



## A Qualitative Study on the Assessment of Intercultural Sensitivity Level of Students Receiving Postgraduate Education in Tourism Management

Çağla Aslı GÜLDURAN<sup>a</sup> Doğan ÇAPRAK<sup>b</sup> Arzu GÜRDOĞAN<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Üniversitesi, Turizm İşletmeciliği ABD Doktora Programı, Muğla/Türkiye (caglasli87@hotmail.com)

<sup>b</sup> Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Üniversitesi, Fethiye İşletme Fakültesi, Muğla/Türkiye (dogancaprak@mu.edu.tr)

<sup>c</sup> Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Üniversitesi, Ortaca Meslek Yüksekokulu/Türkiye (agurdogan@mu.edu.tr)

### Extensive Summary

The intercultural concept, which means the relationship and interaction between different groups, is one of the important concepts that should be emphasized in terms of the structure of the tourism sector. Intercultural communication, which occurs when groups from different cultural backgrounds or individuals from different cultures come together, also affects the way people communicate. In intercultural communication, the individual directs his life with his success and influence in communication with individuals different from his own culture. Being with individuals who have different thoughts and habits around them requires the individual to adapt and understand these differences. At this point, the intercultural communication skill of the individual emerges. Intercultural communication skill does not mean knowing the foreign languages or food of other countries. At the same time, this can be possible by learning different cultures and being able to perceive them correctly.

The intercultural differences experienced by the individual in the environments with which he or she is in a relationship are not only due to the individual having a different culture. There are other factors that make this difference. These differences consist of individual characteristics, cultural values, language, religion, race, education, cultural intelligence, foreign language knowledge and life experiences. Being together and living with individuals with cultural differences shows that cultural differences are reflected in the thoughts, ideas, behaviors and attitudes of individuals. Different ideas, thoughts and behaviors arising from cultural differences can cause conflict, communication and integration problems among individuals, as well as encourage creativity and innovation. However, if intercultural differences are managed consciously, they will have a positive impact on groups and

organizations. Taking advantage of cultural differences in this sense is a process that requires both effort and a strategic management. In the rapidly changing and developing business world, organizations trying to stand on the tough and compelling power of competition can progress on the path to success thanks to their skills and ability to use such competitive advantages.

In the studies conducted, it has been stated that cultural differences cause misunderstandings, doubt, being late, poor quality, low morale and loss of competitiveness in business environments. It should not be forgotten that while cultural similarities facilitate interpersonal relations, differences play a difficult role. If it is not managed well and cannot be controlled, intercultural differences may become an obstacle to the realization of healthy and effective communication between individuals, groups and organizations. In this study, it is tried to measure how much tourism students perceive intercultural differences and their sensitivity to these differences.

In the study, using the intercultural sensitivity model developed by Bennett (1986) to determine two extreme points, ethnocentric and ethnorelative, the intercultural sensitivity levels of the students who are graduate students in the field of tourism who may be candidates for management in the tourism sector or as an academician for tourism education were determined by self-assessment. In this study, it was aimed to determine the level of the Intercultural Sensitivity Development Model of Bennett (1986) in line with the opinions of students who received postgraduate education in the field of tourism. Qualitative research methods were used in the research. A total of 12 students who received postgraduate (doctorate and master's) tourism education at Mugla Sıtkı Koçman University were consulted. Open-ended questions were designed with semi-structured interview technique in the online form, data were collected and content analysis was performed. As a result of the research, where the findings of the interaction of people with different cultures were evaluated, the majority of the students (66.67%) see themselves in the adaptation phase of Bennett's Intercultural Sensitivity Development Model.