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journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jbusresHome in the re-making: Immigrants' transcultural experiencing of home[☆]Maria Kreuzer^{a,*}, Hans Mühlbacher^b, Sylvia von Wallpach^c^a International University of Monaco, 2, avenue Albert II, MC-98000, Monaco^b International University of Monaco, INSEEC Research Center, 2, avenue Albert II, MC-98000, Monaco^c Copenhagen Business School, Department of Marketing, Solbjerg Plads 3C, 3rd floor, 2000 Frederiksberg, Denmark

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ABSTRACT

In a context of unprecedented cross-cultural migration, immigrants struggle to adapt to new cultures. The experience of home as physical, social, individual and temporal belonging is important to immigrants' adaptation processes. Extant literature either focuses on dimensions of home without reference to immigrants, studies material culture related to home, or researches identity projects of migrants without explicitly focusing on their subjective experience of home. This study adopts a phenomenological perspective to gain an in-depth understanding of first generation immigrants' subjective transcultural experiencing of home. By means of autobiographical phenomenological interviews the study identifies three ways of experiencing home: Longing for the past; transcultural mingling of social relationships and consumption; and experiencing home within oneself. The study corroborates extant literature on home, material culture and consumer acculturation and complements this literature with an additional, inner-directed focus of experiencing home. The findings have important implications for corporate and public policy makers.

1. Introduction

Globalization has changed the reality of markets: people, technology, money, images, ideas (Appadurai, 1990), consumer goods, and cultures of consumption (Ger & Belk, 1996) all flow globally. In this context of increasing cross-cultural migration, consumers do not just leave their physical environment and lose their “acquainted” home (Ahmed, 1999), defined as a physical or immaterial space of social, individual, and temporal belonging (Walsh, 2006). New brands, products, services, and consumer lifestyles also change migrants' consumption opportunities (Burrell, 2008a; Penaloza, 1994). Being at the intersection of two or more cultures (Cornwell, Wamwara-Mbugua, & Boller, 2008), newcomers as well as people having migrated some time ago may feel comfort and estrangement concurrently and struggle with their individual and social identities (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). Interactions with locals inevitably demonstrate to migrants what it means (or does not) to be part of the host culture (Ahmed, 1999). In this context, immigrants' notion of home is central to their understanding of the world (Moore, 2000).

Some researchers examine the relationship between individuals and the place called “home” from the perspective of attachment theory (Hummon, 1992; Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974) or identity theory (Dion, Rémy, & Sitz, 2010; Hernandez, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess, 2007;

Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). That stream of research highlights emotions related to a localized home and allows a broad understanding of how individuals experience home. That research, however, narrowly focuses on physical places in one culture but does not refer to immigrants and their experiencing of home in another culture.

Migration researchers such as Burrell (2002, 2008a, 2008b) and Walsh (2006) focus on the role of material objects in migration and the perceived changes in migrants' material lives. That research sheds light on the importance of objects to migrants and on change processes in material culture from the place left behind to a new home defined as a place, destination, or a space of imagined belonging (Burrell, 2002). However, although that research approaches home from a migration perspective, it restricts the focus to specific physical places of home.

Consumer research also devotes some efforts to understanding how consumption contributes to the experience of home. Researchers investigate home as a place for decision making and commercial exchange (Frenzen & Davis, 1990); as meaning embedded in symbols, objects, and artifacts (McCracken, 1989); as a mobile notion from the perspective of professional nomads (Bardhi & Arnould, 2006); and as an information system and technological network (Venkatesh, Kruse, & Shih, 2003). Different theoretical perspectives provide a rich picture of how possessions and consumption contribute to consumers'

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experience of home that can be independent of a specific place. That literature, however, does not specifically focus on immigrants and how they experience their new home after having left their acquainted environment.

For immigrants, the experience of “home beyond home” may take a central role in their lives. Reaching a new experience of home means dealing with the conflict between acculturation to new dominant ways of consumption, as migrants leave behind familiar consumption patterns linked to the original experience of home, and sticking to the consumption patterns of their culture of origin. Consumer culture researchers tend to examine acculturation and the development of consumption behavior of migrants from the perspective of identity projects (Askegaard, Arnould, & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Oswald, 1999; Penaloza, 1994; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). The construction of a multi-dimensional home is an essential part of any individual identity project, which includes a sense of belonging to a group of people (who “we” are compared with “others”) and a sense of being rooted in a real or virtual space. The self-attribution of roles enacted in this space and the perceived related expectations of appropriate behavior are important ingredients of individual identity. Much of that research explicitly or implicitly defines home as the place or cultural context of migrants' origins (Oswald, 1999). Therefore, the studies have a rather limited focus on immigrants' experiencing of home in a new cultural context.

