since the world entered its globalization phase, people have become open to the idea of not limiting themselves to staying in the place they were born. More and more people move from one place, or one country, to another in order to find better job opportunities and life conditions. Finding jobs has become even easier with the existence of the Internet in general and social media specifically (Osterrieder, 2013). This mobility of people has contributed to the diversity of workplaces in many countries around the world, especially the ones that have better employment

laws and regulations (Chan, 2011). This diversity has given birth to the cross-cultural work environment.

Workplace diversity can be defined as the co-presence of employees from different cultural and racial backgrounds in a given workplace site (Chan, 2011). The same office within a company may include individuals who may have diverse cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, or any different perspectives on several work-related issues (Grivastava & Kleiner, 2015). Therefore, organizations have become a representation of a society that entails different dynamics, cultures, and subcultures. This is due to the concept that organizations have employees who work, interact, and share each other's life for a specific time (Lauring, 2011). In these "societies," employees are expected to demonstrate competency in dealing with different cultures and in being part of the organizational "society" (Dixon & Dougherty, 2010).

Diversity has now become a core concept in any workplace due to the flexibility and ease of moving employees from one place to another in light of the dominance of globalization (Grivastava & Kleiner, 2015). Diversity is not just related to race and gender differences. It has a wider scope that includes values, customs, and ideologies (Chan, 2011). Diversity, therefore, is an integral part of any organizational structure (Grivastava & Kleiner, 2015) and has an important impact on the workplace.

The impact of diversity in the workplace is vital because it encourages a lively atmosphere of new ideas and problem-solving skills; yet, it can also be a source of challenging problems that may arise (Van den Born & Peltokorpi, 2010). Hence, diversity in the workplace can be looked at from two angles: strengths and caveats. As for the strengths, diversity in the workplace opens the doors for increases in productivity, increases in creativity, improvements in language skills, and a positive reputation (Sadri & Tran, 2002). As for the productivity, Van den Born and

Peltokorpi (2010) argued that a workplace that is diverse makes employees wish to work more effectively and efficiently, especially when the diversity is found in leadership because it allows managers to bring in new ideas, methods, and skills to solve problems and elevate the level of the company. As for creativity, Cox and Blake (1991) argued that diversity in the workplace can increase creativity and productivity within a corporation because homogeneous groups are incapable of cross-fertilizing one another. As for language skills, corporations that want to increase their market in other countries can benefit from the language diversity they have among their employees. As for positive reputation, applicants for positions usually look for companies that respect diversity (Cox & Blake, 1991).

Forming and understanding culture is also a tool for building advanced ways of communication that can exist among organizations and facilitate their work (Al-Jenaibi, 2011; Sadri & Tran, 2002). Culture can be used to diminish the differences between employees by establishing and maintaining mutual ground for all employees (Al-Jenaibi, 2011; LeBaron, 2003). For all of these reasons, researchers have identified the benefits companies can enjoy by hiring employees representing a variety of cultures.

As for the caveats, diversity can also cause intercultural misunderstanding when individuals who come from different backgrounds and cultures are involved in daily interactions (Al-Jenaibi, 2011; Elmadssia, 2011; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2004). Such interactions, if not dealt with appropriately, can spark conflicts (Al-Jenaibi, 2011; Elmadssia, 2011). However, to better understand such interactions and conflicts, LeBaron (2003) argued against any single method that can exist to interpret culture and its relationship to ways of communication within organization. With diversities in business and their varying cultures, companies can run into different issues regarding their communication problems among

employees. Nevertheless, Scholars introduced ways to deal with different situations of communication or miscommunication in different situations (Al-Jenaibi, 2011; LeBaron, 2003).

An example of such a way is when considering the concepts of high-context and low-context communication (Al-Jenaibi, 2011; Würtz, 2005). High-context and low-context situations of communication within organizations denote the use other clues and cues along with explicit communication to understand the message being conveyed. Hall (1989) argued that Western cultures lean into low-context interactions, while Eastern and Southern cultures lean towards communications that happen within the boundaries of high-context communication (Al-Jenaibi, 2011; Hall, 1989). An example of this is when a person who comes from a high context culture does not rely only on speech in an interactional communication. He/she may use body language as well to convey meaning and then rely on the fact that the other interlocutors understand what he/she means and its cultural context without explicitly saying it in words alone.

On the contrary, people who come from a low-context cultural background make everything clear from their speech and do not expect their interlocutors to rely on anything other than their words to understand the message they are being given. In a diverse workplace, people that come from high context and low context backgrounds work together under the same roof. Hence, such misunderstanding may occur. This leads to the importance of cross-cultural competency to solve this conflict.

Impact of Cross-Cultural Competency

The concept 'cross-cultural' is a relatively broad subject, but it is narrowed down in this study in order to make it more comprehensive. In this study, cross-cultural will mainly focus on having different national cultures within organizations and, to a smaller extent, generational differences. Cross-cultural competence is a vital element for international cooperation (Wang,

Freeman, & Zhu, 2013). This competency may lead to the success or failure of the multicultural organization (Pausenberger & Nöcker, 2000).

Several studies found that cultural differences among the nations of cooperating organizations may negatively affect the business and productivity of the companies (Fedor & Werther Jr, 1996). Moreover, some authors attribute the majority of failed international joint ventures to cultural misunderstandings and conflicts among individual managers. Therefore, the existence of cross-cultural competency in such international ventures plays an essential role in successful communication among employees and leads to the success of these corporations (Elmadssia, 2011). As several researchers have discussed, the negative effects caused by not having this cross-cultural competency illustrate how vital it is to the success of a multicultural corporation.

Gertsen (1990) attributed the failure of many international businesses or entities to the lack of cross-cultural competence, the ability of individuals to function effectively in another culture. Although business practitioners might be successful in their domestic markets, they may fail in the international business environment due to a low level of cross-cultural competence (Wang et al., 2013). Wang et al. (2013) argued that for international businesses to succeed, it is important that cross-cultural competency exists in a workplace for all employees, especially managers as they have more power and responsibility in the job hierarchy system. This raises the question as to whether job hierarchy matters in cross-cultural competency.

Job Hierarchy and Cross-Cultural Competency

Job hierarchy is one of the independent variables in this study. From this angle, the study aims at investigating whether or not the position of the employees plays a role in cross-cultural competency if affected by exposure to social media global content. Managers are usually more

responsible than other employees who occupy less powerful positions in a given workplace. Managerial responsibilities include ensuring effective communication with the rest of the staff, making good decisions, and actions that necessitate workflow and effectiveness (Harvey et al., 2012; Lado et al., 1992). Hence, a problem may arise when a manager from a certain culture moves into another company in another country. For example, China is a high-power distance country (Hofstede, 1983; Pan & Zhang, 2004).

In high-power distance countries, managers expect employees to follow their rules and have a higher respect for them than respect for their fellow employees who are equally powerful. So, when a manager from China moves into another country that is low-power distance, those managers may run into trouble when they think employees who work under them do not respect them. In this case, the Chinese managers think that they are the ones to give orders or solve problems and employees working under them should not discuss it. They should only listen and carry out the orders. Western managers think collaboratively as a team. Anyone in the team, regardless of being a manager or not, has the right to think and discuss things equally. Chinese managers think that their orders are not up for discussion. The issue is not respect or disrespect; the issue is that the culture is different. Therefore, if those managers have a cross-cultural competency that they gained from many sources, such as social media global content, this awareness can help them adapt more seamlessly into the new culture. This is essential since different cultures expect different roles from managers and subordinates.

Expatriate managers should be cross-culturally competent because imposing their own cultural leadership competencies may result in disrupting the flow of the corporation (AlMazrouei & Zacca, 2015). Managers have higher power than subordinate employees; and therefore, they have the ability to influence others (Lunenburg, 2012). Lucas and Baxter (2012)

defined power as “the ability to impose one’s will even against resistance from others” (p. 49). Lunenburg (2012) also defined power as the control the manager has over other employees and the resources of the corporation. Power can actually influence the success of the work (Liew, Ma, Han, & Aziz-Zadeh, 2011). It is important for expatriate managers to be aware of cross-cultural competency to avoid any conflict that may negatively impact the corporation’s production. For these reasons, this study measures to see if exposure to social media by managers, as well as non-managers, increase their level of cross-cultural competency which may enhance effective communication in a diverse workplace.

Social Media and Its Impact

This section deals with social media from different angles. The first topic in this section will discuss when social media first started and how it developed, including in the Arab World and Saudi Arabia, and what its capabilities are. The next topic in this section deals with the impact of social media on the individuals that use it and on the entire society. This discussion examines both the negative and the positive impact and discusses capabilities as well. Next, the section discusses social media in the workplace from both perspectives: potentials and drawbacks. And finally, the section delves into social media and its impact on cross-cultural competency in the workplace.

Background of Social Media

The beginning of social media use, in general, is only a few decades old, and it is even more recently being used in the workplace environment. As for when social media started, it could be argued that SixDegrees.com, launched in 1997, was the first social network to exist. It allowed users to create profiles, to add and communicate with friends, and to surf friends lists (Chen, 2011). However, creating profiles was in existence earlier than that through the dating

websites (Boyd & Ellison, 2010). The variety of companies using the Internet for social purposes makes it a challenge to determine which was the first true social media platform.

Classmates.com was another attempt to connect through social media as it allowed people to affiliate with their high school or college mates (Boyd & Ellison, 2010). It also allowed them to look for and find their friends who were affiliated with the same website (Broughton et al., 2013). The only drawback of this website was the inability of the users to create profiles. Thus, the website that first combined all the social media features was SixDegrees.com (Kelly & Sukhatme, 2009). SixDegrees.com promoted itself as the only social website at the time that allowed people to connect and send messages to each other (Boyd & Ellison, 2010). However, the service was not sustained, and the website eventually closed, although it had attracted thousands of users (Ellison, 2007).

The main issue that negatively affected the website was that people signing up were users of the Internet, but it was not necessarily true that they might find their mates who may or may not have been users of the internet (Boyd & Ellison, 2010). In addition, most people reported at that time that they were not interested in meeting strangers. Others have reported that there was nothing to do or to say after adding friends, so the service was not of much use to them (Boyd & Ellison, 2010). So, while SixDegrees.com may have been the first true social media platform, it was not a successful one.

In an attempt to overcome the shortcomings of SixDegrees.com, *Ryze.com* was launched in 2001 with the aim of having people create business networks (O'Murchu, Breslin, & Decker, 2004). Ryze.com was first introduced in San Francisco to a close circle of business and technology individuals (Ellison, 2007). Later, the founders of Ryze.com, Tribe.net, LinkedIn.com, and Friendster.com established personal and professional collaborations with

each other (Boyd & Ellison, 2010). They preferred to support each other instead of competing with each other (O'Murchu et al., 2004). However, the result was not positive for all of them. Ryze.com never acquired mass popularity. Tribe.net attracted a passionate niche user base. Friendster completely failed. Only LinkedIn became a powerful business service (Caers & Castelyns, 2011).

One of the key elements in the success of LinkedIn is the instant growth of its subscriber base, and its option for current members to invite their friends and acquaintances to join. From 2011 to 2017, the members increased from 150 to 500 million users, from more than 200 countries around the world (Schultz & Peltier, 2013). LinkedIn also offered their service not only in English but in 16 other languages as well and this attracted users who spoke those languages (Chafkin, 2007). The capabilities of LinkedIn as a social media channel dedicated to the business world is that its users can take professional stands by sharing their experiences, uploading their academic resumes, and building professional relationships with other professionals (Carter, 2012).

LinkedIn allows its users to find jobs and make plans for their future desired positions (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). LinkedIn is also a powerful tool because it allows its users to keep track of the professionals that move from one company to another. It also provides a large amount of information about them making it feasible for hiring companies and other professionals to easily contact them and build relationships outside the workplace environment (Carter, 2012). The year 2003 was the true beginning of social media platforms as many other social media websites were launched that year. They either offered the same services or only slightly different services, but LinkedIn kept itself on the peak of the wave with the number of

users and from the angle that it offered the unrivaled services and capabilities mentioned above (Boyd & Ellison, 2010).

Today, social media can be defined as any application that enables users to interact with others. This includes social networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Tango, or gaming sites and virtual worlds (Darwish & Lakhtaria, 2011). The capabilities of social media in the business world are what makes them relevant to this dissertation. When discussing the general capabilities of websites, one can discuss the remote interaction between users. This interaction does not necessitate any social, cultural, or linguistic homogeneity (Carter, 2012). On the contrary, an American, for instance, can have friends from different regions around the world on his/her social media page or account. This is, in and of itself, a capability that helps people know more about other cultures than they used to before they had their social media accounts.

In the business world, Jacobson and other researchers argued that social media offered businesses more effective ways of engaging with customers (Jacobson, Smetters, Thornton, Plass, Briggs, & Braynard, 2009). others also stated that social media helps companies in building better and more effective channels of communication among the employees (Cao et al., 2016). In the past, employees used to only see each other at the job workplace. Now, they get the chance to follow the life events of their fellow employees, the thing that builds rapport and tightens up relations among employees outside the workplace environment (Ellison et al., 2007). This ability to form relationships online has been growing in popularity and in academic research.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, social media has become a dominant research topic and term within the literature in the academic domain. Since then, researchers in multidisciplinary areas have been actively investigating the impact of social media on society.

According to Web of Science, there are currently over 19,000 academic articles and research papers that encompass the term “social media.” (Gruzd, Jacobson, Wellman, & Mai, 2017).

Today, the use of the Internet has increased globally. People use social media for academic or non-academic purposes. As for academic, researchers have started using social media to promote their scholarly productivity. Although it was found that only 3% of scholars were actively using social media, the number was expected to increase (Priem, Costello, & Dzuba, 2012). This number, as expected by Priem et al. (2012), increased to 88% as indicated by Collins, Shiffman, & Rock (2016), and Rock (2016). Those results showed that social media is becoming an integral means of communication within academia as a workplace.

As for the non-academic use of social media, it was found that more than 3 billion people are currently using social media for different purposes (Kemp, 2018). People use social media for social interaction, information seeking, passing time, entertainment, expression of opinion, sharing information, knowing about each other, talking to old friends, and so forth. This increase in the number of people using social media was not only found in the West or in the United States, the Middle East has its fair share, as well. In the Middle East, the percentage of social media use surpassed anywhere else in the world. Usage ranges from a full 98% of the population (in Bahrain), 89.2% (in UAE), and 81.8% (in Qatar) to a low of 35.6% (in Iraq), according to Internet World Stats (IWS, 2017).

Social Media in the Arab World

Social media use spread in the Arab world with the eruption of the Arab Spring in 2011 (Sheedy, 2011). These social media websites helped protesters to communicate and organize their strikes and marches (Sheedy, 2011). According to the Arab Media Social Report (2014), the number of users for different social networks has now tremendously increased after

the revolutions in the Arab Spring. For example, the number of Facebook users almost doubled between 2009 and 2012 with an increase to approximately 45 million users in 2012. In 2014, the number of social media users in the Middle East jumped to more than 80 million users (Arab Media Social Report, 2014).

However, there are few studies about the use of social media by citizens in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar, where revolutions did not erupt. Also, those countries share a similar type of governance as governments are not democratically elected (Sheedy, 2011). As of December 2017, 116 million individuals were actively using social media in the Middle East ("Internet Usage in the Middle East," 2018). This number grows more rapidly than in any other region in the world.

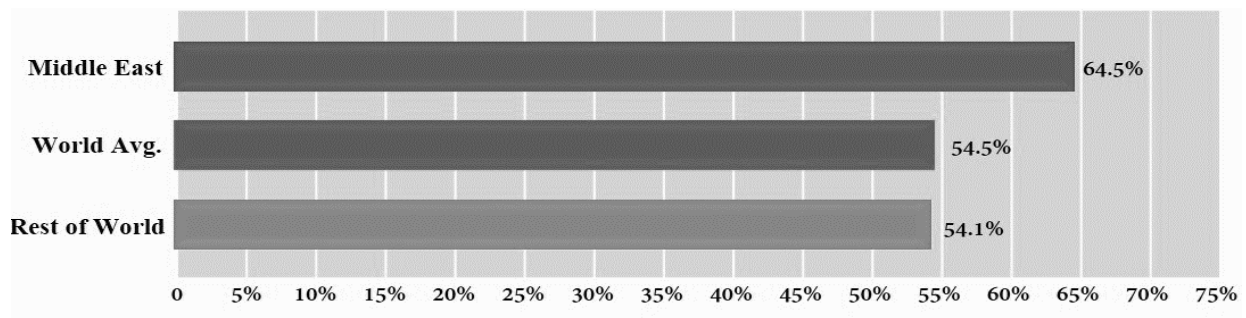


Figure 1. The penetration rate of social media use in the Middle East in 2017.

