A study of Albanian and UK consumers' identity creation within food shopping experiences: a consumer culture theory approach.

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by

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Declaration

This thesis is the result of the author's original research and has not been previously submitted for any other degree examination.

Parts of this research have been published in an academic journal and presented at academic events while developing this thesis:

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the relationship Albanian and UK consumers have with food shopping culture and how their choice of food outlets is affected by social factors. An emic approach is used to gather "culture-rich" data with regards to the reasons consumers choose farmers' markets or supermarkets as food outlets and construct identity through their shopping experiences. The study's underpinning conceptual framework is Consumer Culture Theory and specifically the consumer identity and neo-tribe body of work. The research particularly focuses on Elliott's (2004) Consumption Practices and identity model and makes empirical and theoretical contributions therein. An extensive discussion around farmers' markets, supermarkets and literature around identity creation is presented to support the conceptual framework of the thesis. The findings show that individuals construct identity through a group of paradoxes related to the material food, symbolic meaning of food, social self, private self, desire, constraints, hedonistic aspects of food shopping, utilitarian aspects of food shopping, that together represent the tension of esoteric tensions consumers experience when deciding which outlet to visit and what to buy. The study also finds that the concept of family is deeply embedded in the Albanians' identity creation whereas to the British both family and friends are enduring social relationships impacting self-identity. Culture and a sense of pride of the Albanian ethnicity influence Albanians' identity creation. Albanian culture and ethnicity also influence food shopping experiences which are primarily driven by traditions passed on down through the generations of families. The thesis also contributes to theory upon the neo-tribe creation. This study finds that farmers (food vendors) and online bloggers create tribes by sharing common practices and knowledge, consumers follow similar lifestyles and without realising they start to form a neo-tribe, stretching existing theory that suggests neo-tribe members acknowledge and communicate with each other.

Keywords: self-identity, consumer perceptions, farmers' markets, supermarkets, neo-tribes, consumer culture theory.

Chapter 1: Introduction to research and conceptual framework

1.0 Introduction

This study is concerned with understanding the shopping experiences Albanian and UK consumers have in farmers' markets and supermarkets and understanding the relationship which consumers in Albania and the UK have with food shopping culture and how their choice of food outlets is affected by the social influences which surround them. The main objective is to investigate how Albanian and UK individuals perceive food outlets and build self-identity through their shopping experiences in each of them. This chapter provides an introduction to the thesis and an overview of its conceptual framework. The chapter begins with outlining the theoretical background of the thesis. Consumer Culture Theory is also presented as introduced by Arnould and Thompson (2005), under which this study is aiming to make contributions. Definitions, research aim and questions, and methodology are also presented, and the chapter concludes with the introduction of the conceptual framework underpinning this study.

1.1 Research conceptual framework

The broad conceptual framework is presented here within which this thesis is focused. A definition of consumption as it is used in this thesis is given and consumer behaviour and consumer culture subjects are also introduced. This thesis will consider specifically the work of Arnould and Thompson (2005) conceptualised as Consumer Culture Theory and referring to several contributions that address the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings.

1.1.1 Definition of consumption adopted for this thesis

Consumption as we currently understand it, emerged at the start of the 20th century with the rise of the economic and social freedoms which provided the individual the possibility of getting pleasure from the goods they buy (Lasch, 1984). It was Fordism

in the 1920s that created the setting of what is called modern consumption practices (Gabriel and Lang, 1995), which in conjunction with advertising, building rapport with the customer, and the introduction of brands, turned clients into consumers who are in charge of their own purchase decision making (Strasser, 1989). Consumption dominates the essence of the modern era on a social and cultural level, plays an important role when individuals make decisions on a daily basis and influences eating habits, clothing purchases, furnishing or decorating the house, how people communicate and fundamentally the way people think (O'Cass and McEwen, 2004). McCracken (1990) suggests that consumption is unprecedently linked to culture in the modern world, highlighting that consumption is a cultural phenomenon of the modern society. He defines as "culture" the activities and ideas that we use to construe and construct our world and he defines as "consumption" the processes by which goods and services are created, purchased and used (McCracken, 1990). Consumption has been investigated in many ways when examining consumer behaviour and it concerns how products and services are purchased, used and disposed of (discarding the consumed products through waste, recycling etc) (Warde, 2005). Shopping has been argued to be the most prominent demonstration of consumption (Compeau et al., 2016). It is an act that expresses various aspects of the self to others, allowing consumers to manage relationships by communicating with others (Compeau et al., 2016). Hence, hereafter, for the purpose of this study any reference to consumption throughout this thesis, will be focused on shopping or purchasing of goods. More specifically, consumption in this thesis refers to the purchase of food in farmers' markets and supermarkets, since the aim of this research is to investigate consumers' perceptions of food outlets and self-identity creation through shopping experiences in each of them. The rationale behind the selection of farmers' markets and supermarkets as food outlet for this thesis is presented in the introduction to research context section on page 15 of this chapter.

1.1.2 Consumer behaviour and culture

Consumer choice studies represent consumer behaviour as a process where the main achieved aspects are thinking, evaluating and deciding (Engel et al., 1995). However, Kotler (2003) argues that culture is the "fundamental determinant" which influences

consumer behaviour. Other studies also suggest that culture has a significant effect on the behaviour of individuals (Luna and Forquer Gupta, 2001; Ogden and Schau, 2004). Culture's impact on consumer behaviour is portrayed through group influence, motivation, learning and memory, perception, age, gender roles, self-concept, social class, purchase and post-purchase behaviour, change of attitudes, and decision making (Usunier, 2000). Solomon et al., (1999) define consumer behaviour as the study of the process occurring when people choose, buy, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. "Culture is the accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms and traditions among the members of an organization or society" (Solomon et al, 2010, p. 506). De Mooij (2004) suggests that culture and consumer behaviour are intimately knotted together and "untying the rope" is almost an impossible task. To understand the impact of culture for consumer behaviour, culture must be integrated into the various aspects of consumer behaviour theory (De Mooij, 2004). Existing studies examining the effect of culture on consumer behaviour are often very complicated to apply in practice, comprising an abundance of abstract terms and concepts which makes it difficult to collect information on a cross cultural consumer setting (Luna and Forquer Gupta, 2001). They focus on the role of cultural values, symbols, rituals and heroes/family on consumer behaviour applying anthropological and psychology approaches (Luna and Forquer Gupta, 2001). Whereas, traditional approaches of lifestyle segmentation, aim for brevity and focus on common brand/product meanings tending to favour quantitative methods to validate various theories with numbers (Ahuvia et al, 2006). Hofstede's (1980, 1997) model of culture has been primarily used in previous cross-cultural studies. For example, for studying interpersonal information exchange, a study conducted in eleven countries (DAwar et al., 1996), examining cross-cultural tourist behaviour in USA with the sample consisted of 56 nations (Litvin et al., 2004), and a cross-cultural investigation of consumer e-shopping adoption in USA and Korea (Choi and Geistfeld, 2004). This model relates culture to "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede, 1997, p. 5). Thus, according to Hofstede, the main focus of this model is the comparison of one culture with another. According to Luna and Forquer Gupta (2001) this is an *etic* definition of culture. This means that researchers

following this approach, search for variables and concepts that are common to all cultures and that can be directly compared in order to discover how these cultures are different from or similar to each other (Luna and Forquer Gupta, 2001). When comparing cultures, variables and constructs must be found that allow discovering how these cultures or group of cultures are different from or similar to each other (De Mooij, 2004). However, there is an alternative approach, the *emic* methodology, which focuses upon understanding issues from the viewpoint of the subjects being studied (Luna and Forquer Gupta, 2001). The intentions of emic approaches to culture are not to directly compare various cultures but to encourage a complete understanding of the culture under research through a deep and rich description (Geertz, 1973). Emic research is not conducted to provide "culture-free" measures that can be directly compared but to provide "culture-rich" information (Luna and Forquer Gupta, 2001). Although traditional "lifestyle analysis captures some underlying commonalities across respondents", the process of data analysis leaves out a lot of information relevant to informants' taste, personality and values that are essential in understanding an individual's lifestyle (Holt, 1995, p. 332). On the other hand, a Consumer Culture Theory approach allows for a "more nuanced description of consumer lifestyles" (Holt, 1995, p.326).

1.1.3 Consumer Culture Theory

Elliott (2004, p. 133) describes culture "as a social practice that is a dynamic and autonomous process involving the symbolic construction of a sense of self through the accumulation of cultural and symbolic capital". Consumer culture symbolises a social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). In the wider field of business studies, culture is regularly conceived in essentialist terms – "as a homogenous structure" (of meanings, ways of life, shared values, etc.) "that uniformly shapes the behaviour of its members" (Bajde, 2014, p. 13). Culture and its impact on consumer perceptions and behaviour has been a common theme among researchers for many years. Decades of consumer research have produced a plethora of studies investigating the experiential, sociocultural, symbolic, and

ideological aspects of consumption (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). "Many nebulous epithets characterizing this research tradition have come into play (i.e., relativist, postpositivist, interpretivist, humanistic, naturalistic, postmodern), all more obfuscating than clarifying" (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 868). Arnould and Thompson (2005) claim that these studies fail to highlight the theoretical commonalities and linkages within this research tradition; they either mainly emphasise on methodological differences or "they invoke overly coarse and increasingly irrelevant contrasts to a presumed dominant consumer research paradigm" (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 868). Arnould and Thompson (2005) reflected upon the preceding two decades of consumer research in the Journal of Consumer Research, mapped the work of previous researchers, bringing together key interests and theoretical themes of consumer culture and they termed it, Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). They suggest that "consumer culture" shows that individuals and groups can use commercial concepts, images and objects as part of their everyday practices to create identities and meaning which makes sense of the world around them as well as their own experience (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

Bajde (2014) distinguishes two categories of consumer culture studies the *proto-CCT* work (1930s – 1970s); and the renaissance CCT research which started in the 1980s. He argues that proto-CCT work opposed the reduction of consumption to demographic or psychographic traits of consumers (e.g., gender, age, personality, lifestyle), or the individual's utilitarian information processing and decision-making (Bajde, 2014). According to Thompson et al. (2013, p. 7), the proto-CCT work (1930s-1970s) primarily sought to challenge the "theoretical axioms of micro-economics and [behaviourist and] cognitive psychology, the methodological prescriptions of quantification" prevalent in the marketing and consumer research of the time. Whereas, the CCT related studies focus on "the particular over the abstract, the artistic over the technical, the emotional and expressive over the rational and utilitarian", this research stream approaches consumers as "emotional, creative, and inner-directed individuals who seek self-actualizing experiences" (Thompson et al., 2013, p. 7). Thus, the resurgence of CCT research in the 1980s involved humanistic and experientialist patterns to study the personal meanings consumers attach to

products and experiences as well as general consumption experiences (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982).

CCT examines how meanings differ for different consumers in various cultures, favours qualitative research aiming to find the "why" not the "who" and the "how" and finally emphasizes theory development (Ahuvia et al, 2006). The CCT school of research does not just determine behaviour, but "frames consumers' horizons of conceivable action, feeling, and thought, making certain patterns of behaviour and sense-making interpretations more likely than others" (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 896). This suggested framing is not followed by characteristics of a specific culture (for example traits of members of a particular cultural group), but rather is related to the less than "stable patterning of cultural meanings, ideologies and identities" (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 869). For example, CCT may look at consumption patterns through the lens of a continuous gender development and negotiation processes rooted in specific socio-historic backgrounds instead of just explaining or determining consumption patterns by highlighting the feminine or masculine nature of a particular (national) culture (Moisio et al., 2013). According to Geertz (1973), consumer researchers do not simply study consumption contexts, but they study consumption in order to generate new insights and to extend existing theoretical contributions in the field. This is the aim of the current thesis to extend literature on Albanian consumers and more specifically their perceptions of food outlets, more specifically of farmers' markets and supermarkets, introduce this type of consumer for the first time to the literature, and compare the Albanian findings with findings from consumers in the UK in order to further explore the role culture plays in food outlet decision making and identity creation.

Arnould and Thompson (2005) define Consumer Culture Theory through four domains of research which cut across the traditional economic constructions of production, exchange and consumption looking rather at socio-cultural variables. These domains are explored below:

➢ Consumer identity projects

Consumer culture theory is concerned with the co-constitutive, co-productive ways in which consumers, working with marketer-generated materials, create a "coherent if diversified and often fragmented sense of self" (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 871). This strand of research considers consumers to be identity explorers and creators (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

➢ Marketplace cultures

Traditional anthropological research views people as culture carriers, whereas CCT considers consumers to be culture makers (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). This domain investigates the ways in which consumers develop "feelings of social solidarity and create distinctive, fragmentary, self-selected, and sometimes transient cultural worlds through the pursuit of common consumption interests" (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 873).

➢ The sociohistoric patterning of consumption

This strand of CCT research investigates consumption influences instigated by institutional and social structures such ethnicity, gender, class and community (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). This stream investigates how ethnicity (Belk 1992), gender (Dobscha and Ozanne 2001; Fischer and Arnold 1990), social class (Holt 1998), families and other formal or informal groups (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991) shape consumption choices and behaviours (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

➢ Mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies

The fourth and final stream of CCT perceives consumers to be interpretive agents whose meanings, creating activities range from the ones that quietly embrace the dominant representations of identities and lifestyles portrayed in advertising and mass media to those who do not embrace these ideological instructions (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

From these streams, consumer identity and marketplace cultures are of particular interest and will form the basis of the research framework for this thesis. It is anticipated that elements from the third domain, sociohistoric patterning of

consumption, such as influences of social class, family, gender etc. will also be found in the responses of respondents.

This thesis aims to understand how individuals in Albania and the UK create self-identity in contemporary consumer culture through the choice of food outlets such as farmers' markets and supermarkets. Particularly, the aim of this thesis is to collect data for the first time from Albanian consumers living in a western-influenced society where elements of communist collectivism still exist and compare the data with the UK findings, in order to deepen the cultural understanding of both consumer contexts. The different ways of perception influenced by cultural traits, or the various processes that individuals go through in order to understand the environment around them (Weiner et al., 2003), is seen in the ways that Westerners or Easterners perceive the self versus others in conjunction with other areas of perception such as sensory, emotions and the environment (Simonson et al., 2001).

Culture influences how the individual perceives the self and others, and how the two develop relationships and interact (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). Individuals leaving in Western cultures embrace a prominent independent self-construal (self-construal refers to the cultural differences in the self), which "involves a conception of the self as an autonomous, independent person" (Markus and Kitayama, 1991, p. 226). Thus, Westerners' focus is placed around goals and needs that satisfy the self, and their perception of the self mainly encompasses individual personal traits and attributes, with others de-emphasised (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014). Equally, individuals leaving in Eastern cultures hold a prominent interdependent self-construal and consider the individual "not as separate from the social context but as more connected and less differentiated from others" (Markus and Kitayama, 1991, p. 227). Easterners have a tendency to concentrate on the inter-personal field, how others feel and react, and how their public self appears and is perceived by the other members of their society (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014). However, studies argue that prominent interdependent or independent self-construal are qualities that co-exist within each person but in various strengths for each individual (Aaker and Lee, 2001; Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Singelis, 1994). It is worth noting that although Albania is not an Eastern European country with an

Eastern culture, communist structures have led to aspects of collectivism similar to the Eastern cultures mentioned earlier. Generally, the independent or interdependent self-construal are considered to be appropriate metrics for cross-cultural consumer research due to their ability to capture the tendency of individuals to focus or not on social influences (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012).

Studies show that over the past decade there has been a rise in the interest in shopping from alternative food outlets with UK consumers showing a particular interest in purchasing food from farmers' markets (Carey et al., 2011). Melucci (1989) discusses the expansion of the alternative food movements, through the lenses of Maffesoli's (1996) concepts on neotribalism. According to Maffesoli (1997), the globalisation practices and postindustrial socioeconomic changes have significantly altered the traditional tendency of individuals to interact in a social context but instead have encouraged a prominent philosophy of extreme individualism. Fundamentally, with Melucci, "the neo-tribal, en reliance dimensions of Maffesoli (1997) are applied to a more conscious consumer" (Moore, 2006, p. 420). Thus, the aim of this thesis is to explore the personal narratives of Albanian and UK consumers, to understand how they incorporate structural sources of self into their everyday life, and also to identify whether neo-tribes are created among Albanian consumers and compare them to their British counterparts. Literature around Albania and Albanian consumer behaviour is very scarce. As the focus of this study is to investigate the perceptions Albanian and British consumers around farmers' markets and supermarkets, CCT is considered to be the most appropriate consumer theory approach that will allow theory development concerning Albanian consumer perceptions.

Arnould and Thompson (2005) point out that CCT is focused on consumption in context rather than in unreal, created, hypothetical settings. This means that there are three factors that influence consumer decisions:

i. Commercial market made commodities – artefacts of the material world such as objects, images, text, elements of advertising (Borgmann, 2000);

ii.   Individuals and groups - groups as units of inquiry such as the family (Penaloza, 2011) or neo-tribe (Cova et al., 2007);

iii.   The social environment: Finally there is the recognition that the individual and the artefacts with which she/he interacts exist within a social system.

These factors have been summarised in Elliott's (2004) consumption practices and identity model, as shown below in Figure 1, which will form the basis for the research framework and the structure of the following chapters of this thesis:

Socially Constructed Resources for the Self

e.g. advertising, brands, popular culture, everyday talk, life stories

Sites of the Self-in-Action

Structural/Positional Sources of the Self

e.g. material history, class position, consumption socialisation, interpretive community

Figure 1: Consumer Culture Theory of Self Identity, adopted from Elliott (2004)

According to this model, identities are constructed through social practices and various forms of consumption; however, there is a limitation on how an individual can construct identity free from influences that are retrieved from memories of the past experiences and recollecting the position the individuals have had in their previous social circles (Elliott, 2004). Elliott's (2004) consumption practices and identity model suggests that individuals construct identity through historical

consumption patterns and their social practices and positions. The self in action is continuously being developed and redeveloped as consumers develop consumption patterns drawing from historical constraints (Elliott, 2004).

Elliott's work on consumer's self-identity is referenced in various CCT and consumer research studies: investigating the symbolic consumption of music (Larsen et al., 2010), countering consumption in a culture of intoxication (Fry, 2010), a critique of self-creation through consumption (Saren, 2007), and brand engagement in self-concept (Flynn et al., 2009); and PhD theses have also referenced Elliott's work: A grounded theory of football fan community identity and co-production: Consumer roles in brand culture, meaning, and value co-creation in virtual communities (Healy, 2012), Countering asocial justice: consumer culture, stance and a cartography of encounter (Rhodes, 2013), Domestic arrangements of middle class Turkish families reproduced through home furnishing consumption practices (Baba, 2015), and the way brands work: consumers' understanding of the creation and usage of brands (Bertilsson, 2009). One particular thesis used this model as the research framework in order to investigate "Consumer's identity construction within food culture" in the UK (Tonner, 2012). Thus, considering that this model has been previously applied and referenced in identity creation related works, it was considered that this model is an appropriate and validated tool to be used in this thesis for the purposes of investigating Albanian and UK consumers' identity creation through their shopping experiences and choice of food outlets.

1.2 Introduction to research context

The research context of this study is food shopping in farmers' markets and supermarkets investigated from a cross-cultural point of view and the purpose of this section is to define the appropriateness of this field in order to meet the research aim. This section considers studies around food and food outlets highlighting the lack of studies investigating this subject within the domain of CCT in a cross-cultural setting.

1.2.1 Food, identity and food outlets

Fischler (1988, p. 275) argues that "food is central to our sense of identity" and as Brillat-Savarin (1841) summarised it in his gastronomic review "tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are". Fischler (1988, p. 279) also notes that in "the action in which we send food across the frontier between the world and the self, between outside and inside our body, we become what we eat". The increased interest around food has led to the introduction of a new theoretical domain, food theory (or food studies) (Belasco, 2008). This new field is interdisciplinary work with agents outside academia drawing upon popular commentaries, food advocacy and practice (Short, 2006). This new strand of research is not related to the edible food components (nutritional aspects or agricultural practices) but rather takes a social approach in order to theorise the meaning of food (Miller and Deutsch, 2009) and the symbolic nature of it (Kniazeva and Venkatesh, 2007). In spite of this increased interest from academics in researching this area, researchers argue that there is more to be investigated (Fischler, 1988; Belasco, 2008) especially within the CCT sphere. While there has been some consideration within the CCT area, researchers are investigating fresh food and health alternatives (Sirsi et al., 1996; Thompson and Troester, 2002) or examining fast food consumption and the impact this has on the cultural and socioeconomic influences that have transformed family relationships, the nature of work, and leisure time (Schlosser, 2002). These studies are focused on one country and have not been applied in a cross-cultural setting. As mentioned earlier, culture and its impact on consumer perceptions and behaviour has been a common theme among researchers for many years, with various studies investigating how consumption is influenced by sociocultural, experiential, symbolic, and ideological aspects (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). However, this theory has not yet been applied in a cross-cultural setting investigating and comparing different cultures through the CCT spectrum. This thesis uses food shopping experiences as the appropriate means of investigating cross-cultural consumer experiences because food is something that all cultures relate to and is essential to life (Belasco, 2008). Belasco (2008) argues that everyone has food stories to share and that food consumption is considered the most important form of consumption among other consumption practices.

Moreover, as already mentioned earlier, this thesis is focused on identity creation within the CCT stream of identity projects and food is an appropriate subject for consumer culture not only from a cross-cultural point of view but also that of identity as it crosses the barriers between the external environment (or external world) and the internal body of an individual (Rozin and Fallon, 1981; Fischler, 1988). This means that individuals place symbolic meanings on their food which has been associated with identity referring to the personality, character, mentality and the political, social, cultural and economic identifications of the individuals (Wilson, 2006).

Finally, food represents the world's largest industry representing around 10% of global GDP (Miller and Deutsch, 2009) which makes this subject important and relevant to governmental policies. While this thesis is not focusing on the agricultural production of food, it provides insights on the consumers' understanding of it and their behaviour towards the outlets they use to purchase their food. The DEFRA Food 2030 report highlights the importance of educating consumers in familiarising them with food production practices and where it was produced as well as learning how to cook and make healthy and nutritious meals. This is manifested in the renewed attention in farmers' markets in the UK which was driven by the consumers' increasing interest in buying local and healthy food (Guthrie et al, 2006; Tong et al., 2012). This is reinforced by the positive experience of farmers' markets through the idea of reconnecting the food and where it has come from (Szmigin et al., 2003). The sales revenue of farmers' markets in the UK reflects this increased interest in monetary terms with sales increased to £220 million in 2011 from £166 million in 2002 (Statista, 2019). Therefore, it has become important to investigate consumer behaviour towards these markets, the sources of information they use about food and the way they engage with them.

At the same time, research shows that supermarkets remain one of the main foods and grocery retailing outlets frequented by consumers in Western countries (Wrigley et al., 2009). Figure 2 below, shows the supermarket brands that are available in the UK with Tesco holding the highest market share and Sainsbury's coming second (Mintel, 2018).
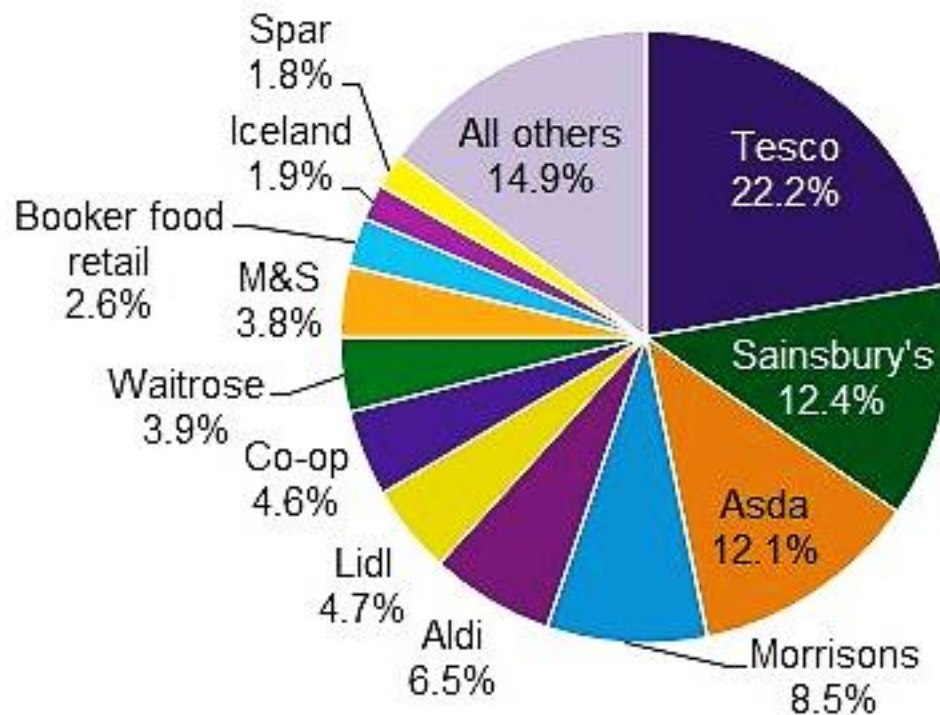
Figure 2: Supermarket brand market share in the UK, Mintel 2018

Larger supermarkets that are usually situated outside city centres have been shown to have underperformed in recent times with consumer using the internet to do their shopping or visiting local shops for more grocery goods (Mintel, 2013) and this may be due to the fact that consumers do not enjoy shopping in a supermarket store (Roberts et al., 2003). Thus, drawing from these data, and focusing on these opposing trends: an increase in farmers' markets spending with a move away from supermarkets (although they remain dominant food outlets in the UK), this thesis considers UK consumers' shopping experiences in both outlets in order to investigate shopping patterns and identify contributions that benefit both farmers' markets and supermarket stores.

On the other hand, in Albania, supermarket stores are considered to be places where consumers can do their shopping and are seen as places of entertainment where they can stop for a coffee and enjoy the supermarket environment (Qendro, 2015). There is very little known about Albanian consumers and especially behavioural trends around food shopping and the choice of outlets. Generally, very little is known about consumer perceptions of food outlets in any post-communist country with the

exemption of Poland (Dries et al., 2004) a collective study concerning Croatia, Latvia, and Russia (Reardon and Swinnen, 2004), Slovakia (Blaas, 2003), Hungary (Rizov and Mathijs, 2003), and the Czech Republic (Spilková et al., 2013). However, there is a lack of studies investigating farmers' market shopping in these countries which also provides a data comparison of consumer perceptions shopping in supermarkets and farmers' markets. In Albania, consumers were mainly purchasing their grocery goods from small local shops, that up until 2006 were the most frequented outlets for food products; the second most frequented food outlet were the farmers' markets followed by small corner minimarket stores (with the last ones having a small impact in food retailing in Tirana which is the capital of Albania, the largest city hosting the majority of Albanian population) (ARCOTRASS-Consortium, 2006). Despite this, in 2007 supermarket stores started appearing in Albania and by 2012 there were four big international supermarket brands operating in the country holding 20% of the grocery market share (Vorpsi, 2012). The rapid expansion of supermarkets in Albania introduced the first hypermarket store in 2011 (Likmeta, 2013). Since the first supermarket store opened in 2007, they have become a popular food outlet due to the fact that Albanians consider them as trusted places for food products (Kapaj et al, 2011). However, there are still concerns around the food safety aspects of food products offered in developing and transition countries such as Albania because food safety standards are scarcely enforced by the relevant organisations (Verçuni et al., 2016). Albania is an emerging economy within the European territory emerging from an old communist regime so investigating consumers in this country will provide insights on whether cultural hangovers persist alongside current institutional and market changes.

The two cultural contexts presenting above offer two differing trends: in the UK farmers' markets are growing and supermarkets are established food outlets, whereas in Albania, farmers' markets are established food outlets with supermarkets growing rapidly. This opposite trend makes these two contexts particularly promising in terms of CCT comparisons.

1.3 Research aim

Summing up from the research context and literature presented in the previous sections above, exploring the consumption behaviour of both Albanian and UK consumers may provide policy relevant insight around shopping patterns in farmers' markets and supermarkets. Thus, the aim of this study is to investigate the different shopping trends and patterns with the rise of supermarkets in Albania and the popularity of farmers' markets in the UK, and consists of two pillars of research:

a) Investigate how individuals create self-identity through their choice of food outlets - to understand how they integrate structural sources of self: such as family and gender, and material sources such as shopping environment and experiences, into their self-identity and;

b) identify whether neo-tribes exist [a social status within a group in neo-tribe sub-cultures is accomplished through exhibitions of cultural characteristics localised to the group (for example skills and information that are appreciated by the group members) and possession of skills that enable the individual to combine and rework the symbolic values shared by the group members but also allow him or her to innovate and contribute towards new symbolic resources (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; McAlexander et al., 2002; Kozinets, 2002; Kates 2002; Belk and Costa 1998; Celsi et al. 1993)] between Albanian and UK consumers.

1.4 Research questions and methodology

To meet the research aim, drawing from the research framework presented in Figure 1 (page 9) and through the examination of the research context and theoretical traditions outlined in the previous sections, four research questions have emerged:

1. How do individuals perceive themselves and their various self-identities in action?

2. How is food shopping and the cultural background of the individual perceived as part of self-identity by Albanian and UK consumers?

3. What is the impact of the social experiences on self-identity while shaping the individual's choice of food outlet?

4. Can common shopping experiences create neo-tribes of consumers with different cultural backgrounds?

An in-depth qualitative research design is developed to answer these questions using personal narratives and stories which allows the researcher to collect rich data which are further analysed and explored in Chapter Five and Six. A detailed approach to the research design and methodology is presented in Chapter Four along with justifications on the qualitative approach. Discussion and contribution of this thesis are presented in Chapter Seven.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The structure of this thesis consists of eight chapters, starting with Chapter One, which introduces the research context and aim of this thesis.

Chapter Two, starts the review of the literature by presenting a debate around farmers' market history, consumer experience, consumer profiles, and trends of farmers' market development in European and post-communist countries. Seasonality, organic food and local produced are also presented in relation to farmers' market literature. The chapter continues with literature around supermarket consumer experience and profiles, history of the outlet and consumer behaviour.

Chapter Three, presents literature around identity construction considering specifically self-identity and social-identity and their relationship to consumption. The chapter continues presenting social theories around self the various social antecedents such as social norms, niche groups and other social structures that have an impact on identity creation. Literature around neo-tribes is also outlined.

Chapter Four, outlines the methodology of this thesis and the conceptual framework proposed to investigate the relationship of culture and social antecedents with self-identity creation. The chapter discusses further the interpretive approach of this study, providing justification for the research design choices with regards to the sampling technique, data collection and analysis.

Chapters Five and Six present the data analysis of this thesis with Chapter Five focusing on research questions one and four considering the social interactions and culture as factors influencing the individual's shopping experiences and behaviours. Chapter Six focuses on research questions three and four considering the integrations of the food outlet shopping experience within the creation of self-identity.

Chapter Seven presents the empirical and theoretical contribution of this thesis presenting the findings in conjunction with the extant literature. The chapter considers how individuals understand the socially constructed sources for the self, such as popular culture and life stories, in two contexts. It considers the social integration of the individual and the influences dominated by family, friends, social norms and the social groups under which each individual places themselves. This is also reflected in the relations of the social structures and social positions in influencing UK and Albanian individuals' food shopping experiences and the individuals' interpretations of these influences in action (for example what to shop for in which food outlet). The thesis introduces a model of paradoxes under which identity creation can be seen to be developed through some paradoxes that represent the tension of esoteric forces consumers experience when deciding which food outlet to choose. This esoteric journey contributes towards the development of several identities that consumers project interchangeably depending on the situation they are in.

Chapter eight concludes this thesis by presenting how the aim of this study has been met through the conceptual framework established in Chapter Four. The chapter also discusses the theoretical and managerial implications, the limitations of the study, highlights the contributions of the thesis and makes recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature review on farmers' markets and supermarkets

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will provide a discussion of the literature review conducted in this thesis. This chapter will present an extensive discussion around farmers' markets, consumer preferences of local food, supermarkets, perceptions of consumers around supermarkets and farmers' markets as well as a review of studies investigating perceptions of supermarkets and farmers' markets, the profile of a typical farmers' market and supermarket consumer, and the history of these food outlets.

There is no single discipline such as consumer behaviour, marketing, retail or agriculture that examines studies around farmer's markets. The literature in the sections that follow are drawn from several disciplines including consumer behaviour, social psychology, food studies and agriculture. This is demonstrated with studies published in a variety of journals such the *Journal of Marketing Management* and *International Journal of Consumer Studies* which deal with demographics and variables that have an impact on consumers' behaviour; and food related journals such as *Food Policy, British Food and Appetite; International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, City and Society, Sociologia Ruralis*. In addition, the literature also extends to sustainability journals such as *Sustainable Development and World Ecology, Energy Policy, Journal of Behaviour and Environment and Local Environment,* as well as on geography journals such as *Focus on Geography, The Professional Geographer and Progress in Human Geography,* that deal with the development of farmers' markets in specific regions such as Ohio, Stockholm, California and various regions in the UK, that examine food consumption and sustainable food production. Studies have also been published in agricultural related journals such as *Re-view of Agricultural Economics, Sustainable Agriculture* and *Agriculture and Human Values.* These journals examine the sustainable agricultural practices used during the production process by farmers. Economics related journals such as *Food Economics, Agriculture and Resource Economics Review* and *Post-Communist Economies*, have also hosted articles related to farmers' markets investigating the socioeconomic impact they create. As a result, the findings reported

can be based on a wide range of assumptions and research approaches that focus on different angles of farmers' markets such as sustainable agricultural practices, locally produced food, or organic food production for example.

In order to present this work to the reader in a coherent way, the structure has been broken down into several sections which address key themes pertaining to farmers' markets from across the disciplines: organic food, local food, sustainability, seasonality and consumer behaviour. Although some of these divisions may seem somewhat artificial and overlapping, they are necessary in order to set out the broad range of studies relevant to farmers' markets in this thesis.

2.1 The history of farmers' markets

The origin of farmers' markets are traced back to Greece and Rome and it is believed that they were created to benefit their local communities (Wells, 1994) by supplying food that is constant at reasonable prices (Biesenthal, 1980). Early definitions of farmers' markets revealed them as typically being held in outside spaces where small-scale farmers used to directly sell their product to the public, often from the backs of pick-up trucks or on makeshift tables (Sommer et al., 1981). These days, farmers' markets can also be held indoors. For example, the farmers' market in Cheltenham, UK, is held in a dedicated venue where local farmers and local producers gather to sell their products to the local community in the town's shopping centre (Jones et al., 2004). This shows that the set up of the farmers' markets has changed since their formation. As indicated in the literature, back in the 1980s farmers would sell their products in an informal street setting while nowadays farmers' markets in the UK may also occur in organised places such as enclosed shopping centres (Jones et al., 2004).

According to the National Farmers' Retail and Markets' Association (FARMA, 2006) the first UK farmers' market was opened in Bath, UK in September 1997 and since then the term 'farmers' market' has been linked with locally produced food sold by the people who produced it. Farmers' markets have been established as one of the main outlets that enable small producers or farmers to provide urban residents with

local products (Bentley et al., 2003). The consensus as to their common characteristics is that they: (1) involve the person who grew, reared, or produced the food to directly sell it to the consumer; (2) are held in a common place/ground where the selling of the goods is practiced by a number of farmers; (3) and finally the main point of farmers' market is to sell local products (McEachern et al., 2010, p. 399). FARMA accredit farmers and award certificates when they comply with the following criteria:

> ➢ The food is produced locally (produced within 50 miles of the consumer (Morris and Buller, 2003));
> ➢ The stall is attended by the producer or someone involved in production;
> ➢ All the goods on sale will have been grown, reared or processed by the stallholders.

The farmers' market in the UK is a strongly structured commercial space where, market governing body expectations are met as well as complying with municipal bylaws and health and safety regulations (Tchoukaleyska, 2013).

2.1.1 An introduction to farmers' markets

Typically, farmers' market would sell fresh products such as fruit and vegetables, meats and meat products, cheeses and other dairy products, fish, honey, bakery products, jams, pickles, dressings and sauces (Bentley et al., 2003). Farmers' markets are also believed to offer a more diverse range of products within these products groups compared to supermarkets (Guthrie et al., 2006).

Farmers' markets have experienced a renewed and increased popularity in recent years due to the ongoing demand of consumers for environmentally friendly, local and healthy food (Tong et al., 2012). Farmers' markets have been with food that is of good quality and the assumption that locally produced food is frequently picked when ripe and fresh (Connell et al., 2008). This increased interest in local foods contributed towards a growth in sales of 30% in the UK in 2011 (Carey et al., 2011) which subsequently led to an increase in the number of farmers' markets up to 550 in 2012, occurring during 9500 market days and involving 230,000 stallholders throughout the UK (Spiller, 2012). This growth of farmers' markets in the UK can also be attributed to the fact that consumers do not wish to purchase food that was

produced at an industrial scale (La Trobe and Acott, 2000), but wish to eat fresh fruits and vegetables due to their better nutritional content, good taste, and flavour which has also contributed to the success of farmers' markets (Brooker and Eastwood, 1993). A study claims that other reasons that farmers' markets have become popular is because consumers have become more interested in rural heritage, culinary traditions and food tourism (Bessière, 1998). Farmers' markets have also been considered to be part of a food system movement that influences consumers' cultural and personal identity (Delind, 2006).

Farmers' markets help farmers to maintain increased profit margins because they sell directly to customers and shorten the supply chain and they are considered to be secure and regular outlets for fresh local produce, coming directly from the producer (Bentley et al., 2003). They generate new businesses and boost trade for local shops and ensure that money spent supports local economy (Griffin and Frongillo, 2003; Gerbasi, 2006) by encouraging consumers to buy from local businesses and local agriculture (Guthrie et al., 2006; La Trobe, 2001). Farmers' markets also contribute towards sustainability by reducing food miles (due to short transportation) and packaging (because food is sold as it is picked from the crops) and promote interactions with the farmer or other customers (Gerbasi, 2006). Moreover, it has been argued that they reinvigorate farming and provide social benefits (Griffin and Frongillo, 2003), such as promoting the revival of town centres (MacLeod, 2007). However, according to Tong et al., (2012) farmers' markets operate differently from other food outlets because they occur at certain times within the day or the week, in dedicated locations which makes it restrictive to consumers with heavy schedules. Therefore, people who work long hours or reside miles away from where markets' take place, are not able to shop there due to the time restriction. Hence people working long hours or commuting long distances would miss farmers' market operating hours and be unbale to take part in this food shopping experience. The following section will present the literature pertaining to the farmers' market's consumers and their characteristics.

2.1.2 Farmers markets' consumer profile

Many studies focus on investigating consumers' attitudes and behaviours towards farmers' markets and try to draw the profile of these consumers, using surveys to determine demographic variables, motivation to attend the market, and preferences for local products (Lockeretz ,1986; Eastwood et al., 1999; Archer et al., 2003; Szmigin et al., 2003; Aguirre, 2007; Tropp and Barham, 2008; Zepeda, 2009; Bubinas, 2011). These studies have found that a typical farmers' market customer is a female of white background, middle aged and well educated, with a medium household income usually above the country's average (Archer et al., 2003; Szmigin et al., 2003; Bubinas, 2011). It has been argued that low-income consumers cannot easily access the farmers' markets because they take place in higher-income neighbourhoods or outside the hours that are convenient to this group of consumers (Tropp and Barham, 2008). However, results from other studies investigating attitudes and preferences of consumers on farmers' markets, showed that there is no statistical difference in gender, income or education (Lockeretz ,1986; Eastwood et al., 1999). Although Zepeda's (2009, p. 255) findings generally agree with regards to income not influencing shopping patterns, she concluded that "the probability of shopping at farmers' markets was significantly increased when factors such as 'enjoyment of shopping', 'shopping with others' and 'being female' were considered". On the other hand, shoppers tend to be younger in Europe, while in other countries such the US and Canada where farmers' markets are popular food outlets, shoppers are older than average (Aguirre, 2007).

To sum up, there is a general consensus that the typical consumer of farmers' market is influenced by age, income, education and gender as presented above. However, Onianwa et al., (2005) found that among consumers in Alabama, the martial status, children and income of the household, race, age and gender, are not as significant as education when it comes to influencing factors of shopping in farmers' markets. On the other hand, a study in Indiana (Jekanowski et al., 2000) found that income, and perception of food quality were significant in predicting the likelihood of the purchase of local foods. After the argument presented in this section by various studies, it can be concluded that although many studies describe a typical farmers'

market consumer as a middle aged, educated person with a high income, that this is not a uniform or uncontested finding. The following section will provide an overview of the experiences consumers have when they shop in a farmers' market.

2.1.3 Farmers' market and consumer behaviour - Consumer experience at farmers' markets

Consumers believe that farmers' markets are more pleasant than supermarkets (Lockeretz, 1986) and provide a special shopping experience (Lyon et al., 2009). Frequent supermarket customers have been found to prefer farmers' markets as a food outlet and are willing to pay the high-priced products offered there because they perceive the products sold in a farmers' market are of better quality than those found in the supermarket (Lyon et al., 2009). Farmers' markets have been considered as outlets where friendly relationships can be developed between the farmer and the customer (Kirwan, 2004; Andreatta and Wickliffe, 2002). Equally, the social interactions that take place at farmers' markets are considered more pleasant and personal than the interactions taking place in supermarkets (Hughes and Mattson, 1992). Consumers enjoy shopping at farmers' markets for three reasons: a) the nice atmosphere and the opportunity to try the food before they buy it; b) the fresh, good quality food; and c) the perception that customers are able to support local farmers (Archer et al., 2003; Youngs, 2003). Consumers of farmers' markets appreciate the fact that they can interact with the farmer and find out more about the food they buy, because this gives them the opportunity to form a personal judgement about whether to trust the farmer and buy the products on display (Kirwan, 2004). From the consumers' point of view this is also seen as a personal reward towards the farmer for providing them with high quality products (Kirwan, 2004). Another important factor reinforcing positive experience in farmers' markets is the idea of "reconnection" which means reconnecting consumers with their food and where it has come from (Szmigin et al., 2003) and giving the opportunity to urban consumers to reconnect with the rural environment (MacLeod, 2007). Other attributes associated with farmers' markets are the enhanced community feeling and connectivity among consumers (McGrath et al., 1993; Szmigin et al., 2003; Moore, 2006; Seyfang, 2007) the closeness that the relationships formed in farmers' markets offer (Sherry, 1990)

and the reduced carbon footprint (McGrath et al., 1993; Seyfang, 2007). Youngs (2003) used quantitative and qualitative methods to research attributes of farmers' markets and the reasons consumers shop there and the results of her study are summarised below:

Organic	
Fresh produce	Sampling food before one buys
Helpful traders	Undercover
Location/surrounding/atmosphere	Supporting local producer/direct from producer
Variety of produce on sale	Quality of produce
Car parking/transport	Getting to speak directly to producers
Good Value	An attraction for the area

Table 1: Positive Attributes of Farmers' Markets, adapted from Youngs (2003, p. 512)

Localness, naturalness, personal trust and a sense of community are values that consumers associate with farmers' markets (Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000). Farmers' markets are considered as alternative ventures, due to their small-scale non-commercial production outcome that support alternative food networks because of the level of protectionism and exclusivity they inspire (Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000). La Trobe (2001) conducted a survey of consumers in a farmers' market in Kent and identified novelty as the main motivation for shoppers to attend the market. It was reported in this study that consumers were driven by "curiosity for something to do" in farmers' markets, however once the novelty value wears off, consumers return in search for quality local food rather than curiosity (La Trobe, 2001, p. 185). In summary, although there are differing conclusions about who the farmers' market consumer is, whether they are influenced by income, education, family circumstances or class, researchers agree that consumers shop in farmers' markets because they value the positive experience they get there by interacting with various farmers and other shoppers. As demonstrated above by the various studies, this positive experience is gained by sampling the food on offer, interacting with the stall holder, the feel-good feeling from supporting the local farmer and from consuming good quality fresh food. In view of these studies the following section will provide an

argument around the opposite trends contributing towards the farmers' markets success between the countries of the south and north Europe.

