



## Cultivating Cross-Cultural Competencies for Heritage Tourism Encounters in Jambi: An HRD Framework for Frontline Staff Development

Darmawanto<sup>1</sup>, Panji Ulum<sup>1</sup>, Feri Antoni<sup>1</sup>, Sasmita Rusnaini<sup>1</sup>, Hamirul<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Business Administration Study Program, Faculty of Administration, Institut Administrasi dan Kesehatan Setih Setio, Muara Bungo, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>State Administration Study Program, Faculty of Administration, Institut Administrasi dan Kesehatan Setih Setio, Muara Bungo, Indonesia

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Cross-cultural competence  
Frontline staff  
Heritage tourism  
Human resource development  
Jambi

#### \*Corresponding author:

Hamirul

#### E-mail address:

[hrul@gmail.com](mailto:hrul@gmail.com)

All authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

<https://doi.org/10.61996/cultural.v2i2.86>

### ABSTRACT

Heritage tourism is vital for Jambi's economy and cultural preservation, attracting increasingly diverse visitors. Effective cross-cultural encounters, mediated by frontline staff, are crucial for positive visitor experiences and sustainable tourism. However, staff often lack specific Cross-Cultural Competencies (CCC) needed for the unique Jambi heritage context, potentially leading to service failures. This study aimed to develop and validate a context-specific Human Resource Development (HRD) framework to cultivate CCC among frontline staff at Jambi heritage sites. A sequential exploratory mixed-methods design was employed. Phase 1 involved qualitative exploration (n=18 staff focus groups, n=6 manager interviews) at major Jambi heritage sites to identify required CCC dimensions. Phase 2 involved a quantitative survey (n=125 frontline staff) using a developed instrument (CCCI-HSJ) to assess baseline CCC levels. Phase 3 comprised developing the HRD framework based on findings, validating it via an expert panel (n=9), and pilot testing the framework through a training intervention (n=22 staff) with pre/post-assessment. Five core CCC dimensions specific to the Jambi heritage context were identified: Cultural Self-Awareness & Reflection, Jambi-Specific Cultural Knowledge & Sensitivity, Intercultural Communication Adaptability, Intercultural Relationship Building & Empathy, and Coping with Intercultural Ambiguity & Stress. Baseline assessment revealed moderate overall CCC levels, with specific weaknesses in communication adaptability and handling ambiguity. The developed HRD framework received strong validation from experts regarding relevance and comprehensiveness. The pilot training resulted in statistically significant improvements ( $p < 0.001$ ) in participants' overall CCC scores. Frontline staff in Jambi's heritage tourism sector require targeted development of specific CCC dimensions. The validated HRD framework provides a structured, contextually relevant approach to enhance these competencies, contributing to improved service quality and more meaningful visitor experiences. Implementation of this framework is recommended for sustainable heritage tourism development in Jambi.

### 1. Introduction

The global tourism industry is increasingly recognizing the importance of cultural heritage as a key motivator for travel. Heritage sites, which encompass both tangible elements like monuments and archaeological complexes, and intangible aspects such as traditions and local lifestyles, offer unique

experiences that attract visitors from various cultural backgrounds. Indonesia, with its rich history and cultural diversity, has been actively promoting heritage tourism as a crucial factor in economic development and the construction of national identity. Within Indonesia, the province of Jambi, located on the island of Sumatra, possesses significant heritage

potential. This potential is most notably represented by the expansive Muaro Jambi Temple Complex, a major Buddhist center dating back to the Srivijaya kingdom, as well as traditional Malay architecture and distinct local customs. As Jambi aims to capitalize on its heritage assets to foster tourism growth and attract both domestic and international visitors, the quality of interaction between tourists and the local context becomes paramount. Frontline staff, including ticket officers, site guides, information personnel, security staff, and vendors, play a crucial role as mediators in these interactions. They often serve as the primary point of contact, shaping the visitor's perception, understanding, and overall experience of the heritage site. In an increasingly globalized tourism landscape, these encounters are inherently cross-cultural, involving individuals with diverse values, communication styles, expectations, and interpretations of heritage.<sup>1-3</sup>

The effectiveness of these cross-cultural interactions is significantly influenced by the Cross-Cultural Competence (CCC) of frontline staff. CCC can be broadly defined as the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds, encompassing cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitudes, motivation), and behavioral (skills) dimensions. In the specific context of heritage tourism, CCC extends beyond general politeness. It involves the ability to accurately and sensitively communicate complex historical and cultural narratives, navigate potentially delicate questions about religion or local customs (especially relevant in Muaro Jambi, a Buddhist site within a predominantly Muslim community), manage diverse visitor expectations regarding service standards and site interpretation, and adapt communication styles (verbal and non-verbal) to minimize misunderstandings. Despite the acknowledged importance of CCC, a significant problem exists: frontline staff at many heritage sites, including those in developing tourism destinations like Jambi, often lack the specific competencies required to effectively manage diverse cross-cultural interactions. Anecdotal evidence and preliminary observations in Jambi suggest instances of communication breakdowns, cultural

misunderstandings, and missed opportunities to enrich the visitor experience due to inadequate staff preparedness. This deficiency can lead to negative visitor perceptions, dissatisfaction, unfavorable word-of-mouth, and ultimately hinder the sustainable development of heritage tourism in the region. While general customer service training may be provided, it often fails to address the nuanced complexities of intercultural dynamics within the unique heritage setting.<sup>4-6</sup>

