

**Title Exploring the Usage of Local Products within the
Hospitality Business**

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BA in Culinary Arts (Hons).
(September, 2022)

Abstract

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Programme Level BA Culinary Arts (Hons)		
Research/Project Title Exploring the Usage of Local Products within the Hospitality Business		14,799 words, excluding abstract, references, and appendices.
<p>This inductive research study, is set to explore the usage of local produce within the hospitality industry in Malta and to understand the reasons behind the choice of ingredients used by such establishments. Besides, to understand the challenges of mentioned usage and the suggestions participants have to overcome those challenges.</p> <p>To achieve that, the author conducted six semi-structured interviews with different range of catering businesses around Malta.</p> <p>With qualitative analysis of the results, the author understands there are differences between the establishments when choosing suppliers and products. The findings light up also lack of quantity and quality of local products, bearing in mind as well encountering a price gap between local and imported goods.</p> <p>Thus it is understandable that the local food production usage, has not yet achieved its full potential. It is suggested, the interaction of government policies to educate and promote local products to increase the amount intake.</p> <p>However, future research must be conducted to understand all the parts involved in the hospitality supply chain.</p>		
Keywords Local produce, Hospitality Establishments, Maltese Islands, Locavorism, Supply Chain.		

Declaration of Authenticity



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Declaration:

I hereby declare that this research study is based on the outcome of my own research. I, as the author, declare that this research study is my own composition which has not been previously produced for any other qualification.

The research study was conducted under the supervision of Dr Rosetta Thornhill

Date: 30/09/2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' or 'P' shape with a horizontal line extending to the right and a vertical line extending downwards.

Student's Signature

Acknowledgements.

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to my family, my wife, and my children for their constant support throughout this research. Without their strong persuasion and belief while the degree education time, I am convinced I would not have been able to reach this stage. I would like to dedicate this paper to them with the expectation of making them proud of my achievements. I would also like to acknowledge my parents, who although live on a different continent, I know for certain that they are proud too.

Secondly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my tutor, Dr Rosetta Thornhill, for her guidance and the constantly pushing me without doubting me. I would not have been able to finish this without her. Together with my tutor, I extend my thanks to the rest of the lecturers who in one way or the other contributed with their help, for me to be able to come this far.

Finally, I would like to mention my gratefulness to my colleagues and classmates who made this journey a truly joyful experience. Lastly, to everyone who accepted to be interviewed and participated in this research. Without them, this study would have not been possible.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background.

Over the last years, the world has faced new challenges and situations that shaped and are shaping the way societies behave. Communication, media and interpersonal relationships, among other topics, are not as they were five or even three years ago (Leyland, 2021). These changes affected most industries including hospitality, and the tourism sector was one of the most impacted (Ammar, Touni and Abdulaziz, 2022). In parallel, new food trend waves conquer Europe with ideas related to the environment, health and respect for nature (Kovács, Balázsne Lendvai and Beke, 2022).

A combination of the mentioned events, including the pandemic and the Eastern Europe war, obliged the economies to look inside when purchasing products. The increased cost of raw materials and transportation stand out the necessity of finding alternatives (*Emerging Europe Food and Drink* Insight, 2022) and (Jasper Y, 2022). Furthermore, with the intention to bring back tourism to the pre-pandemic status, ideas of back to the roots, to the authentic, to the local, gain in strength (Borghini, Piras, Sereni, 2022). However, if the circumstances were tough for every country in general, places like the Island of Malta or smaller countries, were even tougher (Sindico, 2021).

This dissertation paper is part of the Culinary Arts degree program of the Institute for Tourism Studies in Malta. As part of the hospitality business in managing positions, the author finds the idea of turning to the local product a must within the smaller countries. Based in Malta, this paper cannot stop questioning if the use of local products is applied within the hospitality industry. Do all the ranges of establishments share similar concepts when purchasing local products? Are there any challenges when using local products? What are the establishments' suggestions to overcome those challenges? Furthermore, the researcher believes in applying this philosophy professionally and personally.

1.2 Research Aim & Objectives.

This research aims to explore the usage of the latter within the hospitality business on the Maltese Islands. Besides, understand the “whys” behind choosing or not choosing local products and the challenges the establishments find by doing that. Later, the study will discuss any suggestions the entities may have in order to facilitate mentioned usage.

This dissertation starting point does not implicate a hypothesis or any pre-determinate idea (thus using an inductive approach). The author aims to be clean from any bias and leave any personal

points outside the parameters of this research. This way the objectives can be achieved without individual intervention during the analysis and focus on the participants' expertise.

1.3 Research Methods and Material.

The researcher applies an exploratory approach to the research question and objectives. The idea behind this approach is to expose the circumstances and the conditions of the hospitality industry in Malta in relation to the supply chain.

Semi-structured interviews (qualitative approach) with key players of the industry to cover the vast range of possible participants is the data collection chosen method. This way, the author may vary some of the interview questions according to the unique characteristics of the participants, or the flow during the meeting.

Moreover, the flexibility of the data collection permits a thematic analysis of that information (thus qualitative analysis). The author establishes patterns related to the answers from the interviewees. These patterns help to understand a common or not common behaviour toward the usage of local products and fulfil the study objectives.

1.4 Study Structure.

For a clear understanding of this paper, the author presents this introduction to the topic within this chapter (chapter 1). Followed by the literature review in chapter 2 which expresses and gives entity to the background of the study. Chapter 3 is an explanation of the data collection and analysis of the Methodology. Continuing with the findings, analysis and discussion in chapter 4 and ending with a conclusion and recommendations in chapter 5. The Harvard reference method has been utilised for this dissertation with Arial number 11 as the font.

2. Literature Review.

2.1 Introduction.

This literature review chapter consists of the basis of information gathered from several academic sources to identify the gaps and create this research paper. The chapter will start by stating some definitions which will be disclosed further within the subtopics. Later on, some background information about the local food movements in the world, their impact and the influence of post-pandemic and the current conflict in Eastern Europe will be provided. Furthermore, it describes some European strategies as an incentive for the usage of local products to increase the demand. Within this chapter, the author explains the relationship between local products and the hospitality industry from a macro perspective, focusing on some benefits as well as some disadvantages of that relationship. Lastly, it showcases the general aspects of an island followed by the local products' status in Malta.

The literature review concludes with a declaration of gaps. These are the basis for the research paper and the chosen methodology.

2.2 Definitions.

During the following part, the author defines the different concepts which will be utilised and explained in further detail throughout this chapter. Thus, these notions are an important part of the general chapter.

“Locavorism” is an idea that can be defined as the parallel concept of “Eating local” according to Borghini, Piras and Serini (2022). On the other hand, Ribeiro Tavares (2020) expanded this and explained that it is not only subject to a physical area, but also includes cultural and social aspects. This study sees *“Locavorism”* as a movement where hospitality establishments and individuals can feel belong by adopting some behaviours toward the purchase and offer of local products.

“Short supply chain” is defined as a supplier relationship where the number of intermediaries is reduce to the minimum as explained by Laure and Granier (2016). The scholars also described the “local food system” as the area where “the food produced, processed and retailed within a defined geographical region”.

Having several ways to define *“sustainability”*, this study will focus on the one proposed by the United Nations. “Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (UN, 2022). Under these premise, the author understand that the improvement of local economies by the increase usage of local products, suits the definition of sustainability mentioned before.

When referring to food sector or food in general, the author includes any product related to the production of food. Food can be understood as oils, vegetables, fruits, animal production, bread, etc. Furthermore, for the case of this study, the researcher refers also to beverages, either locally produced or not.

2.3 Local Food Movements.

Local food movements, the idea of purchasing local or the ethical concept of shopping from “farm to fork” (European Union, 2020), are based on notions such as “Slow Food movement” founded with the objectives of reborn local food traditions and cultures among others (About us - Slow Food International, 2022). Kovács, Balázsne Lendvai and Beke (2022) expand the idea of traditions and cultures explaining that the local products are seen in general as artisan made by minor producers. Utilizing ancient methods locally found and include not only food but also any kind of homemade and handmade creation. The academics state that “Locavorism” is one form of local food movement which concentrate on the consumption of local products. Furthermore, Ribeiro Tavares (2020) mentioned that this consumption of local food exceeds the relation of value for money and focuses on the origin and specification of the product. In other words, the sense of “Locavorism” goes beyond the connection between prices and utility. In fact it is possible to find local products less affordable than imported. However, those who believe and follow this kind of ideology, will favour local production despite being more expensive. Thus, as the objectives of this study propose, it is important to understand if the situation in the Maltese islands can be classified under the same ideas.

2.3.1 General Aspects of Local Food Movements.

Following the previous paragraph, in this part, the author brings some general aspects of adopting a local food philosophy similar to, or based on “Locavorism”. Ribeiro Tavares (2020) suggests that the production and consumption of local products encourage sustainable actions which impact society, the economy and the environment. These three areas are pillars of this modern era, and their impact can be seen more as the world exits the pandemic time affected by Covid-19. Borghini, Piras and Srini (2022) agree with Ribeiro Tavares (2020) and expand the concept by explaining that focusing on local products will directly affect the food system into a more sustainable path, reinforcing the society and the ethical approach to the environment. In this research, the author will focus the literature review on the impact on society and the economy more than the environment. These topics will be briefly expanded in following parts and connected to other topics which link local food with tourism, and hospitality as well as the post-pandemic time and the status of Malta as an island.

2.3.2 Social and Economic Aspects of Local Food Movements.

Continuing with the idea of “Locavorism” this paragraph will disclose some of the social and economic aspects of the concept. These two points are related since the change in social behaviour has a direct impact on local economy. Furthermore, the author believes the change in the customers’ demand goes hand in hand with the adaptation industries like hospitality do to answer that demand.

Kovács, Balázsne Lendvai and Beke (2022) bring up some of the transitions shown by the general purchase force. Their study states that buyers seek for more information about the products, production method, origin, and stories behind them. There is a change in shopping patterns with a clear indication that the relation value for money loses its position and other topics such as nutrition, health, tradition and culture become higher rang. On the same line, the European Union’s “*Farm to Fork*” (2020) strategy emphasises that the individual grow awareness of “environmental, health and ethical challenges” and the search for prices or commodity loses its place to the search for more value from a product.

It has been clear from the statements before that the transition to a more demanding and informed customer experience has a direct effect on local economies. Laure and Granier (2016) affirmed that there are facts pointing that local production and increased coordination between local shops create and increment workspaces. Furthermore, having a strong local production area, highlighting the food sector, has a direct influence on tourism allowing to generate more income and reinforcing the culture and traditions of the place.

Continuing with the explained paragraphs before, an increase in the tourism sector by strengthening local production, especially in the food sector, have a positive effect on the hospitality business. However, this affirmation is based on theories and must be proven in the real life. Also, it is clear that different landscapes and regions do not react equally to the same premise. Later in this chapter and as part of the study’s objective, the author describes the effects on islands and the exploration throughout interviews of the Maltese situation.

2.4 Covid-19 and Eastern Europe Conflict General Effects.

As mentioned, the local food movements or “Locavorism” have a direct impact on societies and economies. However, the modern world is a connected globe where any conflict or change on a status quo in one area, has a direct effect on the rest of the planet. This part of the chapter will briefly explain the influence the Pandemic left and the current War has in relation to the local products on a country and an Island.

