From farm to table:

Investigating core benefits and advertising strategies in local food

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Preface

I am pleased to present my master's thesis "From farm to table: investigating core benefits and advertising strategies in local food". This journey began in February 2024, as part of my Master's in Marketing, a specialization within Business Administration. Since I am very interested in food, the choice for this topic was quickly made and I was very excited to start this research and gain more knowledge.

I received support from several people during the process. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Marleen Hermans for her guidance and useful feedback throughout the process. Thanks to this good support, I look back on a pleasant and educational period. Furthermore, I would like to thank my second examiner Hanif Widyanto. He also provided me with useful feedback that allowed me to improve my thesis. In addition, I would like to thank my family and friends for their empowering words over the past months. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the people who participated in my research.

I hope you will find this thesis a pleasant read.

Sophie Verhees, June 2024

Abstract

While there is an increasing interest in local food, there is still unclarity about the core benefits that drive consumers' purchase intention regarding local products. Existing studies on the core benefits of local food are fragmented, leading to conflicting findings and impeding a clear understanding of local food consumption patterns. In addition, the impact of advertising content within the context of local food is underexplored. This thesis aims to deepen the understanding of local food consumption from a marketing perspective. It focuses on identifying the core benefits that drive consumers' purchase intention and examines the moderating effect of advertising content. An online survey was conducted among 124 consumers to explore the relationships between the perceived core benefits of local food (nutritional value, community engagement, environmental sustainability, and trust) and purchase intention. In addition, it was examined how advertising content moderates these relationships. The data was analyzed by using a multiple regression analysis. The findings show a positive influence of nutritional value on purchase intention. There were no effects revealed between the other core benefits and the purchase intention. Similarly, the relationships between the different core benefits and the purchase intention were not moderated by the advertising content. The results of this study offer marketers valuable insights into the core benefits of local food and different types of advertising content, guiding effective marketing strategies.

Keywords: local food, core benefits, nutritional value, community engagement, environmental sustainability, trust, advertising content

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1. Introduction

1.1 Practical relevance

The trend toward the consumption of locally sourced food is evident in many areas (Mirosa and Lawson, 2012). Local food can be seen as a geographical concept that refers to products that are produced within a defined geographic area, typically characterized by a relatively small distance between production and consumption (Martinez et al., 2010; Feldmann and Hamm, 2015). Policymakers are increasingly aware of the significance of local food initiatives (Stein and Santini, 2021). For instance, the British government embarked on promoting local food in response to the European Union's commitment to develop a sustainable consumption plan (Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, 2002). This governmental acknowledgment is in line with the observed trend in the United States, where the value of local food consumption in the form of direct-to-consumer sales doubled from $551 million in 1997 to $1.2 billion in 2007 (Martinez et al., 2010). These instances not only reflect a shift in consumer preferences but also underscore the recognition of the importance of supporting local food systems. Consequently, it is becoming increasingly apparent that local food plays a pivotal role in addressing environmental, economic, and social challenges within the current food system (De Schutter, 2017).

1.2 Research GAP

While there is growing interest in local food (Mirosa and Lawson, 2012) a gap remains in understanding the core benefits (Feldmann and Hamm, 2015). The concept of core benefits is emphasized by several authors (Kotler and Armstrong, 2001; Levitt, 1980; Corey, 1975). It refers to the fact that consumers do not simply buy a product but also seek benefits. Core benefits serve as driving factors that motivate consumers' purchasing choices (Kotler and Armstrong, 2001), making it crucial to address this gap. Existing studies on local food are fragmented, lacking an overview of the most important core benefits that drive consumers to choose local products. This fragmentation not only hinders understanding local food consumption patterns and the development of marketing strategies but also results in conflicting findings across studies. (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008; Scaramuzzi et al., 2021; Shindelar, 2015; Allen, 2010). Therefore, the present paper aims to identify the key core benefits of local food consumption so that the fragmentation in the literature can be addressed.

Additionally, this study aims to examine the moderating effect of advertising content in terms of sensory, functional, and symbolic content. Advertising content refers to the information conveyed in advertisements to promote a product or service and may potentially play a significant role in improving the perception of a product and therefore increasing purchase intention (Haase et al., 2018; Olney et al., 1991; Rodgers and Thorson, 2000). However, while previous studies have delved into the domain of advertising content, its specific impact within the context of local food remains underexplored. This research attempts to bridge this gap by clarifying the role of advertising content as the moderator in influencing the relationship between consumers' perceived core benefits associated with local food and their purchase intention.

1.3 Theoretical contributions

This research contributes to the existing literature in two ways. First, by aiming to uncover the key core benefits of local food, this study fills a critical gap in the literature. Addressing this gap not only contributes to our understanding of consumer behavior in the context of local food but also provides valuable insights for food marketing, communication initiatives, and policymaking efforts (Feldmann and Hamm, 2015). Second, by exploring the role of advertising content as a moderating variable between core benefits and purchase intention, this research extends existing knowledge in the field of food advertising. Understanding the different types of advertising content can be important for optimizing advertising strategies and thus has practical relevance for marketers in addition to theoretical relevance (Haase et al., 2018).

1.4 Thesis outline

The present paper is structured as follows: chapter two provides a literature review exploring the core benefits of local food and the definition of local food itself. Within this chapter, the conceptual model and the hypotheses are introduced regarding the effects of core benefits on purchase intention and the moderating effect of advertising content. Subsequently, in the third chapter, the methodology for the study will be elaborated. The results of the research will be described in the fourth chapter. Finally, the paper concludes by discussing theoretical implications, managerial implications, limitations, and suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Core benefits

The concept of core benefits within the context of product consumption originates from works by Levitt (1980), Corey (1975), and Kotler and Armstrong (2001). These authors converge on the understanding that consumers' purchase decisions extend beyond the acquisition of only a basic product. In addition, engaging in the acquisition of benefits and solutions is a fundamental aspect as well. Therefore, the concept of core benefits plays a pivotal role in influencing consumers' purchase decisions.

Levitt (1980) defines a product as a "complex cluster of value satisfactions", emphasizing consumers' evaluation of its ability to solve problems or fulfill needs. This perception includes the comprehensive package of benefits received upon purchase. Levitt's well-known statement "Sell the hole, not the drill", captures the idea that consumers prioritize the benefits enabled by a product rather than its physical characteristics. Therefore, consumers' purchase decisions are driven by the benefits rather than the product itself. A similar idea comes from Corey (1975), who states that "the product is what the product does". The author states that consumers receive an entire bundle of benefits when making a purchase which aligns with the idea of Levitt, that the core of a product is about the benefits it delivers. Corey's viewpoint underscores the importance of a product's functionality and outcomes. In addition, it supports the thought that consumers are primarily concerned with the results and benefits derived from their purchases. The last perspective comes from Kotler and Armstrong (2001), who define three levels of a product. The core product serves as the foundational element and represents the underlying needs or wants to be satisfied by the product. The actual product includes characteristics, quality, style, name, and packaging, while the augmented product includes supplementary services such as delivery and warranty. This approach underscores the importance of offering benefits to consumers, thereby aligning with the central principle that consumers prioritize benefits over the product itself.

While Levitt (1980) and Corey (1975) focus on the overall value and benefits of a product, Kotler and Armstrong (2001) offer a more structured approach to evaluate products at different levels. Although the authors' views are not identical, the shared idea in these perspectives is meeting consumers' needs, providing value, and most importantly recognizing the core benefits of a product.

2.2 Local food

To commence, it is important to establish the distinction between local food and local food systems, as both terms are used throughout the research. While local food refers to products produced within a limited geographic area, local food systems adopt a broader perspective by looking at a food system including producing, processing, and retailing within a limited geographic area (Feldmann and Hamm, 2015; Kneafsey et al., 2013). Despite their frequent usage, a universal definition of "local" is lacking due to divergent interpretations of the local scale. To exemplify this, local food in the United States encompasses products that are marketed within an area less than 400 miles from the origin or within the state of production. Contrarily, local food in Canada encompasses products produced and sold within the same province or sold across provincial borders within 50 km of the originating province (Enthoven and Van Den Broeck, 2021).

In the domain of local food, Enthoven and Van Den Broeck's (2021) review dives into diverse structured supply chains in terms of types of selling arrangements between producers and buyers, forms of interaction between consumers and producers, and levels of commitment from consumers. The focus of this research is on the direct-to-consumer (DTC) channel, which can take three forms: spot market (one-off sales at current prices), relational contracts (exchange at current prices but repetitive transactions between a specific producer and buyer), and formal contracts (agreements between producers and buyers for future repetitive sales). Examples of DTC channels include farmers' markets, on-farm shops, food box schemes that are home-delivered or can be picked up, and community-supported agriculture (CSA). Most examples are well-known, while others are not widely recognized like CSA. This form of DTC emphasizes local food production and consumption while fostering the community between the farmers and consumers (Pole and Gray, 2012). Furthermore, DTC involves face-to-face interactions between producers and consumers with low to high consumer commitment (Enthoven and Van Den Broeck, 2021).

While research into the drivers of local food consumption is extensive, the existing literature is fragmented regarding the core benefits that drive consumers' purchase intention. Discrepancies among studies arise regarding the core benefit that most strongly influences consumers' intention to purchase local food (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008; Scaramuzzi et al., 2021; Shindelar, 2015; Allen, 2010). Local food offers benefits encompassing health (nutritional value), economic (community engagement), environmental (environmental

sustainability), and social (trust) dimensions (Jones et al., 2004), highlighting its multifaceted nature and the complex motivations driving consumer behavior. Empirical research is used to determine the effects of the core benefits on consumers' intention to purchase local food.

2.2.1 Nutritional value

Nutritional value refers to the presence of essential nutrients and biologically active compounds in food sources (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008). Many vital nutrients cannot be produced by the human body and must be obtained through diet (Schröder, 2003). Local products are obtained shortly after harvest, allowing the time between picking and consumption to be minimized leading to a fresher product. This freshness translates into higher nutritional value as nutrients and biologically active compounds are better preserved (Schröder, 2003). Moreover, local food systems often prioritize sustainable agricultural practices which have been associated with higher concentrations of certain nutrients (Alzamora et al., 2000). Given the high nutritional value of local food, it is associated with several health benefits (Jones et al., 2004), leading people to perceive it as an important core benefit of local food.

Consumers' interest in food quality is underscored by existing literature (Savelli et al., 2017). An important attribute of this quality is the nutritional value (Giusti et al., 2007). Liang (2016) found a positive relationship between the nutritional value of food and the purchase intention. This finding is supported by other studies that emphasize the predictive role of nutritional value in food purchase decisions (Loebnitz and Aschemann-Witzel, 2016; Janssen, 2018). With local food's emphasis on freshness and sustainable agricultural practices, it is perceived to offer high nutritional quality which contributes to good health. For that reason, consumers are likely to express stronger purchase intention when they perceive local food as nutritious.

H1: Perceived nutritional value of local food positively influences purchase intention.

2.2.2 Community engagement

Local food plays a pivotal role in building a feeling of community engagement, as noted by Scaramuzzi et al. (2021). The shift toward local food can be seen as a community-focused sub-movement, viewing people as members of communities, food as interweaved with these

communities, and locality as a required part of building fairer communities and relationships between them. Consuming and selling local food is a way of creating and reproducing communities. Through initiatives like farmers' markets and educational events, local food becomes the center for interactions between producers and consumers. These gatherings make people feel like they belong and share a common identity, showing how local food helps bring communities together (Werkheiser and Noll, 2013). Additionally, Koç and Dahlberg (1999) pointed out a similar idea by defining local food as a concept of a regenerative food system, highlighting connections and promoting health across all levels of community engagement. With the focus on interconnectedness and fostering belonging and shared identity, community engagement is perceived as a core benefit of local food.

