

# Investigating Italian consumers at risk of poverty, a preliminary study

*Bertazzoli A.1, Rivaroli S.1, Ruggeri A.1, Samoggia A.1, Arvola A.2, Tuusjärvi E.2*

*1 Department of Agricultural Sciences, University of Bologna Alma Mater Studiorum,  
Bologna, Italy*

*2 VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland, Finland*

*Alghero, 25-27 June 2014*

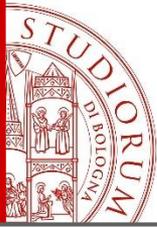


# Introduction 1/2

---

- In 2012, European population at-risk-of-poverty (hereafter AROP):17% of total population (Eurostat data for 28 countries) In Italy, 19.4%.
- Italian females persist to be more espoused AROP than males, accounting at 20.7% in 2012 (Eurostat database).

According to Eurostat: “The at-risk-of-poverty rate is the share of people with an equivalised disposable income (after social transfer) below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers. This indicator does not measure wealth or poverty, but low income in comparison to other residents in that country, which does not necessarily imply a low standard of living”



# Introduction 2/2

---

At European and international level:

- Income inequalities driver for health inequalities
- Increasing use of unhealthy processed food among lower income consumers
- Attention towards female role in food acquisition and preparation

At Italian level:

- Lack of studies targeting Italian lower income consumers food behaviours
- Lack of interventions targeting AROP consumers



# Methodological background 1/4

---

According to the literature reviewed, consumers' food behaviours and food-related lifestyles derive from the complex combination of factors or categories referring to three dimensions:

- psychological,
- social,
- quality attributes.



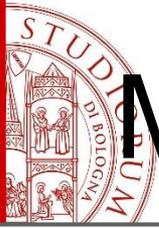
# Methodological background 2/4

---

The psychological dimension includes all key factors referring to subjective perceptions, thus strictly depending on the individual character.

Main categories: consumers' attitudes towards food, ethical concern and health issues, self-efficacy, self-regulation, trust, motivation, emotions, and preferences.

(Bagozzi 1992; Mahon et al. 2006; Shepherd 1999; Gibson 2006; Geeroms et al. 2008; Macht 2008; Anderson et al. 2007; Shepherd 2002; Pettinger et al. 2004).



# Methodological background 3/4

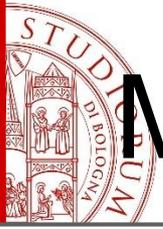
---

Social dimension includes external factors that are not under the direct control of the consumers.

Main categories: time, price, degree of information and knowledge, and accessibility of food.

Socio-demographic aspects, such as age, gender, education, household size and household income.

(Jabs and Devine 2006; Bech-Larsen and Kazbare 2014; Turrell et al. 2003; Grunert and Wills 2007; Larson and Story 2009).



# Methodological background 4/4

---

The physical characteristics of the products (intrinsic cues) that contribute to the creation of quality expectations and experience.

Main categories: nutritional, convenience, taste, and process attributes.

(Grunert 2005; Olsen 2012; Ragaert et al. 2004; Grunert 2002; Veale and Quester 2009).



# Objective of the study 1/2

---

The general objective of the research is to identify the factors influencing the food behaviours of AROP female consumers by adopting an empirical approach of investigation with a confirmative purpose



