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**UNDERSTANDING LOCALITY THROUGH
RESTAURANT AND FOOD FESTIVAL OPERATIONS**

**CORVINUS UNIVERSITY OF BUDAPEST
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT**

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Doctoral dissertation

Bence Csapody

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| A1 | Article 1 |
| A2 | Article 2 |
| A3 | Article 3 |
| A4 | Article 4 |
| CA | Content analysis |
| CFA | Centroid factor analysis |
| FRL | Food-related lifestyles |
| FSC | Food supply chain |
| GB-A | Factor A identified in the Greater Budapest sample |
| GB-B | Factor B identified in the Greater Budapest sample |
| GB-C | Factor C identified in the Greater Budapest sample |
| GB-D | Factor D identified in the Greater Budapest sample |
| Gen Z | Generation Z |
| HLR | Hyper-local restaurants |
| LB-A | Factor A identified in the Lake Balaton sample |
| LB-B | Factor B identified in the Lake Balaton sample |
| LB-C | Factor C identified in the Lake Balaton sample |
| LB-D | Factor D identified in the Lake Balaton sample |
| LB-E | Factor E identified in the Lake Balaton sample |
| LFH | Local food hub |
| OFR | Organic food restaurants |
| PCA | Principal component analysis |
| QIOCA | Qualitative online content analysis |
| QM | Q methodology |
| RQ | Research question |
| SFSC | Short food supply chain |
| SLF | Sustainable local food |
| US | United States of America |
| WTP | Willingness to pay |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Relevance of the Topic

The concept of locality is often compared to globalism in the hospitality systems (Gonda et al., 2021). The heightened interest in local food arises as a viable alternative to the delocalized or globalized food system, driven by consumers' desires to reestablish connections with farmers ("re-localization"), enhance the presence of natural and healthful foods in their dietary choices, and contribute to the development of their local communities (Zhong, 2023; Duram and Cawley, 2012). The locality incorporated into the restaurant's offerings can not only benefit the environment but also offer customers a sense of place, along with the value of originality and authenticity (Huang and Hall, 2023).

Appadurai (1996) primarily viewed the concept of locality as a relational and contextual element, rather than as a scalar or spatial dimension. However, the definition of locality remains ambiguous, as localities are not strictly bounded areas; they exist in a more fluid sense where boundaries are flexible (Jones and Woods, 2012). Despite the absence of a precise definition, nowadays, locality constitutes a significant trend in the hospitality industry, including cuisines centered on "zero-kilometer" ingredients, the revival of regional food traditions, and emerging local community engagement as well (Alsetoohy et al., 2021; Home et al., 2020). Previous research has labeled restaurants advocating for locality as "terroir restaurants" and acknowledged the correlation between sustainability and locality (Tresidder, 2015; Huang and Hall, 2023).

There has been a growing emphasis on localism within the whole hospitality industry. In this context, locality practices implemented in restaurants and food festivals not only contribute to the business prosperity but also positively impact the local food system and the surrounding community (Aydin et al., 2022). The integration of local ingredients can bring about social benefits for the community by fostering connections between producers and consumers (Huang and Hall, 2023). Moreover, through local food, local communities can showcase and preserve their food culture and heritage, while also encouraging greater community involvement in the developmental process (Feenstra, 2002; Starr et al., 2003).

The use of local ingredients also contributes to the emergence of new tourism forms (e.g., rural and food tourism) (Mantino and Vanni, 2018).

Current consumer trends referring to food that is produced, marketed, and consumed locally, is not a recent development in the food systems. However, recent interest in local food indicates a shift in the use of the term, with new and diverse groups and individuals, previously uninvolved in movements challenging the mainstream food system, embracing it (Huang and Hall, 2023).

The utilization of local ingredients in hospitality poses complex interdisciplinary challenges, engaging researchers in geography (Duram and Cawley, 2012), agriculture (Contini et al., 2017; Givens and Dunning, 2019), tourism and hospitality (Sharma et al., 2014), management studies (Salmivaara et al., 2021), and other related fields. However, empirical research within the realm of tourism that includes an examination of restaurants and food festivals is still very limited.

Given the substantial impact of restaurants and food festivals on the culinary industry and the broader food system, this dissertation aims 1) to examine the practical manifestation of locality aspects in restaurant operations; 2) to understand how consumers perceive these locality practices and 3) how locality is conveyed in the online communication of food festivals. Considering these factors, my research question (RQ) can be formulated as follows:

“How does the concept of locality affect the operation of restaurants and food festivals from the perspectives of both the supply and demand sides?”

To address the research question, the aspects of locality need to be analyzed from various perspectives. This dissertation is constructed upon four distinct studies that present aspects of locality with varying geographic focuses and different methodologies. The first article examines rural hospitality in Hungary in general, while the second article focuses on two legally defined destinations, Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest destinations. These two destinations offer similar value propositions and, based on tourism statistics, are among the most popular regions in Hungary (see Chapter 3.3). Finally, the third and fourth articles take a broader perspective, investigating festivals in Europe and North America.

The dissertation is structured as follows. Commencing with the introduction of the theoretical background in Chapter 1.2, this section includes a definition of local ingredients and fundamental concepts related to their utilization in hospitality. Subsequently, consumer perceptions regarding locality are analyzed, base theories regarding local food culture are introduced, and the connection of local communities to the hospitality industry is examined based on secondary sources. The conceptual framework for the research is then introduced in Chapter 1.3 with a figure explicating the relationships, interconnections, and primary distinctions among the concepts (locality, local food culture, local ingredients) under investigation. Chapter 1.4 presents the methodologies used and the data collection process, primarily encompassing qualitative methodologies. As two of the four included studies and journal articles are co-authored, Chapter 1.5 clarifies the individual contributions of the authors, employing a recognized framework proposed by Brand et al. (2015). The subsequent chapters (Chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5) present the four journal articles (A1-A4) without modifications. In Chapter 6, the conclusions are formulated, encompassing theoretical and practical contributions of the research, along with future research directions and acknowledged limitations.

1.2. Theoretical Background

1.2.1. Definition of Local Food and Ingredients

While there is significant interest in locally sourced foods, there is no academically, nor professionally accepted standard for defining what exactly qualifies as local food. Various perspectives provide a framework for understanding local food, a singular, unified definition that encompasses all aspects is still lacking (Cappelli et al., 2022). Based on the available English and Hungarian language literature, defining local food proves to be a multidisciplinary problem, the term encompasses a wide range of complementary and ever-evolving aspects (Szegedyné Fricz et al., 2020; Gonda et al., 2021; Brune et al., 2023). Past studies have uncovered various interpretations of local food among producers and consumers, including definitions tied to political boundaries, the distance between purchase and sale, and the geographic origin of production (Sharma et al., 2012). Conversely, Jones and Woods (2012) contended that “localities” are not strictly bounded areas; rather, they are

understood in a more fluid sense with flexible boundaries, unlike rigid political or geographic borders.

Additionally, Cappelli et al. (2022) identified three distinct dimensions in the definitions of “local food” – geographical, geopolitical, and organic dimensions. Previous studies argued that the concept is socially constructed, while it encompasses geographical locations, institutions, and various stakeholders, including producers and consumers (Watts et al., 2005; Duram and Cawley, 2012). In their study, Brune et al. (2023) aimed to address the lack of a clear definition of local food and identified three categories of definitions prevalent in the literature: market outlet (direct contact between producers and consumers), locality or political boundaries (products from the state or country), and distance (defined in kilometers or miles). However, Bazzani and Canavari (2017) introduced two distinct concepts: while the term “locality food” focuses on the origin of a product from a specific place, “local food” can be defined in terms of the revitalization of food traditions within a community. Similarly, Trivette (2015) categorized these approaches into two distinct groups: “local by proximity” (distance measure or geographic/political boundary) and “local by relationship” (personal connections). The subsequent section will present definitions according to these two categories.

According to the geographical (or Euclidean) perspective, Szegedyné Fricz et al. (2020) define a local product as one that is produced within the boundaries of a specific country or region. In Europe, the distance criterion for a product to be considered local ranges from 40 to 100 kilometers, whereas in the United States, this distance is set at 100 miles (161 kilometers). Gonda et al. (2021) adheres to this perspective, adding that a local product is one that is produced locally and not transported across the country or imported from abroad. Similarly, Beke et al. (2022) consider food items to be local when production, processing, distribution, and consumption are geographically close to each other within a specific area or region (in the case of Hungary, within 40-50 kilometers, according to other sources within distances ranging from 20 to 100 kilometers, thus minimizing transportation distances). The Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture (2016) delineates local products as those where production, processing, sales, and consumption are geographically proximate, with a short supply chain, though distances may vary based on product, region, and circumstances.

Table 1. Definitions of local products and ingredients

| <i>Source</i> | <i>Definition</i> | <i>Origin</i> |
|--|--|---------------|
| Sharma et al. (2009:56) | <i>“(…) local food is defined as food grown or processed locally and purchased by restaurants from the local market or primarily through local producers.”</i> | US |
| Shafieizadeh and Tao (2020: 232) | <i>“food containing ingredients that are produced within the same state in which a restaurant operates”</i> | US |
| Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Sec. 6015, 1167 | <i>“The term ‘locally or regionally produced agricultural food product’ means any agricultural food product that is raised, produced, and distributed in— “(I) the locality or region in which the final product is marketed, so that the total distance that the product is transported is less than 400 miles from the origin of the product; or “(II) the State in which the product is produced.”</i> | US |
| Duram and Cawley (2012:22) | <i>“(…) products produced within a radius of 100 kilometers (60 miles).”</i> | Ireland |
| Szegedyné Fricz et al. (2020:2966) | <i>“(…) a product produced inside the borders of a country or a region is considered a local product.”</i> | Hungary |
| Gonda et al. (2021:40) | <i>“A product that is sold within 40-50 kilometers of its production site.”</i> | Hungary |
| Beke et al. (2022:22) | <i>“(…) considering as local those food items where production, processing, distribution, and consumption are geographically close to each other within a specific area or region (in the case of Hungary, within 40-50 kilometers, according to other sources within distances ranging from 20 to 100 kilometers, thus minimizing transportation distances).”</i> | Hungary |
| Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture (2016) | <i>“(…) production, processing, and sales, as well as the consumer, are as close as possible to each other, and the supply chain is short. However, the distances may vary depending on the product, region, and circumstances.”</i> | Hungary |
| Regulation No. 123/2009 of 17 September, 2009 of the Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry, Hungary | <i>“a non-large-scale product made from locally produced, indigenous or grown raw materials utilizing traditional or regionally specific technology or processes, or a processed product produced using industrial technology or processes, produced and processed by a micro or small enterprise”</i> | Hungary |

Source: own compilation

Conversely, Regulation No. 123/2009 of 17 September, 2009, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, introduces new criteria to the definition, categorizing local products as non-large-scale. Jones et al. (2004) also define locally grown food as that which is produced and consumed within a specific geographic area. Brune et al. (2023) also

support a locality-bounded definition, arguing that local food should be defined based on the specific area where it is produced, such as a county or state, rather than by distance.

The definitions of local food also embody cultural aspects, reflecting how specific locations generate a sense of place, while also highlights the quality of the relationships among production and consumption (Trivette, 2015). Bazzani and Canavari (2017) also argue that the interpretation of “local food” should be more closely associated with the concept of belonging to a community within a specific area, where culinary traditions have been preserved and passed down through generations. Regarding the restaurant sector, Sharma et al. (2009) characterize local food as produce grown or processed nearby and procured by restaurants either directly from local markets or predominantly from local producers (see Table 1).

After these considerations, it is important to clarify what is meant by “local product” in the context of this study. Previous research (Trivette, 2015; Bazzani and Canavari, 2017) has highlighted that a distance-based approach may not satisfy all conditions due to social and cultural aspects. Therefore, building on both locality-bounded and relationship-based definitions, in my research I consider a local product to be one that is produced in accordance with the local food traditions of a specific geographic region, and characterized by having its production, processing, distribution, and consumption geographically proximate to one another.

1.2.2. Utilization of Local Ingredients in Hospitality

The recent surge in customer demand for local food, coupled with awareness campaigns and encouragement initiatives promoting local producers, has propelled the hospitality sector to integrate more locally sourced ingredients. Many restaurant managers and chefs are driven by various factors in their motivation to utilize local food, including the taste of the food, its freshness, alignment with the establishment’s concept, menu consistency, and meeting customer expectations. However, it is important to note that sustainability does not emerge as the primary reason for the preference of local food utilization among consumers (Ozturk and Akoglu, 2020).

In the examined literature, numerous studies have investigated the foundational operational motivations driving the adoption of local sourcing concepts (refer to Table 2). Ozturk and Akoglu (2020) identified five factors, with the taste of ingredients emerging as the most influential in their analysis, followed by the criterion of freshness, as substantiated by additional research (Zocchi and Fontefrancesco, 2020). Criteria such as transparency and traceability may also manifest as supplementary benefits associated with the utilization of local ingredients (Zocchi and Fontefrancesco, 2020).

Within this section, an exploration of diverse perspectives, encompassing considerations in marketing, finance, and other pertinent domains, will be undertaken to introduce multifaceted dimensions associated with the integration of local ingredients within the hospitality sector.

Table 2. Benefits associated with the use of local ingredients

| Benefit | Source |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Freshness</i> | Ozturk and Akoglu (2020); Zocchi and Fontefrancesco (2020) |
| <i>Price and Profit</i> | Zocchi and Fontefrancesco (2020); Alsetoohy et al. (2021) |
| <i>Taste and Quality</i> | Ozturk and Akoglu (2020) |
| <i>Transparency and Traceability</i> | Zocchi and Fontefrancesco (2020) |
| <i>Variety and Creativity</i> | Duram and Cawley (2012) |
| <i>Consumer Demands</i> | Ozturk and Akoglu (2020) |
| <i>Responsible Concept</i> | Alsetoohy et al. (2021) |
| <i>Ensuring Seasonality</i> | Home et al. (2020) |

Source: own compilation

Local Ingredients in Restaurant Concept Management

Restaurant menus built around local ingredients can significantly contribute to a sense of place, establishing an implicit connection with the destination (Home et al., 2020). Food made of locally sourced ingredients is important in shaping the culinary experiences of both tourists and locals. Local ingredients function as a tool for environmentally conscious restaurants striving for elevating the tourist experience, while enhancing the competencies of restaurants, including financial resources, technical expertise, reputation, and competitive advantage (Alsetoohy et al., 2021). These underlying reasons play a pivotal role in the emergence of local food within the domain of restaurant concept management.

In certain instances, the procurement of local ingredients is predetermined by the restaurant concept itself (Ozturk and Akoglu, 2020). Home et al. (2020) underscored the criticality of establishing a connection with the environment as an integral element of the restaurant concept, with seasonality emerging as a prominent component for delivering authentic dining experiences. Reports from restaurants revealed that locals, possessing insider knowledge of seasonal ingredients, contribute to enhancing the perceived authenticity of the ingredients listed on the menu. Alsetoohy et al. (2021) illustrated that some restaurants incorporate local ingredients into their concepts not only as sources of excitement but also to appeal to new consumer groups, while contributing to corporate social responsibility as well. Meanwhile, Duram and Cawley (2012) observed that the diverse range of local ingredients may pose a creative challenge for chefs and cooks.

However, Ginani et al. (2020) proposed a potential methodology that should be applied, evaluating menus reflecting the use of local foods. The use of this tool could assist restaurants in menu improvement, stimulate the consumption and valorization of local foods, and enhance local sustainability. This facilitates menu planning within a software framework: by creating and integrating regional lists of foods and ingredients, menus can be scored, and suggestions can be made for regional replacements of ingredients and dishes.

Hyperlocal restaurant concepts, wherein establishments source at least some of their necessary ingredients from their own production, have also been examined in recent literature. According to De Chabert-Rios and Deale (2018), proponents of these concepts prioritize offering fresh, flavorful products to their guests by producing items on their own farms.

The term “terroir restaurant” is also used in publications reflecting to restaurants that have a strong connection to their location. It is defined by Tresidder (2015:344) as a restaurant that *“provides a space in which the diner can consume tangible elements of both culture and landscape; often, this involves entry into a constructed visceral ‘sensescape’ where the dining experience becomes elevated to a higher level”*. In this sense, these restaurants offer a unique, geographically grounded, multi-sensory (linked to touch, smell, feel, etc.) dining experience that challenges traditional conceptions of dining (Tresidder, 2015).

Local Ingredients in Restaurant Marketing

The inclusion of local foods in a restaurant's menu can significantly enhance its image and contribute to a heightened level of customer satisfaction (Rahman et al., 2018). Effectively communicating the utilization of locally sourced ingredients can positively shape consumer perceptions, eliciting positive emotions and attitudes that, in turn, influence the revisit intention (Bacig and Young, 2019). Kim and Huang (2021) propose that restaurant managers should tailor their marketing strategies to underscore the unique aspects of "*locavorism*", thus conveying compelling and effective messages that enhance market competitiveness.

Highlighting the revitalization of the local economy, rather than solely focusing on environmental benefits, is a noteworthy approach for restaurants offering locally sourced foods (Home et al., 2020). Urban-rural distinctions are apparent, with urban establishments often prioritizing organic ingredients over the "locality" of items on their menus, while rural restaurants accentuate the local nature of ingredients to add value.

Givens and Dunning (2019) contend that disclosing the names of producers and the procurement sources is pivotal in crafting narratives for diners. The menu, serving as the primary tool for communication with consumers, plays a crucial role in influencing their decisions (Shafieizadeh and Tao, 2020). However, it is important for restaurants to underscore transparency to prevent accusations of "*greenwashing*" (Givens and Dunning, 2019). Alsetoohy et al. (2021) recommend that restaurants seeking to portray themselves as sustainable in the media should obtain verification and accreditation from credible associations or authorities. Whereas Duram and Cawley (2012) point out that restaurants might incur substantial costs to be included in specific sustainability rankings, despite being recognized in such listings as the foremost source of information for patrons.

Local Ingredients' Processing and Quality Considerations

The motivation behind the use of local ingredients reflects both emotional and practical considerations for restaurants. Ozturk and Akoglu's (2020) research indicated that some establishments, for practical considerations, only acquire short-shelf-life products from local producers. The use of locally sourced ingredients also depends on other factors, such as

climate conditions and other environmental factors. Boas et al. (2021) highlighted procurement difficulties, “high costs,” “seasonality,” and “customer rejection” as significant determinants in certain areas. Duram and Cawley (2012) argue that some industry professionals are drawn to locally sourced ingredients due to their perceived uniqueness, presenting a greater challenge in processing them. Moreover, the incorporation of local ingredients has contributed to the recognition of certain establishments in restaurant guides (Huang and Hall, 2023). However, previous research suggests that the prevalence of using these ingredients is intricately linked to perceptions of quality. According to Sharma et al. (2014), restaurants actively procuring local food are over 29 times more likely to perceive local food as possessing superior quality compared to those who do not engage in such procurement practices.

Local Ingredients and Food Costs

Given that food costs typically constitute one-third of a restaurant's operating expenses (Bristow and Jenkins, 2018), the financial appeal of local products becomes a pivotal factor in the economic functioning of these businesses. Duram and Cawley (2012) highlight cost savings as a motivating factor for chefs opting for local ingredients. In a study on hyperlocal restaurants, Zocchi and Fontefrancesco (2020) reveal that hospitality operators who directly source from the restaurant's garden perceive ingredient prices as a significant advantage.

Contrastingly, findings from Alsetoohy et al. (2021) suggest that dishes using local ingredients may incur higher costs for restaurants. Bristow and Jenkins (2018), however, emphasize that, while various factors influence the choice of local ingredients, costs can be a decisive consideration. The authors also underscore the importance of evaluating different product types to determine what is economically viable to produce locally versus sourcing from a distance. Additionally, Sharma et al. (2014) highlight that certain segments of restaurants relying on local products may not prioritize food waste and cost control, leading to a diminished emphasis on these aspects.

Duram and Cawley (2012) identify transactional difficulties as a downside of local procurement, such as the immediate payment requirement for small-scale producers, in

contrast to the monthly settlements available when dealing with commercial suppliers during transportation and procurement.

Environmental Issues

Recent studies have analyzed the relationship between restaurants and local products from various perspectives, with the issue of environmental sustainability only emerging in a fraction of these discussions. However, Duram and Cawley (2012) highlighted among chefs' motivations the support of local producers and the environmental benefits derived from shorter distances. Newman et al. (2013) extensively examined the environmental impact of hospitality establishments using specific indicators ("*foodprint*"). They found that the majority of environmental impact can be attributed to the transportation of ingredients rather than the production of food. Consequently, the expectation is that the shorter the distance from the producers to the consumers, the smaller the environmental impact. Nevertheless, the findings of the study did not completely uphold this hypothesis; despite the supply chain being significantly more localized in the high season, the decrease in foodprint was not as substantial as expected.

1.2.3. Local Food Procurement: Dynamics Between Local Producer and Restaurants

The procurement of goods can be considered a critical and resource-intensive process in the operation of hospitality establishments, and its optimization is deemed a necessary step. The incorporation of locally sourced ingredients in culinary practices is contingent upon the chef's motivation, which, in turn, is shaped by factors such as the quality of available produce, producers' readiness to accommodate specific demands, storage capabilities, and consumer price preferences (Duram and Cawley, 2012). Meanwhile, recent research has highlighted that one of the major challenges for producers is ensuring consistent quality and quantity of individual crops and products while contending with fluctuations in demand (Roy et al., 2017; Givens and Dunning, 2019).

Local producers' perspective on consumer behavior is often misaligned with prevailing trends (health consciousness, environmental awareness, consumer awareness), and thus they tend to prioritize price and cost-effectiveness over the quality that is truly important to

consumers (Gonda et al., 2021). Duram and Cawley (2012) observed that in numerous instances, producers contacted hospitality establishments, however Givens and Dunning (2019) emphasized that chefs prefer distributor-led ordering processes and delivery due to time savings and the potential for last-minute orders. Somewhat contrasting, Duram and Cawley (2012) highlighted in their study that local producers could quickly meet urgent needs of hospitality establishments in some cases. However, they also noted that additional refrigerated storage was necessary for establishments to accommodate less frequent deliveries from individual producers (Duram and Cawley, 2012). This issue could potentially be addressed by local food hubs (LFH), as proposed by Pesci and Brinkley (2021), which facilitate the collection, storage, and distribution of locally or regionally produced food products (Pesci and Brinkley, 2021). Moreover, this approach could mitigate problems stemming from inadequate producer infrastructure, such as time spent on communication and inflexible order processing and delivery times (Sharma et al., 2014). A suitable intermediary or distribution system significantly reduces the number of supplier relationships that hospitality establishments need to maintain (Duram and Cawley, 2012), aligning with convenience considerations such as timely delivery of orders, consistent quality, product variety, and “one-stop” shopping (Roy and Ballantine, 2020).

The menus of hospitality establishments are often significantly influenced by the current availability of products in the market. Home et al. (2020) suggest that there may be instances where there is insufficient locally grown product available in a given region to fulfill the quantity demanded by a commercial restaurant. Many hospitality establishments rely on large distributors for their products, which can ensure competitive pricing through bulk purchasing. A crucial factor in purchasing from distributors is securing competitive prices (Roy and Ballantine, 2020).

Givens and Dunning (2019) propose that if wholesalers allocate resources to sales specialists specializing in local products, they could more effectively disseminate information about producers and their products to hospitality establishments. In their example, they introduced a local product specialist and emphasized the significance of food demonstrations where chefs and producers can meet face-to-face. Roy et al. (2017) also regard personal relationships with wholesale distributors as valuable resources, recognizing networking

opportunities as essential for fostering long-term mutually beneficial collaborations. Additionally, they noted in their article that strong positive relationships with suppliers can instill confidence in buyers' purchasing decisions and enhance their trust in the products (Roy et al., 2017).

1.2.4. Consumer Attitudes Towards Food Based on Local Ingredients

Simultaneously, food-related lifestyles (FRL) have emerged as a significant form of psychographic segmentation, leveraging consumers' overarching characteristics, encompassing their activities, attitudes, interests, and opinions regarding food (Bacig and Young, 2019). In their study, Kim and Huang (2021) aimed to delve into the intricacies of consuming local food in restaurants, encompassing ideological, perceptual, emotional, and behavioral factors. Consequently, "emotional benefit" emerges as a significant factor in local food consumption. Should tourists perceive low levels of "emotional benefit," they are prone to dissatisfaction with local foods, hesitant to recommend them, and less acquainted with the destination (Seongseop et al., 2021).

In the context of the restaurant industry, food stands out as the primary product, and sustainability practices associated with it are most visibly communicated to consumers through menus and marketing materials (Schubert et al., 2010). Kwok et al. (2016) classified green restaurant attributes into three categories and found that, overall, environmentally focused elements are more important to consumers. However, consumers who prioritize factors related to food and information are more willing to pay more, wait longer, or travel further to visit green restaurants. Dewald et al. (2014) found that, in their research on green restaurants, fresh and healthy ingredients were rated as more important than other green activities. The many dimensions of sustainability in local food supply chains are linked to guests' emotional values, creating joy, excitement, and relaxation when they consume local food (Alsetoohy et al., 2021). This highlights the fact that well-designed adverts promoting sustainable local cuisine can elicit favorable emotional reactions from travelers. Hence, the interdependent connection between the environment and tourism presents a chance for sustainable high-end restaurants to emphasize the emotional significance linked to their meals, both amidst and following the COVID-19 pandemic. Notable figures in the restaurant

sector have the potential to use regional gastronomy as a means of generating interest and providing a sense of tranquility in order to attract new customers (Alsetoohy et al., 2021).

1.2.5. Generation Z as a New Segment in Hospitality

Generation Z (Gen Z) has emerged as a responsible consumer group with increasing purchasing power that significantly impacts the operation of sustainable foodservice industry (Huang et al., 2022). While Generation Z consumers are considered a segment prioritizing the offering of high-quality food and beverages (Kulcsár and Grotte, 2018), they also demonstrate a strong interest in the health benefits of food products and adopt a value-based perspective, favoring items that offer good value for money (Mitić and Vehapi, 2021).

Marketing products to younger consumer segments with “green” messaging has become prevalent, as Generation Z values product attributes related to environmental conservation and personal well-being (Orea-Giner and Fusté-Forné, 2023). Gen Z consumers are increasingly concerned about environmental issues, though this heightened environmental awareness varies according to their degree of concern for environmental matters and pro-sustainability behaviors (Su et al., 2019).

Generation Z travelers seek experiences that connect them with local cuisine as a means of cultural preservation and interaction with local communities, valuing both local knowledge and service (Orea-Giner and Fusté-Forné, 2023). Similarly, Hoang et al. (2024) found that millennial and Generation Z travelers are particularly inclined to prioritize the culinary experience at restaurants offering traditional food, sometimes overlooking other factors such as hygiene in favor of a unique culinary experience.

Generation Z is highly influenced by digital technologies, which significantly shape their consumer behavior (Gupta and Pande, 2023). Recent research found that while Generation Z consumers generally hold a positive attitude towards the use of service robots in restaurants, human assistance is still considered necessary in the hospitality industry (Ma et al., 2023). However, Ding et al. (2022) revealed that tourists' perceptions of restaurant menus, technology-driven services, and innovative dining experiences significantly contribute to

enhancing the food image of the destination and positively influence tourists' intentions to revisit in the future.

1.2.6. Locality Aspects of Food Cultures

The analysis of food culture can be conducted at various geographical levels, reflecting distinct patterns in food preparation and consumption. Studies frequently emphasize national food cultures (Peštek and Činjarević, 2014). However, at smaller scales, there exist provincial or regional food cultures as well (Boonkumnerd, 2018; Khoshkam et al., 2023), each providing unique insights into the concept of locality within the context of food culture.

Food culture serves as a valuable framework for exploring national identity, capturing the historical, social, and cultural evolution of a society (Malota and Mucsi, 2021). O’Kane (2016) argues that a “*contemporary relational food culture*” signifies a profound connection with people and places, intertwined with memories and emotions. This relationship is rooted in the time and effort dedicated to cultivating or acquiring food, as well as its preparation and consumption. Recently, Khoshkam et al. (2023) examined patterns within food culture, highlighting factors such as the natural resources of a specific location, the beliefs and knowledge of its inhabitants, ethnic heritage, prevailing technology, colonization, and health status. A new trend of innovation that merges local and global elements, known as glocalization, is emerging in Europe. Numerous restaurants incorporate foreign (predominantly Asian) exotic spices, flavorings, and fruits to enrich both the flavor and presentation of their primarily European cuisine (Lane, 2011). Conversely, local food culture, as an integral aspect of a destination’s socio-cultural characteristics, can contribute to maintaining the destination's authenticity (Polat and Aktaş-Polat, 2020). Additionally, food culture plays a crucial role in the local development of rural areas, with the exploration of local food heritage serving as a significant incentive for tourism (Khoshkam et al., 2023).

From a tourism management perspective, addressing food culture differences and potential culture shock is essential. Individuals’ food preferences and habits are deeply rooted in their childhood experiences, which can evoke nostalgia or, conversely, negative emotions if the cultural difference between the destination and the travelers’ backgrounds is too vast (Zhong, 2023). Differences in food culture encompass various aspects, including food preparation,

purchasing habits, serving styles, dining rhythms, and the number, duration, and timing of meals, all of which can be influential (Malota and Mucsi, 2021).