2.4.1 The Post-Pandemic Effect.

It is clear that by purchasing local products the consumer has a direct relationship with the producers and therefore improves the local financial status. Leyland (2021) states that during the pandemic, there was a substantially increased recognition of the importance of choosing the products the individual buys. The scholar explains that society is more conscious of the ethical parts of growing, origin and the production methods of the goods. To emphasise this concept, research from Dalhousie University (2021) adds that shoppers have become more aware of sustainable practices and demand a better product with clear information about some moral aspects of the production and the source of ingredients. Furthermore, it states that during Covid-19 local sources of production and supply chains gained higher devotion from the public which most tend to keep as a default purchasing behaviour.

Despite the hardships and negative effects of Covid-19, one of the light hopes belongs to the localization of purchasing methods adopted by society. In other words, households diverted their shopping pattern toward local shops more than before. This may not be the case in the hospitality sector but this topic will be addressed further after. Besides, understanding that any local conflict can and may affect the rest of the planet is it imperative to briefly state the implications of the Eastern Europe war in relation to the food sector.

2.4.2 The Eastern Europe Conflict.

Every region has a relationship with another, especially when it comes to food. However, there are some countries that are more importation dependant than others. Thus the explosion of military actions in one area might affect the food system of an entire region or more. Jasper (2022) shows that countries need to emphasise local food production over the incoming goods as the Eastern European war increases the challenges of “being import dependant”. It calls for governmental actions to increase the importance of “local food production”. An economic report from Fitch Solutions Group Limited (2022) sustains that after the Russian invasion to Ukraine, some products exported from the area have gained more focus. Furthermore, it is explained that some immediate effects will be seen in terms of “inflation and higher consumers’ price, complications on supply chain and an increase on energy costs”.

Clearly, the pandemic and the war have an influence on the food sector. Countries reacted and are affected differently by these effects. Similar situations based on islands will be discussed at a later stage however this paper will focus its data collection on the Maltese situation. As part of the research objectives, it is imperative to understand if these mentioned global challenges are represented in the local hospitality industry.

2.5 European Local Food Strategy.

Sponsored by the European Parliament Research Services, Laure and Granier (2016) conducted a study focused on “Short supply chain and local food systems”. Among the findings stands out the reality that “Local markets” also called Farmers’ market compose a short food supply chain that it is growing in all European countries. Buying directly from the farmer increases the feeling of purchasing “fresh and seasonal products”. This proposes a dispute with the old-fashioned supermarket chains where the shoppers have less interaction with the grower and less information about the product.

Following some of the mentioned findings, the European Union (2020) came up with the “Farm to Fork Strategy”. Lockdown increased the demand for shortage food supply chain. Another understanding is that food producers, manufacturers and servers can change the market and mild it accordingly depending on the production methodology, marketing as well as ingredients they promote. Therefore, the European Union created a “Code of Conduct” which applies to “responsible business and marketing practices” focused on the increment of a sustainable food approach together with affordable and healthier options.

Unfortunately, this strategy has still a long way to go. Visser, van Beek, den Held and Groen (2021) explain that shopping and consuming local food has awakened society towards various production methods and information of origin. However, most of the raw products found in big food stores are still being imported. Moreover, Leyland (2021) emphasises the fact that fruits and vegetables from anywhere in the world can be found on any day of the year in big food chains. These challenges have been addressed as well by Laure and Granier (2016) finding that in the case of “short supply chains”, it reduces volumes and diversification of products that can be offered to the local food system. Also, the existence of different climate times limits seasonal food. This way, not only the big supermarkets are affected but also, hospitality establishments since the demand is higher than the production offer. An explanation in the relation between the mentioned offer and demand follows below.

2.6 Local Food, Tourism and Hospitality Industry.

To begin it is important to understand from the literature, the general impact that global hospitality suffers before entering the specific region of this paper.

Ammar, Touni and Abdulaziz (2022) begin explaining by showcasing the local products in relation to local traditions from certain small areas can be taken as another way of increasing the regional income and upgrading the neighbourhood’s economic situation. On a similar line Dehdashti and Jahedi, (2021) highlighted that local food tourism is more than just fulfilling the need for eating. They understand there is a correlation between food, ingredients, methods of cooking and the

heritage story behind the product. The scholars believe that hospitality establishments supporting a sustainable approach and focusing on local products have an advantage that can be used as a marketing asset to promote tourism.

Elkhwesky, Salem, Varmus and Ramkissoon (2022) agree with part of the mentioned by the previous studies. They understand that buying from local producers is a way of improving regional economic development and promoting a sustainable approach can be used to attract customers. However, the scholars pointed out some negative effects the pandemic time had on these kinds of practices. The unknown situation and the changes in personal communications as well as the constant need to reduce costs, directly affected the retail purchasing pattern by turning back to wholesales and importers. Furthermore, the study suggests that coming back to more sustainable and locally focused buying technique goes in parallel with the increasing demand for “authentic taste” promoted by each destination.

One way to promote the authenticity of flavours related to the new customer experience demand can be auto-growing or in-house farming. New technologies, appearing lately, allow even small hospitality establishments to use some products from their own cultivation. Visser, van Beek, den Held and Groen (2021) propose that restaurants can create a growing area on a back yard or the roof with new technologies, therefore build a shorter supply chain and literally join the farm-to-fork philosophy. This way, not only the establishments can see themselves as part of the local food tourism but also from the European Union Strategy.

Access to this home growing technologies, however, suppose an investment that many establishments within the hospitality cannot afford to do it. Furthermore, small areas with high population density may not have the space to do so. But local products are not limited to food or agriculture only. As mentioned previously and reinforced by Kovács, Balázsné Lendvai and Beke (2022), local products comprehend all kinds of regionally made goods. From artisan crafted tools to anything produced in general in low quantities by small shops, preserving characteristics, values, and history of the place. Having said that, the hospitality industry can connect with these local shops or producers of any kind and establish a relationship of mutual benefit. Doing that, one can promote local food tourism by showcasing the places where the products originate from. Social media is the ideal interpreter of the mentioned connection. Leyland (2021) explains that the use of social media platforms to connect the producers with the end consumers is a major tool to facilitate the information and showcase the work done. Hospitality establishments and producers can only gain from these tools and contribute to the general growth of the community, the area, the region or even the whole country.

2.7 The Uniqueness of an Island and the Maltese Situation.

Although all the exposed so far can be linked with any kind of place, region or country, the uniqueness of an Island is worth analysing. The Maltese archipelago includes various Islands with similar characteristics to other ones in different parts of the globe. This part will expose some of the effects mentioned previously but focus on the island landscape. Then the author will present some specific data in relation to the Maltese local products. Thus, will follow the conclusion of the chapter where the researcher will exhibit the gaps in relation to the shown in this literature review and the Maltese region.

2.7.1 Local Food Movement on an Island.

The existence of a self-sufficient region is a utopia that most probably will never occur. However, it is fair to say that some areas have more potential and resources than others. In fact, one of the clearest statements is that an island has limited space and resources. Thus, it can be agreed that islands are more reliable on imported goods than mainland places.

Sindico (2021), established that many times tourism represents a major income to places like islands since the lack of space made other resources of industries have a lower rate. From a different point of view, the fact that islands were isolated during the pandemic made them less vulnerable. During Covid-19, the loss of international tourism changed the focus on local tourism which is directly related to the focus on local products. The scholar describes that “Locavorism” joins similar objectives as the islands’ policies where the ideas are to reduce the dependence on imported goods. Thus, nowadays there is a link between focusing on local products and offering those to visitors fostering local food tourism and developing small regional economies. Basically, the changes done under the obligation imposed by the pandemic, need to be the basis to establish a better offer for the main income industry, which is tourism, on the islands.

2.7.2 The Maltese Local Production Status.

This study is conducted on the Maltese islands in relation to the hospitality business. To do so it is important to understand the local food production in terms of numbers and statistics. On a census conducted over ten years by the Ministry of Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries (2020) can be seen that the number of farms was reduced by almost 15%. These reductions not only include vegetables and fruits but also livestock farming. Furthermore, the census shows that manpower was also reduced by over 25%. However, one of the most important details according to this research is that almost 42% of the agricultural farms do not participate from the market and basically focus the production on self-consumption. The findings leave a total of 58% of the

farming activities as part of the different methods of the market on the Maltese islands. On the hand, Laure and Granier (2016) and cited also by Kovács, Balázsné Lendvai and Beke (2022) expose that only a lower than 5% of the local Maltese farms are engaged in sales in the market on one way or another.

Continuing with the Maltese basic information about the local products and understanding that, as mentioned, the term local product not only relates to food or agriculture. The Maltese islands offer a number of local wine producers as well as some artisan craft tools and local markets. Eighteen certified wineries exist on the archipelago (Viticulture and Oenology, 2022), along the craft village offers several kinds of handcraft products and it is an important part of the local products tourism area (Mitev, 2022). Finally, there are a few local markets offering locally grown products but the most important one is the Ta' Qali farmers market. Adding to the found on the census, this market only opens twice per week on Tuesdays and Saturdays during the morning or the afternoon (ta-qali-market, 2022).

2.8 Conclusion.

Throughout the literature review chapter, the author exposes various topics related to local products and local food production. Some concepts were defined for a clear understanding and others were described to expose different situations. It is clear that local product movement or "Locavorism" has been on an increasing wave emphasised by the global pandemic during the last years. This calls for the focus on regional purchasing behaviour and the favour of neighbour shopping. Furthermore, local products are not only food related but also different tools or handcraft items which usually have a relationship with the local cultures, traditions and heritage.

The chapter navigates throughout the covid-19 effect on local societies as well as the hospitality industry. Explaining that focusing on local products not only creates a better local community improving the economy but also promotes more sustainable practices and reduces costs. The researcher also shows some direct influence from the Eastern European war and how it is affecting the prices and obliging some places to find alternative products to those which were imported from that area. Toward the end, the difference between an island and mainland is briefly expressed finalizing with the presentation of the Maltese local product situation.

To conclude the chapter, the author agrees with the new trends favouring local products. Living in the Maltese islands, and based on information provided in relation to local food production. There is a clear gap between the practices of such trends within the hospitality industry. This gap represents one of the main objectives of this study. The author believes that exploring this gap can light up the idea of trying to avoid imported products. However, there are some challenges as

well when favouring local products and these must be researched together. This paper will follow up the above mentioned with the methodology and data collection analysis.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction.

The research focuses on exploring the usage of local products within the hospitality business in Malta. The reasons behind this usage, the challenges the establishment have and any further suggestions they may express.

During this following chapter, the author will disclose the methodology utilized to approach this study and fulfil the objectives. Furthermore will describe the methods to collect data and analyse it. This chapter explains the reasons behind the chosen methodology and the difference with others. Following the structure, the researcher informs the sample area and the limitations during the data collection. Towards the end of the chapter, the ethical considerations have their place.

3.2 Methodology Design.

The following section is dedicated to the explanation of the methodology approach taken to design the research. There are various types of approaches a study can choose, however, the first step to success is to understand the main objective of the paper as well as the secondary ones, if applicable. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) emphasize that the author must follow a rational path when designing a research and the methodology. This idea starts with a clear and concise research question. Furthermore, the scholars describe that a good research design has to have well defined objectives taken from the research question, the sample and source of collecting data and the way these data will be taken and analysed.

