

The Influence of Communication Applications on the Formation and Sustainability of Intercultural Friendships

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Abstract

It is observed that the use of new social media is common across gender, age group, race and ethnicity across the globe. It plays a significant role in fostering the interconnectedness and development of intercultural relationships as it is not constrained by geographical barriers and is able to promote instant communication between groups or individuals. Communication applications (e.g. WhatsApp) are crucial in enhancing intimacy among individuals residing in different regions. In reflection of the university context, the domestic students usually maintain contact with the exchange or international students through digital platforms as they might not have many opportunities for face-to-face interactions upon the completion of the sojourn periods. With the support of prior empirical research, this paper will discuss how communication applications could promote the formation and sustainability of intercultural friendships among college peers in the light of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, functional model of friendship network, Social Exchange Theory and the Contact Hypothesis.

Keywords: digital communication, communication applications, intercultural communication, intercultural contact, intercultural friendships, intercultural interaction