

The Enchained Potential of the Local Food Market

Discovering Reasons of the Consumers Intention-Behavior Gap for Local Food

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Submission: 4th of January, 2016

Abstract

There is a rising demand for local food which traveled only short distances and is marketed directly by the producer. With growing importance of local food also the amount of literature in this field increased. Yet, literature is lacking to examine the challenges and burdens consumers face while trying to purchase local food. Evidence is shown that a gap exists between the intention of consumers who would like to purchase local food and their actual behavior. However, reasons for this gap are only discovered as byproducts of other research objectives. Consequently, this study investigates the specific reasons for the intention-behavior gap of consumers in the local food market. The study makes use of semi-structured face-to-face interviews with rural and urban respondents. The interviews are analyzed by qualitative content analysis based on Elo and Kyngäs (2008). Revealed key drivers for the intention-behavior gap are (1) the lack of awareness where to purchase local food products, (2) the limited reachability of local food producers, (3) the assortment of the local producer in regard to size and composition and (4) the lack in transparency of the prices of local food. Consequently, it is the producers turn to eliminate the revealed barriers by proactively bringing their products closer to the consumer.

Keywords: Local Food, Intention-Behavior Gap, Barriers, Consumer Behavior, Producer

Acknowledgments

*The heart must be, at each new call for leaving,
Prepared to part and start without the tragic,
Without the grief - with courage to endeavour
A novel bond, a disparate connection:
And each beginning bears a special magic
That nurtures living and bestows protection.*

Hermann Hesse - Steps

By handing in this master thesis the biggest and most challenging chapter of my life so far comes to an end – the chapter of being a student. Not only a student of business but also a student of the bitter sweetness of life.

I made friends for life, I made experiences for life – I had the time of my life.

But I was also stumbling, failing, falling, doubting, crying, hating.

With this section I want to offer a big gratitude towards the people in my life, who have supported me throughout this journey and always remembered me to get back up whenever I fell. Without them, I would not have gained the stamina and the necessary strength to complete this chapter. First, I would like to show my deepest gratitude to my family and this one person who became family. I am grateful to have you by my side. A great thanks goes to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Gerard Pfann for supporting me throughout the process of writing this thesis. I am thankful that I had the chance and freedom to conduct a research in the field of my interest. Your thoughts and feedback broadened my horizon, even beyond the thesis. Furthermore I want to thank my second supervisor Dr. Luis Martinez for his valuable, honest feedback and support.

Once more, I want to sincerely express my gratitude to the mentioned ones for encouraging me to fulfil this chapter of my life.

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1. Introduction

In 2015 the global fast food chain McDonalds introduced for the first time a hamburger marketed with local beef called *Simmentaler* in Germany (McDonalds, 2015). The burger was tagged with a label guaranteeing that it contains 100% beef from a specific local region in Germany. The campaign was a reaction of declining sales among others because of a lacking image and higher requirements of the consumers regarding quality and transparency of food products (Zdrzalek, 2015). This real-life example shows the paradoxically situation in the current food market. On the one hand side the consumers demand food products from all over the world to be available at any time (Miroso & Lawson, 2010). On the other hand side society develops a different understanding for food and becomes more concerned about the food safety, food quality and healthiness of what they eat (Adams & Saloi, 2008, Memery, Angell, Megicks, & Lindgreen, 2015). Consequently, the demand for local food which traveled only short distances and is marketed directly by the producer has risen in the last decades. Reasons for the rising demand are manifold and often researched by literature. The major intrinsic benefit and key driver of purchasing local food is the higher quality perceived by consumers (Feldmann, & Hamm, 2014). Local food therefore seems to satisfy the claims and expectations of the so called new “concerned consumer” (Weatherell, Tregear, & Allinson, 2003). Yet, even there is a rising demand for local food the market has not fully unleashed its potential (Darby, Batte, Ernst, & Roe, 2008). There seem to be several burdens and challenges which consumers have to overcome when they want to follow their intention to purchase local food (Bingen, Sage, & Sireix, 2009, Feldmann & Hamm, 2014, Klein et al., 2006). Consumers who decide to purchase local food more frequently are afraid to accept trade-offs as well as conflicting values and attributes. They think it is difficult to implement local food in their daily routine (Bingen et al., 2009).

Yet, there is a lack in research about the reasons for the above described intention-behavior gap, the gap between the desire to purchase local food and the unimplemented behavior. The reasons why people do not purchase local food are not yet investigated in depth especially for specific

product groups (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015). This topic was always a by-product of initial research about benefits and motivations to purchase local food (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Chambers et al., 2007, Penney & Prior, 2014, Weatherell et al., 2003).

Consequently, this explanatory research investigates the reasons for the intention-behavior gap in detail to understand why consumers do not translate their intentions to purchase local food into actual behavior. Hence, this research does not only extend the current literature as this topic was not investigated isolated from other research objectives so far, but also provides practical implications for food producers to unleash the full market potential of local food. The gained results can increase the effectiveness of local food producers as they will be more knowledgeable about choosing the most appropriate methods and strategies to close the investigated intention-behavior gap.

This research is designed as a qualitative, explorative study using face-to-face interviews with consumers which are directly engaged in the purchasing process of food products for the private consumption. The interviews were held in a rural and an urban area to avoid any bias of contextual factors.

The remainder of this study is structured as follows. Chapter two provides a comprehensive overview about local food and its existing research. The term local food is defined and delaminated from organic food and biological food. Further, the purchasing process of local food and the involved consumer are presented. Chapter three introduces the research questions and synthesis of the study. Subsequently, chapter four presents the applied methodology semi-structured interviews by elaborating on the context, the research method and its process, sample and design. Furthermore the analyzing tool qualitative content analysis by Elo and Kyngäs (2008) is introduced. Thereafter chapter five presents the results of the analyzed interviews. Chapter six discusses the results and summarizes main theoretical and practical implications. Furthermore, it mentions limitations and gives directions for future research. Chapter seven finishes with a conclusion.

2. Literature Review

In 1986, the Italian gourmand Carlo Petrini set off the so called Slow Food movement with the aim to rethink current food consumption habits of our society (Jones et al., 2003). “According to the Slow Food principles, the production and consumption of food involves choices that have significant consequences for individuals, communities, and the environment.” (Pietrykowski, 2004, p. 311). Hence, Petrini pleads for a countermovement against the fast moving modern world in regard to food consumption towards a society that preserves the traditional and regional cuisine. The meaning of cooking and eating food as well as food itself is changing in today’s society, especially in more economically developed countries (Pietrykowski, 2004, Shears et al., 2003). Irrespective of this movement in the past decade consumers developed a different understanding for food and became more concerned about the food safety, food quality and healthiness of what they eat (Arsil et al., 2014). That is one reason fast food restaurant chains are facing hard times and losing sales which results in turnarounds of their business models (Wong, 2014). McDonalds for example is introducing bio burgers and changing their corporate colors from red to green to get a healthier image (Der Spiegel, 2015). As a response to this new *concerned consumer*, also supermarkets change their strategies and offer more and more products with bio seals as well as organic food (Weatherell et al., 2003). Yet, a new trend which is evolving is the demand for local food, food that has traveled only short distances or which is directly obtained from the producer (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Chambers et al., 2007, Feldmann & Hamm, 2014, Lang, Stanton & Qu, 2014). Consumers interest in where their food comes from and in the transparency of the food chain has increased as well as their desire to have a personal connection with the purchased food (Blake, Mellor, & Crane, 2010, Feldmann & Hamm, 2014, Lang et al., 2014). Thus it can be said that demand for locally produced food has risen; research even predicts a higher demand for local food than for its organic equivalent (Adams & Saloi, 2008, Chambers et al., 2007, Memery, Angell, Megicks, & Lindgreen, 2015).

The following chapter reviews and summarizes the theoretical groundwork done by scholars in the field of local food. The chapter starts by defining local food and delimiting it from similar concepts. Afterwards the consumer profile of local food is introduced and explained how and why local food is chosen. Thereby principles of consumer behavior theory will be applied to further explain the decision making process for local food. At the end of this review, challenges, barriers and perceived disadvantages for the consumer are discussed and a gap in literature is deduced.

2.1 Definition of Local Food

The term local food is not defined coherently by the existing literature to date (Adams & Saloi, 2008, Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Khan & Prior, 2010, Martinez et al., 2010, Memery et al., 2015, Roininen, Arvola, Lähteenmäki, 2005). Yet, not only literature has no consistent definition for local food, also consumers are generally confused about what local means to them (Khan & Prior, 2010). The prevailing determinant of local food is often the geographical distance, thus from where the food is produced to where it is sold. The distance often varies between 10 and 170 kilometer (Adams & Adams, 2011, Chambers et al., 2007, Memery et al. 2015, Roininien et al., 2005, Selfa & Qazi, 2005). Also political boundaries such as state or country boundaries are used to define the term local (Wilkins, 2002). Besides this geographical distance the number of different parties involved along the supply chain are also seen as a crucial characteristic for defining local food (Feldman & Hamm, 2014, Martinez et al., 2010, Pinchot, 2014). Pinchot (2014) defines local food as food which is directly distributed from the producer to the final consumer or through short supply chains which include few if any intermediary actors such as distributors or wholesaler.

The consumer often defines local food in terms of the size of the producers business as they prioritize smaller, family owned businesses and products unique to their region (Lang, Stanton, & Yingdao, 2014). However, both characteristics, distance and size of the producer, are often difficult to evaluate by the consumer as so far governments have not yet implemented regulations or a seal for local food as it is done for the term Bio in Germany for example (Feldmann & Hamm, 2014). Yet, the German government is planning to introduce a seal for local food based on a

nationally agreed definition (Roosen, Köttl, Hasselbach, 2012). Drawn from literature it seems that the social dimension, e.g. the relationship of buying local food is equally important as the characteristic of distance.

In the following local food is understood as food which is sold within a radius of 50 km from where it is grown or produced and delivered from small sized producers through short supply chains directly to the final consumer.

