

Article

# Bringing the Consumer Back in—The Motives, Perceptions, and Values behind Consumers and Rural Tourists' Decision to Buy Local and Localized Artisan Food—A Swedish Example

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**Abstract:** This article highlights the motivational factors behind consumers' and tourists' decisions to buy local artisan cheese in Jämtland (Sweden). Empirically, the case itself diverts from the typical Franco-Mediterranean case in which both the actions of producers and consumers are embedded in historical, long-term culinary traditions and territorial features, nor is it the typical farmers' market or another market-driven direct produce system. The main purpose is to shed light on the motivational factors behind the purchasing decision of consumers and tourists by studying the attributes that consumers embody in the products. The article is based on two consumer surveys/short interviews, the first conducted in June 2012 and the second in February 2017. The results were tested against/related to the wider local food discussion conceptualized through four types of attributes. Namely, intrinsic and extrinsic attributes; post-modernity and environmental attributes; geographical and territorial attributes; and local and rural development attributes. The results in this article clearly show that consumers value a combination of different attributes from both market-driven direct produce systems and close typicity systems. Therefore, the construction of proximity from the point of view of the consumer can be derived from a complex set of attributes and motivational factors not normally highlighted in the localized food discussion.

**Keywords:** proximity; consumers' motivational factors; local food systems; localized food systems; typicity; food attributes; close typicity food system

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## 1. Introduction

The academic discussion concerning local food emerged almost twenty years ago when local markets and farm stores started to attract more attention from policymakers and scholars. A rising public interest in the local food had created an opportunity for the appearance of food quality schemes for farmers' markets (for example, eco-boxes), local food networks, and other expressions of a new type of rurality [1]. The role of consumers in this development is highlighted by two main schools of thought, namely, the discussion about *local food* in which the role and participation of consumers is often explained as a response against the agricultural modernization paradigm in which the physical distance between food production and food consumption grew through the emergence of long and

complex global food chains. In this discussion cases and examples often depart from the UK and US, where the structure of the agro-food sector has been more diversified than in Sweden, in spite of the far-gone agro-food industrialization. The second is connected to the discussion about *localized food*, in which the participation and role of consumers are explained through various elements of cultural, geographical, and physical *typicity* and *proximity* often highlighted through Franco-Mediterranean examples with a connection to the use of geographical indications.

The case highlighted in this article, Jämtlandic artisan cheese (from Sweden), differs considerably from both of the mentioned schools of thought. Nearly 100 years of intensive and far-reaching self-sustained industrialization of the agro-food system created an agro-food economy that, for a long time, has been export-oriented and inserted in global trade, and in which food production became disconnected from consumption and food distribution became based on large retailers who completely outcompeted the local market for food [2]. Therefore, consumers have been used to buying all of their food in large supermarkets, where cheeses and other foodstuffs are nothing like artisan food.

In fact, the revitalization and re-emergence of local and localized food in Sweden lag behind the rest of the world and it is highly influenced by foreign elements, as Swedish consumers and producers have embraced foreign influences and traditions and made them their own. This imported element is not really highlighted in studies of foreign cases. At least in the localized agro-food debate, there is also a rigidity concerning the link between the emergence of the localized system and the link to the local culture, local geography, local institutions, and other local elements. On the contrary, the revitalization of artisan cheese in Jämtland is directly linked to the short-term *patrimonialisation* of foreign products, foreign recipes, and foreign traditions during the last forty years [3]. An important question is, therefore, if there is also a lesson to be learned by studying consumers' identities, motives, perceptions, and driving forces? Therefore, the main purpose of this article is to offer new knowledge about why consumers buy local and localized food. The main questions to be answered are as follows: Why do consumers buy local and localized food? Which underlying values are consumers' motives, perceptions, values, and driving forces related to? What can we learn about typicity (understood as the values and characteristics embodied by the product that are appreciated by consumers) and proximity (understood as the emotional ties between consumers and products that pushes the consumer towards a positive purchasing decision) departing from this a-typical Swedish example?

### 1.1. Consumers in the Local and Localized Food Systems—Previous Discussion

In the local food discussion, consumers are sometimes argued to be active participants, not only as buyers of food and other rural offerings (for example, tourism, landscapes, and experiences), they can also become stakeholders through the so-called alternative agri-food systems (AAFN) [4], community-supported agriculture (CSA) [5], short food chains [6], and local(ized) agri-food systems [7].

