Master Thesis

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From Farm To Status: The Unexplored Personal Benefits of Local Food

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Abstract

This study explores the extent to which consumers' personal benefits from the consumption of local food relates to the pursuit and signalling of social status. Whereas extant literature has predominantly revolved around the collective benefits of local food, focusing on its environmental impact and ability to be used as a tool to support local economies, this study draws on Bourdieu's (1984) theory of social status and distinction to explore local food's role in the reinforcement of social distinction. Situated within the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) research tradition, qualitative data has been obtained in the Netherlands, revealing that local food serves as a marker of economic, social, and cultural capital. Here, consumers use the consumption practice of local food to express personal identity, signal taste, and strengthen social ties, aligning their consumption behaviour with their underlying social norms and values. Additionally, the concept of class-conditioned habitus is found to moderate these effects, with early exposure to the impact of communal support shaping long-lasting consumption habits, increasing their awareness of local food's underlying competencies. Together, these findings expand the current understanding of local food consumption, suggesting important implications for marketing and consumer behaviour research.

Keywords: Local food, Status, Class-conditioned habitus, Social status, Social distinction, Economic capital, Social capital, Cultural Capital.

Preface

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude towards Dr. Paolo Franco, who has been of tremendous help throughout the entire research process. Dr. Paolo Franco is currently conducting a study on the topic of local food himself, and his enthusiasm was definitely clear and quite contagious, which certainly helped me invest the necessary time and effort. Combined with his incredibly swift responses to questions, constructive feedback and structured meetings meant that it has been a pleasure to work together.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Luuk Einhaus. It was during the end of December that we found out that we had been assigned the same research topic. While your study ultimately ended up focusing on the health benefits of local food consumption, the fact that we shared the same data collection process meant that we could always chat about the progress of the thesis, which certainly made the journey a lot more manageable.

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Introduction

In 2022, when Jan Linders, a supermarket chain well-known in southern parts of the Netherlands, merged with Albert Heijn, consumers had one demand: their famous local food selection had to remain in store (De Winter, 2023). This strong consumer response perfectly resembles not just the high demand for local food, but also its unique position in the marketplace. Despite being more expensive and harder to access than its mass-produced alternatives, local food continues to have a loyal consumer base, further emphasizing its reputation as an exclusive product (Reich et al., 2018). Whereas its consumer base was initially found to be attracted by local food's taste and quality, contemporary beliefs suggest that their motive extends far beyond mere intrinsic product benefits, hinting at deeper social and cultural dynamics at play (Schoolman, 2017).

Consumers are often found to align their purchasing habits with their ethical beliefs. According to Allen (2015), local food consumers are motivated by a sense of responsibility for the welfare of community members and local food producers. Naturally, the positive economic and environmental impact of local food has been a central focus in extant literature. Research suggests that consuming local food fosters local employment, with some even arguing that it contributes to civic pride and safer communities (Schoolman, 2017). Defined as ethical consumption by Starr (2009), purchasing local food enables individuals to actively support environmental sustainability and economic resilience, making it not just a dietary choice but also an ethical statement (Schoolman, 2017).

In this context, the consumption of local food is portrayed as an inherently collectivist-oriented practice, driven by people's concerns for local economy, environmental sustainability, and community well-being (Reich et al., 2018). Consequently, existing literature has largely focused on these factors as the primary justification for consumer's willingness to pay the premium price associated with local food. However, beyond these ethical and community-driven motivations, consumer behaviour research suggests that purchasing behaviour in many contexts are often shaped by personal benefits, including social recognition and status (Dubois et al., 2012). In light of the above, this paper argues that by emphasizing collective benefits, extant literature on local food may have underexplored the role of personal benefits, particularly those tied to social status and distinction. Accordingly, this paper poses the following question: *"To what extent do consumers' personal benefits from the consumption of local food relate to the pursuit or signalling of social status?"*

Via a phenomenon known as conspicuous consumption, consumers often resort to displaying their wealth through the visual consumption of goods. Here, conspicuous consumption provides individuals the opportunity to assert status and differentiate themselves from others. Naturally, food, as a universal and highly visual product, has proven to be a commonly used tool for this matter (Palma et al., 2017).

To extend the literature beyond the dominant focus on ethical and community-driven motivations for consumers' willingness to pay a premium for local food, Bourdieu's (1984) work on status will be

utilized as an enabling lens. As described by Dolbec et al. (2021), enabling lenses are theories, used to capitalize on a proven ontological perspective and theoretical vocabulary in order to explain a particular phenomenon. As a foundational scholar in status and consumer research, Bourdieu's work on status will enable this research to take an interdisciplinary approach, emphasizing the role of cultural, social, and economic capital in the shaping of consumer behaviour.

Complementing a status perspective on local food, this paper will adopt a Consumer Culture Theory research approach. Best described as a research tool to study how consumer decisions are influenced by cultural influences, CCT research takes an interdisciplinary approach explicitly incorporating social and cultural dimensions (Franco, 2022). As other research traditions in marketing and consumer research primarily revolve around economic and psychological factors, the CCT research tradition adequately suits Bourdieu's interdisciplinary view on status, thereby providing a robust framework to understand the potential status-signalling role of local food consumption.

Consistent with prior CCT studies that draw on Bourdieu's work, this research takes on a qualitative methodology (e.g., Arsel & Bean, 2013; Arsel & Thompson, 2011). According to Bourdieu (1984), status and the overarching concept of social distinction are not transmitted via material goods, but instead lie deeply intertwined in cultural and social practices. To uncover these often unconscious practices of consumption behaviour, this study will rely on semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to articulate their engagement with local food beyond surface-level preferences and habits (Arsel, 2017). Additionally, an archival analysis of Dutch newspapers will be conducted in order to explore how local food is framed within public discourse, capturing the broader societal perceptions.

Theoretical Relevance

This study contributes to the existing body of literature by extending the current understanding of local food's high demand. The collective benefits of local food, such as community building, sustainability, and regional economic support, have been widely covered in extant literature (Allen, 2015; Schoolman, 2017). While some collective benefits translate into personal benefits and vice versa, the exclusivity of local food and its potential role as a status-signalling product are yet to be identified. Additionally, despite Bourdieu's (1984) framework on status being a well-established lens in consumer research, it has yet to be applied to the context of local food consumption. By addressing this gap, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how local food functions beyond its economic and ethical dimensions, shedding light on its role in social distinction and consumer identity.

Practical Relevance

Beyond its academic relevance, the findings of this study will provide valuable insights for marketeers seeking to position local food as a premium product. By recognizing that its appeal extends beyond environmental and health concerns, marketeers can better align their strategies related to local food

(Aaker, 2004). Additionally, this study offers a fresh perspective on consumer behaviour, demonstrating that responsible choices are not just ethical or health-driven but can also serve as status markers, influencing purchasing decisions in ways that have previously been overlooked.

Roadmap

This rest of this paper is structured as follows. Firstly, the theoretical background chapter highlights key arguments within existing local food literature, offering an extensive overview of current knowledge, whilst also elaborating on the theoretical lens and relevant frameworks concerning status, social distinction, and Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) research introduced in the introduction. The methodology chapter outlines the research design, including data sources and analytical techniques. The findings chapter then presents the main results, structured in line with Bourdieu's (1984) framework on status and its associated variables. The discussion chapter interprets these findings in relation to existing literature and offers suggestions for future research. Finally, the conclusion provides a summary of the key arguments and answers the research question.

Theoretical Background

Over the last fifty years, consumer research on local food has evolved to correspond with the ongoing global trends framing food consumption. During the 1980s, the rise of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) reflected a growing consumer interest in supporting small-scale farmers and strengthening local economies, aligning with wider concerns about agricultural sustainability and food security (Tregear & Ness, 2005). Globalization in the late 20th century sparked the rise of multinational agribusinesses, whose global supply chains enabled them to optimize their efficiency via economies of scale and overall lower production costs (Goland, 2002). Combatting the displacement of local, small-scaled farms, consumers intentionally altered their consumption patterns to align with their norms and values. This development exemplifies the strength of ethical consumption, which has formed a pivotal foundation in local food research (Schoolman, 2017).