2.2 Conceptual Delimitation of Organic, Regional & Local Food

The terminology of local food is often mixed with regional and organic food (Khan & Prior, 2010, Roinen et al., 2005). Although it may be possible that food is classified as local, regional and organic at the same time, those terms need to be delimited from each other. Organic food usually contains merely organic ingredients, thus without any synthetic pesticides or chemical fertilizers for example. In the European Union and a lot of other countries the definition of organic food is legally saved and to use the certification of organic food the products have to be grown and manufactured by the standards of the countries where they are sold in (Harper & Makatouni, 2002). Regional food is food which comes from a specific region but can be sold all over the world such as Parma ham or Champagne. However, those products are often also covered by European law and other producers not from this region cannot misuse the name (Parrot, Wilson & Murdoch, 2002). Consequently local food does not have to consist of organic ingredients neither it has to have any protection rights on its name.

2.3 Who buys local food - a profile of the concerned consumer

Weatherell et al. (2003) call him the concerned consumer; the customer who fits into the target group of local food. Although there is no coherence in literature in defining the profile of the consumer of local food so far, similar to the definition of local food. Often in literature the profile of a consumer is sketched as older, female, married, with a higher level of income and education (Carpio & Isengildina-Massa, 2009, Conner, Colasanti, Brent Ross, Smalley, 2010, Memery et al.,

2015, Torjusen, 2011, Wetherell et al., 2003). Yet there are divergences about the profile of the concerned consumer. There is no agreement about consumers coming from rural and urban areas for example. Evidence is shown that rural consumers are willing to purchase rather local food than consumers from urban areas (Roininien et al., 2005, Wetherell et al., 2003). Nonetheless there is also evidence from research that no clear difference exists between rural or urban consumers to purchase local food (Chambers et al., 2007, Memery et al., 2015). Zepeda and Li (2006) found, no clear relation between demographics of consumers and their purchasing behavior for local food. This is supported by the fact that literature does not have a coherent picture of the consumer of local food yet.

2.4 Consumer behavior theory & the decision-making process

The field of consumer behavior is investigated from different disciplines: psychology, economics, politics and philosophy. Consumer behavior theory describes the process on how consumers search for, purchase, use, evaluate and dispose products and services that they expect to satisfy their personal needs (Schiffman, Kanuk & Wisenblit, 2010, Solomon, 2011). It has to be differentiated between personal consumers who purchases goods for the private use and organizational consumers such as corporations and educational institutions that mainly do purchasing to run their organization. This study will only concentrate on personal consumers. In the first place, it is the aim of every consumer to make decisions that maximize his value by finding a ratio between his perceived benefits (e.g. quality) and his resources he possesses (e.g. money) (Schiffman et al., 2010, Wilkinson & Klaes, 2010). Due to the globalization and digitalization of information consumers have much more access to information and products than in the past which consequently increases their power to a degree they had never before to achieve the aim of

maximization (Schiffman et al., 2010). The decision-making process (see Figure 2.1) involves three interconnected stages: the input stage, the process stage and the output stage.

The first stage most often influences the consumer's recognition of a need by a company's marketing effort or by the consumer's sociocultural environment. The process stage focuses then on the actual purchasing process and how they decide what to buy. The output stage is the ended process with a final post purchase evaluation. Throughout the whole process the consumer is

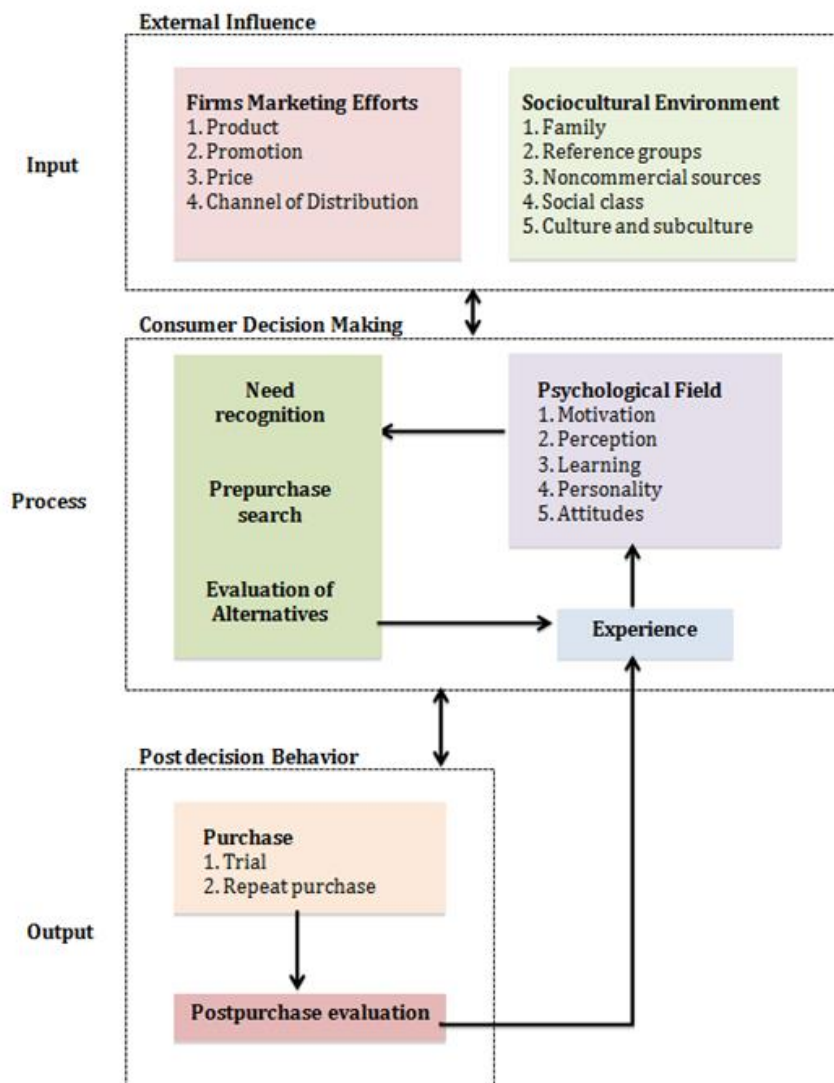


Figure 2.1: "A Simple Model of Consumer Decision Making" (Schiffman et al., 2010, p. 237)

influenced by his needs and underlying values of those needs. The three most prevailing needs referred to in literature are the need for power, the need for affiliation and the need for achievement (Schiffman et al., 2010).

Hence, the decision making of consumers is in rare cases a rational process (Hastie & Dawnes, 2001). Decision-making processes on where and especially what to buy is a complex process depending on extrinsic and intrinsic factors which are moderated by demographic and sociographic characteristics of the consumer as well as his cultural background (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Solomon, 2011, Weatherell et al., 2003). This often does not lead to a rational but rather to an emotional buying behavior. A frequent example which leads to emotional buying is the influence by social factors (Solomon, 2011). Consumers purchase intention then focuses not in the first place on fulfilling a basic need of the Maslow hierarchy which is necessary to survive (see Figure 2.2), but on the need for affiliation and achievement (Solomon, 2011).

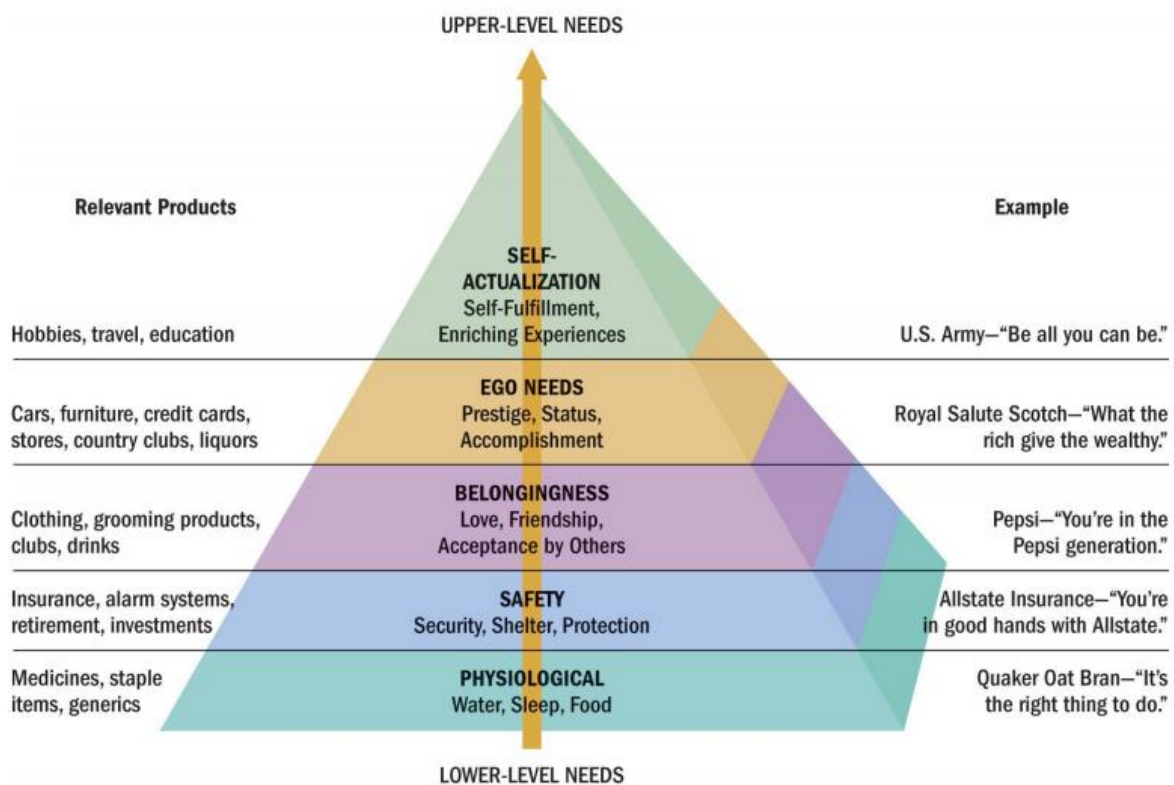


Figure 2.2: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Solomon 2011, p. 135)

2.4.1 Decision-making process of buying local food

Even if the purchasing process of food can be seen according to the hierarchy of needs by Maslow as a basic need in order to survive the process gets more and more influenced by the demographic and sociographic characteristics of the consumer as well as his cultural background

(Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Padel & Foster, 2005, Solomon, 2011, Weatherell et al., 2003). Consumers base their decisions for buying local food mostly on the factors convenience, health, costs and taste (Kemp, Inch, Holdworth & Knight, 2010, Wilkins, 2002). Yet, Wawrzyniak, Jader, Schade and Leitow (2005) separate the reasons for consumers' behavior to buy local food into two groups: active and cognitive. The active components which lead consumers to make a choice on where and what to buy include emotions, motivations and attitudes. The cognitive components include perception, thinking and learning. Both reasons, cognitive and active, will often lead to purchasing decisions which are not rationally driven (Wawrzyniak et al., 2005). Often consumers make their decisions according to norms and values of specific social groups in order to be aligned with them. (Solomon, 2010). Consequently their intention to buy a product which meets ethical or pro-environmental standards does not necessarily originate from their intrinsic desire to act ethically but because it is a norm or value of the social group they want to be part of (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001, Langen, 2012).