Existing literature highlights various frameworks for CCC development, including Deardorff's Process Model and Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), and research has explored CCC in general tourism and hospitality. However, a notable gap persists in the availability of empirically derived, context-specific HRD frameworks designed explicitly for frontline staff within the heritage tourism sector, particularly in non-Western settings like Jambi. Generic frameworks may lack relevance, failing to capture the specific cultural knowledge (local Jambi Malay and Srivijayan history), sensitivities (religious pluralism), and communication challenges pertinent to the local context. Human Resource Development (HRD) interventions, encompassing training, education, and organizational development initiatives, offer a systematic approach to bridge this competency gap, yet require a tailored framework grounded in local needs.<sup>7-10</sup> Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by developing and validating a context-specific HRD framework for cultivating CCC among frontline staff engaged in heritage tourism encounters in Jambi. The research is guided by the following objectives; To identify the core Cross-Cultural Competence (CCC) dimensions perceived as essential for frontline staff working at major heritage sites in Jambi Province; To assess the existing levels of these identified CCC dimensions among the current cohort of frontline staff at these sites; To develop a comprehensive, contextually relevant Human Resource Development (HRD) framework designed to enhance the identified CCC dimensions; To evaluate the perceived relevance, clarity, feasibility, and potential effectiveness of the developed HRD framework through expert validation

and pilot testing of an associated training intervention. This research holds significance for multiple stakeholders. Theoretically, it contributes to the understanding of CCC within the specific domain of heritage tourism, potentially refining existing models by incorporating contextual nuances from a Southeast Asian perspective. Practically, it provides heritage site managers, tourism operators, and HRD practitioners in Jambi with an evidence-based framework and assessment tool to guide staff development initiatives, enhance service quality, and improve visitor satisfaction. Furthermore, the findings may inform regional tourism policy and training standards, ultimately supporting the sustainable and culturally sensitive growth of Jambi's valuable heritage tourism sector.

## **2. Methods**

This study adopted a sequential exploratory mixed-methods research design. This methodological approach was chosen because the study required an initial qualitative phase to thoroughly investigate and understand the specific Cross-Cultural Competence (CCC) requirements within the unique context of heritage tourism in Jambi Province, Indonesia. This initial qualitative exploration was considered essential for laying the groundwork for the subsequent quantitative phases of the research, specifically the development of a contextually relevant quantitative instrument and the creation of an effective Human Resource Development (HRD) framework.

The research was structured into three distinct and sequential phases, each designed to address specific research objectives and build upon the findings of the preceding phase. Phase 1 was dedicated to qualitative exploration, employing methods aimed at identifying the key CCC dimensions that are pertinent to frontline staff operating in Jambi's heritage tourism sector. Phase 2 transitioned to a quantitative approach, focusing on the assessment of baseline CCC levels among these staff members, thereby providing a quantitative measure of the competencies identified in the first phase. Finally, Phase 3 centered on the development, validation, and pilot testing of the HRD framework, integrating the insights gained from both

the qualitative and quantitative phases to create a practical tool for enhancing CCC.

The data collection and analysis for this research took place over a period of approximately one year, commencing in March 2023 and concluding in February 2024. Throughout this period, the researchers adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the well-being and rights of all participants involved in the study. Prior to any data collection activities, all participants were comprehensively informed about the study's purpose, the specific procedures that would be involved, any potential risks or benefits associated with their participation, and their unequivocal right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any penalties. Furthermore, participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and all necessary measures were implemented to uphold these assurances. Written informed consent was meticulously obtained from each participant before they engaged in any aspect of the data collection process. The collected data were stored securely, and all personal identifiers were diligently removed during the transcription and analysis stages to provide an additional layer of protection for participant privacy.

The research was specifically conducted at two primary heritage locations situated within Jambi Province, Indonesia. These sites were carefully selected due to their significance and prominence as major heritage tourism attractions in the region. The first location was the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex, an expansive archaeological site that represents a substantial part of the region's historical heritage. The second site was the Rumah Adat Kajang Lako traditional house area, which offers valuable insights into traditional Malay architecture and the traditional lifestyles of the local people. These sites attract a diverse mix of visitors, including both domestic and international tourists, and they employ a wide range of frontline staff, making them ideal settings for this research. For the purpose of this study, frontline staff were defined as those employees or regular volunteers whose roles inherently involve substantial direct, face-to-face interaction with tourists. This definition encompasses a variety of roles critical to the visitor

experience at heritage sites. These roles include ticket sales personnel, who are often the first point of contact for visitors; official site guides, who provide in-depth information and interpretation of the site; staff at information counters, who assist with inquiries and provide directions; assistants in souvenir shops, who interact with visitors during their purchases; site security personnel, particularly those involved in assisting visitors; and food and beverage vendors operating within the designated heritage areas, who contribute to the overall visitor experience.

The recruitment of participants for this study was strategically tailored to the specific requirements of each research phase, ensuring that the participants selected were most appropriate for the data collection methods and objectives of that phase. In Phase 1, which focused on qualitative data collection, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to recruit participants for both focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. For the focus groups, a total of 18 frontline staff members were selected, with 9 staff members recruited from the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex and 9 from the Rumah Adat Kajang Lako area. The selection criteria for these participants included having a minimum of one year of experience in their respective roles at the heritage sites and representing a variety of different roles to ensure a broad spectrum of perspectives. These 18 staff members were divided into three focus groups, with each group comprising 6 participants, to facilitate effective discussion and interaction. For the semi-structured interviews, 6 key informants were purposefully chosen based on their managerial or senior roles within the heritage tourism sector in Jambi. The selection of these key informants was aimed at gathering insights from individuals with a higher-level perspective on the issues being investigated. The key informants included 2 heritage site managers, 2 senior guides with extensive experience at the sites, 1 representative from the Jambi Provincial Tourism Office, and 1 local community leader who is actively involved in tourism activities in the area. The inclusion criteria for these key informants were that they had to be directly involved in the management or operations of heritage

