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MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Irish local and artisan foods: Multiples make space!

Michelle Dunne^{1,2} and Angela Wright^{2*}

Abstract: Consumers are increasingly discerning about food choices. This research explores the attitudes of Irish consumers to local and artisan food products, and, in particular, if they would consider the supermarket environment as a location of choice for the purchase of these foods. This research applied a quantitative methodology to address the research question. 126,110 supermarket customers were contacted through an Irish supermarket loyalty data base, which resulted in 14,646 completed responses. This rich data allowed the researchers access to the attitude of Ireland's consumers to speciality local food products, normally absent from the supermarket shelf. 98.8% of respondents would like to be able to purchase local food products in a supermarket, and 76% of respondents expect to pay either less than, or the same price for local food products, as they do for other similar standard foods. This research will be of direct benefit to parties involved with the grocery retail sector in Ireland.

Subjects: Food; Services Marketing; Retail Marketing; Retail Sector

Keywords: local; artisan; supermarket; farmers' markets; multiples

1. Introduction and research context

This empirical research examines the concept of “local” and “artisan food” and the case for supermarket space through the lens of the consumer. The identifiable characteristics of consumer behaviour in relation to local and artisan food are researched and analysed. This research explores the

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michelle Dunne is a CRM Supplier Engagement Executive with Musgrave Partners Ireland and has 12 years of experience working in the food retail sector. Together with her co-author, Angela Wright she engaged in this study for over two years. This study has made a valuable contribution to her work and career in the retail sector.

Angela Wright is a senior lecturer, researcher and postgraduate supervisor at CIT, Cork Ireland. Her main areas of interest are Marketing and Food and Tourism Marketing and she has published extensively and continuously over the past 14 years.

Food marketing is an important area of interest and a valuable one to the wider community. This new research is significant as it afforded the opportunity for industry and academia to collaborate. The findings of the study have broad appeal as well as a very valuable commercial relevance to stakeholders.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Consumers are now bombarded with marketing messages in relation to food choice and consumption, but modern day consumers are very concerned with the food chain and have become discerning about their food choices.

This research examines “Local and Artisan” food choices and finds that consumers in general would like to have easy access to such products. While traditionally found at farmers' markets, now everyday access is sought through Supermarkets. The researchers were fortunate in having access to a large supermarket rewards programme database where 14,646 supermarket shoppers responded. The study finds that Local and Artisan food products are desired by shoppers and will warrant space on the shelves of supermarkets.

This research examines what local and artisan foods mean to the consumers and how they are interpreted and understood by consumers.

Also, both “where our food actually comes from”, and the importance of this information to the consumer is interpreted.

meaning of the terms “local” and “artisan” food and the importance of knowing the country of origin of such products to the consumer.

This study investigates whether or not the consumer is interested in or likely to purchase local and artisan food products from a supermarket, how they would like such products displayed and what price they are willing to pay for local and artisan foods in various outlets, including Irish and internationally owned supermarkets. Bord Bia (2013) purports that the rising importance of local food and produce will continue to play a key role for large retailers in building stronger emotional connections with shoppers, and supporting the communities in which they operate.

In the past number of years, farmers markets, food fairs and food festivals have become increasingly popular and the range of local and artisan food products available to sample and purchase at such events is far more extensive than what one can purchase from a supermarket. Does a gap exist therefore to have more accessibility and availability of local and artisan food products in Irish supermarkets?

If this space was available on Irish supermarket shelves for local and artisan food products, would customers purchase them in this different environment, outside of the normal farmers’ markets? The selling of fresh food within supermarkets would be a move back to core, historic, shopping habits; a future that resembles the past where food is organic, local, fresh and delivered daily. One way in which this can be achieved is by the allocation of an in-store “farmers’ market” space where food can be displayed in a more natural, relaxed environment (Fitch.com, 2014). According to Bord Bia (2012), people continue to take an interest in the story of the food journey—how things are made, and by whom. This research seeks to identify if the consumer has a real interest in the origins of their food and food journey when considering local and artisan food products, and if the same interest would come to the fore when presented with these foods in a supermarket setting. According to Collins (2012), there is an increasingly positive perception of locally produced food, with consumers wanting to know the source of their food.

2. Literature

The shop is a theatre. The shop floor is a stage; the customers are your audience: it’s a performance! (Dunbar, 2012)

2.1. The grocery retail landscape

According to Cox and Brittain (2004, p. 3), retailing has historically been viewed as the sale of goods to the consumer through retail shops. Today, however, retailing is a rather broader term, encompassing the internet as well as physical locations (Cox & Brittain, 2004, p. 3). Retailing can be defined as the sale of goods to the public in relatively small quantities for use or consumption rather than for resale (Oxford Dictionaries, 2012).

According to Henchion and McIntyre (2004), the grocery retail sector in Ireland is made up of the major multiples, symbol groups, independent retailers, local markets and speciality independents, e.g. green-grocers, butchers, etc. In the UK nowadays, most food, besides that sold in markets, is sold through some form of retail outlet such as multiples, cooperative societies or independent retailers (Bareham, 1995).