This complicated decision-making process became even more complex in the last decades. On the one hand side consumers can choose from a wide range of products which they often have never seen before and are overwhelmed by different labels and trends (e.g. Bio, Organic, Slow Food, Low Carb etc.) and on the other hand side consumers have new opportunities of how and where to purchase their food such as online shops of supermarkets or start-ups which deliver exclusively local food (e.g. frischepost.de). Hence, also the decision on where to buy local is difficult to answer. Literature shows different results for consumers shopping habits of local food. Weatherell et al. (2003) found that consumers preferred to buy local food at supermarkets and that the least preferred option was to obtain local food directly from the producers. In contrast other research showed that (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Lang et al., 2014, Penney & Prior 2014) consumers try to avoid buying local food from supermarkets as they are not consistent with the image of local food. Thus it can be said that there is a trend towards models of shorter supply chains like farmer markets not at least because of their authenticity. Additionally often consumers do

not expect supermarkets to sell local food as it does not necessarily fit into their product line (Lang et al., 2014). However, the characteristics on which consumers base their decision-making process seem to be immensely challenged if they want to buy local food as it is often not easy to access due to seasonality or other reasons (Feldmann & Hamm, 2014). Consequently, the question comes up, why people buy local food and what are their perceived benefits?

2.5 Perceived benefits of buying local food

The motivations of consumers to purchase local food and their perceived benefits are researched by a lot of literature. The results can be subdivided into intrinsic or personal benefits and extrinsic or social benefits. The major intrinsic benefit and key driver of purchasing local food is the higher quality which consumers perceive (Chambers et al., 2007, Feldmann, & Hamm, 2014, Wilkins, 2002, Zepeda & Deal, 2009). This is related to the fact that consumers connect fresher, healthier (more nutritious and higher vitamin content) as well as tastier products to local food (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Feldmann & Hamm, 2014, Furnols et al., 2011 Roininen et al., 2005, Wilkins, 2002). Additionally consumer's perception of local food is of a higher transparency and traceability as they assume to know where the food comes from, which also mediates a feeling of safety and authenticity (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Feldmann & Hamm, 2014, Roininen et al, 2011). In contrast extrinsic motivations and benefits are more driven by social values. Predominant drivers to purchase local food for consumers are the support of local business as well as agriculture (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Chambers et al., 2007, Feldmann & Hamm, 2014, Roininen et al, 2005, Wilkins, 2002). Consumers of local food are also extrinsically motivated by the fact that they perceive the products and producers as more environmental as well as social sustainable and that they are protecting local heritage as well as traditions (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Bingen et al., 2009, Feldmann & Hammn, 2014, Seyfand, 2006). Apart from the extrinsic and intrinsic benefits, consumers are also motivated to purchase local food by psychological values. Often consumers engage in a relationship with the producer e.g. the farmer which is "based on reciprocity, trust and shared values" (Weatherell et al. 2003, p. 234). Although consumers express more perceived

advantages for local food there are also disadvantages or barriers for consumers to purchase locally (Wilkins, 2002).

2.6 Challenges, barriers & perceived disadvantages of buying local food

Consumers would like to purchase local food more often, yet they are facing obstacles and disadvantages connected to the purchasing process (Bingen et al., 2009, Feldmann & Hamm, 2014, Klein et al., 2006). Although there is a demand for local food, the potential is not yet fully unleashed due to those barriers (Darby et al., 2008). However, the barriers and challenges that will be mentioned in the following are superficial results found in previous studies as byproducts of initial research about reasons for purchasing local food, its target group and by what they are driven to purchase local food. None of these studies has investigated the topic exclusively and insulated from other research objectives.

The major barrier consumer's face when trying to purchase local food is connected to the contextual factor of convenience (Feldmann & Hamm, 2014). Convenience is related to the extra effort of time consumers have to invest into the purchasing process of local food as it is often not available in supermarkets (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Chambers, et al., 2007, Megicks, Memery, & Angell, 2012, Khan & Prior, 2010, Penney & Prior, 2014). This goes hand in hand with accessibility and availability of the products as they are frequently dependent on seasonality (e.g. apples and pears are not available in all months during the year in Germany) and that the product range is therefore limited (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Chambers et al., 2007, Megicks et al., 2012, Khan & Prior, 2010, & Prior, 2014). As a result the effort of the purchasing process for local foods seems to be inconvenient for a lot of potential customers.

The second main barrier for consumers is the factor of price since a lot of consumers perceive local food as more expensive and even as overpriced (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Chambers et al., 2007, Megicks et al., 2012, Penney & Prior, 2014, Khan & Prior, 2010). Although the topic of price and willingness to pay is discussed and investigated in a lot of research, there is no coherence between their outcomes. Especially for different products (e.g. meat, vegetables, milk)

and demographic characteristics (e.g. urban or rural, income level) of the consumers, the research showed different results for the willingness to pay for local food (Chambers et al., 2007, Feldmann & Hamm, 2014, Henseleit, Kubitzki, and Teuber 2007). The study of Carpio and Isengildina-Massa (2009) showed a higher willingness to pay of consumers for local plant products than for local animal products. In contrast research about local meat in specific, showed a high willingness to pay for meat products of local farmers (Furnols et al., 2011, Xue, Mainville, You, Nayga Jr., 2010). Similar contradicting are the outcomes about demographics connected to willingness to pay (Feldmann & Hamm, 2014, Memery et al., 2015). There is evidence shown for elderly consumers to be willing to pay more for local food than younger people as well as for people with higher income (Henseleit et al., 2007, Torjusen, 2011, Weatherell et al., 2003). However, there seems to be no conformity in research if rural or urban consumers differentiate in their willingness to pay for local food products (Chambers et al., 2007, Memery et al., 2015, Weatherell et al., 2003). On top, research has shown that there is no evidence that local products are more expensive than products from the supermarket, quite the contrary local food can also be cheaper (Khan & Prior, 2010). Consequently consumers paradoxically are often willing to pay a premium for local food but see the price as a main barrier for purchasing it.

Summed up, consumers on the one hand side have the right attitudes to purchase local food and it is their intention to behave accordingly, but on the other hand side they often do not seem not be willing or capable of translating those attitudes and intentions into actual behaviors.

The paradox occurs frequently in research when the attitudes of consumers do not translate into behavior during a decision making process (Feldmann & Hamm, 2014). From a psychological perspective this phenomena is named social desirability responding in literature and is according to Rynes, Gerhart & Minette (2004, p. 382) "the tendency to choose items that reflect societally approved behaviors". Hence, it is the basic human tendency to display oneself in the best possible way according to society's values regarding its intentions and attitudes. However, those intentions do not necessarily translate into behaviors. (Kemp et al., 2010). In economics this

phenomena is referred to the intention-behavior gap (Gupta & Ogden, 2006, Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002, Schenkel-Nofz & Walther, 2013, Sheeran, 2002, Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Even though intentions are the most powerful predictors of consumer behavior; consumers sometimes do not act as they intended to do (Sheeran, 2002). Research tried to investigate the reasons for this gap between the intention and behavior for years. The analysis is bilateral and the consumer perspective as well as the producer perspective has to be taken into consideration. From the consumer perspective often behaviors are controlled by habits than by intentions (Sheeran, 2002, Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Further, it seems that consumers are sometimes confused on how to put their intentions into practice as they do not have sufficient control over performing the behavior (Gupta & Ogden, 2006, Sheeran, 2002). The possible dearth of control could be a result of different factors such as limited knowledge or a restriction in the ability to realize the intention due to limited resources, opportunities, or availability (Sheeran, 2002). Hence, a possibility for the intention-behavior gap in the local food market could be that producers maybe miss to educate the consumer about the availability, prices and benefits of purchasing their local food. This would give the consumers a higher level of control to realize their intentions.

Consequently, purchasing local food is connected to a lot of perceived benefits for consumers, however there seem to be burdens and challenges which influence the decision making process and create a gap between their intention or attitude and actual behavior (in the following intention-behavior gap or IBG).

3. Synthesis & Hypothesis Development

By reviewing the literature there is evidence shown for the high potential of local food and a rising demand in the future is predicted. Consumers got a new perception of what food means to them and there is a clear trend towards healthier, sustainable and ethic food as well as transparent, short supply chains. Local food therefore seems to satisfy the claims and expectations of this new concerned consumer (Weatherell et al., 2003). However, consumers who decide to purchase local

food more frequently are afraid to accept trade-offs as well as conflicting values and attributes. They think it is difficult to implement local food in their daily routine (Bingen et al., 2009). Yet, there is a lack in research about the reasons for the above described intention-behavior gap, the gap between the desire to purchase local food and the unimplemented behavior. The reasons why people do not purchase local food are not yet investigated in depth especially for specific product groups (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015). However, this topic was always a by-product of initial research about benefits and motivations to purchase local food (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Chambers et al., 2007, Penney & Prior, 2014, Weatherell et al., 2003). Consequently the first objective of this explanatory research aims to investigate the reason for the intention-behavior gap in detail and to understand why consumers do not translate their intention to purchase local food into actual behavior even if they would like to. Hence, the primary research question is:

*"What are the specific reasons for the intention-behavior gap of consumers
in the local food market?"*

As above described many consumers are concerned about high prices, availability and accessibility of local food. However, literature gives evidence that this does not always corresponds to the truth (Khan & Prior, 2010, Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015). Hence, there seem to be first indicators what the reasons are for the intention-behavior gap for example, a lack of information provided to the consumers about the purchasing process of local food. The different outcomes of the first research question will be critically discussed and first approaches suggested for closing the existing gap.