Ethical consumption was predominantly defined as an act of politically active individuals who deliberately use their purchasing power to influence social and economic systems (Clarke, 2008). However, as ample research has explored the relationship between local food and ethical consumption, contemporary findings suggest that food related consumer behaviour has expanded beyond traditional activism (Memery et al., 2015). In line with the growing awareness on environmental degradation, an ever-increasing amount of consumers are aiming to minimize their carbon footprint through their consumption choices (Reich et al., 2018). In their survey, Reich et al. (2018) found ecological problems caused by fuel used in importing food to be one of the driving factors of present-day consumer decisions. Naturally, local food, with a relatively short supply chain, minimizes ecological harm, thereby harmonizing with the expanding consumer concerns about sustainability.

Perceived Trustworthiness

Beyond environmental benefits, the ‘localness’ of local food has been found to enhance perceived trustworthiness (Masson & Bubendorff, 2022). In accordance with the aforementioned, a shorter supply chain not only minimises environmental harm through lower fuel consumption and carbon footprints but also promotes transparency, enabling consumers to feel more connected to the sources of their food (Masson & Bubendorff, 2022). According to Winter (2003), it is this asset that particularly sets it apart from the competition. Unlike organic food, which emphasizes sustainable production methods but can still involve long and complex distribution networks, local food encompasses both environmental advantages and direct, traceable connections to its origins (Winter, 2003). According to Autio et al. (2013), local food’s perceived trustworthiness not only stems from its geographical proximity to the customer, but also from its integration within a specific cultural context. Here, the embeddedness in local traditions, production practices, and personal interactions is found to reinforce a sense of reliability (Autio et al., 2013). This stands in contrast to organic food, which, despite its sustainable credentials, fails to deliver the same level of transparency as a result of its distant, often industrialized, supply chains (Winter, 2023).

At the heart of local food consumption lies a dual orientation, intertwining personal benefits with collectivist values. On an individual level, consumers seek to improve their environmental impact via increased trust and transparency, based on a clear awareness of their food's origins (McEachern et al., 2010) Simultaneously, consumers collectively reflect a shared commitment, extending far beyond mere self-interests (Allen, 2015). By recognizing the importance of their role in society, choosing local food is often synonymous with a sense of social responsibility, where consumers intentionally ensure that their consumption patterns support the local economy (Schoolman, 2017). According to Autio et al. (2013), this interconnectedness between user and producer enforces a mutual dependency, creating a cycle of trust where trust does not just originate from personal beliefs, but is iteratively built and reinforced within the local community. As a result, Winter (2023) has found demand for local food to exceed that of organic food by almost a factor of two as consumers increasingly prioritize the authenticity and trust of a close and socially embedded food network.

Limitations in Extant Literature

Despite the vast variety of emphasized advantages of local food consumption, one dimension that has been neglected is its potential function as a status signalling product. Even though local food is often perceived through the lens of ethical responsibility, local food's premium pricing introduces an exclusivity that can serve as a marker of social distinction (Palma et al., 2017). As mentioned by Palma et al. (2017), the ability to afford and consume premium food inadvertently signals economic and cultural capital, directly enhancing a consumer's social position. However, the role of local food in this context remains to be identified. Unlike mainstream status goods such as clothing and jewellery, consumption goods are often being privately consumed (Dubois et al., 2012). Yet, the social embeddedness of local food makes it a distinctly exposed practice (Schoolman, 2017). Whether through local farm shops or community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, local food consumption typically occurs in socially visible places, where purchasing decisions are both observed and socially reinforced (Mars et al., 2023). This suggests that beyond the collectivist and environmental motivations, local food may also function as a symbolic act, signalling values of social distinction. Hence, this paper poses the question: "*To what extent do consumers' personal benefits from the consumption of local food relate to the pursuit or signalling of social status?"*

Status as enabling lens

In order to explore and theorize the underlying dimensions of social distinction, this study draws its basis from Bourdieu's (1984) work on status. Bourdieu (1984) conceptualizes status as a product encompassing three distinct facets consumers use to position themselves within a social hierarchy, namely economic, social, and cultural capital. Economic capital refers to the wealth of an individual (e.g., money, assets, property). Social capital refers to the individual's network of acquaintances and relationships (e.g., business contacts). Whereas cultural capital refers to the individual's knowledge and capabilities that can help them get ahead in life (e.g., education, style, vocabulary) (Bourdieu, 1984).

Moving away from a solely economic perspective, Bourdieu's (1984) framework established a revolutionary baseline to recognize social distinction from consumers' everyday practices.

Bourdieu (1984) found social distinction to be maintained through a class-conditioned habitus. Habitus is defined as the deeply ingrained attitudes, preferences, and habits, which, developed through your upbringing, lay the groundwork for educated consumption choices. On the basis of the aforementioned, consumption is not just a personal act but a visible display of distinction, where individuals signal their belongings through their everyday practices (Bourdieu, 1984).

Bourdieu's work has been widely used in consumer research studies. Building on the abovementioned definition of class-conditioned habitus, Arsel & Bean (2013) applied Bourdieu's framework in the context of home aesthetics and decoration, uncovering the intricacies of a person's taste. Introducing the idea of 'taste regimes', Arsel & Bean (2013) argued that socially constructed systems guide taste and the corresponding consumption habits. Accordingly, taste is not just a personal asset, but instead is socially taught and enacted (Arsel & Bean, 2013). Naturally, taste is a constantly evolving construct, enabling the consumer to be aligned with culturally exposed norms and values.

Similarly, Arsel & Thompson (2011) used Bourdieu's framework in the context of hipsters to explain how consumers maintain authenticity in the face of mainstream commercialization. Those deeply embedded in a social field (e.g., an artist) actively work to protect their identity and status from external influences. By breaking social distinction into Bourdieu's forms of capital, Arsel & Thompson (2011) concluded that social capital reinforces legitimacy through exclusive networks, while cultural capital allows individuals to refine their tastes, making their field harder to replicate. Finally, economic capital provides access to rare, custom-made goods, further distinguishing them from mass-market adopters.

This study will adopt a similar approach, applying Bourdieu's (1984) framework of social distinction to examine the status dynamics in local food consumption. While previous research, such as Palma et al. (2017), has explored food's role as a status-signalling product, the application of this perspective to local food remains unidentified. Palma et al. (2017) demonstrate that food consumption extends beyond mere nutrition, serving as a marker of social status through cultural, social, and economic capital. However, Palma et al. (2017) does not address how these mechanisms operate within the realm of local food, where sustainability and ethical considerations often intersect with social distinction. This study aims to fill that gap, uncovering the nuanced ways in which local food consumption functions as a marker of social status signalling.

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT)

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) focusses on the role of social and cultural capital from both an individual and collective perspective (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), making CCT particularly well-suited for an interdisciplinary approach that integrates Bourdieu's (1984) framework on status. By examining how social, cultural, and identity-driven factors shape consumer behaviour, CCT moves beyond economic rationality to understand how consumer actions interrelate with the marketplace and cultural meanings. Thence, this study combines CCT with this lens to examine how economic, social, and cultural capital manifest in local food-related consumer behaviour.

The method section outlined below demonstrates how the principles of CCT research are operationalized to uncover the abovementioned nuances of status in local food consumption.

Methods

Research approach

This study is based on a qualitative research methodology to investigate how local food consumption functions as a marker of social distinction. Within consumer research, qualitative methods are often used to address questions regarding experience, meaning and perspective, and are particularly well-suited when the aim is to understand these phenomena from the perspective of the participant (Hammarberg et al., 2016). This enables studies to explore social phenomena from perspectives from which they can be perceived. As the consumer's habits and preferences underlining this study are shaped by their cultural background and social environment, a qualitative research approach is essential to explore how local food consumers perform and express social distinction in their consumption practices (Busetto et al., 2020).