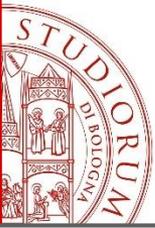
# Objective of the study 2/2

---

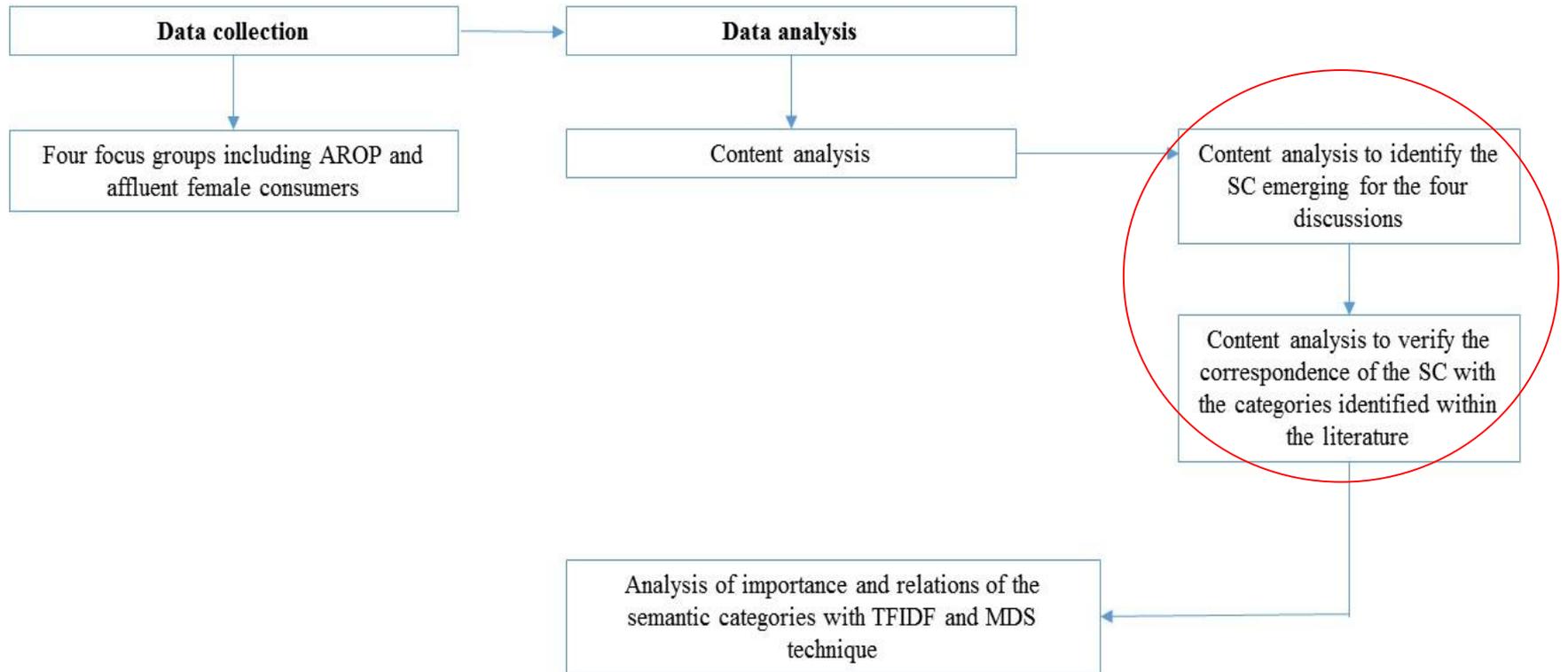
The research foresees two specific objectives

-The first one, achieved by the present study, is to shed light on the specific factors that AROP and more affluent Italian female consumers address as influencing their food behaviours, by analysing their possible accordance with the categorisations provided by the literature.

-The second objective is to highlight the relevance of these factors and their possible relations.



# Materials and methods





# Data collection

- Four focus groups among AROP and affluent female consumers

AGE	AFFLUENT	AROP
<b>Mature 41-65 year-old women</b>	8 participants	9 participants
<b>Younger 25-40 year-old women</b>	9 participants	9 participants

AROP :an household with two adults and one child aged under 14 the range was from 11.270 euro/year to 16.890 euro/year

Affluent: an household with two adults and one child aged under 14 the range was from 28.150 euro/year to 47.020 euro/year



# Data analysis

---

The textual body has been elaborated through TextSmart software.

- Creation of a database of key words and concepts (aliases) expressed by all the participants.

- Identification of the semantic categories (SC) according to the interpretation of the context and general meaning that words or concepts took place at the stage of use.

- Fine-tuning definition of the SC according to their correspondence with the categories identified within the literature



# Results

CONCEPTS AND KEY WORDS	FACTORS - SEMANTIC CATEGORIES		THEORETICAL DIMENSIONS
Taste, sensory liking, flavour	TASTE		QUALITY ATTRIBUTES DIMENSION
Typology of preparation (ready to heat, ready to cook, ready eat, etc.), packaging and conservation methods, duration	CONVENIENCE		
Specific nutritional ingredients, variety of food, balance of ingredients, whole grains	HEALTHY		
Certification, labelling, origin, food safety	SAFETY		
Authenticity, freshness, seasonal, additives	PROCESS		
Time, working in relation to time, convenient	TIME		SOCIAL DIMENSION
Cost, price, promotional offers, saving	PRICE AND ECONOMIC ISSUES		
Family components, single, family	HOUSEHOLD SIZE		
Information search, media use, awareness	KNOWLEDGE and AWARENESS		
Product by brand, preferred brands	BRAND PREFERENCES		
Purchasing preferences, store choices (e.g., specialised food store, discount, large not discount, market)	PURCHASING PREFERENCES		PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION
Trust, lack of trust	TRUST		
Sadness, happiness, feelings	EMOTIONS		
Perception towards organisation and planning	SELF-REGULATION		
Ability and lack of capability	SELF-EFFICACY		
Reuse of food	REUSE ATTITUDE		
Short food chain, animal welfare, environment	ENVIRONMENTAL FRIENDLY ATTITUDE		
Eating habits by personality and involvement	FOOD ATTITUDE		
Health, disease, prevention, diet, well-being	HEALTH ATTITUDE		





# Results

---

AROP younger consumers have not quoted any concept or word referring to trust category. Affluent younger group instead does not mention both knowledge-awareness and emotions categories.

The affluent younger group has been the one providing the lowest number of contributions (175), followed by AROP mature group (181). AROP younger (223) and affluent mature (226) groups share instead the highest number of responses.

Convenience attribute is the category with the highest number of occurrences, followed by the taste attribute (175) and health attitude categories (125).



# Conclusion

---

The results have confirmed the presence of all three theoretical dimensions among all groups investigated.