The findings of the research can contribute to the existing literature about the purchasing process of consumers for local food in two ways: First this research addresses the investigation of reasons why consumers do not purchase local food even though they are positively minded towards it, which is touched upon in many researches (Bianchie & Mortimer, 2015, Chambers et al., 2007, Penney & Prior, 2014, Khan & Prior, 2010) but never investigated in detail. Second, the results of

such a research would be highly valuable for producers of local food as they will be more knowledgeable about choosing the most appropriate methods and strategies to close the intention-behavior gap.

4. Methodology

The aim of this research is to investigate the reasons for the intention-behavior gap of consumers in the local food market. This methodology part describes the systematic and theoretical description of the methods applied in this research. The chapter starts with the context analysis. Further, the preferred research method semi-structured interviews and the research design will be explained in detail. Lastly the approach to analyze the qualitative data of the semi-structured interviews will be presented.

4.1 Context Analyses

Local food covers a wide area of different products such as vegetables, fruits, dairy products and meat. However, local meat has found sparse coverage in existing literature as most research about local food focuses on vegetables (Lim & Hu, 2012). Yet, consumers seem to have high expectations on the meat they purchase and consume. Especially consumers of beef want to know where it comes from and how it was produced (Weatherell et al., 2003). Reasons could be that consumers prefer beef which is locally produced or at least comes from their own country as they perceive it as fresher, tastier and of a higher quality (Furnols et al., 2011). Hence, this research will focus on local beef products as a representative of local food for different reasons. First; existing research for local beef show the same inconsistencies as literature about local food in general towards the intentions and behaviors of consumers (Furnols et al., 2011, Schnettler, Ruiz, Sepúlveda, Sepúlveda, 2008, Lim & Hu. 2012). Second; meat and especially beef is not considered as a seasonal product and therefore makes research nearly independent of time factors (Wilkins, 2002). Third; beef is also not limited to a specific region as it is mostly in every country consumed and produced

which makes a generalization of the findings easier (USDA, 2015). In the following locally produced beef is defined as beef which is sold within a radius of 50 kilometer from where it is produced. Further the beef is delivered through short supply chains directly to the final consumer by small sized producers. Small and medium sized producers are characterized as family owned or owner-managed businesses with less than 20 employees.

4.2 Research Method

This research is designed as a qualitative, explorative study using face-to-face interviews with consumers. Explorative research is done when there is not much known about the research problem and to better comprehend the nature of the problem (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2014). The aim is to create a basis subsequent theory as well as the possibility of hypothesis development and testing (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). Explorative research tries to “provide illumination and understanding of complex psychological issues and are most useful for answering humanistic ‘why?’ and ‘how?’ questions” (Marshall, 1996, p.522). Consequently the aim is to answer ‘why?’ consumers have the intention to buy local beef but do not show this in their actual behaviors. Explorative studies most often use qualitative research methods which offer flexibility in the process and are orientated towards the process rather than outcome (Cassell & Symon, 2004). For explorative studies interviewing individuals is one of the most suitable methods to generate new and meaningful insights (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009).

Interviews are useful when the research objectives center on understanding personal experiences, opinions, attitudes, values and processes. Further interviews are a preferred method if there is insufficient research about the subject to develop a questionnaire (Rowley, 2012). Additionally interviews allow the interviewer to delve deeply into social as well as personal matters and to find out what is on the consumers’ mind (Malhotra, 2010). By interviewing consumers researchers can find out about behaviors which cannot be directly observed (Hannabuss, 1996). The current research uses the technique of semi-structured interviews for interviewing consumers. This approach starts with rather specific open ended questions but allows the interviewee to follow his

or her own thoughts later on (Blumberg et al., 2014). Often other questions emerge from the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee. This fosters an open and conversational two-way communication which allows the interviewer to clarify possible misunderstandings and to generate direct feedback which enables him to dig deeper into specific topics (Bhattacharyya, 2006). Such semi-structured interviews stimulate phases of discovering as well as exploring and bring often some preliminary issues to the surface that enable further in depth investigation (Blumberg et al., 2014, Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). Thus the central idea of semi-structured interviews is to gain insights into consumer's thinking's and feelings as well as what drives their behaviors. Consequently, this method seems to be most appropriate for investigating the objective of identifying why consumers do not translate their intentions about buying local food into behaviors.

4.3 Research Process, Sample and Design

Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews are conducted with consumers. The population of this research are all consumers that are involved in the purchasing decision of beef. Interviewees from the consumer population were selected upon their availability and willingness to participate in this research by addressing them randomly in highly frequented areas such as shopping streets. Due to the fact that literature indicated differences in the purchasing behaviors of rural and urban consumers for local food (Chambers et al., 2007, Memery et al., 2015, Roininien et al., 2005, Wetherell et al, 2003), interviews are held in a large city, respectively Cologne (> 1 Million citizens) as well as in a small village, Dabringhausen (< 9000 citizens) to avoid any possible bias. Yet, the research makes use of a non-probability sampling as not all individuals in the population have a chance to be selected and therefore the generalizability is limited (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). For reasons of convenience and in order to assure reliability, accuracy and validity of the discourse, every interview was recorded with a preceded permission of the interviewee.

Due to the fact that the method of semi-structured interviews is used there is no need for a strict adherence to the formulated questions. Yet, to guarantee consistency as well as generalizability it was made sure that the sequence of questions and follow up questions do not vary too much from

interview to interview. The interview guide (see Appendix A) is designed according to the funnel approach starting with general questions that are followed by progressively specific questions in order to prevent specific questions from biasing general questions (Malhotra, 2010). The purpose is to create a communicative, trustful atmosphere to generate a positive relationship between the interviewer and interviewee – also called developing rapport (Di Cicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). “The relationship with the respondents is crucial to the success of the interview” (Hannabuss, 1996, p. 25). Hence, in the beginning of the interview it will be agreed on disclosing all results anonymously.

For the consumer interviews four stages of rapport introduced by Di Ciccio-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) are applied in order to get the most out of every interview. Those stages include apprehension, exploration, co-operation and participation. In the initial apprehension stage it is the main goal to get the interviewee into talking. Thus the first questions should be easy to answer, interesting and non-threatening. In the exploration phase the interviewee should get more and more engaged in the interview process by also fostering sharing and bonding. The co-operative phase creates a comfort level where the interviewee discusses together with the interviewer certain points and where no one is afraid in offending one another. In this stage also more provoking questions could be asked. The final participation stage would reflect the greatest degree of rapport where the interviewee takes over the role of guiding and teaching the interviewer.

The following section describes the flow chart of the interview guide for consumers and how it contributes to the literature review. To test the feasibility of the interview guide producers of local beef from the Cologne region as well as from Dabringhausen were asked to validate it and its format was adjusted according to the feedback. It has to be mentioned in advance that local food won't be judged by the interviewer as positive or negative at any time during the interview to avoid a social desirability responding of the consumer. The consumer will exclusively be asked about reasons not to purchase locally produced products and not about any other topics connected to local food.

The starting point of the flow chart for the consumer interview is a filter question to clarify if the consumer is involved in the purchasing process for meat in general and beef in specific for his household. If the consumer is not responsible for purchasing beef, he is not part of the population and the interview will not be conducted. In the next step the definition of local beef will be explained to the consumer and is asked if he actively purchases local beef or ever did so. Hence, the consumer will be divided into three categories; consumers who actually purchase local beef, consumers who purchased local beef in the past and consumers who never purchased local beef before. The latter two will be subdivided into consumers who are willing to purchase local food in the future and those who are not. By having classified the customer into actual consumers, past consumers and non-consumers, the interviewer is able to ask the specific questions of why they do not purchase local beef and in specific for the actual consumer what he considers as burdens and challenges to purchase local beef. In this phase the interview gets more and more unstructured and the interviewee's responses more extended. During this phase the interviewer should ask questions which contribute to the literature. Hence, questions about price, convenience, awareness and time should be clarified (Bingen et al., 2009, Feldmann & Hamm, 2014, Klein et al., 2006, Bianchi, 2015, Chambers, et al., 2007). Yet, leading question should be avoided as they bias the outcomes. In the end of the interview administrative and classification questions will be asked. Once more, the interviewee will be remembered that his answers are fully anonymous.

4.4 Qualitative Content Analysis

In comparison to quantitative data analysis, qualitative data analysis follows different approaches as the data to be analyzed is text, rather than numbers (Sage Publication, 2014). Hence, qualitative data analysis does not break the whole into separate tasks but interpreting the interrelated aspects of the setting, group, or person under investigation. Herby the focus is not only on two variables and their relationship, but the social context of events, thoughts, and actions those variables are part of becomes essential for interpretation (Sage Publication, 2014). Qualitative analysis tends to be inductive if the research topic is not yet investigated in depth and knowledge is

fragmented (Blumberg et al., 2014, Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This research made use of a specific form of qualitative content analysis to interpret the results of the face-to-face interviews with the consumers. Qualitative content analysis is a flexible analytical approach to analyze written, verbal or visual communication message data which is often generated through qualitative research methods such as interviews and focus group (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, Hsiu-Fang Hsieh, 2005). The overall aim of content analysis is to narrow the gained information of the interview down into smaller content categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

The used approach to analyze the consumer interviews is an inductive, moving from specific to general, “so that particular instances are observed and then combined into a larger whole or general statement” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 109). Further the applied content analysis followed a systematic three step approach by Elo and Kyngäs (2008): preparation, organizing and reporting (see Figure 4.1). In the preparation phase the unit of analysis is selected. In this research the most suitable unit of analysis were the transcribed interviews (transcriptions available on request). By reading through the transcriptions several times immersion into the data was possible and a first structuring allowed going over into the second phase of organizing. The process of organizing is separated into three steps including open coding, creating categories and abstraction, while open coding is subdivided into coding sheets and grouping. In the open coding phase headings are generated while reading through the interviews to describe aspects of the content. Those headings are collected in a coding sheet and then arranged into broader categories. In the next step the categories are grouped under higher order headings to shrink the number of categories. The reason is to provide a better understanding of the interviews and to generate knowledge.