A large number of studies about local food consumers depart from a contradiction between the local (in which the local many times automatically is defined as good) and the non-local (often defined as less good) [8,9]. Therefore, many articles regarding consumers' attitudes towards the local food can be criticized as being positively biased towards the local and negatively towards food produced in long and conventional food chains [8]. Within this discussion, it is often argued that consumers are motivated to buy local food because they feel alienated from the processes and places in which their food is produced and the buyer's purchasing decision is often explained through several post-modern attributes related to food scares and consumer's desire to know the origin of their food. A representative concept used to describe consumers' motives used in this discussion is "food with a farmer's face" [10–15].

Other schools of thought explain the reasons why consumers buy local food through a range of different arguments [16], often connected to the context in which the study is framed and the role that consumers play in the system that is studied. On the one side, the consumer can be actively involved, for example, by financing production in advanced and/or participating in the process of production through what is known as community supported agriculture [17]. On the other side, the role of the

consumer can be restricted to the relation established between the consumer and producer through a market transaction [18]. In between these two extremes, there are, of course, countless additional varieties and versions defined by various parameters and motives.

The study of consumers motives in the “extremes” and the “in between” mentioned above can be conceptualized by departing from the food attributes connected to the type of the local food system in question. (1) Market-driven direct produce systems (hereafter MDDPS) in which the nature of the relations between producers and consumers are defined through the level of shared knowledge and understanding between buyers and sellers [8], and where the empirical basis of the study is most often exemplified as traditional city markets, selling points on farms, and other places where the market transaction takes place. In such systems and places, the consumers’ involvement is often derived from consumers’ search for non-conventional food production [18–21]; (2) close typicity systems (hereafter CTS), in which the links between the product and the territory play a decisive role in the buyer’s purchasing decision [8], for example, the Cantabrian LFS Quesucos de Liébana, where producers and consumers are linked together through their history, traditions, and food culture, and where purchasing decisions and consumer loyalty are based on social, territorial, and cultural attributes encapsulated in the product [22]; and (3) distant specialty systems where there might exist a close local connection between the local producers and consumers linked together by a product that has either become generic or has such a strong brand that consumption takes place on a global scale; an example of this is Parma ham [8].

Two of the systems highlighted above are of relevance for this study, namely MDDPS and CTS. However, there is a difference between these systems that are of importance to clarify, namely the difference between the local and localized food. MDDPS are sometimes defined through the geographical proximity between consumers and producers, as the distance between the consumer’s residential address and the selling point, the distance between consumer’s residential address and the place of production, or the distance between the place of production and the selling point. These are often defined in kilometers [16]. However, while the geographical proximity alone might create a market for any locally-produced food, the CTS are based on values connected to the identity of the product and the social, cultural, historical, and natural conditions in the place that the system originates from [23]. CTS are conceptualized by the debate about localized food systems. Localized food systems have been defined as an “organization of producers and services linked by their characteristics and their function in a specific territory that includes the environment, the product, the individuals, the savoir-faire, their institutions, and the consumers and their food and culture” [24]. The difference between local and localized can be illustrated by the following: in a local system, production and consumption lack attachment to cultural, historical, and territorial features. For example, a Swedish farmer might sell greenhouse tomatoes in the farmer’s market, the tomatoes are the result of a local productive activity, but has no historical or other connection to the place in which it is produced.

In the localized food system, territorial anchorage, defined as history, local nature, biophysical and biocultural heritage, tradition, know-how, and other local characteristics, play a decisive role in the articulation of collective action, which, in turn, has the potential to create positive spin-off effects between stakeholders and can generate various types of values and synergies [5,23]. Sanz Cañada and Muchnick [7] identified two main characteristics in localized food systems, namely, the presence of geographic, socio-economic, and cultural proximities and of identity-based products (or typicity) anchored to the territory from which they originate [7]. Within the frame of this study, two systems are relevant, namely MDDPS and CTS, using the typology presented by Tregear above [8].

Although there are a large number of studies about consumers in MDDPS, the motives, roles, and perspectives of the consumers in CTS are still understudied. From an empirical point of view, most previous studies are based on cases centered on the Franco-Mediterranean systems in which the products at stake are the result of a long culinary tradition, where the territorial anchorage is quite strong, and where the consumers and producers in most cases have a close geographical proximity [7,23,25–28]. Theoretically, typicity (as defined above) is considered to be the result of

territorial, social, cultural, and historical embeddedness, and typicity is also the main force behind the emergence of proximity.

