

Article

Australian Consumers' Drivers and Barriers to Purchasing Local Food from Alternative Agri-Food Networks

Amy D. Lykins ^{1,*} , Nicolette Larder ² , Cassandra Sundaraja ¹  and Lucie Newsome ³ ¹ School of Psychology, University of New England, Armidale, NSW 2351, Australia; csundar2@une.edu.au² Department of Geography and Planning, School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, University of New England, Armidale, NSW 2351, Australia; nlarder@une.edu.au³ UNE Business School, University of New England, Armidale, NSW 2351, Australia; lnewsom3@une.edu.au

* Correspondence: alykins@une.edu.au

Abstract: Greater engagement with alternative food supply chains is considered a key factor in reducing a range of environmental and social harms associated with the global agri-food system. However, consumer engagement with these supply chains is low, and little research has investigated this issue in the Australian context. This study aimed to identify Australian consumers' drivers and barriers in procuring food grown locally from alternative grocery retailers. Self-reported primary or co-equal grocery shoppers ($n = 325$) completed measures of drivers and barriers to shopping for locally produced food (within 200 km) from alternative retailers, as well as current behavioural engagement with such. An exploratory factor analysis revealed four key drivers (Food Shopping as an Expression of Values, Food Shopping as a Socio-Emotional Experience, Avoiding “Unnatural” Food, Protesting the Duopoly) and two key barriers (It's All Too Hard, Local Food Scepticism). Multiple regression analysis demonstrated that together, these drivers and barriers explained a significant 9% of the variance in the frequency of alternate shopping practices, of which only the barrier It's All Too Hard accounted for a significant amount of unique variance. Findings point to ways to encourage engagement with sustainable food systems, as well as critical barriers to overcoming disengagement.

Keywords: alternative agri-food supply chains; consumer behaviour; sustainable food consumption; local food; climate change



Academic Editor: Dimitris Skalkos

Received: 30 January 2025

Revised: 20 March 2025

Accepted: 28 March 2025

Published: 31 March 2025

Citation: Lykins, A.D.; Larder, N.; Sundaraja, C.; Newsome, L. Australian Consumers' Drivers and Barriers to Purchasing Local Food from Alternative Agri-Food Networks. *Sustainability* **2025**, *17*, 3093. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17073093>

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Supply chain consolidation in the agri-food sector has been one of the most important structural changes in the sector since the 1950s [1]. Arguably, the most consequential aspect of the Australian food system has been domestic vertical integration by food retailers, namely the two major supermarket corporations—Coles and Woolworths—which control 67% of supermarket retail sales nationally [2]. These retailers have amassed political, economic, and regulatory control up and down supply chains, which has given them considerable power to influence the discursive space around food, as well as material patterns of retailing and food production and consumption [3–7]. For close to three decades, researchers have reported on the negative impacts of unequal power relations between supermarkets and other actors in the supply chain (see, for example, [4,8–12]). Despite inquiries into the effects of grocery market concentration on food prices (see, for example, [13]), the market regulator has failed to take substantial action to disrupt the market-distorting effects of the duopoly [14].

For Australian consumers, there is ample evidence that shopping for groceries outside the supermarket duopoly—that is, at alternative food retailers such as farmers' markets and independently owned retailers such as greengrocers, butchers, bakers, and ethnic food stores—is worthwhile. From a price perspective, fruit and vegetables are significantly cheaper at greengrocers compared with the supermarket duopoly [15,16], and consumers also report feeling socially connected when food shopping at farmers' markets compared with feeling alienated at the major supermarkets [17]. Further, the power of the Australian supermarket duopoly has also been identified for some time as an ongoing public health issue due to the types of food they sell, their lack of genuine commitment to contributing to improving population health, and the sales strategies they use [18–20]. For instance, from a consumer trust perspective, Coles and Woolworths have been accused by market watchdogs of lying to consumers about so-called “discount pricing”. At the time of writing, the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission is alleging both Coles and Woolworths spiked prices by at least 15% before “dropping” prices to the same as, or higher than, the regular price before the spike.

The purpose of this study was to investigate grocery shopping practices among Australian consumers. Specifically, it explores the factors that both drive and prevent consumers from shopping for locally produced food at alternative food retailers. A better understanding of the drivers and barriers shaping consumer grocery shopping practices will inform the future of the Australian agri-food system through elucidating the challenges for consumers in engaging in alternative agri-food supply chains. Beyond the noted benefits for consumers, alternative agri-food supply chains are associated with a range of important environmental outcomes, including improved biodiversity, an increase in sustainable production methods, and reduced pollution [21–23]. They also engender significant social benefits, such as greater opportunities for rural development [24], larger income dividends for producers [25], and a more stable safety net for food security and nutrition during times of crisis [26]. Thus, diversity in the food system has emerged as a critical element of a resilient food system that will ensure food security [27]. As such, promoting and supporting greater consumer engagement with alternative food systems supports several of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and, consequently, greater global food security. Understanding factors related to consumer engagement, as well as barriers to such, is crucial in the movement towards sustainable food systems [28].

1.1. Brief Literature Review on Drivers and Barriers to Shopping for Locally Grown Food

In recent decades, many consumers have moved away from purchasing decisions based on price and brand loyalty and towards those made on personal values. In the case of food consumption, this shift in priorities manifests as a preference for sustainable produce based on the individual's morals, ethics, and social views [29,30], in addition to perceptions that these choices assist in mitigating climate change [31]. Following shocks to the Australian food system due to the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers have engaged in a range of strategies to improve the sustainability and resilience of the food system, including strengthening local food systems [32]. Research indicates unequivocally that consumers, irrespective of income and age, are willing to pay a premium for what they perceive to be sustainable produce (e.g., [33–35]); specifically, consumers are willing to pay more for both locally sourced and organically grown food than conventionally produced and sourced food [36,37].

Examinations of the underlying motivations for these shifting consumption patterns have revealed some interesting factors. In an extensive review of 73 internationally based publications, Feldmann and Hamm [38] concluded that attitudes are an important predictor of food purchasing, with consumers' beliefs that locally grown food was of higher quality

and better taste supporting their engagement with local food networks. This research was supported by Watts et al. [39], who found that consumers believed that food from alternative food networks was of better quality than food from mainstream supermarkets. Research on the Australian context [40] found that the perception of the freshness of locally grown fruit and vegetables is a key enabler. In contrast, some research from Germany [41] and Finland [42] did not show perceived higher quality as a factor, though the German participants did perceive local food to be more “natural” in content.

Beyond perceptions of higher quality and better taste, research has also pointed to the role of trust in locally sourced food, revealing higher reported trust in “food from somewhere” than in the “food from nowhere” sold by the corporate-industrial food system [39,43,44]. The literature examining local food consumption in the United Kingdom (UK) identified the shortening of relations between consumer and producer and the associated role of food’s embeddedness in place (e.g., [24,45,46]). Scholars suggested that the observed turn to local food in the UK was part of a re-spatialisation of the social relations of agriculture and food that followed a series of food scares (e.g., foot-and-mouth disease) through the 1990s (e.g., [45,47–49]). The implication is that locally grown food sold through alternative food retailers feels more trustworthy to consumers than the faceless, location-less “food from nowhere” sold by supermarkets with respect to safety, and that this is a driving factor in its purchase.

Research has also demonstrated that consumers seek to purchase from alternative food retailers because it is seen both as more ethical and as a protest against the perceived social, political, and environmental ills of the conventional food system and major supermarkets. In doing so, consumers are constructing alternative economic imaginaries to the dominant food system (e.g., [50–52]). More recently, Watts et al. [39] confirmed this motivation, reporting that consumers purchase from alternative food networks as a form of protest against the market power of supermarkets and the perceived social, political, and environmental problems associated with conventional food systems. Godrich et al. [40] found that consumers were motivated to purchase food locally to support their communities and local farmers.

Others have argued that locally grown and sold foods, as symbols, are imbued with normative characteristics that signal consumers’ valued socio-political positions and/or ideologies (e.g., [53]). This characterisation occurs because producers and marketers present their items with valued qualities, such as rarity and simplicity, and consumers believe it [54]. Winter [49] noted that these characteristics support a belief in the higher quality of these items than those conventionally sourced, irrespective of whether the claims of sustainable production, low environmental impact, and safety were valid. Again, it is the consumers’ beliefs in these qualities of food from alternative networks that drive their purchasing behaviour.

