

Students commuting choices: Carbon footprint and environmental identity

Topic: Thematic IO analysis: Social and Socio-Economic Analysis

Author: Nuria Gomez

Co-Authors: Agustin Collado Rodriguez de Guzman, Pablo Olivos

Environmental issues increasingly concerns society, however consumption patterns do not seem to evolve accordingly. Decisions on consumption are taken based on education, habits, cost and a number of other variables, and they are not easily modified. We focus on this issue by analysing transport consumption for students, and searching for a link between individual environmental identity and transport decisions.

Numerous investigations have shown that different dimensions of identity play a role in the prediction of biospheric environmental concerns, ecological cooperation for obtaining resources and pro-environmental behaviours (Hoot & Friedman, 2011; Olivos & AragonÃ©s, 2014). Positive correlations have been observed between different measures of environmental identity, such as the Connectedness with Nature scale or the Inclusion of Nature in Self Scale, with the general ecological behaviour (Dutcher et al., 2007; Mayer & Frantz, 2004; Olivos, AragonÃ©s & AmÃ©rigo, 2011; Schultz, 2001). Our questionnaire analyses to what extent environmental identity determines real everyday commuting decisions.

We do so by carrying out a survey questionnaire to University students that pursues a twofold objective. By asking about their transport decisions and pulling the information on a Multi-Regional Input-Output model, we can calculate the anthropogenic environmental impact in terms of carbon footprint. The questionnaire also focus on the environmental identity of the student, so that it is possible to appreciate whether their transport choices are coherent with their environmental self dimensions.

We also pretend to identify the best option to prompt changes in the individual choices. Clear and straightforward information on environmental impact of consumption decisions is a powerful tool to change habits, otherwise economic penalties can be considered when information on "Willingness to pay for anti-environmental behaviour" is gathered. Our questionnaire will also allow us to compare both tools.