tourism in Jambi and be willing to share their knowledge and insights with the researchers. In Phase 2, the quantitative phase of the study, a convenience sampling method was utilized to recruit participants for the survey. The primary goal of this sampling strategy was to achieve a broad representation of frontline staff across the various roles and sites included in the study. Researchers approached potential participants during non-peak hours at the designated heritage sites to minimize disruption to their work. The researchers provided detailed explanations of the study's purpose and procedures and invited staff members to participate voluntarily. The inclusion criteria for participation in the survey were that staff members had to be directly involved in interactions with tourists as part of their job responsibilities and possess sufficient understanding of Bahasa Indonesia, the language in which the survey was administered. A total of 125 frontline staff members were recruited for and completed the survey. The final sample consisted of 58% male and 42% female participants, with an average age of 31.5 years, with a standard deviation of 8.2 years, indicating a moderate spread in ages, and an average of 3.8 years of work experience in their current roles, with a standard deviation of 2.5 years. Of the participants, approximately 35% reported having received some form of previous customer service training, while less than 10% reported having received any specific cross-cultural training. In Phase 3, which involved the validation of the HRD framework and the pilot testing of a training intervention, purposive sampling was again the chosen recruitment strategy. For the expert validation process, 9 individuals were carefully selected based on their recognized expertise in one or more of the following fields: HRD and Training, Cultural Heritage Management and Tourism, Intercultural Communication and Anthropology, and local Jambi Culture and History. This panel of experts included academics, senior practitioners in the field, and consultants with specialized knowledge relevant to the study's focus. For the pilot training intervention, 22 frontline staff members were recruited voluntarily from both heritage sites. It is important to note that these participants were distinct from those who

participated in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the study. The inclusion criteria for the pilot training program were that staff members had to express a willingness to participate in the two-day training program and be available to complete the required pre- and post-training assessments.

A variety of data collection instruments were employed across the three phases of this research, each tailored to the specific objectives and data requirements of the respective phase. In Phase 1, semi-structured interview guides were utilized to gather in-depth qualitative data from key informants. These guides were designed to cover a range of topics relevant to the study's focus, including the perceived challenges related to cross-cultural interactions, the essential competencies required for frontline staff to effectively manage these interactions, current training practices in place, and suggestions for potential improvements. The interview guides also incorporated probes, which were used by the researchers to encourage interviewees to provide specific examples and detailed accounts of their experiences and perspectives. The interviews typically lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the topics of interest. Focus group discussion guides were employed in Phase 1 to facilitate interactive discussions among frontline staff. These guides were structured to elicit information about the staff members' direct experiences with culturally diverse visitors, any communication difficulties they had encountered, the strategies they found to be effective in facilitating successful interactions, their perceptions of any skill gaps, and their identified training needs related to Cross-Cultural Competence (CCC). The focus group discussions generally lasted between 75 and 90 minutes, providing ample time for participants to share their insights and engage in meaningful dialogue. Both the semi-structured interview guides and the focus group discussion guides were meticulously developed based on a thorough review of existing literature on the subject matter. To ensure the clarity and effectiveness of these instruments, they were pilot tested with 2 individuals who were not included in the main sample of the study: one heritage

site manager and one frontline staff member. The pilot testing process led to minor refinements in the wording and flow of the guides, enhancing their overall quality. All interviews and focus group discussions conducted in Phase 1 were carried out in Bahasa Indonesia to facilitate effective communication and ensure that participants could express themselves comfortably and accurately. With the explicit permission of the participants, audio recordings were made of these sessions to ensure accurate transcription and analysis of the data. In Phase 2, the primary data collection instrument was the Cross-Cultural Competence Inventory for Heritage Staff in Jambi (CCCI-HSJ). This self-report questionnaire was specifically developed for this study to assess the CCC levels of frontline staff at heritage sites in Jambi. The development of the CCCI-HSJ was grounded in the findings obtained from the qualitative exploration in Phase 1 and also drew upon concepts from established CCC models and related instruments found in the existing literature. The instrument comprises a total of 35 items designed to measure the five key CCC dimensions that emerged from the thematic analysis of the qualitative data in Phase 1. These items were formulated as statements that reflect specific attitudes, knowledge, or skills relevant to cross-cultural competence in the heritage tourism context. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree" and 5 represents "Strongly Agree". Examples of the types of statements included in the instrument are "I am aware of how my own cultural background influences my interactions," "I can explain sensitive aspects of Jambi's history respectfully to diverse visitors," and "I can adjust my communication style when facing language barriers". In addition to the items measuring CCC, the instrument also included a section for collecting demographic information from the participants, such as their age, gender, role at the heritage site, years of experience in that role, and any prior training they had received. Similar to the interview and discussion guides, the CCCI-HSJ instrument was developed in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure that it was accessible and easily

understandable for the participants. To further ensure the quality and validity of the instrument, it was reviewed by a panel of bilingual experts who assessed it for clarity, cultural appropriateness, and overall suitability for the target population. The instrument was also pilot tested with 15 frontline staff members who were not part of the main sample of the study. Reliability analysis was conducted on the data obtained from the pilot test, which yielded a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87, indicating that the instrument has a high level of internal consistency.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the results of the Cross-Cultural Competence Inventory for Heritage Staff in Jambi (CCCI-HSJ), administered to 125 frontline staff. The data shows the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the five identified CCC dimensions, as well as the overall CCC score. The scores are based on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates "Strongly Disagree" and 5 indicates "Strongly Agree," reflecting the staff's self-perceived competence in each dimension; Cultural Self-Awareness & Reflection (Mean Score: 3.68, SD: 0.62): This dimension reflects the degree to which staff members are aware of their own cultural background, values, assumptions, and how these influence their interactions with people from different cultures. The mean score of 3.68 suggests that staff generally perceive themselves as having a moderate to good level of cultural self-awareness and are inclined to reflect on their cultural influences. The relatively low standard deviation (0.62) indicates that the responses are fairly clustered around the mean, implying a degree of consistency in self-awareness among the staff; Jambi-Specific Cultural Knowledge & Sensitivity (Mean Score: 3.55, SD: 0.71): This dimension measures the staff's knowledge and sensitivity towards the specific cultural context of Jambi, including its history, customs, social etiquette, and religious dynamics (particularly the interplay between Islam and Buddhist heritage). The mean score of 3.55 indicates that staff members generally feel moderately knowledgeable and sensitive to the local cultural context. The slightly higher standard deviation (0.71)