As seen in the above figure, the penetration rate of social media use in the Middle East, as of 2017, greater than in other countries or areas around the world. A possible explanation for the extend of the social media use in the Middle East could be that since traditional media within these countries is controlled by strict governmental rules (for instance, civic engagement is not encouraged, and civil actions, like street protests, are not allowed), people found a space to express their opinions and to freely communicate on the pages of social media. However, there is a scarcity of research in this area.

There is, indeed, a need to understand the role of social media in empowering individuals and residents of these countries (Couldry, 2012). The drastic difference between the political landscapes in Western countries and Gulf countries, as well as, the differences in the societies and cultures, made the use and role of social media in these countries deserving of our attention (Sheedy, 2011). Hence, systematic study of the utilization of new communication, such as social media, by individuals in these countries may help understand the role of social media in facilitating communication and expression of opinions (Al-Saggaf & Simmons, 2015).

Social Media in Saudi Arabia

Social media outlets such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook are now popular in Saudi Arabia and easily accessible through computers or smartphones (Yusuf, Al-Madah, & Alam, 2016). Templin (2012) from Time Magazine writes, “Saudis are some of the most active social media users in the Arab world” (para. 5). A large number (95%) of Saudi residents possess mobile phones at a rate of 1.8, meaning for every 10 individuals there are 18 mobiles (Alsenaidy & Ahmad, 2012). The MasterCard company has reported that Saudi Arabia’s smartphones penetration is considered the third highest in the world (Makki & Chang, 2015). This would indicate that high percentage of Saudi population use social media extensively these days.

According to The Social Clinic Report in early 2013 titled, “The State of Social Media in Saudi Arabia 2012,” Saudi Arabia was first among other nations regarding the number of daily viewed videos, 90 million on YouTube, an average of 7 videos per day for each Saudi internet user (SSM, 2014). Also, the report stated that Saudi Arabia was ranked in first place among other nations in relation to the use of Twitter with a growth rate of 3,000% from 2011 to 2012 and is still growing (SSM, 2014). This growth rate is 10 times the average global growth rate. Statistics also showed that there was an average of 50 million tweets per month in 2012 and 150 million

tweets in 2013 in the country (Yusuf et al., 2016). In addition, two million out of six million Facebook users in Saudi Arabia only used their mobiles to access Facebook in 2012 and this number has increased to five million in 2013 (Makki & Chang, 2015). The use of Facebook, in terms of the number of users in Saudi Arabia, has increased from around 6 million users in 2012 to more than 8 million users in 2014 (Aljasir, Woodcock, & Harrison, 2014). Those Saudi users of social media comprise 50% of Facebook users in the Gulf region.

In addition, another example of the use of social media in Saudi Arabia is related to Twitter users. According to two studies released in November 2013 by the Washington Institute, Saudi Arabia's Twitter usage rates are the highest of any country across the globe in relation to online population (Aljasir et al., 2014). Statistically, Peer Reach (2014) states the number of active Twitter users in Saudi Arabia today is 32% of the population, which makes it one of the top five countries that use Twitter in the world (Vinaya, 2013). High Twitter usage rates reflect the vigorous social media consumption by large youth populations in Saudi Arabia (Makki & Chang, 2015). It is also worth mentioning that Saudi Arabia accommodates the most YouTube views per capita worldwide (Aljasir et al., 2014). Research has shown that Saudi Arabia has more than 10 million online users of the Internet (Yusuf et al., 2016). This number shows that almost half of the population is a consumer of social media through different platforms (Mao, 2014). This popularity leads to a discussion of the impact of social media on individuals, society, and the workplace.

The Impact of Social Media

The popularity of social media is mainly due to its widespread presence in the world and the massive number of users. The ease of accessibility and usage of those websites has also contributed to the spread of websites offering instant and immediate social interactions (Alsurehi

& Youbi, 2014). Social media today is all about sharing. It establishes a shared dialogue between people through which they communicate and share information (Baruah, 2012). Sharing means exchanging knowledge and increasing competences and awareness, and this is considered a prime example of the impact of social media.

The variety of communication methods was the most prominent feature of the social media websites (Nduhura & Prieler, 2017). These websites give people the freedom to communicate with each other through several methods such as emails and instant messages (Broughton, Higgins, Hicks & Cox, 2009; Nduhura & Prieler, 2017). This variety of forms also helps in connecting people from different places no matter how big the distance is; those various forms included: micro blogging, Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures, and video (Nduhura & Prieler, 2017).

One of the impacts of social media is that it has attracted younger generations as they are more keen and willing to stay in close connection with each other (Baruah, 2012). Another impact of social media is the promotion of two-way communication among people. In this way, it surpasses other means of communication that existed earlier that promoted one-way communication such as radio and television. This two-way communication method has enhanced the decision-making process as many users make decisions based on the content they interact with on social media websites (Dellarocas, 2003). However, critics of such content argued that making decisions based on this information is not safe as the content is, most of the time, placed anonymously and verified (Dellarocas, 2003). Both issues can be relevant to business and cross-cultural communication and will be discussed in the drawback section below. Ultimately, the impact of social media can affect either the individual or the societal level.

Impact on individuals and society. Social media ensures socialization (Gecas, 1979). Technology helps in this socialization through what can be called “online socialization” which can directly affect human behavior (Greitemeyer & Osswald, 2011). Another essential impact of social media on the individual is that it helps reunite friends and acquaintances. Needless to say, social media platforms have become an ideal outlet for exchanging ideas (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011), sharing information (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013), and performing other activities (Cao et al., 2016). Also, another impact is that social networks allow people to be on top of technological advances and to stay more informed about the latest activities (Makki & Chang, 2015).

On the professional level, social media allows professionals to enhance their career and business advances, as in the case of LinkedIn mentioned above (Chen, 2011). Part of this resource for professionalism is the opportunity to gain cross-cultural experience. Social media has allowed users to connect with people who belong to different cultures and to learn more about those nations (Chen, 2011). This ability to gain knowledge about and experience with other cultures is a great strength of social media.

On the other hand, there are drawbacks to the use of social media as well. Scholars discussed these negatives such as addiction, cybercrimes, harassments, the decline in productivity, and the waste of time (Amiel & Sargent, 2004). Two of the drawbacks that can exist on both levels of cross-cultural and businesses issues are the anonymity and accuracy. Anything published on social media may not verifiable (Fuchs, 2017). The idea of preciseness and accuracy is questionable when one is in the social media world (Castillo, Mendoza, & Poblete, 2011). The fake news is hardly distinguished from the true news, and it is often also difficult to identify the true identity of the poster (Amiel & Sargent, 2004). That is why

individuals need to be cautious when using social media. Incorrect information that people post about some countries or cultures on social media affects people (Castillo et al., 2011). For example: sharing false information about other cultures or ethnicities can cause miscommunication and a cultural gap instead of better communication and cultural competency. This drawback could cause more harm than benefit to the international company.

The impact of social media is not only on the individual level, but also on the whole society, and its institutions, as well. The rhetoric of communication in this world changed from newspapers and magazines to TV, then to the Internet, which seems most convenient to the majority of people (Castells, 2000). When social media emerged, the world became available to anyone by pressing a button on his/her phone. The boundaries among countries and nations have melted, and people can easily contact each other in a matter of seconds (Darwish & Lakhtaria, 2011).

This usage has its societal impact. Now, people share information and news faster. People know what every one of their friends is up to at any given moment. In addition, people can, at their convenience, communicate easier than before. This has changed the face of the society to a different perspective (Darwish & Lakhtaria, 2011). First, the kinship relations moved from face-to-face into virtual relations where people meet and get in touch online instead of meeting physically (Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009). Second, many students have started forming group studies online and gather to study together online (Mao, 2014). Third, organizations (businesses and even schools) started using these websites for interactive, two-way, advertisement to market their products or institutions (Dreher, 2014). This has given space for people to write reviews and construct knowledge together regarding products or institutions. Some organizations hold a virtual society on social media for the employees to strengthen the

relations between the employees and their families, and to build loyalty to the organization (Dreher, 2014). These impacts have certainly affected the societies and institutions.

As researchers have found, social media can have its drawbacks. One negative impact of social media on society is the spread of cyberbullying (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2015), and cybercrime (Illmer, 2016). Some undesired people participate, and negatively affect the social structure, and nurture bad habits among people. Due to the increasing number of those people, governments introduced cybercrime bills (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2015). Despite this issue, young people enjoy social media because it gives them choices of connecting and interacting with different segments of the society. Also, online interaction includes other social activities that are needed for all people in general such as online banking, online courses, and online research (Dreher, 2014). Regardless of its negative impacts, social media continues to grow and remain popular, and it now is also an effective tool in the workplace.

Impact of social media in workplace. The last few years have witnessed the flourishing of social media within the workplace (Robert & Namusonge, 2015). Researchers have investigated different dimensions of social media use within the workplace and found that social media has effectively been used within workplaces such as nonprofit organizations (Nah & Saxton, 2013), and political/inter-governmental institutions (Robert & Namusonge, 2015). The researcher has found that social media is effective in non-profit organizations in that employees in nonprofit organizations do not feel the same obligations that people in profit-organizations feel (Nah & Saxton, 2013). In other words, non-profit organizations target people in need and help them, and for that reason, the climate between employees is friendlier. Social media was found to be a suitable place for communication in such an environment of non-profit work. Researchers studying political and governmental institutions, Robert and Namusonge (2015)

argued that social media provides a welcoming environment for the people. This sense of welcoming is found important to connect the people to their government and decrease the sharpness of dissatisfaction that may be expressed by some people.

Communication is another important issue for businesses, the majority of studies linked to social media have focused on how social media are used as an integral part of the internal and external communication of organizations (Nah & Saxton, 2013). Internally, social media has been used by allowing employees to create their profiles and be in contact with each other, while externally, it was more about the use of social media by the marketing and business development departments (Fogel & Nehmad, 2009). Consequently, employees and employers are now able to send multiple and various messages through different social media outlets such as Twitter and YouTube in order to approach wide audiences (Culnan, McHugh, & Zubillaga, 2010).

The use of social media in the workplace has always been controversial and debated. Some individuals adopted the stance that social media in the workplace is a strength and has a positive impact and others argue that it has a negative impact (Nah & Saxton, 2012). As for the positive impact, three major aspects were found to be the positive impact of using social media within a workplace environment: productivity, sharing information, and increasing retention. As for productivity, Nah and Saxton (2013) and Humphry (2014) argued that social media can help employees decrease hours spent on performing a certain duty, and help customers solve their problems at home. For instance, a customer can now communicate with the company (customer service) through social media to solve a certain problem without having to wait long on the phone or physically go the company location.

Some studies credit social media when it comes to sharing information and ideas (Dreher, 2014). Advertising a service or a new product is a prime example when it comes to sharing

information with the customers using social media. Instead of worrying about TV ads, now these companies can easily use their social media websites to share information. Also, sharing information within the company to announce social news like someone is having a baby, getting married, retiring, etc. These are better done on social media than emails because it gives employees a chance to like, comment, and share the event (Dreher, 2014). Although some managers may see any non-work related social communication as hurting productivity, many managers find employees who feel connected to one another to be more productive and more satisfied with their jobs.

As for employees' retention, it is considered another strength of social media in the workplace. Scholars have claimed that social media increase employee retention rates because they become more attached to the workplace and therefore avoid any unnecessary absenteeism (Garrett & Danziger, 2008). Similarly, research has established a correlation between employees' satisfaction and the number of hours they spend online (Charoensukmongkol, 2014). Individuals who experience lengthy online interactions are likely to be more satisfied, hence achieving more for their institutions (Novak, Hoffman & Yung, 2000).

As for the negatives of using social media in the workplace. Baruah (2012) disagreed with Garrett & Danziger's (2008) argument and claimed that social media is one of the reasons related to the poor performance of employees within the workspace. Three major negative aspects were found for using social media in the workplace: poor concentration of the employees, getting false information and using social media for non-work purposes. First, as for poor concentration, excessive use of social media, such as sending and receiving messages or reading content on social media platforms, may lead to poor concentration on the part of the employees (Garrett & Danziger, 2008). As a compromise, there were calls for companies or employers to monitor the

use of social media at the workplace. However, the extent to which this monitoring should be done remains vague and ambiguous since monitoring social media may lead to some ethical controversies and issues (Al-Saggaf & Simmons, 2015).

Second, many types of content shared on social media are questionable. Some employees do not bother to filter the information they receive and share with others (Fieseler, Meckel & Ranzini, 2014), and this can lead to actions that are based on false information. According to the World Economic Forum (2017), the spread of false information on different social media platforms makes it one of the contemporary dangers in the society. For instance, false information has been found to negatively affect stock markets, hinder responses times during catastrophes, and shape peoples' opinions and behaviors (Kumar & Shah, 2018). This aligns with the findings of the studies that show increases in the tendency of people to obtain their news from social media pages rather than TV or other more authentic sources (Shearer & Gottfried, 2017).

As for the non-work purposes, Broughton et al. (2009) elaborated on this viewpoint saying that some employees found themselves in trouble due to using social media in an undesired way such as using unethical pages on some social media websites, contacting their family member or chatting with their friends, and all that lead to failure to complete and fulfill some of their work-related tasks. Broughton et al. (2009) said that a company in a study he made found some employees using social media to engage in discussions that an organization found inappropriate. Consequently, the company restricted the Internet and social media use during work hours by limiting access to some content such as pornographic websites and social media in general (Broughton et al., 2009).

Employers in multicultural corporations are similar to other people in the society when it comes to being affected by the use and content of social media. Therefore, they can be under the effect of the global content they see published on social media. However, little research has been done on the influence of social media on the employees' level of cross-cultural competency in the workplace. This study is designed to investigate that issue in order to add to the body of knowledge on the subject.

Theoretical Perspectives

In this section, five theories are discussed that relate to the communication field. Three of these theories (Face Negotiation, Social Exchange & Social Penetration) were excluded from this study and a rationale for their exclusion is provided. The other two theories (Social Capital Theory and Uncertainty Reduction Theory) were adopted and the rationale for their adoption is also discussed. For each theory, the researcher gives a definition and describes the application of it in order to examine its fitness and efficacy for this study. All five theories are discussed below.

The Excluded Theories

There are several theories of communication, but not all of them have the same focus. In this section of excluded theories, the researcher reviewed three theories that impact cross-cultural competency but did not fit the scope of this study. The reason for each exclusion is discussed upon introducing the theory.

Face negotiation theory. Each culture has a different way of “saving face” during a conflict. Ting-Toomey (1988) drew on the work of Goffman (1955) and Brown and Levinson (1987) to develop the face-negotiation theory. According to Goffman (1955), social interaction is linked to theater and drama. People in everyday life are similar to actors on a stage, each playing a variety of roles. The audience consists of other individuals who watch those people and react to

the performances. Closely related to this theatrical analogy for Goffman is the idea that people, as they interact together in social settings, are engaged in the process of "impression management," where each one tries to show him/herself and behave in a way that will prevent the embarrassment of themselves or others (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The focus of Negotiation Theory is that it aims at understanding how people who belong to different cultures behave when in conflict (Ting-Toomey, 1988). The theory particularly focuses on two different types of cultures: collective and individual. In an example of this, Ting-Toomey (1988) found that Japanese people belong to the collective culture. Therefore, they try to save their collective faces when in negotiation or conflict. Americans were found to be more individualistic. Thus, they try to save their individual face in a negotiation. That means Westerners are more individualistic in the way they react to a conflict. In a conflict situation, Westerners tend to react more aggressively than collective people. Individualists try to save their own faces as their primary concern. In contrast, collective people look at their cultural norms and other people in their group who might be affected by this conflict and try to find a solution that saves the face of the whole group and culture.

This theory was excluded because it is not in alignment with the topic and focus of this study. To reiterate, the focus of this study is not to find out how people (who belong to different cultures) approach solving conflicts as this theory of Face Negotiation describes, but rather how social media helps those employees to cultivate cross-cultural understanding whether it has to do with resolving conflict or not.