The practice of consuming food in the location where it is produced not only reflects regional dietary preferences but also holds considerable importance for sustainability, particularly from a cultural perspective (Ozturk and Akoglu, 2020). For the preservation and development of cultural identity, the survival and sustainability of local culinary cultures that reflect regional customs are crucial, ensuring their continuity for future generations. For instance, group cooking activities significantly contribute to the development of a food-related identity (Malota and Mucsi, 2021). Moreover, supporting local products can enhance the sustainability of food supplies, preserve local communities, and maintain the diversity of food culture (Szegedyné Fricz et al., 2020). Therefore, integrating local food products into production and prominently featuring them on restaurant menus plays a critical role in regional development by contributing to cultural sustainability and shaping the gastronomic identity of the region (Ozturk and Akoglu, 2020; Boas et al., 2021). Research indicates that restaurant managers leverage the concept of rurality associated with local food culture to attract urban consumers, thereby gaining a competitive advantage (Tellstrom et al., 2005). Munjal et al. (2016), however, suggest that hospitality professionals bear the responsibility of exploring, documenting, and presenting traditional local dishes to their guests.

1.2.7. Food Festivals: Shaping Local Foodscapes

A destination's foodscape comprises the diverse food experiences of travelers. A part of these experiences take place in organized settings that are neither managed by service organizations nor regulated by the tourism industry. As Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2019:468) noted, “*a destination foodscape denotes the places and scapes that facilitate a wide range of food experiences, beyond just restaurants and bars*”. While definitions of foodscapes range from focusing on physical aspects to more comprehensive and socio-cultural perspectives, researchers agree that foodscapes include at least the physical locations and spaces where food is sold and consumed, thus the actual places where people can access food (Vonthron et al., 2020). In this sense, food festivals are organized environments for food experiences within a destination, designed to cater to both tourists and locals (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019).

Local food events can influence the community by helping residents develop and maintain a sense of regional identity (Aaltojärvi et al., 2018). Food festivals contribute to local community development by showcasing traditional cuisine and preserving local food culture and heritage (Aydin et al., 2022). The primary aim of most food festivals is to provide a space for communities to unite through shared food preparation and dining experiences (Fontefrancesco, 2018; Haynes, 2015). Hjalager and Kwiatkowski (2023) argue that festivals positively impact local communities by allowing visitors to explore local food culture, participate in cooking classes, and sample regional cuisine. Cheng (2023) asserts that food festivals featuring innovative dishes rooted in culinary traditions promote place-images and rural lifestyles. Food festivals, in particular, have been extensively utilized as a strategic tool for branding and promoting culinary tourism (Yang et al., 2020).

The presentation of food reflects the community's narratives and aspirations, both to external observers and community members (Haynes, 2015). By attracting tourists, offering diverse programs and culinary experiences, these festivals help popularize the locality (Tóth et al., 2020) and bridge the social and cultural gap between rural and urban areas (Cheng, 2023). Food-related events like fairs and festivals also strengthen the connection between local communities and regional agriculture. These festivals encourage consumption and highlight the economic prosperity of agricultural industries (Haynes, 2015). Additionally, it is important to recognize that each food festival impacts the quality of restaurant services, the expertise of head chefs, cooking techniques, and other critical aspects of the food program. These elements should be taken into account in strategic planning (Khoshkam et al., 2023).

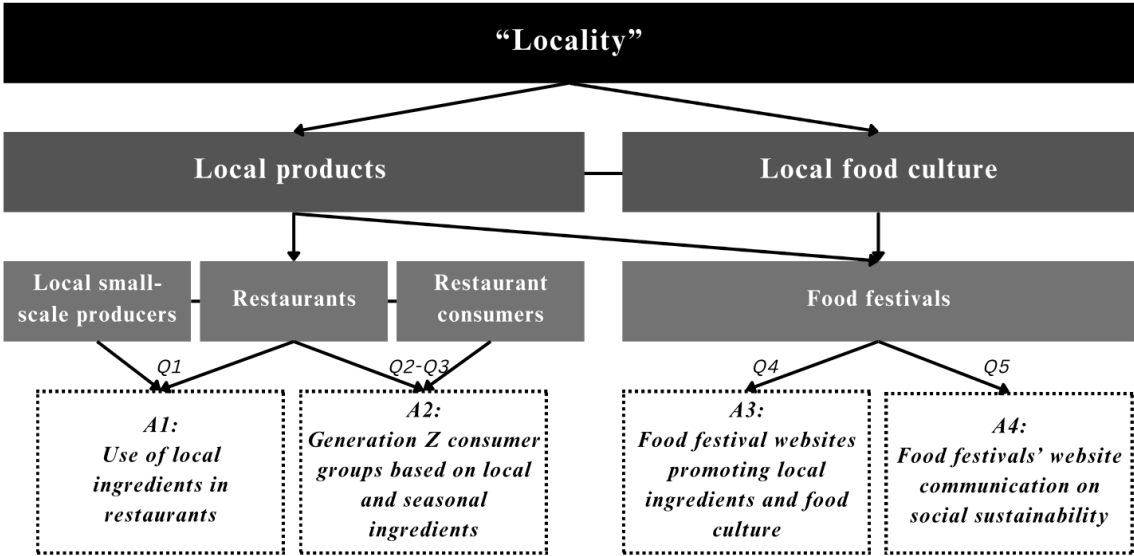
1.2.8. Social Sustainability: Interconnectedness of Local Communities and Hospitality

Food fulfills a variety of social roles and acts as a medium for social interaction. It aids in forming and sustaining interpersonal connections, signifies the depth of these relationships, and represents social status (Polat and Aktaş-Polat, 2020). Additionally, food can be emblematic of group identity, play a central role in the celebration of social events, and carry symbolic meaning (Malota and Mucsi, 2021). However, after reviewing literature on the initiatives undertaken by restaurants in the context of social issues, such local community well-being, social inclusion and promotion of cultural diversity, it is evident that the available body of research is limited.

Moyle et al. (2021) states, that social responsibility has recently emerged as a pivotal strategic objective for worldwide hospitality operations in pursuit of their sustainability goals. In achieving these objectives, core virtues such as “generosity, kindness, trust, protection of the weak and vulnerable and relationship-building” aid the hospitality establishment's contribution, which, according to Bilgihan et al. (2023), is inherently present in their operation. Local restaurants serve as a foundational element of community social infrastructure (Farrer, 2023). Through their active engagement with local communities, local restaurants have the capacity to contribute to the preservation and promotion of social and cultural diversity (Sharma, 2023). They serve as location for social organization and networking, acting as sites where various forms of social capital are cultivated and employed, e.g. by providing a social safety net for vulnerable patrons (Farrer, 2023). Moreover, for a restaurant committed to social responsibility, addressing matters such as community interests, equitable opportunities, skills and education, workplace safety, and working conditions becomes imperative (Sharma, 2023).

1.3. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Conceptual framework



Source: own compilation

The focus of this dissertation research is on Hungary, with additional insights into European and North American gastronomic festivals. For Article A1, the sample consists of representatives from Hungarian rural restaurants and local producers. In Article A2, the sample includes Generation Z individuals traveling to Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest destinations in Hungary. Articles A3 and A4 concentrate on benchmarks, examining the websites of European and North American gastronomic festivals. These studies offer numerous practical implications for Hungarian and international festival organizers, in addition to theoretical contributions.

Table 3. Research objectives and related questions

| Research Objectives | Related Research Question | Related Articles |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| to examine the role of local ingredients in the Hungarian rural hospitality system and to analyse the benefits and drawbacks of their utilization in restaurants | <i>Q1: What aspects influence the utilization of local ingredients in the Hungarian rural hospitality system through collaboration between local producers and restaurants?</i> | A1 |
| to investigate and compare the restaurant preferences of consumers visiting Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest destinations, with specific emphasis on the role of seasonal and local ingredients | <i>Q2: What are the primary restaurant consumer preference groups among Generation Z visiting Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest, according to their preference for food based on seasonal and local ingredients?</i> <i>Q3: What are the similarities and differences among the preferences of Generation Z consumers for food based on seasonal and local ingredients in Greater Budapest and Lake Balaton?</i> | A2 |
| to explore how European and North American food festival websites promote local ingredients and preserve food culture through communication | <i>Q4: What role does the incorporation of local ingredients and the preservation of local food culture play in the online communication of food festivals?</i> | A3 |
| to identify the themes in organizing food festivals related to social sustainability, and to provide a methodological framework for the textual and visual analysis of food festival websites | <i>Q5: How do food festival websites represent and communicate the event's commitment towards social sustainability?</i> | A4 |

Source: own compilation

Given the discussed challenges and emerging patterns concerning the notion of locality in restaurant and food festival operations, it can be inferred that incorporating local products while considering the requirements of local communities could lead to various alterations in supply chains, consequently impacting both the economy and society. Food festivals can further contribute to social sustainability through the presentation and revitalization of local

food culture (refer to Figure 1). In consideration of these insights, the following research objectives have been established (refer to Table 3).

The primary research question (“*How does the concept of locality affect the operation of restaurants and food festivals from the perspectives of both the supply and demand sides?*”) of this thesis is examined across four studies, addressing a total of five sub-questions.

Q1: What aspects influence the utilization of local ingredients in the Hungarian rural hospitality system through collaboration between local producers and restaurants?

The first aim of this research is to examine how Hungarian restaurant managers, chefs, and producers define local products based on their individual experiences and attributes of the Hungarian hospitality system. Moreover, previous literature lacks comprehensive studies investigating the utilization of local products in restaurants and the collaboration between producers and restaurants. The findings of this research contribute to understanding the structural barriers that hinder the effective integration of local products into restaurant operations. Finally, the study aims to provide recommendations for enhancing the cooperation between producers and restaurants.

Q2: What are the primary restaurant consumer preference groups among generation Z visiting Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest, according to their preference for food based on seasonal and local ingredients?

While Generation Z introduces new challenges and transformations to the world of tourism and hospitality, there is insufficient research on their restaurant consumer preferences within the Hungarian context. This study aims to explore and compare the restaurant preferences of Generation Z consumers visiting Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest to identify their subjective perceptions of seasonal and local ingredients in the restaurant industry. Preferences are examined through Q methodology. The research identifies consumer preference groups (factors) for Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest based on themes such as interest in trying local food specialties, immersion in the food culture of the destinations, environmentally sustainable restaurants, and support for local businesses and job creation.

Q3: What are the similarities and differences among the preferences of generation Z consumers for food based on seasonal and local ingredients in Greater Budapest and Lake Balaton?

The literature shows a lack of research comparing restaurant consumption patterns in two specific destinations. Existing tourist attitude research has predominantly focused on specific geographical areas, with no studies systematically comparing restaurant consumers in different destinations. This study conducts a comparative analysis of consumer attitudes toward seasonality and locality in hospitality offerings between the destinations of Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest. The investigation focuses on the uniqueness of the destination restaurant offerings, food culture, and local wine offerings. The heightened competition among tourist destinations underscores the necessity of analyzing factors that influence tourists' behavioral intentions in their decision-making process.

Q4: What role does the incorporation of local ingredients and the preservation of local food culture play in the online communication of food festivals?

There is a lack of research exploring the connection between food festival websites and the promotion of local products and food culture. This analysis aims to reveal how European and North American food festival websites showcase local food and culinary traditions, and how they support local producers and service providers. Its significance lies in contributing to the understanding of communication patterns of local food culture, offering insights to inspire and guide food festival organizers in adopting more practices connected to local food systems.

Q5: How do food festival websites represent and communicate the event's commitment towards social sustainability?

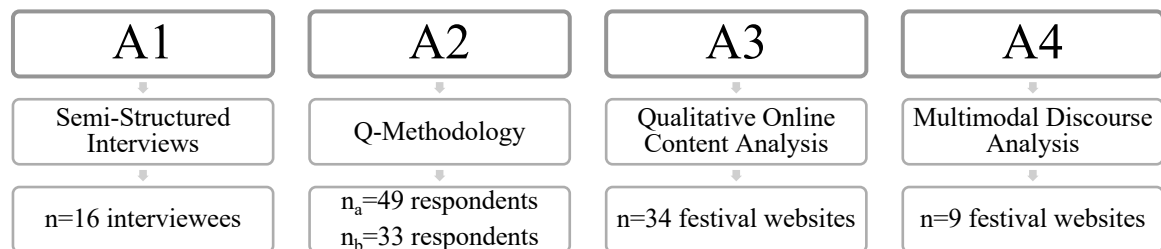
Food festivals showcase the foodscape of tourist destinations, local culture, and identity. Positioning food festivals as socially sustainable and effectively communicating initiatives to enhance community well-being are crucial for gaining local residents' long-term support for the event. Through a multimodal discourse analysis, this study aims to better understand the interplay between visual and verbal signifiers to identify themes in organizing food

festivals related to social sustainability, and to provide a methodological framework for analysis. Social sustainability is examined through three discourses: intergenerational connections, awareness of physical and mental health, and the preservation of local food culture and heritage.

1.4. Research Methods

In the subsequent section, this research attempts to explicate the employed methodological approaches. In pursuit of addressing the primary research question (RQ) as well as all subsidiary questions (see Table 3), various research methods were employed, encompassing semi-structured interviews, Q methodology, qualitative online content analysis, and multimodal analysis (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Methodologies and samples used



Source: own compilation

This dissertation is mainly built upon qualitative research methods which reflects a recent shift in tourism research as there is a notable upswing in interest among researchers in qualitative methodologies within the field of tourism studies. This increased attention has propelled qualitative approaches into the forefront of research discussions, creating an opportune moment for substantive and innovative debates in this domain (Ivanova et al., 2020). One of the benefits of qualitative research is its propensity to avoid standardized solutions (Mitev, 2019). The essence of qualitative research lies in problem exploration and understanding of phenomena, leading to non-quantitative and non-generalizable research outcomes (Malhotra and Simon, 2017). Rather than focusing on quantitative aspects, the emphasis is on uncovering underlying reasons, motivations, attitudes, and seeking to understand the “why” and “how” (Gyulavári et al., 2017).

1.4.1. Semi-Structured Interview Methodology

To answer the research question, using qualitative research was essential, as it aims to reveal deeper causes and explanations that may not emerge, for instance, in a questionnaire-based study (Mitev, 2019). Consequently, to understand the perspectives of local producers and representatives of hospitality establishments (chefs, restaurant managers, owners), semi-structured interview research methodology was applied. In contrast to focus group research, in-depth interviews were chosen because respondents do not face social pressure to conform to the group's opinion, thus allowing for results to emerge through the free exchange of information (Malhotra and Simon, 2017). This research methodology deviates from the unstructured interviews in that the topics, questions, sample size, and respondents have been predetermined. Moreover, the semi-structured and unstructured interviews differ from the structured interview in requiring more expertise from the interviewer, as they often yield information on personal, attitudinal, and value-related characteristics, demanding social sensitivity (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2016).

In this case, a distinctive type of in-depth interview, namely expert interviews were conducted to gain insights into the opinions of individuals who possess particular expertise related to this research topic (Gyulavári et al., 2017). Thus, it is necessary to selectively identify potential interviewees by name and subsequently approach and invite them to participate in the research (Mitev, 2019). To establish contact with the respondents as recognized experts in the examined subject, preliminary data collection was necessary, involving the assessment of restaurant operations through restaurant listings and other sources regarding producers in Hungary.

For the formulation of the interview guide, the framework of Kallio et al. (2016) was applied, and the interconnected stages of the developmental process included: (1) recognizing the conditions for employing semi-structured interviews; (2) accessing and applying existing knowledge; (3) creating the initial semi-structured interview guide; (4) conducting a pilot test for the interview guide; and (5) unveiling the final semi-structured interview guide. Utilizing this framework, the meticulous development of a semi-structured interview guide significantly enhances the reliability of semi-structured interviews as a qualitative research approach (Kallio et al., 2016).

1.4.2. *Q Methodology*

In our study investigating consumer preferences in restaurants concerning the use of local and seasonal ingredients (see Chapter 3), we employed the Q methodology (QM). This methodology is increasingly employed in tourism research (Stergiou and Airey, 2011; Nikraftar and Jafarpour, 2021; Ásványi et al., 2022), art and cultural studies (Ásványi and Fehér, 2023), and within the food science and technology domain (van Dijk et al., 2022).

QM was introduced in 1935 as a substitute for conventional qualitative and quantitative empirical methodologies (Brown, 1996). Primarily, QM focuses on human subjectivity (Ellingsen et al., 2010). According to Hofmeister-Tóth and Simon (2006), the QM can be positioned somewhere between qualitative and quantitative research and is generally employed for ascertaining subjective opinions, attitudes, and value orientations. It applies quantitative procedures for data analysis, including correlation and factor analysis (Brown, 1996).

A five-step research design is the most commonly accepted model for utilizing Q methodology (Ellingsen et al., 2010). The five steps are as follows:

1. *Concourse identification on the subject matter of interest.* This step refers to the comprehensive communication of all potential aspects related to the research topic. In the context of local and seasonal ingredients, it encompasses various statements expressing opinions and perspectives on aspects such as these products' quality, price and availability.
2. *Creating a set of statements (Q-sample).* Statements must be self-referent, allowing subjective viewpoints to be examined. Factual statements lack applicability, as they inherently lack the scalability requisite for a Q-study (Ellingsen et al., 2010).
3. *Determining the participants for the study (P-sample) and providing instructions.* The methodology presupposes that scrutinizing the ranked data generated when a subset of participants (person sample or P-sample) arranges a set of statements (Q-sample) exposes depictions of diverse perspectives (Kampen and Tamás, 2014). Due to the methodological peculiarities, the application of the QM necessitates a small non-random sample (Hofmeister-Tóth and Simon, 2006; Kampen and Tamás, 2014).

4. *Conducting the Q-sort (arranging statements in order of preference)*. During data collection, respondents (P-sample) are required to position various statements on an individual evaluative grid (Q-grid) with a quasi-normal distribution, utilizing a seven-point scale ranging from -3 (indicating strong disagreement) to +3 (indicating strong agreement).
5. *Performing factor analysis and interpretation*. For the analysis of the Q-sorts, PQMethod Software Version 2.11. was employed, a software specifically tailored for QM. The software then examines correlations among all Q-sorts, then this intercorrelation matrix undergoes factor analysis through the centroid procedure (Barry and Proops, 1999). The resulting factor analysis is subjected to rotation to yield factors adhering to the criteria of Q-methodology (Hofmeister-Tóth and Simon, 2006). Statistical significance of a factor is determined using the eigenvalue criterion, wherein factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1.00 are conventionally regarded as significant (Kampen and Tamás, 2014; Barry and Proops, 1999). The ultimate number of factors was determined based on methodological literature and our research decisions, considering the following criteria: relevant correlation coefficients (with a maximum value of 0.5 between individual factors), Eigenvalue (with a minimum value of 1), and variance level (with a minimum of 60%). Additionally, each factor needed to include responses from a minimum of 2 participants.

1.4.3. Qualitative Online Content Analysis

Content Analysis (CA) serves as a frequently used research method in the social sciences, commonly applied to investigate a wide range of communication, encompassing written documents, photographs, videos, and audiotapes (Babbie, 2017; Camprubí and Coromina, 2016; Kim and Yoon, 2013). Epistemologically, content analysis in the social sciences falls into two broad categories: qualitative and quantitative. The former pertains to nonstatistical and exploratory methods, involving inductive reasoning, while the latter refers to approaches capable of offering statistical inferences from texts (Stepchenkova and Morrison, 2008). Qualitative epistemologies maintain the perspective that reality is a social and cultural construct, which can only be interpreted and approximated but not entirely comprehended (Babbie, 2017). Therefore, within the qualitative tradition, the emphasis lies on complexity,

context, and detail (Stepchenkova and Morrison, 2008). Within the realm of qualitative online research methodologies, textual analysis is notably preferred by tourism scholars (Kim and Yoon, 2013; Pahlevan-Sharif et al., 2019), and there has been an increasing adoption of CA in tourism studies (Camprubí and Coromina, 2016). Tourism researchers are often unwilling to employ computer-assisted content analysis, due to their inclination towards a more qualitatively oriented class of content analysis methods, such as semiotic analysis of content (Atabay and Çizel, 2020).

In this dissertation, to examine communication patterns of food festivals on local ingredients and food culture, qualitative online content analysis (QIOCA) has been applied. This methodology centers on examining the features of language as a form of communication, emphasizing the content or contextual significance of the text (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The primary attribute lies in its capacity for reduction, wherein content analysis enables researchers to extract more precise meanings from extensive datasets. The second characteristic underscores its systematic nature, emphasizing the necessity for thorough and methodical analytical procedures. The ultimate characteristic of content analysis is its inherent flexibility, attributable to the subjective elements present in coding and data summaries. With these distinctive features, content analysis is deemed to hold significant potential for applications in tourism research (Atabay and Çizel, 2020).

In this research, deductive coding was employed, where codes were predefined using existing literature as a foundation. The objective of a directed approach to content analysis is to conceptually validate or expand upon a theoretical framework or theory (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Utilizing existing theory or research aids in refining the research question and offers predictions about the variables of interest or relationships among variables. This process, known as deductive category application, guides the development of the initial coding scheme or relationships between codes (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The ultimate coding framework comprised three categories (local food and ingredients, seasonal food and ingredients, and local food culture) and a total of nine codes. Employing the predetermined categories and indicators, the frequencies of information pertaining to these categories were documented. The researcher examined a moderately sized selection of webpages, engaging in manual analysis of online content to thoroughly encompass contextual features.

However, the limitations of the employed methodology must also be acknowledged. First, despite efforts were made to encompass a diverse range of festival websites, the extensive number of events necessitated a constrained selection of analyzed platforms through preselection (food festival listings). Secondly, the analysis relies on textual content exclusively from official websites, yet it is crucial to underscore that other excluded articles, blog posts and social media posts related to food festivals may convey information pertinent to the research focus.

1.4.4. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

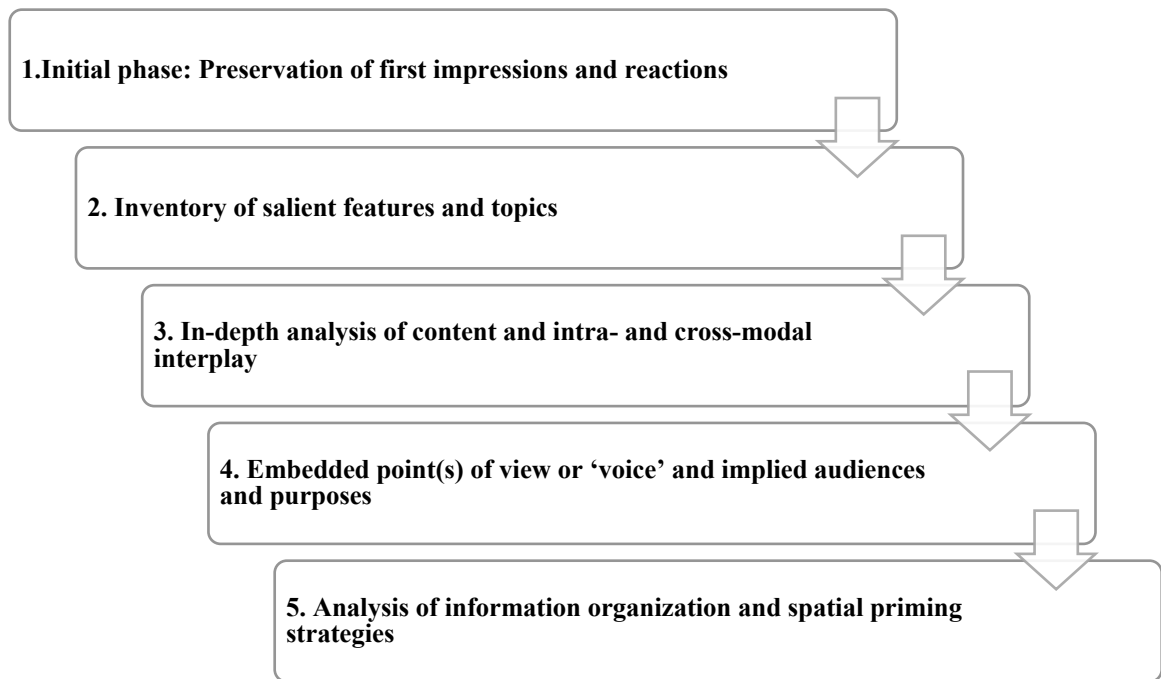
Analyzing singular information, such as written texts or images only, can be partial and incomplete. This presents a challenge to scholars and researchers, prompting the need to develop theoretical frameworks for interpreting the complex space and processes involved in making sense of these representations within specific social contexts (Serafini and Reid 2023). It is important for researchers to conscientiously address the multimodal aspects of phenomena under investigation, also emphasizing the social construction of meaning, the incorporation of relevant theories into the research framework, and the meticulous application of analytical procedures in both data collection and analysis (Rachul and Varpio 2020; Serafini and Reid 2023).

Earlier research has demonstrated that innovative qualitative research exploring intricate relationships, non-representational thinking, and a multi-sensory methodology has been limitedly addressed within the field of tourism studies (Ivanova et al., 2020). Consequently, we have opted for a multimodal analysis in our examination of food festival websites, aiming to examine their contribution to diverse aspects of social sustainability. This approach equips researchers with the means to comprehensively grasp and depict how various modes within online communication, such as body language through photographs and videos, background colors and fonts, contribute to achieving the research goals (Rachul and Varpio, 2020).

In multimodal analysis, data collection methods typically adopt an ethnographic approach, incorporating various sources of data to delve into the complex nature of communication (Rachul and Varpio, 2020). Multimodal discourse analysis examines visual, verbal, and design elements to investigate the diverse ways in which meaning is expressed, thus it is

well-suited for analyzing websites (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2021). For the coding, Pauwels's (2012) framework for multimodal content analysis was utilized (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Steps of multimodal discourse analysis



Source: own compilation, based on Pauwels (2012)

In the realm of food tourism research, multimodal discourse analysis has been utilized to investigate power dynamics and social sustainability (de Jong & Varley, 2018), as well as to examine website communication strategies for promoting ethically branded organic candy (Fernández-Vázquez, 2021). In our study, data were gathered from a selection of English-language websites affiliated with food festivals. Both textual and visual components of these websites were subjected to analysis. Being open to unconventional and potentially disruptive methods of learning and action, as well as actively seeking out and promoting alternative perspectives on tourism, can broaden our understanding of social practices that might otherwise be overlooked or superficially addressed (Ivanova et al., 2020).

1.5. Statement of Conjoint Work

The thesis incorporates the following collection of journal articles, each contributing to the exploration of the research question:

- **Article 1 (A1):** Csapody, B. (n/a) ‘Exploring short supply chains and the role of local ingredients in the rural hospitality system of Hungary’, *Enlightening Tourism*. (status: *resubmitted after revision*)
- **Article 2 (A2):** Csapody, B., Ásványi, K., Jászberényi, M. (n/a) ‘Restaurant consumer preferences towards seasonal and local ingredients in two Hungarian destinations’, *European Journal of Tourism Research*, (status: *resubmitted after revision*)
- **Article 3 (A3):** Csapody, B. (2024) ‘Online Content Analysis Focusing on Local Ingredients and Food Culture: A Study of Selected Food Festival Websites’, *Turizmus Bulletin*, 24(1), (status: *published*)
- **Article 4 (A4):** Irimiás, A., Csapody, B., Jászberényi, M. (n/a) ‘Social sustainability on European food festival websites: A multimodal discourse analysis’, *Tourism Management Perspectives*, (status: *accepted*)

Since A2 and A4 publications are co-authored, it is necessary to present the contributions of each author. To offer a detailed description, the framework published by Brand et al. (2015) has been employed. This framework is recognized as a standard approach for author statements in international journals, ensuring a transparent presentation of individual authorship contributions (refer to Table 4).

Table 4. Journal data and authors' contribution

| General Data | | A1 | A2 | A3 | A4 |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Status | | <i>resubmitted after revision</i> | <i>resubmitted after revision</i> | <i>published</i> | <i>accepted</i> |
| Language | | English | English | English | English |
| Journal Data | Publisher | Universidad de Huelva | Varna University of Management | Hungarian Tourism Agency | Elsevier USA |
| | Journal | Enlightening Tourism | European Journal of Tourism Research | Turizmus Bulletin | Tourism Management Perspectives |
| | Scopus Q / MTA rank | Q4 | Q2 | MTA B | Q1 (D1) |
| | Scimago Journal Rank | 0.199 (2023) | 0.614 (2023) | – | 1.971 (2023) |
| Authors' contribution | First author | Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization, Funding acquisition | Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization | Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization, Funding acquisition | Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization |
| | Second author | – | Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing | – | Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization |
| | Third author | – | Conceptualization, Supervision, Funding acquisition | – | Conceptualization, Supervision, Funding acquisition |

Source: own compilation, based on the framework of Brand et al. (2015)

2. EXPLORING THE ROLE OF LOCALLY-SOURCED INGREDIENTS IN THE RURAL HOSPITALITY SYSTEM OF HUNGARY

Reference: Csapody, B. 'Exploring the role of locally-sourced ingredients in the rural hospitality system of Hungary', *Enlightening Tourism*. (status: resubmitted after revision)

Abstract: *The aim of this research is to examine the role of local ingredients in the Hungarian rural hospitality system and to analyze the benefits and drawbacks of their utilization in restaurants. Previous literature lacks comprehensive studies investigating the use of local products in restaurants and the collaboration between producers and restaurants, particularly those employing qualitative methods involving both parties. To address this research gap, sixteen interviews were conducted with restaurant representatives and local producers. The findings of this research contribute to understanding the structural barriers hindering the effective integration of local products in restaurant operations. The study reveals that the dynamic nature of restaurant offerings relying on local ingredients, poses challenges for chefs, requiring constant innovation. Additionally, factors such as reliability, transparency, and hyper-local procurement strategies play crucial roles in the adoption of local products. However, logistics and communication emerge as significant shortcomings in restaurant-producer relations, and addressing these issues could improve efficiency, financial outcomes, and product quality. Furthermore, the study provides practical recommendations for enhancing the efficiency of collaboration between local producers and restaurants and fostering mutual understanding between them.*

Keywords: local ingredients, local products, local producers, rural hospitality, restaurant procurement, Hungary

2.1. Introduction

Food from a short geographical distance is considered a defining part of tourism products, contributing to both the creation and consumption of the travel experience (Datta, 2022; Mckercher et al., 2008; Robinson & Getz, 2014). Local dishes can have a significant impact

on the image of a destination and on tourists' satisfaction as well (Aydin et al., 2022, Ab Karim et al., 2011). Consumers have a keen interest in the origin of food and “neolocalism” is considered an increasingly popular consumer trend, connecting them to a specific geographical area (Bacig & Young, 2019). Recent research has shown that consumer demand for environmentally friendly goods and services is constantly increasing (Pekersen & Canöz, 2022), bringing about many changes in the field of hospitality management as well.

