

MASTER THESIS

Qualitative analysis of direct-to-retailers local food networks: case of Gostilna Slovenija

Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

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Matilde Guido

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Tanja Mihalič

EMTM Universities:

Faculty of Humanities, University of Southern Denmark

Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana

Faculty of Tourism, University of Girona

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Introduction

Food is a fundamental part of everyday life for each individual. However, it is not merely eaten to satisfy a primary need and quit hunger but it can satisfy, being part of the cultural heritage, the hunger for knowledge of a culture. Food can help individuals to keep their own identity, gaining their place in the globalised world. A place's cuisine tells the story of a culture and of a place (Gajić, 2015), becoming the instrument to transmit history and traditions to future generations. Food, which has a history, is able to give to its eater a sense of place, the feeling of belonging to it, of being part of this history and culture. A deep knowledge of the ingredients and the taste of traditional dishes of their own country leads people to have a more direct and strong connection with their roots. Besides, it improves the understanding of their own culture.

In the globalised market, food coming from all over the world can be found in supermarkets along with local specialities. However, traditional dishes reproduced in different geographical areas, somehow, always present a variation in flavour from the original one. In fact, products and ingredients used, which look the same, have a different taste, even just slightly, so that a traditional dish is proper just in the place where it belongs. This latter consideration demonstrates the long-lasting and profound connection that food and traditional cuisine have with their homeland.

Moreover, this concept can be directly linked to sustainable development. Indeed, the consumption of local food is definitely in line with the final objective of sustainability, from three different perspectives. Firstly, the consumption of local food reduces food miles, thus pollution, and resolves the contemporary issue of food safety. Secondly, local food consumption increases community relationships, developing a healthier society, with increased interpersonal bonds, making it more sympathetic. Last but not least, it contributes to the economic development of the region/nation, avoiding negative phenomena such as migration from countryside to highly urbanized areas or to wealthier countries.

Traditional food is the representation of a place and it can be found just stepping away from McDonalds and multinational chains, looking into rural and family owned restaurants and inns (Gajić, 2015). The social value of local food is not limited to its central role in shielding cultural heritage, but it extends to the creation of social ties among community members. As a matter of fact, local food creates connections using alternative distribution channels to globalised supermarkets, which imply a shorter supply chain and a shorter distance between consumers and producers, as well as increased interactions between them, both in a direct and indirect way. In this perspective, food can be considered as an element that has the power to change contemporary society, fighting against the phenomena of standardization and isolation of the human being, an effect of the increased use of technological tools and devices.

The growing importance of local food as a way to reconnect producers and consumers, creating an alternative to the globalised market, led to the creation of local food networks. These networks involve different stakeholders, facilitating the interaction between producers and consumers or producers and retailers. This latter connection has been neglected in the studies regarding networks, preferring to investigate the relationship producers – consumers and the producers' association types in order to implement direct selling. Besides, chefs and restaurants (retailers) can play a fundamental role, guiding the reconnection of consumers with local suppliers. Indeed, they are in the position to

advertise local suppliers to consumer, giving them visibility and educating consumers to 'the local taste'.

Generally, there is a lack of research about local food networks since it represents a new field of studies. In particular, existing studies have focused on producers – consumers networks. Moreover, the literature treats poorly the topic of local food networks in Slovenia, and there is a lack of investigation about the existence of direct-to-retailers or producers-to-retailers local food networks in the country. However, there is an effort at the national level to promote local food as a source of cultural identity and to differentiate Slovenia from other countries, which are competitors from a touristic perspective, creating a gastronomic identity for the country. In this context, the network Gostilna Slovenija was founded, in order to create the brand Gostilna, to make it known both among locals and tourists and, hopefully, in the future, internationally. This network brings together the typical rural and family owned inns of Slovenia: gostilna.

This research has a qualitative nature. It aims at finding out whether the members of the network Gostilna Slovenija are individually part of direct-to-retailers local food networks (e.g. networks which include the gostilna and its suppliers) and which are the characteristics of these relationships. The intuition behind this research is that Slovenian gostilnas actually do prefer and prioritize the use of local food. However, the author believes that local food is not advertised enough to customers. In fact, the competitive advantage brought from local food is not fully understood and the ties with local suppliers are not formalised in the form of a direct-to-retailer local food network.

In order to determine the existence of formal or informal direct-to-retailers local food networks, this work relies on a benchmarking analysis with three international cases, supported from the theory gathered and explained in the literature review. This methodology allows one to set the general characteristics of direct-to-retailers local food networks in order to assess their existence and way of function in Slovenia. Semi-structured interviews are used to reach this objective along with expert's opinions, such as the food heritage expert Professor Janez Bogataj.

The first chapter of this dissertation presents the relevant literature with the purpose to understand and support the three best practice cases presented at the end of the chapter. Firstly, the theory on tourism networks, including their benefits and the factors that lead to a successful cooperation, is presented. Secondly, trends of local food consumption are displayed and the various definitions of local food are brought together in order to reach a unique definition to be used throughout this research. Moreover, the relation between sustainability and local food consumption is illustrated, followed by the reasons that lead consumers and restaurants to buy local. Thirdly, the two topics presented, tourism networks and local food, are combined together into the presentation of local food networks theory, merging network theory and local food trends. Within the framework of local food networks, the different types of local food networks are displayed, along with drivers and obstacles for their development. Last but not least, the three best practice cases are introduced to the readers to be used, afterwards, for the international benchmarking in the analysis chapter.

In the second chapter, the network Gostilna Slovenija is analysed, including its characteristics, its aim, the requirements to be part of the networks and the revision criteria. Furthermore, the local food trend in the country of Slovenia is analysed, in order to give the reader a complete understanding of the environment in which the research is

conducted. The gastronomic regions of Slovenia are listed along with the traditional dishes assigned to each one. Additionally, the Slovenian food pyramid, built in order to represent the country's gastronomy, is shown.

In the third chapter, the research method is introduced together with the four research questions that this work wants to address. Research questions are aimed at assessing the existence of direct-to-retailers local food networks, their characteristics in Slovenia, as well as drivers and obstacles for their creation and development. The last research question tries to bring together all the different visions, looking at the contribution to sustainability that network configurations can have, within Slovenia.

In the fourth chapter, the methodology applied in this study is outlined in details. The research paradigm is explained along with the data collection method. In addition, the characteristics of the sample used for the interviews are presented. Characteristics of the gostilnas interviewed are summarized in a table.

The fifth chapter presents and analyses the main findings resulting from the interviews conducted. The benchmarking analysis is conducted and findings are discussed in relation to the three best practice cases presented in the first chapter of this research. Findings are discussed in order to determine the level of development of direct-to-retailers local food networks in Slovenia, their characteristics and obstacles and drivers for their creation and development. Lastly, the contribution to sustainability, that these network configurations can have, is assessed.

The sixth chapter presents limitations faced in the research development and the recommendations for further research, before concluding the paper.

1 Literature review

1.1 Tourism networks

The tourism industry is a complex and fast changing sector, in which enterprises increasingly seek for collaboration and cooperation (Hall, 2005). Building partnership arrangements is one of the ways to respond to market changes and its requirement for innovation (Kühne, Gellynck & Weaver, 2015), stimulating learning processes and creation of knowledge. These partnerships, formally labelled within the network concept, are built in the tourism sector with different degrees of formalization in order to gain competitive advantage and accomplish the business sustainability (Morrison, Lynch & Johns, 2004).

The phenomenon of networks configurations increased in the past few years in the tourism industry (Van der Zee & Vanneste, 2015) to address the challenging effects of globalisation (Ziggers & Henseler, 2009). Networks are constituted by complex interactions among organisations, with different or equal power degree (i.e. horizontal and vertical networks). They are created with various scopes and with the purposes of managing public-private interactions, creating destination governance or increasing destination performance (Van der Zee et al., 2015). Network's activities might also include the co-creation of products, services or knowledge (Ziggers et al., 2009). According to Porter (1990), networks are the key to balance competition and collaboration, leading firstly, to the enlargement of the value created by enterprises, and, secondly, to the enhancement of value appropriation from the stakeholders involved.

Studies about tourism networks, over the years, have focused on two main networks types: public-private networks, which have tourism policies as cornerstone, and inter-firms networks, digging into firms' performance (Van der Zee et al., 2015). Literature on the first group, known as 'policy networks', analyses the interactions among government, enterprises and society to influence policymaking, to share resources and to plan collective actions (Van der Zee et al., 2015). Literature on the latter group, on the other hand, is concentrated on the interactions among businesses, mostly configured in self-organised networks with a horizontal structure, usually characterized by strong local focus and relations but with weak global ties (Van der Zee et al., 2015).

Besides these two opposite types of networks studies, another branch of research has focused on stakeholder relationships in tourism networks (Van der Zee et al., 2015), following the research field opened by Porter (1990), who explored ways of balancing competition and cooperation within the network framework. Although his research investigates stakeholder interactions deeply, the network overall configuration is not properly defined, and stakeholders and network types are not categorized either (Van der Zee et al., 2015). In these studies, the concept of co-opetition emerges, in which businesses can get benefits from both competition and collaboration at the same time; therefore, cooperation and competition are part of the same relationship among stakeholders, but they emerge in two different moments (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000). Indeed, stakeholders are firstly involved in a collaborative interaction, in order to reach a better business value, so that afterwards they will compete for the appropriation of the created value.

1.1.1 Benefits

As stated by Morrison et al. (2004, p. 198), networks are defined as a set of 'co-operative relationships between organisations and individuals to achieve a particular purpose within the tourism sector that may result in qualitative and/or quantitative benefits of a learning and exchange, business activity, and/or community nature'. Hence, the purpose for which businesses or individuals work together and interact is to achieve a goal that would be too costly to be reached individually, financially and competency speaking. The result of these interactions is constituted by one or more benefits for the networks' members, which are of various types according to the reasons that led them to join the network.

The benefits resulting from network configurations are of various kinds. Generally, networks improve communication, create value, add service quality and increase knowledge sharing and creation, leading to a rise of innovation within the sector (Van der Zee et al., 2015). Moreover, from a business point of view, networks can create value, decrease transaction costs, boost or create economies of scale, enhance an enterprise's performance, augment access to resources, and facilitate a sustainable use of these resources as well as a sustainable development of the business (Van der Zee et al., 2015). Lastly, according to Ziggers et al. (2009) collaboration among firms can lead to an increase of competitive advantage over other enterprises in the market.

Networks developed in a specific geographical area (referred to as 'destination' in tourism field) are fundamental to increase the competitive advantage of the destination over the others, in order to better perform in a highly competitive market. A significant level of cooperation among stakeholders in a destination leads to further cooperation, through the creation and the exchange of joint knowledge, the development of local know-how and the connection of local capabilities (Van der Zee et al., 2015). Moreover, networks can be used to empower stakeholders, involving them in the decision making process, especially

through the development of ‘policy networks’, through public-private interactions (Van der Zee et al., 2015). This practice leads to a raise in stakeholders’ awareness concerning a destination’s future goals and to an alignment of individual and collective long-term objectives. Indeed, knowledge exchange directly results in the creation of a community, thus of a collective common purpose (Morrison et al., 2004). In order to reach this, it is fundamental to ensure a proper engagement of all stakeholders and their commitment to the network’s objectives. Such commitment can be formalised through the establishment of a membership fee in order to ensure and prove the individual involvement of each member (Morrison et al., 2004). Effective engagement of destination stakeholders, including the local community, leads to the creation of both horizontal and vertical networks, which generate learning. If the diverse networks within a destination or geographical area get in contact with each other, becoming networks of networks, the concept of ‘learning communities’ can apply (Morrison et al., 2004).

1.1.2 Success factors

A network is successful when the set of objectives and goals are reached and benefits reaped, both at an individual and collective level. The first step for a network to be successful is to establish shared objectives and purposes, communicating them clearly to all the stakeholders involved (Morrison et al., 2004). Common objectives are not always easy to establish, being a compromise of diverse interests; hence, individual goals should be openly communicated and discussed to reach a shared view on collective network objectives (Morrison et al., 2004). During this process, the presentation of best practice cases might also be helpful, to highlight which benefits can be created by collaboration, motivating the stakeholders to revise their individual objectives for the sake of shared goals (Van der Zee et al., 2015).

A clear definition of objectives must be coupled with a culture of trust among stakeholders and an adequate funding of the network, in order to ensure the accomplishment of the network purpose (Morrison et al., 2004). Additionally, another fundamental success factor of a network is the effective engagement of stakeholders (Morrison et al., 2004). Effective engagement of all the actors involved results in higher commitment to the final network purpose as well as facilitating the alignment of individual interest to a common objective. Involvement can be enhanced through on going communication among the actors, which is further increased when cultural and geographical distance among them is short (Van der Zee et al., 2015). Therefore, the communication among stakeholders is a fundamental variable that should be carefully managed by network leadership.

Leadership is another key success factor in network development and it can assume various configurations. Within public-private networks, a dominant role is often taken by public institutions (Van der Zee et al., 2015), although, it is suggested that the public sector should rather assume a facilitating role, leaving the actors more freedom to decide and act but taking charge of the training offer to strengthen network skills (Van der Zee et al., 2015). Conversely, within inter-firms networks the dominant role is taken over by one or more private actors. The leadership power can be given from the network configuration itself (vertical networks) or it can be assigned through a formal or informal agreement among the network members (horizontal networks). For example, a network of suppliers and a focal firm, being characterized by a vertical network configuration, will see in the leadership role the main firm and not its suppliers (Ziggers et al., 2009).

1.2 Local food

1.2.1 Local food definition

A clear and unique definition of local food, adopted by both businesses and consumers, does not exist. The main issue in defining local food is: what define food as local? Is it the geographical distance, the political borders, the cultural identity or the direct selling from the producers? The absence of a unique definition makes all these variables valid to define local food, but not absolute. These circumstances might lead to the impossibility for businesses to develop an offer able to meet consumers' needs (Lang et al., 2014). Additionally, it gives companies the possibility to 'cheat', in both products' labelling and advertisement. Therefore, the lack of an official, or at least of a widely shared definition, leads to a credibility issue (Lang et al., 2014) from a consumer perspective, which makes consumers more likely to rely on suppliers' reputation than on retailers' product labelling. Additionally, consumers' confusion is increased by a lack of agreement about each variable that could be used to define local food. For instance, the geographical definition directly refers to a maximum distance which the food can travel while still being considered as local; a unique agreement on how long this distance should be, however, does not exist (Martinez et al., 2010).

Food produced near the place (specific area) where it is consumed can be described as local, just as food produced within a country's borders can (Eriksen, 2013). Additionally, food grown, processed and consumed within a small area, which contributes to making this area more sustainable, can be defined as local (Eriksen, 2013); food which has undergone just one of these stages within such small area, however, can also be defined as local (e.g. Italian coffee is never grown in Italy but is still considered Italian) and can become a food speciality (Sanchez-Cañizares et al., 2015). In most cases, local food is described in terms of distance between place of production and place of consumption (Martinez, 2010). In another perspective, food can be seen as local when the exchange involves a personal relationship producer-consumer (Duram, 2012).

Eriksen (2013) proposes an open definition of local food, stating that the use of the concept of local food has not been consistent over time, changing based on different purposes and priorities. This definition can be constructed based on the situation, according to three domains of proximity: geographical proximity, relations of proximity and values of proximity. The fundamental change of this approach is to step away from the definition of local food just from a geographical point of view, including its social dimension, with its values and relationships, as well. The three domains complement each other and sometimes they might compete. They analyse local food within different conceptual networks (Eriksen, 2013). Geographical proximity refers to the physical place where food is produced, retailed and consumed (Eriksen, 2013). The wideness of this geographic area for food to be categorised as local, can correspond to regional borders, community borders or national borders. The relational proximity concerns the complex interactions among stakeholders in the local food systems. In addition, local food can be an element of reconnection with the traditional food, through a closer relationship producer-consumer and a shorter supply chain (Eriksen, 2013). Lastly, values of proximity point out the value associated in choosing local food consumption (Eriksen, 2013). Different values are attached to local food from different stakeholders, making it an environmental, social or political choice.

To complete the analysis of local food, a definition of food specialities is needed. Food specialities are food products which are recognised as coming from a specific area, hence the link territory-product is fundamental, but they are not always purchased and consumed in the same area (Eriksen, 2013). Thus, these food products have special characteristics and must be grown in a certain place, due, for instance, to special climate conditions. However, they are recognised as 'local' from a specific area in the global market, becoming part of a phenomenon called 'global localization' (Robertson, 1995). From an opposite perspective, food specialities can be defined as dishes with a local identity in the destination, even though they are not prepared with local ingredients but with ingredients from different areas which are processed locally, becoming part of the local identity (Sanchez-Cañizares et al., 2015).

The above definitions of food specialities lead to an authenticity issue. Is a traditional dish still authentic if it is made with ingredients that are not local? If the perspective of Gajić (2015) is taken into account and the concept of local is separated from the concept of authenticity, the answer is yes. This view can be easily explained considering the globalization phenomenon. Indeed, the products grown and processed locally are not necessarily the traditional crops of the area, thus, they are not necessarily authentic, meaning part of the tradition of the community of that specific area. Conversely, traditional dishes are not less authentic if they use imported ingredients, because they are anyway part of the traditional set.

Political boundaries can lead to define as local the food produced in the same region or in the same country. However, in a country like Italy or Germany, the whole food production covers such a wide area that it cannot be considered as local production anymore but is referred to as national production. Within a country of smaller size, like Slovenia, the differences between regional or national products, in transportation terms for example, are of a smaller scale. Therefore, the whole national production might be considered as local. Anyhow, regional food is always taken into consideration since Slovenia is formally divided by the Slovenian Tourism Organization into 24 gastronomic regions, which describe the incredible variety of food traditions that this small country has.

1.2.2 Local food consumption trend

Society has transformed consistently over the past few years, due to significant economic, social and technological changes, influencing all the aspects of everyday life, including food production and consumption. Food consumption is a complex behaviour affected exactly by these aforementioned cultural, economic and social forces (Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015). By observing contemporary society, two opposite trends clearly emerge. On one hand, a boost in out-of-home food consumption can be noted (Casini and al., 2013). This is caused by a frenetic life style, which leads people to spend an increasing amount of time out of their homes. This habit brings to a raise in convenient food consumption, easy to cook in few minutes, in order to drop the time dedicated to cooking meals (Casini Contini, Romano, & Scozzafava, 2013). This upward trend can be considered responsible for the problem faced by the agricultural sector in terms of desertion of the countryside from young generations and scarce profitability of the agricultural activities (Schulze, Sidali & Spiller, 2011).

On the other hand, an opposite trend can be highlighted, namely the growth in consumption of healthy food by another group in society which recognizes the importance of a healthier diet (Casini et al., 2013). This latter trend is in line with the philosophy

promoted by the Slow Food Association, in whose opinion more time should be dedicated to consume meals, in order to enjoy the social dimension of food consumption and not just the food itself or the mere satisfaction of a primary need (Repnik & Divjak, 2015). Slow Food wants to spread this philosophy of healthy and local food consumption to the whole society (Repnik et al., 2015). Thus, eating healthy and local is not seen as an elite practice, reserved to high-end restaurants or gourmet cuisine, but it has to involve all the social groups, having as main character small restaurants that serve traditional food.

Growing attention to food consumption leads directly to an increase in consumption of local food, since it constitutes an alternative food source, which satisfies consumer needs for a healthier diet, coupling it with increasing concern for environmental issues and local economies (Lang, Stanton & Qu, 2014). The spread of local food movements raises the consumers' awareness, which now want a greater understanding and closer connection with the food consumed (Frash, DiPietro & Smith, 2015). Thus, this new consumption model results in the creation of alternative supply chains, shorter in geographical extension, diminishing the number of stakeholders involved (Abate, 2008). Food is not anymore, either for tourists or for locals, a way to simply be fed, but it satisfies higher needs, assuming a different meaning (Sanchez-Cañizares & Castillo-Canalejo, 2015). It represents a choice, which can be social, political or environmental (Sidali & Hemmerling, 2014).

From another perspective, local food has become a source of competitive advantage for destinations to differentiate their tourism offer (Lin, Pearson & Cai, 2011). It assumes an economic value (Sanchez-Cañizares et al., 2015) for tourists, becoming the symbol of the local identity. In this way, food has entered the tourism industry, both as a complementary tourism element and as a protagonist, forming the new concept of gastronomic tourism, born as part of sustainable tourism. Indeed, gastronomic tourism is seen as a way to generate rural development, both socially and economically, and to decrease environmental impacts (Gajić, 2015).

In this latter perspective, local food becomes part of the cultural heritage. This recognition is testified by the official inclusion into the UNESCO list for intangible heritage of the Mediterranean diet and by the creation of the cities of gastronomy (Repnik et al., 2015). Food is a type of heritage with very specific features. Indeed, it is multi-sensory and its consumption involves all five senses (Timothy & Gelbman, 2015). Moreover, tourists might take a proactive role towards this type of heritage in two ways. On the one hand, tourists can buy traditional products and bring them back home (Timothy et al., 2015). On the other hand, they can reproduce the same recipes in their own countries (Timothy et al., 2015), making heritage travel around the world, within other cultures and into a different set of traditions. Being considered as heritage, local food is directly connected with an authenticity issue. Indeed, the use of local food as symbol of a community or destination might lead to its commodification. Consumers demand more and more for authentic experience and food can become the emblem of this craving. Regarding food, the authenticity concept is closely linked with the concept of tradition, which is itself related to a territory and a community (Assiouras, Liapati, Kouletsis & Koniordos, 2014). However, if one embraces the definition of heritage as 'the present use of the past' (Timothy & Boyd, 2006, p. 2), it can be clearly stated that every tradition coming from the past is authentic in its present use. Indeed, traditions do not constitute a static and unchanging asset but they do transform over time due to influences and stimulations coming from several external factors.

1.2.3 Sustainability argument for local food consumption

Sustainability is often advocated as the reason to choose local production but mainly with a narrow meaning, referring to the environmental pillar only and especially to the transportation distance that globalised food production travels, known with the concept of ‘food miles’ (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008). However, sustainability is a much wider concept that includes three pillars: economic, environmental and social. Thus, it is a complex phenomenon that cannot be narrowed down to the transportation issue only but needs a more exhaustive analysis from different perspectives. The environmental aspects should be taken into account along with food safety issues, competitiveness of regional food systems (Hingley, Mikkola, Canavari & Asioli, 2011) and analysed, as well, from a social development perspective.

The choice of buying local food surely involves all three pillars and can be analysed from these three different frameworks. Moreover, to reach a complete analysis of the effects of local food consumption it is appropriate to apply the model of Mihalič (2014) of ‘responsustainable tourism’, which merges sustainability and responsibility concepts, placing side by side the three pillars of sustainability (socio-cultural; environmental; economic) with three sustainability requirements (environmental awareness; stakeholder participation; tourist satisfaction).

Firstly, from the perspective of the socio-cultural pillar several benefits associated with buying local food can be listed, such as: local community empowerment through closer relationships producers-consumers (Sidali et al., 2014); preservation of cultural heritage (Repnik et al., 2015); enhancement of rural development (Verbole, 2000); development of community identity (Abate, 2008); stabilization of local communities (Abate, 2008); conservation of local food traditions (Abate, 2008); increase in sense of community (Paloviita, 2010) and growth of social cohesion (Cerjak, Mesić, Kojić, Kovačić & Markovina, 2014).

Secondly, from an economic perspective, local food has higher economic returns for producers/retailers, keeping the profits within the same community (Sidali et al., 2014); it reduces transportation costs (Abate, 2008); it can be used to strengthen destination competitiveness and differentiation (Lin et al., 2009); it gives a better value for money (Martinez, 2010); it generates a wider effect on the community economy since each dollar spent on local food products might lead to further sales (Martinez, 2010). This latter positive impact is lowered by the reduction of ‘conventional’ purchase (e.g. supermarket sales), but the overall impact is still positive on the economy (Martinez, 2010).

Thirdly, regarding the environmental pillar the formation of local food systems leads to several positive effects: helping to rebuild the agro-ecological system (Abate, 2008); encouraging farmers to apply environmentally friendly production methods (Abate, 2008); limiting the expansion of the urban area, ensuring in this way farmland preservation (Abate, 2008); protecting biodiversity, promoting conservation of traditional crops (Abate, 2008) and supporting rural diversity (Cerjak et al., 2014). Additionally, local food consumption leads to a raise of environmental awareness, especially of the negative effects generated by the globalised food industry, as well as to higher consciousness of the importance of a healthy nutrition (Repnik et al., 2015). The local food trend is the representation of a healthier life-style that is perfectly aligned to the sustainability principles.

Regarding the tourist satisfaction requirement, it can be surely stated that local food generally satisfies a need for healthier and highly nutritional food (Abate, 2008) and it provides customers with better quality food and improved food safety (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008). Moreover, gastronomic tourism leads to a raise in tourist awareness about the local environment and traditions (Gajić, 2015).

Last but not least, regarding the stakeholder participation perspective, the development of local food systems leads to the possibility for customers to make more informed purchase decisions (Abate, 2008). Stakeholders' collaboration is fundamental to reach rural development, which cannot be effective if the local community is not fully involved (Verbole, 2000).

Based on the analysis made above, it can be surely stated that the development of the local food trend is due to the willingness to create integrated and sustainable food systems, to enhance the sustainable development of a particular place (Abate, 2008). It can be observed that if environmentally friendly production methods are effectively applied in local food production, local food can be considered as organic, even though local does not satisfy inherently organic requirements and the two categories should not be confused (Lang and al., 2014).

In any case, it must be clarified that purchasing local does not necessarily reduce the carbon emissions (Eriksen, 2013). The carbon footprints for a product are calculated as the total amount of greenhouse gases emissions occurred during its production, processing and retailing (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008). Therefore, emissions should be calculated (or estimated in the most accurate way possible) throughout the entire supply chain and not just focusing on the transportation phase. Looking at the whole process, it might be possible that greater emissions in global food production are compensated from energy efficiency of such systems (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008), leading to emissions per unit that are actually very similar or even lower than emissions associated with local food production. This analysis is known with the name of 'local trap' (Eriksen, 2013), meaning that local food might be acknowledged as inherently good, being defined as more environmentally friendly, however this is not always true.

1.2.4 Consumer motivations to buy local

The increasing demand for local food from consumers is mainly generated from a movement of opposition to the globalization and standardization process that took place over the last decades. Consumers assume that there is something inherently positive in local food consumption (Eriksen & Sundbo, 2015) as a response to the increasing concerns about food safety, which can be improved with traceability (Bianchi et al., 2015) and transparency of the food chain (Bianchi et al., 2015). Thus, consumers are more and more likely to dedicate time to learn about sources and production processes (Lang et al., 2014) of what they eat. Additionally, they are likely to increase their willingness to pay in order to purchase local food (Martinez et al., 2010). Consumers' decision of buying local is motivated by both personal and societal reasons (Bianchi et al., 2015), since purchasing decision are heavily influenced by society beliefs, being an exemplification of their social identity (Frash et al., 2015).

Motivations to buy local for consumers can be grouped into the three pillars of sustainability. Firstly, from an environmental perspective, consumers see local food as healthier, fresher (Arsil and al., 2013) seasonal and with better taste (Bianchi et al., 2015).

It is believed to reduce emissions, having shorter food miles (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008), and to generally improve environmental conditions (Cerjak et al., 2014). Thus, the purchase of local food is seen as an environmentally responsible choice, which can improve our environment.

Secondly, from an economic perspective, price can be seen as a driver in local food consumption in developing countries and rural areas, where access to local food is high (Arsil, Bruwer & Lyons, 2013). Conversely, in urban areas this is not always true. The price variable is usually seen as a barrier to local food purchase, since it is more expensive than food available through globalised distribution. This is true, especially if local food is associated with organic production sold by specialised retailers or supermarkets, located in bigger towns/cities.

Thirdly, from a social perspective, consumers prioritize buying from small scale local producers or family owned businesses (Lang et al., 2014), since it gives them a higher social value in terms of interpersonal interactions. Local food is seen as a source of reconnection with rural life (Bianchi et al., 2015) and as being socially responsible, since it supports local economies (Bianchi et al., 2015). Furthermore, buying local food is an occasion, in farmers market, to take part in the social life of the community (Bianchi et al., 2015), enhancing preservation of community heritage and traditions (Bianchi et al., 2015) and increasing individual wellbeing (Cerjak et al., 2014). The consumer becomes a 'local patriot', willing to purchase local food in order to preserve his cultural identity (Rudawska, 2014).

Within the social perspective a specific phenomenon can be pointed out: consumer ethnocentrism. Consumers believe that purchasing foreign products is against both the local and national economy, and for these reasons, see them as antipatriotic. Therefore, they prefer the consumption of local products, having as main motivation the support of the local economy and, thus, of the national economy (Bianchi et al., 2015). However, it should be pointed out that this phenomenon means that consumers are indirectly deciding not to support other local economies beyond their own community (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008) or country. This latter consideration might become problematic if one considers the situation, for instance, of the European Union, in which each country accepted to be part of a European market. Hence, promoting the local or national products would place the other member States in a disadvantaged position. Buying local food might become the expression of political choices as well. Consumers' purchasing power might be used to help poorer regions and nations as well as being withheld to boycott products from certain countries (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008), using it as a sign of protest. At the same time, cultural reasons might lead to equal results (Chambers, Lobb, Butler, Harvey & Bruce Traill, 2007).

Moreover, if the value referring to the food market is considered, leaving aside the traditional interpretation attributed, such as nutritional value or value for money, four different value elements can be individuated in the food consumption value: product value; process value; location value and emotional value (Dagevos & van Ophem, 2013). The product value refers to the physical characteristic of the products and the traditional value definition, its value for money and its nutritional value, so it concerns the product itself. Conversely, the process value is related to the value or disvalue created in the production process (Dagevos et al., 2013). The location value is connected with the physical characteristics of the place where the food is purchased and eaten, as well as the

atmosphere, which is represented within the emotional value concept (Dagevos et al., 2013).

