

There is widespread belief that actual nutrition behaviour (after accounting for the biological base) depends on (is influenced, determined by) many factors that can be grouped under the headings of

- i) ECONOMIC;
- II) SOCIO-CULTURAL,
- iii) PSYCHOPHYSICAL factors or variables.

PSYCHOPHYSICAL refers to individual traits or characteristics like appetite, humour, aversion, preference, workload, and emotional/situational factors like stress, anxiety, fear of risks.

SOCIOCULTURAL refers to the impact of shared beliefs, traditions, customs, norms and values, institutions and rites; and especially to the impact of teaching and learning (personal biography) counselling and persuasion by means of publicity/advertising and campaigns.

ECONOMIC(AL) refers to availability (scarcity) dependent on personal resources and the general market situation, on market offer and demand, especially on price-income relations.

Among all these, for the sake of saving time and money in scientific research, the factors under each heading are usually reduced to one which is said to be the most effective or

telling one: ECON: income;

SOCULT: (level of) education, knowledge;

PSYPHYS: stress.

Literature prefers to state that in the end INCOME (Y per head and time) is the most decisive element in making food choices.

This seems to me to be not true, at least not in the rather simplified contexts which we are able to study. To demonstrate my theses, I take recourse to findings of my own research.

A) Research in Colombia showed that among different income brackets there is a tendency related to increase of income to scatter the percentages of nutrition expenses per head (instead of slowing them constantly down), indicator of the selective power of other than purely economic reasoning. This is a revision of ENGELS law.

B) From a pilot study in Germany we were able to deduct the hypothesis that two variables, i.e.

- * early nutrition education (childhood) having been either liberal or authoritarian on the one hand, and
- * present stress impact (private or professional) being high or low,

generate four broad categorial types of nutrition behaviour. Present inclination to spend money and thought on nutrition (impact of values, proneness to change) is guided by this fourfold typology.

C) Further evidence can be found that such "typically patterned" nutrition behaviour varies with age group and according to different food items that are involved in the choice (like bread, drinks, sweets)

Theorising was then developed into two directions:

D 1)

under severe economic constraints (low income bracket) nearly all resources are needed and used for nutrition, on the basis of cultural patterns that poor people share with their more

affluent neighbours, but fill them in their peculiar ways. #
With growing income, needs of filling the (socio-cultural)
nutrition pattern develops, varies, and enriches, mostly in a
quantitative way, whereas the pattern itself remains dominant.
Only after a certain level of household/or individual income
has been reached, the variability of intake surpasses the
cultural limits and qualitative changes are accepted (number of
food items increases).

D 2)

Actual intake (behaviour) is governed by finally one out of a
multitude of possible stimuli that in the so-called motivation
process are chosen from the "stock of experience constructs at
hand" (A.SCHUETZ), qualitatively transformed and above all,
reduced in number so that at the end three variables appear to
be the most effective ones; these are, in their sequence and
power of impact: resources, knowledge and psychophysical state (mood)
- plus an additional drive to achieve or to accomplish which
may be understood as what psychology has under the term urge.

The outcome of the nutrition act (as of other actions as well)
passes through either the body, mind or cognition of the
person, or through the outer world: household and environment
and finally returns from there as a stimulus for the following
sequence of action. The resulting circular model is called
Multiple Autonomous Regulation Model (MARS).

Under these assumptions class may be understood as an
economically determined group of population or a culturally
coherent group of similarly acting people.