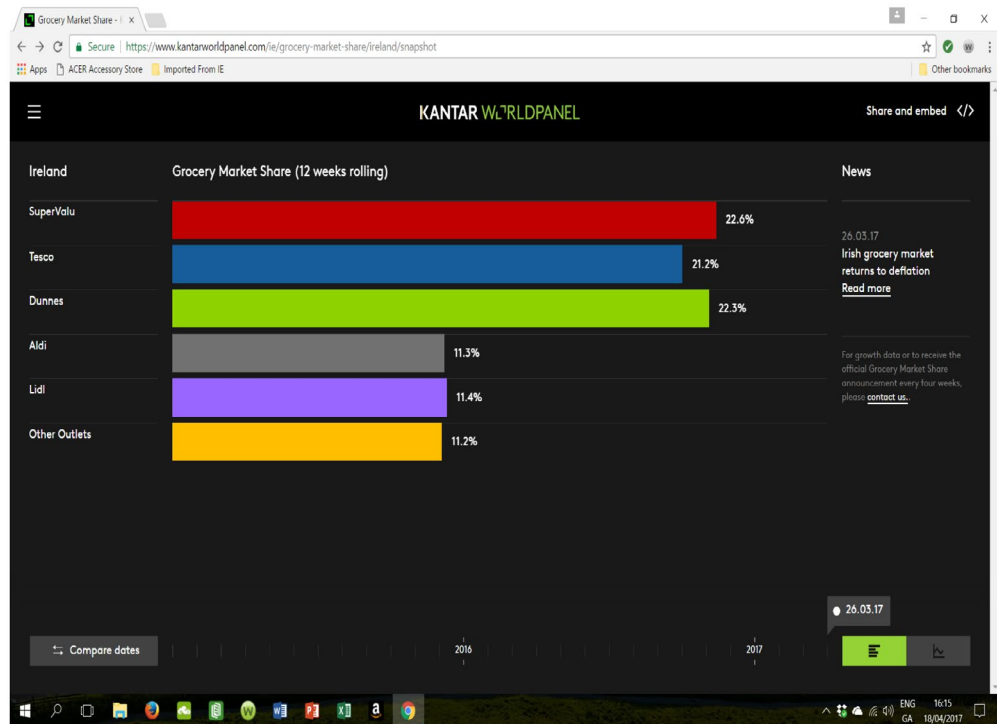
In Ireland, large supermarkets and multiples account for 763 stores and are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of supermarkets in Ireland

Name	Stores	Website
Tesco	149	www.tesco.ie
Lidl	146	www.lidl.ie
Aldi	129	www.aldi.ie
Dunnes stores	116	www.dunnesstores.com
Supervalu	223	www.supervalu.ie
Total	763	

Figure 1. Irish grocery market share (12 week rolling).

Source: kantardata.com.



In Ireland, in terms of market share, SuperValu and Superquinn, now combined under the umbrella of Supervalu, previously held the grocery leader share with 24.9%, but have recently dropped to 22.6% (kantardata.com; Available at <https://www.kantardata.com/i.e./grocery-market-share/ireland/snapshot>, accessed on 18/04/17 at 16.27). Tesco have lost market leadership and currently have a 21.2% market share. Dunnes Stores have 22.3% and total discounters (Lidl and Aldi) have a 22.7% market share (kantardata.com; Pope, 2015) (Figure 1).

2.2. The supermarkets sector

Blythman (2007, p. 251) outlines that the supermarket has become the new forum for the modern civic landscape, and a new community village destination in its own right. Supermarket groups have done extremely well for themselves and for shoppers, as they provide a broad range of products in a pleasant and safe environment (Seth & Randall, 2011, p. 179). According to Raven, Lang, and Dumonteil (1995), the ability to supply fresh seasonal foods from around the world is one of the supermarkets' proudest boasts. Modern supermarkets have transformed the life of the shopper and now, instead of having to trail around various shops, the consumer can make one trip to one shop which stocks almost everything (Raven et al., 1995). Seth and Randall (2011, p. 179) suggest that supermarkets have undoubtedly driven thousands of small shops out of business.

2.3. Farmers' markets

Farmers' markets restore something lost, but not forgotten – contact with the seasons. (Planck & Slater, 2013, p. 4)

Bord Bia (2012) reports that, at a farmers' market, farmers, growers or producers (usually from a defined local area) are present in person to sell their own produce directly to the public. Farmers' markets are a serious retail force in Ireland, and have developed at a remarkable rate. These markets help to forge links between local food producers and the public (Whiriskey & McCarthy, 2006). Farmers' markets give local producers the opportunity to sell their goods directly to consumers

(Bord Bia, 2012) and, according to Raven et al. (1995), markets bring products to the heart of urban and rural communities and provide a focus on cultural life, both for local people and visitors. Markets have reunited the people with producers and give consumers back the connection with the food they are consuming (McKenna, 2006). Market gatherings offer the opportunity to network; “as with social and family networks, these business networks represent locally embedded network ties”, and involvement with a range of business network actors can lead to product innovation (McKitterick, Quinn, McAdam, & Dunn, 2016).

Farmers’ markets capitalise on perceptions of authenticity and locality (McEachern, Warnaby, Carrigan, & Szmigin, 2010), are not just for “foodies”, but are for all of us, (McKenna, 2006). Products at such markets are renowned for being locally grown, very fresh, and sold directly to the public, without going through a middleman (Whiriskey & McCarthy, 2006). McKenna (2006) purports that buying at these markets puts the consumer back in touch with farmers, so they know where the food is coming from and how it was produced. Sommer, Herrick, and Sommer (1981) suggest that farmers’ markets are perceived by their customers as friendlier, more personal, rural, smaller and happier settings than supermarkets, and McKenna (2006) points out that there is a buzzing atmosphere in farmers’ markets, where enthusiastic stall holders are extremely keen to tell you about their produce, how it was made, the best way to cook and eat it, how to store it and where they sourced their ingredients. “What food we buy, where we buy it and how we consume it, is intimately connected to the culture in which we have been brought up”, (Bareham, 1995). In the UK, for example, the best known sources of local food are found at farmers’ markets (Pearson et al., 2011).

2.4. Local food

The emergence of farmers’ markets brings local food to the fore McEachern et al. (2010), however, there is no generally accepted definition of local food (Pearson et al., 2011; Waltz, 2010, p. 3). Martinez (2010) concurs and notes that, unlike organic food, there is no legal or universally accepted definition of local food. In part, local food is a geographical concept related to the distance between food producers and consumers (Martinez, 2010; Pearson et al., 2011). Lockeretz (2009) suggests that, for local origin to be taken into account by consumers, the produce should be sold in a locally orientated environment, e.g. a farmers’ market. While freshness remains the top reason for purchasing local food, there has been strong growth over the last three years in support of local producers with more than four in ten (44%) of those buying or interested in buying local food citing this as a key reason, up by 10% since 2005 (Freedman, 2008).

