

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE HOUSEHOLD AND INDIVIDUAL FOOD CONSUMPTION : A REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Abstract

This paper identifies the factors that influence the household and individual food consumption. Since food is the most important item of the consumption basket, an analysis of the changes in food consumption pattern over time has a special significance which is the most important component for low and middle income groups. Food expenditure pattern is an excellent indicator of economic well being of people. Economic Development not only brings about significant changes in the socio-economic and cultural life of a population but it also influences the levels of living in the long run. India, a rapid developing and agrarian dominant economy has been bringing many changes in the socio-economic life of her population since independence.

INTRODUCTION

The analysis of changing food consumption pattern over time would help in designing appropriate policies related to food production and distribution. Increasing number of working women, rise in per capita income, changing lifestyles and increasing level of affluence in the middle income group have also brought about changes in food habits. Rapid urbanization and sociological changes like the desire on the part of the housewives to spend less time in kitchen, the increased value for leisure, weakening of family ties, increased impact of television and its advertisement as well as changing life styles of the families, have brought about the changes in food consumption pattern. Since food is the most important item of the consumption basket, an analysis of the changes in food consumption pattern over time has a special significance which is the most important component for low and middle income groups. Food expenditure pattern is an excellent indicator of economic well being of people. If the society is wealthy proportionately high expenditure will be made on secondary necessities, comfort, luxury products and conspicuous consumption. On the other, if the society is at

subsistence level, people will spend proportionately more on food. Engel's law also states that the poorer the family, the greater is the proportion of its total income devoted to provision of food.

Economic Development is not only brings about significant changes in the socio-economic and cultural life of a habitant population but it also influences the levels of living in the long run. India, a rapid developing and agrarian dominant economy has been bringing many changes in the socio economic life of her population since independence. Due to variations in natural resources endowments; physical and climatic conditions; economic factors like income, prices and the extent of magnetization; demographic factors like household size and degree of urbanization and cultural factors are likely to influence consumption expenditure pattern. Such diverse socio-economic, demographic and cultural factors are reflected in the inequality in the distribution of consumption expenditure as it is revealed by the national sample survey organization data on consumption expenditure in India.

Food consumption has been a subject of research all over the world. It is especially meaningful in developing countries where food expenditure

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accounts for a relatively large share of household income. Studies on food consumption shed light on food related nutritional policies. They provide estimates of how food consumption is affected by change in prices, income and taxation policies (Dune and Edkins 2005)

The studies on food consumption pattern or expenditure pattern are very important as it is related to poverty and standard of our society. Food being the foremost basic need gets the priority in the expenditure of people, especially the poor classes. It is necessary to study the change in food consumption pattern under the changing situation of liberalization, privatization and globalization.

After liberalization began in 1991, though much attention has been paid to the reduction in head count ratio, less priority have been accorded to the magnitude and pattern of food consumption. Ray and Lancaster (2005) have recently shown that the link had weakened to the extent that the official poverty line in India today is quite out of step with that based on the household minimum calorie requirements. This necessitates an analysis on the magnitude and trend in food consumption, especially cereals, over the reform period in India, in view of their strong implications for food and nutrition securities. This study provides evidence on the magnitude and patterns in food consumption status of both rural and urban population.

There is a strong indication that improvement in the levels of living might not have been distributed well and certain pockets of the states might have remained impoverished in spite of their overall growth. While studies abound on the consumption expenditure among rural and urban households for various expenditure classes at macro level, very few studies have been done at micro level to explain the rural - urban differences in the consumption pattern.

Per capita income and food consumption both are the indicators of human development but food consumption is a better indicator of human welfare. India's faster economic growth over 1990s has raised per capita income (expenditure) and has significantly impacted its food consumption patterns by causing a change in the structure of food consumption patterns observed earlier during pre-reforms period. This raises the relevance of looking at the composition of India's food consumption basket. Changes in the composition of food consumption expenditure during the 1990s, including the shift from cereals to non-cereal items against the

background of a decline in food expenditure share, occurred right across the growth spectrum and raise the issue of the nutritional implications of food items particularly during post-reforms period.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study of the literature was firstly to determine which factors influence household and individual food consumption.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Numerous studies have been made in recent years on the trends of poverty, inequality and level of living in Indian states during the 1990s. Some have highlighted the reduction in poverty (Sundaram and Tendulkar 2003; Bhanumurthy and Mitra 2004), while some others have expressed anguish over the rising economic inequality (Deaton and Dreze, 2002; Sen and Himanshu, 2004; Krishna, 2004). There is a common feeling that although there has been some overall improvement in the average levels of living of people across the majority of states, those who were already on a better footing could reap the advantages of the economic reforms in the 90's and experience faster growth, while there was no tangible improvement for the poorest few. Again, the rural - urban expenditure gap, believed to have widened overtime, needs meticulous scrutiny.

Campbell (1960) conducted a survey and had given a comparison between older persons and younger persons at identical income level. Younger people, at all income level, spend more on clothing, furniture and miscellaneous items than older people but less on medical care. David (1962) studies revealed that the size of the family and frequency of purchasing durables, kinds of durable purchased and the substitution of durables for commercial services hampers the consumption pattern of households. Chatterjee (1962) on the basis on NSS consumption expenditure data for rural and urban areas and six zones has been estimated for elasticities on expenditures on food.