3.3 Theory Development.

There are different ways to approach a research of this characteristic. First, it is important to decide the theory development that best suits the research. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) define three possible theories as “deductive, inductive and abductive”. While a deductive theory begins with the formulation of a hypothesis, an inductive one starts with the collection of data and the analysis of it in order to develop a theory. On the other hand, the abductive way is a way of using the data collected to explain or create new theories to be checked again with a new process of collecting information. This paper’s research question and objective suggest an inductive approach, free from any bias or personal experience in order to explore the current situation and develop future recommendations.

3.4 Methodology Approach.

As the main objective of this paper declares, the author begins with an exploratory approach. Phil (2021) describes the exploratory way as an investigation conducted in order to clarify a problem

which might not be defined yet. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) conclude that the exploratory study tends to ask open questions in order to disclose an issue and earn inside data of a topic.

Existing other methodology approaches such as “descriptive, correlational and explanatory” which the author understands are less appropriate to conduct this study. Descriptive approach tends to understand the samples and circumstances as they are in nature, avoiding any manipulation of variables (Siedlecki, 2020). The correlational and explanatory methodologies are focused on variables relationships and are less applicable to this type of research paper according to Bougie and Sekaran (2019). This paper approaches an exploratory methodology due to the fact that there is not funding data about the topic and the author believes that despite the similarity with the descriptive methodology, the previous one mentioned is a superior choice.

Thus the methodological choice needs to be consistent with the mentioned pattern in order to create a logical study. Ibid (2019) describes in a simple way that the difference between qualitative and quantitative research recalls the type of data searched. Thus, the scholar explains that while quantitative research involves numbers and the information is based on amounts, qualitative research intends to explain situations and patterns involving the use of words. Phil (2021) adds the concept of measurement. The paper emphasizes that quantitative studies involve variables that can be clearly measured in adequate units. On the other hand, qualitative ones investigate behaviours and social patterns. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) agree with the exposed in this paragraph and simplify the difference between the two types of research pointing out the distinction between “numerical and non-numerical data”.

This research paper follows an exploratory and inductive approach in order to fulfil the main objective and the research question, previously mentioned. The author believes, and based on the theories and definitions from previous scholars, the involving of qualitative type of data is the correct way to conduct this study. It is important to clarify, as most researchers do, that this conception cannot be restricted and structured only to qualitative research. Since the main focus of the paper involves people, behaviours and patterns, there is a possibility of change according to initial findings. However, to reach the objectives of the research the data is based on opinions, dealing with words and less with numbers or quantities. The method to collect such data will be described in the following paragraph.

3.5 Strategy and Method.

The research strategy as well as the general methodology design must follow a logical pattern and be hand in hand with the research question and the objectives of the research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Conducting exploratory, inductive, and qualitative research implies as well the application of qualitative methods and strategies. There are several qualitative data collection methods and each study can choose between one or more methods applicable at the same time.

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) give as examples, semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, diary accounts, etc. For the purpose of this research, the author will conduct a unique data collection method based on semi-structured interviews. This is technique is defined by the scholars as the mono method.

This tool and the sample was chosen to interview will be explained in following paragraphs in this chapter.

3.6 Primary Data Collection Tool.

One of the main factors and reasons to conduct interviews is the fact that it is considered the best way to understand personal opinions since the process is done through direct contact. Phil (2021) explains that interviews have some important advantages such as original data, uniform concepts and collection of information, allowing some flexibility and reducing the avoidance to answer. On the other, the scholar mentions some disadvantages as well such as time consuming, high cost or personal bias might influence the results, among others.

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, (2019) from their side, expand the concept of interview and separate it into three different types, the structured interview, the semi-structured interview and the unstructured interview. Each of these different kinds of interviews has its benefits and can be applied to various types of research. The structured interview is based on a rigid and predetermined list of questions providing a standardized set of answers. There is minimum personal interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee which is mainly limited to explanations beforehand. The structured interview is used, in the majority, for quantitative studies. The unstructured interview on the other edge is a more informal approach without any list of questions and allows a more in-depth study. It is crucial, however, to be sure and understand correctly the area of your research focus or else it is easy to lose track. In between the mentioned concepts, there is the semi-structured interview. This type of approach consists of some key questions that the interviewer considers important to ask together with some flexibility according to how the process flow. The structure of the questions is not rigid and varies from interview to interview. Thus some interviewees might need additional questions in order to provide the necessary data.

The hospitality business is based on people and there is a vast range of establishments. The author understands that semi-structured interviews covering most of the range possible is the correct way to proceed in this research. Each place on the range has different aspects and

possibilities and will be an error trying to structure all under the same questionnaire. This paper conducts semi-structured interviews with each of the parameters confining the hospitality range. The interviews are held for a period of a month in order to be able to rich the majority amount of possible interviewees.

3.7 Pilot of Data Collection Tool

To examine the data collection tool created, the author sent the semi-structured interview questionnaire to three individuals who are not related to the topic and are able to express an objective view. The feedback received allows the writer to amend grammatical aspects of the questions. Also, the three participants agreed the focus of the interview is clear and allows to receive important information about the topic researched. However, participant 3 suggested amendments to the question which the author did not consider. These amendments could potentially induct data influence by the examples given by the researcher. Therefore the author discarded the suggestion to avoid any personal bias and affect the reliability of the paper.

3.8 Sample Selection.

With this study's objectives in mind, it is important to remark that hospitality establishments encompass a large spectrum. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) explain the sample selection must address the objectives and be in relation with them. Having said that, the author understands that in order to have a representative sample, interviewing most points of this spectrum is needed. However, and to not lose track and focus of the main objective, this paper will restrict to at least one kind of establishment within the range in hospitality. Furthermore, some of the chosen places to interview may be able to provide with more than one interviewee. The focus on local products, must not be restricted only to food items but include beverage and miscellaneous as well. This concept, reaffirms the choice of conducting semi-structured interviews avoiding standardization and allowing flexibility depending on the interviewee.

This study will concentrate its interviews on the following range of establishments within the hospitality industry in Malta. The author believes this sample selection helps to clarify the general situation in Malta and answer the objectives of this paper. These establishments are classified according to their reputation and the price of an experience within them. There is a disparity between the ideal sample and the real one achieved and this is shown in the following table 1.

Sample Selection:

Establishment	Ideal participant selection	Real participant achieved
Five star hotel	Executive Chef, Purchase Manager and Sommelier	Executive Chef

One star Michelin restaurant	Chef Patron and Sommelier	Chef Patron
High end restaurant	Executive Chef and Sommelier	Executive Chef
Middle range restaurant	Head Chef, General Manager	General Manager
Small establishment or Take Away Kiosk.	Owner, Chef	Owner
Private Caterer	Owner	Owner

Table 1

3.9 Method of Analysis.

Once the data is collected, is time to understand it and analyse it. Having a flexible data collection approach and various types of venues with different characteristics, indicates to the author to utilize a method of analysing data that helps to establish pattern relations and shared ideas. The thematic analysis is a method of data analysis that allows finding these patterns. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, (2019) describe the thematic analysis as the search for common points and paths arising from the data collected. Internal code is utilized to find certain common words through the interviewees and establish common ideas. Thus the thematic analysis method is the chosen one to conduct this study's data collection analysis.

3.10 Limitations.

This study found some limitations which are described and explained below.

- Limitation when approaching some of the potential interviewees. The access to the five star hotel implicated several backs and forwards via e-mail with human resource management and the participant as well.
- Limitation when conducting the interview while on duty was problematic for the participant.
- Limitation between the ideal participant selection and the real one achieved. Having said that, the interviewees have all the required knowledge in relation to the full purchasing process. This reality may have affected some of the answers, the duration and development of the full interview. This accuracy issue is explained in the validity section in chapter 5.
- Limitation in terms of timeline, this paper was conducted with a short timeline of three months and during the summer break. This limited as well the tutorial meetings and the data collection time.

- Limitation of space, when the interviewed place has not have a separate area for the interview there is a chance of data protection compromise. This must be addressed by the author and accepted by the participant.

Despite mentioned limitations, the research was completed with the full range of interviews. The number and type of questions were well structured and allowed the author to have a clear picture of the current situation. However, having a different set of semi-structured questionnaires could have been helpful and it is a point to consider for future references.

3.11 Ethical Considerations.

This part explains the ethical consideration applied by the author. Roshaidai Mohd Arifin (2018) mentioned important steps to consider when conducting qualitative research. The scholar's study can be summarize on four main points, ethical committee approval, obtaining consent from the participant, confidentiality of personal details and data protection.

To begin the author received approval from the Ethical committee of the Institute for Tourism Studies in Malta. Following the approval, the author will compose a letter of introduction including in the consent form (see appendix 1) where is stated the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of the process. The interviews proceed after the approval of the participant via signing the consent form. It is also clear the interviews are voluntary and no harm will result from the analysis results or any other part of the research.

The data protection is divided in three different stages, during the interview, the analysis time and the storage of data, Ibid (2018).

The interviews are conducted in person while recording the answers. These are organize in separate tables or rooms to avoid interference from other individuals and respect the data protection. In line with the mentioned, the analysis of the data and the storage of it is proceeds in the author's own premises under encrypted systems saved by passwords with only access to the researcher.

3.12 Conclusion.

Throughout this chapter, the author explains the methodology approach to the research. The choosing analysis techniques and approaches of this inductive and qualitative study. Lastly, limitations encountered and ethical considerations the researcher respected to fulfil the paper's objectives. The application of mentioned methodology follows in the next chapter.

4. Findings, Analysis and Discussion.

This chapter describes the findings and results from the semi-structured interviews. It is divided into two sections starting from a summary of raw data collected from the participants shown in table 2. Following by the analysis and discussion of the common points applying the thematic qualitative approach to establish patterns and compare them with the academic sources reviewed on chapter 2. A summary of each participant's interview can be found on Appendix 2.

4.1 Summary of Raw Data Collection.

Question 1 & 2: Personal information and Role information	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	The participant works as Executive Chef in a high end restaurant and is the person in charge of the purchase of all the products in it. With over fifteen years of experience in the field working in several countries, this individual has over five in this position at the same company. The chosen place claims to offer a high percentage of local products and this was the main reason for the interview.
Participant 2: Private Caterer	The participant has been brought up into the hospitality from young age since he shared the family passion for it. He is currently a private cater for over four years.
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	The participant has been working in the industry for over twenty years. He has been the Chef Patron and owner of the currently place for five years already. During his experiences abroad in places like London or Australia, the Chef understood that something similar can be done on the Island. Currently the restaurant hold one Michelin star for the last three years.
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	The restaurant has been open since 1964. The participant is a second generation of family

	management and is currently over twenty year in the general manger role.
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	The place has been open for six years by the interviewee and currently offer a range of mainly fish products.
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	The participant has been working for the company for almost thirty years in several roles, positions and countries where the hotels are established. Currently he is transiting his tenth year as Executive Chef of the hotel. In his current role he is in charge of the contact with suppliers and purchasing decisions.
Question 3: What kind of suppliers do you work with? Ex. Catering importers, local producers, big chain stores	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	The participant explained that they work with a cooperative of organic farmers from the region of Manikata in the north of Malta. "Once per week the person in charge send me a list of seasonal products we can have" explained the Chef. When comes to beverage, the restaurant offers local wines and beers together with imported but intends to use only local liquors, which are easier to find on the island.
Participant 2: Private Caterer	The Chef explain that he works with small suppliers to ensure the quality and availability of the products. "The products always change so to keep it local I use small companies to ensure the best product on the season" he added.
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	The place works with local farmers and animal growers as well as catering suppliers and importers. "We have to, because some things we must. But we mostly use boutique ones who bring 20 or 30 things of better quality", explained the Chef in relation to importers.
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	The restaurant concept promote traditional Maltese food and the suppliers used and various. The