Lastly, the consumption of local food presents some barriers for consumers, such as higher prices, accessibility, availability (Bianchi et al., 2015) and challenges to identify the local products (Aoki, 2015). Indeed, in order to purchase local products is not sufficient to get into the nearest supermarket but it is necessary to go to a farmer market (open usually just some days per week) or to visit several specialised retailers (Paloviita, 2010). A farmer market is usually composed of small producers, which perform all the activities related to the products sold, from production to storage, packaging, transportation and distribution (Martinez et al., 2010). Although this is regarded as an enjoyable and social process by most people, it cannot be done regularly due to a lack of time and opportunity, caused by the contemporary frenetic lifestyle (Chambers et al., 2007). A possible improvement to facilitate the identification of local or organic products might be the use of easily recognizable labels (Teng & Wang, 2014) or the creation of a national brand to label locally produced food, which would be trustable for consumers (Cerjak et al., 2014). The issue of high price is particularly relevant for organic products, which present a substantially higher price (Aoki, 2015), which is commonly referred to as premium price, and, more generally, for local food in urban areas.

1.2.5 Reasons for restaurants to purchase local

Restaurants are customer driven, thus they need to respond to the increasing customer demand for local food due to health and environmental concerns (Sharma, Gregoire & Strohhahn, 2009). Meanwhile, the use of local products is seen as a possibility to increase profits (Bianchi et al., 2015). Therefore, restaurants, especially local independent restaurants (Sharma et al., 2009), are interested in purchasing locally grown food but they do not always know if there is a local supply suitable for their demand. This issue is mainly due to the absence of a standardised distribution system for local food, which could gather all the local producers, allowing the restaurants to interact with just one actor (distributor/wholesaler) to access several suppliers or, anyway, to fill the gap of lack of knowledge of local supply availability (Inwood Sharp, Moore & Stinner, 2009). This is why network arrangements are widespread in local food systems, yet these arrangements would need a greater coordination and formalization level.

On the one hand, sourcing local food leads to advantages for restaurants, which should be highlighted. Firstly, using local food can be exploited as a differentiation strategy to attract customers with a unique offer, both for dishes served and unique products implied, communicating to customers the use of locally grown food (Sharma et al., 2009). Secondly, restaurants are willing to source local food for the inherent characteristics of freshness, nutrition values and taste (Frash et al., 2015). In addition, sourcing local food gives access to unique products or food specialities (Martinez et al., 2010). On the other hand, disadvantages are linked with the use of local food, which need to be pointed out in order to be better managed and turned from weaknesses into strengths. The main concern associated with purchasing local food is the higher price (Sharma et al., 2009), which does not always match with a higher customer willingness to pay (Frash et al., 2015), followed by increased delivery time (Sharma et al., 2009), increased coordination for ordering (Frash et al., 2015), inadequate supply caused by the availability of low production volumes (Inwood et al., 2009), payment methods, increased operational time to process food (Sharma and al., 2014) as well as countries administrative regulations (e.g. HASAP)

and bureaucracy, which may discourage restaurants to purchase local (European Network for Rural Development, 2015).

Given the above advantages and disadvantages, it can be stated that selection and management of local suppliers is a critical element for restaurants in order to reduce delivery time (Sharma et al., 2009). In addition, a careful management of local supplier relationships could improve trust and, thus, lead to known delivery times and to the creation of a long term relationship with suppliers (Sharma et al., 2009). However, another common practice used by restaurants to overcome the disadvantages described above is the use of distributors, which are supposed to source local food, instead of purchasing directly from producers (Abate, 2008). The use of local food also means adaptability and flexibility of the kitchen staff since ingredients' availability is not always guaranteed, their skill is needed to emphasize the ingredients' taste (Sharma et al., 2014). Third party certifications might be used strategically to increase the trust level between retailer and producer (Cerjak et al., 2014), reassuring the restaurant customers about the provenience of the food served. However, chefs very often choose non-certified products since they base their relations with producers purely on trust, believing that farmers know best how to grow their produce (Inwood et al., 2009).

Chefs and restaurants can act as opinion leaders (Sharma et al., 2014) for local food and as partners in promoting local food systems (Inwood et al., 2009). The promotion that restaurants make of local producers might be formal, with description of local food used in the printed menus (Sharma et al., 2009) or through the use of storytelling techniques. Conversely, informal promotion is made through blackboards at the entrance with the list of dishes using local ingredients and through direct communication of the waiting staff to customers (Sharma et al., 2009). In the latter case, waiting staff is in charge of communicating the value of local food to customers (Inwood et al., 2009). Indeed, customers often expect waiting staff to advise them about what to choose among the wide menu offer (Sharma, Moon & Strohbehn, 2014). An effective communication to customers of the use of local food might increase their willingness to pay, making restaurants able to charge a premium price, repaying the higher cost of using local ingredients in their kitchens (Sharma et al., 2014).

1.3 Local food networks

Food has become a commodity and consumers are searching for alternative economies, looking for a reconnection with food production and their own culture and traditions (Baker, 2008). The phenomenon known as 'chain reversal', by which companies turn their supply-based approach into a demand-based approach, ought to be understood in this perspective (Fortuin & Omta, 2009). This phenomenon gained popularity over the past years for the following reasons. Firstly, it responds to customer concerns about food safety and traceability. Secondly, it is a way to support and sustain rural development (Dansero & Puttilli, 2014), creating local food economies able to re-connect consumers to producers, shorten the food supply chain and enhance local food consumption (Baker, 2008), through the creation of new distribution channels to overcome the globalised food supply chain (Seyfang, 2006). Indeed, local food networks imply a re-localization of the food supply chain, leading to a consumption of food produced as close as possible to the consumption point (Seyfang, 2006). Networks arrangements can be defined as collective efforts, in order to reach common objectives and to raise the quality of the final products (Chiffolleau & Touzard, 2014).

Networks are loci of innovation, hence of sustainable growth (Lefebvre, Molnár & Gellynck, 2013), being a fundamental part of a sustainable food production (Arsil et al., 2013). Producers must develop an identity, which connects environmental conservation through farming practices and sustainability principles with the commercial dimension, assuming, therefore, an ethical position in the market place (Holloway et al., 2006). Sustainability features of local food networks increase if production is done according to organic requirements, even though local production is already generally considered as environmentally friendly (Seyfang, 2007). However, the implementation of certified organic production is a way for farmers to seek a further differentiation and to tangibly demonstrate their efforts towards sustainable development (Seyfang, 2007). The re-localization of food production, at a local level, through local food networks is aligned to the sustainability principles of decentralization of production and self-sufficiency (Feagan, 2007).

The food sector is considered as a low-tech and low-innovation industry, where innovation is fundamental for enterprises to be competitive in the market (Lefebvre and al., 2012). However, innovation processes have become more and more complex due to technological development (Kühne et al., 2015) and innovation is likely to be incremental, even though one desires it to be radical (Eriksen et al., 2015). Innovation is fundamental in small and medium enterprises in the food sector in order to face the global competition of industrial food production (Kühne et al., 2015). Since the food sector is mainly made up of small and medium enterprises, it might be difficult to sustain innovation at a firm level, due to human and financial capital constraints (Kühne et al., 2015) and their flat organisational structure (Petrakou, Brandt, Gustavsson & Jokela, 2011). Therefore, it is a common practice in the industry to establish network frameworks in order to create and exchange knowledge as well as to boost the diffusion and adoption of innovations (Kühne et al., 2015).

However, innovation occurs if individual network members are able to turn the information received within the network activities, and exchange them into innovations (Hamann, 2013). A network can serve as a hub for creating innovation through knowledge sharing (Deiters & Schiefer, 2013) as well as acting as a facilitator, offering a range of services to its members to implement innovations, such as international matchmaking, innovation link; startup support (Garbade, Fortuin & Omta, 2013); technical assistance; commercialization of crops (Viaggi & Cuming, 2013); technological cooperation (Chiffolleau et al., 2014) and co-marketing cooperation (Petrakou et al., 2011). Innovations through sharing of knowledge are likely to increase if networks members are located in the same geographical area (Omholt, 2015). Therefore, networks can be constituted with different purposes: to generate new knowledge and knowledge exchange; to create new business activities; to create social networking and knowledge exchange (Deiters et al., 2013). For instance, co-operatives of suppliers, within the network frameworks, are usually created with commercialization purposes (Viaggi et al., 2013), in order to facilitate the interaction with customers.

Moreover, local food networks might have the function of connecting the local suppliers with the demand. Indeed, many restaurants or retailers are interested in buying local but they do not have a local distribution infrastructure that can be used to source local food (Inwood et al., 2009). Therefore, networks arrangements are used to fill the gap between retailers and suppliers, forming co-operatives, to ensure the best quality of food for retailers (Hingley, 2010). The same approach can be applied to fill the gap between consumers and producers as well.

1.3.1 Types of local food networks

According to Martinez and al. (2010) two main types of local food markets can be distinguished. Firstly, a direct-to-consumer market, where sales are done directly from producers to consumers. Direct-to-consumer market type includes farmer markets, community supported agriculture, farm shops (Martinez et al., 2010), 'pick your own', box schemes, home deliveries, roadside sales (Dansero et al., 2014). Secondly, direct selling from producers to restaurants, retail stores and public institutions, known as direct-to-retail/foodservice market type (Martinez et al., 2010), also including collective supermarkets, local shops and bio-districts (Dansero et al., 2014). This latter type is usually characterised from vertical integration, focus firm – suppliers (Hingley, 2010). An additional market type is the institutional market, developed through school gardening, with the aim to facilitate the connection among students and local farmers, in order to develop, within the new generations, a higher awareness for food safety and local production (Martinez et al., 2010). The general aim of these local food market configurations is to shorten the supply chain (Guzmán, López, Román & Alonso, 2013), reducing the distance producers – consumers (Feagan, 2007) with the final objective of re-connecting them.

According to Dansero et al. (2014), local food networks can be classified into three different forms: face-to-face networks, in which there is a physical presence of both consumer and producer; spatial proximity networks, where production, distribution and consumption take place in the same region; spatially extended networks, in which consumption occurs in a place far from the production place (e.g. fair trade networks). Moreover, networks configurations can be characterized by horizontal or vertical relationships (Kühne et al., 2015). Vertical relationships usually involve a focal company and its suppliers and/or costumers (Kühne et al., 2015). Conversely, horizontal networks involve actors from the same stage of a vertical network, bringing together consumers, suppliers or the focal firm with its competitors or peers (Kühne et al., 2015). In the latter case, horizontal networks of competitors or peers are usually formalised as business-to-business relationships and not within a network framework (Deiters et al., 2013).

The focus of this research is on direct-to-retailers local food networks between restaurants and suppliers, thus characterized by vertical relationships type, in which the restaurant acts as focal firm of the network. Embracing the view of Dansero et al. (2014), the definition of spatial proximity networks can be applied. Moreover, this network type can assume a formal or informal configuration. Indeed, in the early development of local food networks, the network configuration tends not to be formalised but it assumes the form of an actual practice.

1.3.2 Drivers of local food networks

Drivers can facilitate the creation and development of local food networks and act as motivation for network creation. Local food networks are recognised to significantly contribute to rural development, through economic development and local increase in money circulation, they can constitute a strategy for farmers to avoid the price squeeze actuated by the global food distribution, developing alternative market relationships (Seyfang, 2006). Furthermore, these network configurations can push for a new approach to food governance, in which different stakeholders cooperate towards common objectives, implementing common principles (Favilli, Rossi & Brunori, 2015).

From a rural development perspective, drivers to implement local food networks are: the creation of social cohesion, the generation of alternative value for the society, the support of a sustainable rural livelihood (Seyfang, 2006); the establishment of culinary tourism (Dougherty, Brown & Green, 2013); the enhancement of social capital stock, increasing linkages in the local community (Dougherty et al., 2013); the revitalization of the local heritage (Paloviita, 2010); the maintenance of the rural landscape (Paloviita, 2010) and residents' employment (Eriksen et al., 2015).

From an environmental perspective local food networks reduce the environmental impacts created by the industrialized food production (Eriksen, 2013), through reduction of packaging materials (Eriksen et al., 2015); decrease food miles (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008) and promote sustainable development (Eriksen et al., 2015).

From a customer perspective, local food networks enhance consumers' benefits and satisfaction (Eriksen et al., 2015), through an increase of quality of life for consumers in terms of food safety, food quality and social interactions (Arsil et al., 2013). Moreover, the increased access to healthy food in urban and rural area boosts population health and wellbeing (Sadler, Arku & Gilliland, 2015). For these reasons the development of local food networks was supported, and it should be supported even more in the future, by public institutions (Sadler et al., 2015).

1.3.3 Obstacles for local food networks

In relation to the creation and development of local food networks some obstacles can be highlighted, especially in financial terms, due to fluctuation in quality and quantity of supply as well as the need for an extensive effort in sales promotion (Eriksen et al., 2015). In addition, local food networks' development is challenged by: small number of producers, which do not have a great influence; bureaucracy requirements and poor physical infrastructures (Eriksen et al., 2015). The formation of a network framework implies a shared definition of quality requirements for food production if this common perspective is not reached, conflicts might emerge among the network members (Petrakou et al., 2011). Enterprises generally recognise the importance of collaboration but it is not always easy to put it in practice, initiating collaborative relationships (Petrakou et al., 2011), especially with competitors and peers.

In order to grow bigger, in terms of producers and consumers, local food networks would need both policy and institutional support (Baker, 2008). Indeed, the innovation level is affected from the institutional environment within which firms operate (Capitanio, Coppola & Pascucci, 2009). The most urgent to be faced are the mobilization of producers and the education of consumers (Baker, 2008). Indeed, producers want consumers to recognise the importance of their work and their contribution to the territory and to environment protection (Favilli et al., 2015). Conversely, the promotion of a local food culture, in which local and home-produced is considered better over foreign and global production, might decrease the acceptance of diversity for other local specialities, coming from other local economies (Seyfang, 2006), just as the commercialization of local food might damage its authenticity (Eriksen et al., 2015).

1.4 Local food network: cases of best practice

Three cases are presented in the following paragraphs as best practice examples in order to be applied in the benchmarking analysis, within the analysis and discussion chapter,

supported by the theoretical framework constructed above. Two of these three cases are pioneer of the local food trend, which is now widely spread in several countries, almost turning into a fashion more than an actual practice. These two cases are almost concurrent in two quite far parts of the world. The first one is the restaurant Chez Panisse of Alice Waters, in Berkeley, CA, United States and the latter presents the restaurant Ballymaloe House of Myrtle Allen, in Cork, Ireland. The two cases present some common points in terms of suppliers' network relationships and development of education programmes, for both professional and consumers.

The first case, Chez Panisse, exemplifies the local food use and accessibility, the cooperation with suppliers, the creation of direct-to-retailers local food networks and advertisement benefits for suppliers (co-branding). The second case presented analyses six restaurants located in the region of Galway, Ireland. This case illustrates the drivers and obstacles for using local food in restaurant menus as well as the different types of relationships possible with suppliers when sourcing local food. Lastly, the third case, Ballymaloe House, assess the topics of seasonal menu, community/neighbourhood relationships and the importance of international connections, with organisations promoting local food.

1.4.1 Chez Panisse, USA

Chez Panisse was opened in 1971, by Alice Waters, with the aim of creating a place in which friends could gather to taste fresh food, cooked with local ingredients (Chesbrough, Kim & Agogino, 2014). Chez Panisse is made up of two floors, respectively a restaurant on the ground floor and a café on the first floor. The price of a meal in the restaurant, composed by three to four courses, is between 65 and 100 dollars (approximately between 55 and 90 euros), based on the days of the week (Chesbrough et al., 2014). The menu is changed daily, according to the offer of seasonal products, as well as the café menu a la carte, which is composed from lower priced dishes, served both for dinner and lunch (Chesbrough et al., 2014).

The aim of Alice Waters was to serve the best quality food, requirement that led her to sustainable farmers, at an affordable price. The willingness to serve fresh food cooked with local ingredients, brought up several obstacles in the early development of this business. Indeed, there was a higher cost of ingredients, since they were not purchased from large scale producers, and a strong dependency on farmers and suppliers production (Chesbrough et al., 2014). In order to assess these issues, the expensive ingredients left from the restaurant were re-used in the café menu, avoiding resource waste and relationship with suppliers were carefully managed to create co-innovation and co-branding (Chesbrough et al., 2014). Thus, Chez Panisse started a close collaboration with some farmers, previously agreeing on which crops should be planted and in which quantity. At the same time, the menu of Chez Panisse was based on product availability and seasonal ingredients – ingredient-based menus (Chesbrough et al., 2014). Farmers were also encouraged to experiment new crops and possible innovations to obtain better quality ingredients (Chesbrough et al., 2014). The products are sent twice per week from the suppliers to Chez Panisse and based on the products supplied the chefs try to create a menu which incorporates them (Chesbrough et al., 2014). Moreover, source and producer name were specified on the menu for each ingredient (Chesbrough et al., 2014), initiating a co-branding practice and making local products known among consumers. Furthermore, communicating to customers the use of local suppliers, and which are their products, is important for brand development and the creation of differentiation strategies (Cerjak et

al., 2014).

Alice Waters after the establishment of Chez Panisse became involved in education as well. Firstly, she founded a cooking school with training programmes for chefs. Secondly, a school garden project with children was the starting point to establish the Chez Panisse Foundation in 1996, known from 2011 as Edible Schoolyard Project (Chesbrough et al., 2014), with the aim of educating children and young generations about the value of local food and of healthy eating habits.

Overall, it can be clearly seen as this case summarizes the following topics of collaboration producers – retailers; communication to customers; co-branding practices with producers; local food accessibility and creation of direct-to-retailers local food networks, as instrument for business innovation and sustainability.

Figure 1: Chez Panisse logo



Source: Chez Panisse, 2016.

1.4.2 Restaurants of Galway, Ireland

According to Duram (2012) in the area of Galway, Ireland, some restaurants, led by their chefs, developed a particular attention for local food culture and the use of local products. The study conducted by Duram (2012) analysed six restaurants located in Galway, with 45-90 seating capacity, and committed to the use of local products, members of Restaurant Association of Ireland, which has an annual fee of 700 euros. Moreover, three out of six chefs are member of professional networks that encourage the use of local food (Duram, 2012). The broad objective of these restaurants is to create awareness among customers of artisanal and traditional food in Ireland (Duram, 2012). The price range of this restaurant is between 14 and 30 euros for a main course, depending on the restaurant formality, which can be considered over the average compared with other eating offers in Galway (Duram, 2012).

Ingredients are sourced mainly from producers located within the county of Galway. Relationships with producers imply a social dimension and they are based on trust (Duram, 2012). In some cases, relationship with producers takes a more personal connotation through direct collaboration producer – restaurant, in order to meet specific requirements of the restaurant and vice versa (Duram, 2012). Two ways are used by these restaurants to source local ingredients: direct purchasing and reliable wholesalers/distributors. On the one hand, for products like meat, restaurants rely on direct purchasing from one or few producers. On the other hand, wholesalers/distributors are employed to reduce the management effort of direct interactions with small suppliers. These wholesalers/distributors are committed to providing local ingredients when possible, but they ensure the supply of the ingredients in any case, using bigger food suppliers, from

outside the region/nation (Duram, 2012). Thus, the responsibility of actually purchasing local food is moved from the restaurant to the wholesaler/distributor.

An important highlight made by the chefs is that local producers have undertaken a proactive behaviour, approaching the restaurants individually and proposing the use of their ingredients (Duram, 2012). This attitude demonstrates the willingness from the producers' side to collaborate with the retailers (the restaurants) in order to facilitate the sale of their production directly to them, and to develop a lasting long term relationship, ensuring them of a stable income over time.

The drivers for the chefs to source local food are the taste, the freshness of the products, the media return – such as: being included in critical guides; the quality of food, cost savings; support local producers and environmental reasons, related with the CO2 created by food transportation and intensive cultivation and farming (Duram, 2012). However, the use of local ingredients has several obstacles that must be faced by restaurants: seasonality; availability of the product in the area; price of the products; the immediate payment to producers vs. a monthly payment to wholesalers; the need of additional cold storage due to less frequent supply (Duram, 2012). However, the obstacles of seasonality and availability of the product can be easily solved if the relationship with the suppliers is 'personalised' and agreements on production are previously made. Moreover, it is necessary to make the menu seasonal and to base it on local availability.

Overall, this case points out the topics of: education of customers; other network memberships; direct sourcing vs. intermediation from wholesalers/distributors of local food; proactivity of suppliers; drivers and obstacles for sourcing local food.

Figure 2: Restaurants association of Ireland logo



Source: RAI, 2016.

1.4.3 Ballymaloe House, Ireland

Ballymaloe House is considered one of the creators of good food networks in South West Ireland. The definition of good food usually implies both the concepts of nature and culture and it bypasses the geographical dimension implied by the concept of local food (Sage, 2003). Ballymaloe House is located in Cork region, Ireland. Myrtle Allen founded it in 1964 (Ballymaloe, 2014), when she decided to open her house to the public, giving the possibility to customers to dine in an historical country house. Ballymaloe House restaurant had as primary objective to give the chance to taste traditional Irish dishes, made with local ingredients. The main ingredients used in the cooking process were produced in the Ballymaloe farm itself and the missing ones were sourced from neighbour producers (Sage, 2003).

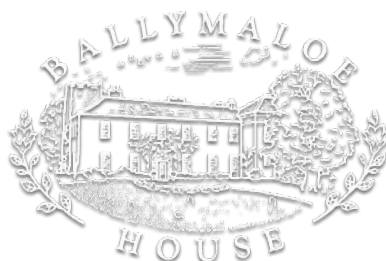
Myrtle's choice to open a restaurant based on local ingredients and offering traditional dishes, was a radical choice of innovation (Sage, 2003) for that time. The demand for good

food in that period in Ireland was latent and restaurants using this concept were not yet spread. The menu was based on local ingredients and changed daily, based on seasonal production from the farm and its suppliers (Ballymaloe, 2014). Ballymaloe House restaurant, after two years, got a hotel license, arranging ten rooms for paying guests. This change allowed the restaurant to become able to serve spirits and liqueurs, in addition to wines (Sage, 2003). The radical idea of Myrtle Allen was successful and the restaurant got regular customers from different social classes (Sage, 2003). In addition to the restaurant activity, Myrtle Allen developed other activities linked with Ballymaloe, like publishing cooking books and organising cooking classes during the winter months, when the work for the restaurant decreased, being mainly concentrated on weekends and holidays (Sage, 2003). Furthermore, both the restaurant and Myrtle Allen herself are part of regional, national and international food organisations, such as the European Community of Cooks, the Slow Food Convivium and the Cork Free Choice Consumers Group (Sage, 2003). The latter network's name proves the commitment of Ballymaloe House and Myrtle Allen to the education of consumers, giving them the opportunity to discover alternative realities, opposed to globalised markets, which will allow them to make informed consumption choices.

Overtime, these complementary activities turned into parallel activities, and nowadays all the children of Myrtle run businesses connected with Ballymaloe House (Sage, 2003). For instance, a formal Cookery School has been established, which runs certification courses for chefs and daily and weekly skill trainings (Sage, 2003). From its first stages, Ballymaloe House built its identity on personal and parity relationships with its suppliers. Suppliers were guaranteed not only a fair financial return for their raw ingredients but even the commitment to a long term relationship (Sage, 2003). Additionally, producers were named directly, thus advertised to customers, in the menus of the restaurant (Sage, 2003), allowing customer to recognize the geographical provenience of what they were eating, as well as to individuate the producers.

This case underlines the following topics: importance of traditional food; self-production of ingredients and in-house processing; seasonality of the menu; education of customers; relationship type with suppliers; communication to customers and community relationships.

Figure 3: Ballymaloe House logo



Source: Ballymaloe House, 2016.

1.4.4 Main topics for benchmarking analysis

The following table summarizes the main topics that are pointed out by each case, grouping them by thematic areas, directly connected with the research questions, indicating in brackets for each topic the case where it comes from.

Table 1: Topics emerged from the best practice cases presentation

Research questions	Thematic areas	Topics
Q1. Are the members of Gostilna Slovenija part of formal or informal direct-to-retailers local food networks?	Sourcing local food	Self-production of ingredients and in-house processing (Ballymaloe House case) Creation of direct-to-retailers local food networks (Chez Panisse case)
Q2. Considering the best practice cases of Chez Panisse (Barkeley, California), Ballymaloe House (Cork, Ireland) and Galway (Ireland) through a benchmarking analysis, which are the characteristics of these networks in terms of communication to customers, relationship type with suppliers, menu construction and seasonality, local food accessibility and international connections?	Retailers – suppliers relationship type	Direct sourcing from producers vs. local food wholesalers (restaurants of Galway case) Proactivity of suppliers (restaurants of Galway case) Collaboration/cooperation producers – retailers (Chez Panisse case)
	Connections	International connections (Ballymaloe House case) Other network membership (restaurants of Galway case)
	Menu design	Seasonality of the menu (Ballymaloe House case)
	Communication to customers	Communication to customers (restaurants of Galway case) Communication to customers and co-branding with producers (Chez Panisse case)
Q3. Which are the drivers and obstacles in sourcing local food for Gostilna Slovenija members?	Drivers and Obstacles	Drivers and obstacles for sourcing local food (restaurants of Galway case) Local food accessibility (Chez Panisse case)
Q4. How do direct-to-retailers local food networks contribute to sustainability?	Contribution to sustainability	Community/neighbourhood relationships (Ballymaloe House case) Importance of traditional food (Ballymaloe House case) Education of customers (restaurants of Galway case)

Source: own research

2 Local food trends in Slovenia

According to Hojnik (2011), Slovenia has around 74.000 farms and 400 businesses producing food products. Slovenian food is not well known worldwide, as are Spanish or Italian cuisine, but the country is an emergent culinary destination (Sanchez-Cañizares et al., 2015). However, local food products have started to become a fundamental part of the tourist experience in Slovenia, thanks to the effort of the Slovenian Tourism Organization, which presents gastronomy as one of the tourism products of the country (Sanchez-Cañizares et al., 2015). The Slovenian Tourism Organization, within its gastronomic strategy, lists 24 gastronomic regions and 170 traditional dishes (STO, 2013). The table below summarizes the 24 gastronomic regions and the representative traditional dishes for each of them (STO, 2013):

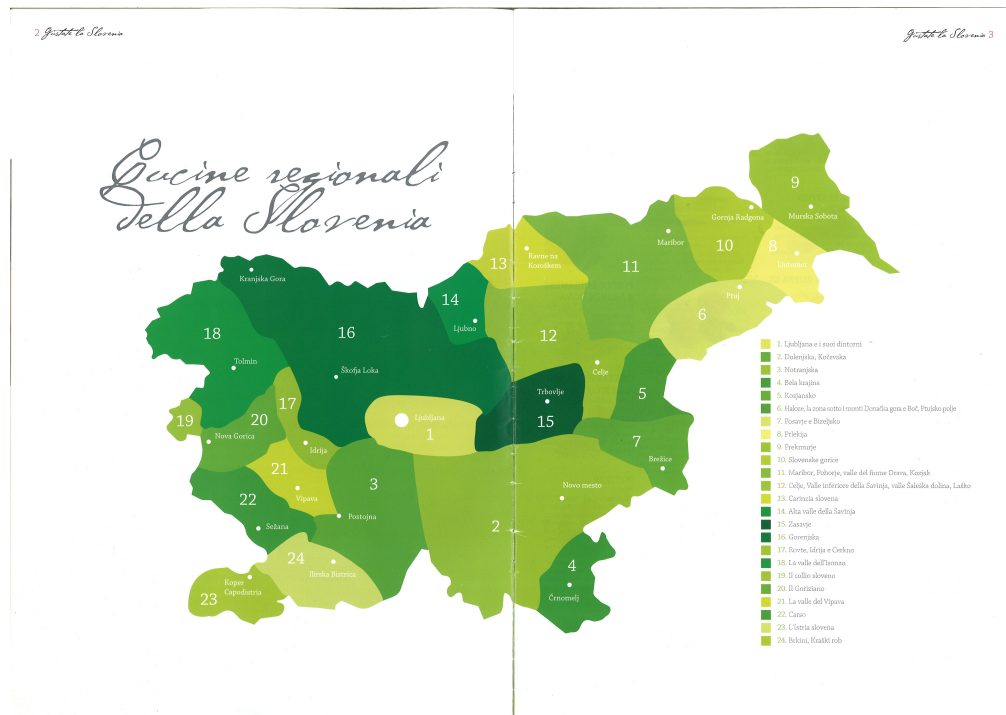
Table 2: Slovenian gastronomic regions and representative dishes

Gastronomic regions	Representative dishes
Ljubljana	<i>Janška vezivka, všenat zelje, ričet, pražen krompir, žabij kraki, leteči žganci, potice, ljubljanske skutne palačinke, ljubljanaska jajčna jed, ljubljanski štrukelj.</i>
Notranjska	<i>Bloška kavla ali trojka, ščuka s fižolom, polšja obara.</i>
Bela Krajina	<i>Belokranjska pogača, belokranjska povitica, prosta povitica, žitna klobasa 'jaglac', črnomaljski nadev ali fuline.</i>
Kozjansko	<i>Korejavec, kozjanska kruhova potica, kozjanska mlinčevka, sirova zafrkjača, kozjanski krapi.</i>
Haloze	<i>Erpica, jerpica ali oprešak, haloška 'gobonca'.</i>
Posavje and Bizeljsko	<i>Bizeljski ajdov kolač, bizeljska mlinčevka, pofalača, koruzna prga.</i>
Prlekija	<i>Prleška tunka, prleške murke, ajdov krapec, prleška gibanica.</i>
Prekmurje	<i>Bosman, vrtanek, ocvirkove pogačice, bujta repa, krumpluvi žganiki, makovi kulinji, povitnica, prekmurska gibanica, prekmurski brogač, gibice, prekmurske koline in prekmurska šunka, repni retaš, hajdinska zlejevanka.</i>
Slovenske Gorice	<i>Slivova juha, oljov pocuk, krompirjev krapec, sireki, kipjena gibanica.</i>
Maribor, Pohorje, Drava valley, Kozjak	<i>Štajerska kisl juha, pohorski lonec, olbič ali pohorski žganci, štajerski kuhani štruklji, pohorska bunka, bogajca, pohorska omleta.</i>
Celje, lower Savinja valley, Šaleška dolina valley, Laško	<i>Mlečna forflcova župa s češplji, češpljeva juha, hruškova čežana s štruklji, zabeljeni hmelveji vršički, jajčni štruklji, žemljna potica, fige prešernove.</i>

Slovene Carinthia	<i>Koroška skuta s čebulo in bučnim oljem, kvočevi nudlji, mežerli, koroški kruhov hren, povitnek, trenta.</i>
Upper Savinja valley	<i>Zgornjesavinjski želodec, mohovt, solčavski sirnek, ubrnjenik, fīruš, zdrkanka, ajdnek, pohla.</i>
Zasavje	<i>Funštrc, grenadirmarš, krumpentoč, zasavska jetrnica, trojanski krofi.</i>
Gorenjska	<i>Govnac, loška smojka, loška medla, ajdova kaša z gobami, ajdovi in koruzni žganci, jurjeva kappa, sir trnič, bohinjski mohant, masovnik, gorenjska danka, bohinjska zaseka, budl, dražgoški kruhek, maželjni, tržiške bržole, ajdovi krapci, dovški krapci. kranjska klobasa, rateški špresovi krapci, kranjski štrukelj, blejska kremšnita, trjak.</i>
Rovte, Idrija, Cerklje	<i>Idrijski žlikrofi z bakalco, šebreljski želodec, smukavc, karaževc, luštrkajca, pajtičke, želševka.</i>
Soča valley	<i>Sir tolminc, čompe s skuto, bovški sir, frika, poštoklja, soška postrv v ajdovi, bulje, trentarske kloce, buški krapci, kobariški štruklji.</i>
Goriška Brda	<i>Briške češnje, kruh križnik, bela in rumena polenta, fritalje ali cvrče, kuhnje, pištunji, toči, fuje, štruklji wljkava, krodegini, šfojada, hubanca.</i>
Nova Gorica	<i>K'p'rouc, bleki, mulce, žvarcet, goriški radič, sope, goriške pečenice v vinu, goriški golaž s polento, pinca, goriška gubanca.</i>
Vipava valley	<i>Skuha, nanoški sir, vipavski pršut, vipavska jota, vipavski štruklji, šelinka, fižolova mineštra.</i>
Karst	<i>Kraška jota, šelinka, kraški pršut, kraška pancetta, kraški zašinek.</i>
Slovene Istra	<i>Kruh z oljakami, fritaje, istrska jota, mineštre, pasta, bakala na belo in rdeče, ribe v šavorju, kalamari, pedoči, nakelda, istrski štruklji, fižgov hlebček.</i>
Brkini, Kraški rob	<i>Fuži</i>
Dolenjska, Kočevska	<i>Poprtnik, matevž, fižolovi štrukelj, kostelske hrge, kostelski želodec, repa s fižolom ribničar, pečena gos ali raca z mlinici in rdečim zeljem, ribiniška povanca, ajdov povanca.</i>

Source: STO, 2013.