Based on previous knowledge, in this study, we will relate consumers' values, perceptions, and motives to what we previously know about MDDPS and CTS. An important point of departure is the assumption that *typicity* is understood here as the product attributes valued by consumers in either local or localized food systems, which gives rise to various types of *proximity* that, in turn, influences consumers' willingness to buy a local or localized food product.

### 1.2. Product Attributes and Consumer Choices—Organizing Concepts

Studies about consumer behavior in local and/or localized food systems include a wide variety of explanations and categories, all of which can be used to build a meaningful model to analyze the results in this study. The main common ground of most consumer behavior studies seems to be consumers' demographics, which is almost always related to general socio-economic factors influencing a purchase decision (for example, income, educational level, and age).

In addition to demographics, there are many different explanations depending on the specific focus of the study. These other concepts and findings are often related to either culture, territory, environment, health, consumer, and/or socio-economic awareness related to the production of food (farming, processing, and so forth). In this study, we have used attributes embodied in cheese and dairy products as these have been described by consumers to understand the underlying causes behind proximity in relation to consumers in the localized food system. The attributes will be conceptualized departing from, and tested, against previous explanations and concepts from the wider local food discussion.

#### 1.2.1. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Product Attributes

There is a relevant relation between the quality of the food and the consumers' preferences. In a large body of literature that reaches far beyond the local/localized food discussion, the quality of food is often described through so-called intrinsic attributes; for example, the sensory characteristics, such as taste, color, texture, nutritional value, and the physical characteristics of the product. However, consumers can also be driven by so-called extrinsic attributes; that is, attributes disconnected from the product, but connected to the sale. Some examples of such attributes are brand name, brand image, stamp of quality (for example, an ecological brand, or a protected designation of origin), price, country and/or place of origin, store, staff at the selling point, packaging, production information, and consumer communication [29–31].

#### 1.2.2. Environmental Product Attributes

Padel and Foster [32] argue that consumers concerned with environmental issues are governed by, on the one hand, terminal values (for example, their quality of life) and, on the other hand, instrumental values (for example, their own health). The purchasing decision can have both psycho-social consequences (makes the consumer feel good) and functional consequences (makes the consumer eat healthily and stay healthy). In turn, both types of consequences can be obtained through the product's abstract and concrete attributes. In the case of organic food, an example of an abstract attribute is "naturally produced" and an example of a concrete attribute is "pesticide-free" [32]. Other environmentally-related arguments are "better for the environment and/or has less negative impact on climate change" [20,33,34], "promotes biodiversity" [35]; "preservation of biological heritage" [36], "pesticide-free food" [37], and "it is healthier", meaning that organic or pesticide-free means healthier food [38,39].

#### 1.2.3. Post-Productivism Product Attributes

Post-productivism arguments, also denominated as "the local response", represent quite a large body of literature and answers to the re-emergence of local food in the context of post-productivism.

This school of thought highlights the emergence of a new and socially-constructed food quality criteria caused by the emergence of the current post-productive food regime [13]. In this new setting and in the wake of several food scares, ethical motives in relation to animal welfare, for example, “ethical considerations towards animals” [37], methods of production, or environmental concerns become important for consumers’ who, therefore, choose to buy organic and/or local food instead of industrially-produced ones [11–13]. Some expressions for the demand for “food with a farmer’s face” are connected to the desire of knowing where the food comes from [40], a surge for nostalgia or “grandma’s cooking” [41], “short food chains” [42,43] and, by the emergence of a willingness to support the local food producer as a relation based on reciprocity, shared values emerge between producers and consumers [31,44].

#### 1.2.4. Geographical, Territorial, and Socio-Cultural Attributes

Another category of attributes highlights the association to geographical proximity, or “sense of place” as one group of values appreciated by consumers [10,14,15]. The sense of place depends on the territorial anchorage of a product, for example, landscapes, climate, know-how, local recipes, animals, plants, the products’ place in the local culture embedded in a specific place, and if the consumers perceive and relate to these attributes. Proximity attributes are believed to offer producers a market differentiation tool that is assumed to serve as a vehicle for consumer loyalty [5,10,23,45,46].

#### 1.2.5. Local and Rural Development Attributes

Finally, the last category of attributes is tightly related to rural development policies and an ongoing public discussion about the need to vitalize the rural economy to achieve several societal goals. These, at least in Sweden, became especially important after the decoupling reform at the beginning of the 2000s. The features of this category can be summarized as the desire to create new rural enterprises and employment, to increase profitability in agriculture and rural firms, and to promote open landscapes and biodiversity [47,48]. Within this debate, local food is expected to connect towns with the countryside, empowering the rural areas, their inhabitants, their economic activities [49], and promoting local/regional development [50].