As is evident, several studies are linking local food systems to a feeling of community engagement. Local food can be used as a community-building strategy (Born and Purcell, 2006). This indicates that local food can influence the feeling of community engagement. A sense of community fosters positive attitudes toward local food, ultimately influencing purchase intentions (Hur et al., 2011). The positive evaluations and attitudes toward local food that are formed as a result of community engagement therefore translate into a higher likelihood of purchasing local products.

H2: Perceived feelings of community engagement associated with local food positively influence purchase intention.

2.2.3 Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability, defined as the balance between human needs and ecosystem capacity and biodiversity, has gained attention in local food systems (Morelli, 2011). This core benefit is promising regarding reducing greenhouse gas emissions and minimizing the ecological footprint of food consumption (Shindelar, 2015). Research underscores the advantageous impact of local food systems on environmental sustainability. Local food systems prioritize environment-friendly practices such as crop diversity, organic farming, and sustainable livestock management (Lotter, 2003). Moreover, the local food industry provides extensive product information to differentiate itself from competitors, resulting in more transparency. Being transparent is crucial for understanding how food products affect the environment and thereby enables consumers to choose products that support sustainable

practices (Corry et al., 2023). Given the use of environment-friendly practices and allowing people to reduce their environmental impact by transparent communication, environmental sustainability is perceived as a core benefit of local food.

The sustainability aspects of the food supply chain are concerning because decisions made in food production directly affect the environment (Poore and Nemecek, 2018). Notably, consumer awareness of these impacts has increased. Kumar (2012) for example, indicates that consumers actively seek products that minimize the harm to the environment, underscoring the importance of environmental considerations in purchase decisions. Furthermore, Pagiaslis and Krontalis (2014) highlight a direct link between environmental concern and purchase intention. Consumers' concerns for the environment can be defined as the awareness of problems regarding the environment and the willingness to solve these problems (Rhead et al., 2015). The fact that local food systems are linked to sustainable practices aligns with consumers' environmental concerns. As a result, consumers have a higher intention of purchasing local food if they perceive it as environmentally sustainable.

H3: Perceived environmental sustainability associated with local food positively influences purchase intention.

2.2.4 Trust

Local food systems play a pivotal role in enhancing consumers' trust in their food (Allen, 2010). Due to numerous food scandals, trust has become a key variable in the decision-making process (Wu et al., 2021). As noted earlier, the focus of this research is directed toward the DTC channel, characterized by face-to-face interactions between producers and consumers (Enthoven and Van Den Broeck, 2021). These face-to-face interactions can strengthen trust (Carfora and Catellani, 2023). Roy et al. (2017) delve deeper into the dynamics of personal relationships within local food systems, highlighting their importance as motivators for selecting local food options. Through social interactions and direct relationships, stakeholders in local food systems build trust, thereby enhancing the perceived reliability of the products they offer. To sum up, face-to-face interactions and personal relationships within local food networks can strengthen the foundations of trust with their consumers, making trust perceived as a core benefit of local food.

Both face-to-face interactions and personal relationships play a significant role in motivating consumers to purchase local food from farmers (Roy et al., 2017). Personal relationships formed through direct interactions between producers and consumers foster trust and confidence in the authenticity and safety of local food products. Adding to this discourse, Wu et al. (2021) provide a review of the drivers of consumer trust within the realm of food. Their research underscores the multifaceted nature of trust-building within the food industry, encompassing tangible cues such as packaging labels as well as the critical role of food system actors. They emphasize the significance of trust-based relationships, reducing uncertainty and enhancing performance. Therefore, the success of local food within the food supply chain depends not only on factors such as price, quality, and food safety assurance but also on the foundation of trust-based relationships. When consumers perceive trust in local food systems, there is a higher likelihood of purchasing local products.

H4: Perceived trust associated with local food positively influences purchase intention.

2.3 Local food's trust factor

As stated before, the existing literature lacks agreement on the core benefit that drives consumers' purchase intention. One of these core benefits is trust which has become a key variable in the decision-making process, especially in the food industry due to past food scandals (Wu et al., 2021). Direct interactions and personal relationships have the potential to enhance trust between producers and consumers which leads to a higher probability for purchase intention. Trust can serve as a foundation on which the other core benefits are built. Therefore, while all four hypotheses are likely to have a positive impact on purchase intention, the one with potentially the biggest effect could be the variable trust (hypothesis 4).

2.4 Advertising content

Advertisements play a pivotal role in appealing and providing product information to consumers (Sethuraman et al., 2011; Koetz et al., 2015). A fundamental aspect of advertising design is the content, which forms associations with the product and influences its evaluation (Lane, 2000). Within advertising content, this study focuses on written text and makes a distinction between sensory content, functional content, and symbolic content (Haase et al., 2018). The provision of advertising content clarifies various product benefits, decreases uncertainty among consumers, enhances their evaluations of the product, and motivates them

to choose the product (Dodds et al., 1991; Urbany et al., 1989). Creating positive advertising messages can enhance consumer perceptions of a product, potentially leading to increased purchases (Chang, 2007). To assess the impact of advertising content, an advertisement without content was chosen as the baseline. Different types of advertising content have distinct characteristics, making them likely to effectively convey particular product benefits.

For moderation to take place, an alignment between the advertising content and the core benefits of local food is necessary. This alignment is critical for several reasons. First, when consumers perceive alignment between the core benefits and the advertising content, they are less likely to experience cognitive dissonance. The theory of cognitive dissonance, developed by Leon Festinger, describes an uncomfortable psychological state that arises when cognitions are inconsistent (Bawa and Kansal, 2008). Reducing cognitive dissonance positively influences attitudes toward the message, toward the product, and purchase intentions (Megehee, 2009). Second, alignment creates persuasion. If there is alignment, people create a cognitive response. These responses are thoughts that people have when they can relate the content to their existing beliefs. As a result of consumers' cognitive response, persuasion arises (Meyers-Levy and Malaviya, 1999). Lastly, alignment ensures the relevance of advertising content to consumers' information needs. When the information in the advertisement aligns with the core benefits sought by consumers, its relevance will be elevated, thereby increasing its effectiveness (Baker and Lutz, 2000).

The sensory attributes serve as the foundation for the aesthetic benefits of food (Schifferstein, 2015). Aesthetics refers to the perceived visual and hedonic pleasure that consumers derive from its sensory attributes (Desmet and Hekkert, 2007). These attributes include factors such as color and texture. In the experiment, the sensory text mentioned taste, juiciness, aroma, color, and scent. Looking at the core benefits, it becomes evident that none of them align with the characteristics of sensory content. Therefore, there are no moderating hypotheses regarding the sensory content.

The term functional food refers to food products enriched with special components that possess beneficial physiological effects (Hardy, 2000; Kwak and Jukes, 2001; Stanton et al., 2005). These special components are primarily derived from the nutrients and ingredients in food (Siró et al., 2008). Within the experiment, functional content pointed out the quality and richness of nutrients and vitamins. The freshness of local food translates into higher

nutritional value (Schröder, 2003), and sustainable practices employed in local food production contribute to higher concentrations of nutrients (Alzamora et al., 2000). The alignment between the nutritional value of local food and the characteristics of functional content suggests that functional content is likely to strengthen the relationship between the core benefit of nutritional value and purchase intention.

H5: Functional content strengthens the positive relationship between the nutritional value of local food and purchase intention compared to no content.

In the context of local food, the main drivers of symbolic content encompass information regarding the origin and methods of manufacturing (Troye and Supphellen, 2012). These characteristics were pointed out in the experiment, wherein the advertised product was described as natural, having regional origins, freshly harvested, and sustainable cultivated. The core benefit of environmental sustainability highlights environment-friendly practices and the importance of transparency (Lotter, 2003; Corry et al., 2023). Both of these aspects align with the characteristics of symbolic content. Transparency aligns with information about the product's origin and environment-friendly practices align with methods of manufacturing. Therefore, symbolic advertising content is likely to strengthen the relationship between the core benefit of environmental sustainability and purchase intention.

H6: Symbolic content strengthens the positive relationship between environmental sustainability associated with local food and purchase intention compared to no content.

2.4 Conceptual framework

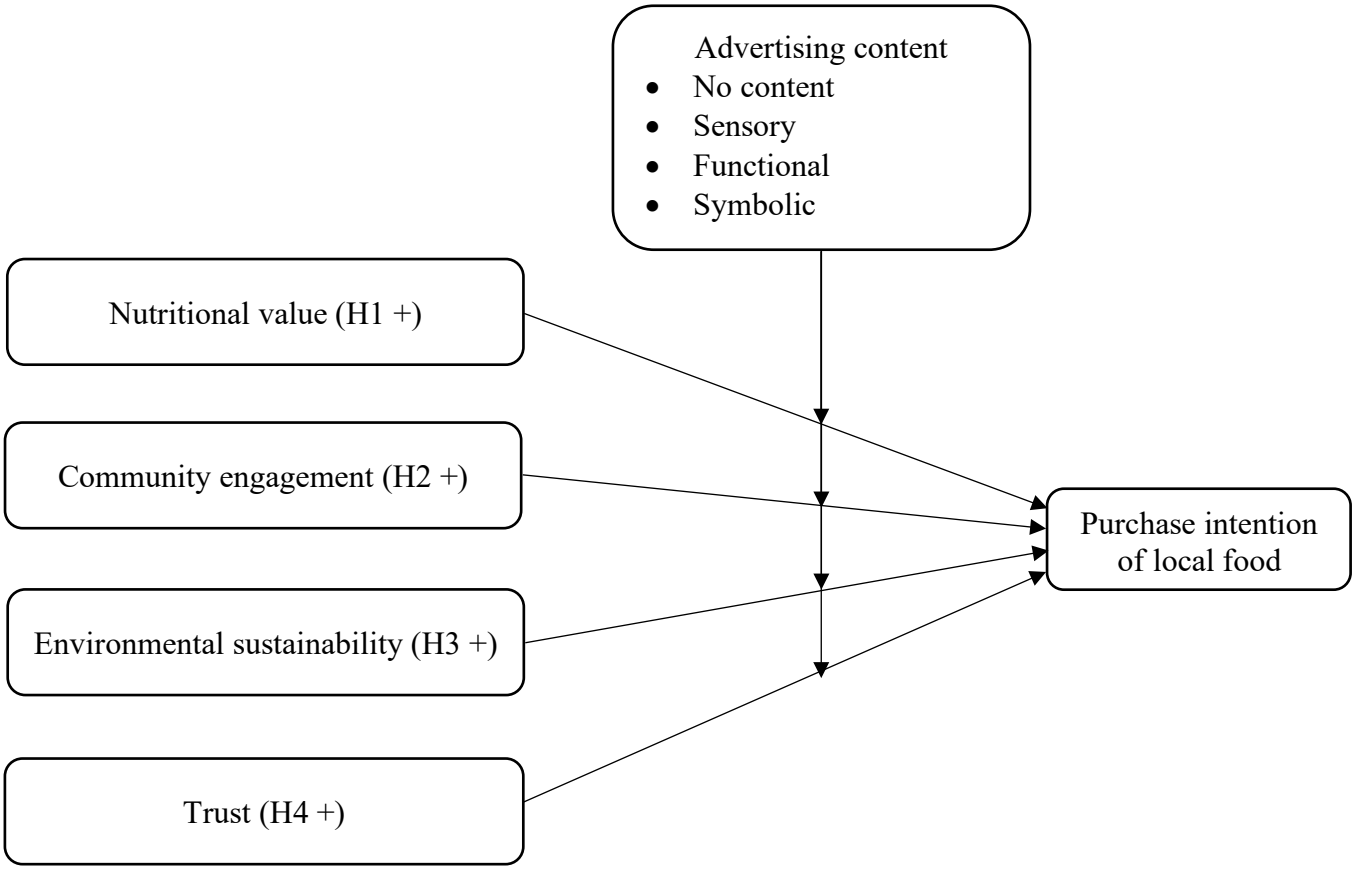

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

For this study, quantitative research was conducted. Quantitative research involves systematic data collection and analysis to examine relationships between variables (Watson, 2015). In addition, this type of research is characterized by its reliance on numerical data and hard facts, a feature that aligns with the nature of this study. The precision of quantitative research enables the categorization of data, ranking of variables, and measuring them in standardized units, facilitating better understanding (Ahmad et al., 2019). In conclusion, quantitative research, with its emphasis on numerical data and systematic analysis, was the most suitable approach for this study.

