

# The Effectiveness of Multicultural Interaction toward Advertising Learning Process among Higher Education: Indonesian Students' Perspectives

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**Abstract:** Intercultural communication between young people has been tremendously increasing nowadays due to the development of Internet and social media. Clearly, it affects to the youths' wants, needs, and behave. It can be seen as well in the Higher Education aspect where students are getting more interesting on education achievements in other countries and its processes. This study is a study case based on an online collaborative project between a university in Indonesia and a university in the UK. It aims to meet the value of multicultural learning approach regarding Indonesian students' creative processes in the advertising module. It was examined through literature review and primary research (observation, student survey, and interviews with Indonesian participants). As a result, key findings were discovered, such as (1) Indonesian design students were greatly looking for multicultural collaboration project, (2) Indonesian Higher Education is remain lack of multicultural collaboration project opportunities, (3) Indonesian students found that multicultural learning method was extremely beneficial for idea development, critical analysis, and project evaluation, and (4) multicultural interactions did not significantly affect students in visual execution of advertising. The authors highly expect that multicultural interaction in advertising learning process could be more implemented in Indonesian Higher Education.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technologies and digital media in the present days seems like one major issue that cannot be ignored by societies across the world, mainly among millennials and early generation Z (people who were born between 1980 and 2002). Perhaps Internet and social media are the most important aspect in belongingness needs of the Maslows' hierarchy (McLeod, S., 2018). Clearly, this phenomenon has created enormous impact to young people, mostly personality and lifestyle. For instance in advertising education context, due to the fact that creative performance is highly affected by current consumer behavior. Higher education students communicating more and more with other people overseas through gadgets (Yang, J., 2014; Kinshuk, Y., H, 2014; Chen, S., 2014; Huang, R., 2014), whether to look for trend updates, working, or merely chatting. Consequently, there is a high possibility that this multicultural interaction might

affects students' behavior in a future; this speculation refers to Percy and Rosenbaum cultural assumptions (Percy, L., 2012; Elliot, R., 2012).

Hofstede defined culture as the integrated human paradigms (knowledge, belief, language, behavior, etc.) that characterize one another (Hofstede G H., 2010; Hofstede G J., 2010; Minkov M., 2010), while multicultural interaction is the communication between people who have shared two or more different cultures. In terms of advertising education in Indonesia, students seem most inspired by external cultures. For instance, young people often watch foreign TV series (Chrisprastika, 2016), use more than one language in social media (English is the preferred language) (Arunarsirakul, A., 2016), and students are likely to follow certain international advertisement awards as their study recommendations. As a result, it changes students' perspectives when making an advertisement; not merely in the implementation but also the process. Indonesian students, as part of the collectivist group, tend to not speak up in a class or during a group

discussion, follow the brief directly, and prevent disagreement. Meanwhile, western education method has an incredibly dissimilar approach such as critical analysis. Given the fact that Indonesian students are fascinating about other cultures, probably utilizing a contrast-learning scheme like Western societies do is more effective to learn advertising presently due to the fact that it improve students' evaluation and communication.

In order to have an in-depth investigation regarding this issue, this research study was conducted. It is a study case based from complete activities of an online collaborative project between a university in Indonesia and a university in the UK. It was designed as an initial attempt to understand the efficiency of multicultural interaction in the direction of advertising learning process among Higher Education students in Indonesia. Hopefully, a number of implications made by this research could enrich advertising learning method in Higher Education in Indonesia. Consequently, it gains students' skills on generating ideas, executing ideas, presenting ideas, and last evaluating for better studies.

## 2 METHOD

This study involved design students from both universities. Students' background were varied, including nine students from Indonesia, seven British students, two students from Thailand, and one student from Vietnam, within the age group between 18 and 25-years old, and had English language proficiency levels from high intermediate to native speakers. The objective of the collaborative project was to analyze to what extent cultural differences affect Indonesian student's learning process and outcomes in regards to advertising and marketing strategy. The selected topic was decided due to the overlap student knowledge and skills of both universities. All activities regarding the collaborative project have been prepared around two months before the workshop has started, including: project planning, module development, the exercise worksheet, the assignment brief, and the technology testing.