Collaborating with other producers who share values on the authenticity and quality of the products is vital for local produces. Values are reflective of strong associations between the quality of the product and authenticity, for example quality and taste of the product and also its provenance are key factors. Labelling products as “Irish cider, having sourced the fruit from England” is questionable according to McKitterick et al. (2016).

2.5. Artisan food

Artisan producers should understand and respect the raw materials with which they work, where these materials come from and what is particularly good about them. “Artisan” is a term used to describe food produced by non-industrialised methods, often handed down through generations, but now in danger of being lost, (School of Artisan Food, 2013). Cayot (2007) believes that traditional foods are also often related to local and artisan food, referring to specific ingredients, location of the production and know-how. According to Teagasc (2012), Irish food writer John McKenna eloquently describes artisan food as a test of 4P’s: It is a synthesis of the personality of the Producer, the Place it comes from, the Product itself, and Passion in the manner it is produced (Teagasc, 2012).

According to School of Artisan Food (2013), Randolph Hodgson, Founder of Neal’s Yard Dairy, states that as demand for artisan food increases so does the demand for knowledge about it. Not only is the general public hungry for knowledge about the food they eat but also the need for skilled artisans is ever increasing. McKenna (2006) outlines that artisan producers and farmers’ markets

have revitalised local rural economies, providing employment and attracting younger generations back in droves. According to Tuomey (2012), artisan foods are still perceived as a luxury and/or gifting items. In May 2015, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (2015), reports that “artisan” or “artisanal” or similar descriptions using these terms should only be used on foods or in advertising of foods that can legitimately claim to meet all of the following criteria:

- (1) The food is made in limited quantities by skilled crafts people.
- (2) The processing method is not fully mechanised and follows a traditional method.
- (3) The food is made in a micro-enterprise at a single location.
- (4) The characteristic ingredient(s) used in the food are grown or produced locally where seasonally available and practical (Food Safety Authority of Ireland, 2015).

McKitterick et al. (2016) recommend broader conceptualisation of social ties and embeddedness to include knowledge derived from non-local territories and non-institutional sources. Trust, and how it shaped network development and the importance of themes such as shared values on product authenticity and provenance, and fear of competition are key issues for Artisan producers (McKitterick et al., 2016).

2.6. Organic food

Hill (2013) suggests that organic foods are those that are styled by the usage of environmentally sound methods which do not involve the use of modern artificial elements during their creation. According to McKenna (2006), the term “organic” means that the food has been produced to a set specification and without the use of synthetic chemicals, such as fertilisers, pesticides, antibiotics or hormones. The increasing popularity of organic food sold at local farm stands, farmers’ market, speciality markets and in supermarkets with organic produce sections, means fresher food is becoming more available (Cox, 2008; Henry, 2014a).

2.7. Retailer behaviour

You don’t know where your consumer is a lot of the time. You may think you have a handle on them and then they move. (Kirrane, 2012, p. 26)

Wynne-Jones and Kirrane (2012) discusses Kirrane’s statement (2012) that retailers increasingly need to be conscious of a whole myriad of values that influence consumer purchasing habits, including physical factors, self image, culture, loyalty and curiosity and should be flexible enough to meet these changing demands. According to Denny-Finch (2012), older shoppers, for example, are more likely to purchase and pay extra for local food than younger shoppers; therefore, retailers should continue to ensure that there are sufficient car parking spaces available for older shoppers to enable easy access to the store.

The Grocer (2012) suggests that supermarkets are spending a great deal of time and effort attracting the custom of shoppers who would previously have shopped only at small, independent food stores and sought out specialist ingredients and food products. According to Freedman (2008), with an increasing number of consumers purchasing local food, it is important for manufacturers and retailers to not only provide shoppers with more local options, but also to improve communications in an environment where the economic downturn may well benefit local producers and communities. Product benefits need to be clearly communicated to shoppers to remind them of the key benefits of buying local (Freedman, 2008).

2.8. Consumer behaviour

The retail environment creates a complex set of stimuli which impact on the consumer and factors such as where the food shop is located in relation to others; how it is designed; how the products are laid out and merchandised; whether there is music playing; how crowded it is, will all impact on the

consumer and affect their purchasing behaviour (Bareham, 1995). Freedman (2012) believes that there is a clear link between a shopper's age and their propensity to be influenced by the store environment, with younger shoppers more impulsive and older shoppers more likely to purchase items they had planned to buy.

Grocery shoppers in Ireland are concerned about price when shopping for food (Power, 2012). Bareham (1995) stated, however, that consumers are influenced by what is made available to them. Although price is still the single most important driver of store choice, a decreasing number of shoppers now say that it is the main criteria they consider when choosing where to shop (Henry, 2014b).

2.9. Ethical and environmental concerns

2.9.1. Sustainability

Maton (2011) states that many food and grocery companies across the supply chain are committed to sustainability, and are taking action to reduce their environmental impact. Stein (2002) points out that the new “buzzword” in assessing the quality of food is “traceability” and this is the information that should come with all food, such as who caught it, raised it, or grew it, where, how and when (Stein, 2002).

2.9.2. Ethical sourcing

Shoppers are including ethical judgements more in their shopping decisions, but they don't want to pay a lot more—they want value for their values. (Denny-Finch, 2010)

The interest in ethical and environmentally sustainable products and issues continues to grow among European grocery shoppers (Miller, 2010). According to Maton (2009), the resilience of ethical shopping, even throughout a recession, sends out a strong message. Ethical sourcing is growing increasingly important for shoppers and therefore it is fast becoming a new competitive frontier for food retailers and brand owners (Maton, 2009).