In summary, most extant research on home relates home to a specific place within one specific culture. Research either does not take immigrants into account or is not specifically interested in how immigrants experience home in their new lifeworld. The current research thus contributes a phenomenological experiential perspective to the extant body of home literature by changing the focus from home being a place or cultural context from which immigrants come to home as a person's subjective experiencing of physical, social, individual, and temporal belonging. This experiencing involves outer multi-sensory and inner-directed experiences of home that take place within the spatial-temporal horizon of a person's lifeworld and contribute to a person's history of experience (Landgrebe, 1973). Leaving home and confronting cultural fluidity adds transcultural facets to immigrants' experiencing of home. Transculturality represents the entanglement, inter-mixing, and commonness of cultural codes (i.e., meanings, values, symbols, lifestyles, products) across cultures (Welsch, 1999). Transcultural experiencing of home implies immigrants' use of culture and consumption codes that transcend cultural boundaries (Brink, 1999) to evoke a feeling of belonging.

Adopting this perspective, this research aims to answer two questions: Which transcultural experiencing of home characterizes immigrants' new lifeworld? and What roles do products and consumption play in immigrants' transcultural experiencing of home? To answer these questions, we conducted in-depth autobiographical phenomenological interviews (Heisley & Levy, 1991) with 17 first-generation consumer immigrants living in the same province of Austria. The findings reveal three different ways immigrants experience home: (1) longing for the past, defined as a backward-looking experience of home with hardly any transcultural facets; (2) transcultural mingling of social relationships with former and new consumption experiences, defined as a social construction of a hybrid transcultural experience of home; and (3) experiencing home within oneself, defined as an experience of home based on close social relationships and an independent reflexive self with low ties to a physical place.

This research contributes insights to extant literature on home by confirming common dimensions of home as experiences of physical, social, individual, and temporal belonging, while also identifying a new way of experiencing home—inner home, which describes an inner-directed experiencing of home independent of physical needs and based on a balance between social belonging and individual freedom in the new cultural environment. This study adds to current research on material culture and consumer acculturation. Corporate and public policy makers need to be aware of immigrants' ways of experiencing home and

their related needs to support them in their new lifeworld.

2. Literature review

Three major streams of literature address the home. The first and early research stream tries to understand the concept of home, its dimensionality, and the importance of the different dimensions of home to people in general. A second stream relates the meaning of home to migrants faced with changes in the availability of material objects and in material culture. The third stream analyzes consumption patterns and focuses on the acculturation processes migrants go through in their new cultural context.

2.1. Home: a multi-dimensional concept

A review of literature on home reveals four dimensions of the concept dominating research at some point in time: physical, social, individual, and temporal dimensions. The *physical* dimension of home reflects the enduring physical structures and characteristics of a place to which people are attached, including the native country, regions, landscapes, spaces, dwellings, and houses (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). McHugh and Ming (1996) use the term “home-as-identity” to characterize rootedness, a part of the self that is affiliated with a place. Frisou and Yildiz (2010) determine three dimensions of the physical home—identification with, attachment to, and solidarity with a place—and call the resulting attitude “rootedness” of consumers. Place identity and the dependence of a person on the place form place attachment (Brown & Raymond, 2007). A more postmodern view of the physical dimension of home adds fluidity to the concept, resulting from globalization and the spread of new media (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The idea of a mobile construction of home (Bardhi & Arnould, 2006) replaces the rather rigid notion of the physical home that dominates literature.

The *social* dimension of home describes the relationships with others in a specific physical location, but also within virtual space. Bardhi and Askegaard (2009) define home as a social concept for structuring time, space, and relationships. According to Hernandez et al. (2007), the relationship between a consumer and a place contributes to identity construction through social relationships. Home as a social space satisfies three basic human needs: community (i.e., social embeddedness and affiliation), control (i.e., action ability and the opportunity to leave traces), and coherence (i.e., making sense of the world) (Hummon, 1992; Low & Altman, 1992). As a social space, home continuously emerges within pre-defined physical structures (Kupke, 2006). The emotional value of the social space is mostly felt when being away (Nowicka, 2007). Social media has reduced the importance of physical closeness to social bonds. In virtual space, social relationships exist independent of physical locations (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

The *individual* dimension of home reflects home as the nucleus of emotional meaning and contains the experiential nature of home within social, physical, and virtual spaces, as well as experiences of self-expression and self-fulfillment (Sixsmith, 1986). Dion et al. (2010) and Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) both highlight the contribution of the individual dimension of home to the construction of social and individual identity.

The *temporal* dimension of home is a lived and longed-for state at once (Varley, 2008). Reflecting on beloved memories, present experiences, and future states enables people to experience the ideal home. Socialization and cultural imprints have created memories that allow individuals to experience home when they feel a loss of familiarity (Moore, 2000). This longed-for state finds its basis in childhood. Memories of local accents, smells, tastes, and sounds mark the first experiences of home. Reflection tends to romanticize these memories, with home taking on a utopian-nostalgic character (Varley, 2008).

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