Social exchange theory. Social Exchange Theory is primarily based on the concept of "rules of exchange" in that it believes that the relationships can evolve over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments when individuals follow certain "rules" of exchange (Cook &

Emerson, 1978). Emerson (1978) argued that these rules of exchange eventually form what he called a “normative definition” that decides how individuals from different cultures and backgrounds are expected to behave in a certain context (p. 351). Cook and Emerson (1978) argued that part of this Social Exchange Theory relies on the principle of the exchange, not only on the materialistic reward. It could also be something psychological. An example of this would be when a Chinese employee greets his American employee by saying “how are you today?” His American coworker may reply with only something like “Fine. Thank you.” For the Chinese employee, this “fine” is not enough as he was expecting more of an exchange. Since a longer exchange means more respect for him, the only “fine, thank you” could be considered offensive and negligent. While his American coworker did not think of any of those issues, he still offended his coworker because it is the nature of his cultural exchange rules.

This theory of Social Exchange studies how people who come from different cultures come to exchange their behavior based on “what will I get in return if I do this or that.” In an example related to the workplace, Son (2016) indicated that about 30% of current employees feel they are not valued. These employees feel that the level of appreciation they get in exchange for what they exert in the workplace is not worth it and this negatively affects the quality of their work.

While this theory can fit and work well in studying the rules of exchange and the way they work in a diverse workplace (Cook & Emerson, 1978), it does not fit the scope of this study because this study does not examine the rules of exchange among cultures or how this cross-cultural competency, gained from using social media, can benefit the employee. This study is specifically dedicated to examining the difference that using social media may have on employees’ cross-cultural competency as a first step in understanding these impacts.

Social penetration theory. The Theory of Social Penetration explains the stages of relationships between people. The theory was developed in 1973 by Irwin Altman and Dalmis Taylor who argued that any relationship starts shallow then deepens by the means of self-disclosure (Altman & Taylor, 1973). When getting to know each other, people tend to disclose simple facts about themselves through short conversations. These short conversations tend to increase in depth and width; i.e., conversations tend to be longer, delve deeper into the topic, and people disclose more and more personal information (Carpenter & Greene, 2015). Altman and Taylor (1973) defined five stages to explain this process: orientation stage, exploratory affective stage, stable stage, and finally depenetration.

During the orientation stage, people tend to carefully observe what they say in order not to disclose deeper information about themselves. This is usually done in short meetings. In the exploratory affective stage, people tend to build up a casual friendship and start to disclose their opinions regarding some political or other issues. In the effective stage, people tend to now disclose more personal feelings and feel comfortable to criticize each other. In the stable stage, they develop deeper relationships and can correctly predict how the other part will react in a certain situation. It is the deepest level of relationship. Finally, in the depenetration stage, people start to depart. They begin to realize that the cost of this relationship will outweigh the gains and therefore leave each other (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

This theory is used in a diverse workplace to study if these five stages work with people who represent different cultures or if these stages only work for people who come from the same culture (Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2002). Social Penetration Theory can also work in a diverse workplace to study if these stages of relationships can affect the workflow. It can be a good fit when studying the effect of social media on these five penetration stages and if they help

reinforce them or not. However, Social Penetration Theory does not fit in studying social media and its impact on understanding other cultures and gaining cross-cultural competency. This dissertation study is not focused on studying the depth or the width of the social relations (which is the focus of Social Penetration Theory) among employees. Therefore, this theory was excluded. For these reasons, the three theories listed above were not chosen for this study even though they are applicable to other aspects of cross-cultural competency. However, the following theories were found to fit this scope.

The Accepted Theories

Two communication theories were found to be particularly suitable for the topic of this study: Social Capital Theory and Uncertainty Reduction Theory. These two communication theories fit the topic of investigating the relationship between exposure to cross-cultural content on social media and the cross-cultural competency in a diverse workplace. Both theories will be discussed in more detail below.

Social capital theory. A key theory that successfully addresses cross-cultural communication in a workspace is the Social Capital Theory. It has been used in different disciplines as it emphasizes social relations and associations. It also stresses the fact that organizations function as a fabric that is impacted by the reciprocal relationship among employees within this entity (Portes, 1998). According to Hirsch and Levin (1999), Social Capital is a theory that examines concepts such as social exchange and embeddedness, social resources, culture, social networks, and support. Social Capital has emerged from sociology (Portes, 1998). It is a relatively contemporary theory, pioneered by Pierre Bourdieu in 1985.

Social Capital as a concept has become an integral component of different disciplines. Thus, scholars in science, politics, economy, and other fields have used Social Capital to address

and answer certain questions pertaining to their fields (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Many researchers have found that Social Capital Theory helps to explain and/or study social interactions in their fields. With this theory finding its way into the research studies in multiple disciplines, it is important to discuss the theory in more detail.

Various scholars attempted to define Social Capital, one of the most common definitions is that “the goodwill that is engendered by the fabric of social relations and that can be mobilized to facilitate action” (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p.17; Glenane-Antoniadis et al., 2003). This definition denotes several important dimensions. First, it refers to the concept of ‘social’ relationships and associations. Second, the term ‘goodwill’ denotes that Social Capital is built on reciprocal relationships and mutuality (Glenane-Antoniadis et al., 2003; Putnam, 1995). This reciprocal relationship is based on the principle that if someone does a favor or makes something good for someone else, then that favor will be returned by the first person (Glenane-Antoniadis et al., 2003; Zhou & Bankston III, 1994). Third, in light of the definition of Social Capital, the term ‘fabric’ is closely related to the organizational and business atmosphere. It implies a system of networks that are formed via relations established within business contexts (Adler & Kwon, 2002). The existence of a network is based on the presence of mutual obligations which, in turn, foster norms of reciprocity (Putnam, 1995). Therefore, certain issues related to the study of families (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997), youth behavior problems (Zhou & Bankston III, 1994), schooling and education (Lee & Brinton, 1996), public health (Lomas, 1998), democracy and governance (Newton, 1997), economic development (Helliwell & Putnam, 1995), and general problems of collective action have been examined through the lens of Social Capital (Jackman & Miller, 1998).

The Social Capital Theory has also been used to analyze communication within organizations. According to studies related to organizational communication, Social Capital influences career success and executive compensation (Belliveau, O'Reilly, & Wade, 1996). Forming such networks functions as a catalyst that helps individuals take certain actions that ensure their benefits such as access to information, influence, and solidarity. Thus, Social Capital is a catalyst that may enhance success within organizations (Coleman, 1988) because it helps companies understand the patterns of successful communication to increase them and patterns of problematic communication to avoid them (Astone, Nathanson, Schoen & Kim, 1999). In accordance with this, the individuals must make an effort to establish and maintain their network of relations and build trust in order for it to remain socially productive (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

The development of social relations happens when employees successfully communicate with each other internally. This efficiency in communications can be achieved through technological tools such as social media, intranet, and e-mails or social tools such as monthly or yearly gatherings for the employees to get together in a context that is not related to business (Helmreich & Schaefer, 1999). This helps in strengthening communication among employees within a diverse workplace.

Contexting is an important concept in Social Capital as it allows people to understand their relationships, how to behave, and how to expect and interact based on other's behaviors (Dolfsma & Dannreuther, 2003). The communication among people or employees depends primarily on the context. Cultures provide their members with different contexts that determine their level of communication and the way it is handled (Jones, 2004). Earle and Earle (1999) defined contexting as any "shared awareness and acceptance of a range of beliefs, activities, and

social interaction patterns among individuals regardless of cultural background ... and provide[s] guides as to how we behave” (p. 1).

From the principle of contexting, Hall (2000) specified an important aspect that he named High-Context culture (HC) and Low-Context culture (LC). HC and LC cultures play an important role when it comes to understanding and interpreting cross-cultural competency. Any culture may adopt one of those two contexts (Mystakidou, Parpa, Tsilika, Katsouda, & Vlahos, 2004). Communication within any culture or context falls within this continuum from HC to LC. Consequently, HC and LC can be perceived as two sides on a continuous scale for meaning in which any mixture of context clues and verbal communication can be combined (Hall, 2000).

There is no exclusive place or classification for any culture in terms of High Context or Low Context. Some cultures tend to be at the higher end while others are at the lower end of the continuum (Hall, 2000). When discussing the LC culture, Okabe (1983) said, “where very little is taken for granted, greater cultural diversity and heterogeneity are likely to make verbal skills more necessary and, therefore, more highly prized” (p. 38). On the other hand, Okabe (1983) continued, in an HC culture, “cultural homogeneity encourages suspicion of verbal skills, confidence in the unspoken, and eagerness to avoid confrontation” (p. 38). As an example of the fluidity of culture placement within this continuum, Japan and the United States are often regarded as having an HC culture and LC culture, respectively (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim, & Heyman, 1996). American culture reflects LC values by demonstrating an interaction that is based on openness, directness, and more confrontations (Chua & Gudykunst, 1987), while Japanese culture values HC communication (Gudykunst et al., 1996).

For High Context communication, indirect verbal expression and implications are made through nonverbal communication (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986). On the other hand, Low Context communication is based on direct and explicit information exchange (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986). Several studies have suggested the weight put on the nonverbal aspect of communication among Japanese is higher than that of Americans (Yashima, 2002). Furthermore, HC/LC values shared across the members of cultures are not exclusively consistent with each individual's use of HC/LC communication; "both low- and high-context communication are used in every culture, but only one tends to predominate" (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986, p. 542).

To further explain HC and LC, Hall (2000) gives a direct interpretation of failure in communication that may happen between the members of two cultures (Richardson & Smith, 2007). Hall (1981) stated that "a High-Context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or is internalized in the person, whereas very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message" (p. 91). Like Japan, most developing nations including those in Sub-Saharan Africa would be considered High-Context (Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987). In such cultures, the verbal code is not a primary source of communication and might also be misunderstood. Instead, people are more confident about nonverbal behavior and situational cues. Thus, communicators in HC communities often use indirect or vague language because they rely on their interlocutors to link the context to the meaning and understand the message.

For Low-Context communication, as in the case of Western societies, people are highly individualistic because they maintain relatively little close involvement with others (Hall, 1981). Thus, meaning is carried in the explicit verbal code in order to ensure that the meaning is not misunderstood. Social media may be a helping tool in increasing the employees' awareness of

the dichotomy of LC and HC cultures. When someone interacts with global content, as tested by Hypothesis 1.2, he/she can increase their awareness of other cultures and if people are LC or HC. If the finding from this hypothesis is found to be significant, then when a person gets a job working with people from other cultures, this person will be ready to communicate based on the understanding he/she has already developed by interacting with global content on social media.

Social Capital Theory, with its contexting principle, supports this study and aligns the way data is collected, analyzed, and discussed. Social Capital Theory fits this dissertation study because it informs that social dimension is important in workplaces: Employees do not only accomplish their task in separation from the social context they are in, but interact, communicate, and socialize in their workplaces. This communication is important to the success of any company and to understand the communication among employees, we should pay close attention to the cultural aspect in communication when employees come from different cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural competency can facilitate more effective communication within diverse workplaces. While this current study does not investigate how cross-cultural competency enhances effective communication, it does investigate if this cross-cultural competency itself can be enhanced by the use of social media by employees.

The questions of the study were derived from the understanding of the Social Capital Theory. The research questions investigate the relationship between social media use and cross-cultural competency of the sampled employees who work for multicultural companies. The questions assume that there is an interaction among employees in multicultural companies and this interaction necessitates cross-cultural awareness. The questions, therefore, ask how social media—as reports said millions of people use social media as cited above—influence employees' cross-cultural competency. The survey items (See Appendix A) were fed by the

understanding of this survey, as well. The items were built upon the understanding that the difference in the amount of time spent on social media (question number 16), the interaction with global content (question numbers 28 to 32), and the job position (question number 9) can have an impact on the level of cross-cultural competency of the employees.

Uncertainty reduction theory. Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) is the second theory used in this dissertation since it plays a role in understanding how cross-cultural competency can help reduce uncertainty and anxiety about other cultures that exist in the same workplace. Berger and Bradac (1982) define uncertainty as a status that “can stem from the large number of alternative things that a stranger can believe or potentially say” (p. 7). When people are uncertain about how to react based on a given situation that involves another culture in a workplace that a person is not knowledgeable about, this situation can result in a number of alternatives (Gudykunst et al., 1985). In other words, this situation leads to a status of “uncertainty.” The way, then, to reduce this status of uncertainty is through gaining information about that culture. Uncertainty plays a significant role when examining relationships.

The Uncertainty Reduction Theory implicitly expresses that the methods that individuals use to reduce the anxiety emerge from the initial encounter between those individuals. Some of those methods are the cultural dictionary and passive listening (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). In the cultural dictionary, the individual forms his/her own understanding of certain messages within a specific social situation and then applies them to similar contexts (Afifi & Reichert, 1996). In passive listening, the individual collects information without interacting with the other constituents until he/she feels comfortable that he/she has an ample amount of information that qualifies him/her to deal with other individuals who are different than him/her.

In conclusion, this study examines the use of social media as a tool in facilitating the social communication among employees who possess different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, this study aims at adding social media as one of the elements that may positively function within organizations to reduce the uncertainty, anxiety, and tension among the employees who come from different cultures. This theory supports the methods in this study in that it helps in revealing the role of social media as a tool that may help reduce uncertainty between cultures in a diverse workplace.

In the light of the Uncertainty Reduction Theory, the researcher formed the research instrument questions in a way that examines the correlation between the use of social media and the level of cross-cultural competency in the workplace and if that reduces employees' uncertainty. Uncertainty Reduction Theory leads the researcher to examine how social media can spread cross-cultural competency, which can eliminate passive listening and lack of interaction among employees. Drawn from URT, the instrument displayed questions to examine the factors that can lead to the tense atmosphere, which is likely to result from uncertainty about other cultures, and what factors can minimize such uncertainty and soften such atmosphere, as well as replace them with cross-cultural competency. Some survey questions (See Appendix A) asked about using social media in the workplace (question numbers 20 and 21) and how it can impact cross-cultural competency (question numbers 33 to 43). URT directs the researcher to assess efforts to build cross-cultural competency in such a diverse workplace.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature from more than one angle. First, the chapter discussed how globalization gave birth to diversity in work environments. This diversity necessitated the need for cross-cultural competencies that can reduce any cultural misunderstanding or clash due

to the differences between these cultures. Therefore, the chapter discussed the impact of cross-cultural competency on diverse workplaces. It then led to the topic of the role of social media. The chapter reviewed and explained the studies that argue for or against using social media in workplaces. A background on social media impact, in general, and in the Arab world, in specific, was discussed. The chapter, then, discussed five theories that can be used in investigating such a topic. Three of these theories were excluded and the rationale for each exclusion was reasoned. Two of these five theories were then found to fit the topic of this study. Therefore, the researcher explained how these two theories fit the topic and inform the study instrument. This research instrument and other details will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study sought to construct knowledge in the discipline of communication within the larger field of the social sciences by investigating the relationship between social media use and cross-cultural competency among employees in their daily communication. It also looked at how the use of social media may hinder or encourage cross-cultural competency among employees and the impact of their positions in the job hierarchy on their competency. This study was based on two theories, “Social Capital Theory” and “Uncertainty Reduction Theory.” Social Capital Theory aims at understanding the social relations between people and, therefore, is germane to the examination of the cross-cultural relationships among employees in a diverse workplace. Uncertainty Reduction Theory explores how uncertain people are when meeting other people from different cultures. This theory can assist in investigating the role of cross-cultural competency in reducing this anxiety (uncertainty). The population for this study are employees that work for multicultural companies in Saudi Arabia. The sample targeted in this dissertation are the employees of multicultural companies in Saudi Arabia. This chapter discusses the research methodology including the research instrument, sampling, and the data collection method.

Research Methodology

The researcher in this study used quantitative method to conduct the research. Studies in media and communication use either qualitative or quantitative methodology based on the arguments and research question (Berger, 2015). A Qualtrics, online, self-administered survey was used to collect the data from employees who work at multicultural companies in Saudi

Arabia. Qualtrics is designed in a convenient way and fits the researcher's participants who are busy people and would probably only participate if the survey is simple and quick to complete. For these reasons, the researcher used Qualtrics to deliver the survey. Online surveys, in particular, can ensure a higher level of privacy for participants and is often used due to their ability to reach more people online than can easily be reached one-by-one. An online survey in this study was used to help in capturing opinions from individuals at varied sites across the country. It also encouraged participation. In addition, the sample was not gathered in only one company. The surveys reached employees at many multicultural companies in different cities in the country of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this online survey helped the researcher reach more people, in a shorter time using a reliable data collection method than other options would have provided.