Restaurants aim to incorporate the highest possible proportion of locally-sourced ingredients into their operations (Lavecchia, 2008), and managers seek to identify consumers who are willing to pay a premium price for these services (Jang et al., 2011). Several restaurants in Europe and North America have played a significant role in reviving forgotten food and recipes, promoting local food heritage, thus revitalizing the cultural assets of certain regions (Zocchi & Fontefrancesco, 2020).

Effective integration of locally-sourced ingredients influence the competitive potential of local businesses (Quattrocioni et al., 2017). In this regard, collaboration between local producers and local restaurants is a crucial aspect. While previous studies on the cooperation between producers and restaurants have primarily focused on Western and Southern European as well as North American regions (e.g., Alsetoohy et al., 2021; Duram & Cawley, 2012; Paciarotti & Torregiani, 2018), consumers' food choices and supply chains are subject to various socio-economic, environmental, and political influences, thus they vary by countries (Roy & Ballantine, 2020). Research on the benefits and obstacles in sourcing local food products directly from local producers including the perspective of Hungarian restaurants and producers is limited. This study may contribute to the literature by examining a less-researched destination and understanding how various, region-specific factors of Hungary shape the use of local ingredients in the rural hospitality sector.

Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions:

What aspects influence the utilization of local ingredients in the Hungarian rural hospitality system through collaboration between local producers and restaurants?

Exploring this topic, involving both restaurant representatives and producers, through qualitative methods may contribute to comprehending the underlying reasons and motivations behind utilizing local products. The findings of this study contribute to the local food system discussion and have implications for restaurants, producers and policymakers. The results will contribute to filling the research gap identified in the literature and provide practical advice to enhance the efficiency of collaboration between local producers and restaurants.

This paper is structured as follows. After the introduction, the literature on the demand and supply of local products will be analyzed. The research results are then presented, beginning with an overview of the applied semi-structured interview methodology, followed by a detailed analysis of the interviews conducted with restaurant representatives and local producers. Finally, the last section illustrates the main practical and theoretical implications, then the article concludes by summarizing the limitations and further research lines.

2.2. Literature review

2.2.1. Restaurateurs' Perspective on Local Products

Local products have been defined in various ways in the literature, depending on the perspectives and approaches of researchers. Previous studies have unveiled multiple conceptions of local food among both producers and consumers, encompassing definitions associated with political aspects, the proximity between purchase and sale, and the geographical source of production (Sharma et al., 2012). Trivette (2015) highlighted two approaches to defining local food. “Local by relationship” approach scrutinizes the actors within supply chains and the direct interaction between producers and consumers, while “local by proximity” considers geographic and/or political boundaries. Research has referenced a 100-mile radius (Dunne et al., 2011) or a 100-kilometer radius (Duram & Cawley, 2012). However, Duram and Cawley (2012) observed that hospitality experts seldom ground definitions on the geographical distance of origin. In accordance with this, Sharma et al. (2009) define local food in the restaurant sector as agricultural products that are cultivated or processed in close proximity and acquired by restaurants either directly from local markets or mostly from local suppliers.

Regarding the use of local products in restaurants, several benefits can be identified based on previous research. Munjal et al. (2016) demonstrated that chefs are moving away from frozen and semi-finished goods, opting for fresh and local products to be processed based on authentic recipes. Moreover, the availability of local products ensures a continuous supply, leading many establishments to incorporate them as ingredients. However, the “sustainability” factor does not usually play a decisive role in the purchasing decision of chefs (Ozturk & Akoglu, 2020).

Recent studies have also examined the underlying reasons behind localist restaurant concepts. Ozturk and Akoglu (2020) highlighted five factors, with better taste and freshness of local products being the most influential. Additionally, transparency and traceability criteria can be seen as added advantages of using local ingredients (Zocchi & Fontefrancesco, 2020). An increasing number of restaurants emphasize their close relationship with the environment, with seasonality being a defining component for authentic gastronomic experiences (Home et al., 2020). Duram and Cawley (2012) also noted that the variety of local ingredients presents creative challenges for chefs who work with them. Hyperlocal restaurant concepts, where a high proportion of necessary ingredients are sourced from the restaurant's own production, are also a major trend in the hospitality industry (De Chabert-Rios & Deale, 2018).

The procurement of raw materials can be considered a critical and resource-consuming process for restaurant operations. Therefore, chefs often prefer the coordination of ordering processes and delivery through wholesalers, as it saves time and allows for fast delivery (Givens & Dunning, 2019). On the other hand, Duram and Cawley's (2012) research highlighted that local producers can quickly satisfy the needs of restaurants in urgent order situations.

Since food costs typically account for a third of a restaurant's operating costs (Bristow & Jenkins, 2018), the price of local products plays a significant role in purchasing decisions. Dishes made from local ingredients may be more expensive for both consumers and restaurants, which is why lower costs often explain the purchase of imported and/or intermediate products (Alsetoohy et al., 2021). However, Zocchi and Fontefrancesco (2020)

argue that farming activities carried out by the restaurants themselves can result in cost savings.

Offering locally sourced food enhances the satisfaction of guests by providing them with knowledge about the environmental impact, nutritional value, food safety protocols, utilization of local agricultural resources, and support for local farmers (Alsetoohy et al., 2021). Thus, many restaurants choose to collaborate with local suppliers and service providers as part of their corporate social responsibility strategy, as concerns about social sustainability rise among companies (Pozo & Tachizawa, 2018). This has the potential to improve the community's social connections and promote social equity for local residents. Thus, offering food made from local ingredients, restaurants can enhance their corporate image (Rahman et al., 2018; Kala, 2020). Communicating the use of local ingredients positively influences consumers' perceptions, evokes positive emotions, and increases their intention to revisit the restaurant (Bacig & Young, 2019). Moreover, menus based on local ingredients can significantly contribute to the restaurant's association with its destination, helping guests gain a deeper understanding of the place and fostering an implicit connection with the surrounding landscape (Home et al., 2020).

2.2.2. Challenges and Opportunities of Local Producers

According to recent studies, the increased demand for local foods not only benefits the local economy but also promotes agricultural diversification and sustainable regional development (Boas et al., 2021; Deere & Royce, 2019). However, recent articles have also highlighted various difficulties and obstacles. Paciarotti and Torregiani (2018) emphasize that producers encounter significant challenges in managing their daily activities, as they must handle both production and sales responsibilities, which has a direct impact on transportation logistics and overall delivery times. The time and effort invested in sales-related tasks, such as order processing, customer communication, and coordination with distribution channels, can divert valuable resources away from production activities. Consequently, the efficiency and effectiveness of transport operations may be compromised.

The link between the local producers' markets and the local hospitality appears to be relatively low (Paciarotti & Torregiani, 2018). One of the major difficulties faced by

producers is ensuring a consistent quantity and quality of products, while dealing with fluctuating demand in the hospitality sector. Producers often struggle to meet the ordered quantity from all customers due to seasonal variations in demand. However, effective information sharing between restaurants and farmers plays a crucial role. If information is quickly and accurately conveyed, farmers can anticipate sales for the upcoming seasons and plan accordingly (Pesci & Brinkley, 2021). To enhance supply chain efficiency, the proactive seasonal planning and regular communication can be provided by the distributors. Givens and Dunning (2019) found that growers emphasized the necessity of planning for future seasons and maintaining consistent communication between restaurants and producers facilitated by distributors in the supply chain. However, while traditional wholesalers and distributors often handle last-minute orders if the product is in stock, this approach is rare among small to mid-sized farms, where owners usually harvest based on received orders (Givens & Dunning, 2019). Providing predictable and reliable demand information not only allows producers to increase production volume (Paciarotti & Torregiani, 2018) but also enables them to expand their product portfolio (Deere & Royce, 2019). In this context, utilizing up-to-date digital solutions may be essential for businesses, particularly during crisis periods, as they contribute to survival and operational effectiveness (Irimiás & Mitev, 2020).

A significant portion of the sales problems faced by small farmers are attributed to inefficiencies in work organization, resulting in disproportionately high sales costs compared to the production volume. Brinkley et al. (2021) highlight that small farmers invest significant human and financial resources in sales and marketing, facing constant competition from more efficient larger producers for sales contracts. Meanwhile, a well-established distribution system would help farmers save time and focus on their core business activities while maintaining direct contact with consumers (Paciarotti & Torregiani, 2018).

Lastly, the connection between direct sales and effective communication within value chains is another key issue. According to Roy et al. (2017), personal relationships between producers and chefs have improved over time through direct interactions, resulting in restaurants valuing purchased goods more than before. Another advantage of direct interactions between farmers and restaurants is that farmers often incorporate feedback into their production decisions (Pesci & Brinkley, 2021).

2.3. Methodology

The research objective is to identify the potential barriers and enablers of local products' distribution within the hospitality system of Hungary. Therefore, the primary research question (RQ) of the study is as follows:

What aspects influence the utilization of local ingredients in the Hungarian rural hospitality system through collaboration between local producers and restaurants?

In addition to the main research question, four sub-questions have been formulated:

- *Q1: How do Hungarian producers and restaurant professionals define the term "local ingredient"?*
- *Q2: What are the main directions of producers' sales activities and the role of local restaurants in them?*
- *Q3: What are the main characteristics of restaurants' procurement strategies and the role of local ingredients in them?*
- *Q4: What steps are necessary for fostering effective collaboration between local producers and restaurants?*

Due to the nature of the research questions, a qualitative approach is proposed for the present study, allowing for a thorough exploration of the underlying reasons and explanations of the issue.

Qualitative methods provide an in-depth perspective that helps researchers understand phenomena differently than a purely positivist approach (Riley & Love, 2000). Inductive analysis is employed to understand these various realities as they are uncovered, leading to study designs that can adapt to unforeseen realities (Riley & Love, 2000). Over the past decade, qualitative tourism researchers have predominantly used interviews and observations (Wilson et al., 2020). Interviews are particularly valued by social scientists for examining social realities and tourists' experiences. Nevertheless, some scholars argue that tourism research is well-suited for exploring innovative, experimental, and mixed methods to study social phenomena (Wilson et al., 2020).

Therefore, semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out with key decision-makers in sourcing food in restaurants and local producers in Hungary to examine their opinions, motivations, and attitudes.

The research is structured into five main steps:

- interview guide development based on literature, and pre-test;
- sampling;
- conducting interviews (data collection); and
- data analysis and findings.

Following the literature review proposed in the previous section, two interview guides were designed to address the main actors within the hospitality ecosystem: local producers and restaurateurs. The preliminary version of the interview guides was then pre-tested with professionals from both fields to assess the difficulty, correct interpretation of interview questions, and time consumption.

Using targeted sampling, a list of interviewees was compiled based on a local restaurant guide rating Hungarian restaurants (Dining Guide) and an online source on local producers' rating in Hungary (Magyar Konyha). Participants were selected from those who purchase local ingredients to compile their menus and were assumed to have information on the operation of local supply chains. The sample included only representatives of enterprises operating outside the administrative boundaries of Budapest, the capital of Hungary, which are significant from a tourism point of view. All interviewees operated within tourist areas designated by Hungarian Government Decree 429/2020. (IX. 14.) (Table 5).

The data collection phase was conducted over a two-month period in November-December 2022. In total, 16 face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of 9 Hungarian rural restaurants (coded as R1 – R9), as well as with 7 local producers (coded as P1 – P7).

Table 5. Interviewees and location of represented businesses

| | Code of Interviewee | Gender | Position | Location of Represented Business (tourism destinations based on Hungarian Government Decree 429/2020 (IX. 14)) |
|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--|
| Restaurants | R1 | Female | General manager, owner | Eger region |
| | R2 | Male | Executive chef | Greater Budapest |
| | R3 | Female | General manager | Tokaj and Nyíregyháza |
| | R4 | Male | Executive chef | Győr and Pannonhalma |
| | R5 | Male | Executive chef, owner | Sopron region |
| | R6 | Male | General manager, owner | Eger region |
| | R7 | Female | Executive chef, owner | Balaton |
| | R8 | Female | Executive chef | Szeged region |
| | R9 | Male | General manager | Debrecen and surroundings |
| Producers | P1 | Male | Individual operator | Greater Budapest |
| | P2 | Male | CEO, owner | Greater Budapest |
| | P3 | Female | Individual operator | Balaton |
| | P4 | Male | CEO | Eger region |
| | P5 | Female | CEO, owner | Szeged region |
| | P6 | Female | Individual operator | Greater Budapest |
| | P7 | Male | Individual operator | Debrecen and surroundings |

Source: own compilation

In both interview guides, there were 11 open-ended questions, including six main questions and five sub-questions (Table 6). The concepts of local food products and sustainability mentioned in the questions were briefly explained to the interviewees. The interviews were conducted in Hungarian language. They lasted for 70 to 90 minutes and were tape-recorded, accompanied by detailed notes. Data underwent a filtering process to remove irrelevant information, thus, only statements aligned with the research objectives were selected. Subsequently, the transcripts of the interviews were coded line-by-line. The interviews were analyzed thematically, revealing distinct themes and sub-themes that pertain to the significance of local food and its utilization in restaurants. In the presentation of the research results that follow, direct quotes from the interviewees are included to clearly illustrate their opinions on the topic.

Table 6. *Questions raised in the interview guides*

| Interview questions | |
|--|---|
| Restaurants | Producers |
| <p>1. What does your establishment consider its main missions, and how is this reflected in its business concept?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How would you characterize the current market environment in which you operate?</i> <p>2. Identify your current main procurement channels/sources!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What changes have you experienced in terms of goods supply over the past 5-10 years? Please mention some positive and negative phenomena in the procurement area!</i> <p>3. If you are referring to local products, what distance do you consider local? (expressed in kilometers)</p> <p>4. Do you use goods from local producers near the restaurant? If yes, why? If not, why not?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If yes, what products do you buy from local sources?</i> • <i>If you answered yes to the previous question, what characterizes the cooperation with local producers and suppliers? What role does the “locality” concept play in the restaurant's business model?</i> • <i>If you answered no, why not? What are the primary factors that lead you not to choose local sources?</i> <p>5. Do you agree with the statement that it is simpler and cheaper to source raw materials from large supermarkets, and furthermore, local producers may not always be able to provide the same quality and quantity of goods? Please share your experiences related to this!</p> <p>6. What changes are necessary to promote and ensure the continuous supply of local ingredients?</p> | <p>1. What does your enterprise consider its primary missions, and how does this manifest in day-to-day operations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How would you characterize the market environment in which you currently operate?</i> <p>2. Identify your current main sales channels!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What changes have you observed in the sales of goods produced/manufactured by your enterprise in the last 5-10 years? Please mention some positive and negative phenomena in this area!</i> <p>3. If you are referring to local products, what distance do you consider local? (expressed in kilometers)</p> <p>4. What significance does local sales hold in the life of your suppliers, particularly in relation to local restaurants?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What characterizes your relationship with local partner hospitality establishments?</i> • <i>What are the positive aspects of the collaboration with local restaurants?</i> • <i>What are the negative aspects of these collaborations?</i> <p>5. Do you agree with the assertion that sourcing ingredients from large supermarkets is simpler and cheaper than from local sources? Please share your experiences related to this!</p> <p>6. What changes are necessary to promote the popularity and ensure the continuous supply of local ingredients?</p> |

Source: own compilation

2.4. Results

2.4.1. Definition of “local products”

Providing a precise definition of local products was one of the primary objectives of this study. However, based on the responses of the interviewees, a wide range of definitions

emerged. One participant asserted that only ingredients sourced from within the boundaries of the restaurant's immediate settlement can be considered local. In contrast, the majority of participants defined local products based on a specified distance. Some interviewees mentioned a radius of 15 to 20 kilometers, while others expressed a more flexible perspective, considering goods from within 30 or even 50 kilometers as local. Concurrently, there was a general consensus that, for the sake of a diverse restaurant offering, it is also necessary to procure products from more distant sources. Moreover, the study reveals variations in the definition of local products, which are contingent upon the specific product types under consideration (Table 7). This is exemplified by the distinct sourcing strategies employed by the restaurants, where some products exclusively originate from the region, while other ingredients are procured in close proximity to the restaurant. These nuanced distinctions underscore the complexity inherent in defining and sourcing local products, highlighting the importance of considering contextual factors and product-specific criteria in establishing local sourcing practices.

Table 7. Different perspectives on the definition of local products

| |
|--|
| <p><i>“There is a buffalo reserve that falls outside the 30-kilometer radius for us, but they offer such unique products that we still consider the distance acceptable” (R6)</i></p> <p><i>“Regarding wines, our menu exclusively features those from the southern coast of Lake Balaton, so we do not source them from the northern coast or other regions. However, our vegetable producer and dairy manufacturer are located just two corners away from the restaurant” (R9)</i></p> |
|--|

Source: own compilation

2.4.2. Analysis of logistics and producers' sales channels

In this study, one of the objectives was to examine the challenges faced by local producers in terms of logistics and sales channels. Thus, during the interviews, participants were asked about the advantages and disadvantages of direct sales to restaurants. Based on the responses, it was found that the catering industry was not identified as the primary target for direct sales. According to the interviewed producers, restaurants tend to order minimal quantities directly from them and predominantly purchase from wholesalers. One interviewee mentioned two high-end restaurants in their immediate vicinity, but only one of them showed interest in local products, while the other primarily sourced from wholesalers for unknown reasons.

Additionally, some producers mentioned farmers' markets and mass caterers as their target customers. Moreover, several producers heavily relied on exports.

During the interviews, participants also discussed what they considered to be the most significant threat to the supply of local ingredients. The majority of participants identified lower-quality, cheap imported goods as the main danger, which could be addressed through producer cooperation and actions taken by authorities. Furthermore, one interviewee emphasized the need for Hungarian producers to focus on producing high-quality products in order to compete with imported goods.

Looking back at recent years, suppliers reported positive changes in restaurateurs' interest in local products. According to several interviewees, there is an increasing openness among consumers towards regional products. One participant mentioned that the foundation of quality Hungarian gastronomy lies in local products: “(...) because high-quality Hungarian cuisine begins there, that restaurants are supplied with locally grown ingredients” (P4). Additionally, chefs are gaining more knowledge about the use of special ingredients and are handling them with greater consciousness in their work, allowing for creativity and exploration of flavors and aromas: “They like to play with their colors, tastes, and smells” (P2).

Overall, based on the interviews, logistics emerged as the most problematic aspect for small producers. One interviewee mentioned being responsible for production, logistics, and sales to partners simultaneously. Another supplier found delivery to be particularly challenging, especially during the summer when demand is highest, as delivering perishable dairy products quickly and professionally poses a challenge. Another producer mentioned that they used to have in-person meetings with existing and potential partners but could no longer accommodate them due to time constraints. They also highlighted that the decrease in personal contact is a negative consequence of increased administrative burdens affecting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Some interviewees emphasized the advantages of digital solutions, such as outsourcing logistics to external companies and integrating webshops for efficient order processing and delivery. Strategic marketing efforts were also deemed highly profitable and rapid cash-generating processes. Furthermore, the role of word-

of-mouth marketing was mentioned, as consumers and hospitality professionals can effectively promote local suppliers among their colleagues.

However, a lack of quality was considered a significant disadvantage of local products by some interviewees. According to one participant, certain Hungarian small producers tend to justify quality deficiencies resulting from their lack of knowledge by blaming bureaucratic burdens. They claim that the need to handle paperwork alongside production leads to compromises in product quality.

Moreover, the majority of suppliers emphasized that the most challenging aspect of working with restaurants is the unpredictability of orders, which is often difficult to reconcile with seasonal production. Producers highlighted the problems related to ingredient supply caused by seasonal fluctuations in catering demand, which is common in several Hungarian destinations, such as Balaton and Eger regions.

2.4.3. Analysis of restaurants' ingredient procurement

During the interviews with restaurants' representatives, the focus was on understanding the role of local products in their concepts. All the investigated establishments shared a common practice of highlighting seasonal dishes, the procurement strategy of the restaurateurs revolved around utilizing ingredients available during the current season to compose their menus. However, there were variations in the quality and utilization of local ingredients among the restaurants. One restaurant primarily relied on local ingredients from its inception, as its concept was built upon a strong emphasis on sourcing from local producers. In contrast, another interviewee expressed concerns about the limited availability of locally sourced goods, which is why they could only create temporary thematic programs and periodically available tasting menus based on them. Nevertheless, they sold products from nearby farms in the *delicatessen* attached to their restaurant.

In terms of the quantity of locally grown produce used by restaurants, an executive chef from a rural establishment mentioned that they relied on approximately 40 percent from local small-scale producers and 60 percent from wholesalers. In another interview, it was noted that local producers alone are insufficient to meet the demand for all necessary ingredients

required by restaurants in the current Hungarian context. However, their products were seen as valuable additions to the menu, contributing to the uniqueness of the restaurants. One interviewee referred to the concept of hyper-local sourcing, where representatives of restaurants mentioned meeting their ingredient needs through their own production or by foraging for vegetable ingredients such as fruits, herbs, and seeds in nature.

Regarding changes in the procurement of local products over the past five years, the majority of participants reported positive trends. They observed an overall improvement in the quality of farmers' products, enabling them to replace a certain amount of imported goods with locally sourced ones. According to a restaurant manager, they used to rely heavily on wholesalers for most of their necessary products. However, due to dissatisfaction with the quality of goods, they gradually increased their purchases from local producers.

Some interviewees mentioned that the relationship with local suppliers had changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. They reported more frequent negotiations, even on a daily basis. Conversely, a representative from another restaurant noted that after reopening following the COVID-19 lockdown, local suppliers struggled to meet the required quantities due to reduced inventory volumes.

The interviews also explored the details of contact between restaurants and producers. Producers now often visit restaurants in the hope of establishing collaborations. However, some restaurateurs expressed difficulties in finding local producers, and even when they did, the producers were unable to consistently supply the quantities needed by the restaurant. This aspect was discussed in most interviews, highlighting that local suppliers often struggle to ensure a continuous supply, with both the quantity and quality provided being quite unpredictable. While most restaurants prefer ordering smaller quantities multiple times due to limited storage capacities, local suppliers often struggle to meet these demands. Additionally, communicating “lack of quality” issues to suppliers was considered challenging, as it could strain the relationship.

Transparency emerged as one of the most crucial aspects in restaurant-producer relations, according to the narratives of the restaurant representatives. Interviewees emphasized the importance of finding trustworthy suppliers, noting that physical proximity was essential for

transparency, allowing restaurant representatives to visit farms and observe their production activities. Many participants considered trust and personal knowledge of the supplier to be more important than relying solely on products with various certifications such as responsible, sustainable, or organic labels.

However, according to the restaurateurs, suppliers had significant shortcomings in marketing and logistics. Some mentioned that farmers' markets were useful for marketing products, but during one interview, it was highlighted that products from small producers were often sold there at the same price as those intended for restaurants that continuously purchased larger quantities.

Nevertheless, based on the interviews, only a few restaurants were able to fully base their menus on local sources due to fluctuations in quantity and rapidly changing product quality. Thus, popular permanent menu items sometimes had to be prepared with ingredients from more predictable but distant sources. The nose-to-tail approach was also mentioned in multiple interviews, indicating that local producers often sell whole poultry, prompting restaurants to create menu offerings that utilize the entire animal.

Finally, despite the efforts to prioritize local sourcing, all the restaurants still had to purchase imported ingredients. France and Austria were frequently mentioned among the foreign sources, while some participants also mentioned Japan and India. One restaurant manager noted that until a Hungarian alternative was found, they would serve international products such as wagyu beef and Bresse chicken. An executive chef overseeing a fine dining restaurant and a bistro reported ordering special foods from foreign suppliers primarily for the fine dining menu, while compromises were necessary for the bistro, often relying on cheaper non-premium goods from wholesalers. In contrast, a representative from another restaurant mentioned that procuring goods in the Hungarian capital city, Budapest, faced fewer barriers compared to their current countryside restaurant, as high-quality product wholesalers were easily accessible.

Table 8. Comments from interviewees on different perspectives of local product procurement

| |
|--|
| <p><i>“Local producers could never take over the role of wholesalers, howbeit they should spice up my menu with their products.” (R5)</i></p> <p><i>“We usually visit the nearby forest and pick the pine buds, so that we can produce syrup of them.” (R1)</i></p> <p><i>“Our chef buys the cheese from a local source where we know what the goats are fed with.” (R9)</i></p> <p><i>“We consider ‘organic’ label as a plus, however, it is more important for us to know the supplier personally.” (R3)</i></p> |
|--|

Source: own compilation

2.4.4. Necessary steps for effective collaboration of local producers and restaurants

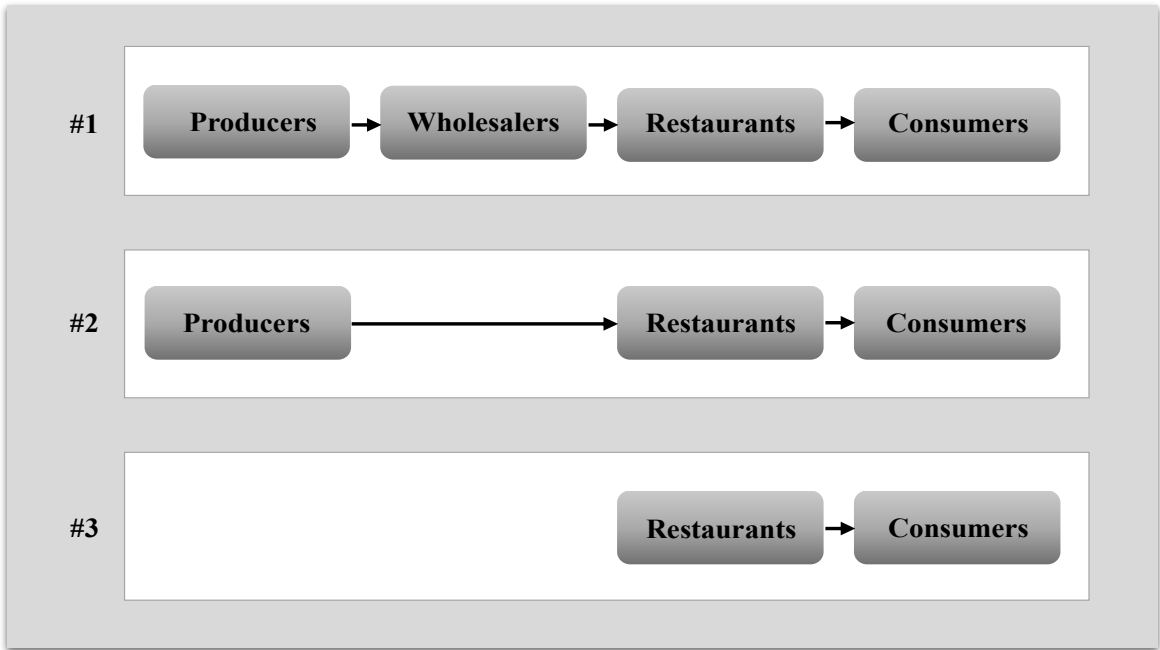
It was also deemed important to investigate the steps deemed necessary by the interviewees to enhance the efficiency of collaboration between local producers and restaurants. Both the majority of restaurant representatives and producers emphasized the prominent role of state measures and governmental bodies. Some participants believed that calling for additional development programs and tenders specifically tailored to small producers would be necessary. They pointed out that the current tender systems primarily benefit larger farmers due to the high financial contribution and technical requirements imposed on them. Additionally, several individuals stressed the need for legislative amendments, highlighting the practical obstacles faced by the farm-to-table concept in Hungary, where multiple certificates are required as proof of origin for all products.

Moreover, one interviewee drew attention to the deficiencies in Hungary's vocational education system, particularly in the field of dairy processing techniques. They expressed concern about the absence of established educational institutions addressing this area of expertise. Education-related issues were further discussed, with interviewees also addressing challenges in research and development. One producer suggested that a new production culture based on traditional local crops and vegetables could evolve in a few decades, potentially reducing the country's long-term import needs and making domestic products more widely accessible and affordable. However, it was emphasized that even with decisive government actions, it may take at least 15 years to observe measurable changes.

During interviews with representatives of specific catering establishments, the significance of local cooperatives and associations was highlighted. These organizations, comprising local operators with extensive networks within a particular settlement or micro-region, were seen as beneficial for fostering connections between the demand and supply sides of local products. Organizing forums and professional events was considered advisable to facilitate such connections. Additionally, professional support in the areas of sales and marketing was deemed necessary.

The interviewees also discussed the importance of a shift in attitude, which some anticipated with a generational change in the sector. However, restaurant representatives also expected a change in the mindset of local suppliers. They stressed the importance of suppliers being flexible and responsive to changes, producing in accordance with demand, and maintaining continuous communication with restaurants and other producers. Conscious production planning, focusing on growing unique or different varieties of produce, was seen as a potential means to improve the financial outcomes of local producers significantly.

Figure 4. Supply chain models in hospitality



Source: own compilation

2.5. Discussion

This study was conducted with the aim of analyzing the role of local ingredients in the hospitality ecosystem and identifying the limitations associated with their procurement. Based on an examination of existing literature and empirical research findings, it has been demonstrated that similar challenges exist in the sourcing of local products in Hungary and Western European countries (Paciarotti & Torregiani, 2018). In line with Roy and Ballantine (2020), this study's findings have emphasized that the definition of local ingredients represents a primary challenge influenced by geographical, political, and economic factors. A notable disparity was observed between the interview results and the literature. While previous sources considered products within a 100-kilometer radius as local (e.g., Duram & Cawley, 2012), the interviewed participants mentioned significantly shorter distances, typically ranging from 15 to 50 kilometers.