	<p>manager explain that they select ingredients from local producers to satisfy the main concept. “We buy our bread from a traditional wood fire oven place in Quormi or the local olive oil from a farmer in Siggiewi”. Basically, the restaurant use a vast number of small suppliers as their main option, however there are still some products that cannot be found local and must be imported.</p>
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	<p>The owner was clear “I try to work with locals as much as I can by unfortunately, many suppliers do not have local products themselves. This oblige me to use foreign ones”.</p>
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	<p>The default is to work with a combination of both bulky retail catering suppliers but also small local producers explain the Chef. The choice is made according to the product and the quantities to be ordered. “If you order 20€ for a small supplier, the probability of deliver is too low” but on the other hand “Certain products like Ġbejniet (local Maltese cheese) I work with a small producer. I try to be in contact and talk to them”.</p>
Question 4: When ordering some product, do you consider asking the origin of them?	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	<p>The participant express that they always investigate the origin of the products before purchasing or choosing anything. Besides, in terms of food products they only chose organic local ones or those who they know the production methods is ethical, like better quality grown animals or wild fish.</p>
Participant 2: Private Caterer	<p>“I always ask where is the product from, this is a vital part of the product”, reply the participant.</p>
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	<p>“We always do a research about the product, many times we tell them about a product and they bring it for us” explained the restaurateur.</p>

Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	There are certain products that are crucial to know where they come from in order to satisfy the Maltese traditional concept propose by the restaurant, explained the owner.
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	The Chef explain that he asks where is the food coming from and also, sometimes he request the production methods special for the foreign product. "I went to visit the factory" mentioned when explaining about one of the foreign ingredients.
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	When the manager comes to bulky orders, he tries to be conscious and check where is the product coming from and the production method applied. "I try to be mindful when I choose a product, because is the right thing to do not because it make sense financially".
Question 5: Do you favour local products over imported. Why? (Either response). Are you supported by management /owner?	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	This product choice has a full back up from the management and owner of the company. "This project came from the owner, we want to grow and change the market. It is important to for us, it is our mission" said the interviewee.
Participant 2: Private Catere	As a freelance the Chef is his own boss and part of the experience offered is choosing local ingredients.
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	Being the owner, the interviewee has the final decision on purchasing. When comes to favour local products, the participant states that some proteins are local but others are, lower quality than the expected and therefore the Chef prefers imported ones. In terms of beverage and drinks, "We showcase all the good quality wines there is" he explained although there is a considerable price difference.
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	The participant states that they favour local produce without any doubt. He explained "We favour local

	products, big time. Even with local wines, we serve two thirds of our wine offer in local based". He then added that there are other local beverage that are offered but there isn't enough variety or quantity, examples of local whiskey, gin or liquors.
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	The participant stated that favouring local products sometimes collapse with consistency. So for him is hard to favour them over imported.
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	"I will favour local on the quality point, not on the price point" reply the participant. As an example the Chef states "If I need tomatoes and the suppliers tells me I have both local and Sicilian, I will taste and choose according to the taste and quality". The management supports his choices completely.
Question 6: What part of your products usage is consider Local?	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	Currently 95% of the kitchen products locally sourced. As mentioned, in terms of beverage the percentage is sharply lower since the lack of existence or the small variety of some items. "We produce or own flour and when comes to oils we use local beef tallow and local olive oil. However we still missing sugar and spices that are not produce locally" he explained.
Participant 2: Private Caterer	"I use a large amount of local products, fish & shellfish, vegetables. As much as I can" Stated the Chef. He also explained that the favour of local products comes when choosing wine and beverages.
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	The participant express that this answer depends on the season, since during the year the local products intake may vary. Thus he explain that this changes on a weekly base.
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	In terms of beverage, the restaurant offer over 40% of local products and in terms of food ingredients around 85% express the participant.

Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	Taking in consideration the food and beverage menu, together with extra products usage, the chef explain that their usage can be seen as half of the products being local.
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	This may vary according to the season and the availability, explains the participant but “I believe we have between 20% and 30% of local usage. But the 30% is by pushing it to the edge”.
Question 7: Do you consider adapting you offer or change it in favour of local products?	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	Definitely, the restaurant adapt to the weekly options list provided by the suppliers in order to use the local organic products
Participant 2: Private Caterer	“I would try always to change my clients mind to favour local products”. The participant, however, pointed that there is a price difference and that can affect the chances of favouring the local products.
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	“If the quality was 100% on everything, I would serve 100% local product. But the quality is still not there” stated the owner.
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	The restaurant concept is local traditional food. The participant stated “sometimes, I receive different request regarding food, like pasta Bolognese, etc. I refuse because is not our concept”.
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	Being a small shop and having local suppliers close by, “I can always cross the street to the fish monger and see what they have”, explains the owner. However this do not apply to the fixed menu which is based on consistence products coming from abroad.
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	“Yes, as long and the product is right, you need to start from quality ingredients”, emphasise the Executive Chef. He added that unfortunately the Maltese mentality has still a long way to go when comes to local products. “It starts from the labelling

	the traceability and the package. When you buy from abroad, the products is well presented, while the local one is just thrown into a bag”.
Question 8: Do you consider changes on your offers according to seasonality and availability of local products?	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	Working only with local and organic they change the offer according to seasonality and availability. These becomes a challenges which will be explained further, later on this sub-chapter. On the other hand, the Chef believes this is an amazing opportunity to be creative but understand sometimes the customer comes to look for certain dish that might not be available.
Participant 2: Private Caterer	“I do not offer similar menus all year around”. The Chef explained that for each client, a menu is tailor made and thus he can adapt according to the season and the availability. “I never state a name of a fish, for example. This way I leave room to choose what is in season”.
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	“Micro seasonality, for example in summer we have three different micro season”. The Chef explains that because this different states on the same season, they look for the best way to use what is available locally. However many times the quantities of certain ingredients are not enough to cover the whole micro season.
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	To summarize this question the manager said, “We have a local soup very famous, but we only offer it when the vegetables are in season”.
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	“We do that on the daily special” stated the chef, but not on the general menu. Also, the price must stay within the take away standards added.
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	The menus for all the food retails within the hotel, rotate according to the seasonality express the

	manager. Although, he adds that the products might not be local. "I make the menu according to the perception of seasonality, for example pumpkin is seen as autumn vegetable but it might not be produced locally".
Question 9: Could you base your offer in a majority or totality local products?	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	The participant emphasize that he is positive when basing the offer on mostly local products and that the goal is to be 100% local sourced ingredients.
Participant 2: Private Caterer	"It is difficult because certain products are not produce in Malta". However the Chef is positive that "you can use 90% of local products on your menu".
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	The interviewee explain that it is possible the usage of a majority of local products but only on those where the quality is according to the expectations. He repeats that in terms of animal protein this is not the case.
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	The owner divide the answer in two parts. In terms of beverage, he explain that it is impossible only to offer local products because the lack of variety. However he mention that they offer above 40% of local beverages. On the other hand, when is food related he explain that 100% in not a real number but the restaurant currently using a range of 85 to 90% local products. "We even produce our own local ice-cream with my grandmother's recipe", added the participant.
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	"I cannot, the consistency is not as we need to do so", explained straight away the participant.
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	The participant believes this option is extremely unlikely. "This difficulty is not only in quality of the product but also in the limited selection of them" explains. The market for just local products based on the offer the Maltese island has is narrow and the hotel cannot offer only that.

Question 10: What are, in your opinion, the advantages or disadvantages of using local products?	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	The usage of local products has some advantages according to the interviewee where “You can be original, for example I have a supplier that produce local sheep milk cheeses. Choosing him, I know how he produce and I can help him produce different things for us” he explained. Then the Chef added “This products have a story behind and we tell that story”. On the other hand, the participant explains that there are some disadvantages as well that become challenges in terms of prices and quantities.
Participant 2: Private Caterer	As a private Caterer, one disadvantage mentioned is that some clients will not agree or understand the price difference. Thus, the client sometime will pay more than if the menu was created with foreign products. On the other hand the Chef believes that an advantage is “You can show Malta on a plate”.
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	When comes to advantages, the Chef mentioned the freshness, the fruits flavour and the taste of the land. On the other hand, as a disadvantage the participant point the lack of quantity supply and the inconsistence of the suppliers.
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	The first advantage mentioned is “pride” of serving local food. “It is my personal pride, because commercially I could make more money” stated the owner. Another advantage is that proposing this local traditional concept, the restaurant found a niche of work that allows them be unique. The manager did not mentioned any specific disadvantage at this stage.
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	As an advantage, the Chef explain that the special menu changes every day making more interesting offer for the client. On the other hand this is more

	pressure on the staff and it is seen as a disadvantage for a take away place.
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	The Chef understands that the main advantage of usage of local products manifest on the pride and the option to tell the story behind the products. The idea of give the customer the local experience by talking about the land and the culture. On the other hand, the participant understand that a key disadvantage comes from the lack of consistency on the quality which does not allow him, as the face of the food and beverage offer, trust that the menu will taste the same throughout the season.
Question 11: In your opinion, the usage of local products attract tourism?	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	The participant is negative to find any relationship between the usage of local products and tourism yet on the Island.
Participant 2: Private Caterer	"Yes, in fact 90% of my clients are foreign and tourists, unfortunately Maltese clients do not want to eat Maltese food" claimed the Private Caterer immediately.
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	The Patron believes in good products, despites of being local or not. He expressed that "Good product attract tourism, they do not care where comes from".
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	The participant believes there are many tourist looking for a traditional authentic Maltese experience and is positive that the usage of local products attracts them.
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	The owner was not sure about this however he believes that local product should attract tourism.
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	The manager is positive that local products attract tourism. "If you are able to tell them an honest story, then yes" he stated. However, the Chef also mentioned that, because this is a trend now, many

	people are telling a fiction story just to attract tourism and this might fire back at some point.
Question 12: Do you promote this? And how?	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	The company does promote this usage within the social media and other internet platforms but the concept is not yet understood very well. He added that "There are some other places copying us now, we do not want to say we were the first ones using only local products but in reality we were".
Participant 2: Private Caterer	The Chef explained that he promote the local products from the minute he meet the clients and tailor made the menu by favouring the home ingredients.
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	The interviewee states that they promote on their menu the usage of local products with full details on where the product comes from. Another way they promote is with the service team explaining the origin of the dishes. Yet again the Chef emphasise that the most important is the good quality of product more than where it comes from.
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	The promotion is done mainly in social media and in the local fly company magazine. Also, once the customer is seated, the service team explains about the origin of the products served.
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	The restaurant promotes the usage of local products on the daily special menu, but not much on social media.
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	The company promotes the usage of local products via social media but also with an excellent training service team who explains and tells the story behind the ingredients to the customers.
Question 13: Have you been asked about the origin of the products by customers?	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	The Chef explains that some customers ask about the origin of the products, however when comes to

	meats they are still dubious about local products. “We try to teach the service team to explain about the origin of the products even before the customer ask”.
Participant 2: Private Caterer	“Yes, in fact is frequently ask specially when preparing potatoes”, reply the Caterer.
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	“Most of the times we explain before they ask, but sometimes the customer ask where the product comes from”, replied the participant.
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	The manager explained that sometimes customer ask about certain products, but usually the service team tells the story behind them beforehand.
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	The manager explained that some customer asked from where is the fish from and also regarding the production method, if it is wild or farmed.
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	“Yes, but there are very few” explain the interviewee.
Question 14: Does the sector include/provide any sort of incentive to use local produce?	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	There is no support or incentive from any sector and the Chef believes it is unlucky since this could be a way to increase the local products intake.
Participant 2: Private Caterer	There is no evidence of any incentive been provided, explained the participant. “I do not know but I am sure there is room for more pushing to chefs to use local products” the Chef added.
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	The Chef replies negatively to this question, explaining there is no incentive form any sector to use local products.
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	There is no incentive or anything provided by the sector, stated the participant.
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	There is no incentive provided to the restaurant.
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	“If there is, I am not aware of” replies the Chef.
Question 15: What are, in your opinion, the challenges you find by choosing the usage of local products?	

