



A PROBLEM IN DEMAND AGGREGATION: PER CAPITA DEMAND AS A FUNCTION OF PER CAPITA EXPENDITURE

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1. Introduction

The expenditure elasticity for a certain commodity is a well defined concept if it refers to a single individual. Yet this case is irrelevant and the concept is never used in such a situation. In all applications the concept of expenditure elasticity refers to a population (a group of individuals): one wants to know how per capita demand for a certain commodity of a given population changes if per capita expenditure of that population varies.

We take it as a fact that "people are different"; different in tastes (preferences), income and other characteristics (attributes). In this context the concept of expenditure elasticity is relevant and used. Yet how the concept is defined in this case?

Obviously, what is needed is a functional relationship between per capita demand and per capita expenditure, ceteris paribus, i.e. a "macro"-demand function.

Consequently, either one assumes the existence of such a relationship right away, than the problem is "solved" by assumption. Or one has to specify a micro-economic model of a population (group of households), which allows "people to be different", such that the impact of a change in *per capita* expenditure is well determined.

In this note we shall discuss the conceptual difficulties for the existence of a macro-demand function, i.e., a functional relationship between per capita demand, prices of all commodities and per capita expenditure. We shall also discuss the question under which conditions on the underlying micro-model one can estimate the expenditure elasticities from cross-section data.

In section 2 we shall first define the market demand function and then in section 3, we shall discuss the aggregation problem.

2. Mean demand

The basic primitive concept of traditional demand theory is the individual demand function; it is assumed that for every individual household there is a functional relationship f between his expenditure (budget, total outlay) b, the prevailing price system p and his demand x for the various commodities.

$$x = f(p,b) \in R_+^l, \quad p \in R_+^l, \quad b \ge 0.$$

This functional relationship f is thought to be determined by individual characteristics of the household which are relevant in the consumption decision. Some of these consumption characteristics are directly observable others are not.

In neoclassical demand theory all individual consumption characteristics are summarized by the concept of an individual preference relation \leq (or utility function). Given an individual preference relation \leq , then the "hypothesis of preference maximization" determines the individual demand function $f(\cdot, \cdot, \leq)$. Of course these demand functions $f(\cdot, \cdot, \leq)$ will have certain general properties reflecting the fact that they are obtained as the result of a maximization problem. Thus, the "hypothesis of preference maximization" is a general and elegant way to parametrize a certain class $f(\cdot, \cdot, \leq)$ of individual demand functions, the parameter being the preference relation. Since we have no reasonable criterion to decide which preference relation describes plausible consumption behaviour¹) the class of individual demand functions defined in this way is very large.

Let \mathcal{P} denote the set of all preference relations on \mathbb{R}^{l}_{+} , which lead to continuously differentiable demand functions $f(p, \cdot, \preceq)$ with respect to b.

For the purpose of demand analysis an individual household *i* is completely characterized by his expenditure b^i and his preference relation \leq^i , i.e., by a point (b^i, \leq^i) in the cartesian product $R_+ \times P$.

¹⁾ The choice of a particular preference relation \leq is typically justified by the plausibility of the demand function $f(\cdot, \cdot, \leq)$ which is derived from it.

A group G of households is then represented by a "cloud" $\{(b^i, \preceq^i)\}_{i \in G}$ of points in $R_+ \times P$.



Figure 1

Since we are mainly interested in large groups G of households we shall describe the "cloud" of points in $R_+ \times P$ by its (empirical) joint distribution μ_G , i.e.,

$$\mu_G(B) = \frac{1}{\#G} \#\{i \in G \mid (b^i, \preceq^i) \in B\}, \quad B \subset R_+ \times \mathcal{P}$$

With this notation we have the identity

$$\frac{1}{\#G}\sum_{i\in G}f(p,b^i,\preceq^i)=\int_{R_+\times P}f(p,b,\preceq)d\mu_G$$