In the last step called abstraction the remaining categories are named using content-characteristic words and subcategories with similar events and incidents are formed. Finally the results of the analyses are reported and possible reasoning's derived. This research made use of a conceptual map to show the findings of the interviews.

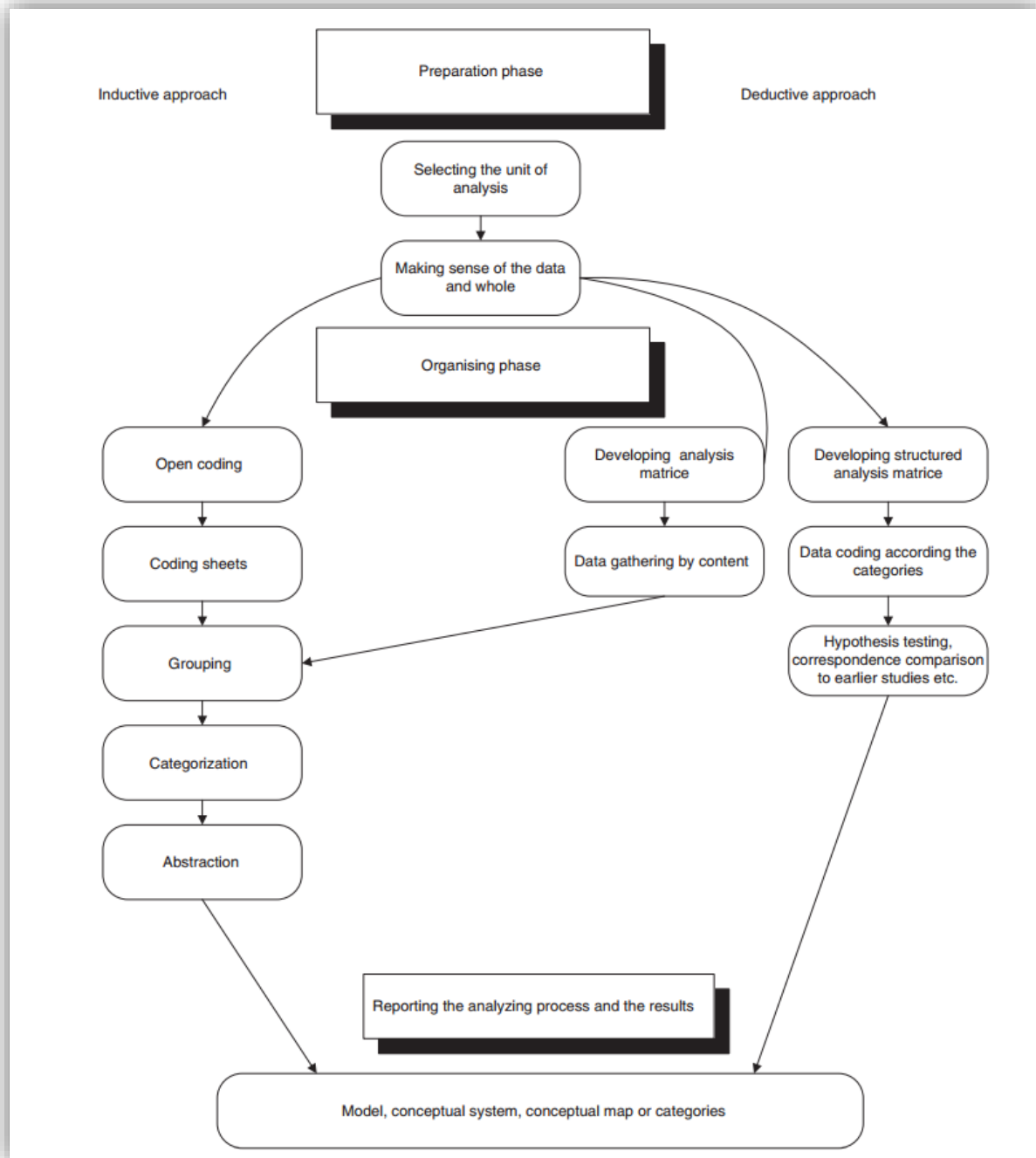


Figure 4.1: Preparation, Organizing and Resulting phase in the content analysis. Elo & Kyngäs, 2008

5. Results & Analysis

In the following the results of the analyzed consumer interviews are presented. First, the descriptive findings of the process are shown and afterwards the results of the qualitative content analysis are illustrated/presented.

5.1 Descriptive Results

The descriptive results of the interviews are displayed in Appendix B. In total 51 interviews were conducted with 24 interviews in a rural area (Dabringhausen) and 27 interviews in a urban area (Cologne). The average length of the interviews in the rural area was 8.10 minutes and for the urban area 7.55 minutes. This leads to an overall average interview duration of 7.81 minutes. The average age of the respondents in the rural area was 47 years and in the urban area 40 years, respectively the respondents had an overall average age of 44 years. Furthermore interviewee's households had an average size of 2.80 people (rural 2.46 persons, urban 3.11 persons). Most of the interviewees were employed (50%) and perceived their income as medium compared to others. There were no significant differences in perceived income or profession between interviewees from the rural area and interviewees from the urban area. The majority of the interviewees have never before purchased beef according to the definition of local food (61%). Yet, there are slightly more rural consumers who purchase currently or purchased in the past local beef than urban consumers (13% more). Overall the attitude towards local food and local beef in specific was found to be positive (Appendix C). Only 20% of the interviewees said that buying local would not be an alternative for them. Surprisingly this number was bigger (29%) for the rural area. Most of the interviewee's perceived local beef as more expensive compared to conventional beef (63%). Interviewees who perceived local beef as cheaper were exclusively actual or past consumers of local beef (21% in the rural area and 9% in the urban area). Especially people who described themselves as having a lower income (60% of people below 30) perceived local beef as more expensive as conventional beef from a supermarket or discounter.

5.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

The qualitative content of the interviews was analyzed according to the method of Elo and Kyngäs (2008). In the first step, the open coding phase, headings were generated while reading through the interviews to describe aspects of the content. Those headings were collected in a coding sheet and then arranged into broader categories. In the next step the categories were grouped under higher order headings to shrink the number of categories. The generated headings which lead to an intention-behavior gap for rural consumers in the open coding phase were grouped into the higher order headings “offer”, “size”, “time”, “assortment”, “price” and “flexibility”. For the urban consumers used headings were grouped into the higher order categories “offer”, “price”, “time”, “opening”, “distance”, and “assortment”.

“Offer” describes the fact that consumers often were not aware of offers for local beef by producers. The interviewees indicated that they would not know where to get local beef from. Often they also searched actively for local beef producers. Some had the feeling the supply of local food does not cover the demand.

Urban Interviewee (UI): “I have the feeling that local beef is withheld to a small elite circle. The producers have their network of consumers and grown structures and relationships. To be honest, I do not know where to get local beef from.”

The problem of not knowing where to get local beef from and who it offers seemed to be the biggest problem and hurdle for urban consumers to translate their intentions into behaviors.

UI: “I have seen marketing from supermarkets, discounters, butchers. But I have never seen any marketing from a farmer here. And even when I google for local farmers and local beef, I cannot find anything nearby cologne. Where are the producers of local beef? I cannot find them (desperately tone)”

Also for local consumers marketing and awareness of the offer for local food seemed to be a problem, especially for the younger generations.

Rural Interviewee (RI): *“I buy vegetables and fruits directly from a young farmer who is really active in social media marketing and things like this. Maybe it’s because of his age. I have never seen such a marketing for local beef. Maybe that’s a reason why I do not purchase local beef from a farmer even I want to”.*

Summed up, the consumers often do not know where to get locally produced beef from, either because there is no marketing of the local producers or there is no (known) producer at all. This was the prevailing named hurdle, especially for urban consumers. However, even if it was known where to source local beef from there were several other reasons why the intention to purchase local beef was not translated into behavior. “Time”, or “Opening Hours” and “Flexibility” or “Distance” were indicators which were named as hurdles when it was known where to source from.

UI: *“I often work long hours and if I or my wife comes home it is mostly after 6 pm. Then no farmers shop is open anymore. Supermarkets are often open till 10 pm which makes them easy accessible even in the evening hours.”*

&

RI: *“I do not want to go the extra mile just for buying beef. That’s also harmful for the environment if I have to drive extra kilometers just to buy beef. So I cannot see the real benefit in it.”*

Consequently, the producers’ distribution structures and sales strategies seem to not meet the requirements of the consumers purchasing process. The interviewed consumers often want to be

highly flexible when shopping for groceries and therefore ask for longer opening hours as well as stores which are central and easy accessible. The latter criteria was especially crucial for urban consumers as they often have to rely on public transport. Thus, reachability and accessibility of local beef is found to be limited for urban and rural consumers. However, even if consumers managed to bridge the hurdles of not knowing where to buy local beef or not reaching the producer because of distance or opening hours they faced challenges for translating their intentions into behavior. Interviewees further mentioned “assortment” and package “size” as a reason why they do not purchase directly from a local producer. Especially package size was named by past consumers of local beef as reasons to not purchase from a local producer anymore.