Finally, research has shown that the practices of shopping at alternative food retailers, particularly at farmers’ markets, are tied to the sociality of the shopping experience itself. Studies by both McEachern et al. [55] and Albrecht and Smithers [56] have shown that for some consumers, the practice of grocery shopping at alternative retailers is driven by the symbolic aspects of the experience of shopping—in particular, the cultural capital associated with the novelty and sociality of farmers’ markets. That is, shopping at these markets may be both a reflection of a particular cultural practice associated with leisure as much as an attempt to practice a particular food-based ethic.

Much of the research investigating consumer behaviour around shopping at alternative food retailers has focused on motivations or intentions; relatively less interest has been paid to the real, practical behaviour of shopping. Results from those studies have shown that even for those who are motivated to diversify their food purchasing practices and who

are willing to pay more for food from alternative retailers, this may not translate into actual behaviour [37]. Noting that food purchasing intention and behaviour are never perfectly correlated [57], it is important that we understand not only why people procure food from alternative retailers but also what factors may make it challenging to do so.

Some evidence points to potential barriers to the purchasing of food from alternative retailers. Higher perceived or actual prices of food from alternative retailers are regularly identified by participants as a barrier to their consumption [33,37,38,40,56–59], as is the perceived (or real) inconvenience of sourcing it [38,56–60]. Less common, barriers include not recognising or knowing how to prepare unfamiliar produce [56,59,61], not having ready access to local producers' markets [37,57,59], the limited seasonality of produce [40], and having a limited understanding of the benefits of supporting these producers and suppliers [57] have also been reported.

1.2. Beyond the Duopoly in Rural and Urban Australia

To date, there have been few studies of Australian consumers' motivations to shop for local food at alternative food retailers. The work of Lockie et al. [62] on consumer motivation to purchase organic food was seminal. The researchers concluded that health and the nature of the content of the food were the most important motivators for the purchasing of organic food, followed by price. This finding was supported by more recent research by Birch et al. [47], who found that Australian consumers were motivated to purchase local food primarily by self-interest related to personal health and well-being, concerns around food safety, and lastly, the construction of an ethical personal identity. Other research has found that consumer approaches depend on what type of shopping the person is doing, whether that be "main" shopping (i.e., where most of the groceries are purchased) or "top-up" shopping (i.e., where the consumer may purchase other items forgotten or to supplement items purchased during the main shopping). In Australia, the main shopping tended to occur at one of the two primary supermarkets, whereas top-up shopping more often occurred at shops that were smaller and more conveniently located [63]. These differences were also reflected in the consumer approach, where ethically farmed produce had the most influence on store choice when doing main shopping, and fair trading and environmentally responsible policies had a greater influence on selection when top-up shopping [63].

More recently, Godrich et al. [40] examined barriers and enablers to the consumption of regionally grown fresh fruit and vegetables in south Western Australia and Tasmania. Enablers included the perception of freshness and the desire to support local farmers and communities, whereas barriers included price and availability of produce. Altruism and civic environment concerns were not associated with the purchasing of local food in this study. In contrast, Barraket et al. [64] investigated rural-dwelling Australian consumer engagement with local social enterprises, concluding that these individuals are largely motivated to engage with these providers by both ethical and instrumental consumer concerns, including the personal relationships and connections they have with the providers. Taken together, drivers for explicitly engaging with local food suppliers are likely motivated by a number of different factors, which may vary depending on whether the population under examination lives in an urban or a rural environment [65]. Given the somewhat unique ecological and agri-food corporate environments of Australia and the relative dearth of data in this space on Australian consumers, this issue deserves further investigation.

The major conclusion that can be drawn from this literature is that the practice of food purchasing is not tied to one particular motivating factor. Instead, it is likely the result of complex and interrelated factors, which may be a key explanation for the intention–behaviour gap observed in many studies of ethical and/or sustainable consumption. If the

aim is to encourage and support consumer engagement with alternative agri-food supply chains, both significant drivers of and barriers to this behaviour need to be understood and addressed in a comprehensive and holistic context, particularly as they relate to one's local setting. This is more so the case where very little research on consumer attitudes towards and engagement with alternative agri-food supply chains exists, such as in Australia.

1.3. Aims of Current Study

Previous research has identified a number of factors that motivate consumers to shop for local food at alternative food retailers; however, a number of barriers have been noted as well, and the intention–behaviour gap persists. To date, there has been little examination of consumer engagement with alternative food retailers within Australia, particularly among people living outside urban centres.

The current study aimed to assess Australian consumers' engagement with alternative food retailers, how this varies depending on geographic location (i.e., urban vs. rural/regional), and drivers and barriers towards procurement of local food from these outlets. We respond to the call from Nemes et al. [66] for research that focuses on specific geographic contexts to understand national differences in attitudes towards sustainable food consumption. To do this, we first reviewed the literature on all known potential drivers and barriers around alternative food consumption and developed a novel questionnaire comprising these items. Following an exploratory factor analysis, the identified drivers and barriers were used in a multiple regression analysis to assess their respective contributions to the purchasing of food from alternative retailers. As this study was exploratory, we had no specific hypotheses about the predicted relationships among our variables of interest.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 325 adult Australians who self-reported being either the primary food shopper in their household or that food shopping was an equally shared role. A target sample size was determined by a power analysis. A study that examined drivers and barriers associated with the adoption of sustainable palm oil purchasing practices among Australian residents, and thus had some meaningful parallels to the proposed study with respect to methodology and analytic approach, found small to medium effect sizes for their psychological variables (squared semi-partial correlations ranging from <0.01 to 0.18 ; [67]). Based on this research, a small to medium effect size of $f^2 = 0.10$ [68,69] was predicted. Assuming a target power of 0.90 , 10 predictors, and an α level of 0.01 , a power analysis using G*Power [70] suggested a minimum sample size of 282 participants.

All participants were sourced using a survey panel from Qualtrics™, an online database and survey administrator. The final sample was representative across adult age groups, mapped on the national representative census data, and drew from both regional and urban New South Wales (51% urban dwelling). Participants were predominantly female (69%), likely due to the screening procedures utilised to survey members of households who primarily do grocery shopping. Although trends are changing, grocery shopping traditionally has been viewed as a female-centric gendered role, and recent surveys continue to indicate that women are more likely than men to perform routine grocery purchases [71,72]. Seventy-nine per cent of participants reported being the primary grocery shoppers in their household, with the remaining 21% reporting that it is equally shared.

Respondents had a mean age of 52.67 years ($SD = 17.39$, range = 18 to 85 years). With respect to education, 27% had a college certificate/diploma, 17% said they had completed an undergraduate degree, 17.5% reported completing year 12 , and 15% had an education level of year 10 or less. The median annual household income reported was between

50,000 and 59,000 AUD, which is lower than the average Australian household income for 2021 at approximately 92,000 AUD [73]. In terms of ethnicity, most of the sample (72%) identified as European Australian. While 59% of the respondents did not identify as migrants to Australia, 21.5% identified as being first-generation migrants, and 19.4% as being second-generation migrants. Finally, almost half the sample (43%) reported growing some of their own food (which included herbs, green leafy vegetables, root vegetables, tomatoes, and fruits).

2.2. Measures

The measures used in this study included an indication of the existing frequency of food shopping behaviour across a range of locations (e.g., large retail supermarkets, local butchers, farmers' markets, etc.) and a specially designed survey to capture factors influencing local food purchasing behaviour derived from the existing literature.

The frequency of food shopping behaviour was estimated as follows. Participants were asked to indicate all the locations where they shopped for food, and this list contained the following options: major/large retail supermarkets (e.g., Coles and Woolworths), other supermarkets (e.g., ALDI and IGA—Independent Grocers of Australia), farmers' markets, local fruit and vegetable shops, local butchers' shops, local bakeries, organic shop, community supported agriculture/food box scheme, ethnic/culture-specific stores/markets, and direct from producers outside of farmers' markets. For each of the locations that participants selected, they were asked to provide an indication of the frequency of each behaviour (either in-person or online) over the past month on an 11-point scale, where 0 = "never" and 10 = "10 or more times".