2.1.4 Opposite trends of farmers markets between the countries of the South and North Europe

Studies undertaken in countries such as Sweden (Wallgren, 2006; Svenfelt and Carlsson-Kanyama, 2010), Norway (Åsebø et al., 2007; Jervell and Borgen, 2004; Storstad and Bjørkhaug, 2003) the Netherlands (Renting et al., 2003; Veen et al., 2012), and Germany (Latacz-Lohmann and Foster, 1997, Wüstenhagen and Bilharz, 2006) show that alternative food networks such as farmers' markets are developed around "modern" and more "commercial" quality classifications, emphasising environmental issues, animal welfare, and innovative ways of marketing (Vecchio, 2009). This is in line with a general movement in agriculture seeking to reconcile agriculture and environment in ways which continue to support agricultural production (Evans et al., 2002). While continuous economic activity causes environmental harm, a study suggests that "sustainable development in place of growth; is a preference for anticipation rather than the cure (the precautionary principle); equating pollution with inefficiency; and treating environmental regulation and economic growth as mutually beneficial", which point to the need to integrate nature and natural processes in the agricultural change (Evans et al., 2002, p. 23).

These findings embed the essence of farmers' markets promoting civic agriculture in order to reconnect farms and farmers, the food, and the community (Lyson, 2012). On the other hand, farmers markets' development in Southern European countries such Spain, Italy and France, is not focused on modern trends such as animal welfare and sustainability but is mostly related to production activities on a regional scale and direct selling to the customers based on long-lasting customs and traditions (Marsden, 2004). "France, Italy, Portugal, Greece and Spain accounted for more than 75 percent of registered, regionally designated products in 2002" (Parrott et al., 2002, p. 242). This occurs due to cultural and structural factors forged to reinforce relationships among the regions, their traditions and origins as well as continuous quality in countries in the south of Europe (Parrott et al., 2002). Family farms of a

small scale, that include labour intensive activities using traditional methods of food production exist in Southern European countries (Sonnino and Marsden, 2006).

The contrast noted between the Southern and Northern European countries and their view of farmers' markets is based on the fact that northern countries share cultural and structural factors that influence the creation of regionally distinctive foods and against any clear association with the level of quality in localised areas (Parrott et al., 2002). A legal system of protection and marketing has been created in Northern European countries that revolves around privately owned brand trademarks and a more practical way of governing food with the matters of public health and hygiene indicating the quality of food instead of other attributes such as taste (Sonnino and Marsden, 2006). This means that the delivery of quality food depends on the economic efficiency and responsiveness to the market, underpinned by health and safety legislation (Sonnino and Marsden, 2006). Contrary to the above, producers from Southern European countries believe that agricultural traditions involved in the production process and culture, the soil quality, climate and local knowledge systems can shape the quality of food (Sonnino and Marsden, 2006).

2.1.5 Farmers' markets in post-communist countries

Literature about farmers' markets in Eastern European or post-communist European countries is very scarce and mainly focuses on operational aspects of the farmers and their farms rather than the outlet where products are displayed or the consumer that buys the products. For example, existing studies focus on farm survival in Hungary (Rizov and Mathijs, 2003) and farm owners and their families in Slovakia (Blaas, 2003). However, one particular study investigated consumers' shopping behaviours and perceptions of farmers' markets in the Czech Republic (Spilková et al., 2013). In contrast with the results found in US and Western studies around farmers' markets' consumer behaviour (Alkon, 2008; Tregear, 2005), the study undertaken in Prague, concluded that individuals of various ages, family sizes and occupation backgrounds, were mainly encouraged by taste and freshness of products to shop at farmers' markets (Spilková et al., 2013). As discussed above, many Western European studies investigated the demographics and characteristics of the individuals frequenting the farmers' markets, arguing that that they are mainly educated, living in urban areas,

middle-class, middle aged and high-income earners (Brown, 2002; Guthman, 2008; Tregear, 2005; Moore, 2006).

In the Czech study on the other hand, farmers' markets' consumers come from different backgrounds including low and high income individuals, mothers with children and pensioners, who view farmers' markets as an interesting shopping place with unique experiences contrary to the experiences they get in the large and anonymous hypermarkets (Spilková et al., 2013). Another finding from this study that comes as a contrast to the Western European and American findings (Zepeda, 2009; Carey et al., 2011; Feagan and Morris, 2009), is that Czech consumers seemed less preoccupied with environmental or ethical issues, or supporting the local community and local producer (Spilková et al., 2013). The main motivation is rather hedonistic, focusing on the enjoyment of the shopping experience, or centred on the freshness and taste of the produce (Spilková et al., 2013).

All these studies indicate that research around farmers' markets is mainly focused on consumers of Western European developed countries including the UK, the USA, and Canada. Research is not as extensive in developing and post-communist countries. Albania on the other hand, is an example of a developing, post-communist, European country, where consumers have increasingly started to shop in supermarkets because farmers' markets in the country do not comply with hygienic and public health standards , food sold there has not gone through the appropriate controlling mechanisms before is displayed on the street markets (Duro, 2010).

While there is lack of research studies around farmers' markets and their consumers in post-communist countries, western literature also focuses on other aspects of farmers' markets such as the seasonality of the food they offer, organic products and food produced locally (in the vicinity of where the farmers' market take place). In the sections that follow, these salient themes within the farmers' markets literature will be set out and considered in turn.

2.1.6 Farmers' markets and seasonality

Seasonality, which is associated with freshness of food, is another reason why consumers prefer shopping from farmers' markets (La Trobe, 2001; Kemp et al.,

2010; Tobler et al., 2011). Personal and physical health benefits are associated with purchasing fruits and vegetables from farmers' markets (Nilsson and Hansson, 2006) as they offer a diversified range of foods that are in season that may lead to further the buying of fresh and unprocessed foods (Pearson et al., 2011). Customers wander through the stalls having a look at what is on sale locally especially for products that are in season (Lyon et al., 2008). Farmers' markets are associated with benefiting communities and which enables the farmers to respond to consumers' demand for products that have a low concentration of chemicals and are produced in season (Hunt, 2006). Seyfang's (2006) research also supported this by identifying respondents who would like to support the smaller, local farmers because of their interest in the return of seasonal fruit and vegetables to the market. Farmers were willing to reduce the use of chemicals in order to meet their customers' demands, through direct farmer-consumer relations, signifying that relationships with the customers may have an impact on the environmental quality of the products (Hunt, 2007). This means that by reducing the use of chemicals, farmers can produce products that are supposed to be cultivated on specific seasons such as tomatoes for example are in season from June till October in the UK (BBC goodfood) and provide their customers with fresh in-season food.

On the other hand, a study showed season extension technologies such as alternative form of greenhouses built using a hooping or bending system, can have an impact to farm viability by helping farmers to extend the periods they offer their products, which is one of the difficulties of meeting customer demand for local food (Conner et al., 2009). However, another study seems to contradict this stating that with the mainstream food supply chains, farmers' markets have the capacity to increase the farmers' income (Onianwa et al., 2005).

While seasonality has proved to be important in the rise of farmers' markets and is considered to be one of the reasons why consumers shop there, organic food is another. The following section will highlight organic food definitions and consumers' perceptions of farmers' markets offering organic food.

2.1.7 Farmers' markets and organic food

According to the Soil Association UK (2019) organic means working with nature, involving a higher level of animal welfare, low use of pesticides, no manufactured herbicides or artificial fertilisers and more environmentally sustainable management of the land and natural environment. In the literature organic refers to products grown without the use of artificial chemical fertilisers and pesticides, animals are reared in more natural conditions without antibiotics and intensive livestock farming (Huguchi, 2017; Burch et al., 2001; Cunningham, 2001; Davies et al., 1995; Lakin and Shannon 1999; Makatouni 2002; Seyfang, 2006). While health reasons and sustainability concerns encourage consumers to increase the consumption of the organic food, living in harmony with the environment and the local ecosystems have also been found as factors that contribute towards the popularity of organic products (Seyfang, 2006). Advocates of organic food argue that if farmers work with nature and replenish the soil with organic material, the quality of soil and subsequently of food will be improved, leading to greater biodiversity, with farmers being able to produce crops that have not used large-scale industrial chemicals, that are associated with waterways pollution and land degradation (Reed, 2001). However, the successful marketing of organic products has increased customer demand which subsequently has turned the organic food industry into a largescale, long-distance, industrialised business defeating the original purpose of producing organic food (Adams and Salois 2010; Delind, 2006).

Farmers' markets typically sell vegetables, bread, preserves, cheese products, honey, fruits, processed meat and flowers (Svenfelt and Carlsson-Kanyama, 2010). The food on offer is often picked the day before or on the morning of the market and to the consumer, farmers' markets offer enhanced access to fresh, healthy, locally grown and often organic food from a trusted source, building consumer's confidence in the farmers' quality product offering (La Trobe, 2001). Literature around consumers' rationale for shopping at farmers' markets refers to the supply of organic food as one of the reasons (La Trobe, 2001; Youngs, 2003). If a stall holder in the UK wishes to sell produce labelled organic at any market they must be registered as organic sellers and provide proof of certification (Guthrie at al., 2006). There are eleven official

organisations in the UK that provide certificates of organically produced food: Biodynamic Association Irish Organic, Farmers and Growers Association (IOFGA), Food Certification Ltd Ascisco Ltd, Global Trust Certification Ltd, Organic Farmers and Growers Ltd, Organic Food Federation, Organic Trust Limited Quality Welsh, Scottish Food Quality Certification Ltd, and Soil Association Certification Ltd, (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, UK, 2012). Whereas in Albania there are only three official organisations that promote organic agriculture and products that bear a certificate and are appropriately labelled as organic: Albinspekt (founded in 2006), BioAdria (founded in 2006) and the Institute of Organic Agriculture (founded in 2010) (Bernet and Kazazi, 2011). However, despite the overall consumers' perception of farmers' markets offering organic food, this is not usually factual for all stallholders with the majority of them not showcasing an organic certificate for their products on their stalls (Guthrie et al., 2006).

The importance of the freshness of the products has been investigated in this section as part of the organic composition of the food offered in farmers' market, with food being picked the day before or on the morning of the market (Trobe, 2001). To keep food fresh from the moment it is collected to the moment it is displayed in the market, it means that food was produced locally and has not travelled many miles before it reaches the consumer. The following section is presenting literature around food produced locally and offered in farmers' markets as well as the consumers' perceptions of local food bought in farmers' markets.

2.1.8 Farmers' markets and local food

Two definitions have emerged in the literature that provide an explanation as per what local food is: a) local food is defined as the food that is produced by the producer at the proximity of the customer, thus local food is defined in terms of the geographical distance between the farmer and the consumer; and b) local food is based on the ability of the consumers to recognise whether the products are local (or locally produced) (Jones et al., 2004). ''The concepts of 'local food' and 'food miles' have become powerful polemical tools in policy discourses built around sustainable agriculture and alternative food systems'' (Coley et al. 2009, p. 150). The food miles

concept refers to the transportation distance of the food from the moment it leaves the farmer in order to reach the consumer; the longer the distance the more negative the environmental impact is (Kemp et al., 2010). Consumers' perceptions of what local food is, is related to the geographical distance where the food is produced, for example food that is produced within a 100-mile radius of where it was purchased (Zepeda and Leviten-Reid, 2004) or food bought directly from farmers in one's county or neighboring counties Zepeda and Li, 2006). The latter is more the case in the UK where local food is defined by the county where food is produced taking into account distance factors that consider 50 miles to constitute local food and 100 not (Morris and Buller, 2003). Food miles have also been discussed in the context of climate change and how the carbon emissions affect the environment (Smith and Smith, 2000) focusing on the food distribution channels and the use of carbon in transportation methods (Coley et al., 2009).

The popularity of local foods has risen due to insufficient control checks, the use of antibiotics, and the concern of animal waste products which have resulted in food product contamination cases and product recalls (Feagan et al., 2004). Concerns have also been expressed about food safety and carbon emissions produced from food transportation (Hinrichs, 2000; Marsden et al., 2000). These concerns have contributed towards more conscious consumers who are becoming more aware of how food is distributed, increasing customer demand to shorten the distance and transportation between the consumer and the consumer's source of food (Delind, 2006; Pretty et al., 2005). This customer demand and the increased interest in food miles has led to an increase in alternative options where consumers can buy more localised food (Dodds et al., 2014). The local food movement was driven initially by the increased consumption rates during the 1980s and 1990s when consumers started looking for quality fruits and vegetables and turned their attention towards local food outlets such as farmers' markets to source them (Adams and Salois, 2010). The number of farmers' markets aiming to provide locally produced, organic food continues to increase in order to meet the growing demand of food conscious consumers (consumers who want to know where their food has come from, are concerned with environmental and sustainability issues and wish to support local

community) (Dodds et al., 2014). Consumers of organic food also buy local food adopting a more anti-corporate attitude, because they believe that if they stop supporting local food, the large corporations would dominate the food system (Zepeda and Deal, 2009). In contrast to organic food beliefs, local foods have been associated with a more authentic alternative source of food because the miles and the distance covered from the producer to the consumer, are believed to be a more accurate representation of sustainability, rather than simply using an organic label (Sirieix et al., 2008).

The increase of interest in locally produced food has also led to studies investigating the producers' point of view and contribution to the movement. It has been found that producers who produce their products locally, are not interested only in benefiting financially from selling their products in the local markets (Morris and Buller, 2003). They are also keen to support the wider local farming community, to continue existing knowledge around traditional foods, to encourage a community feeling and finally to re-establish the lost trust between the farmer and the consumer (Morris and Buller, 2003). A study by Marsden (2000) investigated the consumers' point of view around local food. The study reveals that consumers prefer to buy locally produced food in farmers' markets because this gives them the opportunity to interact and develop a relationship with farmers which is based on trust and reciprocity (Marsden, 2000).

2.1.9 Conclusion

Whilst the themes of seasonality, local food and organic food highlighted in sections 2.1.6, 2.1.7, and 2.1.8 are components of the wider areas of sustainability, they have been considered separately in this chapter to allow consumer perspectives for each strand to be acknowledged separately in line with the aim of this study. This thesis is investigating consumers' perceptions of farmers' markets hence this chapter is presenting arguments around this food outlet and also addressing sustainability concerns from the consumer's point of view. There are also researchers who look at multiple aspects of farmers markets that gather together under the banner of sustainability. For example, locally produced food is seen as an important component

to community sustainability because of the production process that differentiates small, local food farmers and vendors from larger more conventional production farms and for this reason, farmers markets are considered to be a vital component of a community's long term sustainable development (Farmer at al., 2011). Sustainable development has three key strands according to the Brundtland Report (1987) and Kuhlman and Farrington's (2010): a) aim at higher quality of life (social aspects of happiness and well-being); b) welfare (personal and community economic aspects by means of income distribution through employment); and c) reaching environmental benefits (such as reducing the overuse of natural resources of energy or water). However, meeting all these three goals requires a lot of flexibility and compromises because for example the production of environmentally friendly goods usually cost more, and this limits the farmer's profit margins or minimises the accessibility of low income people to these food products; and maintaining relationships with customers means that there is an extra cost imposed on farmers' time (Conner et al., 2010).

Locally grown food is important in community-based food selling systems such as farmers' markets because it contributes to a range of economic, social, land use and public health benefits (Conner et al., 2006). Findings from previous studies are supporting this claim showing that there is a significant correlation with job and income impacts resulting from increased consumption of locally grown produce (Swenson, 2006; Conner et al., 2008). Farmers' markets contribution to economic sustainability is evident through the generation of employment and good standards of living for the farmers, the stimulation of local economies and the economic diversification of farms (Tudisca et al., 2015; Hughes and Isengildina-Massa, 2015; Kloppenburg et al., 2000). As a result, these community-based systems allow the rural areas to stay autonomous to contribute to the economic sustainability of rural communities by evenly distributing income and welfare (Giampietri et al., 2016). Farmers' markets contribute to social sustainability in various ways by connecting people who share the same values and interest around food (Randall, 2008) as well as preserving the knowledge around products and local practices and traditions (Kuhlman and Farrington, 2010). An important social sustainability characteristic of

farmers' markets is the dialogue exchanged between farmers and consumers that can be enabled due to the nature of these outlets, giving individuals the chance to re-discover food, agricultural production and the people involved in producing it (Kuhlman and Farrington, 2010). In terms of environmental sustainability, the contribution of the farmers' market can be attributed to the protection of traditional plant varieties and animal breeds through the valorisation of typical traditional products (Giampietri et al., 2016) and to the reduction of the use of non-renewable fossil energy (Coley et al., 2009; Halweil 2002). This means that environmental awareness is a factor that motivates consumers to purchase food from farmers' markets giving the sense of co-responsibility towards sustainable agricultural management (Giampietri et al., 2016). The sustainable agriculture movement is mainly focused on grassroots (individuals situated in specific a community or region forming the basis for an economic movement) and free-market-based strategies that encourage the production and consumption of local, organic food grown by small farmers (Alkon, 2008). While Pretty (1998, p. 81) argues that "sustainable agriculture is trying to achieve:

- a thorough integration of natural processes such as nutrient cycling, nitrogen fixation, soil regeneration and pest-predator relationships into agricultural production processes, ensuring profitable and efficient food production while increasing natural capital;
- a minimisation of the use of those external and non-renewable inputs that damage the environment or harm the health of farmers and consumers, and a targeted use of the remaining inputs used to minimise costs;
- the participation of farmers and other rural people in all processes of problem analysis, and technology development, adaptation and extension, leading to an increase in local self-reliance and social capital;
- a greater use of farmers' knowledge and practices in combination with new technologies emerging from research, including innovative approaches not yet fully understood by scientists or widely adopted by farmers;
- an enhancement of both the quality and quantity of wildlife, water, landscape and other public goods of the countryside".

It is important to highlight that, while it was considered necessary to present an argument around sustainability and sustainable agriculture due to the fact that the wider concept of farmers' markets' are associated with these issues, this thesis will not focus on them because its aim is to investigate the consumers' perceptions of farmers' markets and not the operational, production and agricultural aspect of them. This chapter of the literature review presented (sometimes contradictory) arguments from the extant literature on farmers' markets. There are overlaps between the sections in reality for example localness and seasonality of food can be linked to the notion of organic (as reduced preservatives mean shorter shelf lives, promoting less travel time; and less fertilizers might mean reduced graining seasons). Equally, different assumptions, underly the approaches of different researchers: some might frame organic as a health benefit whereas others might see it as an environmental one.

This section also showed that the social aspect of farmers' markets has been intensively studied (Hughes and Mattson, 1992; Archer et al., 2003; Youngs, 2003; Kirwan, 2004). It seems that the personal relationships that consumers develop directly with the farmers, determine their decision-making process. It has been also established through several studies that consumers shopping at farmers' markets are willing to pay premium prices to experience this friendly social and cultural environment (Conner et al., 2009). The lack of critique in the literature around farmers markets is not presenting any negative aspects of these outlets. The health and hedonistic attributes of the fresh, tasty and organic products has been the main characteristics discussed in various studies, leading to an assumption that farmers' markets literature is presenting a mainly positive image of these outlets.

However, a study argues that despite all the positiveness and willingness of customers to shop at farmers' markets, they consider supermarkets as their first option of a food outlet where they are able to purchase local and organic food due to the convenience and late opening hours of outlets (Weatherell et al., 2003). The following sections of this literature review will discuss in depth the rise of supermarkets, consumer profiles and experiences of this outlet and their concerns around the supply chain practices with the producers.

2.2 Supermarkets

2.2.1 An introduction to supermarket's literature in developed and developing countries

Supermarkets origins begin in the USA in the 1930s as a form of grocery retail outlet which gradually expanded in other countries around the world adopting both local and global characteristics (Humphery, 1998). The traditional food retail system that dominated the country before the revolution of the supermarkets involved: a) wetmarkets that consisted of small stalls selling fresh products, fish, and meats; b) "mom and pop" stores where a married couple would operate small stores (they usually involved the husband taking orders, and the wife taking the products of the shelves, measuring out and packing orders); c) "street hawkers with pushcarts or shoulder or head burdens", and d) finally home delivery was available for milk and a mobile cart delivery facility for dry goods (Reardon and Gulati, 2008, p2).

A definition of supermarkets that is accepted by British academics is composed by the trade journal *Self Service and Supermarket* indicating that for a shop to be defined as a supermarket needs to satisfy three conditions (McClelland, 1962; Tilley and Hicks, 1970):

a) the sales area should be at least 2000 square feet;
b) should provide a complete range of food products and an essential range of household goods;
c) and should be a self-service system with at least three checkouts.

The development patterns of supermarkets as new retail forms was similarly experienced in the USA and the UK (Reardon and Gulati, 2008). Supermarket stores were initially offering dry-food products and then fresh foods (Reardon and Gulati, 2008). However, fresh products started becoming available in supermarkets in the 1960s due to a wider belief that it was impossible to influence consumers to not shop in the wet markets or the fruit shops but use the new big retail stores instead (Reardon and Gulati, 2008). Today, supermarkets are the most prominent food and grocery retail outlets in the Western world (Wrigley et al., 2009). For example, there are four major supermarket brands operating in the UK: Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda

and Morrisons accruing a total of 75.4% of all food shopping in 2011 (Henderson Research, 2011). The supermarket growth began with stores located in urban areas, and during the 1990s they expanded in out of town locations aiming to increase the store size and build large supermarkets in the edge-of-town centres (Hawkes, 2008). Finally, supermarkets began to expand outside the US and European territories, searching for new markets overseas due to restricted opportunities of growth in these areas (Hawkes, 2008).

After the expansion success that supermarket stores experienced in the Western societies, a new supermarket wave began in order to enter developing countries which happened in three parts (Reardon et al., 2003): a) the first part took place in the mid-1990s when supermarkets started entering South American and East Asian countries; b) the second part involved Mexico and Central America, much of South-East Asia and Southern-Central Europe; c) and finally the third phase took place in the late 1990s early 2000s in China, India and East and South Africa (Reardon and Timmer, 2007). From the above it can be seen that the developing countries experienced a more rapid expansion of the supermarket phenomenon whereas the developed countries experienced a more gradual growth which did not happen in a matter of years. This rapid expansion could be seen in the example of Albania where the first small supermarket chain, Euromax, appeared in 2005 (Likmeta, 2013) but by 2011 other larger supermarket brands such as Marinopoulos entered the country and Carrefour opened the doors to its first hypermaket, the largest shopping mall in the country (Likmeta, 2013). There are four large supermarket chains currently operating in Albania, Euromax, Conad, Merkator and Carrefour (Imami et al., 2013). This information is also supported by Hawke's (2008) study arguing that the rapid growth of supermarkets in developing countries has led hypermarkets, supermarkets and traditional outlets to coexist at the same time.

The supermarket expansion happened partly to meet the ever-changing demands, habits and preferences of consumers (Hawkes, 2008). Other factors that contributed towards the supermarket development include the entry of females into the workforce which also led to a higher per capita income and the urbanisation (Gaiha and Thapa, 2007). Moreover, the internal niche market that supermarkets create by

offering highly priced as well as own-label products, which brings together high and low income customers in one place, also was a factor in the fast development of supermarkets (Harvey, 2000). However, while supermarkets are widely accessible by a variety of high and low income consumers, the shopping patterns and use of stores is not equally displayed (Goldman and Hino, 2005). Contrary to the above, a study finds that supermarkets are no longer outlets for affluent consumers only in the developing countries (Traill, 2006). This is due to the fact that, as mentioned earlier, there is a rise in household income, urbanisation (Traill, 2006; Gaiha and Thapa, 2007) and there is an increasing desire of consumers in developing countries to imitate Western lifestyles (Traill, 2006). Furthermore, supermarkets are considered as places of entertainment for the whole family to spend time together while shopping (Reardon et al., 2007).

There are a plethora of studies in the literature that discuss a variety of matters around supermarkets such as their entry strategies into various countries and the threat they pose to the local small shops (Igami, 2011; Borraz et al., 2014), prices (Dickson and Sawyer, 1990; Lal and Rao, 1997; Levy et al., 1997), nutrition issues of the products available in supermarkets (Russo et al., 1986; Eisenhauer, 2001; Sutherland et al., 2010), CRM strategies and maintaining customer relationships (Smith, 2010; Duffy et al., 2013), and customer service and loyalty (Tolich, 1993; Sirohi et al., 1998; Disney, 1999; Bolton et al., 2000; Vazquez et al., 2001). Supermarket literature is becoming more specialised in Western countries, moving away from the consumer perception concept of supermarkets and started covering topics such as "recording brain waves at the supermarket: what can we learn from a shopper's brain" (Sands and Sands, 2012), "the influence of background music on consumer behaviour (Andersson et al., 2012), "aroma stimuli influencing shopper's behaviour and satisfaction" (Morrison et al., 2011) and obesity issues related to the food bought in supermarkets (Harris et al., 2010; Drewnowski et al., 2012).

This study is related to the consumer's perception of supermarkets therefore literature not relevant to consumer behaviour has been excluded from this review. The sections that follow in this chapter will investigate the supermarket consumer profile, perceptions and experiences gained in a supermarket store.

2.2.2 Supermarkets' consumer profile

Supermarkets segment their audience by targeting upper-income consumers first and then adapt their strategy to target consumers coming from middle or lower social classes (Reardon et al., 2003). Shopping in supermarkets is also associated with the socio-economic status of the individual, because supermarkets offer the middle-class consumer the opportunity 'to differentiate themselves from the lower classes and to express a sense of belonging and a unique social identity' (Amine and Lazzaoui's, 2011, p.570).

Studies that investigate supermarket consumer segmentation, are concerned with the demographic variables of the consumer such as household income, age, gender, education and the relationships formed with other consumer behaviour-related variables such as satisfaction and loyalty (Carpenter and Moore 2006; Pan and Zinkhan, 2006; Burnett, 1991; Hortman et al., 1990). Fox et al., (2004) examined the effect of demographics on supermarket shopping behaviour and concluded that the household size, income, and level of education are factors that influence consumers' choices of supermarket stores. Contrary to these findings, Carpenter and Moore (2006) found that the demographics of income, education and age do not influence consumer behaviour. Theodoridis and Chatzipanagiotou (2009, p. 712) identified three research groups attempting to segment the supermarket consumer: a) investigation of demographic variables such as gender and age (Burnett, 1991; Roy, 1994; Dholakia, 1999; Pan and Zinkhan, 2006); b) examination of personal characteristics and shopping behaviours such as frequency related to store image attributes (Hortman et al., 1990; Kim and Park, 1997; Bawa and Ghosh, 1999; Carpenter and Moore, 2006); and c) evaluation of the national or geographical context comparing consumer types between two or three national backgrounds (Home, 2002; Baltas and Papastathopoulou, 2003; Baltas and Argouslidis, 2007). This last strand of research identifies a variety of consumer types of consumers. For example, in Finland, Home (2002) found that typically, a supermarket customer is more educated, young, a family person with children, and has a higher income compared to consumers that do their grocery shopping in other retail stores (Home, 2002). In Greece, the supermarket consumer tends to be females that pay relatively more attention to economic criteria when choosing to buy from a supermarket store

(Baltas and Papastathopoulou, 2003). However, even though females have been the key determinants of shopping activity, males are becoming progressively more active shoppers (Dholakia, 1999). The results of these studies show some conflicting results in their attempt to draw the supermarkets' consumer profile when the research is conducted in various countries using a diverse range of variables. This may be due to the different timescales the studies were conducted, the methodology used to analyse the data or the questionnaire or interview design. Nevertheless, one study concludes that it is not clear how and in what degree these specific demographic factors affect customer behaviour across various types of retailing stores (Kim and Jin, 2001).

On the other hand, several studies investigating consumers in developing countries concluded that consumers of a higher socioeconomic status are more likely to switch to modern supermarkets (Appel, 1972; Findlay et al., 1990; Goldman, 1981; Kaynak and Cavusgil, 1982; Kumcu and Kumcu, 1987). Young consumers in Taiwan, aged from fifteen to thirty and in their forties as well as consumers of higher social class, were found to avoid traditional markets showing a preference towards supermarkets (Shiu and Dawson, 2001). While shopping in a supermarket is considered an attribute of an individual belonging to high social class in certain cultures, in the UK, surveyed shoppers were found to judge each other by the carrier bags which revealed the supermarket choices of the individuals (Mintel, 2007). More than half of the respondents felt that their choice of supermarket reflects their social class (Mintel, 2007). One in ten respondents expressed embarrassment if they were to be seen in an inferior supermarket by their peers and would prefer to spend more in order to be seen in the 'right' supermarket store (Mintel, 2007). Furthermore, the survey provided customer segmentation for each of the main British supermarket brands with: a) Waitrose's customers to be career professionals and well educated; b) Sainsbury's customers are young, well-educated and childless shoppers with cosmopolitan tastes and liberal outlook; c) Tesco's customers are families, OAPs, price conscious consumers and professionals; d) ASDA's customers are down to earth shoppers of the 'ties of community' types from coalfield, old steel and shipbuilding regions; e) Morrisons' shoppers come from close-knit, inner city and manufacturing

towns, plus 'rural isolationists'; and f) Netto's customers are low income families from large council estates. While recent data show a shift of the UK grocery market share with Tesco holding 24.4%, Sainsbury's 12.1%, Asda 12.1%, Morrisons 8.6%, Aldi 7.0%, Lidl 5.1%, and Coop 4.6% (Mintel, 2018) there is a lack of recent surveys investigating the impact of the supermarket brand and the consumer social status as undertaken by Mintel in 2007. Mintel's (2007) survey showed that, in the UK, while shopping in a supermarket is everyone's prerogative, shopping in the right supermarket determines the social class and high-income consumers. The next section of this chapter will also provide a review on the supermarket expansion in the post-communist countries in Europe in order to present an argument around the supermarket consumer profile in these countries.

2.2.3 Supermarkets in post-communist countries

Post-communist countries in Europe such as Russia, Croatia, Latvia, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, have also been experiencing the supermarket expansion, which is a different format of retailing from the state controlled economies they used to have in the past (Reardon and Swinnen, 2004; Dries et al., 2004). The research undertaken in these countries involves mainly the analysis of the expansion strategies of big supermarket chains, the changes in the retail system or the steps the state owned, communist economies followed to move towards globalisation (Reardon and Swinnen, 2004; Dries et al., 2004). While few studies exist that investigate post-communist individuals such as Lithuanian consumers' behaviours towards supermarkets (Pilelienė and Grigaliūnaitė, 2013) and young Czechs, Hungarians, and Poles' shopping patterns in supermarkets (Money and Colton, 2000), there is a lack of studies in the literature that investigate consumer perceptions of supermarkets in a post-communist country. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, one of the post-communist countries situated within the Balkan territory that is experiencing the supermarket expansion is Albania. Supermarkets started appearing in 2007 (Vorpsi, 2012 and shopping from supermarket stores has become a trend for Albanian consumers because they consider them to be trusted sources of controlled products (Kapaj et al., 2011). However, very little research has been undertaken to investigate Albanian consumer perception of this new retail

sector. A recent study showed that there are two types of supermarkets existing in Albania: local stores (small supermarket outlets situated in neighborhoods and frequented during weekdays) and large supermarket stores (mainly built outside the city centre, frequented for bulk shopping and places of entertainment for the whole family) (Qendro, 2015).

Consumer behaviours and perceptions towards supermarkets have been widely covered by the literature in western European countries such as the UK. The following section provides a discussion around the reasons consumers shop in supermarkets and the value they get from such a shopping experience.

2.2.4 An analysis of consumer perception - behaviour towards supermarkets

There are many reasons why consumers shop in a supermarket involving personal experiences with the store staff, the food quality on offer and the convenience factor that enables them to buy what they need. This section will investigate these reasons further and provide an overview of studies that have examined consumer perceptions towards supermarkets.

A study conducted by Jackson et al., (2006) in Portsmouth using in-depth interviews, observation and a longitudinal analysis found that consumer choice between supermarket stores involves judgments on taste, quality, value, convenience, price, and accessibility. They also found that the above characteristics are correlated to households' differential levels of cultural, ethical and moral considerations as well as practical utility (Jackson et al., 2006). Another factor impacting consumer perception is access to the supermarkets with Baker et al., (2005) showing that access to services and stores is of direct relevance to consumers' perception of well-being and quality of life. It is also found that consumers perceive larger, more attractive, supermarket stores to be more accessible than smaller ones (Clarke et al., 2012).

Other studies have indicated the variety of products in store as an impact factor that positively influences consumers' perceptions of store image and satisfaction (Oppewal and Koelemeijer, 2005; Anselmsson, 2006; Huddleston, et al., 2009), because this variety provides flexibility and convenience of choice as well as the opportunity to compare products which makes them feel in control (Botti and Iyengar,

2006). On the other hand, other studies have found that consumers do not always notice variations in product assortments and it has little effect on shoppers' perceptions of the assortment offered or missing, as long as favourite items are available and shelf space is held constant (Broniarczyk, Hoyer and McAlister, 1998; Sloot, Fok and Verhoef, 2006). Pricing is another influential factor that contributes to the retailer's positioning in the market, builds up the brand's "personality" (McGoldrick, 1990) and has a great effect on the value of the supermarket store (Sirohi et al., 1998). Price is also found to be one of the most important attributes in grocery-shopping decisions (Hortman et al., 1990).

Consumers' perceptions towards supermarkets are inter-related with the overall level of satisfaction and experience they get during their shopping process and the feeling they get after leaving the store. Giese and Cote's (2000) definition of customer satisfaction is identified by the customer's response (cognitive or affective) focusing on the experience of purchasing products and occurs at a certain time usually post-purchase or post-consumption. Thus, a customer's satisfaction is an outcome of the value provided by the shopping experience (Huddleston et al., 2009). Other factors that influence consumers' satisfaction in a supermarket store have been found to be the quality of service and the experience they have with the salespeople (Darian et al., 2001). This shows that the experience consumers have in a supermarket store influences their perception of the store and the supermarket brand and subsequently their shopping behaviour and expenditure in the store. Therefore, the following section is investigating consumers' experience of supermarkets in more detail.

2.2.5 Consumers' experience of supermarkets

According to Theodoridis and Chatzipanagiotou, (2009) when customers go shopping, they seek an experience which is more than product variety and / or quality; it is a combination of various attributes related to a retailer that favour it with a unique store image. Thus, customers' satisfaction is affected by the physical environment of the store, the ease of locating products through the store aisles and the experience while encountering the cashiers, queues, traffic within the store and the use of trolleys (Theodoridis and Chatzipanagiotou, 2009; Pan and Zinkhan, 2006; Hackl et

al., 2000; Morschett et al., 2005; Martineau, 1958; Bloemer and De Ruyter, 1998; Finn and Louviere, 1996; Gail and Scott, 1995). Colours, shelf displays, decorative features around the store, ease of movement between aisles, smell, condition of the air, music, and lighting, form part of a supermarket store ambience which enables a positive consumer experience (Theodoridis and Chatzipanagiotou, 2009; Babin and Darden, 1996). This positive experience results in the customer spending increased time in the store (Babin et al., 2003). Min's (2006) research indicated that the most important factor that determines consumers' preferences for supermarkets is the availability of products of good quality. As Table 2 shows below, other important attributes are the cleanliness of the supermarkets, the competitiveness of prices, and the variety of products on the shelves (Min, 2006).

Attributes	Average degree of importance[1]	Ranks
Quality of products	1.55 (0.88)	1
Cleanliness of a supermarket	1.69 (0.87)	2
Competitive price	1.72 (0.94)	3
Product variety	1.82 (0.99)	4
Fast checkout	1.88 (0.97)	5
Proximity to residence	2.03 (0.97)	6
Length of store operating hours	2.19 (1.08)	7
Quality of prior services	2.08 (0.94)	8
Good price labelling	2.19 (1.00)	9
Employee courtesy	2.25 (1.06)	10
Ease of payment such as credit card facilities	2.41 (1.25)	11
Special departments such as seafood/meat	2.47 (1.16)	12
Word-of-mouth reputation	2.95 (1.07)	13

Table 2: Service attributes for supermarkets, adapted from Min (2006)

There are also other reasons that influence consumers' perceptions of supermarkets which are relevant to the sustainability practices and ethical considerations of the supermarket chain they choose. Thus, the following section provides insights into the debate around the ethical concerns over the supermarkets' supply chains and their approaches to sustainability.

2.2.6 Ethical concerns over supermarket supply chains or supermarkets' approaches to sustainability

UK supermarkets have been pressured to behave more responsibly, as there have been reports indicating unacceptable treatment of their suppliers (Spence and Rinaldi, 2012). Unfair practices have been enforced on suppliers by supermarkets, including "requiring or requesting from some of their suppliers various non-cost related payments or discounts, sometimes retrospectively; imposing charges and making changes to contractual arrangements without adequate notice; and unreasonably transferring risks from the main party to the supplier" (Competition Commission, 2000, p. 6).

In the UK food retailing sector, supermarket provider brands are limited in numbers and food sourcing practices in a globalised environment, have given supermarkets unparalleled power over producers and agents in their global value chains (Vorley, 2004). This unprecedented power has resulted in accusations made by a range of campaigning organisations, journalists and researchers arguing that supermarkets make unreasonable demands on their suppliers by pushing the prices down which means producers and their workers within the supermarket supply chain are unable to make a decent living (Tallontire and Vorley, 2005).

The major food retailers are integrating sustainability practices and strategies into their fundamental business models however, this movement is seen with scepticism and suspicion as to be driven by cost savings, by marketing and public relations initiatives (Jones et al., 2008). Some supermarkets in the UK have taken the opportunity to differentiate from their competitors by addressing sustainability issues within their outlets such as food miles in order to promote their stores as eco-friendly (Wallop, 2007). Several of the UK's major supermarket brands have incorporated initiatives planned to enhance their sustainability strategies. Tesco and Sainsbury are becoming more environmentally friendly and have started marketing a wide range of organically-produced products such as fruit and vegetables, milk, yoghurt, eggs, tea, coffee, baby foods, flour, bread, biscuits and other bakery products, cider, wine, chocolate and some meats (Burch et al., 2001). One of Tesco's campaign was emphasising the chain's choice of local milk and in 2007, Marks and Spencer

announced, that the brand is increasing product supply from UK producers (Kemp et al, 2010). A survey was carried out in the UK in July 2009 (Allder and Yates) to see what major supermarket brands are doing in their stores, to enhance sustainability on four environmental indicators: climate change, sustainable farming, sustainable fishing, and waste and recycling. They found that Marks and Spencer's and Sainsbury scored highly in the sustainable ladder making it easy for their consumers to make sustainable choices (Allder and Yates, 2009). Supermarkets such as Sainsbury have started to adopt environmentally friendly distribution methods as well as a green approach to the production and delivery of foods to their customers, taking into consideration the environmental impact of the production system (Burch et al., 2001). This approach is described by Johnson (1998) as the big organisations embracing a 'new ecological paradigm' (mainly found in North of Europe) encouraged by a strong, green, public policy and regulatory climate.

To adapt to the new sustainability requirements, supermarket brands are focusing on commercialising green food and have become one of the main providers of such food (Oosterveer et al., 2007). Small and locally based vendors were the original retail marketplace for organic food, but the multiple grocery chains are now dominating the market with an estimated 70% market share (Jones and Clarke-Hill, 2001). Large supermarket brands use labels to show the quality and the sustainability levels of their products to cater to their customer base's needs or preferences (Oosterveer et al., 2007). Though, Young (2004) argues that supermarkets have been widely criticised for overselling organic food for large profit margins. Supermarkets also are supplied their organic food products from overseas markets, which adds to food miles, even though they could use UK based organic food producers (Young, 2004). Supermarkets are perceived as convenient points of sale for conventional and organic food, but a study reveals that consumers have become more concerned with supermarket practices that do not allow suppliers to trade in fair terms with the big corporations (Padel and Foster, 2005).

2.2.7 Conclusion

This section of the literature chapter mainly focused on the origin and expansion of the supermarkets, their development through the years and their relationship with their consumers. While the farmers' markets section elaborated on sustainability issues, a delibarate decision was made not to investigate sustainability issues around supermarkets since the strands of literature explore many aspects of sustainability such as operational sustainability within supermarket stores, Fairtrade and recycling, subjects that could each form a separate thesis. Various studies have investigated the ways that supermarkets have addressed sustainability issues to differentiate from competitors and to enhance sustainability profiles (Burch, 2001; Wallop, 2007; Allder and Yates, 2009; Kemp et al., 2010). This shows that there is a clear recognition that the major food retailers are trying to integrate sustainability into their core business however, this movement is seen with scepticism and suspicion by many consumers believing that this sustainable behaviour is driven by cost savings, marketing and public relations initiatives (Jones et al., 2008).

It is a common practice among the major supermarket retailers to use food labels as a way of indicating product quality and sustainability (Oosterveer et al., 2007). While the original retail marketplace for organic food, another form of sustainable food as investigated in the farmers' markets section, was small and locally based, it seems that recently it had been the multiple grocery chains that dominate the market with an estimated 70% market share (Jones and Clarke-Hill, 2001). Although the green food movement has been researched for over four decades, it was not until the 1990s that it gained a largely mainstream status (Van der Grijp and den Hond, 1999). This is due to the fact that green food has been distributed through supermarkets which helped reach a much larger audience (Van der Grijp and den Hond, 1999). In an attempt to adapt to the new sustainability requirements, supermarkets have become one of the main providers of green food (Oosterveer et al., 2007). However, while supermarkets are considered as convenient and easily accessible stores for buying organic and conventional food, consumers have become more concerned with the big corporations not treating their suppliers in fair terms (Padel and Foster, 2005).

2.3 Chapter summary

The literature on farmers' markets showed that many studies have examined farmers' markets not only from the consumers' point of view but also from that of the farmers. There are many studies attempting to identify the typical consumer of farmers' markets in various countries applying a variety of demographic variables, sometimes bringing conflicting results as per who is the typical farmers' market customer. The positive aspects of farmers' markets have been presented in this chapter emphasising on the freshness of the food that has been locally produced, animal welfare, supporting local communities, and the friendly environment, attributes that result in a positive shopping experience in the farmers' markets. The farmers' market literature is almost devoid of critique. Supermarket literature on the other hand, covered the origins of the supermarket, how supermarket brands segment their consumers and organic food distribution through supermarket stores, as well as some highlights around sustainability practices. Consumer perception and experiences of supermarkets were also explored as well as the concerns that have arisen from the non-Fairtrade practices of supermarkets with their suppliers. The following literature review chapter will consider the relevant theories of constructed identity and how consumption and consumer culture are shaping the consumer's self and social identity.

Chapter 3: Self identity and individual consumer

3.0 Introduction

This is the second literature chapter and will provide a discussion around the definitions of self, individuality and identity which have been employed both within Consumer Culture Theory and other consumer behaviour studies. Moreover, as this study is directly concerned with self identity through food consumption, this chapter will also cover the body of work related to this strand of self identity theory.

The strands of social identity will also be investigated in this chapter as well as the concepts of niche groups such as family and friends, neotribes and social norms in order to understand how these social antecedents contribute towards the creation of one's self.

3.1 Self identity theory

Consumer Culture Theory related studies have been used to develop the definitions of self, individuality and identity to explore many aspects of consumer behaviour. This study is concerned with Consumer Culture Theory and particularly the individual's identity and concepts of self identity through purchasing of food in supermarkets and farmers' markets.

A definition of self is usually associated with identity and is concerned with how individuals describe themselves in response to the "Who am I?" question (Gollwitzer and Kirchhof 1998). Thoits and Virshup (1997) argue that self identity theory also responds to the question "who am I in my own eyes?" triggering an internally generated role expectation by the individuals.

Identity Theory answers questions related to the origins of the various saliences of identities in the individual's self-structure and the reasons identity salience may change over time (Stryker 1968; Wells and Stryker 1988). Consequently, a new theory, self identity theory, is created that is concerned with how individuals are tied into social structure and the consequences of the ties upon their identities (Stryker and Burke, 2000). A correlation was later identified to be between the identity salience and the individual's behaviours that are related to the roles underlying their

identities, emphasising that expectations attached to roles, were internalised and acted out (Stryker and Burke, 2000).