Figure 4: Slovenian gastronomic regions



Source: STO, 2013

The realisation of this list of 24 gastronomic regions in the country is a clear statement that Slovenia, despite its modest dimension, presents strong and diverse culinary traditions, which can be experienced by tourists, just travelling few kilometres away from the capital (Ljubljana). Gastronomy starts to be recognised as a motive to visit the country and is anyway seen as a fundamental complement to any trip. Moreover, this phenomenon is obviously coupled with a rising interest by the Slovenian restaurants to be considered, and valued, as local from both citizens and tourists.

The importance of eating local, as well as preserving local products and dishes, is also highlighted as well by the Slovenian government that has encouraged, over the past few years, all the population to 'buy local', through advertisement campaigns on media and economic incentives to local companies (Hojnik, 2011). The reasons for this effort are diverse. On the one hand, buying Slovenian products is fundamental to preserve customs and traditions of the country and to strengthen national pride and the national identity. On the other hand, the raise of local product sales should indirectly lead to a further development of the food industry in the country, thus enhancing the country economic situation (Hojnik, 2011). In addition, to increase the economic conditions of farmers, farm tourism has been promoted by the government as complementary activity to farming, in order to integrate the yearly income (Cigale, Lampič & Potočnik-Slavič, 2013). The demand for this type of accommodation is not high, but the economic impact on farmers is sufficient to integrate their income (Cigale et al., 2013). Last but not least, the organic trend is taking off in Slovenia as well, as in most Europe. Indeed, according to Cerjak et al. (2010) Slovenians have a positive attitude towards organic food and they are mainly motivated by environmental issues and from the health value commonly attributed to organic produce.

In December 2016 the new Slovenian food legislation will be fully enforced. The changes applied in the legislation have the aim to allow consumers to make more informed choices,

with the obligation to explicate the food processing on the label (Smolniknar & Slemenjak, 2015). However, the new legislation does not regulate specifically the obligation to indicate on the food label the geographical provenience, thus the provision of this information remains up to the company (Smolniknar et al., 2015). Therefore, it can be stated that the focus of the new legislation are mainly health issues; it is not yet centred on communicating and highlighting the locality of the food products.

Slovenia has three convivia officially registered with the Slow Food organization: convivium of Primorje; convivium of Ljubljana and convivium of Zasavje (Repnik et al., 2015). Moreover, after accessing the European Union, Slovenia has protected 14 wines with the Protected Designation of Origin label and 16 agricultural products, with the three quality designations of the European Union: Protected Geographical Indication, Protected Designation of Origin or Traditional Speciality Guaranteed. The agricultural products protected with the EU quality labels are: Tolminc cheese, extra virgin olive oil from Slovenian Istria, Nanos cheese, forest honey from Kočevje, *belokranjska pogača*, *idrijski žlikrofi*, *prekmurska gibanica*, *kraška panceta*, Styrian-Prekmurje pumpkin seed oil, *prleška tünka*, *zgorñjesavinjski želodec*, *šebreljski želodec*, *ptujski lük*, *kraški pršut*, *kraški zašink* and Bovec cheese (STO, 2016).

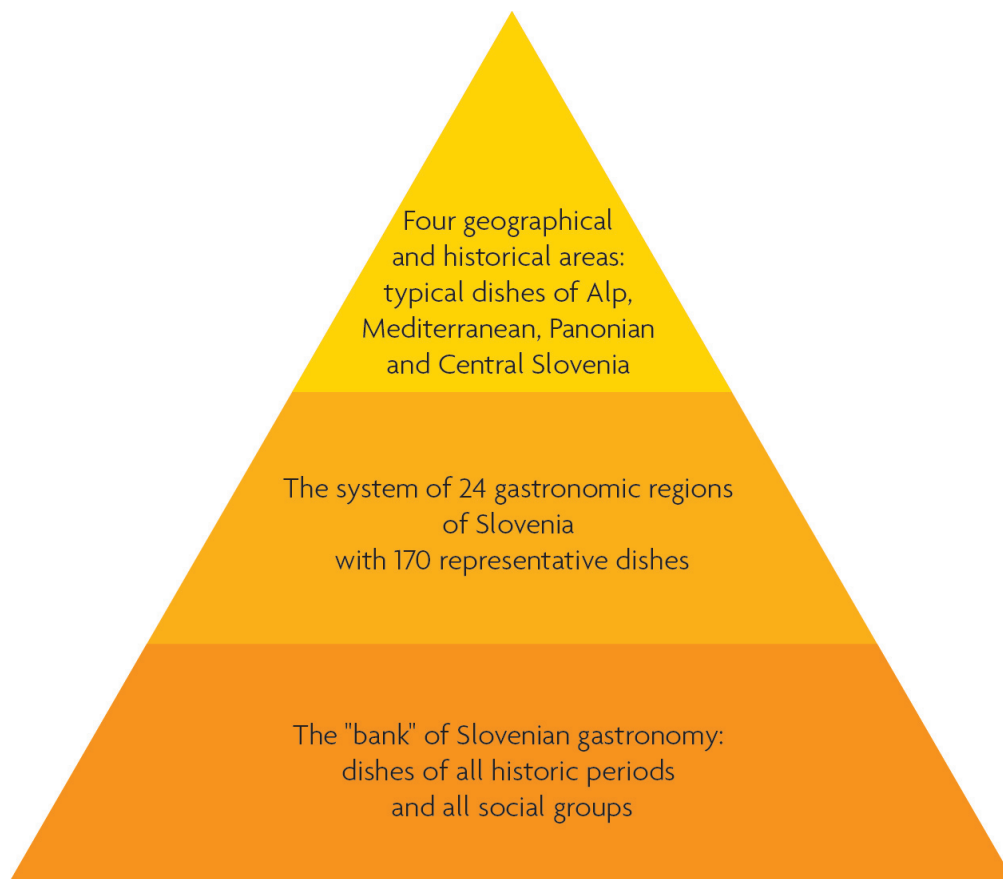
Additionally, the Slovenian Tourism Board has created the Slovenian food pyramid (Bogataj, 2008). The pyramid has been developed in collaboration with the Slovenian food and heritage expert Professor Janez Bogataj, to be used as a representation of Slovenian cuisine, as well as for its promotion. This pyramid consists of three levels. Firstly, at the bottom of the pyramid are placed the origin of the Slovenian cuisine, with an overview of the historical periods and different dishes over time. This milestone is defined as “the bank of Slovenian gastronomy”. Secondly, in the middle level of the pyramid, are placed the 24 gastronomic regions and their 170 traditional dishes. Thirdly, the top of the pyramid summarizes the gastronomic regions, grouping them into four geographical and historical areas, choosing the most representative dishes for each of them, which are then the ones represented on the cover of the Slovenian Tourism Organization promotional material ‘Taste Slovenia’, translated in several languages. Thus, the traditional dishes are grouped into typical dishes from Alpine, Mediterranean, Pannonian and Central Slovenia. Eight dishes are elected as representative from the several gastronomic regions: *kranjska klobasa*; *kislo zelje* and *kisla repa* (sauerkraut and turnip); *bosman* (wedding bread); *prekmurska gibanica* (layer cake); *skutni štruklji*; *potica*; anchovies in two marinades; mussels on three salads (Bogataj, 2008).

Figure 5: Taste Slovenia, cover page



Source: STO, 2013.

Figure 6: Slovenian food pyramid



Source: modified from Bogataj, 2008.

2.1 Definition of Gostilna

In English, the translation of the term gostilna would be inn or pub. Gostilna is used in Slovene language to refer to a rural and traditional inn, usually family owned, in which is possible to taste good quality local food cooked in traditional dishes with some innovations allowed, but without pushing it too far. Gostilnas are still the centre of life in villages and small towns across Slovenia, a place in which people can gather to share food or drinks (STO, 2013) as well as a place for important celebrations (Slovenian Gostilna, 2016). The food offered is usually, in the most traditional and antique gostilnas, coupled with the offer of accommodation (STO, 2013). The goal of gostilna was, and still is, to offer the same comfortable environment that you would find at home, from food to interpersonal relationships (Slovenian Gostilna, 2016).

Gostilnas offered refuge to travellers as well as a place to make business (Slovenian Gostilna, 2016). This latter characteristic is still part of gostilnas and bargaining has been replaced with business decisions (Slovenian Gostilna, 2016). Moreover, gostilnas developed from travellers' refuge into tourist attractions, both for eating and accommodation. However, this development should not be seen from a negative perspective (Jelen, 2010). Indeed, it is respectful of tradition and it does not conflict with the course of rural life, but it might lead to the development of collateral touristic activities as well as to the preservation of the traditional role of gostilnas (Jelen, 2010), ensuring their economic sustainability in the future.

To demonstrate that gostilna is the core representation of Slovenian culture it can be remembered that a gostilna was established during the Olympic Games in Sydney to promote and represent Slovenia (Slovenian Gostilna, 2016). The promotion of gostilnas, as representation of Slovenian food consumption, is linked with the tourist strategy of Slovenia, in order to make Slovenian traditional food recognizable by tourists, and valued by both foreigners and Slovenians.

2.2 The network Gostilna Slovenija

The network Gostilna Slovenija was created in 2010 (STO, 2013). The idea behind the network creation was to certify the quality of the food in gostilnas as well as their locality and to link to each other the best gostilnas, presenting them all together to tourists (STO, 2013). The ultimate objective of the network is to create a brand, introducing quality standards for food and exterior and interior image of gostilnas (Gačnik, 2012). The term gostilna is not translated on purpose, as it has to become recognizable by people and identified with a certain set of values and characteristics. Exactly as when people say *pizzeria* translation is not needed the term gostilna has to evoke in people's mind a certain place, environment and food type.

Applications to become member of the network are evaluated based on assignation of points to the gostilnas, evaluating several characteristics (Gostilna Slovenija, 2016). The points are assigned from two judges part of the network judges' commission of five judges. The minimum points amount required to be part of the network is 100 points out of a total possible assignation of 120 points. Moreover, the judges commission carries out every year a control of the points assigned in order to check the quality of the gostilnas already part of the network and whether they still satisfy the requirements, reaching the needed amount of points. If the minimum amount of points is not reached anymore, to the gostilna is asked to modify some characteristics/behaviours in order to "fix" the missing requirements in a set period of time. If this task is not accomplished by the interested gostilna, membership is withdrawn and a new application process might be accepted in the following years. Once a gostilna becomes member of the network it receives a sticker to be placed on the entrance door and a wood sign to be placed outside the gostilna.

Figure 7: Gostilna Slovenija logo



Source: Gostilna Slovenija, 2016.

The points assigned to gostilnas in order to get the network membership are based on several criteria. Firstly, it is assessed if gostilna is family owned, since one or more generations, or if it presents other types of ownerships, however the term gostilna, in both cases, must be used in the name of the place (e.g. Gostilna Rajh; Gostilna Skok). Secondly, the menu design is evaluated with respect to its seasonality, the use of regional and national ingredients, the use of Slovenian products with a Protected Designation of Origin,

the presence of house dishes, the use of organic ingredients, the offer of local and homemade alcoholic and not alcoholic drinks. Generally, gostilnas must have at least 50% of the ingredients used, coming from the region or from Slovenian territory. Thirdly, the physical environment of gostilnas is evaluated with regards to the use of tablecloths, the use of real flowers from the region on the tables, the use of traditional furniture and its preservation, the use of historical objects and photos in the gostilna setting as element of cultural heritage, the preservation of traditional architecture of gostilna (if the building in which it is placed is traditional), the existence of a garden, the presence of separate spaces for the bar (*šank*) and the dining room and the offer of a special room for group gatherings (e.g. families, hunters). Last but not least, the ambience of gostilnas is evaluated, such as the presence or absence of music, and if there is it must be mainly Slovenian, the existence of other services in addition to the food service (e.g. children services; accommodation), the organization of social activities (e.g. cultural or recreational events; business meetings).

The tables exemplifying points assigned for each requirement is attached to this research in Appendix A. The document is in Slovene language and it has been translated and commented in a talk with professor Janez Bogataj and revised with the help of Google Translator.

3 Research model and research questions

The main purpose of this study is to assess the existence and the level of development, of formal or informal direct-to-retailer local food networks in Slovenia. In order to accomplish this goal three cases were presented in the literature review to be applied to construct a benchmarking analysis, giving to this research an international reference, thus using a secondary source. The intuition is that direct-to-retailer local food networks do exist in Slovenia but they are not formalised.

In order to assess the goal presented above, four research questions were formulated based on the best practice cases, which guide the main research topics, with a support of all the literature presented within literature review chapter. Thus, this research has the goal to assess the following research questions:

Q1: Are the members of Gostilna Slovenija part of formal or informal direct-to-retailers local food networks?

Q2: Considering the best practice cases of Chez Panisse (Barkeley, California), Ballymaloe House (Cork, Ireland) and Galway (Ireland) through a benchmarking analysis, which are the characteristics of these networks in terms of communication to customers, relationship type with suppliers, menu construction and seasonality, local food accessibility and international connections?

Q3: Which are the drivers and obstacles in sourcing local food for Gostilna Slovenija members?

Q4: How do direct-to-retailers local food networks contribute to sustainability?

The four research questions were used to design the semi-structured interview to conduct the qualitative research, coupled with the benchmarking analysis, in order to assess the research questions above.

4 Methodology

This inductive research has the purpose to assess the existence of direct-to-retailers local food networks within the members of the network Gostilna Slovenija. The research is qualitative, and data collection is done through semi-structured interviews. Afterwards, the data collected are analysed applying a benchmarking analysis in order to link the Slovenian context to the international environment. The construction of the research questions was made following this pattern. Indeed, the research questions were written based on the main characteristics of the three best practice cases presented in the first chapter, with the support of the theory fields investigated, always within the first chapter, which are tourism networks, local food and local food networks.

Inductive methodology is generally associated with qualitative research and it is commonly characterized by a bottom-up approach, since the researcher describes the phenomena studied through observations and data collected (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010), with data usually gathered in the participant's setting (Creswell, 2013). The data collected are then analysed to assess if a pattern emerges in order to construct generalizations (Gray, 2013). Thus, starting from the specific analysis conducted, the research draws general conclusions and findings with the main objective of exemplifying the complexity of a situation (Creswell, 2013). The first focus of this research type is to understand dynamics and characteristics of the study object. This study can be classified as inductive, since it aims to build a framework for further researches into local food networks in Slovenia. Indeed, the topic has not been investigated yet in the Slovenian context as well as it is generally poorly presented in the international theorizations. Therefore, this study aims to define the development stage of direct-to-retailers local food networks in Slovenia, assessing as well the local food trend, starting from the interviews conducted in the network Gostilna Slovenija.

4.1 Research paradigm

According to Guba & Lincoln (1994) a paradigm can be defined as a set of basic beliefs, which defines 'the nature of the world, the individual's place in it and the range of possible relationships to that world and its part' (Guba et al., 1994, p. 107). Hence, a paradigm helps both the reader and the researcher understand the context as well as the reality in which the research takes place, clarifying the type of relationship between the researcher and the research field. Indeed, the researcher always has a standing point, which necessarily influence his research.

This research is designed and conducted following a critical theory paradigm, as exemplified in Guba (1990), since it applies qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews) as well as direct observations and because there is a co-creation of findings with interview respondents, with the main objective of understanding the surrounding reality (Creswell, 2013). A critical theory paradigm leads to precise definitions of ontology and epistemology. Ontology is the nature of the reality within which the research is conducted (Guba, 1990). Within the concept of the critical theory paradigm, reality is defined as constructed by singles through actions and critical thinking since it is influenced by their own values, which can be social, economic, cultural and political (Guba, 1990). Moreover, the research paradigm defines the epistemology, which represents the relationship between knowledge and the inquirer (Guba, 1990). Within the critical theory paradigm, this relationship is defined by a co-creation of knowledge by the inquirer in his interaction with the environment, through dialog and critical inquiry (Guba, 1990). Thus,

there is not an absolute reality, but many different ones are interconnected with each other. This type of study tries to understand and discover the different perceptions of the participants to exemplify these various realities (Creswell, 2013).

4.2 Instrument design

The research is conducted through semi-structured interviews. This particular type of interviews presents characteristics of both unstructured and structured interviews, presenting the advantages of both types. The semi-structured interview type allows the inquirer to get consistent and relevant results from all participants through a pre-planned set of questions for each interview subtopic, adapting the interview questions to the answers of the participants and their characteristics as the interview proceeds (Longhurst, 2003). Semi-structured interviews are the most common method used in qualitative research and they are characterised by a conversational and informal tone (Longhurst, 2003). The interview tone leads the participants to feel more confident to propose their solutions and their own views of the reality. The use of this instrument allows one to collect detailed information on individuals' decisions in the most convenient way (O'Keeffe Buytaert, Mijic, Brozovic & Sinha, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews are particularly suitable for this research since it involves gostilnas with different managerial and personal backgrounds, customer types and price levels. These characteristics are reflected in different level of personal knowledge of the issues debated in the interview. Additionally, different levels of personal knowledge directly lead to a highly different understanding of local food sourcing as well as to different objectives in its application. Semi-structured interviews, using an informal tone, make people who are unrelated to the academic and research fields more comfortable and willing to share their thoughts and experiences. Part of the questions is left quite broad on purpose, in order to allow the participants to exemplify their view on the issues, discovering the different existing realities, and building a theory or a pattern of meaning (Creswell, 2013). Semi-structured interview questions set for this research can be seen in Appendix B, at the end of this document.

4.3 Sample characteristics

The sample used for the interviews is a nonprobability sample. More precisely, the sample can be defined as a purposive sample. Indeed, the characteristics of the interviewees were chosen prior to the data collection. It was decided to conduct the interviews for a specific type of restaurants in Slovenia: gostilnas (rural inns) and to select the interview participants among the gostilnas member of the network Gostilna Slovenija. This latter choice was taken to ensure the quality of the interviews. In choosing the gostilnas to be interviewed in the research, the criteria applied was firstly geographical, in order to cover different areas of the country. Anyhow, the Slovenian food and heritage expert Janez Bogataj was consulted in order to choose the appropriate gostilnas for the research. At the same time, since all the interviewees selected have the quality label Gostilna Slovenija, which has the aim to preserve cultural heritage through traditional food preservation, they are the most likely to be 'early birds' in starting the configuration of direct-to-retailers local food networks.

Six gostilnas were selected to participate in the research interviews. All the interviews, except one (I5), took place in the gostilna location. Thus, direct observations were made in addition to the information collected through the interviews. The number of participants

was kept low, since the purpose of the research was to understand the early development of a new phenomenon (local food networks) and not to seek a statistical validity of the study, typical of quantitative research.

The gostilnas selected are the following and their location is represented on the following map of Slovenia:

- 1) Gostilna Skok, Štorje (Sežana)
- 2) Gostilna Repovž, Šentjanž
- 3) Gostilna Ančka, Šenčur
- 4) Gostilna Pri Kuklju, Velike Lašce
- 5) Gostilna Pri Lojzetu, Zemono (Vipava)
- 6) Gostilna Rajh, Murska Sobota

Figure 8: Gostilna's locations



Source: Modified from phonebook of the world, 2016.

Interviews have been entirely transcribed in Appendix C and they have been numbered, following the order of the list above, from 1 to 6. Moreover, in order to be easily named into the following chapters, within the findings analysis, interviews were coded from I1 to I6.

The following table has the objective to summarize the main characteristics of each gostilna that took part in the interviews. The variables presented in the table below (ambiance; location; formality level) are the result of direct observations done during the interviews. Only the last variable, gostilna type, is already related with the interviews' content, defining the business activities undertaken from each gostilna.

Table 3: Interviewed gostilna characteristics

Gostilna	Ambiance	Location	Formality level	Gostilna type
Gostilna Skok	Very simple with warm welcome and simple care of the customers.	Convenient location on the main road, but with a peaceful setting.	Low.	It is a farm (with animals) that has the gostilna.
Gostilna Ančka	Very simple ambiance, with warm welcome of the customers.	Placed into the village it looks just one of the many buildings. It is too close to the main road, which is quite busy.	Low.	It is purely a gostilna.
Gostilna Repovž	Very accurate ambiance, with highly competent staff.	Peaceful setting in a small village, nice view and nature around.	Medium.	It is an organic farm (without animals) that has the gostilna.
Gostilna Pri Kuklju	Very simple ambiance but welcome from the staff is warm and make you feel at home.	Right in the centre of the village.	Medium.	It is purely a gostilna.
Gostilna Pri Lojzetu	Quite fancy but welcoming.	Peaceful location in a natural setting.	Medium/high.	It is purely a gostilna.
Gostilna Rajh	A bit fancy, every detail is extremely taken care of.	Very good location in the middle of the village but in a peaceful setting.	Medium/high.	It has its own production under its own label (which other producers produce as well).

Source: own observations

For each gostilna one person took part in the interview. All the participants were either the owners or the chefs, but in both situations, they were part of the family that has owned the gostilna for several generations.

5 Qualitative analysis of direct-to-retailers local food networks

In this chapter the results of the semi-structured interviews are presented based on research questions categories of analysis. The categories of analysis are the following: membership to direct-to-retailers local food network, characteristics of direct-to-retailers local food network, drivers and obstacles for direct-to-retailers local food network and contribution to sustainability. One paragraph is dedicated to each of the category named above (from 5.1

to 5.4). Moreover, each of them is divided in subsections in order to firstly present the interview results and then discuss them within the benchmarking analysis. Indeed, the benchmarking analysis is conducted comparing the findings emerged from the interviews with the main characteristics of the three best practice cases, presented within the theoretical background in the first chapter, in order to assess the research questions of this study. At the end of each category analysis a table is made trying to summarize the research assessment in the clearest way. The full transcripts of the interviews can be found in Appendix C, attached to this research.

5.1 Membership of direct-to-retailer local food networks

5.1.1 Interview results

All the restaurants interviewed declared that they are not part of any direct-to-retailers local food network. The interviewees were not familiar with this concept in its formal term. However, after this was explained to them most of them said they had already heard about this as a new trend. Moreover, all the interviewees were asked if they knew any formal network formation of the type previously explained, and just two of the interviewees did know any of them. In I3, Gregor Repovž mentioned two network formations: Dobrote Dolenjske and Posavska skleda. However, both networks named are have been founded with the purpose of connecting producers of vegetables, fruits and other products to make their interactions with the final consumer, or with retailers, easier and faster. Thus, retailers (e.g. gostilnas) are not members of these networks, but they interact with them just as bigger customers. In the case of I3, Gostilna Repovž, being also an organic farm, is actually part of the network Dobrote Dolenjske, but only as a producer, and not as a retailer. Both networks named above are focused on connecting producers, valorising their products, from the region of Dolenjska. The region of Dolenjska emerged from the interviews to be the more advanced in this network frameworks, and it was named in I4 and I6 as a good example to be followed.

In I5 another network was named: Agraria Koper. This network appears to be another network of producers and it does not include directly retailers or customers, giving them a membership, status but it involves retailers just within the selling process.

Moreover, all of the interviewees declared that they do use mostly local food and that they always try to keep this percentage as high as possible. However, an issue was pointed out by I3; since the production out of season of fresh vegetables and fruits is substantially lower in the country, it is difficult for gostilnas to source ingredients not only regionally but even nationally. Thus, there is a different distribution of how much local (especially regional) ingredients are used from each gostilna throughout different periods of the year. Moreover, a fundamental difference emerges from this question: gostilnas can be classified into two different types: 'pure gostilna type' in which the main, or only, activity is the food service (sometimes coupled with accommodation offer) and the 'gostilna and farm formula', in which the restaurant activity is performed along with a farming activity (with or without animals depending on the owner's choice). Three gostilnas out of the six interviewed are ascribable to the latter type, 'gostilna and farm formula', having both food services and farm activities. However, just one of them has animals. Conversely, the other two gostilnas have agricultural production only.

Within the category 'pure gostilna type' just one of them, I5, carries out self-picking of wild herbs and mushrooms. Moreover, this gostilna has an in-house production of

sparkling wine in collaboration with Klet Brda, with a special label customized for the gostilna. The other two gostilnas do not have any production of vegetables or animals and they do not self-collect any ingredient nor do they have any in-house processing. For the other category, 'gostilna and farm formula', two gostilnas in this category perform the self-collection of wild herbs, but just one of them collects mushrooms and berries as well. The other one does not carry out self-collection, due to a lack of time. The use of wild herbs in the gostilna's kitchens, and restaurants in general, is quite a new concept, as it is stated in I1: "I am learning how they should be cooked but it takes time to introduce them in the menu, they are healthier but they have a strong taste, which people are not used to". Moreover, I1 is the only one to have animals, thus meat production, but it does not have other in-house processing. However, several in-house processing activities are described in I3 and I6, starting from their self-production. In I3, several productions are named, such as buckwheat flour, wines, apple juice and jams. In I6, the list of in-house processing includes *jurka* grape juice and apricot jams, as well as all the products made from pumpkin seeds, which are not grown directly by the gostilna, but they are produced under the gostilna's label. Lastly, it should be highlighted that the gostilnas in which self-collection of wild herbs, mushrooms and berries is practiced are mostly (except one) the ones that have their own production. This can be probably linked to the fact that it is more difficult to justify the use of self-picked ingredients, due to legislation, if there is not already a part of self-produced ingredients used in the kitchen.

Only in I4 it was stated that it is very complicated for this gostilna to source regional ingredients since, in the close surroundings, people are mostly working in Ljubljana, and there is not any farm activity. Thus, the regional production is very low, if 'regional' is used with a strictly geographical proximity meaning. However, if it is considered the region to which the town belongs to (Dolenjska), production is copious even though not 'regional' if a geographical proximity concept is applied. Therefore, in this case, gostilna Pri Kuklju could take advantage of the producers of Dolenjska, exploiting the network formations already existent, named from I3 (Dobrote Dolenjske and Posavska skleda), instead of basing the ingredient sourcing strictly on geographical proximity.

On balance, from the findings presented above, it seems that direct-to-retailers local food networks are not developed yet in Slovenia. Even though the network type is recognised as a new trend by the majority of the interviewees, this configuration seems not existent yet in Slovenia. However, the need for connections is clear since Dolenjska region, in which these networks seem to be at an early stage, is recognised as an example to be followed. In order to assess the development towards direct-to-retailers local food networks configurations, all the findings from the interviews must be taken into account and combined into a broader perspective, within the benchmarking analysis. This analysis will be conducted in the following paragraph.

5.1.2 Benchmarking analysis and discussion

All gostilnas interviewed declared not to have any formal membership of direct-to-retailers local food networks, as opposed to the Chez Panisse case, which created a durable relationship of cooperation with suppliers, formalizing it into a network framework. The case of I6 presents the greatest similarities with the Chez Panisse approach. Indeed, the self-production represents just a minor part of the ingredients used and collaboration arrangements (e.g. agreement on quantity to be produced each year) are made with local suppliers. In addition, this gostilna enjoys some minor similarities with the Ballymaloe House case. Indeed, it created its own brand and has in-house production of pumpkin seeds

butter and *jurka* grape (a grape type typical from Slovenia) juice. The *jurka* grape is produced by the gostilna itself; conversely, the pumpkin seeds butter is produced under the gostilna brand but in collaboration with an external supplier of the raw ingredient (pumpkin seeds).

Furthermore, some similarities can be pointed out between some of the gostilnas interviewed and the Ballymaloe House case. Indeed, I1 and I3 are producers as well, exactly as Ballymaloe House. In these gostilnas, self-production provides the main part of the ingredients used in the restaurants, and ingredients are sourced from external suppliers only when they are out of their own supply. Obviously, in-house processing is added to self-production, exactly like in the Ballymaloe House case. For instance, I3 has an in-house processing of several products like: buckwheat flour, apple juice, jams, wines and liquors. These gostilnas have a long-term relationship with their suppliers, and it can be said that they operate in an informal network framework, building trust and long term relationships with their suppliers. Moreover, I3 is situated in a region (Dolenjska) where the development of direct-to-retailers local food networks is suggested to be at an early stage. Indeed, two networks configuration connecting producers already exist (Dobrote Dolenjske and Posavska skleda) with the aim of facilitating the relationships producers – customers, promoting their products. Thus, restaurants could interact with them acting just as ‘big’ customers and taking advantage of the already existing network configuration. The next step towards development of direct-to-retailers local food networks would be for restaurants to formally become part of these configurations, turning them from producer networks into networks involving both retailers and producers, known as direct-to-retailers networks. Moreover, within this development, a cooperation concept might be taken into account, including in these networks more than one gostilna, with the final purpose of reducing the risk associated with cooperation arrangements. Having more than one restaurant in the network would allow, for instance, a gostilna to use the production previously asked from a producer, and not fully used, by another gostilna.