This ability to explore a social phenomenon from where they can be perceived and experienced is also crucial to adequately implement this study's enabling lens: Bourdieu's (1984) framework on status. Here, status is not transmitted via material goods, but instead lies deeply intertwined in cultural and social practices. Naturally, a qualitative research approach with its inherent capacity for in-depth exploration will allow these deeply embedded social meanings to be uncovered. Additionally, Bourdieu (1984) argues that status is shaped by a class-conditioned habitus. These are deeply ingrained attitudes, preferences, and habits, which, developed through your upbringing, unconsciously affects consumer behaviour. Given that these elements are often not recognized by an individual, a quantitative approach, which relies on predefined variables and factual reporting, would be incapable of capturing these social meanings (Hammarberg et al., 2016). On the other hand, qualitative research methods allow participants to share experiences beyond surface-level rationality, making them particularly well-suited for the purpose of this study (Arsel, 2017).

Interviews

This study uses semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. Semi-structured interviews provide conversations with the space for flexibility, ensuring that emerging topics are sufficiently addressed (Arsel, 2017). This ability is instrumental in Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) research, as the underlying meanings it aims to understand are interpretative and subjective by nature. Consequently, the use of semi-structured interviews enables this study to explore how consumers personally interpret, experience, and justify their consumption of local food, allowing themes such as social status and perceived benefits to naturally emerge from the interviewees' own narratives (Arsel, 2017). Asked questions will therefore be based on the value consumers attach to local food, the reasoning behind their purchasing behaviour, and the embeddedness of local food in their cultural background and social environment. As an example, asking the interviewee, "Hypothetically, what would you say to a

neighbour who is not an active local food consumer?", potentially reveals underlying motivations and the personal importance of local food.

These questions will be iteratively refined throughout the research process to include emergent themes of relevance. A preliminary version of the interview guide is provided in Appendix 1.

This study adopts a purposive sampling approach, guaranteeing that participants possess key characteristics relevant to the research objective (Spiggle, 1994). Whereas all participants will have a level of involvement with local food consumption, a subset will be intentionally selected on the basis of their societal position (i.e. members of a renowned golf course). Since these places are widely recognized as social spaces that reflect social distinction and status, the inclusion of these participants will allow this study to explore whether local food serves as a similar marker of social distinction. A participant table is provided in Appendix 4.

Additionally, this comparative approach strengthens the ability to assess the generalizability of the findings. The data will be drawn in collaboration with Luuk Einhaus, a fellow Master Marketing student, who explores how shopping environments influence consumer perceptions of local food's health benefits and how routines and repeated experiences in local food venues contribute to these beliefs.

Archival Analysis

In order to further increase the depth of the analysis and supplement the interviews, this study conducts an archival analysis using Dutch newspaper articles. Building on Mars et al.'s (2023) argument on the visibility of local food consumption, local food has become a frequent topic in the media, highlighting its reputation as a socially observable and often publicly discussed practice. Therefore, analysing archival material will assist the study in observing how local food is portrayed and consumed in real-world contexts (Fischer & Parmentier, 2024). This data collection method allows for a deeper understanding of how discourses around local food unfold in everyday life, extending theoretical insights into tangible public discourses and further validating the findings from the interview data (Ventresca & Mohr, 2017).

Archival materials will be retrieved via the Nexis Uni database. This will be done via a Boolean search strategy. This strategy empowers this study with full control over the data set as it precisely excludes articles mentioning words irrelevant to the study. Given that the purpose of the archival analysis is to contextualize and support the findings within the public discourse of local food consumption, any article revolving around the COVID-19 pandemic has also been excluded in the search. Using this Boolean search strategy, the archival materials will solely consist of articles from the five largest Dutch newspapers (het Algemeen Dagblad, de Telegraaf, de Volkskrant, NRC, and Trouw) published from the 1st of January 2022 to the 31st of December 2024, ensuring that the data remains manageable whilst

encompassing the most recent discourses around local food consumption. The Boolean search string, which this study shares with Luuk Einhaus' study on the perceived health benefits, is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Boolean Search Strings Used in Nexis Uni

Local Food Synonyms		Search Filters
Lokaal voedsel (local food)	AND	Gezondheid (Health)
Lokaal product (local product)		Status (Status)
Lokale producten (local products)		Identiteit (Identity)
Regioproduct (regional product)		Omgeving (Environment)
Regioproducten (regional products)		Gezond (Health)
Streekproducten (local products, referring to famous local food lines in Dutch supermarkets)		Sociale status (Social status)
Regionale producten (regional products)		Regionale identiteit (Regional identity)
		Vertrouwen (Trust)
		Milieu (Environment)
		Seizoen (Season)
		Cultuur (Culture)
		Trots (Pride)
		Bewustzijn (Awareness)

Data Analysis

The data from the semi-structured interviews will be analysed among three distinct phases. In line with Spiggle's (1994) iterative approach, data analysis will coincide with the data collection process to ensure that newly found insights are integrated into subsequent interviews. Data analysing will begin via an open coding process, where the transcriptions from the interviews are examined to uncover emerging themes and patters. This inductive process allows the data to emerge organically, without any pre-defined concepts interfering with the results (Spiggle, 1994). After this process is completed, the established themes and patterns are examined through axial coding. Here, the identified codes from the open coding process are organized into higher-order categories, emphasizing the identification of relationships and conceptual coherence amongst the data. In the final phase, a selective coding process will be conducted to form a central theme tying all the categories together, solidifying a coherent framework grounded in the empirical data (Spiggle, 1994).

The obtained data from the archival analysis will be analysed via manual coding of the content from the newspaper articles. Following a similar approach, recurring themes, discourses and framings surrounding local food and its perceived personal benefits will be identified. These insights are subsequently used to supplement the findings from the interviews. As the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews are primarily conducted in the same cultural region, the insights from the archival analysis extend insights to a nation-wide context, thereby strengthening the validity of the results and supporting the final framework with broader contextual and cultural perspectives.

Research Ethics

This study will follow a set of established guidelines to ensure that the participants' participation is ethically sound. Before an interview is conducted, participants will receive a plain language form containing all required information regarding their rights, the manner in which the data will be used, and that their participation is on a completely voluntary basis. This is done to ensure that their privacy, autonomy, and well-being are prioritized throughout the entire phase of the interview (Tracy, 2010). Participants are, provided they agree to the conditions, able to give verbal or written consent based on their preferences. Individuals under the age of eighteen will not be included in the study. The verbal consent script and plain language form are provided in Appendix 2.

Research Quality

Within Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) research and qualitative research principles, studies are required to adhere to a set of quality standards. Sound CCT research consists of methodological transparency and interpretive depth, emphasizing the importance of analytical trustworthiness throughout the entire research process (Hogg & Maclaran, 2008 & Tracy, 2010).

In order to ensure that this study adheres to the abovementioned principles, it operates in alignment with a multitude of extant theoretical frameworks. Firstly, as defined by Tracy (2010) as meaningful coherence, a sound qualitative study operates under a tight alignment between the theoretical framework and methodological approach. Here, the use of Bourdieu's (1984) work on capital and status, combined with the informed methodological approach of the CCT research tradition, ensures theoretical depth and coherence throughout the entire research process. This methodological alignment is reflected in the purposive sampling strategy, enabling this study to find and draw data from higher-status consumers.

Additionally, this study enhances its methodological transparency and credibility by carefully documenting each step of the research process. Besides, following the inductive and iterative approach of Spiggle's (1994) framework, themes and patterns emerging from data collection are able to emerge naturally, without any pre-defined variables or researcher biases influencing the outcomes of the results (Hogg & Maclaran, 2008).

Overall, these strategies position the study to make a contextually sound contribution to the literature on local food consumption and status signalling.

