



Tropentag, September 20-22, 2023, hybrid conference
“Competing pathways for equitable food systems transformation:
Trade-offs and synergies”

Influence of socio-psychological food environment on consumer food choice in Mkuranga and Ilala districts, Tanzania

Edward Mushi¹, Roselyine Alphonse¹, Betty Waized¹, Mikidadi Muhanga², Harald Kaechele³, Constance Rybak⁴

¹*Sokoine University of Agriculture, Dept. of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, Tanzania*

²*Sokoine University of Agriculture, Dept. of Development and Strategic Studies, Tanzania*

³*Leibniz Centre for Agric. Landscape Res. (ZALF), Inst. of Socioeconomics, Germany*

⁴*Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Thaeer-Institute - Div. Urban Plant Ecophysiology, Germany*

Abstract

Food systems of low-income countries are experiencing increased disruptions caused by such aspects as trade patterns and globalisation, climate change and outbreak of diseases. These disruptions augment the triple burden of malnutrition (TBM), that has primarily been a consequence of the interaction between the food environment (FE) and food choices (FC). Thus, understanding of how FE influences FC is critical to addressing the TBM. Ample research on FE in the past decade is concentrated on high income countries with focus on the physiological aspects of FE rather than the socio-cultural and psychological. The paucity of research-based evidence on how FE influences FC in low-income countries could be contributing to the persistent TBM. Theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and health belief model (HBM) was applied to determine the socio-psychological constructs influencing intention and consequently choice of healthy food among 408 randomly selected adults in Tanzania. Cross-sectional data were analysed through structural equation modelling (SEM). The findings reveal that; about 70 % of the variance in intention to choose healthy foods is explained by consumer's knowledge, attitude, and perceived behaviour control ($p < 0.01$). On the other hand, health value, perceived barriers, health behavioural identity, and perceived susceptibility account for 80 % of the variance observed in the intention to choose healthy food ($p < 0.05$). Results further revealed a significant difference among the predictors of intention to choose healthy foods between rural and urban, male and female, and across age categories. We suggest that the socio-psychological aspects of the food environment should be an integral part of health and nutrition interventions. Since over 70 % of intention to choose healthy foods is influenced by socio-psychological aspects of the food environment, it is imperative that health and nutrition interventions integrate such aspects in order to improve consumers' knowledge, and foster positive attitudes and perceptions about healthy eating

Keywords: Food choices, food environment, health belief model, socio-psychological factors, Tanzania, theory of planned behaviour