The survey used in this study does not include any information that could help identify the participants. So, it is private and secure. The content and focus of the survey were about the use of social media in terms of time spent and interaction with global content, and the employees' job position. The survey also focused on the level of cross-cultural competency among the employees in the workplace. The entire survey can be found in Appendix A.

Population and Subjects

The targeted subjects in this study come from the population of employees who work for any multicultural company in Saudi Arabia. The main characteristic of this targeted population was that they came from different countries and cultural backgrounds and that they work in multicultural companies in Saudi Arabia. The population also included employees who represented different positions in the job hierarchy.

Saudi Arabia attracts many foreign employees due to the job opportunities and the high living standards it provides (Alghamedi, 2016). Saudi Arabia started to invest in foreign labor to increase and enhance its economic development in the 1970s (Alghamedi, 2016). Most of the foreign employees work for the private sector. The ratio of the foreign to the Saudi workers is 3 to 1; that means for every three foreign workers, there is one Saudi worker (De Bel-Air, 2014). Hence, Saudi Arabia is ranked second, after the United States, in attracting foreign employees (Schuttler, 2015). The number of foreign employees in the private companies in Saudi Arabia in 2016 was more than 8.5 million (Toumi, 2017). Most of those employees work for multicultural companies that are located in the major cities in Saudi Arabia such as Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam, and in industrial cities such as Al-Jubail city and Yanbu' city. These companies match the purpose of this study as they employ a large number of people from different cultural backgrounds and the aim of this study is to investigate the cross-cultural competency among this type of employees.

A challenge in the research was obtaining a sample that reflects the diversity of employees in Saudi multicultural companies. However, the resulting mix of respondents was predominately Arabic. While it underrepresented women in the Saudi workforce, the proportion of women was roughly consistent with the industrial sector where the snowball sample began and was focused. As a result, our findings are useful in understanding social media use and cross-cultural among Arabic employees in this sector.

Variables and Measurements

In this study, four major variables are used, three independent and one dependent. The three independent variables are interaction with global content on social media, time spent on social media, and job position. The one dependent variable is the level of cross-cultural

competency. In this section, each of these variables is introduced, defined, and tied to the literature review and the theories where applicable.

Cross-Cultural Competency

When examining the literature, cross-cultural competency is theorized and defined by Hofstede (1983), Haines et al. (2000), Apud et al. (2003), and Johnson et al. (2006). In this study, the variables were defined using the following four aspects from their previous research.

1. learning about other cultures' opinions, language, holidays, traditions, tastes, trends, and approaches;
2. developing skills in working and interacting with individuals and colleagues who come from other countries;
3. having the ability to adapt to living in other cultures;
4. being able to establish long-lasting friendships and relationships;

In this study's survey, 11 Likert-scale question items (#33 to #43) (See Appendix A) were designed to measure cross-cultural competency. Item #35 in the survey states, "I always try to educate myself about the culture of my coworkers to avoid any miscommunication," which is consistent with the first aspect above. It asks about the participants' willingness and readiness to learn and educate themselves about their co-workers' culture. Other survey items that also correspond with the first aspect of cross-cultural competency's definition above are #33 "there are differences between cultures" and #34 "I accept friend requests on social media from people who belong to other cultures." If a person does not believe there is a difference between cultures, he/she would not be willing to learn about these differences. Also, accepting friends from other cultures indicates the person's willingness to learn from what social media friends post, like, and share about their cultural perspectives, tastes, trends, or approaches.

Survey items number #36, “I don’t encounter miscommunication when I deal with people from other cultures,” #37 “I feel comfortable dealing with co-workers from other cultures,” #39 “I am interested in socializing with my coworkers who come from different cultural backgrounds,” and #40 “I am able to greet people from other cultures the way they do in their own culture” echo the second aspect in the definition of cross-cultural competency above. These items measure the abilities and communication skills of the participants to work with members of a diverse work population. This knowledge and these skills reflect the participants’ cross-cultural competency as argued by Johnson et al. (2006) and others. Survey item #38 “I am eager to learn about the country in which I work, when it is not my country” echoes the first and third aspects in the definition of cross-cultural competency, while survey item #41 “Some of my co-workers from other cultures have become my friends outside of work,” and survey item #42 “My relations with people from other cultures don’t always last long” reflect the last aspect mentioned above. Depending on the answers of the participants to these survey items # 33-43, points were calculated. Each answer in the Likert scale was assigned a certain number of points (strongly agree =7 pts, agree = 6 pts, somewhat agree = 5 pts, neither agree nor disagree = 4 pts, somewhat disagree = 3 pts, disagree = 2 pts, strongly disagree =1 pt). Then the researcher measured cross-cultural competency by averaging the overall scores for each participant. Based on this calculation, the levels of cross-cultural competency were assigned.

Social Capital Theory is usually tied to the outcomes of people socializing in a certain place for a certain purpose. They could be socializing, working, studying, etc. As people gather, either online or on a physical site, they tend to share information that promotes their awareness about different life matters. This increases cross-cultural competency if, among those individuals, there are people from different cultures. This sharing of information establishes and

maintains those individuals' relationships with each other. In the 11 survey items that measure cross-cultural competency in this study, there are questions (#33-43) that ask about the outcome of such online interaction, such as the one (#36) that asks if participants encounter misunderstandings when dealing with other employees who come from other cultures. Social Capital also makes employees' behavior more predictable and understood (Claridge, 2013). Cross-cultural competency survey questions are based on the assumption that when employees understand and predict their co-workers' behaviors, this can directly reflect higher levels of cross-cultural competency and lower levels of anxiety and uncertainty.

Interaction With Global Content

As for the variable of the interaction with global content, Sawyer (2011) stated that global content is any content that is intended to inform the viewers about cultures in an appealing way and that can lead to successful communication among people in today's world society. Chen (2011) indicated that globally designed and written contents reinforce intercultural dialogues and aim at promoting effective communication and understanding among diverse people. In this study, the survey asked about 'interaction' with global content and by 'interaction' the researcher meant, not only skimming the content but reading it, watching it (if it is a video), liking it, commenting on it, or sharing it. By interaction, the researcher sought to identify if the participants initiated the search about global content.

The survey in this study dedicated five, 7-point, Likert scale, survey question items (See # 28 to 32 in Appendix A) to measuring interaction with global content. The questions were answered by choosing one of the following options: (strongly agree = 7 pts, agree = 6pts, somewhat agree = 5 pts, neither agree nor disagree = 4 pts, somewhat disagree = 3 pts, disagree = 2 pts, strongly disagree = 1 pt.). Then cross-cultural competency was measured by averaging

the points each participant obtained from answering these five questions. Based on this calculation, the levels of interaction with global content were assigned. The survey items related to the interaction with global content were items # 28 to 32.

- 28 I read posts on social media about other cultures.
- 29 I participate in discussion on social media about other cultures.
- 30 I use social media to obtain information about other cultures.
- 31 I use social media to increase my knowledge about the cultures of my co-workers.
- 32 I use social media to visit my international co-workers' pages (such as: Facebook) and learn about their culture life.

As seen in the above five survey items, participants were asked to rate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with these statements. These statements seek to understand to what extent the participants interact with social media content helps them gain or reinforce some new information about other cultures. Social Capital Theory and Uncertainty Reduction Theory shaped this section because the increase in interaction with global content is expected to create an increase in the level of cross-cultural competency which, in turn, leads to avoiding uncertainty and anxiety and valuing human interaction. According to Almainan et al. (2015), interaction with global content leads their participants to be more competitive in their workplace and less uncertain or anxious. In the survey, for instance, the participant's answer to the item # 33 which states, "I use social media to increase my knowledge about the cultures of my co-workers" is one

factor that will help show the level of interaction with global content on social media and then see if this interaction has an influence on the participant’s cross-cultural competency.

Time Spent on Social Media

Regarding this independent variable, time spent on social media measures the time that the participants dedicate to using social media every day without mentioning any specific purpose behind this time being used or the content that they view. There was a direct question (#16) that asked participants about the amount of time they spend on using social media every day. The question provided four groups for the participants to choose from: Less than 1 hour/day, 1 - 3 hours/day, 4-6 hours/day, or more than 6 hours/day.

Job Position

As for this independent variable of job position, it was important to know the job position of the participant in order to answer the second research question. In the demographic section, participants were asked (Survey item # 9) to categorize their job position as either managerial or non-managerial. By managerial, the researcher means that the participant has employees working under his supervision, while the participant who has a non-managerial position is an employee who works under the guidance of a manager and has no employees under his supervision.

Table 1

Variables and Measurements

Variables	Independent /Dependent	Level of data	Questions related	Measurement
Cross-cultural Competency	Dependent	Ordinal	33-43	7-point Likert scale
Interaction with global content	Independent	Ordinal	28-32	7-point Likert scale
Time spent on social media	Independent	Ordinal	16	Multiple choice question (4 choices)
Job position	Independent	Nominal	9	Multiple choice question (2 choices)

Procedures

The researcher followed the steps described in the next section as the procedures used in designing and disseminating the survey to the participants.

The Instrument

The researcher designed the instrument to measure the relationship between the use of social media, job hierarchy, and the cross-cultural competency. The survey was divided into three major parts. Part one, demographics, asked about nine items (question # 1 - 11): country of origin, ethnicity, gender, age, marital status, first language, other languages (if any), education, current position, and years spent in Saudi Arabia. The second part of the survey asked about the use of social media. This part is divided into three subsections: time spent on social media (question # 15 and 16), type of social media used (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, etc.) (question # 18), and type of content (global or local) (question # 23, 24, and 28 to 32). The third part of the survey asks about cross-cultural competency (question # 33 - 43).

The survey consists of different levels of measurements. It includes nominal level questions such as nationality, gender, and marital status. It also includes ordinal level questions such as time spent on social media and level of interaction with global content. In addition, interval data is collected such as age.

Reliability and Validity

The instrument used in this study was built on identified characteristics of CCC and global content from the literature, and then jury validity was used as an extra verification. Reinard (2001) defined jury validity as a process of “having a group of experts in the subject matter examine a measurement device to judge its merits” (p. 435). The researcher sent the survey to two individuals with expertise (Ph.D. candidates in the Communication Media and

Instructional Technology program) in the field of cross-cultural communication research. The researcher then modified the instrument according to their recommendations and comments. After that, the researcher used expert jury validity by asking four PhD candidates to form a group together to discuss the tool. The panel evaluated each question individually for a total of 30 minutes and then discussed the suggestions for 90 minutes. Members introduced their comments on the survey, which had been printed out, and then would ask the rest of the members about their opinions regarding what the member had said. The major suggestions that came from the jury members were about the language used. A member asked what if some participants could not speak English, and he suggested that the researcher translate the survey and attach a version in different languages. The other members disagreed with his opinion saying that to work for a multicultural company, you would have to have a language proficiency, so there is no need to translate.

Another suggestion was that the jury members emphasized that the survey items should be based on studies in the literature and theories. Some other suggestions were that instead of having two questions, one asking about the participants' nationality and one about their ethnicity, it would be better and more convenient and less confusing to the participants to ask one question about the country of origin and not the ethnicity. The members said some people prefer not to mention their ethnicity and some people have mixed ethnicities. The suggestion was welcomed and the question about the ethnicity was removed.

The panel was asked to take the role of the participant in order to check for any language-related, confusing words, or clarity issues. The panel suggested edits to some survey questions that they thought were wordy and made them succinct. An example of this was about the country of origin and ethnic background, the panel suggested this was vague and it would be clearer to

remove ethnic background. Another example was the question about marital status. The question gave two options: separated and divorced. The panel suggested that these could be confusing. They suggested using only one of them (divorced). However, after some discussion and taking into consideration different backgrounds of the participants, it was agreed that both (divorced and separated) remain.

Subject Recruitment and Contact

The recruitment method used in this study was a snowball method. Snowball sampling is defined as “a special nonprobability method used for developing a research sample where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances” (Katz, 2006, p. 4). Snowballing was important to this study and fits it well because the topic is about using social media, and hence, using social media to snowball the survey is more likely to reach the desired population, gives credibility and creates trust that the people who answer, indeed, do use social media. Another reason why snowballing fits this study is because it was convenient to find more respondents through other people who know them as the personal connection may help encourage participation (Katz, 2006). It was also not possible for many respondents to access outside surveys from the secured networks in their companies – this made direct contact through HR offices less viable. Therefore, snowball offered a better option.

The researcher, through personal associations, sent the link to the survey with a participation invitation to 20 professional colleagues working in multicultural industrial companies in Saudi Arabia. Those professional colleagues were asked to start snowballing and sending the survey to eligible people they may know who are on social media. Given the snowball technique, an unexpected result was the respondents were predominately Arabic with minimal representation by other groups. As a result, this study is useful in understanding

attitudes among Arabic employees, primarily in industrial companies, but cannot be generalized to foreigners in the Saudi workforce.

IRB approval was obtained before starting the study. There were no identifiable criteria on the survey that could enable the researcher to identify the participants. Completion of the survey was voluntary, and it was active for a 21-day period. After the data had been collected, the researcher calculated the average level of cross-cultural competency and the interaction with global content, then ranked the levels of each participant's interaction with global content. With those variables in place, SPSS was used to run the analysis tests. The findings of this study will be presented and discussed in chapters four and five.

Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure the privacy of the participants, the researcher designed the survey so that no leading information would be requested from the participants in the demographic information section, and no identifying questions about the company would be asked in the body of the survey, except for the name of the company because the researcher wanted to know if these participants worked in multicultural companies. The names of the companies will not be published. All the demographic questions were anonymous. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained before conducting the study.

The participation in this study was voluntary. The first question in the survey was a consent to be accepted by the participants before they decided to proceed to the survey itself. In the consent, the participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point by just closing their browser. The participants were also given the contact information for the researcher and the supervisor in case they had any questions or concerns.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology of the study. The introduction restated the topic and focus of the study and the theories used. After that, the chapter described the research instrument and the mechanisms used to establish reliability and validity. From there, the chapter introduced the participants: How they were recruited, contacted and why they were an appropriate sample for the study. It also highlighted that the respondents were predominately Arabic, and the results would be applicable to this group but conclusions cannot be made to the broader foreign workforce. Then, the chapter presented the variables and their measurement followed by illustrating the procedures that started from the step of creating the survey to the step of collecting the data and the type of statistical tests used to get the findings. This chapter concluded with possible ethical considerations and appropriate protections.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This study investigated the relationship between social media use and cross-cultural competency among employees in diverse workplaces, and how the use of social media may influence cross-cultural competency. The method employed in this study is a quantitative survey. This study, therefore, examined the role that social media plays, either positively or negatively, in facilitating cross-cultural competency among diverse employees who possess different job positions in multicultural companies in Saudi Arabia. This study, hence, sought to investigate the functionality of social media within these companies to promote cross-cultural competency. Based on the literature, this increase in cross-cultural competency is expected to reduce conflicts such as uncertainty, anxiety, and tension among the employees who come from different cultural backgrounds. The results of this study are discussed in light of two theories in the literature of communication: Social Capital Theory and Uncertainty Reduction Theory.

Using snowball sampling, the participants were drawn from different multicultural companies in Saudi Arabia. The resulting sample, however, was reflective of the Arabic members of the workforce in the industrial sector but not the larger foreign nationals. The researcher contacted professional contacts in multicultural industrial companies and asked them to complete the survey and start snowballing it. They were asked to send an email invitation with the survey link to the people they know that may work for multicultural companies, and also to post the invitation links on their social media accounts.

This chapter is divided into six parts. The first part addresses the screening questions that filter those who meet the study's criteria and qualify for it. The demographic analysis of the study sample is found in part two. The third part discusses the social media use habits of the

participants. The statistical techniques that show what tests will be run to answer the questions follows in part four. The fifth part summarizes the results of the study which answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The sixth, and final part, contains the conclusion and connections to Chapter Five.

Screening Questions

For the purpose of filtering the participants, a group of four screening questions was asked at the beginning of the survey. These screening questions were used to see if the participants met the criteria for the study. If participants did not meet the criteria for the study, they were taken to a thank-you screen at the end of the survey. The first screening question asked the age of the participant. If “less than 18” was selected, the survey would automatically go to the end. This question eliminated one participant. The next screening question asked if they worked in a multicultural company in Saudi Arabia. Only “yes” responses met the criteria for the study. Twenty-three participants were eliminated from the study through this question. In order for the researcher to verify that the participants were really working for an appropriate company that met the study’s criteria, there was an optional question in the survey that asked the name of the company. The third screening question asked if they have co-workers from different countries and cultural backgrounds in their workplace. This question eliminated seven participants. The final screening question asked if they were users of any social media websites. Seven participants were eliminated from the study by this question. Table 2 shows the number of the participants who started the survey (310), the number of participants who did not meet the criteria or did not complete the survey (69), and the number of participants who were qualified and completed the survey (241).