As highlighted above, the reasons why consumers buy local or localized food can be quite diverse. All of the attributes, reasons, perceptions, and values are elements in a social construction that influence the consumer positively or negatively in relation to the local food. As such, the attributes perceived by the consumer are the consumers’ interpretation of what the food quality is. However, as seen above, quality is a complex social construct that grasps intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes, as well as other performances, criteria, and characteristics that the consumer wants [29]. These attributes are, in turn, tightly linked to the type of production system out of which the local food in question sprang from. For example, the direct produce, close typicity, or distant typicity [8]. In the case of localized food systems, the mentioned attributes are also an important underlying cause behind the creation of proximity.

There are certain similarities in the argumentation within the discussions highlighted above; what varies is the discussion in which a study is conceptualized. We have organized the discussions above into four coherent and interrelated categories, namely, the intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes; the post-modern and environmental attributes; the geographical, territorial, and socio-cultural attributes; and the local and rural development attributes. These categories will be used as analyzing concepts for this study. In addition, demographics (age, educational level, place of residence, and place of origin) will be included as a fifth category offering both a background to the sample and valuable information for our conclusions.

## 2. Materials and Methods

It is important to state that the questions asked in this article are the result of a case study conducted between 2010 and 2013 and in which the conditions, challenges, and opportunities for

growth in the farm dairy sector in Jämtland were studied [3,51]. Within this case study, the need to know more about the role of consumers became evident. Therefore, two surveys directed to artisan cheese consumers in the province of Jämtland were conducted. The first survey was conducted in the summer of 2012 and answers from 161 consumers, visitors at farm dairies and markets were gathered. The second survey was answered by 56 people and was conducted at the Gregory market in Östersund during one of the national winter vacation weeks in February 2017. The survey consisted of short interviews, containing both closed-ended questions with pre-determined alternatives and also some more qualitative and open questions. Respondents had the possibility to tick several alternatives. These closed-ended questions aimed at investigating both respondents' motivations in buying such artisan food products, respondents' associations with artisan food production, and respondents' thoughts about the products. Some questions were multiple choice questions where respondents were asked to select one of several alternatives from a list of choices. These questions also opened up for adding additional options under the choice "other". Some questions had a Likert scale range from 1 to 3 where 3 represented the things that were most appreciated and 1 represented the things were the least appreciated. Many of the interviewed people came in groups/families/pairs, but only one person from each group was selected. One of the parameters in the survey was to find out the current activity and the level of education of the respondents. However, most of the retired respondents only answered with "retired" and did not specify their earlier occupation. Therefore, the retired group consists of a separate category in the presentation below. The results are presented in Table 1.

The places for conducting the surveys were selected based on the fact that farm gate sales, farm cafés, and markets are the main sales channels used by farm dairies in Jämtland [45] and that the composition of the consumer group can vary between the summer and the winter. An important connotation is that some of the production places, such as Skärvången Village Dairy, and Kullens Farm Dairy & Café, are selling points but they have also become the most important tourist attractions in their municipalities, especially during the summer. The second most important selling points are local markets held in different locations and at different times of the year [45]. One of these markets is the Gregory market.

**Table 1.** The overview of the sample,  $n = 217$ .

Place of Purchase	N	Female	Male	Education <sup>1</sup> UG	UL	n.a.	Age 0–34	35–65	66+	Average Value of Purchase (€)
Kullens Farm Dairy and Café	37	27	10	17	19	1	6	23	8	21.4
Ost och Vilt (Delikatessen in Östersund)	4	2	2	2	2	0	0	3	1	7.1
Skärvången Village Dairy	81	40	41	36	36	9	11	42	28	22.4
Tivars Farm Dairy and Restaurant	28	14	14	8	16	4	8	13	7	14.7
Järvsö Market	11	8	3	6	5	0	2	6	3	11.7
Gregory Market	56	33	23	24	27	4	16	24	16	14.0
Total	217	124	93	93	105	18	42	111	63	15.2
Percentage		57	43	43	49	8	20	51	29	

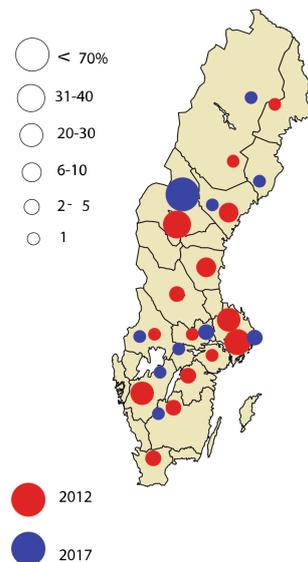
<sup>1</sup> UG = Undergraduate; UL = University level; n.a. = Respondents did not state their educational level.