Identity theory indicates that self identity is the main motivator of behaviour (Stryker and Burke, 2000). There are several studies which also highlight the identity-behaviour relations (e.g., Biddle et al., 1987; Eagly et al., 1993; Stets and Biga, 2003). When approached from a sociological point of view, self identity is defined by a number of meanings related to roles individuals play in the social structure, and unique ways in which they portray themselves in the roles they enact (Stets and Burke, 2003). Self identity is considered as an independent predictor of a consumer's attitudes and consumption behaviours, because individuals are looking for being consistent with the identity norm through behavioural activities (Arnocky et al., 2007). Further studies also show that self identity theory is used to describe oneself (Cook et al., 2002), influenced by personal motivations (self-esteem, self-enhancement, self-understanding) and social interaction (demands, expectations of others) and the various roles the individual portrays (Ellmers et al., 2002; Stryker and Burke, 2000; Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Self identity also serves as a separator for an individual's self when asked to adapt to the values and behaviours indicated by the various social groups to which the individual belongs (Christensen et al., 2004).

While the above definitions of self identity form the grounds of a good theory, it is not very clear how the "various construction dynamics" (for example, the ways people characterise themselves in response to "Who am I?" (Gollwitzer and Kirchhof 1998)), are seen in the consumers' everyday understanding of self or how it functions (Gould, 2010, p.182). Self is often treated as the self of a particular consumer (their identity) "while generally ignoring that consumer's broader cultural, phenomenological, ontological and epistemological influenced perspectives on the self where their own identity is embedded" (Gould, 2010, p.182). Additionally, a study stresses the relationships of the private versus cultural self which an individual may have and use interchangeably to make sense of the self and the world (Ringberg and Reihlen, 2008).

One school of theory does not consider self as a non-coherently understood single entity but explores the idea of multiple selves co-existing in individually constructed

spheres which may be linked to each other or disparate (Hermans, 2002). This is considered to be part of multiple self theories (Gould, 2010) as represented in Figure 3 below:
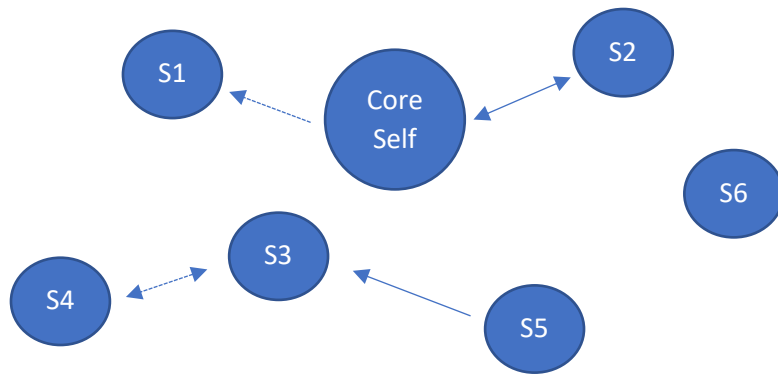
Figure 3: Multiple Self Model (adopted from Gould, 2010, p. 208)

Gould (2010, p.208) suggests that "there are multiple coexisting narratives and constructions of the self". He also continues that the core self is multi-dimensional where all dimensions of the self are linked to the core and should not be misinterpreted with the multiple self aspect where the multiple selves are satellites of the central self for example private self projected in private moments, the core self which forms the core values of the individual and the public self projected in accordance with social norms (2010). A mapping of the multidimensional and multiple selves model is represented in Figure 4 showing the relationship the core self has to its various satellite aspects and the multiple selves which may or may not be linked dialogically.
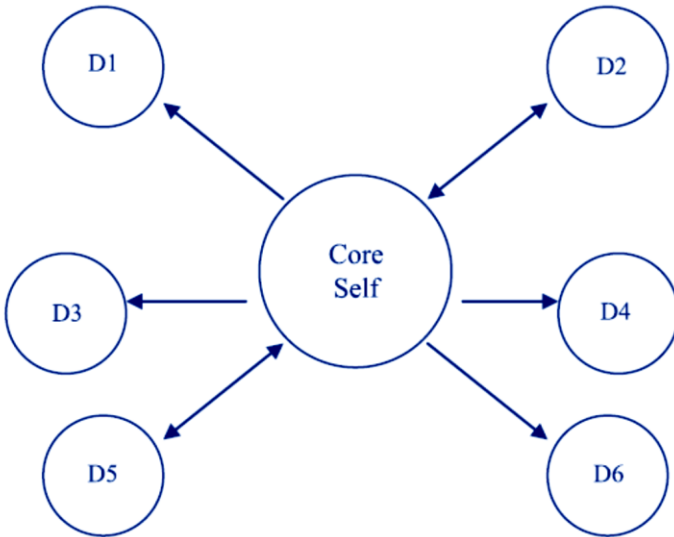
Figure 4: The Multidimensional Core Self, (adopted from Gould, 2010, p. 208)

Gould's (2010, p.207) following example summarises this difference between these two aspects: "I have a funny personality" is not the same as saying, "My funny self comes out at certain times," the first example could be considered a dimension of the core self while the last one projects an aspect of the multiple self concept. Identity theory is investigated further in the following section in order to identify studies that have applied identity theory and in what context this theory has been applied.

3.2 Consumer identity in the literature

Identity theory has emerged as a robust theory of the self over the past decades (Burke and Stets, 2009). Studies have revealed a lot of information about how identities work within the self, providing empirical evidence that reveals how identities influence behaviour (Carter, 2013). Identity theory related research has examined the effect of the moral identity on behaviour and emotions (Stets and Carter, 2006; Stets et al., 2008; Stets and Carter, 2011, 2012). Whereas other studies have been researching the identity development as a control system and how individuals feel emotions via identity verification (Stets and Cast, 2007; Stets, 2005; Stets and Burke, 2005).

A further group of studies using identity theory has been investigating various aspects of everyday life such as donating blood (Charng et al., 1988), contraception (Fekadu and Kraft, 2001), voting behaviour (Granberg and Holmberg, 1990), diet low in fat (Sparks and Guthrie, 1998), dietary changes (Sparks et al., 1995), consumption of organically grown vegetables (Sparks and Shepherd, 1992), household recycling (Terry et al., 1999) and participation in a programme of exercise activity (Theodorakis, 1994). Foci of research include the effect of self identity on technology acceptance decisions in the context of a web-based class support system (Lee et al., 2006), the effects of green self identity and the adoption of an electric car (De Pelsmacker et al., 2016), women's alcohol consumption (Haydon et al., 2018), the influence of pro-environmental self identity on sustainable consumption (Dermody et al., 2017), green consumerism (Sparks and Shepperd, 1992), sustainable consumption (Soron, 2010), and the roles of health consciousness, food safety concern and ethical self identity in predicting buying intentions of organic products (Michaelidou and Hassan, 2008).

3.3 Self identity and consumption

Consumption, which in this thesis focuses on the shopping experience as identified in the introduction chapter, can influence social differentiation, identity and lifestyles of individuals (Gilleard et al., 2005). Individuals use material, symbolic, and experiential resources when they employ personal and collective identities (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

Consumption is perceived to contribute towards creating and managing identity as well as showing patterns of symbols that communicate one's identity; it is both a social action (use of resources within the framework of identity for example consumer behaviour), and a system of symbols that communicates identity (for example consumer culture) (Wang, 2001). Consumers use consumption as the means to construct their identities (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998). The construction of the self depends upon the choices that we make as consumers (Slater 1997, p. 91). A reflexive project "involves unremitting self-monitoring, self-scrutiny, planning and ordering of all elements of our lives, appearances and performances to marshal them into a coherent narrative" (Slater, 1997, p 91). Consumers choose between different

types of selves, but also the "post-traditional world" requires that we "constitute ourselves as a self who chooses, a consumer" (Slater 1997, p. 91). "In a detraditionalized and individualized world, individuals expect (and are expected to) focus much more specifically upon their own project of self identity" (Reimer and Leslie, 2004, p. 191).

Individuals can select an identity as they wish from a variety of cultural identities that can be worn and then discarded (Belk and Costa, 1998). Possessions become clues for definitions to be used by the individual and by others through interaction (Perez et al., 2010). These possessions project the individual's extended self, facilitate the creation of personal identity and the construction of a culture of consumption (Belk, 1988). This is even more relevant when hedonic consumption is involved where symbolic meanings play a crucial role in the decision-making processes (Perez et al., 2010).

Studies suggest that there is a correlation between consumption behaviour patterns, the adoption of new products and the individual's identity (Cook et al., 2002; Grewal et al., 2000). Schouten (1991) finds that people perform consumption activities to develop and maintain their stable and harmonious self-concept. The relationship between consumption and identity and the need for self identity has resulted from the increasing growth of individualism in society, (Bauman, 1988) a distinctive feature of the western person (Morris, 1972).

McCracken (1988) argues that consumption can fulfil two functions: as a symbolic outward display and as personal identity work — through the goods which one consumes there may be communication with themselves; he discusses them as representing —"a bulletin board for internal messages and billboard for external ones" (p. 136).

Identities are constructed through social practices and various forms of consumption; however, there is a limitation on how an individual can construct identity free from influences that are retrieved from memories of the past experiences and recollecting the position the individuals have had in their previous social circles (Elliott, 2004). The ability to escape the structures of culture is limited thus the self in action leading the way to the construction of identity is constantly being developed and redeveloped as consumers make consumption choices drawing from historical constraints (Elliott,

2004). This assumption is summarised in Figure 5 below and has been adopted to form the conceptual framework of this study.

Figure 5: Consumption practices and Identity (adopted from Elliott, 2004)

Elliott's (2004) consumption practices and identity model, as shown in Figure 5, suggests that individuals construct identity through historical consumption patterns and their social practices and positions. The self in action is constantly being developed and redeveloped as consumers make consumption choices drawing from historical constraints (Elliott, 2004). This means that decision making on what to buy and where to buy it is influenced by socially structured sources of the self such as advertising, popular culture, narratives and life stories and the structural positions of the self such as material history, class position and consumption socialisation. Shopping, which is the most prominent demonstration of consumption, is an act that also expresses various aspects of the self to others and allows consumers to manage

relationships by communicating with others (Compeau et al., 2016). Shopping may also operate as a communicative act that expresses affection for an individual's self and family without any expectation of reciprocation (Belk and Coon, 1993). Relating one's self with other group members takes place when purchase decisions are influenced by people from their social circles such as friends and family, hence by incorporating the values, opinions, attitudes, and preferences of others, consumers define their relationship with the people around them (Compeau et al., 2016). Shopping has been also found to enhance self-worth because it breaks the bonds of constraining relationships with consumers finding shopping soothing, fun, exciting, even therapeutic, and thrilling (Compeau et al., 2016).

Another aspect of contributing towards self identity creation is modernity as argued by Giddens (1991). In his book, Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age, he analyses the difficulties individuals face in sustaining self identity because individuals are confronted with a complex diversity of choices in modern society (Giddens, 1991). He argues that the maintenance of self identity is possible through the construction of coherent narratives of self, monitored and tested under different circumstances which makes the choices of the individual critical to self identity (Giddens, 1991). These choices and small decisions that individuals make such as what to eat, what to wear or how to act in a work or social environment, contribute towards everyday routines that build self identity, consequently all these choices not only affect individuals' actions but who they are (Giddens, 1991). The effect of food on creating self identity is further analysed in the section that follows.

3.4 Creating identity through food consumption

Fischler (1988, p. 275) argues that "food is central to our sense of identity" and as Brillat-Savarin (1841) summarised it in his gastronomic review "tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are". Fischler (1988, p. 279) also notes that in "the action in which we send food across the frontier between the world and the self, between outside and inside our body, we become what we eat".

While clothes, houses, cars and white goods are considered commodified markers of identity and judged for their symbolic significance (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991), food and drink have been associated with identity referring to the personality, character,

mentality and the political, social, cultural and economic identifications of individuals and groups (Wilson, 2006). This is because food preferences have personal meanings to everyone, and the food choices everyone makes, contribute towards the individual's uniqueness among others (Scholliers, 2001). Food consumption may also express class, religious, ethnic or other group differences (Scholliers, 2001). Food can play a symbolic role in distinguishing memberships to various regional, national or international groups (Scholliers, 2001). The symbolic nature of food has been argued in Kniazeva and Venkatesh's (2007) work highlighting that individuals impose restrictions on themselves to avoid negative selves and engage in self-improvement identities. According to the authors (Kniazeva and Venkatesh, 2007) the negative self is usually reflected in the individual's health and weight and this results in anti-consumption behaviours towards fatty foods and sugar.

Food has also been reported to be an important element of the creation of 'family' identities and the balance of gender relationships within the home (Lupton, 1996). Previous research around food and families showed that the meaning of "proper meals" is very important, described as meals including good foods, fresh and natural ingredients which are cooked instead of being convenience foods which are cold or heated up (Charles and Kerr, 1988). The study also concluded that along with healthiness and the methods of preparation of food, a proper meal is also described in a social context indicating that a proper meal is consumed together with family hence a 'proper meal' is itself ingrained in the family as a unified social unit (Charles and Kerr, 1988). Caplan (2013) argues that although identity is created from lifestyles, the concepts of class, gender, and ethnicity, the socially constructed nature of identity which is symbolised by food cannot simply be reduced to lifestyle. According to Elliott (2004), identity is a social construction and the creation of an individual's self-identity is developed in parallel with the social identity creation. Jenkins (2014, p. 40) describes this relationship as the "internal-external dialectic of identification" and argues that self-identity should be validated through social interactions because self is embedded in such practices. Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) argue that consumers live in a symbol-rich environment and learn to develop individual symbolic interpretations of their own and/or agree on shared meanings of

these symbols by other people through the socialisation process. These symbols then help consumers to construct and express their self identities in a social context (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998). Thus, having considered the theory and literature of self-identity, the discussion will now turn to social identity theory.

3.5 Social identity theory

Tajfel's classic definition of social identity is defined as an "individual's knowledge that he or she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him or her of this group membership" (Tajfel, 1972, p. 292). Since this theory was published it has been widely accepted that in social identity theory, a social identity is a person's acceptance that he or she belongs to a social category or group (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). Social identity theory has been developed in two strands of theory:

a) the first one, named social identity theory was developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Tajfel (1981);

b) and the second one is self-categorisation theory (Turner at al., 1987).

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1972) investigates the dynamics of various relationships within and between group members and other social groups. This theory suggests that there is a predisposition of the individual for self-categorisation, looking for relationships with peers with similar interests (Abrams and Hogg, 1999). These social interactions may prompt an individual to act, feel or think in accordance with the groups' norms which triggers the individual's social cognition (Turner et al., 1987). For this reason, both social identity theory and self-categorisation theory will be investigated further in the sections that follow.

a) Social identity theory

According to social identity theory, the social group to which each individual belongs, such as nationality, ethnicity, religion or political affiliation etc. gives a definition of who the individual is and what his / her characteristics are (Hogg et al., 1995). A social group is comprised of individuals with a common social identification or

understanding of themselves as members of the same social category (Stets and Burke, 2000). People who share similar traits with the core self are characterised as persons of the in-group; people who do not share similar traits to the core self are categorised as persons of the out-group (Stets and Burke, 2000). Social categories are part of a structured society coexisting with other contrasting categories such as male vs female with each category having power, prestige, status, etc. (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). These social categories exist before the individual who is born into an already structured society (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). On the other hand, Stets and Burke (2000) argue that everyone's self-concept is unique, made up by a set of social identities created through a combination of social categories developed in the course of each person's personal history.

Generally, the social groups and memberships have distinctive characteristics that are represented in one's mind as a social identity that describe and define the individual's membership to the group he or she belongs; therefore, these membership attributes are indicating the individual's feelings and behaviours within and outside the group to which he or she belongs (Hogg et al., 1995). A feature of this theory is that basic "sociocognitive processes of categorisation and self-enhancement" are articulated to explain the group members' behaviours with "subjective belief structures" which refer to the relationships between the group members (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 260). Thus, this theory suggests that members of certain groups are aiming to achieve a positive social identity to boost their self-esteem and in the event of an unsatisfactory identity, the members may leave their group or try and find other ways they can achieve a more positive uniqueness for it (Brown, 2000).

b) Self-categorisation

The self-categorisation process in social identity takes place when the self is reflexive, taking itself as an object and categorising, classifying or naming itself in ways relevant to other social categories or classifications (Turner et al., 1987). This process of categorisation emphasises both the way that individuals perceive whether the stimuli bear any similarities (such as objects or people who belong to the same group)

or differences that belong to different categories (Hogg et al., 1995). According to self-categorisation theory individuals represent social groups through prototypes (Hogg, 2016). A prototype is a personal representation of a social group's attributes, such as attitudes, beliefs, customs, behaviours, dress code etc., which is constructed from relevant social information (Fiske and Taylor, 1991). Members of the same group have similar prototypes because they are exposed to similar information which is usually perceived in the same way (Hogg at al., 1995). However, if many individuals belonging to a group share their own prototype or another group's, then the prototype becomes essentially a stereotype (Hogg, 2016) – if one person for example believes that only rich people shop in a farmers' market this is a prototype but if for example a larger population of Britain believes this then this prototype is also a stereotype. It has been found that stereotyped perceptions of members of an in-group or an out-group, are enhanced and are made more homogeneous through identification with the in-group (Haslam et al., 1996).

When individuals categorise self and others into in-groups and out-groups, they also show their social identity and emphasise the similarities they find with other people that represent the characteristics of the group to which the individuals belong (Hogg et al., 1995). This process is called depersonalisation when the individual is acting as an embodiment of the group's prototypes instead of acting as a unique individual (Hogg et al., 1995). This uniqueness depends on the level of depersonalised self-categorisation, a process where the self and the in-group become psychologically immersed (Smith and Henry, 1996). The process of the depersonalising of the self, works together with the self-expansion model in order to explain the relationships close to the self, when the relationship between the self and other are not very clear (Aron et al., 2004). Figure 6 below shows how the model works by pinpointing the different levels of depersonalised self-categorisation of different relationships and groups:
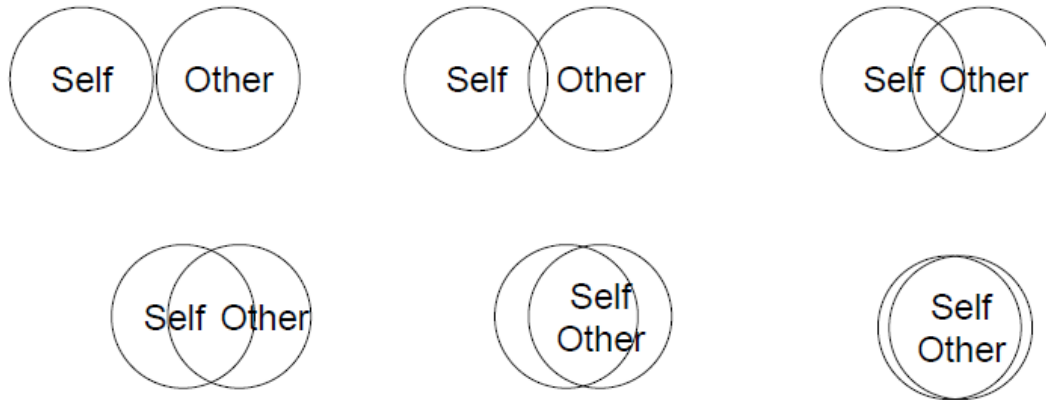
Figure 6: Inclusion of others in the self scale (Aron, Aron and Smollan, 1992)

However, while the depersonalisation of self is a process that underlies group phenomena such as social stereotyping, ethnocentrism, empathy, collective behaviour, shared norms, altruism, cooperation etc., it doesn't have any negative connotations such as the terms de-humanisation (Hogg et al., 1995). The depersonalisation of self refers to the change of the social identity where the person becomes a group member from a unique individual without losing his/her identity (Hogg et al., 1995). This depersonalisation, self-categorisation process transforms the individuals into group members and one's individuality into a group behaviour (Hogg et al., 1995).

3.6 Family and friends – niche groups of influencers

3.6.1 Family

Family members and friends are part of an individual's daily interactions whose opinions are frequently asked (Nicholson and Seidman, 1995) hence they are considered to be one of the main direct group of influencers on an individual's consumption decision making (Moisio et al., 2004). The influence of the family upon the decision making of the individual starts at a very young age. Parent to child influence is considered under the umbrella of socialisation (Moschis, 1987). Consumer socialisation has been defined as the process by which young people acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills that are mainly influenced by family, friends and teachers (Ward, 1980; Lipscomb, 1988). Parents' influences can be both direct and

indirect beginning in infancy with young individuals exposed to various stimuli such as when children accompany their parents to the shops (Solomon et al., 2010). The traditional family socialisation theory suggests that parents transfer values and attitudes around purchasing habits or favouring a brand to their children (Cotte and Wood, 2004). This approach indicates that young individuals learn through mirroring their parents' behaviour or/and other social learning practices (Moschis, 1987).

Family is perceived to be the most important influencer around the consumption of goods and decision making throughout the lifetime of an individual (Assael, 1998). However, parents' and siblings' influence over the individuals is reduced over time with partners and children taking over and playing a more influencing role in the individual's life (Assael, 1998). Siblings have been found to influence each other in many cases, they create relevant in-groups comprised by the siblings in the family and compare and mirror each other's behaviours especially during the adolescence years (Pechmann and Knight, 2002). However, Hoffman (1991) shows that this influence cannot always be easily predicted due to the rebellion that exists within a family, known as sibling de-identification, which means that siblings are more likely to confirm that they are different from one another than admit they are alike (Schachter and Stone, 1987). This is because siblings find being continuously compared with the other sibling painful, therefore they will try to emphasise that being compared to the other sibling is nonrelevant (Cotte and Wood, 2004).

3.6.2 Family and food experiences

The concept of a family eating together is important, as family plays an important role as an institution of early stages socialsiation and a "crucial societal foundation stone" (Hunt at al., 2011). Eating together around the table creates a sense of unity among the family members (Fulkerson et al., 2006). Family meal times are considered important factors of maintaining the sense of belonging and communication among the family members and very often memorable meals are associated with the sense of family togetherness (Kniazeva and Venkatesh, 2007). Food sharing has also been viewed from a ritualized point of view, a symbolic gesture that strengthens solidarity between the recipients (Douglas, 1984). Family meals are

also important in developing emotional and social significance in the individual's perception of a coherent social group and it also works as a socialising factor of the young members (Lupton, 1996). Food produced in a family environment is another way to enforce individuals' roles within the family that also defines the power relationship within the family members (Moisio et al., 2004).

When it comes to food consumption, parental influence on children is a complex issue (Baranowski, 1997). The parent becomes a role model when eating for example and showing enjoyment or dissatisfaction with certain foods in front of the children (Birch and Fisher, 1998). Parents are called to display authoritative or permissive techniques (Johnson and Fischer, 1994) to enable their children to eat food they do not enjoy but is beneficiary to their health and growth. However, the variations of the modern family such as single-person, nuclear, extended and step family, along with the different social class status and ethnicity may contribute towards a variety of structures of family meals and the relationships that are related to it (Fiese and Schwartz, 2008).

Despite the importance given to family meals and the sense of unity they create among the family members, research is challenging this perspective (Bell and Valentine, 1997) due to the fact that family meals can also function as divisive and centres of conflict within the family members (Coveney, 2002). Strained relationships between family members may consequently result in disjointed family eating habits with children avoiding meals within the household and preferring to eat with either other extended family members outside the home or with friends (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2000).

3.6.3 Friends

As discussed earlier, Social Identity Theory showed that there is a desire for self-categorisation in order to be associated with peers in friendship groups with similar views and prototypes (Abrams and Hogg, 1999). Friendship is socially constructed and highly impacted by the socio-economic environment in which it exists and is therefore a very important factor in shaping social identity (Allan, 1998). Friendship can be related to the quality and the management of the social behaviour of the individual (Hartup, 1996). Mangleburg et al., (2004) argue that friends may influence

evaluation of products, brands, and stores in ways that enhance one's sense of belonging and help to establish an identity separate form the family. For example, in the case of adolescents, shopping with friends may reassure teenagers that they are making "appropriate" purchases (products and brands) that create favourable images among their peers (Mangleburg et al., 2004). Another study showed that friends are the consistently the strongest factor drives alcohol use in adolescents and young adults (Petraitis et al., 1995). Adolescents' friendship influences have also been investigated upon individuals' inclination to participate in risky behavioural practices such as smoking (Mercken et al., 2010) and alcohol consumption (Glaser et al., 2010).

On the other hand, the friendship influences do not have always a negative impact on the individual (Kleine et al., 1993) but also contribute towards more positive behaviours such as swimming or going to the cinema or eating out (Warde and Tampubolon, 2002). This positive influence was also demonstrated in Vermeir and Verbeke's study (2006) showing that individuals believe that their friends find it important that they are engaged in sustainable product purchases.
Generally, it is argued that individuals need to consult with friends to get their opinion and comments about the products they like before purchasing them (Katawetawaraks and Wang, 2013). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) also stress the importance of how consumption can play a central role in the creation of friendship and the sense of belonging to a membership group.

3.7 Neo-tribes

Neo-tribes are small-scale groups, not created by any of the conventional parameters of modern society, are kept together via shared feelings, lifestyles, moral beliefs and consumption practices (Cova and Cova, 2001). "The word tribe refers to the re-emergence of quasi-archaic values: a local sense of identification, religiosity, syncretism, group narcissism etc, the common denominator of which is the community dimension" (Cova and Cova, 2001, p. 67). Maffesoli (1996) provides a sociological theory of modern society in terms of formation of tribes described as postmodern neo-tribes noting how shared ethical consciousness can create a tribe

which may surpass the importance of the individual. Maffesoli suggests that a tribe refers to a specific environment or atmosphere, a state of mind, mainly expressed through individuals' lifestyles (1996). Neo-tribes are discussed in literature as groups, real or virtual, created around specific products or services, brands or consumption practices, which provide the linking value that unites the members (Cova and Cova, 2001). The concept of neo-tribes has been conducted to investigate farmers' market consumer communities (McGrath et al., 1993), communities of individuals that ride Harley Davidson bikes (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). The "foodie" communities have also been researched in order to investigate how they create identity through discussing their off-line food consumption experiences online (Watson et al., 2008). While consumer tribes have recently been identified as a concept within social theory, their impact has been significant on marketing theory development (Cova and Salle, 2008). Cova and Cova (2002) investigate the tribalisation of society and how this is affecting marketing conduct. In their research they find that individuals like to get together in tribes where social communities are more effective and influential on the tribe members' behaviours than other marketing establishments or more formal cultural authorities (Cova and Cova, 2002). Kozinets (1999) researched online gaming rooms and the possibility of e-tribalised marketing to the audiences that visit these virtual communities. He found that consumers create e-tribes that use computers and the internet to improve their consumption knowledge, to socialise with other consumers, to organise events and to play online (Kozinets, 1999). Mitchell and Imrie's (2011) study aimed to extend the developing consumer tribe literature in order to comprehend how the antecedents and roles are understood within consumer tribal memberships. They found that the tribe they investigated had core values that eliminated any differences between the individuals (Mitchell and Imrie, 2011). There was a hierarchy system with a Chief acting as the opinion leader and organiser of the group (Mitchell and Imrie, 2011).

Consumer tribes are different from subcultures because their connections are much narrower, they have similar beliefs and values, which separates them from the main societal culture (Schiffman et al., 2008). A brand community also differs from a tribe because it is created around the common support of a brand or a product hence the term is inadequate when describing a tribe (Brownlie et al., 2007). Contrary to the

setting of the consumption subcultures and brand communities, tribes scarcely take control over consumers' lives as they represent a brief escape from the pressure and stress of the individual's working week (Goulding et al., 2002). In addition, if an individual is a member of one kind of tribe this does not exclude membership from other tribes or communities (Goulding et al., 2013). Quite the opposite, tribal theory emphasises that there are drifts between different identities when the individual is under different circumstances (Bennett, 1999). Within tribes, the social connections that have been created between the tribe members, are more significant than the actual object of consumption (Cova, 1997).

Consumer tribes are built through a learning process that involves engagement, imagination and alignment (Wenger, 2000). When individuals of a group act together and engage with each other, this becomes a central factor of any consumption community which develops over time into a community that shares rituals and traditions (Schau et al., 2009). Imagination involves imaginative learning which means that people are able to develop a shared self-image that facilitates community engagement (Goulding et al., 2013). Alignment involves all individuals of a tribe acting together in a way that they impact within and beyond the boundaries of the group in order to achieve a greater goal (Goulding et al., 2013).

Shared consumption patterns are the new means for a post-modern consumer to try to create social links and build bridges with other individuals (Simmons, 2008). Therefore, consumer tribes provide consumers with an opportunity to connect with other elusive post-modern consumers (Mitchell and Imrie, 2011). Neo-tribes exist around the use of symbolism to show allegiance to a specific group by its members (Bauman, 1992). Moreover, this symbolic consumption is used to create a social link that expresses the group member's self identity (Cova, 1997). There is a benefit for marketers in targeting consumer tribes in that social influences are the most important influence on an individual's consumption decisions (Bagozzi, 2000). The neo-tribe members share between them moral values, opinions, consumption values and preferences, providing the opportunity for marketers to access consumers that connect with each other by sharing consumption preferences (Mitchell and Imrie, 2011).

However, Cova and Cova (2002, p. 607) argue that not all tribal members engage in the same way or in the same activities and they categorise the tribal members as follows:

- "a member of institutions (associations, religious sects);
- a participant in informal gatherings (demonstrations, happenings);
- a practitioner or adept who has quasi-daily involvement in tribal activities;
- a sympathiser or fellow-traveller who moves with the vogues and trends and is marginally/virtually integrated into the tribe".

On the other hand, Mitchell and Imrie (2011) suggest that tribal members are very passionate in their involvement with the tribe and very knowledgeable of the tribe structure. Even if the tribe members are not as active with others in terms of consumption activity, they still feel this consumption activity is a central part of their self identity.

Literature around self identity and social identity as well as around tribe memberships, showed that they are all factors that influence an individual's consumption. The next section of this chapter will also investigate how social norms impact consumer decision making.

3.8 Structural and societal classifications

This section will discuss social classifications and norms and how they are used to depict individuals' perceptions of these terms. Social norms, culture, ethnicity, gender and social class literature will be discussed to identify the role they play in impacting an individual's behavour.

3.8.1 Social norms

Norms are important factors applied to understand social order and human behaviour (Campbell, 1964). Ellickson (2001, p.3) defines a social norm as "a rule governing an individual's behavior that third parties other than state agents diffusely enforce by means of social sanction". Personal norms on the other hand, are rules overseen by self-sanctioning or reward (feelings of guilt or pleasure) and are followed by an

individual irrespectively of what peers of the social group might think (Kinzig et al., 2013). There is no clear division between these two norms especially when people have strong beliefs, they often proselytise them, and socially imposed behaviours may become internalised (Hopper and Nielsen, 1991).

Norms can be a significant means of controlling behavioural choices which are confined within these norms, pushing behaviours to be acted in accordance with what the norms dictate in reference to the social groups that are most important to the individual (Perkins, 2003). Social norms also occur when there are government regulations that constrain behaviours such us the probability of being caught and fined for littering a park; there is a possibility that individuals resist doing it not because the regulations dictate it but because of personal (e.g., "I'm not the kind of person who litters") or social (e.g., "I wouldn't want others to think I am the kind of person who litters") norms (Kinzig et al., 2013, p. 166).

Many studies have debated over the importance of norms in predicting behaviour and have recognised that social norms encourage and guide actions in direct and impactful ways (Goldstein et al., 2007; Aarts and Dijksterhuis, 2003; Terry and Hogg, 2001; Cialdini et al., 1991). Ajzen and Fishbein's (1977) theory of reasoned actioned behavoiur, acknowledged the power of people influencing one's behaviour and how others' opinions of what should be done is seen as more relevant to the individual's own preferences.

Consumers are often driven to buy products that have a significant meaning to them and to the members of the social groups they belong (Leigh and Gabel, 1992). The pressures of social norms dictate consumer behaviour in order to meet the expectations of rules of the socialisation institutions similar to those coming from family and other reference groups (Engel et al., 1993). Considering the power that social norms have on predicting behaviours, many studies have emphasised on the important role that social norms play in changing behaviours that are significant to society, such as gambling, drug use, alcohol consumption, disordered eating, littering, and recycling (Neighbors et al., 2004; Larimer and Neighbors, 2003; Schultz, 1999). As a result, social norms reflected in marketing campaigns have been found to help prevent undesirable conduct (Donaldson et al., 1995). This approach is based on the fact that many individuals misjudge the extent of undesirable

behaviours, such as alcohol use among peers (Borsari and Carey, 2003), and that people use their perceptions of peer norms as a metric against which to compare their own behaviours (Clapp and McDonell, 2000).

Various studies investigate social norms in a variety of contexts such as alcohol consumption (Moreira et al., 2009; Schultz et al., 2007; Perkins, 2003) as well as social norms influencing green behaviour such as recycling (Viscusi et al., 2011; Sunstein, 1996; Cialdini et al., 1990). However, this strand of literature is not relevant to this study therefore these subjects will not be investigated further in this chapter. A more thorough section of social norms influencing food consumption follows next which is more relevant to the research questions of this thesis.

3.8.2 Social norms influencing food consumption

Research around human food consumption or eating behaviour have focused on two themes: when and how much do individuals eat and what type of foods do they like and select for consumption (Pliner and Mann, 2004). Herman and Vaccarino (2000) argue that social factors are important in both areas.

In terms of food intake control, various studies showed that individuals eat bigger portions of food when they eat with other people than when they eat alone (Clendenen et al., 1994; de Castro and Brewer, 1992; de Castro et al., 1990). Herman et al., (2003) proposed a normative framework around the social influence on food intake assuming that individuals are uncertain of the amount of food they should consume in a given situation. They argued that individuals look at the other people around them in order to understand how much food is appropriate to consume. Socially derived norms of what is appropriate to consume indicate the increased or the decreased amount of food consumed in the presence of peers depending on whether these peers are eating, how much they are eating and whether there is a willingness to impress (Herman et al., 2003). To sum it up, social influence and impression management as well as the eagerness to conform to social norms, demonstrate how important social influence is in the individual's control of food consumption (Herman et al., 2003).

Family is seen as the most immediate and narrowest definition of a social group which provides the first platform for an individual's food preferences, deriving from the imitation the individual had as a child towards the parents' food preferences (Pliner and Pelchat, 1986; Rozin et al., 1984; Birch, 1980a). Same age peers also seem to have a positive impact on the food selection process as Birch (1980b) found in her study examining children's preferences of vegetables. Birch (1980b) set up groups of children, with one chosen target group, who preferred different vegetables and asked children to choose between the two opposite types of vegetables for four days. At the end of the fourth day, the target group of children had shifted from the vegetable they originally liked to the one their peers were eating. The target group continued to choose the latter type of vegetable even when their peers were not present. The selection process seems to continue being influenced even when the individual reaches adulthood with one study showing that participants were encouraged to choose bigger or smaller proportions of new foods when "exposed to neophilic and neophobic models, respectively" (Hobden and Pliner, 1995, p. 111).

Social influences have an impact on the food selection, with culture being one of the main factors (Pliner and Mann, 2004). What individuals eat shows the cultural backgrounds they belong to (Rozin, 1976). Its profound effect is also reflected on why and how individuals buy and consume products and services as well as the consumption patterns, decision making, and communication in the wider society (Blackwell et al., 2006). The following section discusses cultural influences on food selection in more detail.

3.8.3 Cultural norms

Culture was originally considered as the process of cultivation or natural growth which subsequently meant the process of human training but at the beginning of the nineteenth century culture became a synonym of intellectual development of the mind and the individual in society (Wright et al., 2001). Today, culture refers to the process of developing intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic aspects as well as particular ways of life (Williams, 1976). As a way of life, culture may encompass both high culture and aspects of popular culture such as food, music and clothes (Wright et al., 2001). The Longman Dictionary of the English Language (1984, p.356) provides two

definitions for culture: "The typical behaviour, customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of a racial, religious or social group" and "The enlightenment and excellence of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training; refinement in manners, taste and thought". Both these definitions have salience here.

The concept of culture has been studied in various disciplines such as cultural anthropology, psychology and cross-cultural business management (Straub et al., 2002). Their review of the history of the conceptualisation of culture resulted in three categories: *Definitions Based on Shared Values*, *Definitions Based on Problem Solving* and *General All-Encompassing Definitions.*

According to Bruner (1990), human beings create meanings and symbols to understand the world around them. He argues that humans get their meaning and interpretations of the world from culture which is a system where meaning is given to action by "situating its underlying intentional states in [this] interpretive system" (Bruner, 1990, p. 24). Culture patterns or norms become embedded within each individual and enable anyone to receive, organise, rationalise, and understand personal experiences in the world (Saleebey, 1994).

Different cultural backgrounds have an impact on consumers' decision-making processes (Perner, 2010; Miller, 2009). Central components of culture comprise of the food consumption habits and general consumption patterns, which contribute significantly to decision making when it comes to consuming or buying food (Tian and Wang, 2010; Wood and Muñoz, 2007; Mills, 2000). People's cultural background highly influences the food they eat, the way they handle, prepare and consume food, and when it is suitable to eat (Miller, 2009).

Although food's primary function is to satisfy hunger and supply nourishment, it also serves as an important family factor that brings all the members together to eat; it represents ethnic and national identity as well as the region the individuals come from; food is used in social occasions and in the development of friendships, or in asserting influence upon others' behaviours (Tian and Tian, 2011). Food becomes a tool for social interactions, allowing people to establish connections, and becomes an instrument for aesthetic expression, which leads to extravagant food preparations and cuisines that are not based on nutritional factors only (Rozin, 2005). People with similar or the same cultural backgrounds, generally share the same collection of food

variables, but when the factor culture differs, so do the consumption variables (Muñoz and Wood, 2009).

Cultural factors play a significant role in influencing consumers' buying behaviour; culture theory and specifically the theory of individualism and collectivism holds important insights about consumer behaviour (Kacen and Lee 2002) as discussed in section 1.1.2 (page 6). Collectivism is a social pattern that comprises of individuals who see themselves as an integral part of one or more groups or in-groups, such as family and co-workers (Triandis, 1995). Collectivist individuals seem to be driven by norms and responsibilities indicated by the in-group, prioritise the goals of the in-group, and try to emphasise their connection with the in-group (Tian and Tian, 2011). Individualism on the other hand, comprises of individuals who see themselves as autonomous and independent (Triandis, 1995). Individualist people seem to be driven by their own preferences and needs, prioritisation of personal goals, and emphasis on a rationalised analysis of their relationships with others (Triandis, 1994). Psychological and behavioural values of ethnic group members are very significant when they are part of culturally heterogeneous societies (Rosenthal and Feldman, 1992). The next section of this chapter will discuss this significance of ethnicity to identify the role it plays in consumption.

3.8.4 Ethnicity

Ethnicity creates a sense of common customs, language, religion, values, morality, and etiquette among the members of a society with the same ethnic background (Webster, 1994). However, Malezevic (2010) argues that ethnicity is not considered to be self-evident and while it can help identify sociologically relevant common attributes, it needs a definition and explanation first. There is little agreement among scholars about the "ethnicity" term except for its origin which is from the Greek word *ethnos* (Rattansi, 2004). The Greek concept of ethnos refers to people of the same nation or tribe, and *ethnikos*, stands for national; hence, ethnicity indicates the ethnic value or affiliation of a group, usually characterised in terms of culture (Betancourt and López, 1993).

Rattansi (2004) argues that culture and race have often been used interchangeably. Jamal (2003) describes ethnicity as a biological makeup of individuals where genetic

factors show aspects of it. However, this definition is very close to Jones's (1991) definition of race which is defined in terms of physical characteristics such as skin colour, features and hair type, common to geographically defined populations. In a wider concept, ethnicity has been considered to be a subjective and psychological occurrence which can be expressed in any identity display (Hraba, 1979).

Ethnic identity can influence attitudes and behaviours associated with the sense of membership including consumption preferences (Jamal, 2003; Rosenthal and Feldman, 1992). This relationship between ethnicity and consumption may result in consuming behaviours or patterns rooted in the minority culture and unlikely to change with time or acculturation and in other behaviours that are open to acculturative influences and cultural assimilations (Hui et al., 1998). Acculturation is the "phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Berry, 1980, p. 9). Consumer acculturation is more likely to occur with consumption behaviours that are not relevant to any cultural aspects such as waxing the car whereas with culture-relevant activities such as ethnic festivals it is more unlikely to happen (Lee and Tse, 1994). Bradby's (1997) study on acculturative, investigated female respondents from Glasgow of Punjabi origin who used food to adapt into the new culture by categorising it into "our food" (Asian) and "your food" (Scottish, British). Daily food preferences manifested the respondents' Punjabi origin and willingness to preserve their cultural heritage, while British food was introduced on the family table by the young members and considered as a treat or to increase variety (Bradby, 1997).

Ethnicity is often prominent through food (Kymlica, 2010), one of the main predictors of ethnic identity and widely accepted (Laroche et al., 1998). One indicator of ethnicity is the purchasing and consumption of ethnic foods, an intricate category of market goods, reflecting a certain culture and taste of the country of origin (Verbeke and Poquiviqui Lopez, 2005). Ethnic foods are often viewed as novel food products purchased to satisfy consumers' preference with an authentic connection to the culture of reference, a purchase that often involves special shopping trips and background cultural knowledge of how to prepare novel foods (Bradby, 1997).

Typical ethnic food consumers tend to be of younger age, working and living mainly in big cities and suburbs (Sloan, 2001). To these type of consumers, ethnic food provides a form of palate adventure and emotional mobility as they can be transported with the aroma and flavour to places around the world they wish they could be, or it evokes memories of holidays, or it reflects relationships and acceptance of new cultures (Verbeke and Poquiviqui Lopez, 2005).

On the other hand, ethnic food is a result of a social process in which a cooking style becomes a representation of an ethnic cuisine (Huat and Rajah, 2001). However, to the cook who prepared the food in a homely environment, this is not a conscious process of producing ethnic food; the cook is producing food as learned from family members at home and subsequently the ethnicity of the food is the extension of the ethnicity of the cook who produced it (Huat and Rajah, 2001).

Socio-demographic characteristics have been found to be very important determinants of the consumption of food (Verbeke and Poquiviqui Lopez, 2005). Food habits and taste preferences are related to the gender of the consumer (Ton Nu et al., 1996). For this reason, gender will be further explored in the next section of this chapter.

3.8.5 Gender, food and consumption

Gender and its influence on behaviour and identity emerged as a concept among researchers in the 1970s when they started distinguishing the differences of the two biological sexes. (Oakley, 1972). Scott (1986, p. 1953) refers to the definition given by the feminist movement as the gender being the "social organization of the relationship between the sexes". Scott's (1983; 1986; 2010) extensive work on gender concludes that gender had been used by feminists to talk about how the differences of anatomical sex mean different things at different times. A cultural construction has been associated with gender attributing meanings to the term not necessarily related to the body construction but to history, politics and culture which means that sex and gender can be carefully distinguished with one referring to biology and the other to culture (Scott, 2010).

Socio-economic demographics have been used in many studies to investigate the various ways they influence individuals on many aspects of life. Interest has been

drawn around gender and its influence around food consumption and preparation with some studies suggesting that it is a women's responsibility to prepare a "proper meal" consisting of meat and vegetables (Charles and Kerr, 1988; Murcott, 1982). This was a traditional notion within families having a symbolic significance to the role of women preparing proper meals for their husbands who are the breadwinners of the family (Murcott, 1982). A study in the UK revealed that 68% of women compared to 18% of men cooked everyday with the majority of respondents claiming to have learnt to cook from their mother (Caraher et al., 1999). Lake at al., (2006) also argue the significant role a mother plays in teaching the future generations how to cook and select their food.

Murcott's (2000) study asked the question "Is it still a pleasure to cook for him?" and found the following answer "whether with or without much pleasure, women are still most likely to be cooking for him". Other studies seem to agree with this finding. Although food purchasing, and cooking may involve both genders it is still a predominately female task in shared households (Lake at al., 2006). However, the study found that rather than accepting the food-related tasks as being "a woman's job", it was found that women had taken this responsibility because they were more skilled in doing the job (Lake at al., 2006). These findings were also echoed in a study investigating Scottish consumers where the shopping responsibility fell to the women because men were seen as not capable enough to carry out the task effectively (Marshall and Anderson, 2000).

