

Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Student:	Artur Harutyunyan
Advisor:	Karel Janda
Title of the thesis:	How large food manufacturers affect the country and its population

OVERALL ASSESSMENT (provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):

Please provide a short summary of the thesis, your assessment of each of the four key categories, and an overall evaluation and suggested questions for the discussion. The minimum length of the report is 300 words.

Short summary This thesis is dealing with the influence of globalized fast food on obesity. Just to make sure that the correspondence between the title of the thesis and the content is not taken against the student, I want to emphasize, that I am the one responsible for a clear focus of the thesis on obesity. The general title is a remnant from a deep past when the student came with the idea of investigation of food industry on the big chains like McDonald. Gradually we singled out the obesity issue, but I did not bother with changing the title of the thesis. Anyway, the title of thesis is not wrong, it is just much more general than needed.

Contribution There is not much of original contribution of this thesis. The descriptive parts just review what is known from literature without much value added and they are rather heterogeneous. The regression analysis is more in flavor of exploratory exercise in simple econometrics. It follows 2 papers by De Vogli et al. (2011, 2013), however with worse data. Given a poor data coverage, I would be reluctant to make any definite conclusions based on the results of this thesis.

Methods While the previous version of the thesis was fully verbally descriptive with some simple correlation coefficients included as an empirical part of the thesis, this version upgraded to regression analysis in the analysis part and to inclusion of more information about obesity in the verbally descriptive part of the thesis.

Literature The work with the literature is not very good both formally and in a substance. I have to admit that since I had to look for literature references and to suggest the student which papers he should read and what to include in the literature review, I simply did not have enough persistence to focus on formal details of how to be consistent with references, citing journal version of the paper not its working paper version etc.

Manuscript form Most annoying feature of final pdf version of submitted manuscript is an absence of page numbers. The structure of the thesis is not a optimal one since during a frequent revisions some parts (like literature review on relation between fast foods and obesity in section 4.4) were not placed in proper places.

Overall evaluation and suggested questions for the discussion during the defense

This was a bachelor thesis which took a very long time. It started with a long time it took to prepare an acceptable thesis proposal (actually I am surprised to find that final submitted version of this thesis does not contain the „historical part“ of reprinted thesis proposal. I am used to see this part in the IES theses I am reading – and I do not consider that part important anyway). Then the thesis was supposed to be done already last year, but I did not consider it admissible for defence and I did not approve it for defence, I asked student to work more on this topic.

Actually the student had a really bad luck. I planned to devote considerable attention to the obesity as a joint research topic with my friend prof. Oleg Yerokhin, who was already officially invited to spend his sabbatical semester with me in Prague working on this topic during Australian winter 2020. However because of covid, prof. Yerokhin did not come to Prague and we did not even start to work on this topic. This was a bad luck for Mr. Harutyunyan, because as long as prof. Yerokhin would be in

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Prague, we would probably do a good progress on this topic with both me and prof. Yerokhin devoting attention to obesity.

While this version of the thesis is not a very good one, it is still substantial improvement from the previous version which I refused to approve last year. After so long time working on this thesis, I think nothing much could be realistically improved there and it may be defended. While I would not be happy with this thesis passing as IES master's theses, I am willing to let it pass as a bachelor's thesis.

Questions:

You provide formula for BMI calculation in section 2.3.3, being followed with a figure defining obesity etc. on the next page. Using your formula $\text{weight (kg)}/\text{height (m)}^2$ I obtain $60\text{kg}/1.7\text{m}^2 = 20.76$, which would be extreme obesity according to your figure 9. So something is wrong here.

Could you have one more look at Currie et al. (2009) paper (published I think at American Econ. Journal, Applied Econ.), maybe even at their publicly available dataset, and try to explain how the analysis of the relation between fast food and obesity could be done properly as long as you have appropriate data available?

In my view, the thesis fulfills the requirements for a bachelor's thesis at IES, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, I recommend it for the defense and suggest a grade E. The results of the Urkund analysis do not indicate significant text similarity with other available sources.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Contribution</i> (max. 30 points)	16
<i>Methods</i> (max. 30 points)	10
<i>Literature</i> (max. 20 points)	10
<i>Manuscript Form</i> (max. 20 points)	15
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	51
GRADE (A – B – C – D – E – F)	E

NAME OF THE REFEREE: Karel Janda

DATE OF EVALUATION: May 18, 2021

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Digitally signed (May 18, 2021):

Karel

Janda

_____ **Referee Signature**

EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES AND SCALE:

CONTRIBUTION: *The author presents original ideas on the topic demonstrating critical thinking and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and empirics. There is a distinct value added of the thesis.*

METHODS: *The tools used are relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the author's level of studies. The thesis topic is comprehensively analyzed.*

LITERATURE REVIEW: *The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and command of recent literature. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way.*

MANUSCRIPT FORM: *The thesis is well structured. The student uses appropriate language and style, including academic format for graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables and disposes with a complete bibliography.*

Overall grading:

TOTAL	GRADE
91 – 100	A
81 - 90	B
71 - 80	C
61 – 70	D
51 – 60	E
0 – 50	F