compared to the first dimension suggests greater variability in the staff's knowledge and sensitivity levels, implying that some staff may be more informed or sensitive than others; Intercultural Communication Adaptability (Mean Score: 3.18, SD: 0.68): This dimension assesses the staff's ability to adapt their communication styles to effectively interact with visitors from diverse cultural backgrounds. This includes adapting verbal and non-verbal communication, managing language barriers, and ensuring clear understanding. The mean score of 3.18 is the lowest among all the dimensions, indicating that this is the area where staff perceive themselves as being the least competent. This suggests that staff find it challenging to adjust their communication effectively in intercultural settings. The standard deviation of 0.68 shows a moderate spread in the data, indicating that there are varying levels of communication adaptability among staff, but overall, it's a weaker area; Intercultural Relationship Building & Empathy (Mean Score: 3.72, SD: 0.59): This dimension measures the staff's ability to build positive relationships with visitors, demonstrate empathy, show respect, and handle interactions with hospitality. The mean score of 3.72 is the highest among all dimensions, indicating that staff perceive themselves as being most competent in this area. This suggests that staff generally feel confident in their ability to build rapport and show empathy towards visitors from different cultures. The low standard deviation (0.59) indicates that staff responses are quite consistent, suggesting a strong and relatively uniform ability to build relationships and show empathy; Coping with Intercultural Ambiguity & Stress (Mean Score: 3.12, SD: 0.75): This dimension assesses the staff's ability to manage uncertainty, stress, and potential misunderstandings that may arise in intercultural interactions. It includes the ability to remain calm, flexible, and problem-solve in ambiguous situations. The mean score of 3.12 is the second lowest, highlighting that staff find it challenging to handle ambiguity and stress in intercultural encounters. This may suggest that staff feel less equipped to deal with unexpected or difficult situations arising from cultural differences. The

highest standard deviation (0.75) among all dimensions indicates the greatest variability in responses. This implies that staff differ significantly in their ability to cope with ambiguity and stress, with some being more resilient than others; Overall CCCI-HSJ Score (Mean Score: 3.45, SD: 0.55): The overall mean score of 3.45 provides a general indication of the staff's self-perceived Cross-Cultural Competence. It falls slightly above the midpoint of the scale (3), suggesting that, on average, staff members perceive themselves as having a moderate level of overall CCC. The standard deviation of 0.55 for the overall score indicates a relatively small spread, meaning that the overall perception of competence is fairly consistent across the staff.

Table 2 outlines the proposed Human Resource Development (HRD) framework designed to enhance Cross-Cultural Competence (CCC) among frontline staff in Jambi's heritage tourism sector. It's structured around the five key CCC dimensions identified in the research, detailing learning objectives, training methods, and assessment methods for each; Cultural Self-Awareness & Reflection: The framework aims to enable staff to identify their own cultural background, values, assumptions, and communication styles. It also focuses on recognizing potential personal biases and stereotypes and developing reflective skills to analyze and learn from challenging intercultural encounters. The framework also introduces Bennett's DMIS stages for understanding intercultural sensitivity development. Training involves cultural identity mapping exercises, group discussions, and the use of frameworks like DMIS. Reflective journaling and sessions using critical incident techniques facilitate personal analysis and learning from real-life interactions. includes pre/post self-assessment, analysis of reflective journal entries, peer feedback, and self-rating changes on DMIS-related scales to measure the shift in cultural awareness; Jambi-Specific Cultural Knowledge & Sensitivity: This dimension focuses on acquiring in-depth knowledge of Muaro Jambi's history, cultural significance, and related Srivijaya context. It emphasizes understanding key aspects of Jambi Malay culture, local customs, worldviews, and social etiquette. Furthermore, it aims

to develop sensitivity towards diverse visitor motivations, origins, and expectations, including religious and gender-related sensitivities. Training involves lectures from historians and cultural experts, guided site tours focusing on interpretation techniques, case studies on potential sensitivities, and discussions on managing diverse visitor expectations. Resource materials on Jambi history and culture are also provided. Knowledge quizzes assess understanding of Jambi history and culture. Role-playing exercises evaluate the ability to provide sensitive explanations. Observation of interpretation accuracy and sensitivity during guided tour simulations and analysis of responses to visitor query scenarios are also used; Intercultural Communication Adaptability: The framework emphasizes practicing active listening skills and perception checking techniques. It aims to develop the ability to simplify language and use clear speech, avoid jargon, and incorporate non-verbal cues. Managing communication breakdowns effectively and communicating with visitors having limited shared language are also key objectives. focuses on communication skills through lectures and role-play on handling barriers and refusals. Self-assessment and debriefing on communication styles, exercises on active listening, and demonstrations of effective communication practices are included. Language simplification practice and visual aids are also employed. Analysis of performance in role-play scenarios, behavioral observation checklists focusing on communication skills, peer feedback, and analysis of communication breakdown resolution strategies are used; Intercultural Relationship Building & Empathy: This dimension aims to develop welcoming and hospitable behaviors. It focuses on building rapport quickly, understanding visitor perspectives, needs, and potential frustrations. Handling complaints and difficult situations respectfully and empathetically is a core objective. Hospitality skills training and practice are conducted. Empathy mapping exercises help staff understand visitor profiles. Deardorff's model components (respect, openness, curiosity) are applied. Case studies and role-playing focus on service recovery and handling complaints effectively.

