

ABSTRACT

This study identifies various factors involved in the diffusion of Christianity and the growth and expansion of the church among the urban Chinese diaspora in the greater Kuala Lumpur metropolitan area (KL) of Malaysia. Specifically, the research is designed to determine whether principles and theories related to the diffusion of innovations could inform or help explain the diffusion of Christianity and growth of the church. The study is further informed by insights, principles, and theories from literature related to other areas of study including Chinese religion and culture, religious conversion studies, church growth, urban ministry, and missiology. In addition to an extensive examination of literature related to the history of the diffusion of Christianity in Malaysia, case studies were developed on nine growing churches from a variety of denominational and non-denominational backgrounds in the KL area with particular focus on the period 1990-2001. In addition, personal interviews were conducted with 76 first-generation Chinese converts to Christianity in order to obtain further insights into factors involved in their choice to embrace the Christian faith. This research reveals that numerous movements, events, and factors have been involved in the diffusion of Christianity and the growth of the church in the Malaysian context in recent decades. And, although the diffusion of Christianity, religious conversion, and the growth and expansion of the church are ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit, this study demonstrates that insights and methods used to study how other innovations have spread within a given society are useful in studying the diffusion of Christianity and the growth of the church among the urban Chinese diaspora in KL, as well as complementary to other fields of study including church growth theory, religious conversion studies, urban ministry, and missiology.