The results of the interviews revealed considerable variations in the level of local ingredient utilization by restaurants, owing to fluctuating availability and quality of goods. Nonetheless, respondents highlighted the importance of freshness regardless of origin, corroborating previous research findings (Ozturk & Akoglu, 2020; Munjal et al., 2016). The frequent changes in restaurant offerings based on seasonal and local ingredients, including tasting menus and thematic programs, can also be interpreted as a challenge for chefs, as it demands constant innovation, and these findings align with the results of Duram and Cawley (2012). Additionally, the aspect of reliability and transparency, also emphasized in the works of Zocchi and Fontefrancesco (2020) and Roy et al. (2017), can serve as additional motivation for local procurement.

In line with Chabert-Rios and Deale (2018), this research also identified hyper-local procurement strategies, as representatives of several catering establishments reported meeting their ingredient needs through in-house production. The research underscores logistics and communication as major challenges in restaurant-producer relationships. Diverse perspectives regarding engagement were evident, with some facing difficulties in locating local producers, while others expressed indifference towards catering establishments. Moreover, restaurateurs highlighted the unpredictability in both quantity and

quality from small-scale producers, while suppliers emphasized the fluctuating demand and increased orders during peak seasons as significant hurdles. The interviews with producers also identified the issue of producers being responsible for multiple tasks, including production, marketing, and sales, which has already been highlighted in previous literature (Paciarotti & Torregiani, 2018).

Furthermore, in line with the findings of Irimiás and Mitev (2020), the adoption of digital solutions and the emphasis on strategic marketing activities can play a key role in this context. Greater involvement of professional organizations and governmental bodies is expected in promoting these initiatives. Several interviewees expressed the need for active intervention by authorities, such as issuing development tenders, implementing deregulatory legislative amendments, and promoting research and development projects.

2.5.1. Theoretical Implications

The study highlights the complexities inherent in defining and sourcing local products, emphasizing the need to consider local contextual factors and product-specific criteria. This contributes to existing literature on the challenges of local sourcing practices in the hospitality industry.

The findings underscore the critical role of trust and transparency in fostering successful relationships between restaurants and local suppliers. This contributes to supply chain literature by highlighting the importance of relational factors in the context of local food procurement.

External factors such as government policies and educational systems significantly influence the feasibility of local sourcing initiatives. This emphasizes the interconnectedness of the local food ecosystem with broader socio-economic structures, adding depth to discussions on sustainability and food system resilience.

The study suggests a potential shift in the local food culture towards conscious production planning and a focus on unique varieties of produce. This opens avenues for further research on the socio-cultural dynamics driving changes in food preferences and consumption patterns over time.

Overall, the findings contribute valuable insights for both practitioners and researchers in understanding the complexities and opportunities associated with local food sourcing in the hospitality industry.

2.5.2. Practical Implications

Based on the research findings, restaurants should invest in building strong relationships with local producers to secure a consistent supply of high-quality ingredients. Transparency and trust emerged as key factors in these relationships, suggesting the importance of personal connections and open communication channels.

Understanding the nuanced definitions of “local products” as revealed in this study is crucial for restaurants seeking to align their sourcing strategies with consumer preferences. Restaurants should consider adopting flexible definitions based on both distance and contextual factors to ensure a diverse and appealing menu offering.

Small producers face significant challenges in logistics, which can impact their ability to supply restaurants consistently. Restaurants could explore digital solutions, such as outsourcing logistics and integrating webshops, to streamline the ordering process and ensure timely delivery of perishable goods.

Both restaurants and producers advocate for government support and legislative amendments to promote the farm-to-table concept. Calling for development programs tailored to small producers and addressing vocational education gaps in food processing techniques are essential steps towards fostering a thriving local food ecosystem.

2.6. Conclusions

This study provides an analysis of the role of local ingredients in the hospitality system, uncovering various challenges and opportunities associated with their procurement in Hungary. The study reveals a notable disparity between traditional definitions of “local” in existing literature and the perceptions of stakeholders in Hungary. While previous studies often defined local products within a 100-kilometer radius (Duram & Cawley, 2012), this study demonstrates significantly shorter distances, typically ranging from 15 to 50

kilometers. This discrepancy underscores the importance of context-specific definitions that consider geographical, political, and economic factors in determining the locality of ingredients.

Challenges abound in the sourcing and procurement of local ingredients, affecting both restaurants and local producers. Fluctuating availability and quality of goods pose significant obstacles, necessitating constant adaptation by chefs and producers alike. Logistics and communication emerge as major pain points in restaurant-producer relationships, highlighting the critical need for streamlined communication channels and transparent partnerships to ensure a consistent supply chain.

The study identifies a growing trend towards hyper-local procurement strategies, where restaurants seek to meet their raw material needs through in-house production or collection. This trend reflects a broader shift towards sustainability and authenticity in culinary offerings, signaling an opportunity for stakeholders to embrace local sourcing practices and strengthen connections with the surrounding community.

In conclusion, it is essential to facilitate communication between the parties involved. Smooth communication can help the daily work of stakeholders, such as menu compilation for restaurant representatives and production planning for producers. This positive aspect was also emphasized in the research conducted by Givens and Dunning (2019). In the long term, these efforts can lead to improved financial results and product quality, enhancing efficiency and reducing the dependence of restaurants on products from distant sources.

The adoption of digital solutions and strategic marketing activities emerges as crucial drivers for enhancing efficiency and reducing dependence on distant sources (Irimiás & Mitev, 2020). Moreover, greater involvement of professional organizations and governmental bodies is essential to promote these initiatives effectively. Stakeholders anticipate active intervention from authorities, including the issuance of development tenders, implementation of deregulatory legislative amendments, and promotion of research and development projects to support local sourcing initiatives.

In the pursuit of a more sustainable and resilient food system, fostering collaborative efforts between restaurants, local producers, and governmental bodies is paramount. By facilitating communication, embracing technology, and advocating for supportive policies, stakeholders can work towards building a robust local food ecosystem that promotes economic prosperity, environmental stewardship, and social well-being. Ultimately, these efforts are crucial for ensuring the long-term viability and sustainability of local sourcing practices in the hospitality industry.

2.6.1. Limitations and future research

However, the present research has several limitations that should be acknowledged and addressing them through planned future research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Firstly, it is important to note that the results of the current study cannot be generalized due to the specificities of the methodology employed. To overcome this limitation, conducting future quantitative research involving a larger sample of representatives from diverse restaurants would provide a broader perspective on the role of local ingredients in the hospitality system.

Secondly, the timing of data collection may have influenced the findings, as the interviews were conducted within a context characterized by elevated energy costs and inflationary pressures, thus, the public mood was predominantly negative.

Thirdly, the research focused exclusively on certified rural restaurants and ranked producers, which may have limited the insights gained. Extending the scope of the research to include other types of catering establishments, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to local ingredient procurement across the broader hospitality sector. Additionally, involving a wider range of suppliers in the study would allow for a deeper exploration of their motivations, practices, and the everyday challenges they face in supplying local ingredients.

By addressing these limitations and pursuing these research ideas, a more comprehensive understanding of the role of local ingredients in the hospitality system can be achieved,

ultimately leading to the development of effective strategies and practices that promote sustainable and locally integrated food systems.

3. RESTAURANT CONSUMER PREFERENCES TOWARDS SEASONAL AND LOCAL INGREDIENTS IN TWO HUNGARIAN DESTINATIONS

Reference: Csapody, B., Ásványi, K., Jászberényi, M. (n/a) ‘Restaurant consumer preferences towards seasonal and local ingredients in two Hungarian destinations’, *European Journal of Tourism Research*. (status: resubmitted after revision)

Abstract: *This article aims to investigate and compare the restaurant preferences of Generation Z consumers visiting Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest (Hungary) in order to identify the subjective perceptions of seasonal and local ingredients in the restaurant industry. Preferences are examined through Q-methodology, with statements generated based on relevant literature. In the study, two distinct samples are employed: with 49 consumers from the Lake Balaton and 33 consumers from the Greater Budapest destination. These samples are also subjects of a comparative analysis. The research identifies five consumer preference groups (factors) for Lake Balaton and four factors for Greater Budapest. Consumers demonstrate an overall interest in trying local food specialties, primarily driven by a desire to immerse themselves in the food culture of the destinations. The factors exhibit relatively low commitment to choosing environmentally sustainable restaurants, while consumers aim to support local businesses and job creation. Comparatively, consumers at Lake Balaton place higher value on local wine offerings, while they consider the food in Greater Budapest's restaurants to be more unique. This study provides information based on Q-methodology research results regarding consumer preferences, offering advice to restaurants on customizing their offerings for diverse consumer groups.*

Keywords: consumer preferences, Generation Z, seasonal ingredients, local food, Q-methodology

3.1. Introduction

The restaurant industry has witnessed a global trend of increasing demand for seasonal, local, and organic ingredients, as well as traditional local cuisine (Ozturk & Akoglu, 2020;

Alsetoohy et al., 2021). Before the Covid-19 outbreak, many restaurants were already incorporating locally sourced and sustainably grown items into their menus (Bonn et al., 2016). The pandemic further accelerated consumer preference for locally produced ingredients, while also emphasized the significance of sustainability practices in restaurant business (Alsetoohy et al., 2021).

This trend is particularly evident among younger generations, such as Generation Z, defined as individuals born between 1996 and 2010 (Monaco, 2018). Generation Z presents a unique challenge for tourism managers and marketers due to their distinct behaviour patterns compared to previous generations, resulting in significant changes in consumer behaviour (Stavrianea & Kamenidou, 2021; Orea-Giner & Fusté-Forné, 2023). However, Generation Z has received less attention compared to other age groups such as millennials (Dimitriou & AbouElgheit, 2019). This new generation is also bringing fresh challenges and transformations to the world of tourism and hospitality, necessitating quick adaptation and response from marketers.

However, while there is literature on the agro-food industry, such as studies on green, organic, or toxic-free food products (Trivedi et al., 2023; Cicia et al., 2021; Troudi & Bouyoucef, 2020) and comparative analyses of food consumption patterns across countries (Šedík et al., 2019), there is a lack of research comparing restaurant consumption patterns in two specific destinations. Even though some international studies have addressed the use of locally sourced food and sustainable products in restaurants (Zocchi & Fontefrancesco, 2020; Ozturk & Akoglu, 2020; Alsetoohy et al., 2021), this topic remains relatively understudied in the context of post-communist countries, such as Hungary, where unique historical and political conditions necessitate specific consideration (Makowska et al., 2024). Moreover, there is a lack in investigating consumer attitudes toward Hungarian restaurants offering food made of locally sourced ingredients.

A distinctive aspect of this article is its methodology. The research highlights the importance of Q-methodology for exploratory studies aimed at forming consumer typologies. This approach is suitable for examining consumption patterns and preferences, while also simplifying the complexity of respondents' opinions (Ásványi et al., 2022). The results of

this Q-methodology study provide an in-depth portrayal of Generation Z's subjective perspectives on restaurants' use of local and seasonal ingredients in their menu composition.

Moreover, heightened competition among tourist destinations underscores the necessity of analysing factors that influence tourists' behavioural intentions in their decision-making process. Santos et al. (2022) emphasize that emotions towards a destination play a crucial role in shaping tourists' satisfaction levels and subsequently influence future consumer behaviours, including loyalty or disloyalty towards the destination and its tourism offerings. Although regional comparisons are common in tourism studies (Bočkus et al., 2023; Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2021), existing tourist attitude research has predominantly focused on specific geographical units, with no studies systematically comparing restaurant consumers in two different Hungarian destinations. Therefore, conducting a comparative analysis is particularly valuable for identifying differences among distinct attitude groups concerning destination-specific offerings.

Hence, the present research aims to investigate and compare the restaurant preferences of consumers visiting Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest destinations, with specific emphasis on the role of seasonal and local ingredients in the restaurant sector, addressing our main research questions:

- *What are the primary restaurant consumer preference groups among Generation Z visiting Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest, according to their preference for food based on seasonal and local ingredients?*
- *What are the similarities and differences among the preferences of Generation Z consumers for food based on seasonal and local ingredients in Greater Budapest and Lake Balaton?*

This study contributes to the theories by employing Q-methodology to analyse perspectives on seasonal and local ingredients for the creation of consumer typologies, thereby enriching and expanding the literature on Generation Z's restaurant preferences. From a practical perspective, this study also offers significant managerial implications. As Generation Z emerges as a responsible consumer group with increasing purchasing power, the study reveals patterns that can inform targeted marketing strategies in the restaurant industry.

This article is structured as follows. Firstly, the literature review explores responsible consumer trends and food consumption patterns of Generation Z, examines previous research related to restaurant practices concerning local food culture and the concept of “locality” within hospitality marketing. Subsequently, the Q-methodology and the research specifications are introduced. Then, a comprehensive analysis and comparison of samples as well as consumer preference groups is conducted. The article concludes by presenting its conclusions, theoretical and practical implications, and limitations of the research.

3.2. Literature review

3.2.1. Responsible consumer trends in hospitality

The demand for fresh, seasonal, and sustainable ingredients, as well as destination-specific traditional dishes, significantly influences consumer trends, leading to changes in hospitality management (Jang et al., 2011). In the context of restaurant consumers, the term “local” when describing food is primarily associated with the word “fresh” (Conoly & Lee, 2023). A growing number of environmentally conscious consumers place value not only on the quality of the dining experience but also on the sense of contributing positively to the environment when dining at a restaurant (Parker, 2011). Restaurants are striving to incorporate “green foods” into their operations to the greatest extent possible and identify consumers who possess both the intention and willingness to pay (WTP) a premium price for such services (Mahasuweerachai & Suttikun, 2023; Jang et al., 2011).

The willingness to pay (WTP) for sustainable food is influenced by various factors. Galati et al. (2021) argue that the opinions of other tourists significantly affect potential guests' behavioural intentions and WTP. Additionally, consumers' intention to pay a premium for green products is influenced by their environmental attitudes and the perceived ease of purchasing such goods (Galati et al., 2023). Furthermore, the presence of certifications impacts consumers' perceptions by reducing information asymmetry and providing additional assurances about the lower environmental and social impact of the product or process (Galati et al., 2023). Conversely, Futtrup and Grunert (2023) found that while price-conscious consumers hold positive expectations regarding certified organic labelling, they tend to avoid visiting restaurants with such certifications due to anticipated high costs.

Nonetheless, explicit (online) communication of specific consumption values, such as functional aspects (restaurant ambience, staff behaviour), emotional, and epistemic (menu options) factors, can significantly influence customers' intentions towards organic food restaurants (OFR) (Ray et al., 2023).

Moreover, food-related lifestyles have emerged as a defining form of psychographic segmentation, encompassing the general characteristics of consumers, including their gastronomic activities, attitudes, interests, and opinions (Bacig & Young, 2019). Kim and Huang (2021) states, that locavores hold three fundamental beliefs: the superiority of local food, opposition to imported food, and a commitment to supporting the local community. Therefore, locavores were more likely to perceive a restaurant offering locally sourced products as authentic. Additional research indicated that if tourists perceive a low level of emotional benefit, they tend to express greater dissatisfaction with local food offerings (Seongseop et al., 2021). Nevertheless, a study conducted by Lang and Lemmerer (2019) investigating consumer perspectives revealed that environmental benefits ranked only 15th out of 18 listed benefits, thus challenging the prevailing research and marketing assumption that environmental sustainability serves as the primary motivation for restaurant patrons choosing local foods.

While the responsible consumption in hospitality has become a new research trend in Western Europe and North America, little previous research has examined it in the context of post-communist countries – among them in Hungary. Previous studies conducted in post-communist countries of Europe also highlight the emerging role of the country-of-origin effect as a form of patriotism in response to the challenges of purchasing foreign goods during the socialist era (Makowska et al., 2024; Velčovská & Valečková, 2018). Local food consumption in Hungary, however, is a less researched topic. Gonda et al. (2021) argue that local products have become a new trend in tourism and hospitality, domestic tourists preferring local food have emerged as an important consumer segment at Hungarian destinations. Beke et al. (2022) found that sustainable quality of life is becoming increasingly important to the younger generation in Hungary, particularly with regard to healthy eating. They examined the main motivational and purchasing incentive factors, identifying hedonistic experiences (such as joy, the discovery of new foods, and curiosity about new

flavours) as the most significant. Health benefits and nutritional content, however, were found to be less influential motivators.

3.2.2. Food consumption patterns of Generation Z

Generation Z has become a responsible consumer group with rising purchasing power that significantly influences the direction of sustainable foodservice (Huang et al., 2022; Mitić & Vehapi, 2021). However, according to Orea-Giner and Fusté-Forné (2023), members of Generation Z report that adopting sustainable consumption patterns can be challenging due to the high cost of sustainable food. Zuo et al. (2022) indicates that Generation Z consumers' food preferences are multifaceted, involving four dimensions: dish evaluation, dietary choice, marketing innovation, and service quality. Additionally, this generation shows a keen interest in the health benefits of food products and adopts a value-based perspective, preferring food items that provide good value for money (Mitić & Vehapi, 2021).

Marketing products to young consumer segments through “green” messaging has become widespread, as Generation Z prioritizes product attributes associated with environmental conservation and personal well-being (Su et al., 2019; Orea-Giner & Fusté-Forné, 2023). Environmental concerns positively impact Generation Z consumers' willingness to pay more for green products, partly due to their generally lower disposable income, however, they may be significantly influenced by green marketing efforts (Gomes et al., 2023). Nonetheless, situational, cultural, and restaurant-related factors are crucial in shaping Generation Z consumers' moral judgement regarding restaurant choices (Huang et al., 2022). Orea-Giner and Fusté-Forné (2023) noted that living in rural areas with substantial agricultural and livestock activities can support the adoption of sustainable consumption practices through the use of local foods. Additionally, the feeling of “warm glow” can motivate Generation Z consumers to patronize green restaurants, as they often view these establishments as socially and environmentally responsible rather than profit-driven (Mahasuweerachai & Suttikun, 2022).

Generation Z travellers seek experiences that connect them with local cuisine as a means of cultural preservation and interaction with local people, appreciating both local knowledge and service (Orea-Giner & Fusté-Forné, 2023). Similarly, Hoang et al. (2024) found that

millennial and Generation Z travellers are particularly inclined to prioritize the culinary experience at restaurants offering traditional food, sometimes overlooking other factors such as hygiene in favour of the unique culinary experience.

3.2.3. Reflection of local food culture in restaurants

Given the growing significance of the food experiences for tourists and its direct impact on their satisfaction with dining environments, it is essential for restaurants to concentrate on factors such as offering traditional cuisine and opportunities to engage with local food cultures (Coughlan & Saayman, 2018). Munjal et al. (2016) proposed that hospitality professionals should actively seek out and document traditional local dishes, ultimately incorporating them into guests' dining experiences. For many restaurants, emphasizing their concept's connectedness to local food culture in their personal and online communication presents an opportunity worth exploring (Csapody et al., 2022). Menus based on locally sourced ingredients can significantly contribute to visitors' identification with a destination and facilitate a deeper understanding of its unique characteristics, establishing an implicit connection with the region (Home et al., 2020). Reflection to locality is essential, as it not only enhances consumers' loyalty but also contributes to the preservation of local cultural and culinary identity (Laškarin Ažić et al., 2023). Strategies that foster collaboration between restaurants (creators of the final products) and the province (suppliers of raw materials), can be accomplished by forging synergetic relationships, establishing networks of gastronomic routes, and elevating the value of local products (Millán Vázquez de la Torre et al., 2016).

3.2.4. Concept of locality in restaurant marketing

Sourcing food from local food systems and incorporating components of the local food heritage are frequently observed strategies used by restaurants to promote sustainability (Huang & Hall, 2023). Rahman et al. (2018) states that offering locally sourced food can enhance the restaurant's image and lead to heightened guest satisfaction. For restaurants, effectively communicating their use of local ingredients can positively influence consumer perceptions, evoking favourable emotions that, in turn, impact their intention to revisit (Bacig & Young, 2019). Kim and Huang (2021) advise restaurant managers to tailor their marketing strategies and promotions accordingly, underscoring the value of highlighting the distinctive

aspects of locavore practices in marketing messages to enhance market competitiveness. However, emphasizing the contribution to the local economy proves to be more impactful than solely focusing on potential environmental protection aspects (Lang & Lemmerer, 2019). When tourists consume regional cuisine, it generates a market potential that can also promote the advancement of sustainable farming, preserve traditional agricultural landscapes, and bolster the local economy (Sims, 2009).

As Givens and Dunning (2019) states, effective “storytelling”, wherein restaurants communicate the names of producers and the sources of their procurements, can be useful in shaping consumer perceptions. The menu serves as a primary tool through which restaurants engage with consumers and influence their decision-making (Shafieizadeh & Tao, 2020).

However, transparency must be emphasized to avoid accusations of greenwashing. Alsetoohy et al. (2021) recommend that restaurants seeking media exposure with sustainable messages should undergo scrutiny and obtain accreditation from credible “green” associations or authorities. Nonetheless, Duram and Cawley (2012) highlight that restaurants often encounter significant costs when striving to be featured on sustainable restaurant listings, despite such listings being regarded as a vital source of information for guests seeking green dining options.

3.3. Methodology

In this study, research gaps were addressed by delving into the distinct consumer preference groups within Generation Z pertaining to food based on seasonal and local ingredients. To achieve this, Q-methodology was employed to explore and compare the restaurant consumer preferences in two destinations. Our analysis focused on Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest as Hungary’s two popular destinations. In 2022, the Lake Balaton region was the most popular destination within Hungarian rural areas, accounting for 32% of all guest nights. Greater Budapest destination was ranked third, contributing to 8% of the total guest nights in rural Hungary (Hungarian Tourism Agency, 2023).

The two destinations exhibit distinctive tourism and gastronomic brand profiles. Lake Balaton is acknowledged as a popular, year-round destination, providing a wide range of

leisure opportunities. It is positioned as a place for waterfront relaxation, complemented by a variety of active, cultural, gastronomic, and health-related tourism offerings. Lake Balaton's gastronomic offering is highlighted in the tourism strategy of Hungary ("Turizmus 2.0"), as offering a "*wide range of gastronomic experiences*", attracting visitors from diverse demographic and geographic backgrounds, with a highly varied range of available offerings (Hungarian Tourism Agency, 2021, 191).

The Greater Budapest destination encompasses active and eco-tourism products, enriched with historical attractions. It is important to note that the destination excludes the Hungarian capital, Budapest. However, it includes the Danube Bend region, Lake Velence – Hungary's third-largest natural lake – as well as historically significant cities such as Gödöllő and Székesfehérvár. As defined by the Hungarian Tourism Agency, this integrated tourism region encourages the extension of stays during visits to Budapest. From a gastronomic perspective, promotional messages for the Greater Budapest area emphasize a "*rural taste adventure in a day*", with the aim of involving visitors in local culinary experiences (Hungarian Tourism Agency, 2021, 191).

3.3.1. Overview of Q-methodology

Q-methodology is relatively seldom employed in the exploration of issues within the agro-food business (e.g. Mandolesi et al., 2023) and restaurant management (e.g. Kim, 2018). However, its application is becoming increasingly prevalent in tourism research, as evidenced by a growing number of studies in this domain (e.g., Stergiou & Airey, 2011; Nikraftar & Jafarpour, 2020; Ásványi et al., 2022; Ásványi & Chaker, 2023). Previous research has demonstrated that the application of this methodology is suitable for understanding consumer attitudes and behavior in a specific market, thereby facilitating the formation of market target groups (Hofmeister-Tóth & Simon, 2006).

Q-methodology as a hybrid tool mixing qualitative and quantitative methods ("qualiquantology"), is, however, frequently used to elucidate subjective opinions, attitudes, and value orientations (Stenner & Stainton Rogers, 2004; Hofmeister-Tóth & Simon, 2006). As previous studies have demonstrated its suitability for this purpose (Kim, 2018; Nikraftar & Jafarpour, 2020), Q-methodology was employed to identify various patterns of food

preferences and restaurant consumer attitudes, rather than to quantify the number of individuals with specific perceptions or beliefs.

It employs quantitative methods, such as correlation and factor analysis, to discern typologies and systematically analyse individual cases (Brown, 1996). In contrast to other research methods in the social sciences, Q-methodology focuses on analysing participants rather than variables to determine specific typologies (Hofmeister-Tóth & Simon, 2006). In Q-methodology research, “factors are clusters of people for a set of variables” (Stergiou & Airey, 2011, 316), specifically individuals who hold similar perspectives related to the study’s theme.

While Q-methodology offers several advantages, it is also important to acknowledge certain limitations associated with its use. Stergiou and Airey (2011) argued that determining the precise research questions and problems best suited for Q-methodology remains challenging. Nevertheless, Barry and Proops (1999) suggest that this methodology represents an attempt to structure and comprehend subjectivity in a coherent manner for all readers. Due to its methodological underpinnings in factor analysis, some scholars emphasize Q-methodology’s capacity to facilitate scientific investigation of subjective phenomena (Previte et al., 2007). This appeal, particularly for tourism researchers, lies in its focus on the subjective lived experiences of individuals (Stergiou & Airey, 2011). While quantitative methods identify overall trends and proportions within a population, Q-methodology may enhance these findings by providing insights into the underlying intellectual reasoning and understanding behind these trends (Barry & Proops, 1999; Stergiou & Airey, 2011). Nonetheless, the application of Q-methodology entails considerable time investment, including formulating Q statements, and often necessitates personal assistance to help participants complete the evaluation table (Barry & Proops, 1999). Since, in Q-methodology, the participants are the variables rather than the samples, a large number of participants is not required – an optimal range is 10-50 respondents (Q-sorters) (Hofmeister-Tóth & Simon, 2006).

3.3.2. Steps of Q-methodology research

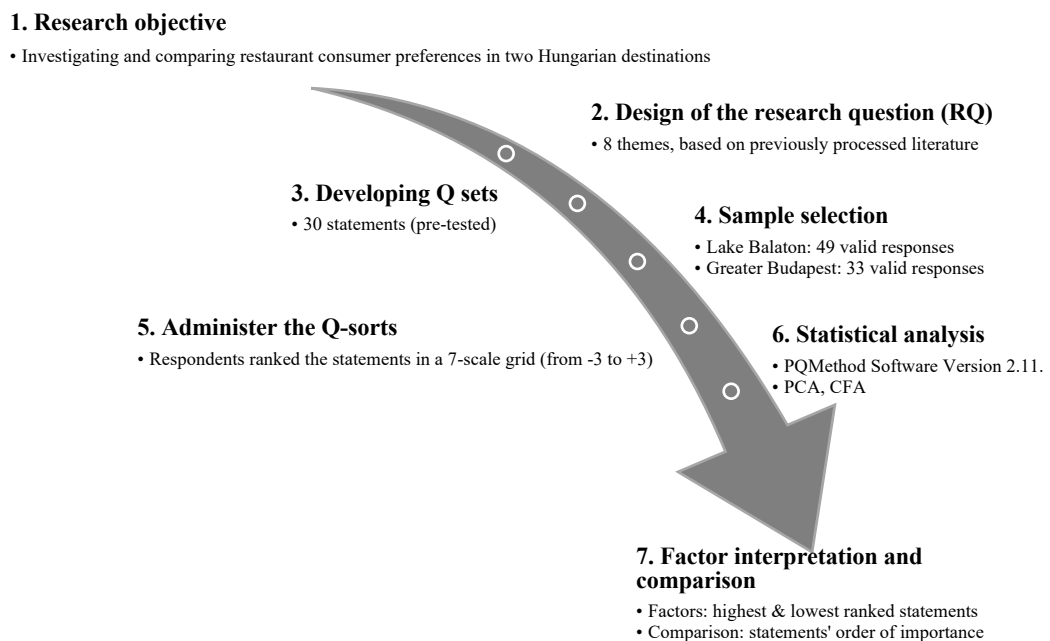
Firstly, our research aim was defined, which emerged from the identified gap in literature. Our aim was to conduct a comparative analysis into the restaurant consumer preferences in

Generation Z with special regard to food based on seasonal and local ingredients in two Hungarian destinations, in Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest.

The second step involved the analysis of literature available through academic databases, such as Web of Science and Science Direct, all pertaining to the research objective. As a result of the literature review, the main research questions were formulated:

- *What are the primary restaurant consumer preference groups among Generation Z visiting Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest, according to their preference for food based on seasonal and local ingredients?*
- *What are the similarities and differences among the preferences of Generation Z consumers for food based on seasonal and local ingredients in Greater Budapest and Lake Balaton?*

Figure 5. Steps of research



Source: own compilation, based on Ásványi et al. (2022)

The analysis of recent studies has also led to the identification of eight key themes related to consumer preferences and restaurant attributes associated with seasonal and local food: (1) use of seasonally, locally available ingredients; (2) local focus in restaurant concepts; (3) restaurant consumers' willingness to pay; (4) convenience and speed; (5) food neophilia/neophobia; (6) connection to local communities; (7) role of special diets; and (8) environmentally friendly and sustainable practices.

Building upon these themes, a set of 30 statements were formulated in Hungarian language, aligned with the restaurant offerings of the destinations. As Damio (2016) argued, the statements should consist of subjective opinions rather than facts, aiming to evoke emotional responses regarding the topic. To ensure clarity, these statements underwent pre-testing with 5 Generation Z students and were subsequently adjusted, shortened, or rephrased as needed.