***RI:** “I stopped purchasing beef from a local farmer after our children moved out and started studying and living on their own. The quantity I had to purchase from the local farmer was too large for a two person household. You could only take 10 kilogram packages. Those you had than to freeze. I would like to purchase again from him (the local farmer) but that’s just too much for us.”*

The matter of size and packages was also often connected to the assortment. Yet, this does not mean that consumers indicated that they want to purchase from one supplier different product categories (beef, chicken, vegetables, dairy products etc.). Rather the assortment of beef products in itself was often limited or the consumers had to purchase packages in which a mix of different beef products was included and they could not chose what they would have liked to have .

***UI:** “If I wanted to buy a beef filet or roast beef I had to take also boiling beef, ribs and minced beef and so on. Further, I had to pre-order it because he did not had it available when I wanted it. The process of purchasing was way too time consuming.”*

&

RI: *“Especially now in the Christmastime it is difficult to get beef from the local farmer because most of the time the beef is sold out”*

Consequently, even if the consumers manage to reach the local farmer and accept distance and opening hours, they often face a limited assortment or have to accept specific purchasing quantities which they often perceive as too large. However, this seemed to be different from producer to producer and cannot be generalized because not all interviewees made those experiences.

The last higher order category which was generated out of the open coding phase is “price” mentioned by both, urban and rural interviewees. A lot of consumers, especially younger, perceived the price of local beef as higher compared to conventional beef from the supermarket or discounter.

UI: *“I am a student and I consume a lot of beef. Hence, I cannot afford the expensive local products. I think they are much more expensive, aren't they?”*

Only a few interviewees who actively purchase local food directly from the producer considered it as cheaper. Yet, the majority of interviewees from both, the urban and the rural area, do not see the price in general as a barrier to purchase local beef. But therefore all other criteria's mentioned above (short distance, opening hours, assortment etc.) must be fulfilled- however, it should be noted that consumers often did not really know the exact price level. They just assumed that it would be more expensive to buy local. By digging deeper the interviewees often could not explain why they perceived local beef as more expensive. Thus, there is no transparency about the prices of locally produced beef which goes hand in hand with the fact that consumers are often not aware of the offer of local beef.

Those mentioned higher order categories generated from the headings are categorized in the abstraction process into a main category, generic category and sub-category. The abstraction process shows the indicators which lead to the intention-behavior gap (displayed in Figure 5.1.). Basically

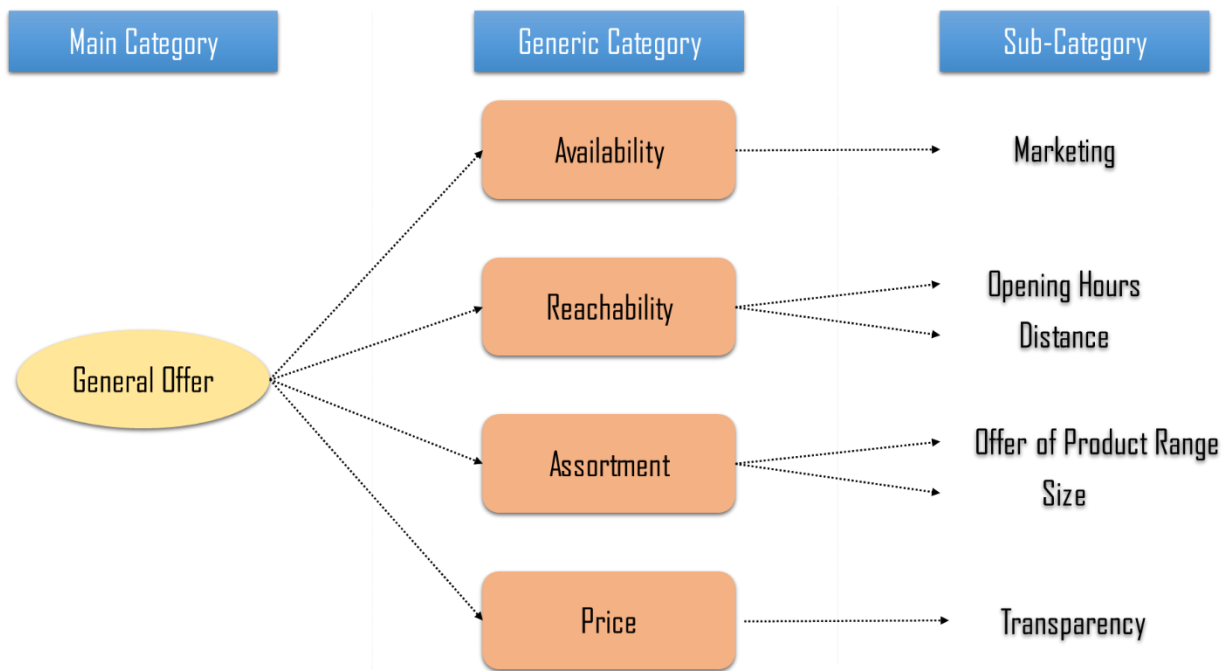


Figure 5.1: Abstraction Process for Gap Indicators

the qualitative content analysis reveals as a main category the general offer by the producers of local food. The offers made by the producers does not seem to meet the requirements of the consumers. The reasons for this are displayed in four generic categories. First, the producers do not seem to generate awareness as the consumers often do not to know from where to source local beef, even if the consumer is actively searching for it. Hence, the consumer has not the feeling that local beef is available to them. A sub-category here is the lack of marketing activities mentioned by the interviewees. Second, the reachability and accessibility of the producers and its products is a main barrier to translate the intentions of the consumers into actual behavior. Sub-categories which lead to a limited reachability are opening hours and the distance between the producers and consumers. Third, the offered assortment of the producers seems to not meet the purchasing criteria of the consumers. The offer of the product range is too limited and the sizes of the packages are often too big. The last generic category is price. In general there are only a few consumers who see price as a main barrier for purchasing local beef. Yet, consumers are not aware of the actual prices of local beef as there is no transparency about it.

6. Discussion & Implications

In the following the results of the abstraction process are discussed and possible managerial implications for producers of local beef in specific but also for producers of local food in general are emphasized. Afterwards limitations of the study are presented and future research opportunities are suggested.

This study examined qualitatively the gap between the consumers' intentions to purchase locally produced food and their actual behavior. Existing research did not yet investigate reasons for an intention-behavior gap in depth (Bingen et al., 2009). The following paragraph discusses the results of the semi structured face-to-face interviews and compares them with previous studies in the area of local food. The findings appear not really surprising at the first sight or may see even obvious but after having a closer look they are very helpful and strong in order to understand the decision making process of consumers regarding local food and why they often do not follow their intentions. There are four major reasons why consumers do not purchase locally even if they would like to do so: awareness, reachability, assortment and price. All those factors were already superficially found in previous studies as byproducts of initial research about reasons for purchasing local food, its target group and by what they are driven to purchase local food (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Bingen et al., 2009, Chambers, et al., 2007, Feldmann & Hamm, 2014, Megicks et al., 2012, Penney & Prior, 2014). Therefore this research explicitly investigates exclusively reasons why consumers do not purchase local food and most of the earlier findings are backed up with empirical evidence from this study. There are no significant differences found between urban and rural interviewees and their barriers to purchase local food. Hence, in the following analyzes of the burdens and challenges to purchase local food there is no differentiation made between urban and rural consumers. Only the general attitude towards local food and the intention to purchase local was lower for rural interviewees. One reasons for this could be that often rural interviewees perceived beef purchased from a butcher as the same as purchasing it directly from a producer.

Limited availability was the prevailing reason for creating a gap between consumer's intention and behavior. Nevertheless, most literature narrowed this down to limited availability of local food in supermarkets (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Bingen et al., 2009, Feldmann & Hamm, 2014.) Yet, consumers seem to not like to purchase local food from supermarkets anyways (Bingen et al., 2009). When the interviewees were confronted with the question if they have purchased local beef in the past they also immediately connected it with obtaining it directly from a producer (e.g. farmer). This is in line with Seyfang (2006) who stated that consumers perceive buying local food in supermarkets as not authentic and not fitting into the image of large retailers. The concept of local food and supermarket seem to be not compatible (Penney & Prior, 2014). Hence, the limited availability of local food offered directly by producers is the crucial factor which was also found by this study. Consequently, the question arises what the reasons are that local food is not available to consumers. One reason could be a lack of marketing which is in line with the assumptions by previous research and also an outcome of the interviews. Feldmann and Hamm (2015) for example recommend local farmers to adapt their marketing strategies for local food effectively to overcome the purchase barriers. Interviewees stated as well that they have barely experienced any marketing activities of local food producers. Another reason which is rarely considered in literature could be that there is simply not enough supply of local food and therefore is not available to every consumer.

Reachability of the local food producers is closely connected to the factor of availability in both, the interviews and the existing literature. Supermarkets and discounters are easier reachable due to their central location and long opening hours. According to Penney and Prior (2014) the superior convenience of supermarkets was often the reason that consumers did not translate their intentions to buy local food into actual behavior even if their attitude was positive towards local products. For the interviewees distance to the producer was found to be the major reason not to purchase local food, independent of knowing a producer of local food or not. This was especially the case for urban consumers. Again the question arises if there is a need for the producer to meet those requirements with a better location or longer opening hours (which would include higher

costs). If the demand for local food is higher than the supply producers can probably ignore those requirements as they are dealing with a scarcity.

Assortment as a barrier to purchase local food is differently expressed in the interviews than in existing literature. The majority of present research described the limited product range as a reason why consumers do not follow their intentions (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Chambers et al., 2007, Megicks et al., 2012). Consumers are described as too convenient to go grocery shopping for only one product (e.g. beef). Consequently, visiting a producer just to purchase beef products would not be an option for a consumer (following existing literature) even if with a positive attitude towards local food. Consumers would like to have a one-stop one-shop experience; visiting one shop and having everything available (Feldmann & Hamm, 2015, Penney & Prior, 2014). However, interviewees did not at all mention the limited product range for local food as a barrier. Rather the product variety in itself seemed to not satisfy the consumer, especially for local beef sourced directly from the producer. Especially past consumers of local beef criticized the fact that they often had to purchase product bundles instead of choosing for specific beef pieces. At this point the products package size played also a decisive role as they often were too big and the products needed to get frozen. This finding is in line with Penney and Prior (2014), who stated that box schemes for local fruit and vegetables aren't suitable for smaller households. Summed up, a limited product range seems to be secondary. Much more important seems to be that the product variety in itself are diversified and package sizes are variable.