Findings

This study explores whether local food consumption can serve as a marker of social status, drawing on Bourdieu's (1984) theory of capital. As illustrated in Figure 1, local food consumption has the potential to signal economic, cultural, and social capital. A central aspect of this framework is the moderating role of class-conditioned habitus, influencing the extent to which local food consumption functions as a status signalling practice. The abovementioned concepts will be illustrated in the following findings, using examples from the data retrieved from both the interviews and the archival analysis. For a summary table of supplementary examples of each variable in the conceptual model, please see Appendix 3.

Economic Capital

Extant literature (Palma et al., 2017; Dubois et al., 2012) has established a strong link between food and social status, emphasizing consumers' willingness to pay a premium for products associated with exclusivity. Here, the premium price itself becomes a symbol of economic capital, where the ability to pay a premium for a luxury item signals an individuals' financial means. In line with Bourdieu (1984), such displays of economic capital enable people to assert control and elevate their position within a social hierarchy.

Even though local food is inherently more expensive and offers demonstrable exclusivity, exemplified by Geert, a local baker, who described his products as *"constructed with indisputable love and passion"*, existing research has not sufficiently addressed whether consumers of local food are consciously aware of local food's capacity to signal economic capital, and whether this awareness actively motivates their consumption choices. Extending Palma et al.'s (2017) framework on food's ability to signal economic capital, this study has found local food to enhance a consumer's sense of pride and care, suggesting a subtle feeling of satisfaction in demonstrating that they have not opted for a lower-cost option. As Martine explains:

> **Martine:** Whenever I welcome friends or family, I will always opt for a cheese or piece of meat from a local food shop. Just to show that I have put some extra effort into the food I serve. The extra money spent is not something I will openly express, but does fill me with some satisfaction. Just so I can say to myself that I have not been cheap. Yes, that does make me feel better.

However, this study has found that local food consumers are predominantly motivated by local food's perceived exclusivity, with some explicitly stating that "*The more exclusive, the better"* (Esther, Martine). Here, consumers were particularly attentive to characteristics such as taste and visual appeal. This strengthens the idea that their willingness to pay a premium price is closely tied to local food's exclusivity. Importantly, the act of presenting local food to guests, where the extra effort is visibly demonstrated, appears to generate a strong sense of personal satisfaction for the consumer. As Esther explains:

> **Esther:** To serve my guests with products that are not available in supermarkets, products that are exclusive or even sometimes unknown to them is something I find fun to do. Then price is completely irrelevant to me.

In this context, status, in the form of economic capital as conceptualized by Bourdieu (1984), is not merely displayed and consolidated through wealth and purchasing power, but also through the access to exclusive local food products unavailable in mainstream stores such as the supermarket. This study has, however, found this representation of exclusivity to be only one dimension of local food's broader appeal.

Social Capital

Local food has established itself as a unique, exclusive product facing high demands. Extant literature has provided a plethora of reasons as to why local food has become so popular (Mars et al., 2023; Schoolman, 2017). Accordingly, local foods' popularity resides in its versatile nature, where local purchases not only foster local communities, but is also environmentally beneficial. As the acquiring of local food typically occurs in socially visible places (e.g. food markets and local food shops), local food consumption is often associated with a community identity (Schoolman, 2017). This sense of belonging to a group valuing localism and sustainability strengthens social bonds and reinforces the idea that the consumption of local food is indeed a marker of social status. An article, written by the NRC on the 12th of September 2023, mentioned the following regarding a local food shop:

> **NRC**: "Sometimes this is just like a chat house,' says Kloosterman. 'People love to exchange the latest news with each other. You run into friends and acquaintances everywhere. There's always something to talk about."

This aligns closely with Bourdieu's (1984) notion of social capital, wherein social interactions increase bonding with an individual's social network and enables them to position themselves within a societal hierarchy.

The data from this study, however, demonstrates that local food's capacity to signal social capital exists well beyond the point of purchase. The participants of this study have indicated that local food is not solely valued for its taste, but also as a cultural marker that signals their participation in a social practice. Here, local food functions as a facilitator or social gatherings, where the consumption of local food is inseparably connected to events with friends, family, and other acquaintances.

> **Martine:** Even though it is not the sole motivation for me to buy local food, it definitely facilitates a social setting. And yes, the local food served is almost always material for conversation.

In line with the aforementioned, the consumption and participation with the consumption of local food and its practices provides the opportunity for individuals to meet, interact with, and reinforce social ties with their social network. Therefore, local food consumption is found to act as a mechanism for

expanding and reinforcing these social networks, fostering social capital and ultimately contributing to an individual's social status within their particular community.

Cultural Capital

Local food and its associated shops are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of a region. Local food shops not only serve as key drivers of the local economy, but are also the most accessible locations of a regions identity. Functioning as the postcard of a culture's cuisine, these stores are essential for maintaining the region's quality of life and cultural distinctiveness. Geert, whose own bakery has unified Wanssum for more than four decades said the following:

> **Geert:** Our bakery is incredibly important for this community, but I feel like our influence extends far beyond our village's borders. We are from Limburg and ensure that people are able to feel part of Limburg through the products we make.

This level of embeddedness in the region was later underlined by Jurriën:

> **Juriën:** When we have a party with friends and family, I will always get a Limburgse Vlaai from Wanssum (referring to Geert Verdeuzeldonk's bakery). I am very proud to be from Wanssum. Consuming a Vlaai from our local bakery makes us feel like us.

The aforementioned adequately exemplifies Bourdieu's (1984) definition of cultural capital, who argued that cultural capital manifests in the ability to recognize, appreciate, and take part in culturally valued practices. Here, participation in these every day practices can serve to distinguish individuals from others within a social environment. In Jurriën's case, this connection to the consumption of local food, and particularly the Limburgse Vlaai, reinforces his sense of authenticity and personal identity within his community.

Furthermore, the data from this study highlights that local food's signalling of cultural capital is not merely a result of a culturally distinctive product. Instead, participants of the study argued that they only experience cultural attachment to a particular product when it is bought from a local food shop. Similar to what Bourdieu (1984) described as emplaced cultural capital, mentioning that an individual's experience is shaped by the material, sensory, and social environment, visitors of local food shops become indulged in a region's authentic identities.

Comparable to the smell of Italian pizza dough or the visuals of a stone oven, buying bread from Geert's bakery involves more than just a transaction. The ability to see the origins of the product directly behind the counter is found to engage the buyer in local traditions, combined with a sensory appreciation of place. This dual experience is exactly what sets local food, and its shops, apart from mass-produced alternatives typically found in supermarkets as it uniquely combines this emplaced form of cultural capital with the culturally valued product. Geert explains it as follows:

> **Geert:** If you would only look at our famed Limburgse Vlaai, I get people from all over Limburg to buy our Vlaai. They would never buy that in a supermarket as it would lose its cultural value. I especially experience this effect since its official recognition as cultural heritage of last year.

This sentiment resonated with all participants of the study, concretely stating that they only experience cultural attachment to a particular product when it is explicitly locally produced.

Additionally, and in line with Palma et al. (2017), who argue that individuals possess an inherent drive to seek social status, and that the goods capable of providing social status are often more desirable, this study posits a mutually reinforcing relationship, where local food's status-signalling function amplifies its own demand.

Class-Conditioned Habitus

Finally, this study posits that class-conditioned habitus, conceptualized by Bourdieu (1984) as the deeply ingrained attitudes, preferences, and habits, which, developed through your upbringing, lay the groundwork for educated consumption choices, influences the perceived status signalling capacity of local food. Marlie Camps stated the following about her current purchasing behaviour:

> **Marly:** My parents had their own business and we were definitely reliant on the local community for our shop to be sustainable. This for sure influences my perception of local food. For me, it is a way to pay back the community for what they have meant for my parents' business in the past.

