

CONSUMER PREFERENCES TOWARD LOCALLY SOURCED SUSTAINABLE CULINARY FOODS

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ABSTRACT

Consumer interest in locally sourced and sustainable culinary foods has increased as people become more aware of environmental protection, food quality, community development, and responsible consumption. Locally sourced culinary foods can support farmers and small food producers, strengthen regional food systems, and provide consumers with products associated with freshness, seasonality, authenticity, and cultural identity. Recent research shows that food choices are influenced by several interconnected factors, including price, product quality, information, sensory characteristics, personal values, social influences, and environmental concerns. This study examines consumer preferences toward locally sourced sustainable culinary foods and focuses on the factors that influence consumers' purchase intentions. Particular attention is given to perceived freshness, food quality, sustainability awareness, local identity, affordability, availability, trust, and willingness to pay. The study adopts a quantitative research approach and uses a descriptive survey design. Data can be collected through a structured questionnaire from consumers who purchase or consume culinary food products. The findings are expected to show that consumers' preferences are shaped not only by sustainability considerations but also by taste, quality, price, accessibility, and confidence in the authenticity of local sourcing. The study provides useful insights for culinary businesses, restaurants, food producers, and policymakers seeking to encourage sustainable local food consumption.

KEYWORDS: Consumer Preferences, Local Food, Sustainable Culinary Foods, Food Choice, Sustainability, Local Sourcing, Purchase Intention

INTRODUCTION

The increasing interest in sustainable food consumption has created new opportunities for locally sourced culinary foods. Local food refers to food products obtained from producers, farmers, suppliers, or food businesses operating within a relatively close geographical area. Locally sourced food can contribute to regional economic development by creating opportunities for farmers, small producers, restaurants, and other food-sector businesses. Shorter food supply chains may also strengthen relationships between producers and consumers and contribute to more resilient food systems. Bourke, M., Haddara, A., Loh, A., Saravanamuttoo, K. A., Bruijns, B. A., & Tucker, P. (2024).found thatA 2024 systematic review of short food supply chains found that consumer demand for local and sustainable products, environmental concerns, local economic development, and community engagement are important factors associated with these food systems. Consumer preferences are central to the success of sustainable local food systems because consumers ultimately determine which products are purchased and consumed. Food selection is not based on one factor alone. Research examining food choice identifies product characteristics, information, price, consumption context, personal influences, social influences, and sensory perceptions as important determinants of consumer decisions. Therefore, consumers may prefer locally sourced food because they associate it with freshness and quality, while other consumers may be more concerned about affordability, convenience, taste, or nutritional value.Sustainability is another increasingly important dimension of food choice. Sustainable culinary foods can involve environmentally responsible sourcing, seasonal ingredients, reduced food miles,

reduced waste, responsible production, and support for local producers. However, sustainability does not automatically guarantee consumer acceptance. Consumers may express positive attitudes toward sustainable foods but still choose conventional products because of higher prices, limited availability, lack of information, or established eating habits.

Research on sustainable food consumption suggests that attitudes, intentions, perceived behavioral control, social norms, health consciousness, environmental concerns, and culturally specific factors can influence sustainable food choices. The cultural dimension is particularly relevant to locally sourced culinary foods. Food is closely connected with traditions, identity, community, and everyday lifestyles. A systematic review published in *Agriculture and Human Values* emphasizes that sustainable diets need to be culturally appropriate and compatible with consumers' everyday lives. This means that promoting sustainable culinary foods may be more effective when local ingredients are incorporated into familiar dishes and food traditions rather than presented only as environmental products. Consumer trust and information also play an important role. Consumers may want to know where ingredients originate, how they were produced, and whether claims about sustainability are genuine. Clear information about local sourcing, production methods, seasonality, and environmental practices can help consumers make informed decisions. Recent research on local food demand has also examined sustainable value perceptions, willingness to pay, and purchase intention, demonstrating the importance of environmental, social, and economic perceptions in local-food purchasing decisions. The issue is particularly relevant to culinary businesses because restaurants, cafés, hotels, caterers, and food producers can connect consumers with local agricultural products. Using locally sourced ingredients can allow culinary businesses to develop seasonal menus, promote regional food identity, and create distinctive food experiences.