The category of price as a burden for customers to follow their intentions is probably most difficult to assess. Especially existing literature is not showing any coherence about the factor price as a reasons for an intention-behavior gap. On the one hand side research is arguing that consumers perceive prices for local food as too high and this is one of the major reasons they do not follow their intentions (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015, Bingen et al., 2009, Chambers et al., 2007, Feldmann & Hamm, 2015, Penney & Prior, 2014). On the other side most of the existing literature argued that most consumers show a higher willingness to pay towards local food products (Megicks, et al.,

2012, Khan & Prior, 2010, Penney & Prior, 2014). Hence, price is not directly seen as a barrier to purchase local food. This is also confirmed by the interviews of this research. The majority of the interviewees perceived local food as more expensive which is in line with mostly all of the existing literature. Furthermore, they were largely willing to pay an extra amount for locally produced beef. However, the interesting outcome of the interviews was that the majority of the interviewees did not have any concrete knowledge about the actual prices of local beef. Mostly the respondents answered with uncertainty and subjunctive sentences towards questions which were broaching the subject price again. The fact that consumers often perceive local food as more expensive is contradicting to the research of Khan and Prior (2010), who found only some vegetables to be cheaper at the British grocery retailer Tesco compared to local food obtained directly from producers. “The biggest cost difference was for topside beef, which was £10 cheaper in farm shops” (Khan & Prior, 2010, p.163). One reason that consumers perceive local food as more expensive could be that they confuse local food with similar and often more expensive products such as bio or organic food. Hence, consumers need to be more educated about the concept of local food and its accompanied advantages such as higher quality, more transparency and lower prices. In sum, it is not the higher price of local food which leads to an intention-behavior gap, rather the ignorance and unknowingness about the actual prices of local food which are often cheaper than expected. Based on the existing literature and from the qualitative content analysis of the interviews a conceptual model can be derived (displayed in Figure 6.1) which describes how the four prevailing reasons awareness, reachability, assortment and price create a gap between the consumers strong intention to purchase local food and their actual behavior.

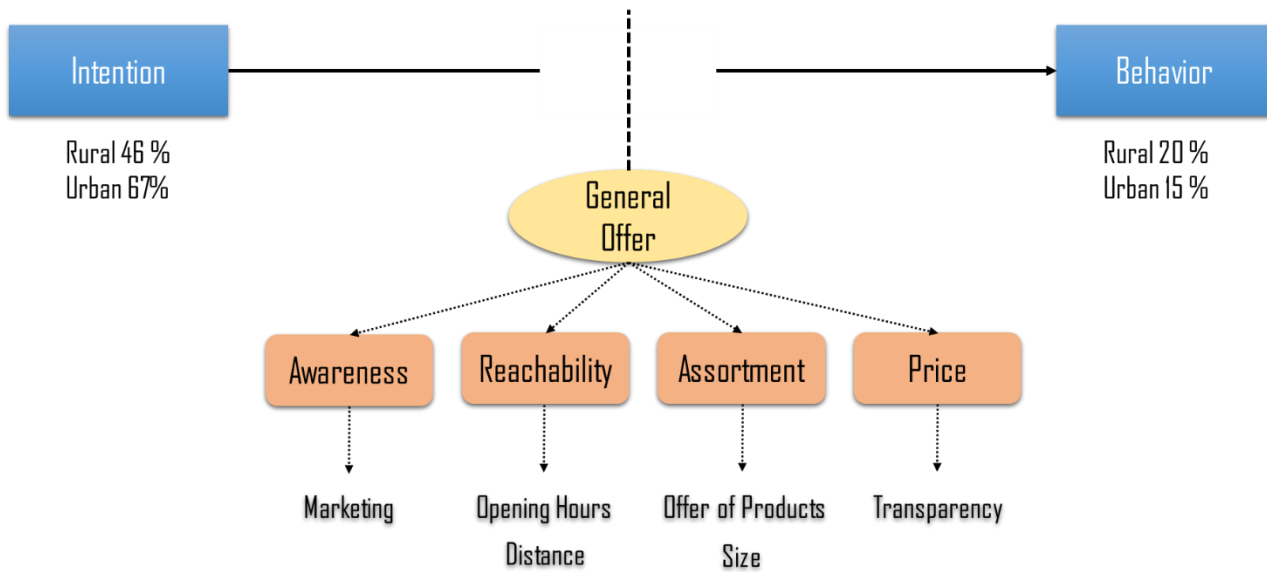


Figure 6.1: Conceptual Model: Intention-Behavior Gap for Local Food

6.1 Contributions to Existing Literature and Practical Implications

The results gained by answering the problem statement reveal four predominant reasons causing an intention-behavior gap for the local food market which leads to various academic and practical contributions.

From an academic standpoint the investigation of the reasons why consumers do not purchase directly from local farmers fills a current gap in research. So far only few studies have scratched the surface why there is a gap existing between the intention and behavior of consumers for local food. No study so far researched this topic exclusively and in depth. Consequently this study gives valuable contributions to the emerging topic of local food.

However, the practical implications generated from the results can be more far-reaching as producers of local food can easily translate their current weaknesses into opportunities and strength by closing the intention-behavior gap. To close the existing gap the four pillars have to be tackled mainly by communication and marketing. Yet this should happen not only to promote local food but to educate the consumer about local food and its benefits. Hence, to reach more awareness and also to create transparency about prices marketing and communication strategies have to be

developed to reach the broad target group of possible local food consumers. However, many farmers have either a limited budget or limited knowledge about marketing campaigns and communication tools (Conner et al., 2010). Hence, there is a need for a well targeted communication and marketing campaign with external support especially because this is not the farmer's core business. Yet, it is not enough to only promote local food with marketing and communication campaigns, consumers need to be educated about the benefits of the products and production process. This can happen through governmental help but also through a higher presence of producers and farmers. Further there seems to be not only a mismatch between the location as well as opening ours and the consumer's requirements but also on how products are offered. To recommend possible strategies on how to close this gap reasons for chosen package sizes and composition have to be evaluated. Summed up there are plenty of possibilities for producers to make the first step in closing the gap. However, it seems that they are lacking of resource such as money, knowledge and manpower.

6.2 Limitations & Further Research

The methodology of this study, mainly the qualitative data analysis is restrained by certain limitations that need to be taken into consideration especially for future research. Due to the fact that qualitative content analysis is less standardized and does not follow a linear fashion it is much more complex than quantitative analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This makes the analysis difficult and dependent on the skills as well as analytical abilities of the researcher. The qualitative content analysis is very much dependent on the subjective interpretation of the researcher and can therefore easily lack objectivity. There are reasonable doubts that every researcher would interpret the data in the same way coming up with the above discussed four categories. However, the results are in line with previous research and therefore generalization is possible. Yet, there are reasonable grounds that a generalization of the results is to a certain degree limited. Especially the fact that the interviews were held only in two different cities from the same region (North Rhine-Westphalia) and that local food was narrowed down on beef products to limit the complexity and scope of the questions restricts the generalizability of the present study. Furthermore, a tendency from the

interviewees to answer in a way that reflect societally approved behaviors, called social desirability responding, could not be fully prevented even though the used methodology was best suited for it. Especially for the category of price interviewees were often answering in the form of subjunctive (“I would pay more if...”). Therefore, price is the most difficult category to assess and generalization is limited. Beside the limitations of the research method the theoretical and practical input from the producer side is rather limited due to time constraints and lack of information in literature.

Consequently, the recommendation for further research is bilateral. First, future research should mitigate the methodology limitations of this study. The limitations can be overcome by a bigger sample using different cities in different regions. It would also be interesting to investigate how the intention-behavior gap varies between different product categories (meat, vegetables, dairy products). To overcome the limitation of the social desirability responding, especially for the category of price, probably an observational study, field study or experiment would be most suitable. Second, future research should investigate the problem of the intention-behavior from the producer’s perspective to prevent a one-sided view. The question of limited supply, an analysis of the current local food offering structure and producer’s point of view regarding possible burdens are needed to fully understand the intention-behavior gap.

7. Conclusion

Even though there is a rising demand for local food which traveled only short distances and is sold directly by the producer, the market has not yet unleashed its full potential (Darby et al., 2008). Consequently, there seem to be some burdens and challenges which inhibit a bigger market share of local food products in the grocery market. This study approaches the problem from the consumer perspective. In detail the research examined qualitatively why consumers do not purchase local food even if they often want to do (e.g. 67% of urban interviewees had the intention to purchase local food but only 15% followed their intentions).

The qualitative research revealed four major key drivers for an intention-behavior gap in the local food market out of the consumer perspective. (1) There is a lack of awareness where to purchase local food products, as the consumer most often does not know where to go. (2) If it is known where to purchase local food, often a limited reachability of local food producers in regard to distance or opening hours inhibits consumers to follow their intentions. (3) When the consumer overcomes the barrier of reachability the assortment of the local producer in regard to size and composition is often not satisfying. (4) Lastly the lack in transparency of the prices of local food causes consumers to perceive local food as more expensive as conventional food even this is often not the case (Khan & Prior, 2010).

In sum, the consumers put the blame on the producers of local food products as they criticize their marketing and distribution strategies. Therefore, future research should investigate the topic from the producers' perspective taken the results from this research into account. This study is among the first that investigates the topic of the intention-behavior gap for local food isolated from other objectives. Hence, the results can be taken as a starting point to examine why local food still does not unleash its full potential.