Participant 1: High end Restaurant	<p>The Chef mentioned a number of challenges which will be state below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First is that using only local product, the kitchen must constantly play around what they find. The chef stated “Some time you only have potatoes and onion and you need to build a menu of fifteen dishes”. • Consistency is another challenge mentioned, however this is not something the participant in bother about. “For us in the kitchen, the availability and consistency, make a playground of creativity. • Another challenge is related to price, when local products are considerably more expensive than imported. “Price is a challenge because some essential products vary on their cost drastically according to seasonality like honey or olive oil”. On the other hand the chef also add that using local products allow them to reduce cost by using almost free stuff from foraging. “One day a farmer came with a big bunch of rucula, and told me take, I found in on my field. So sometimes you have free products”.
Participant 2: Private Caterer	<p>The Chef mentioned a number of challenges which will be state below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participant explain that by choosing local products unfortunately limits his clients list. Again he emphasise that “Maltese clients do not want to eat Maltese food. People are obsess with social media food like Wagyu beef from Japan”. • Another challenge the Chef find is the shelf life of the products, due to the fact that foreign ones come in more resistance packages, preservatives and chemicals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price of local product is one more challenge, where sometimes local vegetables are more expensive than the same one coming from abroad.
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	<p>The participant mentioned three important challenges in his opinion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of the products • Quantity of the products • Consistency of the products <p>Furthermore, he explained that quality is the most important one and relegated the price difference. “I prefer to have three weeks of super good product and then finish than longer time poor quality” claimed the Chef.</p>
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	<p>The challenges can be divided into some points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of product. • Quantity of product. • Bureaucracy over the animal growing. “There is a lot of bureaucracy on the rabbit growing”. • Cost and price. “I absorb a big part of the costs in order to offer local products”. • One important point mentioned by the manager was that “being a local restaurant, offering traditional Maltese food, is very hard to survive only based in the local market”. “We suffered a lot during Covid” added.
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	<p>The major challenge is quality and consistency according to the participant. However he mentioned as well the price, where “sometimes the local product is more expensive than the foreign”.</p>
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	<p>As challenges the Executive Chef mentions some clear and detailed points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency of the products. • The amount available.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price, where many times the local product is more expensive than a similar imported. However in this case the Chef explains that “Although financially does not make sense, it is the right thing to do and therefore I have Maltese Ġbejniet on breakfast table”.
Question 16: What are, in your opinion, the suggestions to overcome these challenges?	
Participant 1: High end Restaurant	<p>As a suggestion, the participant focus on two aspects related to the local authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentives to farmers to produce better quality, more quantity and more variety of products. • In parallel, focus on promoting more local products on the national level. “Perhaps, governments need to do more local food festival, not only the festa frawli” (Local Feast to celebrate the strawberry season) he stated.
Participant 2: Private Caterer	<p>As a suggestion, the participant focus on some ideas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetables sellers and farmers should have a larger turnover. This way they can grow larger amount of crops, then prices may go down by the increase of offer. • In order to overcome the lack of local clients, the chef believes this is a long process of changing people’s mentality and this can only be reached by education towards the usage of local products from the early age at schools.
Participant 3: Michelin Star Restaurant	<p>In terms of suggestions, the participant explained that he is part of a governmental forum together with growers and other individuals who work on improve the local products. The Chef suggests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One important step could be grading, or in another words, products certifications according to quality. Similar to what is happening in other

	<p>European countries. The Chef explain that “When you have better quality, people want to invest. Like what happened when Michelin guide came to Malta”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another important step the interviewee express is the increase of quantity of products. Furthermore He explained that many times the restaurant offer to buy the seeds for the farmer to grow for them. This should come with a governmental incentive for the growers as well.
Participant 4: Mid-Range Restaurant	<p>The manager is not sure if there is any help to farmer to increase the growth of crops. He mention to be worry and “wondering if the war shifter the business to search for local products”. The owner believes the bureaucracy must be stopped, also that the beverage market must increase the quantities and qualities.</p>
Participant 5: Take Away Establishment	<p>The restaurateur believes that an incentive from government to the farmers to improve the quality and consistency of the products can help overcome the challenges. Also, he added that the sector should find a way to reduce local product’s price to be able to compete with foreign.</p>
Participant 6: Five Star Hotel	<p>When comes to suggestions in order to overcome the mentioned challenges, the participant pointed some ideas that go above the industry but includes also governmental actions. These can be summarized on the following points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The look at the food chain must change. “When Covid striked, emerged the idea of self-sufficient and many farmers were delivering local products to the houses. This changed as soon as the pandemic fear lower down and everything went back to as it was. My fear is that we might end up being 100% importation dependant”. Thus the Chef adds that the Government must find the way to increase

	<p>the incentives to farmers to grow, better quality crops and more variety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) can help to promote the local product so the customers are more aware of them. Not just tourist but also locals. • Another point is that government need to improve the regulations and enforcement when comes to labelling of local products. "I know many products been sold even at the airport that are label as local and are not". • Education, "Kids needs to know where the food comes from, so then the respect for this food will increase".
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Table 2

4.2 Analysis and Discussion of Common Points.

This part focuses on the common points brought up by the participants during the interviews. The analysis will explain the usage of local products within the hospitality establishments in Malta, the challenges of this usage and the suggestions the interviewees pointed out. In parallel, will compare and contrast this analysis with the academic data provided in the literature review. Therefore the work is separate between headlines which answer the objectives of this paper. Lastly will describe any emerging points to be consider from the data and its comparison with the academic information.

4.2.1 Usage of Local Products within Hospitality Business in Malta.

When coming to choosing the suppliers to work with, the high end restaurant together with the private Caterer and the middle range place opted for small and locally sourced producers in order to get the best produce the land can give. On the other hand, Michelin Star restaurant, the take away and the five star hotel will not base their choice only from small producer but also large ones, who can assure the consistency and quantity of the same item any time. Larger suppliers not necessary focus on local ingredients but mostly imported ones. This choice partially agrees with Kovács, Balázsne Lendvai and Beke (2022) who stated that the local products are seen in general as artisan made from minor producers. When comes to beverages, the point is clear and all the establishments support local producers of wine and other beverages on similar percentages. However none of the participants can base their drinks only on local

produce since there is not enough options or the needed beverage type do not exist. These facts are in relation to Viticulture and Oenology (2022) explained in chapter 2.

When it comes to considering the origin of the purchasing products, the six participants agree that it is important to question that. Even if the choice is not to buy local products, where the ingredient comes from as well as the production method based on ethical thinking are pillar details that the interviewees ask their suppliers. Kovács, Balázs and Lendvai (2022) agree with the actions taken by the establishments.

However each individual focuses on different aspects of the product when choosing what to purchase. While the high end restaurant, the private Caterer and the middle range place will favour a local product over the same one imported despite the price or quality difference, the rest of the participants will first focus on the quality, the flavour. Only then chose the ingredient and it is clear the two main postures. In addition customers, local or tourist, are better informed and looking for more than just a meal when coming to a place. This is an aspect mentioned also by the interviewees pointing that several times customers query about the origin of products, production methods and else. All the mentioned concur with Ibid (2022), Ribeiro Tavares (2020) and European Union (2020) strategy, and emphasize how cost loses its place for other values at the balance of ingredient's choice.

During the interviews, participant 1 expressed that the establishment change and adapt their offer almost on a weekly base to favour local products and stay in line with the availability of them during the season. In a similar way participant 2 offers different menus to fulfil the same objective. Also participant 4 explains they adapt the offer constantly to favour the local products as well as the seasonality and availability of them. However the rest of the participants have a different view over this points. While participant 3 claims to change the offer on a micro-seasonality way, which refers to the different stages of the same season, participant 5 explains they are only flexible with a minor part of their offer and participant 6 express that their menus change seasonally according to the customer perception of seasonality but that the products usage not necessarily include local production. Furthermore, the last three agree that any change must be done based on quality of the product rather than if it is local or not. Therefore, the author understand that the chances of based the offer on the majority of local products and ingredients, are high within the high end, the middle range restaurant and the private Caterer. However, they are low when comes to the Michelin star place, the take away and the five star hotel. It is clear that restaurants adapt their offer to the new customers' points of interest focusing on seasonality and availability of products. However, the fact that the entities change or adapt the offer to the time of the year does not imply the use of local product only. Therefore contradict part of the base of "Locavorism" supported by the mentioned scholars.

Thus the actively amount of local product that used in each establishment is the most pronounced contrast between the participants. While participant 1, 2 and 4 claim to use close to 90-95% of local products, when comes to choose the food ingredients, participant 3 and 5 explain that their usage intake does not exceed the 50% of them. Besides participant 6 expresses that their quantity utilised hardly reach the 30%. These facts agree with Laure and Granier (2016) and express some of the issues of a “Short supply chain”. Also they concur Sindico (2021) who refers to the lack of land space in islands. Moreover the low usage of local products agree with Elkhwesky, Salem, Varmus and Ramkissoon (2022) when explained part of the pandemic effects on the hospitality industry and the way to reduce costs.

Despite the differences that exist between the participants when comes to change or adapt their offer in order to favour local and seasonal products, they all agree that there are some advantages of this usage. Participants from all the hospitality frame agree that using local products has the advantage of feeling pride, the idea of promoting Malta and the taste of the land on a plate. It allows creativity, and showcases tradition. This advantages mentioned are in line with the fundamentals of the “Slow Food Movement” expressed on chapter 2 (About us - Slow Food International, 2022) and Jasper (2022) with the idea of back to the roots. On the other hand the Chefs pointed as disadvantage the lack of quantity and consistency on the products which are described and expanded as the challenges on following part.

4.2.2 Challenges of Using Local Products.

In the course of the interviews, the interviewees pointed out some challenges the establishments have when opting for local products. This part will describe those mentioned challenges brought up by the participants and compare them with the academic chapter (chapter 2).

There are three major points emerging as common factors. Price, consistency, quality and quantity available of a product (The author combines them as are related to the same base of challenge), and shelf life and packaging.