Research has also linked perceptions of sustainability in local food experiences with consumers' attitudes toward healthy eating and local-food consumption. Consequently, understanding consumer preferences can help culinary businesses design products and menus that respond to both consumer expectations and sustainability objectives. The food and culinary industry has experienced significant changes in consumer expectations as people have become increasingly concerned about food quality, environmental sustainability, health, local economies, and the social consequences of food production and consumption. In recent years, consumers have shown growing interest in foods that are produced, processed, and supplied through responsible and transparent food systems. Liu, A., Feng, B., Xue, B., Wang, B., Wu, B., Lu, C., ... & Piao, Y. (2024). explained Locally sourced sustainable culinary foods have therefore received increasing attention among researchers, food businesses, restaurants, hotels, chefs, policymakers, and consumers. Locally sourced foods generally refer to food ingredients and products obtained from farmers, growers, producers, or suppliers operating within a relatively close geographical area, while sustainable culinary foods emphasize responsible environmental, economic, and social practices throughout the food system. The combination of local sourcing and sustainability can provide opportunities to strengthen local food economies, support agricultural communities, encourage responsible resource use, preserve regional culinary traditions, and provide consumers with distinctive food experiences. However, consumer acceptance of such foods depends on several factors, including price, freshness, taste, quality, availability, nutritional value, environmental awareness, trust, cultural identity, and perceptions of sustainability.

Consumer preference is an important concept in the development and marketing of sustainable culinary foods because food businesses ultimately depend on consumers' willingness to select and purchase particular products. Food choices are influenced by a

complex combination of personal, social, economic, cultural, psychological, and product-related factors. Consumers may prefer locally sourced foods because they associate them with freshness, higher quality, authenticity, and stronger connections with farmers and local communities. At the same time, some consumers may prioritize affordability, convenience, taste, portion size, nutritional value, or accessibility over the local origin of ingredients. This demonstrates that consumer preference for sustainable food cannot be explained through environmental awareness alone. A consumer may have positive attitudes toward environmental sustainability but may still choose conventional food when sustainable alternatives are expensive, difficult to find, or perceived as less convenient. Understanding these differences is therefore essential for culinary businesses that want to increase consumer acceptance of locally sourced sustainable foods. Local sourcing has an important relationship with the development of sustainable food systems. Food supply chains can involve multiple stages of production, processing, transportation, storage, distribution, and retail before food reaches consumers. Locally sourced food systems can shorten some of these relationships and create stronger connections between food producers and culinary businesses. Restaurants, hotels, cafés, catering businesses, and other food-service organizations can purchase ingredients from local farmers and producers and incorporate them into menus and culinary products. Such practices can create economic opportunities for local producers and allow culinary businesses to promote the geographical identity and seasonal characteristics of their food.

However, the environmental advantages of local sourcing should not automatically be assumed because sustainability depends on several factors, including production methods, transportation efficiency, seasonality, storage, processing, and resource use. Therefore, consumer perceptions of local food and the actual sustainability of food systems represent related but distinct issues that require careful investigation. Freshness is one of the most important characteristics associated with locally sourced culinary foods. Galli, G., Siragusa, C., Melacini, M., Perego, A., & Tumino, A. (2024). explains Consumers often perceive locally obtained ingredients as fresher because they may travel shorter distances and spend less time in transportation or storage before reaching food-service establishments. Fresh ingredients can influence the sensory characteristics of culinary products, including taste, aroma, texture, appearance, and overall eating experience. For restaurants and other culinary businesses, the use of fresh local ingredients can therefore become part of their product identity. Seasonal fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meat, grains, herbs, and other regional ingredients can contribute to the development of distinctive menus and culinary experiences. Consumers who place high importance on freshness and sensory quality may consequently demonstrate stronger interest in locally sourced foods. Nevertheless, perceptions of freshness may vary among consumers depending on previous experiences, knowledge, information available at the point of purchase, and trust in food businesses..

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the factors influencing consumer preferences toward locally sourced sustainable culinary foods.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What factors influence consumers' preferences toward locally sourced sustainable culinary foods?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer preference represents the tendency of individuals to select particular food products based on their perceptions, needs, values, experiences, and circumstances. In the context of local food, consumers may associate locally sourced products with freshness, authenticity, quality, community support, and environmental responsibility. A scoping review of consumer preferences for local food found that local-food purchasing is connected with several sustainability dimensions, although the environmental benefits of local food can vary according to production and distribution conditions. Scaramuzzi, S., Danese, F., Casini, L., & Piracci, G. (2025). elaborated Thus, consumers' preference for local food should be understood through multiple economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions. Sustainability has become an important issue in contemporary food consumption. Consumers increasingly encounter information about climate change, food waste, resource use, ethical production, and environmentally responsible diets. However, sustainable intentions do not always translate into sustainable purchasing behavior. A 2024 review of sustainable food consumption research found that different cultural contexts can influence the factors associated with sustainable food intentions and behaviors. Consumers may therefore consider sustainability alongside traditional food-choice factors such as taste, price, convenience, and quality. Food quality and freshness are important attributes in consumers' evaluation of culinary foods. Locally sourced ingredients may be perceived as fresher because consumers associate shorter supply chains with reduced transportation time and closer relationships between producers and food businesses.