Table 2

Distribution of Participants That Started the Survey

Group	Number	Percentage
Participant who started the survey	310	100.00%
Participant who met the criteria and completed the survey	241	77.74%
Participant who did not meet the criteria	69	22.26%
Participant who met the criteria but did not complete the survey	31	10.00%
Participants who were not working for a company in Saudi Arabia	23	7.42%
Participants who did not use social media	7	2.26%
Participants who did not have co-workers from other cultures	7	2.26%
Participants who were less than 18 years old	1	0.32%

Demographic Distribution

The demographic section of the survey included questions about the descriptive variables: gender, age, marital status, education level, job position, and country. The researcher focused on these independent variables because they can provide a description about those who work in these companies and responded to the survey. Knowing this information can be helpful in studying how to improve communication between them and avoid cultural conflicts and misunderstandings situations in the workplace in the future. As pointed out earlier, the resulting sample was predominately Arabic employees, so any conclusions would be applicable to that group but possibly not to other foreign employees.

Gender

In Table 3, the gender distribution among the participants is summarized. When considering gender, it was assumed that the number of female participants would be lower than the number of male participants because the nature of work in these companies in Saudi Arabia tends to attract more men than women. Most of the participants ($n=232$ - 96.27 %) were male and the number of female participants were only ($n=9$ - 3.73%).

In addition, the nature of the Saudi society and culture dictate that men work in the industrial sector more than women. Women in the Saudi society are traditionally more likely to work in the education and nursing fields. Table 3 presents the gender distribution of the participants. According to the General Statistics Department in Saudi Arabia (2006), only 7% of Saudi women are in the job market, and most of them pursue jobs in teaching, nursing, medicine or charity work. As for the scientific areas, GSD (2006) reported that only 3.8% of employed Saudi women are involved in scientific or technical fields. That means more than 96% of Saudi working women are employed in other fields that were not included in the focus of this study.

Table 3

Gender of the Participants

Gender	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Male	232	96.27%
Female	9	3.73%
Total	241	100.00%

Age

Regarding the distribution of age among the participants, the survey included eight age groups that ranged from 18 years old (as the youngest) and spanned up to 85 years old or older. The highest age group that participated in the study was 35 - 44, representing 49.38% of the participants, while the lowest age group was 65 - 74, representing only 0.41% of the participants. The second largest group (25 - 34) contained 102 participants, representing 36.51%. By combining the top two age groups (25 - 34 and 35 - 44), the total is approximately 86% of the participants in this study were between the ages of 25 and 44. This finding aligns with the announcement of the Saudi Government which said 80% of the Saudi population is under the age of 44 (Maal, 2016). Another rationale for such a finding may be due to the fact that such

companies attract employees who fall into the age category of under 45 years of age. Table 4 shows the participants' age distribution.

Table 4

Participants' Age Distribution

Age	<i>n</i>	Percentage
18 – 24	11	4.56%
25 – 34	88	36.51%
35 – 44	119	49.38%
45 - 54	18	7.47%
55 – 64	4	1.66%
65 – 74	1	0.41%

Marital Status

Consistent with the participant's age, most of the participants in this study were found to be the “married” group ($n=216$), representing 89.63%. The lowest group was found to be the “widowed” group with only one participant reporting that he/she was widowed. The second largest group, which was extremely lower than the first one, was “never married.” Only 18 participants, representing 7.47%, reported that they were never married. The reason for such a demographic finding could be related to the Saudi culture in which Saudis get married young, usually at the age of 25. Most participants ($n=191$ - 79.25%) were Saudi citizens. Table 5 below shows the distribution of the marital status of the participants.

Table 5

Distribution of the Marital Status

Marital status	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Married	216	89.63%
Widowed	1	0.41%
Divorced	6	2.49%
Never married	18	7.47%

Educational Level

Table 6 shows the distribution of the educational level among the sampled participants of the study. Educational level “4-year degree,” which represents 53.11% of the participants, has the highest participation rate over all of the other education level groups. The lowest group was found to be “high school graduate” which represents only 0.83% of the participants. The second largest group was “master’s degree,” which accounted for 52 (21.58%) of the participants.

The findings show that the majority of the participants possessed a 4-year college degree or higher. This may indicate that these multicultural companies attract educated workers who have college degrees and want to work in these companies or it may indicate that these types of companies prefer to hire workers with college degrees.

Table 6

Educational Level Among the Participants

Educational level	<i>n</i>	Percentage
High school graduate	2	0.83%
Some college	9	3.73%
2-year degree	38	15.77%
4-year degree	128	53.11%
Master’s degree	52	21.58%
Doctoral degree	12	4.98%

Job Position

With respect to the participants’ position, those who reported being in managerial positions represented 43.57% ($n=105$) of the participants, and those who reported as non-managerial represented 56.43% ($n=136$) of participants (Table 7). Since the professional colleagues who started the snowballing were in both managerial and non-managerial positions; this can explain why participants came from both groups. Participants from both groups were also expected since social media in Saudi Arabia is available for all to use, and the survey was

snowballed through social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, etc. Hypotheses 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 test to see if there is a difference in cross-cultural competency based on the participants' job positions.

Table 7

Distribution of the Participants' Job Positions

Job position	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Managerial	105	43.57%
Non-managerial	136	56.43%

Country of Origin

In regard to the participants' country of origin, the majority of participants came from Saudi Arabia ($n = 191$), representing 79.25% of the participants (Table 8). The hope was that more non-Saudi and non-Arabic participants would respond to the survey because the sample comes from multicultural companies. Although the majority of the participants were Saudis, some participants came from other countries including 14 participants from Egypt, 8 from Jordan, 6 from Yemen, 6 from Pakistan, and 6 from India. The other 10 participants came from different countries including Japan, China, Lebanon, USA, and Canada. This finding suggests that the responses can provide perspective on Arabic workers, especially men, in Saudi multicultural companies.

However, it is not broadly representative of the foreign workforce and additional studies would be needed to address that population. The reason why most participants came from Saudi Arabia may have to do with the fact that the researcher's professional colleagues who were contacted to take the survey and started snowballing it were Saudis, and it would be expected that they snowballed it to Saudi people they knew who worked for multicultural companies. The time factor may have also contributed to this issue. The survey link was active for 21 days. If the

link was active for a longer period, it may have reached more participants from different countries. However, it does raise questions about the viability of snowball sampling to reach across cultural groups even in multicultural companies.

Table 8

Participants' Country of Origin

Country	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Saudi Arabia	191	79.25%
Egypt	14	5.81%
Jordan	8	3.32%
Yemen	6	2.49%
Pakistan	6	2.49%
India	6	2.49%
Others	10	4.15%

Participants and Social Media Use

The demographic information has been presented and explained in the previous section. This section will present tables that show the distribution of participants according to their social media use. Any differences in social media use will be analyzed to determine if it has influenced cultural competency.

Social Media Platforms

Table 9 shows the social media platforms that participants reported using. The participants were given the option to choose multiple social media platforms they use. It was found that the majority of the sampled participants use WhatsApp ($n=211$ - 87.55%) as their primary, personal, social media platform. Facebook came second with ($n=168$ - 69.71%) participants. It was also found that the least used social media website was Flickr ($n=5$ - 2.07%). This finding was expected since the majority of the participants were Saudi citizens, and the most used social media platform in Saudi Arabia is WhatsApp (Statista, 2018).

Table 9

Platforms Used by Participants

Social media platforms	<i>n</i>	Percentage
WhatsApp	211	87.55%
Facebook	168	69.71%
Twitter	160	66.39%
Snapchat	115	47.72%
YouTube	109	45.23%
Instagram	96	39.83%
LinkedIn	83	34.44%
Facebook Messenger	45	18.67%
Blogger.com	9	3.73%
Google Plus	6	2.49%
Flickr	5	2.07%
Other (Telegram - Line - Pinterest)	4	1.66%

Length of Time Using Social Media

The majority of the participants, as presented in Table 10, reported having used social media platforms for several years. In contrast, only one participant reported having used it for a year or less. The results show that more than 96% ($n=232$) reported having used social media for more than 3 years by the time they took the survey. Social media is widely used in Saudi Arabia and other Arabic countries. Since social media started to diffuse in 2006 (Skelton, 2012), and as most participant's ages fell into the 35 – 44 age group, it was expected that those participants would have already spent several years using social media.

Table 10

Length of Time Using Social Media

Length of time using social media	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Less than 6 months	0	0.00%
7 months to 1 year	1	0.41%
1 to 2 years	8	3.32%
3 to 4 years	88	36.51%
More than five years	144	59.75%

Time Spent on Social Media

Concerning the amount of time participants spent on their social media, Table 11 shows the majority of participants ($n=134$), representing 55.60 % of participants reported using social media for an average of 1-3 hours per day. About 70% of the participants reported using social media for three or less hours a day. This may be indicative of the phone-use restrictions that these participants may be subject to in their work environment. In contrast, only 14 participants, representing 5.81%, used social media for more than 6 hours a day. This is consistent with the tendency of some individuals in the society to devote a significant amount of time to social media on a daily basis.

Table 11

Time Spent on Social Media

Time on social media	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Less than 1 hour/day	35	14.52%
1 - 3 hours/day	134	55.60%
4-6 hours/day	58	24.07%
More than 6 hours/day	14	5.81%

Number of Friends on Social Media

As indicated in Table 12, it was found that a plurality of participants ($n = 87$) representing 36.10% reported having between 101 and 300 social media friends. This was expected as the average number of friends per social media user is 288 (Statista, 2018). Only two participants, which represented 0.83%, had less than 10 social media friends.

Table 12

Number of Friends on Social Media

Number of friends	<i>n</i>	Percentage
less than 10	2	0.83%
10-50	23	9.54%
51-100	68	28.22%
101-300	87	36.10%
301-500	35	14.52%
501 or more	26	10.79%

Accepting Friends From Other Cultures

The tendency of the participants to accept new friends from other cultures, as Table 13 shows, was positive. The majority of participants ($n = 158$), representing 65.56%, reported being open to accepting friend requests from people who come from other cultures. On the other hand, 45 participants, representing 18.67%, said they did not. This is consistent with the expectation that most participants would accept friend requests from people who come from other cultures because they are working in multicultural companies and have co-workers from other cultures.

Table 13

Accepting Friends From Other Cultures

Accept new friends from other cultures	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Yes	158	65.56%
No	45	18.67%
Sometimes	38	15.77%

Type of Shared Personal Information

Regarding the type of personal information (such as real name, photos, beliefs, etc.) participants make available or share on their personal social media pages, it was reported by the majority of participants ($n=219 - 90%$) that the most common information available about them was their real names. However, the number of participants who were interested in presenting

information related to their religion, traditions, and beliefs was less than 50%: religion ($n=79$ - 32.78%) and traditions and beliefs ($n=111$ - 46.06%) as presented below in Table 14.

The least common information available on the participants on their social media accounts was found to be personal videos with only 52 participants, which represented 21.58%. These findings are consistent with the Pew Research Center (PRC) (2018), which found that 92% of social media users post their real name on their profile and 24% post videos of themselves.

Table 14

Participants' Information on Social Media

Participants' information	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Real Name	219	90.87%
Personal photos	118	48.96%
Interests	113	46.89%
Traditions and beliefs	111	46.06%
Religion	79	32.78%
Contact information	71	29.46%
Daily activities	55	22.82%
Personal videos	52	21.58%

Purpose of Using Social Media

The purpose of using social media, as presented in Table 15, shows that approximately 60% of the participants ($n=144$) reported using social media to find information about other cultures. However, more than 80% of the participants ($n=198$) reported that they use social media to find information about general topics. Research says that users of social media use it because they want to get connected to people they know and maintain their relationships (Ellison et al., 2007). However, Powell (2009) argued that people use social media for other benefits such as achieving network externalities, positive feedback, and expansion of relationships.

Table 15

Purpose of Using Social Media

Purpose of use	<i>n</i>	Percentage
To find information about general topics	198	82.16%
To find information about other cultures	144	59.75%
To find information about my coworkers	134	55.60%
To make new friends	124	51.45%
To post about my culture and beliefs	116	48.13%
To communicate with coworkers in my workplace	112	46.47%

In summary, the most prominent findings from the demographic and social media use sections of the survey questions are the following. First, it was found that the overwhelming majority of participants in the study were male ($n=232$ - 96.27%), compared to only 9 female participants (3.73%). Another similar finding pertains to the nationality of the participants. The majority of participants were Saudis ($n=191$ - 79.25%). A third interesting finding has to do with the educational background of the participants. The majority of participants ($n=128$ - 53.11%) reported that they obtained a 4-year educational degree. When analyzing their social media use, it was found that participants ($n=219$ - 90%) used their real names on their social media platforms. The next section deals with the statistical analysis of the findings. Demographic and social media use findings will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

Introduction to Statistical Techniques

This section deals with the statistical techniques and findings used to answer the research questions and hypotheses. The first research question examined the use of social media from two angles: time use and type of content. It examined the relationship between the time spent on social media by employees who work in multicultural workplaces in Saudi Arabia, and their cross-cultural competency. It also tested the relationship between the amount of global content that participants interact with on social and cross-cultural competency. It then tested the

relationship between cross-cultural competency and global content and time spent on social media combined.

The second research question examined the possible impact of job hierarchy on cross-cultural competency. It was assumed that the position rank of an employee plays a role in his/her cross-cultural competency because the higher the position ranks, the more it is required to work with different employees and supervise them. Being in a managerial position usually requires cross-cultural competency. This question, hence, tested if the job position of the employees correlates with the cross-cultural competency they have, and if time spent on social media combined with global content, taking into consideration the job position, correlates with cross-cultural competency. Cross-cultural competency, as the dependent variable, was measured by averaging the points each participant got by answering survey questions 33 to 43 (See Appendix A) which target cross-cultural competency.

Findings

This section presents the findings of the study. It answers the research questions by viewing, analyzing, and discussing the hypotheses under each research question. There are three hypotheses for question one and four hypotheses for question two. Each of these hypotheses is answered through presenting the statistical test that was run and a table that shows the details of the test results. The first research question is:

RQ1: In Saudi multicultural companies, is there a relationship between social media use and cross-cultural competency among employees?

This research question focuses on the overall relationship between using social media and cross-cultural competency. The participants' use of social media is measured in regard to two dimensions: the time they spend using social media and the amount of global content they

review. The following three hypotheses for the first research question, respectively, tested the difference in cross-cultural competency among the sampled employees based on the amount of time they spend on social media (hypothesis 1.1), based on their level of interaction with global content on social media, (hypothesis 1.2), and based on the amount of time they spend on social media and their level of interaction with global content (hypothesis 1.3).

H1.1: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency among employees based on the amount of time they spend on social media.

The first hypothesis tested the difference in cross-cultural competency among the sampled employees based on the amount of time they spend on social media. This hypothesis was based on an assumption that employees’ levels of cross-cultural competency can be influenced by the amount of time they spend on social media. Social media outlets are naturally diverse spaces and include people from different cultural backgrounds. When employees spend more time on social media, it is more likely that they will be exposed to more information. The amount of time was measured as an ordinal variable with four categories: less than one hour, 1 to 3 hours, 4 to 6 hours, and more than 6 hours per day. One-way ANOVA was used to find the difference, and it was found that the difference was not significant.

Table 16

Time Spent on Social Media per Day and Cross-Cultural Competency

Time spent on social media	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	F-value	Sign
Less than one hour	35	4.59	1.18	0.20	1.367	0.254
1-3 hours	134	4.50	1.37	0.12		
4-6 hours	58	4.84	1.21	0.16		
More than 6 hours	14	5.02	1.35	0.36		

As seen in Table 16 above, the difference between the groups that used social media for different amounts of time was not significant. The significant level was $p=0.254$, and their means

on cross-cultural competency were approximately similar. For instance, the group that used social media for 1-3 hours a day had a mean of 4.59 (SD = 1.37), while the group that used it for more than six hours a day had a mean of 5.02 (SD = 1.35). As result, the difference between these groups based on the time they spent on social media was not significant. This was not surprising as the variable of time spent on social media cannot by itself indicate any level of cross-cultural competency if not accompanied by the type of content the participants reviewed while spending this amount of time. People can spend many hours on social media playing social media games or shopping, for instance. This may not strongly predict their cross-cultural competency level.