In order to get comprehensive and valid data, both secondary and primary research through various methods were managed. First, to discover the perfect strategy of a multicultural collaboration project, its benefits, and its difficulties, literature review through previous journals, books, and articles were conducted. Second, in depth observation

during the workshop session was strongly needed to verify data given from previous secondary studies. Next, Indonesian participants were asked to give feedback regarding the workshop session through an online survey as a part of user evaluation. Once the workshop was completed, students in Indonesia and in the UK were given the same assignment brief to analyze to what extent the project outcomes were achieved. During three weeks, within a group, students were required to create a human centered marketing concept and were able to communicate with the lecturers in other countries to get some suggestions. After the assignment was done, all participants applied their critical analysis to give each other a peer feedback. Last, three Indonesian students were selected to be the participants for in-depth interviews to have an inclusive evaluation.

Table 1. Research Method Structure

Period	Method	Objectives
Pre-workshop	Literature review	To analyze previous studies regarding multicultural interaction
Workshop day	Observation	To witness student engagement and the difficulties during the session
Post-workshop	Survey	To analyze student feedback regarding the workshop
	Assignment analysis	To analyze to what extent students have achieved the project outcomes
	Peer review	To observe student critical thinking towards the project outcomes
	Interview	To get student insight as a recommendation for further studies

Adapting to Community of Inquiry (CoI) theoretical framework (Garrison, D., R., 2007; Arbaugh, J., 2007), all research findings were divided into three areas of teaching and learning in online education, including: (1) *social presence*, which students personalities towards the collaboration project were

analyzed; (2) *cognitive presence*, where students skills were evaluated to confirm learners' understanding in relation to the collaboration project; and (3) *teaching presence*, which is all elements that support students in accomplishing the learning or project outcomes. These three areas need to be completely linked together in order to achieve the entire experiences.

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results are divided into three sub-sections, including: multicultural collaboration learning method, student participation, and student project outcomes.

#### 3.1 Multicultural Collaboration Learning Method

McInerney and Roberts described multicultural learning as a type of education system where interaction (spoken or written) between students, with more than two different cultural backgrounds, is the emphasis of the learning process and teachers become the facilitator (McInerney, J., M., 2009; Roberts, T., S., 2009); in addition the easiest way is through web 2.0 technologies. Facing one of the global challenges, which is developing graduate competencies in a rapidly changing world, cross-cultural or multicultural interaction in regards to education has been continuously underlined by several universities across the world recently (Ameny-Dixon, G., M., 2004)(Dennis, J., M., 2011)(Macgregor, K., 2010). The objectives were varied such as developing student communication skill, improving innovative thinking, gaining international experiences to be able to answer certain global matters, and decreasing stereotype over one or more cultures. However, lots of debates found within this topic. For instance, Banks and Banks have highlighted that multicultural education is highly required to increase high value as human development, improving academic quality and Education Equality (Banks, J., a., 2002; Banks, C., a., M., G., 2002), Whereas Multicultural Learning Model Has Not Yet Become Essential in the Indonesian Higher Education Curriculum, It Remains Under Discussion (Ristekdikti, 2018). One of the Possible Reasons Is Probably Due to the Technology Qualification; given the Fact That Multicultural Learning Model Requires an Online-based Platform. This Fact Is Somewhat Interesting Due to the Fact That Students Collaboration Project