The frequency of shopping at these locations in person was examined using Cronbach's α to ascertain whether there were consistencies in patterns across shopping at locations other than the major supermarkets (i.e., whether it made sense to group the shopping locations together in a particular way or not). Frequencies across all locations apart from supermarkets (which, although geographically "local", mainly rely on long, non-diverse supply chains) were summed (farmer's markets, local fruit and vegetable shops, local butchers' shops, local bakeries, organic shops, community supported agriculture/food box schemes, ethnic/culture-specific stores/markets, and direct from producers outside of farmers' markets), which resulted in a Cronbach's α of 0.69. These frequencies were added together to provide a single, comprehensive measure of the frequency of the alternative shopping practices and were used in subsequent analyses. An attempt to sum the frequencies relating to shopping at supermarkets yielded a Cronbach's α of 0.10, which was very low. Hence, the frequencies of shopping in person at large retail supermarkets vs other supermarkets (e.g., ALDI and IGA) were considered separately in subsequent analyses.

Factors influencing local food shopping survey. Based on a detailed literature review of research investigating engagement with diverse agri-food supply chains (e.g., [24,33,36–38,42,56–58,61,74–78]) and adding onto an existing survey that explored factors influencing local food shopping in the UK [59], potential barriers and drivers of purchasing local food were identified. These were then incorporated into a survey of 61 driver items and 34 barrier items that included items about price, knowledge (on availability, production practices, etc.), convenience or lack of it (in terms of distance, availability, seasonal variability, etc.), perceived health benefits, and wishing to demonstrate support for local producers, among others (including open-ended "other" items for participants to write any other reasons they did not think had been captured in the survey items). For a complete list of all of the items, please see Supplementary Materials. Though we endorse the broader understanding of short supply chains provided by Renting et al. [24] and others, we elected to define "local food" in the instructions as having been produced within a 200-kilometre radius

of the participant's home to ensure that all participants were using the same definition in answering the barrier and driver items. All items were rated on a 7-point scale of 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree". These items were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis, the details of which are summarised in Section 3. Cronbach's α for the scaled factors ranged from 0.87 to 0.96.

2.3. Procedure

Participants were recruited via a QualtricsTM online panel in 2022. The online survey began with information about the study, after which they could provide consent and then complete the questionnaires. Those who were below 18 years of age and those who reported that someone else (apart from the participant themselves) primarily did the grocery and/or supermarket shopping for the household were screened out of the survey. In the survey, all questions were mandatory (although participants could select "rather not say" for the questions about ethnicity and annual household income). The socio-demographic questions and frequency of local food shopping behaviour were first presented, followed by the survey on factors influencing local food purchasing (driver items and then barrier items). As attention-checks, three instructed-response items (e.g., "In order to check for attention, please answer '5' for this question") were incorporated into the survey on factors influencing local food purchasing. These instructed-response items have been known to be useful in screening out careless responders while still protecting the validity of the scale [79,80]. QualtricsTM screened out participants who failed any of the attention checks or provided only partial responses. Additionally, a speed-checker was incorporated into the online survey. Participants whose response times were approximately below one-half of the median time taken to complete the survey in a soft launch (i.e., less than or equal to six minutes and 50 s) were automatically screened out as well to ensure good data quality. This study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (HE21-214) and was conducted in compliance with the approved research ethics procedure.

2.4. Data Analysis

All data analyses were run using IBM SPSS Statistics v. 28 [81]. Further information on selected statistical analyses is presented below.

3. Results

Twenty-four per cent of participants reported that they obtained their food from one primary store, and on average, the sample purchased food from three different sources. Ninety per cent of the sample reported that they shop at major/large retail supermarkets at least some of the time, followed by 55% who reported shopping at other supermarkets (ALDI and IGA). The percentages decreased after that, with 47% who reported shopping at local fruit and vegetable shops, 40% at local bakeries, 37% at local butchers, and 21.5% at farmers' markets. The remaining shopping locations were shopped at by less than 10% of the sample. The selection of shopping locations was then compared for participants from regional versus urban geographic locations. Those in regional areas tended to shop significantly more frequently at local fruit and vegetable shops, $t(323) = 2.196$, $p = 0.029$, 95% CI (0.01, 0.23), while those in urban areas tend to shop significantly more at ethnic/culture-specific shops, $t(323) = 4.269$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI (0.07, 0.18). At all other shopping locations, purchasing patterns across urban and regional consumers in the current sample were not significantly different. Finally, there was no significant difference between those in regional and urban areas in terms of growing one's own food, $X^2(1) = 2.883$, $p = 0.090$, $\Phi = -0.09$.

3.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis to Identify Potential Drivers and Barriers

The survey on factors influencing local food shopping consisted of 61 driver items and 34 barrier items. These driver items and barrier items were separately subjected to exploratory factor analysis, using the maximum likelihood extraction method, to determine the underlying structure of the variables and to reduce the data into more manageable units.

Drivers. For the exploratory factor analysis run with the driver items, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.96, and Bartlett’s test of sphericity had a *p*-value of less than 0.001, which indicated that there were strong linear relationships within the data set. The number of factors to retain was decided based on Cattell’s [82] scree plot and Kaiser’s rule (of eigenvalues greater than one). The scree plot distinctly indicated that three factors should be retained, whereas Kaiser’s rule suggested nine. All possible solutions for three to nine factors were run using the direct oblimin rotation with Δ set to 0. A four-factor solution was the most interpretable and accounted for 59% of the overall response variance. Factor solutions of more than four factors had a high number of cross-loading items across two or more factors, resulting in fewer items per factor. Additionally, there was a notable conceptual overlap between the additional factors generated, and hence, the four-factor solution was selected.

Items that loaded greater than 0.50 on one factor with a cross-loading of 0.30 or less were used to define each factor. Scale scores for each of the retained factors were computed by taking the average across the selected items for each factor and were used for subsequent analysis. Table 1 lists the items included under each of the four driver factors, the mean and standard deviation, and the internal reliability score for each factor.

Table 1. Exploratory factor analysis pattern matrix loadings for drivers ($n = 325$).

Driver Items	M (SD)	Factor Loading			
		1	2	3	4
<i>Factor 1—Food Shopping as an Expression of Values ($\alpha = 0.96$)</i>					
I can buy the amount I want.	2.64 (1.45)	0.57		0.25	
It supports local producers.	1.96 (1.20)	0.88			
It supports local retailers.	2.02 (1.20)	0.88			
I know where it comes from.	2.34 (1.38)	0.68		0.23	
It is ethical.	2.81 (1.33)	0.53	0.24		
It tastes good.	2.45 (1.34)	0.71			
Fair trade is important.	2.72 (1.46)	0.60			
It uses less packaging.	2.78 (1.54)	0.63			
It is fresh.	2.06 (1.28)	0.85			
It is healthy.	2.36 (1.38)	0.70			
It involves “friendly” farming methods (e.g., grass-fed cows).	2.68 (1.51)	0.51		0.24	
It is of high quality.	2.22 (1.22)	0.69			
I think it is the right thing to do.	2.25 (1.27)	0.61			
It is safe.	2.42 (1.26)	0.53		0.24	
I trust the producers.	2.68 (1.31)	0.61			
There is transparency in food production.	3.00 (1.42)	0.53	0.25		
It is sourced directly from the producer (there are no intermediates).	2.57 (1.35)	0.68			
It is important to preserve agricultural traditions.	2.61 (1.48)	0.67			0.30
It is important to preserve local seeds and varieties.	2.79 (1.44)	0.59			0.26

Table 1. Cont.