To establish causal relationships and compare the effects of different conditions on local food consumption and advertising content, an experimental design was chosen. This approach allows for the manipulation of variables to observe how changes in one variable affect another while controlling for other factors that could influence the outcome (Bevans, 2019). In this study, the key variables of interest include consumers' core benefits of local food, their purchase intention, and the impact of different types of advertising content. The experiment was conducted by using the online platform Qualtrics. Online experiments offer different advantages. First, they enable automation, reducing costs and time. Second, the flexibility of online settings enhances participants' comfort. Third, ethical standards are maintained through public accessibility, ensuring transparency and minimizing the compulsion of participants. Lastly, targeted audience recruitment improves result generalizability (Dandurand et al., 2008). A cross-sectional design was used, which means that data was gathered from participants at a single point in time (Thomas, 2020). This approach was appropriate for this study as it allowed capturing a snapshot of consumers' attitudes and behavior toward local food without the need to track changes in variables over time.

In implementing a 1 x 4 between-subjects design, the primary aim was to investigate the impact of different types of advertising content on consumers' purchase intentions regarding local food, while also exploring the core benefits that participants perceive per type of content. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions, representing variations in the type of advertising content (no content, sensory, functional, or

symbolic). The random assignment ensured that each member of the sample had an equal chance of being assigned to the control group or the experimental group. This assisted in ensuring that all groups were comparable at the beginning of the experiment. Proper randomization is important for internal validity and thus to prevent bias in differences between groups (Hair et al., 2019). The chosen between-subjects design offered two advantages for this research. First, it minimized carryover effects that can threaten internal validity. Second, it facilitated a shorter study duration because each participant was only given one treatment. However, it required a larger sample size and individual differences could have threatened validity (Bhandari, 2023).

Convenience sampling was used to select participants for this study. This method involves recruiting readily available individuals. It is important to acknowledge that this type of sampling causes bias, as certain groups may be overrepresented while others are underrepresented. Despite this limitation, it can still offer valuable insights. It allows for the exploration of attitudes and opinions, as well as the generation of hypotheses (Galloway, 2005).

A multiple regression analysis was used which requires a minimum sample size of 50 and a preferred sample size of 100. For experiments, it is preferred to use a sample size of 30 per cell (Hair et al., 2019). In the case of this research, a sample size of 30 x 4 (1x4) = 120 was preferred.

The experiment involved several steps for participants to follow. The first step involved presenting an introduction that included information regarding research ethics. Second, a short text explained that participants must imagine they were going to buy a local product. Third, participants got questions or statements for each core benefit. Fourth, participants were randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions. The experimental conditions were the advertisements representing one type of advertising content related to a local food product. In the fifth step, participants rated the extent to which they intended to purchase the advertised product. Sixth, participants were presented with questions regarding category involvement, their purchase pattern, and their experience with local food. The last questions concerned the demographic characteristics of the participants. Finally, participants were allowed to submit remarks about the experiment and were thanked for their participation.

3.2 Operationalization

The operationalization of the variables is detailed in Appendix A (Table A1).

3.2.1 Manipulated variable

In the experiment, the manipulated variable focused on the different types of advertising content presented to participants. The purpose of these manipulations was to explore how different advertising contents influence consumers' purchase intentions regarding local food. The types of advertising content manipulated in the study include sensory, functional, and symbolic. In addition, a baseline condition with no content was included. Each type of content aimed to evoke specific responses and perceptions. All advertisements included the same image of strawberries. This choice was made because fruit is one of the most commonly purchased categories of local food (Voedingscentrum, n.d.). Furthermore, there was no specific reason for choosing strawberries as an image. The image of the advertisement was intended to provide an example of a type of local food. Only the category fruit was chosen for a specific reason, but the exact product could also have been raspberries, for example. Furthermore, no brand was used to avoid stimulating any biases participants may have toward specific brands. A manipulation check was included to determine if the respondent had perceived the manipulation correctly (Hair et al., 2019). Participants who did not pass the check were eliminated.

For the sensory content manipulation, participants were exposed to advertising content that emphasized the sensory attributes of strawberries. The stimulus that was used is (Figure 2): "Try our local strawberries! They are incredibly juicy, have a delicious sweet aroma, are bright red in color, and exude a fruity scent." (Haase et al., 2018). This stimulus is based on the understanding that sensory attributes encompass aesthetic benefits (Schifferstein, 2015). Aesthetic benefits are the visual pleasure and the hedonic pleasure that consumers derive from its sensory attributes (Desmet and Hekkert, 2007).

Figure 2: Sensory advertisement (Van Gelder, n.d.)

As part of the functional content manipulation, participants received a description emphasizing the functional attributes of strawberries. The stimulus that was used is (Figure

3): “Try our local strawberries! They are of the best quality, are rich in nutrients, and have many vitamins.” (Haase et al., 2018). This stimulus was used because functional attributes primarily arise from the nutrients and ingredients of food (Siró et al., 2008).

Figure 3: Functional advertisement (Van Gelder, n.d.)

For the symbolic content manipulation, participants were presented with a message conveying symbolic meanings and associations related to strawberries. The stimulus that was used is (Figure 4): “Try our local strawberries! They are 100% natural, have regional origins, are freshly harvested from local farmers, and come from sustainable cultivation.” (Haase et al., 2018). The information about the origin and methods of manufacturing are the primary drivers of symbolic content, thus leading to the utilization of this stimulus (Troye and Supphellen, 2012).

Figure 4: Symbolic advertisement (Van Gelder, n.d.)

The last manipulation is the one without the content. This advertisement was the baseline and showed the image of the strawberries and the sentence: “Try our local strawberries!” (Figure 5). This sentence was necessary to maintain consistency in the advertisements and to emphasize the local nature of the strawberries. Furthermore, no forms of sensory, functional, or symbolic content were used. By using this advertisement, it could be examined whether there was a difference between the use of no content and the use of content.

Figure 5: Advertisement without content (Van Gelder, n.d.)

Overall, the four manipulations were designed to provide insights into how different types of advertising content influence consumers’ purchase intentions regarding local food products. This ultimately provided a better understanding of consumer behavior in this context.

3.2.2 Latent variables

In the experiment, participants' perceptions of the core benefits of local food served as latent variables, representing underlying constructs. Before presenting the questions or statements regarding each core benefit, participants were given a brief introduction to imagine they were about to purchase local strawberries. This explanation was important because most statements and questions about the core benefits were centered around a specific product. For example, "I think the nutrition level of this product is:". The first latent variable revolves around nutritional value. For this variable, a scale was used that was developed by Kozup et al. (2003). This scale assesses individuals' attitudes toward the healthiness of consuming specific products based on provided information. The four seven-point statements, measured perceptions of nutritional quality and health benefits associated with the local strawberries. The second latent variable is community engagement. The scale that was used for this variable, was developed by Reich et al. (2018). The four seven-point Likert statements captured consumers' beliefs about the benefits of purchasing locally produced strawberries for the community and their commitment to supporting this practice. Environmental sustainability represents the third latent variable. This variable was measured by assessing consumers' beliefs about feeling environmentally conscious when consuming local strawberries. This scale was developed by Kamleitner et al. (2019) and consists of three seven-point Likert questions. For the last latent variable, trust, the scale of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) was used. The four seven-point Likert statements assessed trust, reliance, honesty, and safety perceptions toward local strawberries. In addition to the core benefits, purchase intention is also a latent variable. In this study, purchase intention measured the likelihood that a consumer would buy a specified product. These four seven-point Likert questions were developed by Baker and Churchill (1977).

3.2.3 Control variables

The control variables – category involvement, purchase pattern, and experience with local food – were included in this study as they could influence the purchase intention of local food. For category involvement, a scale was used that was developed by Kahn and Wansink (2004). The three nine-point Likert statements measured consumers' degree of pleasure they experienced when eating strawberries. For the purchase pattern, the following question was used: "How often do you purchase strawberries?". Experience with local food was measured with the scale of Kelting et al. (2017). The four seven-point Likert questions assessed

consumers' level of familiarity with local food. In addition, the variables age, gender, education, and income were included to gather information on participants' demographic characteristics.

3.3 Data analysis

To test the hypotheses, multiple regression analysis emerged as the most suitable method. Multiple regression analysis is well-suited for examining the relationship between a single dependent variable and multiple independent variables (Hair et al., 2019), aligning with the research objectives focused on consumer behavior toward local food products. This method's suitability stems from several key characteristics. First, this method is effective at predicting purchase intentions by analyzing various independent variables. Second, the interpretive power provided by regression coefficients facilitates an understanding of each variable's impact on purchase intention, which makes it easier to have a comprehensive view of consumer decision-making. Finally, multiple regression analysis enables an assessment of variable importance and their relationships, revealing crucial factors driving consumer behavior and possible interactions among variables (Hair et al., 2019). Two separate models were constructed to systematically analyze the effects. The first model focused on the main effects, while the second model integrated interaction effects. In preparation for the analysis, the independent variables were mean-centered, a method employed to facilitate the interpretation of both main and interaction effects.

3.4 Research ethics

For this research, several ethical requirements were faced. These ethical requirements are needed when conducting research with human participants (Smith, 2003). Therefore, ethical standards were strictly followed throughout the study. In the introduction, participants were informed about the purpose of this research, research benefits, and expected duration. Furthermore, participants were assured of their right to refuse and withdraw at any time without consequences. The anonymity was guaranteed because no personal information was collected. Additionally, it was explained that research results would be transparently processed and eventually made available online. Data collection was limited to the researcher, treated confidentially, and only used for research purposes. Lastly, an email address was provided for possible questions.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptives

The initial participant count was 174 and after eliminating those who did not complete the survey, the remaining number was 141. Following the removal of these 33 participants, the manipulation check was examined, revealing that 14 participants did not pass. It has been decided to exclude these participants from further analysis. Including only the succeeded manipulation checks ensured that the treatments were responsible for the results instead of how they were carried out (Hair et al., 2019). After eliminating the 14 participants, 127 participants remained. Lastly, 3 participants were eliminated because their values were observed as outliers. The remaining sample size of 124 was adequate for conducting the multiple regression analysis.

Table C1 gives an overview of the sample characteristics. The participants' ages ranged from 18 and 78 years, with an average of 38. 62.9% identified as female and 37.1% identified as male. The majority of the participants either finished an education at a university of applied sciences or a university. Specifically, 45.2% graduated from a university of applied sciences, of which 31.5% had a bachelor's degree and 13.7% a master's degree, and 39.6% graduated at a university, of which 8.1% had a bachelor's degree and 31.5% had a master's degree. More than half of the participants were in the highest two income categories, of which 38.7% have an income of 2500 – 5000 euros and 21.0% have an income of > 5000 euros. Looking at the category involvement, in general, people are involved with strawberries as we can see from the mean of 7.75, and purchase the product a few times a year (58.1%). Finally, the participants demonstrated to have considerable experience with local food, as we can see from the mean of 4.31.