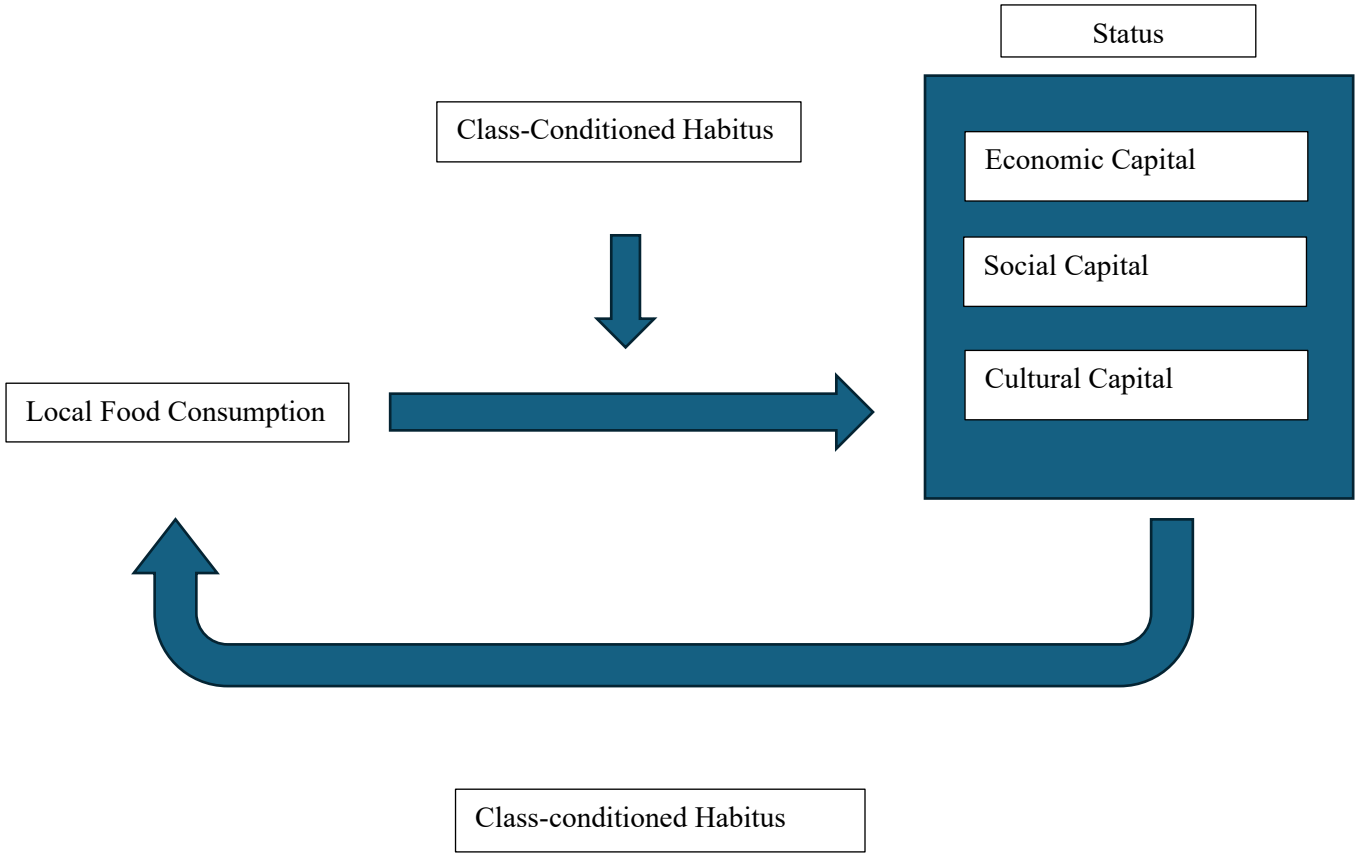
Here, her parents' involvement in a local business fostered a sense of loyalty towards her local community, embedding her in a consumption practice that is not merely driven by superior taste or convenience. Naturally, this ingrained habit, which created through Marlie's upbringing, amplifies local food's role as a status symbol, signalling both cultural and social capital.

Similarly, Martine's childhood memory of receiving a slice of sausage from the butcher exemplifies how, seemingly minor, rituals in everyday life can create long-lasting preferences and consumption practices.

> **Martine:** Yes, those are memories I will cherish for ever and I consciously take my kids to the butcher to ensure that they experience something similar.

Here, these early experiences form a class-conditioned habitus shaping an individual's consumption behaviour, extending their motivation to purchase and be involved in local food consumption for much more than just quality or taste, but also for its capacity communicate a sense of social belonging and distinction. On the basis of the aforementioned, this study argues that class-conditioned habitus moderates the relationship between the consumption of local food and its function to serve as a marker of status. (See the diagram below).

Figure 1.



Economic Capital	Family Financial Background
Social Capital	Depth of social interactions (i.e. amount of friends and acquintances)
Cultural Capital	Educational level

Discussion

Contributions to Local Food Literature

Local food's popularity was long believed to be primarily driven by collectivist-oriented factors (Schoolman, 2017; Reich et al., 2018; Memery et al., 2015). Via a practice named ethical consumption, consumers deliberately choose to use their purchasing power to influence various social and economic systems (Clarke, 2008). In the context of local food, actively participating in the practice of its consumption is perceived as a symbolic, ethical stance, aimed at minimizing carbon footprints and supporting the local community (Reich et al., 2018; Schoolman, 2017).

Within existing literature, these collectivist-oriented motivations have been positioned as the primary drivers of local food consumption. While some studies have gestured towards consumers personally benefitting as well, such as Masson & Bubendorf's (2022) suggestion that local food's localness fosters a feeling of trustworthiness, these personal dimensions have generally remained underexplored.

By turning to Bourdieu's (1984) work on status, this study extends the literature on local food, finding that consumers not only personally benefit from an increased perception of trust, but also from the ability to express and reinforce their social position. Here, the consumption of local food has emerged as a marker of distinction, where the higher price point, perceived cultural authenticity, and ability to facilitate social meetings enables consumers to harmonize their consumption practice with their own taste and preferences.

Additionally, this study has applied Bourdieu's (1984) concept of class-conditioned habitus, arguing that the deeply ingrained attitudes, preferences, and habits developed through your upbringing influence the extent of the effect of local food's ability to serve as a marker of social status and distinction. The findings of this study indicate that individuals who have been actively exposed to the consumption of local food during their youth demonstrate an increased level of awareness of the impact of their consumption practices, especially in the context of social capital. Here, participants were found to be copying motivations from their past, deliberately buying local food and other products to support and enhance the local community and economy.

These insights build on existing literature on ethical consumption from Reich et al., (2018) and Schoolman (2017), who framed the underlying motivations to be a form of civic and collective engagement. While those studies emphasize the present-day surfacing of these motivations, rooted in moral concerns from contemporary issues, this study extends the literature by suggesting that these concerns may be influenced from deeply ingrained attitudes, preferences, and habits cultivated through early exposure to these particular consumption practices.

Future research could explore the extent of class-conditioned habitus' influence on perceived status signalling. As this study was solely revolved around the consumption of local food, having different

markets moderating the aforementioned relationship could reveal new academic opportunities. An example could be the following: Given the long-lasting dispositions of class-conditioned habitus, which type of decisions in consumer behaviour are most affected? Here, you get a deeper understanding of the different contexts in which the effects of class-conditioned habitus manifests.

Contributions to Consumer Behaviour and Marketing Research

Beyond the aforementioned, this study positions itself within the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) research tradition, moving beyond economic rationality to understand how consumer actions interrelate with the marketplace and cultural meanings (Franco, 2022; Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Through this perspective, this study highlights that local food's culture is co-constructed through its context, thereby not just embedded in the product itself. The findings of the study suggest that consumers only truly attach cultural value to local food when it is locally produced, and bought from a designated local food shop. Here, individuals experience an appreciation for place, where the appreciation for a culture's identity extends beyond the product, reflecting cultural identity through the physical and social environment in which it is exchanged.