With Universities Overseas Is Being Highlighted Already in the Advertising Development Plan 2015-2019 in Order to Improve Education Quality (Hendriana, E., 2015). However, based on the Survey Conducted to Indonesian Students Who Have Participated in the Human Centered Marketing Concept Workshop, No One Has Experienced a Multicultural Collaborative Project before. It Can Be Seen That Opportunities or Motivation to Join a Multicultural Collaboration Project Back by the University Are Remain Uncommon. on the Other Hand, Peter and Shultz' Previous Study Claimed That One of the Biggest Challenges of Multicultural Education Was regarding Teacher Capabilities (Peters-Davis, N., 2015; Shultz, J., 2015). Teachers as Facilitator Should Be Able to Make Students Paradigms Shifted – to Develop Their Own Identities to Work With Diverse Students, Different Language, and Wider Viewpoint. Perhaps One Question That Needs to Be Asked Currently Is to What Extent the Multicultural Learning Model Needs to Be Delayed Due to Technology Support and Instructor Planning.

in Contrast, Students Expressed Great Enthusiasm Towards Multicultural Collaboration Project. Referring to the Students Survey, 44 per Cent Participants Were Strongly Agree That Multicultural Collaboration Is Extremely Important in the Creative Education, Where Other 33 per Cent Students Thought That It Is Somewhat Necessary. When Students Were Asked What Made Them Interesting to Join a Multicultural Learning Model, 8 out of 9 Students in Indonesia Answered That They Would like to Gain Understanding about What People Think in Other Countries, While 6 Students Also Have Curiosities in Cultural Differences and Other Creative Approach That Can Help Their Current Study. This Circumstances Is Unfortunate, given the Fact That Student Needs and Wants Were Contrary to the Reality, Which Current Higher Education System Is Lack of Multicultural Learning Project Chances.

#### 3.2 Student Participation

Move to the next aspect to discuss, student cognitive presence. Previous research studies found that a multicultural collaborative project is effective when all actions are precisely designed in line with the international learning outcomes (Villar-Onrubia D., 2016; Rajpal, B., 2016) and the assistance, feedback, also evaluation are monitored by the instructors

during the collaboration (Capdeferro, N., 2012; Romero, M., 2012).

According to the observation at the Human Centered Marketing Concept workshop, Indonesian students were tremendously engaged with the modules, group exercise, and also the presentation. In addition, 77 per cent of students were extremely satisfied with the collaboration project. The causes were wide-ranging, but the dominant reason was due to skill development in marketing -advertising and also an opportunity to observe and communicate with students and lecturers overseas. Interestingly, this collaboration project successfully met students' expectations. Firstly, during the survey and interviews, students acknowledged that this project has gained some understanding of how student think in other countries, particularly regarding creative thinking. Based on the mood board presentation, it showed that British students were interesting in humor concept while Indonesian students expressed more wholehearted ideas. This finding also related to Troikes' statement, which claimed that *"participants in the cross-cultural or multicultural collaboration are not adopting the structures and strategies used by native speakers, they transfer their own language and culture"* (Saville-Troike, M., 2003). Secondly, multicultural interaction helped students to gain experiences of creative marketing processes. As stated by two participants from Indonesia, *"when we worked with British students and lecturers, it was very fast-paced. We were not allowed to think beyond the topic but focused. I think that was incredibly useful"*. Lastly, the project has improved students' understanding of media use, in terms of marketing strategy, in other countries. Fascinatingly more, 8 of 9 students are certainly decided to join another multicultural collaboration project in the future.

### 3.3 Advertising Learning Process and Student Project Outcomes

In regards to the advertising practice, Altstiel and Grow have mentioned that the advertising creative process requires four main steps, such as: brainstorming, idea starters, concept development, and concept testing (Altstiel T., 2006; Grow, J., 2006). In addition, user insight and experience are two key points that have to be completely considered from the brainstorming stage to the final assessment in order to create an effective communication (Oscario A, Kuntjara, H., 2016; Adhityatama, A., 2016). However, the main issue to be evaluated through this study was not merely

about the arrangement, but to what extent multicultural interaction affects the creative advertising learning process among higher education students.