The participants explained that local products are in a majority more expensive than similar ones imported although they not enter in the reasons behind. This fact present a major challenge since despite not being financially right, most of the individuals still opt to purchase specific items from local producers. This reality agrees with the explained by Ribeiro Tavares (2020) and emphasize the ideas of “Locavorism”. Also it showcase the pride stated as an advantage of using local products. Having said that, the participants who choose a low usage of local product focused on other circumstances rather than price. The interviewees agree the product received today, not necessary will be consistence with the one received tomorrow. In addition, the quality of certain local products is inferior to the same item imported. This affect the possibility of basing

the offer on a majority of local products. The restaurateurs expressed also that the amount of product offer to the market is not enough to supply the demand. Therefore many times they are obliged to turn to imported products. This has direct impact when confectioning menus leading to a customer visiting a place for certain ingredients and not being able to find it. This pattern follows the results of the census conducted over ten years by the ministry of Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries (2020) and explains the reduction in all terms of local products. However it contrast with the concept stated by Sindico (2021) whereby island's policies following "Locavorism", are moving towards reducing the dependence on imported products. One more important challenge, brought up by the private Caterer and the five star hotel Executive Chef, point out that local products are treated with less care than imported ones. The lack of well-presented packaging influences the shelf life as well as the quality and consistency of the item. This point has direct relation with traceability also and it stands against the "Code of Conduct" supported by the European Union and described in chapter 2. Despite the challenges mentioned, the interviews show signs of ideas moving towards a higher "locavorism" concept. This ideas are explained by the suggestions the establishments express to increase the usage of local products.

4.2.3 Suggestions to Overcome the Challenges.

Previous paragraphs described the challenges establishments pointed out when using local products. This part focuses on the suggestions or recommendations the participant expressed to overcome mentioned challenges. In parallel, the author compare these ideas with the concepts explained in the literature chapter to establish a path.

One important point brought up is the fact that some customers are not aware or do not believe on the quality of the local Maltese products. This statement contradict with the "Farm to Fork" strategy (2020) idea and therefore education is crucial in order to promote the local products and demand better quality. The participants understand that education start from early school where children should learn where and how the food comes from. Thus, education may impact on the local residences and increase their demand on local food products. This suggestions is in line with Sindico (2021) and the concept of islands' policies move toward "Locavorism".

To overcome the challenges of lack in quality, quantity and consistency, the participants suggested applying governmental incentives to farmers. Thus, will improve ingredients and promote the usage of them by hospitality establishments. Moreover the five star hotel executive chef and the high end restaurant chef believe the Maltese tourism authority should promote more local food festivals to engage local residences as well as tourist into the offers the land has. Suggestions which address the European Union strategy (2020) and Laure and Granier

(2016) to shorten the supply chain. In addition the mentioned participants brought up the idea of in grow production, they suggested to purchase seeds and help the farmers. Also the thought of having some crops in house. This suggestion agrees with Ibid (2016) and Visser, van Beek, den Held and Groen (2021) as explained in the academic review chapter (chapter 2).

In line with mentioned challenges, the cost of products has been addressed also. There are several possible factors to explain the increase on local food price, however understanding that Malta is an island with small resources aggravated by the Eastern European conflict, are some important ones. The Fitch Solutions Group Limited (2022) report, express that the inflation is affecting the globe increasing the costs of supply chain. Furthermore, as mentioned by Jasper (2022) in order to prevent further price increase, governments must adopt a higher locally product focus policy which is in direct relation with the incentive suggestion made by the participants on the interviews.

Lastly, the Michelin star Chef explained that having a grading mark on ingredients will bring a better quality on them. In this line, the five start hotel Executive Chef expresses that labelling and packaging regulations will bring a better product to the customer. Over all the participants agreed the products must be taking care on a better way in terms of hygienic and labelling standards. The mentioned suggestions are in line with the European Code of Conduct mentioned previous and explained in chapter 2.

4.2.4 Emerging Concept from Interviews and Literature.

An emerging point from the interviews is a relationship between the tourism and the local products and the way establishments exploit it. This concept agrees with Sindico (2021) as tourism is the main industry when comes to islands.

The direct relation between usage of local products and the increase of food tourism has different views according to the participants. While the high end restaurant, the Michelin star and the take away place are negative of a direct influence, the other three establishments believe in a correlation between them. This point partially contrast with the explanations of Elkhwesky, Salem, Varmus and Ramkissoon (2022) whereby there is an increase tourist demand of “authentic taste”. Also stands against Laure and Granier (2016) who believe that a strong focus on local product has a direct impact on the increase of tourism.

Despite having unequal ideas on whether the usage of local products attract tourism, every business expresses that they adopted a concept of promoting their usage. This promotion is based on social media platforms and with a strong service team training that provide explanations to the customers. These actions taken by the service or floor team focus to anticipate customers’ questions and queries about certain items which all the participants

mentioned that occurs with more or less frequency during a meal experience. Dehdashti, Jahedi, (2021) support this action describing that approaching local products is an advantage used as marketing asset. Leyland (2021) emphasises the use of social media as a way of connecting the producer to the end customer via the hospitality establishment.

4.2.5 Conclusion.

This part will provide a brief conclusion of the data collection analysis, before moving to the next chapter where a general conclusion of the study will be described.

To begin, it is understandable that each establishment has a different policy when coming to purchasing local products. Some are focused on the origin of the ingredient while others are more interested on the quality and taste of them as primary value. Following this point there is a clear idea of showcasing the vast or little usage of local products each establishment consume to differ themselves from other places.

During the analysis of results, common point's patterns established to answer the objectives of this research. These points enlighten the similar situation the hospitality industry cross despite the different range of establishments interviewed. Further along on the chapter, those common ideas are compared with the academic studies reviewed in chapter 2.

It can be conclude that global circumstances and food trends have direct impact on the usage of local products within the Maltese Hospitality industry. However, being an island, Malta suffers from lack of space affecting the quantity, consistency and quality of its local production. In line with the mentioned, an emerging point from the data express the relation between tourism and local food production. Furthermore the establishments pointed some suggestions which go hand in hand with the food trends and new strategies taking place in Europe.

5. Final Arguments.

The final chapter is to summarize and conclude the study. The following lines will disclose the conclusions and the understandings the author achieved from the findings and the analysis of the research. Furthermore the next paragraphs will describe the relations between these results and the study's objectives. Additionally the author provides recommendations for future research.

5.1 Conclusions.

The study has shown that the last episodes from the pandemic for Covid-19 and the regional war in Eastern Europe have affected the economies in several ways with crucial impact on the food sector and the hospitality business. Besides, emerging local food trends in addition to these effects claim for the restaurant industry to look inside and reduce the product importation dependence. Furthermore these circumstances toughen up in small countries and regions such as islands like Malta.

This research aimed to explore the usage of local produce within the hospitality establishments and concludes that, after analysing the finding results of the interviews, this objective has been met. Having interviewed several establishments encompassing various range of them, the author believes the usage of local produce is clear and respects each and every place's policy. In addition, the reasons behind choosing or not local produce, and the challenges the establishments have when selecting ingredients have been understood. Finally, the interviewees provided suggestions to increase the local produce intake and a positive impact on the country's economy. Thus the author conclude that the usage of local produce within the hospitality industry is currently far from being maximized. The lack of quality and consistency of the products is an important concern point since it affects most of the individuals. Besides in a certain way oblige the establishments to find alternatives with imported goods. Under the current conflict situation affecting the region, smaller economies must look inside for basic needs such as food and avoid the importation dependence.

The challenges mentioned are in line with the Maltese agricultural situation and request deeper analysis of reasons. Moreover, it is clear the establishments believe in showcasing local production and have similar line of thought when comes to future recommendations.

Lastly as an emerging objective, the author believe there in an increase of food addicts and food consumers when comes to tourism. Having said that, still Maltese establishment are not exploding this mentioned on its full potential. The local food movement is happening and is fomented by the tourism visiting places for its local food. Local Maltese food sector should embrace this movement and grow within.

This paper is a base of research on the topic. Although could be use as starting point, future research should be conducted. In the following part, the author provides future recommendations for further studies which may clarify the full picture of the hospitality business toward the usage of local products in Malta.

5.2 Recommendations.

Following the conclusion, where the interviewees expressed some suggestions to the decision makers. The author understands that these come only from one part of the industry and further research needs to be done to understand the full picture. Thus, the author recommends to explore the usage of local product within the entire supply chain focused in everyone involved in it. Although some details related to food production in Malta where pointed by previous researches referred here, it is imperative to understand the reasons behind them. While the globe moves towards inside production, Malta still favours imported goods.

Having the full picture, governments may be able to understand the gaps pointed out by this paper's establishments and compile new policies according to the general European Strategies and the new food movements mentioned in chapter 2.

In addition, the study shows the relation between local food product and tourism is not full exploded by the establishments on the island. It is understandable, Malta has important income from the tourism sector, and therefore understanding how to increase the food tourism via local products could provide an important increase of neighbourhood economies. The author believe further research should be conducted to establish and increase this mentioned factor.

The author also recommends to conduct similar research applying longer sample and time line to overcome the mentioned limitations on chapter 3.

5.3 Reliability and Validity of Research

Throughout this part the author provides a brief analysis of the reliability and validity of this research. The idea of this part is to evaluate the trustworthiness of the inductive and qualitative research with thematic analysis, to understand the relevance of it (Rose, Johnson, 2020).

In terms of reliability, the author believes the chosen methodology approach to the research has been the appropriate. Moreover, the researcher understands this study can be replicated by others following the methodology description. However, in terms of validity the author is less optimistic. When evaluating the type of participants the researches is positive this paper includes the full range of participants. Having said that, to obtain higher accuracy results, the author recognize this paper needs to be extended and encompass more than one participant of each range of establishments.

In a certain way, it can be conclude the existence of a reliable and valid study. This can be extended to further research to obtain higher information about the current situation in the hospitality industry in Malta, and their usage of local products.

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7. Appendix 1 Introduction Letter and Consent Form.



Consent Form for Undergraduate Research Study

Title of Research – Exploring the Usage of Local Products within the Hospitality Business

Researcher Ariel Guivisdalsky 0176910A

Degree Bachelor in Culinary Arts (Hons)

Dear Sir / Madam,

I, **Ariel Guivisdalsky** a mature student at the Institute of Tourism Studies am currently in the final year of my *Bachelor in Culinary Arts (Hons)*. I am carrying out research on the Usage of Local Products within the Hospitality Business. I would like to explore your views on this matter by asking you / any other person involved in the purchase of food and beverage, some questions. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information so you can decide whether to participate in this study. Any questions you may have will be answered by the researcher. Please note the interview should not take more than one hour.

There are no known risks related with this research project other than possible discomfort with the following:

- You will be asked to be honest when answering questions.

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be stored securely and will be made available only to those individuals conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

Your identity will not be revealed in any publications that result from this study.

You can terminate your participation at any time without prejudice. You also do not have to answer individual questions you don't want to answer. Your name will not be attached to the findings and I will ensure that your participation remains confidential.

Participant's declaration

I have read this consent form and am giving the opportunity to the researcher to ask questions and record the session for note taking / analysis purposes only. I hereby grant permission to use the information I provide as data in the above mentioned research project, knowing that it will be kept confidential and without use of my name.

Participant's name

Participant's signature

Date

Researcher's name

Researcher's signature

Date

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8. Appendix 2 Summarize of Interviews per Participant.

8.1 Participant 1, High End Restaurant.

Question 1 & 2 A bit about the participant. Experience and personal information. Role - how long they have been there, in the hospitality, in Malta.

The first participant works as Executive Chef in a high end restaurant and is the person in charge of the purchase of all the products in it. With over fifteen years of experience in the field working in several countries, this individual has over five in this position at the same company. The chosen place claims to offer a high percentage of local products and this was the main reason for the interview.

Question 3 what kind of suppliers do you work with? Ex. Catering importers, local producers, big chain stores.