<u>Definition</u>: The mean (per capita) demand (or market demand) of a group of households (which is described by the joint distribution μ of expenditure and preferences) is defined by

$$F(p,\mu) := \int_{R_+ imes P} f(p,b, extsf{d}\mu) d\mu$$

This definition of mean demand can be extended to more general distributions μ than the empirical distributions of finite groups of households. This will be done in the sequel, in particular, we shall consider distributions μ where the corresponding marginal distributions of expenditures

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are given by densities, like the log normal distribution. If the space \mathcal{P} of preferences is endowed with a metric (see e.g. Hildenbrand 1974) then we can extend the above definition of mean demand to any (Borel) probability distribution on the cartesian product $R_+ \times \mathcal{P}$. We shall always assume that the mean of the expenditure distribution is finite.

Remark

In applied demand analysis and in some econometric models (e.g. D.W. Jorgensen, L.J. Lau and T.M. Stoker 1982) one often uses a more specific version of this model. One starts with a list $a_1, a_2 \ldots, a_n$ of observable consumption characteristics, called *attributes* (e.g., families' total expenditures, family size, age (sex) composition of the families,...) and postulates a functional relationship between the price system p, the attributes $a = (a_1, a_2 \ldots a_n)$ and the demand vector $x \in \mathbb{R}^d$,

$$x = g(p, a), p \in R^l_+, a \in A.$$

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The group of households (population) is then described by a distribution α of attributes. Thus, mean demand is defined by

$$F(p, \alpha) = \int_A g(p, a) d\alpha$$

To link this model to our preference based formulation, we start from the hypothesis that individual preference relations are dependent on attributes, \leq_a . There is no list of observable attributes – as detailed and long this list might be – such that households with the same attributes $a = (a_1, a_2 ...)$ have identical demand behavior. Thus, there is a gap between prices of all commodities, observable attributes and demand. Indeed, individual preference relations (utilities) have been invented to fill this gap. Consequently, g(p, a) is not in a strict sense an individual micro-demand relationship. It has to be interpreted as an average, the mean demand of all those households in the group with attributes a (households of type a.) Thus, in the notation of our model, where the group of households is described by a joint distribution μ of expenditures and preferences we define

$$g(p,a) = \int_{P} f(p,b, \preceq) d\mu \mid a,$$

where $\mu \mid a$ denotes the conditional distribution of preferences given the attribute

$$a = (a_1 = b_1, a_2, \ldots)$$

Thus

$$F(p,\mu) = \int f(p,b, \preceq) d\mu = \int_A (\int_{\mathcal{P}} f(p,b, \preceq) d\mu \mid \alpha) d\alpha = \int_A g(p,a) d\alpha.$$

The usefulness of the "attribute-model" (A, g, α) rests on the hypothesis that the demand relation g(p, a) for types of households is relatively stable for variations of the distribution μ , in particular, if the distribution μ changes over time. Thus, if the distribution μ changes and if the function g(p, a) does not change (e.g. if the conditional distributions $\mu \mid a$ do not change) then the change of the distribution μ can be attributed solely to a change of the observable distribution α on the space A of attributes.

The advantage or disadvantage of these two models are obvious. The advantage of the attribute-model is that the distribution α , and hence its evolution over time, can, in principle, be observed since by definition the attributes are observable. The disadvantage of this model (from a theoretical point of view!) is that it is not clear which general properties of the function g(p, a) one can postulate, since g(p, a) is the mean demand of all households of type a. For example, the axiom of revealed preferences does not necessarily hold. In other words, the attribute-model assumes that the aggregation problem for households of the same type is settled. On the other hand, in the preference-model the individual demand functions are canonically defined (through \leq), and the general properties of the functions $f(\cdot, \cdot, \leq)$ are well known. The disadvantage, of course, is the fact, that the full distribution μ is not observable.