The results of the descriptive statistics for the independent variables are summarized in Table C2. The mean scores for nutritional value (5.52), community engagement (5.54), and trust (5.54) indicated that participants generally had favorable perceptions in these domains. The mean score of environmental sustainability (5.20) was slightly lower, though still positive. The standard deviations suggested a moderate level of agreement among participants for all variables, with environmental sustainability showing the highest variability (.971) and nutritional value the lowest (.849).

4.2 Factor analysis

Before doing the multiple regression analysis a factor analysis was conducted. There was one analysis performed for the independent variables. Performing a factor analysis was useful because the independent variables were measured using multiple items that could load on another scale. Before knowing if the factor analysis could be used, KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity had to be checked. Because KMO = .857 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity <.001, the factor analysis was allowed to be used (Table D1). The results of the factor analysis are shown in Table D2. Per variable, the items loaded on one factor. Nutritional value items loaded on factor 2, community engagement items on factor 3, environmental sustainability items on factor 4, and trust items on factor 1. Given the sample size of 124, a loading is considered significant at a value of .50 (Hair et al., 2019). No items were removed because the highest loadings met the threshold and no cross-loadings were detected.

4.3 Reliability analysis

The reliability analysis is crucial as it helps evaluate the degree of consistency between multiple items of a variable. For this analysis, Cronbach's alpha was used, which assesses the consistency of the entire variable. Because exploratory research was conducted, a Cronbach's alpha of .60 or higher was needed for reliability (Hair et al., 2019).

A reliability analysis was conducted for the independent variables, the dependent variable, and the control variables category involvement and experience with local food. As shown in Table E1, all values of Cronbach's alpha were higher than .70. Given the sufficiency of all variables, item deletion was unnecessary. Moreover, beyond the sufficiency of all variables, possible improvement in Cronbach's alpha after removing items was examined. The Cronbach's alpha of purchase intention, category involvement, and experience with local food could be improved. However, this was not executed because the values would increase by less than 0.05 (0.024, 0.041, 0.004).

Following the reliability analysis, new variables were created. For the variables with multiple items, composite measures were created, also referred to as a summated scale. A summated scale has the advantage of reducing measurement errors and representing multiple facets of a concept (Hair et al., 2019). The summated scales were calculated based on the average score of all items per variable.

4.4 Assumptions

To be able to conduct a multiple regression analysis, the variables had to meet several assumptions (Hair et al., 2019). Since only metric variables are allowed in a multiple regression analysis, the non-metric variables, advertising content, gender, education, and income were transformed into dummy variables.

First, outliers and influential observations were identified using the Cook's distance and the Mahalanobis D2. Three participants were removed due to unusual values, with a missing value for the Cook's distance and at the same time an extremely high value for the Mahalanobis D2. The remaining participants had Cook's distance values of lower than 1.0 and no extremely high Mahalanobis D2 values (Hair et al., 2019).

The second assumption examined was the normality of the data distribution. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (D (124) = .127, p = <.001) and the Shapiro-Wilk test (D (124) = .928, p = <.001) were both significant (Table F1). Significance indicates that the independent variable is unlikely to follow a normal distribution. The Normal P-P plot appeared normal, unlike the histogram where a slight negative skew was evident (Figure F1 and Figure F2). Both tests and the histogram indicated non-normality. Given the sample size of 124, which is below the recommended threshold of 200 for normality (Field, 2018), various transformations were attempted to enhance normality. None of the attempted transformations showed improvement, indicating that complete normality was not achieved.

Third, the linearity was checked. This represents the extent to which variations in the dependent variable are linked to changes in the independent variable (Hair et al., 2019). Polynomials were created for the independent variables and some of the control variables. The polynomials were used to determine curvilinearity or linearity (Hair et al., 2019). The non-significance of the polynomials indicated linearity and ensured that this assumption was met (Table F2). After checking this assumption, the polynomials were deleted.

The fourth assumption checked was homoscedasticity. Violation occurs if errors between the observed and predicted values are inconsistent across the independent variable, leading to increased Type I errors or decreased power (Hair et al., 2019). The homoscedasticity was checked by using a ZRESID-ZPRED plot, which showed no clear pattern. (Figure F3). Therefore, the assumption of homoscedasticity was met.

Fifth, the independence of error terms was checked by using the Durbin-Watson test. To meet this assumption, the residuals cannot be correlated. The value of the Durbin-Watson test has to be higher than 1 and lower than 3 (Field, 2018). In the case of this research, the Durbin-Watson test was 2.092. Because this value was within the range of 1 and 3, the regression model showed that the residuals were not correlated and that the assumption was met.

Assessing the degree to which a variable's behavior can be explained by other variables in the analysis, was the last assumption and is also known as multicollinearity. Multicollinearity complicates interpreting the impact of individual variables due to their interrelationships (Hair et al., 2019). First, a correlation matrix was created to check Pearson's correlations. There is no multicollinearity if Pearson's correlation is lower than .70 (Hair et al., 2018) and Table F3 confirms this. Second, in the case of no multicollinearity, the tolerance values are higher than .20 and the VIF values are lower than 10 (Field, 2018). Table F4 shows that these rules were met. In short, all three criteria were tested and approved, confirming that the assumption of multicollinearity was met.

4.5 Results multiple regression analysis

After checking the assumptions, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The highest categories of the control variables were used as reference categories. For gender it was female, for education WO master, and for income 2500 – 5000 euros. The reference group for advertising content, no content, was already predetermined. Two models were created. The first was for the main effects and the second included the interaction effects.

Appendix G shows the statistics of the model fit. Model 1 had an R^2 of .522 which indicates that this model explained 52.2% of the variance and model 2 had an R^2 of .526 which indicates that this model explained 52.6% of the variance. Both models had a significant F-test (model 1 (F (22, 101) = 5.017, p <.001) and model 2 (F (24, 99) = 4.574, p <.001)). The F-statistic checks if the linear model fits the data (Field, 2018). The significant values therefore showed that there was a good fit and that the models could be used to test the hypotheses. Despite the good fit of both models, the F change was not significant (F change = .378, p = .686), meaning that the interactions included in model 2 did not yield more meaningful predictions than model 1. The results of the multiple regression analysis are shown in Table 1, with on the left side the results of model 1 and on the right side the results of model 2.

Table 1: Results model 1-2 multiple regression analysis

	1: Main effects			2: Main and interaction effects		
	B	**Std. Error**	**Sig**	**B**	**Std. Error**	**Sig**
(Constant)	2.349	.619	<.001	2.295	.628	<.001
Independent variables						
Nutritional value (H1 +)	.284	.095	.003	.248	.117	.037
Community engagement (H2 +)	.184	.104	.081	.160	.112	.156
Environmental sustainability (H3 +)	.100	.085	.244	.062	.099	.529
Trust (H4 +)	-.056	.089	.528	-.046	.092	.617
Moderators						
Functional content	.104	.175	.554	.110	.179	.540
Symbolic content	.324	.172	.063	.304	.175	.086
Sensory content	.219	.184	.236	.222	.187	.236
Control variables						
Category involvement	.163	.061	.009	.171	.063	.008
Purchase pattern	-.105	.080	.192	-.097	.082	.237
Experience with local food	.186	.066	.006	.183	.068	.009
Age	.012	.005	.024	.012	.005	.023
Gender – male	.173	.137	.208	.148	.142	.299
Education – secondary	.501	.348	.153	.509	.352	.152
Education – MBO	.392	.215	.071	.396	.219	.073
Education – HBO bachelor	.228	.154	.142	.242	.158	.128
Education – WO bachelor	.491	.262	.064	.524	.267	.052
Education – HBO master	.051	.201	.800	.074	.204	.720
Income – < 500 euros	-.155	.292	.596	-.189	2.96	.524
Income – 500 – 1000 euros	.179	.237	.452	.123	.247	.619
Income – 1000 – 2500 euros	.120	.201	.551	.102	.206	.621
Income – > 5000 euros	-.201	.181	.270	-.196	.188	.300
Income – rather do not say	-.309	.215	.153	-.341	.219	.123
Interaction effects						
Nutritional value * Functional content (H5 +)				.122	.193	.528
Environmental sustainability * Symbolic content (H6 +)				.117	.153	.447

Based on the results of the multiple regression analysis of model 1, the main effect of nutritional value (B = .284, p = .003) had a significant positive effect on purchase intention. This significance indicated that hypothesis 1 was supported, demonstrating that individuals are more likely to intend to purchase local food when they perceive it to be nutritionally valuable. Community engagement (B = .184, p = .081) was marginally significant, indicating partial support for hypothesis 2. This hypothesis indicated that individuals are more likely to intend to purchase local food when they perceive a higher feeling of community engagement. However, perceived feelings of environmental sustainability (B = .100, p = .244) and trust (B = -.056, p = .528) associated with local food did not significantly impact purchase intention. Hypotheses 3 and 4 were therefore not supported. Finally, what stood out was that symbolic content was the most influential moderator affecting purchase intention (B = .324, p = .063).

Model 2 included the interaction effects "Nutritional value * Functional content" and "Environmental sustainability * Symbolic content" to test hypotheses 5 and 6. The interaction effect of "Nutritional value * Functional content" (B = .122, p = .528) was not significant. Therefore, it could be concluded that functional content does not strengthen the relationship between nutritional value and purchase intention compared to no content. The same applied to the interaction effect "Environmental sustainability * Symbolic content" (B = .117, p = .447), which also had no significant value. Symbolic content does therefore not strengthen the relationship between environmental sustainability and purchase intention compared to no content. Furthermore, there was a notable difference in the significance of the main effects. While the main effect of nutritional value (B = .248, p = .037) and symbolic content (B = .304, p = .086) remained significant and marginally significant, the main effect of community engagement lost its marginal significance (B = .160, p = .156).

For the control variables, five significant effects were identified. The first control variable of interest was category involvement (B = .163, p = .009). Therefore, participants who are more involved with the category strawberries have a higher intention to purchase local products than those who were less involved with the category strawberries. The second significant control variable was experience with local food (B = .186, p = .006), indicating a higher intention to purchase if participants are more experienced with local food. Age (B = .012, p = .024) was the third significant control variable. The significance suggested that participants' age plays a significant role in determining their purchase intentions regarding local food. So, if the age increases by one year, purchase intention increases by .012. The last significant

control variables were part of the variable education. Both MBO (B = .392, p = .071) and WO bachelor (B = .491, p = .064) were marginally significant, indicating that individuals with MBO and WO bachelor education are more likely to purchase local food compared to those with a WO master education.

4.6 Robustness check

The participants who failed the manipulation check were excluded from the analysis. To ensure the robustness of this study, a comparative analysis was conducted between two datasets. The first dataset comprised 124 participants who all passed the manipulation check and the second dataset comprised 138 participants of which 14 people did not pass the manipulation check. The R^2 of the dataset with the excluded participants was .522 for model 1 and .526 for model 2. Including the 14 participants led to an R^2 of .422 for model 1 and .437 for model 2 (Table H1). This suggests that the analysis performed on the complete dataset accounted for 10% and 8.9% less variance compared to the analysis conducted on the dataset with the excluded participants. Looking at the results of the new multiple regression analysis (Table H3), it can be concluded that the substantive results almost remained robust. While the main effect of nutritional value (B = .298, p = .002) and symbolic content (B = .286, p = .099) remained significant and marginally significant, the main effect of community engagement lost its marginal significance (B = .172, p = .101). The other main effects remained insignificant (environmental sustainability (B = .072, p = .393) and trust (B = -.097 p = .287)). Also, both interaction effects ("Nutritional value * Functional content" (B = .260, p = .167) and "Environmental sustainability * Symbolic content" (B = .197, p = .203)) remained insignificant. Minimal adjustments were observed for the control variables. There was a change in the reference group where HBO bachelor replaced WO master. Furthermore, category involvement (B = .142, p = .014), experience with local food (B = .162, p = .017), and age (B = .012, p = .017) remained significant, while the marginal significance of MBO and WO bachelor was no longer observed.