Driver Items	M (SD)	Factor Loading			
		1	2	3	4
Factor 2—Food Shopping as a Socio-Emotional Experience ($\alpha = 0.87$)					
Shopping for it brings back memories of the past.	3.60 (1.64)		0.65		
It is fun.	3.51 (1.58)	0.24	0.67		
It is nostalgic.	3.96 (1.47)		0.64		
I feel guilty if I do not.	4.42 (1.55)		0.58		0.28
It is more affordable.	3.45 (1.63)	0.24	0.57		
The products are unique.	3.55 (1.61)		0.60		
Many people in my social circle do so.	4.68 (1.67)		0.62		
Factor 3—Avoiding “Unnatural” Foods ($\alpha = 0.92$)					
It is free from preservatives.	2.81 (1.50)	0.24		0.72	
It is free from chemicals (e.g., pesticides, herbicides).	3.06 (1.51)			0.70	
It doesn’t use GMO (genetically-modified organisms).	3.04 (1.53)			0.69	
The production methods don’t use antibiotics.	3.01 (1.56)			0.77	
The production methods don’t use hormones.	3.07 (1.51)			0.83	
It is organic.	3.54 (1.66)			0.60	
Factor 4—Protesting the Duopoly ($\alpha = 0.89$)					
I do not trust the large retailers (e.g., supermarkets like Coles and Woolworths).	4.22 (1.66)				0.68
I dislike the shopping experience at large retailers like Coles and Woolworths.	4.42 (1.68)				0.70
I am ethically opposed to buying from large retailers like Coles and Woolworth.	4.75 (1.66)				0.73

M = mean, SD = standard deviation; all items were rated on a 7-point scale of 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”.

Barriers. For the exploratory factor analysis run with the barrier items, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.97, and Bartlett’s test of sphericity had a p -value of less than 0.001, which once again indicated that there were strong linear relationships within the dataset. The number of factors to retain was decided based on Cattell’s [82] scree plot and Kaiser’s rule (of eigenvalues greater than one). The scree plot distinctly indicated that two to three factors should be retained, whereas Kaiser’s rule suggested three. Solutions for both two and three factors were run using the direct oblimin rotation with Δ set to 0. A two-factor solution was the most interpretable and accounted for 61% of the overall response variance. The three-factor solution had items from the third factor with low factor loadings and a high number of cross-loading items across the other two factors, so this was not utilised.

As with the driver items, barrier items that loaded greater than 0.50 on one factor with a cross-loading of 0.30 or less were used to define each factor; scale scores for each of the retained factors were computed by taking the average across the selected items for each factor and were used for subsequent analysis. Table 2 lists the items included under each of the two barrier factors, the mean and standard deviation, and the internal reliability score for both factors.

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis pattern matrix loadings for barriers ($n = 325$).

Barrier Items	M (SD)	Factor Loadings	
		1	2
Factor 5—It's All Too Hard ($\alpha = 0.97$)			
The range of products is limited.	5.02 (1.58)	0.68	
Food produced elsewhere is sometimes better.	5.07 (1.50)	0.52	0.25
It is not well promoted.	4.86 (1.75)	0.70	
The price is not always clear.	5.17 (1.56)	0.64	
It is not readily available.	4.84 (1.73)	0.91	
It is expensive.	4.58 (1.77)	0.77	
To do so is time-consuming.	5.09 (1.54)	0.85	
It requires extra effort.	5.02 (1.67)	0.88	
It is inconvenient.	5.17 (1.65)	0.87	
I have to travel farther to do so.	4.94 (1.79)	0.90	
I do not know where to get it from.	5.19 (1.69)	0.62	
It is not part of my normal/regular shopping routine	4.88 (1.78)	0.94	
It is challenging to plan for.	5.25 (1.53)	0.69	
I prefer to complete all my purchases at one location (i.e., a large retail supermarket).	4.53 (1.89)	0.75	
It is difficult to access places to do so.	4.86 (1.78)	0.86	
There is not much food produced in my local area.	4.97 (1.72)	0.69	
Factor 6—Local Food Scepticism ($\alpha = 0.94$)			
I do not trust the producers.	5.93 (1.17)		0.84
I don't trust the safety of local food.	5.92 (1.12)		0.78
I do not recognise some of the food that is sold.	5.55 (1.40)		0.69
I rarely cook.	5.80 (1.33)		0.61
I do not know how to cook/prepare it.	5.88 (1.26)		0.79
I like cooking meals that use products that are not available locally.	5.31 (1.41)		0.53
It is not important to me.	5.66 (1.39)	0.29	0.56
I do not know why I should.	5.79 (1.24)		0.78
I am not convinced of its benefits of local food.	5.69 (1.28)		0.77
I do not like the way it looks.	5.89 (1.20)		0.83
I don't think much about where food comes from.	5.53 (1.44)		0.63
I prefer to invest in other sustainability initiatives (e.g., decreasing energy use, reducing plastic, etc.).	5.43 (1.33)		0.68
I feel out of place (uncomfortable) at farmers' markets.	5.77 (1.41)		0.64

M = mean, *SD* = standard deviation; all items were rated on a 7-point scale of 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree".

3.2. Multiple Regression to Predict Frequency of Alternative Shopping Practices

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict the frequency of various shopping practices. As described above, the frequency of alternative shopping experiences was taken to include in-person shopping at farmers' markets, local fruit and vegetable shops, local butchers' shops, local bakeries, organic shops, community-supported agriculture/food box schemes, ethnic/culture-specific stores/markets, and direct from producers outside of farmers' markets. As there was a reasonably large number of participants who shopped at mainstream supermarkets and other supermarkets (i.e., ALDI and IGA), the frequency of shopping at these locations was used separately in the regression analysis.

Together, the four driver factors and two barrier factors explained 9% of the variance in the frequency of alternative shopping practices. A summary of the regression analysis is presented in Table 3. Examining the beta-coefficients of the six factors, it is apparent that only *It's All Too Hard* explained a statistically significant amount of unique variance (2%) in the frequency of alternative shopping practices. Therefore, these results indicate that it is likely that the perceived barriers relating to difficulty and inconvenience are the main influence on consumers' decisions to shop outside of mainstream supermarkets (at least of the variables assessed in this study).

Table 3. Predicting frequency of shopping practices from the four driver factors and two barrier factors influencing local food shopping.

Predictors	M (SD)	B	95% CI for B		r	sr ²
			LB	UB		
Food Shopping as an Expression of Values	2.49 (1.05)	−1.09	−2.60	0.41	−0.23 ***	0.01
Food Shopping as A Socio-Emotional Experience	3.88 (1.20)	−0.91	−1.99	0.17	−0.24 ***	0.01
Avoiding “Unnatural” Foods	3.09 (1.30)	0.80	−0.24	1.85	−0.13 **	0.01
Protesting the Duopoly	4.46 (1.51)	−0.50	−1.19	0.19	−0.19 ***	0.01
It's All Too Hard	4.96 (1.37)	1.18	0.19	2.17	0.25 ***	0.02 *
Local Food Scepticism	5.70 (1.01)	−0.15	−1.53	1.23	0.15 **	0.00

M = mean, SD = standard deviation, B = unstandardised beta, CI = confidence interval, LB = lower bound, UB = upper bound, r = correlation coefficient, sr² = squared semipartial correlation coefficient. * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001, R = 0.33, R² = 0.11, Adj R² = 0.09.

4. Discussion

To our knowledge, this is the first systematic assessment of drivers and barriers to engagement with local short supply chains in the Australian population. A full 90% of our sample reported that they purchased food from the major/large retail supermarkets at least some of the time, whereas just over half (55%) reported shopping at other supermarkets. Just under half of the sample also shop at local fruit and vegetable shops, just over one-third at local bakeries and butchers, and about 20% at local farmers' markets. Our results identified four main drivers for purchasing local food—an expression of values, the socio-emotional experience of local food shopping, wishing to avoid foods produced “unnaturally”, and as a protest to the Australian supermarket duopoly—and two main barriers, including difficulty/inconvenience, and scepticism about local food. Together, these six factors accounted for 9% of the total variance in explaining local food purchasing behaviour, with only the difficulty/inconvenience factor contributing significant unique variance. Furthermore, we did not find meaningful differences in purchasing patterns between our urban and rural participants. This study provides new data about why Australian shoppers may or may not engage with diverse agri-food supply chains, critical information to have if we wish to encourage broader adoption to support small businesses and local suppliers, contribute to rural development, enhance global food security, and combat climate change.

4.1. What Motivates Australian Consumers to Engage in Sustainable Food Systems: Identified Drivers

The first major driver identified in our study was Food Shopping as an Expression of Values, with the key underlying theme that purchasing local food aligned with people's values and ethics in meaningful ways. Items that fell onto this factor covered a lot of ground,

including an emphasis on ethical purchasing, trust in local producers and a desire to have a direct relationship with them, as well as beliefs that local food is healthy, safe, fresh, and of high quality. Much of the research on engagement with short supply chains has been framed as “ethical consumption,” so a values-based driver emerging is not especially surprising, and many of the contributors to this factor have been observed in previous studies (though not often clustered together).

