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| **Overview** |  |
| Summarise your thesis in a sentence. | It's an attempt to understand how aspirational consumption could rise with economic growth with a focus on sub-Saharan Africa |
| Describe your thesis in brief. | The thesis explains the rise in aspirational consumption when both higher quality and mobility is limited to those with higher wealth. The first part discusses the two observations in Tanzania and Nigeria. The second part considers how aspirational consumption would rise when rewards from competitions are determined by expenses on mobility. |
| Summarise the context. | The context is a developing economy where there are still wealth differences but economic development has increased expenses and income. |
| Why did you choose this topic? | I considered aspirational consumption in developing economies and evaluated different notions of aspirational consumption such as visible, conspicuous or positional consumption. |
| Why is this topic important, and to whom is it relevant? | The topic is relevant for anybody who is interested in aspirational consumption in developing economies. |
| What are the key findings? | The key findings are aspirational consumption could mean different things and that from a conservative point of view, the rise in aspirational consumption is merely updating of consumer basket with modern needs. The theoretical finding is that aspirational consumption rises in the short-term with higher income gaps but is limited due to population constraint alone. |
| Briefly summarise the findings as they relate to each of the research questions. | Chapter 1 discusses the quality view in Tanzania and finds that quality is not aligned with health while being driven by wealth and urbanisation. Chapter 2 views that wealth limits access to education but more urbanisation seems to increase access to education. Chapter 3 details how aspirational consumption rises in the short-term with higher income gaps but is limited due to population constraint. |
| What is your favourite result? | That aspirational consumption increases in short-term but the long-term dynamics are evidently limited by population constraint. |
| How could you improve your work? | Consider Experimental Economics and connect the model with the behavioural economic literature. Currently, intertemporal substitution limits the model to a normative one. |
| What are the core areas of debate in this paper? | Relationship between inequality, growth and status consumption. |
| Original contribution of the thesis | long-term view of effects of income-differences on aspcon, effect of urbanisation as a geographic variation. |
| Strengths and weaknesses | Strength: dependence on consumption data alone (without using questionnaire asking whether a consumer buys something just for status). Weakness: not time series conclusions, only a normative model. |
| If you had to start the thesis again, what would you do differently? | more empirical approach, narrow down the context |
| [“What was the most critical decision you made when determining your research methodology?”](https://www.discoverphds.com/advice/doing/research-aims-and-objectives) | not worrying about hurdles/discrete analysis and time-series |
| [“Do your findings agree with the current published work?” “How do your findings impact existing theories or literature?”](https://www.discoverphds.com/advice/doing/what-is-a-phd-literature-review) | Agree in the empirical conclusion - but long-term model implications are not commonly seen in the literature |
| **Literature** |  |
| Where did you draw the line on what you included in your literature review? | Only literature that drives a decision in the model / method is included. |
| What three publications would you say have been most influential in your work? | Nelson for Chapter 1, Heyneman for Chapter 2, Cole-Maliath for Chapter 3. |
| Who are the key names in this area? | Chapter 1 Deaton Nelson, Chapter 2 - Heynman, Tilak, Ravaillon, Chapter 3. Ed Hopkins and Tatiana Kornienko |
| Who are the project’s key influences? How does your work differ from theirs? | Deaton inspired a lot of approaches, but the methods from Deaton have not been used with sufficient attention to address to paying more attention to available controls - preventing us to be more specific without compromising on theoretical underpinnings. Discrete methods are discussed enough in consumption literature where intertemporal substitution is common. |
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| **Research Design and Methodology** |  |
| Is there anything novel in your method? | Markov Chain, clustering for market-prices. |
| What problems did you have? | Discrete approaches often require long-term series - thus wasting some time. Finally decided to explore discrete models in a theoretical question. |
| How did you develop your research questions? | Looking at literature on conspicuous consumption and then on consumption. Then seeing how can one answer questions empirically. |
| Did the research questions change over the course of the project? | We focused on conspicuous consumption - before realising that it is a rather specific sociological concern and would need more backing up with relevant surveys. |
| What are the philosophical assumptions in your work? | Needs and wants are separate and it's possible to talk about needs without measuring wants. |
| Describe your sample. | LSMS data on households and individuals. Community Data is recorded separately. |
| What are the weaknesses of your sample? | Food is available in far more detail than others. Assets have significant measurement errors across time. The fields are slightly different (e.g. subjective fields) across Nigeria and Tanzania. |
| What other data would you like (or have liked) to collect? | Simple questions about future and status concerns could have provided a better idea of the psychological environment - which may have a more direct role in aspirational consumption. |
| Did you think about using any other theories, and if so, why did you reject them? | I did consider using Deaton's methods without market-prices and discrete analysis based on time-series. I also consider behavioural model for chapter 3. |
| What didn’t you include in the framework? | discrete approaches |
| What alternative methods could you have used? | discrete methods, time series analysis |
| Why did you use that statistical test and how does it work? | breusch pagan was only to test heteroskedasticity. |
| **Review** |  |
| How do you see this area developing over the next 5-10 years? | More data on behavioural experiments - better connection with economic growth. |
| To whom is your work relevant? | Education policy, Food Policy and Growth Economists. |
| What would you publish from this research, and in which journals? | Chapter 1: Food Policy, Journal of International Development, Chapter 2: Developing Economies, Journal of Demographic Economics, OXFORD DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, Review of Development Economics, Urban and Regional Development Studies, Economic Analysis and Policy, Education Economics, International Development and Planning Review , Chapter 3: Journal of Economic Growth, Journ of Economic Behaviour and Organisation, dynamic\_games\_and\_applications, economic\_theory\_bulletin, journal\_of\_income\_distribution, Journal of Economic Interaction and Coordination |
| **Reflection** |  |
| How has your view of the area changed as you have progressed through your research? | Measurement Errors are a problem, Models can be far more advanced than the available data, Research goal and the literature drives research design far more than elegance |
| How did your thinking change over the course of the project? | Aspirational Consumption was a psychological problem but at some point - I was really unsure if there is anything aspirational - social need is hardwired in our surroundings - so the issue of what is want seems largely impossible and yet pinned with the very notion of aspirational consumption |
| What did you enjoy about your project? | A lot of things - cleaning and normalising data (which is half the work), questioning the data and general reports. |
| What were the most difficult areas? | Finding that the data is enough - because you go through a lot of rounds in understanding the data and deciding what insights you get from it and then choosing the model - it's a bit circular often. |
| What surprised you the most? | I didn't think wealth differences would be that strong in both developed and developing economies. I thought that the withdrawal from status consumption (educ) would be obvious but it actually is not. |