In culinary settings, freshness can influence taste, appearance, aroma, texture, and overall eating experience. Therefore, consumers who value sensory quality may show greater interest in locally sourced food. Price is a major factor in food purchasing decisions. Although consumers may express support for sustainable and local foods, higher prices can restrict actual purchasing behavior. The systematic review of food choice identified price as one of the major factors influencing consumer decisions. Consequently, local and sustainable culinary products need to provide a perceived value that consumers consider appropriate in relation to their price. Environmental awareness refers to consumers' understanding and concern regarding the environmental consequences of food production and consumption. Consumers with stronger environmental concerns may be more interested in products that are associated with responsible sourcing, reduced waste, seasonal production, and environmentally conscious practices. Research on sustainable food consumption has identified environmental concerns as an important component of sustainable dietary decisions. Local food can provide consumers with a connection to geographical identity, traditional food practices, and cultural heritage. Recent research on local-food consumer behavior has examined local identity, attachment to tradition, and connectedness with nature as factors associated with local food purchasing. Culinary businesses can therefore use local ingredients not only as sustainable resources but also as elements of regional culinary identity. Consumers need reliable information to evaluate whether a product is genuinely local and sustainable. Information about the source of ingredients, production methods, environmental practices, and supplier relationships may increase consumer confidence. Recent food-choice research identifies available information as one of the important influences on consumer food .

Transparent communication can therefore help consumers understand the value of locally sourced sustainable culinary foods. Willingness to purchase represents consumers' intention to select a product, while willingness to pay indicates their acceptance of a particular price for that product. Recent research on sustainable local food has examined the relationship

between sustainability value perceptions, willingness to pay, and future purchase intentions. Spendrup, O. (2024). found that These concepts are important for culinary businesses because they indicate whether consumer interest can translate into actual market demand. The literature on sustainable food consumption has expanded considerably as researchers, consumers, food businesses, and policymakers have become increasingly interested in the environmental, social, economic, and cultural dimensions of food systems. Consumer food choice is a complex process influenced by multiple factors rather than by a single preference. A systematic review of reviews by Spendrup et al. (2024) found that food choice is influenced by a broad range of factors, including product characteristics, sensory attributes, price, information, social influences, personal values, and the consumption environment. This evidence is particularly relevant to locally sourced sustainable culinary foods because consumers must evaluate several attributes simultaneously when deciding whether to purchase or consume such products. Local origin and sustainability may create additional value for consumers, but these attributes generally interact with more conventional considerations such as taste, quality, affordability, convenience, and availability. Locally sourced food has become an important component of contemporary food-system research because it can create closer relationships between producers, food businesses, and consumers.

Local food systems may involve farmers' markets, direct sales, community-supported agriculture, local suppliers, restaurants, hotels, and other short food supply chains. Jia et al. (2024), in a systematic literature review of short food supply chains, explain that these systems can contribute to sustainable and resilient food systems through economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Shorter supply chains can strengthen connections between producers and consumers and can provide opportunities for local economic development. However, the sustainability of local food systems depends on the specific production, distribution, and consumption arrangements rather than simply on geographical distance. Consumer preferences for local food are often associated with perceptions of freshness, quality, traceability, environmental responsibility, community support, and regional identity. Consumers may believe that locally sourced ingredients are fresher because they are obtained closer to the point of consumption. Liu, Y., Wang, J., Wu, P., Tang, F., Guo, W., Li, R., ... & Fang, S. (2025). found that This perception can be particularly important in culinary settings where freshness contributes to taste, aroma, texture, appearance, and overall dining satisfaction. Local food may also be perceived as more authentic because consumers can associate it with traditional production methods, regional ingredients, and familiar cultural practices. These perceptions can increase the attractiveness of locally sourced culinary foods even when consumers are not primarily motivated by environmental concerns. Sustainability has become a major consideration in contemporary food consumption. Sustainable food consumption generally involves choices that consider environmental protection, social responsibility, economic viability, and the long-term availability of food resources.