Gender differences are expressed in the form of values, beliefs and meanings about food and have also been associated with attitudes and understanding of food and healthy eating (Lake at al., 2006). Generally, females are perceived to have more knowledge around the nutrition and health aspects of food than men (Barker et al., 1995), and are more inclined to change their diets to healthier ones (Fagerli and Wandel, 1999).

Gender is becoming more important than class or other factors in influencing consumption patterns (Bihagen and Katz-Gerro, 2000). Male and female have been considered to contribute towards creating a social identity and factors that categorise any activities related to them (Hogg and Garrow, 2003). For this reason, consumer behaviour theorists have considered gender to be a variable predicting (Bettany et

al., 2010) behaviours around shopping, advertising and other areas (Dahl et al., 2009). Biological and psychological aspects of sex and gender have been considered to influence both men and women's consuming patterns (Markus et al., 1982).

Many studies are polarised around this gendered agenda when it comes to exploring differences and masculinised gender identity such as body building (Jeffords, 1994), motorbike riding (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995) and feminised gender identity such as fashion (Barthes, 1983) and lingerie (Jantzen et al., 2006). This division is also reflected in cooking habits with men regarding cooking as a hobby rather than a chore (Kemmer, 1999). While men are treating cooking as a rather creative task, for women this is not a choice (Swinbank, 2002) due to work issues and time constraints (Lake at al., 2006). When men do cook, they prepare meals suitable for men such as barbecues or grilling meat (Williams, 1997; Miller, 2010).

3.8.6 Social class

As mentioned in the previous section, socio-economic demographics play an important role in predicting consuming patterns with social class being a factor analysed for over three decades (Coleman, 1983). Warner, Meeker, and Eells (1949) were the pioneers of social class as a predicting factor used by many marketers and consumer behaviour researchers, seeing social classes as communities of individuals confined within a common social status.

The process and social impact behind any type of consumption used to project a social class position, has been called status consumption (Üstüner and Holt, 2009). While there is some debate around this issue due to the fact that the majority of studies have been conducted in Europe and America to formulate a nomothetic theory meant to be universal, (Lamont, 1992; Bourdieu, 1984), there is a limitation about whether this theory can be applied in less industrialised countries where a Western status consumption model might be inadequate (Üstüner and Holt, 2009). This is difficult to understand because of the new consumer class emerging in these countries with discretionary purchasing power, able to pursue a consumption-focused lifestyle similar to Western consumers (Myers and Kent, 2004).

Social classes as communities of individuals confined within a common social status, can be reflected in more pragmatic terms such as having the right kind of house and

household objects and also living in the right neighborhood which works as a status show of consumption within the community (Holt, 1998). Income and class also is reflected in the quality of food that consumers of high and low income and class backgrounds purchase (Lang and Caraher, 1998). Lang and Caraher (1998) report findings from the Health and Lifestyles Survey in the UK showing that groups of individuals that have high incomes, are predisposed to choose their food based on taste and healthy diet whereas consumers with low incomes choose their food based on cost and taste, rather than on healthy diet. The same survey concluded that consumers with lower incomes and coming from lower-social-class families mainly emphasised their food shopping on providing meals rather than buying foods based on the nutritional value they offer (Lang and Caraher, 1998). Middle class mothers have also been examined in relation to lower class mothers with findings showing that to middle class mothers, health was considered more important than costs which was not the case for the lower class mothers (Hupkens et al., 2000).

These findings can be complemented by another study which found that the lack or availability of supermarkets or local shops may paly an influencing role on the individual's shopping and food behaviour (Piachhaud and Webb, 1996).

However, a Dutch study on class differences in food consumption showed that mothers and their partners who were skilled or semi-skilled labourers, displayed common patterns with higher and middle class women than mothers coming from more deprived background (Van Otterloo and Van Ogtrop, 1989). A possible explanation in the different results of this study with others might be the fact that the majority of these studies have been conducted in the UK where there is a stronger hierarchy of social classes and may have a larger impact on lifestyle than in other countries (Hupkens et al., 2000). Income inequalities as well as families living in poverty are in larger numbers in the UK compared to other countries such as Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands, meaning that class differences in terms of material resources are larger in the UK (Kooiker and Christiansen, 1995).

3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter focused on social and self identity, the co-existing of individuals in several social groups and the need to create different identities in order to be part of these groups. A review of the literature around these subjects showed that consumers do not exist in social isolation and certainly the creation of the various identity types presented earlier cannot develop under such unsocial circumstances. The social role each individual plays as well as the social structure around them and sociological variables such as class and gender have been argued to influence consumers (Caplan, 1997). In this chapter the structural sources of self have been considered as well as the social antecedents of identity and the influence of family and friends on the individual.

This chapter has reflected upon the literature on individual identity creation (Caplan, 2013) and the role of consumption (Bauman, 1988). The concept of identity is a complicated one and this study has focused on conceptions of identity as a form of an individual's narrative, as subjectively understood by them. The role of consumption in shaping identity was also discussed with specific focus on the conceptions of food consumption and identity. The influence of ethnic identity and the home production of meals was discussed in order to portray identity food portraits and how they influence the individual in a social setting.

This study aims to extend the literature around the symbolic and experiential values of shopping through the investigation of Albanian and British consumers' grocery shopping and consumption experiences in supermarkets and farmers' markets. While a previous study in the UK found that consumers can construct various dimensions and levels of self identity through their food shopping and consumption practices, identifying four key themes: "I am in control"; "I am me"; "I share and I love"; and "I belong" (Woodruffe-Burton and Wakenshaw, 2011); to the author's knowledge, there is no study yet investigating these concepts in a cross cultural setting with a post-communist sample and consumers from a well developed Northern European country. The study will also be investigating the shopping experiences in the farmers' markets and supermarkets as a combination with external resources and the support that each consumer group, Albanian and British, get from the respective outlets in their countries.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.0 Introduction

The methodology chapter will discuss the philosophy, design and approach of this study. An analysis of data collection is provided as well as the reasoning behind the choices made for the research types and sampling techniques. This study used a semi-structured interview protocol to collect data about cultural habits/patterns around food, identity and social surroundings impacting food purchasing and shopping patterns. The chapter will begin by defining the research aims and objectives that resulted from the literature review and continue with the justification of the epistemological and methodological approach of the research. The research takes an interpretive, qualitative approach to data collection. Within the qualitative approach, the narrative paradigm in which this research is sitting will be also analysed as the appropriate strategy to gather personal and reflective life and food consumption stories from the individuals sampled. The chapter will end with an outline of the data analysis and the limitations of the research design and methodology as well as the rationale behind the use of specific techniques. The outline of the methodology chapter is based on the Saunders et al., (2009) research onion as presented in Figure 7 below:
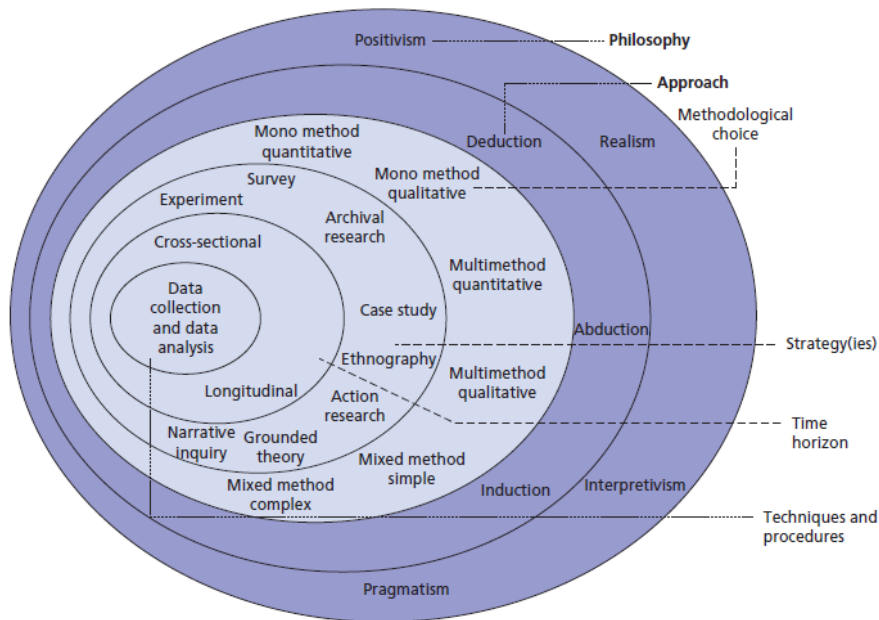
Figure 7: Research onion by Saunders et al., (2009)

4.1 Research aim

This research aims to understand how individuals from different countries, in this case Albania and the UK, create self-identity through food shopping. The main objective of the study is to understand how Albanian and British food shoppers use external factors such as family, friends, gender, social environment, income, shopping experiences, reflective emotions and hedonistic patterns to create self-identity.

4.2 Research philosophy

Johnson and Clark (2006) argue that management and business researchers need to be aware of the philosophical commitments that need to be made to develop the appropriate research strategy in order to understand the impact of the research and the subject under investigation.

By undertaking systematic investigation into consumer behaviour and identity development, researchers can increase their knowledge about how consumers create identities in various situations and more specifically through the choice of food outlets. This study applies a theoretical framework based on the doctrines of consumer culture theory and the methodological philosophies selected will steer and guide this study to examine consumers' behaviours and identity building as well as their created cultural worlds within Consumer Culture Theory (CCT).

It has been noted that there is a multiplicity of ways for researchers to seek knowledge about consumers, and each form has a unique value (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). However, the "exact nature of the definition of research is influenced by the researcher's theoretical framework" (Mertens, 2005; p. 2) which means that the theoretical positioning of this study is quite important for the research outcome.

4.2.1 Ontological position of this study

Ontology is the study of the philosophy of knowledge, and the philosophical study of how such knowledge is acquired is referred to as epistemology; the ontological and epistemological positions that researchers take have important implications for the

way that research is approached, for data collection, data interpretation and the conclusions that can be drawn (Gratton and Jones, 2010).

Ontology in business research can be defined as "the science or study of being" (Blaikie, 2010) and it deals with the nature of reality (Saunders et al., 2009). Ontology is a system of beliefs that reflects an interpretation by an individual about what constitutes a fact and is associated with whether social entities should be perceived as objective or subjective (Dudovskiy, 2016). There are two aspects of ontology: objectivism, also known as positivism; and subjectivism, also known as constructionism or interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2009; Dudovskiy, 2016). Objectivism or positivism indicates that social entities exist in reality external to any social actors concerned with their existence (Saunders et al., 2012). This strand of ontology asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors (Bryman, 2012). It also refers to "the school of thought that the only true or valid form of knowledge is that which is 'scientific', that is where the principles and methods of the natural sciences (such as chemistry or physics) are used to study human behaviour, which in itself is objective and tangible in nature" (Gratton and Jones, 2010; p.16).

On the other hand, subjectivism (constructionism or interpretivism), argues that social phenomena are created from the perceptions and actions of the social actors concerned with their existence (Dudovskiy, 2016). Constructionism or interpretivism can be defined as the ontological position which states that social phenomena and their meanings are accomplished by social actors (Bryman, 2012). Tables 3 and 4 below show the differences between the two philosophical approaches as presented by Saunders et al., (2009) and Hudson and Ozanne (1988):

	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontology: the researcher's view of the nature of reality or being	External, objective and independent of social actors	Socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple
Epistemology: the researcher's view of what constitutes acceptable knowledge	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data/facts. Focus on causality and law-like generalisations, reducing phenomena to simplest elements.	Subjective meanings and social phenomena. Focus upon the details of situation, a reality behind these details, subjective meanings motivating actions.
Axiology: the researcher's view of the role of values in research	Research is undertaken in a value-free way, the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance.	Research is value bound, the researcher is part of what is being researched, cannot be separated and so will be subjective.
Data collection techniques most often used	Highly structured, measurement, quantitative but can use qualitative	In-depth investigations, qualitative

Table 3: Comparison of positivism and interpretivism by Saunders at al., (2009; p. 119)

	Positivism	**Interpretivism**
Ontology		
Nature of Reality	Objective, tangible, single, fragmentable, divisible	Socially constructed, multiple, holistic, contextual
Nature of Social Beings	Deterministic, reactive	Voluntaristic, proactive
Axiology		
Overriding Goal	Explanation via subsumption under general laws, prediction.	Understanding based upon verstehen
Epistemology		
Knowledge Generated	Nomothetic, time-free, context independent	Idiographic, time-bound, context dependent
View of Causality	Real cause exists	Multiple simultaneous shaping
Research Relationship	Dualism, separation, privileged point of observation	Interactive, cooperative, no privileged point of observation.

Table 4: Positivism and interpretivism adapted from Hudson and Ozanne (1988; p. 509)

As stated above in Table 3 by Saunders et al., (2009), the researcher is part of what is being researched. This is also supported by Stalker (2009) who argues that researchers construct ontological and epistemological narratives used to communicate their identity as researchers and to socially situate themselves within a pre-existing situation. McGregor and Murnane (2010) argue that consciously identifying oneself within a philosophical approach and a research paradigm, minimises the risk of releasing a responsibility to account for the philosophical underpinning of one's work and enhances the integrity of consumer research. Moreover, identity creation is part of Consumer Culture Theory, a strand of theory that aims to discover the sociocultural dimensions of consumption which are not easily accessible from a positivist perspective (Sherry, 1991). Thus, the researcher of this study and this research are positioned within the interpretivist approach. Having placed this research at the core of Consumer Culture Theory and the interpretivist

approach, it is situated in a well-established domain of social sciences research which is concerned with lived experiences (Hogg and Maclaren, 2008).

4.2.2 Epistemology

Having selected the interpretivism aspect of ontology, this section of the methodology chapter will also consider the epistemology and paradigm of this research. With its origins in the Greek term epistēmē which means knowledge, epistemology is interested in the origins and nature of knowing and the construction of knowledge and is trying to answer the following questions:

— What is the relationship between the knower and the known?

— What role do values play in understanding? (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

Hudson and Ozanne (1988) break epistemology down into three elements: how knowledge is generated, the research tradition's view of causality and the relationship between the participants and researcher.

4.2.3 Strategies of inquiry

Creswell (2009) identifies three types of strategy of inquiry that provide specific directions for procedures in research designs: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Table 5 below summarises these methodologies under the philosophies they are associated with:

Philosophy	Interpretivism	Positivism	Pragmatism
Type of research	Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed
Methods	Open-ended questions, emerging approaches, text and/or image data	Closed-ended questions pre-determined approaches, numeric data	Both, open and closed-ended questions, both, emerging and predetermined approaches, and both, qualitative and quantitative data analysis
Research practices	Positions researcher within the context Collects participant-generated meanings Focuses on a single concept or phenomenon Brings personal values into the study Studies the context or setting of participants Validates the accuracy of findings Interprets the data Creates an agenda for change or reform Involves researcher in collaborating with participants	Tests or verifies theories or explanations Identifies variables of interest Relates variables in questions or hypotheses Uses standards of reliability and validity Observes and then measures information numerically Uses unbiased approaches Employs statistical procedures	Collects both, qualitative and quantitative data Develops a rationale for mixing methods Integrates the data at various stages of inquiry Presents visual pictures of the procedures in the study Employs practices of both qualitative and quantitative research

Table 5: Research methods used for philosophical approaches (Andrew et al., 2011)

4.2.3.1 Quantitative research inquiry

Quantitative research studies are concerned with subjects answering the "how many?" and "how often?" questions and that is why quantitative data collection methods are mainly based on numbers and mathematical calculations (Dudovskiy, 2016). Quantitative research can also be described as "entailing the collection of numerical data and exhibiting the view of the relationship between theory and research as deductive, a predilection for a natural science approach, and as having an objectivist conception of social reality" Bryman, 2015; p. 160). In simple words, this means that studies employing a quantitative research strategy examine variables that are measured numerically while applying statistical techniques. In recent years, more elaborate structural equation models that incorporate causal paths and the identification of the collective strength of multiple variables, are being applied in quantitative studies, focusing on two strategies of inquiry: surveys and experiments (Creswell, 2009). While social researchers are familiar with the concepts of qualitative vs quantitative methodologies, scientific or quantitative methods have dominated the literature since World War II (Walle, 1997). Despite the fact that many studies take this quantitative approach to examine subjects around consumers, there has also been a rising interest in applying qualitative approaches (Askegaard, 1991) so as to discover new ideas, generate new theories and identify the "why" behind the "who", "how many" and the "what" in the consumer perception / behaviour area. Table 6 below shows the differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods:

Characteristic	Quantitative research	Qualitative research
Type of data	Phenomena are described numerically	Phenomena are described in a narrative fashion
Analysis	Descriptive and inferential statistics	Identification of major schemes
Scope of inquiry	Specific questions or hypotheses	Broad, thematic concerns
Primary advantage	Large sample, statistical validity, accurately reflects the population	Rich, in-depth, narrative description of sample
Primary disadvantage	Superficial understanding of participants' thoughts and feelings	Small sample, not generalizable to the population at large

Table 6: A comparison of research methods, adapted from (Dudovskiy, 2016)

4.2.3.2 Qualitative research inquiry

Bryman and Bell (2003) suggest that the use of a qualitative approach is important while trying to understand a social world through the perceptions and interpretations of the participants' point of view. This means that qualitative data collection methods are mainly used when the researcher is trying to examine beliefs, motivations, perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. This is also the reason that this research approach emerged because traditional quantitative data collection methods were unable to take account of human feelings and emotions (Dudovskiy, 2016). Qualitative research is able to provide the researcher with rich and detailed descriptions and understanding of the participants rather than just a measurement (McGivern, 2006). Besides, the role of a social scientist researcher is not just to gather facts in order to measure patterns and their variability, but to identify the different meanings that participants place on their experiences as well as their social constructions (Geertz, 1994).

In qualitative research there are a number of strategies applied with Tesch (1990) identifying 28 different forms and Wolcott (2001) 19. However, Cresswell (2009) simplified these lists and identified 5 broad approaches utilised in a qualitative inquiry Table 7:

Qualitative Inquiry	Characteristics
Ethnography	The researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a long period of time using observational and interview data.
Phenomenology	Understanding the essence of experience, studies several individuals with shared experience to explain the phenomenon.
Narrative Study	Studying the lives of individuals and their experiences to explore their story through their own stories
Grounded Theory	Research based on the observations or data from which it was developed, using a variety of data sources, such as quantitative data, review of records, interviews, observation and surveys.
Case Study	Exploring in depth an activity or event or one or more individuals. Cases are bound by time and activity.

Table 7: Types of qualitative inquiry adapted from Creswell (2009)

There is a growing link between Consumer Culture Theory and a qualitative inquiry approach because most studies in this area rely on understanding participants' points of view to describe broader cultural meanings, and believe that to seek emic data researchers should interact with individuals (Sherry, 1991). Arnould and Thompson (2005) argue that qualitative inquiry is more appropriate as a methodology for Consumer Culture Theory related studies because they focus on the experiential and sociocultural dimensions of consumption which cannot easily be examined through surveys or experiments or analysed through database modelling. Furthermore, consumer behaviourists are increasingly embracing qualitative techniques and models in order to deal with relevant topics in meaningful and pragmatic ways (Walle, 1997).

This study is seeking to explore Albanian and British consumers' perceptions of various food outlets and how these consumers create identity or identities through shopping experiences. Thus, in line with the above, an understanding of identity informed by a narrative approach, provides an additional interpretive lens that may open up new paths for identity research, and assist in the development of new insightful theory (Rhodes and Brown, 2005). Moreover, a narrative study suggests that narrative thought is a predominant cognitive mode of comprehension used by consumers to interpret their personal experiences (Padgett and Allen, 1997). For these reasons, this research is adopting a qualitative approach because it also has a cross cultural character, with Kalafatis et al., (1999) noting that qualitative research is crucial to such studies.

4.3 Research paradigm

The term research paradigm is used to describe a researcher's 'worldview' (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006) which is the perspective or a set of shared beliefs, that informs the meaning or interpretation of research data (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Creswell (2009) uses the term world view to describe what Guba (1990) describes as a set of basic beliefs that guide an individual's action. While there is a wider acceptance of the term paradigms (Guba, 1990; Mertens, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) others call them epistemologies and ontologies (Crotty, 1998) or simply research methods (Neuman, 2000). Another definition of the paradigm is that it encompasses three

elements; a belief about the nature of knowledge; a methodology; and criteria for validity (McNaughton et al., 2001). Paradigms usually set the foundations of how researchers should conduct their research and what techniques to adopt by embracing either a qualitative or a quantitative route (McNaughton et al., 2001; Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) summarises four worldviews in the Table 8 below:

Postpositivism	Constructivism
• Determination • Reductionism • Empirical observation and measurement • Theory verification	• Understanding • Multiple participant meanings • Social and historical construction • Theory generation
Advocacy/Participatory	Pragmatism
• Political • Empowerment issue-oriented • Collaborative • Change-oriented	• Consequences of actions • Problem-centred • Pluralistic • Real-world practice oriented

Table 8: Creswell's 4 worldviews (2009; p. 6)

However, over the last two decades narrative approaches have gained momentum in two ways – a) more generally, as a term occurring in educational research literature; and b) with a potential for use across a wide range of disciplines (Webster and Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry is set in human stories of experience and is argued by Wengraf (2001) to stand as a paradigm in its own right as it provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their own stories (Webster and Mertova 2007). As mentioned earlier this is a cross cultural study trying to understand identity creation through shopping and will draw on information from the participants' storytelling of their past and present experiences as well as their interactions with

others. This study is also trying to build theory by investigating Albanian consumers' perceptions, which is quite a new group of consumers entering the literature, cross examining the findings with their British counterparts. Also, culture, social structures and customs are also being investigated to see how these factors contribute towards identity creation while one is experiencing food shopping. In summary then, to help find answers to the above, this study is adopting a narrative approach set within a social constructivist worldview.

4.4 Research design

Research design is the process through which the researcher finds the appropriate ways to plan the research study in order to gather data and answer the main research questions (Saunders et al., 2009). Saunders et al., (2009) classify research in terms of its purpose into three categories: explanatory, exploratory and descriptive. Exploratory studies are used to assess new phenomena in a new light or to seek new insights into new areas (Robson, 2002). Explanatory studies put the emphasis on the relationship between the variables of the subject under study and descriptive studies describe phenomena as they are portraying an accurate profile of the individuals, events or situations that are being studied (Saunders et al., 2009; Robson, 2002).

This research can be classified as exploratory as its main objective is to asses consumers' perceptions in Albania. There aren't many studies investigating Albanian consumers due to its past regime and seclusion from the rest of the world for over 50 years. Moreover, this study will explore similarities and differences between two different types of consumers with different cultural and historical backgrounds. Thus, exploratory research is appropriate for this study since there is only a few earlier studies to which we can refer for information about Albanians' perceptions of food shopping (Hussey and Hussey, 1997).

The most common approach to research design is a sequence of steps of the research process presented as a linear model (Easterby-Smith et al., 2001). However, other researchers argue that such an approach is not very relevant to qualitative studies (Maxwell, 2005) where the researchers should adopt a reflexive process for every stage of the project (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Maxwell's (2005) research

design model (presented in Figure 8 below) comprises of five stages integrating factors that may affect the research process throughout its duration:
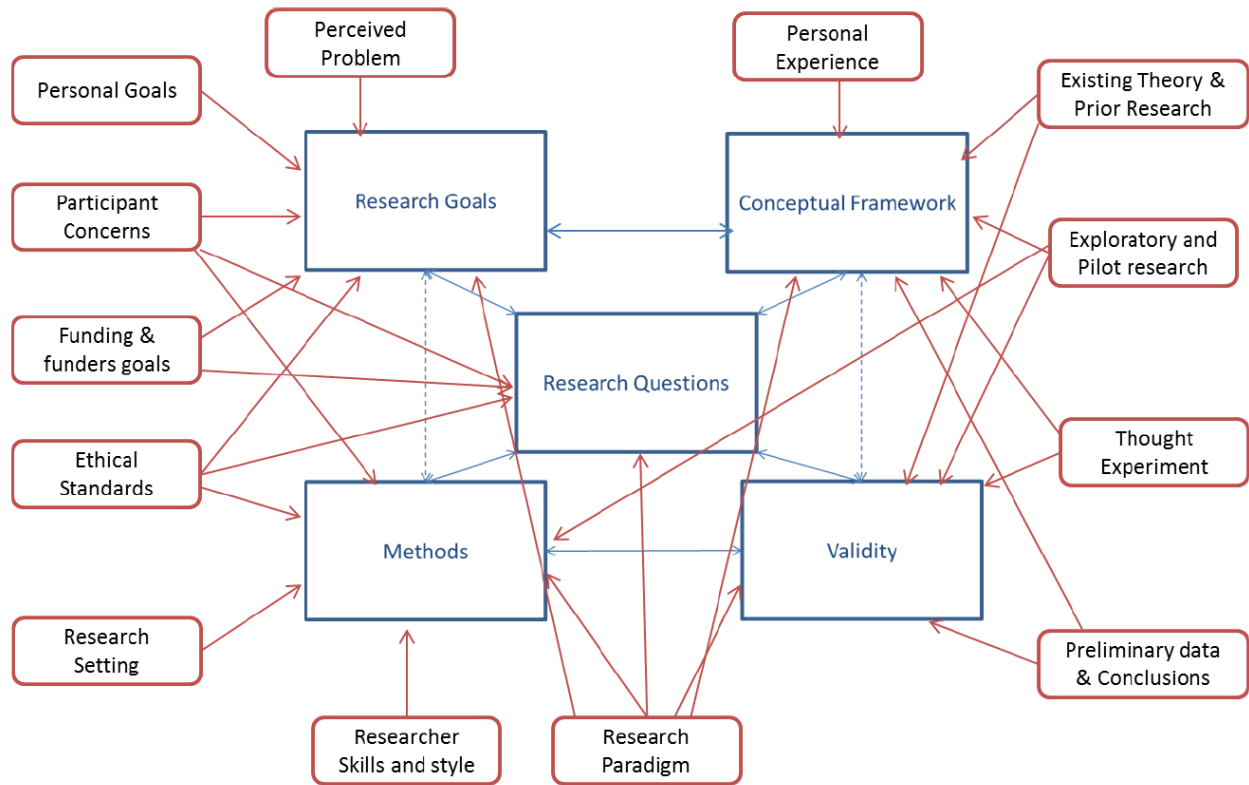
Figure 8: Maxwell's model of research design (2005; P. 6)

4.4.1 Building the research framework

The research framework of this study is based on theories presented in the literature review chapters, concerned with consumption theories which relate to food shopping experiences, the choice of food outlets such as supermarkets and farmers' markets, identity creation and Consumer Culture Theory.

Marketing, sociology and anthropological studies have been presented in this study to identify the resources that individuals retrieve when consuming food or choosing which outlet to frequent while engaging in their various identity forms relevant to each occasion. These fields of research have also been considered in order to identify the social factors that help shape one's identity and perceptions that are turned into actions. As previously mentioned in this study, the framework used for this research is based on Elliot's (2004) model of identity, which is also presented here as a means of visualisation:
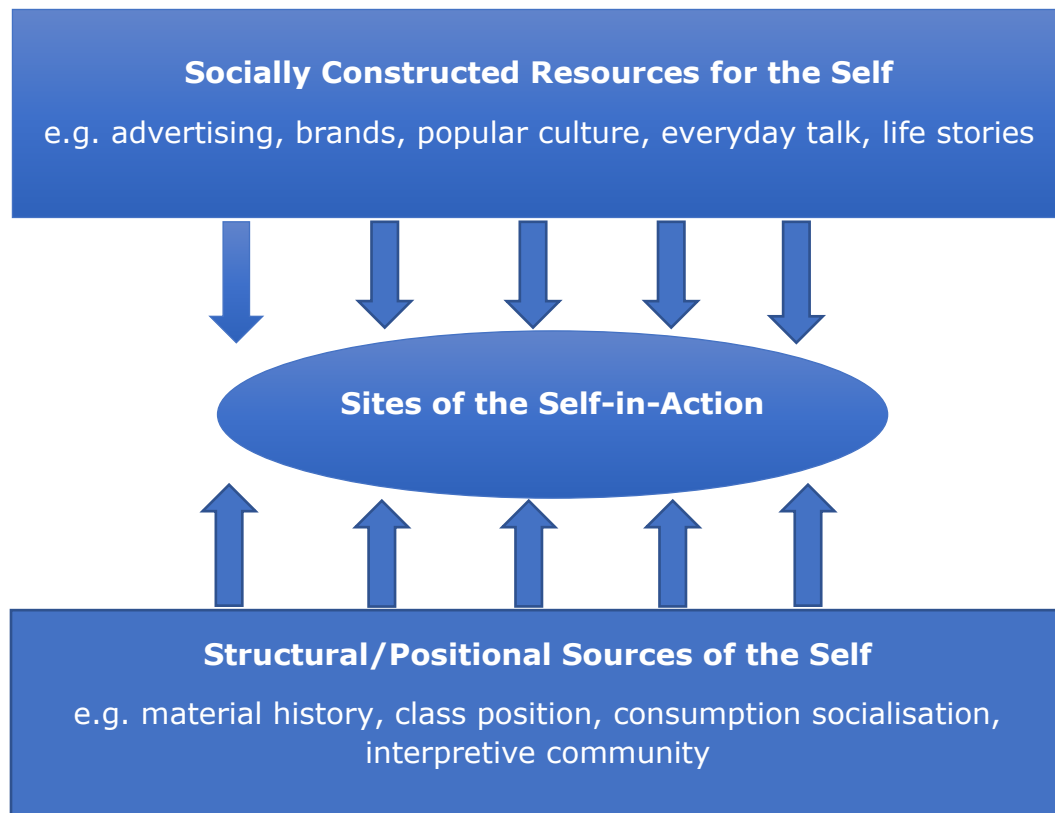
Figure 9: Consumption Practices and Identity, Adopted from Elliott (2004)

4.4.2 Research Questions

The aim of this study is to understand how Albanian and British individuals create self-identity within food shopping experiences in farmers' markets and supermarkets. The goal is to discover through personal stories and narratives of the individual consumers, how they integrate structural sources of self, such as family, friends, social circles and gender, as well as sources from food products, experiences and interactions with others, into their personal aspects of self-identity. Thus, this study is trying to answer the following research questions:

1. How do individuals perceive themselves and their various self-identities in action?
2. How is food shopping and the cultural background of the individual perceived as part of self-identity by Albanian and UK consumers?

3. What is the impact of the social experiences on self-identity while shaping the individual's choice of food outlet?

4. Can common shopping experiences create neo-tribes of consumers with different cultural backgrounds?

4.4.3 Research methods

This section of the methodology chapter will outline the techniques used for sampling, data collection and data analysis.

4.4.3.1 Sampling

Sampling is considered to be one of the main instruments when conducting a marketing research (Chisnall, 2006). Saunders et al., (2009) identify two sampling techniques the probability and the non-probability. When using a probability sampling technique each case is predefined in being chosen and there is an equal possibility of each case being selected (Saunders et al., 2009). When applying a non-probability sampling technique, it is not known what are the chances of each case in being chosen (Saunders et al., 2009).

On the other hand, Marshall (1996; p. 523) argues that there are three sampling techniques appropriate for qualitative research:

"Convenience sample: which involves the selection of the most accessible individuals, cost effective in terms of time, effort and money, but may result in poor quality data and lacks intellectual credibility.

Judgement sample: Also known as purposeful sample, the researcher actively selects the most productive sample to answer the research question, based on the researcher's practical knowledge of the research area, the available literature and evidence from the study itself. Subjects may also recommend additional potential candidates for study (snowball sample).

Theoretical sample: Theoretical sampling requires building interpretative theories from the emerging data and selecting a new sample to examine and elaborate on this theory. It is the principal strategy for the grounded theoretical approach but will be used in some form in most qualitative investigations necessitating interpretation".

As outlined earlier, this study is adopting an interpretivist and qualitative research approach aimed at gathering narrative data. For this purpose, a judgement sample would be more appropriate, relying on the judgment of the researcher based on the study's aim, previous studies in the field and the willingness of the individuals to participate. Though as Watters and Biernacki (1989) suggest, all qualitative sampling techniques involve a level of convenience because without the willingness and the availability of the participant, the research would not be possible. Hence this study follows this principle and used a sample in Albania and Britain, with respondents participating voluntarily at a time and place of their convenience. When considering what the sample size of a study should be, Saunders et al., (2009) argue that there are no particular rules that determine the selection of a specific size in a non-probability sampling technique. This is due to the fact that the sample size is subject to the research questions, the nature of the study, and specifically it depends on the resources and time frames available to the researcher (Patton, 2002), as well as at what point of data collection the researcher reaches data saturation.

Regarding the sample size of this study a sample of 30 participants was selected in Albania and 28 in Britain. Demographic data for both groups of respondents is presented in Appendix I. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) discuss that the sample size should be enough to achieve saturation in the topic group but not too large to prevent an in-depth analysis, hence the researcher stopped collecting data in the respective countries when saturation was reached, challenged and confirmed after 30 and 28 interviews respectively. The participants were recruited in supermarkets and farmers' markets' outlets in Albania and the UK. A snowballing technique was also applied by the interviewees spreading the word in their friendship and family circles as well as the social media. Data collection in Albania was undertaken in the urban area of Tirana, the capital of Albania. Consumer purchasing power is mainly concentrated in the capital making Tirana a good representative area of the country because of the internal migration the country experienced in the last twenty years (numbers showed that in 2014 Tirana grew from 200,000 to around 700,000 inhabitants) people from all regions of Albania have moved to the capital which represents a variety of the

country's distinctive areas and subcultures (Skreli at al., 2014). The researcher tried to also recruit online via various platforms respondents from all parts of the UK resulting in volunteers coming from England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

4.4.3.2 Data collection

There is a variety of methods used to collect data in qualitative research, such as observations, textual or visual analysis (e.g. from books or videos) and interviews (one to one with individuals or in groups) (Silverman, 2000). Creswell (2009) argues that the data collection steps set the boundaries for the research, collecting information through unstructured or semi-structured observations or interviews, and establishing the protocol in order to record the information required. The data collection process allows for relationships to be formed between the researcher and the participants and is an ongoing reflexive process (Hall and Callery, 2001). Because of these relationships formed, Suzuki et al., (2007) stress the importance of the researcher in attending to the power dynamics that will not only influence the data obtained but also the interpretations that will be made. They also argue that developing a successful research process and gaining access to a participant's information, depends not only on the relationship formed but also on the quality of rapport between researcher and study participants. Harrington (2003, p. 599) defines entry as the act of "gaining permission to start a study".

As such, participants were briefed that the researcher was undertaking a PhD study and were informed about the broad areas of interest. The purpose of data gathering in this qualitative research is to provide evidence for the experience of the Albanian and British participants under investigation. The evidence is gathered in the form of accounts people have given of their experience through in-depth interviews (Polkinghorne, 2005). Other studies investigating consumer behaviour in farmers' markets have also employed the same qualitative techniques as shown in Table 9 below which further strengthens the rationale behind choosing in-depth interviewing as a data collection tool for this study.

Scholar	Year	Research topic	Methodology
Andreatta and Wickliffe	2002	Cultural relationships between farmers and consumers	Interviews with consumers and interviews and focus groups with vendors
Griffin and Frongillo	2003	Importance of FM for vendors	In-depth interviews with farmers
Wolf *et al.*	2005	Comparison of FM shoppers with non FM shoppers	Personal interviews with consumers

Table 9: In-depth interviews in qualitative studies

On the other hand, group interviews and focus groups are particularly useful for studying phenomena involving process as well as content but this methodology does have drawbacks (Munday, 2006). Individuals may feel peer pressure and the group may be dominated by forceful peers whose views colour collective opinion (Nairn et al., 2008). Due to the personal nature of the data collected and concern about focusing on individual social interpretations rather than socially acceptable or normative views, focus groups were not considered appropriate for this study. In order to avoid gathering biased responses and increase comfort for the participants, in-depth interviews were considered as a more appropriate methodology for all the reasons highlighted above.

4.4.3.2.1 In depth interviews

In depth interviews are non-directive interviews in which the respondent is encouraged to talk about the subject instead of just answering 'yes' or 'no' (Chisnall, 2005). This gives the interviewer the opportunity to sense the situation in which the interviewee is and adjust the questions according to the responses that are given and form an open two-way communication. Wengraf (2006) argues that there are two broad meanings underpinning in-depth interviews: a) to go to the core of a subject in order to get an in-depth knowledge about it; and b) to get a sense of how the seemingly straight-forward matter is more complicated in reality, of how the surface appearances may be quite misleading about depth realities.

When designing an interview protocol, it is important to ask questions that are likely to harvest as much information about the study phenomenon as possible and also be able to address the aims and objectives of the research (Gill et al., 2008). To gather information and understanding of participants at such depth, the researcher must make adequate planning and preparation time prior to conducting the interviews (Wengraf, 2006). When conducting the actual interview, it is sensible for the interviewer to familiarise themselves with the interview schedule, so that the process appears more natural and less rehearsed (Gill et al., 2008). For this reason, Wengraf (2006) suggests that the interviewer should allocate the research questions into a range of topics under which the actual interview questions are placed. This process was followed for this study and was incorporated into the interview protocol as shown in Appendix III.

While it is important to prepare the depth of interviews before entering the field of study, it is also crucial to consider that for semi-structured interviews not all questions need to be prepared ahead of time as a degree of flexibility is required during the interview itself, to allow the researcher to respond or question further the answers given by the respondent (Wengraf, 2006). Most experience-focused narrative interviews are semi-structured and as such there is a level of co-production in the stories where the researcher controls the sequencing of questions (Squires, 2008). Using this tactic combined with active listening and prompting in the interviews, the researcher gets a fuller narrative about the respondent's experiences and is also involved in shaping the important and focused experiences upon narratives (Chamberlayne et al., 2002).

It is argued that the interview should take part in a relaxed atmosphere with the session being set up as a conversation where the interviewee is allowed to freely describe his or her detailed story of his or her experiencing of the subject under investigation containing valuable insights, rather than providing questions that are quickly answered (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). In line with this, the researcher ensured that the interview process was as comfortable as possible for respondents, who chose to schedule the times and locations of the interviews. While no payment was provided to respondents for taking part to this study, the interviews were often

accompanied by coffees or refreshments in order to make the interview as informal as possible.

The use of the language is also important while conducting a research interview as it should be comprehensible and relevant to the person being interviewed (Bryman and Bell, 2003). The interview protocol of this study was built in English and employed a simplified use of the English language avoiding any consumer behaviour or marketing jargon so that the respondents understand and are clear of what they are asked to answer. That said, the researcher took every opportunity to clarify any uncertainties or unclear questions to the respondents. The protocol was also translated into Albanian, for the data collection process in Albania, and back translation was also carried out to check any inconsistencies or translation errors. As in any research, it is often wise to first pilot the interview protocol prior to the actual data collection (Pontin, 2000). This allows the researcher to establish if the protocol is clear, understandable and capable of answering the research questions, and if, therefore, any further changes to the interview protocol are needed (Gill et al., 2008). Thus, pilot testing was administered with three respondents being interviewed in Albania and three in the UK. The pilot testing sample was selected from the researcher's social environment who volunteered to participate and make comments for the improvement of the protocol. The pilot interviews allowed the researcher to rearrange the order of the interview as well as reshape the wording of some questions so as to be more comprehensive. Also, some other elements were added in order to gather more specific data about the socioeconomic situation of the respondents. These pilot data however were not included in the study as the protocol was later adapted according to the findings and the information gathered by them.

Due to the large volume of data (30 interviews in Albania and 28 in the UK), it was noted that field notes alone would not capture all the information provided by the respondents. Audio equipment was utilised for this reason to ensure that no data were lost. This approach also has the bonus of having a record of the nuances of the language used and the tone of the participants' voices when describing their experiences (Bryman, 2001). The researcher's smartphone was used to record the

interviews which was placed nearby but not directly between the researcher and the interviewee to avoid their attention going to the recording device.

The literature suggests that on average interviews last between 20 and 60 minutes (Gill et al., 2008). The interviews of this study lasted between 30 and 70 minutes.

The researcher carried out the data transcription personally, despite being time consuming because personal transcription seemed a necessary step in remaining familiar with the data and recalling the respondents' nuances and reactions to the interview questions. The Albanian data were also transcribed and translated by the researcher personally for the same reason. Audacity, an audio software application, was also employed in the transcription process to clear the sound because of the noisy backgrounds making it difficult for the researcher to clearly hear the various British accents on tape. The temptation to get professionals to do the transcription was resisted due to the fact that the time spent transcribing the interviews was useful for data immersion and supported the preliminary data analysis (David and Sutton, 2004). Despite the long time required to fully transcribe 58 interviews in total, it was very useful for the data analysis process because knowing every word of the conversation is a great advantage when it comes to qualitative data analysis (David and Sutton, 2004, p. 99).

4.4.3.3 Data analysis

Data analysis of this study was conducted through an inductive approach meaning that data have been explored during the collection process in order to identify any themes or issues that may emerge which need to be followed up (Strauss and Corbin, 2008; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). During this interactive process of analysing data while collecting them, it is imperial in creating a conceptual framework to lead the study's subsequent work (Saunders et al., 2009). The rationale behind choosing this approach was the ability it gave the researcher to identify any relationships between Albanian and UK data, driven also from the fact that there are no previous theories developed around Albanian consumers' perceptions, this data analysis style will allow the theory to emerge from the process of data collection and analysis (Saunders et al., 2009). More specifically this study is employing a thematic analysis approach to

analyse the data. Thematic analysis as an independent qualitative descriptive approach is described as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). It is argued that qualitative researchers should become more familiar with thematic analysis as an independent and a reliable qualitative approach to analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Thematic analysis aims to analytically examine narrative resources from life stories by breaking the text into small pieces of content and submitting them to descriptive treatment (Sparker, 2005). This approach is suitable for answering questions such as: what are the concerns of people about an event? What reasons do people have for using or not using a service or procedure? (Ayres, 2007), which is very close to the questions that this study is trying to answer. Moreover, this is an exploratory study investigating a consumer target group (Albanians) about whom not much is known, thus this analysis is suitable to report the common issues identified in the data collected (Green and Thorogood, 2004). Thematic analysis is also used in cases where there are no previous studies dealing with the phenomenon, and therefore the coded categories derive directly from the data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). As a flexible and useful research tool, thematic analysis provides a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This analysis also includes the search and identification of common threads or patterns that extend across an entire interview or set of interviews (DeSantis and Noel Ugarriza, 2000). Equally, thematic analysis provides a purely qualitative, detailed, and nuanced account of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Moreover, it has been observed that thematic analysis is a suitable method for a researcher who wants to investigate the actual behaviour, attitudes, and motives of the individuals being studied, or to detect what has happened (Ten Have, 2004).

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) have developed a six-step process approach to thematic analysis as presented in Table 10 below :

Step	Process approach
1	**Familiarising with data:** Transcribing data, reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2	**Generating initial codes:** Coding interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3	**Searching for themes:** Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4	**Reviewing themes:** Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic map.
5	**Defining and naming themes:** Ongoing analysis for refining the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6	**Producing the report:** The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a report of the analysis.