For data collection, undergraduate students from Corvinus University of Budapest were recruited, representing Generation Z (born between 1996 and 2010) (Monaco, 2018), as participants for the study to complete the Q-sorts. The Q-sort tables were formulated using Microsoft Excel, providing detailed instructions for the completion of the evaluation tables. Subsequently, these tables were disseminated to participants via the university's intranet, and participants were obliged to submit the finalized Q-sort assessments via email. The data collection process was carried out during two distinct time periods: from September 30 to October 12, 2021, resulting in 49 valid responses from travellers to the Lake Balaton region, and from March 10 to 31, 2022, yielding 33 valid responses from travellers to the Greater Budapest destination. Contingency questions were formulated to screen out visitors who had not visited the respective destinations within the past 12 months. Some Q-sorts were invalidated during the process ("Lake Balaton" sample: 2 invalid sorts; "Greater Budapest" sample: 3 invalid sorts) due to incomplete filling or not meeting the criteria established by the contingency questions.

Figure 6. *Q-sort table*

| -3 (3 statements) | -2 (4 statements) | -1 (5 statements) | 0 (6 statements) | +1 (5 statements) | +2 (4 statements) | +3 (3 statements) |
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Source: own compilation

During data collection, respondents in both cases were asked to place the statements in the Q-sort table (evaluation table of quasi-normal distribution, see Figure 6), indicating their strong agreement (+3), neutrality (0), or strong disagreement (-3) with the statements. Within a 7-point scale, there could be 3 instances associated with a value of -3; 4 instances with -2; 5 instances with -1; 6 instances with a neutral (0) value; 5 instances with +1; 4 instances with +2; and +3 had 3 instances; with no possibility of exceeding or diminishing these counts.

Data analysis was conducted using PQMethod software version 2.11, exploring solutions with varying numbers of factors for both samples. For factor extraction, analysis included two techniques: centroid factor analysis (CFA) and principal component analysis (PCA). The study employed the VARIMAX rotation method. Subsequently, Q-sorts are flagged to maximize differentiation between factors. First, automatic pre-flagging was conducted, followed by manual flagging based on a review of the loadings. There is no definitive, objectively correct way to determine the number of factors to extract, however, simpler solutions with fewer factors are generally preferred (Mandolesi et al., 2023). In this study, the final determination of the number of factors was guided by relevant correlation coefficients (with a maximum value of 0.5 between individual factors), Eigenvalue (with a minimum value of 1), and variance level (with a minimum of 60%). Furthermore, each factor was required to encompass responses from at least 2 participants. As a result, five factors were identified among the sample of travellers to Lake Balaton, while four factors were distinguished among tourists in the Greater Budapest area.

3.4. Results

3.4.1. Factors identified among restaurant consumers in Lake Balaton destination

In the case of travellers to Lake Balaton, the first factor (LB-A) identified is the “immersed localists”, characterized by their strong emphasis on immersing themselves in the destination’s culture, particularly its food culture. For them, experiencing the local culture is paramount, and they actively seek opportunities to engage with the local population, avoiding the behaviour typical of outsider tourists. They demonstrate a keen interest in food and beverages made of seasonal and locally sourced ingredients, such as wines from the Balaton wine region. Additionally, they exhibit attentiveness to specific dietary requirements.

“Culinary enthusiasts” as the second group (LB-B) share certain similarities with the previous factor. They also display an interest in the destination’s food culture and are open to trying local dishes and ingredients, but they rely more on their instincts when selecting restaurants and meals. These travellers are less motivated by novelty-seeking during their journeys and tend to prefer familiar products, vegetables, and fruits regardless of location and season. Seasonal ingredients do not hold particular significance for them, and they do not consider the food and drink offerings at Lake Balaton’s hospitality establishments to be particularly unique.

The third group (LB-C) is characterized by their price sensitivity, yet they express a willingness to indulge in local cuisine during their travels, provided it is available at an affordable cost. These “price-sensitive localists” associate freshness with short supply chains and locally sourced products. While they value comfort, location, and quick service when choosing a restaurant, sustainable certification and special dietary options do not hold significant appeal to them.

The fourth factor (LB-D), comprising the “conscious localists”, exhibits a dual consciousness. On one hand, they are environmentally conscious consumers, which is reflected in their preference for purchasing local products and seeking food derived from local raw materials. Supporting local producers plays a crucial role in their choices. Furthermore, they demonstrate a keen curiosity for the local gastronomic culture, actively

seeking menus featuring local ingredients at Lake Balaton. On the other hand, they are also considered conscious restaurant patrons who plan their restaurant visits by reputable restaurant guides (e.g., Michelin) or review platforms (e.g., TripAdvisor). In contrast to the previously mentioned groups, price sensitivity is less pronounced among this segment.

Lastly, the fifth factor (LB-E), the “price-sensitive comfort-seeker” exhibits significant price sensitivity, with the quality of food and beverages at Lake Balaton being of less decisive importance to them. Their primary considerations involve the comfort, location, and efficiency of restaurant services. They actively seek establishments that cater to special dietary needs, but they do not perceive the restaurant offerings at Balaton to be particularly distinctive.

Table 9. Factors of consumers in Lake Balaton destination

| FACTORS | LB-A | LB-B | LB-C | LB-D | LB-E |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| QSORTS | Immersed Localists | Culinary Enthusiasts | Price-sensitive Localists | Conscious Localists | Price-sensitive Comfort-Seekers |
| # of respondents | 16 | 8 | 5 | 11 | 9 |
| % expl. variance | 21 | 10 | 10 | 17 | 12 |

Source: own compilation

Our research involving the “Lake Balaton” sample did not yield any consensus statement at the significance level ($p > 0.05$). Nevertheless, the results revealed a degree of unity among respondents concerning certain statements. Most participants expressed the view that by sampling local dishes, they could gain insights into the food culture of the destination. Furthermore, respondents displayed a consistent perspective on the inclusion of references to the local origin of food and beverages in restaurant menus, such as naming producers. Such practices were not perceived as mere “marketing ploys” but were associated with highly positive values in terms of environmental sustainability and food quality. However, regarding the link between local food consumption and job creation, the results indicated a lack of motivation for consumers to opt for local food, with each factor displaying neutrality on this matter. Nevertheless, such perceptions can be easily altered through conscious communication and education of consumers.

Moreover, the findings shed light on characteristics contributing to the formation of distinct groups, wherein significant differences and contradictions emerged among factors. The most significant characteristic in this regard was the attitude towards special dietary offerings (e.g., vegan, gluten-free, and lactose-free options), with respondents displaying various perspectives on this matter. Additionally, the issue of willingness to pay higher prices for restaurants that adhere to sustainable principles also evoked contrasting opinions among the respondents.

3.4.2. Factors identified among restaurant consumers in Greater Budapest destination

“Social localists” (GB-A) specifically look for food made from local ingredients during their travels, which they associate with higher quality and consider them fresher. The social impacts are also decisive for them, since on the one hand it drives them that by buying local products they create jobs, and on the other hand they expect the restaurants to support local communities with further actions. At the same time, they do not tend to behave as outsider tourists nor to look for offerings suitable for special diets.

At the same time, “comfort-seeker sceptics” (GB-B) are especially interested in local ingredients during their trips around the Hungarian capital city, the goal of which is to get to know the local food culture more thoroughly by tasting them. However, they do not think that the local ingredients would be significantly higher quality than the imported ones. On the other hand, comfort aspects are decisive in their case when choosing a restaurant as they do not like to spend much time on dining out. It is also very important for them to eat food for a relatively low price during their travels.

For the third factor (GB-C), “price-sensitive globalists”, comfort and cost aspects are also important. However, they are not specifically interested in local food, nor are they looking for environmentally conscious restaurants. Based on the results, they are clear fans of imported food and buy vegetables and fruits regardless of their season.

Finally, the group of “special-dietary localists” (GB-D) was identified, who are primarily distinguished from other factors by the need for an offer suitable for special dietary requirements. In addition, the high rate of seasonal and local ingredients’ use is a decisive

aspect for them when choosing a restaurant. During their travels, they cannot be considered price sensitive, and they do not want to behave as outsider tourists when visiting Greater Budapest.

Table 10. Factors of consumers in Greater Budapest destination

| FACTORS | GB-A | GB-B | GB-C | GB-D |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| QSORTS | Social Localists | Comfort-seeker Sceptics | Price-sensitive Globalists | Special-dietary Localists |
| # of respondents | 9 | 9 | 6 | 9 |
| % expl. variance | 18 | 16 | 14 | 16 |

Source: own compilation

Similar to the “Lake Balaton” sample, statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) consensus statements could not be identified any among those traveling to destinations around Budapest. However, based on the results, it can be said that the respondents had a similar opinion regarding one statement: by tasting local dishes, they will also get to know the food culture of Greater Budapest destination.

3.4.3. Differences and similarities among factors

The empirical findings reveal differences and similarities among various factors (see Table 11). The results show that respondents across diverse factors express some preference for consuming dishes made from locally sourced ingredients when dining out. Nevertheless, only “social localists” (GB-A) strongly believe that the use of local ingredients results in higher quality, which is less conspicuously articulated within other factors (S01). This phenomenon is underscored by the observation that except for the “social localists” (GB-A), other factors consider the use of local ingredients as a subordinated aspect when choosing a restaurant. However, for “price-sensitive comfort-seekers” (LB-E), tasting high-quality local foods when visiting Lake Balaton destination is not a priority.

Table 11. Factor Q sort values for restaurant consumers in Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest destinations

| Statements | LB-A | LB-B | LB-C | LB-D | LB-E | GB-A | GB-B | GB-C | GB-D |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 01. If I know that a dish is made from local ingredients, it also means higher quality for me. | ++ | 0 | + | + | 0 | +++ | 0 | - | ++ |
| 02. When choosing a restaurant in [destination's name], its price level is the primary decision criterion. | 0 | 0 | +++ | --- | +++ | + | ++ | +++ | -- |
| 03. The culinary offerings of [destination's name] are significantly diverse, characterized by uniqueness. | + | - | 0 | 0 | -- | 0 | + | - | - |
| 04. When traveling to [destination's name], a priority is to taste high-quality, local foods. | 0 | + | -- | + | --- | ++ | -- | 0 | - |
| 05. When I am in [destination's name], comfort and speed of service is the primary criterion when eating out. | + | 0 | +++ | - | +++ | 0 | +++ | +++ | - |
| 06. If a restaurant in [destination's name] follows sustainable operational principles, I am willing to pay a somewhat higher amount for their service. | 0 | 0 | -- | + | 0 | 0 | + | - | + |
| 07. Even in the summer, I seek dishes made with tropical fruits, regardless of how far they are imported from. | -- | +++ | --- | -- | 0 | - | -- | ++ | 0 |
| 08. When I am in [destination's name], the label "local" is not appealing to me; I prefer to choose internationally recognized ingredients and wines. | --- | + | - | --- | -- | --- | - | + | --- |
| 09. When visiting [destination's name], I stick to the familiar flavors and dishes from home. | --- | --- | 0 | --- | --- | -- | --- | -- | -- |
| 10. When I am in [destination's name], greater variety is more important to me, so it doesn't matter if a product is made socially responsibly. | - | 0 | - | - | + | 0 | - | + | -- |
| 11. I enjoy trying local foods of [destination's name], as it allows me to also explore the destination's culinary culture. | +++ | +++ | ++ | +++ | ++ | +++ | +++ | +++ | +++ |
| 12. When traveling to [destination's name], it's important to me to visit environmentally conscious restaurants. | 0 | - | - | + | --- | - | 0 | -- | - |
| 13. If I know that a restaurant in [destination's name] uses local ingredients, I consider all other aspects secondary when dining out. | - | --- | --- | 0 | -- | + | --- | --- | 0 |
| 14. The offerings of [destination's name] restaurants can be considered somewhat stereotypical; their menus often revolve around the same dishes. | ++ | ++ | ++ | 0 | +++ | 0 | 0 | + | - |
| 15. When I travel to [destination's name], I expect a restaurant to have a wide selection of international beverages. | -- | - | 0 | - | - | - | --- | - | 0 |
| 16. During my travels to [destination's name], I prefer to behave as an "outsider tourist" avoiding contact with the local population and their food culture. | --- | --- | 0 | -- | + | --- | - | - | --- |
| 17. When dining out in [destination's name], it gives me a sense of satisfaction to know that I am also creating employment for the local population (e.g., producers, restaurant employees). | + | ++ | + | 0 | 0 | ++ | ++ | 0 | ++ |
| 18. When I travel to [destination's name], it is a primary consideration for me that a restaurant supports local market players as well. | + | + | + | ++ | - | ++ | + | 0 | + |
| 19. During my travels to [destination's name], I gladly consume dishes made from local ingredients in restaurants. | +++ | +++ | +++ | +++ | ++ | +++ | +++ | + | +++ |
| 20. In the restaurants of [destination's name], fruits and vegetables should definitely come from the region to ensure their freshness. | + | - | ++ | ++ | - | ++ | ++ | 0 | + |
| 21. I believe that a restaurant in [destination's name] should primarily offer local wines to its guests, while international drinks should not appear on the wine list. | ++ | -- | 0 | ++ | - | + | + | --- | --- |
| 22. I think, tropical fruits can get on the shelves or to restaurant kitchens in [destination's name] just as quickly as local ones, their source does not influence me when choosing a restaurant. | 0 | 0 | - | -- | 0 | -- | - | ++ | 0 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|
| 23. When I am in [destination's name], my restaurant selection is based on restaurant guides' ratings (e.g., Dining Guide, Michelin) or review sites (e.g., Tripadvisor). | -- | ++ | + | +++ | ++ | - | - | ++ | + |
| 24. Restaurants in [destination's name] are expected to use the same fruits and vegetables even in winter, no matter if they come from distant areas. | - | ++ | --- | -- | + | 0 | -- | ++ | + |
| 25. In [destination's name], I look for restaurants with "green" certification. | -- | -- | -- | 0 | -- | - | -- | -- | 0 |
| 26. If the local nature of a dish is emphasized in a restaurant in [destination's name] (e.g., by mentioning producers), I consider it merely a marketing concept with no other intention behind it. | - | -- | - | - | 0 | -- | 0 | -- | -- |
| 27. When traveling to [destination's name], it is less important to me that a restaurant represents local food culture, I prefer international cuisines. | - | + | 0 | - | + | -- | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 28. [destination's name] has a diverse range of ingredients, so when I am there, I opt for local choices, as they have a shorter journey to my plate. | 0 | + | ++ | ++ | - | + | 0 | - | ++ |
| 29. It is important to me to consume seasonal dishes made from locally available ingredients when traveling to [destination's name]. | ++ | - | + | + | - | + | + | 0 | ++ |
| 30. The most important thing for me is that the menu includes dishes suitable for special diets; other factors (e.g., the origin of ingredients) are secondary when I eat out in [destination's name]. | +++ | -- | -- | 0 | ++ | --- | + | + | +++ |
| (Note: +++ = +3; ++ = +2; + = +1; 0 = 0; - = -1; -- = -2; --- = -3) | | | | | | | | | |

Source: own compilation

Dishes made with non-seasonal, imported fruits appear to be a very divisive question. While “price-sensitive localists” (LB-C) absolutely disagree with their use, “culinary enthusiasts” (LB-B) totally seek dishes made with tropical fruits, regardless of where they are imported from. However, a preference was mirrored among most factors (except for LB-B and GB-C) for products labelled as “local”, as respondents considered them appealing.

Furthermore, all groups express some level of interest in trying local culinary specialties, primarily motivated by the intent to delve into the host region's food culture. This is additionally supported by the fact that factors (except for LB-C and LB-E) do not tend to behave as outsider tourists while traveling. A consensus emerges across the factors that they do not seek familiar flavours when traveling, except for the “price-sensitive localists” (LB-C), who show neutrality in this regard.

Overall, the factors exhibit a comparatively lower degree of commitment to patronizing environmentally sustainable restaurants. Most of the factors are not willing to pay a higher amount for sustainable restaurants, with the exception of the “conscious localists” (LB-D), who manifest some inclination toward these dining establishments. This is also proven by the fact that a significant majority of the factors (7 out of 9) do not actively seek restaurants with “green” certification. Conversely, social sustainability aspects emerge as more influential determinants in the restaurant selection process. For most of the factors under

consideration, it gives a sense of satisfaction that their consumption of local food contributes to the bolstering of local market players and generates employment for local people.

In restaurant selection, respondents generally consider comfort and speed of service as important aspects, specifically those belonging to “price-sensitive localists” (LB-C) and “price-sensitive comfort-seekers” (LB-E) from Lake Balaton and “comfort-seeker sceptics” and “price-sensitive globalists” (GB-B and GB-C) from Greater Budapest destinations. Nevertheless, it is a divisive question to choose restaurants based on restaurant guides. While “conscious localists” (LB-D) highly seek restaurants in restaurant guides’ ratings and review sites, “immersed localists” (LB-A), “social localists” (GB-A), and “comfort-seeker sceptics” (GB-B) do not pay attention to these evaluations. It is also noticeable that the “immersed localists” (LB-A) and “special-dietary localists” (GB-D) place the highest importance on restaurants offering options that cater to dietary sensitivities and special eating habits, while for most factors, this is a less important aspect.

Regarding restaurant pricing, most groups exhibit lower levels of price sensitivity, especially “conscious localists” (LB-D). However, “price-sensitive comfort-seekers” (LB-E), “price-sensitive localists” (LB-C), and “price-sensitive globalists” (GB-C) consider restaurant pricing as the primary decisive criterion when eating out.

3.4.4. Differences and similarities between the samples

The comparison of results between the two sample groups also holds significant importance. Employing a comparative approach with the entire dataset, the average values assigned to each statement were calculated, weighted by the number of respondents belonging to each factor. The findings are presented in Table 12, which showcases the order of importance assigned to each statement by restaurant consumers visiting Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest destinations. The ranking in the table reflects the relative significance of statements, ranging from the most important (1st rank) to the least important (30th rank) across both sample groups.

To investigate the differences in the order of importance between the two samples, we compared the “Lake Balaton” sample to the respondents from the Greater Budapest area.

Notably, both groups exhibited similar views on four statements. The foremost ranked statement for both groups was the inclination to try local food in order to explore the gastronomic culture of the destination (1st rank). Additionally, the enjoyment of consuming dishes made from local ingredients during their travels held great significance for both groups (2nd rank). Moreover, respondents from both samples showed opposition towards eating the same dishes as they do at home (30th rank). Similarly, both groups displayed a neutral stance towards selecting a restaurant based on some form of restaurant guide or review page (13th rank).

Nonetheless, the investigation reveals regional distinctions observed in certain statements between the two samples. A difference lies in the perception of local wines on the drinks list. The respondents visiting Greater Budapest destination deem it notably crucial and search for local wines, while those from the Lake Balaton area rank it 14 places further back. A considerable difference of 12 points also emerges concerning the perception of restaurant offerings in the two destinations, with respondents describing it as stereotyped in the case of Lake Balaton. Additionally, a significant difference was noted in the view that respondents traveling to Greater Budapest, which centred on the origin of fruits and vegetables in a restaurant, guaranteeing fresher food. Conversely, for the Lake Balaton sample, the inclusion of dishes suitable for special diets ranked higher by 6 places in terms of importance.

Table 12. Differences between the two samples according to the statements' order of importance

| Statement # ¹ | Lake Balaton sample | | Greater Budapest sample | | Difference ² |
|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| | \bar{X} | Order (rank) | \bar{X} | Order (rank) | |
| 21 | 10,388 | 5 | 18 | 19 | -14 |
| 14 | 7,735 | 3 | 16,182 | 15 | -12 |
| 20 | 12,224 | 12 | 9,273 | 5 | 7 |
| 30 | 10,408 | 6 | 13,364 | 12 | -6 |
| 3 | 19,735 | 22 | 17,364 | 17 | 5 |
| 24 | 17,918 | 19 | 14,455 | 14 | 5 |
| 29 | 11,776 | 9 | 8,818 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | 13,837 | 14 | 12,273 | 10 | 4 |
| 6 | 14,327 | 15 | 13,273 | 11 | 4 |
| 18 | 12,082 | 11 | 10,909 | 7 | 4 |
| 22 | 18,837 | 20 | 16,455 | 16 | 4 |
| 4 | 17,327 | 17 | 18,364 | 20 | -3 |
| 26 | 21,714 | 24 | 22,364 | 27 | -3 |
| 27 | 17,531 | 18 | 18,727 | 21 | -3 |
| 1 | 10,796 | 8 | 9,818 | 6 | 2 |
| 10 | 17,143 | 16 | 17,727 | 18 | -2 |
| 12 | 19,306 | 21 | 19,455 | 23 | -2 |
| 7 | 20,959 | 23 | 18,727 | 22 | 1 |
| 8 | 23,776 | 29 | 23,091 | 28 | 1 |
| 13 | 21,796 | 25 | 20,545 | 24 | 1 |
| 15 | 22,653 | 26 | 21,909 | 25 | 1 |
| 17 | 10,245 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 1 |
| 25 | 23,388 | 27 | 22,091 | 26 | 1 |
| 28 | 12,02 | 10 | 12,091 | 9 | 1 |
| 16 | 23,429 | 28 | 25,818 | 29 | -1 |
| 5 | 10,51 | 7 | 11 | 8 | -1 |
| 9 | 27,388 | 30 | 26,909 | 30 | 0 |
| 11 | 2,388 | 1 | 1,545 | 1 | 0 |
| 19 | 2,796 | 2 | 3,091 | 2 | 0 |
| 23 | 12,49 | 13 | 14,364 | 13 | 0 |

¹ The statements are arranged in accordance with the distance between the two samples.
² Positive difference values, indicative of a higher ranking in the Lake Balaton sample, are highlighted.

Source: own compilation

3.4. Discussion

The study aims to identify distinct Generation Z restaurant consumer preference groups visiting Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest destinations. The results of the study reveal both similarities and differences among these factors based on their food consumption patterns and attitudes, supporting the findings of Bacig and Young (2019) regarding the significance of food-related lifestyles in psychographic segmentation.

Based on our findings, respondents across more factors exhibit a preference for dishes made from locally sourced ingredients when dining out (Gonda et al., 2021). Notably, “social localists” hold a strong belief in the use of local ingredients leading to higher quality (Mahasuweerachai & Suttikun, 2022). This also aligns with Rahman et al.’s (2018) findings that offering locally sourced food can enhance a restaurant’s image and elevate guest satisfaction. Positive word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing can affect potential guests’ intentions to choose local food as well as to pay a premium for these products (Galati et al., 2023; Galati et al., 2021). Moreover, local food also serves as an opportunity to experience authenticity through the destination’s cuisine, thereby promoting sustainable food tourism (Sims, 2009).

However, there is a lack of consensus regarding the association of local ingredients with freshness (Conoly & Lee, 2023). Respondents traveling to Greater Budapest perceived the use of local fruits and vegetables in restaurants as a guarantee of fresher food, while respondents in Lake Balaton destination were less inclined to support this notion.

As demonstrated by Sims (2009), when tourists partake in regional cuisine, it generates market potential: supports sustainable farming, helps to preserve traditional agricultural landscapes, and bolsters local economy. Hence, specific restaurant consumers (such as “social localists”) can be effectively targeted with marketing messages connected to social responsibility (Parker, 2011). This form of communication can also positively influence consumer perceptions, evoking favourable emotions (Mahasuweerachai & Suttikun, 2022), that, in turn, influence their revisit intention (Bacig & Young, 2019).

However, the study shows that there is relatively low commitment among Generation Z consumers to support environmentally sustainable restaurants in general. While restaurants often incur substantial costs in their efforts to secure inclusion on “green” restaurant listings (Duram & Cawley, 2012), our study demonstrates that most consumers do not actively seek green certifications when traveling, in contrast to the findings of Jang et al. (2011). Consequently, it may not be economically viable for restaurants to pursue such listings at high costs.

Research conducted employing Q-methodology demonstrates a significant potential for altering the attitudes of consumer groups regarding statements that were initially perceived as neutral. Mitić and Vehapi (2021) argued that this generation adopts a value-based perspective, preferring food items that provide good value for money. However, our study showed neutrality in various groups concerning the willingness to pay a higher price for food provided by restaurants following sustainable operational practices (Orea-Giner & Fusté-Forné, 2023). In contrast, Gomes et al. (2023) argued that environmental concerns positively impact Generation Z consumers' willingness to pay more for green products, and they may be influenced by green marketing efforts. By taking deliberate measures such as transparently communicating the sources of their products, restaurant managers and chefs can encourage consumers to invest more in these services. Additionally, another statement that emerged as relatively neutral is the level of importance attached by consumers to a restaurant's representation of local food culture, as some groups exhibit a preference for international cuisines. To make local food culture and dishes more appealing to Generation Z consumers, restaurants may attempt to present their food and beverages in a contemporary and appealing manner (Hoang et al., 2024; Orea-Giner & Fusté-Forné, 2023).

Differences in the order of importance of specific statements align with the main associations concerning food and beverage specialties of the two destinations. Lake Balaton's recognition as a wine region explains why respondents generally deemed its wine offerings to be more significant than those of Greater Budapest. Leveraging these local products in restaurant offerings can substantially enhance visitors' connection with a destination and deepen their understanding of its distinctive attributes (Home et al., 2020).

3.5. Conclusions and implications

Using Q-methodology, this study examines the restaurant preferences of generation Z consumers in two Hungarian destinations, resulting in five distinct consumer groups in Lake Balaton and four in Greater Budapest. Comparing the two destinations, in general, restaurant consumers in both Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest had similar views on trying local food to explore gastronomic culture, enjoying dishes made from local ingredients and not seeking familiar flavours when traveling. However, some differences were also observed. Restaurant

consumers at Lake Balaton placed higher value on local wine's offering but considered food in restaurants to be more ordinary. In contrast, Greater Budapest consumers regarded restaurant offerings as more unique, with dishes suitable for special diets rated as relatively important.

In the study, the belief in the higher quality of dishes made with local ingredients is most pronounced among the "social localists", even though, all groups demonstrate an overall interest in trying local food specialties, primarily driven by a desire to immerse themselves in the culinary culture of the host region. Food prepared with non-seasonal, imported fruits appears to be a topic of contention, with "price-sensitive localists" objecting to their utilization at the highest level. The research indicates that the factors exhibit relatively low commitment to supporting environmentally sustainable restaurants, while consumers, such as "social localists", derive satisfaction from supporting local businesses and job creation, making them receptive to messages focused on social responsibility.

3.5.1. Theoretical implications

The research provides insights into the complex interplay of aspects influencing restaurant choices of Generation Z consumers. In this work, localism has been identified as significant aspect in food preferences. The identification of different consumer groups, such as "immersed localists" and "culinary enthusiasts", highlights the importance of localism and culinary preferences in influencing consumer choices. This suggests that consumers' interest in local food culture plays a significant role in their dining decisions. Consumers' positive associations with practices such as naming producers on menus suggest that transparent communication about the origin of food and beverages can positively influence consumer perceptions. For distinct consumer groups, the contribution to the improvement of socioeconomic conditions may emerge as a motivator for choosing restaurants that use locally sourced ingredients. Providing information and certifications on "locality" can build trust and enhance the overall dining experience. However, the identification of consumer groups like "price-sensitive localists" and "price-sensitive comfort-seekers" underscores the importance of price sensitivity in consumer decision-making.

From a methodological perspective, this study demonstrated that Q-methodology can provide researchers in the restaurant business field with opportunities to expand and enrich the range of methodological approaches available for advancing knowledge. This work also proposes a comparative approach to examine local food consumption patterns in various destinations. Regional differences in preferences between Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest indicate that consumer behaviour is also influenced by the specific characteristics – such as food and beverage offering – of the destination (Santos et al., 2022). Thus, future research should consider local context and tailor their focus accordingly.

3.5.2. Practical implications

This research also provides practical implications for restaurants, prompting them to re-evaluate their business models and marketing strategies. The identification of diverse consumer groups, each with unique characteristics and preferences, suggests that a “one-size-fits-all” approach may not be effective in the hospitality industry. This research highlights that certain consumer groups (e.g. “social localists”, “immersed localists”, “price-sensitive localists”, “conscious localists”) can serve as target markets for restaurants offering local and seasonal ingredients. Simultaneously, it is evident that some Generation Z consumer groups require different offerings and messages to be effectively targeted. For instance, “price-sensitive comfort-seekers” value the presence of reasonably priced menu items, “comfort-seeker sceptics” actively seek restaurants with elevated comfort and quick service, and “special-dietary localists” can be targeted by including food and beverages that meet special dietary requirements (e.g. gluten-free, lactose-free) on the menu (Beke et al., 2022). Restaurants need to understand and cater to the specific needs and motivations of different consumer segments in Generation Z.

Locally sourced food and incorporating components of the local food heritage can play a pivotal role in a restaurant’s concept, yielding multifaceted effects (Huang & Hall, 2023). As noted by Munjal et al. (2016), traditional local food on the menu can be leveraged by restaurants. The emphasis on social impacts, such as job creation and support for local communities, suggests that consumers are not only concerned about personal experiences but also about the broader impact of their choices. This has implications for restaurants seeking to align with consumers’ values.

In our study, the consistent interest across different consumer groups in exploring the culinary culture of a destination implies that cultural exploration through food is a key motivator for some consumer groups. Therefore, hospitality professionals should actively seek new opportunities to incorporate local food into the guest experience management. Balancing affordability with a focus on local ingredients may be crucial for businesses in these destinations.

3.5.3. Limitations and further research

The study has limitations that can be improved in future research. One constraint in our research using the Q methodology is the necessity to restrict the number of statements (30 statements) to maintain the engagement of respondents throughout the Q-Sort process. This means that certain topics may need to be combined or, in some cases, excluded. Moreover, the examination of undergraduate university students as respondents limits the generalizability of the findings to other generations engaged in food tourism. Additionally, it should be noted that the respondents were Hungarian travellers, which means that the food culture of the destinations and their domestic food milieu may only exhibit slight differences. To address this limitation, future research should encompass a broader age range and also include foreign tourists.