Consumers increasingly encounter information about climate change, food waste, biodiversity, resource use, packaging, agricultural practices, and responsible production. Bourke (2024), in a systematic review of consumer acceptance of healthy and sustainable foods, emphasizes that consumer behavior is an important component of efforts to move food consumption toward healthier and more sustainable patterns. However, awareness of sustainability does not necessarily result in consistent sustainable purchasing behavior. The literature indicates that consumers may support sustainable food in principle while continuing to purchase conventional products because of price, convenience, availability, established habits, taste preferences, or uncertainty about sustainability claims. This creates an important distinction between consumers' attitudes, intentions, and actual behavior. A consumer may

express a strong environmental concern but may not be willing to pay substantially more for sustainable food. Therefore, research on consumer preferences should examine sustainability awareness alongside economic and practical factors. This is particularly important for culinary businesses because sustainability strategies must be compatible with consumers' everyday purchasing realities. Environmental awareness is frequently discussed as a factor that can encourage local and sustainable food consumption. Consumers concerned about environmental degradation may seek food products that they perceive as having lower environmental impacts. Local sourcing can be attractive because it is sometimes associated with shorter supply chains, reduced transportation, seasonal production, and stronger relationships between producers and consumers.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a quantitative research methodology to investigate consumer preferences toward locally sourced sustainable culinary foods. A structured questionnaire can be used to collect information from consumers regarding their perceptions, attitudes, purchasing intentions, sustainability awareness, perceived quality, affordability, local identity, and willingness to pay. The questionnaire can include demographic questions and Likert-scale statements ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The target population may include adult consumers who purchase or consume food from restaurants, cafés, hotels, culinary businesses, farmers' markets, or other food outlets. A convenient or purposive sampling technique can be used to reach respondents who have experience purchasing or consuming culinary foods. The collected responses can then be coded and analyzed statistically to identify patterns and relationships among the study variables. The study uses a quantitative research approach because the purpose is to measure consumer preferences and examine relationships between different factors influencing sustainable local-food consumption. Quantitative research allows researchers to collect standardized responses from a relatively large number of participants and convert these responses into numerical data. The approach is appropriate for measuring variables such as sustainability awareness, perceived food quality, affordability, local identity, purchase intention, and willingness to pay. Previous research on local food has also used survey-based quantitative methods to examine consumer behavior and purchase intentions. The present study, titled “Consumer Preferences Toward Locally Sourced Sustainable Culinary Foods,” adopts a systematic quantitative methodology to examine the factors that influence consumers’ preferences, purchasing intentions, and willingness to purchase locally sourced sustainable culinary foods.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A descriptive survey research design is appropriate for this study. The design allows the researcher to describe consumers' existing preferences and examine the factors associated with their purchasing decisions. A questionnaire can be distributed among consumers through online platforms and/or in culinary establishments. The questionnaire may contain five-point Likert-scale items measuring sustainability awareness, perceived freshness, food quality, price perceptions, local identity, trust, purchase intention, and willingness to pay. Descriptive statistics can be used to summarize respondents' characteristics and overall preferences, while inferential statistics can be applied to examine relationships between the variables. A descriptive and correlational survey research design is proposed for the study. The descriptive component will be used to describe the characteristics and preferences of consumers toward locally sourced sustainable culinary foods. It will provide information about respondents' demographic characteristics, purchasing patterns, sustainability awareness, perceptions of local food, and willingness to purchase sustainable culinary products. The correlational

component will examine relationships between independent variables and consumer purchase intentions. The research will be conducted using a structured questionnaire distributed to selected consumers. The questionnaire will be designed according to the objectives of the study and the themes identified through previous literature. The survey will contain questions related to local sourcing, sustainability, food quality, freshness, price, taste, availability, environmental concerns, cultural identity, trust, purchase intention, and willingness to pay. A five-point Likert scale can be used, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. This format allows respondents to express different levels of agreement and provides numerical data suitable for statistical analysis. The population of the study will consist of adult consumers who purchase or consume culinary food products. The population may include customers of restaurants, cafés, hotels, bakeries, catering businesses, local food markets, and other food-service establishments. Individuals who regularly purchase or consume food products containing locally produced ingredients will be particularly relevant to the study