The table above describes the sample, showing the number of answers per production/sales place and some general features of the respondents. The socio-economic profile of the respondents is quite mixed, containing, for example, assistant nurses, forest workers, plumbers, teachers, engineers, pensioners, dairymaids, clerks, salespersons, and owners of small- and medium-sized firms. Of the total respondents, 43% of them are male and 57% are female. Concerning the educational level of the consumers, 41% have basic and secondary school studies, 47% have university-level studies, and 12% are retired (elder citizens). In 2012, 46% of the sample had only basic and secondary school studies, while 54% had university-level studies. In the 2017 sample, 43% of the informants had basic and secondary school level education while 48% had a university-level education. Unfortunately, 8% of the total respondents did not state their educational level. All of them were elderly citizens/retirees

aged over 66. We have not omitted these incomplete responses because, as a group, the retired people have a much lower income level than the people in the workforce and, therefore, their demographics are of general interest for our conclusions. Of the total respondents, 51% are 35–65 years old. Most people in this category are already finished with their education and they tend to have a more stable situation in the workforce, while people under 35 can still be studying or working their way up in their careers. If the income is of importance, it is not surprising that only 20% of the sample were under 35. In addition, young people might be interested in other types of leisure activities, but this is, of course, just speculation.

### 3. Results

An overview of the results showed that the consumers lived all over Sweden and a few also lived in Norway (Figure 1). However, most of them had a common denominator: many of them had close or distant roots in Jämtland. Many of them, at least in the 2012 sample, were second-home owners. For example, they lived somewhere else but owned a house, an old farm, or a cottage in Jämtland. There were more tourists in the summer than in the winter, with the exception of the ski resorts. This seasonal variation partly affects the results as more respondents in the 2017 survey were local inhabitants when compared to the 2012 survey.



**Figure 1.** The geographic distribution of the informant's current place of residence  $n = 217$ <sup>1</sup>. <sup>1</sup> The blue dots on the map describe the 2017 sample and the red dots describe the 2012 sample. Source: Own elaboration.

Additionally, with the exception of a few people from Norway, all informants were from Sweden. This differs from the groups targeted tourism policies in which the goal is to attract so-called foodies (food tourists), HiFs (high-income food tourists), DINKs (double income, no kids), and other gourmets mainly from foreign countries [52–55]. The Norwegian respondents are just people passing by and visiting Jämtland for reasons not connected to the purchase of cheese. The Norwegians in this study have a common denominator with other respondents as cheese making at summer farms and local artisan farm dairies is a historic tradition shared by Jämtland and the neighboring Nord- and Sør-Trøndelag in Norway.

#### 3.1. The Reason for Visiting the Selling Point

The vast majority of respondents in the 2012 sample visited the place of purchase as a tourist destination (day trips), or as a local attraction (second-home tourists with a cabin nearby and even

some locals). In total, 102 out of the 161 of the 2012 sample indicated that the visit to the selling point was part of an excursion and 44% of the informants were at the destination for the first time, while 28% visited the destination a few times per year, 11% visited the destination every summer, and 2% were local inhabitants who buy cheese at the destination every week. Of the respondents, 15% were just passing by. In the 2017 sample, 17% of the informants were locals, but as can be seen from the map above, there were also several who come from other places, some of which expressed that they were visiting or staying in their summer house/cabin. The Gregory market itself was the main reason for the presence of the informants in the 2017 sample and the purchase of cheese was a direct consequence of this.

Most consumers have bought the products before and buy one or several times per year (both surveys). It shows that the selling points are important destinations, but also that the products are used as presents to people who do not live in Jämtland. In addition, some consumers seem to also buy the products when they decide to go back home (in the case of tourists).

When buying from the producer, the results show that there are three main reasons for visiting the selling point. The first reason is random visits to farm dairies situated along a main road/passing by; the second reason represents the local community. These respondents were important in numbers both in 2012 and 2017, but they were far from the only market for the farm dairies; the third was tourists conducting day trips or participating in organized excursions. This category is also important because the sales during the summer generate the largest share of income for the artisan cheese-makers.