3. Methodology

Upon examining the academic and industry specific literature, the researchers identified a lack of specific research in relation to the question of whether local and artisan foods have a place in Irish supermarkets. Extensive primary and secondary research was conducted as part of this empirical study to identify whether obtaining permanent space on Irish supermarket shelves for local and artisan food products would be of interest to the consumer.

A quantitative approach by way of an internet-mediated questionnaire was undertaken for the purpose of this research. This questionnaire was directed in conjunction with a leading Irish retail company and place of employment for one researcher (Musgrave Retail Partners Ireland), giving a unique opportunity to access the Supermarket's rewards customer database (a very successful loyalty programme with a large database). The researchers were confident that quantitative research was the correct approach to take, as it would enable ease of compilation and comparison of such large amounts of data.

An internet-mediated questionnaire was used for the purpose of this research, as all other types of questionnaires would have been unsuitable due to time constraints and cost of data analysis as a result of the potentially large response rate. A very detailed and substantial questionnaire was developed and facilitated through the professional edition of the Survey Monkey mechanic. This survey consisted of 30 questions, which were aimed at understanding what consumers believe local and artisan food to be, the price the consumers are willing to pay for such products, how important country of origin is to the consumer and, more generally, behaviours towards local and artisan foods in Ireland.

The use of an internet-mediated questionnaire also enabled the use of cross tabulations. Cross tabulations are used in this study to interpret behaviours and trends among different age groups, gender and other variables to provide more in-depth analysis in the current study. Also, with a potentially large response rate, the quantitative approach would allow the researchers to present the analysis in both graphical and textual terms.

A pilot survey was firstly circulated to 10 respondents. The researchers had the benefit of having access to the company consumer research team, where the survey was tested for any errors or biased before being sent to the wider data base. After academic and practitioner consultation, final amendments were applied and the final questionnaire was circulated to the database of 126,110 potential consumer participants. 14,696 of these consumers responded to the survey. Using data collected from the 14,646 respondents, the authors examined the characteristics and behaviours consumers portray when deliberating over various elements relating to local and artisan food products.

While participants' numbers were very substantial, the results are based on only one supermarket chain's database, and therefore, the element of bias needs to be highlighted for this study. However, Bell (2002) outlines that in some cases, the most useful evidence can be derived from biased sources which reveal accurately the true views of an individual or group. The findings from this study are very beneficial for the participating retail group and have fed directly into the marketing strategy in relation to local and artisan foods and The Food Leadership programme.

4. Ethical considerations

The principle of voluntary participation requires that people should not be coerced into participating in research (Sachdeva, 2009, p. 31). Participants were given a detailed brief regarding the purpose of the study, the reason the survey was being circulated and the goals and objectives the researchers aimed to achieve. Anonymity was guaranteed for all of the participants of the survey. Finally, the audience targeted had the option to complete the survey only if they wished to do so.

It was essential to ensure that the audience selected had already consented to be contacted by email. The chosen participants were accessed based on the level of contact they have previously agreed to. Participants have the right to choose whether or not to contribute to the research, the right to have confidentiality protected and the right to be well-versed about the nature of the study.

5. Validity and reliability

For the purpose of this research, questions were carefully thought out and formulated in simple language and in a well-constructed manner, ensuring any opportunity for misinterpretation was eliminated. The researchers reviewed all questions in conjunction with a grocery retail research expert which safeguarded against the opportunity to script any form of question which may be leading in nature and ensured reliability and validity of the survey. Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad (2010, pp. 2, 205) indicate that a leading question is one that is worded in such a way as to influence the respondent to give a certain answer.

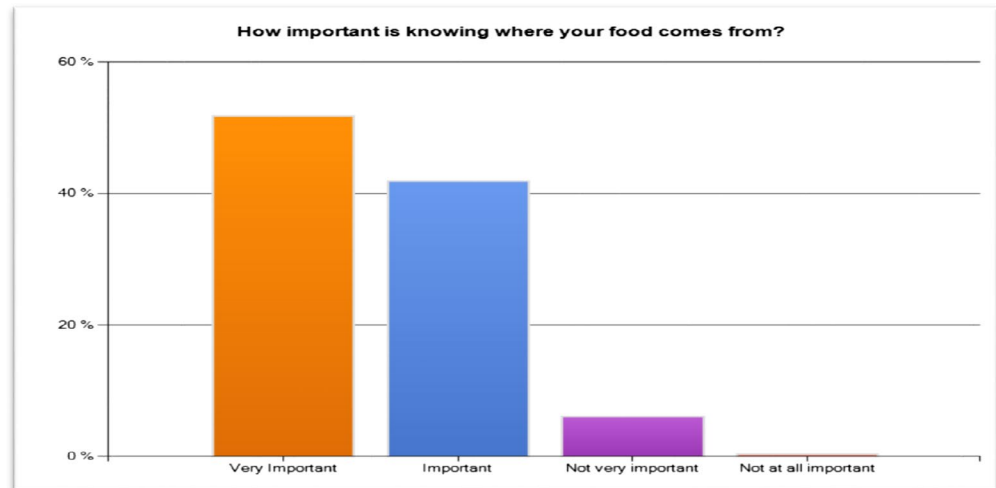
6. Main findings and discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate where consumers most frequently purchase local and artisan food products and, depending on the outlet, the prices consumers expect to pay for such products. Furthermore, this research study explores opportunities for local and artisan food products within a supermarket context, how they should be merchandised in store and how best to bring the concept of local and artisan foods to life for the consumer.

6.1. Age, gender and rural–urban divide

A higher proportion of females (84%) than males (16%) completed the survey and the majority of respondents were between 30 and 59 years (79%). This is not surprising as results from this study found that females are more likely to do the household grocery shopping and also look at the county

Figure 2. The importance of knowing where your food comes from.



of origin more often than males do. 10.2% more females than males do not currently purchase local food in their shopping, as they believe it to be too expensive. Interestingly, a higher proportion of males than females do not currently purchase local food, as they prefer to purchase branded or own brand products rather than local food products.