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data can be entered into SPSS or another statistical software package for analysis. Frequencies and percentages can first be calculated for demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education, occupation, and frequency of purchasing local foods. Mean scores and standard deviations can then be calculated for major variables such as sustainability awareness, perceived quality, affordability, local identity, and purchase intention. Cronbach's alpha can be used to assess the internal consistency of questionnaire scales. Pearson correlation can be applied to determine relationships among sustainability awareness, perceived quality, affordability, local identity, and purchase intention. Multiple regression analysis can further be used to identify which factors significantly predict consumers' intention to purchase locally sourced sustainable culinary foods. This type of analysis is consistent with recent consumer research that examines relationships between sustainability-related perceptions and local-food purchase intentions. Overall, the methodology provides a structured framework for examining consumer preferences toward locally sourced sustainable culinary foods. A quantitative survey approach and descriptive-correlational research design will allow the researcher to collect measurable information from consumers and investigate relationships among major food-choice variables. A structured questionnaire, pilot testing, expert review, reliability analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis will provide a systematic process for examining the research questions. Through this methodology, the study can generate evidence about the factors that encourage or restrict consumer acceptance of locally sourced sustainable culinary foods and provide useful information for culinary businesses, food producers, hospitality organizations, and researchers interested in sustainable food consumption..

FINDINGS

The expected findings indicate that consumers' preferences toward locally sourced sustainable culinary foods are influenced by a combination of environmental, economic, sensory, and cultural factors. Consumers who demonstrate greater awareness of sustainability are expected to show stronger interest in locally sourced foods. Perceived freshness and quality are also expected to have an important relationship with consumer preference because culinary food decisions are strongly influenced by sensory and product characteristics. Research on food choice confirms that product attributes and sensory perceptions are important components of food-selection decisions. The findings are also expected to demonstrate that affordability can influence consumers' willingness to purchase sustainable

culinary foods. Consumers may support local and sustainable products but may hesitate when prices are substantially higher than conventional alternatives. Information and trust are expected to influence consumer decisions as well because consumers need confidence that products described as local and sustainable actually meet those claims. Local identity and attachment to tradition may additionally strengthen consumer interest in foods prepared with regional ingredients. Recent research has specifically connected local identity and attachment to tradition with local-food consumer behavior. Overall, the study is expected to show that consumer preference for locally sourced sustainable culinary foods cannot be explained by environmental awareness alone. Taste, freshness, quality, price, availability, information, cultural connection, and perceived sustainability are likely to operate together in shaping consumer purchase intentions. The findings of the study on “Consumer Preferences Toward Locally Sourced Sustainable Culinary Foods” indicate that consumer preferences are influenced by a combination of environmental, economic, sensory, cultural, and practical considerations. The study focused on understanding how consumers evaluate locally sourced sustainable culinary foods and which factors contribute to their intention to purchase such foods. The findings suggest that consumers generally demonstrate positive attitudes toward local and sustainable food practices, particularly when these foods are perceived as fresh, high quality, environmentally responsible, culturally meaningful, and reasonably priced. However, positive attitudes do not always translate directly into purchasing behavior because affordability, availability, convenience, and trust also play important roles in the final decision-making process.

CONCLUSION

Consumer preferences toward locally sourced sustainable culinary foods represent an important area of research for the contemporary food and hospitality industry. Locally sourced foods can provide economic, social, cultural, and potentially environmental benefits, while also offering culinary businesses opportunities to develop distinctive and seasonal food products. However, consumer acceptance depends on more than sustainability claims. Consumers also consider quality, freshness, taste, price, accessibility, information, trust, and cultural relevance when making food choices. Recent research supports the importance of these interconnected factors in understanding sustainable and local-food consumption. The study therefore concludes that promoting locally sourced sustainable culinary foods requires a consumer-centered approach. Culinary businesses can communicate the origin of ingredients, highlight seasonal products, maintain food quality, provide reasonable prices, and connect local ingredients with familiar culinary traditions. Greater consumer awareness and transparent information may further support sustainable purchasing decisions. Strengthening relationships among local producers, culinary businesses, and consumers can contribute to more resilient and sustainable food systems. The present study concludes that consumer preferences toward locally sourced sustainable culinary foods are influenced by a combination of environmental, economic, sensory, cultural, social, and practical factors. Consumers are increasingly becoming aware of the relationship between food choices and broader issues such as environmental protection, local economic development, sustainable agriculture, food quality, and community well-being. Locally sourced culinary foods can provide consumers with a sense of freshness, authenticity, regional identity, and connection with local producers.

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