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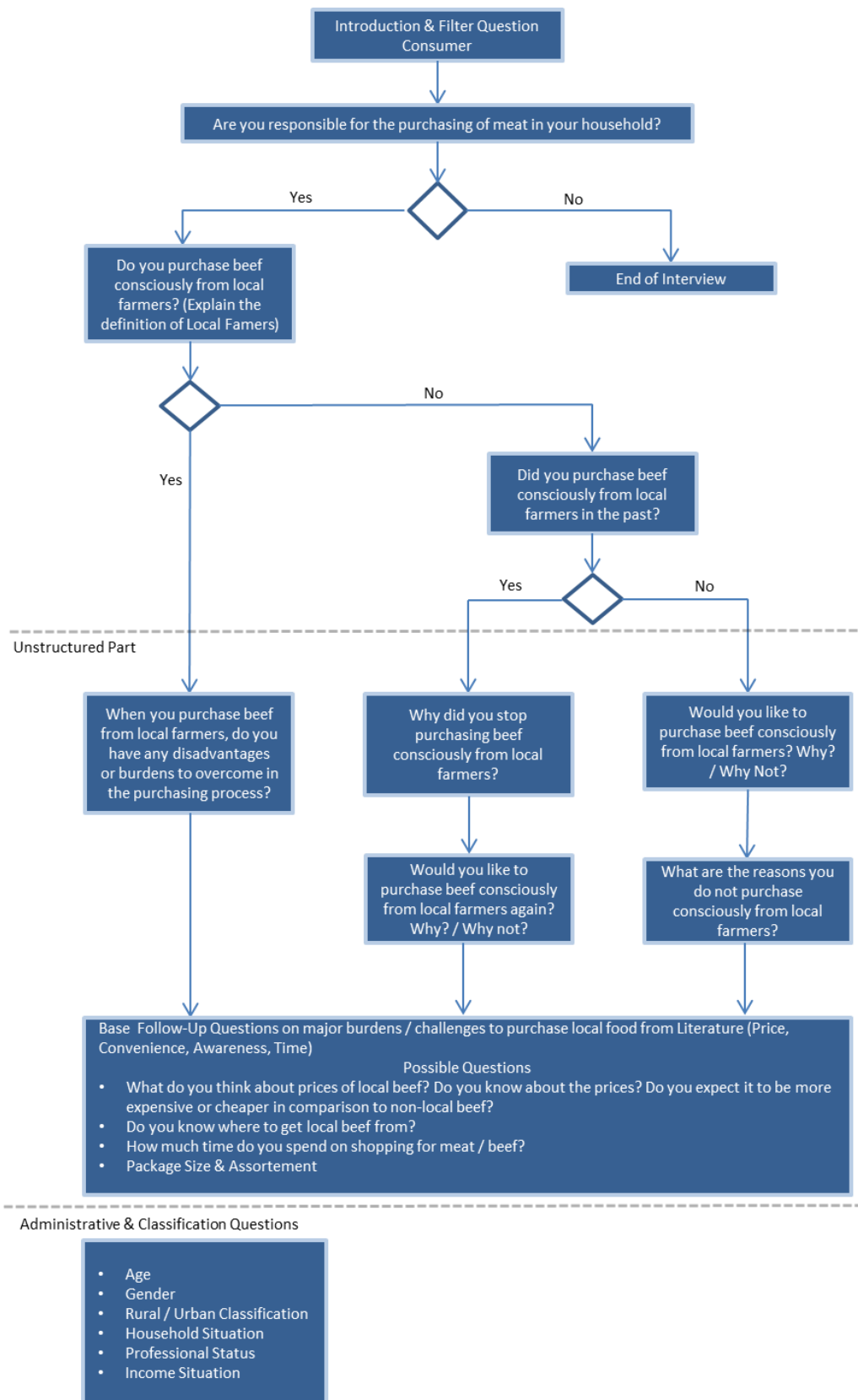
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9. Appendices

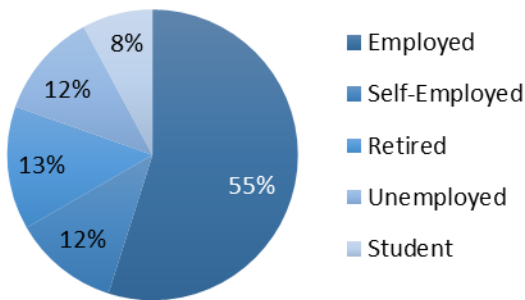
Appendix A: Flow Chart Interview Guide



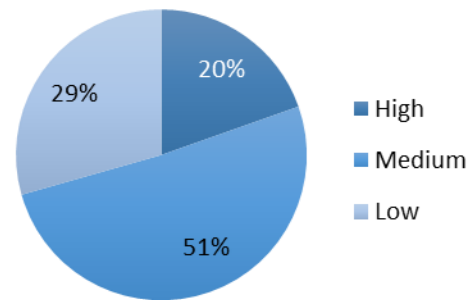
Appendix B: Descriptive Statistics

	Interviews	%	Average Duration (In Minutes)	Average Age (Years)	Average Household
Rural Area	24	47,06%	8,10	47,29	2,46 Persons
Urban Area	27	52,94%	7,55	40,33	3,11 Persons
Total	51	100%	7,81	43,61	2,80 Persons

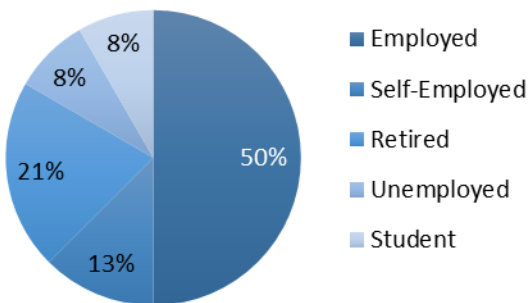
Profession Total (in %)



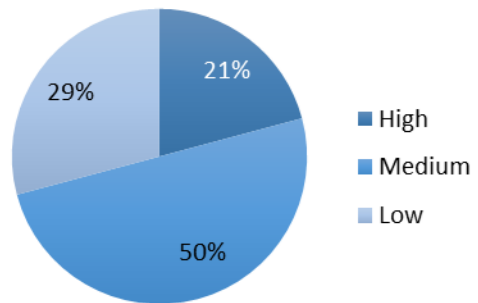
Income Total (in %)



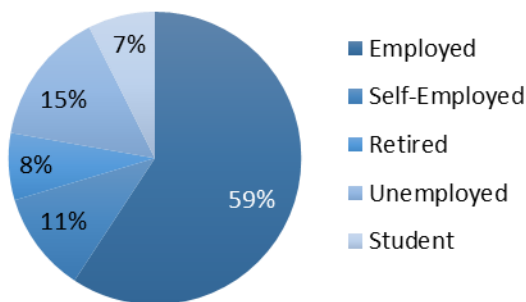
Profession Rural (in %)



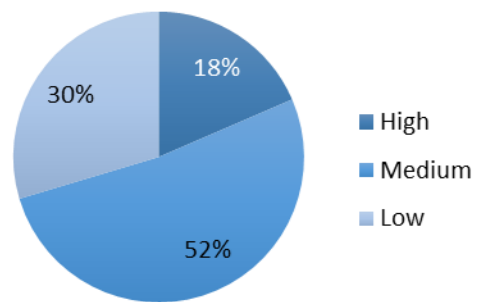
Income Rural Area (in %)



Profession Urban (in %)

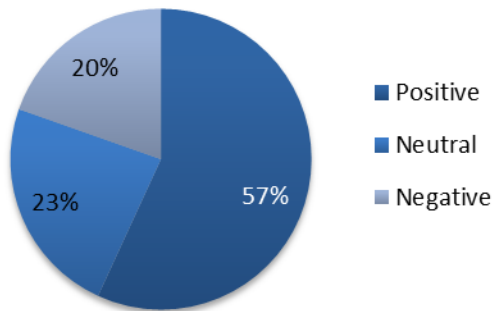


Income Urban Area (in %)

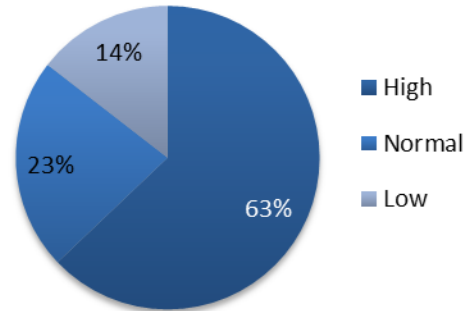


Appendix C: Attitude towards Local Food and Perception of Price of Local Food

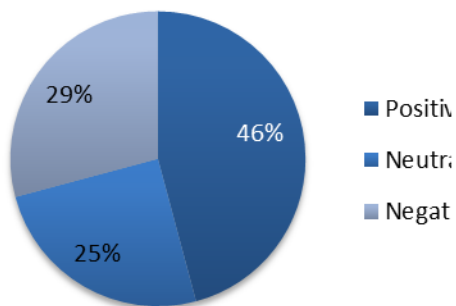
**Attitude towards Local Food
Total (in %)**



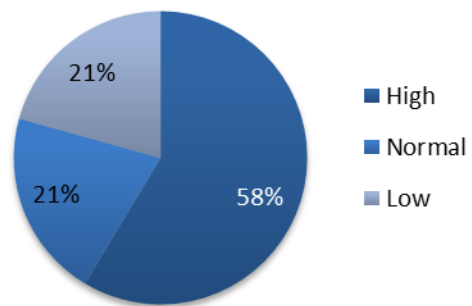
**Price Perception
Total (in %)**



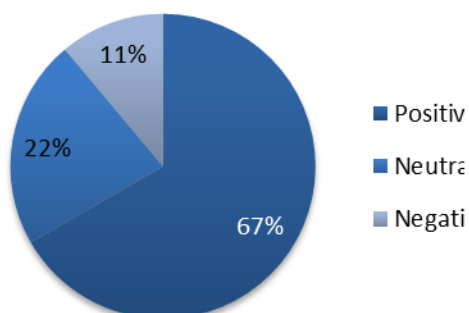
**Attitude towards Local Food
Rural (in %)**



**Price Perception
Rural (in %)**



**Attitude towards Local Food
Urban (in %)**



**Price Perception
Urban (in %)**