H1.2: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency among employees based on their level of interaction with global content on social media.

The second hypothesis tested the relationship between the type of content the participants viewed on social media and their level of cross-cultural competency. This hypothesis (H1.2) was based on the assumption that the content participants interact with on social media may influence their level of cross-cultural competency. Not all content on social media bears the same level of cultural awareness. It was assumed that the global content is the element that would most likely correlate with cross-cultural competency because global content includes features of other cultures (i.e., how people greet each other, how they celebrate their special days, how they interact, etc.). The type of content was measured as an ordinal variable. The measurement was carried out by averaging the scores of each participant on the five survey questions on this topic (survey items 28 through 32) (See Appendix A). These survey questions asked the participants if they like, comment, or share contents that include information about other cultures. Using one-way ANOVA as the difference measure, it was found that the difference among participants'

level of cross-cultural competency based on their interaction with global content on social media was significant (Sign. 0.00) (See Table 17).

Table 17

Level of Interaction With Global Content and Cross-Cultural Competency

Level of interaction with global content*	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	F-value	Sign
2	60	2.97	56.00	0.07	157.6	0.00
3	30	3.67	1.07	20.00		
4	29	4.91	0.83	0.15		
5	60	5.44	0.54	0.07		
6	58	5.72	0.31	0.04		
7	4	6.32	0.28	141.00		

*No participant in level #1

Running Tukey’s test, as is seen in Table 18, it was found that those participants who prefer to interact with global content—by sharing, liking, or commenting on content that shows some aspects of another country or culture—tend to have higher levels of cross-cultural competency. This was consistent with the expected outcome since global content, by nature, disseminates information about different people, countries, traditions, languages, holidays, etc. Such interaction with global content would be expected to lead to an increase in one’s cross-cultural competency level. Since the difference in Table 17 was significant (p=0.00), Tukey HSD test was run to see where the significant difference among groups was (Table 18).

Table 18

Factorial Analysis of Level of Interaction With Global Content and Cross-Cultural Competency

Level of interact with global content	Level of interact with global content	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
2	3	-.685830*	0.14150	0.000	-1.0924	-0.2793
	4	-1.94344*	0.14312	0.000	-2.3547	-1.5322
	5	-2.46750*	0.11553	0.000	-2.7995	-2.1355
	6	-2.75051*	0.11652	0.000	-3.0853	-2.4157
	7	-3.34267*	0.32678	0.000	-4.2816	-2.4037
3	2	.685830*	0.14150	0.000	0.2793	1.0924
	4	-1.25761*	0.16479	0.000	-1.7311	-0.7841
	5	-1.78167*	0.14150	0.000	-2.1882	-1.3751
	6	-2.06468*	0.14231	0.000	-2.4736	-1.6558
4	7	-2.65683*	0.33683	0.000	-3.6247	-1.689
	2	1.94344*	0.14312	0.000	1.5322	2.3547
	3	1.25761*	0.16479	0.000	0.7841	1.7311
	5	-0.52406*	0.14312	0.004	-0.9353	-0.1128
	6	-0.80707*	0.14392	0.000	-1.2206	-0.3935
5	7	-1.39922*	0.33752	0.001	-2.3690	-0.4294
	2	2.46750*	0.11553	0.000	2.1355	2.7995
	3	1.78167*	0.14150	0.000	1.3751	2.1882
	4	0.52406*	0.14312	0.004	0.1128	0.9353
	6	-0.28301	0.11652	0.151	-0.6178	0.0518
6	7	-0.87517	0.32678	0.084	-1.8141	0.0638
	2	2.75051*	0.11652	0.000	2.4157	3.0853
	3	2.06468*	0.14231	0.000	1.6558	2.4736
	4	0.80707*	0.14392	0.000	0.3935	1.2206
	5	0.28301	0.11652	0.151	-0.0518	0.6178
7	7	-0.59216	0.32713	0.461	-1.5321	0.3478
	2	3.34267*	0.32678	0.000	2.4037	4.2816
	3	2.65683*	0.33683	0.000	1.6890	3.6247
	4	1.39922*	0.33752	0.001	0.4294	2.3690
	5	0.87517	0.32678	0.084	-0.0638	1.8141
	6	0.59216	0.32713	0.461	-0.3478	1.5321

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As the Tukey HSD test in Table 18 shows, there was a significant difference among most of the levels of interaction with global content except for the highest levels of interaction with

global content (levels 5, 6 and 7). These levels were the only ones among which the difference was not significant from one another. The difference was found to be significant among all the other levels (level 2, 3, and 4). Thus, there was no significant difference in the level of cross-cultural competency among participants who had 5 or above in their level of interaction with global content on social media. This suggests that once a certain level is reached, the impact of global content on cross-cultural competency beyond that point is minimal. In other words, a threshold is reached where increases in global content viewing do not impact cross-cultural competency much more.

H1.3: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency among employees based on the amount of time they spend on social media and their level of interaction with global content.

The third hypothesis tested the difference in the level of cross-cultural competency based on both the time spent on social media and the level of interaction with global content viewed on it. This hypothesis was based on the assumption that time spent on social media combined with the level of interaction with global content influence participants' cross-cultural competency. It was assumed that when participants spend more time on social media interacting with global content, they are more likely to have higher levels of cross-cultural competency. A two-way ANOVA test (Table 20) reported a non-significant difference in any interaction effect on cross-cultural competency.

Table 19

Time Spent and Interaction With Global Content

Time spent on social media	Level of interaction with global content	N	Cross-cultural competency	Std. Dev	Std. Error
Less than one hour	2	6	3.08	0.3139	0.256
	3	8	4.35	1.3070	0.222
	4	9	5.01	0.7520	0.209
	5	10	5.11	1.0447	0.198
	6	2	5.60	0.0636	0.444
	7	0	0.00	0.0000	-
	Total	35	4.59	1.1799	
1-3 hours	2	40	2.98	0.6720	0.099
	3	16	3.34	0.7803	0.157
	4	13	4.87	1.0195	0.174
	5	26	5.55	0.3295	0.123
	6	39	5.72	0.3183	0.100
	7	0	0.00	0.0000	-
	Total	134	4.5	0.3671	
4-6 hours	2	10	2.88	0.2287	0.198
	3	6	3.59	1.1585	0.256
	4	6	4.80	0.6053	0.256
	5	22	5.48	0.4002	0.134
	6	13	5.73	0.3116	0.174
	7	1	6.45	-	0.627
	Total	58	4.84	1.2081	
More than 6 hours	2	4	3.05	0.0900	0.314
	3	0	0.00	0.0000	-
	4	1	5.36	-	0.627
	5	2	5.36	0.1272	0.444
	6	4	5.80	0.2786	0.314
	7	3	6.27	0.3301	0.362
	Total	14	5.02	1.3465	

Table 20

Factorial Analysis of Time Spent, Interaction With Global Content, and Cross-Cultural Competency

Variables	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Value	Sign	Partial Ets Square
Corrected Model	323.076	20	16.154	41.054	0.00	0.789
Intercept	1667.335	1	1667.335	4237.4	0.00	0.951
Time spent on social media	0.544	3	0.181	0.46	0.71	0.006
level of interaction with global content	137.907	5	27.581	70.096	0.00	0.614
Time spent and Global content	7.057	12	0.588	0.495	0.13	0.075
Error	86.566	220	0.393			
Total	5566.586	241				
Corrected Total	409.642	240				

As seen in the Table 20 above, the difference between the groups based on combining time spent on social media and type of content the sampled employees viewed was not found to be significant ($p=0.13$). However, as shown in Table 16, the difference in the level of cross-cultural competency based on the time variable alone was not significant, but the difference based on the interaction with global content (Table 17) was significant as was seen in H1.2.

The second research question sought to examine the relationship between the use of social media (time and type), job hierarchy, and cross-cultural competency. The following four hypotheses tested the data and helped answer the question.

RQ2: In Saudi multicultural companies, what is the relationship between the use of social media, job hierarchy, and cross-cultural competency?

H2.1: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency based on employees' job positions.

The purpose of H2.1 was to explore how the job hierarchy can affect cross-cultural competency among participants. This hypothesis was based on the assumption that the participants' job position influences their level of cross-cultural competency. It was assumed that the sampled participants who are in managerial positions may have a greater need to understand how their subordinates' cultures play a role in their work, and therefore, they aim to be more cross-culturally competent than those who are in non-managerial positions. Job position was measured as an ordinal variable with two categories: managerial and non-managerial.

As seen in Table 21 below, the one-way ANOVA test results reported that there was a significant difference between the job position and cross-cultural competency. However, it was found that those who occupied managerial positions ranked lower in their cross-cultural competency.

Table 21

Managerial and Non-Managerial Positions and Cross-Cultural Competency

Job Position	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	F-value	Sign
Managerial	105	4.14	1.38	1.34	30.95	0.00
Non- Managerial	136	5.00	1.11	0.96		

The difference in cross-cultural competency between the managerial and the non-managerial groups was significant ($p=0.00$). The expectation was that managers would be higher in cross-cultural competency as managers are usually expected to deal with their subordinate employees on a daily basis. For managers to succeed, they usually need to know how to deal with those employees working under their supervision. Such interaction with diverse employees requires certain levels of cross-cultural competency. However, a significant finding was in the opposite direction. The finding indicated that those in non-managerial positions had significantly higher levels of cross-cultural competency than their managerial peers. It could be said that

managers may be busy with company operations and finances and may not have the time, which non-managerial employees have, to spend on social media. It could also be that these findings are not widely generalizable beyond the Saudi work environment and that more studies are needed to test this finding's accuracy.

H2.2: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency based on employees' job positions and the amount of time they spend on social media.

Hypothesis 2.2 considered whether time spent on social media combined with the job position has any impact on the employees' cross-cultural competency. This hypothesis assumed that the time spent on social media influences the level of cross-cultural competency of the employees who are in managerial positions in a way that is different from those who are in non-managerial positions. Using two-way ANOVA, as shown in Table 22, it was found that a difference existed between using social media, job hierarchy, and cross-cultural competency among employees in multicultural companies in Saudi Arabia.

Table 22

Job Position, Time Spent on Social Media and Cross-Cultural Competency

Job Position	Time spent on social media	<i>n</i>	Cross-cultural competency	Std. Dev	Std. Error
Managerial	Less than one hour	13	4.45	1.38	0.335
	1-3 hours	72	3.87	1.33	0.142
	4-6 hours	16	4.86	1.27	0.302
	More than 6 hours	4	5.05	1.47	0.604
	Total	105	4.14	1.38	
Non- Managerial	Less than one hour	22	4.67	1.07	0.257
	1-3 hours	62	5.24	0.99	0.153
	4-6 hours	42	4.83	1.20	0.186
	More than 6 hours	10	5.01	1.38	0.382
	Total	136	5.00	1.11	

Factorial Analysis (as shown in the Two-way ANOVA test in Table 23) shows that the difference in participants' level of cross-cultural competency based on their job position and time spent on social media was significant ($p=0.001$).

Table 23

Factorial Analysis of Job Position, Time Spent on Social Media and Cross-Cultural Competency

Variables	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Value	Sign	Partial Ets Square
Corrected Model	70.109a	7	10.02	6.873	0.000	0.171
Intercept	2449.682	1	2449.68	1681.064	0.000	0.878
Time spent on social media	3.976	1	3.98	2.728	0.100	0.012
Job position	4.939	3	1.65	1.130	0.338	0.014
Time spent and Job position	23.514	3	7.84	5.379	0.001	0.065
Error	339.533	233	1.46			
Total	5566.586	241				
Corrected Total	409.642	240				

Detailed analysis (as shown in the Tukey test in Table 24) was run to disclose the details of the difference in participants' level of cross-cultural competency among groups based on their job position and time spent on social media. A significant difference ($P=0.00$) was found between groups 2 and 3. However, the differences between other groups were not significant.

Table 24

Detailed Factorial Analysis of Job Position, Time Spent and Cross-Cultural Competency

Job position	Time spent on social media (1)	Time spent on social media (2)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	1	2	0.58	0.36	0.11	-0.14	1.30
		3	-0.42	0.45	0.36	-1.30	0.47
		4	-0.60	0.69	0.39	-1.96	0.76
	2	1	-0.58	0.36	0.11	-1.30	0.14
		3	-.997*	0.33	0.00	-1.65	-0.34
		4	-1.18	0.62	0.06	-2.40	0.04
	3	1	0.42	0.45	0.36	-0.47	1.30
		2	.997*	0.33	0.00	0.34	1.65
		4	-0.18	0.67	0.79	-1.51	1.15
	4	1	0.60	0.69	0.39	-0.76	1.96
		2	1.18	0.62	0.06	-0.04	2.40
		3	0.18	0.67	0.79	-1.15	1.51
2	1	2	-0.56	0.30	0.06	-1.15	0.03
		3	-0.16	0.32	0.62	-0.78	0.47
		4	-0.34	0.46	0.47	-1.24	0.57
	2	1	0.56	0.30	0.06	-0.03	1.15
		3	0.41	0.24	0.09	-0.07	0.88
		4	0.23	0.41	0.58	-0.58	1.04
	3	1	0.16	0.32	0.62	-0.47	0.78
		2	-0.41	0.24	0.09	-0.88	0.07
		4	-0.18	0.42	0.68	-1.01	0.66
	4	1	0.34	0.46	0.47	-0.57	1.24
		2	-0.23	0.41	0.58	-1.04	0.58
		3	0.18	0.42	0.68	-0.66	1.01

As seen in Table 24 above, it was found that the difference between time spent on social media, job position, and cross-cultural competency was significant. Overall, there is a pattern that time and job position together interact and make a difference; however, when looking at

individual groups, there is not a clear distinction between particular groups of position by time. Since the time variable was too weak to shape a pattern, it is more likely that job position is influencing the statistical test more than time.

H2.3: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency based on employees' job positions and their level of interaction with global content on social media.

The purpose of the third hypothesis was to explore the differences in cross-cultural competency among employees according to their level of interaction with global content on social media and job hierarchy. This hypothesis assumed that the difference between the interaction with global content and cross-cultural competency can be different between the managerial and non-managerial groups when combining the job position and global content. Running a two-way ANOVA test as shown in Table 26, it was found that differences in cross-cultural competency existed between the groups shown in the table below.

Table 25

Job Position, Level of Interaction With Global Content and Cross-Cultural Competency

Job Position	level of interaction with global content	N	Cross-cultural competency	Std. Dev	Std. Error
Managerial	2	40	2.86	0.30	0.10
	3	18	3.46	0.93	0.15
	4	10	5.07	0.66	0.20
	5	24	5.48	0.77	0.13
	6	12	5.74	0.33	0.18
	7	1	6.18	-	0.63
	Total	105	4.14	1.38	-
Non- Managerial	2	20	3.20	0.85	0.14
	3	12	3.96	1.23	0.18
	4	19	4.84	0.91	0.14
	5	36	5.41	0.33	0.10
	6	46	5.72	0.30	0.09
	7	3	6.36	0.33	0.36
	Total	136	5.00	1.11	-

Table 26 indicates that the difference in cross-cultural competency, based on employees' job positions and their level of interaction with global content, was not significant. As was found in hypothesis 1.2, interaction with global content significantly influenced employees' cross-cultural competency. When this finding was combined with employees' job position, the difference was found to be non-significant. The non-significant results in this combination between job position and level of interaction with global content along with the significant results of each of these variables independently, denote that there is a significant difference in cross-cultural competency between the level of interaction with global content regardless of the employee's position, and there is a significant difference in cross-cultural competency between managerial and non-managerial job positions regardless of the employee's position. However, the combination global content and job position is not significant.

In explanation, it was found that non-managers scored higher on cross-cultural competency at almost every level of interaction with global content (As in Table 25: the total means for CCC is 4.14 for managers and 5.00 for non-managers), and managers' standard deviations were higher than non-managers (SD 1.38 for managers and 1.11 for non-managers). This would weaken the relationship of job status combined with interaction with global content to cross-cultural competency together. In other words, managers' responses were far more varied across the variables of global and cross-cultural competency so that reduces chances of finding a difference or a relationship.