Generally, it can be stated that all the gostilnas interviewed prioritize the use of local ingredients as well as interactions with local suppliers. Moreover, they establish a long term relationship with suppliers, tending to collaboration but without realizing it, because they are too afraid to take the risk, as it is explained in I3: “we could do that but it is hard for us as well to forecast how much we will need of something”.

Overall, it can be affirmed that only I6 (Gostilna Rajh) is involved in an advanced informal direct-to-retailers local food network since collaboration is developed along with a long-term relationship with suppliers. All the other gostilnas involved in the research have a personal and long term relationship with suppliers but they have not done the ‘step forward’, creating collaboration with them, thus a early network framework. However, it can be said that they operate with a network vision, thus this could be the natural evolvement of these relationships in the future. Among these, the only borderline case is I3, which developed a very good brand value among customers and suppliers and, over the years, it led suppliers to develop organic production (since the gostilna requires organic production only) and to develop their businesses, conforming to legal requirements (e.g. being able to give receipts for the supply sold). A way to speed up the development of this early stage situation is to implement, from the government side, policies and institutional support, giving actual instruments and instructions to form and formalize direct-to-retailers local food networks. Additionally, the creation of networks would address one of the obstacle related to local food sourcing, the quantity issue. Indeed, most gostilnas

complained about the scarce quantity produced from local suppliers, and a collaboration agreement would definitely solve this problem.

The networks named in the interviews, when it was asked if any direct-to-retailers local food network were known, were actually producers networks (Agraria Koper; Dobrote Dolenjske; Posavska Skleda). Thus, it can be suggested that there is not a formal development of direct-to-retailers local food networks in Slovenia. However, some informal network frameworks do exist, as explained above, and they will most likely evolve into a formal framework in the next years in order to enhance warranties and benefits from both retailer and supplier perspectives. Additionally, the need of connections is clearly stated by all the participants, even though most of them seem unwilling to make the leap required to establish this connection. Indeed, even though the framework of direct-to-retailers local food networks is characterized by collaboration, it is likely to assume a vertical network configuration. This characteristic is due to the position of power naturally held by restaurants in the supply chain as well as to the fact that restaurants enjoys a direct relationship with customers, thus they are in charge of forecasting and understanding their needs in order to build a successful and sustainable business. Generally, the use of local food by restaurants can be seen as a response to the global trend of increased attention to food consumption due to health, environmental and societal concerns. Local food is seen as an alternative to globalised food production, which can give higher warranties about provenience and production methods to customers, shortening the supply chain and creating a 'close' relationship consumer-producer. It meets consumer needs for a healthier diet, satisfying their requirements for higher environmental attention and support of the local economies.

In only one case, I4, it emerges that the creation of a local food network is actually desired by the gostilna, but is prevented by a lack of producers in the region. However, the lack of producers in the region could be overcome with the creation of a network in collaboration with producers of the nearby region of Dolenjska, where many small producers are based. Although this would involve a higher effort from the gostilna's side due to a 'longer' distance from the producers, it would allow the gostilna to ensure a local supply to its business. Moreover, existing networks of producers (e.g. Dobrote Dolenjske) could be used in order to reduce the time required for gathering producers into a network framework. This approach would give advantages to both the producers and the gostilna. On the one hand, it would increase producers' sales, thus improving their economic situation and sustainability. On the other hand, it would lead to the creation of a direct connection with producers for the gostilna, giving it the possibility to create a network of producers, increasing the value delivered to customers, despite the lack of producers in the surroundings of the gostilna. The physical infrastructures for transportation do not represent an obstacle in the case of Slovenia. In fact, the road system is well developed in the country and it is already quite common among the population to travel 'long' distances to get to the workplace.

The table below summarizes the elements useful to evaluate the development stage of direct-to-retailers local food networks in Slovenia. The elements chosen for the evaluation are the ones emerged from the literature review and from the benchmarking cases presented in the first chapter. For each element of evaluation chosen is constructed a brief description in order to exemplify the situation in Slovenia, emerged from this research, using the knowledge gathered from interviews' results and within the benchmarking analysis.

Table 4: Elements of evaluation of local food networks development stage in Slovenia

Elements	Description
Formalization degree of supplier – retailer relationship	Low, there is no formal membership of a network
Relationship duration with suppliers	Long-term
Collaboration degree	Low, collaboration is still seen as risky
Use of local ingredients	Prioritized over the other available
Self-production of fruits/vegetables	Medium-high
Ownership of farm animals	Medium-low, it is explained that they require much more care than vegetable gardens
Self-picking of wild herbs/berries and mushrooms	Medium-high

Source: own research.

5.2 Characteristics of direct-to-retailers local food networks

5.2.1 Interview results

5.2.1.1 Local food sourcing

A fundamental perspective on local food sourcing is how the local ingredients are sourced, since this could have different impacts on the community in which the gostilna is located. The main difference is the approach taken by the gostilna, thus if the local ingredients are sourced through distributors or wholesalers of local food (regional or national) or through a direct relationship with small local producers. Three gostilnas out of six (I1, I3 and I6) stated that when they source local ingredients, they interact only directly with producers, thus they have several small local suppliers. The importance of the diverse impacts generated on the community is exemplified in I1: “Each type of cheese or meat, or whatever, has its own supplier. This makes you buying from everyone, not just from one big supplier”.

The other three gostilnas (I2, I4 and I5) stated that they have both direct interactions with small local suppliers as well as to use distributors or wholesalers that aggregate local supply. Indeed, for all the interviewees, the number of suppliers involved is high, confirming the use of local small suppliers, beside medium and big size distributors/wholesalers. The choice of one of the two possibilities is explained by a contrasting approach to local food as well as being directly linked with a different amount of effort invested in suppliers’ relationship building. The choice of purchasing from single small suppliers rather than from aggregators (distributors/wholesalers) of local food requires much more time used for relationships’ building and it indicates an attitude to recognise the speciality of each ingredient and the willingness to look for the best quality available. This approach is exemplified by the answer given in I3, in which Gregor Repovž states that: “we do prefer small local suppliers, one for each specific product. This is a big problem for us though in terms of time invested in suppliers’ relationships. For example, for the dried meat one supplier is good just for salami, one is good just for *svinjska mast* (pig fat). So for dried meat we have five different suppliers or more. And the same goes for all the other ingredients that we source”.

Generally, from the interviews it emerges that all the gostilnas do prefer small suppliers to big ones because they have a higher level of specialization, which implies a better quality of the products. However, some divergent views on this issue are pointed out by the interviewees. Firstly, in I2, it is stated that often it is preferred to source the ingredients from distributors due to a lack of time, since single small supplier relationships are time consuming. Secondly, in I4, it is affirmed that the use of small suppliers is prioritized but it cannot provide the total supply since the quantity offered from those is not enough. Lastly, in I5, it is declared that the variable of quality is prioritized over the different size of the suppliers chosen.

All the gostilnas interviewed apply the rule ‘regional, national and international’, giving priority to local ingredients over the other ones. In I6, it is stated that: “we always start from our region, than nation and then just some spices and other unusual ingredients you have to search at an international level”. This statement perfectly exemplifies the rule named above. However, different gostilnas do apply it at different degrees, despite all of them having both regional and international products within their ingredients. Indeed, in I1, I5 and I6, it is stated that they do source internationally just for products that they cannot do without (e.g. lemons), so the percentage of non-Slovenian products in their kitchens is actually really low. In I2 and I3, it is stated that they do use international supply just out of season, especially in the months of February and March, through big distributors. Conversely, in I4, big distributors of vegetables and fruit are mostly used throughout the year to source the ingredients and these usually source internationally. Thus, in this latter case, the percentage of non-Slovenian ingredients is much higher than in the other cases. Additionally, another important characteristic is whether suppliers are producers of the ingredients they sell to the gostilna or not. Obviously, medium and big distributors (both aggregating local food and not) are not producers of the products they sell. The six gostilnas involved affirm that their suppliers are mainly producers of the products they sell, but this feature does not apply to all the ingredients purchased. Moreover, for each gostilna it was asked which are the furthest and the nearest products/ingredients and from where they come. The answers to this question are summarized in the following table.

Table 5: The nearest and the further ingredients

Gostilna	The nearest ingredient	The furthest ingredient
Gostilna Skok (I1)	Produce and meat from our farm	Out of season it is mushrooms from the other part of the world
Gostilna Ančka (I2)	Cheese and meat from our region	At the moment asparagus from Mexico
Gostilna Repovž (I3)	Vegetables and fruits from our farm	Organic sugar from South America
Gostilna Pri Kuklju (I4)	Potatoes and salad from our employees	Meat from Hungary
Gostilna Pri Lojzetu (I5)	Vegetables Vipava valley, like radish from Gorica, asparagus, potatoes, Vipava corn – ‘ <i>guštenca</i> ’	Beef Wagyu from Japan
Gostilna Rajh (I6)	Apricots and <i>jurka</i> grape from our production	Green tea from Japan

Source: own research.

Looking at the table above, it can be seen that I1, I3, I5 and I6 do source products from far away that are not produced at all in Slovenia, so they cannot be found in a way other than international sourcing. The story told in I3 is interesting in this respect: in order to produce their own organic cookies from organic spelt, which is produced by them, they have to use organic sugar produced in South America, since in Slovenia there is no production of organic sugar. Otherwise, the cookies would not be fully organic anymore. However, the organic sugar from South America is part of the internationally sourced ingredients from the gostilna, which totally amount to 10% of the total ingredients used.

5.2.1.2 Retailer – supplier relationship type

The relationship between suppliers and retailers (specifically, the gostilnas) can assume several connotations and characteristics based on the prevalent supplier type of each gostilna, as well as the preferences in relationships' building that each gostilna manifested over time. Generally, given the results emerged from the interviews, the relationship retailer – suppliers can be analysed according to the following sub-topics: relationship with single supplier vs. use of wholesalers/distributors/cooperatives of local food; relationship duration and collaboration arrangements; requirements in suppliers' selection; frequency of delivery; payment methods.

Firstly, it needs to be pointed out that all the gostilnas generally have a direct relationship with suppliers, without the mediation of distributors/wholesalers. However, there are two exceptions, I2 and I4, in which it is stated that both direct relationships with single suppliers and the mediation of distributors of local food are employed for sourcing local ingredients. It must be highlighted that these two exceptions exhibit an opposite trend. Indeed, in I2, the use of distributors of local food is preferred to the interaction with single suppliers, due to a reduction in the time needed for food sourcing, thanks to the interaction with only one person (the distributor/wholesaler). Conversely, in I4, distributors of local food are used due to a lack of small suppliers in the area where the gostilna is located.

Moreover, it is explained that cooperatives of local producers (or any coordination framework) do not exist in the area where the gostilna is based, even though they are recognised as a useful aggregation to get to know the availability of ingredients at a local level. Within this general trend, two exceptions stand out from I3 and I4, referring to the same region (Dolenjska). Indeed, both gostilnas have within their suppliers some cooperatives of regional producers (e.g. Dobrote Dolenjske), even though their development level is described as primitive and it is hoped that it will advance in the future. Last but not least, it has to be mentioned that all gostilnas, except one, looked for their local suppliers, having a proactive role in the increase of local food use in their restaurants. Thus, the role of suppliers has to be considered as passive, at least in the beginning of the interaction with retailers. The only difference comes to light in I5, in which it is stated that suppliers from the region 'found' the gostilna, proposing themselves. This difference in suppliers' behaviour can probably be attributed to the characteristic of the gostilna interviewed. Indeed, the chef of the gostilna (Tomaž Kavčič) is an internationally known chef and this gives him a 'quality label' in suppliers' eyes, who can clearly see the advantages of entering his suppliers network.

Generally, the relationship with suppliers is personal and direct, and the owner, who is also the chef in some cases, is responsible for it. The responsibility in choosing the ingredients assumes a different configuration based on the characteristics of the gostilna's ownership. Indeed, when more than one generation is directly involved, with different tasks, in the

management of the gostilna, they tend to break down the responsibility of choosing the ingredients among family members, assigning to each of them a sub-group of ingredients (e.g. cheese, vegetables, meat, dried meat).

Secondly, two other important factors characterize the relationship retailers – suppliers: the length of the relationship and the existence of cooperation behaviour. Regarding the relationship length, it is clear that the relationship with suppliers is usually built over time. Indeed, all the gostilnas have, and are proud of, a long term relationship with their suppliers. Having a long term relationship with suppliers, coupled with personal interaction, ensures the gostilnas the capacity to base this relationship on trust. Moreover, a long term relationship is directly linked with the chance to build collaboration between the suppliers and the retailer. It is clear from the interviews that only one of the gostilnas, I6, has developed collaboration with its suppliers over time. All the other interviewees consider it too risky or too complicated to estimate the needed quantity for the coming year, agreeing with suppliers on the quantity they will produce. Conversely, in I6, the gostilna is trying to push its suppliers to produce more, with previous agreement on production, since the production proved not to be enough to satisfy the demand of the gostilna over the past years. However, it must be considered that even in this case the collaboration is limited to the quantity variable and it does not include what suppliers will produce each year, thus the innovation variable. Indeed, with producers of a specific product an agreement is made on the quantity they will produce in the next season.

A practical example of collaboration can be pointed out from I6, regarding an organic in-house production. The gostilna produces its own buckwheat bread using organic buckwheat flour, obtained with a traditional production method, which is bought from a regional producer. However, over the past years, the gostilna encountered an issue in this relationship: the producer was running out of flour before the end of the year. To solve this problem, the gostilna decided to calculate what is the quantity of flour needed to produce the bread, in sufficient quantity for all year around in the gostilna, based on the quantity bought in the past years. In this way, the producer will sell the quantity estimated to the gostilna, ensuring a substantial part of his income, and the gostilna will be assured to have enough flour to produce bread for its clients for all the year. In this way, both the producer and the retailer can take advantage from the relationship built over time, establishing a trustworthy collaboration.

Thirdly, the requirements in the suppliers' selection have to be analysed. In I2, I4 and I5 the main requirement named is the quality of the product. Indeed, quality is considered as the most important variable in order to ensure a unique taste and achieve customer satisfaction. In I3 it is pointed out that the first requirement for suppliers is to be organic. This choice is the result of the fact that this gostilna is an organic farm itself and it is clearly explained by the owner's statement: "we put a lot of work to produce organic food and I can smell and taste the difference so it is very important for me that suppliers of the products that we buy are organic". In I1 and I6, a preference for organic suppliers is stated as well. However, this preference is not absolute as in I3. Moreover, in I6, a preference for small suppliers is declared as well, possibly local or national.

Consequently, as it can be clearly forecasted from the analysis above, in I2, I4 and I5, the relationship with suppliers is based on trust, which is built over time, and third part certifications are not a relevant variable in suppliers' choice. Conversely, in I1, I3 and I6, third part certifications are considered an important asset to complete suppliers' choice. Indeed, they allow certification of the organic productions as well as creating a 'tangible'

value that can be communicated to customers, adding value to their experience and increasing their satisfaction.

Last but not least, the relationship suppliers – retailers is characterized by frequency of delivery and payment methods. Regarding the frequency of delivery, it clearly emerges that there is no pre-fixed schedule with suppliers, but delivery is required based on the changing needs of the gostilnas. However, it can be pointed out that frequency varies depending on the gostilna type (farm and gostilna formula or pure gostilna). Indeed, as it can be read in I3, the delivery frequency has a different pattern in season and out of season. For example, for gostilnas that have their own production of vegetables, delivery from suppliers will be more frequent out of season than in season, when their own production is used. However, this change in frequency pattern will not apply to other ingredients types, which, for instance, are not produced from the gostilna, like cheese or dried meats. Thus, in this latter case, the frequency of delivery is higher and more or less steady all the year around.

The payment methods to suppliers illustrated are various. Indeed, in I4 and I5, payment to suppliers is done exclusively in cash for each delivery. In the other cases, a mixed pattern of payment methods can be observed, both at each delivery and on monthly account. However, a difference can be pointed out. In I1 and I4 there is a prevalence of monthly payment methods compared to payment at the delivery. Conversely, in I2 and I3, the trend is opposite, showing the predominance of payment for each delivery.

5.2.1.3 Menu design

The menu design acts as a fundamental variable for a restaurant. It gives the possibility to communicate its philosophy to customers as well as to express the ‘restaurant personality’, shaping it over time. Throughout the interviews conducted, both patterns of similarities and differences in the design approach can be illustrated. Firstly, it is important to disclose that all the gostilnas, except one, have a menu composed of two parts: a fixed menu for all the year and a seasonal menu, which is modified periodically. In I5, it is stated that the gostilna does not have a fixed menu at all, but the menu is fully seasonal and it is changed periodically, sometimes even daily, depending on ingredients availability. The frequency at which the seasonal menu is modified in a year changes throughout the gostilnas. The highest frequency is registered in I3, in which the seasonal menu is changed every day, depending on the ingredients availability. This is followed by I1, in which the menu is modified every three weeks, for a total of sixteen times per year, and I5, where the menu is redesigned once per month, for a total of twelve times per year. Lastly, in the three remaining interviews (I2, I4 and I6) the menu is reshaped every two months, thus six times per year.

In all gostilnas the menu is designed with a bottom-up approach. It is built starting from the ingredients available (both coming from the gostilna’s own production and from their local or regional suppliers). Gostilnas that have their own produce (I1, I3, I6) start the menu design from their own production available first, and then they look for the missing ingredients within their local suppliers. This approach is exemplified in I4, in which the interviewee declares: “I go to Tržnica in Ljubljana twice per week because I need to see the products, what the market offers”.

In all the gostilnas the menu has mainly traditional dishes, which constitute over 50% of the whole menu. However, in I3, I5 and I6, it is said that traditional dishes are realized

with a personal and innovative touch, making them unique creations of the gostilnas. In the other three gostilnas, a more ‘traditional approach’ is embraced in the use of traditional recipes. Moreover, despite a majority of traditional dishes in the menu, all the gostilnas do include non-traditional ones within the menu. This choice is made for different reasons by each gostilna. Indeed, in I1 it is stated that non-traditional dishes “have to be included because different groups of people expect us to have them and ingredients used are mostly regional or national but they are not part of the Slovenian cuisine”. In I2, they are considered a ‘must have’, “we must have steak and potatoes for children for example, it is something that you must have” and in I4, non-traditional dishes come directly from a ‘family tradition’, “we use fish a lot in the menu because my father is from Dalmatia so he imported here the Dalmatian cuisine”. Thus, reasons that lead to the inclusion of non-traditional dishes in the menu are diverse. However, they all lead to the same results: a menu can never be purely traditional, but it is always influenced by the ‘personal’ history of a gostilna as well as by the social environment in which the gostilna is located.

Lastly, each gostilna was asked during the interviews to disclose their most traditional dish. However, once this question was asked, most of the interviewees tended to highlight the ingredient (or ingredients) for which they are well known among customers, more than a dish. However, these two elements are closely linked and very often, it is the uniqueness of the ingredient that creates the uniqueness of the dish. The most popular dishes (and ingredients) for each gostilna are summarized in the following table.

Table 6: The most popular ingredients and dishes

Gostilna	The most popular ingredients	The most popular dishes
Gostilna Skok	Potatoes (self-produced) Young horsemeat (self-produced)	<i>Jota</i> Homemade gnocchi
Gostilna Ančka	-	<i>Štrukli</i>
Gostilna Repovž	Self-produced organic spelt Dried meat from the region	Risotto made from spelt
Gostilna Pri Kuklju	-	Seasonal soups <i>Potica</i> <i>Štrukli</i>
Gostilna Pri Lojzetu	-	<i>Vipavska jota</i> <i>Solni žar</i>
Gostilna Rajh	Pumpkin oil Pumpkin butter	The entire menu, from appetizer to dessert, with pumpkin oil and butter.

Source: own research

5.2.1.4 Communication to customers

Communication to customers can be used as a way for developing a relationship gostilna – customers as well as to increase the value of the relationship suppliers – gostilna, using it as a co-branding tool. Several questions were asked to the interviewees about this topic. Firstly, it is needed to point out that all the gostilnas do communicate to customers the use of local food. This means that customers recognise this feature as an added value, making it relevant for the gostilnas to communicate them their choice. Secondly, to find out if the communication to customers is implemented as a strategic tool to achieve co-branding

objectives, it is fundamental to know if it is clearly said from where the ingredients come from (which would advertise the suppliers' region in general) and by who the ingredients are produced (which has a direct effect of branding for the gostilna's suppliers). The interviews' results testify that most of the gostilnas (five out of six) communicate to customers both where the ingredients come from and who the producers are, thus the suppliers. The only exception is I2, in which ingredients are generally labelled as local and there is not any specific communication about who the suppliers are.

Another aspect that needs to be underlined is the way of communication to customers. Indeed, it differs substantially for each gostilna. In I1 and I4, the provenience of the ingredients is both written in the menu and communicated through the waiting staff. In I3, pictures of the suppliers, with the place of production and their names, are placed on the walls, to directly show to customers who are the suppliers of the food they are eating as well as where the food comes from. In I5 and I6, the task of communication to customers is completely left to the waiting staff. However, it should be highlighted that this same result is explained by different reasons. Indeed, in I5 it is stated: "everything passes through our staff, to every customer we explain every dish and its roots". Conversely, in I6 it is explained: "We don't have it written yet but we are thinking about doing it. However, we have the flyers outside that our suppliers bring to us. We didn't write it until now because very often suppliers run out of goods and then we have to change the menu". Thus, in the first case the choice is made to better guide the customer into the experience of local food, through the expertise of the waiting staff. Conversely, in the latter case the choice is made to avoid problems caused by the instability of quantity produced from each supplier. For this reason, on the menu the ingredients are generally labelled as regional and the waiting staff is in charge of completing the information given to customers. This is best explained in the words of the I6: "First touch is that the customer sees the menu so he sees the story. And then we tell to each of them what are our story and our philosophy personally through the waiting staff".

As it can be seen from the paragraphs above, the communication to customers plays an important role both for gostilnas and suppliers. Indeed, it positively affects the customers' perception of the gostilnas' value as well as it acting indirectly as a branding tool for suppliers, to become known among new potential customers. Moreover, the promotion of local food generally has a positive impact on the region's perception by both tourists and locals.

5.2.1.5 International connections

International connections reveal if the effort of using local food is part of a bigger pattern and is sustained from a wider philosophy, shared by other stakeholders around the world. Thus, it was asked to the interviewees if the gostilna, or its chefs, are part of any international network for the support of local food consumption or local food promotion. From the interviews it has come to light that none of the gostilnas' chefs are members, individually, of professional organizations/networks supporting local food consumption and promotion. However, two out of six gostilnas (I5 and I6), are members of international organizations/networks supporting local food consumption. In I5, it is stated that the gostilna is member of the network Slow Food and of the association Le Soste, as only Slovenian representative. Moreover, the importance of the membership of the first one strongly emerges within the words of the interview: "Exactly here, in gostilna Pri Lojzetu, it was established Slow Food Slovenija. So, our gostilna is member of this organization from its start". Thus, this gostilna is not just a member of this international organization

but it contributed to bring it to Slovenia, impacting directly on its development. In I6, it is affirmed that the gostilna holds membership of two international networks: *Chaine de Rôtisseurs* and *Jeunes Restaurateurs d'Europe*. Both networks emphasise the importance of food as a fundamental component of a place's traditions.

Moreover, all the gostilnas are members, as outlined in the methodology chapter, of the network *Gostilna Slovenija*. However, this network cannot be considered as international since the membership is limited to the Slovenian national area and it presents a lack of international connections, according to all the interviewees. Despite its national character, the network aims at supporting local food consumption as a driver for the local economies as well as to promote and preserve, through it, the regional cultural heritage. All the gostilnas recognise membership of this network as a quality label, which helps customers to differentiate them from others, recognizing the unique value of their work. However, the brand *Gostilna Slovenija* is not yet widely recognised and an image building strategy should be undertaken at both national and international level.

Poor international connections of the gostilnas interviewed reveals, on the one hand, a genuine local effort in emphasizing the regional ingredients and dishes. However, on the other hand, it shows a really low connection with the international environment, thus a low possibility for the local ingredients and dishes to be recognised at an international level, facilitating the heritage conservation and supporting the development of the local economies within the country. Last but not least, the lack of international connections makes one of the objectives of *Gostilna Slovenija* network, outlined in the previous chapter, hard to be fulfilled. Indeed, the brand *gostilna* cannot reach an international recognition if the gostilnas themselves lack the international connections to be exploited as a tool to reach this objective.

5.2.2 Benchmarking and discussion

Even though direct-to-retailers local food networks seems not to formally exist in Slovenia, as it was pointed out in the previous paragraphs, here, through the benchmarking analysis, are highlighted the main characteristics of this framework, exemplified in the best practice cases and they are compared with the present situation in Slovenia, as it has emerged from this research. This analysis will allow assessing the level of development towards formal direct-to-retailers local food network configurations. The variables, taken into account for this analysis are: relationship type with suppliers; menu design; communication to customers; international connections.

Firstly, from the best practice cases presented in chapter one, it is possible to identify some major sub-topics to facilitate the analysis of the suppliers' relationship, which are listed as follow: direct relationship vs. distributors/wholesalers of local food; proactivity of suppliers; collaboration/cooperation; frequency of delivery; payment methods. The case of *Chez Panisse* and *Ballymaloe House* are characterized by a direct relationship with suppliers; a lot of effort is placed in trust building and long-term interactions. Conversely, in the case of *Galway restaurants*, they prefer to use distributors/wholesalers of local food, thus the responsibility of having local food is transferred from the restaurant to the distributor. These intermediaries commit themselves to providing local food when available but they guarantee to the restaurants that they will get the supply needed from other sources, when local ingredients turn out not to be available. According to interview results, most of the gostilnas (I1, I3, I5 and I6) apply the same pattern used by *Chez Panisse* and *Ballymaloe House*, preferring a direct relationship with local suppliers.

Conversely, I2 and I4 prioritize the use of distributors of local food, since this practice allows them to invest less time into suppliers' relationship building. In addition, in the three best practice cases presented, the proactivity of suppliers appeared to be quite low and the leap in building the relationship was made from the restaurants themselves. The same situation emerges from the interviews, gostilnas believe that suppliers are not able to sell their products and they never do the first step, introducing themselves to the restaurants, thus gostilnas were in charge of making the first step. The only exception is I5, towards which suppliers played a proactive role, presenting their products to the gostilna.

Additionally, the sub-topics of collaboration, payment methods and delivery frequency must be analysed. Collaboration is a step forward in supplier – retailer relationships and it brings advantages to both parties involved. Collaboration is a practice in the Chez Panisse case, in which it is used to develop innovation and ensure a sufficient supply in terms of quality and quantity. According to the interviews, gostilnas in Slovenia do not put in practice collaboration with suppliers. Indeed, this approach is seen as too risky, since it would include some binding agreements. The only exception is I6, which developed collaboration with its suppliers in order to have a pre-agreed quantity of ingredients for each year, avoiding in this way to look for an alternative, once the suppliers run out of the ingredients. In addition, in the Chez Panisse case, frequency of delivery is twice per week and the payment methods, in the Galway restaurants case, are mostly done at each delivery. According to the interviews, gostilnas do not have a fixed delivery schedule with suppliers, but delivery is made based on their changing needs. Delivery frequency is more intense out of season for gostilnas that have their own production. The payment methods of suppliers are various for the gostilnas. In I4 and I5, payments are made in cash per delivery. In all the others, payment methods are mixed, and occur both at delivery and on a monthly base.

Table 7: Relationship retailer – suppliers

Supplier – retailer relationship elements	Gostilna Skok	Gostilna Ančka	Gostilna Repovž	Gostilna Pri Kuklju	Gostilna Pri Lojzetu	Gostilna Rajh
Single suppliers vs. distributors or cooperatives	Single suppliers	Mixed	Single suppliers	Mixed	Single suppliers	Single suppliers
Relationship length	Long term	Long term	Long term	Long term	Long term	Long term
Collaboration degree	None	None	None	None	None	Medium
Requirements in suppliers' selection	Organic produce	Quality of the products	Organic produce	Quality of the products	Quality of the products	Small regional suppliers
Delivery frequency	Higher out of season	Steady along the year	Higher out of season	Steady along the year	Steady along the year	Steady along the year
Payment methods	Mixed methods	Mixed methods	Mixed methods,	Mixed methods	At delivery in cash	At delivery in cash

Source: own research.

Overall, the relationship retailers – suppliers for gostilnas in Slovenia, can be considered as direct, with an initial passive role of suppliers, characterized by a low level of collaboration arrangements and by flexible delivery schedules coupled with mixed payment methods.

Secondly, menu design is an important variable to be taken into account. In the Chez Panisse and Ballymaloe House cases, the menu is changed daily in order to adjust to the seasonal products available. The process of designing the menu can be considered as a bottom-up approach, therefore, it is based on what suppliers offer and is not established a priori. The same bottom-up approach is employed by all the gostilnas in Slovenia when designing the seasonal menu. However, all the gostilna (except one) have a part of fixed menu, which is offered all the year round, along with a seasonal one. A further difference is that the menu is changed daily just in one gostilna. In all the others, it is changed periodically, with a variable frequency (four weeks period is the average). Menus are designed including mainly traditional dishes (over 50% of the whole menu), however some ‘international’ dishes are considered by the chef as a must, that customers expect to find in the restaurant (e.g. children menu). In addition, gostilnas (I3, I5 and I6) add their ‘own touch’ to the traditional recipes, personalizing them for their gostilna. Anyway, this should not be considered as a threat to the authenticity of the gastronomic heritage if one embraces the vision according to which ‘heritage is the current use of the past’ (Timothy and al., 2006). Another important aspect is that Ballymaloe House, having its own production, bases the menu on what it is ready to be used within this production. The same behaviour is followed by the gostilnas that have their own production in Slovenia as well, as it is confirmed as well in I1, I3, I6.