Pro-environmental attitudes and valuing sustainability have encouraged local food purchasing in a number of studies [38,57–59,61,74,75,77], as has the desire for a relationship with the producer [37,58,61,64,75] and a desire to support local/regional businesses and economies [38,40,57,58,61,64]. Furthermore, perceptions of better taste, freshness, safety, healthiness, and overall higher quality have also been observed in other studies [24,37,38,40,42,57,58,61], though why these perceptions loaded on the ethical/values-based factor is not immediately obvious. Interestingly, this factor appears to be a combination of the “Local Support and Provenance” and “Ethical Sustainability” factors derived from the factor analysis conducted by Megicks et al. [59] in their sample from the UK. Future research would benefit from assessing the items falling on this factor in different samples to ascertain whether they are meaningfully different components from each other (as observed in other studies) or to establish that they do have a common underlying theme, as our data indicate.

Related to the motivations of health, freshness, and safety in food, the Avoiding “Unnatural” Foods factor identified drivers of local food purchasing as wishing to avoid chemicals (e.g., pesticides, herbicides), preservatives, antibiotics, hormones, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs), as well as wanting food that is organically produced. These kinds of motivations have been observed in several other studies [24,57,77] and largely map onto the “Intrinsic Quality” factor observed in Megicks et al.’s [59] UK study. We found it interesting that health, which had been previously found to be one of the most important motivators among Australian consumers of chemical-free organic foods [62], did not load onto this factor. Similarly, safety did cross-load onto this factor but was primarily associated with the ethics/values factor. This finding suggests that another factor, such as aversion to perceived risk in food consumption (e.g., orthorexia nervosa [83]), may drive the desired avoidance of chemically laden food. Another relevant point is that simply because food is farmed and sold locally provides no guarantee that it has been farmed organically [84], suggesting a potential mismatch between consumer expectations and reality. This characteristic is an important driver for some people in purchasing local foods, which supports the value of certification schemes and clear labelling to allow consumers to make informed purchasing decisions.

Food Shopping as a Socio-Emotional Experience was another major driver that focused on the shopping experience, with some components of affordability and uniqueness of products included. Both positive (e.g., finding the experience fun/nostalgic, social circle peer influences) and negative (e.g., feeling guilty if they do not purchase local foods) reinforcers were evident in this factor, showing some parallels with, as well as some distinctions from, the “Shopping Benefits” factor observed in the Megicks et al. [59] study. The endorsement of items on this factor was quite high, suggesting that the social and experiential value of local food shopping was particularly relevant for our participants. Others have also noted the power of the hedonic experience and personal well-being derived by “doing good” [64] via engaging with local food suppliers, which, combined with our results, points to a potentially important driver to emphasise in supporting engagement with diverse agri-food supply chains.

Finally, and potentially unique to the Australian food landscape, Protesting the Duopoly was the last major factor observed as a driver of local food purchasing. As noted previously, two major supermarket chains dominate the food market in Australia,

and this duopoly and their associated practices have garnered significant social criticism. As with the previous factor, there was a high level of endorsement of the items loading on this factor, suggesting a general dissatisfaction with the shopping experience offered by these two supermarket chains, ethical opposition to shopping at them, and an expressed lack of trust in these venues. This factor may provide a regional example of food activism (e.g., [39,61]), which includes components of anti-capitalist, anti-industrial, and anti-concentrated production methods sentiment related to the globally integrated agri-food system and serves to support engagement with alternative, diverse food networks. However, even despite the relatively high endorsement of the items on this factor, the vast majority of our participants continued to shop at one or both of these supermarkets at least occasionally. It is possible that this represents an issue of easy access and lack of alternative, convenient local options, as one or more of these supermarkets is often present even in regional towns of a certain size. Notably, though, this value/intention-behaviour gap has been observed in other studies (e.g., [37,57]), and its presence highlights the need to understand potential barriers to local food purchasing, as well as associated drivers.

4.2. What Makes This Engagement Challenging: Identified Barriers

All of the relevant barrier items fell into one of two factors. The first major factor, *It's All Too Hard*, highlighted challenges with (in)convenience of and difficulties (genuine or perceived) with sourcing local food and encompassed items related to expense/price sensitivity, feeling that it was time-consuming to access and/or not readily available, that accessing local food required travelling farther, that the product range was limited, that it required extra effort to access, and/or participants simply did not know where to buy local food—that it was just “harder.” Inconvenience as a major barrier to purchasing local food has been found in a number of studies [38,56–60], as have (lack of) access and extra time and effort required [37,38,56,57,60]. Interestingly, at least for fruit and vegetables, any price differences between supermarkets and farmers’ markets in Australia are negligible, with supermarkets often being more expensive [15,85]. This finding suggests that better advertising of local foods may assist with their consumption if price-conscious consumers were aware of these price trends.

Of all the factors derived from the factor analysis, this one was the most important of the six, as it was the only one that contributed unique variance to predicting local food purchasing behaviour. This result suggests that addressing inconvenience and lack of access is imperative in encouraging purchasing from diverse agri-food supply chains. No matter what reasons people may have to engage with local food suppliers, if this barrier outweighs them, habitual behaviour is unlikely to change. We suggest that diverse agri-food businesses, policymakers, and advocates engage in three key strategies. First, interventions to support new habit formation should be designed and tested (e.g., [86]). Second, better advertising of these suppliers should be conducted so that people know they exist, that the products meet the needs of consumers identified in the survey, where they are, how to access them, and have a general sense of product pricing. For example, one could launch a marketing campaign that details a day in the life of a local producer through photos/videos, from the production of their product to its delivery to consumers. Third, availability should be increased, potentially by increasing the days or times the suppliers are open and/or offering purchasing online. Wills and Arundel [87] found in their analysis of Canadian and Australian consumer engagement with local food systems that online retailing did not compromise food quality and had the potential to broaden access to local food systems.

Lastly, the second barrier and last major factor amounted to Local Food Scepticism—emphasising that (dis)trust can go both ways (i.e., towards the major supermarket chains

or towards local food suppliers), with a strong endorsement of items related to scepticism about local food. Participants reported not trusting producers with respect to safety, that they are not familiar with the products or how to prepare them, and/or that they do not like the way they look. Providing a counterpoint to the socio-emotional driver factor, some participants did not feel comfortable at farmers' markets, and some did not endorse any particular ethic or value motivating them to engage with local food suppliers, reflecting some barriers noted by Vermeir and Verbeke [57]. Suggestions for helping consumers overcome aspects of this major barrier may include educational campaigns on the benefits of local food and short/diverse supply chains, having local food suppliers provide printed recipes with their products that guide shoppers on how to use and/or prepare unfamiliar foods, and encouraging better labelling to increase trust in producers and their products. A recent initiative in New South Wales, Australia, to digitise local food environments and enable consumers to filter results by how local food is to the individual, as well as healthiness, may enable greater local and alternative food production [88].

Interestingly, essentially all of the items included in the original survey that referenced animal welfare motivations—which conceptually might have loaded onto an ethical/values-based factor—were weeded out in the factor analysis; they did not load onto any of the four drivers. This finding contrasts with other research (e.g., [24,38,59,77]), where animal welfare was found to be an important driver of local food procurement. The loss of animal welfare items may be reflective of a separation between humans and systems of food production, such that animal welfare has become detached from food practices in Australia in ways that it has not in other countries [89]. For example, in Sweden, farm animals in the environment closely align with values of environmental care; in contrast, in Australia, agriculture is understood (in part) through a narrative of environmental damage, and farm animals are seen as inimical to the Australian ecology [90]. This rejection of farm animals as “natural” in Australia may translate into a separation of these animals from the environment in which they are raised, which may have contributed to the lack of relationship between our values-based factor, which included aspects of environmental care, and the animal welfare items in the original survey.

4.3. Urban vs. Rural Consumers

The current study also aimed to assess differences between urban- and rural-dwelling shoppers' local food procurement, with the expectation that there would be significant differences between these two groups on alternative shopping practices as per [65]. However, despite a significant difference in shopping at cultural/ethnic food locations (endorsed to a greater degree by our urban participants) and a barely significant difference in shopping at local fruit and vegetable markets (endorsed to a greater degree by our rural participants), there were no significant differences in reported shopping behaviour between these two groups. This finding is particularly interesting given the relative lack of alternative food purchasing options in rural areas [15], which may suggest an over-engagement in local food purchasing from our rural participants relative to overall access.