The researcher also sought to identify any rural/urban bias in relation to the understanding and purchasing patterns of local and artisan food. This study identified that 50.3% of respondents live in an urban area and 49.7% live in a rural area, therefore eliminating any such bias.

6.2. Preferred grocery shopping outlet

This current study identifies that, of those surveyed, the top five locations for grocery shopping in last 12 months, which include online shopping, are SuperValu (97.4%), Tesco (67.2%), Lidl (66.5%), Aldi (65.3%) and then Dunnes (57.8%). Independent butchers are also identified as an integral location for consumers purchasing local food products, with a large proportion of respondents (46.7%) having shopped there in the past 12 months. This survey identifies that consumers have visited multiple stores to complete their shopping within the last 12 months.

6.3. The importance of knowing the origins of your food

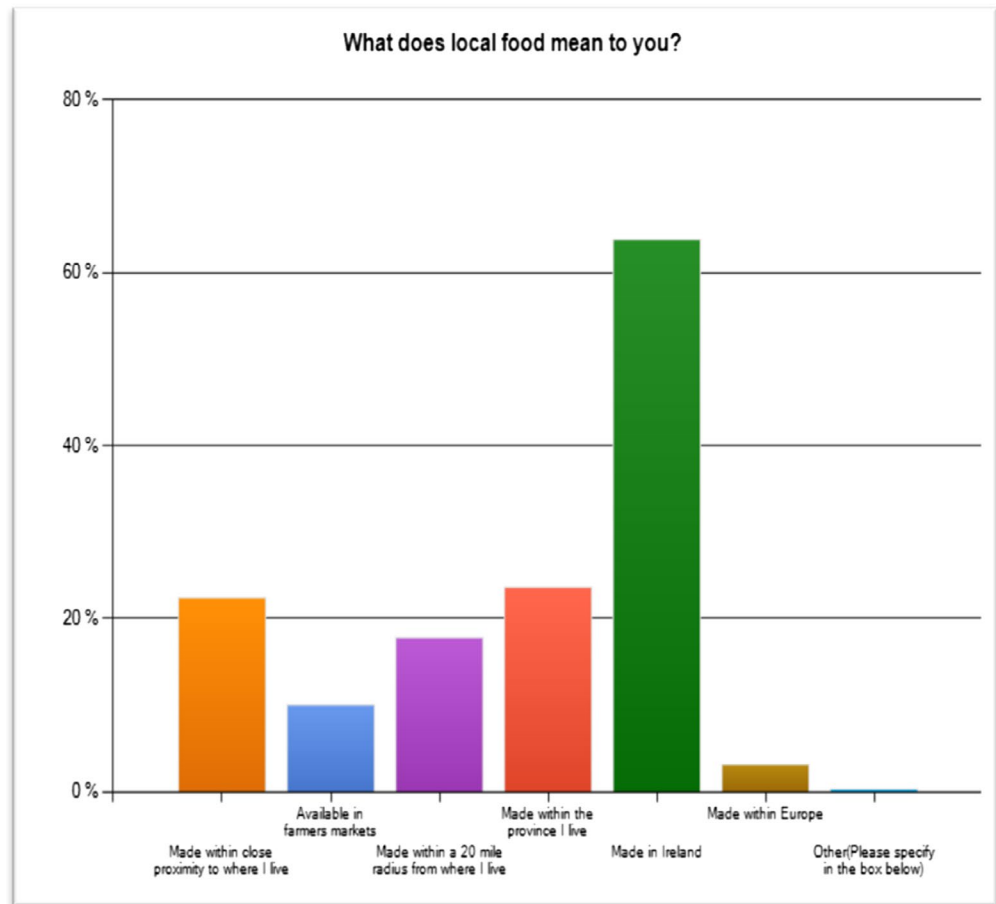
The findings of this survey outline that knowing where your food comes from is either “important” (41.8%) or “very important” (51.8%) to the respondents of the survey (Figure 2). It is important to note that while 93.6% of people surveyed believe it is either “important” or “very important” to know where their food comes from, only 85% of such respondents are either “likely” or “very likely” to look at the country of origin when purchasing food products.

6.4. Local food

Grace Communications Foundation (2014) states that because there is no universally agreed-upon definition for the geographic component of what “local” or “regional” means, consumers are left to decide what local and regional food means to them. This study found that 63.8% of respondents believe that “local food” means food made in Ireland (Figure 3). Results from this study outline that only 22.3% believe local food is “made within close proximity to where they live”. 94.6% of people surveyed currently purchase local food in their shopping; however, the remaining 5.4% do not do so.

On investigation as to why the respondents do not currently purchase local food, the research identified that 48% believe local food to be too expensive, and 31% state that local food is not freely available to them. 12.7% prefer to buy branded products and 8.4% prefer own brand products.

Figure 3. The meaning of local food.



SuperValu is outlined as the first choice (86%) with regard to where respondents purchase local food most frequently (no surprise due to database), the next most popular location is Independent butchers (34.7%). While 22.2% of people surveyed purchase local food in a farmers’ market most regularly, this study identifies that farmers’ markets are most popular with 30–65 year olds.