Moreover, the most traditional dishes named in each interview, illustrated in the above paragraph, can be discussed in relation to the Slovenian gastronomic regions and the representative dishes displayed for each of them, within the second chapter. This discussion has the purpose to assess at which degree these dishes can be considered as traditional. Looking at this list and comparing it with the traditional dishes listed in chapter two, it can be immediately observed that just half of them can be found in the representative dishes listed for each region. This finding leads to a further consideration: gostilnas present a different approach to traditional cuisine and two opposite trends appear from their answers. On the one hand, some gostilnas took the dishes part of the culinary tradition of the region and turn them into their tradition as well. On the other hand, some gostilnas took the traditional elements (or ingredients) part of the Slovenian cuisine and used them in an innovative and different way, creating their own traditions as a restaurant, which have become traditions because they are recognised and valued from their customers. In order to achieve an exhaustive and complete analysis, it will be pointed out which dishes are directly included within the representative traditional dishes of Slovenia and which are the outcomes of innovation applied to Slovenian cuisine by the gostilnas. For each gostilna, it will be pointed out which are the traditional dishes and ingredients and which is the link with the Slovenian cuisine and with the Slovenian gastronomic regions.

Gostilna Skok, is placed in the gastronomic region of Kars, where *kraška jota* is, at the same time, a representative dish for the region as well as for this gostilna. The value added by this gostilna to the traditional recipe is the exceptional quality of their self-produced potatoes. The other most popular dish mentioned in this interview (I1) are the homemade gnocchi. This dish is not directly included within the traditional representative dishes of the region. However, the quality of the ingredient (the self-produced potatoes) makes it

unique for the customers and its presence is also justifiable due to the proximity with the Italian border, where this dish is part of culinary tradition.

Gostilna Ančka's most popular dish (I2) is *štrukli*, which is definitely part of the tradition of the region, being included in the representative dishes of Ljubljana's region as *Ljubljanski štruklj*.

Gostilna Repovž (I3), placed in the gastronomic region of Celje, lower Savinja valley, has as its most popular dish a spelt risotto. Spelt is a traditional ingredient in Slovenian cuisine and it is used especially in the form of flour. However, the creation of a risotto from this traditional ingredient is the result of innovation implemented by the gostilna itself. The quality of this dish contribute to making it one of the best known among customers, becoming part of the gostilna's heritage. Moreover, this gostilna is known for dried meats, which are definitely part of the Slovenian cuisine, all around Slovenia and especially in the Savinja valley, well-known for this kind of productions. Moreover, the importance of dried meats in this gostilna is exemplified by the attention and the care that the family owning it places on ingredients' selection.

Gostilna Pri Kuklju (I4) does not have a special ingredient. However, it is recognized by customers for seasonal soups, *potica* and *štruklj*. *Potica* and *štruklj* are directly part of the gastronomic regions' representative dishes. However, it must be pointed out that this gostilna is placed on the border of two gastronomic regions: Ljubljana and Dolenjska. Thus, *potica* belongs to Ljubljana region and *štruklj* to both Ljubljana and Dolenjska gastronomic region. The other popular dish, seasonal soups, is not directly part of the list. However, soups play a fundamental role in the meals all over Slovenia, and a proper meal never starts without a good soup.

Gostilna Pri Lojzetu (I5) does not have a main ingredient but it does have two most popular dishes: *vipavska jota* and *solni žar*. The first one, *vipavska jota*, is directly included in the representative dishes of the gastronomic region where the gostilna is located (Vipava valley). The second one, *solni žar*, is not purely part of the gastronomic regional traditions but it is the outcome of innovation made by the widely known chef Tomaž Kavčič.

Last but not least, gostilna Rajh (I6) built its most popular dishes (a whole menu, from appetizer to dessert, based on pumpkin oil and butter) starting from a unique ingredient of the Slovenian cuisine: the pumpkin oil. Thus, the gostilna built its own gastronomic traditions, applying innovation to the use of a traditional ingredient. This gostilna is placed in the gastronomic region of Prekmurje, where the pumpkin oil is the main ingredient in one of the representative dishes of the region: the *hajdinska zlejevanka*, a buckwheat flatbread served with pumpkin oil on top.

Thirdly, in two of three best practice cases (Ballymaloe House and Chez Panisse cases) presented in the first chapter, communication to customers has a fundamental role. Indeed, both restaurants established co-branding practices with suppliers, indicating the provenience of the ingredients and the name of suppliers on their menus. This practice helps suppliers to become known among customers and to increase transparency and reliability of the food eaten in the restaurant. From the interviews emerge that all the gostilnas do communicate to customers the use of local food. In addition, in five gostilnas out of six, this communication assumes the strategic value of co-branding, clearly telling customers where the ingredients come from and who the producers are. However, the

communication channels differ in each gostilna. In I1 and I4, communication takes place through the written menus and the waiting staff. In I3, pictures of the suppliers are placed on the walls in order to give to customers a more direct connection with them. Conversely, I5 and I6 do not have any written material, but communication is implemented through the waiting staff, which is in charge of guiding customers into discovering the local ingredients and their suppliers.

Last but not least, international connections should be examined. The importance of this variable is highlighted in both best practice cases of Galway restaurants and Ballymaloe House. In both cases, the restaurants are part of international networks promoting the use of local food. Additionally, in the case of Galway restaurants, chefs are part of professional networks of the same kind. Looking at the interviews, the international connections of gostilnas in Slovenia appear to be quite poor. Indeed, only two out of six are members of international networks. Furthermore, of those networks named in the interviews, just one can be considered as internationally known: Slow Food. The other two, Chaîne de Rotisseurs and Jaunes Restaurateurs d'Europe, can be acknowledged as minor ones. Moreover, none of the gostilnas' chefs is part of any professional network promoting local food consumption.

On balance, the characteristics to assess the development towards direct-to-retailers local food network in Slovenia can be summed up as follows. Firstly, the relationship retailer – suppliers for gostilnas in Slovenia is mostly direct and with an initial passive role for suppliers. It is characterized from flexible delivery schedules and a mixed pattern of payment methods. In addition, a low level of collaboration is observed suppliers' relationships. Secondly, gostilnas use communication to customers in a strategic way, as a co-branding tool. The communication channels vary from written to spoken communication. Thirdly, the menu is designed with a bottom-up approach and it is made up of two parts: a fixed menu and a seasonal menu. Over 50% of it is mainly based on traditional dishes. Lastly, gostilnas have poor international connections; consequently international branding is low as well.

Table 8: Characteristics of direct-to-retailers local food networks in Slovenia

Elements of evaluation	Description
Relationship type with suppliers	Mostly direct, with flexible delivery schedule, mixed payment methods and a low level of collaboration.
Communication to customers	Strategic, applied as a co-branding tool.
Menu design	Designed in two parts, fixed and seasonal menu, built with a bottom-up approach, using mostly traditional dishes (over 50%).
International connections	Low, only few gostilnas are member of international organizations.

Source: own research.

5.3 Drivers and obstacles for local food sourcing

5.3.1 Interview results

The use of local food in restaurants can be associated with several drivers and obstacles in relation to the restaurant sustainability (economical, social and environmental). On the one

hand, drivers make the local food use a possibility to develop a unique offer, increasing the restaurant sustainability. On the other hand, the restaurants' sustainability might be challenged by this choice, due to the occurrence of obstacles to its achievement. In the following paragraphs, obstacles and drivers associated with sourcing local food for gostilnas, as emerged from the interviews, are analysed and explained.

5.3.1.1 Obstacles

Several are the obstacles connected with local food sourcing for restaurants. In the interviews conducted, each interviewee highlighted the main obstacles for the gostilna in sourcing local food. In I1, I2, I3, I5 and I6, the lack of connections between producers and the lack of a formal organization are seen as the main obstacles in purchasing local food. This lack of connections among producers leads to an increase in the time needed to look for ingredients, making the sourcing of local food a very time consuming activity for the gostilnas, since each supplier is specialised for one product and it is hard to make out who produces what. Indeed, the fact that sourcing local food is more time consuming than using the globalised supply chain is mentioned in all the interviews, along with the lack of connections. Moreover, in I2, another obstacle is named: the lack of a quality production on a local level. It is stated in I2 that: "Sometimes it is difficult to find quality ingredients at the local level because the products are grown naturally and it is not good quality". In I3 and I4, the quantity of local ingredients available is pointed out as an obstacle. For I3, this can be explained by the fact mentioned in the above paragraphs, that this gostilna requires organic ingredients, thus the production at a local level might not be enough to satisfy this requirement for all the ingredients needed. Last but not least, the main obstacle named in I5 is bureaucracy. This is a very important variable in sourcing local food. Indeed, bureaucracy may act as a driver or an obstacle, depending on the regulations and the legislations implemented in the country. Indeed, it has the power to enhance or reduce the use of local food in restaurants.

Moreover, to each interviewee were listed several obstacles commonly associated with local food sourcing and it was asked if these obstacles were considered as related to their own business. Participants were asked to assess the relationship with their businesses of the following potential obstacles: price of local ingredients; influence on final price; relationship building with suppliers; connections with and among suppliers; quality of ingredients; quantity of ingredients available; bureaucracy; suppliers' reliability; payment methods.

First of all, it was asked if buying local ingredients proves to be more expensive than using a traditional supply chain (e.g. international distributors). All the interviewees stated that buying from local suppliers is more expensive compared with the same ingredients provided by big distributors/wholesalers. However, it was outlined in I3 and I5 that the premium price paid is worth it, since the quality is higher and costumers can recognise this extra value. Moreover, in I5 it was stated that it is not more expensive "if we consider the ratio price – performance". Thus, the premium price does exist for local ingredients but this is not really seen as an obstacle, since it is compensated by a better quality and performance of the product bought. Secondly, it was asked, to each interviewee, if the higher prices of local ingredients influence the final price to customers, on the gostilna's menu. From the answers it emerges that the final price to customers is generally fixed. This happens because customers expect a certain price level that cannot be increased, without reducing their satisfaction. Only in I1, it was affirmed that the use of local ingredients led to a slight increase in the final price to customers.

Interviewees were asked to assess if it is challenging to develop a trustworthy relationship with their local suppliers. From the answers to this question it is clear that each gostilna has a different way of managing suppliers' relationship. Indeed, in I1, I3 and I5, it is affirmed that to develop a trustworthy relationship with local suppliers is not difficult. However, this result is reached with different strategies from each of the three gostilnas. In I1, it is stated that the trust is facilitated by third part certifications and by a long term relationship. In I3, it is said that it is not difficult anymore to develop a relationship based on trust with suppliers, since the gostilna "has developed its own brand now and it is reliable. Suppliers now can trust us and I think it is also important for small suppliers that they supply to us, because we are a reference for them". Thus, the trust is facilitated by the reliability and value of the gostilna's brand. Last but not least, in I5, the trust within supplier relationships is built by embracing an open and honest behaviour from both sides involved, gostilna and suppliers. Conversely, in I2, I4 and I6, it is declared that building trust in the relationship with local suppliers represents an obstacle to local food sourcing. The main reason why trust is difficult to implement within the relationship retailer – suppliers, is the time to be invested in the relationship itself.

Other obstacles commonly associated with sourcing local food are the problem of getting to know the availability of ingredients at a local level, as well as their insufficient quantity and/or quality. Regarding the first point, all interviewees, except I5, said that it is difficult to know what ingredients are available at a local level, and from whom. It is a very time consuming activity, for the retailers (gostilnas), to get this information. The problem is clearly exemplified in I6, in which it is affirmed: "Suppliers don't know how to introduce themselves to buyers, so we would know easily what is available and what they produce. We need to search for them. They might have very quality products, but they don't know how to sell them", and more, "If you don't have personal interest to search for the products, it is very difficult to find them". Suggestions on how to address this problem are made in some of the interviews and it is affirmed, in I6, that: "It would be good if someone would connect them" as well as in I3, where it is confirmed: "It would be easier if they were connected to know what it is available at the local level".

Moreover, regarding the second and the third points made above, it was asked to assess the quality and quantity of local ingredients, used by gostilnas, in order to determine if these characteristics constitute an obstacle in local food sourcing. From the interviews it emerges that five interviewees out of six consider quantity of local food available as not sufficient to satisfy the gostilna's demand. The only exception is for I1, where the quantity is stated to be usually enough to satisfy the gostilna's needs. In I5, it is affirmed that when a predefined (large) quantity of an ingredient is needed, for some special requests from the client, then quantity at the local level might not be suitable to satisfy it. Thus, it is declared that the local production is adequate if the menu is adjusted and changed based on the ingredients available from time to time. Conversely, different results appear from the interviews regarding the quality of local food supply. Indeed, four gostilnas out of six (I1, I2, I4 and I5), express that it is difficult to buy local ingredients because quality is not always guaranteed. In this case, the quality of food is acknowledged as an obstacle. Conversely, in I3 and I6, quality of the local supply is not seen as an obstacle to local food sourcing.

Other two obstacles, commonly associated with local food sourcing and suppliers' relationship building, are the reliability of suppliers (especially in relation to products delivery) and payment methods. Regarding the reliability of suppliers, especially related to delivery, local suppliers are considered from most interviewees as fair and reliable (I1, I2,

I3 and I5). Conversely, in I4 and I6, reliability constitutes an obstacle to local food sourcing. Moreover, in I4, reliability is brought up as a general issue that groups all suppliers, even in relation to bigger national suppliers. Indeed, it is said: “We had a problem with a big distributor from Maribor just before Easter. We ordered the walnuts for potica and they were supposed to be delivered on Wednesday. When I called on Wednesday to know the arrival time of the order they told me ‘the order was not sent, because there was not enough demand for Ljubljana’. But we really needed it and anyway they did not call in advance to tell this to us. In the end it worked out, but it was a lot of stress”. Concerning payment methods, most gostilnas interviewed do pay local suppliers for each delivery (I1, I2, I3, I5 and I6). Anyhow, this is not contemplated as an obstacle to local food sourcing by any of them. In I6, it is affirmed: “I don’t see it as a problem. The only challenge is to have more bills, but it is ok”. The only exception is I4, in which it affirmed that the payments are mostly done monthly and that it would be an obstacle to have it otherwise, since it would significantly augment the paper work to be done by the gostilna.

Last but not least, bureaucracy is another obstacle guilty of decreasing and impeding local food sourcing. In all the interviews except one (I3), bureaucracy is considered an obstacle to the purchase of local food. However, different attitudes come to light towards it, among the different interviews. In I1, for instance, it is defined as something that you cannot change, so you have to coexist with it. In I4, it is said that bureaucracy “Requires a lot of paper work and small producers are not ready yet for it. I like to work in the restaurant and I am proud to represent our food but it is so hard sometimes when I have to sit in the office for many hours to do all the paper work just to get some good meat from the local producers. If there would be a local organization to manage this paper work it would be much easier”. In I6, another issue is brought up. Indeed, the gostilna pays in cash at delivery most of its suppliers, and the interviewee’s concern is that from a bureaucracy point of view, this will not be possible anymore in the near future.

The only exception for bureaucracy is I3, in which bureaucracy is not considered as an obstacle and it is stated: “If you put your own energy in it, then it is no problem. It was a big problem like five years ago, when farmers did not understand that they needed to have papers in order to work with us. But now they do have, they understand now how it works. They grew with us because they understood that we couldn’t buy from them”. This different attitude is caused by the development of the suppliers of the area along with the gostilna, which were willing as well to turn to organic production to satisfy the gostilna’s demand. Additionally, the gostilna made a clear statement in the beginning of its relationship with suppliers, asking them for receipts, otherwise they would not purchase the products from them. This behaviour influenced the suppliers and led to the development of their businesses, in conformity with legal requirements. This phenomenon did not take place in other areas and the lack of collaboration between retailers (gostilnas) and their suppliers explains why the obstacle of bureaucracy was not overcome like it happened in this case.

5.3.1.2 Drivers

Several drivers are associated with local food sourcing for restaurants. In the interviews conducted, each interviewee pointed out which are the main drivers for the gostilnas to choose to source local food. Drivers illustrated by each interviewee are different and highlight diverse motivations for this choice for each gostilna. In I1, the main driver in sourcing local food is the power that local food has to differentiate the gostilna’s offer.

Indeed, it is said to give a better taste to customers. In I2, the main drivers mentioned are freshness of the ingredients bought locally, which do not need to travel many kilometres to get into the gostilna's kitchen, as well as the fact that local supply is more environmentally friendly, having shorter transportation distances. In I3, the main driver for local food sourcing named is mainly social. Indeed, it is affirmed that buying local food makes the community grow. In I4, the main driver is constituted by the interest and appreciation of customers for local food use from the gostilna. In I5, the main drivers pointed out are the transparency, in relation to the supply chain, meaning the possibility to know where the ingredient comes from and how it was produced, as well as the higher quality of local ingredients. Last but not least, the main drivers named in I6, are the possibility to preserve traditional food and the freshness of the ingredients.

From the results listed above, it can be highlighted that the choice of sourcing local ingredients assumes different meaning and objectives for each gostilna. Local food sourcing is acknowledged as an instrument for community development and as a source of differentiation for the gostilna. It can be a way to preserve and promote regional/local traditions, or it can have the objective to get always the best quality and the freshest ingredients. It can be used to enhance the transparency of the supply chain or to promote a more environmentally friendly world. All these different functions and meanings attributed by each gostilna to local food should be thought of as valid, being the expression of a different side of the same picture.

Moreover, to each interviewee several drivers commonly associated with local food sourcing were listed and it was asked if these drivers were contemplated as being related to their own businesses. Interviewees were asked to assess the relationship with their businesses of the following potential drivers: quality; taste; food safety; health issues; price; differentiation power; increase of community relationships; increase of regional development.

Firstly, it was addressed in the interviews if the physical characteristics of the ingredients, quality and taste, were considered as a driver to source local food. From the interviews it emerges that just two out of six interviewees (I5 and I6), think that local ingredients have a higher quality compared with ingredients coming from large distributors/wholesalers. Conversely, in I1, I2, I3 and I4, local ingredients are not always recognised as having a higher quality, thus quality is not seen as a driver in buying local food. Reasons for these circumstances are different. Indeed, in I2, it is expressed that the problem is that "it goes bad too quickly, it doesn't last much". However, in I3, the lack of higher quality is mainly linked with the production methods, which are not always organic, and which significantly affect the ingredients' taste. The other characteristic assessed was the taste of the local ingredients. Most of the interviewees, except I4, consider the taste of local ingredients to be superior to ingredients sourced from big distributors/wholesalers. Thus, taste is definitely acknowledged as a driver in sourcing local food by the gostilnas. The reason is clearly explained by Gregor Repovž in I3, in which he declares: "Last week we bought garlic for the first time this year but we cooked the soup and we threw it away because the taste was not good. We are always afraid when we run out of our carrots, because we cook a lot of thing with them and if they are without taste or bitter the food will not taste the same. The salad as well, when it is from the store, it has no taste or it tastes like chemicals". Conversely, only in I4, the taste is not seen as a driver in sourcing local food, and it is affirmed that: "we are too used to mass production and we don't like it then". This difference in opinion is probably due to the fact that this gostilna (I4) has a lower use of

local ingredients, thus clients probably do not expect the use of ‘different’ ingredients within its menu or the chefs have not yet found a way to deal with their stronger flavour.

Secondly, to each interviewee, it was asked if the intangible attributes (safety; health issues; price) of local ingredients represent a driver for sourcing local food. The interviews reveal that local ingredients are generally not cheaper than ingredients sourced from the global distribution. Thus, price cannot be acknowledged as driver for local food sourcing but it might represent an obstacle. An exception is pointed out in I6, where it is stated that: “if you get local food from people that ‘do it in the afternoon’, then it is cheaper, yes, but it is not legal”. Concerning the safety attributes, from the interviews it emerges that local ingredients are generally considered safer than industrial productions (I1, I3, I5 and I6) thus, the safety attribute is, in this case, a driver in local food sourcing. This approach is explained very well in I6, where it is affirmed that: “Our big advantage is that we know our producers so we are sure it is safer. We do know the name of the cow when we buy the meat. They are our neighbours so it is in their interest as well to establish a trustworthy relationship”. However, in I2 and I4, the safety attribute is not seen as a driver for local food sourcing. This attitude is explained in I4: “The problem is that big producers are constantly controlled by the alimentary organization by taking samples. Small producers are not controlled, so we don’t know what they actually use for their production. For big corporation is easier to see what they are doing”. Regarding the last intangible attribute, healthiness of local ingredients, again different results come to light, revealing the same pattern as for food safety. Indeed, in I1, I3, I5 and I6, healthiness of local ingredients is considered high and this attribute is seen as a driver for local food sourcing. Conversely, in I2 and I4, the same attitude as for food safety is apparent, and the lack of control is seen to lead to a decrease in healthiness. Thus, in this latter case, the healthiness of local ingredients is not seen as a driver for local food sourcing, from their point of view.

Thirdly, the possibility of exploiting the differentiation power of local food sourcing is analysed. According to the results disclosed in the interviews, the use of local ingredients as a differentiation tool is seen as a driver for local food. Indeed, customers recognise the value associated with local food sourcing and they appreciate the embracement of this philosophy. This view is shared by all interviewees, except for I2, who states that some customers do not care at all and do not appear to recognise any added value in the use of local ingredients.

Last but not least, the interviews assessed if the increase in community relationships and regional development is seen as a driver for local food sourcing. From the answers, it is possible to point out that all the *gostilnas* interviewed see both the raise in community relationships and regional development as a driver in sourcing local food. Indeed, the use of local food enhances community relationships and connections, boosting the economic development of the region as well as expanding tourism in the region itself. The only exception is represented by I4. Indeed, this *gostilna*, due to a lack of production in the close proximity of its location, does not have the possibility to create a real community there. Anyhow, these two variables are considered in the interview as drivers, even though the effect of these variables cannot be directly observed in the *gostilna*’s environment.

5.3.2 Benchmarking and discussion

Several drivers and obstacles associated by restaurants (especially from a chef point of view) to the use of local food were pointed out in the best practice case restaurants of Galway (Ireland) presented in the first chapter. In the following paragraphs obstacles and

drivers for local food sourcing presented in the case are discussed in relation to ones emerged from the interviews.

5.3.2.1 Obstacles for local food sourcing

The obstacles associated with local food sourcing that emerged in the case presented in chapter one are the following: price; seasonality; availability of products in the area (quality and quantity); payment methods; need of additional storage space. Additionally further obstacles emerged from the interviews: bureaucracy; lack of connections among producers/lack of formal organizations; time; trust relationship building.

Firstly, the higher price that local ingredients have, compared with ingredients sold by international wholesaler or distributors, is not considered as an obstacle to local ingredients sourcing by all the interviewees. Although the price is said to be higher than in globalised distribution, but the ratio price – performance for local ingredients is pointed out, for it makes the premium price correspond to a higher value obtained, in terms of taste, quality and image. Thus, gostilnas are willing to pay a premium price to gain a better performance and they do not consider this variable as an obstacle.

Secondly, the seasonality of the local production is generally considered as an obstacle by restaurants when buying local food. This issue emerges quite strongly in the case of Slovenia. Due to the climate conditions of the country, the production of fruits and vegetables is basically non-existent during the winter months (from November to February). This obstacle is felt by all the gostilnas interviewed and it is stated that during the winter months the only solution is to source the missing ingredients from big distributors/wholesalers. However, the possibility of buying ingredients produced by other local economies might be considered as a possible solution to address this obstacle. For instance, it could be envisaged to develop collaboration arrangements with small local producers in the northern part of Italy (which can still be defined as geographically local, but across the national border), where production is higher during the winter season and it is available for almost the entire year.

The following obstacle might be linked with seasonality concerns as well: the availability of ingredients at a local level, both in terms of quantity and quality. It was pointed out above that supply is definitely not enough to satisfy gostilna's demand out of season. However, in five interviews out of six (excluding I1), supply is considered not enough to satisfy the demand, even during the season. Conversely, the quality of the ingredients is considered an obstacle by four gostilnas out of six (I1, I2, I3 and I4). The different attitude in defining local food quality might be explained considering that I3 apply a high selection for suppliers, demanding organic products only.

Thirdly, payment methods for local ingredients usually differ from the ones used with international distributors, given that local suppliers are paid on delivery and not on a monthly account. This is true for almost all the gostilnas involved in the interview (five gostilnas out of six). However, payment of suppliers for each delivery is not seen as an obstacle by the interviewees. In only one case, I4, which actually does not have at the present moment any payments at delivery, is this seen as an obstacle to local food sourcing.

The last obstacle emerging from the case, the need for additional cold storage space, it is not seen as an obstacle by the gostilnas. Indeed, sourcing local ingredients means that they can ask for delivery when it is needed, without a pre-fixed schedule, thus when they run out of the ingredients.

In addition, some obstacles, which were not named in the cases, emerged from the interviews conducted. The further obstacles are the following: bureaucracy; lack of connections among producers/lack of formal organizations; time; trust relationship building.

Bureaucracy is considered as an obstacle by all the interviewees, except one (I3). This is a peculiar variable because it could act as an obstacle or as a driver. Indeed, depending on the regulation enforced in the country, bureaucracy can enhance or hinder the use of local food, by retailers and consumers alike. Thus, looking at the interview results, bureaucracy in Slovenia does not act as a facilitator. Despite the efforts made by the government in promoting Slovenian gastronomy among citizens and tourists, the regulations/legislations seem not be aligned with this objective.

The lack of connections among producers and the lack of formal organizations is an important obstacle to be pointed out, which is directly linked with the increase in the time required to source local ingredients. Indeed, it is difficult for gostilnas to know what is available locally and from who, due to a low proactivity of suppliers as well as to a lack of formal network configurations of all types (direct-to-retailers and direct-to-consumers). This leads to an increased time required for local food sourcing since suppliers 'network' must be built by the restaurant themselves. This obstacle, along with time, was pointed out by five interviewees.

The last obstacle that came to light, in the interviews, is the effort to build a trust relationship with suppliers. The relationship building represents an obstacle for three interviewees out of six. The reason for this consideration is directly linked with the time and effort needed to build trustworthy relationship overtime. However, once the relationship is established, suppliers are considered as fair and reliable by most of the interviewees, thus their reliability does not constitute an obstacle to local food sourcing for gostilnas.

5.3.2.2 Drivers for local food sourcing

The drivers associated with the use of local food in restaurants that come up through the presentation of the cases in chapter one are the following: quality; taste; freshness; cost savings; support of local economies; environmental concerns. Moreover, further drivers emerged from the interviews: food safety, health issues; differentiation.

Regarding the physical characteristics of the ingredients, quality, taste and freshness, only one of them can be considered as a driver in local food sourcing. Quality of local ingredients is considered superior by just two out of six interviewees. Thus, it cannot be fully considered as a driver. Conversely, five interviewees out of six agree that local ingredients taste better. Freshness is named as a driver just by two gostilnas out of six, thus it cannot be considered as a driver. However, the freshness variable is directly linked with a better taste, thus, even if not directly recognised as a driver, it can still be considered so.

Regarding the intangible attributes of local food, safety, health issue and price, two of them can be listed as drivers for local food sourcing. The price of local food is believed to be higher than big producers. Thus, the cost saving does not constitute a driver in local food sourcing for the gostilnas. However, both safety and health issues are seen as drivers for local food sourcing, by four gostilnas out of six. Indeed, local food is safer than industrial production and it contributes to establish a healthier diet.

In addition, two drivers for local food consumption are directly linked with a sustainability approach. Indeed, it is believed by all interviewees that local food contributes to community development, enhancing community relationships and promoting the cultural heritage of the region. On top of this, in five interviews another driver named for buying local food is its positive impact on the environment. Last but not least, local food is seen by all the gostilnas as a source of differentiation from their competitors, since consumers recognise the higher value of local food use and this helps to create costumers' loyalty and to increase their willingness to pay.

For the purpose of this study, obstacles and drivers are not taken into consideration if they are not considered so by at least half of the gostilnas (thus in three interviews). The following table summarizes obstacles and drivers in sourcing local ingredients, determined from the analysis made above.

Table 9: Obstacles and drivers in sourcing local ingredients in Slovenia

Obstacles	Drivers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonality • Quality • Quantity • Bureaucracy • Lack of connections/lack of formal organization • Time • Trust relationship building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taste • Safety • Health issues • Support of local economies • Environmental concerns • Differentiation

Source: Own research.

5.4 Contribution to sustainability

5.4.1 Interview results

5.4.1.1 Motivations to buy local food

The interviewees were asked what motivates them to buy local ingredients, in order to determine the main motivations for restaurants (gostilnas) to buy local products. From the results it emerges that the main reasons motivating gostilnas to buy local ingredients are differentiation and environmental concerns (these two reasons are named by three gostilnas out of six). Thus, local food is seen by gostilnas as a source of differentiation that can increase the value attributed to their businesses from customers' perspective. Moreover, local food is seen as a responsible and sustainable choice in order to improve the conditions of the environment. Two other follows these main reasons: valorisation/promotion of traditions and community and regional development (these two reasons are named by two gostilnas out of six interviewed). Thus, the use of local food is considered a source of development for the community and the region where the gostilna

operates and as a tool to achieve traditions preservation and promotion, given that local food an important part of the regional cultural heritage. The latter two motivations named just by one gostilna are freshness of the ingredients and higher quality.

Motivations to buy local emerged from the interviews are summarized in the following table, ranked from the most important to the least important, according with the interviews conducted.

Table 10: Motivations to buy local in Slovenia

Motivations to buy local
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Differentiation of the business from competitors - Environmental concerns - Promotion of traditions - Community and regional development - Freshness of the ingredients - High quality of the products

Source: own research

5.4.1.2 Sustainability contribution

In order to analyse the choice of buying local ingredients from a sustainability perspective, all the interviewees were firstly asked if buying local food is considered, from their point of view, as a more sustainable choice and in which sense. This question had the purpose to assess the interviewee's perception of the sustainability concept. Afterwards, further questions were asked to the interviewees in order to assess singularly the relationship of each sustainability pillar (environmental, socio-cultural and economical) with their choice of buying local ingredients. Sustainability was not directly named among the motivations for buying local food, as it can be read in the paragraph above. However, all the three pillars were indirectly included in the previous discussion. Indeed, among the motivations for using local ingredients were mentioned the use of local food as a differentiation tool, to enhance the gostilna's economic results the link with environmental concerns as well as the possibility, with local food sourcing, of developing the social environment and preserving the regional traditions.