In the literature the function g(p, a) is often interpreted as an individual demand relation by adding a random term

$g(p,a) + \epsilon_a$

where ϵ_a represents a random vector with expectation $E(\epsilon_a) = 0$, which is supposed to take into account the different consumption behavior within the type *a*. Thus, ϵ_a is a random vector on the probability space

$$(\mathcal{P}, \mu \mid a); \quad \epsilon_a(\preceq) = \int_{\mathcal{P}} f(p, b, \preceq) d\mu \mid a - f(p, b \preceq).$$

In this generality there is no substantial difference between the attribute-model $\int_A g(p,a)d\alpha$ and the preference-model $\int_{R_+\times P} f(p,b, \preceq)d\mu$. Yet, the two models differ substantially as soon as one specifies the functional form of g (e.g. linear in $a \land \subset \mathbb{R}^n$) and the stochstic structure of the random terms ϵ_a (e.g. independence or homoscedasticity.) The following discussion applies to both models.

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3. Mean (per capita) demand as a function of mean (per capita) expenditure

3.1. The motivation for considering mean demand as a function of mean expenditure comes mainly from applied demand analysis. If one wants to estimate a demand system the above definition of market demand as

$$F(p,\mu) = \int_{R_+ \times \mathcal{P}} f(p,b, \preceq) d\mu$$

is much too detailed. The full distribution μ of agents' characteristics on $R_+ \times P$ can, of course, not be observed.

In these applications $F(p,\mu)$ is often interpreted as a short-run demand system²) i.e., all commodities refer to a certain period t. Thus, let μ_t describe the distribution of agents' characteristics in period t and consider a time series (μ_t) , t = 1, ..., T of joint distributions of agents' characteristics. Let B_t denote the mean expenditure associated with the distribution μ_t .

Problem 1: Under which condition on the evolution (μ_t) , does there exist a function C(p, B), the "macro"-demand function, such that

$$F(p, \mu_t) = C(p, B_t)$$
 for every t and p?

<u>Remark</u>: The question is not restricted to the interpretation of t as "time". One might consider a subset D (not just a one-parameter path) of distributions on $R_+ \times P$ and ask whether $F(p, \mu) = C(p, B)$ for every $\mu \in D$ and p.

In most empirical demand studies (see e.g. the survey paper by Brown and Deaton (1972) in The Economic Journal) market demand is written in the simplified form C(p, B). One then typically is interested in

 $\frac{\partial}{\partial B}C_h(p,B)$, the marginal propensity to consume (MPC) commodity h out of per capita expenditure B

or

 $\frac{B}{C_h(p,B)} \frac{\partial}{\partial B} C_h(p,B)$, the expenditure elasticity (*EE*) for the group μ of commodity h.

Problem 2: Given a solution to Problem 1, under which condition on the evolation (μ_t) is it possible to estimate the *MPC* or *EE* from cross-section data of family expenditures?

²⁾ This interpretation strictly speaking requires an intertemporal setting (for an analysis of short-run demand functions, see e.g., Grandmont (1982)). We neglect the intertemporal aspect in order to simplify the presentation. The present analysis has to be extended if it were applied to a situation where the intertemporal aspect cannot be neglected, for example, in the theory of consumption functions.

The distribution μ_t cannot be observed. In principle, one can observe the expenditure and demand vector for every individual i in the group G:

$$(b_t^i, f_t^i(p_t, b_t^i))_{i \in G}$$

Let ν_t denote the joint distribution of expenditure and demand, i.e., ν_t is the image measure of μ_t under the mapping

$$(b, \preceq) \rightarrow (b, f(p, b \preceq)).$$



Figure 2

We assume that cross-section data of family expenditures give us, in principal, a sample distribution of ν_t ! If the distribution ν_t is known one can compute

the empirical distribution function of expenditure V_t 1)

 $V_t(\xi) = \mu_t(\{b, \preceq) \in R_+ \times \mathcal{P} \mid b \le \xi\}) = \nu_t(\{(b, x) \in R_+^{l+1} \mid b \le \xi\})$

and

2) the Engel curve of the group for every commodity h, i.e.,

$$f_h^{\mu_t}(p,b) = \int f_h(p,b, \preceq) d\mu_t \mid b = E(\nu_t \mid b)_h$$

where $\mu_t \mid b$ (resp. $\nu_t \mid b$) denotes the conditional distribution of μ_t (resp. ν_t) given b, i.e., $\mu_t \mid b$ (resp. $\nu_t \mid b$) denotes the distribution of preferences (resp. demand vectors) of those households whose expenditure is equal to b. If it is clear from the context which distribution μ is used then I shall write \bar{f} instead of f^{μ} .

