Anxiety About Cultural Dilution and Adoption of a Global Lifestyle

Amro A. Maher

Abstract The main purpose of this study is to examine how Kuwaitis, as a minority, react to the influx of expatriates living in Kuwait and how such a reaction affects their consumption behavior. We build upon findings from the social psychology literature to build our theoretical model. Research supports that local populations feel threatened by immigrant populations (Stephan et al. 2002). When the local population is threatened, then locals might express concern about the future existence of the group. This concern is referred to as collective angst in the social psychology literature (Whole et al. 2010). We seek to examine how concern about the future affects Kuwaitis' lifestyle in the present. Data was collected from Kuwait where foreign migrants represent around 60 % of the total population. The results reveal several interesting findings. First, we find that when expatriates are perceived by Kuwaitis as a source of symbolic threat then Kuwaitis are more likely to be concerned about the existence of Kuwaiti culture in the future (i.e., collective angst). Second, we find that this high level of collective angst leads to the preference for a global consumer lifestyle versus a local lifestyle. Finally we find that individualism strengthens the indirect effect of symbolic threat on the preference for a global lifestyle through collective angst. Thus our results are not consistent with previous literature in suggesting that the experience of collective angst results in behaviors that would seek to eliminate the source of threat.

References available upon request.

A.A. Maher (✉)
Qatar University, Doha, Qatar
e-mail: amaher@qu.edu.qa