The majority of the interviewees, except one, consider buying local ingredients as a more sustainable choice. However, the meaning that each interviewee attributes to the sustainability concept is different and emphasis is placed on different aspects of it. Indeed, in I2, I3 and I4, the environmental pillar of the sustainability concept is stressed; buying local food is seen as being good for the environment, enhancing its conditions. In I3 and I6, the socio-cultural pillar of the sustainability concept is highlighted, and the choice of buying local food is looked at as a way to make the community grow as well as to increase the relationships within the community, creating a network. Lastly, in I6, the economic pillar is emphasized and it is stated that buying local food has an economic impact, both on the restaurant and on the community involved. Overall, it can be observed that diverse approaches exist to the sustainability concept.

Moreover, it was specifically asked in the interviews, if when buying local ingredients they are motivated by environmental concerns, better economic conditions, or willingness to improve the social context and the preservation of their traditions. Thus, through these three questions the relationship between local food sourcing and each sustainability pillar

was assessed. Firstly, concerning the first question, environmental concerns were considered by five interviewees out of six as a motivation to buy local ingredients. The main reason named in the interviews was the reduction of the distance travelled by the ingredients (I2, I6). Additionally, in I6, the reduction of packaging used and the decrease of food waste was mentioned, since almost all the parts of the products can be used, reducing the amount of food thrown away.

Secondly, regarding the economic pillar, better economic conditions of the region/nation are considered, by five interviewees out of six, to be enhanced by the choice of buying local ingredients. Indeed, it is acknowledged as a choice that contributes to the economic sustainability of local producers as well as boosting the national economic development. Thirdly, the use of local ingredients is recognized to improve the social environment and to help preserving the regional traditions, by all the participants in the interviews. Buying local augments community relationships, community development and it creates valorisation and promotion of the regional cultural heritage.

Overall, from the answers described above to the general question about sustainability, it can be highlighted that each interviewee prioritizes different elements of the sustainability concept. The answers to the three following questions specifically about the relationship between local food consumption and each sustainability pillar, reveals that the understanding of the sustainability concept includes all the three pillars, however one (or more) is prioritized over the others. Gostilnas have a perception of the sustainability concept as a whole, even though they choose one aspect to be emphasized according with their primary objectives.

5.4.2 Benchmarking and discussion

Both Chez Panisse and Ballymaloe House were founded with the aim of giving the best quality food to clients. In addition, in the case of Ballymaloe House, there was the willingness to allow customers to get the real flavour of the traditional Irish cuisine. Sustainability can be observed throughout the best practice cases discussed in the first chapter, since these cases are a whole, exactly as the sustainability concept is. The biggest impact that these restaurants had (and have) is surely related with the social pillar of sustainability. Indeed, both restaurants built community relationships, through suppliers' relationships, contributing to community development. Moreover, Ballymaloe House addressed the need of promoting and rediscovering the Irish traditional food, enhancing cultural heritage conservation. From an economic sustainability perspective, the use of local food helped these restaurants to implement a differentiation strategy for the use of local food was an innovative approach, as well as contributing to the regional economic development. In addition, it helped rising awareness about environmental issues among consumers. Considering the requirements of sustainability from 'resposustable' model of Mihalič (2014), in relation to these two best practice cases, it can be affirmed that the actions and choices undertaken by these restaurants increased the environmental awareness of customers, suppliers and citizens as well as stakeholder participation, creating inclusive relationships with suppliers, citizens and customers. Furthermore, these restaurants promoted educational activities for a healthy food culture. Last but not least, the action of these restaurants increased tourist satisfaction, enhancing the value of the region in tourists' eyes and promoting its gastronomic heritage.

From the interviews it emerges that all the gostilnas (except I1) have a perception of the sustainability concept as a whole, even though they emphasize different aspects of it.

Firstly, five out of six interviewees consider the environmental concerns as a reason to purchase local food. Secondly, five out of six gostilnas think that the regional economic development is increased through buying local food. Thirdly, all the gostilnas interviewed agree that the social environment is positively affected by local food sourcing. Indeed, it increases community relationships and development, as well as the promotion of regional gastronomic heritage. Last but not least, the gostilnas' position towards sustainability can be analysed according to the sustainability requirements of Mihalič (2014). All gostilnas recognize an augment in stakeholder participation within their community, due to the raise of local suppliers' involvement. Moreover, they all perceive an increasing awareness among consumers about local food and they try to further build up their awareness and education through communication to customers (as analysed in the previous chapter). Lastly, their choice of using local ingredients allows tourists to have a unique experience of the gastronomic heritage, boosting their satisfaction.

In addition to the sustainability analysis it can be pointed out that the drivers generally associated with local food network formations are directly linked with the sustainability concept. The main driver perceived is the contribution to rural development given by network configurations. This element appears to be relevant for the gostilnas interviewed. Indeed, all the gostilnas are rural inns, thus placed within a rural environment. This condition ensures that their choices of local food sourcing to have a direct impact on rural development.

Table 11: Contribution to sustainability of local food sourcing in Slovenia

Sustainability elements	Contributions/benefits
Economic pillar	Business differentiation and positive economic impacts on rural areas
Socio-cultural pillar	Increase of community relationship and development, enhancement in promotion of regional gastronomic heritage
Environmental pillar	Better environmental conditions
Stakeholder participation	Increased due to local suppliers (community) involvement
Customer awareness	Raised through the use of strategic communication from gostilnas

Source: own research.

6 Limitations and recommendations for further research

The present research was subject to some limitations. Firstly, the language barrier must be taken into account. Indeed, some of the material used in the research (the requirements to be part of the Gostilna Slovenija brand and the website of Gostilna Slovenija brand) was in Slovene language. The requirements were translated, and commented, with the help of professor Janez Bogataj and through Google Translator. The website, in order to be used as a source, was translated automatically on Google Chrome from Slovene into English. Moreover, the Slovene language sometimes came up as a barrier during the interviews. Indeed, participants were sometimes not familiar with some English terms and translation in Slovene was required (and done through Google Translator). For instance, some interviewees were not familiar with the term sustainability, but once the concept was explained or translated in their language, they actually knew about it. For further

researches, it might be worth considering conducting interviews in the Slovene language in order to increase understanding of the interviewees and overcome the language barrier.

Secondly, it is necessary to consider that the number of interviews within this study is limited, due mainly to time constraints; the time dedicated to interviews was indeed quite limited (one month and half). Additionally, it was not possible to arrange a higher number of interviews in this fixed time period since all the gostilnas have quite an intense work schedule. Therefore, it is challenging to find some time available that they can dedicate to interviews. Hence, it is advisable to take into account the little time that gostilnas have available and to try and expand the time period dedicated to interviews as much as possible. This expansion would allow the researcher to enlarge the sample of gostilnas involved in the research; thus, a broader perspective would be accomplished.

Thirdly, the gostilnas selected for the interviews were chosen within the network Gostilna Slovenija, thus within some excellence cases. It would be interesting in future studies to enlarge the sample to gostilnas outside the network, in order to reach a wider overview of the development level of direct-to-retailers local food networks in the country. Indeed, the approach undertaken by this study allows to individuate the early birds but does not look at the country as a whole.

Last but not least, triangulation could have been fully applied in the present study with the formulation of hypothesis built on the information gathered through the interview conducted. This approach would have allowed, along with the interview analysis and the benchmarking analysis, to entirely check the study results from different perspectives.

The present research opens up the way to further investigations in the future. Indeed, even with a small sample, this study tried to bring to light, for the first time, the development stage of direct-to-retailers local food networks in Slovenia. Further researches should focus on investigating in a deeper way the interactions among gostilnas and suppliers. In addition, it would be relevant to examine deeply the legislative framework of the country, in order to determine what actions should be undertaken by the government to enhance and facilitate the development of these local food network configurations.

Conclusion

The primary objective of the present research was to assess the level of development of direct-to-retailers local food networks in Slovenia. In order to achieve this objective it was chosen to conduct semi-structured interviews involving gostilnas members of the brand Gostilna Slovenija. The choice to include participants who are members of Gostilna Slovenija, was made in order to individuate early birds in this development.

The theory foundation presented (tourism networks; local food; local food networks) had the aim to act as a support to the three best practice cases. Indeed, three cases (Chez Panisse – California; Restaurants of Galway – Ireland; Ballymaloe House – Ireland) were selected in order to conduct a benchmarking analysis, giving to this research an international breath.

From the interview results and the benchmarking analysis it seems that direct-to-retailers local food networks do not have a formal structure in Slovenia. However, configurations that can be considered as informal networks of this kind can be observed. The characteristics of those were analysed through the benchmarking and it was pointed out

that gostilnas have a strong and long-term relationship with suppliers, strategic communication to customers, seasonal menus built with a bottom-up approach and poor international connections. Moreover, it was assessed which are the drivers and obstacles to the development of direct-to-retailers local food networks development in Slovenia and what is the contribution to sustainability created by them.

Slovenia has a lot of potential in developing direct-to-retailers local food networks. On the one hand, gostilnas are a typical element of Slovenian culture and they are by definition placed outside urban areas, they are rural inns. This characteristic makes them suitable for the creation of strong connections with producers, in order to strengthen their position, enhance their differentiation, giving customers a stronger reason to get out of the city to visit their restaurant. On the other hand, Slovenia has quite a large rural area, which could take advantage from this development. Additionally, the use of local products in restaurants should be addressed by legislation, facilitating the collaboration between small producers and gostilnas. Moreover, the lack of production during the winter season should be seen as an incentive for gostilnas to support other local economies, especially for those gostilnas that are located near the borders. Indeed, the production in Italy or Croatia is higher, due to different weather patterns, and collaboration could be developed with local producers across the borders, instead of choosing big distributors, which often source from further away.

A huge (and tasty) gastronomic heritage is preserved within the borders of this small country and it should be promoted, both among tourists and locals, in order to ensure its conservation for the future generations.

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Appendixes

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Appendix A: Gostilna Slovenija network – selection form

Priloga 4: Obrazec za ocenjevanje za strokovno komisijo za pridobitev pravice do uporabe kolektivne blagovne znamke Gostilna Slovenija

Naziv gostinskega obrata:
Naslov gostinskega obrata:
Naziv gostinskega podjetja:
Naslov podjetja:
Poštna številka in kraj:
Kontaktna oseba:
Kraj in datum ocenjevanja:
Čas in ura ocenjevanja:
Ime in priimek člana Strokovne komisije:
Mnenje člana strokovne komisije je (obkrožite) POZITIVNO / NEGATIVNO

ELEMENTI POTREBNI ZA PRIDOBITEV NAZIVA IN ZNAKA »GOSTILNA-SLOVENIJA«	SKUPNO ŠTEVILO TOČK: Največ 120	
1. LASTNIŠTVO GOSTILNE (OBKROŽI ENO OD MOŽNOSTI)	Največ možnih točk 5	Ocenjeno število točk
a) Lastništvo gostilne je tradicionalno družinsko (ena ali več generacij)	5	
b) Lastništvo gostilne ni tradicionalno družinsko (druge vrste lastništva)	3	

DODATNA POJASNILA: Družinsko urejeno lastništvo je v gostilniški dejavnosti v Sloveniji izrednega pomena, saj so bile gostilne v preteklosti praviloma družinsko naravnane. Združenje želi spodbujati ohranjanje te tradicije, vendar ne želi ovirati lastniško drugače urejenih gostiln. Kot tradicionalno družinsko lastništvo komisija upošteva najmanj dve generaciji gostilničarjev oz., da delujeta v gostilni najmanj dve generaciji gostilničarske družine. Pri ocenjevanju se upošteva eno ali več generacijsko družinsko gostilniško tradicijo kot dejavnost in sicer v primerih, ko ima nekdo gostilno v najemu sicer šele kot svojo prvo dejavnost, izvira in nadaljuje pa svojo družinsko gostilniško tradicijo, ki lahko obsega že več generacij.

2. UPORABA NAZIVA IN ZNAKA GOSTILNA (OBKROŽI ENO OD MOŽNOSTI)	Največ možnih točk: 10	Ocenjeno število točk
a) - Obrat je registriran kot gostilna in se s tem nazivom tudi jasno predstavlja in pozicionira v vseh elementih trženja. - Obrat ima registriranih več dejavnosti oz. nazivov, a se dejavnost gostilne jasno ločuje od drugih dejavnosti. Na različnih področjih trženja se obrat predstavlja in jasno pozicionira kot gostilna; tudi z nazivom.	10	

b) Obrat je registriran kot gostišče, a se na različnih področjih trženja predstavlja pod imenom gostilna. Ta naziv se lahko uporablja le do spremembe zakonodaje, vendar se nosilcu dejavnosti svetuje, da gostišče čim prej preimenuje v gostilno ali gostilno s prenočišči.	9	

DODATNO POJASNILO: Če se obrat ne pozicionira kot gostilna oziroma gostišče (glej a, b, c), nima pravice do pridobitve naziva in znaka »Gostilna – Slovenija«.

3. PONUDBA HRANE	Največje število točk: 57	Ocenjeno število točk
a) Ponudba hrane je sestavljena iz: - najmanj treh hišnih jedi - iz krajevnih in regionalnih jedi* - iz vseslovenskih jedi* Jedilnik vključuje skupno vsaj 80% jedi, ki spadajo v zgoraj naštetе skupine.	40	
b) Ponudba hrane vključuje vsaj tri proizvode z zaščitenim geografskim poreklom (v nadaljevanju ZGP)	3	
c) Ponudba hrane vključuje pridelke in proizvode lokalnega, regionalnega in slovenskega okolja v vsaj 50% vseh živil.	5	
d) Ponudba hrane je sezonska oz. usklajena z letnimi časi	3	
e) Ponudba mora biti jasno razvidna v jedilnem listu	3	
f) Obrat uporablja vsaj 5 (pet) ekološko pridelanih živil, ki so jasno razvidna v ponudbi jedi v jedilnem listu	3	

DODATNO POJASNILO

Če obrat v točki 3. - Ponudba hrane ne doseže vsaj 50 točk, nima pravice, do uporabe naziva in znaka »Gostilna – Slovenija«

4. PONUDBA PIJAČ	Največje število točk: 22	Ocenjeno število točk:
a) Ponudba vin temelji na izvirnih slovenskih vinih in na vinih slovenskih vinogradnikov v vsaj 75% v razmerju do tujih.	10	
b) V ponudbi žganih pijač je vsaj 5 pijač krajevnega, regionalnega ali slovenskega izvora.)	5	
c) V ponudbi brezalkoholnih pijač mora biti vsaj 10 pijač krajevnega, regionalnega ali slovenskega izvora. (sokovi, vode)	4	
d) Ponudba mora biti razvidna v vinski karti	3	

DODATNO POJASNILO

Če obrat v točki 4. - Ponudba pijač ne doseže vsaj 19 točk, nima pravice, do uporabe naziva in znaka »Gostilna – Slovenija«

5. ZUNANJA UREDITEV GOSTILNE	Največje število točk: 6	Ocenjeno število točk:
a) Zunanja podoba – arhitektura je krajevno oziroma regionalno značilna za gostilne	3	
b) Gostilna ima urejen gostilniški vrt oz. zunanji prostor za goste.	1	
c) Zunanja podoba gostilne odraža skrb gostilničarja za ohranjanje stavbne dediščine Slovenije	2	

6. NOTRANJA UREDITEV GOSTILNE	Največje število točk 11	
a) Gostilna ima ločen prostor s točilnim pultom	3	
b) gostilna ima prostor (kotiček, sobo ipd.), ki je neke vrste tematski prostor (lovski kotiček, ribiška soba, kulturniška soba,...)	3	
c) Notranja oprema ima jasno temeljno usmeritev: 1. Gostilna ohranja in nadaljuje dediščino notranje podobe gostilne ali 2. Ambient gostilne je na novo urejen in ne temelji na nepravilnem dekoriranju s predmeti kulturne dediščine*.	3	
č) Gostilniške mize so pogrnjene s prti	1	
d) Cvetje oz. dekoracija sta naravni, usklajena z letnim časom in upošteva lokalno naravno okolje.	1	

DODATNI POJASNILI

Če obrat v točki 6. – Notranja ureditev gostilne, ne doseže vsaj 5 točk, nima pravice do uporabe naziva in znaka »Gostilna – Slovenija«.

* Pri tem je mišljeno dekoriranje gostilne z različnimi vsebinsko neprimernimi starimi predmeti kot so kolesa vozov, kmetijsko orodje idr. Ambient se lahko dekodira s predmeti, ki so z gostilniško dejavnostjo povezani npr.: stari pekači, kuhinjsko orodje, jedilno in strežno orodje ter posodje, vsekakor uporaba originalnega pohištva ali njegovih replik idr.

7. OBLAČILNI VIDEZ STREŽNEGA OSEBJA GOSTILNE	Največje število točk 2	Ocenjeno število točk
a) Strežno osebje ima klasično sodoben oblačilni videz, ki upošteva veljavne standarde oblačilnega videza gostinskih delavcev	2	

8. ZVOČNA OPREMA AMBIENTA	Največje število točk 2	Ocenjeno število točk
a) V primeru zvočne kulise je ta v največji mogoči meri slovenskega porekla	1	
b) Zvočne kulise ni	1	
c) V primeru uporabe različnih zvočnih kulis je potrebna minimalna glasnost predvajanja	0,5	
d) Ob posebnih priložnostih je v gostilni prisotna živa glasba	0,5	

9. DODATNE DEJAVNOSTI GOSTILNE	Največje število točk 5	Ocenjeno število točk
a) Dodatne dejavnosti, ki se opravljajo v sklopu gostilne so v skladu s tradicionalnimi dejavnostmi, ki so sestavine gostilniške dediščine (sestanki, srečanja, shodi, veselice, kulturne prireditve omejenega obsega idr.)	2	
b) Vsa dodatna ponudba temelji na izvirnem slovenskem poreklu izdelkov	2	

(npr.: Ponudba prehranskih izdelkov, spominkov, ZGP-ja idr.)		
b) Ostale dejavnosti in ponudba gostilne (igrala, polnjenje elektr. avtomobilov, oddajanje sob idr.)	1	

* Točka b) mora biti uresničena, da lahko gostilna sploh pristopa k postopku za pridobitev znaka Gostilna Slovenija

10. POSEBNO POZITIVNO / NEGATIVNO MNENJE OCENJEVALCA	MNENJE JE: POZITIVNO/NEGATIVNO

POJASNILO: Ocenjevalec naj svoje pozitivno / negativno mnenje vpiše v spodnji prazen prostor. Utemeljitev pozitivnega / negativnega mnenja naj bo popolnoma jasna in naj temeljito opiše situacijo, ki ustvarja ocenjevalčevo mnenje.

UTEMELJITEV: _____

REZULTAT OCENJEVANJA

MAKSIMALNO ŠTEVILO TOČK	120	
MINIMALNO ŠTEVILO TOČK ZA PODELITEV NAZIVA GOSTILNA - SLOVENIJA	100	
DOSEŽENO ŠTEVILO TOČK		

Ime in priimek člana Strokovne komisije:

Datum in podpis člana Strokovne komisije:

VPLIV POSEBNEGA MNENJA NA KONČNO OCENO GOSTILNE: Kriterij ocenjevanja lahko odločilno vpliva na končno oceno gostilne. Lahko jo tako izboljša kot poslabša.

V PRIMERU:

- Da je seštevek točk za **5 točk** manjši / višji od minimalnega števila točk.
- Da **vsaj dva od štirih ocenjevalcev** izrazijo posebno pozitivno / negativno mnenje

Je lahko posamezna gostilna izjemoma sprejeta v / izključena iz postopka za pridobitev znaka Gostilna Slovenija. Posebno mnenje se lahko izrazi, ko je posamezen ocenjevalec izjemno navdušen / razočaran nad doživetjem v gostilni. Npr.:

- Okus hrane je izjemno dober / slab
- Postrežba, prijaznost, ustrežljivost natakarjev je izredno dobra / slaba
- Urejenost gostilne je izredno dobra / slaba
- Ocenjevalec je zaradi neke posebnosti gostilne izredno navdušen / razočaran

Če vsaj dva od štirih ocenjevalcev izrazijo posebno pozitivno / negativno mnenje in če je seštevek točk v zgoraj določenih okvirih (+ / - 5 točk od določenega minimalnega seštevka) se opravi poseben postopek za odločitev o izjemnem sprejetju v / izključitvi iz postopka za pridobitev znaka Gostilna Slovenija.

POSTOPEK JE SLEDEČ: Predsednik komisije skliče poseben sestanek članov komisije, kjer se posebna mnenja skupaj analizira. Odločitev se določi z glasovanjem, kjer mora biti odločitev o sprejetju / izključitvi sprejeta z večino glasov.

Appendix B: Semi-structured interview questions

Qualitative analysis of direct-to-retailers local food networks: case of Gostilna Slovenija

Matilde Guido

Semi-structured interview questions

The questions to guide the interview are divided in topic areas based on the research questions and further subtopics for each research question in order to make the structure as clear as possible. Thus, for each research question, a set of questions is proposed in order to guide the interview and to ensure that all relevant aspects to assess them are covered.

I) Formal or informal membership of direct-to-retailers local food networks

Formal membership in direct-to-retailers local food networks takes place when gostilna is formally member of a network, including all or most of its local suppliers and the gostilna itself. A formal membership implies that some requirements are put in place in order to be part of the network and it exists a formal organization that manages its operations.

Informal membership implies that there are stable relationships overtime, with local suppliers of local food based on trust and collaboration principles.

Formal direct-to-retailers local food network

- 1) Are you formally part of any direct-to-retailer network (which means a network that includes you as restaurant and your suppliers)?
- 2) Do you know any direct-to-retailer network that links suppliers and gostilnas?

Sourcing local food

- 1) Do you buy local ingredients?
- 2) Do you buy local ingredients from small local food suppliers? Or from wholesalers/distributors of local food?
- 3) Do you have relationships with single suppliers for specific products or do you reach them through cooperatives or distributor/wholesalers of local food?
- 4) Did you develop, over the years, collaboration with your suppliers? (meaning that you both have benefits from the exchange made)
- 5) Do you have long term relationships with your local food suppliers?
- 6) Do you apply the rule regional first, then national and if it is not available international?
- 7) Do you have any suppliers outside your region? For which products?
- 8) Do you have any international suppliers? For which products?
- 9) Which is your furthest product? From where?
- 10) Which is your nearest product? From where?

II) Characteristics of retailers – suppliers network

Suppliers' choice

- 1) What are your requirements in the selection of local suppliers?
- 2) Are your suppliers producers of the ingredients you buy?
- 3) Do you prefer small producers to big ones?

- 4) Do you base your relationship on trust or do you require third part certifications (eg. Organic/PGI)?
- 5) How many suppliers do you have? Many small suppliers or one big one?

Type of suppliers' agreement/relationship

- 1) Did you look for your local suppliers singularly or through cooperatives based on your needs? Or the suppliers proposed to you their products?
- 2) Did you develop a close collaboration over the years with your local suppliers? In which way?
- 3) Who is responsible for choosing the ingredients? Is the relationship with supplier direct or indirect?
- 4) Do you personally know your suppliers?
- 5) Do you talk with them singularly or through wholesalers/cooperative/supplier coordinators?
- 6) Do you make any agreement about the production they make? Or you just take whatever they offer?
- 7) Do you prefer organic certified suppliers to not certified suppliers?
- 8) How often do your suppliers deliver their products?

Menu design

- 1) How do you design the menu?
- 1) Is your menu seasonal? Is your menu built on seasonal products?
- 2) How often do you change your menu?
- 2) Do you make the menu first and then you look for ingredients (top-down approach)?
- 3) Do you design the menu based on products' availability from your suppliers (bottom-up approach)?
- 4) What is the percentage of traditional dishes in your menu?
- 5) Do you use any self-grown ingredients/animals or self-collected mushrooms and berries?
- 6) Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, liquors, meat)?
- 7) Do you use any organic certified ingredients? Do you prefer them to others?
- 8) Do you have traditional dishes only in the menu?
- 9) Which is your most popular dish? How local is it (meaning if it is part of the regional culinary tradition/heritage)?

Communication with customers

- 1) Do you communicate to customer the use of local food?
- 2) Do you communicate to customers who are your suppliers?
- 3) Do you tell the customers where your ingredients come from?
- 4) How you communicate to customers? Through written material (e.g. through menus, stories, pictures in the restaurant, brochures, boards) or through waiting staff?
- 5) Is it possible for customers to buy some of these food/ingredients of your suppliers in your restaurant?
- 6) Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, spirits and liqueurs)?
- 7) Do you use products with "Protected Geographical Indication" label? Which ones?
- 8) Do you prefer organic certified suppliers to not certified suppliers?

Other network membership

- 1) Is your gostilna member of any international organization supporting local food consumption (eg? Slow food)?
- 2) Are your chef/chefs members of any professional network supporting local food use and

consumption?

- 3) Which advantages you see in being member of Gostilna Slovenija network?

III) Drivers and obstacles in direct-to-retailers local food networks

Obstacles

- 1) Do you see any obstacle in purchasing local food for your Gostilna?
- 2) Is purchasing local ingredients more expensive than using international food wholesalers?
- 3) Does the use of local food and ingredients increase the final price?
- 4) Do you find difficult to develop a close and trustworthy relationship with your local suppliers?
Is it time consuming?
- 5) Is it difficult to know which supply is available locally? Is it time consuming?
- 6) Is it difficult to buy local supply because quantity is not guaranteed?
- 7) Is it difficult to buy local supply because quality is not guaranteed?
- 8) Do you think that bureaucracy makes more difficult to buy local food?
- 9) Do customer appreciate the use of local food?
- 10) What are the issues you encounter in buying local food?
- 11) Is it delivery of local food reliable?
- 12) Is the local supply enough to satisfy your demand?
- 13) Are all products that you need available in your region? And in your nation?
- 14) Do you pay your suppliers for each delivery? Is this a challenge for you?

Drivers

- 1) Which are the advantages that the use of local ingredients gives you?
- 2) Do you think that local food has a better quality?
- 3) Does local food taste better?
- 4) Is local food safer?
- 5) Is local food healthier?
- 6) Is local food cheaper?
- 7) Does the use of local food differentiate you from others?
- 8) Which benefits direct supplier relationships give you? Does it increase community relationships?
- 9) Do you think that buying local food increase the development of your region?

IV) Contribution to sustainability

- 1) What motivates you to purchase and use local ingredients in your Gostilna?
- 2) What is your objective in using local food?
- 3) Do you think that your choices can influence costumers and increase local food consumption?
- 4) Do you think that purchasing local food is more sustainable? In which sense?
- 5) Are you motivated from environmental concerns?
- 6) Do you think that your choice for local food enhance the regional and national economic development?
- 7) Do you think that your choice for local food improves the social context and helps to preserve your traditions?

Appendix C: Interview transcriptions

Interview 1: Katja Skok, owner of Gostilna Skok, code interview 1 (I1)

I) Formal or informal membership of direct-to-retailers local food networks

Formal direct-to-retailers local food network

1) Are you formally part of any direct-to-retailer network (which means a network that includes you as restaurant and your suppliers)?

No, we are not part of a formal network but it is formed naturally with suppliers that we know, each restaurant forms its own.

2) Do you know any direct-to-retailer network that links suppliers and gostilnas?

Just recently I heard about one or two, it's a new phenomenon.

Sourcing local food

1) Do you buy local ingredients?

Yes, sure from local suppliers, mostly in our village. We grow vegetables, buckwheat, corn and fruit in our farm as well as we produce pork and horsemeat.

2) Do you buy local ingredients from small local food suppliers? Or from wholesalers/distributors of local food?

We buy local ingredients from small local suppliers. They are mostly biological farms and local producers of meat and cheese. We do not use any distributor, the relationship is direct with suppliers and I am in charge of it.

3) Do you have relationships with single suppliers for specific products or do you reach them through cooperatives or distributor/wholesalers of local food?

No, we don't use any cooperative for ingredients sourcing.

4) Did you develop, over the years, collaboration with your suppliers?

No, I look for what I need based on the seasonal menu that I design/choose.

5) Do you have long term relationships with your local food suppliers?

Yes, we all know each other.

6) Do you apply the rule regional first, then national and if it is not available international?

Yes.

7) Do you have any suppliers outside your region? For which products?

Yes, we do.

8) Do you have any international suppliers? For which products?

We have some international suppliers, for products that are more difficult to find, especially out of season but you can't be without, like lemons.

9) Which is your furthest product? From where?

The furthest product... I wouldn't know for sure. Maybe mushrooms out of season they come from the other side of the world.

10) Which is your nearest product? From where?

The nearest product is our production from the farm.

II) Characteristics of retailers – suppliers network

Suppliers' choice

1) What are your requirements in the selection of local suppliers?

More and more we prefer biological producers, now there is offer and the quality is good.

- 2) **Are your suppliers producers of the ingredients you buy?**
Yes, they are mostly farmers and small producers.
- 3) **Do you prefer small producers to big ones?**
Yes, because they are specialised in one particular product.
- 4) **Do you base your relationship on trust or do you require third part certifications (eg. Organic/PGI)?**
It's better to have third part certifications, you can communicate it to customers.
- 5) **How many suppliers do you have? Many small suppliers or one big one?**
We have many small suppliers, each one for a specific product. Each type of cheese or meat or whatever has its own suppliers. This makes you buying from everyone, not just from one big supplier. Buying from small producers ensure you that the products are fresh.

Type of suppliers' agreement/relationship

- 1) **Did you look for your local suppliers singularly or through cooperatives based on your needs? Or the suppliers proposed to you their products?**
I look for what I need based on the menu I make, within the suppliers I know.
- 2) **Did you develop a close collaboration over the years with your local suppliers? In which way?**
No.
- 3) **Who is responsible for choosing the ingredients? Is the relationship with supplier direct or indirect?**
I am responsible for the ingredients' choice and all relationships with the local suppliers are direct.
- 4) **Do you personally know your suppliers?**
All the local ones, yes.
- 5) **Do you make any agreement about the production they make? Or you just take whatever they offer?**
No, I look for what I need.
- 6) **Do you prefer organic certified suppliers to not certified suppliers?**
Yes, because this can be communicated to customers, it is something concrete thus we prefer them more and more.
- 7) **How often do your suppliers deliver their products?**
We don't have a fix schedule, we talk when we need the products. Mostly, they are paid in cash at the delivery but some, more and more, have bank transfer payment after the delivery.