4.7 Extra analysis

At the beginning of this study, two interaction effects were formulated using theoretical support. However, when conducting the multiple regression analysis neither of these interaction effects had significant results. To explore the possibility of other interaction

effects, an additional analysis was conducted. In this analysis, all core benefits were paired with each content type which led to a total of 12 interaction effects.

The inclusion of these additional interaction effects resulted in a change in the $R^{2\cdot}$ The R^2 in model 2 increased from .526 to .589 meaning that adding all the interaction effects ensured that model 2 explained 58.9% of the variance (Table I1). Despite this improvement in model fit, adding the interaction effect led to no significant findings (Table I3). The significance of the main effects and the control variables remained the same with a significant value for nutritional value (B = .284, p = .003), community engagement (B = .184, p = .081), symbolic content (B = .324, p = .063), category involvement (B = .163, p = .009), experience with local food (B = .186, p = .006), age (B = .012, p = .024), MBO (B = .392, p = .071) and WO bachelor (B = .491, p = .064).

5. Discussion and conclusion

The study aimed to enhance the understanding of local food consumption from a marketing perspective, specifically by identifying the core benefits that drive consumers' purchase intention and exploring the moderating effect of advertising content. This chapter will first discuss the theoretical implications followed by the managerial implications. The limitations and suggestions for further research will discussed last.

5.1 Theoretical implications

Local food is highly valued for its nutritional value, which results from its emphasis on freshness and sustainable agricultural practices (Schröder, 2003; Alzamora et al., 2000). Based on evidence from several studies (Liang, 2016; Loebnitz and Aschemann-Witzel, 2016; Janssen, 2018), the hypothesis regarding this core benefit stated that the perceived nutritional value of local food would positively influence purchase intention. The results of this research were in line with this formulated hypothesis. The observed outcome validated that nutritional value is important for consumers. This corresponds with the study of Savelli et al. (2017) and Giusti et al. (2007) who claim that nutritional value is a characteristic of the quality of local food that consumers are increasingly interested in.

Surprisingly, the analysis revealed that perceived feelings of community engagement associated with local food did not influence purchase intention. In contrast, it was hypothesized that these feelings would positively influence purchase intention as a sense of community fosters favorable attitudes toward local food products (Hur et al., 2011). A possible explanation for the contrasting effect are the varying degrees of community engagement in different forms of local food exchanges (Obach and Tobin, 2013). In earlier parts of this study, it was specified that the focus would be on the DTC channel, which can have selling arrangements based on spot markets, relational contracts, or formal contracts (Enthoven and Van Den Broeck, 2021). The survey did not disclose the targeted arrangement, requiring participants to fill it in themselves. The standard deviation of community engagement with a value close to 1 (.935), confirmed this by indicating a reasonable amount of variation in responses. Although all three arrangements of DTC are components of the local food system, their degree of social interaction varies, impacting their ability to facilitate community engagement (Hinrichs, 2000). To exemplify this, Obach and

Tobin (2013) distinguished farmers markets (spot market), independently owned stores that specialize in local products (relational contract), and CSA (formal contract), each of which is part of a specific DTC selling arrangement. CSA fosters strong social connections through shared ownership, ensuring the highest level of community involvement. In contrast, farmer markets are less socially oriented than CSA due to the direct exchange of money (Hinrichs, 2000). Among the three different forms, independently owned stores ensure the lowest level of community engagement, as these stores resemble normal food stores where social interaction is minimal. In summary, the varying levels of community engagement across different forms of local food exchange may explain why perceived feelings of community engagement did not have an effect on purchase intention.

Furthermore, perceived environmental sustainability associated with local food did not influence purchase intention. This finding contrasts with the hypothesized effect that suggested a positive influence of environmental sustainability on purchase intentions, given the increased environmental concern and the association of local products with environmental sustainability (Kumar, 2012; Pagiaslis and Krontalis, 2014; Lotter, 2003; Enthoven and Van Den Broeck, 2021). A possible explanation for this discrepancy could be that consumers perceive local products, which are often seen as environmentally friendly due to environment-friendly practices (Lotter, 2003), as more expensive (White et al., 2019). This perception is supported by previous research, which indicated that the perceived high price of environmentally friendly products negatively affects purchase intention (Briz & Ward, 2009; Verhoef, 2005). Consequently, even though consumers might recognize the environmental benefits of local food, the belief that these products are more expensive may reduce their purchase intention, thereby explaining the lack of observed effect of perceived environmental sustainability on purchase intention.

Moreover, the results of the analysis disclosed that perceived trust associated with local food did not influence purchase intention. This result is in contrast to the hypothesized effect that trust would positively influence purchase intention. A possible explanation could be that trust is not uniformly articulated and may take on varied expressions. Trust can be based on the product, the brand, the seller, the sales system, the producer, or the entire organization. In addition, the experience of trust within these relationships also depends on aspects such as integrity and benevolence (Prigent-Simonin and Hérault-Fournier, 2005). For example, some people trust the producer if they experience a sense of integrity, while for others trust is based

on the benevolence of the producer. During the research, participants were presented with a situation where they had to imagine they were going to buy local strawberries. This situation was briefly outlined in which no further context was described. Without clear contextual cues, participants likely relied on their personal experiences to define what trust meant in these situations. This is also partly confirmed by the standard deviation of trust with a value close to 1 (.913), showing there was a reasonable amount of variance in the responses. Therefore, the lack of a uniform context in the study likely contributed to the varying perceptions of trust among participants, leading to the contradicting effect.

Lastly, the results of both interaction effects were in contrast with the hypothesized effects. The outcome of the analysis indicated that functional content did not influence the relationship between nutritional value and purchase intention and that symbolic content did not influence the relationship between environmental sustainability and purchase intention. For moderation to take place, the different variables must be coordinated and pointing in the same direction. In this study, it is referred to this coordination as alignment. The absence of an alignment could be a possible explanation for the contradicting effects. There were two alignments identified, one between nutritional value and functional content and one between environmental sustainability and symbolic content. These alignments were based on the literature, which does not automatically mean that consumers perceive it the same way. Participants may have perceived no alignment between nutritional value and functional content and environmental sustainability and symbolic content, leading to cognitive dissonance (Bawa and Kansal, 2008), less persuasion (Meyers-Levy and Malaviya, 1999), and decreased relevance (Baker and Lutz, 2000). These consequences could ultimately have weakened or eliminated the interaction effects.

Besides the interaction effect discussed, surprisingly, a main effect was found for one of the moderators. The results showed that symbolic content had a positive effect on purchase intention. This finding suggested that while there were no interaction effects, symbolic content alone could still influence consumer behavior directly.

5.2 Managerial implications

The results of the study provide some key insights for marketers in the food industry. In the first place, the study revealed that consumers' perception of the nutritional value of local food

did positively influence their purchase intention. This underscores the opportunity for marketers to strategically emphasize the nutritional value benefit of local products in their communications. Managers can achieve this by highlighting the freshness and sustainable agricultural practices, which contribute to better-preserved and higher concentrations of nutrients and biologically active compounds (Schröder, 2003; Alzamora et al., 2000). By using this strategy, marketers align with the increasing interest in healthier food choices (Savelli et al., 2017; Giusti et al., 2007), which can strengthen consumer appeal. Moreover, this approach can enhance the competitive advantage of food products in the market. In conclusion, using this communication strategy can not only increase consumers' purchase intention regarding local food but can also have multiple advantages within de food industry.

Second, the results of this research can be used to provide specific tools for segmenting. For the control variables, it emerged that category involvement, experience with local food, age, MBO, and WO bachelor had a positive effect on purchase intention. Marketers can utilize these findings to develop targeted segmentation strategies. Specifically, they can focus on consumers with high strawberry involvement and a lot of experience with local food and consumers who are older and have an MBO or WO bachelor's degree, as these characteristics did positively influence the intention to purchase local products. On the other hand, purchase pattern, gender, education, and income are better not to be used, as these variables had no effect on purchase intention.

Lastly, although the study did not find moderating effects of advertising content on the relationship between core benefits and purchase intention, the direct effect of symbolic content on purchase content was positive. This finding is valuable as it can be used by marketers to develop an advertising strategy. Developing and optimizing advertising content can be a potentially powerful tool to decrease uncertainty among consumers, enhance their evaluations of the product, and motivate them to choose the product (Dodds et al., 1991; Urbany et al., 1989). Moreover, creating positive advertising messages can improve the way people perceive a product, which can lead to more purchases (Chang, 2007). In addition to focusing on symbolic content, it is also interesting to experiment with other types of content, such as the difference between informational and non-informational content. To sum up, by continuously refining advertising strategies, particularly by focusing on symbolic content, marketers can effectively enhance product appeal and drive higher purchase rates.

5.3 Limitations and future research

Several limitations were identified, which formed the basis for recommendations for future research. The first limitation is that the normality sample was not met. Both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the Shapiro-Wilk test were significant and the histogram was slightly negatively skewed. If the sample size is 200 or larger, not meeting normality is negligible (Field, 2018). Since the sample size of this study was 124 it did not meet this rule, having no normality is problematic in this case. Thus, in any follow-up study, increasing the sample size by at least 76 usable participants is necessary.

Second, this study investigated the purchase intention of local food. However, there exists a difference between purchase intention and actual purchase behavior, often referred to as the attitude-behavior gap. This gap claims that consumers may express positive attitudes toward a product, yet their actual behavior does not match it (Carrington et al., 2010). The gap is influenced by individual, social, and situational factors (Terlau and Hirsch, 2015) that can be examined in future research. Possible methods for future research can be in-depth interviews or focus groups that could provide deeper insights into the underlying reasons behind the attitude-behavior gap. Furthermore, longitudinal research designs could be used in which consumers with certain purchase intentions are followed for a longer period to investigate what kind of buying behavior they ultimately express.

The third limitation is the use of the non-random sampling method, convenience sampling. The disadvantage of this method is that it is likely to be biased. This bias could impact the generalizability of the research, as certain groups are over- and under-represented and may therefore not be representative of the population (Mackey and Gass, 2005). The sample characteristics confirmed these statements. The majority of the participants identified themselves as female (62.9%), finished education at a university of applied sciences (45.2%), have an income of 2500 – 5000 euros (38.7%), and purchase strawberries a few times a year (58.1%). These characteristics of the sample are not representative of the Dutch population. Therefore, it is recommended to use a random sampling method in future research so that the characteristics of the sample are better distributed. In addition, it would be interesting to include more demographic characteristics such as cultural background and geographical location to get a more comprehensive picture of the participants.

The last limitation concerns the explanation provided during the survey, where participants were asked to imagine themselves purchasing a local product. In the questions that followed, participants had to indicate their perceived, nutritional value, community engagement, environmental sustainability, and trust based on the situation outlined. However, the explanation provided was concise, lacking a clear definition of local, as well as failing to provide specific contextual details. This lack of clarity could have an impact on consumers' interpretations of the scenario. Given the theoretical implications discussed earlier, this particularly may had an impact on perceived community engagement and trust, as both can vary depending on the type of local food exchange. Future research could benefit from providing a well-defined definition of local and contextual details. In addition, exploring the varying levels of community engagement and varying expressions of trust across different forms of local food exchange could provide new insights into consumer behavior and decision-making processes in local food choices.

