

Case Study of Migrants, Cultures and Environmental Crisis

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Abstract : Migration is a global phenomenon with movements of migrants from developed and developing countries to the host societies. Migrants have changed the host countries' demography - its population structure and also its ethnic cultural diversity. Acculturation of migrants in terms of their adoption of the host culture is seen as important to ensure that they 'fit into' their adopted country so as to participate in everyday public life. However, this research found that the increase of the China-born migrants' post-migration consumption level had impact on Australia's environment reflected not only because of their adoption of elements of the host culture, but also retention of aspects of Chinese culture - indicating that the influence of bi-culturalism was in operation. This research, which was based on the face-to-face interview with 61 China-born migrants in the suburb of Box Hill, Melbourne, investigated the pattern of change in the migrants' consumption upon their settlement in Australia. Using an ecological footprint calculator, their post-migration footprints were found to be larger than pre-migration footprint. The uniquely-derived CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) Index was used to measure individuals' strength of connectedness to ethnic culture. Multi-variant analysis was carried out to understand which independent factors that influence consumption best explain the change in footprint (which is the difference between pre-and post-migration footprints, as a dependent factor). These independent factors ranged from socio-economic and demographics to the cultural context, that is, the CALD Index and indicators of acculturation. The major findings from the analysis were: Chinese culture (as measured by the CALD Index) and indicators of acculturation such as length of residency and using English in communications besides the traditional factors such as age, income and education level made significant contributions to the large increase in the China-born group's post-migration consumption level. This paper as part of a larger study found that younger migrants' large change in their footprint were related to high income and low level of education. This group of migrants also practiced bi-cultural consumption in retaining ethnic culture and adopting the host culture. These findings have importantly highlighted that for a host society to tackle environmental crisis, governments need not only to understand the relationship between age and consumption behaviour, but also to understand and embrace the migrants' ethnic cultures, which may act as bridges and/or fences in relationships. In conclusion, for governments to deal with national issues such as environmental crisis within a cultural diverse population, it necessitates an understanding of age and aspects of ethnic culture that may act as bridges and fences. This understanding can aid in putting in place policies that enable the co-existence of a hybrid of the ethnic and host cultures in order to create and maintain a harmonious and secured living environment for population groups.

Keywords : bicultural consumer, CALD index, consumption, ethnic culture, migrants

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