Menu design

- 1) **How do you design the menu?**
When I design the seasonal menu I base it on what we produce as first step and if we miss something we look for it outside, within our suppliers.
- 2) **Is your menu seasonal? Is your menu built on seasonal products? How often do you change your menu?**
We have a normal menu, which is always the same, and a seasonal menu, which is changed every two or three weeks. This makes the offer interesting for people to come back. Now we have just done the Easter menu.
- 3) **Do you make the menu first and then you look for ingredients (top-down approach)?**
No.
- 4) **Do you design the menu based on products' availability from your suppliers (bottom-up approach)?**
Yes, we base it on what we produce and on what our suppliers have.
- 5) **What is the percentage of traditional dishes in your menu?**

More than half.

6) Do you use any self-grown ingredients/animals or self collected mushrooms and berries?

We have self-grown ingredients but I don't have enough time to do self-collection of mushrooms or berries, I would do it if I have time. However, from middle April we will have wild asparagus month in collaboration with other restaurants and we prepare dishes with asparagus. It is eight years that we do it. Now we are starting to use wild herbs. I am learning how they should be cooked but it takes time to introduce them in the menu, they are healthier but they have a strong taste, which people are not used to. In the end of June we do the lavanda festival, and we cook dishes with lavanda. I thought it was too strong taste for people but they liked it a lot, so we do it every year.

7) Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, liquors, meat)?

Just meat, for alcoholics is more difficult because of legislation.

8) Do you use any organic certified ingredients? Do you prefer them to others?

Yes, because you have something concrete for communicating the quality to customers.

9) Do you have traditional dishes only in the menu?

No, we have a section which is called 'dishes from other places' in which are collected the non-traditional dishes. They have to be included because different groups of people expect us to have them and ingredients used are mostly regional or national but they are not part of the Slovenian cuisine (e.g. cevapcici, people from Trieste expect them in the menu, but for Slovenians they are usually eaten in cevapdzinica).

10) Which is your most popular dish? How local is it (meaning if it is part of the regional culinary tradition/heritage)?

Jota is our most popular dish because it is made with our potatoes as well as homemade gnocchi. We have this kind of potatoes, which is very suitable for these dishes; we produce 7.000 kg of them. The next most famous ingredient is the young horsemeat that is produced in our farm.

Communication with customers

1) Do you communicate to customer the use of local food?

Yes, through the menus and through the direct communication, usually people ask because they want to know more and more. People really read the menu, looking for the local ingredients. They really want to know and they give importance to the seasonal menu.

2) Do you communicate to customers who are your suppliers?

Yes, with their names.

3) Do you tell the customers where your ingredients come from?

Yes, we say where they are and who they are.

4) How you communicate to customers? Through written material (e.g. through menus, stories, pictures in the restaurant, brochures, boards) or through WOM and reviews?

Just through the menus and speaking with them directly.

5) Is it possible for customers to buy some of these food/ingredients of your suppliers in your restaurant?

No.

6) Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, spirits and liqueurs)?

No we don't have, we buy them from regional producers.

7) Do you use products with "Protected Geographical Indication" label? Which ones?

Yes, *kraška panceta*, honey and *kraška Teran* (wine).

Other network membership

1) Is your gostilna member of any international organization supporting local food consumption (eg? Slow food)?

No, none.

- 2) **Are your chef/chefs members of any professional network supporting local food use and consumption?**

No, they are not.

- 3) **Which advantages you see in being member of Gostilna Slovenija network?**

It's good to have a quality label but the network should do more, it does not work as it should. There is not enough collaboration. We need a person full time to work on the network and to develop the communication, especially on socials.

III) Drivers and obstacles in direct-to-retailers local food networks

Obstacles

- 1) **Do you see any obstacle in purchasing local food for your Gostilna?**

A formal base would make it easier in order to inform us on what is available locally.

- 2) **Is purchasing local ingredients more expensive than using international food wholesalers?**

It is more expensive yes.

- 3) **Does the use of local food and ingredients increase the final price?**

Yes, a bit but not much.

- 4) **Do you find difficult to develop a close and trustworthy relationship with your local suppliers? Is it time consuming?**

No, it is not difficult. It is easier if they have certificates, it helps.

- 5) **Is it difficult to know which supply is available locally? Is it time consuming?**

It is time consuming to know what is available and from who.

- 6) **Is it difficult to buy local supply because quantity is not guaranteed?**

Quantity is not a problem it is usually enough.

- 7) **Is it difficult to buy local supply because quality is not guaranteed?**

Quality is an issue. It is difficult to find good quality ingredients.

- 8) **Do you think that bureaucracy makes more difficult to buy local food?**

It does, there is a lot, but it exists so what else can you do?

- 9) **Do customer appreciate the use of local food?**

Sure, they do appreciate it. It has a positive effect the use of local food.

- 10) **Is it delivery of local food reliable?**

It is, they are always fair and reliable.

- 11) **Is the local supply enough to satisfy your demand?**

It is, quantity is not a problem but quality is.

- 12) **Are all products that you need available in your region? And in your nation?**

Mostly, but not all.

- 13) **Do you pay your suppliers for each delivery? Is this a challenge for you?**

We mostly pay them in cash for each delivery but this is not a problem for us. Some of them have the possibility to pay through bank transfer after the delivery.

Drivers

- 1) **Which are the advantages that the use of local ingredients gives you?**

Differentiation from others, it gives a better and different taste to customers.

- 2) **Do you think that local food has a better quality?**

Yes, it does.

- 3) **Does local food taste better?**

Sure, it does.

- 4) **Is local food safer?**

Yes, it is.

5) Is local food healthier?

Yes, it is.

6) Is local food cheaper?

No, it is not. It is more expensive but this is a choice. You have to choose what you want on your table.

7) Does the use of local food differentiate you from others?

It does, people that appreciate this kind of things and attentions they know already what is the difference and they can taste it as well. Other people, that are not interested, they do not understand the difference among biological, local and industrial meat.

8) Which benefits direct supplier relationships give you? Does it increase community relationships?

It does. If there is quality tourists come, and it is good for us for our suppliers and for our community.

9) Do you think that buying local food increase the development of your region?

It does, it brings more people here and more relationships.

IV) Contribution to sustainability

1) What motivates you to purchase and use local ingredients in your Gostilna?

Differentiation potential and promotion of our region.

2) Do you think that your choices can influence costumers and increase local food consumption?

People already have a sensibility, people that don't have they can't understand the difference.

3) Do you think that purchasing local food is more sustainable? In which sense?

I don't know what sustainability is.

4) Are you motivated from environmental concerns?

No, not really.

5) Do you think that your choice for local food enhance the regional and national economic development?

It does indirectly I think, yes. Differentiation from others through local food use makes people come.

6) Do you think that your choice for local food improves the social context and helps to preserve your traditions?

Sure, if you make the producers known people will know more the region. People become more emotionally attached to us and to the regions, especially tourists,

It does. It makes the traditions known.

Interview 2: Marko Magdič, owner and chef of Gostilna Ančka, code interview 2 (I2)

I) Formal or informal membership of direct-to-retailers local food networks

Formal direct-to-retailers local food network

1) Are you formally part of any direct-to-retailer network (which means a network that includes you as restaurant and your suppliers)?

No.

2) Do you know any direct-to-retailer network that links suppliers and gostilnas?

No.

Sourcing local food

- 1) **Do you buy local ingredients?**
Yes. We mostly source ingredients locally, especially regionally.
- 2) **Do you buy local ingredients from small local food suppliers? Or from wholesalers/distributors of local food?**
We buy from both, but mainly from bigger distributors. Bigger distributors that we use they are both distributors that aggregate local small suppliers and big distributors, which source nationally and internationally.
- 3) **Do you have relationships with single suppliers for specific products or do you reach them through cooperatives or distributor/wholesalers of local food?**
We prefer distributors when this exists. It is faster because you interact with only one person.
- 4) **Did you develop, over the years, collaboration with your suppliers? (meaning that you both have benefits from the exchange made)**
No.
- 5) **Do you have long term relationships with your local food suppliers?**
Yes, more than 10 years with each of them.
- 6) **Do you apply the rule regional first, then national and if it is not available international?**
Yes.
- 7) **Do you have any suppliers outside your region? For which products?**
Yes, when they are not available in the region. But our local ingredients come mainly from our region.
- 8) **Do you have any international suppliers? For which products?**
Yes, we source products internationally, mostly from Europe, when they are not available here. In winter we have more international suppliers because in Slovenia the production is much lower during the winter months.
- 9) **Which is your furthest product? From where?**
Now, in this moment, it is asparagus from Mexico.
- 10) **Which is your nearest product? From where?**
They come from our region, cheese or meat.

II) Characteristics of retailers – suppliers network

Suppliers' choice

- 1) **What are your requirements in the selection of local suppliers?**
The only requirement is the quality of the products.
- 2) **Are your suppliers producers of the ingredients you buy?**
Not all.
- 3) **Do you prefer small producers to big ones?**
Ideally yes, but it is difficult to interact with many small suppliers. The interaction with one or more bigger suppliers/distributors makes the ingredient sourcing easier and faster.
- 4) **Do you base your relationship on trust or do you require third part certifications (eg. Organic/PGI)?**
We don't have any organic certified supplier. We do base the relationship simply on trust.
- 5) **How many suppliers do you have? Many small suppliers or one big one?**
Both, small local suppliers and big ones.

Type of suppliers' agreement/relationship

- 1) **Did you look for your local suppliers singularly or through cooperatives based on your needs? Or the suppliers proposed to you their products?**

We looked for suppliers singularly or through bigger distributors of local food.

- 2) **Did you develop a close collaboration over the years with your local suppliers? In which way?**

No.

- 3) **Who is responsible for choosing the ingredients? Is the relationship with supplier direct or indirect?**

The relationship with suppliers is direct and I am personally in charge for sourcing the ingredients.

- 4) **Do you personally know your suppliers?**

Yes, we have a direct relationship.

- 5) **Do you talk with them singularly or through a wholesalers/cooperative supplier coordinator?**

No, there is not a coordination of local suppliers.

- 6) **Do you make any agreement about the production they make? Or you just take whatever they offer?**

No, we don't have any special agreement.

- 7) **Do you prefer organic certified suppliers to not certified suppliers?**

Not really, the only important requirement is the quality of the products.

- 8) **How often do your suppliers deliver their products?**

It depends on the need.

Menu design

- 1) **How do you design the menu?**

We have a constant menu that doesn't change and then we have an additional seasonal menu. I design it with my parents. For example now is time for wild garlic to make soups.

- 2) **Is your menu seasonal? Is your menu built on seasonal products?**

A part of our menu is changed over time, and one part of it is fixed all year round.

- 3) **How often do you change your menu?**

It depends on the season, six/seven times per year.

- 4) **Do you make the menu first and then you look for ingredients (top-down approach)?**

No.

- 5) **Do you design the menu based on products' availability from your suppliers (bottom-up approach)?**

We design the seasonal menu based on the products and ingredients available in the season. So we must have the ingredients first and then we write the menu. We cannot afford to have something on the menu that is then not available.

- 6) **What is the percentage of traditional dishes in your menu?**

It is 88% in the menu.

- 7) **Do you use any self-grown ingredients/animals or self collected mushrooms and berries?**

No, we don't have any self-grown products or animals and I do not collect mushrooms or berries.

- 8) **Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, liquors, meat)?**

No.

- 9) **Do you use any organic certified ingredients? Do you prefer them to others?**

No, we don't prefer them to others.

- 10) **Do you have traditional dishes only in the menu?**

Our dishes are mostly traditional but also international. We must have steak and potatoes for children for example, it is something that you must have. But 88% of our menu is built on traditional dishes.

- 11) **Which is your most popular dish? How local is it (meaning if it is part of the regional culinary tradition/heritage)?**

Our most popular dish is *štrukli*. We are known for this type of food. We make it since 1968 and it was, and it still is, constantly in our offer. It is a typical Slovenian food, we do not have translation in other languages, it is just *štrukli*.

Communication with customers

- 1) **Do you communicate to customer the use of local food?**
Yes.
- 2) **Do you communicate to customers who are your suppliers?**
No, we do not write in the menu who are our suppliers but just which ingredients are local.
- 3) **Do you tell the customers where your ingredients come from?**
Yes, we tell them which ingredients are local.
- 4) **How you communicate to customers? Through written material (e.g. through menus, stories, pictures in the restaurant, brochures, boards) or through WOM and reviews?**
We communicate to customers through menus and through our waiting staff.
- 5) **Is it possible for customers to buy some of these food/ingredients of your suppliers in your restaurant?**
No.
- 6) **Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, spirits and liqueurs)?**
No.
- 7) **Do you use products with “Protected Geographical Indication” label? Which ones?**
No, we don’t use any.
- 8) **And do you prefer organic certified suppliers to not certified suppliers?**
No, our priority is the quality of the products but not the certifications.

Other network membership

- 1) **Is your gostilna member of any international organization supporting local food consumption (eg? Slow food)?**
No.
- 2) **Are your chef/chefs members of any professional network supporting local food use and consumption?**
No.
- 3) **Which advantages you see in being member of Gostilna Slovenija network?**
It gives visibility to our gostilna and it gives a quality label that can be easily recognised from customers.

III) Drivers and obstacles in direct-to-retailers local food networks

Obstacles

- 1) **Do you see any obstacle in purchasing local food for your Gostilna?**
The problem is the seasonality, from October until March/April there is not much production, it doesn’t grow much. Production is reduced to just few things. But you can get from Italy or other European countries all the vegetables that you need.
It depends on how much time you have available. Big suppliers have everything and you don’t need to look for what is available locally and from whom. Thus, the main obstacle to local food purchase is the time. Sometime is difficult to find quality ingredients at the local level because the products are grown naturally and it is not good quality.
- 2) **Is purchasing local ingredients more expensive than using international food wholesalers?**
Sometimes it is more expensive, yes. But nowadays it is not so much anymore because if it is too expensive compared with the alternatives that you wouldn’t buy local anymore.

- 3) **Does the use of local food and ingredients increase the final price?**
Not really.
- 4) **Do you find difficult to develop a close and trustworthy relationship with your local suppliers? Is it time consuming?**
Yes, it is very time consuming.
- 5) **Is it difficult to know which supply is available locally? Is it time consuming?**
Yes, it is and it is very time consuming.
- 6) **Is it difficult to buy local supply because quantity is not guaranteed?**
Yes, definitely.
- 7) **Is it difficult to buy local supply because quality is not guaranteed?**
Yes, quality is not always guaranteed.
- 8) **Do you think that bureaucracy makes more difficult to buy local food?**
Sometimes it does. Especially for berries and mushrooms for examples, which are collected from suppliers in the wild. For example, I would be allowed to collect them as citizen but not actually to use them in the gostilna's kitchen, from a legal point of view. This is because you always need a receipt for everything that you are using in the kitchen to demonstrate where it comes from. So if you want to make it legal you cant buy the fresh ones but you have to buy from distributors, which usually have frozen ones and not local.
- 9) **Do customer appreciate the use of local food?**
Some do and some not. I don't think there is an increased sensibility but it is always the same. The ones that appreciated it before still do, and the ones that did not care they still don't.
- 10) **What are the issues you encounter in buying local food?**
The main issue is to know what it is available locally and the time this activity takes. It would be easier if there would be an organization to aggregate all the local suppliers.
- 11) **Is it delivery of local food reliable?**
Yes, mostly.
- 12) **Is the local supply enough to satisfy your demand?**
Yes, in the season it is. Out of season it is not enough for the demand.
- 13) **Are all products that you need available in your region? And in your nation?**
In season mostly, but out of season this is not possible.
- 14) **Do you pay your suppliers for each delivery? Is this a challenge for you?**
Yes, we mostly pay local suppliers for each delivery.

Drivers

- 1) **Which are the advantages that the use of local ingredients gives you?**
The first advantage is surely the freshness, because in maximum few hours they come from the field into your kitchen. Secondly, this makes them environmentally friendly because they don't have to travel a long distance.
- 2) **Do you think that local food has a better quality?**
The problem is that it goes bad quickly, it doesn't last so much.
- 3) **Does local food taste better?**
Yes, mostly it does.
- 4) **Is local food safer?**
No.
- 5) **Is local food healthier?**
Maybe. They say it is, but I don't know.
- 6) **Is local food cheaper?**
It depends.
- 7) **Does the use of local food differentiate you from others?**
I don't know.
- 8) **Which benefits direct supplier relationships give you? Does it increase community**

relationships?

It does.

9) Do you think that buying local food increase the development of your region?

Yes, it definitely does.

IV) Contribution to sustainability

1) What motivates you to purchase and use local ingredients in your Gostilna?

Freshness is the first reason, followed from the environmental concerns.

2) What is your objective in using local food?

It's fresher and it's environmentally friendly.

3) Do you think that your choices can influence costumers and increase local food consumption?

I don't think so. I don't think there is an increased sensibility from people about local food consumption.

4) Do you think that purchasing local food is more sustainable? In which sense?

It doesn't need transportation, so it is good for the environment.

5) Are you motivated from environmental concerns?

Yes, buying local food avoids transportation for long distances.

6) Do you think that your choice for local food enhance the regional and national economic development?

Yes, definitely. It contributes to the economic development/sustainability of local suppliers as well.

7) Do you think that your choice for local food improves the social context and helps to preserve your traditions?

Yes, it does.

Interview 3: Gregor Repovž, owner of Gostilna Repovž, code interview 3 (I3)

I) Formal or informal membership of direct-to-retailers local food networks

Formal direct-to-retailers local food network

1) Are you formally part of any direct-to-retailer network (which means a network that includes you as restaurant and your suppliers)?

No, we are not.

2) Do you know any direct-to-retailer network that links suppliers and gostilnas?

I am not sure but it could be Dobrote Dolenjske, we are part of it as well but as producers. So this is something similar. It started not long ago, but they currently just have marmalades and brandies. They were trying last year to get producers of fresh fruits together but it did not work out. Another one is Posavska skleda, we buy from them as well, like once per month. They have a network of ten farmers but the problem is that we have our production as well, and in the end of the season when our own production is finished the farmers' one is finished too.

Sourcing local food

1) Do you buy local ingredients?

Yes, we mainly actually use our own production. There is a difference though in the out of season period in which it doesn't grow much, then it is necessary for us to source from bigger distributors.

2) Do you buy local ingredients from small local food suppliers? Or from wholesalers/distributors of local food?

We do prefer small local suppliers, one for each specific product. This is a big problem for us though in terms of time invested in suppliers' relationships. For example, for the dried meat one supplier is good just for salami, one is good just for *svinjska mast* (pig fat). So for dried meat we have five different suppliers or more. And the same goes for all the other ingredients that we source (e.g. cheese, vegetables).

3) Do you have relationships with single suppliers for specific products or do you reach them through cooperatives or distributor/wholesalers of local food?

We have single relationships with each supplier.

4) Did you develop, over the years, collaboration with your suppliers? (meaning that you both have benefits from the exchange made)

No. We could do that, but it is hard for us as well to forecast how much we will need of something.

5) Do you have long term relationships with your local food suppliers?

Yes, of course. We built trust over time.

6) Do you apply the rule regional first, then national and if it is not available international?

Yes.

7) Do you have any suppliers outside your region? For which products?

Mainly out of the season.

8) Do you have any international suppliers? For which products?

If there is nothing in winter season from Slovenia, then you have to buy it in the store from international market. The problem is especially February and March.

9) Which is your furthest product? From where?

Internationally. We have 90% of Slovenian products but there are still some products that you cannot find. For example, we produce our organic cookies from our organic spelt but in Slovenia there is not organic sugar produced, so we have to use the sugar produced in South America. But these international ingredients are a really small percentage of what we use. We use Slovenian oil and salt, everything that we can find we prefer Slovenian products.

10) Which is your nearest product? From where?

Our own production of vegetables and fruits is definitely the nearest product.

II) Characteristics of retailers – suppliers network

Suppliers' choice

1) What are your requirements in the selection of local suppliers?

They need to be organic.

2) Are your suppliers producers of the ingredients you buy?

Yes, mainly.

3) Do you prefer small producers to big ones?

Yes, we do.

4) Do you base your relationship on trust or do you require third part certifications (eg. Organic/PGI)?

We prefer third part certifications.

5) How many suppliers do you have? Many small suppliers or one big one?

Many small ones, each supplier is good for one specific product.

Type of suppliers' agreement/relationship

1) Did you look for your local suppliers singularly or through cooperatives based on your needs? Or the suppliers proposed to you their products?

Both, we have some cooperatives that we use like Posavska skleda or Dobrote dolenjske. But it is still not a system that works properly.

2) Did you develop a close collaboration over the years with your local suppliers? In which way?

Not really. It is hard for us as well to forecast how much we will need of each ingredient.

3) Who is responsible for choosing the ingredients? Is the relationship with supplier direct or indirect?

We have a direct relationship, yes. We are a family business, so each of us as an area of competence. I usually deal with dried meat supply and my sister deals with vegetables.

4) Do you personally know your suppliers?

Yes, all our small suppliers.

5) Do you talk with them singularly or through a wholesalers/cooperative supplier coordinator?

Usually we deal with small suppliers singularly except in the case of cooperatives, but this is not so developed.

6) Do you make any agreement about the production they make? Or you just take whatever they offer?

No.

7) Do you prefer organic certified suppliers to not certified suppliers?

Yes, we do. We have an organic farm as well. We put a lot of work to produce organic food and I can smell and taste the difference so it is very important for me that suppliers of the products that we buy are organic

8) How often do your suppliers deliver their products?

It depends. Generally, in the season maybe we interact with the suppliers' of vegetables once per month. Conversely, out of season the interaction is more frequent. Then we have suppliers for cheese, fresh meat, dried meat and in this case the interaction is more frequent all the year around.

Menu design

1) How do you design the menu?

We have a fixed menu, maybe even for all the year. But for all the rest we base it daily on what we have available.

2) Is your menu seasonal? Is your menu built on seasonal products?

Yes, this might change even daily depending on the availability of fresh ingredients.

3) How often do you change your menu?

Even daily, for sure it is seasonal.

4) Do you make the menu first and then you look for ingredients (top-down approach)?

No.

5) Do you design the menu based on products' availability from your suppliers (bottom-up approach)?

Yes, we base it on what we have available of our own production first and then on what is available within our suppliers. In the winter season as well, it is based on what it is available from our local suppliers or through distributors.

6) What is the percentage of traditional dishes in your menu?

We do have dishes that are not traditional, especially if you consider traditional from the regional what it is historically. For example, here in this region, from researchers, it is considered traditional the duck, but you cannot find a duck here, there are not duck producers. But we do have traditional Slovenian dishes in our menu. We are well known for *potica* and *štrukli*, which are traditional Slovenian dishes, but we do them in our way.

7) Do you use any self grown ingredients/animals or self collected mushrooms and berries?

We grow vegetables and fruits (especially apples) and we produce buckwheat as well, but we don't have animals. We self-collect mushrooms, berries and other wild plants, like *regrat* (dandelions) and wild garlic in this period of the year. And a lot of other things you can pick up

in the warmer season.

8) Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, liquors, meat)?

We produce wines (Cviček, pinot grigio, pinot nero), brandies, liquors, apple juice and marmalades. We do not have animals anymore, because it requires too much time. Vegetables and fruits can wait for one or two days. We are organized in the way that we work on our farm from Monday to Wednesday and we open the restaurant from Thursday to Sunday. We would need extra work if we would decide to do have animals. But we think that it is important that we are 100% into what you are doing because you can give extra care and attention. The best worker on the world is not the same thing of being you doing that. When customers come, they expect our mother in the kitchen and me in the service.

9) Do you use any organic certified ingredients? Do you prefer them to others?

Yes, we do. We have organic farmer as well and we put a lot of work to produce organic food and I can smell and taste the difference so it is very important for me that suppliers and the products that we buy are organic.

10) Do you have traditional dishes only in the menu?

No, we have as well not traditional ones.

11) Which is your most popular dish? How local is it (meaning if it is part of the regional culinary tradition/heritage)?

Our most popular dish, it is hard to say, but probably it is a kind of risotto from spelt that we produce. And as well this area of Slovenia is well known for dried meat.

Communication with customers

1) Do you communicate to customer the use of local food?

Yes, we do.

2) Do you communicate to customers who are your suppliers?

Yes, we do.

3) Do you tell the customers where your ingredients come from?

Yes, we do.

4) How you communicate to customers? Through written material (e.g. through menus, stories, pictures in the restaurant, brochures, boards) or through WOM and reviews?

We have suppliers' pictures on the walls, with names and place, so that our customers can see them. And it is written on the menu as well. Moreover, we communicate to customers the use of local and biological ingredients through our staff.

5) Is it possible for customers to buy some of these food/ingredients of your suppliers in your restaurant?

Yes, we have a shop with our own products and as well we can sell there our suppliers' products. When this is not done we can put them in contact with the suppliers directly.

6) Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, spirits and liqueurs)?

Yes, wines, spirits, liquors, brandies, flours, marmalades and juice.

7) Do you use products with "Protected Geographical Indication" label? Which ones?

We use some but not many. Their use it is not so developed as in other countries, like Italy for example. Here in Slovenia more table wines, like *Cviček*, are protected with these certifications. In other countries the protection is concentrated more on the protection of internationally well-known wines.

8) And do you prefer organic certified suppliers to not certified suppliers?

Yes, we do. We have organic farm as well and we put a lot of work to produce organic food and I can smell and taste the difference.

Other network membership

1) Is your gostilna member of any international organization supporting local food

consumption (e.g. Slow food)?

No.

- 2) Are your chef/chefs members of any professional network supporting local food use and consumption?**

No.

- 3) Which advantages you see in being member of Gostilna Slovenija network?**

In the beginning it was good for us because our community here recognised it as a trustworthy brand. So it is a quality label for the local community and we got the local reputation but it is missing the international connection.

III) Drivers and obstacles in direct-to-retailers local food networks

Obstacles

- 1) Do you see any obstacle in purchasing local food for your Gostilna?**

The main problem is the time required to find out what is available and from whom. Secondly, the problem is that they are not connected. Thirdly, farmers are afraid of produce more because they are afraid they will not sell it.

- 2) Is purchasing local ingredients more expensive than using international food wholesalers?**

Yes, it is. But I don't see it as a problem because this is worth it. Customers recognised it as well.

- 3) Does the use of local food and ingredients increase the final price?**

Not really.

- 4) Do you find difficult to develop a close and trustworthy relationship with your local suppliers? Is it time consuming?**

It is not difficult anymore. We developed our own brand now and it is reliable, so suppliers now they can trust us and I think it is also important for small suppliers that they supply to us because we are a reference for them.

- 5) Is it difficult to know which supply is available locally? Is it time consuming?**

Yes, it is difficult and it is time consuming. It would be easier if they would be connected to know what it is available at the local level.

- 6) Is it difficult to buy local supply because quantity is not guaranteed?**

The challenge is that quantity on the local level is usually not enough for our demand.

- 7) Is it difficult to buy local supply because quality is not guaranteed?**

No, the quality is guaranteed.

- 8) Do you think that bureaucracy makes more difficult to buy local food?**

No, it is ok. If you put your own energy in it, then it is no problem. It was a big problem like five years ago, when farmers did not understand that they needed to have papers in order to work with us. But now they do have, they understand now how it works. They grew with us because they understood that we couldn't buy from them.

- 9) Do customer appreciate the use of local food?**

I think yes.

- 10) What are the issues you encounter in buying local food?**

It's strongly time consuming to have specialized suppliers for each ingredient.

- 11) Is it delivery of local food reliable?**

Yes, it is.

- 12) Is the local supply enough to satisfy your demand?**

No, it is definitely not enough.

- 13) Are all products that you need available in your region? And in your nation?**

Mainly yes, in season period. However, out of season is more difficult.

- 14) Do you pay your suppliers for each delivery? Is this a challenge for you?**

It depends, some yes and with the others we have a monthly account. But I don't see it as a

problem. The only challenge is to have more bills, but it is ok.

Drivers

1) Which are the advantages that the use of local ingredients gives you?

It makes our community grow. If everyone thinks like us, with the same philosophy, we can develop.

2) Do you think that local food has a better quality?

Not always.

3) Does local food taste better?

Yes, it has a different taste for sure. Last week we bought garlic for the first time this year but we cooked the soup and we throw it away because the taste was not good. We are always afraid when we run out of our carrots, because we cook a lot of things with them and if they are without taste or bitter the food will not taste the same. The salad as well, when it is from the store, it has no taste or it tastes like chemicals.

4) Is local food safer?

Generally, yes. Our big advantage is that we know our producers so we are sure it is safer. We do know the name of the cow when we buy the meat. They are our neighbours so it is their interest as well to establish a trustworthy relationship.

5) Is local food healthier?

Yes, of course.

6) Is local food cheaper?

It depends.

7) Does the use of local food differentiate you from others?

Yes, it does.

8) Which benefits direct supplier relationships give you? Does it increase community relationships?

It increases community relationships and connections. Moreover, it increases people coming from outside the region and the nation.

9) Do you think that buying local food increases the development of your region?

It does. It brings more people, both locals and tourists.

IV) Contribution to sustainability

1) What motivates you to purchase and use local ingredients in your Gostilna?

It differentiates us and it helps our community to grow as well as our region.

2) What is your objective in using local food?

We are slowly building our philosophy, this didn't come overnight but it comes from a long process. We believe in dedicating ourselves to it and to the customers.

3) Do you think that your choices can influence customers and increase local food consumption?

There is an increased sensibility maybe. Customers are growing, maybe because we had good reviews or maybe for word of mouth. We have many returning customers.

4) Do you think that purchasing local food is more sustainable? In which sense?

It helps our community to grow and it is good for the environment.

5) Are you motivated from environmental concerns?

Yes, we are. Local productions are for sure better for the environment.

6) Do you think that your choice for local food enhances the regional and national economic development?

Yes, sure.

7) Do you think that your choice for local food improves the social context and helps to preserve your traditions?

Yes, it surely does.

Interview 4: Margareta Damjanić, owner of Gostilna Pri Kuklju, code interview 4 (I4)

I) Formal or informal membership of direct-to-retailers local food networks

Formal direct-to-retailers local food network

1) Are you formally part of any direct-to-retailer network (which means a network that includes you as restaurant and your suppliers)?

No.

2) Do you know any direct-to-retailer network that links suppliers and gostilnas?

No.

Sourcing local food

1) Do you buy local ingredients?