4.4. Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

Noted strengths of the current study include the large and diverse sample recruited, as well as focusing only on adults who actually participate in food shopping. We also intentionally over-sampled participants from outside of major metropolitan areas to provide a balanced perspective on this issue, given that much of the research in this space has focused on urban consumers and access to local food suppliers and the overall diversity of foods available varies widely depending on geographic location [15]. The systematic assessment of a comprehensive list of both drivers and barriers also provides new data

from the Australian population with respect to engagement with diverse agri-food supply chains. The resulting questionnaire, both in its original form and as derived from the factor analyses, may be useful to other researchers investigating these issues in Australia and potentially beyond.

The current study also has several limitations worth mentioning. The final sample was somewhat older than anticipated, so it would be worth recruiting younger people in future research to assess whether the current factor structure holds. Also, in the interest of scale validity, we elected to provide a relatively narrow definition of “local food” (i.e., produced within a 200-kilometre radius of one’s home) to our participants so that everyone was working from the same understanding in responding to the questionnaire items. The trade-off, of course, is that short supply chains encompass more than simply geographic distance [24], and our definition did not support this broader understanding. Future research may wish to provide a more nuanced description of “local food” to further enhance our understanding of these relationships. Furthermore, since the data were collected in 2022, Australia (like much of the world) has experienced significant inflationary pressures on the economy, although supermarket food prices have outpaced inflation in recent years [91,92]. While we believe that the data collected likely represent the purchasing landscape in “normal” economic periods, it may be worth assessing whether price serves as a stronger barrier now than it was observed pre-2023, given rising inflation and prices. Moreover, although our factors explained a significant amount of variance in local food shopping behaviour, 91% of the variance was unaccounted for by these variables. Future research would benefit from investigating other constructs (e.g., identity, cultural worldviews, etc.) that may also contribute to food purchasing behaviour so that targeted interventions to promote local food purchasing are better refined (and, thus, more likely to succeed). Michie et al.’s [93] Behaviour Change Wheel may be particularly useful in addressing both barriers and drivers in developing new interventions that have empirical support. Finally, whilst also a strength of the study given the relative dearth of information on this issue in Australia, it is unclear how well these findings would generalise outside of the country. As mentioned above, future research could test the utility of the original and shortened versions of this questionnaire to see how well the factors obtained in the Australian sample replicate in other countries.

5. Conclusions

Changing food demand has been identified as key to achieving transformation of the agri-food system [94], which is essential to supporting an expanded version of global food security, particularly as climate change advances. If we want to encourage consumer engagement with short/diverse agri-food supply chains, we urgently must understand both why people do (or would) purchase from local food suppliers, as well as why they do (or would) not, so that evidence-based interventions can be developed and trialled for efficacy in promoting behaviour change.

The current study goes some way to providing new, comprehensive information on both important drivers (e.g., values and ethics, enjoying the social and emotional experience of local food shopping, avoiding “unnatural” foods, and a protest against the dominance of the Australian supermarket duopoly), as well as barriers (e.g., scepticism around local food and a lack of understanding why people should care, as well as, very broadly, inconvenience). Among these, beyond value-based motivation, it was perceived difficulty and inconveniences around product availability, costs, and the efforts required to plan one’s shopping that was most significant in determining where Australians shop. However, given the significant but somewhat small amount of variance accounted for in

current shopping behaviour by these factors, further research is needed. Future research could trial the questionnaire we developed to assess its utility in other populations.

Finally, convenience/inconvenience around shopping is related to a whole set of multi-scalar factors that include interpersonal (e.g., socio-economic status, age, gender, health, education), interpersonal (e.g., family structure, peer pressure/support, parenting practices), and meso-scale settings (e.g., retail and urban environments) and policies (e.g., nutrition and labelling standards, advertising and marketing, food system and supply chain regulation). Those interested in encouraging behaviour change with respect to local food consumption could focus on addressing the “inconvenience” factor that most directly influenced local food procurement through a wide variety of interventions across these multiple scales.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/su17073093/s1>, Table S1: Drivers for Local Food Purchasing Survey (Original); Table S2: Barriers to Local Food Purchasing Survey (Original).

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation, A.D.L., N.L., C.S. and L.N.; data curation, A.D.L. and C.S.; formal analysis, C.S.; funding acquisition, L.N.; investigation, A.D.L. and C.S.; methodology, A.D.L. and C.S.; project administration, A.D.L. and L.N.; writing—original draft, A.D.L., N.L., C.S. and L.N. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This work was supported by the University of New England Centre for Agribusiness. The Centre had no involvement in the study’s design, data collection, analysis or interpretation of the data, or in the writing of the report.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (HE21-214, 1 November 2021).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors on request.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Merrett, D.T. The making of Australia’s supermarket duopoly. *Aust. Econ. Hist. Rev.* **2019**, *60*, 301–321. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
2. Australian Competition & Consumer Commission. ACCC Supermarket Inquiry Moves into Next Phase After Hearing Consumer and Supplier Concerns. Australian Government, 2024. Available online: <https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/accc-supermarkets-inquiry-moves-into-next-phase-after-hearing-consumer-and-supplier-concerns> (accessed on 31 January 2025).
3. Bailey, M. Retail suburbanization, modernization, and growth in Sydney during Australia’s postwar boom. *J. Urban Hist.* **2023**, *49*, 844–864. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
4. Burch, D.; Dixon, J.; Lawrence, G. Introduction to symposium on the changing role of supermarkets in global supply chains: From seedling to supermarket: Agri-food supply chains in transition. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2013**, *30*, 215–224. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
5. Lang, T.; Heasman, M. *Food Wars: The Global Battle for Mouths, Minds and Markets*; Earthscan: London, UK, 2004.
6. Parker, C.; Scrinis, G. Out of the cage and into the barn: Supermarket power food system governance and the regulation of free range eggs. *Griffith Law Rev.* **2014**, *23*, 318–347. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
7. Richards, C.; Bjorkhaug, H.; Lawrence, G.; Hickman, E. Retailer-driven agricultural restructuring—Australia, the UK and Norway in comparison. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2013**, *30*, 235–245.
8. Burch, D.; Rickson, R.; Lawrence, G. *Globalization and Agri-Food Restructuring: Perspectives for the Australasia Region*; Avebury: Aldershot, UK, 1996.
9. Burch, D.; Lawrence, G. Supermarket own brands, supply chains and the transformation of the agri-food system. *Int. J. Sociol. Food Agric.* **2005**, *13*, 1–18. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
10. Burch, D.; Lawrence, G. *Supermarkets and Agri-Food Supply Chains: Transformations in the Production and Consumption of Foods*; Edward Elgar: Cheltenham, UK, 2007.