First, according to the interview session, Indonesian students stated that the initial processes (brainstorming and idea starter) used to being managed regularly in their current education; as a result, it was easily followed. The main attention in this stage, however, was idea sharing between distinctive cultures. As stated by one of the Indonesian students, *"I really enjoyed the workshop because I got some references from students in the UK and we (as a team) were able to share our ideas as well"*. On the other hand, Indonesian students demonstrated different expressions throughout the concept development stages, students were slightly struggling. Particularly, when students got some feedback from lecturers in the UK (based on the online survey, 44 per cent of Indonesian students were agreed that lecturer advice from universities overseas was the most useful part of the project). Indonesian students have not introduced certain sustainable campaign ideas at the first attempt; which is an idea that aims to create greater social impacts (i.e. community relations in wider aspects or maintaining continuous activities). Consequently, students have been suggested to utilize a few of creative approaches (such as human centered and 5 senses method) to build up specific ideas. After the basic ideas were being revised, one of the lecturers in the UK claimed that new concepts made by Indonesian students were well shaped and well presented. However, they were lack of idea evaluation from target audience feedback. This situation is somewhat disappointing given the fact that idea testing is one of the core processes in the advertising education. It can be seen that the multicultural collaborative learning model is incredibly needed to assess existing advertising teaching and learning model. For instance, Indonesian students were able to understand and adapt to other advertising methods, which add more values to the communication effectiveness.

Interestingly, there was no significant difference regarding visual execution of the selected concept between students in Indonesia and in the UK. This finding also answered Fam and Grohs' previous study, which showed that *"most cross cultural advertising studies have focused on advertising content, where the strategies and some executional techniques are based on the positioning and its main theme, not in their execution style"* (Fam, K., S., 2007; Grohs, R., 2007). For instance, in terms of

content, students in the UK have established certain humorous verbal communication and more individual experience, where students in Indonesia started with group orientation campaign concept with more emotional engagement involved. It also can be seen through the peer feedback, where Indonesian students were more critical observed the communication approach (content) designed by students in the UK rather than the visual context.

## 4 CONCLUSION

To sum up, multicultural or cross-cultural collaborative learning model is not a recent issue in an education aspect; it has already been observed in a while. Nevertheless, this method has not been implemented massively in Indonesia higher education due to undeveloped facilities (technology equipment and capable instructor). In contrast to the limited opportunities, design students in Indonesia showed great enthusiasm to participate in the multicultural collaborative project. The main motivation is to understand how students think globally. It is likely that the major cause is due to social media, where people across the world are connected easily. Fascinatingly, this online collaborative project arranged by a university in Indonesia and in the UK has answered students expectation, including: (1) Indonesian students were able to see creative ideas proposed by students in the UK and its processes as well, (2) both peer feedback and lecturer feedback have gained students abilities to develop basic ideas, and (3) cross- culture idea sharing method has showed Indonesian student the differences of media utilization in other countries.

Although Indonesian students faced some difficulties throughout the advertising learning process (particularly in the concept development and testing phases), multicultural collaborative learning method has facilitated students to do an in - depth evaluation of a current study. Moreover, Indonesian students had an opportunity to discover new advertising approaches in global perspectives, which have never been taught in certain courses and evidently affect the project outcomes. In regards to students soft skills, a multicultural interaction have built Indonesian student to be more adaptable to diverse cultures, gaining students' self-control, and the most important, improving critical thinking skill.

Given the fact that several advantages are established throughout multicultural collaboration learning method, this approach is absolutely high recommended to implement in Indonesian higher

education system, mainly in design and other creative programs due to the fact that global creative industries have changed rapidly. On the other hand, it enhances relationship between students overseas and teaching system as well. In addition, understanding of cultural diversity across education is one of the global sustainable development goals (United Nations, 2018). However, the effectiveness of cross-cultural or multicultural online collaborative project can only be seen with complete learning activities, from an introduction to the feedback or a combination between theory and practice. Moreover, it has to be supported by qualified technologies and instructor. Indonesian students have noticed that there was a technique problem during the online workshop and it slightly distracted students' concentration, yet it is not an obstacle to not to realize this valuable learning method.

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