In the following I shall neglect the statistical aspect of the problem. That is to say, the cross-section data of family expenditures at time t give us at best a sample distribution of ν_t . Hence every number which is derived from cross-section data is a random variable. I do not study in this paper the statistical properties of such random variables. I shall, however, assume in the following that the distributions ν_t are known. I think that this is a characteristic difference between economic theory and econometrics. The theorist uses full information, i.e., the distribution ν_t , while the econometrician explicitly takes into account that one can only observe a sample distribution of ν_t . To carry out then the statistical analysis one has, unfortunately, often to make strong and unjustifiable assumptions on the distribution μ , in particular, on its support.³⁾ For a theoretical analysis some of these assumptions are not necessary.

There would be a trivial solution to Problem 1 and 2 if one could assume that the Engel curves for every commodity h were

(i) linear in b

and

(ii) independent of t, at least at the relevant domain of the expenditure distribution, i.e., $f_{h}^{\mu_{t}}(p,b) = \bar{f}(p,b).$

³⁾ For an econometric approach to the problem of aggregation which is in the line of this note we refer to the work of T.M.Stoker, in particular to "Completeness, Distribution Restrictions, and the Form of Aggregate Functions", Econometrica 1985.



Figure 3

Indeed, in this case one obtains

$$F(p,\mu_t) = \int_{R_+} \bar{f}(p,b) dV_t(b) = \bar{f}(p,B_t).$$

The textbook example (e.g., Deaton and Muellbauer (1980) Chapter 6 or the survey paper by Shafer and Sonnenschein (1982)) for such a case is the situation where all households have ' the same homothetic preference relation.⁴) Note that homothetic, but not identical preferences do not imply that the Engel curve $\bar{f}(p, \cdot)$ is linear, nor does linearity of $\bar{f}(p, \cdot)$ imply that the individual demand functions $f(p, b, \preceq)$ are linear in b.

In any case cross-section studies of family expenditures indicate clearly that Engel curves $\bar{f}(p, \cdot)$ for specific commodities are typically not linear, even if restricted to the relevant domain of the expenditure distribution. Even for very broad commodity aggregates is this assumption not well supported by empirical evidence.

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⁴⁾ In this case $\bar{f}(p, \cdot)$ is even homogeneous of degree one, thus one has EE = 1, hence there is nothing to be estimated. The empirical analysis is needed only to check the hypothesis of the linearity of the Engel curve $\bar{f}(p, \cdot)$.

If we take it for granted that typically Engel curves $\bar{f}(p, \cdot)$ are not linear then mean demand depends on the distribution of expenditures.⁵⁾ This fact, of course, is well-known and is emphasized in the literature. Some economists build their theory on this fact; for example, Keynes, if he proposes measures of redistribution of income with the aim of stimulating market demand. However, in the econometric models the distributional effect is often neglected. The importance of the distributional aspect is very clearly discussed by J. Marschak in several papers in the 1930s (Econometrica (1939) and Review of Economic Statistics (1939)), by T. Haavelmo, (Econometrica (1947)) and by P. de Wolff (Economic Journal (1941)). They also discuss the use of cross-section data and come to quite different conclusions. As we shall see the reason for this apparent contradiction is that they make quite different assumptions on the evolution of (μ_t). For a more recent reference we refer to the excellent discussion of the aggregation problem in E. Malinyaud, Théorie Macro-Economique (1981) Chapter 2.2.