Despite the limitations, this study provides valuable insights into the core benefits of local food and the moderating effect of advertising content on purchase intention. This could be a starting point for future research in which knowledge and insights about local food can be expanded.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Operationalization of variables

Table A1: Operationalization of variables

Variable	**Operationalization**	**Source**	**Cronbach's alpha**
Manipulated variables			
Advertising content	No content is the reference category. Three dummies were created. The first dummy for sensory (sensory content = 1, others = 0), the second dummy for functional (functional content = 1, others = 0) and the last dummy for symbolic (symbolic content = 1, others = 0)		
Latent variables			
Nutritional value	Seven-point scale (1: poor/not important at all/bad for your heart/not nutritious at all – 7: good/very important/ good for your heart/very nutritious) • I think the nutrition level of this local product is: • Based on the information provided, how important would this local product be as a part of a healthy diet? • This local product is: • How would you rate the level of nutritiousness suggested by the information provided?	Kozup et al., 2003	.84 and .85
Community engagement	Seven-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree)	Reich et al., 2018	0.85

	• Buying locally produced foods supports sustainable farming practices. • Buying local foods helps build a more prosperous community. • I like to support local farmers whenever possible. • Supporting the local food economy is important to me.		
Environmental sustainability	Seven-point Likert scale (1: not at all– 7: very) • How sustainable would you feel with this local product? • How environmentally conscious would you feel with this local product? • How environmentally friendly would you feel with this local product?	Kamleitner et al., 2019	0.91 and 0.93
Trust	Seven-point Likert scale (1: completely disagree – 7: completely agree) • I trust this local product. • I rely on this local product. • This is an honest local product. • This local product is safe.	Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001	.81
Purchase intention	Seven-point Likert scale (1: no, definitely not – 7: yes, definitely) • Would you like to try these strawberries? • Would you buy these strawberries if you happened to see it in a store? • Would you actively seek out these strawberries?	Baker and Churchill, 1977	.69 and .73

	• I would patronize these strawberries.		
Control variables			
Category involvement	Nine-point Likert scale (1: completely disagree – 9: completely agree) • I find strawberries pleasurable to consume. • I find strawberries enjoyable to eat. • I get excited when I eat strawberries.	Kahn and Wansink (2004)	.84
Purchase pattern	How often do you purchase strawberries? • Never • A few times a year • Every month • Every week • Every day		
Experience with local food	Seven-point Likert scale (1: not at all familiar/not at all clear/very little/one of the least knowledgeable – 7: extremely familiar/extremely clear/a lot/one of the most knowledgeable • How familiar are you with local food? • How clear of an idea do you have about which characteristics of local food are important in providing you with maximum satisfaction? • How much do you know about local food? • How would you rate your knowledge about local food relative to the rest of the population?	Kelting et al., 2017	.89

Age	How old are you?
Gender	What is your gender? • Female • Male • I would rather not say
Education	What is the highest level of education you have completed? • No degree • Primary education • Secondary education • MBO • Bachelor HBO • Bachelor WO • Master HBO • Master WO • PhD
Income	What is your gross income per month? • < 500 euros • 500 – 1000 euros • 1000 – 2500 euros • 2500 – 5000 euros • > 5000 euros • I would rather not say

Appendix B: Survey

Page 1

Beste Deelnemer,

Bedankt voor uw interesse in het deelnemen aan mijn onderzoek. Voordat u begint, wil ik u graag voorzien van belangrijke informatie met betrekking tot het doel, de procedures en de ethische overwegingen van dit onderzoek.

Het doel van deze studie is om de belangrijkste drijfveren achter de consumptie van lokale voeding te identificeren. Door deel te nemen, zult u waardevolle inzichten bijdragen die zullen helpen bij het vergroten van het begrip voor de keuze van lokaal voedsel.

Uw deelname aan dit onderzoek is volledig vrijwillig. U heeft het recht om deelname te weigeren of zich op elk moment terug te trekken uit het onderzoek zonder enige consequenties. Uw antwoorden blijven verder volledig anoniem en zullen uitsluitend worden gebruikt voor onderzoeksdoeleinden. De enquête zal naar verwachting ongeveer 5 minuten duren.

De resultaten van dit onderzoek worden transparant verwerkt en uiteindelijk online beschikbaar gesteld. Uw anonimiteit zal worden gewaarborgd en uw individuele antwoorden zullen niet zichtbaar zijn in eventuele publicaties die voortvloeien uit dit onderzoek. Als u vragen of opmerkingen heeft over het onderzoek, aarzel dan niet om een mail te sturen naar: sophie.verhees@ru.nl

Alvast dank u voor uw medewerking en waardevolle bijdrage aan mijn onderzoek.

Door verder te gaan met deze enquête geeft u toestemming om deel te nemen aan het onderzoek onder de bovenstaande voorwaarden. Heeft u bovenstaande inleiding gelezen en wilt u doorgaan met de enquête?

- Ja
- Nee

Page 2

Lokale voeding betekent simpelweg voedsel dat wordt geproduceerd en verkregen in de buurt van waar u woont. Lokaal voedsel kan variëren van groenten en fruit tot vlees, zuivelproducten en meer. Met lokale voeding draait het om het kopen van producten die afkomstig zijn van boeren en producenten uit uw eigen regio. Kortom, lokale voeding gaat over het ondersteunen van lokale producenten en het kopen van voedsel dat dicht bij huis wordt geproduceerd en gekocht.

Stelt u zich voor dat u van plan bent om aardbeien te kopen. U hoort over de beschikbaarheid van lokale aardbeien en besluit daarom bewust voor deze lokale optie te kiezen. U selecteert met zorg een aanbieder die lokale aardbeien verkoopt, in plaats van andere alternatieven.

Page 3

Beantwoord a.d.h.v. de eerder geschetste hypothetische aankoop van lokale aardbeien, de volgende statements en vragen over voedingswaarde.

1. Ik denk dat het voedingsniveau van dit lokale product ___ is.
    - Zeer slecht (1)
    - Slecht (2)
    - Redelijk slecht (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Redelijk goed (5)
    - Goed (6)
    - Zeer goed (7)

2. Hoe belangrijk zou dit lokale product zijn als onderdeel van een gezond dieet?
    - Zeer onbelangrijk (1)
    - Onbelangrijk (2)
    - Enigszins onbelangrijk (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Enigszins belangrijk (5)
    - Belangrijk (6)
    - Zeer belangrijk (7)

3. Dit lokale product is ___.
    - Zeer slecht voor je hart (1)
    - Slecht voor je hart (2)
    - Redelijk slecht voor je hart (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Redelijk goed voor je hart (5)
    - Goed voor je hart (6)
    - Zeer goed voor je hart (7)

4. Hoe zou u het niveau van voedzaamheid van dit lokale product beoordelen?
    - Zeer onvoedzaam (1)
    - Onvoedzaam (2)
    - Redelijk onvoedzaam (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Redelijk voedzaam (5)
    - Voedzaam (6)
    - Zeer voedzaam (7)

Page 4

Beantwoord a.d.h.v. de eerder geschetste hypothetische aankoop van lokale aardbeien, de volgende statements over betrokkenheid van de gemeenschap.

1. Het kopen van lokaal geproduceerd voedsel ondersteunt duurzame landbouwpraktijken.
    - Sterk mee oneens (1)
    - Oneens (2)
    - Enigszins mee oneens (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Enigszins mee eens (5)
    - Eens (6)
    - Sterk mee eens (7)

2. Het kopen van lokaal voedsel helpt bij het opbouwen van een welvarende gemeenschap.
    - Sterk mee oneens (1)
    - Oneens (2)
    - Enigszins mee oneens (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Enigszins mee eens (5)
    - Eens (6)
    - Sterk mee eens (7)

3. Ik steun lokale boeren graag wanneer dat mogelijk is.
    - Sterk mee oneens (1)
    - Oneens (2)
    - Enigszins mee oneens (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Enigszins mee eens (5)
    - Eens (6)
    - Sterk mee eens (7)

4. Het ondersteunen van de lokale voedsel economie is belangrijk voor mij.
    - Sterk mee oneens (1)
    - Oneens (2)
    - Enigszins mee oneens (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Enigszins mee eens (5)
    - Eens (6)
    - Sterk mee eens (7)

Page 5

Beantwoord a.d.h.v. de eerder geschetste hypothetische aankoop van lokale aardbeien, de volgende vragen over duurzaamheid van het milieu.

1. Hoe duurzaam zou u zich voelen met dit lokale product?
    - Helemaal niet (1)

- Niet (2)
- Bijna niet (3)
- Neutraal (4)
- Een beetje (5)
- Erg (6)
- Heel erg (7)

2. Hoe milieubewust zou u zich voelen met dit lokale product?
    - Helemaal niet (1)
    - Niet (2)
    - Bijna niet (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Een beetje (5)
    - Erg (6)
    - Heel erg (7)

3. Hoe milieuvriendelijk zou u zich voelen met dit lokale product?
    - Helemaal niet (1)
    - Niet (2)
    - Bijna niet (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Een beetje (5)
    - Erg (6)
    - Heel erg (7)

Page 6

Beantwoord a.d.h.v. de eerder geschetste hypothetische aankoop van lokale aardbeien, de volgende statements over vertrouwen.

1. Ik vertrouw dit lokale product.
    - Sterk mee oneens (1)
    - Oneens (2)
    - Enigszins mee oneens (3)
    - Neutraal (4)

- Enigszins mee eens (5)
- Eens (6)
- Sterk mee eens (7)

2. Ik vind dit lokale product betrouwbaar.
    - Sterk mee oneens (1)
    - Oneens (2)
    - Enigszins mee oneens (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Enigszins mee eens (5)
    - Eens (6)
    - Sterk mee eens (7)

3. Dit is een eerlijk lokaal product.
    - Sterk mee oneens (1)
    - Oneens (2)
    - Enigszins mee oneens (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Enigszins mee eens (5)
    - Eens (6)
    - Sterk mee eens (7)

4. Dit lokale product is veilig.
    - Sterk mee oneens (1)
    - Oneens (2)
    - Enigszins mee oneens (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Enigszins mee eens (5)
    - Eens (6)
    - Sterk mee eens (7)

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Bekijk de advertentie hieronder aandachtig:

Probeer onze lokale aardbeien!
Ze zijn 100% natuurlijk, hebben een regionale oorsprong, worden vers geoogst bij lokale boeren en zijn afkomstig van duurzame teelt.

Probeer onze lokale aardbeien!
Ze zijn van de beste kwaliteit, rijk aan voedingsstoffen en bevatten veel vitaminen.

Probeer onze lokale aardbeien!

Probeer onze lokale aardbeien!
Ze zijn ongelooflijk sappig, hebben een heerlijk zoete aroma, zijn helderrood van kleur en verspreiden een fruitige geur.

Beantwoord de volgende vragen en het statement a.d.h.v. deze advertentie.

1. Zou u deze aardbeien willen proberen?
    - Absoluut niet (1)
    - Nee (2)
    - Ik denk het niet (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Misschien (5)
    - Ja (6)
    - Absoluut (7)

2. Zou u deze aardbeien kopen als u ze toevallig in een winkel zou zien?
    - Absoluut niet (1)
    - Nee (2)
    - Ik denk het niet (3)

- Neutraal (4)
- Misschien (5)
- Ja (6)
- Absoluut (7)

3. Zou u actief op zoek gaan naar deze aardbeien?
    - Absoluut niet (1)
    - Nee (2)
    - Ik denk het niet (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Misschien (5)
    - Ja (6)
    - Absoluut (7)

4. Ik zou deze aardbeien aanbevelen.
    - Absoluut niet (1)
    - Nee (2)
    - Ik denk het niet (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Misschien (5)
    - Ja (6)
    - Absoluut (7)

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Welke tekst heeft u zojuist in de advertentie gezien?