11. Messner, R.; Johnson, H.; Richards, C. From surplus-to-waste: A study of systemic overproduction, surplus and food waste in horticulture supply chains. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2021**, *278*, 123952. [CrossRef]
12. Singh-Peterson, L.; Lieske, S.; Underhill, S.J.R.; Keys, N. Food security, remoteness and consolidation of supermarket distribution centres: Factors contributing to food pricing inequalities across Queensland, Australia. *Aust. Geogr.* **2016**, *47*, 89–102. [CrossRef]
13. Australian Competition & Consumer Commission. Report of the ACCC Inquiry into the Competitiveness of Retail Prices for Standard Groceries. Commonwealth of Australia. 2008. Available online: <https://www.accc.gov.au/about-us/publications/report-of-the-accc-inquiry-into-the-competitiveness-of-retail-prices-for-standard-groceries> (accessed on 31 January 2025).
14. Richards, C.; Lawrence, G.; Loong, M.; Burch, D. A toothless chihuahua? The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, neoliberalism and supermarket power in Australia. *Rural Soc.* **2012**, *21*, 250–263. [CrossRef]
15. Abley, S.; Cassar, O.; Khinsoe, E.; Marks, L.; Vanderzwan, O.; Palermo, C.; Kleve, S. Do farmers' markets offer consumers an available and affordable supply of fresh fruit and vegetables compared to other retail outlets in Australia? *J. Hunger Environ. Nutr.* **2020**, *15*, 827–834. [CrossRef]
16. Williams, P.; James, Y.; Kwan, J. The Illawarra Healthy Food Price Index 2. Pricing methods and index trends from 2000–2003. *Nutr. Diet.* **2004**, *61*, 208–214. Available online: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/hbspapers/13> (accessed on 5 March 2024).
17. O'Kane, G.M.; Pamphilon, B. 'My lifestyle kind of locks me into supermarket shopping': Narratives of reflexivity and routines from supermarket shoppers in Australia. *J. Hunger Environ. Nutr.* **2020**, *15*, 372–387. [CrossRef]
18. Pulker, C.E.; Trapp, G.S.A.; Scott, J.A.; Pollard, C.M. What are the position and power of supermarkets in the Australian food system, and the implications for public health? A systematic scoping review. *Obes. Rev.* **2018**, *19*, 198–218. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
19. Pulker, C.E.; Trapp, G.S.A.; Scott, J.A.; Pollard, C.M. The nature and quality of Australian supermarkets' policies that can impact public health nutrition, and evidence of their practical application: A cross-sectional study. *Nutrients* **2019**, *11*, 853. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
20. Wardle, J.; Baranovic, M. Is lack of retail competition in the grocery sector a public health issue? *Aust. N. Z. J. Public Health* **2009**, *33*, 477–481. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
21. Forssell, S.; Lankoski, L. The sustainability promise of alternative food networks: An examination through "alternative" characteristics. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2015**, *32*, 63–75. [CrossRef]
22. Kumar, V.; Wang, M.; Kumari, A.; Akkarangoon, S.; Garza-Reyes, J.A.; Neutzling, D.; Tupa, J. Exploring short food supply chains from Triple Bottom Line lens: A comprehensive systematic review. In Proceedings of the International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management, Bangkok, Thailand, 5–7 March 2019; pp. 728–738.
23. Schmitt, E.; Galli, F.; Menozzi, D.; Maye, D.; Touzard, J.-M.; Marescotti, A.; Six, J.; Brunori, G. Comparing the sustainability of local and global food products in Europe. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2017**, *165*, 346–359. [CrossRef]
24. Renting, H.; Marsden, T.K.; Banks, J. Understanding alternative food networks: Exploring the role of short food supply chains in rural development. *Environ. Plan. A* **2003**, *35*, 393–411. [CrossRef]
25. Andrée, P.; Dibden, J.; Higgins, V.; Cocklin, C. Competitive productivism and Australia's emerging 'alternative' agri-food networks: Producing for farmers' markets in Victoria and beyond. *Aust. Geogr.* **2010**, *41*, 307–322. [CrossRef]
26. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN). 2018. Available online: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1920/Chair/CFS_Chair_Statement_HLPE_COVID.pdf (accessed on 27 April 2020).
27. Smith, K.; Lawrence, G.; MacMahon, A.; Muller, J.; Brady, M. The resilience of long and short food chains: A case study of flooding in Queensland, Australia. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2016**, *33*, 45–60. [CrossRef]
28. Hoek, A.C.; Malekpour, S.; Raven, R.; Court, E.; Byrne, E. Towards environmentally sustainable food systems: Decision-making factors in sustainable food production and consumption. *Sustain. Prod. Consum.* **2021**, *26*, 610–626. [CrossRef]
29. Gilg, A.; Barr, S.; Ford, N. Green consumption or sustainable lifestyles? Identifying the sustainable consumer. *Futures* **2005**, *37*, 481–504.
30. Griskevicius, V.; Tybur, J.M.; van den Bergh, B. Going green to be seen: Status, reputation, and conspicuous conservation. *J. Personal. Soc. Psychol.* **2010**, *98*, 392–404. [CrossRef]
31. European Commission. Special Eurobarometer 459—Climate Change Report. 2018. Available online: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2140> (accessed on 11 September 2018).
32. Kent, K.; Gale, F.; Penrose, B.; Auckland, S.; Lester, E.; Murray, S. Consumer-driven strategies towards a resilient and sustainable food system following the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia. *BMC Public Health* **2022**, *22*, 1539. [CrossRef]
33. Adalja, A.; Hanson, J.; Towe, C.; Tselepidakis, E. An examination of consumer willingness to pay for local products. *Agric. Resour. Econ. Rev.* **2015**, *44*, 253–274. [CrossRef]
34. De Magistris, T.; Gracia, A. Do consumers care about organic and distance labels? An empirical analysis in Spain. *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* **2014**, *38*, 660–669. [CrossRef]
35. Hu, W.; Batte, M.T.; Woods, T.; Ernst, S. Consumer preferences for local production and other value-added label claims for a processed food product. *Eur. Rev. Agric. Econ.* **2012**, *39*, 489–510. [CrossRef]

36. Bazzani, C.; Caputo, V.; Nayga, R.M.; Canavari, M. Revisiting consumers' valuation for local versus organic food using a non-hypothetical choice experiment: Does personality matter? *Food Qual. Prefer.* **2017**, *62*, 144–154. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
37. Kiss, K.; Ruskai, C.; Szucs, A.; Koncz, G. Examining the role of local products in rural development in the light of consumer preferences—Results of a consumer survey from Hungary. *Sustainability* **2020**, *12*, 5473. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
38. Feldmann, C.; Hamm, U. Consumers' perceptions and preferences for local food: A review. *Food Qual. Prefer.* **2015**, *40*, 152–164. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
39. Watts, D.; Little, J.; Ilbery, B. "I am pleased to shop somewhere that is fighting the supermarkets a little bit". A cultural political economy of alternative food networks. *Geoforum* **2018**, *91*, 21–29. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
40. Godrich, S.; Kent, K.; Murray, S.; Auckland, S.; Lo, J.; Blekkenhorst, L.; Penrose, B.; Devine, A. Australian consumer perceptions of regionally grown fruits and vegetables: Importance, enablers, and barriers. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2019**, *17*, 63. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
41. Hasselbach, J.L.; Roosen, J. Motivations behind preferences for local or organic food. *J. Int. Consum. Mark.* **2015**, *27*, 295–306. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
42. Kumpulainen, T.; Vainio, A.; Sandell, M.; Hopia, A. How young people in Finland respond to information about the origin of food products: The role of value orientations and product type. *Food Qual. Prefer.* **2018**, *68*, 173–182. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
43. Campbell, H. Breaking new ground in food regime theory: Corporate environmentalism, ecological feedbacks and the "food from somewhere" regime? *Agric. Hum. Values* **2009**, *26*, 309–319. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
44. Friedmann, H. From colonialism to green capitalism: Social movements and the emergence of food regimes. In *New Directions in the Sociology of Global Development*; Buttel, F., McMichael, P., Eds.; Elsevier: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2005.
45. Ilbery, B.; Kneafsey, M. Producer constructions of quality in regional specialty food production: A case study from south west England. *J. Rural Stud.* **2000**, *16*, 217–230.
46. Ilbery, B.; Maye, D. Alternative (shorter) food supply chains and specialist livestock products in the Scottish-English borders. *Environ. Plan. A* **2005**, *37*, 823–844. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
47. Birch, D.; Memery, J.; De, M.; Kanakaratne, S. The mindful consumer: Balancing egoistic and altruistic motivations to purchase local food. *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.* **2018**, *40*, 221–228.
48. Goodman, D. The quality 'turn' and alternative food practices: Reflections and agenda. *J. Rural Stud.* **2003**, *19*, 1–7.
49. Winter, M. Embeddedness, the new food economy and defensive localism. *J. Rural Stud.* **2003**, *19*, 23–32. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
50. Blake, M.D.; Mellor, J.; Crane, L. Buying local food: Shopping practices, place, and consumption networks in defining food as "local". *Ann. Assoc. Am. Geogr.* **2010**, *100*, 409–426. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
51. Jackson, P. Food stories: Consumption in an age of anxiety. *Cult. Geogr.* **2010**, *17*, 147–165. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
52. Little, J.; Ilbery, B.; Watts, D. Gender, consumption and the relocalisation of food: A research agenda. *Sociol. Rural.* **2009**, *49*, 201–217. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
53. Kim, S.-H.; Huang, R. Understanding local food consumption from an ideological perspective: Locavorism, authenticity, pride and willingness to visit. *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.* **2021**, *58*, 102330. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
54. Guthman, J. *Agrarian Dreams: The Paradox of Organic Farming in California*; UC Press: Berkeley, CA, USA, 2004.
55. McEachern, M.G.; Warnaby, G.; Carrigan, M.; Szmigin, I. Thinking locally, acting locally? Conscious consumers and farmers' markets. *J. Mark. Manag.* **2010**, *26*, 395–412. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
56. Albrecht, C.; Smithers, J. Reconnecting through local food initiatives? Purpose, practice and conceptions of 'value'. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2018**, *35*, 67–81. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
57. Vermeir, I.; Verbeke, W. Sustainable food consumption: Exploring the consumer "attitude—Behavioral intention" gap. *J. Agric. Environ. Ethics* **2006**, *19*, 169–194. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
58. Kummer, S.; Milestad, R. The diversity of organic box schemes in Europe—An exploratory study in four countries. *Sustainability* **2020**, *12*, 2734. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
59. Megicks, P.; Memery, J.; Angell, R.J. Understanding local food shopping: Unpacking the ethical dimension. *J. Mark. Manag.* **2012**, *28*, 264–289. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
60. Byker, C.; Rose, N.; Serrano, E. The benefits, challenges, and strategies of adults following a local food diet. *J. Agric. Food Syst. Community Dev.* **2010**, *1*, 125–137. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
61. Papaoikonomou, E.; Ginieis, M. Putting the farmer's face on food: Governance and the producer-consumer relationship in local food. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2017**, *34*, 53–67. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
62. Lockie, S.; Lyons, K.; Lawrence, G.; Mummery, K. Eating "green": Motivations behind organic food consumption in Australia. *Sociol. Rural.* **2002**, *42*, 23–40. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
63. Williams, J.; Memery, J.; Megicks, P.; Morrison, M. Ethics and social responsibility in Australian grocery shopping. *Int. J. Retail. Distrib. Manag.* **2010**, *38*, 297–316. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
64. Barraket, J.; McKinnon, K.; Brennan-Horley, C.; de Cotta, T. Motivations and effects of ethical purchasing from social enterprise in a regional city. *Soc. Enterp. J.* **2022**, *18*, 643–659. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