In the following sections, we summarize the reason for consumers' purchases, the attributes used to describe the products, and why they appreciate them. All consumers indicated more than one reason for their purchase, therefore, there are more attributes than consumers. The attributes have been identified through the multiple choice closed-end questions and thereafter summarized by analyzing the qualitative open questions. The tables in the following sections indicate the number of attributes expressed by each consumer.

### 3.2. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Attributes

As can be seen in Table 2, amongst the intrinsic values, taste and product quality are the most important attributes, followed by product appearance, especially in the 2012 sample. Customers highlight uniqueness by arguing that the product could only be found at the dairy, that it tastes good, and has "more flavor than other cheeses". Some consumers also mentioned specific products, such as fermented milk (tjockmjölk) and "Gammelosten" (old-fashioned cheese).

**Table 2.** The intrinsic and extrinsic attributes <sup>1</sup>.

Category	Attribute	2012	2017
Intrinsic values	Good taste	152	54
	High quality	115	37
	Appearance	32	8
	Nutritional value	0	2
Extrinsic values	Likes the staff	79	0
	Nice store	27	0
	Good price	28	36
	Expensive	0	13
	Exclusive/unique	0	35
	Brand/product name	37	2
	Name of enterprise	32	0
	Enterprise logo	7	0
	Packaging	27	0

<sup>1</sup> Own elaboration.

Amongst the extrinsic values, it is interesting to notice that there are important differences between 2012 (summer) and 2017 (winter). First of all, as the Gregory market (2017) was held in the city of Östersund in February, no consumer expressed pleasant comments about the selling point, which is not surprising since there was nothing special about the selling point and it was very cold during the week when the survey was conducted. However, the 2012 sample was mostly collected at the dairies during a summer week and the visit at the selling point included the experience of being at the dairy and seeing some animals within a nice rural setting. The differences are illustrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Physical settings for the 2012 and 2017 surveys. (a) Customers enjoying the cheese buffé at Kullens farm dairy, June 2011; and (b) Gregory market, 2017.

In addition, although a majority of the 2017 sample, and a reasonable share of the 2012 sample, indicated that the consumers found that the products have a good price, 23% of the 2017 sample considered the products as expensive, while none in the 2012 sample offered the same answer. It is likely that the difference in setting, for example, experiencing the dairy during a summer day versus buying it at a market in town during a very cold winter day plays an important role on how consumers assess the price level. Moreover, some consumers compared when they buy the product in their hometown with buying it in the dairy. Buying from the producer is cheaper and there is more to choose from.

It is also noticeable that many of the respondents in the 2012 sample valued the qualities of the staff at the selling point. In fact, many claimed that “the nice staff” was one of the reasons why they came back to buy at the farm dairies. The dairy owners were present at the selling point in 2012, but in the 2017 sample, the people selling the cheese were independent ambulatory salespersons who specialize in local and regional markets. In addition, the appearance of the selling point is quite important and an example of that is given by some of the answers: “we want to experience authenticity, but the facility needs to be fresh” and “we like farm stores”. Thus, it is possible that the presence of the food artisan plays an important role for consumers.

In the 2012 sample, people also had comments on the brand, packaging, and logotypes. However, when the questionnaire was looked over before the 2017 survey, we decided to omit these questions because they were not very significant in the results from the 2012 survey. The comment about the importance of tidiness and cleanness was highlighted by several respondents, but one couple responding in 2012 offered an especially long answer with some relevant examples. It is, therefore, important to highlight that all facilities relevant for this study held a good standard, but there are a few facilities which were not included in this study that are a bit messy and where owners/staff did not understand consumers’ interpretations of what cleanliness and tidiness were. Even if this was not highlighted by the majority, it is a reasonably important aspect for farm dairy owners as most of them have expressed that the uneven standard in the business risks, creating a negative spillover effect on all farm dairies.

One relevant observation is that consumer behavior studies, in general, tend to include intrinsic and extrinsic values in one way or the other, but these attributes are quite absent in the wider local food discussion, except for some recent articles [29]. Thus, the relevance of intrinsic and extrinsic attributes highlighted in this case helps us to enrich our understanding of consumers in market-driven direct produce systems and close typicity systems.