Problem 1, but not necessarily Problem 2, has again an obvious solution (a "solution" by assumption) if we restrict the evolution (μ_t) to a one-parameter family, where the parameter can be chosen to be the mean B_t of the expenditure distribution in period t. There are, of course, alternative ways to specify such parametrization of the evolution (μ_t) . Different specifications will lead to different macro-demand functions C(p, B).

⁵⁾ There is a well-known exceptional case, studied by Gorman (1953) and Nataf (1953), where the statistical Engel curves of the group might not be linear and still mean demand depends only on mean expenditures. Indeed, if preferences are such that for every commodity h the individual demand function $f(p, b, \leq)$ is on the relevant domain of the expenditure distribution, linear in b and has for all households the same slope S_h , then

$$F_h(p,\mu) = \int_{R_+\times \mathcal{P}} (f_h(p,B,\preceq) - (B-b)S_h) d\mu = \int_{\mathcal{P}} f_h(p,B,\preceq) d\mu_{\preceq},$$

where μ_{\leq} denotes the marginal distribution of preferences of the distribution μ . Thus, if in addition to the strong assumptions on the individual demand functions the marginal distribution μ_{\leq} of preferences is fixed, then meand demand depends only on mean expenditure. This, however, is too special a case to be considered as a solution to problem 1.

3.2. The evolution (V_t) of the expenditure distribution

The empirical distribution function V_t of individual expenditures for a finite group $\{b_t^i\}_{i\in G}$ is defined by

$$V_t(b) = \frac{1}{\#G} \{ i \in G \mid b_t^i \le b \}$$

In Figure 4a (resp. 4b) we have plotted a non-parametric (resp. log-normal) estimation of the distribution functions for the group of all households in the Family Expenditure Survey in Great Britain^{5) a)} for every second year from 1969 to 1981.

The mean expenditure B_t and the median increased steadily:

mean	27215	31915	41262	57671	74691	99183	136550	1
median	24932	29067	37520	52985	68425	91126	121250	

Let V_t^* denote the normalized distribution function, i.e.,

$$V_t^*(b) = rac{1}{\#G} \# \{i \in G \mid rac{b_t^i}{B_t} \le b\}.$$
 Thus $V_t(b) = V_t^*(rac{1}{B_t} \cdot b).$

Of crucial importance for our analysis is the surprising, yet empirical fact that the normalized distribution function V_t^* for large household groups do not change essentially over time.

Figure 5 shows the normalized distribution functions V_t^* for the expenditure distributions of Figure 4.

The approximate constancy of the relative dispersion over the years from 1969 to 1981 can also be illustrated by looking at the Lorenz curves of the distribution functions V_t , as shown in Figure 6.

The Gini-coefficient does not change very much:

We remark that the normalized distribution functions V_t^* described for example by the variance, higher moments or the Gini-coefficient) can not be explained by the mean expenditure B_t .

In the Figures 4, 5 and 6 we have chosen for individual expenditure b_t^i the entry "net income" as defined in the above mentioned Family Expenditure survey. The survey also contains alternative definitions: normal gross income, current gross income and total expenditure.

^{a)} The analysis of the Family Expenditure Survey data was carried out by K.Hildenbrand. I would like to thank him for his permission to use his results.

b) Both measures are recorded in tenths of pence per week.

⁵⁾ Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, Social Survey Division, and Department of Employment: Family Expenditure Survey. The Family Expenditure Data were supplied by the SSRC Data Archive at the University of Essex, U.K.





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Figure 6: Lorenz curves of the distribution functions V_t

In all cases one obtains essentially the same pictures. Figures 7 and 8 illustrate the distribution for the entry "total expenditure".