- Probeer onze lokale aardbeien! Ze zijn van de beste kwaliteit, rijk aan voedingsstoffen en bevatten veel vitaminen. (1)
- Probeer onze lokale aardbeien! (2)
- Probeer onze lokale aardbeien! Ze zijn ongelooflijk sappig, hebben een heerlijk zoete aroma, zijn helderrood van kleur en verspreiden een fruitige geur. (3)

- Probeer onze lokale aardbeien! Ze zijn 100% natuurlijk, hebben een regionale oorsprong, worden vers geoogst bij lokale boeren en zijn afkomstig van duurzame teelt. (4)

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Beantwoord de volgende vraag en statements over de categorie aardbeien.

1. Ik vind aardbeien aangenaam om te consumeren.
    - Sterk mee oneens (1)
    - Oneens (2)
    - Redelijk mee oneens (3)
    - Een beetje mee oneens (4)
    - Neutraal (5)
    - Een beetje mee eens (6)
    - Redelijk mee eens (7)
    - Eens (8)
    - Sterk mee eens (9)

2. Ik vind aardbeien plezierig om te eten.
    - Sterk mee oneens (1)
    - Oneens (2)
    - Redelijk mee oneens (3)
    - Een beetje mee oneens (4)
    - Neutraal (5)
    - Een beetje mee eens (6)
    - Redelijk mee eens (7)
    - Eens (8)
    - Sterk mee eens (9)

3. Ik word enthousiast als ik aardbeien eet.
    - Sterk mee oneens (1)
    - Oneens (2)
    - Redelijk mee oneens (3)
    - Een beetje mee oneens (4)

- Neutraal (5)
- Een beetje mee eens (6)
- Redelijk mee eens (7)
- Eens (8)
- Sterk mee eens (9)

4. Hoe vaak koopt u aardbeien?
    - Nooit (1)
    - Een aantal keer per jaar (2)
    - Elke maand (3)
    - Elke week (4)
    - Elke dag (5)

Beantwoord de volgende vragen over lokale voeding.

1. Hoe bekend bent u met lokaal voedsel?
    - Extreem onbekend (1)
    - Onbekend (2)
    - Redelijk onbekend (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Redelijk bekend (5)
    - Bekend (6)
    - Extreem bekend (7)

2. Hoe duidelijk idee heeft u over welke kenmerken van lokaal voedsel belangrijk zijn voor het bieden van maximale tevredenheid?
    - Heel onduidelijk (1)
    - Onduidelijk (2)
    - Redelijk onduidelijk (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Redelijk duidelijk (5)
    - Duidelijk (6)
    - Heel duidelijk (7)

3. Hoeveel weet u over lokaal voedsel?
    - Heel weinig (1)
    - Weinig (2)
    - Redelijk weinig (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Redelijk veel (5)
    - Veel (6)
    - Heel veel (7)

4. Hoe zou u uw kennis over lokaal voedsel beoordelen ten opzichte van de rest van de bevolking?
    - Zeer weinig geïnformeerd (1)
    - Weinig geïnformeerd (2)
    - Redelijk weinig geïnformeerd (3)
    - Neutraal (4)
    - Redelijk veel geïnformeerd (5)
    - Veel geïnformeerd (6)
    - Zeer veel geïnformeerd (7)

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De volgende vragen gaan over uw demografische kenmerken.

1. Wat is uw leeftijd? ___

2. Wat is uw geslacht?
    - Vrouw (1)
    - Man (2)
    - Zeg ik liever niet (3)

3. Wat is de hoogste opleiding die u heeft afgerond?
    - Geen diploma (1)
    - Basisonderwijs (2)
    - Voortgezet onderwijs (3)
    - MBO (4)

- Bachelor HBO (5)
- Bachelor WO (6)
- Master HBO (7)
- Master WO (8)
- PhD (9)

4. Wat is uw bruto-inkomen per maand?
    - < 500 euro (1)
    - 500 – 1000 euro (2)
    - 1000 – 2500 euro (3)
    - 2500 – 5000 euro (4)
    - > 5000 euro (5)
    - Zeg ik liever niet (6)

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Hartelijk dank voor uw kostbare tijd en waardevolle input bij het invullen van deze enquête.

Voor eventuele vragen of opmerkingen kunt u mailen naar: sophie.verhees@ru.nl

Appendix C: Descriptives

Tabel C1: Sample characteristics

Variable	Category	N	%	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Age		124	100%	18	78	38.48	14.747
Gender[1]	Female	78	62.9%	1	2	1.37	.485
	Male	46	37.1%				
Education[2]	Secondary education	5	4.0%	3	8	6.10	1.592
	MBO	14	11.3%				
	Bachelor HBO	39	31.5%				
	Bachelor WO	10	8.1%				
	Master HBO	17	13.7%				
	Master WO	39	31.5%				
Income	< 500 euros	8	6.5%	1	6	3.92	1.329
	500 – 1000 euros	12	9.7%				
	1000 – 2500 euros	16	12.9%				
	2500 – 5000 euros	48	38.7%				
	> 5000 euros	26	21.0%				
	I would rather not say	14	11.3%				
Category involvement		124	100%	1	9	7.75	1.070
Purchase pattern	Never	2	1.6%	1	5	2.75	.818
	A few times a year	72	58.1%				
	Every month	28	22.6%				
	Every week	21	16.9%				
	Every day	1	.8%				
Experience with local food		124	100%	1	7	4.31	1.072

[1] No participants selected "I would rather not say" as gender identification. Therefore, this category was not included in the further analysis.
[2] No participants selected no degree, primary education, and PhD as education. Therefore, these categories were not included in the further analysis.

Tabel C2: Desprictives independent variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Nutritional value	124	1	7	5.52	.849
Community engagement	124	1	7	5.54	.935
Environmental sustainability	124	1	7	5.20	.971
Trust	124	2	7	5.54	.913

Appendix D: Factor analysis

Table D1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.857
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1232.608
	df	105
	Sig.	<.001

Table D2: Rotated component matrix

	Component			
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
I think the nutrition level of this local product is:	.298	.739	.181	.033
Based on the information provided, how important would this local product be as a part of a healthy diet?	.009	.664	.489	.100
This local product is:	.158	.784	.041	.265
How would you rate the level of nutritiousness suggested by the information provided?	.155	.770	.152	.299
Buying locally produced foods supports sustainable farming practices.	.432	.184	.542	.265
Buying local foods helps build a more prosperous community.	.356	.219	.591	.160
I like to support local farmers whenever possible.	.141	.087	.788	.227
Supporting the local food economy is important to me.	.052	.185	.824	.228
How sustainable would you feel with this local product?	.182	.302	.279	.773

How environmentally conscious would you feel with this local product?	.157	.100	.242	.900
How environmentally friendly would you feel with this local product?	.190	.245	.218	.838
I trust this local product.	.901	.017	.098	.132
I rely on this local product.	.895	.186	.075	.086
This is an honest local product.	.717	.336	.283	.322
This local product is safe.	.650	.373	.376	.190

Appendix E: Reliability analysis

Table E1: Results reliability analysis

Variable	**Item**	**Cronbach's alpha**	**Cronbach's alpha if item is deleted**
Latent variables			
Nutritional value	Nutritional value 1	.821	.791
	Nutritional value 2		.795
	Nutritional value 3		.765
	Nutritional value 4		.743
Community engagement	Community engagement 1	.797	.761
	Community engagement 2		.758
	Community engagement 3		.742
	Community engagement 4		.725
Environmental sustainability	Environmental sustainability 1	.908	.903
	Environmental sustainability 2		.839
	Environmental sustainability 3		.863
Trust	Trust 1	.897	.866
	Trust 2		.852
	Trust 3		.865
	Trust 4		.885
Purchase intention	Purchase intention 1	.746	.645
	Purchase intention 2		.730
	Purchase intention 3		.770
	Purchase intention 4		.614
Control variables			
Category involvement	Category involvement 1	.810	.730
	Category involvement 2		.652
	Category involvement 3		.851
Experience with local food	Experience with local food 1	.896	.856
	Experience with local food 2		.900
	Experience with local food 3		.841
	Experience with local food 4		.869

Appendix F: Assumptions

Table F1: Test of normality

	Kolomogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Purchase intention	.127	124	<.001	.928	124	<.001

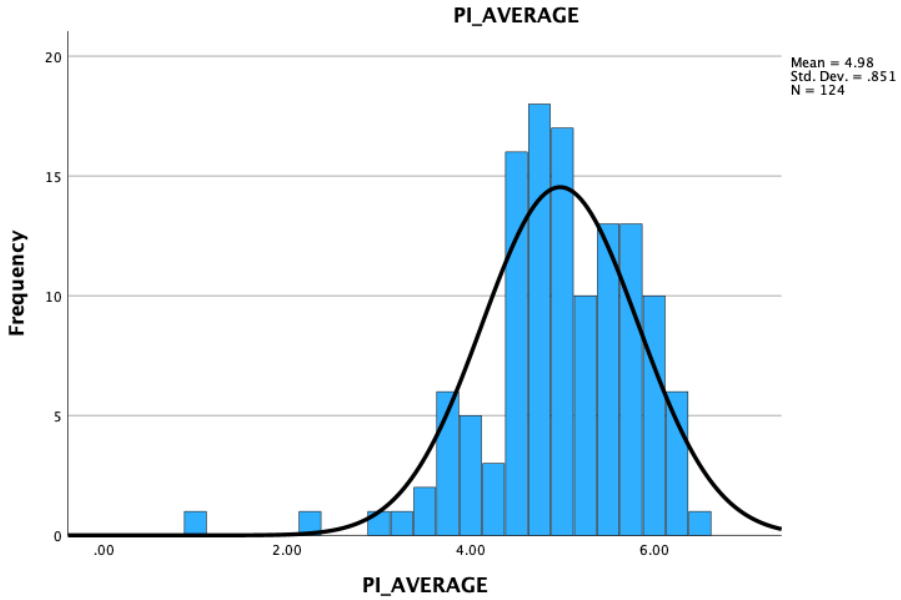

Figure F1: Histogram (Purchase intention)

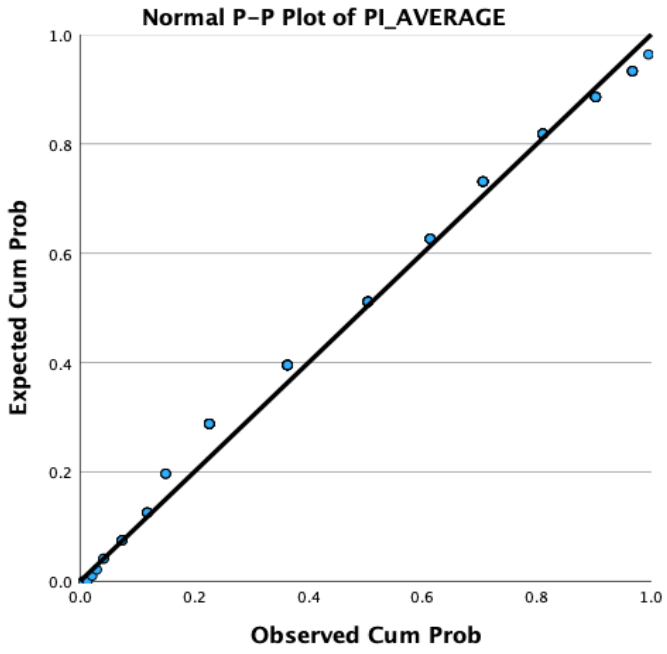

Figure F2: Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual (Purchase intention)

Table F2: Linearity – polynomial terms

	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized		
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
Nutritional value	-.123	.067	-.289	-1.845	.068
Community engagement	-.091	.059	-.243	-1.546	.125
Environmental sustainability	.097	.080	.214	1.220	.225
Trust	.059	.056	.108	1.061	.291
Category involvement	-0.11	.036	-.168	-.307	.760
Purchase pattern	.165	.140	.165	1.182	.240
Experience with local food	.019	.050	.040	.390	.698
Age	.000	.000	.024	.253	.801