### 3.3. Post-Modern and Environmental Attributes

Table 3 above summarizes the number of observations in the post-modern and environmental attributes categories. The discussions on post-modernity and environment were combined into one category as most of the arguments seem to be the same or similar. The answers show that consumers were confused concerning the meaning of organic and the meaning of local. In the 2012 sample, for example, 64 informants claimed that they bought products because they were organic. However, most of the production was neither organic nor fully conventional (there were features of both organic and conventional). For some consumers, it was clearly difficult to assess this difference. However, it is clear that combining the “organic” and “environmentally friendly” attributes is relevant for consumers in both samples. An additional category related to the two previous categories in the 2012 sample was “short chains”, however, no respondent highlighted this attribute in the 2017 sample. Using traditional methods of production was also considered to be related to preserving natural resources.

**Table 3.** The summary of post-modern and environmental attributes <sup>1</sup>.

Attribute	2012	2017
Organic	64 <sup>2</sup>	13
Environmental friendly	34	46
Biodiversity	0	15
Traceability	10	0
Short chains	20	0
Small scale	37	42
Know the producer	18	7
Local production	79	39
Produced close by (närproducerat)	51	0

<sup>1</sup> Source: Own elaboration; <sup>2</sup> The same answer was delivered under two different open-ended questions with a total of 25 and 39 observations, respectively.

Another confusion concerns the concepts of local production (lokalproduktion) and produced close by (närproducerat), which are differentiated in Swedish. Some consumers used the word “lokalproduktion”, while others used “närproducerat”, and some used both. Thus, for the consumer, it is difficult to assess the difference.

The attributes “small scale” and “knows the producer” also seemed to play a role in the purchasing decision. In addition, attributes related to nostalgia and health were also expressed in the answers. Products are considered to be “home-cooked” and “healthy”. Thus, respondents in this study clearly showed that the values and attributes that are central to consumers in the market-driven direct produce systems were also important factors behind their purchase of cheese in this case.

### 3.4. Geographical, Territorial, and Socio-Cultural Attributes

When asked about the geographical, territorial, and socio-cultural attributes, there were some differences between the samples, but in general, the consumers seemed to be using different words to describe the same thing. Table 4 above illustrates that, in both samples, the attributes cultural heritage, food culture, and cultural landscape are seen as interrelated by informants. Consumers also highlight “artisan food” as being relevant for their purchase.

**Table 4.** A summary of post-modern and environmental attributes <sup>1,2</sup>.

Attribute	2012	2017
Childhood memories/family ties	22	
Cultural heritage/food traditions	58	32
Place and its history	68	
Natural heritage/natural pastures		26
Animals/landraces		14
Endangered species/unusual animals		11
Grazing animals		31
Natural landscape		26
Cultural landscape		18
Artisan food	65	24
Resources from outline land		6

<sup>1</sup> In the 2012 survey, aspects concerning the animals, landscape, and nature were not specified in the closed-end questions. All the environmental aspects were lumped together under “environment”, “organic”, and “place”. However, as the results showed that there were different interpretations of the mentioned concepts (through the results in the open-ended questions) the questions were reformulated in 2017 in order to try to understand what the consumers actually meant when they thought about the natural, cultural, and biological heritage. Some of the words used to describe cultural and natural heritage were “place”, richness of nature”, “open landscape”, “summer farm landscape”, “mountains”, “goats”, “kitten goats”, “grazing animals”, “alpine cows”, and “animals”; <sup>2</sup> Source: Own elaboration.

Another expression of the link between consumers and traditions is that the consumers in both samples highlight that knowing about, having visited, or having relatives who worked or owned summer farms positively influenced them to buy artisan cheese. This also includes the more general “childhood memories” highlighted by a fifth of the respondents in 2012, which is in line with the search for food with nostalgia, highlighted by Anthopoulou and Koutsou [39] and Autio et al. [41]. However, there were also more specific arguments, such as being “born in the house next to the dairy” or that the “grandmother was a dairy maid” (on a summer farm). Consumers also expressed a sense of pride related to the cultural heritage of the products. This was expressed by permanent residents and by those informants who have a historical connection to Jämtland.

As highlighted above, some attributes were specified in more detail in the 2017 survey based on the responses from 2012. The attributes of animals/landraces, grazing animals, natural landscape, and cultural landscape were highlighted in both samples. However, in the 2017 survey, some attributes were specified in order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between the consumer and the various aspects of nature. The answers clearly showed that consumers have a complex relationship to nature, landscape, and animals, and that the meanings are more varied than previous studies showed [12,32]. Further investigating consumers’ relations to nature, landscapes, and animals can offer new insights which can be relevant for policy- and decision-making at different levels [36], but above all, it can also help us deepen our knowledge and improve the conceptualization of market-driven direct produce systems and of close typicity systems. In the words of consumers, this is expressed by efforts to link the existence of the products to biodiversity, nature, landscape, animals, and cultural value, while others express their love for the “goats” and “mountain cows”.