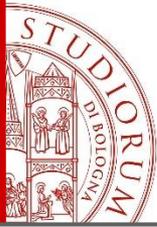
The analysis of huge amount of literature investigating the determinants of food behaviours was not exhaustive of all the sources identified, yet it was carried out so to make it functional to the objectives of the research.



# Acknowledgments

---

This investigation was carried out within the frame of the EC co-financed project (7°FP) "CHANCE - Low cost technologies and traditional ingredients for the production of affordable, nutritionally correct foods improving health in population groups at risk of poverty" ([www.chancefood.eu](http://www.chancefood.eu))



# References

---

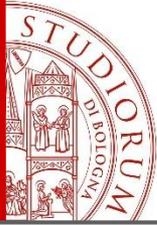
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Process*, 50: 179–211.
- Askegaard, S., Madsen, T. K. (1998). The local and the global: exploring traits of homogeneity and heterogeneity in European food cultures. *International Business Review*, 7(6), 549–568.
- Bagozzi, R. P. (1992). The Self-Regulation of Attitudes, Intentions, and Behavior. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 55(2):178-204.
- Banterle, A., Cavaliere, A. (2009). The social and economic determinants of obesity : an empirical study in Italy. In 113th EAAE Seminar “A resilient European food industry and food chain in a challenging world”, Chania, Crete, Greece, date as in: September 3 - 6, 2009 Copyright: 1–14.
- Brunsø, K., Scholderer, J., Grunert, K. G. (2004). Closing the gap between values and behavior—a means–end theory of lifestyle. *Journal of Business Research*, 57(6): 665–670.
- Carrigan, M., Szmigin, I., Leek, S. (2006). Managing routine food choices in UK families: the role of convenience consumption. *Appetite*, 47(3): 372–83.
- Furst, T., Connors, M., Bisogni, C. a, Sobal, J., Falk, L. W. (1996). Food choice: a conceptual model of the process. *Appetite*, 26(3): 247–65.
- Geeroms, N., Verbeke, W., Van Kenhove, P. (2008). Consumers’ health-related motive orientations and ready meal consumption behaviour. *Appetite*, 51(3): 704–12.
- Grunert, K. G. (2002). Current issues in the understanding of consumer food choice. *Trends in Food Science & Technology*, 13: 275–285.



# References

---

- Grunert, K. G. (2005). Food quality and safety: consumer perception and demand. *European Review of Agricultural Economics*, 32(3): 369–391.
- Halkier, B., Jensen, I. (2011). Methodological challenges in using practice theory in consumption research. Examples from a study on handling nutritional contestations of food consumption. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11(1): 101–123.
- Larson, N., Story, M. (2009). A review of environmental influences on food choices. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine : A Publication of the Society of Behavioral Medicine*, 38 Suppl 1: 56–73.
- Macht, M. (2008). How emotions affect eating: a five-way model. *Appetite*, 50(1): 1–11.
- Mahon, D., Cowan, C., McCarthy, M. (2006). The role of attitudes, subjective norm, perceived control and habit in the consumption of ready meals and takeaways in Great Britain. *Food Quality and Preference*, 17(6): 474–481.
- Pieroni, L., Lanari, D., Salmasi, L. (2013). Food prices and overweight patterns in Italy. *The European Journal of Health Economics : HEPAC: Health Economics in Prevention and Care*, 14(1): 133–51.
- Roininen, K., Lähteenmäki, L., & Tuorila, H. (1999). Quantification of consumer attitudes to health and hedonic characteristics of foods. *Appetite*, 33(1): 71–88.
- Scholderer, J., Brunsø, K., Bredahl, L., Grunert, K. G. (2004). Cross-cultural validity of the food-related lifestyles instrument (FRL) within Western Europe. *Appetite*, 42(2): 197–211.
- Scholderer, J., Grunert, K. G. (2005). Consumers, food and convenience: The long way from resource constraints to actual consumption patterns. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 26(1): 105–128.



# References

---

- Shepherd, R., Raats, M.M. (1996). Attitudes and beliefs in food habits. In Meiselman, H.L., MacFie, H. (eds), *Food Choice, Acceptance and Consumption*. Springer US, 346-364.
- Steptoe, A., Pollard, T. M., Wardle, J. (1995). Development of a Measure of the Motives Underlying the Selection of Food: the Food Choice Questionnaire. *Appetite*, 25: 267–284.
- Turrell, G., Hewitt, B., Patterson, C., & Oldenburg, B. (2003). Measuring socio-economic position in dietary research: is choice of socio-economic indicator important? *Public Health Nutrition*, 6(2): 191–200.
- Wells, J. C. K., Marphatia, A. a, Cole, T. J., McCoy, D. (2012). Associations of economic and gender inequality with global obesity prevalence: understanding the female excess. *Social Science & Medicine* (1982), 75(3): 482–90.
- Worsley, A. (2002). Nutrition knowledge and food consumption: can nutrition knowledge change food behaviour? *Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 11 Suppl 3(2002):579–85.



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

Arianna Ruggeri

*DIPSA - Department of Agricultural Sciences, University of Bologna Alma Mater Studiorum, Bologna, Italy*

arianna.ruggeri3@unibo.it

*www.unibo.it*