This approximate constancy over time of the normalized expenditure distributions is, of course, well known in the literature on personal income distributions.⁶) The foregoing discussion motivates the following

Assumption 1: (the law of constant relative dispersion)

The normalized distribution functions V_t^* do not change along the evolution (μ_t) . Thus, there is a distribution function V^* with mean equal to one such that

$$V_t(b) = V^* (\frac{1}{B_t} \cdot b)$$

This is, indeed, a strong assumption on the evolution of the distributions of expenditures. It implies that the Gini-coefficient and the Lorenz curve of the expenditure distributions V_t do not depend on t. However, as we have shown, the assumption is surprisingly well supported by empirical studies provided it is applied to the group of all households in a country. It is known that the law of constant relative dispersion does hold less well for subgroups, like self-employed heads of household or retired individuals (see Figures 9 and 10).

If one considers the remaining differences in the normalized distribution functions V_t^* (see e.g. Figure 5) as still relevant, then in the macro-demand function one has to take into account in addition to the mean B_t other characteristics of the distribution V_t as well. Note, however, we are not interested here in the distributions V_t per se; we do not discuss econdenz inequality. The relevant question is whether the remaining differences in the normalized distribution functions V_t^* have a relevant influence on mean demand, i.e., on the integral

$$\int \bar{f}(p,b)dV_t(b) = \int \bar{f}(p,B_t \cdot b)dV_t^*(b) \sim \int \bar{f}(p,B_t \cdot b)dV^*(b).$$

At this point I will not pursue a discussion and justification of the "law of constant relative dispersion". For the time being I take it as an example for a simple assumption which leads to a one-parameter family of distribution functions V_t , where the mean B_t each distribution can be chosen as the parameter.

⁶⁾ e.g. G. Vangrevelinghe, "Les niveaux de vie en France -1956 et 1966". Economie et Statistique No.1 1969, G. Banderier "Répartition et évolution des revenus fiscaux des ménage" Economie et Statistique No. 16, 1970 and G. Göseke and K.D. Bedau (1974), Verteilung und Schichtung der Einkommen der privaten Haushalte in der BRD von 1950-1975. Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, Heft 31, (Duncker und Humblot, Berlin), A.S. Blinder, "The level and distribution of Income Well-Being", in: The American Economy in Transition (ed. M. Feldstein), Univ. of Chicago Press 1980, J. Hartog and J.G. Venbergen, Dutch treat, long-run changes in personal income distribution, De Economist 126, Nr.4, 1978





Figure 8: Lorenz curves for "Total Expenditure"





Figure 10: Lorenz curves for self-employed heads of household

If the distributions of expenditures of the group are given by densities ρ_t , then our assumption can be expressed by

$$\rho_t(b) = \frac{1}{B_t} \rho^* (\frac{1}{B_t} \cdot b)$$

where ρ^* is a density with mean equal to one.

We emphasize that Assumption 1 does not imply an implicit assumption on the functional form of the expenditure distributions. Empirical studies in the literature typically assume that the expenditure distributions can be well described by log-normal, Beta or Gamma distributions. These functional specifications, however, are not well supported by the data that we used in Figure 5 and 6. A non-parametric estimation of the densities suggest clearly that the density of the expenditure distributions for the group of all households is not unimodale. of expenditure have bi-modal densities. Figure 11 shows a non-parameter as well as some parametric estimations of the expenditure distribution for the U.K. Data in the year 1973. The figures are similar for other years.



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3.3. The evolution (μ_t) of the joint distributions of expenditures and preferences

Every assumption on the evolution of the joint distributions (μ_t) of expenditures and preferences is highly speculative. If one cannot observe individual preference relations then one cannot observe distributions over preference relations. If we replace preferences by observable "attributes" as mentioned in the Remark in Section 2, we need an a priori given functional relationship between prices, observable attributes and demand. The distributions α_t of attributes are then, in principle, observable if we have a time series of cross-section data.

Thus, in order to specify the evolution of (μ_t) we have to make assumptions on the evolution of the conditional distributions of preferences where we condition on expenditure and possibly other observable attributes. Since in the preference-model we did not explicitly consider other observable attributes than expenditure, we have to make assumptions on the evolution of the conditional distribution $\mu_t | b$, i.e., the distribution of preferences in period t of those households whose expenditure is equal to b.