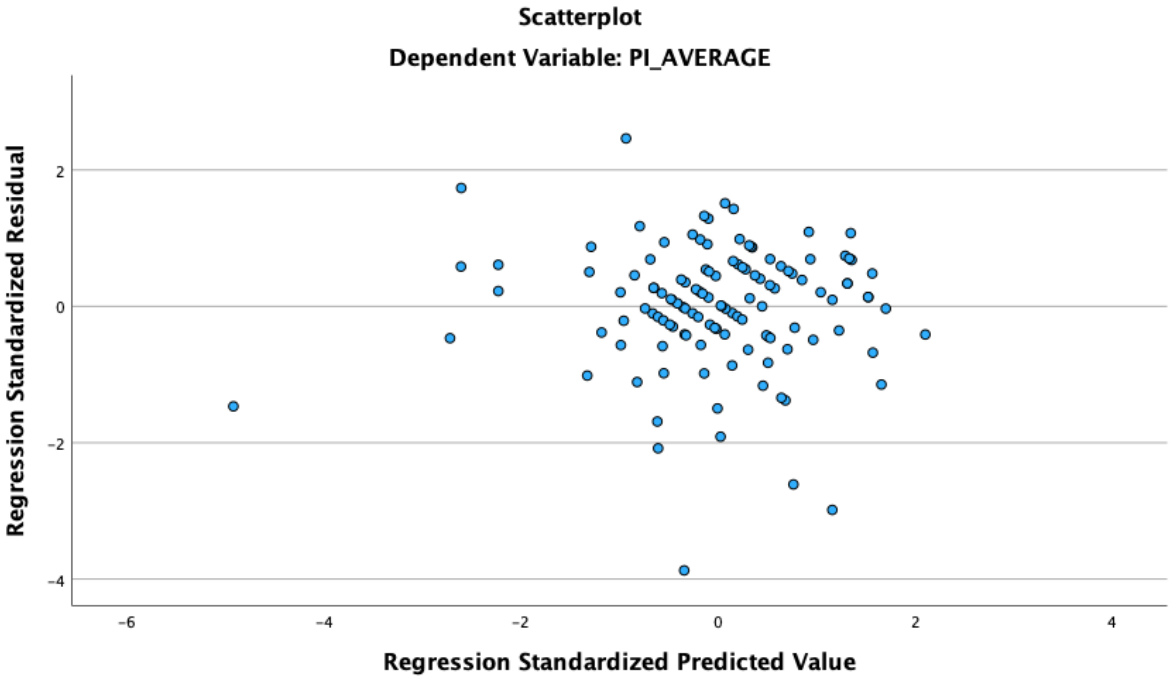

Figure F3: ZRESID-ZPRED Scatterplot (purchase intention)

Table F3: Correlation table

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1: Nutritional value	1.000	.548	.524	.524	-.033	-.193	.259	-.026
2: Community engagement	.548	1.000	.590	.590	-.129	-.172	.229	.086
3: Environmental sustainability	.524	.590	1.000	.492	.026	-.176	.047	.103
4: Trust	.524	.590	.492	1.000	.008	-.136	.138	-.007
5: Symbolic content	-.033	-.129	.026	.008	1.000	-.361	-.345	-.361
6: Functional content	-.193	-.172	-.176	-.136	-.361	1.000	-.305	-3.19
7: Sensory content	.259	.229	.047	.138	-.345	-.305	1.000	-.305
8: No content content	-.026	.086	.103	-.007	-.361	-319	-.305	1.000

Table F4: Multicollinearity statistics

	Tolerance	VIF
Independent variables		
Nutritional value	.527	1.899
Community engagement	.360	2.781
Environmental sustainability	.500	1.999
Trust	.517	1.933
Moderators		
Functional content	.607	1.648
Sensory content	.573	1.745
Symbolic content	.555	1.803
Control variables		
Category involvement	.795	1.259
Purchase pattern	.792	1.263
Experience with local food	.677	1.477
Age	.548	1.826
Gender – male	.778	1.285
Education – secondary	.727	1.376
Education – MBO	.735	1.360
Education – HBO bachelor	.665	1.503
Education – WO bachelor	.666	1.501

Education – HBO master	.710	1.409
Income – < 500 euros	.662	1.510
Income – 500 – 1000 euros	.692	1.445
Income – 1000 – 2500 euros	.746	1.341
Income – > 5000 euros	.625	1.600
Income – rather do not say	.736	1.359

Appendix G: Results multiple regression

Table G1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
1	.723	.522	.418	.522	5.017	<.001
2	.725	.526	.411	.004	.378	.686

Table G2: ANOVA

Model		df	F	Sig
1	Regression	22	5.017	<.001
	Residual	101		
	Total	123		
2	Regression	24	4.574	<.001
	Residual	99		
	Total	123		

Table G3: Results model 1-2 multiple regression analysis

	1: Main effects			2: Main and interaction effects		
	B	Std. Error	Sig	B	Std. Error	Sig
(Constant)	2.349	.619	<.001	2.295	.628	<.001
Independent variables						
Nutritional value	.284	.095	.003	.248	.117	.037
Community engagement	.184	.104	.081	.160	.112	.156
Environmental sustainability	.100	.085	.244	.062	.099	.529
Trust	-.056	.089	.528	-.046	.092	.617
Moderators						
Functional content	.104	.175	.554	.110	.179	.540
Symbolic content	.324	.172	.063	.304	.175	.086
Sensory content	.219	.184	.236	.222	.187	.236

Control variables						
Category involvement	.163	.061	.009	.171	.063	.008
Purchase pattern	-.105	.080	.192	-.097	.082	.237
Experience with local food	.186	.066	.006	.183	.068	.009
Age	.012	.005	.024	.012	.005	.023
Gender – male	.173	.137	.208	.148	.142	.299
Education – secondary	.501	.348	.153	.509	.352	.152
Education – MBO	.392	.215	.071	.396	.219	.073
Education – HBO bachelor	.228	.154	.142	.242	.158	.128
Education – WO bachelor	.491	.262	.064	.524	.267	.052
Education – HBO master	.051	.201	.800	.074	.204	.720
Income – < 500 euros	-.155	.292	.596	-.189	2.96	.524
Income – 500 – 1000 euros	.179	.237	.452	.123	.247	.619
Income – 1000 – 2500 euros	.120	.201	.551	.102	.206	.621
Income – > 5000 euros	-.201	.181	.270	-.196	.188	.300
Income – rather do not say	-.309	.215	.153	-.341	.219	.123
Interaction effects						
Nutritional value * Functional content				.122	.193	.528
Environmental sustainability * Symbolic content				.117	.153	.447

Appendix H: Robustness check

Table H1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
1	.650	.422	.312	.422	3.824	<.001
2	.661	.437	.317	.014	1.409	.249

Table H2: ANOVA

Model		df	F	Sig
1	Regression	22	3.824	<.001
	Residual	115		
	Total	137		
2	Regression	24	3.647	<.001
	Residual	113		
	Total	137		

Table H3: Results model 1-2 multiple regression analysis

	1: Main effects			2: Main and interaction effects		
	B	Std. Error	Sig	B	Std. Error	Sig
(Constant)	2.676	.611	<.001	2.628	.609	<.001
Independent variables						
Nutritional value	.298	.094	.002	.219	.112	.053
Community engagement	.172	.104	.101	.118	.111	.294
Environmental sustainability	.072	.084	.393	.013	.096	.895
Trust	-.097	.090	.287	-.068	.093	.467
Moderators						
Functional content	.057	.176	.748	.082	.179	.646
Symbolic content	.286	.172	.099	.256	.173	.141
Sensory content	.052	.175	.765	.066	.175	.705

Control variables						
Category involvement	.142	.057	.014	.149	.057	.011
Purchase pattern	-.045	.081	.576	-.033	.081	.687
Experience with local food	.162	.067	.017	.164	.067	.016
Age	.012	.005	.017	.013	.005	.011
Gender – Male	.058	.137	.671	.015	.139	.916
Education – secondary	.394	.328	.232	.400	.337	.238
Education – MBO	.273	.215	.207	.230	.216	.288
Education – WO bachelor	.229	.252	.365	.253	.252	.319
Education – HBO master	-.094	.202	.644	-.103	.202	.612
Education – WO master	-.144	.155	.354	-.190	.158	.232
Income – < 500 euros	-.077	.304	.802	-.154	.307	.617
Income – 500 – 1000 euros	.215	.244	.381	.109	.252	.666
Income – 1000 – 2500 euros	.147	.207	.477	.109	.210	.606
Income – > 5000 euros	-.059	.177	.738	-.064	.180	.722
Income – rather do not say	-.279	.216	.200	-.337	.218	.125
Interaction effects						
Nutritional value * Functional content				.260	.187	.167
Environmental sustainability * Symbolic content				.197	.154	.203

Appendix I: Extra analysis

Table I1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
1	.723	.522	.418	.522	5.017	<.001
2	.768	.589	.432	.067	1.209	.290

Table I2: ANOVA

Model		df	F	Sig
1	Regression	22	5.017	<.001
	Residual	101		
	Total	123		
2	Regression	34	3.754	<.001
	Residual	89		
	Total	123		

Table I3: Results model 1-2 multiple regression analysis

	1: Main effects			2: Main and interaction effects		
	B	Std. Error	Sig	B	Std. Error	Sig
(Constant)	2.349	.619	<.001	2.095	.660	.002
Independent variables						
Nutritional value	.284	.095	.003	.190	.207	.363
Community engagement	.184	.104	.081	.223	.208	.287
Environmental sustainability	.100	.085	.244	.141	.204	.492
Trust	-.056	.089	.528	.034	.202	.865
Moderators						
Functional content	.104	.175	.554	.116	.179	.518
Symbolic content	.324	.172	.063	.361	.178	.046
Sensory content	.219	.184	.236	.286	.218	.193

Control variables						
Category involvement	.163	.061	.009	.185	.066	.006
Purchase pattern	-.105	.080	.192	-.088	.084	.293
Experience with local food	.186	.066	.006	.191	.071	.008
Age	.012	.005	.024	.012	.006	.031
Gender – Male	.173	.137	.208	.273	.149	.069
Education – secondary	.501	.348	.153	.530	.356	.140
Education – MBO	.392	.215	.071	.428	.222	.057
Education – HBO bachelor	.228	.154	.142	.229	.165	.169
Education – WO bachelor	.491	.262	.064	.570	.277	.042
Education – HBO master	.051	.201	.800	.059	.212	.781
Income – < 500 euros	-.155	.292	.596	-.126	.305	.680
Income – 500 – 1000 euros	.179	.237	.452	.116	.252	.645
Income – 1000 – 2500 euros	.120	.201	.551	.004	.209	.983
Income – > 5000 euros	-.201	.181	.270	-.257	.194	.190
Income – rather do not say	-.309	.215	.153	-.402	.221	.072
Interaction effects						
Nutritional value * Functional content				.129	.325	.693
Nutritional value * Sensory content				.189	.323	.561
Nutritional value * Symbolic content				.030	.283	.916
Community engagement * Functional content				-.174	.330	.599
Community engagement * Sensory content				-.365	.300	.227
Community engagement * Symbolic content				.219	.290	.452
Environmental sustainability * Functional content				.186	.264	.481
Environmental sustainability * Sensory content				-.346	.283	.225
Environmental sustainability * Symbolic content				-.116	.253	.647
Trust * Functional content				-.205	.296	.491
Trust * Sensory content				.104	.298	.728

Trust * Symbolic content	.017	.282	.952