65. Weatherall, C.; Tregear, A.; Allinson, J. In search of the concerned consumer: UK public perceptions of food, farming and buying local. *J. Rural Stud.* **2003**, *19*, 233–244. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
66. Nemes, G.; Chiffolleau, Y.; Zollet, S.; Collison, M.; Benedek, Z.; Colantuono, F.; Dulsrud, A.; Fiore, M.; Holtkamp, C.; Kim, T.-Y.; et al. The impact of COVID-19 on alternative and local food systems and the potential for the sustainability transition: Insights from 13 countries. *Sustain. Prod. Consum.* **2021**, *28*, 591–599. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
67. Sundaraja, C.S.; Hine, D.W.; Lykins, A.D. Palm oil: Understanding barriers to sustainable consumption. *PLoS ONE* **2021**, *16*, e0254897.
68. Cohen, J. *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*; Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: Hillsdale, NJ, USA, 1988.
69. Henseler, J.; Ringle, C.M.; Sinkovics, R.R. The use of partial least squares path modeling in international marketing. In *New Challenges to International Marketing (Advances in International Marketing)*; Sinkovics, R.R., Ghauri, P.N., Eds.; Emerald Group Publishing Limited: Warrington, UK, 2009.
70. Faul, F.; Erdfelder, E.; Buchner, A.; Lang, A.G. Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behav. Res. Methods* **2009**, *41*, 1149–1160.
71. Bailey, M. Consumer profiles and behavior in Australian shopping centers, new benchmarks for assessing mall shopping patterns. *Retail. Prop. Insights* **2013**, *20*, 4–11.
72. Inside FMCG. *Women Chief Grocery Buyers*; Inside FMCG: Sydney, Australia, 2015.
73. Australian Bureau of Statistics. New Census Insights on Income in Australia Using Administrative Data. 2023. Available online: <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/new-census-insights-income-australia-using-administrative-data> (accessed on 21 October 2024).
74. Beingessner, N.; Fletcher, A.J. “Going local”: Farmers’ perspectives on local food systems in rural Canada. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2020**, *37*, 129–145. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
75. Giampietri, E.; Verneau, F.; del Giudice, T.; Carfora, V.; Finco, A. A Theory of Planned Behaviour perspective for investigating the role of trust in consumer purchasing decision related to short food supply chains. *Food Qual. Prefer.* **2018**, *64*, 160–166. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
76. Head, L.; Klocker, N.; Dun, O.; Waitt, G.; Goodall, H.; Aguirre-Bielschowsky, I. Barriers to and enablers of sustainable practices: Insights from ethnic minority migrants. *Int. J. Justice Sustain.* **2021**, *26*, 595–614. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
77. Mazzocchi, C.; Orsi, L.; Sali, G. Consumers’ attitudes for sustainable mountain cheese. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 1743. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
78. Scalco, A.R.; Devos Ganga, G.M.; de Oliveira, S.C.; Baker, G. Development and validation of a scale for identification of quality attributes of agri-food products in short chains. *Geoforum* **2020**, *111*, 165–175. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
79. Kung, F.Y.H.; Kwok, N.; Brown, D.J. Are attention check questions a threat to scale validity? *Appl. Psychol.* **2018**, *67*, 264–283.
80. Meade, A.W.; Craig, S.B. Identifying careless responses in survey data. *Psychol. Methods* **2012**, *17*, 437–455.
81. IBM Corp. *IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows*; Version 28.0; IBM Corp: Armonk, NY, USA, 2021.
82. Cattell, R.B. The scree test for the number of factors. *Multivar. Behav. Res.* **1966**, *1*, 245–276.
83. Koven, N.S.; Abry, A.W. The clinical basis of orthorexia nervosa: Emerging perspectives. *Neuropsychiatr. Dis. Treat.* **2015**, *11*, 385–394.
84. Born, B.; Purcell, M. Avoiding the local trap: Scale and food systems in planning research. *J. Plan. Educ. Res.* **2006**, *26*, 195–207. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
85. O’Kane, G.M.; Richardson, A.; D’Almeida, M.; Wei, H. The cost, availability, cultivars, and quality of fruit and vegetables at farmers’ markets and three other retail streams in Canberra, ACT, Australia. *J. Hunger Environ. Nutr.* **2019**, *14*, 643–661. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
86. Carden, L.; Wood, W. Habit formation and change. *Curr. Opin. Behav. Sci.* **2018**, *20*, 117–122. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
87. Wills, B.; Arundel, A. Internet-enabled access to alternative food networks: A comparison of online and offline food shoppers and their differing interpretations of quality. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2017**, *34*, 701–712. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
88. Jia, S.S.; Luo, X.; Gibson, A.A.; Partridge, S.R. Developing the DIGIFOOD Dashboard to monitor the digitalization of local food environments: Interdisciplinary approach. *JMIR Public Health Surveill.* **2024**, *10*, e59924. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
89. Evans, A.B.; Miele, M. Enacting public understandings: The case of farm animal welfare. *Geoforum* **2019**, *99*, 1–10. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
90. Saltzman, K.; Head, L.; Stenseke, M. Do cows belong in nature? The cultural basis of agriculture in Sweden and Australia. *J. Rural Stud.* **2011**, *27*, 54–62. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
91. Ainsworth, K. Coles and Woolworths Food Prices Rise by 9.6% Per Cent in Past Year, Outpacing Inflation Rate. ABC News. 2023. Available online: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-05-23/supermarket-prices-increase-coles-woolworths-inflation/102380456> (accessed on 31 January 2025).
92. LaFrenz, C. Fresh Food Prices Spike in March: UBS. Australian Financial Review. 2023. Available online: <https://www.afr.com/companies/retail/fresh-food-prices-spike-in-march-ubs-20230420-p5d20s> (accessed on 31 January 2025).

93. Michie, S.; van Stralen, M.M.; West, R. The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implement. Sci.* **2011**, *6*, 42. [[CrossRef](#)]
94. Aschemann-Witzel, J.; de Hooge, I.; Amani, P.; Bech-Larsen, T.; Oostindjer, M. Consumer-related food waste: Causes and potential for action. *Sustainability* **2015**, *7*, 6457–6477. [[CrossRef](#)]

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.