Behavioral observation during interaction activities, analysis of responses in complaint handling role-plays, peer and facilitator feedback on demonstrated empathy, and scenario-based questions assessing appropriate relationship-building strategies are used; Coping with Intercultural Ambiguity & Stress: The framework focuses on applying key principles of uncertainty management. It aims to increase tolerance for ambiguity and develop cognitive flexibility to adapt responses. Developing stress-reduction techniques and enhancing problem-solving skills in uncertain situations are also core. Group discussions on managing uncertainty are held. Problem-solving activities involving ambiguous scenarios are used. Discussions and exercises on cognitive reframing techniques and stress management are conducted. on scenario-based problem-solving tasks, self-reported stress/anxiety levels, observation of composure and adaptability during challenging role-plays, and analysis of chosen coping strategies are used.

Table 3 presents the Jambi Heritage CCC Enhancement Framework was evaluated by a panel of 9 experts. The experts provided ratings on four key evaluation criteria, each assessed on a scale of 1 to 5; Relevance: This criterion assessed the appropriateness, importance, and applicability of the framework's dimensions, objectives, and activities to the specific context of Jambi heritage sites and the needs of frontline staff. The framework received a mean rating of 4.78, with a standard deviation of 0.44. This high mean rating indicates that the experts perceived the framework as being very high in relevance to the Jambi context; Clarity: This criterion evaluated the extent to which the framework's components, including its dimensions, learning objectives, and suggested methods, were clearly defined, understandable, and logically structured. The framework achieved a mean rating of 4.56, with a standard deviation of 0.53. This result suggests that the experts found the framework to be very high in clarity; Feasibility: This criterion examined the perceived practicality of implementing the framework

and its associated training activities within the typical resource constraints (time, budget, expertise) of heritage sites in Jambi. The framework received a mean rating of 4.11, with a standard deviation of 0.60. While still positive, this mean rating indicates a high level of feasibility, slightly lower than the ratings for relevance and clarity; Comprehensiveness: This criterion assessed the degree to which the framework adequately covered the essential aspects and dimensions of Cross-Cultural Competence required for effective frontline staff performance in Jambi heritage tourism. The framework attained a mean rating of 4.67, with a standard deviation of 0.50. This demonstrates that the experts considered the framework to be very high in comprehensiveness.

Table 4 presents the effectiveness of the training program on enhancing Cross-Cultural Competence (CCC) was evaluated using paired samples t-tests. These tests compared the pre-training and post-training scores of 22 participants across several CCC measures; Overall CCC Score: The analysis revealed a statistically significant increase in the overall self-perceived CCC score from pre-training to post-training. The mean score increased by 0.84. This increase was statistically significant, with a p-value less than 0.001, indicating that the training program had a significant positive impact on the participants' overall perception of their CCC; Communication Adaptability: There was also a statistically significant improvement in the Communication Adaptability subscale scores. The mean score increased by 0.97. This improvement was statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that the training effectively enhanced the participants' ability to adapt their communication styles in intercultural contexts; Coping with Ambiguity & Stress: Similarly, the scores on the Coping with Ambiguity & Stress subscale showed a statistically significant increase, with a mean increase of 0.90. The p-value was less than 0.001, indicating that the training program was effective in improving the participants' ability to manage uncertainty and stress in intercultural interactions.



Table 1. Mean scores and standard deviations for CCCI-HSJ dimensions (N=125).

CCC dimension	Mean score	Standard deviation (SD)
1. Cultural Self-Awareness & Reflection	3.68	0.62
2. Jambi-Specific Cultural Knowledge & Sensitivity	3.55	0.71
3. Intercultural Communication Adaptability	3.18	0.68
4. Intercultural Relationship Building & Empathy	3.72	0.59
5. Coping with Intercultural Ambiguity & Stress	3.12	0.75
<b>Overall CCCI-HSJ Score</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>0.55</b>

Notes: Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 2. The Jambi heritage cross-cultural competence (CCC) enhancement framework structure.