4. ONLINE CONTENT ANALYSIS FOCUSING ON LOCAL INGREDIENTS AND FOOD CULTURE: A STUDY OF SELECTED FOOD FESTIVAL WEBSITES

Reference: Csapody, B. (2024) ‘Online Content Analysis Focusing on Local Ingredients and Food Culture: A Study of Selected Food Festival Websites’, *Turizmus Bulletin*, 24(1). (status: *published*)

Abstract: *The rising popularity of food tourism is fueled by a growing interest in destination-specific culinary experiences, with food festivals playing a crucial role in this trend. This article conducts a qualitative online content analysis of European and North American food festival websites to explore how these events promote local ingredients and preserve food culture through communication. The analysis reveals an increasing commitment by these festivals to showcase local food and traditions, supporting local producers and service providers. Additionally, the study categorizes food festivals based on their online representation's connection to local ingredients and food culture. Its significance lies in contributing to the understanding of communication patterns of local food culture, offering insights to support festival organizers in fostering local economies and communities.*

Keywords: locality, local ingredients, food culture, local product, food festivals, food tourism

4.1. Introduction

Recently, the appeal of food tourism has been steadily increasing, driven by the growing popularity of distinctive culinary experiences and a heightened appreciation for diverse food-related services (ZARĘBSKI – ZWEGLIŃSKA-GALECKA 2020, JANCSIK et al. 2019). Food tourism events, such as food festivals, fairs, and exhibitions, have become an essential component of this trend, offering visitors the opportunity to explore local food culture, sample regional specialties, and interact with local communities (CSAPODY 2022).

Recent studies have also explored the demand side of food festivals and the role of “locality” in motivating individuals to attend such events (TÓTH et al. 2020). Admittedly, local food-

themed festivals draw participants of diverse demographics. However, for the main segments, it is important motivation to purchase and try local food (KILIÇHAN – KÖŞKER 2020). The increasing interest in locally produced goods has resulted in their emergence as a new category of tourist attractions (MADARÁSZ et al. 2021). Thus, leveraging the concept of “locality” in communication (such as inclusion of place associations in the names of festivals) can serve as great marketing tools (KESGIN et al. 2021).

In this context, this article explores how food festivals promote food based on local ingredients and local food culture through their communication. The research question this article seeks to answer is as follows: What role does the incorporation of local ingredients and the preservation of local food culture play in the online communication of food festivals? While this research aims to conduct a qualitative online content analysis on selected European and North American food festival websites to identify and examine exemplary practices, it does not intend to undertake a comparative analysis across the continents.

By highlighting and presenting some examples, this research also aims to provide insights that can support the efforts of event organizers to enhance local economies’ and communities’ development. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the existing body of knowledge on the role of local food culture and food festival management and its potential to inspire and guide organizers in adopting more practices connected to local food systems.

4.2. Literature Review

4.2.1. Website Communication Characteristics of Food Festivals

The website communication strategies employed by food festivals exhibit a diverse array of distinctions, encompassing variations in update frequency, proportions of dynamic and static content, as well as thematic emphases within their messaging (KESGIN et al. 2020, CSAPODY et al. 2021). Food festival websites extend beyond the provision of functional information regarding the events. Rather, they convey detailed messages regarding food specialties, elucidate their objectives in seeking to influence patterns of consumption behavior, and engage in critical examinations of contemporary food cultures (FROST – LAING 2013). Pre-event online communication plays a pivotal role in attracting a larger

audience to food festivals. To this end, website communication strategies should align with tourists' preferences for high-quality and unique food offerings at the event (YANG et al. 2020).

In the context of implementing sustainable initiatives in online communication, DODDS et al. (2020) identify sustainable transportation alternatives and waste management as the most frequently communicated practices, while highlighting a lack in consistency and efficiency. Addressing the aspect of locality, KESGIN et al. (2021) recommend the utilization of geographical associations by organizers to signify a connection with place, thereby enhancing the festival's image.

4.2.2. Environmental Aspects of Food Festivals Serving Local Food

Food tourism events can play a significant role in promoting environmental preservation (CSAPODY et al. 2021). The importance of the local character of an event and the utilization of local products is considered a crucial component of the sustainability indicators for festivals (LŐRINCZ et al. 2023). The definition of local ingredients stands out as the foremost challenge, influenced by geographical, political, and economic aspects (CSAPODY 2023). In line with this, TRIVETTE (2015) identified two distinct methodologies for characterizing local food: the “local by proximity” approach taking into account geographical and political boundaries, and the “local by relationship” concept, which builds on social factors.

Culinary tourism events can motivate local chefs and vendors to utilize regional products and adopt sustainable food production practices, such as composting food waste and employing biodegradable packaging (CSAPODY et al. 2021). Similarly, CHENG (2023) asserted that food festivals foster sustainable practices by incorporating locally sourced ingredients, thereby encouraging sustainable food production methods and supporting local farmers. This not only affects the local economy but also shortens supply chains, reduces fuel consumption associated with food transportation, and improves environmental conditions (ZARĘBSKI – ZWĘGLIŃSKA-GAŁECKA 2020).

4.2.2. Food Festivals and Economic Opportunities for Local Communities

Traditionally, food-related events, such as fairs and festivals, exhibited a strong connection between local communities and regional agriculture. The promotion of food at these festivals served the dual purpose of stimulating consumption and highlighting the economic prosperity achieved by agricultural industries (HAYNES 2015). Nevertheless, logistics and communication with local producers pose notable challenges, as both the quantity and quality provided by small-scale producers are unpredictable and subject to fluctuations. Given the season-dependent nature of demand in the hospitality sector, small-scale producers frequently encounter difficulties in meeting the increased raw material requirements during peak periods (CSAPODY 2023).

Contemporary food festivals, however, have a broader range of economic opportunities for local communities (JÁSZBERÉNYI 2016). These events generate employment opportunities for locals, from event staff to food vendors and producers. Furthermore, food festivals have the potential to stimulate local food businesses and service providers in tourism industry (CHENG 2023).

However, destinations show variability in terms of the economic potential of their food festivals. Food festivals' impact is more pronounced in areas with high tourism capital, equipped with developed accommodation and other service amenities (YANG et al. 2020). Beyond engaging with the festival's offerings, attendees also avail themselves of other services, thereby contributing supplementary income to the local economy (ZARĘBSKI – ZWEGLIŃSKA-GAŁECKA 2020).

4.2.3. Promotion of Local Food Heritage and Community Development

Memorable tourism experiences are not solely derived from innovative culinary encounters; they are equally propelled by an exploration of local heritage flavors, which involves the incorporation of indigenous ingredients. In this context, storytelling emerges as a valuable tool, guiding visitors to consciously seek and appreciate these authentic values (BENE – PISKÓTI 2019). In this sense, food festivals can contribute to local community development by showcasing traditional cuisine, thereby promoting and preserving local food culture and

heritage (AYDIN et al. 2022). HJALAGER and KWIATKOWSKI (2023) argue that festivals positively impact local community development by offering visitors the opportunity to explore local food culture, participate in cooking classes, and try regional cuisine. Additionally, food festivals serve as platforms for the continuous reinvention of local traditions, identity, and the concept of belonging.

The primary objective of most food festivals is to provide a platform for communities to unite and engage in an environment that fosters a sense of community through shared food preparation and dining experiences (HAYNES 2015). Organizing festivals serves as an effective means to foster and engage the local community. Such initiatives not only instill a sense of pride within the local populace but also present a valuable opportunity to enhance awareness and promote the positive image of the destination (LŐRINCZ et al. 2023, YANG et al. 2020).

CHENG (2023) argues that food festivals, featuring innovative dishes rooted in culinary traditions, contribute to the promotion of place-images and rural lifestyle. The way foods are showcased reflects the community's narratives and aspirations in presenting themselves to both external observers and fellow community members (HAYNES 2015). By opening to tourists and offering diverse programs and culinary offerings, these festivals assist in promoting the popularity of the “locality” (TÓTH et al. 2020). Thus, food festivals also contribute to reducing the social and cultural gap between rural and urban areas (CHENG 2023).

4.3. Methodology and Sample

4.3.1. Overview: Qualitative Content Analysis Methodology

In tourism studies, a frequently employed method is content analysis, however, they mainly adopt a quantitative approach (MOHAMED et al. 2020, LARMOLENKO – SCHNEIDER 2016). Contrary to high number of studies conducted with quantitative methodology, researchers argue in favor of the qualitative approach due to the utilization of non-statistical and exploratory methods (CSORDÁS et al. 2018). Qualitative studies serve as useful tools for exploring intricate and nuanced phenomena that cannot be adequately captured solely

through quantitative methods. One of the key power elements of qualitative research is its ability to generate rich, detailed data that captures the experiences, perspectives, and meanings that participants attach to their social world (KIBISWA 2019).

In this study, a qualitative approach was used to assess European and North American food festivals' online communication practices connected to local ingredients and local food culture. A qualitative content analysis (QICA) was undertaken to identify, assess, and synthesize information found on websites published by festival organizers. QICA is a research method conducted through either an inductive or deductive approach. In the “deductive” or “directed” method, it derives themes from existing theory to establish the framework guiding the research (KIBISWA 2019).

4.3.2. Sample, Data Collection and Analysis

First, existing studies and research in the field were explored. Based on these, the research question (RQ) was formulated: What role does the incorporation of local ingredients and the preservation of local food culture play in the online communication of food festivals?

Table 13. Sources for Selection of Food Festival Websites

| Source | Article | Link |
|------------------------|--|---|
| <i>AllExciting</i> | <i>Food and gourmet festivals in Europe</i> | https://allexciting.com/food-festivals-europe/ |
| <i>CNN Travel</i> | <i>Europe's best summer food festivals</i> | https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/europes-best-food-festivals/index.html |
| <i>TimeOut</i> | <i>11 great food festivals in the U.S.</i> | https://www.timeout.com/usa/things-to-do/best-food-festivals-usa |
| <i>Travel Triangle</i> | <i>10 Food Festivals In Canada For Those Who Love Food And Festivals</i> | https://traveltriangle.com/blog/food-festivals-in-canada/ |

Source: own compilation

For this study, the analysis unit is the textual content available on official website of the pre-selected food festivals. The compilation of the sample was based on online sources listing food festivals (Table 13), resulting in the exclusion of numerous festivals and the omission of smaller-scale events from the initial stage of sample formation, thus potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. Based on the above-mentioned food festival listings, 65 food festivals were initially identified. The screening criteria specified that the festivals must have (1) an official website available (2) in English. After this, pre-defined screening criteria

were applied, thus 31 festivals were excluded: 2 duplications, 19 unavailable official websites, and 10 with no English-language website. In total, 34 festivals were included in the final sample (Table 15). The majority of the examined festivals are held in the United Kingdom (9 festivals), Canada (8 festivals), and the United States (8 festivals). Moreover, a notable observation was that most of these festivals spanned a duration of three days or extended beyond five days. Furthermore, it was observed that a significant proportion of these festivals drew attendance from fewer than 20,000 visitors (Table 14).

Table 14. Distribution across Countries, Duration, and Visitor Numbers of Analyzed Festivals

| | | <i>No. of festivals</i> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Breakdown by country | <i>Canada</i> | 8 |
| | <i>Denmark</i> | 2 |
| | <i>France</i> | 1 |
| | <i>Germany</i> | 1 |
| | <i>Ireland</i> | 2 |
| | <i>Italy</i> | 2 |
| | <i>Switzerland</i> | 1 |
| | <i>United Kingdom</i> | 9 |
| | <i>United States of America</i> | 8 |
| | Breakdown by duration | <i>1-day event</i> |
| <i>2-day event</i> | | 7 |
| <i>3-day event</i> | | 8 |
| <i>4-day event</i> | | 7 |
| <i>5-day event</i> | | 3 |
| <i>Event longer than 5 days</i> | | 8 |
| Breakdown by visitor numbers | <i>up to 20 000 visitors</i> | 5 |
| | <i>20 001 – 40 000 visitors</i> | 4 |
| | <i>40 001 – 60 000 visitors</i> | 3 |
| | <i>60 001 – 80 000 visitors</i> | 3 |
| | <i>80 001 – 100 000 visitors</i> | 2 |
| | <i>more than 100 000 visitors</i> | 1 |
| | <i>No data available</i> | 16 |

Source: own compilation

In the second stage, English versions of the websites were selected. To collect textual data, the researcher exclusively analyzed pages on the official websites, delving no more than two links deep on each site. Analysis of each festival's website began with an examination of the home page, followed by pages accessible from the homepage and main menu, and subsequently extended to all other sections. No external websites or social media platforms were subjected to analysis. Only textual data was scrutinized. The data collection period

extended from May 21, 2023, to July 15, 2023. During the third stage, websites' textual data underwent analysis. Initially, a coding scheme was developed in alignment with the identified research objectives (NEUMAN 2014). For this study, deductive coding was used, codes were predetermined based on prior literature (DODDS et al. 2020, CSAPODY et al. 2021). The final coding scheme consisted of three categories (local food and ingredients, seasonal food and ingredients, and local food culture) and 9 codes. Utilizing the a priori categories and indicators, the frequencies of information related to the categories were recorded. The researcher examined a moderately sized set of webpages, manually analyzing online content to comprehensively capture contextual features.

Table 15. Food Festivals Included in the Analysis

| <i>Festival names (in alphabetic order)</i> | <i>Location</i> | |
|---|------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Aarhus Food Festival</i> | <i>Aarhus</i> | <i>Denmark</i> |
| <i>Abergavenny Food Festival</i> | <i>Abergavenny</i> | <i>UK</i> |
| <i>Aspen Food and Wine Classic</i> | <i>Aspen</i> | <i>US</i> |
| <i>Atlanta Food & Wine Festival</i> | <i>Atlanta</i> | <i>US</i> |
| <i>Blenheim Palace Food Festival</i> | <i>Woodstock</i> | <i>UK</i> |
| <i>Butter Tart Festival</i> | <i>Midland</i> | <i>Canada</i> |
| <i>Castroville Artichoke Festival</i> | <i>Castroville</i> | <i>US</i> |
| <i>Cheese</i> | <i>Bra</i> | <i>Italy</i> |
| <i>Copenhagen Cooking</i> | <i>Copenhagen</i> | <i>Denmark</i> |
| <i>Cork on a Fork Food Festival</i> | <i>Cork</i> | <i>Ireland</i> |
| <i>Corn And Apple Festival</i> | <i>Morden</i> | <i>Canada</i> |
| <i>Dine Out Vancouver Festival</i> | <i>Vancouver</i> | <i>Canada</i> |
| <i>Dorset Seafood Festival</i> | <i>Weymouth</i> | <i>UK</i> |
| <i>Edinburgh Food Festival</i> | <i>Edinburgh</i> | <i>UK</i> |
| <i>Exeter Food and Drink Festival</i> | <i>Exeter</i> | <i>UK</i> |
| <i>Fête du Citron</i> | <i>Menton</i> | <i>France</i> |
| <i>Food Zurich</i> | <i>Zurich</i> | <i>Switzerland</i> |
| <i>Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival</i> | <i>Galway</i> | <i>Ireland</i> |
| <i>Loch Lomond Food and Drink Festival</i> | <i>Loch Lomond</i> | <i>UK</i> |
| <i>Ludlow Food Festival</i> | <i>Ludlow</i> | <i>UK</i> |
| <i>Martha's Vineyard Food and Wine Festival</i> | <i>Edgartown</i> | <i>US</i> |
| <i>Mauna Lani Culinary Classic</i> | <i>Mauna Lani</i> | <i>US</i> |
| <i>Morgan Hill Mushroom Festival</i> | <i>Morgan Hill</i> | <i>US</i> |
| <i>New York City Food and Wine Festival</i> | <i>New York</i> | <i>US</i> |

| | | |
|--|----------------------|----------------|
| <i>Ottawa Poutine Fest</i> | <i>Ottawa</i> | <i>Canada</i> |
| <i>Prince Edward Island Fall Flavours Festival</i> | <i>Charlottetown</i> | <i>Canada</i> |
| <i>Shediac Lobster festival</i> | <i>Shediac</i> | <i>Canada</i> |
| <i>Shrewsbury Food Festival</i> | <i>Shrewsbury</i> | <i>UK</i> |
| <i>South Beach Wine and Food Festival</i> | <i>Miami</i> | <i>US</i> |
| <i>Stragusto</i> | <i>Trapani</i> | <i>Italy</i> |
| <i>Stuttgarter Weindorf</i> | <i>Stuttgart</i> | <i>Germany</i> |
| <i>Taste Of The Caribbean</i> | <i>Montreal</i> | <i>Canada</i> |
| <i>Taste Of The Danforth</i> | <i>Toronto</i> | <i>Canada</i> |
| <i>Vegfest UK</i> | <i>London</i> | <i>UK</i> |

Source: own compilation

4.4. Results

4.4.1. Reflection to the use of local and seasonal ingredients

In food festivals' communication, there is a growing emphasis on promoting sustainability through the selection of ingredients and the diverse range of food offerings. These events showcase a commitment to regional traditions, local producers, and catering to various dietary preferences.

In the context of the examined festivals, there was an emphasis on the utilization of local and seasonal ingredients in food preparation (Table 16). Local ingredients were identified in 20 instances (58.8%), while the utilization of seasonal ingredients was noted in 7 instances (20.6%). Festivals highlighting seasonality consistently underscored locality in every case; hence, these dual aspects are collectively discussed in this chapter. Subsequently, the qualitative analysis will be explained, aligning with the specific online communication practices that have been identified.

Table 16. Food Festivals’ Practices Focusing on Locally Sourced Ingredients

| Practice | Example from the website | Festival’s name |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Providing free sample from locally grown food for festival visitors | <i>“Free corn - Enjoy the most delicious corn on the cob you’ve ever had, completely for free!”</i> | <i>Corn & Apple Festival</i> |
| Establishing regulations within the terms and conditions to facilitate the presentation of local producers | <i>“We always look to include quality local, Welsh, unique, regular and new producers to offer a balance of variety, fresh offerings and familiarity.”</i> | <i>Abergavenny Food Festival</i> |
| Conducting programs related to local food, encompassing workshops, lectures, showcookings, and similar activities | <i>“Each stage at the Festival hosts different chef, producer and speaker appearances (...) celebrating some of the finest producers and chefs of the region”</i> | <i>Ludlow Food Festival</i> |
| Organizing an educational exhibition to highlight various aspects of a specific local ingredient | <i>“Mushroom Educational Display and Exhibit (...) to learn about the health benefits of mushrooms, how mushrooms are grown, purchase a growing kit and maybe even enjoy a taste of Mushroom Beer!”</i> | <i>Morgan Hill Mushroom Festival</i> |
| Demonstrating the preparation of international cuisines utilizing locally sourced ingredients. | <i>“Veggie Vibes: Unleashing Global Cuisine With Local Ingredients – (...) We’ll cook international dishes using locally sourced ingredients (...).”</i> | <i>Food Zurich Festival</i> |

Source: own compilation

Loch Lomond Food and Drink Festival's as well as Exeter Food and Drink Festival’s website indicates a close collaboration with local producers, small businesses, and chefs to ensure the utilization of local and sustainable ingredients. Furthermore, the website provides information about dedicated exhibition spaces reserved for chefs exclusively working with locally grown or plant-based ingredients. Ludlow Food Festival’s website showcases over 180 traditional food and beverage artisan producers participate in the festival, providing tastings and selling their products, with a prominent focus on seasonal and local ingredients. Festival programs involve daily presentations on the festival stage, featuring diverse appearances by chefs, producers, and speakers.

The Stuttgarter Weindorf website prominently emphasizes the offer of wines made from grapes sourced from the Baden-Württemberg region (Germany). Although the emphasis on wines is more on origin than seasonality, the utilization of local and seasonal ingredients remains a focal point in the food offerings based on the website.

The Prince Edward Island Fall Flavors Festival website underscores the celebration of local ingredients (oysters, mussels, lobster, beef, potatoes) with several programs as well as participating restaurants in the festival feature and promote the use of local, organic produce. The Abergavenny Food Festival website also exemplifies exhibitors working with organic,

seasonal, raw materials from local producers, processed under sustainable conditions. The website also outlines the organizers preference to showcase local producers and the festival's policy, regulating the use of local and seasonal raw materials: fruits and vegetables should come from local producers, meat should preferably be local, and pigs and poultry should not be fed genetically modified feed.

The Copenhagen Cooking website highlights concepts connected to locality such as zero-kilometer food and slow food, all receiving special attention during the event. The festival offers craft beers and food made from organic, locally grown ingredients. The festival's online platform features an occasion wherein chef and farmer, Thomas Køster, guides participants through tastings, imparts insights and techniques pertaining specifically to red cabbage (a traditional ingredient of Denmark) in daily culinary applications.

The Food Zurich Festival website excellently presents locally grown ingredients, featuring presenters from farms in the country. Visitors can taste local, farm-made food entirely crafted from domestically grown ingredients, with examples such as "Seasonal, Local, Delicious" and "Grow Your Own Veg" encapsulating the festival's mission. The website also introduces a slow food market with local food, and cooking shows presenting international dishes based on exclusively locally sourced ingredients.

4.4.2. Representation of elements connected to local food culture

Food festivals serve as conduits for the transmission of local food heritage to festival visitors. These events are enriched by interactive culinary programs, such as showcookings, insights into local production, or presenting local cookbooks (Table 17). However, in contrast to the utilization of local ingredients, a comparatively diminished number of festivals underscored explicitly their connection with local food heritage. Through textual analysis, it was discerned that 14 festivals (41.1%) highlighted these aspects in various manners.

Table 17. Food Festivals' Practices Focusing on Local Food Culture

| Practice | Example from the website | Festival's name |
|--|--|--|
| Showcasing the preparation of traditional cuisine | <i>"From a lobster party in a barn to meeting the Island's top oyster producers while slurping their fare, kitchen party dancing, lobster claw cracking, and everything in between (...)"</i> | <i>Prince Edward Island Fall Flavours Festival</i> |
| Presenting the traditional grape pressing method | <i>"Each year it is great fun when city councillors, members of the Bundestag and state parliament climb into the tub (...) and stomp the grapes with their (...) feet."</i> | <i>Stuttgarter Weindorf</i> |
| Educating children on the preparation of local dishes | <i>"School of Fish – a free children's cookery workshop – (...) kids create their own delicious seafood dishes at the Festival."</i> | <i>Dorset Seafood Festival</i> |
| Conducting workshops to instruct visitors in the crafting of local food specialties | <i>"Mastering the Art of Making Menton Lemon Tart! Savor a unique experience with this gourmet workshop!"</i> | <i>Fête du Citron</i> |
| Engaging with actors of local food system | <i>"From fourth generation lobster fishers to 'Islander-by-choice' food entrepreneurs, potato farmers with deep roots, and chefs with grand visions, you'll get to meet the fine people that are constantly shaping our incredible foodscape."</i> | <i>Prince Edward Island Fall Flavours Festival</i> |

Source: own compilation

Local, traditional foods are preserved and disseminated through festival websites, such as that of the Ottawa Poutine Fest, contributing to the conservation and global promotion of Canadian Poutine culture. Often referred to as the "Canadian Salad," Poutine finds textual representation as a local cultural specialty. Similarly, the Butter Tart Festival's website in Canada showcases the Butter Tart Contest, which aims to acknowledge this culinary specialty in Ontario. The contest actively engages both professional and amateurs, connecting various stakeholders within local food systems. Notably, a panel of esteemed judges includes celebrities, chefs, food and travel bloggers, along with local dignitaries. This event establishes a link to local food heritage and culture, celebrating and acknowledging a quintessentially regional culinary delight.

The Dorset Seafood Festival website recognizes participants that prioritize local and responsible sourcing of seafood. Moreover, the website emphasizes its commitment to the education of future generations in local food culture. According to the information available on the website, the School of Fish, a free children's cookery workshop facilitated by Weymouth College, serves as an ideal partner to engage visiting families and assist children in crafting their own delectable seafood dishes at the festival.

Several websites also feature the exhibition of traditional food and beverage preparation methods. The Stuttgarter Weindorf website, for instance, serves as an exemplary illustration of the preservation of local traditions through its traditional grape pressing event, a practice deeply rooted in the historical customs of local winemakers. Meanwhile, the Castroville Artichoke Festival webpage highlights Monterey County's chefs as they demonstrate the versatility of traditional artichoke preparation techniques in chef demos.

The Fête du Citron website underscores the significance of the citrus fruit to Menton, constituting an integral part of its history and culinary heritage. Its website features a lemon tart workshop offering participants a unique and gourmet experience and serves as an opportunity to learn about the preparation methods of this local food specialty.

The Morgan Hill Mushroom Festival website revolves around the mushroom as its focal point, inviting visitors to savor specialties including mushroom beer. The festival offers cooking demonstrations by local chefs, allowing visitors to explore a variety of mushroom dishes, ranging from stuffed and sautéed to sandwiched, deep-fried, and grilled, among others.

The Prince Edward Island Fall Flavours Festival celebrates local culinary excellence, providing an immersive experience with lobster parties, oyster tastings, and engagements with key figures shaping the Island's foodscape.

The Dine Out Vancouver Festival website emphasizes its role in professional community-building by bringing together hundreds of local chefs, over 300 restaurants, wineries, craft breweries. The website also promotes virtual events on the future of (local) food systems, and experiences designed to allow visitors to experience the city's food culture. The festival is centered around community, collaboration, and sharing Vancouver's culinary narrative with the world.

Culinary festivals, through their diverse strategies and cultural interactions, play a pivotal role in preserving and disseminating local and international culinary traditions. These events foster cultural exchange, community-building, and sustainability, contributing to a rich tapestry of global culinary understanding.

4.5. Conclusions

This study contributes to the existing literature by analyzing websites of food festivals concerning the representation of local ingredients and local food culture. The promotion of local food culture is deemed essential as it holds the potential to stimulate local food businesses and service providers within the tourism industry (CHENG 2023). Furthermore, food festivals that represent local food heritage have the capability to enhance the destination's image (YANG et al. 2020).

To address the research question (“What role does the incorporation of local ingredients and the preservation of local food culture play in the online communication of food festivals?”), this study first explores the use of local and seasonal ingredients. Food festivals are increasingly prioritizing sustainability through ingredient selection, demonstrating a commitment to regional traditions, local producers, and diverse dietary preferences. This aligns with CHENG's (2023) findings, acknowledging that festivals fostering sustainable food practices have a long-term impact on local communities. Their online platforms can serve as educational tools throughout the year, promoting sustainable practices and connecting local communities with food producers, thereby improving environmental conditions (ZARĘBSKI – ZWĘGLIŃSKA-GAŁECKA 2020).

The second aspect focused on the representation of elements connected to local food culture. The analysis revealed practices contributing to the preservation of local food culture and heritage such as showcasing traditional cuisine, presenting the traditional grape pressing method, educating children on the preparation of local dishes, and organizing workshops on local food specialties (AYDIN et al. 2022).

Food festivals with rich website content can provide adequate information and stimulate the interest of both locals and tourists. The study suggests that the promotion of local food culture should align with the actual food offerings of the destination to generate a long-term effect. Successful food festival websites are those that develop an online presentation of local food experiences, maintain dynamic year-long content, while focus on the common needs of local communities.

Based on the analysis of websites, it can be stated that the online representation of food festivals can be categorized according to their concept's connection to local ingredients and local food culture as follows:

1. Food festivals presenting specific food specialties or beverages (e.g., Poutine Fest).
2. Food festivals introducing locally available ingredients and dishes built upon them (e.g., Fête du Citron).
3. Food festivals representing local food culture and heritage (e.g., Dorset Seafood Festival).
4. Food festivals as presentation of (distant) ethnic or regional cuisines (e.g., Taste of The Caribbean Festival).
5. Food festivals focusing on world cuisine with multinational, diverse food and beverage offering (e.g., South Beach Wine and Food Festival).

The research suggests that festival organizers should prioritize “locality” in their planning and execution to enhance their overall impact on local communities. Emphasizing local engagement, supporting regional businesses, and preserving cultural heritage can enhance visitors' experiences while advancing sustainability objectives. Effective communication and educational initiatives are crucial for raising awareness among festival attendees and encouraging active participation in promoting local food culture.

While this study offers valuable insights, certain limitations should be acknowledged. A main limitation discerned during the analysis of web content is the disparity between the information conveyed on the festival's websites and the actual initiatives or actions undertaken by the festival. Moreover, the dataset might have missed festivals lacking an online presence, and the data collection process excluded festivals without official websites or English-language content. Future research could focus on obtaining information directly from festival organizers, delving into the motivations behind showcasing local ingredients and food heritage.

5. SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY ON EUROPEAN FOOD FESTIVAL WEBSITES: A MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Reference: Irimiás, A., Csapody, B., Jászberényi, M. (n/a) ‘Social sustainability on European food festival websites: A multimodal discourse analysis’, *Tourism Management Perspectives*, (status: *accepted*)

Abstract: *Food festival websites often showcase the commitment of events towards a socially relevant issue. However, it is challenging to communicate how events contribute to the well-being of communities. This paper analyses European food festival websites to explore to what extent events’ social benefits are represented in their online communication. The research is based on a multimodal discourse concerned with the interaction between visual, textual, and design elements. Findings show that intergenerational connections, awareness of physical and mental health, and the preservation of local food heritage are the most salient discourses related to social sustainability when these are represented on the websites. In most cases, sustainability initiatives to assure access and inclusion of diverse community members stay hidden. Food festival organizers are advised to use inclusive online communication to foster a sense of community, inclusivity, and social equity.*

Keywords: food tourism events, local food, visuals, websites, social sustainability, Europe.