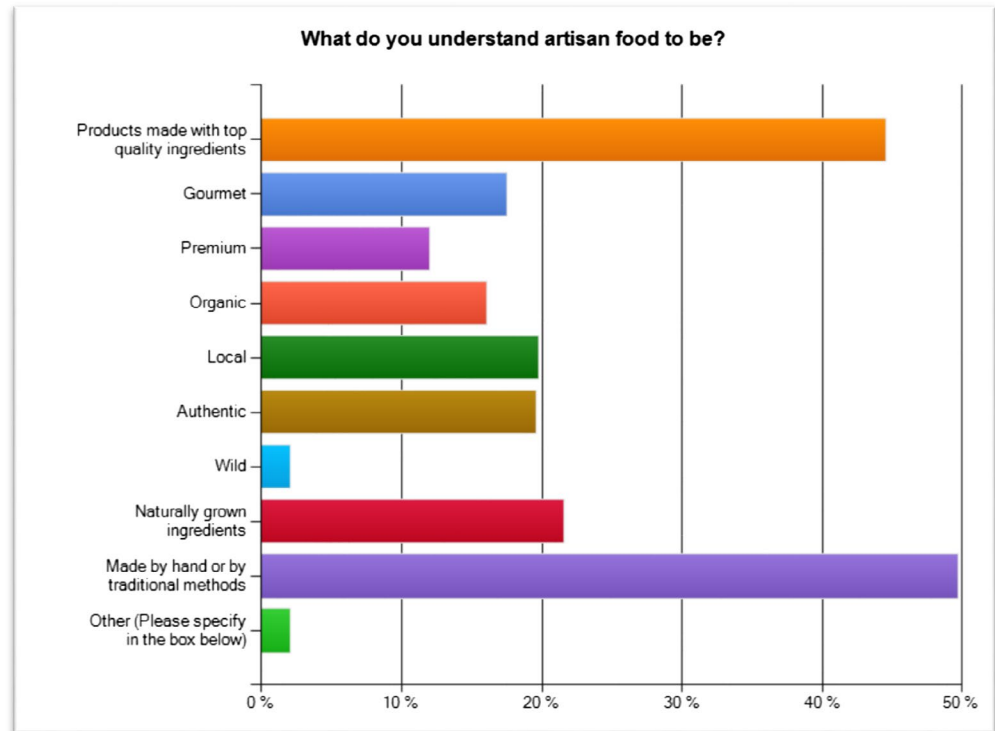
6.5. Expected price paid for local food

An important element that has emerged from this current research is the ability for the researcher to identify the price respondents are willing to pay for local foods across various outlets. Waltz (2010, p. 3) states that customers who value high-quality foods produced with low environmental impact are willing to pay more for locally produced food. This study confirms that the majority of respondents expect to pay 5–10% more for local food than non-local food in farmers markets (32.5%), Craft Butchers (36.7%), Fishmongers (33.3%), Convenience stores (36.1%) and Independent retailers (36.8%). This study found, however, that 53.1% of respondents expect to pay the same price for “local” food products as standard non-local food products in Irish-owned supermarkets. Furthermore, results outline that 42.8% expect to pay less for local food in an internationally owned supermarket such as Tesco, Lidl, Aldi and Marks and Spencer.

6.6. Displaying local foods in a supermarket

This research reveals that 41.2% would like local food displayed in a designated section for local foods, however, 38.8% would like local food merchandised within its relevant section in store. This study has also highlighted that 13.4% of respondents would like local food merchandised in a “market-type” look and feel, and 5.6% would like local food to be cross merchandised with complementary products such as crackers with farmhouse cheeses.

Figure 4. The meaning of artisan food.



6.7. Artisan food

49.7% of respondents understand artisan food to be made by hand or using traditional methods, and 44.5% believe artisan food products to be products made with top-quality ingredients (Figure 4). Interestingly, naturally grown, local, authentic and organic, also resonate with respondents when asked what they understand artisan food to be.

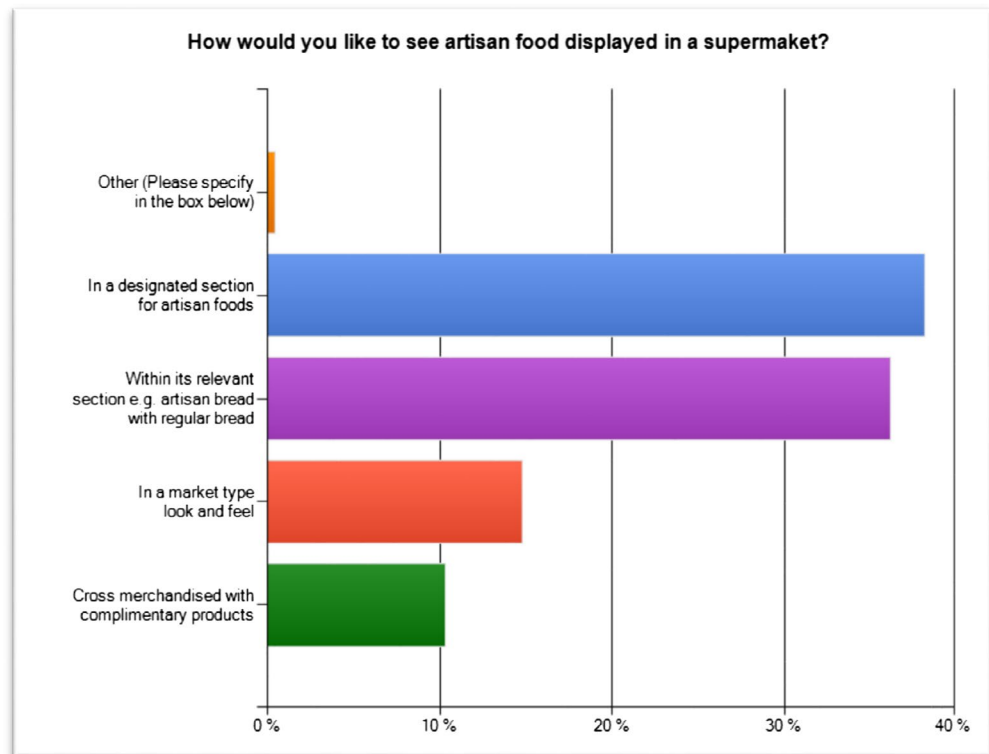
This study acknowledges that 64.4% of respondents currently purchase artisan foods, and, of the 64.4% who “do” purchase artisan food, 33.9% “do so” on a weekly basis. Results show that 16.6% purchase artisan foods a few times a year, 15.9% for seasonal events such as Christmas, and 15.7% for special occasions. This equates to 48.2% of respondents purchasing artisan foods intermittently throughout the year. It can be derived from the current findings that seasonal events and key occasions throughout the year are key influencing factors when purchasing artisan foods.