Dimension number	CCC dimension name	Key learning objectives	Training methods & activities	Assessment methods
1	<b>Cultural Self-Awareness &amp; Reflection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Identify own cultural background, values, assumptions, and communication style preferences.</li> <li>* Recognize potential personal biases and stereotypes influencing intercultural interactions.</li> <li>* Develop skills in reflective practice to analyze and learn from challenging cross-cultural encounters.</li> <li>* Understand stages of intercultural sensitivity development (based on Bennett's DMIS).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Cultural identity mapping &amp; exploration exercises.</li> <li>* Values clarification activities &amp; group discussions.</li> <li>* Introduction to Bennett's DMIS framework.</li> <li>* Guided reflection sessions using the critical incident technique.</li> <li>* Keeping reflective journals on intercultural interactions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Pre/post self-assessment of cultural awareness.</li> <li>* Analysis of reflective journal entries or essays.</li> <li>* Peer feedback during reflective sessions.</li> <li>* Self-rating changes on DMIS-related scales.</li> </ul>
2	<b>Jambi-Specific Cultural Knowledge &amp; Sensitivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Acquire accurate knowledge of Muaro Jambi Temple Complex history, significance, and related Srivijayan context.</li> <li>* Understand key aspects of Jambi Malay culture, local customs, social etiquette, and communication norms.</li> <li>* Recognize diverse visitor motivations (pilgrimage, historical interest, leisure).</li> <li>* Develop sensitivity towards religious diversity (Buddhist heritage, Muslim majority) and handle related inquiries respectfully.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Mini-lectures &amp; Q&amp;A sessions with local historians and cultural experts.</li> <li>* Guided site tours focusing on accurate and sensitive interpretation techniques.</li> <li>* Case studies exploring potential sensitivities in Jambi context.</li> <li>* Discussion forums on managing diverse visitor expectations.</li> <li>* Resource materials on Jambi history and culture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Knowledge quizzes on Jambi history, culture, and site significance.</li> <li>* Role-playing scenarios requiring sensitive explanations.</li> <li>* Observation of interpretation accuracy and sensitivity during guided tour simulations.</li> <li>* Analysis of responses to visitor query scenarios.</li> </ul>
3	<b>Intercultural Communication Adaptability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Practice active listening skills and perception checking techniques.</li> <li>* Learn to simplify language and use clear speech without being patronizing.</li> <li>* Enhance awareness and appropriate use/interpretation of non-verbal cues (gestures, eye contact, proxemics) across cultures.</li> <li>* Develop strategies for managing communication breakdowns constructively and patiently.</li> <li>* Learn techniques for effective communication with visitors having limited shared language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Communication style self-assessment &amp; debriefing.</li> <li>* High/low context communication exercises.</li> <li>* Role-playing diverse visitor interaction scenarios (language barriers, different communication styles).</li> <li>* Non-verbal communication practice (charades, observation exercises).</li> <li>* Video analysis of intercultural interactions.</li> <li>* Practice using visual aids and checking for understanding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Performance evaluation during role-playing scenarios.</li> <li>* Behavioral observation checklist focusing on communication skills (clarity, active listening, non-verbal adaptation).</li> <li>* Peer feedback on communication effectiveness.</li> <li>* Analysis of communication breakdown resolution strategies.</li> </ul>
4	<b>Intercultural Relationship Building &amp; Empathy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Demonstrate welcoming and hospitable behaviors consistently.</li> <li>* Apply empathy to understand visitor perspectives, needs, and potential frustrations.</li> <li>* Build rapport quickly and effectively across cultural differences.</li> <li>* Handle complaints and difficult situations professionally, respectfully, and empathetically.</li> <li>* Understand and apply key principles of intercultural relationship development (based on Deardorff's model).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Hospitality skills training &amp; practice (greetings, attentiveness).</li> <li>* Empathy mapping exercises based on diverse visitor profiles.</li> <li>* Application discussions using Deardorff's model components (Respect, Openness, Curiosity).</li> <li>* Case studies and role-playing focused on service recovery and complaint handling.</li> <li>* Group discussions on building trust in short encounters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Behavioral observation during interaction activities (welcoming behaviors, rapport building).</li> <li>* Analysis of responses in complaint handling role-plays.</li> <li>* Peer and facilitator feedback on demonstrated empathy.</li> <li>* Scenario-based questions assessing appropriate relationship-building strategies.</li> </ul>
5	<b>Coping with Intercultural Ambiguity &amp; Stress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Increase tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty in cross-cultural situations.</li> <li>* Develop cognitive flexibility to adapt responses when initial approaches fail.</li> <li>* Practice practical stress-reduction techniques applicable during challenging interactions.</li> <li>* Enhance problem-solving skills for situations with incomplete information or unclear cultural cues.</li> <li>* Learn to manage personal emotional responses constructively.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Problem-solving activities involving ambiguous scenarios.</li> <li>* Discussions and exercises on cognitive reframing.</li> <li>* Training in brief stress management techniques (mindfulness, deep breathing).</li> <li>* Group discussions sharing coping strategies for difficult encounters.</li> <li>* Scenario analysis focusing on flexible responses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Performance on scenario-based problem-solving tasks requiring flexibility.</li> <li>* Self-reported stress/anxiety levels pre/post training or specific scenarios.</li> <li>* Observation of composure and adaptability during challenging role-plays.</li> <li>* Analysis of chosen coping strategies in hypothetical situations.</li> </ul>

Table 3. Expert panel validation ratings for the Jambi heritage CCC enhancement framework (N=9 Experts).

<b>Evaluation criterion</b>	<b>Criterion description</b>	<b>Mean rating (1-5 Scale)</b>	<b>Standard deviation (SD)</b>	<b>Qualitative interpretation of mean score</b>
<b>Relevance</b>	The appropriateness, importance, and applicability of the framework's dimensions, objectives, and activities to the specific context of Jambi heritage sites and frontline staff needs.	<b>4.78</b>	0.44	<b>Very High</b>
<b>Clarity</b>	The extent to which the framework's components, including dimensions, learning objectives, and suggested methods, were clearly defined, understandable, and logically structured.	<b>4.56</b>	0.53	<b>Very High</b>
<b>Feasibility</b>	The perceived practicality of implementing the framework and associated training activities within the typical resource constraints (time, budget, expertise) of heritage sites in Jambi.	<b>4.11</b>	0.60	<b>High</b>
<b>Comprehensiveness</b>	The degree to which the framework adequately covered the essential aspects and dimensions of Cross-Cultural Competence required for effective frontline staff performance in Jambi heritage tourism.	<b>4.67</b>	0.50	<b>Very High</b>

Table 4. Paired samples T-test results comparing pre- and post-training cross-cultural competence (CCC) scores (N=22).