5.1. Introduction

Food festivals, whether local or major events, have been growing in popularity among different audiences (Getz et al., 2015; Hall & Sharples, 2008; Yang et al., 2020). From the tourist point of view, culinary festivals often represent the primary or secondary motivation to visit a destination for authentic food and beverage offerings (Lefrid & Torres, 2022), ethnic restaurants (Aybek & Özdemir, 2022), locally sourced and seasonally available ingredients (Fustè-Fornè, 2022), or to experience foodscapes (Park & Widyanta, 2022; Park et al., 2008). These experiential products can position a tourism destination on the food aficionado’s map. Festivalgoers can learn about food preparation methods, taste local products, and socialize

both with guests and hosts. Festival organizers, exhibitors, and vendors can interact with a wide target market and raise economic capital (Getz, 2005; Getz & Robinson, 2014). While the economic feasibility and impact of events are relevant, their social sustainability benefits should also be considered and communicated (Pernecky, 2013). Some recent studies explored the perspectives of local communities and noticed that the social sustainability of events is embedded in human dimensions and social relations (Fustè-Fornè & Pont-Llagostera, 2021; McClinchey, 2021) and that festivals might enhance community participation, local pride, and place attachment (de Jong & Varley, 2018; Frost & Laing, 2013; McClinchey, 2021, 2008; Pizzichini et al., 2021). Regarding these concepts of social sustainability, Laing (2018) pointed out that more research is needed to explore whether events are committed towards host communities, and how they communicate diversity and inclusiveness. In response to this special issue's call on 'Food tourism events and social sustainability', we explore the social dimensions of food festivals by analysing their website communication.

Food festival websites are persuasive promotional platforms and often represent a statement of what the festival is about and the values it embraces (Frost & Laing, 2013; Jackson, 2013). These marketing channels are usually operated by or on behalf of event organizers and local/regional/national tourism authorities (Boyne & Hall, 2004). While festival websites are promotional tools to engage potential audiences, they also showcase the events' commitment towards hosting communities (Boyne et al., 2003) and can deliver socio-political messages (de Jong & Varley, 2018; Frost & Laing, 2011). The online presentation and communication of the local culture and place-specific traditions is a distinguishing feature of food festivals, though practical concerns about how social sustainability principles should be referred to are less evident. Positioning food festivals as socially sustainable, and communicating the initiatives and efforts put in practice to enhance community well-being are highly relevant to gaining local stakeholders and residents' long-term support for the event (Carnegie & McCabe, 2008; Clark & Rice, 2019).

Therefore, this research undertakes a multimodal analysis of the websites of renowned European culinary festivals advertised as 'Europe's best summer food festivals' by CNN (Cable News Network, <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/europes-best-food-festivals/index.html>). We explore the events' online communication to investigate the visual

and textual modes of discourse on socially sustainable practices. Our main research question is ‘*How do food festival websites represent and communicate the event’s commitment towards social sustainability?*’ Thus, this paper aims to do the following: (1) better understand the interplay between visual and verbal signifiers within a website’s communication, (2) identify the themes in organizing food festivals related to social sustainability, and (3) provide a methodological framework for analysis. Section 2 offers a short overview of the relationship between food festivals and social sustainability; it then delves into the nexus of food festivals and local food culture. Section 3 presents our multimodal discourse analysis and the nine websites studied. This method offers a comprehensive approach to decoding the explicit and implicit meanings embedded in visuals, texts, and design elements by applying the framework developed by Pauwels (2012). Section 4 unveils the three themes identified during our analysis of the food festival websites. Based on our results, we suggest some practical implications to represent and communicate festivals’ social sustainability efforts.

5.2. Literature Review

5.2.1. Food festivals and local foodscape

Food festivals are ‘themed, public celebrations’ (Getz, 2005:21) and require collective actions to exhibit tangible and intangible values inherent in local food heritage (Getz & Robinson, 2014; Lugosi et al., 2020; Orea-Giner & Fustè-Fornè, 2022). The interaction between food festivals and the promotion of local foodscapes has received some attention in academia. Kim (2015) argued that food festivals are associated with cultural capital, which necessitates the revival of local food traditions through the sharing of experiences among various stakeholders. Food heritage and food festivals, grounded in their historical and geographical contexts, play a significant role in fostering community development, offering the possibility of economic, social, and cultural benefits. Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen (2019:473) identified generic types of foodscapes, where food festivals fall within either ‘destination service encounter (an organized environment staged for tourists)’ or ‘local service encounter (an organized environment staged for locals)’ contingent upon the food festival’s connectedness to local communities. According to Cheng (2023:14), slow foodscapes serve to revitalize food heritage practices which undergo continual reinvention,

thus reinforcing ‘social and cultural survival’. Dishes that respect culinary traditions may contribute to the promotion of place images and the transformation of perceptions of rural spaces. Through the convergence of local food culture and community engagement, food festivals enhance a shared sense of belonging, influencing the formation of the foodscape.

Food festivals provide platforms for producers, consumers, exhibitors, and vendors linked to specific socio-spatial contexts (Hjalager & Kwiatkowski, 2023; Pizzichini et al., 2021). The ‘spatial interlinking’ between the festival and the destination foodscape reinforces the hosting territory’s authentic offerings which are linked to a sense of place. These events play an active role in the promotion and preservation of local culinary heritage and contribute to rebuilding and rediscovering food cultural traditions (Laing, 2018; Stevenson, 2016). According to Hjalager and Kwiatkowski (2023:129), these events possess distinct abilities, such as ‘creative crowding, attentive focus, and centripetal and centrifugal energy’ linked to social sustainability. The symbolic forms of capital build on various approaches to strengthen social networks within the community (Lugosi et al., 2020). Pizzichini et al. (2021) revealed that traditional knowledge of food production, cultivation, and preparation is part of the social capital of Italian food festivals, while in Sweden food festivals build on innovation linked to New Nordic Cuisine. Through these events, the rich tapestry of local food heritage is showcased. The dissemination and celebration of local food traditions, producers, and chefs are linked to social sustainability because these may enhance local pride and place attachment.

5.2.2. Social sustainability and food festivals

Social sustainability, building on the concept of Bourdieu’s social capital, refers to the conditions in and of societies that support human well-being, social interactions, and a sense of community (de Jong & Varley, 2018; Jepson & Clarke, 2014; Pernecky & Lueck, 2013). As Bourdieu (1986) stated, there exist three discrete yet interrelated types of capital: economic, cultural, and social. Economic capital is quantifiable, and convertible into monetary value; it serves as the foundation for acquiring other forms of capital. Cultural capital encompasses various symbolic elements such as skills, knowledge, tastes, and tangible objects. Social capital is linked to the networks of relationships built through individuals’ socialization and reflects the group’s norms and values. The nexus of these three

types of capital sets different scenarios according to the socio-spatial features of a place. Putnam (1995:67) delineated social capital as ‘features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits.’ Since then, the concept of social capital has been involved in discussions related to social sustainability as inequality and social exclusion are understood to stem from ‘mechanisms that act to detach groups of people from the social mainstream’ (Giddens, 1991:103). Social sustainability encompasses a continuous effort within communities to support individuals’ well-being and it extends beyond the scope of social impacts (Stevenson, 2016).

In the case of community festivals, social benefits are often understood in relation to economic benefits such as increased tourism arrivals, domestic attendance at events, a boost of the local economy, and job opportunities (Getz, 2005; Getz & Page, 2016). According to Pernecky & Lueck (2013), while dimensions of economic and environmental sustainability related to events have been widely studied, social sustainability aspects of events and festivals have been neglected. Food festivals are often perceived as active contributors to the attainment of broader societal and developmental objectives (de Jong & Varley, 2018; Haynes, 2015). These events generate a wide range of effects on communities’ well-being (Jepson & Walters, 2021). De Jong and Varley (2018) claimed that there is a need to first scrutinize expansive definitions of ‘community,’ or, failing to do so, it becomes challenging to formulate an inclusive approach facilitating the integration of diverse segments. Derrett (2003) portrayed festivals as cooperative, fair, and harmonious contexts that bridge social and cultural divides. Stevenson (2016) showed that festivals can enhance existing social connections within the community and can efficiently involve people in collective actions and decision-making within their community. Hjalager and Kwiatkowski (2023:130) see food festivals as ‘game changers’ within local communities for the transformative forces they can put into action. The interplay between social capital and inclusion may generate social benefits.

However, concepts such as social justice, accessibility, and social inclusion should be more actively embraced to create social benefits for communities in the long term (Mair et al. 2023; Mair & Duffy, 2015; McClinchey, 2008). Accessibility is a broad concept which includes

physical and financial accessibility of festivals where attendees of all abilities, ages, social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds feel welcomed (Finkel et al., 2019). Whether events and festivals are accessible to all members of a community depends on the social practices performed in space and time. De Jong and Varley (2018) showed that the ability of food festivals to reinforce connections relies on existing social capital and power dynamics, which can somewhat hinder the integration of all community members. Similarly, Moufakkir and Kelly (2013) argued that festivals in general target their audiences based on their financial capacities and this mechanism reproduces class relations and inequalities.

5.2.3. Websites and event communication

Websites are multimodal ‘content delivery systems’ (Herring, 2010:233) comprising texts, visuals, links, design elements, sound, animation, and videos. Website composition creates meaning and delivers messages. Festival websites, for practical reasons, need to provide specific information to potential festivalgoers such as date, venue, scheduled program, and admission fee (Boyne & Hall, 2004; Boyne et al., 2003). These online platforms also communicate what the festival is about, how local communities and businesses are involved, the values the festival aims to represent, and the sustainability practices it implements (Kim et al., 2009; Laing & Frost, 2010). In fact, event websites are often used as channels for delivering persuasive social, political and/or pro-environmental messages (Dodds et al., 2020; Frost & Laing, 2013). The visuals – photographs, short videos, reels, etc. – that appear on an event’s webpage construct meaning and, as Rose (2016) observed, can represent or contribute to the creation of social difference. Frost and Laing (2013) analysed the online communication of five, slow food festivals and investigated their food-related social and ideological messages. The authors refer to the websites’ multimodality as ‘multi-storeyed and multi-storied communication’ to evidence their complexity, and explored the interplay between imagery, metaphors, and texts that should ‘convert’ potential festivalgoers to embrace the idea of slow food as ideologically positioned as healthy and better than non-slow food (Frost & Laing, 2013:72). Their findings showed how discourses on local food heritage, cooking, and dining culture along with the farming, fishing, and horticulture traditions of a region convey a persuasive marketing message of food. Recently, concerns for social sustainability in events have been also raised. Dodds et al. (2020) explored 303

Canadian festival websites to uncover how events communicated their efforts towards the three pillars of sustainability. Issues such as sustainable transportation and waste management related to environmental sustainability were addressed, while only a few websites made references to community development, charity organizations, NGOs, and locally and ethically produced food and goods. Surprisingly, only 36% of the festivals conveyed sustainability-related messages and when they did so, the information was hidden on the websites' subpages. This demonstrates that the topic was not a priority of festival organizers.

5.3. Methodology

5.3.1. Research paradigm and multimodal discourse analysis

In this study, we employed a qualitative research method following the interpretivist paradigm. The goal was to generate a more nuanced understanding of the ways food festivals promote their events online and to explore whether they are committed to social sustainability.

Multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021) is largely founded on social semiotics, which aims to identify signs and interpret different layers of meaning (Hunter, 2016; Rose, 2016; Van Leeuwen, 2011). As Rose (2016:121) indicated, semiology considers signs as denotive or connotative. The first layer of meaning conveyed by different modes is denotive: who, what, and how are represented on the image or websites. The second layer refers to ideas, values, concepts, and power relations and carries higher-level meanings. Events like food festivals per se are powerful modes of communication and websites are both stages of manifestation and tourism marketing tools (Frost & Laing, 2013).

Here, we employ Pauwels's (2012) multimodal framework which is particularly suitable for exploring cultural websites. This framework is an integrated tool used to decode 'the cultural information that resides both in the form and the content of websites' (Pauwels, 2012:248). Visual and verbal modes that websites use to speak about and show local communities, tourists, and stakeholders reflect certain views and intentions of communication. This method helps to uncover the 'hidden meanings' of website communication. The combination of

modes may advertently or inadvertently construct social differences related to age, gender, health, etc. In this analysis, particular attention was given to the representation of ideas and values linked to social sustainability. Mair and Duffy (2015) argued that festivals are socially sustainable when accessible and inclusive. The social impacts and benefits of festivals, however, are intangible (Mair et al., 2023). Therefore, it is challenging to capture the ways civic pride, a sense of belonging, or the minimization of social isolation – all highly important concepts in social sustainability – are represented.

In food tourism research, multimodal discourse analysis has been employed to study the power relations and social sustainability at a Scottish food festival (de Jong & Varley, 2018), to explore website communication to market organic candy (Fernández-Vázquez, 2021), and to analyse ethics and aesthetics in short food-themed videos (Irimiás & Volo, 2023).

5.3.2. Sampling and data collection

For this research, we sampled CNN’s list of ‘Europe’s best summer food festivals in 2023’ which included 10 events. The CNN Travel website and its ‘Culinary Journeys’ subpage are reputable online sources of food tourism content. We started by reading the festivals’ descriptions on the CNN Culinary Journeys website (<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/europes-best-food-festivals/index.html>). This was followed with a non-linear procedure of searching all the listed festival websites to figure out structures (number of subpages, embedded external links, news feeds, blog posts, etc.) and content. The total sampling consists of the websites of nine European food festivals (Table 18). Matstreif Festival (Oslo, Norway) was excluded because it had no official website.

Table 18. The nine annually held European food festivals selected for multimodal analysis

| Festival name and website information | Location | Festival short description |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| <p>Abergavenny Food Festival</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URL: https://www.abergavennyfoodfestival.com • Responsible organization: Abergavenny Food Festival EH Accountancy • Updated with 19 blog posts/year • Available in English | Abergavenny, Wales, United Kingdom | This annual event taking place in September was arranged for the 25 th year in 2023. Abergavenny Castel and the Market Hall are the main locations. The emphasis is on local food stories, Welsh food and beverages, and heritage. As a not-for-profit organization, it is committed to be inclusive. |
| <p>Cheese 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URL: https://cheese.slowfood.it/en/ • Responsible organization: Slow Food Italy and Città di Bra • Updated with 72 news post/year • Available in Italian and English | Bra, Italy | Held every September, and for the 15 th time in 2023, the festival is organized with the cooperation of Slow Food International, Città di Bra, and Regione Piemonte. Bra is the headquarter of the Slow Food movement which represents a socio-political philosophy. The festival offers programs on local dairy producers, dairy-based food culture and slow-life as synonym of wellbeing. |
| <p>Copenhagen Cooking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URL: https://www.copenhagencooking.com • Responsible organization: The Food Organisation of Denmark (FOOD) • no info on website updates • Available in Danish and English | Copenhagen, Denmark | Taking place each August since 2004, this is one of Northern Europe's largest food festivals. It showcases Danish food culture and pays tribute to local culinary figures. It's a non-profit organization working to develop Denmark as a healthy food country. |
| <p>Dorset Seafood Festival</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URL: https://www.dorsetseafood.co.uk • Responsible organization: Seafood Festivals Limited • Updated with 2 news post/year • Available in English | Weymouth, England, United Kingdom | Taking place since 2008, this festival celebrates local fishing communities and food culture linked to seafood. The festival is committed to shed light on fishers and their occupational challenges. Linked to sustainability, importance is given to sustainable fishing methods and environmental impact of seafood production. |
| <p>Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URL: https://www.galwayoysterfestival.com • Responsible organization: Galway International Oyster and Seafood | Galway, Ireland | Launched in 1954, the festival positions itself as the 'oldest oyster festival in the world'. Every September, chefs participate at the World Oyster Championship. The festival features the culinary heritage of the West Coast of Ireland and it is linked to local Seafood |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festival / Milestone Inventive • no info on website updates • Available in English | | <p>Trail. The festival organized in partnership with sponsors and national stakeholders.</p> |
| <p>Loch Lomond Food and Drink Festival</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URL: https://www.lochlomondfoodanddrinkfestival.co.uk • Responsible organization: Loch Lomond Festivals • no info on website updates • Available in English | <p>Loch Lomond, Scotland, United Kingdom</p> | <p>Taking place in September, for the 21st time in 2023, the festival provides opportunities for culinary education through cooking demonstrations, and whisky and gin tastings, in partnership with various vendors.</p> |
| <p>Ludlow Food Festival</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URL: https://www.foodfestival.co.uk • Responsible organization: Ludlow Marches Food and Drink Festival • Updated with 6 posts/year • Available in English | <p>Ludlow, England, United Kingdom</p> | <p>Since 1995, the Ludlow Food Festival has served as a tribute to the local food heritage with exhibitors from Ludlow and the Welsh Marches region. The three-day, not-for-profit event is organized to promote local small-scale food and drink producers.</p> |
| <p>Stragusto</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.stragusto.it/en/ • URL: https://www.stragusto.it/en/ • Responsible organization: Associazione Culturale Trapani Welcome • no info on website updates • Available in Italian and English | <p>Trapani, Italy</p> | <p>Hosted in July since 2009, the festival evokes the atmosphere of traditional food markets and showcases typical products from regions including Trapani, Palermo, and Puglia. Local food culture and traditions are showcased with the cooperation of gastronomic-cultural associations.</p> |
| <p>Stuttgarter Weindorf</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URL: https://www.stuttgarter-weindorf.de • Responsible organization: Pro Stuttgart e.V. • no info on website updates • Available in German and English | <p>Stuttgart, Germany</p> | <p>Organized since 1976, from late August to early September, this festival focuses on local traditions: restaurants offer specialties from the region, while an assortment of locally produced wines is presented. Regarding social sustainability the festival is dedicated to celebrating diversity and collaborates with Stuttgart Pride.</p> |

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the festival websites.

For data collection, we took snapshots of the visuals in the main webpages and their subpages. Videos and reels were excluded from data gathering. This allowed us to investigate the organization of the visual, textual, and design elements. To explore the websites' visual content, we collected 1608 photos between June and September 2023: Abergavenny Food Festival (n=315), Cheese 2023 (n=231), Copenhagen Cooking (n=259), Dorset Seafood Festival (n=127), Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival (n=321), Loch Lomond Food and Drink Festival (n=11), Ludlow Food Festival (n=89), Stragusto (n=217), and

Stuttgarter Weindorf (n=38). We discarded portraits of chefs, exhibitors, or restaurateurs and the images that showed only objects because there were no visual interactions between actors to analyse. The final dataset of collected data, suitable to explore connotative meanings linked to social sustainability, included 9 home pages with 18 subpages and 52 visuals.

5.3.3. Data analysis

For the coding criteria, we employed Pauwels's (2012) framework for multimodal content analysis and adapted it to explore food festival websites (Table 19). In choosing to employ the social semiotic approach, we are aware that our interpretation of reading visuals – the interaction of narrative elements reproduced in a photo – is subjective. To minimize bias, each coder – the first and the second author – completed the coding separately in Microsoft Excel, taking about 90 minutes for each website. After the coding was completed, we checked our data for intercoder reliability. Intercoder reliability was 100% on five variables related to typographic signifiers (font, colour, position, salience, and style) and on layout and design signifiers (logo, templates, frames, text position, and visuals). It was 85% on variables of website narrative visuals (setting, actors, actions, texture, resolution, sharpness, composition, and camera focus and angle). Coders discussed the differences until they reached a consensus. For the analysis, we employed a denotive reading of the visuals with a focus on the explicit content of the photos (e.g. people, food, festival location). For example, under the representation of people we included festivalgoers, entertainers, food producers and vendors, chefs, etc., and categorized the visuals accordingly. For the festival locations, we identified outdoor and indoor settings and explored how these settings facilitated access for various socio-economic groups.

Connotative reading of visuals focused on the representation of values and ideas associated with social sustainability as conceptualized by Mair and Duffy (2015). Visual and textual signifiers that conveyed a meaning associated with social sustainability were divided into four categories: 1) relationships between present and future generations, 2) people's quality of life, 3) community cohesion, and 4) sense of belonging.

Table 19. Phases in Pauwels’ (2012) multimodal discourse analysis applied to food festival websites

| Phase | Description |
|--|--|
| 1. Initial phase: Preservation of first impressions and reactions | Assessment on how a website ‘looks and feels’. We explored whether the festivals communicated about social inclusion and equity, participation and relationships between present and future generations, local communities’ wellbeing. We took notes about our spontaneous and affective reactions. |
| 2. Inventory of salient features and topics | Denotive reading of the websites’ content and form. We created an inventory of features, attributes and modes, both present and absent, in website communication. Salient features that dealt with intergenerational connections, physical and mental health, community building and preservation of local food were collected, numbered and coded by using a standardized coding sheet. Some of the food festival websites contained detailed information about local peoples participation, and opportunities to build social inclusion which assisted us in the next step. |
| 3. In-depth analysis of content and intra- and cross-modal interplay | Focus on ‘what’ is communicated. Intra- and cross-modal analysis were performed. Verbal (opinions, statements, descriptions), typographical (font style, size, style etc.) and websites’ narrative visual signifiers (setting, actors, actions, texture, resolution, sharpness, composition, and camera focus and angle) were investigated to explore their denotive and connotive meaning. To frame our multimodal discourse analysis, we built on Mair & Duffy’s (2015) concepts and guide to assess events’ social sustainability. Relations between verbal and narrative visual signifiers were also explored. |
| 4. Embedded point(s) of view or ‘voice’ and implied audiences and purposes | Focus on ‘who’ is saying ‘what’ to ‘whom’: a result of combination of many features and modes. We tried to uncover the dominant point of view -festival organizers, local stakeholders, community members- expressed in website communication. Exploration of explicitly stated audiences and latent ones. |
| 5. Analysis of information organization and spatial priming strategies | The selected European food festivals run their websites to communicate information about their events. We investigated the architecture (menus, internal links, navigational tools) and design of the website to explore which signifiers take up more space and catch audiences’ attention. |
| 6. Contextual analysis, provenance and inference | Finding the most relevant features and modes with their explicit and implicit meaning and whether these reflect values, norms and expectations related to events’ social sustainability. |

Source: developed by the authors of this study based on Pauwels (2012:255-259) and Mair & Duffy (2015)

On the CNN Travel website, under ‘CNN Culinary Journeys’ subpage, the 10 best European summer food festivals are listed in an article published on March 5, 2023. The article uses persuasive and emotive language to describe the events and shares four visuals (an image representing the Galway, Matstreif, Stragusto, and Stuttgarter Weindorf food festivals).

5.4. Findings

The multimodal discourse analysis on food festival websites aimed to uncover to what extent these events communicate their commitment towards social sustainability. Before the food festivals, we present the CNN website communication and its denigrating word register and

connotative meanings used in discourse formation. The CNN website introduced the attractiveness of their listed 10 European summer food festivals as follows:

For those sick of the all-inclusive discomfort of Europe's traditional summer music events, there are tastier alternatives [CNN Culinary Journeys, No. 1].

Discourse on the CNN website disparages food festivals in general, and makes the listed events stand out:

Here's a selection of the best upcoming events where there'll be no need to eat out of a Styrofoam box or listen to second-rate indie bands [CNN Culinary Journeys, No. 2].

Food discourse is salient on CNN's website communication with value statements on the quality of ingredients, foodscapes, and tourism destinations by employing emotive language as a persuasive tool.

[Dorset Seafood Festival is] the ultimate beacon for foodies in this corner of England [CNN Culinary Journeys, No. 3].

Ludlow's independent spirit has helped give rise to one of the UK's most renowned food festivals [CNN Culinary Journeys, No. 4].

Stuttgarter Weindorf is presented as a food festival where

There's way more to it than just the sweet fizzy stuff usually associated with this beer-obsessed country [CNN Culinary Journeys, No. 6].

While the four visuals are salient on the CNN website, the verbal signifiers in the festival descriptions contribute to the discourse formation of 'tasty' and fun events that are outstanding in the European festivalscapes, therefore, 'worth' inclusion in the CNN list. From here we turn our attention to the nine websites we analysed in terms of references to their social benefits. Drawing on Pauwels's (2012) framework, we identified three primary themes linked to the concept of social sustainability: 1) intergenerational connections, 2) awareness of physical and mental health, and 3) local food culture and heritage.

5.4.1. Festival websites encourage intergenerational connections

Among the social benefits of food festivals, it is often claimed that these events attract a wide range of people – visitors and locals – without any distinction of age (Mair et al., 2023). The first theme emerging from data, intergenerational connections, revolves around the representation of interactions. One rhetorical device used across the selected festival websites is associating conviviality with food consumption, the strength of social networks, and family ties. In all nine websites, intergenerational connections between juniors and seniors are central in the discourse on food festivals. Focusing on the visual analysis, the most remarkable aspect is the central role given to human interactions, especially between different age cohorts. These visuals reflect a spirit of entertainment and fun. However, a deeper analysis reveals that prevalence is given to children and teenagers, while images depicting only seniors are less frequent.

On the Copenhagen Cooking website, we learn that the festival is ‘a centre for communal dining and fun food experiences’ and the visuals indeed depict the narrative elements that reinforce the idea of community experiences (Figure 7). Three of the nine visuals on the homepage show Frederiksberg Allé, the principal location. The prominent element of the composition is the long dinner table with intense natural lighting. These visual signifiers represent a culturally significant view of hosts and festivalgoers who appropriate a public realm: the city’s avenue. This outdoor location should provide the social benefit of accessibility for a variety of people. Still, it is surprising to find very few photos representing the multiple identities of the Danish capital city.

The festival also claims that ‘events at Copenhagen Cooking have to be unique’ and restaurant owners, food producers, vendors, and cultural institutions should ‘consider the guests to have food experiences in a place they don't normally connect with eating.’ Such rhetorical tones suggest elitism, that the festival is for people who are seeking uncommon experiences. Narrative visuals emphasize the actors’ hands. Hands symbolize one of the core discourses of social sustainability: the connection between people. Community building is an embodied action in which intimacy and physical touch play a significant role and can mitigate social exclusion. Visuals on the homepage showcase actors of different ages. While these actors are photographed performing various actions together (preparing food, eating,

drinking, celebrating, etc.) there is a scarcity of individuals with different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities.

Figure 7. The top section of the Copenhagen Cooking homepage



Source: www.copenhagencooking.com, last accessed September 25, 2023

On the website, under program 2023, we find the daily calendar of events. The event's page layout is organized vertically with a narrative visual on the top and the presentation of the menu below. On the right, the event's title, location, purpose, and practicalities are described. The intramodal analysis of the event description reveals the topic of inclusivity referring to children, the association of delicious dishes with beauty and a fun atmosphere.

Come by and draw your favorite fruit, vegetable or ice cream. Or draw a giant lasagna. [...] Whether you are an artist, child, food lover, parent, friend, aunt or something else entirely, you are welcome to come by and paint with us! [Copenhagen Cooking, Events, No. 55].

Narrative visuals used on the website represent the intergenerational connections from the children's perspective and emphasize their role as decision-makers. Chalk drawing events and family cooking sessions put children in a power position. Similarly, on the website of the Abergavenny Food Festival, the visual emphasis is placed on intergenerational relations and activities. The festival programs place children in charge of food creation:

Find out how dough is made. Mix your own sauce. Choose your own toppings. Tuck in with friends and family [Abergavenny Food Festival, No. 85].

Figure 8. A visual represents the intergenerational interaction of the Abergavenny Food Festival website



Source: <https://www.abergavennyfoodfestival.com/cook-stars-kids-cookery-school/>, copyright of the Abergavenny Food Festival, last accessed April 15, 2024

Seafeast, the Dorset Seafood Festival, and the Ludlow Food Festival also introduce references to intergenerational inclusivity through visual and textual signifiers. Entertainment, the essence of any food festival, is depicted through live music, creative food preparation, and consumption. Seniors wearing bright colours and singing songs are associated with dynamism and their active participation in the festival. On its website the Dorset Seafood Festival uses the spatial balance of pictures, symmetrically depicting seniors (left hand) and children (right hand) to reinforce the meaning of a sense of community (Figure 9). Under 'What's on,' in the festival highlights, the invitation uses an affective language style ('our much-loved local seafood heroes') directed at families:

Be entertained by talented chefs as well as by our much-loved local seafood heroes. Learn about underutilised species, bring the family to try new experiences and find out why we should all be eating more seafood [Dorset Seafood Festival, No. 6].

It refers to the intention to raise awareness of fishers and the challenges they face during their work. The emphasis on seafood as a healthy alternative for children and adults alike is a persuasive message running through the website.

Figure 9. The top section of the Dorset Seafood Festival website



Source: <https://www.dorsetseafood.co.uk/fcimages/images/sliderpics/home/5.jpg>, copyright of the Dorset Seafood Festival, last accessed April 15, 2024

On the Ludlow Food Festival website, we find water-colour paintings on both sides of the festival logo. These references to vegetables occupy a predominant position in the homepage composition in terms of size. The visual over-representation of vegetables raises social consciousness of the impact of food production and consumption on our health and the natural environment. Colours are relevant resources of visual communication and colours often have a meaning (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002). The typographic signifiers – the informal font choice of the magenta-coloured Ludlow Food Festival logo – make the communication playful.

Food festival websites, such as Stragusto and the Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival, use other visual signifiers to portray social inclusion and a sense of community. The visual emphasis is placed on convivial food consumption and all the social activities that make it joyful.

On the Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival website, oysters dominate the header and are also used in the festival's logo. The slogan is also symbolic – Embrace the Wild Atlantic Way of Life – and refers to the challenges that fishing represents. The theme of intergenerational connection emerges from visuals depicting the grand parade on Galway's streets. The salient position of local traditional attire, festive clothes, and flags supports the idea of pride, place attachment, and a sense of community.

Abergavenny Food Festival extends its community-building endeavours beyond the confines of the festival itself, fostering engagement throughout the year. The culturally meaningful invitation to locals and visitors asks them to:

[...] get involved in Abergavenny's vibrant food culture, with a host of community dinners, grow-your-own initiatives, political debates, and social gatherings.
[Abergavenny Food Festival, No. 9]

The political overtones used on the website create a link between local food traditions, community identity and new ways of considering food and cooking traditions. Festival organizers recognize that 'it takes a town and a team' to make the event happen and support local stallholders, food producers, and chefs. The visuals featuring festivalgoers of diverse ethnicities immersed in a festive atmosphere symbolize the event's commitment towards inclusivity.