Table 26

Factorial Analysis of Job Position, Global Content and Cross-Cultural Competency

Variables	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Value	Sign	Partial Ets Square
Corrected Model	319.255a	11	29.02	73.53	0.00	0.779
Intercept	1812.81	1	1812.81	4592.87	0.00	0.95
Job position	0.26	1	0.26	0.65	0.42	0.003
level of interaction with global content	255.80	5	51.16	129.62	0.00	0.739
Job position and Global content	3.13	5	0.63	1.59	0.17	0.033
Error	90.39	229	0.39			
Total	5566.59	241				
Corrected Total	409.64	240				

H2.4: There is a difference in cross-cultural competency based on employees' job positions, the amount of time they spend on social media and their level of interaction with global content.

This hypothesis aimed at finding a difference in cross-cultural competency among employees based upon their job position, time spent on social media, and interaction with global content. This hypothesis assumed that the influence of time spent on social media and the level of interaction with global content on employee's cross-cultural competency is affected by their job position (Table 27 and Table 28).

Table 27

Job Position, Time Spent, and Interaction With Global Content (Managerial Group)

Job Position	Time spent on social media	Level of interaction with global content	N	Cross-cultural competency	Std. Dev	Std. Error
Managerial	Less than one hour	2	2	3.000	0.509	0.433
		3	3	3.940	1.475	0.353
		4	3	4.970	0.837	0.353
		5	5	5.020	1.524	0.274
		6	0	-	-	-
		7	0	-	-	-
		Total	13	4.450	1.376	-
	1-3 hours	2	35	2.835	0.292	0.103
		3	1	3.173	0.504	0.184
		4	5	5.256	0.479	0.274
		5	13	5.544	0.345	0.170
		6	8	5.739	0.381	0.216
		7	0	-	-	-
		Total	72	3.866	1.330	-
	4-6 hours	2	2	3.180	0.127	0.433
		3	4	3.910	1.353	0.306
		4	2	4.775	1.096	0.433
		5	5	5.836	0.499	0.274
		6	3	5.697	0.295	0.353
		7	0	-	-	-
		Total	16	4.864	1.265	-
More than 6 hours	2	1	2.910	-	0.612	
	3	0	-	-	-	
	4	0	-	-	-	
	5	1	5.270	-	0.612	
	6	1	5.820	-	0.612	
	7	1	6.180	-	0.612	
	Total	4	5.045	1.472	-	
Total	2	40	2.862	0.297	-	
	3	18	3.464	0.933	-	
	4	10	5.073	0.658	-	
	5	24	5.484	0.766	-	
	6	12	5.735	0.330	-	
	7	1	6.180	-	-	
	Total	105	4.135	1.377	-	

Table 28

Job Position, Time Spent, and Interaction With Global Content (Non-Managerial Group)

Job Position	Time spent on social media	Level of interaction with global content	N	Cross-cultural competency	Std. Dev	Std. Error
Non-Managerial	Less than one hour	2	4	3.113	0.269	0.306
		3	5	4.600	1.303	0.274
		4	6	5.030	0.790	0.250
		5	5	5.200	0.336	0.274
		6	2	5.595	0.064	0.433
		7	0	-	-	-
		Total	22	4.674	1.074	-
	1-3 hours	2	5	3.962	1.512	0.274
		3	5	3.710	1.183	0.274
		4	8	4.636	1.217	0.216
		5	13	5.546	0.320	0.170
		6	31	5.717	0.307	0.110
		7	0	-	-	-
		Total	62	5.238	0.994	-
	4-6 hours	2	8	2.809	0.183	0.216
		3	2	2.955	0.064	0.433
		4	4	4.818	0.458	0.306
		5	17	5.375	0.311	0.148
		6	10	5.746	0.331	0.193
		7	1	6.450	-	0.612
		Total	42	4.832	1.201	-
	More than 6 hours	2	3	3.090	0.000	0.353
3		0	-	-	-	
4		1	5.360	-	0.612	
5		1	5.450	-	0.612	
6		3	5.790	0.341	0.353	
7		2	6.320	0.453	0.433	
Total		10	5.009	1.377	-	
Total	2	20	3.200	0.852	-	
	3	12	3.955	1.235	-	
	4	19	4.837	0.911	-	
	5	36	5.414	0.326	-	
	6	46	5.723	0.302	-	
	7	3	6.363	0.329	-	
	Total	136	5.005	1.115	-	

As shown in Table 29, when running two-way ANOVA, the difference was non-significant ($p=0.151$), that means the difference in the level of cross-cultural competency based on employees' job positions, the amount of time they spend on social media, and their level of interaction with global content was non-significant.

Table 29

Factorial Analysis of Job Position, Time Spent, and Global Content

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	334.055 ^a	38	8.791	23.493	0.000	0.815
Intercept	1648.936	1	1648.936	4406.651	0.000	0.956
Job position	0.060	1	0.060	0.160	0.689	0.001
Time spent on social media	0.128	3	0.043	0.114	0.952	0.002
Global Rank	111.842	5	22.368	59.778	0.000	0.597
Job position * Time spent on social media	2.101	3	0.700	1.871	0.136	0.027
Job position * Global Rank	0.540	5	0.108	0.289	0.919	0.007
Time spent on social media * Global Rank	7.172	12	0.598	1.597	0.095	0.087
Job position * Time spent on social media * Global Rank	5.043	9	0.560	1.497	0.151	0.063
Error	75.587	202	0.374			
Total	5566.586	241				
Corrected Total	409.642	240				

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between the use of social media and cross-cultural competency among employees in a diverse workplace in multicultural companies using Saudi Arabia as the country of focus. This chapter outlined the findings of this

study, which were analyzed using One-way ANOVA, and two-way ANOVA. The first research question sought to find if there was an overall relationship between the use of social media (regarding time spent and global content) and level of cross-cultural competency. Based on the respondents, the sample was predominately Arabic and any conclusions should reflect this element. As shown in the tables presented in this chapter, the major findings were that a significant difference was found only when global content was considered. The amount of time employees spent on social media did not create any significant difference. As for the second research question, the variable that affected the difference significantly was the job position and, also, when combining job position with time spent on social media. Table 30 summarizes the findings for each of the hypotheses, whether the findings supported the hypothesis, and whether the findings were significant. These findings will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

Table 30

Summary of Outcomes for the Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Independent Variable(s)	Supported?	Significant?
H1.1	Time spent on Social media	No	No
H1.2	Level of interact with global content	Yes	Yes
H1.3	Time spent & interact with global content	No	No
H2.1	Job position	No	Yes
H2.2	Job position & Time spent	Yes	Yes
H2.3	Job position & interact with global content	No	No
H2.4	Job position, Time spent, and interact with global content	No	No

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study aimed at surveying employees who work in multicultural companies in Saudi Arabia to examine the relationship between social media use and cross-cultural competency among employees in such diverse workplaces. However, the resulting sample was essentially composed of Arabic respondents with a minimum of women. The proportion of women, however, was not atypical for the Saudi workforce especially the industrial sector tapped in this research. Thus, the results can help us to understand social media use, job position and cross-cultural competency among the Arabic employees in the targeted industrial sector. The role of social media in the workplace has been debated among opponents and proponents. As for those who oppose using social media in workplaces, it has been argued that using social media in workplaces can waste the time of the employees. However, those who stand on the side of using social media have communicative perspectives. They argue that using social media can enhance relationships among employees and, therefore, increase the productivity of their work. This study investigates the impact of using social media on employees' levels of cross-cultural competency which may lead to improving the communication among employees in diverse workplaces, avoiding conflicts, and reducing misunderstandings in the workplace.

This study attempts to answer two major questions by testing seven hypotheses (three for the first research question and four hypotheses for the second research question).

RQ1: In Saudi multicultural companies, is there a relationship between social media use and cross-cultural competency among employees?

This first research question attempts to compare the difference in the level of cross-cultural competency among these Arabic employees based on the amount of time they spend on social media, the employees' level of interaction with global content on social media and the combination of both the amount of time they spend on social media and their level of interaction with global content.

RQ2: In Saudi multicultural companies, what is the relationship between the use of social media, job hierarchy, and cross-cultural competency?

This second research question attempts to compare the difference in cross-cultural competency based on employees' job positions, job positions combined with the amount of time they spend on social media, job positions combined with employees' level of interaction with global content on social media, and job positions combined with the amount of time these Arabic employees spend on social media, and their level of interaction with global content.

For this study, three independent variables were operationalized: a) time spent on using social media, b) global content employees review on their social media platforms, and c) job position of the employees (i.e., managerial or non-managerial). The method employed in this study was an online quantitative survey, which consisted of 44 questions sectioned into four major parts. The first part consisted of screening questions that were used to filter those who did not meet the four criteria of the study: a) older than 18 years of age, b) works in Saudi Arabia, c) has co-workers from other cultures, and d) uses social media. Those who did not meet these criteria were excluded from the study. The second part of the survey was the demographic questions. Participants were asked about their age, gender, country of origin, level of education, job position, and marital status. The next section of the survey asked the participants about their habits of using social media (how many hours they spend on social media, and their interaction

with global content). The last section of the survey asked the participants ten questions to assess their level of cross-cultural competency.

Using snowball sampling, the participants were drawn from different multicultural companies in Saudi Arabia. The researcher contacted professional colleagues in multicultural companies and asked them to complete the survey and start snowballing it. They were asked to send an email invitation with the survey link to the people, they knew, who work for multicultural companies, and to post the invitation link to their social media accounts. Because the snowball technique is uncontrollable, the result was a respondent pool that was predominately Arabic and Saudi. While the respondents were overwhelming men, this was not atypical for the workforce in the industrial sector. This could be due to the fact that the initial professional colleagues that were contacted to start the snowball were themselves Saudi males in the industrial sector.

The results of this study are discussed in light of two theories in the literature of communication: Social Capital Theory and Uncertainty Reduction Theory. Social Capital Theory emphasizes social relations and associations. Social Capital examines concepts such as social exchange and embeddedness, social resources, culture, social networks and support (Hirsch & Levin, 1999). Many researchers argue that Social Capital Theory serves to explain social interactions (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Social Capital Theory can be defined as “the goodwill that is engendered by the fabric of social relations and that can be mobilized to facilitate action” (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p. 17). This definition highlights the concept of ‘social’ relationships and associations and suggests that Social Capital is built on reciprocal relationships and mutuality (Putnam, 1995). It also implies a system of networks that can be established within a workplace (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Social Capital Theory, thus, fits this study because social media can be

one form of communication among Arabic employees in a multicultural workplace. This theory also helped the researcher word the research questions in a way that brings understanding into how reading about other cultures can enhance communication with people who come from those read-about cultures.

The second theory is the Uncertainty Reduction Theory. This theory plays a role in understanding how cross-cultural competency can help reduce uncertainty and anxiety about other cultures that exist in the same workplace. Berger and Bradac (1982) defined uncertainty as a status that “can stem from the large number of alternative things that a stranger can believe or potentially say” (p. 7). When people are uncertain about how to react based on a given situation that involves another culture in a workplace, this can result in a number of alternatives (Gudykunst et al., 1985). In other words, this situation leads to a status of “uncertainty.” The way, then, to avoid this status of uncertainty is through gaining information about that culture and increase the level of cross-cultural competency. Uncertainty Reduction Theory fits this topic because it plays a significant role when examining relationships. Since uncertainty has been identified as an important element in communication, it is beneficial to use it to discuss the results of this study to know if exposure to global content on social media can help increase cross-cultural competency and, therefore, reduce conflicts and communication uncertainty or anxiety in a diverse workplace.

Research Question 1

The first research question investigated the relationship between the use of social media (time spent and interaction with global content) and employees’ level of cross-cultural competency. The study found that, indeed, there was not a significant difference in the level of cross-cultural competency among the sampled employees based on the amount of time they

spend on social media (H1.1). However, when considering the global content that employees review on their social media platforms, the difference was significant (H1.2). When the study tested the difference in the level of cross-cultural competency with combining the amount of time employees spend on social media with their level of interaction with global content (H1.3), the difference was not significant. This leads to the fact that interaction with global content on social media reinforces employees' cross-cultural competency. The amount of time was not a significant factor. Unless participants spend the time interacting with global content, the time variable does not make a significant difference. The more global content employees review, the more cross-culturally competent they become.

Previous researchers have examined the impact of the content and time spent on social media. Almainan et al. (2015) examined the effect of social media content (especially Twitter) on nurses' awareness in relation to their jobs. They found that it was the content variable, not the amount of time spent, that made a significant difference in nurses' knowledge, awareness and being updated with the latest nuances in their field. The findings in this current study supports Almainan et al. (2015) finding that time did not play a significant role in the participants' cross-cultural competency just as it did not play a significant role in nurses' knowledge. Both studies, Almainan et al. (2015) and this current study, found that the content variable plays a significant role. It is, hence, the content that makes the difference.

Oposing the findings of this current study in regard to the time spent factor, Ogara et al. (2014) conducted a study that aimed at determining the factors that most highly correlate with participants' field awareness. Ogara et al. (2014) investigated how the interaction with content on social media can lead into participants' updatedness in their field. Their study examined 202 participants to see how their usage of social media enhances their knowledge related to their job

fields. One of their findings that sought a correlation between time spent on social media and field awareness was found to be significant. The authors also found a significant correlation between the type of content and the field awareness. The more time the participants spend on social media and more content they review, the more aware they become of the updates in their field. While this current study supports Ogara et al. (2014) finding of type of content, it opposes it when it comes to the amount of time participants spent on social media. While Ogara et al. (2014) investigated how the interaction with content on social media can lead into participants' updatedness in their field, this current study sought to investigate how the interaction with global content can lead into increase in participants' cross-cultural competency – a factor that may support success and productivity but is not directly related to the actual subject matter of their work such as engineering, mineralogy, mechanics and so forth. Both studies, however, found that the type of content being interacted with plays the most important role in making difference.

Aligning up with Ogara et al. (2014), Robertson and Kee (2017) surveyed 512 working adults in different companies and organizations to test the relationship between time that employees spend on Facebook interacting with their co-workers, employment status, and job satisfaction. Their findings indicated that “an employee’s satisfaction at work is positively associated with the amount of time they spend on Facebook interacting with co-workers” (p. 191). The amount of time in Robertson and Kee’s (2017) was not generally on Facebook but specific to the activity of interacting with co-workers. In this current study, the amount of time spent was defined as the whole time spent on social media with no reference to any specific action or activity. That said, if in this study, the amount of time was related to only interacting with global content, then it would be expected that the amount of time would significantly correlate with participants' cross-cultural competency.

The findings of this question align with Social Capital Theory. According to Adler & Kwon (2002) social capital emphasizes the relationships among people, and this relationship is reciprocal, according to (Putnam, 1995). This reciprocal relationship is based on the principle that humans tend to turn behaviors (Zhou & Bankston III, 1994). That means if someone does a favor or something good to another, this other person is more likely to do another favor in return. In terms of cross-cultural competency, if an employee greets another expat employee according to the latter's culture or language, it is more likely that this latter employee is going to also learn how to greet the former employee according to his (the former's) culture and/or language. Therefore, one way to build cross-cultural competency is through social media. Social Capital Theory can explain that when people interact with global content on social media, they tend to extend their interaction by posting or sharing more global content. This will consequently lead to increase in cross-cultural competency. According to studies related to organizational communication, Social capital influences career success and executive compensation (Belliveau et al., 1996).

Forming such networks functions as a catalyst that helps individuals take certain actions that ensure their benefits such as access to information, influence, and solidarity. Thus, Social Capital is a catalyst that may enhance success within organizations (Coleman, 1988) and hence, it functions as a tool for achieving cross-cultural competency within organizational structures (Astone et al., 1999). The development of the social relations happens when employees successfully communicate with each other internally. This efficiency in communications can be achieved through technological tools such as social media, intranet, and e-mails or social tools such as monthly or yearly gatherings for the employees to get together in a context that is not related to business (Helmreich & Schaefer, 1999). This helps in strengthening communication

among employees within a diverse workplace and reducing any uncertainty or anxiety of the employees when interacting with international co-workers. This finding is consistent with Uncertainty Reduction Theory in that higher levels of cross-cultural competency may result in lower levels in employees' anxiety and uncertainty when the Arabic employees communicate with employees from another culture. Anxiety and uncertainty usually come from lack of confidence in dealing with international work colleagues and shortage of information about the cultures from which the interlocutors come. Cross-cultural competency can foster confidence and, thus, reduce anxiety and uncertainty.