<b>CCC measure</b>	<b>Pre-training mean (SD)</b>	<b>Post-training mean (SD)</b>	<b>Mean difference (Post - Pre)</b>	<b>t-value (df=21)</b>	<b>p-value</b>
<b>Overall CCC Score</b> (20 items)	3.31 (0.48)	4.15 (0.39)	<b>+0.84</b>	8.76	< .001
<b>Communication Adaptability</b> (Subscale)	3.05 (0.55)	4.02 (0.41)	<b>+0.97</b>	7.98	< .001
<b>Coping with Ambiguity &amp; Stress</b> (Subscale)	2.98 (0.61)	3.88 (0.45)	<b>+0.90</b>	6.91	< .001

The qualitative phase of the study revealed five core CCC dimensions perceived as essential for frontline staff at Jambi's heritage sites Cultural Self-Awareness & Reflection, Jambi-Specific Cultural Knowledge & Sensitivity, Intercultural Communication Adaptability, Intercultural Relationship Building & Empathy, and Coping with Intercultural Ambiguity & Stress. The first dimension, Cultural Self-Awareness & Reflection, highlights the importance of staff recognizing their own cultural influences on interactions with visitors. This finding aligns with broader conceptualizations of CCC, which consistently emphasize the role of self-awareness as a foundational element. In the context of Jambi, this is particularly salient given the potential for staff members' own cultural values and assumptions to shape their interpretation and presentation of heritage, as well as their interactions with visitors from diverse backgrounds. The study's emphasis on reflective practice, incorporating tools like critical incident

techniques and reflective journaling, underscores the ongoing nature of developing cultural self-awareness. This aligns with the understanding that CCC is not a static trait but rather a dynamic set of competencies that evolve through continuous learning and self-reflection. The second dimension, Jambi-Specific Cultural Knowledge & Sensitivity, underscores the importance of staff possessing specific knowledge about the local context. This includes not only factual information about the history and significance of sites like the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex but also an understanding of Jambi Malay culture, customs, and social etiquette. Furthermore, this dimension highlights the need for sensitivity towards the diverse motivations and expectations of visitors, as well as the importance of navigating religious diversity in a respectful manner. This finding emphasizes the context-specificity of CCC and the limitations of applying generic frameworks to unique cultural settings. In Jambi, the interplay between the Buddhist

heritage of Muaro Jambi and the predominantly Muslim local community necessitates a nuanced understanding and sensitivity on the part of frontline staff. The third dimension, Intercultural Communication Adaptability, highlights the importance of effective communication skills in cross-cultural encounters. This includes the ability to practice active listening, use clear and simple language, and adapt both verbal and non-verbal communication styles. The ability to manage communication breakdowns and communicate effectively with visitors who have limited shared language is also crucial. This finding aligns with the central role of communication in intercultural interactions, where misunderstandings can easily arise due to differences in linguistic styles, non-verbal cues, and communication norms. In a heritage tourism context, where staff are tasked with conveying complex information and facilitating meaningful experiences, effective communication is paramount. The fourth dimension, Intercultural Relationship Building & Empathy, emphasizes the importance of establishing positive connections with visitors. This involves demonstrating welcoming and hospitable behaviors, understanding visitor perspectives and needs, building rapport, and handling complaints or difficult situations with respect and empathy. This finding highlights the affective dimension of CCC, recognizing that positive emotional connections can significantly enhance the visitor experience and foster positive relationships between hosts and guests. In the context of heritage tourism, where visitors may be seeking authentic and meaningful interactions, the ability of frontline staff to build rapport and demonstrate empathy is particularly important. The fifth dimension, Coping with Intercultural Ambiguity & Stress, acknowledges the potential for uncertainty and challenges in intercultural encounters. This dimension emphasizes the importance of staff being able to tolerate ambiguity, adapt their responses, manage stress, and solve problems effectively in situations where cultural cues may be unclear or conflicting. This finding recognizes the dynamic and sometimes unpredictable nature of intercultural interactions, where frontline staff may encounter

unexpected situations or behaviors. The ability to remain calm, flexible, and resourceful in such situations is crucial for ensuring positive visitor experiences and maintaining service quality.<sup>11-13</sup>

The quantitative phase of the study assessed the baseline CCC levels of frontline staff using the Cross-Cultural Competence Inventory for Heritage Staff in Jambi (CCCI-HSJ). The results revealed that staff generally perceived themselves as having a moderate level of overall CCC. However, there were significant differences in the self-perceived competence levels across the five dimensions. Staff reported the highest levels of competence in Intercultural Relationship Building & Empathy, suggesting a strong foundation in hospitality and interpersonal skills. Cultural Self-Awareness & Reflection and Jambi-Specific Cultural Knowledge & Sensitivity were also rated relatively high, indicating that staff generally felt aware of their own cultural influences and knowledgeable about the local context. In contrast, the lowest self-perceived competence levels were observed in Intercultural Communication Adaptability and Coping with Intercultural Ambiguity & Stress. This suggests that staff may face challenges in adapting their communication styles to diverse visitors and in managing the uncertainties and potential stressors inherent in intercultural encounters. These findings highlight the need for targeted training interventions focused on enhancing communication skills and developing coping mechanisms for managing ambiguity and stress.<sup>14-16</sup>

Based on the findings from the qualitative and quantitative phases, a context-specific HRD framework was developed to enhance CCC among frontline staff in Jambi's heritage tourism sector. The framework is structured around the five key CCC dimensions identified in the study, with each dimension having specific learning objectives, training methods, and assessment methods. The framework emphasizes experiential learning and active participation, incorporating a variety of training methods such as group discussions, role-playing, case studies, guided site tours, and reflective exercises. It also incorporates a range of assessment methods, including self-assessments, peer feedback, behavioral

observations, and knowledge quizzes, to evaluate the development of CCC among staff.<sup>17,18</sup>

The HRD framework underwent rigorous evaluation through expert validation and pilot testing. The expert panel, comprising academics, practitioners, and cultural experts, provided high ratings for the framework's relevance, clarity, feasibility, and comprehensiveness. This suggests that the framework is well-aligned with the needs of the Jambi heritage tourism context and is likely to be practical and effective in enhancing CCC among frontline staff. The pilot training intervention, based on the HRD framework, resulted in statistically significant improvements in participants' overall CCC scores, as well as in their scores for Intercultural Communication Adaptability and Coping with Ambiguity & Stress. These findings provide preliminary evidence for the effectiveness of the framework in enhancing key CCC dimensions among frontline staff.<sup>19,20</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