5.4.2. Festival websites promote awareness of physical and mental health

The ideology of a healthy diet and slow food actions are part of most food festival discourses (Frost & Laing, 2013; Pizzichini et al., 2021). A plant-based diet is presented as a health-conscious choice on the Ludlow Food Festival website, while seafood – with sustainable fishing practices – is endorsed by the Dorset Seafood Festival and the Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival. A healthy diet is associated with cooking skills, as shown by the festivals' visual discourse. Festivals actively involve children, teens, and young adults in the preparation of dishes with vegetables. Not only families but also children are in charge of their own health, as the following quotation from the Dorset Festival website shows:

The programme is designed to help children learn how to cook and enjoy fish as part of a balanced diet [Dorset Seafood Festival, News, No. 14].

The multimodal analysis of the websites helped to identify our second theme: awareness of the physical and mental health of food producers, fishers, and hospitality workers. On the Dorset Seafood Festival and the Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival websites the topic of well-being is explicitly addressed. Thus, these festivals transcend their roles as mere celebratory gatherings and assume a heightened significance in the domain of social sustainability. Surprisingly, a diverse array of topics – generally considered taboo – is mentioned. The awareness of fishers’ mental health is one of these. On the Dorset Seafood Festival website, the description of the Fishermen's Mission is salient given that the festival contributes to raising money for this charity. This organization is the only national charity to provide financial and emotional support to local fishers, both active and retired, and their families. The Mission contributes to raising awareness of the perilous nature of fishers’ work, characterized by accidents and fatalities. Addressing the mental health issues of food producers and fishers supports the argument of social inclusion and equity and mitigates social exclusion.

Cardiovascular diseases and stroke are among the health risks in service-related industries. However, people outside the hospitality industry are rarely aware of the difficulties, pressures, and health concerns the hospitality workforce faces. The Ludlow Food Festival challenges the discourse on mental health within the sector and regularly invites a former chef who has grappled with the aftermath of a stroke. On the website, under the ‘What’s on’ label, we find a conversation with him and learn his views on the British culinary arts and the importance of preventive measures that recognize the early signs of stroke [Ludlow Food Festival, What’s on, No. 35].

The Burnt Chef Project, set up in 2019, soon became a widely known not-for-profit organization, which combats the stigma of mental health issues within the hospitality industry. The Dorset Seafood Festival has teamed up with the project and invites head chefs to speak about their experiences. Mental health remains an inadequately discussed topic and an occupational hazard that needs to be managed. The industry grapples with a constellation of challenges, including protracted and irregular working hours, demanding and stressful

working conditions, and heightened performance pressures. All these negatively influence mental and physical health and need to be openly and widely addressed and managed.

5.4.3. Festival websites preserve local food culture and heritage

Although the third theme, local food culture and heritage, was among the primary objectives of all nine festivals analysed, some differences in communicating and presenting food heritage were eloquent. The Stragusto website effectively incorporates the importance of heritage in its textual and visual communication. The festival itself is regarded as an expression of the city's history and local identity. Traditional street food and seafood dishes are recontextualized, often playing a pivotal role in fostering interaction between chefs and visitors, thereby educating festivalgoers about food (Figure 10). A collage of eight photos accompanies the festival description:

A festival that rekindles the atmosphere of the ancient markets, a concentration of flavors, smells, colors, voices that, every year, overwhelms the historic center of Trapani [Stragusto, Home, No. 62].

This radiates an aura of joviality and culinary delight. The images are captured from close range, focusing sharply on both the food and the individuals, enabling clear observation of their facial expressions. In the food images, traditional Italian dishes take center stage. In terms of composition, the photos maintain a proportional distribution, alternating between food and people. The colour palette used in the images conveys warmth, with yellow, orange, brown, and red hues predominating, evoking a sense of coziness.

Figure 10. Collage displaying traditional food on the Stragusto Festival website



Source: <https://www.stragusto.it/en/> copyright of the Stragusto Festival, last accessed April 15, 2024

Within the collage, viewers can discern distant, medium, and close-up shots, all while the subjects' expressions reflect happiness (Figure 10). Many of the individuals depicted hold food or drinks, creating an impression that they are offering them to the audience, establishing a more immediate and intimate connection. Close-ups of vendors further enhance the audience's sense of closeness. The report on one of the events of the Copenhagen Cooking Festival begins with the phrase:

A tribute to the open sandwich [Copenhagen Cooking Festival, Events, No. 61].

This event highlights the traditions of crafting and savouring the renowned Danish (Scandinavian) sandwich, Smørrebrød, within the context of gastronomic heritage. The event's description underscores that in the 1800s, urbanization led to a transformation of daily meals, with workers shifting from cooked midday meals on farms to cold rye-bread-based options. The food's origin, rooted in the working class, is portrayed in an accompanying drawing. While the narrative visual recalls a humble way of life, it is juxtaposed with the current understanding of the sandwich as something particular. The cultural and historical references are part of the symbolic capital of local communities and the act of remembering the humble origins of the Smørrebrød contrasts its current role as a unique dish.

5.5. Discussion

Media resources, based on users and/or staff ratings, create and promote ‘best of’ lists of tourism destinations and festivals. CNN Travel’s Culinary Journey lists 10 European summer food festivals and promises readers uncommon events with local food and authentic experiences. Here, we investigated the website communication of the listed festivals and studied the ways social sustainability efforts – as the basis of authentic events (Mair et al., 2023; McClinchey, 2021, 2008) – are communicated.

Food festival websites play a critical role in positioning the events as sustainable. Prior research has studied food festival websites from different perspectives, with a focus on event management, persuasive messages, and value creation through marketing initiatives (Dodds et al., 2020; Forst & Laing, 2013; Laing, 2018). Our multimodal analysis of websites demonstrates the complex interplay between delivering a persuasive message and preserving the local ‘flavour’ of these festivals. Compared to website content analysis, this approach is not concerned with large datasets and statistically representative images. Rather, multimodality is based on social semiotics and as such it is ‘concerned to investigate processes of meaning-creation that are socially significant’ (Rose, 2016: 110). The visuals used for analysis are selected on how conceptually pertinent they are. The focus is given to visual denotive and connotative meanings and the social effects of the message (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021; Pauwels, 2012; Rose, 2016). Social impacts of food festivals can be diverse, providing opportunities for intergenerational interactions, raising awareness of food producers' and fishers' physical and mental health, education, skills development, and a sense of belonging. The communication of these intangible social benefits needs a specific and coordinated strategy.

The findings revealed that all nine food festivals aimed to create social consciousness of the impact of food production/consumption both on human health and on the natural environment, but surprisingly most of the websites did not appear to be aware of the need to address social (in)equality. The most surprising results concern that only two festivals (Ludlow Food Festival and Abergavenny Food Festival) addressed local food producers’

well-being specifically, and only one included a discourse on fishers' mental health (Dorset Seafood Festival).

All nine food festivals share a common objective: to foster societal awareness regarding the far-reaching implications of food preparation and consumption, encompassing both human health and the environment, though they communicate in different ways. In fact, two out of nine food festival websites appear to be less attractive to viewers/potential festivalgoers as they are poorly developed. The analysis of the commitment to social sustainability on the websites showed that a great number of these festivals praise local communities and promote the relationship between present and future generations, although other concepts of social sustainability – such as social justice or equity – seem to be less prioritized. Social sustainability, enhanced by food festivals, has the potential to involve all social segments and to bond stronger relations across diverse ethnic communities. If a food festival fails to include and/or represent the different range of cultures and ethnicities living in the region then, as Mair and Duffy (2015) observed, it risks further marginalizing them. If the social sustainability of events is a long-term goal of festival organizers and policymakers, then the involvement of local community members should be better represented in online (and offline) communications. Food festival websites aim to attract festivalgoers; therefore, the website communication's main discourse is on the satisfactory tourism experiences at the event. For the locals, the festival should guarantee inclusion and quality of life. These opposing interests need to be carefully managed both by the festival organizers and the website content creators.

5.6. Conclusion

5.6.1. Theoretical implications

Advancing current knowledge of whether and how food festivals communicate social sustainability on their websites, the results support the notion that human relations within a community network can be strengthened through place-based narratives and visual representations. From the theoretical perspective, this study expands the understanding of the interconnection between social sustainability of food festivals and website communication of events. Specifically, our findings advance knowledge on how the social semiotic approach and multimodality convey meanings in marketing of 'the best' summer food festivals in the

online realm. Our findings further support Fustè-Fornè and Pont-Llagostera's (2021) view that food communicates place identity and local culinary heritage. In line with Pizzichini et al. (2021), the results support the different social and symbolic capital leveraged by food festivals. Visuals and texts narrating intergenerational connections and human interactions can be seen to represent social cohesion. Importantly, inclusive conviviality emerged as a central discourse on food festival websites, especially in the communication of Dorset Seafood Festival and Ludlow Food Festival. The compositional elements of the festival websites show the power positions of multigenerational families representing them as equally important members of the community. The visual narratives depicting hands in collaborative activities – chalk drawing and family cooking – show the embodied co-creation of festival experiences, consistent with Lugosi et al.'s (2020) findings on the approaches to strengthen community's social networks.

Aligned with Jepson and Walters' (2021) argument on food festivals' effect on communities' well-being, our results suggest that any discussion on event's webpage about the awareness of physical and mental health in the hospitality industry should involve locals and event organisers. The findings substantiate the argument that embracing the social commitment to eradicate the stigma around mental health issues (e.g. on the Dorset Food Festival's website) can significantly contribute to the meaning construction on social sustainability in the website communication. Congruent with prior research (Hjalager & Kwiatkowski, 2023) our study provides additional support for the potential to represent local food culture and heritage as part of the social and symbolic capital of communities. Carefully designed food festival websites play a key role in such meaningful representation.

Our paper implies that three thematic pillars shape the discourse on the social sustainability of food festivals, events seen both as culinary celebrations and possible moments of community building. The modalities that reflect the ethical values and norms – enhancement of human well-being, development of inclusive societies, and support for local businesses – can also be disseminated on the event's website. However, we found that food festival website communication only partly promotes inclusivity, thereby only partly embracing the discourse on social sustainability ideals that mitigate social exclusion (de Jong & Varley,

2018; Stevenson, 2016). Finally, the careful composition of website content, clear navigation options, and the use of effective language contribute to disseminating community values.

5.6.2. Practical implications

Our findings hold some practical implications, both for festival online content creators and food festival organizers. Content creators are advised to emphasize the symbolic capital of communities and the importance of intergenerational connections through a balanced composition of visuals depicting age groups. Festival websites targeting diverse demographic cohorts, such as children and seniors, can foster intergenerational bonds through visual communication. Inclusive communication can facilitate broader audience engagement with the festivals, thus strengthening community building. In this regard, composite images, such as collages, prove less effective as these depict age cohorts separately, lacking a focus on their interconnectedness. Concerning textual communication, the use of nouns such as ‘fun’ and ‘entertainment,’ in relation to food conveys a positive meaning and can engage children while also focusing on local food heritage. Photographs on websites should emphasize gestures and expressions while simultaneously representing individuals as engaged community members. Food festival organizers are advised to pay more attention to the use of visuals and represent community members of diverse socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Food festival organizers can associate the local food culture and heritage revitalization with specific spatial contexts such as a castle, seaside, or urban center. Visual elements that spotlight interactions between chefs, locals, and festivalgoers co-creating dishes and beverages can stimulate knowledge creation of local ingredients and cooking traditions. To keep interest in local food alive in the long term, food festival websites can extend audience engagement after the festival by updating the content on a year-round active website. Sharing news, menus with seasonal ingredients, and traditional recipes linked to festivities reinforces place attachment and a sense of community.

Furthermore, food festivals can strategically employ their websites to communicate their commitments to mental and physical health. Visuals, text, and design features on a website can incorporate health-related food such as fruit and vegetables with the promotion of health-

conscious nutrition. Food festival websites can also address traditionally taboo subjects, such as the mental health of food producers, fishers or hospitality employees. This initiative could foster food festivals' commitment to social sustainability by embracing mental health concerns and making them visible.

5.6.3. Limitations and future research

Notwithstanding its relevant findings, this research is not free of limitations. The multimodal analysis was based on a limited sample of food festival websites – the CNN Culinary Journey list – and we focused only on European festivals. Further, we did not scrutinize social media platforms although we recognize that the multimodal discourse analysis might have revealed some other aspects of social sustainability. Given that this website analysis did not include any sonic signifiers such as music, songs, or vocal sounds like laughter, we plan to investigate the multimodality between visual and sonic signifiers.

Additionally, we acknowledge that there is a need to further investigate the social sustainability of food festivals and the authenticity of these events (Truc et al., 2024). While discourse formation on food, tourism, and food festivals has been increasingly shaped by (social) media (Fustè-Fornè & Masip, 2020; Irimiás & Volo, 2023), websites still play a key role in communication.

Future research could involve festivalgoers and use a photo-elicitation technique or collage to explore their sense of community and place attachment. Future research on the strict collaboration between community members of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and festival organizers could bring new insights into how social sustainability is created, strengthened, and communicated to locals and tourists alike.

6. CONCLUSION

In this research, the question of how certain aspects of locality influence the operations of restaurants and food festivals was addressed. Previous research has demonstrated that the notion of locality represents a notable trend in the hospitality sector, encompassing the revival of regional food traditions and the increase of local community engagement (Alsetoohy et al., 2021; Home et al., 2020). The adoption of locality practices in restaurants and food festivals not only contributes to business success but also positively impacts the local food system and the surrounding community (Aydin et al., 2022). Additionally, the utilization of local ingredients allows communities to showcase and preserve their culinary heritage, fostering greater community involvement in the developmental process (Feenstra, 2002; Starr et al., 2003).

As a result, the incorporation of local ingredients in the hospitality industry presents multifaceted interdisciplinary challenges, involving researchers from fields such as geography (Duram and Cawley, 2012), agriculture (Contini et al., 2017; Givens and Dunning, 2019), tourism and hospitality (Sharma et al., 2014), management studies (Salmivaara et al., 2021), and related disciplines. However, empirical research focusing on tourism and encompassing an examination of restaurants and food festivals remains limited.

Following the exploration and presentation of relevant theories, the dissertation draws upon four distinct studies. The first article examined the relationship between restaurants and local producers using a deep-interview methodology, shedding light on factors that either strengthen or hinder their collaboration, ultimately impacting the utilization of local products in hospitality. The aim of the next study was to examine the consumer perception of local and seasonal products, delineating consumer attitude groups based on Q methodology. Subsequently, two articles focus on food festivals: one investigates the representation of local ingredients and local gastronomic culture in online communication, while the other explores aspects of social sustainability on food festival websites, including the portrayal of local food culture, utilizing multimodal analysis.

6.1. Responses to Research Questions

Main research question (RQ): *“How does the concept of locality affect the operation of restaurants and food festivals from the perspectives of both the supply and demand sides?”*

Response to the research question (RQ): Defining “local products” in a generally acknowledged manner is difficult, which in turn creates obstacles for promoting the concept of “locality”. Restaurant representatives demonstrate a inclination for utilizing local ingredients, though their implementation to restaurant operations varies significantly. Stakeholders frequently hold divergent views not just on the meaning of “local”, but also on how local items might be distributed in the market. Initiatives are essential for facilitating relationships between the demand and supply sides of locally sourced products.

Nevertheless, restaurant consumers have a strong inclination to sample local gastronomy and value dishes that are made with locally sourced, seasonal ingredients. While consumers’ interest in local food culture plays a significant role in their dining decisions, there are also noticeable differences in consumption based on the destinations being studied. The differences in preferences indicate that consumer behavior is also influenced by the specific characteristics – such as local food and beverage offering – of the destination.

Meanwhile, food festival websites can serve as promotional tools, presenting aspects related to local food culture and showcasing local food products and farmers. Spotlighting interactions between chefs and festivalgoers co-creating dishes and beverages can stimulate knowledge creation of local food traditions, while sharing content of local ingredients, and traditional local food linked to festivities reinforces place attachment and a sense of community.

The research yielded the following responses to the five sub-questions (Q1-Q5):

Q1: *“What aspects influence the utilization of local ingredients in the Hungarian rural hospitality system through collaboration between local producers and restaurants?”*

Response to Q1: Based on the interviews, there is no consensus on the definition of local products. Some stakeholders limit it to ingredients from the immediate settlement, while others extend the range to 15-20 kilometers, or even to 30-50 kilometers.

While producers identified farmers' markets and mass caterers as their primary consumer base, the restaurant industry was not a primary target for direct sales. Interviews with producers revealed that restaurants generally procure small quantities directly from them, preferring wholesale channels.

However, restaurants exhibit a shared practice of featuring seasonal cuisine prominently, disparities were observed in the quality and integration of locally sourced ingredients. Certain establishments relied heavily on local ingredients, aligning with their concept that prioritizes sourcing from short food supply chains. Conversely, concerns were articulated regarding the constrained availability of locally sourced goods.

The majority of representatives from both restaurants and producers underscored the significant role played by state measures and governmental bodies. Some participants advocated for the necessity of additional development programs and tenders specifically tailored to small-scale producers. Legislative revisions were seen necessary, to facilitate the implementation of the farm-to-table concept within the Hungarian context.

Q2: “What are the primary restaurant consumer preference groups among Generation Z visiting Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest, according to their preference for food based on seasonal and local ingredients?”

Response to Q2: Five factors have been identified among travelers to the Lake Balaton destination, alongside four consumer groups in Greater Budapest. In Lake Balaton region, “immersed localists” place a significant emphasis on immersing themselves in the local food culture of the location. They show a strong interest in consuming seasonal and local food and beverages. “Culinary enthusiasts” also show some interest in the food culture of the destination, however, they prefer familiar food items, regardless of the place and season. “Price-sensitive localists” are highly sensitive to prices but, at the same time, are eager to enjoy local cuisine while traveling. “Conscious localists” demonstrate their environmental

awareness by actively choosing to buy local items and searching out meals made from local raw resources. Lastly, “price-sensitive comfort-seekers” demonstrate a strong sensitivity to pricing, while the quality of food and beverages is of lesser significance to them.

“Social localists” actively seek out food that is sourced from local sources while traveling, as they consider it is of superior quality and fresher. They believe that purchasing local products generates employment, thereby contributing to the well-being of local communities. “Comfort-seeker sceptics” are particularly intrigued by the utilization of local products, their objective is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the local cuisine culture by eating out. For “price-sensitive globalists”, both comfort and cost considerations have significant importance. Finally, “special-dietary localists” stand out for their particular demand for offerings that cater to special dietary requirements, while also preferring seasonal and local ingredients.

Q3: “What are the similarities and differences among the preferences of Generation Z consumers for food based on seasonal and local ingredients in Greater Budapest and Lake Balaton?”

Response to Q3: Comparing the two locations, restaurant patrons in both Lake Balaton and Greater Budapest generally had similar opinions on their approach to exploring culinary culture. They expressed a desire to experience local cuisine, appreciate dishes prepared with local products, and avoid seeking familiar flavors while traveling. Nevertheless, certain disparities were also noted. Customers dining at Lake Balaton restaurants expressed a greater appreciation for the selection of local wines but found the food to be more average in quality. On the other hand, consumers in Greater Budapest considered restaurant options to be more distinctive, with a particular emphasis on foods that cater to special dietary needs.

Q4: “What role does the incorporation of local ingredients and the preservation of local food culture play in the online communication of food festivals?”

Response to Q4: Food festival websites are placing a growing emphasis on sustainability by showcasing elements connected to regional traditions, presenting local farmers, and addressing various dietary needs. Their websites can function as teaching tools year-round,

fostering sustainable habits and facilitating connections between local communities and food producers, so enhancing environmental circumstances, too.

Food festivals act as channels for the dissemination of local food heritage to festival attendees, so the study also concentrated on the portrayal of aspects linked to local food culture. The investigation identified behaviors that contribute to the preservation of local food culture and heritage. These practices include showcasing traditional cuisine, demonstrating the traditional grape pressing method, training youngsters on the production of local dishes, and holding seminars on local culinary specialties. However, in contrast to the use of local foods, a relatively smaller number of events expressly emphasized their relationship with local cuisine traditions.

Q5: “How do food festival websites represent and communicate the event’s commitment towards social sustainability?”

Response to Q5: Based on the study, human relations within a community network can be strengthened through place-based narratives and visual representations. Visuals and texts depicting intergenerational ties and human interactions can be seen as symbols of social cohesion. The concept of inclusive conviviality became a prominent topic of discussion on food festival websites. The festival websites' compositional aspects depict the power dynamics of multigenerational families, portraying them as equally significant members of the community. Another contribution is the recognition of the importance of physical and mental health in the hospitality sector. Some food festivals have taken on the social responsibility of eliminating the negative perception surrounding mental health issues and incorporating it as a significant aspect of their website communication. Moreover, the findings indicate that the local cuisine culture and tradition contribute to the social and symbolic assets of communities and are mentioned on the homepages. Every festival presents traditional food and culinary techniques in a distinct way, providing attendees with a diverse range of cultural experiences.

6.2. Theoretical Implications

New theoretical and methodological insights have emerged from both my empirical and secondary research. The empirical research has revealed that operationalizing the concept of “locality” through the delineation of terms such as “local product” and “local culture” presents a challenge. This challenge is shaped by multifaceted factors, including geographical, political, and economic considerations. A disparity has emerged between the findings drawn from previous research and the outcomes of the present papers, notably regarding the stipulation for local products to originate from significantly shorter distances.

The exploration of restaurant preferences among Generation Z consumers sheds light on crucial theoretical implications within the hospitality domain. Utilizing Q-methodology, a distinctive approach in tourism research, this investigation underscores the significance of localism in shaping food preferences. The identification of distinct customer segments highlights the pivotal role of localism and gastronomic inclinations in consumer decision-making processes, emphasizing the substantial impact of local food culture on dining choices. Transparent communication regarding the sourcing of food and beverages is noted to positively influence consumer perceptions, indicating a growing interest in understanding the origins of ingredients among diners. Moreover, the selection of restaurants utilizing locally sourced ingredients may be driven by a desire to contribute to the socioeconomic development of local communities, suggesting a shift towards more ethically conscious consumption patterns.

Furthermore, the comparative analysis of local food consumption patterns across different destinations reveals the influence of contextual aspects inherent to each region on consumer behavior. The observed variations between regions underscore the importance of considering local context in understanding consumer preferences, emphasizing the need for tailored approaches in hospitality management.

In addition, the study highlights the role of food festivals as platforms for promoting local food culture and stimulating interest among both locals and tourists. Effective online presentation of local food experiences, sustained provision of dynamic content, and alignment with actual food offerings of the destination are identified as key strategies for

enhancing the impact of food festival websites. Furthermore, the centrality of inclusive conviviality in festival discourse underscores the importance of fostering community engagement and social cohesion through culinary events.

In conclusion, my dissertation has made an important addition to the examination of specific aspects of locality related to the operations of restaurants and food festivals, which have received limited attention in prior studies. These theoretical implications underscore the need for subsequent academic research within this domain, accentuating the significance of using new methodologies, which are less pervasive in the realm of tourism research. Moreover, they underscore the necessity for qualitative research to complement the prevailing quantitative dominance within this field.

6.3. Practical Implications

The research encompassed within this dissertation yields practical implications and provides guidance for restaurant managers, food festival organizers, and other stakeholders within the tourism sector.

6.3.1. Implications for Restaurant Professionals

The integration of local products into hospitality operations presents both challenges and opportunities from the perspectives of restaurant representatives and local producers. To foster collaboration between these parties, effective communication channels are crucial. Digital solutions and strategic marketing efforts can facilitate this collaboration, thereby streamlining daily tasks such as menu compilation and production planning. Additionally, greater collaboration with professional organizations and governmental bodies is essential for promoting these initiatives.

Frequent changes in restaurant menus based on seasonal and local ingredients, along with innovative approaches such as tasting menus and thematic programs, can be seen as both challenging for chefs and a form of innovation. In the long run, such efforts may lead to improved financial outcomes and product quality, reducing reliance on ingredients from distant sources.

Restaurants should reassess their business models and marketing strategies to accommodate diverse consumer segments, especially Generation Z, who have distinct preferences and inclinations. Incorporating locally produced food and elements of local food heritage into restaurant concepts can significantly impact consumer perceptions. Additionally, consumers are increasingly concerned about the social impacts of their consumption, such as employment generation and support for local communities. Aligning with these values can enhance a restaurant's appeal to consumers.

Hospitality professionals need to actively integrate local cuisine into the experience management to meet the strong consumer interest in exploring food cultures. Balancing affordability with a focus on local ingredients is essential for enterprises in tourism destinations. Moreover, offering choices that cater to specific dietary requirements is crucial for meeting the preferences of Generation Z consumers.

6.3.2. Implications for Professional Bodies in Hospitality

Professional bodies can facilitate collaboration between restaurants, food festival organizers, local producers, and other stakeholders in the hospitality sector. By providing platforms for communication and networking, professional bodies can help streamline efforts to integrate local products into hospitality operations and promote local cuisine.

Tourist boards should prioritize promoting the region's culinary heritage as part of its tourism marketing strategy. Highlighting local food traditions, festivals, and culinary experiences can attract tourists interested in exploring the authentic flavors of the destination. Moreover, they can offer resources, guidance, and incentives to support initiatives aimed at incorporating local ingredients into restaurant menus and food festival offerings. This support can range from funding opportunities to educational workshops on sustainable sourcing practices.

Tourist boards should also collaborate closely with governmental bodies responsible for agriculture, tourism, and economic development to align policies and regulations that support the growth of the local food industry. This may involve advocating for incentives for local producers, infrastructure improvements, and initiatives to preserve food cultural heritage.

6.3.3. Implications for Food Festival’s Organizers and Online Content Creators

Food festival organizers should prioritize locality in their planning and implementation processes to maximize their impact on local communities. This involves prioritizing local participation, supporting regional businesses, and preserving food cultural heritage. Effective communication and educational campaigns are essential for increasing awareness among festival-goers and encouraging active engagement in promoting local cuisine culture.

Content creators for food festivals should emphasize the symbolic value of communities and the importance of intergenerational relationships through a balanced mix of imagery representing different age groups. Festival websites designed to cater to diverse demographic cohorts can promote intergenerational connections through visual communication. Inclusive communication methods and positive language can enhance participation in festivals, contributing to community development. Regularly updating festival websites with news, seasonal menus, and traditional dishes fosters a sense of belonging and sustains interest in local cuisine throughout the year.

Table 20. Theoretical and practical contribution of research

| Theoretical and practical implication | Methodology | Related Q | Article |
|--|--|------------------|----------------|
| Operationalizing the concept of local product | Semi-Structured Interviews | Q1 | A1 |
| Highlighting the role of cooperation to foster integration of local products into hospitality operations | Semi-Structured Interviews | Q1 | A1 |
| Identifying consumer preference groups considering seasonal and local food | Q methodology | Q2 | A2 |
| Integration of local cuisine into the restaurant experience management to meet consumer interest | Q methodology | Q2 | A2 |
| Highlighting the significance of localism in shaping food preferences | Q methodology | Q2; Q3 | A2 |
| Revealing the influence of destination-specific aspects on consumer behavior | Q methodology | Q3 | A2 |
| Highlighting the role of food festivals as platforms for promoting local food culture | Qualitative Online Content Analysis; Multimodal Discourse Analysis | Q4; Q5 | A3; A4 |
| Focusing on the importance of fostering community engagement and social cohesion through culinary events | Multimodal Discourse Analysis | Q5 | A4 |

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|----|----|
| Emphasize value of communities and intergenerational relationships through online communication | Multimodal Discourse Analysis | Q5 | A4 |
|---|-------------------------------|----|----|

Source: own compilation

6.4. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the limitations of the current research and to address them in future studies in order to enhance our overall understanding of the subject.

One limitation of this dissertation is the restricted scope imposed by the samples utilized in the research. This constrained the examination to certain aspects of restaurant and food festival operations concerning locality.

The selected methodologies may have inadvertently overlooked other relevant factors within these contexts, thus the findings may not provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in the relationship between locality and restaurant or food festival operations. It is also crucial to acknowledge that the findings of the present study cannot be generalized due to the specificities of the methods used, such as semi-structured interviews, Q-methodology, online content analysis, and multimodal analysis.

Focusing exclusively on certified rural restaurants and ranked farmers, perhaps restricting the acquired insights. Expanding the research to encompass additional categories of catering establishments would yield a more comprehensive understanding of the difficulties and possibilities associated with sourcing local ingredients throughout the wider hospitality industry. Incorporating a broader range of suppliers into the study would provide a deeper exploration of their motivations, practices, and the daily obstacles they encounter in providing local ingredients.

Additionally, the dataset may have overlooked festivals without an online presence, and the data collection process excluded festivals lacking official websites or English-language content. A primary limitation identified during the analysis of web content is the disparity between the information presented on the festival's websites and the actual initiatives or actions undertaken by the festival.

Furthermore, I stay engaged in investigating the subsequent research subjects that are pertinent to my doctoral research:

1. Extending the scope of the research to include other types of catering establishments, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to local ingredient procurement across the broader hospitality sector.
2. Future research could focus on obtaining information directly from festival organizers by in-depth interviews, delving into the motivations behind showcasing local ingredients and food heritage.
3. Future research could involve festival goers to explore their sense of community and place attachment. Future research on the strict collaboration between community members of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and festival organizers could bring new insights on how social sustainability is created, strengthened and communicated to locals and tourists alike.

7. REFERENCES

This thesis includes a compilation of articles authored independently or co-authored by the dissertation's author, with publication status indicated as of June 27, 2024.

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