Table 10: Six-step process approach to thematic analysis, (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

This thematic analysis under the classifications of generating initial codes, defining and naming themes, reviewing themes, and searching for themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2013) is also used to analyse the data of this study. This process is also summarised in Figure 10 as presented by Vaismoradi et al., (2013) as the main characteristics of thematic analysis in the continuum of qualitative research:
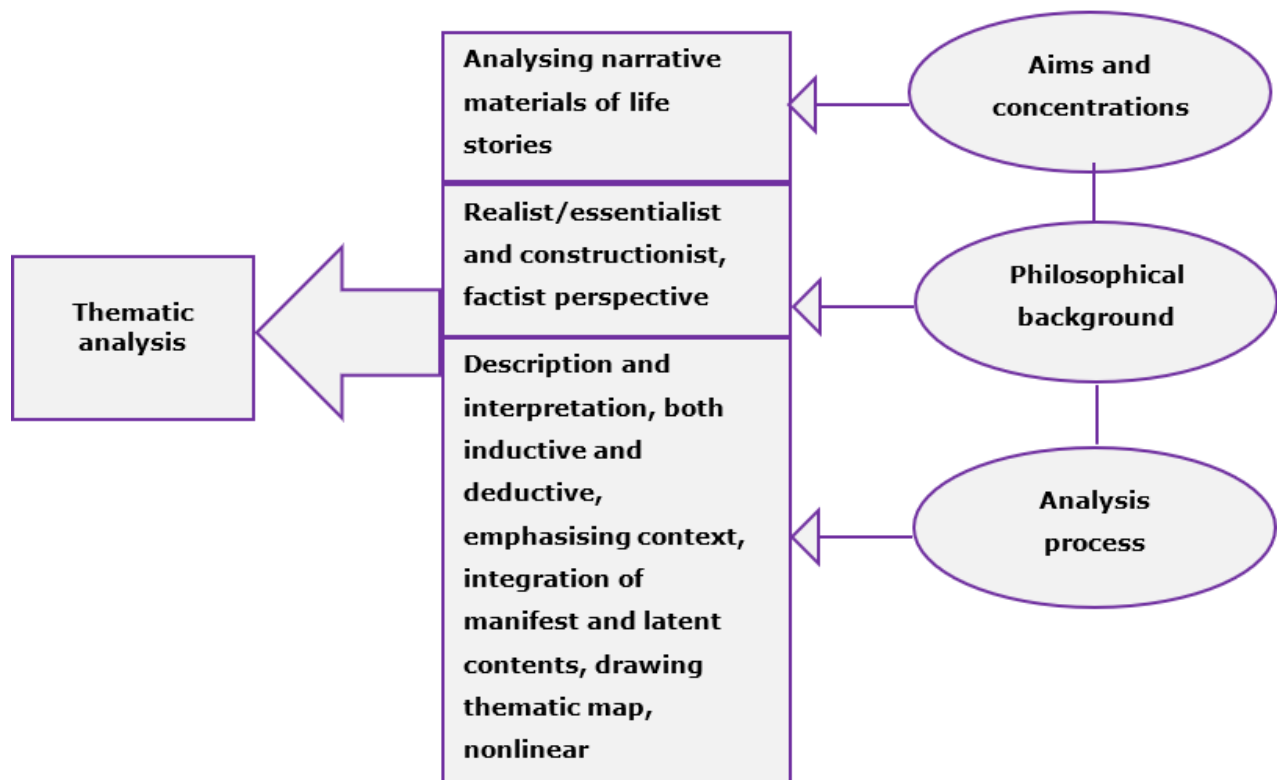
Figure 10: Main characteristics of thematic analysis adopted from Vaismoradi et al., (2013)

4.4.3.4 Limitations of methodology

McGrath suggests that any research methodology applied has its limitations (1982, p. 77) — all research strategies are "bad" (in the sense of having serious methodological limitations): none of them are "good" (in the sense of being even relatively unflawed). Hence, the limitations of the narrative approach are considered and addressed in this section. The practical and conceptual limitation which is a common reoccurring theme among qualitative studies, the time needed for data collection, manipulation and interpretation makes it difficult for any study to work with a large data set. That is why qualitative studies are mainly based on the opinions and experiences of a relatively small numbers of individuals. Every effort was made by the researcher to reach a healthy number of participants both in the UK and Albania for the purposes of this study to mitigate this limitation. Van Maanen (1988) considers that reliability and validity are overrated criteria and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argue that apparency, which requires the researcher to demonstrate

appropriate interpretation and also present the narratives with requisite clarity to allow the reader to judge for themselves the connections and suppositions within (Rodrigues, 2010) and credibility are more appropriate means to judge qualitative work. Guba and Lincoln (1989) also argue that the generalisation of the findings from a qualitative study should be considered as transferability which means that results should not be presented in terms of how these may be applied to a whole population but rather how the understandings within the data may apply in other contexts or populations. It is worth mentioning that for Albanian literature this is a deeply exploratory study. There are many UK studies relevant to consumer behaviours, perceptions, farmers' markets and supermarket and identity creation which makes the comparison between UK and Albania unequal in terms of literature but an interesting one in terms of the actual findings of the data.

4.5 Ethical considerations

Every consumer facing researcher encounters major concerns around data collection and whether there is intrusion on the personal rights of the participants by informing them about the research project and therefore impacting the validity of the data (Webb et al., 1981). In a qualitative study it is important to prompt personal narratives especially when researching experiences, perceptions and identity creation. This requires close collaboration between the participants and the researcher and an understanding that the data analysis includes part of the researcher's interpretive identity as well as the participants'. The researcher retrieves the personal stories of various individuals trying to place them into a larger story in order to draw conclusions on the subject under investigation. Thus, it is inevitable that the researcher cannot be involved and free from personal interpretations when trying to extract new theory from the findings. Individual narratives are intrinsically layered and ambiguous, so the presented nature of truth and the level of how subjective the researcher is (Peshkin, 1988), are evident for this study. The researcher has fully disclosed her presence and intentions towards the informants of this study as well as the purpose and subject of the study under investigation. The informants were given the opportunity to decline their participation should they wish to and were briefed that they could interrupt the interview at any time. Before

starting the interviews and thus the recording of them, consent was obtained from the participants to enable the researcher to keep the audio files and written transcripts for this study. Consent forms can be found in Appendix II. When the interviews were completed, the researcher thanked the participants for their time and reassured them that their information was invaluable to this study, and their transcripts will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will not be shared with third parties outwith the supervision team but will be stored on the researcher's password protected computer. Further, the researcher ensured participants understood that anonymised quotation from their transcripts will be included in this thesis and subsequent research publications.

4.6 Conclusion

The methodological approach of this study has been presented and analysed in the chapter as well as the research aim and questions. This chapter has identified this research to be an interpretive ontology study which proved to be a most suitable approach for examining experiences and self-identity creation of consumers through food shopping, within a consumer culture theory sphere. Extensive literature review was presented in this chapter to justify the reasons behind the qualitative approach, narrative inquiry paradigm and social constructionist approaches to narrative adopted by this study. The research design was also presented in this chapter with an extensive analysis of the research framework, the judgement sample and snowballing technique used for this study, the data collection and data analysis approaches. The semi-structured in-depth interviews as the more appropriate data collection tool were outlined. Finally, the thematic approach to data analysis developed by Vaismoradi et al., (2013) was discussed and selected as the appropriate data analysis technique for this thesis. The chapter concluded with a consideration of the methodological limitations.

Chapter 5: Findings relevant to research questions 1 and 2

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the first part of the data analysis and the various themes that emerged. Two main themes emerged from the data which will be presented in two separate chapters. Chapter five will present data and themes that emerged under one main category: Culture and social interactions shaping individuals' shopping experiences. Chapter six will present the themes identified under the other main category: Integration of food shopping experiences within the construction of self identity. Both themes have been subcategorised into further categories in order to present the findings in such a way as to answer the research questions of this thesis. The data analysis of this chapter seeks to answer two of the research questions of this thesis: What is the impact of the social experiences on self identity while shaping the individual's choice of food outlet?; and can common shopping experiences create neo-tribes of consumers with different cultural backgrounds? Chapter six presents findings relevant to the following research questions: How do individuals perceive themselves and the various self-identities in action? How is food shopping and the cultural background of the individual perceived as part of self identity by Albanian and UK consumers?

As identified in the literature chapters, food culture is an integral part of consumer culture when trying to investigate identity creation and is considered the most important of all consumption fields (Fischler, 1988). Thus, this chapter focuses on findings related to food culture taken from narratives of both UK and Albanian respondents. Cultural and social sources are considered to be factors of self-influence interactions within a wider social context reflected in shopping behaviours in farmers' markets and supermarkets. Consumption stories and food outlet preferences are discussed as part of social structures influencing decision making, shopping experiences and the consumer's identity as a knowledgeable food shopper. The analysis of the data is presented in a contextualised format with existing research presented in the literature chapters two and three. Raw data are presented in the form of quotes aligned to the theoretical framework and research questions of this

thesis, "in order to illuminate analytical interpretation and retain authenticity of findings" (Cunningham, 2018, p. 7).

Theme 1: Culture and social interactions shaping individuals' shopping experiences

5.1 Findings: What is the impact of the social experiences on self identity while shaping the individual's choice of food outlet?

Three themes emerged that seek to answer the above research question: a) Recognising good quality food vs taking someone's else's word for it, b) Hedonistic vs Utilitarian Shopping Experience, and c) Shopping alone or with company. Each of these themes are further analysed providing comparison between the UK and Albanian findings in order to present similarities, differences and culture specific characteristics.

5.1.1 Recognising good quality food vs being influenced by the vendor

Analysis of the UK and Albanian data showed that there is a different level of experience for each consumer category around the food selection process. Albanian respondents appeared to be more confident consumers of fresh food who are able to recognise the quality of the food, freshness and the level of how naturally the product was produced. Data show that there is also a distinction in the food quality between products of fruit and vegetable nature bought in supermarkets and farmers' markets in Albania. Respondents in an almost unanimous way were indicating that they would buy fruit and vegetables in farmers' markets. This is due to the wide variety of products and stalls to choose from as well as the opportunity to view and check the quality themselves by visually screening the products or manually testing them for firmness and colour etc.:

> ➢ *Generally, when I go there* (farmers' market) *I need to see what looks good on the eye, you can tell when products are of good quality* (AL Respondent 9).

➢ *A fresh egg is different from the farmers' market than the supermarket. Even with an untrained eye you can see that the eggs are different and fresher* (AL Respondent 6).

➢ *I understand it from the taste and how they look on the eye whether they are or aren't bio. I have many years of experience in buying bio food and I can tell when something is bio, fresh or has been stocked for many days* (AL Respondent 23).

➢ *My eyes are used to shop in there because I can tell which food is grown naturally and which not. I tried to buy cucumber and green salads and tried to find the smallest available. You can tell even by tasting these products that are fresh and naturally grown not just by their size. The salad leaves for example are not as sweet as the larger size ones but this is ok because it is a natural taste of the product* (AL Respondent 12).

➢ *I can recognise for example when a tomato is of good quality or as they say without chemicals produced in the village, despite the fact that the farmer opens it in the middle for the client to see it.* (AL Respondent 1).

➢ *Positive aspects of farmers' markets are the freshness of the products as the farmers produce them on their land and sell them while they are still fresh. I buy milk for example from them and I boil it a lot so I can drink it and make yoghurt. You can tell from the yoghurt if the milk you bought was good or bad. When I used milk from supermarket, my yoghurt was quite watery whereas the one produced with milk from farmers was quite thick* (AL Respondent 4).

The confidence demonstrated above is drawn from the environment and the culture surrounding the Albanian respondents' upbringing. A lifetime experience of selecting fruits and vegetables for example is recalled when making a purchase:

➢ *Well we have been consuming such products all our lives and we can tell whether what we eat is bio or not* (AL Respondent 17).

➢ *Because, I am used to* (AL Respondent 12).

Information gathered by the observation of the farmers' farms, or knowledge from a family member also is recalled when selecting fruits and vegetables:

> *I know about the food produced by the villagers because in my paternal home we have animals and produce dairy products ourselves and grow our own vegetables. Our animals are not fed with unhealthy food and the vegetables are grown naturally and you can see this difference at the taste of the end products* (AL Respondent 27).

> *You can see why this happens because the farmers have the cows free in the land and they only get fed with grass they find around, I cannot tell the same for the milk sold in the supermarket. Products are more bio than the ones in the supermarket. I don't have a lab with me to be frank to identify the true bio nature of products, but I use my reasoning* (AL Respondent 4).

> *You might not remember this (*reference to the researcher's birthplace*) but tomatoes grown by villagers look that they are not forced to be grown because the colour of the tomato is not the same all around it depending on the light that hit it while it was growing* (AL Respondent 3).

> *The trust that food is closer to being naturally produced without chemicals. This trust used to be stronger in the past but have started to become weaker now because of their desire to profit more. I think they are trying now to produce more in order to profit more so they start using not so natural practice of growing their produce. It is not of the same scale of the greenhouses, but I think that the field produce is still more naturally grown* (AL Respondent 15).

While studies show that consumers prefer to shop in farmers' markets because they offer fresh, quality food (Youngs, 2003; La Trobe, 2001; Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000), data collected from the UK respondents showed that they are unable to identify this quality themselves but instead choose to trust third parties to communicate whether the food they buy is fresh or of good provenance. When UK consumers buy products from farmers' markets, they rely on the information that the vendor tells them about how fresh the food is or if it is organic. This is consistent with what literature is suggesting about consumers valuing the opportunity to interact with the farmer at farmers' markets because talking to them could be considered as identifying the quality themselves (Kirwan, 2004). When shopping in a supermarket the emphasis is put on the product labels and certifications to show the quality of the

products whereas in farmers' markets consumers rely on the expertise of the producer. Further questioning of the respondents both in the UK and Albania, encouraged them to describe the organic attributes of the products offered at the farmers' markets and how they justify the products being organic in the absence of the appropriate certificate displayed on the stalls. Examples were given to the respondents about organic products offered in supermarkets that are clearly labelled and certified as organic products. While processing this information, UK respondents would recall their interaction with the stall holders and retrieve information from their interaction with the farmers and the way they were treated on the day. This experience would influence their belief about the products being organic, based solely on the trust put on the farmer claiming the products are organic. Thus, their perception of the food being organic is built on the trust and relationship that is created between the consumer and the farmer during the transaction process. This is also similar to what Albanian respondents perceive about the food bought at farmers' markets as demonstrated earlier in this section. They agree that farmers' markets offer good quality products and organic produce not only because they can retrieve information from their own experiences with the products but also because the farmer told them.

Contrary to the UK respondents, Albanians seemed to be more confident in recognising external attributes of naturally produced fruits and vegetables which they recognise as organic, trusting their own ability of knowing the food they consume. This means that Albanian respondents have a direct connection with the food they consume and the selection process. UK respondents have a mediated or indirect experience of food. This means that when consumers retain a direct unmediated experience with food, like Albanians do, then the shopping experience is differently structured:

> *Well we're just a trusting soul then (she laughs) but I know farmers and I have worked in banks where farmers have been customers, so I know them, and I have been to school with many of them. I don't know the farms, but I know the farmers, so I am basing this purely on trust* (UK Respondent 3).

> To me it is when you are visiting the stallholder and they tell you their exact views on what's in their products. The personal connection you have though with the seller it feels that it justifies the organic price tag which is always more. I guess probably I am more trusting of a person telling me than I am of a label. Huh, you've ruined it for me now (she laughs) (UK Respondent 1).

> Well people on the stall say so and we haven't gone beyond to investigate it. I honestly don't know but they tell us that 80% is organic. It is a trust relationship with the farmer (UK Respondent 18).

> I will talk to the stall holder and they would say that their products are organically reared. When I ask, and I do ask a lot sometimes they say when it is not organic, and they explain why it is not and then I make a judgement. When my children were younger, I was strict for them to eat organic food (UK Respondent 14).

> Well at the farmers' market that I go, I know which region the food is coming from and I know the vendor, so I make strong relationship with them (AL Respondent 19)

> They do not produce large number of products, so we know it is bio even if it is not certified/labelled. It is simply a matter of trust. I have been shopping from the same people for many years now and I know that they have a certain piece of land or trees that produce certain things, so I trust them that they sell me naturally produced food (AL Respondent 2).

> We need not to kid ourselves about the quality of food that our parents had, that bio quality they had doesn't exist anymore. The grown conditions are not the same anymore because the rise of the population and the urbanisation of people do not allow the same bio grown techniques of that time due to the increase in demand of the consumption. However, in Albania they are still trying to keep the same techniques for many fruits and vegetables (AL Respondent 21).

> You can tell if a vegetable is bio. You can see a tomato and smell it if it is bio. It may not be beautiful but looks natural. Whereas when you buy a tomato in a supermarket it feels like you eat a piece of wood (AL Respondent 3).

> *I know someone, for many years, that sells at the farmers' markets, she is not a farmer but sells there, who I trust and she tells me what to buy and what is fresh and good quality […] the farmers' markets are not like they used to be where all farmers displayed their own produce, now they may be just sales people. They usually only produce small things like onions, parsley, mint, tomatoes, cucumber. Here it is called a farmers' market even if I go out and sell on the street even if I don't produce it and that I come from the city and actually from the village* (AL Respondent 8).

On the other hand, it is worth noting that some Albanian and UK respondents expressed different views about the quality of foods and the way farmers' markets operate both in the UK and Albania. Data show that these respondents were more aware about organic food attributes and the standard of the food offered at farmers' markets and supermarkets:

> *In farmers' market food is not always organic. Whereas supermarkets tend to have a section with organic vegetables and a selection of vegetables of organic nature. Organic means that is made of less chemicals, doesn't always mean there is none. I am particularly interested in getting organic because the interest in health and of the capacities and the nutrients of the soil. With intensive farming and the pesticides, chemicals and herbicides depict the soils so food itself is not as nutritious as it used to be* (UK Respondent 5).
> *Sometimes the standards of their products are an issue, while they try and check everything is OK, they might not have the same standards every time. Whereas in supermarkets they have such strict rules, so you get the same taste and packaging although they use pesticides and stuff to control their quality* (UK Respondent 15).
> *Farmers' markets are perceived to have better quality products* (UK Respondent 16).
> *I am Albanian, and I like to eat what is produced in Albania and tastes like the old times. I find it more difficult to accept new products that taste differently. This is why I go to the farmers' market to remind me of the old times that I am used to. However, I have noticed that even the villagers have started to*

bring products from abroad. They change their "production hand". I frequent the ones I know that provide me with food that is similar to the one I grew up with, the so called bio and that I am trying to nourish my children. I believe that everyone should eat food that is produced in their own countries and that they consume the same food they grow up with (AL Respondent 2).

➢ *A fresh egg is different from the farmers' market than the supermarket. Even with an untrained eye you can see that the eggs are different and fresher. However, they are sold on the street which is a negative point for me* (AL Respondent 6).

➢ *I usually don't buy there because it is very far from where I live. They might be bio but we cannot be certain that they actually are. Bio to me means that products are grown with sun and water and without any external help of hormones* (AL Respondent 22).

➢ *Farmers' markets are for those who know how to shop there and what to select. If you know you can get really good products however, I do not know much about them [...] Sometimes they lie as per where food comes from. For example, you want to buy some beans and they tell you they are from Korça but they actually come from Afghanistan (he laughs). And then you realise this because it takes a very long time for them to boil and cook* (AL Respondent 24).

➢ *I think that local food is always better because we have grown up with such food. I believe that local food is more beneficial to our system because our organism is used to consume food grown in Albania. I think that their products are of better quality than in other shops. I am aware of the label (bio food) however I am certain that villagers' food is bio because you can tell the difference when you look a tomato grown with hormones and another one without. It is just that villagers do not earn enough to pay for the labels and the signature needed. Anything that is labelled as bio in Albania is imported from abroad. In my opinion any local food that is in season tastes much better than any bio product that is imported. I also do not shop anything that is not in season* (AL Respondent 26).

This section highlighted the differences between the Albanian and UK respondents in terms of the food they buy, the interactions they have with the vendors and the experiences they build. These experiences and interactions with the vendors are stored in the respondents' memories and retrieved when making future food purchases. Overall, this theme shows that Albanians due to cultural and historical consumption patterns are more confident in recognising good quality food whereas the British rely on the interaction and the information provided to them by the vendor. The next section will analyse the hedonistic and utilitarian experiences of both Albanian and UK respondents when shopping in a farmers' market and a supermarket.

5.1.2 Hedonistic vs utilitarian shopping experience

According to the respondents' answers there is a distinctive difference between their shopping experience in a farmers' market and a supermarket. The subcategories below highlight the differences between UK and Albanian respondents when shopping in a farmer's market or a supermarket.

5.1.2.1 Supermarkets

UK

Previous research suggests that store atmosphere comprising colours, displays, decorative features, ease of movement, smell, condition of the air, music, and lighting, is found to enable a positive consumer response (Theodoridis and Chatzipanagiotou, 2009; Babin and Darden, 1996) resulting in the customer spending increased time in the store (Babin et al., 2003). However, findings from the UK respondents are in contrast with this literature. Supermarkets were found to be shopping places where respondents would do their daily or weekly shopping and serves the sole utilitarian purpose of supplying food provisions for their week ahead. The shopping experience in a supermarket is neither positive nor negative. They are considered to be functional food outlets where UK respondents would buy their supplies and leave the place as soon as possible. It is also considered a good place to shop and be protected from nature's elements such as rain:

- *Supermarkets are just purely functional get stuff and get out* (UK Respondent 3).
- *You go there you put things in a trolley and you get out of there. You don't waste any time or hang around like you do in a farmers' market* (UK Respondent 13).
- *I'd rather wander in a supermarket when it is raining than rather wander in a farmers' market* (UK Respondent 9).
- *Supermarket shopping is something you have to do it, it is a chore* (UK Respondent 22).
- *I don't have the time to select or even consider what to buy, I normally go with a list and throw things in the trolley* (UK Respondent 1).
- *It is more clinical and more faceless in a supermarket* (UK Respondent 5).
- *In a supermarket it's just more in and out maybe speak a little to the cashier but that is all* (UK Respondent 27).
- *In terms of going to Tesco's we just go to buy food, we don't go to meet with other people. It is purely functional* (UK Respondent 4).
- *the supermarket is known to go in on do the shopping and go out again* (UK Respondent 6).
- *I like to purchase in a farmer's market, I like the stall owners, I like the interaction more. Supermarkets are cold but more functional* (UK Respondent 10).
- *it is not a particularly enjoyable experience and I am not sure about the freshness of the food or where it comes from. Even though I do read the labels to see where it comes from. I try to read the labels to find out if I can* (UK Respondent 12).
- *in a supermarket, I am trying to go in and out as fast as I can* (UK Respondent 19).
- *Supermarkets are not social, it feels more anonymised when you shop there […] t*here is no character in a supermarket and sometimes the quality of the products is poor. You have no contact with the seller just fill in your trolley and then queue at the counter to pay […] in a supermarket you do not get a personalised service. It is quite poor sometimes with employees there not even*

talking to you because it is not their business and they do not care (UK Respondent 20).

➢ *When you go to a supermarket you go with a list and maybe you're planning your meals for the week so you're buying accordingly* (UK Respondent 23).

➢ *Supermarkets I tend to shop online, and I like to go to the store too and it is a funny mix, there are people around but they are there to get their shopping not to socialise. It is not private either because you do your shopping in public* (UK Respondent 24).

➢ *I am not much of a browser, I am more of an in and out so if I go to the supermarket, I have a list to follow. I know what I want before I go I tick it off, I know where it is, I know what I need I put it in my basket and then I leave* (UK Respondent 28).

Albania

Findings from the Albanian respondents contrast with the experience the UK shoppers have in supermarkets. There is a similarity between the two different groups of consumers which is the planning of a trip to a supermarket. That said, the experience that the Albanian respondents have in a supermarket is a more positive one and a trip that may involve the whole family or friends:

➢ *Last time we went as a family at the big Carrefour. We bought sugar, pasta, rice, tuna, olive oil etc. Nice environment where you find lots of stuff in offers but you end up spending more* (AL Respondent 13).

➢ *We see it as an activity together. We really like it because if we get tired we can pause for a coffee before we go home which makes the whole experience very nice* (AL Respondent 6).

➢ *I shop to a supermarket every day, it is like a walk time with my neighbours* (AL Respondent 10).

➢ *Large supermarkets that I usually visit with my mom, they have all sorts of things in there apart from food such as clothes, accessories etc. I can have a day out there and buy interesting things that I like* (AL Respondent 18).

> *The big ones (hypermarkets) are a way of spending your time, you don't go there on purpose to buy things, and it is by the way of having a day out that you shop as well* (AL Respondent 2).

Albanian respondents have a more hedonistic experience when shopping in a supermarket in general, whereas for UK respondents it was more of utilitarian one. Albanians enjoy the clean and organised environment of the shops as well as the packaging of the products:

> *Environment is very pleasant in a supermarket. Products are displayed beautifully, and you can spend many hours in there* (AL Respondent 1).
> *The supermarket I go to is very clean [..] the shelves are very nicely structured, and products are nicely displayed. I also like the packaging of the food which is very pleasing on the eye* (AL Respondent 9).
> *It is a clean, pleasant and very attractive environment and I really enjoy buying food there especially dairy products* (AL Respondent 10).
> *It feels good to shop in a nice, calm, quiet and clean environment. The service there is also great* (AL Respondent 21).
> *Supermarkets have a cleaner environment to shop in* (AL Respondent 27).
> *I like the clean and tidy environment there and I feel that I am more relaxed shopping there because I can also rest and drink my coffee after I have finished my shopping* (AL Respondent 28).
> *We enjoy the display of the products on the shelves and the cleanliness of the stores* (AL Respondent 6).
> *Supermarkets have a nice environment with goods displayed very nicely* (AL Respondent 11).
> *I like going to the supermarket because it always feels nice shopping in a clean environment. I like that products look pretty on the shelves and that there is order from the shelves to the tills. It feels also very nice in the summer with the air-conditioning on inside when outside the temperature is boiling* (AL Respondent 29)

Quality of the products bought in a supermarket has been found to be one of the factors that mean consumers prefer one supermarket over another ((Jackson et al., 2006). Product quality is perceived differently in Albania with respondents quoting the governmental control imposed on supermarket chains to provide products that meet health and hygiene standards:

> ➢ *I usually buy food in supermarkets because it is more controlled and guaranteed* (AL Respondent 10).
> ➢ *Controlled food, this is everything to me. I also like the lovely environment inside a supermarket store* (AL Respondent 7).
> ➢ *A positive thing is the hygiene standards in the shops. So, I try to buy from the good quality supermarket such as Conad which I think is the most trustworthy supermarket in Albania about its quality* (AL Respondent 15).
> ➢ *Supermarket is my favourite place. It is clean, secured food, better quality, the service there is much better, cleanliness. It is also very convenient, you fill in the bags and leave* (AL Respondent 22)

Findings of this study also showed the value that Albanian respondents put emphasis on the importance of establishing status and social acceptance through their food shopping. While in the UK, respondents were self-conscious of being seen in an inferior brand supermarket (Mintel, 2007). Shopping in supermarkets is also associated with the socio-economic status of the consumer, because supermarkets can offer consumers of middle-class backgrounds the means 'to differentiate themselves from the lower classes and to express a sense of belonging and a unique social identity' (Amine and Lazzaoui's, 2011, p.570). These findings from the literature do not agree with the findings in the Albanian data. The supermarket brand, while important in terms of establishing quality, was not found to be a status showing outlet. What Albanians find important is the social acceptance by the supermarket staff and the recognition they get as a valued customer which highlights the self-perception of an elevated status in a social group:

> ➢ *The staff at the supermarket I go are very nice, they respect their clients and they treat you as a customer should be treated.* (AL Respondent 9).

- *I feel more respected as a client when I shop in a supermarket* (AL Respondent 28).

- *Mostly I shop from supermarkets which as a concept entered Albania very late. I like the service and the attention I get in a supermarket. It is not that I am a rich person splashing my cash, but I like the attention that I am given even by the cashier who is very friendly and polite. I feel that I am respected. When I go to a supermarket, I feel like Lady Diana (she laughs) because they treat me well. I am free to choose what I like and to spend as much as I can afford* (AL Respondent 8).

- *Because I like the service there, employees are very polite* (AL Respondent 13).

- *The service is great, and personnel are happy to help you. I don't believe that supermarkets have any negative aspects* (AL Respondent 7).

While the findings seem to be positive so far about the shopping experience in supermarkets, Albanians also expressed some concerns in terms of prices and spending more than budgeted for but were also content with the offers they could get:

- *Usually supermarkets have attractive offers. The regional supermarkets are smaller and it is easier to find what you are looking for and where these offers are* (AL Respondent 2).

- *I was content in my last trip to the supermarket. I bought a few things that I needed in good prices. I visited once the big supermarket when it opened, and I spent so much money on that trip that I didn't go back again. You go for one thing in a there and you get out having spent more and buying useless things. I once went to buy some food and ended up spending two times more the budget because of the things they had on sale that I bought, and we didn't need* (AL Respondent 11).

- *You end up buying more than you expected as you will also stay and drink a coffee and enjoy more time in there* (AL Respondent 19).

- *Supermarkets have a nicer environment to shop in, but their prices are very high, and we cannot afford to buy all the products there that is why we shop*

> *more frequently at the farmers' markets. I am used to shop at farmers'*
> *markets, so I am fine with it, but I do sometimes like the cleanliness of a*
> *supermarket* (AL Respondent 30).

> *I like the good quality goods, the offers they do, and they have a variety of*
> *products. The overall impression is good* (AL Respondent 23).

> *Everything is gathered in one place, so this saves you time, you get offers on*
> *various products. I cannot think of any negative aspects of the supermarket*
> (AL Respondent 15).

They also expressed concerns about the manipulation of information by supermarket management such as altering the expiration date labels, although, the findings here are somewhat conflicting. This mistrust derives from the high level of corruption in the country in terms of media, politics and public services as also shown in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2017 on the Transparency International Organisation's website<https://www.transparency.org/country/ALB>):

> *Expiration date needs to be monitored carefully* (AL Respondent 13).
> *They check the expiration date of the products very frequently. Whereas the*
> *farmers bring what they have for today and don't pay attention on how their*
> *products look* (AL Respondent 11).
> *I am not certain that the expiration dates have not been manipulated. For*
> *example, when I buy Nutella is tastier than from other supermarkets because*
> *this is probably produced in Italy and not specifically for Albania like the other*
> *supermarkets.* (AL Respondent 15).
> *However, depending on the supermarket brand, they also abuse customers'*
> *trust. We have seen on TV programmes that they change the expiration dates,*
> *they falsify the quality certificates etc.* (AL Respondent 8).

Convenience has been found to be one of the determinants influencing consumer behaviour towards supermarkets (Weatherell et al., 2003; Jackson et al., 2006; Botti and Iyengar, 2006). While this factor was not prominent in Albanian's responses when describing the reasons they would shop in a supermarket, it was however revealed in some responses:

- *Because it is a more appropriate environment to buy your food from. It is more controlled, everything is available there and you don't waste too much time shopping around. It is more convenient to fill in a trolley, finish your shopping and then go home. It makes your life easier to do all your shopping in one place in terms of time and tiredness, you don't need to carry lots of bags from one place to another. You also don't deal with different people when you pay in the end, you get one receipt and that's it really* (AL Respondent 20).
- *You save a lot of time by shopping in a supermarket; you select the products and pay for them giving you more free time to spend with the family* (AL Respondent 24).
- *Convenience, both my wife and I work so we do not have time to waste around. The supermarket offers us everything in one place and is open until late hours which help us shop when we finish work* (AL Respondent 25).

This may be an early indication of change in Albanian consumers shopping behaviour which seems to be similar consumer behaviours in developed countries. These few but notable responses maybe showing signs of a more westernised approach to shopping and the early changes of a collectivistic society
(Hofstede Insights, https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/albania/ 2018).

5.1.2.2 Farmers' markets

UK

Data gathered in Albania (as presented above) showed that respondents visit supermarkets not only to shop but also to spend a day out. However, when it comes to farmers' markets this is more of a repetitive shopping trip to them. Contrary to these findings, UK respondents find farmers' markets as places where they can spend a nice day out and make it part of their weekend's outing:

- *I would say farmer's market is more social as it would be a special day out* (UK Respondent 17).

- *I think it is quite private for me because it doesn't feel like shopping it feels more like an experience. It feels more like an outing because you consider more what you purchase* (UK Respondent 1).

- *The only ones I have been too it's been like a family outing. I have bought things occasionally and there is a farm back in Glasgow where I could get milk and their ice cream was amazing. It is normally going as a day out because they would advertise it as a fun day or craft market and the farmers' market is there too* (UK Respondent 8).

- *The farmers' market in Belfast is more about food made to be eaten there. It is not like a place where you could do your grocery shopping, but you can treat it as a day out when you go there* (UK Respondent 10).

- *It is a good day out with the family and as I said before I like that I get to talk to the seller and to know him and his produce* (UK Respondent 20).

- *Most of the times it would be an outing with my husband and if we see that there is a farmers' market I just pop down and have a look at what's on* (UK Respondent 25).

- *Farmers' market is more social because we are having a wander around and it is an activity at the weekend* (UK Respondent 19).

Farmers' markets are perceived to be places where friendly relationships are created between consumers and farmers (Kirwan, 2004; Andreatta and Wickliffe, 2002). In line with this, UK respondents find interacting with the stall holders and knowing where their food comes from a positive experience that may influence their shopping experience in a farmers' market. This is also enhancing their sense of social exchanges with people outside their immediate family circles. This social interaction takes place in the spirit of everyone being in a happier mood while browsing through the various stalls thus they are more open to communication not only with the farmers but also the people around them:

- *Shopping in a farmers' market is a social matter because you socialise with the seller but also other people on the stall too. You also develop a relationship with the seller and he understands you and your needs. I like that I get to talk to the seller and to know him and his produce* (UK Respondent 20).

- *I see them more like a social thing to do. You know like the one we have in Belfast with the little stalls it is like a tourist attraction there* (UK Respondent 10).

- *The farmers' market I go to close to work is quite a hub so there's quite a social interaction between the stalls and being in Glasgow anywhere you go people are friendly and chat to people they don't know about the weather etc* (UK Respondent 5).

- *I suppose the farmers' market would be more social because you are usually with someone and then you buy things together and it is a bit more sociable* (UK Respondent 13).

- *I would say that at farmers' market is a bit more social because there is more personality there. People just seem happier at it and more likely to want to speak to you* (UK Respondent 27).

- *It could be a good laugh around there. I suppose you always get to meet somebody there they remember you and they may suggest something to buy that you might have no thought* [...] *you are interacting with the farmer or someone who is related to the farmer. You can build up a relationship or rapport if they are to be on the stall every month or every week. And then is the chance of getting better deals because you can negotiate or if you are seen as a returning customer* (UK Respondent 7).

- *They kind of know who we are so.. it is nice to have that sort of relationship. [...] we do enjoy it, I do like the atmosphere of it, but I also see it as a means to an end. My husband treats as a place to hang out, whereas I am there to buy things* (UK Respondent 18).

- *I think probably going to the farmers' market on a Sunday, there is a lot of people and a lot of food to eat and lots of stands where you stand and chat, so it is more sociable* (UK Respondent 6).

- *I think the farmers' market is set up to be a more social experience and I suppose, historically it would have been a social experience where traditionally a housewife would have gone to exchange gossip. It is less like this nowadays, but you still have the stall holder whom you can ask about the product and exchange niceties* (UK Respondent 24).

> *Being able to try the food before you buy it is a positive thing. You can also talk to the people who make the products. Although that is also a little scary because you feel obliged to buy something after you've tasted. Being able to talk to the person selling is great because you get to know them and the product but then you feel the extra pressure to buy. But you get to ask lots of questions around the product and you get to try them which you can't do in the supermarket* (UK Respondent 25).

Literature indicates that local food producers are aiming not only to just seek financial benefits from selling their produce in their local markets but also to develop a sense of community (Morris and Buller, 2003). Making a difference to society or supporting someone else with their shopping patterns was also found among the UK respondents:

> *The positive aspect is definitely the community feel to it. Having a positive impact on people in the immediate vicinity. It feels nice, it feels like you are making a difference to somebody who lives only 5 minutes down the road as opposed to someone who you don't know where has come from* (UK Respondent 15).
> *You get a community feeling and it makes you feel better buying from a farmers' market* (UK Respondent 13).
> *I feel that I should possibly be doing more things about farmers' markets to support them and local community* (UK Respondent 25).

Social interaction at farmers' markets is perceived as being friendlier and more personal than shopping in supermarkets (Hughes and Mattson, 1992). This is reflected on the UK responses with respondents focusing on the "nice people" shopping there, the "friendly environment" and the "more relaxed shopping experience". It was also reported that attention paid by the farmers to meet the consumers' needs made them "feel special" and that the food products they can get in a farmer's market are more interesting and original than the ones they can find in a supermarket:

- *Farmers market was full of nice people* (UK Respondent 22).

- *Hm, buying from a farmers' market is probably more social because it is more enjoyable, and it is not a supermarket (he laughs)* (UK Respondent 12).

- *You are interacting with people who are generally friendlier giving you the chance to try the food* (UK Respondent 14).

- *Because it is local here, we bump into people we know. I suppose because it is interesting experience, my partner has an interest in food. They have nice atmospheres and you get to try bits and pieces. They give little pieces of cheese or bread that the kids would like to try and if we like it we might buy something as well. For my point of view is that wandering around farmers' market is more like a leisure activity whereas going to a supermarket is a chore. Farmer's market is more enjoyable, and we go there all together and it is more interesting for the children and they don't get bored as much* (UK Respondent 19).

- *When you are in a farmers' market is not so rushing, you just wander around, you take your time, you browse, and you talk to other people about why you buy. I am prone to buy veg that I wouldn't normally buy. Experiment with different meat, I'd say all right let's try this. My husband is not as adventurous as me. He is plainer in his palate, that saying though I see him more adventurous when actually he is at the market and more interested in what he is buying. That is probably when I see him most interested in food* (UK Respondent 23).

- *Shopping in farmers' markets is it is more relaxed, quieter just better fun* (UK Respondent 3).

- *They are keen to sell so they are trying to talk to you and engage you. They make you feel like a special customer* (UK Respondent 5).

- *It is different from the supermarket where the food is the same every time you go to shop there. Fruit and veg have just come from the fields and it feels more genuine food more natural. It is part of this societal move and that push towards being aware about where your food is coming from, that hasn't travelled many miles and is not full of chemicals. I think as consumers we are more aware of this issue now than what we were 10 years ago […] it feels like*

a past time. You don't go there with a shopping list and you are more open to try new things (UK Respondent 24).

➢ *In a farmers' market I would be more likely to look around because the goods aren't as generic as you would find in a supermarket* (UK Respondent 28).

➢ *Freshness, taste, it is just a different experience. We tend to experience farmers' markets while on holiday, so it is a culturally different experience. We tend to go around on a sunny day and in that way, you are not going to get peed on by rain as you would to here. Also, there are not that many farmers' markets in the UK* (UK Respondent 4).

➢ *I don't go socially to see other people is a supermarket especially. If it is a farmers' market, a stall you are engaging a bit more in a conversation that you do in a supermarket* (UK Respondent 2).

Albania

Albanian respondents indicated that farmers' markets or the villagers' markets as they refer to them, are considered to be functional shopping places where respondents could get fresh products in affordable prices. The fact that Albanians call farmers' markets villagers' markets reflects the social structure determined during the communist era. Farmers and all sorts of food producers were situated in the villages around the urban cities, working in the governmental cooperatives who were also selling their produce in the big cities via street markets. Citizens of the big cities were calling the street markets the villagers' markets to distinguish the provenance and the social status of the producer. To this day, despite the fact that vendors of these markets might not come from or reside in villages, the street markets are still called villagers' markets.

Farmers' markets in Albania, despite being affordable, lack hygiene standards, the display of the products on the street as seen in the pictures below allows dust and dirt to surround the products, and this made the shopping experience less pleasant for the Albanian respondents. The fact that the farmers' markets are not controlled and regulated by the Albanian government, is a worrying factor that raises concerns around the impact the uncontrolled product may have on respondents' health. However, respondents recognised that the food provided by the farmers' markets is

fresher, tastier and Bio which is the term they used to refer to organic food. Despite the above negatives many of them would still shop there to buy fresh ingredients for their daily cooking:

> *Food is not controlled. However, we take measures to clean it properly at home. We clean for example the salads with vinegar at home to kill all the insects. If we buy milk from the farmers, we will boil it* (AL Respondent 12).
> *A negative aspect of a farmers' market is the lack of food security and cleanliness* (AL Respondent 21).
> *They might have bio food and better than other outlets but the way they sell it on the streets spoils it for me* (AL Respondent 27).
> *They don't have dedicated spaces that meet the appropriate hygiene standards to sell their produce. I think that the new mayor is trying to solve this issue to create new spaces for them because at the moment they just sell everything on the street* (AL Respondent 28).
> *They are not as clean as the supermarkets* (AL Respondent 10).
> *Non-controlled food is a negative for me. They shouldn't be allowed to function like the way they do now. They have small personal interests that are aiming profit so they won't pay attention to certifications, control and other things related to foods. The lack of hygiene is very important to me* (AL Respondent 8).
> *At the farmers' markets it is understandable that food comes directly from the farmers and it is not controlled* (AL Respondent 1).

➢ *The lack of hygiene is a negative thing. When I buy vegetables, I wash them twice or three times more to make sure is clean but is worth it because they are tasty, fresh and bio and remind me of my childhood* (AL Respondent 2).

➢ *They have fresh products that are bio whereas in a supermarket, products are displayed for more than a day or two. However, cleanliness is an issue because everything is displayed open on the street* (AL Respondent 13).

➢ *It is a dirty environment* (AL Respondent 22)

➢ *We try and buy bio and healthy food for our family. We enjoy going from one stall to the other because we have come to know now the people that sell there, and they always tell us which products are fresher picked up on the day. However, the dust, the mud and the lack of cleanliness sort of spoil the whole experience for me. I guess we are used to it though* (AL Respondent 29).

➢ *They sell on the street, so the hygiene standards are not met probably* (AL Respondent 29).

➢ *I almost go daily to the farmers' markets because it is very close to my house and it is better for me to buy fresh ingredients to cook on the day* (AL Respondent 6).

➢ *I think the standards there are not great, not so much for me because I will be there for 5' minutes and then go home. It is not so good though for those who sell there all day. Fruits and vegetables are fresh and there are many options to choose from. In supermarkets this food is not sourced locally and it stays longer on the shelves, it is not as fresh* (AL Respondent 26).

Data analysis show that Albanian respondents also expressed an interest in supporting their community and felt "morally obliged" to support the striving farmers by buying their produce:

➢ *In terms of the farmers' markets I believe it is a social aspect because I want to support them with my purchases. They strive all year to produce their stuff so it would be bad for them not to sell their produce. I value how the produce their products, so I feel obliged morally to buy from them* (AL Respondent 11).

➢ *I think it is a private matter in terms of personal choice but also a social one to help the villagers that sell on the stalls. They need to have a sort of income*

to survive. They produce their products in their back yards which make them quite tasty. I also like to support them because we have people in our extended family that sell in such markets (AL Respondent 19).

➢ *So, you see people who are trying to survive on what they sell and so they just find a place on many corners and display their products. This is something that the council need to sort out and offer dedicated places where they can sell their produce. This though would indicate that they would have to pay taxes and would have to raise their prices so again you would have the odd ones sell on the street* (AL Respondent 30).

However, despite the willingness to support local farmers, mistrust towards them emerged from the responses mainly due to the fact that the vendor may not be the actual farmer of the produce. This raises suspicions as per the products' provenance and quality:

➢ *They are not honest as per where food is coming from. For example, they sell you stuff that supposedly is local and good such as walnuts, they open one in front of you that looks good and you buy it. But when you go home, they are all rotten inside. So, it makes you think that it is better to buy something more expensive in Conad but you know that it will be of good quality* (AL Respondent 8).

➢ *We don't know sometimes where it comes from because of the lack of control […] it is a lifestyle thing that Albanians shop from farmers' markets because supermarkets don't have everything you are looking for and they definitely don't provide bio food. I think that if they had bio food a certain level of consumers would buy from them. It is the lifestyle here in Albania I think that everyone is shopping at farmers' markets* (AL Respondent 1).

➢ *If they sell on the streets though, I am not convinced about the quality and the origin of the food* (AL Respondent 7).

Overall, farmers' markets are considered to be functional shopping places to Albanians where they can buy fresh products in affordable prices. Contrary to this, UK respondents find farmers' markets exciting places to shop food, that provides

many opportunities for hedonistic experiences. On the other hand, shopping in a supermarket is considered by the UK respondents to be a chore, a repetitive shopping habit that serves the purpose of getting food supplies where the shorter time they spend the better it is. Whereas it is the opposite to Albanians that grasp the opportunity to combine a day out while doing the shopping. The next section will analyse how UK and Albanian respondents choose to do their shopping with company or alone.