This perspective of appreciation for place extends Autio et al.'s (2013) study, which argued that consumers' embeddedness in local traditions, production practices, and personal interactions reinforces a sense of reliability. While Autio et al. (2013) focused on how this cultural embeddedness increases the perceived trustworthiness of local food, this study suggests that the physical and social environment in which the product is exchanged not only fosters that sense of trust, but also plays a key role in shaping its perceived cultural value. Without this environment, local food risks losing not only its sense of reliability, but its deeper cultural meaning as well.

On the basis of the aforementioned, future research could examine whether this effect also influences the cultural value of other product categories, extending the framework beyond local food. Using potters and their distinctive arts for exemplary purposes, an example could be the following: To what extent does the physical environment influence the cultural value of distinctive craftsmanship?

Managerial Implications

As established, local food is a highly versatile product, which besides its superior taste and quality offers powerful means to personally benefit consumers. In line with these findings, local food producers, retailers, and other actors from the supply chain can use this study to strengthen the product's appeal and broaden its market reach. Local food's demand was traditionally found to be driven by a required sense of environmental responsibility and support for local communities and has been positioned accordingly. However, this study shows that local food can also function as a marker of social status, where its consumption allows consumers to signal distinction. Consequently, these findings open up opportunities to reach new consumer segments who are not only necessarily ethically motivated, but

more interested in aligning their purchasing behaviour with their personal identity and social positioning (Aaker, 2004).

In order to appeal to this extended consumer base, this study recommends that marketeers go beyond simply promoting the localness of the product. Instead, narratives should highlight that its closer proximity to the source not only promotes environmentally friendly facets, but that the products inherently provide better quality and generally offer higher levels of exclusivity. Additionally, supermarkets should focus on increasing the cultural richness of their shops, ensuring that visiting clients feel embedded within the region's identity. This could be done by renovating bread sections, so they mimic local bakeries, or placing authentic, culturally loaded texts so people from the region feel cultural connection.

Lastly, this study posits that younger consumers need to be targeted. As the findings suggest that an early exposure to local food can have a long-lasting effect on their consumption habits, investing in educational initiatives, or even partnering with local schools, will hopefully help to ensure that the youth from now embraces the importance of communal support and will adopt these practices in the future, fostering the local economy for decades to come.

Limitations

This study has been conducted in line with a set of quality standards rooted in Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) and qualitative research principles. However, despite a lot of effort being made to ensure methodological rigour, the individual collection and interpretation of the data introduces certain limitations.

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, creating the possibility for interpretation bias. However, in order to mitigate this effect, the guidelines from Spiggle's (1994) framework has been followed, allowing all themes and patterns to emerge naturally from the data (Hogg & Maclaran, 2008). Here, the semi-structured nature of the interviews played a crucial role by offering participants the space and flexibility to explore their own meanings without being restrained by a predefined structure.

Besides the interpretation bias, the data used in this study has been obtained from a relatively small sample, consisting of twelve interviews. While the relatively small sample size places limitations on the generalizability of the findings, the sample itself was diverse, including a broad mix of participants, ranging from renowned entrepreneurs to actively engaged local consumers. As a result of this purposive sampling strategy, all participants shared a strong passion for local food, which made their insights particularly valuable and relevant to the study's objectives.

Furthermore, as this study was conducted in the Netherlands, and more specifically in the southern province of Limburg, the findings are contextually bound to this particular region and cultural environment. The village of Wanssum, where a large portion of the data has been collected, is characterised by a strong sense of belongingness. Since such characteristics can easily vary across different regions, or even villages, the broader applicability of the findings could be limited. However, my own integration within this cultural context enabled access to deeper, more nuanced cultural dimensions that might have been missed by a researcher who lacks this level of integration. This insider positioning, combined with the addition of the archival analysis to secure the larger, nation-wide discourse, has ultimately contributed to the richness of the data.

On the basis of these limitations, future research could address these by adopting an even broader, quantitative research design. A quantitative methodology, encompassing diverse geographical and cultural contexts from its larger sample size, could enhance generalizability and examine whether local food's function as a marker of social status persists across different social and cultural groups.

Lastly, this study's focus on Bourdieu's (1984) work on status and its concepts may have limited the interpretations to the three forms of capital. Future research could therefore possibly adopt a different enabling lens, such as the Assemblage Theory, to view the consumption of local food and its ability to express an individuals' identity from a more dynamic and emergent perspective, which could be very useful in further exploring the intergenerational transfer of class-conditioned habitus.

Conclusion

For the past decades, local food's popularity has been associated with primarily collectivist-oriented dimensions (Schoolman, 2017; Reich et al., 2018; Memery et al,, 2015). Inherent facets, such as its ability to serve as a moral stance towards environmental goals, and the fostering of the local economy were emphasized as the principal justification for consumer's willingness to pay a premium for the product. While previous studies have gestured towards the possibility of consumers benefitting from its consumption on a personal level (Masson & Bubendorf, 2022), the depth of understanding around these individual motivations has remained limited. This study therefore set out to explore and better understand the personal side of local food's appeal, aiming to answer the following research question: "To what extent do consumers' personal benefits from the consumption of local food relate to the pursuit or signalling of social status?"

Drawing on Bourdieu's (1984) work on social status and distinction, the findings of this study reveal that local food consumption extends far beyond the abovementioned environmental and ethical considerations. The findings show that local food's ability to signal social status resides in its versatility, functioning as a marker of social status and distinction. Here, local food enables consumers to harmonize their consumption practices with their preferences and taste. Accordingly, the findings have demonstrated that local food has the ability to signal all three forms of capital: economic, social, and cultural (Bourdieu, 1984).

Local food's ability to signal economic capital is found to originate from its premium price and perceived exclusivity, where consumers experience a subtle feeling of pride when able to serve local food to their guests, with some explicitly mentioning that they felt like they didn't "cheap out." This paper therefore extends the findings of Palma et al. (2017), who argue that people are inherently motivated to differentiate themselves and that food, in general, serves as a common tool for status signalling. This study finds that local food plays a significant role in this process as well.

Additionally, local food is found to signal social capital. As local food is often purchased for special occasions, coming from a desire to serve guests with something distinctive, it acts as a mechanism through which individuals reinforce and expand their social networks. Facilitating these social settings, actively engaging in the practice of local food consumption fosters an individuals' social status, directly contributing to the accumulation of social capital.

Culturally, the consumption of local food is found to enable consumers to express their personal identity, whilst also aligning their consumption practice with a sense of regional pride and authentic cultural traditions. This alignment with an individuals' local culture and values enables consumers to practice their own culture, enhancing their sense of belongingness to the region. In line with Palma et al., (2017), who argue that individuals possess an inherent drive to seek social status, and that the goods capable of providing social status are more desirable, this study has found all of these aspects collectively to

reinforce local food's perceived value, creating a mutually reinforcing relationship where its ability to signal social status amplifies its own demand.

Lastly, this study finds that class-conditioned habitus, defined as the ingrained attitudes, preferences, and habits developed through your upbringing, moderates the extent to which consumers experience these effects, especially in relation to social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). People who are exposed to local food practices and its impact on the community at an early age are found to be more likely to associate local food consumption with cultural capital. Here, personal norms and values (i.e. in the context of communal support) obtained during their youth were still contributing in their current consumption practices.

To conclude, this study has found personal benefits of local food to extend far beyond a sense of increased trustworthiness, functioning as a marker of social status and distinction. Ultimately, local food uniquely blends the ability to connect, distinguish, and belong, all in a single purchase.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

1.Interview Guide

Combined Interview Guide: Local Food Perceptions and Consumption

Project: Understanding The Personal Benefits of Local Food Consumption

Research Focus: Exploring how consumer's personal benefits from the consumption of local food extend beyond its sustainable impact.

DATE & TIME:	
OTHER COMMENTS:	

Participant Details

Name*:*	
Age (Circle Range):	18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+
Gender:	Male / Female / Nonbinary / Transgender / Prefer not to say
Household Structure:	(e.g., lives alone, with partner, with children, etc.)
Local Food Consumption Frequency:	(Never / Sometimes / Often / Always)
Primary Shopping Locations:	(Farmers' market, supermarket, specialty store, online, etc.)