It seems likely that these conditional distributions $\mu_t | b$ of preferences will change over time. For example, if we believe that preferences depend on age (or sex) and if the age (sex) distribution of those households with budget b changes over time which typically is observed, then $\mu_t | b$ will actually change over time. But how do they change? Since I have no reasonable answer I am tempted to consider the hypothetical case where the conditional distributions of preferences do not change. The reader will immediately object that it is not very sound to assume that distributions of preferences do not change if I claim at the same time that preferences cannot be observed. The assumption, however, would imply that the Engel curves do not change along the evolution (μ_t) . Since Engel curves seem to be more "real" than distributions of preferences we formulate our assumption in terms of Engel curves.

<u>Assumption 2</u>: The Engel curves for the distribution μ_t do not change along the evolution (μ_t) , i.e., there is a function $\bar{f}(p, b)$ such that

$$\bar{f}(p,b) = \int_{\mathcal{P}} f(p,b, \preceq) d\mu_t | b.$$

Assumption 2 is quite strong since in forming the average $\int f(p, b, \leq) d\mu_t | b$ we condition the distribution μ exclusively on expenditure b. Recall, in the attribute-model we conditioned on the vector of attributes $a = (a_1 = b, a_2, ...)$ and assumed merely that $g(p, a) = \int f(p, b, \leq) d\mu_t | a$ does not change. Assumption 2 is a strengthening of the assumption that the function g does not change. Clearly Assumption 2 is satisfied if individual expenditures and preferences are statistically independent (i.e., μ_t is a product measure $\mu_t = \mu_t^{\leq} \otimes \nu_t$) and if the marginal distributions μ_t^{\leq} of preferences do not change over time. Note, however, if the distributions μ_t are not product measures (i.e., the conditional distributions μ_t^{\leq} of preferences will change over time.

Proposition: Under Assumption 1 and 2 there exists a macro-demand function C(p, B) for the evolution (μ_t) . The function $C(\cdot, \cdot)$ is, in general, not homogeneous of degree zero in (p, B). The margina' propensity to consume commodity h is given by

$$MPC(p,B) = \frac{1}{B} \int_{R_+} (\frac{\partial}{\partial b} \bar{f}(p,b)) \cdot b \cdot \rho_B(b) db.$$

<u>Proof.</u> Given ρ^* and \overline{f} we obtain

$$C(p,B) = \int \bar{f}(p,b)\rho_B(b) = \int \bar{f}(p,b)\frac{1}{B}\rho^*(\frac{b}{B})db$$
$$= \int \bar{f}(p,B\cdot b)\rho^*(b)db,$$

which is a function in p and B. If μ is not a product measure then $\overline{f}(p, b)$, and hence C(p, B), are not necessarily homogeneous of degree zero. Finally we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial}{\partial B}C(p,B) &= \int \frac{\partial}{\partial B}\bar{f}(p,B\cdot b)\rho^*(b)db \\ &= \int \partial_2\bar{f}(p,B\cdot b)\cdot b\cdot \rho^*(b)db \\ &= \frac{1}{B}\int \frac{\partial}{\partial b}\bar{f}(p,b)\cdot b\cdot \rho_B(b)db. \end{aligned}$$
Q.E.D.

<u>Remark</u>: The above result is based on two assumptions. The first one we claim to be satisfied approximately in reality. The second one is purely hypothetical. I do not claim that in reality Engel curves remain constant over time (actually I have no knowledge at all about the evolution of Engel curves over time.) However, I do claim that a micro-model of a household population for which the concept of MPC or EE is well defined and, moreover, can be computed from cross-section data must satisfy Assumption 2. Or in different words: If one computes a number from cross-section data according to the formula

$$\frac{1}{B_t}\int \frac{\partial}{\partial b}f^{\mu_t}h(p,b)b\cdot\rho_{B_t}(db)$$

then this number can be interpreted as the marginal propensity to consume of the population provided we introduce the ceteris paribus clause as given by Assumption 2.