5.1.3 Shopping alone or with company

UK

Family and friends form the focus of most people's daily interactions and so each is considered to be particularly influential upon one's consumption and also one's sense of identity (Nicholson and Seidman, 1995). Family members or friends can make a difference in the experience UK respondents may have when going food shopping especially if a farmers' market is involved. As demonstrated earlier, the shopping experience between the farmers' markets and the supermarkets is very different for the UK respondents. A reason for this is the fact that farmers' markets are associated with family and friendly faces. Findings indicated that food is associated with family moments thus a connotation with family, happy moments is also correlated with a visit to the farmers' markets. When it comes to shopping in a farmer's market, UK respondents agreed that is a trip that will always involve someone to accompany them:

> ➢ *I always go with my family in a farmers' market* (UK Respondent 3).
> ➢ *With a girlfriend usually. It works as an outing at times* (UK Respondent 9).
> ➢ *I would probably always be with someone, I might go there as part of an outing* (UK Respondent 13).
> ➢ *I guess it felt more like an event, more of a special occasion but I always end up buying myself some nice cheese (she laughs)* (UK Respondent 1).
> ➢ *I usually go with my husband. We buy what we see and try on the stall and sometimes we take things and freeze them. It is a different experience to the*

supermarket. We are more spontaneous about what we buy at farmers' market (UK Respondent 11).

➢ *I usually go with one of my friends actually who has a couple of children and go to school in the village. We go with her youngest child who is not at school yet. She likes the experience of the little child going and seeing and appreciating what we have around us as opposing to just going to the supermarket* (UK Respondent 15).

➢ *I would probably say I go to a farmers' rarely not as often as we probably could do but if we do me and my wife once in a couple of months then we buy local produce from the farmers* (UK Respondent 2).

➢ *Sometimes with my wife sometimes just myself it depends. If you know that you need to buy stuff for 4 or 5 days you just head there yourself but sometimes is nice to have a stroll out together just to have a look and see what's on offer* (UK Respondent 6).

➢ *We usually tend to go as a family out and if we see one when passing by, we stop and have a look* (UK Respondent 16).

➢ *Usually with my family. With my son who is almost two and my husband* (UK Respondent 18).

➢ *it would be all of us going there* (UK Respondent 19).

➢ *I go with my family and sometimes I go alone* (UK Respondent 20).

➢ *Usually with my husband* (UK Respondent 23).

➢ *To the ones outside the city centre, I used to go alone and to the ones in the city centre I tend to go with my family* (UK Respondent 24).

➢ *Most of the times it would be an outing with my husband and if we see that there is a farmers' market I just pop down and have a look at what's on* (UK Respondent 25).

➢ *I would always go with someone; I wouldn't go on my own there. Don't get me wrong it's OK if I am passing by but I wouldn't go to shop there on purpose* (UK Respondent 28).

Supermarkets on the other hand, have been repeatedly reported as places where there is no sense of fun or having a positive experience. For various reasons which

include budget, time or convenience, the respondents in question usually shop alone in a supermarket. There might be other people accompanying them when there is need to carry the bags or provide transport from the outlet to the residence:

> *I go on my own; I pass through a supermarket on my way home from work* (UK Respondent 9).
> *I go alone, I have a local Tesco, and I typically buy my everyday things there as well as fruit and veg. I know where everything is, so I can get around quickly* (UK Respondent 13).
> *I try to go by myself as I spend less money* (UK Respondent 17).
> *Often, I'll have my son with me, so I don't have the time before he starts grabbing everything* (UK Respondent 1).
> *Now I shop with my mom because I have moved back home now in Hertfordshire, but I used to shop with a friend when I was staying in Sheffield, we used to go the same time on the same day every week. […] I go with my mum because she pays.. sounds quite bad (she laughs)..* (UK Respondent 15).
> *Normally I go alone, although sometimes my flatmate will come with me. Convenience of the outlet would be more important for me because I don't have a car, so I really need to think of how I am getting home* (UK Respondent 27).
> It tends to be with my wife. It can be either or but mostly we go together (UK Respondent 2).
> *It is mixed. If it is the weekend generally then it is the two of us. During the week then it is just nipping something on the way home so it might be something for one evening. So, it tends to be yourself during the week but the two of us during the weekend* (UK Respondent 6).
> *I usually go on my own* (UK Respondent 16).
> *We mostly go alone because it is easier with a child* (UK Respondent 18).
> *I either go with the children or on my own. We do not tend to go to the supermarket all together* (UK Respondent 19).
> *I usually go on my own. My wife stays at home with our daughter while I do the shopping* (UK Respondent 20).

- *I go alone (*UK Respondent 21).
- *I go alone. The supermarket shopping is something I would do on my way home from work* (UK Respondent 23).
- *It varies really, I might go alone or with my children, I wouldn't do a big shopping when I am with them though. If it is just me or my husband, we spent ten to fifteen minutes in there and we try not to make it a time-consuming experience* (UK Respondent 24).
- *Alone or with my husband* (UK Respondent 25).
- *With my partner, my roommate or alone* (UK Respondent 28).

Albania

The findings of the Albanian respondents regarding their shopping in farmers' markets show an opposite trend to the UK respondents. As shown earlier, it was a recurrent theme among the UK respondents to shop in a supermarket on their way home from work. It would be a quick shopping trip to get the necessary and get out of the outlet. It seems that this is the case of shopping in a farmers' market among the Albanian respondents. Farmers' markets are visited on a frequent basis to stock their homes with consumables that can be cooked fresh on the spot and not to be stored in fridges and cupboards. When Albanian respondents were accompanied on their shopping trip to a farmers' market it would mostly be to help carry the bags and not have a day out although they would occasionally be accompanied by someone else:

- *I shop from these markets every day because it is also close to my house. I finish work earlier [..] so before I go home I buy what we need.* (AL Respondent 9).
- *I go on my own as I am lucky enough to have them close to where I live* (AL Respondent 12).
- *I usually shop on my own in the farmers' market* (AL Respondent 14).
- *Usually I go by myself but sometimes my wife accompanies me* (AL Respondent 21).
- *I usually go when I am called by my wife to help her with the bags (he laughs)* (AL Respondent 5).

> *I go alone, don't usually go with someone else. I feel free when I shop myself as I can choose whatever I want. I don't want other people to influence my choices* (AL Respondent 8).

> *I usually go alone but sometimes my husband's sister joins me* (AL Respondent 28).

> *Sometimes I go with my husband and sometimes I go alone because I work, and we usually go together on a Sunday* (AL Respondent 1).

> *I go alone, as it is my responsibility to do the daily food shopping* (AL Respondent 2).

> *Usually I go on my own. Because I go early in the morning before I start work and I leave it in the house for my husband to prepare them for lunch* (AL Respondent 3).

> *When I go to villagers' markets* [direct translation], *I call my husband to help me carry the bags, he is my handy man (she laughs)* (AL Respondent 4).

> *I go alone to the farmers' market because I do the shopping there when I come back from work and is very convenient to grab a few things I need to cook for the evening* (AL Respondent 6).

> *I go with my wife; she is the one that usually does the shopping though I mostly buy what she tells me to buy (he laughs)* (AL Respondent 13).

> *I go alone or with my parents* (AL Respondent 16).

> *On my own or with my mom* (AL Respondent 18).

> *I usually go with company especially with my husband's cousin* (AL Respondent 19).

> *I go on my own or with a family member* (AL Respondent 20).

> *I go either with my husband or a friend. I work part-time so this gives me plenty of time to wander around farmers' market and search for bio food* (AL Respondent 29).

> *I do the shopping alone on my way to work* (AL Respondent 30).

On the other hand, respondents gave a variety of answers as per the frequency of their trips to the supermarkets ranging from two times a week to once a month. These shopping trips are planned and respondents indicated that they are usually

accompanied by family members to either help with transport, carrying the bags or combine a day out with shopping:

> *I plan to go to a supermarket once in two weeks when I usually need to buy oil, soaps, cheeses etc. I usually go with my neighbour who also suggests when there is something new or good to buy* (AL Respondent 9).

> *Sometimes my wife or my son accompanies me* (AL Respondent 21).

> *I go with my neighbours […] we are used to go together and usually buy the same things (*AL Respondent 10).

> *I go with my daughter. When my daughter is around, we go to the supermarket, it is shopping and spend some time together. When I am on my own, I just go at the farmers' markets which is closer to where I live* (AL Respondent 28).

> *I go with my husband because it is a larger supermarket and we buy more stuff. It is larger than the one we do daily at a farmers' markets and I can use his help with carrying the bags* […] *You definitely need to use your car to go to a hypermarket and decide to fill in the shopping cart for a longer period. I sometimes go with my sons. When they go for themselves, they take us too, so we go together out* (AL Respondent 1).

> *We usually go as a family on a Saturday or Sunday to the big supermarkets that are a little bit outside the city centre. It feels like a day out, entertainment and shopping* (AL Respondent 2).

> *I go with my husband and we usually buy cupboard food and Cheerios or other sweets for my children. I don't frequent supermarket that much though* (AL Respondent 3).

> *I go there with my husband when my grandchildren are in school to buy dry food like sugar, rice, pasta and detergents. It is like a leisure time for us and shopping at the same time. We like to have a look around the shelves and the clean aisles* (AL Respondent 4).

> *I go on my own, I don't get any help from others in the family with shopping* (AL Respondent 11).

> *I usually go with my husband to the supermarket because I don't drive, and we usually do the supermarket shopping once a week to stock food for the following week* (AL Respondent 6).

> *Usually we take turns with my husband but mostly on my own. When I take my kids, I need to get a large check with me as they ask for more things to be bought so I go on my own to buy what we need* (AL Respondent 11).

> *When we shop at the big supermarket we go together, my job is to drive them there and carry the bags (he laughs)* (AL Respondent 13).

> *I go alone or with my parents (*AL *Respondent 16).*

> *On my own or with my mom (*AL *Respondent 18).*

> *my close family husband and kids, we usually go and shop at the big supermarkets that are nice places. We go with other families as well* (AL Respondent 19).

> *It is just me* (AL Respondent 20).

> *I shop with my husband when we want to fill the fridge but when I am alone, I just grab some things quickly to cook on the day* (AL Respondent 26).

> *Depends, if I go the small one in my neighbourhood, I go on my own because I buy things I need to cook my meal of the day. If it is a visit to the big ones then we usually go all together. I have a grandchild that I like taking there because he gets excited with all the things laying around (she laughs)* (AL Respondent 29).

> *I go on my own as my husband needs to stay at home with my daughter while I do the shopping* (AL Respondent 30).

This theme also highlights the different shopping experiences UK and Albanian respondents have in farmers' markets and supermarkets. This is also reflected on the choice of the companion they both choose when visiting these outlets. For example UK respondents take the whole family to a farmers' markets and choose to do the supermarket shopping on their own. Whereas Albanians take the family to a supermarket for a fun day out and husbands or friends are called upon to help with carrying bags when shopping in a farmers' market. This is another example where the hedonistic purpose of the farmers' market is highlighted for the UK respondents

that choose to go with family members or friends and make a fun day out of their visit. Contrary, this is the case for the Albanians visiting the supermarkets with family members or friends, especially when visiting the bigger ones, where they can take a break and enjoy a coffee while doing their shopping. The next section is investigating whether people from different cultural backgrounds such as Albania and the UK, can create groups of neo-tribes when sharing common shopping practices.

5.2 Findings: Can common shopping experiences create neo-tribes of consumers with different cultural backgrounds?

Neo-tribes are discussed in literature as groups, real or virtual, created around particular products or services, brands or consumption activities, that provide the linking value that unites the members (Cova and Cova, 2001). Two themes emerged from the data. The first one is related to UK respondents only:

  a)   A new perspective/need for purchasing fresh food

and the other includes both Albanian and UK respondents overcoming 'formal' cultural authorities (Cova and Cova, 2002);

  b)   Information seeking around food - Internet used as a primary source.

5.2.1 Neo-tribes – a new perspective/need for purchasing fresh food

Studies have been conducted around farmers' market consumers (McGrath et al., 1993), Harley Davidson motorbikes (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995) and Watson et al (2008) researched the "foodie" communities. While the "foodie" and the like-minded consumer was acknowledged in the response as a frequent customer of farmers' market:

> ➢ *I think people I work with are like minded with me about nutrients and they are trying to get the best quality food they can. Also, they are socially responsible as per whom they are supporting like farmers and community and that's become more apparent the last few years. It's a conscious choice for the people I work with to shop in farmers' markets* (UK Respondents 5).
> ➢ *[..] people are foodies and they are interested where the food has come from, the heritage of food* (UK Respondent 3).

- *We are conscious of buying local and healthy ingredients. So, I don't necessarily go to the supermarket. We have the fishmonger, and then we have the farmers' market which is very close* (UK Respondent 6).
- *The folks that care about the local community possibly care about the environment as well because of the short transport of the goods. If you buy from a farmers' market the produce it's going to be close to the farm, you're not having to transport goods a long way* (UK Respondent 7).

The preference for fresh food consumption emerged as a new shopping pattern among the UK respondents. The majority of the respondents claimed that they have started trying to cook from scratch using fresh ingredients leaving behind habits of eating convenience food. This rediscovered cooking lifestyle is also something respondents were keen to pass on to their children because of the benefits fresh ingredients have for one's health and wellbeing:

- *My husband is obsessed with fresh homemade food. With the exception of pizza, he refuses to have anything that is pre-packed. So, it is incredibly important, and we are growing our children with that* (UK Respondent 3).
- *When I was younger, I used to eat a lot of convenience food whereas as I get older, I enjoy fresher ingredients, diverse ingredients* (UK Respondent 1).
- *We do not eat much processed food put it that way. We buy our own fresh meat, veg, fish and cook that from scratch* (UK Respondent 4).
- *Yes, I get quite passionate about food, I am interested eating healthily I am interested in food as a nutritious therapy that side of medicine of things […] So sometimes when we look at the nutritious side of food, is that food that has been picked for long time, lies there longer, transport costs and this is usually the case in the supermarkets. […] In farmers' market is the illusion that food is been freshly picked when sometimes it might not even be their own produce* (UK Respondent 5).
- (Is it important where you buy food from) *Yes, just to make sure that you get the right ingredients if you are preparing something like fresh food and vegetables* (UK Respondent 11).

- *If I am shopping for myself, I buy lots of vegetables because I like cooking from scratch* (UK Respondent 15).
- *I would like to make sure that the products I buy are fresh and local where I can. Other products it doesn't matter so much because I am a vegetarian, so I buy a lot of Quorn products* (UK Respondent 27).
- *I guess it would be people who are interested in cooking because you get to buy fresh ingredients as opposed to processed food* (UK Respondent 19).

Overall, while UK respondents are displaying common traits that form the "rules" of a tribe, they did not seem to understand that they form part of a wider group of consumers whose behaviours is mirroring theirs. The next section will investigate the sources of information the respondents of this study use related to cooking recipes and food attributes.

5.2.2 Neo-tribes – Information seeking around food - Internet used as a primary source

With so many food and cooking blogs and websites, information around food is widely available for consumers that can be informed about the various health and nutrition attributes of the food products they buy. According to neo-tribalism theory, consumer tribes are built through a learning process that involves engagement, imagination and alignment (Wenger, 2000). Supporting this theory, data show that British and Albanian respondents quoted the internet as another factor that influences their shopping. Internet, food and cooking blogs have emerged not only as sources of information, but also common virtual places were consumers with different backgrounds find common ground around food cooking. These online platforms defy cultural and social boundaries and are places where respondents can search for information around food attributes and health agents associated with specific food products as well as the fact that they can access new recipes and enrich their daily diet with food from all around the world:

- *I am quite interested and query about articles on food, websites and blogs that write about healthy eating food and I am interested in the more nutritious side of things* (UK Respondent 5).

- *(*factors influencing shopping decision) *I think education it does for me. Haven't I had done the marketing degree I would have never known about corporate social responsibility* (UK Respondent 15).

- *My wife and I we don't watch television or buy a newspaper. We are informed online, so we are not influenced by advertising. So, we make the decision on what we want not on how the adverting is influencing us* (UK Respondent 6).

- *you can find more information nowadays about food and I like to read a lot on my own and find out info on the internet* (AL Respondent 27).

- *I like to read and inform myself about new things. I believe that it is never too late to enrich your knowledge and improve your life* (AL Respondent 5).

- *I also refer to the information I get from the internet about food and its quality. It is not like in the past we didn't eat good food, but it was served to us by our parents. Now I have to the chance to search for it myself. We can find more diverse menus and recipes online, so our diet is more enriched than those of my parents. I respect and preserve tradition passed to me by my parents but I also look for new modern food that has come from abroad.* (AL Respondent 8).

- *It is because as I said when you are looking for good quality food you need to know where your food has come from. We are lucky now to have internet where we can search more information around food and its benefits to our health* (AL Respondent 6).

- Internet now is a big provider of information about everything even for food (AL Respondent 22).

- *I also like to cook so I search information on the internet how to cook traditional food as well as foreign one* (AL Respondent 26).

- *We try to eat healthier now. We try to find lots of new recipes on the internet that help keep our cholesterol and blood pressure low* (AL Respondent 29).

Overall the above data show that that neo-tribe communities are created by individuals projecting similar behavioural traits when searching further information around food. However, despite these individuals behaving in a similar way, which according to neo-tribe theory constitutes members of the same tribe, the respondents were not aware that other people around them are acting similarly to them and did not consciously acknowledge they may be part of the same group. This data also showed that bloggers are influencing consumers and encouraging similar behaviours to a variety of individuals around the world which may initiate the formation of neo-tribes by sharing common knowledge and practices to groups of consumers that do not realise that they form part of such groups.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter provided an analysis of the data gathered as part of this study to answer two research questions of this thesis: What is the impact of the social experiences on self identity while shaping the individual's choice of food outlet?; and can common shopping experiences create neo-tribes of consumers with different cultural backgrounds?. Further examination of these in the context of the literature can be found in the Discussion chapter, Chapter 7.

Findings showed that food shopping and the wider food culture which also includes cooking and use of fresh ingredients, is an important factor for individuals to establish social structures within a family and friendship environment. Data indicated that culture is also an instrumental factor in shaping an individual's food shopping behaviours as well as the understanding of food quality. A connection was found between the social surrounding and cultural structures of the food outlets and the shopping experience that UK and Albanian respondents get while buying food in a farmer's market or supermarket. Data also show that neo-tribes are emerging among UK respondents when it comes to buying fresh ingredients and cooking meals from scratch. This "going back to their roots" emerging theme is different from previous studies focusing on the "foodie" communities (Watson et al., 2008). UK respondents were seen to retrieve information from their childhood when families would cook fresh meals leading to consumers not buying convenience food as much. Moreover, a common theme tribe was identified between UK and Albanian respondents which

involves online communities and information seeking on online platforms around food. Data showed that respondents from two different cultural backgrounds use the same pathways to be better informed about food health attributes and new recipes to diversify their daily diet. Chapter six focuses upon the other two research questions set by this thesis: How do individuals perceive themselves and the various self-identities in action?; and how is food shopping and the cultural background of the individual perceived as part of self identity by Albanian and British consumers? The findings of this chapter will consider how food shopping and culture influences identity constructions and complete the theoretical contribution made by the data collected for this thesis.

Chapter 6: Findings relevant to research questions 3 and 4

Theme 2: Integration of food shopping experiences within the construction of self identity

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the second part of the data analysis and the various themes that emerged under the theme: Integration of food shopping experiences within the construction of self identity. The data analysis of this chapter seeks to answer two research questions of this thesis: How do individuals perceive themselves and the various self-identities in action?; and how is food shopping and the cultural background of the individual perceived as part of self identity by Albanian and British consumers? Taken together, data answering the above questions seek to understand how individuals create self identity within food shopping and culture. This chapter considers individual accounts of identity derived from the respondents' personal narratives by investigating self identity in action and in a social context, as well understand the multiple selves in action as presented by Gould (2010) on page 54 of the literature review.

Fischler (1988, p. 275) argues that "food is central to our sense of identity" and data will be further analysed to investigate the influence of food shopping and the cultural background in identity creation between the Albanian and UK respondents. The analysis of the data is presented in a contextualised format with previous research presented in the literature chapters two and three.

6.1 Findings: How do individuals perceive themselves and the various self-identities in action?

Four themes emerged that seek to answer the above research question: a) Food the essence of life – self identity created through food and family moments; and b) Self identity in action when decision making around food shopping, which consists of two further themes: 1) Factors influencing shopping decision making and the choice of a

food outlet; and 2) Self identity in a social context – niche groups influencing decision making and finally, c) Self-identity – recognising personal attributes. Each of these themes are further analysed providing comparison between UK and Albanian findings in order to present similarities, differences and culture specific characteristics.

6.1.1 Food the essence of life – self identity created through food and family moments

The concept of a family eating together as part of creating in-group social experiences is important an important role as an institution of early stages socialisation and a "crucial societal foundation stone" (Hunt at al., 2011; p. 2). Eating together around the table creates a sense of unity among the family members (Fulkerson et al., 2006). Interview findings show that food plays an important role in the respondents' lives for two main reasons: health and nutrition and bringing families together. It was reported that families cook together in the evenings or at the weekends using fresh ingredients to prepare meals. This has a significant importance because this is the only time of the day where the families spend quality time together:

> ➢ *It is a time when we all sit together and talk and celebrate things that kind of thing* (UK Respondent 19).
> ➢ *We like to cook from scratch and we eat together as a family at night and at the weekends, so it is fairly important* (UK Respondent 22).
> ➢ *Yes, food is very important, because food is part of family life and is high priority. We get very close when we cook together* (UK Respondent 20).
> ➢ *Yes, we like to eat good homemade food, we will spend time cooking and trying different things. […] I'll get home tonight and start cooking if I am in before the Mrs. In that sense it is a good way of having a chat and I moan about the day (he laughs)* (UK Respondent 4).
> ➢ *Food is immediately connected to our health and longevity and help us have close relationship with family members when we eat together* (AL Respondent 17).
> ➢ *Food is the basis of the family wellbeing. It is the primary thing that matters to me and my family and everything else comes second* (AL Respondent 2).

> - *I want all the food I consume to be bio. I am trying to find food similar to what I grew up with […] and I would like to pass this on to my children as well. I try to buy healthy food and cook in a healthy way like my mother used to, without too much fat* (AL Respondent 3).
> - *Food is related to the core of the family. Without food things don't work well* (AL Respondent 24).

Food produced in a family environment is another way to emphasise individuals' roles within the family that also defines the power relationship among the family members (Moisio et al., 2004). Data show that some respondents would have clear self identities within a family circle: that of the cook:

> - *My husband is the main cook in the family* (UK Respondent 3).
> - *Food is very important because I am the cook in the family. We have a little daughter and it is the only time we can all spend together because we work long hours. I like that she can watch me cook and learn from me* (AL Respondent 30).
> - *Yes, for us a couple with grown up children I would say that the weekend is when we all get together, and I enjoy cooking the most* (UK Respondent 23).

Other respondents would make an extra effort when cooking for someone else apart for themselves and cook something special. Thus the "cook" self is projected in family gatherings when the individual is putting extra thought into preparing a meal that is special and socially accepted by the other members of the subgroup:

> - *It can be it depends on the occasions. If I am cooking for someone else, I would try and cook something nice but if I am cooking for me, I would cook what I normally do* (UK Respondent 9).
> - *Family time is quite important to us in the weekend and like I said food is quite a social thing so at least once a week we try to cook something nice and be all together around the table that normally prompt me to go and buy at farmers' markets* (UK Respondent 1).

Family meal times are also considered important factors of maintaining the sense of belonging and communication among the family members and very often memorable meals are associated with the sense of family togetherness (Kniazeva and Venkatesh, 2007). This also enforces the senses of love and happiness one gets from spending time with family members and creates memorable moments retrieved later in an individual's life when trying to recreate something similar:

> *My mother used to cook and bring us all together around meals. I have done the same for my family now* (UK Respondent 14).

> *I think it's an expression of love preparing food for people* (UK Respondent 11).

> *Well I like eating and it is a good opportunity to sit down and talk and cover time with your family. It is the one time that everyone decides to relax and decides to have a conversation with you* (UK Respondent 7).

> *When I was younger I remember we always sat together, an Irish family with a typical Irish food always containing potatoes (laughs)* (UK Respondent 28).

> *I just think that we just enjoy it. We just enjoy cooking and we have discovered that it is a good family time. We'll get together and make food and enjoy just being together* (UK Respondent 15).

> *I love food. Breakfast is a big thing for us. Even when I was growing up breakfast would have been a good time to eat together and then cook a big dinner* (UK Respondent 27).

> *We like eating socially so we often invite friends around, do not often cook as much as we used, but I enjoy cooking and we also try to eat a healthy diet. Sometimes you can manage during the week if you have time* (UK Respondent 6).

> *I would cook a lot with my parents and it was sort of a family activity than just eating* (UK Respondent 21).

> *I grew up seeing my mother cook and shop and I see myself doing the same for as long as I remember myself* (AL Respondent 4).

> *Yes food is very important in our family because my wife and I also take care of our grandchildren and we want to give them a good example of cooking*

good quality food. It is very nice when we sit all together and eat around the table (AL Respondent 5).

Previous research around food and families showed that the meaning of "proper meals" is very important, described as meals including good foods, fresh and natural ingredients which are cooked instead of being convenience foods which are cold or heated up (Charles and Kerr, 1988). As demonstrated above, data findings showed that this is reflected in the UK and Albanian's personal narratives of family meals and the importance of eating fresh good quality food. This importance is placed upon the effects fresh food has on the individual's health and wellbeing. Food is considered a very important element in both UK and Albanian respondents' lives because of the nutritional benefits that good quality food has on the human body:

> *I am interested in food from a nutritious point of view and I cook probably 4 times a week. When my daughter comes to stay, I am very cautious about what she eats* (UK Respondent 13).
> *We eat it every day for health reason, to have a good body and it is part of your daily routine. It is one of those things that if you miss dinner you need something to eat* (UK Respondent 10).
> *Our bodies regenerate every seven years and it is based entirely on what you put in them so that is why food is very important to us* (UK Respondent 18).
> *We all enjoy our food, it's important because we have two children and we try to keep the balance between healthy nutritious and treats that come from good sources. Sometimes it is pleasant sometimes it is a chore but it is important for health reasons as me and my husband also cook a lot* (UK Respondent 24).
> *I like to get good quality and healthy food and I like to make a balance with the type of food that we have. I also feel that it is the time that me and my husband eat together so it is a bit of a social thing* (UK Respondent 25).

However, Albanian respondents use strong expressions to describe why food is important in their life indicating that *it is what gives you life* (Al Respondent 9):

- *You can eliminate many things with food like illnesses; you cleanse your blood with good food as well. You can function better mentally when you eat from all kind of foods. Especially when is cooked with love and respect. Even food needs love and respect to be tasty* (AL Respondent 9).
- *Yes, it is the first priority in my family* (AL Respondent 12).
- *It is important for the health of the human body* (AL Respondent 14).
- *Yes because the reason of good health lies behind good food consumption* (AL Respondent 21).
- *Yes of course because without food there is no life* (AL Respondent 27).
- *Without food you cannot do anything* (AL Respondent 10).
- *Yes, because without food there is no life* (AL Respondent 28).
- *Of course, food is important because I understand that a healthy diet leads to a healthy body. The healthier the diet the longer we live* (AL Respondent 8).
- *I find it a bit difficult to describe it, but I will try, it is important because we should eat food that is controlled, that has all the vitamins that your organism needs, the appropriate calories in order to fill in a nutritious day with the needed calories. In this way we don't miss on proteins and carbohydrates* (AL Respondent 1).
- *Well, you need to feed yourself to live and you need to feed yourself well to be healthy so it is very important that the food you buy does you good* (AL Respondent 6).
- *Yes, food is important in order to maintain good health* (AL Respondent 7).
- *Yes, it is important that is why I work hard to buy good healthy food* (AL Respondent 11).
- *Yes, because it is the main priority in the family life. With good and plenty of food you have good health too. Health is the most important thing and it is related very closely to the food we consume* (AL Respondent 13).
- *It is because there are two male members in my family who need to eat well to perform well at work and everyday life. They also like to eat a lot, so food is one of the main priorities in the family (she laughs)* (AL Respondent 15).
- *It is because the way you eat is the way you live. You eat healthy, so you live healthy* (AL Respondent 16).

- *Yes, for all my family because it is one of the most important things in life. As food is one of the important things in life then it is very important the place where we buy food from* (AL Respondent 18).

- *it is important for my children's health* (AL Respondent 19).

- *Food is central to our family life because it is important that all family members consume quality and healthy food to lead a healthier life. It is also very important where we buy food from and that is bought in places that are controlled by the government* (AL Respondent 20).

- *Yes, because food is the primary ingredient for a good health. I don't like to buy on the street. I like to shop in enclosed stores in secured controlled places such as the supermarket* (AL Respondent 22).

- *Yes, because without food there is no life* (AL Respondent 23).

- *I try and buy food from people I know because I trust their judgement. These are independent shops that provide dairy and meat products as well as fruits and vegetables* (AL Respondent 24).

- *Yes of course, because if you eat well everything in life goes well* (AL Respondent 25).

- *Everything depends on food* (AL Respondent 26).

- *We would like to live a better life and food contributes massively towards this* (AL Respondent 29).

- *Good quality food is very important to me. I remember that even during communism my mother and later myself, wouldn't buy meat for example that had come in the country from abroad. We wouldn't understand the reason at the time, but we would prefer to eat local meat. I think it was that that meat wasn't as tasty as the Albanian one* (AL Respondent 4).

This section demonstrated that food prepared in a family environment is an important factor of identity creation. We see that special identities are created during these moments such as that of the "cook", ready to make an extra effort to create food in order to take care and please the family members. The following section is looking at how self identity is developed when individuals make decisions around food shopping.

6.1.2 Self identity in action when decision making around food shopping

This section analyses how self identity is projected in action in a food shopping context. Factors influencing shopping decisions and food outlet preferences as well as how niche groups such as family and friends are influencing the respondents' decision making are analsyed in two sub-parts of this section.

6.1.2.1 Factors influencing shopping decision making and the choice of a food outlet

A study conducted by Jackson et al., (2006) in Portsmouth using in-depth interviews, observation and a longitudinal analysis found that consumer choice between supermarket stores involves judgments on taste, quality, value, convenience, price, and accessibility. The findings of this study agree with the above results but mainly focus on three factors as per which outlet to choose: convenience, price and accessibility.

Respondents expressed preferences about the proximity and the location of the supermarkets and farmers' markets, as well as parking facilities and access for disabled people:

> ➤ *The real problem for me is that I am disabled, and I need to be able to walk short distance to reach the farmers' market and that has been an issue in the past*, *they are always placed in town centres and there is not any parking nearby* (UK Respondent 14).
> ➤ *Why would I shop in a supermarket? Convenience really and accessibility. I can take my car and park in the parking lot and get everything I need in one shop* (UK Respondent 15).
> ➤ *I think the location of the supermarket is what interests me. I wouldn't necessary go to the cheapest shop I would probably choose the location* (UK Respondent 28).
> ➤ *It is easiness and convenient. The Sainsbury's that is close to us is easy to get to, we know the layout of the place and the prices are relatively good. It's not just easy to get there but easy to get the products you need. You can park*

your car just outside and is easy whereas at the farmers' markets you would have the bags home or wherever you have parked your car (UK Respondent 25).

The trips to supermarket would be planned in advance with UK respondents quoting the making of the list for their shopping or they would just shop there at the end of the day after work. Giddens (1991) states that modernity of our era affects one's self identity by the choices they make on a daily basis such as what to eat for example. UK respondents with busy lives and families quoted that convenience and time is one of the main factors influencing their shopping decision. Once more farmers' markets were not considered as outlets for core food shopping but places where respondents would wander around or buy something to treat their family and friends for special occasions:

➢ *There is a convenience factor; I'd rather wander in a supermarket when it is raining that rather wander in a farmers' market* (UK Respondent 9).
➢ *Convenience is merely the reason that deters me, so it is mainly supermarkets and shops I use. Proximity is another reason I don't frequent farmers' markets, if there were closer to where I live, I would definitely buy from them and independent shops. But just because it is easier to spend two minutes at Asda to buy what you need* (UK Respondent 7).
➢ *The main thing is that it depends what I need. There are things that I buy from one shop and there are other things that I buy from another shop. It depends on how much time I've got. I go to the shops when I need to buy things whereas I go to the farmers' market not because I need to buy things but because it is a nice thing to wonder around* (UK Respondent 19).
➢ *Convenience normally. If we knew that a farmers' market was nearby on, then we would try and make an effort to go there but the Stirling one is every second Saturday so is knowing exactly when the markets are on* (UK Respondent 8).
➢ *Time is one, if I was in a position of having people coming to eat, it would be food because it is more of an event at the weekends because we have family coming to stay with us. If I have time I always choose to go to the market. If*

> *I don't have time I will go to the supermarket. Price is not always a problem because I often feel that if I want to enjoy something I will probably have to pay more* (UK Respondent 1).

➢ *If I was to prepare a nice meal with mussels and nice bread I would probably go to farmers' market than supermarket. I don't mind putting money onto the food, but I think it is about what I want at the time, where I can get the best quality food. Location and convenience also are important to me* (UK Respondent 5).

➢ *Locally you don't need to get a car, it is 10' down the road to shop at the farmers' markets. Supermarket wise also it is convenience* (UK Respondent 6).

➢ *Usually we just go where is most convenient of what we want at the time. The nearest shop is Waitrose so we go there. If we are in town we quite often go to Sainsbury's because it's in the town centre itself. It depends on what kind of situation we are in. For me personally I like to shop in place that have good reputation not financially but social responsibility* (UK Respondent 15).

➢ *Convenience. Based on what I need and how much time I've got to get it* (UK Respondent 12).

➢ *Probably timing, what day of the week is and what do we need. Farmers' market is for us to get some free time out, probably on a morning or afternoon* (UK Respondent 23).

The characteristics of taste, quality, value, convenience, price, and accessibility are found to be correlated to households' differential levels of cultural, ethical and moral considerations as well as practical utility (Jackson et al., 2006). As shown above convenience and accessibility were considered important factors when making decisions around where to shop. Findings below present price and quality in conjunction with some ethical and moral considerations to also have an impact on the individuals' decision making. Good value for money and offers would also trigger a store trip which are usually notified to the respondents by a promotional email. Respondents would conclude that a utility factor is influencing their food shopping as the trips to a supermarket for example would be initiated but what is needed in the household:

- *Price is top priority for making a decision on which food outlet to shop from* (UK Respondent 3).
- *I do buy from farmers' markets, but I don't buy very often just because of the convenience factor* (UK Respondent 13).
- *As long as I get good value for money*. (Positive aspects of shopping in a supermarket); *Cheaper, convenient at any time of day* (UK Respondent 17).
- *The top priorities I consider before I make a decision on which food outlet to shop from*, *I suppose are the price and quality; I think obviously the supermarket is much bigger and they are there all the time, so it is the convenience of it* (UK Respondent 22).
- *I think it is quite routine. I used to stay in a city and shop from a Tesco's and when I moved to Ballerno there was nothing there and I didn't like that. I think you get quite attached to a supermarket or a store where you know where everything is* (UK Respondent 11).
- *Quite often I would get an email with offers or I would look online for better deals such as detergents, when that happens then I end up doing all my shopping in that store* (UK Respondent 27).
- *It is based on price and if quality comes to it as well, fresh produce, how long it is going to last, the loyalty you get back from the supermarket, so we tend to shop a lot at Morrison's now cos we get vouchers and money back and extra deals. That kind of drives it whereas some other don't do it* (UK Respondent 2).
- *By what we need. So, if we just need a bit of fruit, milk, veg we go to Lidl's, if we need something over and above that then we may think oh we need to go to Tesco's* (UK Respondent 4).
- *It is between convenience and what we need. There are two Tesco's not very far from each other from where I live. We change between them if one doesn't have what we need* (UK Respondent 10).
- *It's not so much a choice for me. I need to eat, and I need to buy some food, so I decide on two bases: 1) if I have the energy then I go to the local store 2) if I am very tired or I am working then I get a delivery* (UK Respondent 14).

- *I base it on what I can get. Tesco's offer a wide range of organic products. Even though the produce from M&S is the best it is not usually organic* (UK Respondent 18).

- *That depends on what I need to buy on the day. For small things I go to a small store nearby, for my weekly planned shopping I visit a big supermarket* (UK Respondent 20).

- *It is usually driven by what we need. It is a mixture of convenience and pricing I would say* (UK Respondent 24).

Albanian data showed a different trend. Albanians have a clear idea about how and where to do their shopping. While price was quoted as an important factor in choosing a food outlet, it was not quoted for supermarkets as such. Respondents quoting financial difficulties or just shopping more economically, would choose to buy their fruit and vegetables from the farmers' markets:

- *Well when it comes to farmers' markets, I sometimes shop with my sister in law and we always seem to influence one another as per to do our fruit and vegetable shopping. As* for *the supermarket we discuss this with my daughter. I am more price conscious than she is* and *my income does influence my decision making, and that is why I mostly do my shopping in a farmers' market* (AL Respondent 28).

- *Usually like most Albanian families we do not overthink this. We go and shop when we need something to fill our cupboards and fridges. We buy our fresh ingredients from the farmers' markets because we know they have a good quality and low prices* (AL Respondent 22).

- *I separate my shopping according to the products. Apart from the fruits and vegetables that we buy at the villagers we buy everything else in a supermarket. You can find anything you like in these stores at a variety of prices* (AL Respondent 26).

- *But most importantly prices and income make the decision for people* (AL Respondent 11).

- *I just look at my money and try to figure out where I can afford to do my shopping so basically my income indicates how much I will spend where. We*

are not rich, so we usually do our shopping in the farmers' market (AL Respondent 30).

Utility and convenience were also quoted as factors influencing food shopping choices. Contrary to the UK data, Albanian findings showed that most of the times trips to the supermarkets or farmers' markets are not planned they are based on the convenience of the outlet and what is needed in the household:

➤ *At the end of the week we see what we need, but I don't plan my shopping trips* (AL Respondent 1).

➤ *I don't plan on going shopping. It is just me and my wife, so we don't need to do major shopping apart from when our children or grandchildren come over. When we need something we just go out and buy it* (AL Respondent 5).

➤ *I buy fresh fruits and vegetables only at farmers' market, I even sometimes buy olive oil from them. Supermarkets are useful for other products that are not available at farmers' markets. In the past I used to think from the previous night what I needed and where to go, but now I just decide on the day. I go out and select what is attractive to my eyes that I also think might be interesting to my husband and my children. If I find fresh spinach, peppers, green beans or onion I buy them and cook them on the same day to keep their freshness* (AL Respondent 2).

➤ *It depends on what my mind dictates me what to buy every day (laughs)* (AL Respondent 10).

➤ *When I see that my fridge is empty, or I run out of things I go out sourcing for the things that I need* (AL Respondent 4).

➤ *Because both my husband and I work, convenience is very important to us. That said though we also look for the best quality we can get for our budget and we try to juggle between farmers' markets and supermarkets* (AL Respondent 6).

➤ *It is decided that I buy fruits and vegetables at the farmers and the other products at the supermarket. I have separated my shopping and I don't deviate from that. I don't plan in advance where to source my food from, but I usually know where to buy it in advance* (AL Respondent 15).

- *Simply from the point of convenience I choose the supermarket because you get also wider spaces to roam than the farmers' markets. It is also the time I don't want to waste and the beautiful display of the products in the stores. There is a variety of products available in a supermarket that is addressed to all kind of budgets and this gives you many options to choose from* (AL Respondent 20).
- *In the morning when I wake up I check what we need and then plan two trips, one to the farmers' market and one the supermarket* (AL Respondent 23).
- *I don't think about it. I just see what is needed and go and buy it. I rarely go to the farmers' markets because I work and usually don't make it on time. Supermarket is open until late hours so is very convenient for me. I buy everything there from fruits and vegetables to dairy products and other things* (AL Respondent 25).

As shown above, Albanians separated their shopping for fresh produce such as fruit and vegetables from the other household goods. Dairy or other products such as detergents or pasta would be purchased in a supermarket. The lack of governmental control towards the farmers' markets was also quoted in this section of the interviews highlighting the Albanians' concerns around the food safety and lack of hygiene. For health reasons, for example they would buy packed, bottled dairy products from supermarkets that have passed quality and standard controls:

- *When I need vegetables or fruits I go to the farmers' market. When I need other household things I go to the supermarket. The main difference for me is the lack of governmental control of the farmers' markets. Supermarkets are better controlled and monitored by the government* (Respondent 14)
- *For fruits and vegetables, it would be the farmers' markets because they are the main providers. For all the other products I prefer the supermarket because of the security they give me over the quality control they have done prior to selling the products in the store* (AL Respondent 21)
- *Supermarkets have expiration dates on their products, and if something turns differently from. It depends what my mind dictates me every day (laughs). What expected you can return it back to the store* (AL Respondent 27).

> *Taste and healthiness are the factors that influence my decision as per where to source my food* (AL Respondent 3).

> *It depends, once a week or in ten days because I only shop from the controlled farmers' markets and I have to organise my trips there. I plan things before, as I said I shop in a supermarket every two weeks when I run out of supplies* (AL Respondent 7).

> *I don't think of it, when my wife asks me to go with her, I go. Quality comes first and then the price* (AL Respondent 13).

> *Hygiene, quality and prices. The environment of the supermarket and the way they package and display their products is also important. If they display a product in a dark corner not the way this product should be displayed, then it makes you suspicious as per the quality or the validity of the product and the store itself* (AL Respondent 18).

> *Your shopping is not guaranteed in a farmers' market. If you are not satisfied with a product you cannot go back and complain or return it as you can do in a supermarket* (AL Respondent 20).

> *Based on my previous experiences. I usually do my shopping where I have had good previous shopping experiences with the vendors and the quality of the products* (AL Respondent 24).

> *A supermarket is more controlled than the open markets. It feels safer to consume food from there* (AL Respondent 25).

> *For me the main factor that influences my shopping is the health and wellbeing of my family. This determines where I buy things. I believe farmers' market sell bio products, so I try and buy all my fruits and vegetables from them. All the other things we need for the house we buy them at the supermarket (AL Respondent 29).*

Overall, UK and Albanian respondents have developed different esoteric mechanisms that influence food decision making. While convenience, good quality and prices were important to both groups of respondents, the choice of food outlet was made on different grounds. To Albanians it is clear that fresh fruits and vegetables are bought in a farmers' market and everything else is bought in a supermarket. To the UK

respondents, farmers' markets are not considered as mainstream food outlets, and the decision to shop there is driven by factors such as buying something nice to treat family and friends or buy something for special occasions. The following section will investigate how family and friends as well as social norms influence decision making and the self identity in action.

6.1.2.2 Self identity in a social context – niche groups influencing decision making

6.1.2.2.1 Family and friends

Family members and friends are part of an individual's daily interactions whose opinions are frequently asked (Nicholson and Seidman, 1995) hence they are considered to be one of the main direct group of influencers on an individual's consumption decision making (Moisio et al., 2004). Going back to infant years where family plays an important role up to one's adulthood where friends and social norms define one's behaviour and consumption patterns. Respondents were asked questions about family and friend influences, shopping and food habits of parents that have been passed on to them as well as pressures imposed by social norms in order to discover any traits reflected on the individuals' self identity as well as their social identity. While studies indicate that same age peers have a positive impact on the food selection process (Birch, 1980), findings showed that parents have somewhat shaped the respondents' shopping and cooking habits one way or another. Like other themes described earlier, it seems that respondents were retrieving memories from their childhood when parents, mainly mothers, would buy food locally and prepare it at home. These memories were recalled when making cooking or food purchasing and applied in the daily food routine. Respondents seem positive in continuing this chain of food shopping influenced by their childhood memories by teaching their children to adopt the same cooking and shopping practices with theirs. The wider family members such as siblings or children were also found to influence food and other grocery shopping such as detergents but not at the same level with parents:

➢ *Yes absolutely. I think we are all influenced about the way we were raised and what we used to eat. My parents taught me what I know about food. After that of course education and information play a role into decision making* (UK Respondent 20).

