

**СЕКЦИЯ
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ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ**

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**FOOD ACCULTURATION AND ITS EFFECT
ON THE CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS PURSUING
HIGHER EDUCATION IN IRELAND**

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In every corner of the world people are starting to embrace the options of studying abroad, and in light of this trend, there is an important issue to be addressed, which deals with food acculturation and its effect on international students. Acculturation is a process of social, psychological and cultural change that stems from the balancing of two cultures while adapting to the prevailing culture of the society. Acculturation explains the process of cultural and psychological change or alteration that results following a meeting between cultures.

Aspects of food acculturation include the preparation, presentation and consumption of food. The exchange of food cultural features occurs when different culture groups of individuals come into continuous contact then the original cultural patterns of both groups may possible alter. Due to the fact that there is limited research on international students' acculturation with respect to food habits and the food environment, the purpose of this research was to evaluate the extent of international students' food acculturation in the Republic of Ireland.

In the context of this research, education and social interaction as part of the acculturation attributes are believed to influence the preparation and consumption of various types of food.

Authors of this research conducted a qualitative analysis in a form of survey questionnaires among 100 students studying at different faculties, programmes and years at Athlone Institute of Technology in Ireland during the 2018–2019 academic years. Participants were randomly selected,

despite their gender, religion and ethnical background. The survey consisted of 15 open and multiple-choice questions. Participation was voluntary, therefore, authors received only 82 surveys back. Aim: to gain an overview of the challenges international students face while buying, preparing and consuming food in Ireland.

Based on survey questionnaires results, Chinese students constituted around 45 % (n = 37) of the total respondents compared to 30 % (n = 25) Indians, 12 % (n = 10) Malaysians and 12 % (n = 10) other students (including EU and other non-EU). On religion, 55 % (n = 45) of the respondents were Hindu, followed by 21 % (n = 17) Buddhists, 15 % (n = 12) were Muslims and 9 % (n = 8) Christians.

15 % (n = 12) of respondents argued that education had an impact on their understanding of different types of food, and it also contributes to their understanding of how some food is served and consumed by different people from different cultural background.

100 % of respondents pointed out that it was difficult for them to get food ingredients necessary for preparing their home meals. However, all Chinese students said that canteen in the university fully satisfies their needs for breakfast, lunch and

Indian students added that there are lots of take-away options available in the town, however, they feel like they could have more vegetarian and vegan options available. 100 % respondents suggested of serving their local food in the university canteen, due to the large number of international students from their home countries. Also, 55 % of respondents pointed out that Irish food is very different from what they are used to and they hardly adopt to it.

Food acculturation plays an important role on consumer buying behaviour of the international students in Ireland. Authors of this research believe that this research may serve as a fundamental platform for other researchers to investigate on this issue and understand how educational, governmental and non-governmental institutions may facilitate overseas students in this issue.