Research Question 2

The second research question adds one more variable, Job position, to the variables mentioned in research question one. The researcher predicated that manager participants would possess higher levels of cross-cultural competency because their managerial positions dictate that they become culturally and cross-culturally competent, especially if there are foreign employees working under their supervision. For this study, 105 managerial employees and 136 non-managerial employees participated in this study. Against the predictions of the researcher, the group that had significantly higher levels of cross-cultural competency was the non-managerial (H2.1). In Chapter Four, some explanations were provided in regard to why the non-managerial participants were found to be more cross-culturally competent than the managerial employees. It could be said that the non-managerial had more free time than the managerial who may have been busy with the company's operations or profits and did not have enough time to spend on educating themselves about other cultures.

As for H2.2, it was found there was a significant difference between managerial and non-managerial Arabic employees when it comes to cross-cultural competency based on the amount

of time they spent using social media. The data indicate that there is an increase in cross-cultural competency (Table 25) based on the level of interaction with global content on social media. However, in looking at job position and global content there is no significant interaction effect (H2.3). Fieseler (2015) who collected survey responses from 679 participants, with 369 females and 310 male manager participants to measure why managers use social media and how they use the time they spend on social media--found three major patterns for why managers use social media.

1. Self-promotion: Managers use social media in order to self-promote their dedication, hard-work, productivity, personal traits and successes. We see that this does not deal with other cultures and may partially explain why the managers in this study were not found to be more cross-culturally competent than other employees.
2. Assistance Seeking/Peer Support: Managers were found to be using social media as a fertile ground for seeking assistance because they reported that social media is an informal, cross-divisional communication platform that can help people find knowledgeable colleagues that can be asked for advice.
3. Authority: Managers use social media to present a certain professional image that keeps their authoritative level on social media as in the workplace. They employ strategies on social media to force others to deal with them as authoritative figures even in informal, social media settings.

While RQ2 in this study asks if using social media makes a significant difference in managers' and non-managers' level of cross-cultural competency and the results were that non-managers were higher than managers in cross-cultural competency, Fieseler's study suggests that managers do not usually use social media to educate themselves and increase their cross-cultural

competency but use it for other reasons mentioned above. Fieseler (2015) collected survey responses from a large number of employees who work in different companies. In fact, his 679 participants were the participants who responded out of 17,000 potential participants who were invited to respond to the survey. It is, thus, expected that some of these Arabic managers work with employees who come from different countries and represent different cultures, but their responses did not mention using social media to increase their cross-cultural competency levels.

Fathi-Makvand and Fernandez (2017) interviewed one CEO and five departmental managers working in a multicultural company in Iran, to find out the ways that using social media by those managers affected the organizational behavior. Their findings suggested that the organizational behavior of the multicultural companies is influenced by the country in which the company is located. They also found that the use of social media by managers had a positive impact on their leadership, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. The findings of Fathi-Makvand and Fernandez (2017) can indicate a limitation in the study design of this current study. Interviews may help find out why managers were found to have lower levels of cross-cultural competency. This study can also make a logical connection between the policy of Saudization in Saudi Arabia and the reverse finding found in this study. This policy of Saudization aims to reduce the dependence on foreign employees and bring more Saudis to the workforce. Fathi-Makvand and Fernandez (2017) argued that the culture and environment of a company is influenced by the culture and environment of the whole country. If the country is working to reduce the reliance on expats and replacing them with Saudis, this may indicate that those managers did not feel the need to foster their cross-cultural competency because most employees will be Saudis soon.

Summary of Findings and Discussions

This study investigated the impact of using social media on participants' cross-cultural competency. Most of those participants were Saudis (%79.25) and were males (%96.27). As a result, the findings are applicable to this population but must be used carefully if being applied to foreign nationals. Looking at all the seven hypotheses this study investigated, three were found to be significant (H1.2, H2.1, and H2.2) and four were found non-significant (H1.1, H1.3, H2.3, and H2.4). It was found that the difference in the level of cross-cultural competency was not significant when it based on the time spent on social media (H1.1). The difference based on time spent and interaction with global content was also not significant (H1.3). Job position combined with interaction with global content was not significant (H2.3) as was the interaction of job position, time spent and global content with cross-cultural competency (H2.4). On the significant side, the difference in the level of cross-cultural competency was significant based on the level of interaction with global content on social media (H1.2), job position (H2.1), and job position combined with time spent on social media (H2.2), as well.

As for the factors that help foster or hinder cross-cultural competency among the sample, it was found that the independent variables that helped foster cross-cultural competency were involvement with global content on social media, job position, and job position combined with time spent on social media. Job position also made a significant difference as those in non-managerial positions scored higher on cross-culturally competent. Other independent variables such as time spent on social media did not have a significant impact on cross-cultural competency.

Finally, it was not expected that managers would score lower than non-managers on cross-cultural competency but that could be explained by the suggestion that managers may have

been busy with their responsibilities and company's operations, or by Fieseler's (2015) study which suggests that managers use social media for other purposes than for increasing cross-cultural competency. Given the nature of the final sample, it is possible that the large proportion of respondents who were either in their native country or a similar culture, may be less attuned to cross-cultural issues than if the same individuals were managers in a foreign country. The researcher's personal reflection on the results suggest that social media could make a difference in the employees' cross-cultural competency level if they receive enough awareness on how to best use social media to get familiarized with other cultures by interacting with global content.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study established a new line of inquiry regarding the use of social media for the sake of enhancing employees' cross-cultural competency. More subsequent studies are recommended to be conducted to build upon this foundation. As this study was quantitative, it would benefit the research if some additional qualitative studies also be conducted. These qualitative studies could discuss the complexities of the findings that this current study presents. Interviewing employees is important. While this study found that interaction with global content leads to higher levels of cross-cultural competency, the nature of such interactions was not investigated in this study. Also, the reasons why some employees interact with global content while others do not is important to know. Such interviews can reveal a deeper and more in-depth exploration of attitudes toward using social media, spending time on it, and interacting with different types of content.

Another interesting finding from this study was that manager participants scored lower on cross-cultural competency than non-managers among the sample. The expectation was the opposite of the hypothesis and the predictions in the literature. It was expected that managers

would score higher than non-managers. As mentioned above, perhaps it is because they are in their home country or culture. It would be reasonable to explore the same demographic if they were managing an operation in a foreign country or culture. Another study to investigate this and look into the reasons (such as time of managers, if cross-cultural competency is not seen as a part of their job or as something that does not have high priority, or if they have low percentage of diverse subordinate employees and hence managers feel no need to be cross-culturally competent) is essential.

Another important variable that was not addressed in the current study is the role of the policies that such companies have. It is important to know if these companies recommend and encourage their employees to have social media accounts and communicate with each other or not, and if the company itself has a page on any social media platforms. Also, studies are needed to investigate the influence of virtual social networks created by companies for their employees and examine if such virtual networks can impact the level of the employees' cross-cultural competency.

In this study, it was assumed the global content is positive. Future research should look at the nature of the global content: Will interaction with negative global content, for instance, foster or hinder cross-cultural competency. Another issue/limitation in this study is the gender issue. Most of the participants were Saudi males. It is possible that this has occurred because of the effect of the snowball method. The researcher started with his Saudi male professional colleagues and they may have snowballed the survey to their male colleagues as well. This could also be related to the number of employees who have different nationalities in these multicultural companies. Although the ratio of non-Saudis working in Saudi Arabia is 3:1, according to De Bel-Air (2014), this study is more a reflection of Saudis working for multicultural companies and

their use of social media impact on their cross-cultural competency. Future studies should explore alternatives to the snowball sample and/or to how the snowball is started and distributed. As the initiators of the snowball were all Arab males and no specific instructions were given to reach out to others, this may have limited the diversity of the resulting sample. Future studies should, therefore, use other techniques that can help them seek more diverse subject pools.

Conclusion

In Saudi Arabia, there are many multicultural companies which house different employees from different cultural backgrounds. The study of such employees' cross-cultural awareness is important and has become needed in a world full of varying social media platforms. Prior to this study, there was no empirical research, to the best of the researcher's knowledge that investigated the role of using social media on employees' cross-cultural competency.

This quantitative study investigated the relationship between social media use and cross-cultural competency among employees in diverse workplaces using a survey as the research method instrument. In this study, 241 participants filled out the survey, most of whom were Saudis and males. This study built on prior research and the theoretical framework of Social Capital Theory and Uncertainty Reduction Theory. While the study resulted in a sample that was primarily Arabic, it does have important conclusions for further testing. This includes two key findings. First, the interaction with global content played a significant role in the participants' level of cross-cultural competency. Those that interacted with global content on social media the most had the highest level of cross-cultural competency. Second, non-managers were found to have higher levels of cross-cultural competency than managers, which was an unexpected finding. While subsequent research on a broader population is warranted, this study takes an

important step, and opens an important window, to show the role of using social media to improve workplace communication.

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Appendix A
Survey Instrument

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in my research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please contact the researcher at M.H.Alharthi@iup.edu. You are eligible to participate because you are currently an enrolled employee in one of the multicultural companies in Saudi Arabia and are at least 18 years old.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between social media use and cross-cultural competency among employees in a diverse workplace, and how the use of social media may encourage cross-cultural competency. In this survey, you will be asked to answer questions that ask about your use of social media and your cross-cultural competency. The survey will approximately take 10 minutes to complete. Taking the survey may benefit you to be more sensitive to cross-cultural competency and to identify ways you can enhance your cross-cultural competency. There is no risk of participating in this study. Your responses will be anonymous, and the survey does not ask any information about your identity.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by exiting from the survey page. If you choose to exit the survey without finishing it, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all your responses will be anonymous and all information will be held in strict confidence. If you submit your survey, you cannot ask to be withdrawn because we won't be able to identify which survey is yours. Your response will be considered only in combination with those from other participants. The information obtained in this survey will be published in a dissertation study and may later be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please click (Yes) then (Next) to start the survey. If you choose not to participate, please click (No) then (Next) to exit from this survey.

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This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730)

- I understand the informed consent and agree to participate (“NO” response will go to ending screen)

- Yes

- No

Q1

Select your age group?

- Under 18

- 18 - 24

- 25 - 34

- 35 - 44

- 45 - 54

- 55 - 64

- 65 - 74

- 75 - 84

- 85 or older

Q2

Are you working now in one of the companies in Saudi Arabia?

- Yes

- No

Q3

Do you have co-workers in your workplace from multiple countries?

- Yes

- No

Q4

Are you a user of any social media website?

- Yes
- No

Q5

Choose why aren't you a user of social media website?

- I don't know what a social network is
- I am not interested in joining social networking.
- I joined once, but I didn't enjoy it
- It's against my culture
- No Privacy

Q6

Select your gender

- Male
- Female
- Other _____

Q7

Select your marital status

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Never married

Q8

Select your highest educational level

- Less than high school
- High school graduate
- Some college
- 2 year degree
- 4 year degree
- Professional degree
- Doctorate

Q9

What is your position in the company?

- Managerial Position
- Non-Managerial Position

Q10

Select your country (nationality)?

▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe

Q11

Select your ethnicity/race

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Other _____

Q12

Where is the headquarter of your company located?

- Saudi Arabia
- Another country _____

Q13

What is the official language that you use in your workplace?

- English
- Arabic
- European language (German, French, Italian,.....)
- Other Middle east languages (Farsi, Hebrew, Turkish,.....)
- Asia language (Japanese, Korean, Chinese,.....)
- Other _____

Q14

To verify that you belong to Multicultural company, what is the name of your company?

Q15

How long have you been using social media?

- Less than 6 months
- 7 months to a year
- 1-2 year
- 3-4 years
- 5 years or more

Q16

On average, how much time do you spend on social media?

- less than one hour/day
- 1-3 hours/day
- 4-6 hours/day
- More than 6 hours/day

Q17

How many social media websites do you use?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

Q18

Please select the social media that you use (you can choose more than one)

- Facebook
- Facebook Messenger
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- LinkedIn
- Whatsapp
- YouTube
- Flickr
- Blogger.com
- Google Plus
- Other _____

Q19

What information do you include on your personal social media profile?

- Real Name
- Religion
- Traditions and beliefs
- Personal photos
- Interests
- Personal videos
- Daily activities
- Contact information
- Other _____

Q20

Do you use social media primarily for business or personal purposes?

- Mainly for business usage
- Mainly for personal usage
- I use them equally
- I am not sure

Q21

What device do you usually use to browse social media?

- Personal desktop
- Personal laptop
- Personal smart phone
- Work desktop
- Work laptop
- Work smart phone
- Other _____

Q22

How many friends do you approximately have on your most used social media?

- Less than 10
- 10 to 50
- 51 to 100
- 101 to 300
- 301 to 500
- 501 or more

Q23

Do you accept friend requests on social media from people who belong to other cultures?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

Q24

For what purposes do you use social media? (check all that apply)

- To find information about general topics
- To find information about other cultures
- To post about my culture and beliefs
- To make new friends
- To find information about my coworkers
- To communicate with coworkers in my workplace
- Other _____

Q25-Q27

Click to write the question text

	Always	Most of the time	About half the time	Sometimes	Never
*How often do you read/watch posts on social media?					
*How often do you participate in discussions on social media (like, share, retweet, comment,...)?					
*How often do you use social media to find and obtain information?					

Q28-Q32

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
*I read posts on social media about other cultures							
*I participate in discussion on social media about other cultures							
*I use social media to obtain information about other cultures							
*I use social media to increase my knowledge about the cultures of my co-workers							
*I use social media to visit my international co-workers' pages (such as: Facebook) and learn about their culture life							

Q33-Q43

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
*There are differences between cultures							
*I accept friend requests on social media from people who belong to other cultures							
*I always try to educate myself about the culture of my coworkers to avoid any miscommunication							
*I don't encounter miscommunication when I deal with people from other cultures							
*I feel comfortable dealing with co-workers from other cultures							
*I am eager to learn about the country in which I work, when it is not my country							

*I am interested in socializing with my coworkers who come from different cultural backgrounds

*I am able to greet people from other cultures the way they do in their own culture

*Some of my co-workers from other cultures have become my friends outside of work

*My relations with people from other cultures don't always long last

*I use social media to build better relationships with co-workers from other cultures

Appendix B
IRB Approval Form



Indiana University of Pennsylvania

www.iup.edu

Institutional Review Board for the
Protection of Human Subjects
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Stright Hall, Room 113
210 South Tenth Street
Indiana, Pennsylvania 15705-1048

P 724-357-7730
F 724-357-2715
irb-research@iup.edu
www.iup.edu/irb

May 29, 2018

Dear Mr. Majed Alharthi:

Your proposed research project, “The Impact of Social Media Use upon the Cross-Cultural Competency among Employees within Multicultural Companies,” (Log No. 18-153) has been reviewed by the IRB and is approved. In accordance with 45CFR46.101 and IUP Policy, your project is exempt from continuing review. This approval does not supersede or obviate compliance with any other University requirements, including, but not limited to, enrollment, degree completion deadlines, topic approval, and conduct of university-affiliated activities.

You should read all of this letter, as it contains important information about conducting your study .

Now that your project has been approved by the IRB, there are elements of the Federal Regulations to which you must attend. IUP adheres to these regulations strictly:

1. You must conduct your study exactly as it was approved by the IRB.
2. Any additions or changes in procedures must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented.
3. You must notify the IRB promptly of any events that affect the safety or well-being of subjects.
4. You must notify the IRB promptly of any modifications of your study or other responses that are necessitated by any events reported in items 2 or 3.

The IRB may review or audit your project at random *or* for cause. In accordance with IUP Policy and Federal Regulation (45CFR46.113), the Board may suspend or terminate your project if your project has not been conducted as approved or if other difficulties are detected

Although your human subjects review process is complete, the School of Graduate Studies and Research requires submission and approval of a Research Topic Approval Form (RTAF) before you can begin your research. If you have not yet submitted your RTAF, the form can be found at <http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=9168> 3 .

IRB to Mr. Majed Alharthi, May 29, 2018

While not under the purview of the IRB, researchers are responsible for adhering to US copyright law when using existing scales, survey items, or other works in the conduct of research. Information regarding copyright law and compliance at IUP, including links to sample permission request letters, can be found at <http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=165526>. I wish you success as you pursue this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

Timothy Runge, Ph.D.
Interim Chairperson, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Professor of Educational and School Psychology

TJR:bkj

Cc: Dr. Mark Piwinsky, Faculty Advisor