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Is the migration-tourism relationship only about VFR?

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ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to the literature on the linkages between tourism and migration. Though it is widely recognised that the two phenomena are closely linked, and that migration may induce visiting friends and relatives) tourism (VFR), there has been little econometric evaluation of the relationship. The present analysis draws upon Australian data to identify a strong quantitative link between migration and VFR tourism. It also demonstrates a strong link between migration and other forms of tourism. Indeed the latter are almost equally as strong as the links between migration and VFR tourism. This unexpected finding has implications for policymakers and for conceptualising the migration-tourism relationship.

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Introduction

In a world of increasing mobility, it is not surprising that migrants will travel between their new and old countries. Indeed, this phenomenon continues to expand in both scale and scope. It is evident

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that permanent migration and tourism are interconnected and that the relationship operates in both directions (Dwyer, Burnley, Forsyth, & Murphy, 1993; Williams & Hall, 2002). It is therefore understandable that considerable analysis has been undertaken on the links between migration and the form of tourism most associated with migration, namely visiting friends and relatives (VFR). As well as exploring how VFR tourism is affected by migration, this paper also investigates the effects on non-VFR tourism. The evidence suggests that the effect on non-VFR tourism is almost as strong as on VFR tourism.

It is unsurprising that the migration and VFR tourism are connected. It is commonplace for residents in the former homeland of migrants who have departed to settle in another country, to maintain contact. Within migrant communities, many migrants maintain strong emotional and social attachments with their previous homeland (Nguyen & King, 2002; Philpott, 1968, 1973; Rubenstein, 1979) as well as familial and friendship ties (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994; Gmelch, 1992). When settlers depart from their home country to establish new lives, tourism may be stimulated through visits by friends and relatives (VFR) in both directions. Where there is a larger quantum of permanent migrants in a destination, there will be a larger pool of friends and relatives who are resident in source countries and who have a reason and/or incentive to make visits. Permanent migrants who travel to their country of origin to visit friends and relatives may engage in 'promotion' of their new homeland, whether explicitly or implicitly, thereby stimulating short term inbound visitation.

An increased quantum of migrants in a destination country increases the capacity of accommodation that is available in the homes of residents and which may be accessed by friends and family who are visiting from abroad, thereby reducing trip costs. The presence of permanent migrants enriches cultural life and provides the destination country with greater tourist-related interest and diversity (e.g. 'Chinatowns', business and social precincts frequented by residents with Chinese ethnicity often appeal to tourists). Even where international visitors have no friends and/or relatives of their own in the destination, awareness that their compatriots have chosen to settle and contribute to the relevant community may enhance their disposition to visit. Permanent migrants who retain or forge business links with their country of origin may stimulate international trade and associated business travel. The presence of permanent migrants will boost outbound tourism by making return visits to friends and relatives in their previous country of residence, including for special occasions such as weddings and funerals (Feng & Page, 2000; Paci, 1994; Seaton & Tagg, 1995; Yuan, Fridgen, Hsieh, & O'Leary, 1995). Finally, there may be a boost for permanent migration to countries which have attracted inward migration as visitation for tourism purposes increases, (King, 1994; King & Gamage, 1994).

Tourism researchers have widely acknowledged the connection between more and less permanent forms of migration (King, 1994; Oigenblick & Kirschenbaum, 2002; Williams & Hall, 2000, 2002). Prospective migrants sometimes set off for their destination intending to relocate permanently, whereas others undertake shorter stays, but then extend their stay, sometimes permanently. Employees who are relocated overseas for a defined period may fall into the "temporary migrant" category. Some permanent migrants make a conscious or unconscious decision to cut ties with their country of origin on arrival. However, most maintain contact with family members and this is increasingly the case with the accessibility that is provided by various forms of social media. Concerted efforts to re-assemble families in destination settings ("family reunion") are a component of the migration program in many countries. However, assembling family members for shorter periods is more correctly viewed as a sub-set of tourism and specifically of VFR tourism. Since migration is a global phenomenon involving the dispersal of with those who share common geographical or ethnic backgrounds to diverse locations, it is likely that their chosen destinations will attract subsequent temporary or permanent migrant flows.

The Australian context is particularly relevant to the present research, because immigration has played a prominent role in national development in the post War period, and Australia continues to receive large scale migration relative to its population. Irrespective of political persuasion, Australian governments have had a longstanding interest in so-called 'multiculturalism', a concept which recognizes migrant contributions to national development and celebrates cultural diversity. Following the establishment of the Federation of Australia in 1901, there was a specific policy espousing a preference for British or European immigrants (this was subsequently described as the "White Australia Policy"). Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, as Australia became more strongly integrated into

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