1) Rapport Building and General Shopping Routines

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? (e.g., where you live, what you do for work/study, hobbies)

2. Can you tell me a little bit about the village/town/city you live in right now?
3. What do you spend most of your time doing?
4. Who lives with you right now?
5. Can you describe your typical grocery shopping routine?
    - Where do you usually shop for food?
    - How often do you go grocery shopping?
    - Do you plan your food purchases in advance or buy spontaneously?

2) Shopping Routines and Food-Related Practices

6. Can you walk me through your last shopping trip?
    - Where did you go?
    - What kind of food did you buy?
    - How did you decide what to buy?
7. Do you have any shopping habits that influence your food choices?
    - Do you always go to the same places for certain products?
    - Do you look for any specific labels or features (e.g., "organic," "locally grown")?
8. Has your perception of local food changed over time?
    - Did you always think local food was healthier?
    - Have any experiences made you more or less likely to buy local food?

3) General Local Food Consumption Background

9. Can you describe a recent time when you purchased local food? What motivated your choice?
10. Can you recall another memorable instance, such as the first time you bought local food?
11. Where do you usually buy local food?
12. What made you start purchasing local food?

13. Which products do you prefer most to be bought locally and why?

14. What specific products do you associate with your region's identity and traditions?

4) Perceptions of Local Food and Shopping Environments

15. How do you decide if a food product is healthy?

    - What factors are most important to you? (e.g., freshness, labels, organic certification, where it is sold)

    - Does the place where you buy food affect how healthy you think it is? Why or why not?

16. When you think of "healthy food," what comes to mind?

    - Do you associate local food with being healthier? If so, why?

    - How does local food compare to supermarket food in terms of health and quality?

17. Farmers' Markets vs. Supermarkets:

    - What are the differences you notice between food bought at a farmers' market and food bought in a supermarket?

    - Do you feel more confident in the freshness or healthiness of food at farmers' markets? Why?

    - How do you think the presentation of food in supermarkets influences how healthy it seems?

    - Are there other places where you buy local food, such as roadside stalls, 'boerderijwinkeltjes', vending machines? How would you compare these to supermarkets and farmers' markets?

    - What do you think about a specialized biologic supermarket like Ekoplaza?

18. Trust and Authenticity:

    - Do you trust food from a supermarket as much as food from a farmers' market? Why or why not?

    - How important is it for you to know where your food comes from?

- Do you ever talk to farmers or vendors about their products? If so, what do you ask them?

5) Specialized Questions About Local Food Consumption

19. What products do you rate to be of personal relevance?

20. Do you feel that buying local food reflects a certain social status? If so, how?

21. Have you ever purchased local food in a social setting (e.g., at a market, restaurant, or event)? How did others react?

22. How important is buying local food to you personally? Why?

23. Do you think people around you perceive locally sourced food differently than mass-produced food? Why or why not?

24. Hypothetically, what would you say to a neighbor who is not an active local food consumer?

25. If price were to be completely irrelevant, what would motivate you to purchase local food and why?

26. How would you compare your local food choices to others?

- What do you believe purchasing local food says about someone?
- What kinds of people do you tend to see purchase local food?

6) Accessibility and Travel for Local Food

27. What is the furthest you have ever traveled to purchase local food?

28. How far would you be willing to travel to purchase local food?

29. Do you think your upbringing has had anything to do with your preference to purchase local food?

7) Food Preparation, Consumption, and Meaning

30. After you buy food, how do you usually store and prepare it?

- Do you think local food requires different handling than supermarket food? Why?
- Do you believe local food "tastes better"? What makes you feel that way?

31. Can you recall a time when you were disappointed with local food?

    - What happened?
    - Did it change how you view local food?

32. What role does local food play in your household or social life?

    - Do you share meals with family or friends?
    - Do you ever talk about where your food comes from?

8) Broad Reflection and Future Considerations

33. Do you think your food shopping habits will change in the future?

    - What would make you buy more local food?
    - Would anything make you trust supermarkets more when it comes to local food?

34. If you could change one thing about the way local food is sold or marketed, what would it be?

35. Is there anything I haven't asked that you think is important about local food?

9) Wrap-Up

36. Is there anything I have left out?

37. Is there anything else you would like to add/discuss?

38. Was there something that we talked about that you found particularly interesting? Why?

39. Would you be willing to recommend someone else for this interview?

Appendix 2

Verbal Consent Script

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. It is your own choice whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, you will first be given the opportunity to read the participant information sheet and ask any questions you may have. After that, you will be asked to provide your verbal consent before the interview begins. Even after agreeing to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, without any consequences. You can also ask for any unprocessed data you have provided to be removed. In addition, you are not required to answer every question and may request that certain information not be used in the analysis.

With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. During transcription, any personally identifiable information will be removed to protect your privacy. The collected data will only be used for the purposes of this research and will be treated confidentially. All data will be stored securely and handled with care. To ensure anonymity, direct identifiers such as names, places, occupations, institutions, and email addresses will be replaced with pseudonyms. This means your identity will not be visible in any report or publication based on this research.

Would you like to continue to the interview by offering your verbal consent to participate in this research study?

Plain Language Form

Radboud Universiteit

Nijmegen School of Management

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

PROJECT TITLE: ***From Farm to Status: The Unexplored Personal Benefits of Local Food***

This research project is part of the Master of Science in Business Administration (specialisation in Marketing) programme by student researcher Gijs van Putten at Radboud University.

Dear Participant,

You are kindly invited to take part in a student research project conducted by Gijs van Putten from the Nijmegen School of Management at Radboud University. This project contributes to the completion of the researcher's Master's degree.

Purpose: The aim of this study is to explore how people personally benefit from the consumption of local food. The research focuses on the benefits extending beyond a positive sustainable impact, being particularly interested in potential social status signalling capabilities of local food and the underlying social and cultural meanings related to local food consumption.

Participation: Your participation is entirely voluntary. It is your own choice whether or not to take part. If you choose to participate, you will first receive this information sheet and may ask any questions. Before the interview begins, you will be asked to give verbal consent. Even after giving your consent, you are free to stop at any time, without giving a reason and without any consequences. You can also ask for any unprocessed data you provided to be removed from the study. You do not have to answer all questions, and you can request that certain parts of your interview are not included in the analysis.

Research Process: If you decide to take part, the researcher will ask you questions about your views on local food, your shopping habits, and your experiences. Interviews will last around 30 to 60 minutes. A follow-up conversation may be requested, but only if you agree.

Confidentiality and Data Use: With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to help the researcher review and analyse the conversation. During transcription, any personal information such as your name, location, job, or email address will be removed so your identity is protected. A pseudonym will be used in any written reports or publications. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the raw data. All data will be stored securely and used only for this study. If you would like to receive a summary of the research results or a copy of the thesis, this can be provided upon request.

Possible Effects: There are no expected physical or psychological risks involved in taking part in this study. There will be no audio-recording or personal data collected without your consent. Due to the small sample of participants in this study there is a small chance that responses could be identified through the outputs of this study. However all reasonable measures will be taken to mitigate this risk.

Providing Consent: Participants aged 18 or over will be asked to provide either written or verbal consent prior to the interview.

Researchers:

Gijs van Putten (Student Researcher)	gijs.vanputten@ru.nl
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Questions?

If you have any questions or would like to receive the final research report, please feel free to contact Gijs van Putten at gijs.vanputten@ru.nl.

Thank you for considering participation in this research project.