Research findings from this study outline that the main reasons 35.6% of respondents do not purchase artisan foods is because artisan foods are perceived as too expensive and unaffordable. Surprisingly, this study also notes that the term artisan does not resonate with a portion of respondents, and is therefore a significant reason why a large percentage of people do not currently purchase artisan foods.

6.8. Expected price paid for artisan food

Important details have emerged from the current study regarding what the consumer expects to pay for artisan foods compared to standard food products across various outlets. This study confirms that the majority of respondents expect to pay 5–10% more for artisan food than standard food products across outlets such as independent retailers, bakeries, farmers markets, craft butchers, etc. This study also identifies, however, that respondents expect to pay less than standard food products for artisan food products in supermarkets, either Irish owned (37.7%) or internationally owned (31.7%). Furthermore, a substantial percentage of respondents expect to pay between 20%

Figure 5. Displaying artisan food in a supermarket setting.



and 50% more for artisan foods in farmers' markets (10.4%), convenience stores (12.3%) such as Londis and Centra and Independent retailers (14.6%).

6.9. Displaying artisan food in a supermarket

This research has investigated the preferences consumers have when identifying how artisan food should be displayed in a supermarket (Figure 5). Results from the current survey outline that 38.3% of respondents would like artisan food merchandised in a designated section for “artisan foods”, while 36.2% would prefer artisan food to be merchandised with similar type foods, such as artisan bread merchandised with standard bread. A further 14.8% would like artisan food displayed in a market type look and feel. Furthermore, of those who would like artisan foods displayed in a designated section for artisan foods, 70.9% are either “very likely” or “likely” to increase their spending in the next 12 months.

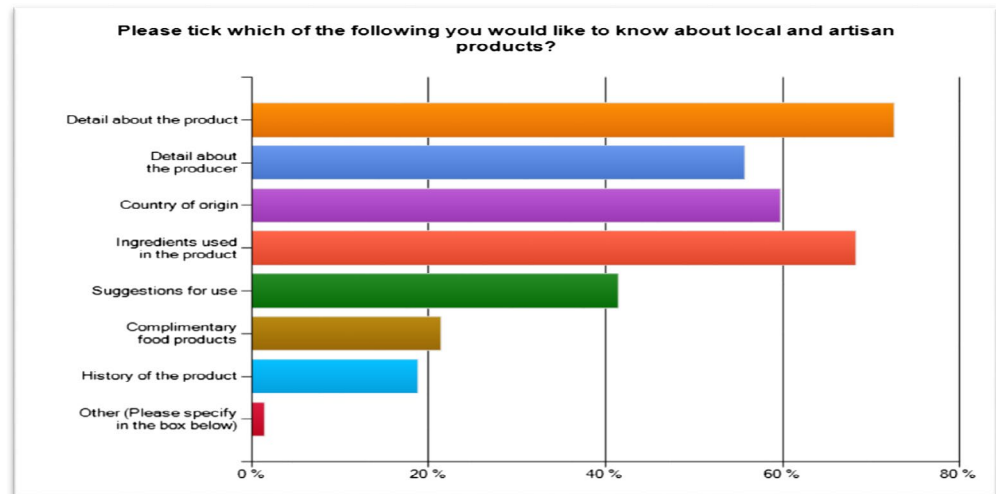
6.10. Desired information about local and artisan food products

This research study has found that people have an enthusiasm for information associated with local and artisan foods (Figure 6). It has been identified that, of the people surveyed, 72.6% would like to know detail about the specific local and artisan products, and 68.3% would like to know about the ingredients used in the products. The results from the survey outline that 41.4% of respondents would like suggestions for use of local and artisan products and 21.4% would like to know about foods which are complimentary to the local and artisan food products.

6.11. Likelihood of increasing “spend” on local and artisan foods in the next 12 months

It can be derived from this research that, while 66.5% of respondents are either “very likely” (10.7%) or “likely” (55.8%) to increase their spending on local and artisan food in the next 12 months, 30% are “not very likely” to increase their “spend” on such products in the coming year. It is evident from the research that the propensity to spend more on local and artisan food in the coming year is higher among the 50–65+ age group. Interestingly, those who state that it is ether “very important” or

Figure 6. Local and artisan information.



“important” to know where their food comes from, are “likely” to increase their personal spend on local and artisan food in the next 12 months.

7. Recommendations

A desire for local and artisan food products, knowledge about such products, how they are made and ingredients used in these products are key elements derived from the extensive quantitative research conducted. A number of recommendations have been outlined, the premise for which has been derived from this research. It was interesting to find that no ultimate definition currently exists for “local” food. During the life of this research study, no definition existed for “artisan” food either. Interestingly, participants in this study viewed both “local” and “artisan” very differently. Therefore, the following definitions for “local” and “artisan” foods are presented from this current research:

Local foods are foods to which consumers have an emotional connection together with a feeling of responsibility to support the producers, which enables them to give back to their community.

The local food definition proposed by the author has removed the geographical element in relation to local food and focused on the emotional aspect. The rationale behind eliminating the geographical connotations in local food is because the element of proximity varies from consumer to consumer.

This current research would like to propose the following definition of “artisan”:

Artisan foods are foods produced by hand or traditional methods, using specially selected ingredients to produce products which are superior in quality and taste.

Artisan food products are unique in flavour and differ from batch to batch due to the traditional methods used in production.