### 3.5. Local and Rural Development Attributes

Table 5 above illustrates how the local and rural development arguments seem to be important for respondents in both samples. Local consumers also found these attributes as more important than consumers not living locally. However, some of the respondents also highlight Jämtland and the importance of the dairies. There seems to be a consciousness about the link between the products and farm dairies and the local and rural development. This was expressed, for example, as the farm dairies being the municipality’s most important tourist destination; that dairies bring life and activities to the locality; because dairies create local employment offering opportunities for young families to stay because it is then possible to keep the local school; or that when there are local firms, the

community can remain vibrant. One consumer expresses this as “one must buy local products to maintain a living countryside”. In addition, several respondents valued the contribution made by the food artisans/entrepreneurs to the local community; they were described as “local heroes” and “son(s) of the village”.

**Table 5.** The summary of the local and rural development attributes <sup>1</sup>.

Attribute	2012	2017
Contribute to rural development	90	27
Living countryside	104	44
Local heroes/value contribution of the firm	37	

<sup>1</sup> Source: Own elaboration.

#### 4. Conclusions

The results in this article clearly show that consumers value a combination of different attributes from both MDDPS and CTS. Intrinsic values, and especially “good taste” and “high quality”, were the most important attributes valued by consumers in both samples. Some of the attributes coincide with attributes found in MDDPS, which is backed up by the literature on post-modernity and the environment and in which short transports, knowing the producer, environmental concerns and, above all, the attributes of “local production” and “organic” play key roles. Our results also show that there are important elements of CTS grasping the territorial, cultural, and historical embeddedness highlighted in the localized food discussion. Thus, the construction of the proximity from the point of view of the consumer can be derived from a complex set of attributes and motivational factors not normally highlighted in the localized food discussion. The intrinsic and extrinsic attributes are normally less highlighted in the research about the local and localized food, but the relevance of such attributes indicate that there is a need for the additional scrutiny of their role in the wider local food discussion.

Moreover, the role of the attributes connected to natural values and the natural environment in which this type of production takes place also showed a more complex picture than what was thought initially. Additionally, in this case, there is a need to obtain a deeper understanding of how consumers value and perceive such attributes in both MDDPS and CTS. This is especially true since there is likely to be an even stronger cognitive shift towards the environment and climate-friendly food products. Thus, food with these attributes, true or presumably so, is likely to become more popular. In that context, traditional small-scale, local, and old-fashioned food production systems might become even more popular among the wealthier part of the population.

Thus, consumers argue that all these aspects hang together. Their perception of proximity is influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic values, post-modernity and environment, geography, tradition, rural development, and all other attributes they see embodied in the products that they are willing to pay for.

Consumers in this study seem to value a more complex and varied set of attributes than previous studies seem to highlight. It is not possible to establish why, since our sample is too small, but one reason can be that the alienation of consumers from the production of food occurred much earlier in Sweden than in many other countries and, therefore, it is not possible to differentiate just one set of motivational factors connected to one type of production system (for example MDDPS and CTS).

It can be concluded that the respondents’ connection to values and attributes found in the CTS can partly be the result of a personal and historical link to Jämtland expressed by most consumers (that is, they or their parents migrated from Jämtland). This connection creates an emotional link to the historical, cultural, and territorially-embedded values. The connection to values and attributes found in MDDPS can also be the result of the fact that many of the informants do not permanently

live in Jämtland, therefore, as they were physically de-linked from the production of food by living elsewhere, they are also influenced by the values and attributes found in MDDPS.

Another conclusion is that the goals of tourism authorities of attracting global gourmets, so-called foodies (food tourists), HiFs (high-income food tourists), DINKs (double income no kids), and other gourmets from foreign countries are not met in reality, at least in the context of Jämtlandic farm dairies and farm cafés. Instead, the customers and tourists, in this case, were second homeowners, local tourists, and a few people from Norway, all of which are forgotten groups in the national tourism strategies. In addition, the socio-economic profiles of the visitors were quite mixed, with people with low-income jobs, as well as high-income ones, being present.

The local and rural development is often implied and indirectly defined as a category in consumer behavior studies. A part of this can be related to motivational factors in market-driven direct produce systems, while others can be related to close proximity systems. However, highlighting and deepening our understanding of these attributes in relation to both types of systems offers an opportunity to improve the conceptualization of consumer behavior in the wider local food system discussion and also in relation to the systems mentioned above.

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