Indeed, consider the simplest case, where the evolution of the Engel curves can be parametrized by the mean expenditure B, thus $\bar{f}(p, b, B_t) = f^{\mu_t}(p, b)$. Then there exists a macro-demand function C(p, b). But if one computes the derivative one obtains

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial B}C(p,B)=\frac{1}{B}\int(\frac{\partial}{\partial b}\bar{f}(p,b,B))b\cdot\rho_B(b)db+\int\frac{\partial}{\partial B}\bar{f}(b,B)\rho_B(b)db$$

Obviously from cross-section data we cannot compute the second integral on the right hand side. In order to compute this integral we have to know how the Engel curves shift with increasing per capita expenditure. We emphasize that Assumption 2 does not imply that individual preferences (or attributes) do not change. If individual expenditures and preferences (or attributes) are not statistically independent then Assumption 1 and 2 on the evolution (μ_t) are not compatible with the hypothesis that the preference relation (or attributes) of every individual household remains fixed and only their expenditures vary. If we would know how individual expenditure varies as a function of per capita expenditure then, of course, we would know the evolution of (μ_t) provided one assumes that every household keeps his preferences. An example is given by the well known fixed individual budget share model, i.e., b_t^i/B_t is independent of t. Assumption 1, which refers to the marginal distribution of expenditures, however, says nothing on the evolution of individual expenditures.

Consequently, an alternative way to parametrize the evolution (μ_t) by the mean expenditure B_t is to strengthen Assumption 1. (Compare E. Malinvaud 1981, Chap. 2.2, p. 75).

Let $V_t \mid \leq$ denote the conditional distribution function of expenditure given \leq , i.e., the distribution function of expenditure of all households with preference relation \leq . Of course, \leq can be replaced by attribute *a*.

If we assume now that (i) for every preference relation the conditional distribution function $V_t \mid \preceq$ can be parametrized by the mean expenditure B_t of V_t (not by the mean of $V_t \mid \preceq$) i.e., there is a distribution function V_{\preceq}^* such that

$$V_t \mid \preceq (b) = V_{\preceq}^* (\frac{1}{B_t} \cdot b)$$

and (ii) the marginal distribution μ_t^{\preceq} of preferences do not change along the evolution, then we have again parametrized the evolution (μ_t) by the mean B_t . Consequently, there exists a macro-demand function C(p, B), i.e.,

$$F(p,\mu_t)=C(p,B_t).$$

The macro-demand function C(p, B) is homogeneous of degree zero in p and B. If we compute the MPC we obtain

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial B}C(p,B) = \frac{1}{B} \int_{R_{+} \times P} \frac{\partial}{\partial b}f(p,b, \preceq) \cdot bd\mu$$
$$= \frac{1}{B} \int_{R_{+}} b(\int_{P} \frac{\partial}{\partial b}f(p,b, \preceq)d\mu | b)\rho_{B}(b)db$$

If the conditional distributions $\mu \mid b$ of preferences depend on b, i.e., if expenditures and preferences are not statistically independent, then Assumption 2 is not satisfied and we have in general

$$\int_{p} \frac{\partial}{\partial b} f(p, b, \preceq) d\mu \mid b \neq \frac{\partial}{\partial b} \int_{p} f(p, b, \preceq) d\mu \mid b = \frac{\partial}{\partial b} \bar{f}(p, b)$$

From cross-section data we can, in principal, estimate the statistical Engel curve \bar{f} , hence $\frac{\partial}{\partial b}\bar{f}(p,b)$, but we cannot estimate the individual marginal propensities to consume, $\frac{\partial}{\partial b}f(p,b, \preceq)$

or $\frac{\partial}{\partial b}g(p, a_1 = b, a_2...)$ in the attribute-model. Thus, we conclude, that the above assumptions lead to a well defined macro-demand function but for this macro-demand function we cannot estimate the *MPC* from cross-section data.

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