We are trying to do it, but there is not enough supply in this region so we are buying our ingredients in Ljubljana market (*tržnica*). I usually buy some ingredients from producers from Dolenjeska region, like apple juice from Gostilna Repovž. Here in the region is quite hard, since we are 20 minutes away from Ljubljana and people are going to work there and they don't have farms.

2) Do you buy local ingredients from small local food suppliers? Or from wholesalers/distributors of local food?

Some of our employees supply some of the ingredients that we use, but this is a small percentage and it is on the line of legality because they are not official producers. Small suppliers are from Ljubljana and from Dolenjska. The rest is all bigger distributors, for example for vegetables is Gea and we use it when we run out of the regional supply. These distributors have mainly international ingredients then.

3) Do you have relationships with single suppliers for specific products or do you reach them through cooperatives or distributor/wholesalers of local food?

We use both.

4) Did you develop, over the years, collaboration with your suppliers?

No.

5) Do you have long term relationships with your local food suppliers?

Yes.

6) Do you apply the rule regional first, then national and if it is not available international?

Yes, generally.

7) Do you have any suppliers outside your region? For which products?

Yes, they are mostly outside the region.

8) Do you have any international suppliers? For which products?

We use big distributors to supply meat and vegetables (when we run out of ours) and they mainly have international products.

9) Which is your furthest product? From where?

Maybe the furthest product is the meat from Hungary.

10) Which is your nearest product? From where?

The nearest products are potatoes and salad that we get from our employees.

II) Characteristics of retailers – suppliers network

Suppliers' choice

- 1) **What are your requirements in the selection of local suppliers?**
We don't have special requirements, it is about the quality of the products.
- 2) **Are your suppliers producers of the ingredients you buy?**
It depends. Some are and some are just distributors.
- 3) **Do you prefer small producers to big ones?**
I would like to use just small and local producers, but the supply is not always enough.
- 4) **Do you base your relationship on trust or do you require third part certifications (eg. Organic/PGI)?**
I usually base the relationship on trust.
- 5) **How many suppliers do you have? Many small suppliers or one big one?**
We have both types, in total we have about 15 to 20 suppliers.

Type of suppliers' agreement/relationship

- 1) **Did you look for your local suppliers singularly or through cooperatives based on your needs? Or the suppliers proposed to you their products?**
I interact with suppliers directly and with bigger distributors.
- 2) **Did you develop a close collaboration over the years with your local suppliers? In which way?**
No.
- 3) **Who is responsible for choosing the ingredients? Is the relationship with supplier direct or indirect?**
The relationship is direct. I go to *Tržnica* in Ljubljana twice per week because I need to see the products, what the market offers. Then usually for big quantities they deliver it here.
I am responsible for choosing the ingredients with all the other people that work here (seven employees), we choose together what to get from each supplier.
- 4) **Do you personally know your suppliers?**
Yes.
- 5) **Do you talk with them singularly or through a wholesalers/cooperative supplier coordinator?**
We interact directly with local/national producers.
- 6) **Do you make any agreement about the production they make? Or you just take whatever they offer?**
No, we don't have any agreement.
- 7) **Do you prefer organic certified suppliers to not certified suppliers?**
Not really.
- 8) **How often do your suppliers deliver their products?**
Usually they deliver once or twice per week.

Menu design

- 1) **How do you design the menu?**
We base the menu on the season and of course we have a fixed part, which is always present.
- 2) **Is your menu seasonal? Is your menu built on seasonal products?**
Yes, we have a seasonal menu.
- 3) **How often do you change your menu?**
We change the seasonal menu six/seven times per year.
- 4) **Do you make the menu first and then you look for ingredients (top-down approach)?**
No.
- 5) **Do you design the menu based on products' availability from your suppliers (bottom-up approach)?**
Yes, I know what are the seasonal ingredients (now for example *regrat* - dandelions - and

asparagus) and then I choose what to include in the menu.

6) What is the percentage of traditional dishes in your menu?

They are mostly traditional, but we have international dishes too.

7) Do you use any self-grown ingredients/animals or self collected mushrooms and berries?

No, it is not allowed to use them in the restaurant. We get berries and mushrooms from a company that collect all the mushrooms and berries self-collected from the people, they freeze them and then they sell them with the right papers and everything.

8) Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, liquors, meat)?

No, nothing.

9) Do you use any organic certified ingredients? Do you prefer them to others?

No, I don't prefer them. But we do use some.

10) Do you have traditional dishes only in the menu?

Not only but mainly. Then we use fish a lot in the menu because my father is from Dalmatia so he imported here the Dalmatian cuisine.

11) Which is your most popular dish? How local is it (meaning if it is part of the regional culinary tradition/heritage)?

We are known for seasonal soups, *potica* and *štrukli*.

Communication with customers

1) Do you communicate to customer the use of local food?

Yes, sometimes.

2) Do you communicate to customers who are your suppliers?

Yes, sometimes.

3) Do you tell the customers where your ingredients come from?

Yes.

4) How you communicate to customers? Through written material (e.g. through menus, stories, pictures in the restaurant, brochures, boards) or through WOM and reviews?

We write it in the menu and then we talk with customers and we advise them what is made with local ingredients.

5) Is it possible for customers to buy some of these food/ingredients of your suppliers in your restaurant?

No.

6) Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, spirits and liqueurs)?

No, nothing.

7) Do you use products with "Protected Geographical Indication" label? Which ones?

No.

8) And do you prefer organic certified suppliers to not certified suppliers?

I don't prefer them but sometimes we do use them.

Other network membership

1) Is your gostilna member of any international organization supporting local food consumption (eg? Slow food)?

No.

2) Are your chef/chefs members of any professional network supporting local food use and consumption?

No.

3) Which advantages you see in being member of Gostilna Slovenija network?

I think we don't get anything from that. People, even Slovenian, do not recognise it as a quality label.

III) Drivers and obstacles in direct-to-retailers local food networks

Obstacles

- 1) **Do you see any obstacle in purchasing local food for your Gostilna?**
The main problem for our gostilna is the lack of producers in our community and in general I think that Slovenian production is not enough to satisfy the demand.
- 2) **Is purchasing local ingredients more expensive than using international food wholesalers?**
Yes, it is.
- 3) **Does the use of local food and ingredients increase the final price?**
No, it is the same. We have a price and it is always the same because that's what people expect.
- 4) **Do you find difficult to develop a close and trustworthy relationship with your local suppliers? Is it time consuming?**
It is time consuming, yes.
- 5) **Is it difficult to know which supply is available locally? Is it time consuming?**
Yes, I need to go to Ljubljana market twice per week and it is time consuming.
- 6) **Is it difficult to buy local supply because quantity is not guaranteed?**
Yes.
- 7) **Is it difficult to buy local supply because quality is not guaranteed?**
Yes.
- 8) **Do you think that bureaucracy makes more difficult to buy local food?**
Yes, it definitely does. It requires a lot of paper work and small producers are not ready yet for it. I like to work in the restaurant and I am proud to represent our food but it is so hard sometimes when I have to sit in the office for many hours to do all the paper work just to get some good meat from the local producers. If there would be a local organization to manage this paper work it would be much easier. Bureaucracy is going to kill us because we have to sell and work, not spend our time writing down paper work.
- 9) **Do customer appreciate the use of local food?**
Yes, they do appreciate. If you tell them that you have something local, homemade they are always going to choose it. So they do recognise the value.
- 10) **What are the issues you encounter in buying local food?**
There is not enough production in this area, and I think in general in Slovenia.
- 11) **Is it delivery of local food reliable?**
Not really. Not even from bigger suppliers actually. We had a problem with a big distributor from Maribor, just before Easter. We ordered the walnuts for *potica* and they were supposed to deliver them on Wednesday. When I called on Wednesday to know the arrival time of the order they told me "the order was not sent because there was not enough demand for Ljubljana". But we really needed it and anyway they did not call in advance to tell this to us. In the end it worked out, but it was a lot of stress.
- 12) **Is the local supply enough to satisfy your demand?**
No, it is not.
- 13) **Are all products that you need available in your region? And in your nation?**
No, they are not.
- 14) **Do you pay your suppliers for each delivery? Is this a challenge for you?**
No, I pay them mostly monthly and it is better for me because I do the receipt just once and that's it.

Drivers

- 1) **Which are the advantages that the use of local ingredients gives you?**
Customers recognise the value of it and they appreciate it.

2) Do you think that local food has a better quality?

Not always.

3) Does local food taste better?

Sometimes. I think we are too used to mass production and we don't like it then.

4) Is local food safer?

I don't think it is. The problem is that big producers are constantly controlled from the alimentary organization by taking samples. Small producers are not controlled, so we don't know what they actually use for their production. For big corporation is easier to see what they are doing.

5) Is local food healthier?

It is the same like safety.

6) Is local food cheaper?

No, it is more expensive but it is not a big difference.

7) Does the use of local food differentiate you from others?

Yes, it does.

8) Which benefits direct supplier relationships give you? Does it increase community relationships?

It would, if it would be possible to create a community.

9) Do you think that buying local food increase the development of your region?

It depends. Here is very difficult to create a community of suppliers because there is not production.

IV) Contribution to sustainability

1) What motivates you to purchase and use local ingredients in your Gostilna?

I think customers give value to it and it would be smart for our environment

2) What is your objective in using local food?

I think clients give value to it and it would be smart for our environment. I miss having producers in the community in which we are.

3) Do you think that your choices can influence costumers and increase local food consumption?

I don't know.

4) Do you think that purchasing local food is more sustainable? In which sense?

Buying local would be smart from an environmental perspective.

5) Are you motivated from environmental concerns?

Yes, I am.

6) Do you think that your choice for local food enhance the regional and national economic development?

Not yet, but maybe in the long term. If all people start to value the local then this will happen.

7) Do you think that your choice for local food improves the social context and helps to preserve your traditions?

It is difficult to develop something like this in this region because of a lack of producers.

Interview 5: Tomaž Kavčič, chef of Gostilna Pri Lojzetu, code interview 5 (I5)

I) Formal or informal membership of direct-to-retailers local food networks

Formal direct-to-retailers local food network

1) Are you formally part of any direct-to-retailer network (which means a network that includes you as restaurant and your suppliers)?

No.

2) Do you know any direct-to-retailer network that links suppliers and gostilnas?

E.g. Agraria Koper

Sourcing local food

1) Do you buy local ingredients?

Yes, 90%.

2) Do you buy local ingredients from small local food suppliers? Or from wholesalers/distributors of local food?

From both, but mostly from local suppliers.

3) Do you have relationships with single suppliers for specific products or do you reach them through cooperatives or distributor/wholesalers of local food?

Mostly I am buying without distributors, directly from suppliers.

4) Did you develop, over the years, collaboration with your suppliers?

Yes, I have suppliers which I trust, I know they will offer me the most quality products. Since I am regular payer they always offer me the best quality and they call me when there is something different, new.

5) Do you have long term relationships with your local food suppliers?

Yes, I have long term relationship with suppliers.

6) Do you apply the rule regional first, then national and if it is not available international?

If the client (e.g. external catering or special event) doesn't demand differently, I always focus on local or regional in my restaurant.

7) Do you have any suppliers outside your region? For which products?

For ingredients that you usually cannot get in our country or they are not always top quality like kapesante, foie gras ...

8) Do you have any international suppliers? For which products?

E.g. selecta for chocolate, goose products ...

9) Which is your furthest product? From where?

Beef wagyu meat from Japan.

10) Which is your nearest product? From where?

Vegetables (radish from Gorica, asparagus, potatoes, Vipava corn –'guštenca'). Everything coming from the surroundings of Vipava valley.

II) Characteristics of retailers – suppliers network

Suppliers' choice

1) What are your requirements in the selection of local suppliers?

Bilateral trust, I need to know the production methods. The first requirement it is always the quality of the ingredients.

2) Are your suppliers producers of the ingredients you buy?

Generally, yes.

3) Do you prefer small producers to big ones?

I choose the once that have the most quality products, size it is not the main issue.

4) Do you base your relationship on trust or do you require third part certifications (eg. Organic/PGI)?

I built the relationship on trust, which strengthen over the years.

5) How many suppliers do you have? Many small suppliers or one big one?

I have a lot of small suppliers of local ingredients (surroundings farmers) from which I buy seasonal ingredients. I usually buy from bigger once when farmers don't have enough or they don't have anymore.

Type of suppliers' agreement/relationship

- 1) **Did you look for your local suppliers singularly or through cooperatives based on your needs? Or the suppliers proposed to you their products?**
Suppliers found me.
- 2) **Did you develop a close collaboration over the years with your local suppliers? In which way?**
Not really.
- 3) **Who is responsible for choosing the ingredients? Is the relationship with supplier direct or indirect?**
I choose all the ingredients personally and I have personal relationship with all the suppliers. I know all of them really well.
- 4) **Do you personally know your suppliers?**
Yes, I know all of them really well.
- 5) **Do you talk with them singularly or through a wholesalers/cooperative supplier coordinator?**
Singularly.
- 6) **Do you make any agreement about the production they make? Or you just take whatever they offer?**
We usually base the menu on what suppliers offer.
- 7) **Do you prefer organic certified suppliers to not certified suppliers?**
No, the most important variable is the quality but we do have organic suppliers too.
- 8) **How often do your suppliers deliver their products?**
When it is necessary. I care to have the freshest products, so deliveries are based on the need.

Menu design

- 1) **How do you design the menu?**
We don't have fixed menu, we design it according to the season, thus according to products that I buy.
- 2) **Is your menu seasonal? Is your menu built on seasonal products?**
Yes.
- 3) **How often do you change your menu?**
Really often, at least once per month. Particular dishes change even every day.
- 4) **Do you make the menu first and then you look for ingredients (top-down approach)?**
No.
- 5) **Do you design the menu based on products' availability from your suppliers (bottom-up approach)?**
I design the menu according with the ingredients available. If the client has special requests, then I search for the most suitable ingredients to satisfy it.
- 6) **What is the percentage of traditional dishes in your menu?**
Most of the dishes are traditional, but they are prepared in an innovative way.
- 7) **Do you use any self-grown ingredients/animals or self collected mushrooms and berries?**
We have self-collected herbs, vegetables and mushrooms (wild asparagus, mint, nettle, primrose, mushrooms *jurček*).
- 8) **Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, liquors, meat)?**
No, I don't produce them myself but the in association with Klet Brda we produce the sparkling wine 'Zemona rosé'.
- 9) **Do you use any organic certified ingredients? Do you prefer them to others?**
Sure, I use organic ingredients with certificates. However for me they don't have higher value because my first goal is to have the best quality of ingredients and not being organic.
- 10) **Do you have traditional dishes only in the menu?**

Mostly, but not all.

11) Which is your most popular dish? How local is it (meaning if it is part of the regional culinary tradition/heritage)?

I have few dishes for which I am known. For example, salty barbecue (*solni žar*), gin tonic. These dishes are not strictly local. Then there is the *Vipavaska jota*, which is definitely local. I am always focused that my dishes have a local identity.

Communication with customers

1) Do you communicate to customer the use of local food?

Of course. I tell the customers from where the ingredients come from, who are the producers and how they were produced.

2) Do you communicate to customers who are your suppliers?

Yes, I do if they ask for it.

3) Do you tell the customers where your ingredients come from?

Yes, sure.

4) How you communicate to customers? Through written material (e.g. through menus, stories, pictures in the restaurant, brochures, boards) or through WOM and reviews?

Everything passes through our staff, to every customer we explain every dish and its roots.

5) Is it possible for customers to buy some of these food/ingredients of your suppliers in your restaurant?

They cannot buy them here, except the sparkling wine 'Zemona rosè'. However, we often give them some gifts.

6) Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, spirits and liqueurs)?

No.

7) Do you use products with "Protected Geographical Indication" label? Which ones?

Yes, we do.

8) And do you prefer organic certified suppliers to not certified suppliers?

No, the most important variable is quality.

Other network membership

1) Is your gostilna member of any international organization supporting local food consumption (e.g. Slow food)?

Exactly here, in gostilna Pri Lojzetu, it was established Slow Food Slovenija. So, our gostilna is member of this organization from its start. As well, we are included in culinary association Le Soste, as the only Slovenian representatives. This movement also gives remarkable emphasis to this way of cooking.

2) Are your chef/chefs members of any professional network supporting local food use and consumption?

No.

3) Which advantages you see in being member of Gostilna Slovenija network?

The main advantage is the concern that the network has for quality and the emphasis the richness of Slovene cuisine with local and seasonal ingredients.

III) Drivers and obstacles in direct-to-retailers local food networks

Obstacles

1) Do you see any obstacle in purchasing local food for your Gostilna?

Bureaucracy is the main problem. I would buy from many farmers that I know they have excellent products but unfortunately I cannot because they don't have the necessary papers to

give receipts.

- 2) **Is purchasing local ingredients more expensive than using international food wholesalers?**
It is not if we consider the ratio price – performance.
- 3) **Does the use of local food and ingredients increase the final price?**
The price for the customer is fixed.
- 4) **Do you find difficult to develop a close and trustworthy relationship with your local suppliers? Is it time consuming?**
It is not difficult if both sides are open and honest.
- 5) **Is it difficult to know which supply is available locally? Is it time consuming?**
No, because I am every day at the market, I am paying attention to the changes.
- 6) **Is it difficult to buy local supply because quantity is not guaranteed?**
This is sometimes a problem. That's why sometimes if I necessarily need a predefined ingredient I choose then bigger distributors.
- 7) **Is it difficult to buy local supply because quality is not guaranteed?**
Yes.
- 8) **Do you think that bureaucracy makes more difficult to buy local food?**
Absolutely.
- 9) **Do customer appreciate the use of local food?**
They do a lot, that is one of the reasons why they come back to our gostilna. The majority of our customers are regular customers, who appreciate our philosophy.
- 10) **What are the issues you encounter in buying local food?**
Bureaucracy is the main problem.
- 11) **Is it delivery of local food reliable?**
Usually yes.
- 12) **Is the local supply enough to satisfy your demand?**
Not always, when I have bigger groups I have to search a lot to get the right quantity.
- 13) **Are all products that you need available in your region? And in your nation?**
Mostly.
- 14) **Do you pay your suppliers for each delivery? Is this a challenge for you?**
Yes.

Drivers

- 1) **Which are the advantages that the use of local ingredients gives you?**
Transparency, monitoring from seed to final product and definitely the higher quality.
- 2) **Do you think that local food has a better quality?**
Yes.
- 3) **Does local food taste better?**
Yes, more intense.
- 4) **Is local food safer?**
Yes, I think so.
- 5) **Is local food healthier?**
Yes.
- 6) **Is local food cheaper?**
No.
- 7) **Does the use of local food differentiate you from others?**
Yes, definitely.
- 8) **Which benefits direct supplier relationships give you? Does it increase community relationships?**
The community is more connected and this is also the way to develop it.
- 9) **Do you think that buying local food increase the development of your region?**
We are a small gostilna and that is why I don't buy big quantities but definitely we contribute to

the economic development of the region. If others would buy local as well, this development would be more obvious.

IV) Contribution to sustainability

1) What motivates you to purchase and use local ingredients in your Gostilna?

Mostly the better quality and also the protection of traditions because also my grandparents were buying from these suppliers, so they are trustworthy.

2) What is your objective in using local food?

To emphasize the real taste, without covering it.

3) Do you think that your choices can influence costumers and increase local food consumption?

I am doing my best towards this, hopefully successfully.

4) Do you think that purchasing local food is more sustainable? In which sense?

Definitely. More and more people are aware of the advantages of local food consumption. Unfortunately not everyone can afford healthy local food.

5) Are you motivated from environmental concerns?

Definitely, environmental issues are a great concern for me.

6) Do you think that your choice for local food enhance the regional and national economic development?

Sure, it does.

7) Do you think that your choice for local food improves the social context and helps to preserve your traditions?

Of course, local food is the base for my restaurant. Without it the restaurant could not exist.

Interview 6: Tanja Pintarič, owner of Gostilna Rajh, code interview 6 (I6)

I) Formal or informal membership of direct-to-retailers local food networks

Formal direct-to-retailers local food network

1) Are you formally part of any direct-to-retailer network (which means a network that includes you as restaurant and your suppliers)?

No.

2) Do you know any direct-to-retailer network that links suppliers and gostilnas?

No.

Sourcing local food

1) Do you buy local ingredients?

Yes.

2) Do you buy local ingredients from small local food suppliers? Or from wholesalers/distributors of local food?

We buy ingredients directly from suppliers.

3) Do you have relationships with single suppliers for specific products or do you reach them through cooperatives or distributor/wholesalers of local food?

We interact with them directly but they generally supply us more than one product.

4) Did you develop, over the years, collaboration with your suppliers? (meaning that you both have benefits from the exchange made)

Yes, we talk about what we want to have for next year. For example, I tell them that I want more lettuce or garlic for next year so we try to agree.

5) Do you have long term relationships with your local food suppliers?

Yes.

- 6) **Do you apply the rule regional first, then national and if it is not available international?**
Yes, we always start from our region, than national and then maybe some spices and some other unusual ingredients you have to search at an international level.
- 7) **Do you have any suppliers outside your region? For which products?**
Yes, we do when we don't find the products here.
- 8) **Do you have any international suppliers? For which products?**
Yes, we do for all seasons.
- 9) **Which is your furthest product? From where?**
It is green tea from Japan.
- 10) **Which is your nearest product? From where?**
It comes from our garden, apricots and *jurka* grape.

II) Characteristics of retailers – suppliers network

Suppliers' choice

- 1) **What are your requirements in the selection of local suppliers?**
We do prefer small suppliers to big ones and we do prefer regional or national food to international. If it is possible we prefer as well organic productions.
- 2) **Are your suppliers producers of the ingredients you buy?**
Yes, generally.
- 3) **Do you prefer small producers to big ones?**
Yes, we do.
- 4) **Do you base your relationship on trust or do you require third part certifications (eg. Organic/PGI)?**
We base it on trust, but we do prefer certifications and organic productions in general.
- 5) **How many suppliers do you have? Many small suppliers or one big one?**
We have 5 or 6 of medium/big size. And then we have some small producers of specific products at the regional level, they are not regular in the long term, so we change them over time.

Type of suppliers' agreement/relationship

- 1) **Did you look for your local suppliers singularly or through cooperatives based on your needs? Or the suppliers proposed to you their products?**
We have small suppliers but not specialised in just one product. Each supplier gives us more than one. We interact with them directly, there is not a cooperative or a wholesaler.
- 2) **Did you develop a close collaboration over the years with your local suppliers? In which way?**
Yes, we talk about what we want to have for next year. For example, I tell them that I want more lettuce or garlic for next year so we try to agree.
- 3) **Who is responsible for choosing the ingredients? Is the relationship with supplier direct or indirect?**
Yes, the relationship is direct and my father and me we are responsible for the choice.
- 4) **Do you personally know your suppliers?**
Yes, we have a direct relationship. My father is responsible more for vegetables and fruits.
- 5) **Do you talk with them singularly or through a wholesalers/cooperative supplier coordinator?**
We usually speak directly with our suppliers.
- 6) **Do you make any agreement about the production they make? Or you just take whatever they offer?**

We always talk about the production for the next year, based on what we need more or less in especially quantity.

7) Do you prefer organic certified suppliers to not certified suppliers?

We do prefer them if we can, of course. Like for example buckwheat, because we make bread from it and we have specific supplier who is producing organic buckwheat and he also makes the flour in the traditional old way with the stone mill.

8) How often do your suppliers deliver their products?

I order when I need, weekly or twice per week.

Menu design

1) How do you design the menu?

It is usually designed on the season.

2) Is your menu seasonal? Is your menu built on seasonal products?

Yes, we have a fixed menu and then we have a seasonal menu.

3) How often do you change your menu?

We usually change it every two months.

4) Do you make the menu first and then you look for ingredients (top-down approach)?

No.

5) Do you design the menu based on products' availability from your suppliers (bottom-up approach)?

Yes, based on what is available we design the menu.

6) What is the percentage of traditional dishes in your menu?

We have all traditional dishes but combined with modern style and not so fatty and with less sugar.

7) Do you use any self-grown ingredients/animals or self collected mushrooms and berries?

We grow *jurka* grape and apricots. But we don't have animals. We don't self-collect berries and mushrooms but other people from the region do it and then they sell to us.

8) Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, liquors, meat)?

Yes, apricot jam and juice from *jurka* grape and elder flower. We have pumpkin oil, butter and seeds under our label, but it is not produced directly from us. We are the only one to produce this pumpkin seeds butter, and maybe we should think about protecting it with certification. Every customer that comes gets a welcome with organic buckwheat bread with this pumpkin seeds butter on top.

9) Do you use any organic certified ingredients? Do you prefer them to others?

We use organic buckwheat flour to make our own bread. We try to experiment organic when we can generally, yes.

10) Do you have traditional dishes only in the menu?

We have all traditional dishes but combined with modern style and not so fatty and with less sugar.

11) Which is your most popular dish? How local is it (meaning if it is part of the regional culinary tradition/heritage)?

We are famous for the use of pumpkin oil and butter. And we have the full menu from appetizer to dessert with pumpkin oil and butter.

Communication with customers

1) Do you communicate to customer the use of local food?

Yes.

2) Do you communicate to customers who are your suppliers?

Yes. We don't have it written yet but we are thinking about doing it. However we have the

flyers outside that our suppliers bring to us. We didn't write it until now because very often suppliers run out of goods and then we have to change the menu.

3) Do you tell the customers where your ingredients come from?

Yes.

4) How you communicate to customers? Through written material (e.g. through menus, stories, pictures in the restaurant, brochures, boards) or through WOM and reviews?

First touch is that the customer sees the menu so he sees the story. And then we tell to each of them what are our story and our philosophy personally through the waiting staff.

5) Is it possible for customers to buy some of these food/ingredients of your suppliers in your restaurant?

Some of them, like the pumpkin oil products.

6) Do you have any in-house production (eg. Wine, spirits and liqueurs)?

We produce jam and juice from elderflower and *jurka* grape.

7) Do you use products with "Protected Geographical Indication" label? Which ones?

Yes, we have *gibanica*.

8) And do you prefer organic certified suppliers to not certified suppliers?

If it is possible yes, we do choose organic.

Other network membership

1) Is your gostilna member of any international organization supporting local food consumption (eg Slow food)?

Yes. The first one is Chaine des Rotisseurs and the second one is Jeunes Restaurateurs d'Europe. They are international networks and as restaurant we are included in this networks. The first one is one of the oldest French association, people join the network because they love food and traditions and we cook for them as professionals. Then, once per month they gather together and we cook for them. Each restaurant in Slovenia does it once per year. The second one, it is an association for young restaurants and cooks.

2) Are your chef/chefs members of any professional network supporting local food use and consumption?

No.

3) Which advantages you see in being member of Gostilna Slovenija network?

Mh, I didn't notice any positive effect of being part of the network, just few customers recognise the brand and they say 'oh, you are par of Gostilna Slovenija too?'. There is not enough action in the network. It is our own fault that we did not connect each other enough (among the restaurants) in order to start some new initiatives, for example creating a "Gostilna week" instead of a "Restaurant week".

III) Drivers and obstacles in direct-to-retailers local food networks

Obstacles

1) Do you see any obstacle in purchasing local food for your Gostilna?

The problem is that you have to search what is available locally on your own and it takes time. It would be maybe better if suppliers would be connected each other.

2) Is purchasing local ingredients more expensive than using international food wholesalers?

It is a bit, but it is more or less the same.

3) Does the use of local food and ingredients increase the final price?

No, you cannot afford this.

4) Do you find difficult to develop a close and trustworthy relationship with your local suppliers? Is it time consuming?

Suppliers don't know how to introduce themselves to buyers so we would know easily what is

available and what they produce. We need to search for them. They might have very quality products but they don't know how to sell it. It would be good if someone would connect them.

5) Is it difficult to know which supply is available locally? Is it time consuming?

Yes, it is. If you don't have personal interest to search for the products it is very difficult to find them.

6) Is it difficult to buy local supply because quantity is not guaranteed?

No, it is enough just for some time, and then they run out of it. For example, the organic buckwheat is finished too fast, so now he is calculating how much he sold to me previous years and he will reserve this amount. So I will have enough for all year.

7) Is it difficult to buy local supply because quality is not guaranteed?

No.

8) Do you think that bureaucracy makes more difficult to buy local food?

Yes, very. We cannot buy from suppliers who don't give us papers, which they would be even cheaper.

9) Do customer appreciate the use of local food?

Yes.

10) What are the issues you encounter in buying local food?

It is the quantity and it is the issue to find out who has what.

11) Is it delivery of local food reliable?

Not always.

12) Is the local supply enough to satisfy your demand?

No, it is not. They always run out.

13) Are all products that you need available in your region? And in your nation?

Not all, but mostly.

14) Do you pay your suppliers for each delivery? Is this a challenge for you?

Yes, I do. Maybe it will be a problem later on, with new legislations because I pay on delivery in cash.

Drivers

1) Which are the advantages that the use of local ingredients gives you?

The food is more traditional, as it was in the past and fresh. Vegetables don't see few fridges before arriving here.

2) Do you think that local food has a better quality?

Yes, it does.

3) Does local food taste better?

Yes.

4) Is local food safer?

Yes.

5) Is local food healthier?

Yes.

6) Is local food cheaper?

No. It is more expensive, but it is not a big difference and then you can actually see and taste it. However, if you get local food from people that 'do it in the afternoon', than it is cheaper, yes, but it is not legal.

7) Does the use of local food differentiate you from others?

Yes, it does for sure. Customers appreciate local quality food.

8) Which benefits direct supplier relationships give you? Does it increase community relationships?

For sure it does.

9) Do you think that buying local food increase the development of your region?

Yes, for sure it does.

IV) Contribution to sustainability

1) What motivates you to purchase and use local ingredients in your Gostilna?

I support the local producers connecting with them and from an environmental point of view, I am trying not to affect the environment too much and I don't have waste in the kitchen.

2) What is your objective in using local food?

The objective is that customers get the best quality, authentic and traditional food. This makes them come back.

3) Do you think that your choices can influence costumers and increase local food consumption?

Yes, customers come back more often and they bring more people along. They appreciate the quality of local food.

4) Do you think that purchasing local food is more sustainable? In which sense?

For sure you create a network of people and it has an economic impact.

5) Are you motivated from environmental concerns?

Yes, shorter distances from suppliers, less waste of packaging and food parts, you can use almost everything.

6) Do you think that your choice for local food enhance the regional and national economic development?

For sure it does yes.

7) Do you think that your choice for local food improves the social context and helps to preserve your traditions?

Yes, for sure.