Gupta (1968) has compared the differences in overall consumption patterns in the state of UP and Tamil Nadu for the reason of their known and distinct economic, social and cultural differences. The study has concluded that there exist significant differences in consumer expenditure on various categories of item in those states in general as well as also between rural and urban regions in each of two states.

Kwang (1972) had analyzed the effect of income as well as other economic and social demographic characteristics on household's

consumption expenditure significantly among different groups. Chatterjee & Bhattacharya(1972) have constructed indices of consumer price differential between the rural areas of different states of India with NSS 18th round data. Rao(1977), in her study has tried to identify some measures at development in order to identify backward regions and subsequently to examine the trends in inter regional and inter sectoral disparities in India.

The study by Sarkar(1983) based on NSS consumer expenditure data for 13,16,21 & 28 rounds supports the hypothesis that level of living and expenditure pattern differs over the states. Kumar and Aggarwal (2004) determined the extent of poverty in Delhi slums through consumption patterns, employment and educational status of the slum population.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE FOOD CONSUMPTION

Income: Income is an important means of widening the range of consumption options, especially as economies around the world become increasingly monetized. Income gives people the ability to buy diverse, nutritious foods instead of eating only their own crops, to pay for motorized transport instead of walking, to pay for health care and education for their families, to pay for water from a tap instead of walking for many hours to collect it from a well. The increasing dependence of much consumption on private income means that changes in income have a dominant influence on changes in consumption. When incomes rise steadily consumption rises for most of the population. But for the same reason, when incomes decline, consumption also falls sharply, with devastating consequences for human well being.

Demographic Characteristics: The demographic characteristics have an important bearing on the level of income, consumption expenditure and saving of the society. Features like rate of growth of population, educational level of the head of the household and other members, the age of the members of the household, the size of the family are some of the factors which have a direct effect on the saving of the community, especially in the rural areas. According to Leff (1969)' this factor as a determinant of saving had been left out because, this hypothesis had not been validated by extensive empirical testing

Level of Education : The level of education of the head of the household and that of other

members of the family determines the nature of occupation they are involved in, the level of income that they get and the motivations for saving. Also the level of education of the female members of the community is likely to have a positive influence on the saving rate

Size and Pattern of Assets: For any economic unit wealth reflects the net result of accumulated saving, revaluation of assets and capital transfers ever since the unit came into existence. The size and pattern of assets held by the households determine the income enjoyed by the household as also the amount of income saved and the pattern of investment of saving.

Time use: Opportunities to consume can be severely limited by lack of time. Women, spend many hours a day meeting the household's needs and have no time left for education, better health care or community activities. Similarly, overworked labourers may receive an adequate wage. but they often work long hours and are denied the opportunity of regular leave.

Information: Information is the key to raising awareness of the range of consumption options available and enabling the consumer to decide which choices are best. Without information, there is no way of knowing what goods and services are available in the market, and what services are being provided by the state and are, by right, available to all. Advertising and public information campaigns play an important role in this respect.

Social barriers: Income cannot always remove barriers to access to opportunities. This is particularly so when considerations of gender, class or ethnicity limit people's freedom to consume the goods and services they want. For example, people belonging to certain ethnic groups might be denied equal access to education, employment and other basic social services by the state, regardless of how much they earn.

The household- decision-making and upbringing : Much analysis of consumer decision-making assumes that the person making the decision is the one who will directly benefit from the consumption. This is far from the truth in many cases. A great deal of household consumption decision making is in the hands of one person-often the mother or the father of the family. Although this may lead to good outcomes, it can also be a source of inequity within the family- Household values has a wider effect on the consumption options of individual

members. The education and upbringing given to children early in life play a critical part in establishing their ability to make good use of the options available for living a full and fulfilling life. The remarkable expansion and diversification in consumption options have made it more difficult for consumers to make informed choices.

Globalization and Consumption: As a result of increased purchasing power and opportunity to purchase, a change was manifest in the activity of consumption. The definition of what constitutes a 'necessity' is changing, and the distinctions between luxuries and necessities are blurring. Globalization is integrating not just trade, investment and financial markets; it is also integrating consumer markets around the world and opening opportunities. This has two effects i.e. economic and social. Economic integration has accelerated the opening of consumer markets with a constant flow of new products. There is fierce competition to sell to consumers worldwide, with increasingly aggressive advertising. On the social side local and national boundaries are breaking down in the setting of social standards and aspirations in consumption.

Technological Advancement: Another important factor that has changed the rural consumption pattern in recent years is the technological advancement in agriculture which has in turn raised the income of the rural population. The increased income is likely to be used for consuming more of the items which are already in their commodity basket. This may increase their choices of falling on goods with sensory appeal such as sweets, tobacco, drugs and intoxicants and also those goods and services associated with prestige and status.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that food plays a central part in the culture, traditions. Important events such as weddings, funerals, and religious celebrations are all accompanied by food specifically prepared for the occasion. Consumption of traditional food is largely associated with poverty and consequently, as people move to the city, they change their diet to a typical westernised diet with a high fat content and low carbohydrate intake (Bourne et al., 1996). Our study found that this population associated meat with high socio-economic standing and therefore tried to consume it on daily basis. Our findings are confirmed

by those of Wong et al. (1984) who examined a relationship between household income, level and expense and consumption of food in urban marginal areas of Mexico. The authors found a marked tendency to increase consumption of high protein foods as family income increased. It emphasizes the critical importance of taking these factors into consideration in developing strategies for modifying eating practices.

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