The participant explained that they work with a cooperative of organic farmers from the region of Manikata in the north of Malta. "Once per week the person in charge send me a list of seasonal products we can have" explained the Chef. When comes to beverage, the restaurant offers local wines and beers together with imported but intends to use only local liquors, which are easier to find on the island.

Question 4 when ordering some product, do you consider asking the origin of them?

The participant express that they always investigate the origin of the products before purchasing or choosing anything. Besides, in terms of food products they only chose organic local ones or those who they know the production methods is ethical, like better quality grown animals or wild fish.

Question 5 Do you favour local products over imported. Why? Are you supported by management / owner.

This product choice has a full back up from the management and owner of the company. "This project came from the owner, we want to grow and change the market. It is important to for us, it is our mission" said the interviewee.

Question 6 what part of your products usage is consider Local?

Currently 95% of the kitchen products locally sourced. As mentioned, in terms of beverage the percentage is sharply lower since the lack of existence or the small variety of some items. "We produce or own flour and when comes to oils we use local beef tallow and local olive oil. However we still missing sugar and spices that are not produce locally" he explained.

Question 7 Do you consider adapt you offer or change it in favour of local products?

Definitely. The restaurant adapt to the weekly options list provided by the suppliers in order to use the local organic products.

Question 8 Do you consider changes on your offers according to seasonality and availability of local products?

Working only with local and organic they change the offer according to seasonality and availability. These becomes a challenges which will be explained further, later on this sub-chapter. On the other hand, the Chef believes this is an amazing opportunity to be creative but understand sometimes the customer comes to look for certain dish that might not be available.

Question 9 could you base your offer in a majority or totality local products?

The participant emphasize that he is positive when basing the offer on mostly local products and that the goal is to be 100% local sourced ingredients.

Question 10 what are, in your opinion, the advantages or disadvantages of using local products?

The usage of local products has some advantages according to the interviewee where “You can be original, for example I have a supplier that produce local sheep milk cheeses. Choosing him, I know how he produce and I can help him produce different things for us” he explained. Then the Chef added “This products have a story behind and we tell that story”. On the other hand, the participant explains that there are some disadvantages as well that become challenges in terms of prices and quantities.

Question 11 in your opinion, the usage of local products attracts tourism?

The participant is negative to find any relationship between the usage of local products and tourism yet on the Island.

Question 12 Do you promote this? And how?

The company does promote this usage within the social media and other internet platforms but the concept is not yet understood very well. He added that “There are some other places copying us now, we do not want to say we were the first ones using only local products but in reality we were”.

Question 13 Have you been asked about the origin of the products by customers?

The Chef explains that some customers ask about the origin of the products, however when comes to meats they are still dubious about local products. “We try to teach the service team to explain about the origin of the products even before the customer ask”.

Question 14 Does the sector include/provide any sort of incentive to use local produce?

There is no support or incentive from any sector and the Chef believes it is unlucky since this could be a way to increase the local products intake.

Question 15 what are, in your opinion, the *challenges* you find by choosing the usage of local products?

The Chef mentioned a number of challenges which will be state below.

- First is that using only local product, the kitchen must constantly play around what they find. The chef stated “Some time you only have potatoes and onion and you need to build a menu of fifteen dishes”.
- Consistency is another challenge mentioned, however this is not something the participant in bother about. “For us in the kitchen, the availability and consistency, make a playground of creativity.
- Another challenge is related to price, when local products are considerably more expensive than imported. “Price is a challenge because some essential products vary on their cost drastically according to seasonality like honey or olive oil”. On the other hand the chef also add that using local products allow them to reduce cost by using almost free stuff from foraging. “One day a farmer came with a big bunch of rucula, and told me take, I found in on my field. So sometimes you have free products”.

Question 16 what are, in your opinion, the *suggestions* to overcome these challenges?

As a suggestion, the participant focus on two aspects related to the local authorities.

- Incentives to farmers to produce better quality, more quantity and more variety of products.
- In parallel, focus on promoting more local products on the national level. “Perhaps, governments need to do more local food festival, not only the festa frawli” he stated.

8.2 Participant 2, Private Caterer.

Question 1 & 2 A bit about the participant. Experience and personal information. Role - how long they have been there, in the hospitality, in Malta.

The participant has been brought up into the hospitality from young age since he shared the family passion for it. He is currently a private Caterer for over four years.

Question 3 what kind of suppliers do you work with? Ex. Catering importers, local producers, big chain stores.

The Chef explain that he works with small suppliers to ensure the quality and availability of the products. "The products always change so in order to keep it local I use small companies to ensure the best product on the season" he added.

Question 4 when ordering some product, do you consider asking the origin of them?

"I always ask where is the product from, this is a vital part of the product", reply the participant.

Question 5 Do you favour local products over imported. Why? Are you supported by management / owner?

As a freelance the Chef is his own boss and part of the experience offered is by choosing local ingredients.

Question 6 what part of your products usage is consider Local?

"I use a large amount of local products, fish & shellfish, vegetables. As much as I can" Stated the Chef. He also explained that the favour of local products comes when choosing wine and beverages.

Question 7 Do you consider adapt you offer or change it in favour of local products?

"I would try always to change my clients mind to favour local products". The participant, however, pointed that there is a price difference and that can affect the chances of favouring the local products.

Question 8 Do you consider changes on your offers according to seasonality and availability of local products?

"I do not offer similar menus all year around". The Chef explained that for each client, a menu is tailor made and thus he can adapt according to the season and the availability. "I never state a name of a fish, for example. This way I leave room to choose what is in season".

Question 9 could you base your offer in a majority or totality local products?

"It is difficult because certain products are not produce in Malta". However the Chef is positive that "you can use 90% of local products on your menu".

Question 10 what are, in your opinion, the advantages or disadvantages of using local products?

As a private Caterer, one disadvantage mentioned is that some clients will not agree or understand the price difference. Thus, the client sometime will pay more than if the menu was created with foreign products. On the other hand the Chef believes that an advantage is "You can show Malta on a plate".

Question 11 in your opinion, the usage of local products attracts tourism?

“Yes, in fact 90% of my clients are foreign and tourists, unfortunately Maltese clients do not want to eat Maltese food” claimed the Private Caterer immediately.

Question 12 Do you promote this? And how?

The Chef explained that he promote the local products from the minute he meet the clients and tailor made the menu by favouring the home ingredients.

Question 13 Have you been asked about the origin of the products by customers?

“Yes, in fact is frequently ask... specially when preparing potatoes”, reply the Caterer.

Question 14 Does the sector include/provide any sort of incentive to use local produce?

There is no evidence of any incentive been provided, explained the participant. “I do not know but I am sure there is room for more pushing to chefs to use local products” the Chef added.

Question 15 what are, in your opinion, the *challenges* you find by choosing the usage of local products?

The Chef mentioned a number of challenges which will be state below.

- The participant explain that by choosing local products unfortunately limits his clients list. Again he emphasise that “Maltese clients do not want to eat Maltese food. People are obsess with social media food like Wagyu beef from Japan”.
- Another challenge the Chef find is the shelf life of the products, due to the fact that foreign ones come in more resistance packages, preservatives and chemicals.
- Price of local product is one more challenge, where sometimes local vegetables are more expensive than the same one coming from abroad.

Question 16 what are, in your opinion, the *suggestions* to overcome these challenges?

As a suggestion, the participant focus on some ideas.

- Vegetables sellers and farmers should have a larger turnover in order to favour local products. This way they can grow larger amount of crops, then prices may go down by the increase of offer.

In order to overcome the lack of local clients, the chef believes this is a long process of changing people’s mentality and this can only be reached by education towards the usage of local products from the early age at schools.

8.3 Participant 3, One Michelin Star Restaurant.

Question 1 & 2 A bit about the participant. Experience and personal information. Role - how long they have been there, in the hospitality, in Malta.

The participant has been working in the industry for over twenty years. He has been the Chef Patron and owner of the currently place for five years already. During his experiences abroad in places like London or Australia, the Chef understood that something similar can be done on the Island. Currently the restaurant hold one Micheline star for the last three years.

Question 3 what kind of suppliers do you work with? Ex. Catering importers, local producers, big chain stores.

The place works with local farmers and animal growers as well as catering suppliers and importers. "We have to, because some things we must. But we mostly use boutique ones who bring 20 or 30 things of better quality", explained the Chef in relation to importers.

Question 4 when ordering some product, do you consider asking the origin of them?

"We always do a research about the product, many times we tell them about a product and they bring it for us" explained the restaurateur.

Question 5 Do you favour local products over imported. Why? Are you supported by management / owner?

Being the owner, the interviewee has the final decision on purchasing. When comes to favour local products, the participant states that some proteins are local but others are, unfortunately, lower quality than the expected for example. In terms of beverage and drinks, "We showcase all the good quality wines there is" he explained although there is a considerable price difference.

Question 6 what part of your products usage is consider Local?

The participant express that this answer depends on the season, since during the year the local products intake may vary. Thus he explain that this changes on a weekly base.

Question 7 Do you consider adapt you offer or change it in favour of local products?

"If the quality was 100% on everything, I would serve 100% local product. But the quality is still not there" stated the owner.

Question 8 Do you consider changes on your offers according to seasonality and availability of local products?

"Micro seasonality, for example in summer we have three different micro season..." The Chef explains that because this different states on the same season, they look for the best way to use what is available.

Question 9 could you base your offer in a majority or totality local products?

The interviewee explain that it is possible the usage of a majority of local products but only on those where the quality is according to the expectations. He repeats that in terms of animal protein this is not the case.

Question 10 what are, in your opinion, the advantages or disadvantages of using local products?

When comes to advantages, the Chef mentioned the freshness, the fruits flavour and the taste of the land. On the other hand, as a disadvantage the participant point the lack of quantity supply and the inconsistency of the suppliers.

Question 11 in your opinion, the usage of local products attracts tourism?

The patron believes in good products, despite of being local or not. He express that “Good product attract tourism, they do not care where comes from”.

Question 12 Do you promote this? And how?

Despite what was answer on the previous question, the interviewee states that they promote on their menu the usage of local products with full details on where the product comes from.

Another way they promote is with the service team explaining the origin of the dishes. Yet again the Chef emphasise that the most important is the good quality of product more than where it comes from.

Question 13 Have you been asked about the origin of the products by customers?

“Most of the times we explain before they ask, but sometimes the customer ask where the product comes from”, replied the participant.

Question 14 Does the sector include/provide any sort of incentive to use local produce?

The Chef replies negatively to this question, explaining there is no incentive from any sector to use local products.

Question 15 what are, in your opinion, the *challenges* you find by choosing the usage of local products?

The participant mentioned three important challenges in his opinion.

- Quality of the products
- Quantity of the products
- Consistency of the products

Furthermore, he explained that quality is the most important one and relegated the price difference. “I prefer to have three weeks of super good product and then finish than longer time poor quality” claimed the Chef.

Question 16 what are, in your opinion, the *suggestions* to overcome these challenges?

In terms of suggestions, the participant explained that he is part of a governmental forum together with growers and other individuals who work on improve the local products.

- One important step could be grading, or in another words, products calcifications according to quality. Similar to what is happening in other European countries. The Chef explain that “When you have better quality, people want to invest. Like what happened when Michelin guide came to Malta”.
- Another important step the interviewee express is the increase of quantity of products. Furthermore He explained that many times the restaurant offer to buy the seeds for the farmer to grow for them. This should come with a governmental incentive for the growers as well.