➢ *Family do friends don't influence me, but it is more of a volume thing. My parents grew their own food and only shop locally and organic, they would rather lose an arm than go to a supermarket* (UK Responded 3).

➢ *Yes, I think we shop along the lines that our parents used to do. There is more choice now though and we cook more different things than they used to. I suppose our diet has changed as well since I was a child, we didn't know pasta or rice when I was growing up laughs. I have friends, but I don't think they influence me certainly not with regards to food […]* (UK Responded 22).

➢ *My parents and I have very similar shopping habits* (UK Respondent 17).

➢ *My mom used to cook and for some reason I took an interest in cooking as well. She was a lot into nutritious food which was not the norm when I was growing up in the 70s. The way I was brought up had a big influence on my food shopping* […] *Yes, I do have a few friends and they do influence me* (UK Respondent 13).

➢ *Possibly not. If family or friends recommend something, I would probably try it, but it is not a big influence* (UK Respondent 5).

➢ *I think I am influenced by knowing what they like. My older son has influenced me to buy detergents that are greener when he was doing his project in sustainability. It made me think on how I shop and try different things. I've got loads of friends, but I don't think they influence me as much as my family. Buying meat from the butcher and fresh food is something that my mum used to do. She shopped every few days not on a weekly basis that we do. But in terms of cooking for people and making an effort that is a family thing* (UK Respondent 11).

➢ *When I was a child, I was fed daily using local food and home prepared food probably purchased and cooked that day and we ate it that night. From that point that habit has carried on to me, my wife does exactly the same thing now because she was brought up in the same way. I have a few friends and*

they can influence me at times particularly if they have been to a shop and talked about something they got there and where they purchased it, I may go and have a look as well (UK Respondent 2).

➢ *Generally, yes, they influence me but for food yes, I would say so. One of my sisters is vegetarian so I always ended up eating the vegetarian version and then end up buying vegetarian food* (UK Respondent 10).

➢ *I do have friends and they influence me a little, more the ones that care about what they eat. But ultimately, I do my own thing* (UK Respondent 18).

➢ *Yes, I would say they have, mom was very much about going to local shops and buying fresh where you can, so this have been passed on to me and my love for bread* (UK Respondent 27).

➢ *I've got many friends, but I don't really know what they shop or what they do. I like what I like. I think I am quite good at making my own decisions when it comes at that* (UK Respondent 8).

➢ *I would say that my friends influence me too. We go out and eat together so I wouldn't say they influence me on my food shopping habits, but they influence me when we go out to eat to try new things* (UK Respondent 27).

➢ *Yes, probably they do. The answer to where I shop, is that I would try anything they would recommend that wouldn't be a supermarket. It would be a local shop they know* (UK Respondent 12).

➢ *I would say your partner certainly but outside your immediate family it doesn't make any difference. We have some barbecues around the year and we discuss what you would buy and that is probably all you discuss around shopping. Christmas would be another example* (UK Respondent 6).

➢ *My shopping is usually dictated by what the family want* (UK Respondent 16).

➢ *Yes, they do. Definitely we share recipes and ideas because when we get together it would some sort of occasion. We might talk about where we shop but they don't influence me as per which outlet to choose though. Friends don't really influence me, I am closer to my family than my friends* (UK Respondent 23).

➢ *There was not much money when I grew up food was very functional so what we bought was what we needed and was affordable. It made me quite nervous*

of new foods. When I started earning my own money the freedom went with that. My mom still buys a lot of the things that we were younger because she got used to buy affordable items whereas I buy food with different selection criteria. My mom would choose something if it was cheap, if it was lot of it to feed lots of people. I would walk past of that because I know it would be of rubbish quality. I have not had good food habits growing up and I want my son to get good food habits, so I want to pass quality to my child (UK Respondent 1).

➢ *I would say that my brothers influence me less as I get older. I have become more my own person. I don't think they influence my buying decisions around food. I do have friends, but I don't know where they shop actually. We don't really talk about food shopping. Our friends tend to like independent small shops rather than chains. I suppose that does influence me in terms of wanting to shop from somewhere that is unique and unusual* (UK Respondent 24).

➢ *(Family influence) No, (laughs). My knowledge on food doesn't come from my family. They are not very foody or very interested in food. Price is their main interest which wouldn't be my priority. Friends, yes probably more so in the past when I was a bit younger. Now I would say that I am probably less so* (UK Respondent 19).

➢ *Yes, they do (family) but only on life matters. My family always shopped in supermarkets never went to farmers' markets. I would say more my parents interestingly than my friends when it comes to life decisions and I take on their wisdom* (UK Respondent 25).

➢ *Yes, I would say so. I wouldn't buy meat in a supermarket because my mom wouldn't do it. I try and do the same dishes that my mom did but obviously not as good as she did (he laughs). As an Irish person I expect everything to come with potatoes when a dish comes out with rice, I'm like where's my potatoes? Probably yes, friends influence me when it comes at eating out. My roommate would like to try different things and I would go along with her as I wouldn't necessarily try new things on my own (UK* Respondent 28).

Studies suggest that there is a correlation between consumption behaviour patterns, the adoption of new products and the individual's identity (Cook et al., 2002; Grewal et al., 2000). Findings from the Albanian respondents showed that self identity is created through family relationships. Specifically, food shopping is important for the wellbeing of that close social group of the individual thus any decision making around where to shop for food is influenced by the family members. While friends may influence on occasion, they are considered to be individuals outside their immediate social groups which is family and *aren't allowed to influence my judgement* (AL Respondent 13):

➢ *We discuss as family where to go but because we have villagers who sell in our area, I choose them. As the mother of the family it is my responsibility to do the shopping trying to get the healthier food on the table as I understand it. I make my own decisions when it comes to the actual shopping. I take ideas initially and then I consider whether these ideas are good to be implemented or not* (AL Respondent 2).

➢ *Yes, I am influenced by my family and this is normal, because family is the basis of everything. The way that you were educated will be transferred to your children as well. I have passed my knowledge to my children as per where to shop, how to cook because they need to choose their food carefully. And I believe that it is important that family influences and I believe that it is a hereditary habit you get from your parents* (AL Respondent 6).

➢ *I like to spend weekends and every day with my family. I don't like going out and staying away from my family like some other people do. This is how I also grew up with my parents. My family influences me only in a way of finding the things they like* (AL Respondent 3)*.

➢ *My family is important to me, my children and grandchildren. My wife and I try to help them as much as possible either financially or by babysitting our grandchildren* (AL Respondent 5)*.

➢ *I have many friends, but I do not get influenced on the food or personal matters. I consult mainly with my husband* (AL Respondent 26)*.

- *Sometimes I consult with my husband, but I don't think that other people influence me. I have many friends, but I don't think that they influence me* (AL Respondent 30).

- *I do have some friends, but I don't allow them to influence my judgement. I have a close relationship with my family and work very hard to provide them anything they need* (AL Respondent 13).

- *I think that I am quite stubborn and am not very easily influenced by others. I usually get on well with other people and especially with my friends and family, but I don't to ask them on how I should lead my life. When it comes to food, I might ask them if they have seen any offers but apart from that I don't like to be told how to do things (laughs)* (AL Respondent 29).

- *I am quite strong minded, so I like to see and analyse things myself. If someone tells me about an offer, then I would go and check, but I couldn't say that other people influence me. I do have many friends and I like to consult with them. I like to hear their opinion when I am doing something wrong, but I am not influenced much on other aspects* (AL Respondent 4).

- *Friends do influence me because we usually shop together. When someone needs to do some shopping just suggest that we all go and choose what is good on the day* (AL Respondent 10).

- *No, I don't get influenced from other people. I choose where I do my shopping on my own, so I think this is a private matter. I shop from example in Conad which is an expensive supermarket and people tell me oh you go and shop there. However, I don't do this because I want to show off, I clearly do this because of the quality of the products* (AL Respondent 8).

- *Usually I am the one who gets influenced (laughs), when my wife makes her mind that is it, I have to do what she says* (AL Respondent 17).

- *I make up my own mind as per where to buy my food. I do have many friends and they sometimes make suggestions that I find interesting and I tend to follow* (AL Respondent 3).

- *I have lots of friends and sometimes they influence me in terms of suggesting something new that I should try. There are times that we talk about food shopping too because some of them are living on their own and they also buy*

fresh fruits and vegetables from the farmers and the other products in a supermarket. My friends also advise me in different situations, but it is up to me to make the final decision (AL Respondent 18).

➤ *No, I don't get influenced, I buy whatever my mind tells me to buy. I am very careful though where I buy my food because here in Albania there are many places that sell expired products or vegetables that have gone bad. I try and build relationships with the people I shop from that are based on trust* (AL Respondent 24).

➤ *No, I don't feel that I get influenced by anyone. I take my friends' advice or hear their opinions but if I don't like what they're suggesting I don't buy anything* (AL Respondent 7).

➤ *Friends not so much but my mother in law has specific requirements as per what to buy and where. Friends usually influence in terms of offers, I consult with them when they buy cheaper products, so I can go and do the same. I think that generally the social circles and friends have an impact as per where people buy their food* (AL Respondent 11).

➤ *I think not, there is a slight influence when there is something new in the market that someone else suggests that I should try it. Their strong feelings about the product is encouraging me to try it once but it is up to me to go back if I like it or not* (AL Respondent 15).

➤ *Well my family and my friends usually suggest that I buy healthy and bio food. Supermarket is more convenient and practical for young people. This is due to self confidence you get mainly from the peer's opinion. It is easier for someone my age to shop in a supermarket* (AL Respondent 16).

➤ *Yes, I have many friends. They influence more in terms of shopping in a supermarket. They suggest where the good products are in good prices* (AL Respondent 19).

➤ *No, I do not rely on other people's opinions. I buy what I like where I like it. I am open to get information and suggestions from my friends, but I do not necessarily follow* them (AL Respondent 22).

> *I cook in the house, so everyone comes around me with requests so they do influence me about where and what to buy food (she laughs)* (AL Respondents 14).

6.1.2.2.2 Social norms

Ellickson (2001, p.3) defines a social norm as "a rule governing an individual's behavior that third parties other than state agents diffusely enforce by means of social sanction". Both Albanian and UK respondents were asked questions about social norms and the possibility of them putting pressure on their daily life which impacts their identities in the various social groups they may belong to. Schouten (1991) finds that people perform consumption activities to develop and maintain a stable and harmonious self-concept. This is demonstrated mainly in the Albanian answers showing a harmony of the respondents' self concept and acceptance of being a family person. Norms also can be powerful agents of control as choices of behaviour (Perkins, 2003) and when people have strong beliefs, they often proselytise them, and socially imposed behaviours may become internalised (Hopper and Nielsen 1991). This has been demonstrated by a survey showing that one in ten respondents expressed embarrassment if they were to be seen in an inferior supermarket by their peers and would prefer to spend more in order to be seen in the 'right' supermarket store (Mintel, 2007). Responses received from both Albanian and UK respondents showed this internalisation of constraints imposed by their choice of a supermarket or other food outlet. The relationship between consumption and identity and the need for self identity has resulted from the increasing growth of individualism in society, (Bauman, 1988) a distinctive feature of the western person (Morris, 1972). These findings seem to be relevant today as seen in the UK responses. As demonstrated earlier, Albanians feel a strong identity as a family person and the projection of self is strongly associated within the family group which plays a central role in their decision making. However, UK respondents showed a more individualistic approach to how social norms may or may not impact them reflecting a strong presence of self identity of an individual not attached to social groups:

- *I don' think so. I would like to make an informed decision, so I don't think I feel much the social pressure. Having said that though I don't like taking an Aldi bag into Marks and Spencer's but that is probably because I don't want people shopping there looking at me carrying an Aldi bag (laughs). I don't know maybe.. now that you said that maybe I do, oh (laughs)* (UK Respondent 15).

- *I think I do feel pressure because supermarket attracts people of upper classes and of higher educational level as well as financial and social. So, I would like to be seen as similar individual* (AL Respondent 20).

- *I suppose there are social norms of how you see yourself in different classifications; I would be more embarrassed if I'd met a colleague at Asda than at Sainsbury's. Social pressure, I don't know. I am thinking why I don't shop at Asda and I am telling myself it's because of the environment or maybe it is because of the social pressure because Sainsbury's is a step higher than Asda and Waitrose higher than Sainsbury's. I guess there are social pressures that we don't really examine on an individual level about where we shop. But I wouldn't say that I am feel it maybe I would respond to it subconsciously* (UK Respondent 24).

- *Pressure exists widely especially when people don't want to be seen that they only buy things where the lower prices are, but I don't think I feel this pressure* (AL Respondent 17).

- *I sometimes feel pressure from social norms because I feel that I should possibly be doing more things about farmers' markets to support them and my local community. A lot of things I do though are related to convenience, so I always end up shopping at Sainsbury's* (UK Respondent 25).

- *It is important where I source my food and there are many occasions that I am influenced by peers. Sometimes we discuss among friends where good quality food is sold or if any of the supermarkets have better prices and upon discussion, they do suggest places where to shop from if they have a good experience from a place. I believe you choose your friends according to your level. Classification of people is important to me. It is not that I don't like lower*

class people, but when it comes to choose my friends and social circles, I like to associate myself with higher level people (AL Respondent 1).

➢ *In terms of influence I don't think that I get influenced by others very easily, but I am open to suggestions and to try new things* (AL Respondent 5).

➢ *I don't accept pressure from others. Someone needs to be of better background than me or more challenging for me to accept their opinion* (AL Respondent 26).

➢ *I live my life with what I have and what I can get not what other people tell me* (AL Respondent 30).

➢ *Yes, I do have many friends. They influence me in matters of life but not in terms of shopping. Sometimes I do feel pressure from social norms because there are some people who are showing off and telling you to buy food from the outlets where they shop from. I don't usually like this because I know what is best for me and my family and basically for what we can afford to buy* (AL Respondent 23).

➢ *I really don't care what other people think where I do my shopping. As a pensioner I have plenty of time to look around and shop wherever I wish. I think that in Albania is the norm to shop in farmers' markets and I don't see how you can add value to yourself by shopping in a supermarket. A social phenomenon that you see however in Albania is that if someone is unemployed and has a university degree won't go beneath their perceived status to do some cleaning work for others. They prefer to famine than to see themselves below other people. I know in Greece for example it is perceived quite a low status thing to shop in a farmers' market but here in Albania I don't think that this perception exists* (AL Respondent 4).

➢ *I exchange ideas with others but do not get pressurised on what to do or how to act. I listen to new ideas, consider them carefully and if these ideas are sound, I follow them and if not, I don't* (AL Respondent 18).

➢ *I consult a lot with my closest friends. I consult with friends on products, but I don't feel pressure on trying things just because other people have done it* (AL Respondent 16).

- *I definitely feel pressure from social norms. There is a lot of different sources telling you how to act and where to buy. I am thankful to take a note of them but the pressure around people to be a certain way is everywhere. As a marketer you sense it in every advertising that other people probably can't see it. If you drink this or buy this or have this you will be this* (UK Respondent 1).

- *I learnt from a very young age not really care of what people think about me. Not in a rude way but not everybody has to like everybody* (UK Respondent 10).

- *I don't feel pressure from social norms about where I should shop because I don't care but I do feel that at times I am not allowed to dress how I would like to dress for some things (he laughs)* (UK Respondent 4).

- *I don't feel pressure. But I do feel aware that I am doing something that others are not doing but I don't feel pressure at all. As a vegan you do feel an anarchist, so you are on a whole different category of your own* (UK Respondent 18).

- *I think as I grow older, I care less about what people think. If I want to buy something from a certain place, I'll do it* (UK Respondent 8).

- *I don't think there is a peer effect with my friends or peer pressure. I don't feel any social pressure* (UK Respondent 12).

- *I don't feel any pressure at all. I am well off financially, so I do what I want really* (UK Respondent 14).

- *TV I could say has influenced me with all these cooking shows, but I have never felt any social pressure at all. I always try to do what I like* (UK Respondent 20).

- *I am probably aware of the social pressures and they might influence my decision making to a certain degree but not hugely* (UK Respondent 21).

- *There is an element of that; I wouldn't say pressure but social norms you live within sort of indicate on how you behave. If you move in circles that it is normal to go to farmers' markets, spend on food more and buy organic whereas if you live in areas where it is more important to feed everybody around you then that probably influences your behaviour* (UK Respondent 19).

➢ *Don't really feel any pressure from social norms when I am actually buying food from a farmers' market or a supermarket but sometimes, I do when I am out at a restaurant, I wouldn't know which fork to use or things like that...* (UK Respondent 28).

Personal norms on the other hand, are rules overseen by self-sanctioning or reward (feelings of guilt or pleasure) and are followed by an individual irrespectively of what peers of the social group might think (Kinzig et al., 2013). Albanian respondents seemed to resonate more strongly with these social norms than the UK respondents, although some UK respondents also were reflecting the same principles, in terms of what influence they allow others to have on them. The feelings derived from the responses were not those of joy or guilt but of assertiveness and the sense of permission respondents would give to members outside of their immediate social group which is family. It is interesting to note the use of words from both Albanian and UK respondents when expressing that they are strong minded and do not allow others to influence them:

➢ *Not at all, I don't get influenced by others. I don't accept being pressurised by others and I do not like to pressurise other people. I just mind my own business really. I have many friends, but they also don't influence me. Everything is discussed and decided within the family members* (AL Respondent 25).

➢ *I do not feel pressure from social norms anymore. I have passed that. I realised it was stupid, I stopped value other's opinion (*UK Respondent 3).

➢ *No, I am quite strong minded. Family comes first though, and I always talk to them about everything* (AL Respondent 10).

➢ (Feel pressure from social norms) *No I don't think so, I have a strong mind of my own* (UK Respondent 22).

➢ *No, I am confident enough to be myself* (UK Respondent 17).

➢ I do have many friends, but I don't allow them to influence me. I have my own mind*. I don't feel any pressure. I just look at what is good for me and my family* (AL Respondent 28).

- *No, I always act for my wellbeing, so I don't tend to get pressurised by external factors other than myself and my family* (AL Respondent 7).

- *I don't feel pressure from social norms. I don't care about shopping* or what others think of my shopping (UK Responded 9).

- *I don't feel pressure from social norms because I am very strong minded. However, I feel pressure in terms of having a family without any conflicts with third parties* (AL Respondent 12).

- *I think I feel more pressure from me to perform better in my life and from my family to make them proud. That said though, I don't feel pressure from social norms on how to behave* or what to buy (AL Respondent 27).

Overall it can be seen that respondents develop internal handling mechanisms in order to allow or not allow niche groups to influence their decision making and the "shopper" self when choosing a food outlet or what to buy. This section showed that parents are the ones to have somewhat shaped the Albanian and UK respondents' shopping and cooking habits one way or another. For Albanian respondents this remained the main influential source of the self until the later years of the individual's life. Whereas for UK respondents while family is as equally important with the Albanians, friendship gains a more prominent influential role at a later stage of their lives. Social norms seem to not be influencing the self and decision making around food shopping. The section below will investigate whether individuals recognise personal attributes and how these attributes influence the multiple selves in action.

6.1.3 Self-identity – recognising personal attributes and multiple selves in action

Gould (2010) suggests that there are multiple coexisting narratives and constructions of the self. Interacting with individuals during an interview, the data collected are a projection of the social self image, more specifically they are a projection of the "me" rather than the "I" (Mittal, 2006). Thus, in order to uncover the actual self image respondents have of themselves, questions were asked to encourage them to reflect upon self attributes and the multiple nature of identity such as how they could

describe themselves and their personality, positive or negative aspects of their personality that they are aware of and how other people could describe them.

Literature suggests that individuals understand their own identity through narratives of personal stories (Giddens, 1991). Mittal (2006) argues that in order to examine the internal understanding of self, two aspects of selves should be investigated further: subjective personality traits such as considering oneself extrovert or caring, and an individual's values and character, aspirations and desirable life goals. Therefore, collecting narrative accounts is a suitable technique that allows a researcher to access issues of self.

The analysis of the data begins with a discussion around the respondents' concepts of self which they reflect on while trying to define who they are through their narratives and personal stories. Respondents were asked questions aiming to reveal insights into their personalities and interactions with family members and third parties. It is worth mentioning that observing the body language and voice nuances of the UK respondents, revealed how unexpected it was for them to be asked such personal questions and make them think deeper about who they are and what they like. UK respondents found it very difficult to identify characteristics of their personality in the first instance or even to describe some of their attributes. They had to pause and think about the questions in order to reflect on their core self before providing an answer. UK respondents expressed a difficulty in talking about themselves and highlighted that other people who know them would be more appropriate to talk about them. At the beginning, UK respondents would focus on describing their external appearances and once they felt a little more at ease then they would talk more about themselves:

> *Unfortunately, it is all about my hair (she laughs) it is curly and big* (UK Respondent 3).

> *Oh, that's a horrible question to ask (she laughs). British people don't like to talk about themselves (she laughs) maybe I am quite friendly, and bubbly and I like to meet new people, I am quite sociable* (UK Respondent 25).

- *That is not a question that an individual should be able to answer. I think it is egotistical for someone to answer this because it is other people that should tell how you are. I am quite strong willed* (UK Respondent 9).
- *Oh wow, that's a lot of big question! I suppose I like quality, I am very much health conscious* (UK Respondent 13).
- *I am struggling here because I haven't thought much about this* (UK Respondent 12).
- *I think that someone else would be able to answer this question better than me (she laughs). I don't know I am friendly and humble* (UK Respondent 27).
- *I don't know how to answer this question! I guess I am a bit of conflicting person because I like quietness, but I like a bit of loud as well. I think normally people are one or the other not both. I don't know what makes me distinctive. I can be quite a risk taker, I've never got any money.* (UK Respondent 1).
- *Friendly, outgoing, it is hard to think about yourself. I struggle* (UK Respondent 5).
- *I have never been asked that before, wow how would I describe myself? Very family orientated conscious about what I do, and I enjoy life* (UK Respondent 2).
- *I don't know, what kind of things do you want to know? I don't know! I am just a middle class, middle aged woman. I am not sure I have anything that makes me more distinctive from other people (she laughs)* (UK Respondent 19).
- *I believe that who we are indicates where we buy our food from* (UK Respondent 11).
- *My wonderful way with words? (he laughs) the fact that I can be incredibly irritating!* (UK Respondent 4).
- *If you want yes (laughs). I am aware socially not to get something purely on the price, I am also environmentally aware. I am 51 years of age, and an engineer* (UK Respondent 6).
- *27 years old, pretty big guy I like to eat, I like reading and play ex box. I am a gentle giant (laughs), I don't know, I am not 100% sure. Laid back, nothing really fazes me* (UK Respondent 7).

➢ *I am very helpful, I try to be nice, very chatty (laughs)* (UK Respondent 10).

➢ *I think what makes me distinctive is that I reached a high point in my career coming from a very working class family and the welfare state took care of me* (UK Respondent 14).

➢ *My biggest passion is theatre. I like to travel, I like to eat, I love vegan, I would say that would be it. I did a MSc in Diplomacy and a BSc in international relations* (UK Respondent 18).

➢ *I am 39 years old, I am a busy man. I have a lot of hobbies, but I don't have time to actually do them. I like cooking and I am a family man with a little daughter. I am a social person and I have good relationships with the people I know. I don't know what to say to this one. I am quite talkative and direct I suppose* (UK Respondent 20).

➢ *I am a student at the moment, I don't know how to answer this question. This is very hard (laughs). I am easy going, fairly confident* (UK Respondent 21)

➢ *Yes, I am quite happy to say no now. In the past it was more difficult to say no. I am more about pleasing myself now than pleasing others* (UK Respondent 23).

➢ *Gosh that's an interesting question, I hate social media, I dislike society's obsession with consumption which is ironic because we have been talking about this (laughs). I loathe all the celebrity culture, I like doing simple things like walking and reading* (UK Respondent 24).

It is also worth noting the differentiation of responses given by the UK female and male respondents. Female respondents would start describing themselves according to their family or education status:

➢ *Old and tired (she laughs). Married for 26 years, have 3 children and my main worry is them and work is secondary* (UK Respondent 3).

➢ *Mum and wife on a tight budget* (UK Respondent 17).

➢ *I don't know (she laughs). I am an accountant, I am married with three children in my 50's, I don't know (laughs again)* (UK Respondent 22).

➢ *I am 26, I live with my partner and my 4 cats. I don't, know! I am quite tall for a girl with red hair. That is quite distinctive. I am quite friendly I tend to be*

quite quiet until I know people. And according to my partner I am not quite good at hiding when I don't like someone so my face gives me away apparently (she laughs) (UK Respondent 8).

➢ *I am a sociable home bird. I like making nice things for the family, such as baking or sewing* (Respondent 11)

➢ *I am a Masters student at the University of Sheffield. I am studying marketing management I have become interested in corporate social responsibility. I finish my taught programme and I am doing my dissertation in my home town. I live with my mom and my dad* (Respondent 15)

➢ *I am a single female and a vegetarian, I love food* (UK Respondent 27).

➢ *I am highly educated. I live in a beautiful village. One of my daughters has become a vegan and the other daughter is a pescatarian* (UK Respondent 14).

➢ *Not my favourite topic (she laughs). I am very family orientated person, I like to feel good and healthy, I like the fresh air. I like being at home* (UK Respondent 23).

➢ *I am a mother of two children and a wife, I work part time and I am 48 years old* (UK Respondent 24).

➢ *I'm a 30-year-old professional, married with a house in the suburbs, used to a comfortable lifestyle* (UK Respondent 25).

Whereas some male respondents would focus on behavioural aspects of their personality:

➢ *I am analytical, sarcastic and I swear a lot* (UK Respondent 9).

➢ *I am not sure I am very distinctive from other people. I think in general I am more conscious about the environment and the impact of things on the environment* (UK Respondent 13).

➢ *I enjoy the finer things in life, quality wine & food etc, cool, sophisticated & refined (he laughs)* (UK Respondent 16).

➢ *I don't know how to answer that, I suppose I am Irish, I think I am probably very quiet. I would wait to know somebody before I come out of my shell. Although once you get to know me you will notice that I never shut up (he laughs)* (UK Respondent 28).

In contrast to the above findings, Albanians appeared at ease when describing to talk about themselves, their values and their families. It is interesting to see that the values of honesty, justice and respect are very important attributes that define one's personality. The need to emphasise these attributes might be based on the corruption levels in Albania, as also demonstrated in section 5.1.2.1 above, that is apparent in many public and private organisations, the fact that non deserving individuals are favoured to get better jobs etc. or even the fact that there is a big gap between the high and the low income earners:

> *I am a very open and honest person and I like to have fun. I have been through a lot in my life and I always look at the bright side of the things. This keeps me going and overcoming any difficulties that might come my way again* (AL Respondent 29).
> *I am a well-educated person, honest that I treat other people with love and respect* (AL Respondent 9).
> *I am an open book, I don't lie, and I am a just person. I am a fiery person* (laughs) (AL Respondent 12).
> *I am a straightforward and honest person who hates things happening behind my back. I do not like injustice, it stresses me out. I think I am a weak person who tolerates a lot which I shouldn't do* (AL Respondent 10).
> *I am an educated middle aged woman who works as a nurse. I think that I am a very honest and approachable person* (AL Respondent 6).
> *I am a calm and smiley person. Communicative, what else can I say? I think that I am a very honest person. I have qualities that I believe not many people have, such as punctuality, sincerity, I don't like to manipulate others or harm them. I thank God for giving me these qualities. These qualities make differ from other people* (AL Respondent 7).
> *I am a retiree and honest person* (AL Respondent 28).

Findings of this thesis show that Albanians place family at the centre of everything. It was also found that Albanian respondents understand self identity within the family's group and what they are or do is fitted within the family's entity:

> *I am a family man, loyal to my family who works hard. I am a quiet man who doesn't like arguments* (AL Respondent 13).

> *I try to be a good mother and a good wife. My family is sacred to me and I don't want other people to talk bad about them. I would do anything and everything for my family and go the extra mile if I need to. Sometimes though, I think that I overdo it for my children because I remember when I was a child that I didn't have this life and I had to take care of myself. I am a very energetic and stubborn person. I have lots of courage and I am quite a determined person as well to make my own decisions. I will do whatever comes to my mind and I am almost right! I am an organised person and organise work and activities to get the best outcomes for me and my family. I have a good heart and I always like to help others* (AL Respondent 4).

> *I am a busy person that runs all day. It is the nature of my work as well that I have to work all day. I try to put my family first and I would sacrifice everything for them* (AL Respondent 3).

> *I am a strong minded person but a calm and gentle personality. May family is everything to me and I would do anything if I had to, to protect them* (AL Respondent 30).

> *I have always strived to offer the best to my family. I like going out a lot* (AL Respondent 28).

> *I am close to my family. I am also very strong-minded which sometimes makes me come across like I am not open for discussion (she laughs)* (AL Respondent 6).

> *I am a family guy and very consistent and punctual as a person. I am quite an open person* (AL Respondent 25).

They were also focusing on valiant characteristics of their characters such as being good hearted, helping others and being friendly with people from different backgrounds:

> *I would describe myself with the best words (she laughs) is there anyone that can say something negative about themselves? I am a communicative and big hearted woman. I try to help people as much as I can. Sometimes though I*

sacrifice myself to do the best I can for my family so there is nothing that they are missing (AL Respondent 1).

➢ *I think that I am a communicative person and good with other people. I don't treat people in a way that makes me popular and likeable to others but because this is the way I am. This is how I was raised. This is appreciated by other people and especially my friends who are now financially helping me that I am unemployed. They say that we are doing this because you have done the same for us. I think that we need to be more peaceful with each other even when we suffer from unemployment or anything else. I think that generally Albanians are aggressive people, unhappy probably, this must be due to the lack of education, might be a culture thing as well there are many factors that contribute to this behaviour* (AL Respondent 8).

➢ *I am a social person, I like people of all backgrounds. I talk to everyone and I feel that I am accepted by everyone. I believe in communication. I don't like to insult people or make them feel inferior to me. I consider myself a person of a middle level status, but I don't mind or find it difficult talking to people of a lower level than me* (AL Respondent 2).

➢ *I work a lot and earn very little money. I tolerate people from any social level and forgive easily* (AL Respondent 11).

➢ *I am a very happy person, concerned about the others and approach people very easily. I am very good and friendly with older people and get on really well with them. I like to help people in need as much as I can and can afford* (AL Respondent 19).

There were also other respondents who were focusing on their main character aspects. Like the UK respondents, Albanian respondents were presenting narratives related to their studies, their passions and personal traits that they believed made them distinctive individuals.

➢ *I am a 24-year-old graduate of environmental engineering. I am a gentle person* (AL Respondent 14).

➢ *I am a 60-year-old person, a quiet family guy without big expectations from my live. I am a communicative and approachable person* (AL Respondent 21).

- *I am quiet person who likes to listen to other people. I don't like troubles and I avoid taking place into heated discussions* (AL Respondent 5).

- *I have two passions my work and reading a lot which I think makes me a special individual. I am not very social, and I am mostly preoccupied with my own problems* (AL Respondent 17).

- *I am punctual, and I love working, I am an educated person and my high priority as a consumer is to buy quality food* (AL Respondent 15).

- *I am a spur of the moment person and do not plan in advance. It takes a lot of time for me to make up my mind, I think twice before I decide what to do* (AL Respondent 16).

- *I am a quiet person, a cold thinking and determined person. I am also very ambitious* (AL Respondent 18).

- *I am a careful person who pays attention to details and a quiet person too* (AL Respondent 20).

- *I think I am a neurotic person* (laughs) *I am a closed character, so it is a little difficult for other people to approach me* (AL Respondent 22).

- *I am a communicative and open person, I don't like conflicts, but I am a very energetic person. I am a good listener* (AL Respondent 23).

- *I am a lucky person that I am working around music which is my life's passion. I think I am a normal person and I think that I positively impose my artistic aspects on others which should make me more likeable and friendlier* (he laughs) (AL Respondent 24).

- *I am a very straightforward and a very smiley person. I am ambitious and am not afraid of work. I get irritated easily. I like to challenge people* (AL Respondent 26).

The literature indicates that the projection of specific identities such as that of a professional discourse in a business environment, requires the need for micro-identities (Thomas and Davies, 2005) adaptable to each professional setting in question. A study also claims that there is a need for a work specific identity (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) abiding to the organisation's norms and culture with the individual expected to project equivalent identity in order to meet the

company's expectations. Ahuvia (2005) argues that identity personae and the core self can be used interchangeably to meet the business person's requirements and the deep personal traits of a "bon viver" in more private moments. This means that consumers can project each identity as they see fit in each situation, they find themselves in (Reed II and Bolton, 2005). In accordance with this identity approach, the respondents of this study were asked to describe the various personae they adopt when in various situations and were generally asked whether they change their personae at all or keep the same attitude or persona all around. It should be also mentioned that the number of respondents stating they keep the same persona in various situations was almost equal to the number of respondents stating that they adapt according to the situation for both Albanian and UK participants. The quotes below provide a representation of the Albanian and UK respondents stating that they keep the same persona in various situations:

Keep the same persona across various situations:

> *Yes I keep the same character and calm attitude. I don't like to be aggressive and confront people when there is a problem* (AL Respondent 5).
> *Yes I keep the same character since I remember myself* (AL Respondent 6).
> *Yes, I don't think I can modernise myself with the new customs, I am old school* (AL Respondent 11).
> *I keep the same persona. I don't change at all* (AL Respondent 12).
> *Yes, I don't change (*AL Respondent 14).
> *I keep the same persona everywhere* (AL Respondent 15).
> *I try to keep the same way of thinking on different occasions* (AL Respondent 16).
> *I am very determined as I said so I usually don't change but keep the same persona* (AL Respondent 18).
> *I keep the same persona most of the times* (AL Respondent 23).
> *I keep the same persona and I challenge people a lot* (AL Respondent 26).

- ➢ *I think so, most people who meet me would probably agree that I am the same character, I obviously moderate loudness at work but I would say I am probably the same* (UK Respondent 1).
- ➢ *I do* (UK Respondent 2).
- ➢ *I try to, I cannot adapt very easily..* laughs (UK Respondent 4).
- ➢ *Pretty much yes, I don't change much my home life and my work life* (UK Respondent 8).
- ➢ *It is pretty much the same* (UK Respondent 9)*.*
- ➢ *Yes, I keep the same persona most of the times. I slightly might change depending on the situation, but this is very rarely* (UK Respondent 11).
- ➢ *I think so yes. I think generally speaking I am the same in most situations* (UK Respondent 15).
- ➢ *yes I do* (UK Respondent 16).
- ➢ *I think I am just the same person in every situation really* (UK Respondent 22).
- ➢ *I would say I pretty much keep the same persona. I can be more reserved than I need to be* (UK Respondent 27).
- ➢ *Yes. If I meet my boss I am the same if I meet my friends I don't change* (UK Respondent 28).

The quotes below provide a representation of the Albanian and UK respondents stating that they adapt according to the situation:

Adapt accordingly:

- ➢ *I adapt myself according to the event, circumstances and what is happening in front of me* (AL Respondent 13).
- ➢ *It depends on the occasion. I try to have etiquette with others depending on the problems. I try to adapt* (AL Respondent 17).
- ➢ *I think that I grow every day and I learn something every day that contributes towards my personality. Science is evolving and we need to follow as well* (AL Respondent 8).

> *It depends on the situation; I adapt according to the event* (AL Respondent 20).

> *Try to adapt according to the situations* (AL Respondent 21).

> *I adapt according to the situation* (AL Respondent 22).

> *I adapt according to the situations, growing older means that you take a secondary role in your family, so you take a step back* (AL Respondent 24).

> *I adapt to each situation separately* (AL Respondent 25).

> *I change all the time; I adapt according to the situations* (AL Respondent 27)*.*

> *I adapt myself; I tolerate sometimes what other people do and say* (AL Respondent 28).

> *I try to adapt myself according to the situation I find myself in* (AL Respondent 29).

> *As a calm person I try and weigh the situation and act accordingly* (AL Respondent 30)*.*

> *No different, I adapt to the environment* (UK Respondent 3).

> *I change frequently and ever adapting. I wear different hats for work and family life* (UK Respondent 5).

> *I think I adapt. I think that when you are in a professional environment I think the way you conduct yourself is different from a social occasion. And often it depends on how much pressure or how much stretch you get, you can be a quite different person under pressure and quite different when you are relaxed* laughs.. (UK Respondent 6).

> *I try to adapt as much as I can. I am a bit guarded if there are new people or new situations. I try to go with the flow pretty much* (UK Respondent 7).

> *It is natural to change to the environment a little bit. I am supposed to be quieter at work. I am chatty in social groups* (UK Respondent 10).

> *I think I adapt* (UK Respondent 12).

> *It depends on the occasion. In generally yes, but it also depends on the situation you're in* (UK Respondent 13).

> *I do now, only recently I have become much more tolerant. I was an angry young woman for many years at capitalism, at injustice. I still am angry, but*

> *I am more mature now and I deal with these issues better* (UK Respondent 14).

> *No, I am a very different person at work than I am at home* (UK Respondent 17).

> *I change according to who I am talking to* (UK Respondent 18).

> *No, you are a different person at work to the one at home and you know I am a different person with my parents than I am with my children* (UK Respondent 19).

> *I adapt I can say it depends on the situation I guess.. I can say that I try to keep my principles standard and for things that I could be adapted I adapt* (UK Respondent 20).

> *I think I probably adapt according to situations* (UK Respondent 21).

> *I think I can adapt. I would say there's not much call for that where my life is now. Working in a professional office I knew how to adapt to coexist with them and have a different behaviour with family and friends* (UK Respondent 23).

> *I change according to the situation. At work I have to take a more confident and positive persona. You are closer to yourself with certain people that know you and different with others* (UK Respondent 24).

> *I think generally I do, but naturally you change at work or when I manage other people. Outside work I am more conscious about the person in front of me* (UK Respondent 25).

Taking into considerations how confident Albanian respondents come across when they make decisions around food and talking about themselves, it is interesting to see that the majority of the respondents would "tolerate", "adapt" "according to the situation". This is consistent with theory suggesting that depending on the situation individuals develop micro-identities (Thomas and Davies, 2005). What is also worth noting is the fact that Albanians did not mention any work environment in their attempt to describe their adapting patterns to fit in various situations. This is more prominent in the UK responses where individuals would quote that they would "be different at work than at home" or "be the same in front of the boss". It is also worth mentioning that there was not observed any difference in opinion between male and

female respondents. Thus, a generalisation cannot be made based on the gender of the individual that influences behavioural adaptations according to various situations. This section provided an overview of both Albanian and UK respondents' personal accounts on personality characteristics, personal preferences and behaviours in various social and family situations. Consequently, identifying who they are helps understand how they create the various identities in action when making decisions around food shopping and choosing a food outlet. The next section of this chapter will provide an analysis of how food shopping and cultural backgrounds are perceived as part of self identity by Albanian and UK consumers.

6.2 Findings: How is food shopping and the cultural background of the individual perceived as part of self-identity by Albanian and UK consumers?

Two themes emerged from the data analysis that seeks to answer the above research question: a) Every day and necessary vs novelty and special purchases - the cultural and structural differences of farmers' markets in Albania and the UK and, b) Identifying self and others as a farmers' market and a supermarket consumer – who really shops there?.

6.2.1 Every day and necessary vs novelty and special purchases - the cultural and structural differences of farmers' markets in Albania and the UK

Shopping at farmers' markets is seen as a novelty shopping trip by the UK respondents. Consumers visit farmers' markets to make special purchases for special occasions such as venison for example for the Christmas dinner. UK respondents' data indicated that there are specific purposes attached to each outlet depending on the shopping needs. They perceive farmers' markets as places where they can get out of the norm and buy things that they do not usually buy in a supermarket such as special food to be served on family celebrations. For Albanians farmers' markets are not considered special outlets as also presented.

Supermarkets were reported to be places where UK consumers made their everyday purchases including dairy products, cupboard food etc. Literature reports that

farmers' markets sell vegetables, bread, preserves, cheese products, honey, fruits, processed meat and flowers (Svenfelt and Carlsson-Kanyama, 2010). UK data in this thesis also revealed that farmers' markets are perceived as places that provide novelty goods such as crafts:

> *I went at Christmas time and bought turkey, sausages and cake. I know they kill the animals themselves and humanely I don't know why that matters more at Christmas than any other time but there you go* (she laughs) (UK Respondent 3).

> *When I am in a supermarket you buy your regular items, I very rarely buy anything naughty let's say, but if I am in a farmers' market I am more inclined to buy local sausages or some other types of products that I think are naughty such as salami or sausages that come directly from the producer then I am more interested to buy* (UK Respondent 13).

> *I feel farmers markets have more specialist produce and stuff you wouldn't necessarily find in a supermarket* (UK Respondent 17).

> *It was like a trip to buy novelty goods, buy specific things like venison* (UK Respondent 22).

> *We like to try different meats, so we use farmers' markets to source different meats such as ostrich burgers, like that (laughs) and it always feels like things are of better quality* (UK Respondent 1).

> *Because it is pricier, it is the affluent clientele that buys there in this country. It is different in other countries, which is normal for someone to buy there whereas here is quite a novelty.* (UK Respondent 11).

> *I would like to say that I would like to make farmers' markets the most frequented option in reality I might not. With farmers' market I quite like the bit that they are special, and they are different. I spend a lot of time in farmers' markets and I enjoy it whereas when I go grocery shopping, I just go quickly in and out* (UK Respondent 15).

> *I like to cook venison and I like to know where that venison has come from. Supermarkets don't provide this, but farmers' markets do, and I know where venison has come from. You are not always convinced from the labelling*

stating where the food comes from and where's been grown or produced. Is that whole ethos that I want to know what I am eating, where's my food come from, who's produced it etc. it comes down again to health and sustainability (UK Respondent 2).

➢ *In the UK it would have been on Christmas. This is really sad (laughs) we bought a Christmas dinner which was venison. We went to a specific farmers' market ahead of Christmas and put it and deep freeze, so we could use it for Christmas* (UK Respondent 4).

➢ *I like to shop from the butchers' in the farmers' market because the things I find there you wouldn't usually get in a supermarket. They have wild boar and ostrich meat for example* (UK Respondent 6).

➢ *It is more of a luxury thing to do. But it depends whether you think that fresh food is better for you* (UK Respondent 12).

➢ *Shopping in farmers' markets is usually more expensive, but I guess because it is only on a couple of months on and that is why we would buy something whereas if it was more frequent then we wouldn't be able to shop as much. I understand why it is more expensive it is just that we wouldn't be able to eat like that. It is a special occasion to spend that kind of money on food I guess* (UK Respondent 19).

➢ *There were various stalls with flowers, breads, meat and live animals, there were crafts as well. I do like your local products and their quality and also the cakes and the local meats, they are always good. I also like the fact that you can get something slightly different that you cannot get in the supermarket* (UK Respondent 25).

➢ *So, the Loch Lomond shores have a farmers' market and they also have craft stalls (UK Respondent 8).*

As analysed in chapter 5, respondents associate supermarkets and farmers' markets, with different personal feelings and experiences for a variety of reasons such as enjoyment, having a day out with family and friends, buying special things or just doing their daily or weekly shopping that resonate differently with Albanian and UK respondents. Despite the fact that both British and Albanian respondents indicated

either outlet as the preferred one as demonstrated in section 5.1.2, for a variety of reasons such as friendly environment, interaction with other people, support of local community (UK respondents for farmers markets), controlled food, beautifully displayed products on the shelves, lots of products of different natures offered in stores (Albanian respondents for supermarkets), they would not give one up when doing their shopping. For UK respondents it was very clear that farmers' markets are not a food outlet that can supply food on a frequent basis due to the high cost of the products and the infrequency of them occurring once a month:

> *If the farmers' market was every week, I probably wouldn't buy more things from it. I would choose the supermarket because that would be a big difference in the price. We are using it as a special case top up of special things. It is very different. A different experience like a little treat from the general shopping* (UK Respondent 11).