Kind regards,
Gijs van Putten

Appendix 3

Economic Capital

Interview:	Archival Data:
“Price is irrelevant”	*Translated from Dutch: “*A man in his thirties has a shopping bag from an online supermarket slung over his shoulder. 'I actually only know the SRV truck from the TV series Flodder. This is the first time I’ve seen one from the inside myself. It’s really a good idea. I’m quite willing to pay a bit more for locally sourced meat.”
“I am willing to pay a premium in order to treat my guests and own family”	*Translated from Dutch:* "One respondent does this as well: 'I only eat meat if I know where it comes from. That's a lot more expensive, so we only eat meat a few times a week.'"
“The more exclusive, the better”	*Translated from Dutch: "*Consumers need to be more enticed to buy locally and sustainably produced food. A reduction in tax on organic and regional products could serve as an incentive. This is proposed by the provinces in a report they presented yesterday afternoon to Agriculture Minister Piet Adema. The document serves as a basis for discussions on the Agricultural Agreement that the minister wants to conclude this spring with farmers, provinces, and other stakeholders. The provinces make additional suggestions to involve supermarkets and other players in the food chain more closely in changes to agriculture. For example, they also suggest making agreements about a minimum share of Dutch products in supermarkets."
“Local food shops need to keep me interested with constant innovations”	
“Whenever I welcome friends or family, I will always opt for a cheese or piece of meat from a local food shop. Just to show that I have put some extra effort into the food I serve. The extra money spent is not something I will openly express, but does fill me with some satisfaction. Just so I can say to myself that I have not been cheap. Yes, that does make me feel better.”	
“I am willing to pay the premium as long as I find the quality worthwhile”	

Social Capital

Interview	Archival Data
“I use locally sourced products as a surprise element for my guests”	*Translated from Dutch:* "The Fruittuin van West lies like a green oasis between Osdorp, Halfweg, and Westpoort, on the outskirts of Amsterdam. 'The garden has become a meeting place for a very diverse audience,' says Lisan Sturkenboom, who started the business with her partner Wil. 'Visitors and local residents from all kinds of

	backgrounds and of all ages come here. That creates a pleasant atmosphere. Food connects people, that's really true!'"
"I adore shopping specifically seeking for niche local products with friends"	*Translated from Dutch:* "It takes a few years before the kiwi plants bear fruit. During that time, customers gradually got used to the idea of Dutch-grown kiwis. By now, demand is sometimes overwhelming. 'All I have to do is post one photo of the new harvest on Facebook, and the next day the place is full of people.'"
"If I know friends are coming, and time is my friend, I will go above and beyond to treat them at the best of my abilities. Then, everything I serve that day will be locally sourced. The reason is simple, it tastes a lot better and is something different than usual."	*Translated from Dutch:* "'Sometimes this is just like a chat house,' says Kloosterman. 'People love to exchange the latest news with each other. You run into friends and acquaintances everywhere. There's always something to talk about.'" (Referring to Local Food Shops)
"Even though it is not the sole motivation for me to buy local food, it definitely facilitates a social setting. And yes, the local food served is almost always material for conversation."	*Translated from Dutch:* "Donny says: 'What people have too much of in fruits and vegetables, they trade for dinner vouchers.'" (Referring to local people sourcing a restaurant with fruits and vegetables from their farms).
"Purchasing local food possibly related more to its social aspects than the overall quality"	*Translated from Dutch:* "There is an actual Short Chain Taskforce, a foundation established by entrepreneurs with the aim of fostering better social contact between local farmers and citizens."
"Coming from a family who owned a local business, supporting other businesses is key"	*Translated from Dutch: "*Joep Brekelmans is a chef and forager, and Lianne van Genugten is a farmer's daughter and creative thinker. Together they started Vaderland, a gastronomic circular farm, as they call it themselves. The location alone is beautiful, just outside the village of Nederwetten, on the banks of the Dommel River. Vaderland consists of various components, such as a shop with their own organic vegetables, culinary dishes, and takeaway meals."
"I am a local entrepreneur myself. I find the support of other local businesses important"	*Translated from Dutch:* "By choosing regional SMEs, you strengthen the regional circulation of money and the social cohesion of the area."
"The support we received during the corona pandemic from our community enabled our business to survive"	*Translated from Dutch:* "The idea behind the event is that, just like in France, neighbors and friends sit together at long tables, which contributes to a sense of community."
	Translated from Dutch: "We provide that connection. I think the time is ripe for it now."
	Translated from Dutch: "Every year, celeriac farmer Ted organizes a grand feast in his barn: there are competitive chefs vying for two prizes: the best pea soup and the tastiest side dish made with celeriac."

Cultural Capital

Interviews:	Archival Data:
“If you would only look at our famed Limburgse Vlaai, I get people from all over Limburg to buy our Vlaai. They would never buy that in a supermarket as it would lose its cultural value. I especially experience this effect since its official recognition as cultural heritage of last year.”	*Translated from Dutch:* "A tradition cherished by local entrepreneurs. Like André and Tonnie Mulder, who settled there eight years ago from Zwolle with their Raw Milk Company. They sell their famous 'kefir' made from raw milk sourced from local organic farmers."
“When we have a party with friends and family, I will always get a Limburgse Vlaai from Wanssum (referring to Geert Verdeuzeldonk’s bakery). I am very proud to be from Wanssum. Consuming a Vlaai from our local bakery makes us feel like us.”	*Translated from Dutch:* "He thinks it’s fun to launch a new local product on the market. 'And it really belongs to us. Although of course we don’t make it ourselves.' [...] Hospitality venues, liquor stores: the drinks that Snijders has created and launched since 2019 can be found all over Zeeland. And even outside Zeeland, wherever there are people from Zeeland working."
“Our bakery is incredibly important for this community, but I feel like our influence extends far beyond our village’s borders. We are from Limburg and ensure that people are able to feel part of Limburg through the products we make.”	*Translated from Dutch:* “Many people still come to the Dutch booths for the latest developments, although of course they also want to see tulips, herring, clogs, and cheese.”
“The presence of local food shops is essential for me. In fact, if there are not a lot of these shops around in a region, then that is a region I certainly do not want to live in. Me and my husband have been looking at houses in Italy for the past few years, but often find ourselves struggling with this very aspect of the neighborhood.”	*Translated from Dutch:* "Bolk sees the city as a new, still untapped market. Most of the customers in his store come from the countryside. 'It's not practical for city dwellers to have to travel back and forth between city and countryside by car to buy regional products. It's better to take the step toward the consumer ourselves.’"
“I believe people from the city are just as likely to shop for local food as people from rural areas. Actually, I think that the presence of so many different local food shops might mean that it has become ingrained in a city’s culture, even more than rural areas who feel more attached to the need to support farmers and acquainted entrepreneurs.”	*Translated from Dutch:* "Residents also come here, young and old, to meet each other. Or for a vegan *Pom* sandwich (no chicken, but mushrooms), a spicy tempeh pita, or peanut soup. 'Everything is fresh, responsible, and homemade.'"
“Local food, such as cheese from the Kaasboer in Venray, is much more than just food, but has become a passion. A passion I love to share with my friends and family”.	*Translated from Dutch:* “Boshuis Venkraai is, however, older. It dates back to 1915, when Natuurmonumenten bought the Oisterwijkse Bossen en Vennen and had a house built there for the forest ranger. To supplement his income, he was allowed to serve lemonade and coffee to passersby, such as the pilgrims to Scherpenzeel. Nowadays, mainly walkers, cyclists, and riders come to explore the beautiful natural area.”
“For me, local food functions as a symbol of dedication. Dedication towards those I love and cherish. It is something I have been taught and pursued since my youth”	

Appendix 4

Sample Overview

No.	Name Interviewee:	Gender:	Age group:	Occupation:
1	Penny	Female	45-54	Former Mortgage Advisor (Retired)
2	Woppert	Male	25-34	Policy & Management Trainee
3	Henry	Male	18-24	Student
4	Maria	Female	55-64	Nature Coach
5	Arno	Male	55-64	Former Business Analyst (Retired)
6	Sjors	Male	18-24	Student
7	Eva	Female	18-24	Student
8	Geert	Male	55-64	Baker
9	Marly	Female	55-64	Jeweller
10	Esther	Female	45-54	Pediatric Rheumatologist
11	Martine	Female	45-54	Lawyer
12	Juriën	Male	35-44	Owner JustBeFit (gym)