8.4 Participant 4, Middle Range or Family Restaurant.

Question 1 & 2 A bit about the participant. Experience and personal information. Role - how long they have been there, in the hospitality, in Malta.

The restaurant has been open since 1964. The participant is a second generation of family management and is currently over twenty year in the general manger role.

Question 3 what kind of suppliers do you work with? Ex. Catering importers, local producers, big chain stores.

The restaurant concept promote traditional Maltese food and the suppliers used and various. The manager explain that they select ingredients from local producers to satisfy the main concept. “We buy our bread from a traditional wood fire oven place in Quormi or the local olive oil from a farmer in siggiewi”. Basically, the restaurant use a vast number of small suppliers as their main option, however there are still some products that cannot be found local and must be imported.

Question 4 when ordering some product, do you consider asking the origin of them?

There are certain products that are crucial to know where they come from in order to satisfy the Maltese traditional concept propose by the restaurant, explained the owner.

Question 5 Do you favour local products over imported. Why? Are you supported by management / owner?

The participant states that they favour local produce without any doubt. He explained “We favour local products, big time. Even with local wines, we serve two thirds of our wine offer in local

based". He then added that there are other local beverage that are offered but there isn't enough variety or quantity, examples of local whiskey, gin or liquors.

Question 6 what part of your products usage is consider Local?

In terms of beverage, the restaurant offer over 40% of local products and in terms of food ingredients around 85% express the participant.

Question 7 Do you consider adapt you offer or change it in favour of local products?

The restaurant concept is local traditional food. The participant stated "sometimes, I receive different request regarding food, like pasta Bolognese, etc. I refuse because is not our concept".

Question 8 Do you consider changes on your offers according to seasonality and availability of local products?

To summarize this question the manager said, "We have a local soup very famous, but we only offer it when the vegetables are in season".

Question 9 could you base your offer in a majority or totality local products?

The owner divide the answer in two parts. In terms of beverage, he explain that it is impossible only to offer local products because the lack of variety. However he mention that they offer above 40% of local beverages. On the other hand, when is food related he explain that 100% in not a real number but the restaurant currently using a range of 85 to 90% local products. "We even produce our own local ice-cream with my grandmother's recipe", added the participant.

Question 10 what are, in your opinion, the advantages or disadvantages of using local products?

The first advantage mentioned is "pride" of serving local food. "It is my personal pride, because commercially I could make more money" stated the owner. Another advantage is that proposing this local traditional concept, the restaurant found a niche of work that allows them be unique.

The manager did not mentioned any specific disadvantage at this stage.

Question 11 in your opinion, the usage of local products attracts tourism?

The participant believes there are many tourist looking for a traditional authentic Maltese experience and is positive that the usage of local products attracts them.

Question 12 Do you promote this? And how?

The promotion is done mainly in social media and in the local fly company magazine. Also, once the customer is seated, the service team explains about the origin of the products served.

Question 13 Have you been asked about the origin of the products by customers?

The manager explained that sometimes customer ask about certain products, but usually the service team tells the story behind them beforehand.

Question 14 Does the sector include/provide any sort of incentive to use local produce?

There is no incentive or anything provided by the sector, stated drastically the participant.

Question 15 what are, in your opinion, the *challenges* you find by choosing the usage of local products?

The challenges can be divided into some points.

- Availability.
- Quantity.
- Bureaucracy over the animal growing. "There is a lot of bureaucracy on the rabbit growing".
- Cost and price. "I absorb a big part of the costs in order to offer local products".
- One important point mentioned by the manager was that "being a local restaurant, offering traditional Maltese food, is very hard to survive only based in the local market". "We suffered a lot during Covid" added.

Question 16 what are, in your opinion, the *suggestions* to overcome these challenges?

The manager is not sure if there is any help to farmer to increase the growth of crops. He mention to be worry and "wondering if the war shifter the business to search for local products". The owner believes the bureaucracy must be stopped, also that the beverage market must increase the quantities and qualities.

Question 17 who are your main clients?

"We used to be 50% local and 50% foreign but lately we shifting to a majority foreign customers" stated the manager.

8.5 Participant 5, Take-Away Restaurant.

Question 1 & 2 A bit about the participant. Experience and personal information. Role - how long they have been there, in the hospitality, in Malta.

The place has been open for six years by the interviewee and currently offer a range of mainly fish products.

Question 3 what kind of suppliers do you work with? Ex. Catering importers, local producers, big chain stores.

The owner was clear "I try to work with locals as much as I can by unfortunately, many suppliers do not have local products themselves. This oblige me to use foreign ones".

Question 4 when ordering some product, do you consider asking the origin of them?

The Chef explain that he asks where is the food coming from and also, sometimes he request the production methods special for the foreign product. "I went to visit the factory" mentioned when explaining about one of the foreign ingredients.

Question 5 Do you favour local products over imported. Why? Are you supported by management / owner?

The participant stated that favouring local products sometimes collapse with consistency.

Question 6 what part of your products usage is consider Local?

Taking in consideration the food and beverage menu, together with extra products usage, the chef explain that their usage can be seen as half of the products being local.

Question 7 Do you consider adapt you offer or change it in favour of local products?

Being a small shop and having local suppliers close by, "I can always cross the street to the fish monger and see what they have", explains the owner. However this do not apply to the fixed menu which is based on consistence products coming from abroad.

Question 8 Do you consider changes on your offers according to seasonality and availability of local products?

"We do that on the daily special" stated the chef, but not on the general menu. Also, the price must stay within the take away standards added.

Question 9 could you base your offer in a majority or totality local products?

"I cannot, the consistency is not as we need to do so", explained straight away the participant.

Question 10 what are, in your opinion, the advantages or disadvantages of using local products?

As an advantage, the chef explain that the special changes every day making more interesting offer for the client. On the other hand this is more pressure on the staff and it is seen as a disadvantage for a take away place.

Question 11 in your opinion, the usage of local products attracts tourism?

The owner was not sure about this however he believes that local product should attract tourism.

Question 12 Do you promote this? And how?

The restaurant promotes the usage of local products on the daily special menu, but not much on social media.

Question 13 Have you been asked about the origin of the products by customers?

The manager explained that some customer asked from where is the fish but also regarding the production method, if it is wild or farmed.

Question 14 Does the sector include/provide any sort of incentive to use local produce?

There is no incentive provided to the restaurant.

Question 15 what are, in your opinion, the *challenges* you find by choosing the usage of local products?

The major challenge is quality consistency according to the participant. However he mentioned as well the price, where “sometimes the local product is more expensive than the foreign”.

Question 16 what are, in your opinion, the *suggestions* to overcome these challenges?

The restaurateur believes that an incentive from government to the farmers to improve the quality and consistency of the products can help overcome the challenges. Also, he added that the sector should find a way to reduce local products to be able to compete with foreign.

8.6 Participant 6, Five Star Hotel Ex. Chef.

Question 1 & 2 A bit about the participant. Experience and personal information. Role - how long they have been there, in the hospitality, in Malta.

The participant has been working for the company for almost thirty years in several roles, positions and countries where the hotels are established. Currently he is transiting his tenth year as Executive Chef of the hotel. In his current role he is in charge of the contact with suppliers and purchasing decisions.

Question 3 what kind of suppliers do you work with? Ex. Catering importers, local producers, big chain stores.

The default is to work with a combination of both bulky retail catering suppliers but also small local producers explain the Chef. The choice is made according to the product and the quantities to be ordered. “If you order 20€ for a small supplier, the probability of deliver is too low” but on the other hand “Certain products like Ġbejniet (local Maltese cheese) I work with a small producer... I try to be in contact and talk to the producers”.

Question 4 when ordering some product, do you consider asking the origin of them?

When the manager comes to bulky orders, he tries to be conscious and check where is the product coming from and the production method applied. “I try to be mindful when I choose a product, because is the right thing to do not because it make sense financially”.

Question 5 Do you favour local products over imported. Why? Are you supported by management / owner?

“I will favour local on the quality point, not on the price point” reply the participant. As an example the Chef states “If I need tomatoes and the suppliers tells me I have both local and Sicilian, I will taste and choose according to the taste and quality”. The management supports his choices completely.

Question 6 what part of your products usage is consider Local?

This may vary according to the season and the availability, explains the participant but “I believe we have between 20% and 30% of local usage. But the 30% is by pushing it to the edge”.

Question 7 Do you consider adapt you offer or change it in favour of local products?

“Yes, as long and the product is right, you need to start from quality ingredients”, emphasise the Executive Chef. He added that unfortunately the Maltese mentality has still a long way to go when comes to local products. “It starts from the labelling the traceability and the package. When you buy from abroad, the products is well presented, while the local one is just thrown into a bag”.

Question 8 Do you consider changes on your offers according to seasonality and availability of local products?

The menus for all the food retails within the hotel, rotate according to the seasonality express the manager. Although, he adds that the products might not be local. “I make the menu according to the perception of seasonality, for example pumpkin is seen as autumn vegetable but it might not be produced locally”.

Question 9 could you base your offer in a majority or totality local products?

The participant believes this option is extremely unlikely. “This difficulty is not only in quality but also in the selection” explains. The market for just local products based on the offer the Maltese island has is narrow and the hotel cannot offer only that.

Question 10 what are, in your opinion, the advantages or disadvantages of using local products?

The Chef understands that the mainly advantage of usage of local products manifest on the pride and the option to tell the story behind the products. The idea of give the customer the local experience by talking about the land and the culture. On the other hand, the participant understand that a key disadvantage comes from the lack of consistency on the quality which does not allow him, as the face of the food and beverage offer, trust that the menu will taste the same throughout the season.

Question 11 in your opinion, the usage of local products attracts tourism?

The manager is positive that local products attract tourism. “If you are able to tell them an honest story, then yes” he stated. However, the Chef also mentioned that, because this is a trend now, many people are telling a fiction story just to attract tourism and this might fire back at some point.

Question 12 Do you promote this? And how?

The company promotes the usage of local products via social media but also with an excellent training service team who explains and tells the story behind the ingredients to the customers.

Question 13 Have you been asked about the origin of the products by customers?

“Yes, but there are very few” explain the interviewee.

Question 14 Does the sector include/provide any sort of incentive to use local produce?

“If there is, I am not aware of” replies the Chef.

Question 15 what are, in your opinion, the *challenges* you find by choosing the usage of local products?

As challenges the Executive Chef mentions some clear and detailed points.

- Consistency of the products.
- The amount available.
- Price, where many times the local product is more expensive than a similar imported.

However in this case the Chef explains that “Although financially does not make sense, it is the right thing to do and therefore I have Maltese Ġbejniet on breakfast table”.

Question 16 what are, in your opinion, the *suggestions* to overcome these challenges?

When comes to suggestions in order to overcome the mentioned challenges, the participant pointed some ideas that go above the industry but includes also governmental actions. These can be summarized on the following points.

- The look at the food chain must change. “When Covid struck, emerged the idea of self-sufficient and many farmers were delivering local products to the houses. This changed as soon as the pandemic fear lower down and everything went back to as it was. My fear is that we might end up being 100% importation dependant”. Thus the Chef adds that the Government must find the way to increase the incentives to farmers to grow, better quality crops and more variety.
- Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) can help to promote the local product so the customers are more aware of them. Not just tourist but also locals.

- Another point is that government need to improve the regulations and enforcement when comes to labelling of local products. "I know many products been sold even at the airport that are label as local and are not".
- Education, "Kids needs to know where the food comes from, so then the respect for this food will increase".