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland outlined a guide in relation to the advertising and marketing of artisan foods that can legitimately claim to meet certain criteria in May 2015. This could be interpreted as a guide only however, for marketing artisan products, for example, one could question does the food really have to be locally grown? What if however, an artisan food producer made a Whiskey and orange marmalade using Seville oranges and Jameson Whiskey? Ireland does not have the climate to grow oranges! The Food Safety state however that “the characteristic ingredient(s) used in artisan food are grown or produced locally where seasonally available and practical” (Food Safety Authority of Ireland, 2015).

Much debate still ensues in relation to the Food Safety guide however, this research believes that it does work as a guide in relation to the marketing and promotion of artisan products but may need to be relooked at for further clarification for a more accurate definition as to the true meaning of “artisan” as outlined in this study.

7.1. Recommendations for local food in a supermarket context

Research findings from this current study identify that the main reasons consumers do not currently purchase local food products is because they are either not freely available to them or they are too expensive. The researcher would recommend that supermarkets address the issue of the availability of local products in store, as this is a potential gap in the product offering for them.

A true identity for local products needs to be developed. This identity needs to be strong enough to resonate in the minds of the consumer. An identity for local food would then trigger awareness of local products in the consumer’s minds.

A convincing price message for local food products in a supermarket needs to be communicated to the consumer. This study identifies that over half of the respondents to the survey expect to pay the same price for local products as they do standard food products, in an Irish-owned supermarket; therefore, supermarkets should endeavour to charge the consumer the same price for local and standard products in store.

7.2. Recommendations for artisan food in a supermarket

Findings from this research outline that almost 65% of respondents to the survey currently purchase artisan food. Almost 93% of respondents, however, would like to be able to purchase artisan food in a supermarket. To capitalise on getting the additional 28% of respondents to purchase artisan food products, supermarkets need to furnish the consumer with what they are looking for in relation to artisan foods.

Respondents that do not currently purchase artisan foods state that the main reasons they do not is that they do not understand what the term “artisan” means, or they believe artisan products to be too expensive. Consequently, it is recommended that the consumer needs to be educated as to what artisan actually means. According to Kumar (2007, p. 13, 58), consumer behaviour is influenced by learning, therefore, interesting and engaging methods of educating the consumer on what artisan truly means need to be developed. In store tastings conducted by the actual artisan producer; in store signage, information leaflets and recipe cards are practical methods that supermarkets could use to educate the consumer.

This study also identifies that the majority of respondents expect to pay either the same price or between 5 and 10% more for “artisan” as opposed to “local” products in an Irish-owned supermarket. It is therefore recommended that, where possible, Irish-owned supermarkets should price artisan food products at a maximum of 10% more expensive than “like for like” standard food products, thereby providing access to such foods in-store, without making them too exclusive.

7.3. Recommendations for local and artisan food in a supermarket space

After in depth analysis as to how local and artisan food should be displayed in a supermarket structure, it is recommended that both local and artisan foods should be merchandised in a designated section in store with a market type look and feel. This would enable the supermarket to create an identity, highlight the products, educate the consumer and inform them that local and artisan food products are freely available to purchase.

The three largest retail grocery chains in Ireland, SuperValu, Tesco and Dunnes Stores, all have loyalty programmes available. A recommendation originating from the current study is to segment the retailer’s consumer data for the purpose of targeting local and artisan food purchasers with personalised offers and beneficial information regarding local and artisan food products.

It has been identified from this comprehensive study that the consumer is keen for detail about both local and artisan food products; therefore, the final recommendation from this study is to furnish the consumer with details about the actual product, ingredients used in the products, details about the producer, complimentary products and perhaps suggestions for use.

8. Conclusion

The conclusions of this research study confirm that a case for supermarket space does exist for both local and artisan food. It is evident from this current research that respondents not only have an appetite for local and artisan food, but it is also reasonable to conclude that the overwhelming majority of respondents would like local and artisan foods to be made freely available for them to purchase in a supermarket space.

Respondents believe local food to be food that is made in Ireland and understand artisan food to be food either made by hand, or by traditional methods, or products made with top quality ingredients.

While almost 95% of respondents currently purchase local food, the same cannot be said for artisan food products, with only 64% of respondents purchasing artisan food in their shopping. This study can categorically conclude that the current barriers for consumers purchasing *local* foods are due to local products being too expensive or not being freely available in a convenient location. Interestingly, consumers do not currently purchase *artisan* foods because respondents either do not understand what artisan foods are, or those who do understand the term believe that artisan products are too expensive to purchase in a weekly shop in-store.

Respondents also have a genuine desire for more information surrounding the food, such as details about the producers, the ingredients used in the products, and the country of origin of the products. Price, however, also remains a significant concern for the consumer. Pricing for local products needs to be in line with like-for-like standard products where possible and artisan products should be a maximum of 10% more expensive than similar standard products in an Irish-owned supermarket. Pricing will always be an issue however as Pearson et al. (2011) outline that Local ecosystems are not capable of providing many products, nor are they able to provide many existing products in the volumes required by contemporary diets. Instead, local food is seen to compliment international trade, for bulk commodities as well as specialised products, and hence meet the preferences of some customers for particular products.

Customers vote with their feet, and anything that can lead to increased footfall is a cornerstone of a successful business model (Dunbar, 2012). Supermarkets need to embrace new customer trends and desires. By facilitating the needs of the consumer by incorporating local and artisan food into a designated section within the supermarket space, consumers would become more store loyal, reap the benefits and retailers could capitalise on the investment of the new dedicated space in-store for local and artisan food products. Musgrave Retail Partners Ireland have now collaborated with Bord Bia and the Local Enterprise Office Network to create the Food Academy Programme, which was set out to give “Small producers a Big Chance”. The introduction of the “Acorn” logo to promote the Food Academy Programme, was further endorsed by the research findings which gives local and artisan foods the true identity they deserve.

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