The study successfully developed and validated a context-specific HRD framework to cultivate Cross-Cultural Competencies (CCC) among frontline staff in Jambi's heritage tourism sector. The research identified five core CCC dimensions crucial for effective cross-cultural encounters at Jambi's heritage sites: Cultural Self-Awareness & Reflection, Jambi-Specific Cultural Knowledge & Sensitivity, Intercultural Communication Adaptability, Intercultural Relationship Building & Empathy, and Coping with Intercultural Ambiguity & Stress. Baseline assessments revealed moderate overall CCC levels among staff, with specific weaknesses identified in Intercultural Communication Adaptability and Coping with Intercultural Ambiguity & Stress. The developed HRD framework, encompassing targeted learning objectives, training methods, and assessment strategies for each CCC dimension, was evaluated positively by an expert panel for its relevance, clarity, feasibility, and comprehensiveness. Furthermore, a pilot training intervention based on the framework demonstrated statistically significant improvements in staff's overall CCC, Communication Adaptability, and

Coping with Ambiguity & Stress. These findings underscore the importance of context-specific HRD interventions in enhancing CCC among frontline staff in heritage tourism settings. The validated framework offers a practical tool for heritage site managers and HRD practitioners to develop staff competencies, ultimately contributing to improved service quality, enhanced visitor experiences, and the sustainable development of heritage tourism in Jambi.

#### 5. References

1. Zaki K, Saad H. Adoption of cloud human resource information system in Egyptian hotels: an experimental design research. *Int J Herit Tour Hosp.* 2018; 12(1): 233–45.
2. Ezenagu N. Heritage resources as a driver for cultural tourism in Nigeria. *Cogent Arts Humanit.* 2020; 7(1): 1734331.
3. Jarwan A, Ibrahim R. Impact of human resources management practices on turnover intention through intrinsic motivation: Evidence from the Jordanian hospitality industry. *Int J Herit Tour Hosp.* 2020; 14(3): 1–11.
4. Nikolova E, Zhelev Y, Monova-Zheleva M. Digitisation of cultural heritage and interoperability in the context of competences of the culture industry human resources. *DiPP.* 2021; 11: 151–8.
5. Atallah A, Ahmed A, Ali A. The impact of human resource recruitment on the competitive advantage of tourism companies (an applied study in Egypt). *J Tour Hotels Herit.* 2022; 5(2): 268–84.
6. Sobian P. Human resources development of Village Apparatus as a response to the determination of Betang long as a tourism allegation areas based on cultural heritage case study in Ensaid Panjang Village, Kelam Permai District, Sintang Regency, West Kalimantan. *Wacana J Sos Dan Hum.* 2022; 25(01).
7. Marshak A. Cultural security as a resource for preserving the cultural heritage of the peoples

- of Russia. *Humanit South Russ.* 2022; 11(4): 55–64.
8. Worku Tadesse G. Heritage resources as a driver of cultural tourism development in Ethiopia: a review. *Cogent Arts Humanit.* 2023; 10(1).
9. Hong NT, Hieu LT, Huong DT, Phuong TTM. Impact of green human resource management on employees' green behavior in hotels. *Herit Sustain Dev.* 2024; 6(2): 639–56.
10. Surkova L. Genius and place: Cultural heritage as a strategic resource. *Humanit South Russ.* 2024; 13(2): 131–50.
11. Nguyen MT, Pham NT, Nguyen QT. High-quality human resources in sustainable socio-economic development in Vietnam. *Herit Sustain Dev.* 2024; 6(2): 529–44.
12. Mteti SH, Mpambije CJ, Manyerere DJ. Unlocking cultural tourism: Local community awareness and perceptions of cultural heritage resources in Katavi Region in southern circuit of Tanzania. *Soc Sci Humanit Open.* 2025; 11(101295): 101295.
13. Madaan K, Sharma H. Linking empowering leadership to employee work-behaviors in the hospitality context: The role of harmonious work passion as a mediator. *J Hum Resour Hosp Tour.* 2024; 23(3): 531–60.
14. Zerva S, Belias D, Rossidis I, Ntalakos A. Examining the impact of leadership on job satisfaction in Greek luxury hotels. *J Hum Resour Hosp Tour.* 2024; 23(3): 439–64.
15. Näppä A, Styvén ME, Robertson J. Employment in the tourism and hospitality industry: Toward a unified value proposition. *J Hum Resour Hosp Tour.* 2025; 24(1): 26–56.
16. Almustafa A, Mustafa MJ, Butt MM. Does investment in employee development encourage proactive behaviors among hospitality staff? A self-determination theory perspective. *J Hum Resour Hosp Tour.* 2025; 24(1): 57–84.
17. El Hajal G, Losekoot E. Gen Z talent management: Hospitality industry insights. *J Hum Resour Hosp Tour.* 2025; 24(1): 139–62.
18. Lei BCH, Kuok ACH. How emotional labor predicts burnout and work engagement in the differentiated job demands–resources model: The moderating effect of emotional intelligence in hotels in Macau. *J Hum Resour Hosp Tour.* 2025; 1–25.
19. Vakira E, Shereni NC. Fostering environmental performance through green human resource management practices in hotels: the moderating role of green inclusive leadership. *J Hum Resour Hosp Tour.* 2025; 1–22.
20. Pranić L, Vuković M. Hard evidence on soft skills' infusion in tourism and hospitality education: Current versus former students. *J Hum Resour Hosp Tour.* 2025; 1–27.