For Albanian respondents, it was very clear how their weekly or monthly shopping should be done. They would buy fruits and vegetables at the farmers' markets, because of the many attributes mentioned earlier such as low price and freshness, and other products such as dairy and cupboard foods in supermarkets:

> *When I need vegetables or fruits I go to the farmers' market. When I need other household things I go to the supermarket. The main difference for me is the lack of governmental control of the farmers' markets. Supermarkets are better controlled and monitored by the government* (AL Respondent 14).
> *For fruits and vegetables, it would be the farmers' markets because they are the main providers. For all the other products I prefer the supermarket because of the security they give me over the quality control they have done prior to selling the products in the store* (AL Respondent 21).
> *I buy fresh fruits and vegetables only at farmers' market, I even sometimes buy olive oil from them. Supermarkets are useful for other products that are not available at farmers' market* (AL Respondent 2).

The above data show that supermarkets and farmers' markets are not competing outlets but supplementing each other adding to the overall hedonistic and utilitarian experience of food shopping. Structurally, while on the surface farmers' markets seem similar in both countries, with farmers selling foods on stalls on the street, they differ on many levels. More specifically, their main differences are the price, food or craft offering, shopping environment (cleanliness, governmental control of standards and hygiene), novelty of products, the frequency, availability and proximity of the outlet, set up and the rationale of their clientele shopping there.

6.2.2 Identifying self and others as a farmers' markets and a supermarket's consumer – who really shops there?

Farmers' markets

Previous studies related to farmers' markets (Wolf et al., 2005, Lyon et al., 2009, have attempted to draw the profile of the consumers' frequenting them. Taking into consideration many variables such as socio-economic factors derived from the respondents' demographic data, usually the results show that their customers are middle aged with a good income who are conscious about health issues and supportive towards sustainable initiatives (Spilková et al., 2013; Smithers and Joseph 2010; Alkon, 2008; Guthman, 2008; Moore, 2006; Sonnino and Marsden, 2006; Onianwa et al., 2005; Tregear, 2005; Feagan et al., 2004; Brown, 2002; Jekanowski et al., 2000; Eastwood et al., 1999; Lockeretz, 1986).

While these studies focus on the demographic data of the respondents that identify the typical farmers' market consumer focusing on general perceptions of this food outlet, this study is trying a different approach in the identification of the farmer's market customer, taking into account what respondents think who the typical customer is. There are two reasons for this: one is to investigate the social stereotypes and see how they are embedded in the individuals' perceptions around this topic, and two to understand if the respondents of this study identify themselves as customers of farmers' markets and fall under the categories they describe about this type of customer.

The findings from the data collected show that according to the respondents a typical farmers' market customer is a home owner, educated, high earning, and health, environmentally and socially conscious individuals. Particular emphasis was given to the class status of the potential farmers' market customer with the majority of respondents quoting middle class:

> *I would assume that it is people with higher disposable income. Because food there is more expensive certainly more expensive than if you go to a grocery shop or Iceland or Farm Foods or similar. I presume people with professional jobs, uni educated and probably home owners* (UK Respondent 9).

> *People who are into food, people who are more community minded, a little more interested in where the food comes from. Maybe sustainability wise people who don't like to buy in supermarkets and people who prefer quality over quantity* (UK Respondent 13).

> *I think someone who is more socially conscious in Scotland anyway, someone who cares about their health and what they eat. They might also go there if they are looking for something different* (UK Respondent 5).

> *Middle class because it is a middle class area where I am staying. But it was full of nice local people. Farmers' markets are not cheap, so I would have thought that people who are reasonably well off would go there* (UK Respondent 22).

> *I would say people who like food and into eating clean healthy food, people with slightly more money* (UK Respondent 27).

> *(He laughs) I would probably say can I put this in a class thing? Typically, middle class people from a British perspective, people who have maybe a bit more readily available cash. That's maybe a very snobby view of it but that's kind of the impression I have* (UK Respondent 2).

> *They are people with sufficient income to be able to shop there. Where we live is fairly middle class, professional place. But I've seen a range of people there* (UK Respondent 19).

- *These days it is probably people with large amount of disposable income concerned about source of food and food miles, being organic* (UK Respondent 24).
- *I am not sure there is a typical customer, type that shops in a farmers' market. I guess anyone who is part of the community* (UK Respondent 21).
- *It is people who are thinking of buying local produce, people who are thinking of environmental issues. I wouldn't limit it to the farmers' market only because where I live, we have a good fishmonger, a butcher and I go there for the same reason, quality and variety* (UK Respondent 6).
- *I have a friend who always shops in a farmers' market because she is into alternative eating and she likes to support local trade. She is looking for very specific things. She would shop there more regularly despite being more expensive* (UK Respondent 10).

Despite the fact that they were customers themselves and the fact that many of the respondents would not fall under the demographic criteria established by previous studies, for example high income individual, a university graduate who is living in an affluent area, they would not classify themselves as a typical customer of a farmers' market. For example, UK Respondent 23 is a female in her mid-40s, no higher education and with a household income between £41,000-50,000 who is not residing in an affluent area. However, she is a frequent farmers' markets customer who is enjoying shopping there and spending a substantial amount of money on her trips to the markets:

- *I shop every two weeks in the farmers' market. I would say the price is a negative, as much as I enjoy it, but it doesn't put me off and I spend more money there. But that's me because you get carried away. The positive side of it is enjoyment. I enjoy it more than shopping for clothes.*

From what she is saying above it is clearly understood that she is a frequent farmers' market customer however, according to her words she does not believe can be characterised as a typical farmers' market customer:

> ➢ I think that here are people that got more money because there is a certain buy-in around farmers' market. I wouldn't put me in that category, but it is maybe people with more money than someone that shops every week in the local supermarket (UK Respondent 23).

Further respondents focused on the income as the main characteristic of someone shopping in a farmers' market, education and the level of how "posh" people of affluent areas are:

> ➢ sometimes they can be a little bit pompous but that just might be that posh people go there because of the high end products but is mainly down to price posher people, people are foodies and they are interested where the food has come from, the heritage of food which I understand to a certain point but they are quite willing to pay lots of money for that but I don't understand it (UK Respondent 3).
> ➢ Wealthy? (UK Respondent 17).
> ➢ I think it is people who care about the tradition of food. People with above of the average income because it is expensive and highly educated (UK Respondent 14).
> ➢ I would say in the UK they are your hooray Henry types you know the A1-A2 social types – what does that mean? – posh people with lots of money and very well paid jobs who have the time and the energy, and without wanting to sound snobbish, possibly of higher education to know that fresh food is good for you. I tend not to see, and this is going to sound awful, your eastern house syndrome purchasing stuff in a farmers' market. That may be wrong whereas in France because the markets are so common and so frequent you see the whole population of the town in the market buying stuff (UK Respondent 4).
> ➢ I see a lot of women there, generally my age and older, maybe I guess that's to do with disposable income (UK Respondent 1).
> ➢ Here in Ballerno I would say is quite an affluent clientele that shops there (UK Respondent 11).
> ➢ People with quite a lot of disposable income (UK Respondent 12).

> *Families that know about it and the ones that have the extra income to cover the cost of petrol and other things* (UK Respondent 8).

> *Those of higher earnings* (UK Respondent 16).

> *I would associate farmers' markets with people who can afford to go there and can afford to take the time to go there* (UK Respondent 10).

The data from this study is consistent with what the literature has indicated on who a typical farmers' market customer is as shown above, such as middle age with high income and of high education. Some responses received indicated that children were not seen in farmers' markets with respondents saying that it is older people over 35 or 40 they see frequenting these markets. However, this is contrary to what data from this study has already shown and presented in other sections of the data analysis chapters where respondents would say they use the farmers' market visits as a day out for the whole family:

> *Actually, now I come to think about it, not many children. Because it is traditional food specific at the one, I go I see lots of tourists, but it tends to be more mature ladies like myself (she laughs). But I think it is frequented by 40 over and older age group and I guess in the supermarket is younger* (UK Respondent 1).

> *The best way I could describe it from my experience is yummy mummies (she laughs). The area I live in is mainly women with prams because when it is on it is on a Friday morning. So, it is generally women who are on maternity leave or women who work part time or don't work. Obviously, there are exceptions to that but that is my main experience* (UK Respondent 15)

> *I think it tends to be maybe older people because when they were younger, they were used to go to different shops to get different things. They might think this is just when I used to go to different shops, so they go from different stalls* (UK Respondent 8).

> *Probably not with children and not people under 35, people older than that and my guess is because of their income. And also, you cannot do all of your shopping there. So, it is people with more time on their hands as well. They*

have the option to do their grocery shopping in a supermarket (UK Respondent 12).

➢ *I think it is a 50-50 split between tourists and people who are concerned about where their food has come from. My vegan friends go there* (UK Respondent 18).

➢ *I think people in their 40s shop there with a higher income because of the pricey products they offer* (UK Respondent 20).

➢ *I would say more rural customers. People that aren't possibly city people. possibly the older generation, people in their 40s more so than the younger generation* (UK Respondent 25).

For Albanian respondents it was a more straightforward process to identify the typical farmers' market customer. Respondents would claim that everyone in Albania shops in a farmers' markets from poor to rich people. All types of customers shop there because they can find products for all household budgets and affordability. Price and income play an important role as well but not in a similar way to the UK findings. This is more related not to the choice of the outlet but the amount of the food to be bought that is in accordance with what the household can afford at the time. There is no question of skipping the farmers' market to shop elsewhere due to budget constraints. Farmers' markets have been around for many years and many generations of Albanians have grown up with them as a standard shopping outlet. Older generations are passing this tradition of shopping to the next generations making these markets a familiar place to buy fruits and vegetables:

➢ *I have passed on my shopping habits to them (my daughters) as my mother has passed them on to me. There is something in the farmers' markets for everyone at a variety of prices* (AL Respondent 9).

➢ *It is also a tradition to shop there in the markets that we call the villagers market because they come from the villages around the city to sell their products here* (AL Respondent 14).

Many respondents would quote the class of individuals and the ability to shop either in farmers' markets or in a supermarket. However, it is worth noting that the class

the Albanians refer to is different from the one that UK respondents are aware of. Between 1948-1953 and up until the 1980s, communist Albania experienced a class warfare trying to shape collectivisation policies where private ownership of land was not permitted, and the old affluent higher classes of Albanian societies were persecuted by living in poverty in the rural areas of Albania (Iordachi and Bauerkamper, 2014). Due to this historical experience, Albanians refer to low, middle and high class or levels of living, people who have the relevant income that defines them as low, middle and high class earners. This is how they would also identify themselves when they were asked to describe the place, they would put themselves socially. Data showed that income indicates class in Albania:

➢ T*he pensioners who are used to make savings all their lives and people of my age that try and buy healthy and good food* (AL Respondent 12).

➢ *I think that middle and lower classes buy in these markets. You get the richer ones buying there as a statement or an alternative choice.* (AL Respondent 14).

➢ *Everyone, young, old, women, men, rich and poor people shop there. It is the bio aspect and freshness that lead people to shop from farmers' markets […] the products sold in supermarkets are not produced in Albania and I don't know their origin. I would like to taste food that resembles to the one I grew up with, so I try to buy products that state on the label that are made in Albania* (AL Respondent 5).

➢ *Everyone goes there, I have seen many rich people shop there* (AL Respondent 27).

➢ *All rich and poor people shop in a farmers' market* (AL Respondent 10).

➢ *Usually all sort of classes go there because it is the perception that they have good quality products. Some of them have indeed but you need to be vigilant and find which ones. It is usually middle and upper class people who have the financial ability to afford shopping in supermarkets* (AL Respondent 8).

➢ *I think it is the middle level of people shopping there* (AL Respondent 28).

➢ *Two categories: people like us who are conscious and look for bio food and the ones that look for cheaper food* (AL Respondent 17).

- *It is a daily routine person that buys fruits and vegetables from farmers. My husband for example will go every day, like paying respect to them (she laughs) which I don't approve as we end up with more food than we need […] I think that everyone shops from the farmers' markets. I don't think that there is anyone that doesn't shop from farmers' markets. I think it depends on how everyone organises their shopping however, I don't think that anyone can escape from them* (AL Respondent 1).

- *All levels of people shop there from a high level to the low, rich and poor and all ages of people shop there to* (AL Respondent 2).

- *I think that all shop from villagers markets. Many people rush to buy things from them very early in the morning to get the opportunity to buy what they want* (AL Respondent 3).

- *Everyone I don't think I can distinguish someone who doesn't* (AL Respondent 4).

- *I have seen all sorts of people shop in a farmers' market. I don't think that there is anyone in Albania that wouldn't shop there* (AL Respondent 6).

- *I believe that the medium class and the poor buy food from farmers' markets because they believe that farmers' prices are lower than elsewhere* (AL Respondent 7).

- *I think that 60% of people shop in farmers markets and 40% is the higher class people that shop in supermarkets* (AL Respondent 11).

- *Everyone, from the politicians (they send their help to do the shopping) to the poorer members of the society* (Respondent 13).

- *Is a customer that looks for cheap products, that buys seasonal food produced in the fields not greenhouses* (AL Respondent 15).

- *Family people usually or a housewife* (AL Respondent 16).

- *All types of people shop in a farmers' market, rich and poor. At least this is how it works in Albania* (AL Respondent 18).

- *I think most of the people shop there especially the ones that do not have high incomes* (AL Respondent 19).

- *I think that people who live closer to them shop there that do not have supermarket stores nearby. They are people, who do not pay too much*

attention on the quality of the products they consume, and it terms of the dairy products they buy there they do not care about the fat percentage of the products. They also want bio food coming directly from the producer without any pasteurisation or further control. You need to trust the person that produces them as they are not produced on factory standards (AL Respondent 20).

➢ *Probably the poorer members of the society* (AL Respondent 22).

➢ *I think that mainly housewives shop there but you can also see men like me with bags* (AL Respondent 23).

➢ *Everyone shops there* (AL Respondent 24).

➢ *Everyone goes there. From bank managers to cleaners shop there* (AL Respondent 26).

➢ *I don't think that there is anyone in Albania that doesn't shop there* (Respondent 29).

➢ *Everyone I think, but the poorer members of the society are benefited more from the lower prices* (AL Respondent 30).

Supermarkets

Supermarkets aim has been to initially segment and target upper-income consumers and then gradually use strategies to target consumers coming from middle or lower social classes (Reardon et al., 2003). Literature states that typically, a supermarket customer is more educated, younger, has a family with children, and has a higher income level in comparison with other retail-format customers (Home, 2002). When UK respondents were asked to identify who the typical customer of the supermarket is, they would all claim that everyone is a supermarket customer in the UK. That said though, not all of them have the same spending power in terms of the quality and the quantity of the products they buy in supermarkets:

➢ *This depends on the supermarket, as there are different budgets for people coming from different incomes, low, middle and high. Supermarkets have different prices and depending on the job that people do differentiates the shopping behaviour. Manual workers usually buy food with lower prices but higher calories to cope in their working environment (*UK Respondent 20*).*

> *You get a very broad spectrum all sorts of people, but I think ultimately it is convenience and price that lead people to shop there. We have a Waitrose near us and I would say that on one end you wouldn't see clients that you would see in other supermarkets because it is more expensive. It used to attract a certain group of society in the past, but I have seen that prices have changed now* (UK Respondent 6).

Generally, all respondents agreed that all people from all income and social backgrounds shop in supermarkets projecting different shopping patterns such as shopping in a hurry, not having a large trolley, shopping with children or as they would put it normal people:

> *I guess is everyone, but I am more conscious that is younger people with their children. I guess people who do not have so much time to shop* (UK Respondent 1).
> *Everybody I think* (UK Respondent 3).
> *I think everyone, because of the frequency and what's on offer* (UK Respondent 5).
> *Everyone shops in a supermarket. All members of society* (UK Respondent 11).
> *All kind of people. The one I go to there is a lot of younger people who shop their stuff for that evening. You don't see people with massive trolleys though* (UK Respondent 13).
> *I think everyone I know shops from supermarkets* (UK Respondent 15).
> *I think most people shop there. When we are over in France lots of people use the markets a lot because they are so many of them and much more frequent. Over here you don't have choice I suppose so supermarket is your option* (UK Respondent 22).
> *I would say pretty much everyone goes there* (UK Respondent 27).
> *I think everybody shops from a supermarket. Everyone in Britain. Although I have never seen the Queen running in (he laughs)* (UK Respondent 2).
> *It just is an average person who doesn't have the time to travel in different places, who are maybe on a rush to get everything from one place* (UK Respondent 7).

- *I think everyone really but probably a lot would be families because they would be looking to feed themselves and children for a good price. They can go and buy in big amounts as well* (UK Respondent 8).
- *Everybody goes there (*UK *Respondent 10).*
- *All kinds* (UK Respondent 16).
- *Everybody (*UK *Respondent 18).*
- *Well, it is the people who live in the locality, so I guess that kind of reflect the area. Normal people ordinary people shop in a supermarket really (she laughs)* (UK Respondent 19).
- *Everyone would shop in a supermarket* (UK Respondent 21).
- *All sorts (she laughs)*(UK Respondent 23).
- *I would think everybody. I suppose a typical one would be a family person with young children* (UK Respondent 24).
- *I would say families and probably the mother would come and shop. Sometimes you can see children which can be annoying (she laughs)* (UK Respondent 27).
- *People with less disposable income than those who go to farm shops, families, just normal people, Mrs and Mr Normal (he laughs). Families with 2.4 children, that's the average (he laughs again)* (UK Respondent 12).

On the other hand, some respondents mentioned the supermarket brand and the type of people shopping there. Mintel's (2007) survey about shoppers in the UK judging each other by the supermarket brand they frequent, indicating that the choice of supermarket shows the social class of the consumer, was apparent in some responses showing that some social stereotypes have not yet vanished from consumer perceptions:

- *It depends where the supermarket is located. Most people shop in a supermarket depending on the socioeconomic variables. In my area there are more affluent people shopping in the supermarket* (UK Respondent 9).
- *It depends of what type of supermarket you go into. Waitrose very posh and upper class people all the way down to Lidl's where you get posh people through to people where you think where the hell do you live in Kirki*

(Kirkintilloch)? Depending on the pricing point of the supermarket you get a range of clientele (UK Respondent 4).

➢ *That's an interesting one. Depends where the supermarket is. My local Lidl is in my local town which is a very working class town and has many Polish. And so, the local people go there. In Sainsbury's and Waitrose, you meet more middle class people, with higher income. I think it depends where the actual store is* (UK Respondent 14).

➢ *At Sainsbury's though you can see young people or professionals depending on the time of the day you go there* (UK Respondent 24).

A study showed that buying from supermarkets is associated with the socio-economic status of the consumer because supermarkets can offer consumers from middle-class backgrounds the means 'to differentiate themselves from the lower classes and to express a sense of belonging and a unique social identity' (Amine and Lazzaoui's, 2011, p.570). This is more reflecting perceptions of the Albanian respondents than the UK ones. According to the Albanian data, supermarket shopping seems to reflect the different layers of society. As it is common in the UK, there are different supermarket brands, frequented by different types of consumers. Generally, it is widely perceived that the more affluent people shop more frequently in supermarkets, filling up their trolleys, than the poorer families. As stated earlier in both the findings chapters, one of the reasons that contribute towards this trend is the security consumers feel when consuming products bought in a supermarket that are controlled by the relevant governmental authorities. That said, all Albanian respondents agreed that all people shop in supermarkets however, they project different buying behaviours according to their household income and the perceived social status they belong to which also seems similar to the UK data:

➢ *People from different levels shop there. You have lazy housewives who shop there semi or full pre-prepared food, you have the lot that always is looking for offers and chase them from one supermarket to another, and then you have the conscious customer like me who knows what is needed and buy it* (AL Respondent 12).

➢ *In Albania customer base is separated according to their income. People with money shop at Conad, the other part goes to other supermarkets that have better prices but not as good quality as Conad. It depends on the affluence of everyone. Poorer people cannot buy at Conad because prices are very high* (AL Respondent 14).

➢ *I think that people with money that possess cars shop there. Not only because they can afford to spend a lot in a place like that but because they can actually drive there, fill in their car, pass their time and then return home. Not sure if someone who doesn't have a car would do some serious shopping there. Taking the bus home with many bags is not very pleasant I suppose* (AL Respondent 5).

➢ *All ages, genders and levels. Some buy few products and some other that literally full their trolley. There are different supermarkets that are frequent by different level of consumers with higher income* (AL Respondent 21).

➢ *You don't see poor people shop in a supermarket* (AL Respondent 8).

➢ *Middle class people are typical consumers who have limited time to shop elsewhere and find things in one place. Poorer people don't have the income to be a frequent customer in a supermarket and I think the richest one has other ways of supplying good quality food such as directly from the producer* (AL Respondent 17).

➢ *Look, there are many supermarkets around like for example KMY that is around the corner and that is frequented by many people. However, I don't go there because I don't like it. It is the lower level of the society that usually go there. There are classifications of supermarkets that are frequented by different levels of consumers. We also have Carrefour the French chain that is frequented by many people, but I am used to, and I know the quality of Conad.* Affluent people shop from supermarkets such as Conad (AL Respondent 1).

➢ *Poor people I think do not shop in a supermarket because their prices are higher than farmers' markets. I never buy my fruits and vegs in a supermarket* (AL Respondent 3).

➢ *I think that everyone shops from supermarkets. Depending on the budget some shop more and some others shop less* (AL Respondent 4).

➢ *I think that the family income indicates which supermarket each one shops from* (AL Respondent 6).

➢ *Different people go there, from middle class and up. I think that higher classes don't buy anything from the farmers' markets. I believe this happens because of the quality of the food available in the supermarkets which is of better quality* (AL Respondent 7).

➢ *Rich people with money* (AL Respondent 11).

➢ *Depending on the supermarket, everyone goes. Some buy more and some less things, but you get a variety of people shopping there* (AL Respondent 13).

➢ *I think is someone that does not have time to waste and does the shopping as quickly as possible* (AL Respondent 15).

➢ *You can see more young people shopping in a supermarket than a farmers' market. I think this might be because it easier for them to go there and they don't need to interact with farmers and choose what to buy. I think it is also a social thing as they don't want to be seen shopping in farmers' markets where older people go and moms* (AL Respondent 16).

➢ *I think all people do and you can distinguish in the supermarket all the levels of the pockets from rich to poor* (AL Respondent 18).

➢ *The ones that are more affluent income wise* (AL Respondent 19).

➢ *More affluent people that can afford the high prices of the supermarket* (AL Respondent 20).

➢ *Those who would like to get a product of better taste and that is inspected and controlled* (AL Respondent 22).

➢ *I think everyone shops now in supermarkets, but I think it is also the ones that look for products on offer* (AL Respondent 23).

➢ *Families of different incomes who do not want to spend their lives shopping around* (AL Respondent 24).

➢ *Everyone, I think. You have also people that have credits cards and money that shop there* (AL Respondent 26).

➢ *I think everyone. Everyone I know shops in a supermarket. Some go to the expensive ones and some to discount supermarkets. Isn't this the case where*

you stay in the UK too? I think it is in the nature of people to buy expensive things if the budget allows it (AL Respondent 29).

➢ *I think people with good income shop more frequently in a supermarket* (AL Respondent 30).

On the other hand, some Albanian respondents argued that supermarket prices are higher not only because of the security they provide through the controlled goods they offer, but also because they have to pay taxes to be able to provide products that have been controlled by governmental bodies which by default raises the prices of the products on display. This is contrary to the literature and the UK data, stating a general mistrust towards the transparency that supermarkets display (Barrientos and Smith, 2007), their Fairtrade practices and the way they treat their suppliers Spence and Rinaldi, 2012). Some Albanian respondents argued that they shop in supermarkets to support local community. The reason behind this is the fact that supermarkets pay taxes, those taxes are collected and then returned back to society in forms of education or other public services:

➢ *Everything in a supermarket is controlled, companies pay taxes to the government that are invested back to the society* (AL Respondent 21).

➢ *As much as I would like to help them (farmers) because they go through a lot to produce their products and sell them on the street, I don't feel good to pay for something that has not paid any taxes* (AL Respondent 27).

➢ *From a public point of view shopping in a supermarket it is social thing to do because it operates under the administration and function of governmental bodies* (AL Respondent 17).

The above data show that farmers' markets have been around for many years and many generations of Albanians have grown up with this food outlet being a standard provider of fruits and vegetables. Thus, to them this will always be the place where they buy these products. According to Albanian data, all people rich and poor would shop in a farmers' market at some point depending on the budget that is available. Whereas, the perception of UK respondents around these outlets, is consistent with the literature as demonstrated above. UK data show that the general belief of a

farmers' market customer is a middle aged, affluent and middle-class person who can afford to buy many things there. On the other hand, supermarkets are considered by both groups of respondents to be outlets where everyone is a customer. However, in both countries there is a financial element that separates the expensive from the more affordable brands creating another layer of separating the level of society.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter provided an analysis of data gathered in answer to two of the research questions of this thesis: How do individuals perceive themselves and the various self-identities in action?; and how is food shopping and the cultural background of the individual perceived as part of self-identity by Albanian and British consumers?. Further examination of these in the context of the literature can be found in the Discussion chapter, Chapter 7.

Data was presented under the following themes: a) Every day and necessary vs novelty and special purchases - the cultural and structural differences of farmers' markets in Albania and the UK; b) Identifying self and others as a farmers' markets and a supermarket's consumer – who really shops there?; c) Food the essence of life – self identity created through food and family moments; and d) Self identity in action when decision making around food shopping which consists of two further themes: 1) Factors influencing shopping decision making and the choice of a food outlet; and 2) Self identity in a social context – niche groups influencing decision making and finally, e) Self-identity – recognising personal attributes. Findings considered how the different cultural backgrounds of food shopping and the preparation of family meals, is significant in continuing traditions initiated by family members and also maintaining social structures with wider social circles. Data analysis focused on the individual's understanding of the influences imposed by the social norms and the niche groups affecting food shopping in farmers' markets and supermarkets not only from a cultural but also a social view. The chapter has also focused on the relationships between food shopping culture and identity construction, presenting the complex nature of food in many social contexts and the role it plays when connecting with other individuals. Activities and shopping patterns are explored in order to

understand how individuals perceive and utilise social factors within their own self identity.

Data also showed that Albanian respondents feel a strong identity as a family person and the projection of self is strongly associated within the family group which plays a central role in their decision making. Whereas, UK respondents showed a more individualistic approach of how social norms may or may not impact them reflecting a strong presence of self identity of an individual not attached to social groups.

The following chapter will consider the theoretical contributions and implications of the findings presented in chapters 5 and 6. The chapter is structured in accordance with the findings' chapters around the research questions demonstrating new development to existing theory.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Theoretical Contributions

7.0 Introduction

The previous two data analysis chapters presented and analysed the primary data findings that answer the research questions of this thesis. The main objective of this research is to understand how Albanian and UK individuals perceive food outlets and build self-identity through the shopping experience in each of them. This chapter discusses the theoretical contributions of the findings to the existing literature around the consumer identity research studies within the Consumer Culture Theory body of work (Arnould and Thompson, 2006). Moreover, findings of this study are shedding light and extending literature around the Albanian consumer not only from the self-identity creation point of view, but also in terms of an overall introduction to this consumer group because studies around Albanian consumers have rarely featured in scholarly studies. The theoretical contribution of this study is based on the lived experiences of the respondents with data being presented in such a way as to preserve the sentiment and depth of information provided by the British and Albanian informants. This means that, this thesis's contribution is not just the advancement of the literature on a specific school of theory such as Consumer Culture Theory's identity creation. By presenting a variety of personal narratives and stories, various literature arguments are also explored in this chapter. This is due to the fact that many theoretical schools and studies investigate one aspect at a time rather than the diversity that derives from consumer behaviour studies and more specifically at a cross cultural level. The structure of this chapter follows a similar structure to the data analysis chapters presenting the contribution of the four research questions in the context of existing literature.

The chapter begins by reflecting on how self-identity is understood by individuals and presented through various actions and considers the theorisation of these perspectives across the UK and Albanian groups of respondents. It then discusses Elliott's (2004) model on consumption practices and building identity in conjunction with other self-identity theories highlighted in the literature review chapters. Thirdly, based on Elliott's (2004) model, the chapter considers how individuals understand the socially constructed sources for the self, such as popular culture and life stories,

in two contexts between the social integration of the individual and the influences dominated by family, friends, social norms and the social groups within which each individual places themselves. This is also reflected in the relations of the social structures and social positions in influencing UK and Albanian individuals' food shopping experiences and the individuals' interpretations of these influences in action (for example what to buy/look for/source in which food outlet). The food culture aspect is also discussed in the context of being part of the informants' identity and goes on to identify whether this agrees with existing literature and highlights the main differences between the extant literature and the data analysis. The chapter also considers shopping experiences as part of the same interpretive community that create neo-tribes sharing common shopping experiences in a cross-cultural shoppers' community.

Finally, the overall contribution of this thesis is to extend literature on two main subjects: self identity creation and perceptions Albanian and UK consumers of farmers' markets and supermarkets, providing a comparison between Albanian and UK findings.

7.1 Discussion of research question 1: How do individuals perceive themselves and the various self-identities in action

The conceptual framework for this thesis was based on Elliott's (2004) model on consumption practices and identity, influencing the interview protocol that contributed towards the data collection. Thus, this chapter considers Elliott's (2004) sites of self in action in order to extend theory and understanding of self-identity and self identity construction. The chapter also considers the findings of this thesis in relation to Gould's (2010) multiple-self theory. Contribution under this research question is focused on how individuals perceive their identities and conceptualise them in action, extending and comparing the findings with Elliott's (2004) model of consumption practices and identity.

7.1.1 Self-identity creation

Elliott (2004) suggests that individuals construct identity through historical consumption patterns and their social practices and positions. The self in action is constantly being developed and redeveloped as consumers make consumption choices drawing from historical constraints (Elliott, 2004). This means that decision making on what to buy and where to buy it is influenced by socially structured sources of the self such as advertising, popular culture, narratives and life stories and the structural positions of the self such as material history, class position and consumption socialisation as modelled by Elliott (2004) in the figure below:

Socially Constructed Resources for the Self
e.g. advertising, brands, popular culture, everyday talk, life stories

Sites of the Self-in-Action

Structural/Positional Sources of the Self
e.g. material history, class position, consumption socialisation, interpretive community

Figure 11: Consumption practices and identity (Elliott, 2004)

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Elliott's model formed the underpinning framework for this thesis and informed the interview protocol which addressed questions that placed the interviewees in a position to narrate stories about various

actions relevant to food and food shopping. Interviewees' narratives revealed four situations in which they place their "relevant" self, drawing information from historical consumption patterns, family life stories and personal judgment on which self to project each time:

- self identity created through food and family moments;
- self identity in action when making decisions around food shopping and the choice of a food outlet;
- internalised mechanisms in allowing niche groups to influence decision making;
- recognising personal attributes of the self and the multiple selves in action.

7.1.1.1 Self identity created through food and family moments

Elliott (2004) defines community of practice in two dimensions: mutual engagement and shared repertoires. Communities of practice involve members that engage in mutual actions giving them the opportunity to find a place within this group and gain a unique identity (Elliott, 2004). In order to maintain a community coherence these identities develop shared repertoires of communications such as words, gestures ways of doing things, actions, gestures or any other concept that these communities use. (Elliott, 2004). Thus, the concept of a family eating together as part of creating in-group social experiences is important and has an important role as an institution of early stages socialisation (Hunt at al., 2011). Therefore, eating together around the table creates a sense of unity among the family members (Fulkerson et al., 2006). Data collected for this thesis support the above theories finding that food plays an important role in the respondents' lives for two main reasons: health and nutrition and bringing families together. Data also support Elliott's (2004) suggestions of the shared repertoire where respondents would report cooking together in the evenings or at the weekends using fresh ingredients to prepare meals. This also gives the individuals the opportunity to project their unique self "My husband is the main cook in the family" (UK Respondent 3) and share knowledge or gestures with the other members of the community, "We have a little daughter and it is the only time we can

all spend together because we work long hours. I like that she can watch me cook and learn from me" (AL Respondent 30).

Elliott (2004) argues that identity is not just cognitive or narrative with many studies focusing on language parameters only. This has led to what Gergen (1999, p. 85) calls "linguistic reductionism" where the focus on the actual dialectic discussion has overpowered the significance of the nonverbal signals such as facial expressions, gestures, and body posture. This study fully agrees with this statement. The researcher of this study paid great attention to not only what was said during the interviews but also how it was said, what mannerism was used and what sound nuances were produced during the discourse. While both UK and Albanian respondents highlighted the importance of food in their lives due to the health and wellbeing reasons, Albanian respondents were livelier when talking about food and family. Apart from the fact that they would use stronger expressions to describe why food is important in their life such as *it is what gives you, life* (AL Respondent 9), their mannerisms would become more active, moving closer the researcher and projecting a warm feeling. They would look the researcher straight in the eyes and talk very seriously about the importance of food and the ability to provide food to their family members. Thus, when the "bread winner" self would be in question or action, Albanian respondents would treat it with the outmost importance and consider it one of the most significant parts of their identity.

Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) suggest that consumption of the symbolic meaning of goods plays an important role in providing meanings and values in social practice performance. This symbolic meaning of individuals has been researched from an advertising and brands point of view, and aspects have been used as symbolic resources of the construction of identity (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998; McCracken, 1987; Mick and Buhl 1992). Clothes, houses, cars and white goods are also considered commodified markers of identity and judged for their symbolic significance (Beck 1992; Giddens, 1991). Food on the other hand has been investigated from an importance point of view when creating identity within a family setting (Fischler, 1988; Valentine, 1999). Food playing a symbolic role has been researched in terms of identifying memberships of various regional, national or international groups (Scholliers, 2001). The symbolic nature of food has also been

argued in Kniazeva and Venkatesh's (2007) work from a body image angle, highlighting that individuals impose restrictions on themselves to avoid negative selves and engage in self-improvement identities. This study is extending the symbolic role of food literature by providing a comparison of symbolic meanings that food has in a cross-cultural setting. Data showed that when it comes to personal and family health and wellbeing, Albanian and UK respondents have similar views. However, there are different symbolic meanings attributed to food by Albanians who consider it as a means of passing on tradition to other generations and the ability of each individual to distinguish good from bad quality food, thus the capability of projecting the "food expert" self when it comes to choose food for personal and family consumption. On the other hand, UK respondents view food in a more socialised context. Food is a means to socialising not only with family members but others outside family ties, providing the opportunity of turning something into a special event. Food is also viewed as something that breaks daily routine giving UK respondents the thrill of identifying something new or special to cook. This enables them to project the self that can impress other members of their social group, gathering praise and approval for the effort and thought. The similarities and differences in these findings are summarised in Figures 12 and 13 below:

Figure 12: Food symbolic meanings to Albanian respondents
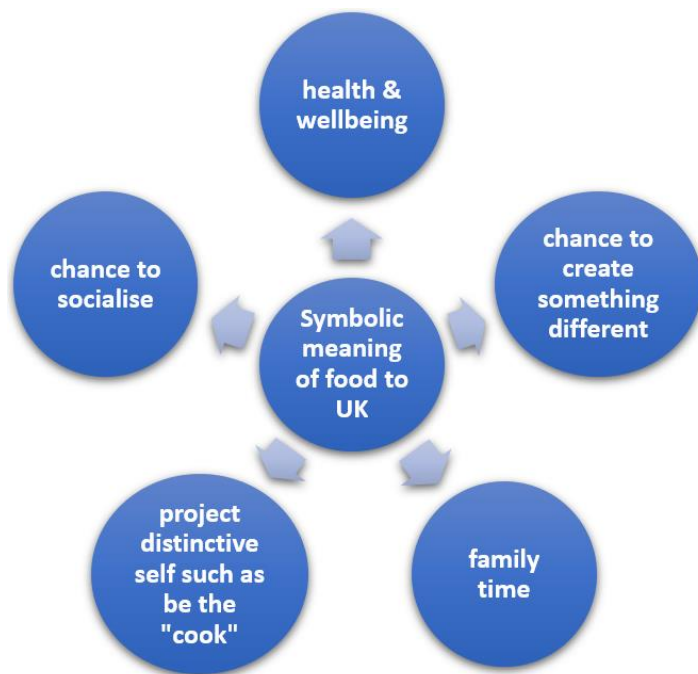
Figure 13: Food symbolic meanings to UK respondents

To Albanian respondents food symbolises family wellbeing. When sufficient food is provided then all family members are happy. This happiness and wellbeing are also associated with health which impacts not only the individual's wellbeing but that of the whole family. Albanians perceive that quality food equals good health. Food is also used in a way that the links generations within a family that share traditions of how and where to shop for good quality food. These traditions and way of shopping reinforces the sense of personal competency in good food shopping practices. To the UK respondents, food also symbolises health and wellbeing which is emphasised more on a personal level than a family one. UK respondents attribute creativity to food that gives them the chance to look for new recipes and create something different to treat family and friends. This opportunity also gives the UK respondents to proudly project their cooking skills which often is done to receive praise on the cooked food. Food allows them to spend family time by either eating or cooking together or socialise with friends.

7.1.1.2 Self identity in action when making decisions around food shopping and the choice of a food outlet

As previously discussed, the self in action is constantly changing and redeveloping when individuals make consumption choices within historical constraints (Elliott, 2004). These historical constraints are related to previous experiences that individuals went through when deciding what to buy or where to buy it. Another approach to investigate the self in action is to examine identity in a wider context: "who we are lies in the way we live day to day, not just in what we think or say about ourselves" (Wenger, 1998, p. 151). In this thesis this approach has been applied in a shopping context on a day to day basis and the reasons behind the choices individuals make in order to buy food. One previous study found that consumers go through an internal process of thought when choosing a supermarket outlet based on taste, quality, value, convenience, price, and accessibility of the store (Jackson et al, 2006). The findings of this thesis agree with these results but emphasise a focus on three factors: convenience, price and accessibility.

Shopping has been also found to enhance self-worth because it breaks the bonds of constraining relationships with consumers finding shopping soothing, fun, exciting, even therapeutic, and thrilling (Compeau et al., 2016). This notion may be relevant when shopping for clothes or other similar goods however the findings of this study showed that for UK consumers shopping in a supermarket is considered boring and a chore. The constraining relationships between shopping in a supermarket and the projection of the "convenience shopper" self is formed when the proximity and the location are considered, the parking facilities, value for money and accessibility of the products in need. Moreover, the "planner" self is projected before the "shopper" takes action for UK respondents. This is due to the fact that the trips to the supermarket would be planned in advance, involving the making of a list for the shopping trolley or shopping would take place at the end of the day after work. Giddens (1991) states that modernity of our era affects one's identity by the choices they make on a daily basis such as what to eat for example. UK respondents with busy lives and families considered convenience and time constraints to be the main factors influencing their shopping decisions. On the other hand, farmers' markets

were not considered as outlets for core food shopping but entertaining places for the whole family where shopping would also take place for different and novel products. UK respondents revealed they would buy products in famers' markets to treat their family and friends on special occasions. This means that the "pleaser" self comes to action in order to fulfill the goal of having a pleasant time with family but also offer it back through cooking something special even if they had to pay a premium for these products.

For Albanian respondents, data showed the opposite trend. Albanians project their "pleaser" self when shopping in a supermarket because of the environment and "the beautiful display of the products in the stores" (AL Respondent 20). Moreover, data showed that Albanians distinguish their shopping in two categories: fruits and vegetables are bought in the farmers' markets and all the other products are bought in a supermarket. This is consciously done due to the financial benefits offered by the less expensive offerings in the farmers' markets, allowing the respondents to project their "economically savvy" self in action. The dairy and other household products are bought in supermarkets because "the supermarket provides me with security on quality control they have done prior to selling the products in the store" (AL Respondent 21). This shows that Albanian respondents have to develop "cautious" or "protective" selves when food shopping due to the uncontrolled and unregulated farmers' markets selling their products on the streets without going through the appropriate governmental health and quality controls. Utility and convenience were also quoted as factors influencing food shopping choices. Contrary to the UK data, Albanian findings showed that most of the time trips to the supermarkets or farmers' markets are not planned they are based on the convenience of the outlet and what is needed in the household. Therefore the "convenience shopper" self is commonly projected by both Albanian and UK respondents despite their cultural and background differences. The same can be said about the "economically savvy" self projected by UK respondents when looking for bargains or when "get an email with offers or I would look online for better deals" (UK Respondent 27).

7.1.1.3 Internalised mechanisms in allowing niche groups to influence decision making

Elliott (2004, p. 133) argues that symbolic freedom is constrained by social structure and our actions are determined by "relationships of power extending through class and society". The social group to which each individual belongs, such as nationality, ethnicity, religion or political affiliation etc. gives a definition of who the individual is and what his or her characteristics are (Hogg et al., 1995). The social structural elements that have an impact on the development of self, as presented in Chapter 3 of the literature review, are those of family, friends, cultural norms, ethnicity and gender. This section of the discussion chapter will discuss the contribution of this thesis within each of these social antecedents beginning with family and friends.

7.1.1.3.1 The influence of family and friends

Shopping operates as a communicative act that expresses affection for an individual's self and family without any expectation of reciprocation (Belk and Coon, 1993). Relating one's self with other group members takes place when purchase decisions are influenced by people from their social circles such as friends and family, hence by incorporating the values, opinions, attitudes, and preferences of others, consumers define their relationships with the people around them (Compeau et al., 2016). Family members and friends are part of an individual's daily interactions whose opinions are frequently asked (Nicholson and Seidman, 1995) hence they are considered to be one of the main group of direct influencers on an individual's consumption decision making process (Moisio et al., 2004). Food forms one of the most necessary types of consumption in one's life and while studies indicate that same age peers also have a positive impact on the food selection process (Birch, 1980), findings of this study showed that parents are the ones to have somewhat shaped the respondents' shopping and cooking habits one way or another. Food produced in a family environment is another means of enforcing an individual's roles within the family that also defines the power relationship within the family members (Moisio et al, 2004). The findings of this thesis provide an insight into the familial influence that remains significant well into the adulthood of the individual. For

Albanian respondents this remained the main influential source of the self until the later years of the individual's life. Whereas for UK respondents while family is equally important as it is to the Albanians, friendship gains a more prominent influential role at a later stage of their lives. During the interview narratives, respondents were trying to retrieve childhood memories when parents, mainly mothers, would buy food locally and prepare it at home. This validates Elliott's (2004) model of the identity consumption practices where consumers make consumption choices by drawing data from historical constraints. Data showed that both Albanian and UK respondents would recall family memories when cooking or food purchasing and apply these subtle influences in their daily food routine. Data also revealed a tendency for continuing this tradition by passing on historical consumption practices down to the next generation. This repetitive consumption and cooking behaviour by generations of consumers forms the basis of family rituals that play an important role in the creation and the endurance of the self, whether enacted in private or in the presence of others (Elliott, 2004).

Studies also suggest that there is a correlation between consumption behaviour patterns, the adoption of new products and the individual's identity (Cook et al., 2002; Grewal et al., 2000). Findings from the Albanian respondents showed that self identity is created through family relationships. Specifically, food shopping is important for the wellbeing of that close social group thus any decision making around where to shop for food is influenced by the family members. While friends may influence in occasions, they are considered as individuals outside their immediate social groups, which is family, and "aren't allowed to influence my judgement" (AL Respondent 13).

7.1.1.3.2 Social norms

Ellickson (2001, p.3) defines a social norm as "a rule governing an individual's behavior that third parties other than state agents diffusely enforce by means of social sanction". Schouten (1991) finds that people perform consumption activities to develop and maintain their stable and harmonious self-concept. Norms also can be powerful agents of control as choices of behaviour (Perkins, 2003) and when

people have strong beliefs, they often proselytise them, and socially imposed behaviours may become internalised (Hopper and Nielsen, 1991). An example of this socially imposed behaviour was demonstrated by a survey showing one in ten respondents expressed embarrassment if they were to be seen in an inferior supermarket by their peers and would prefer to spend more in order to be seen in the 'right' supermarket store (Mintel, 2007). In light of these theories, this section seeks to add contribution in terms of food consumption and the impact this has on the individual's construction and maintenance of the self.

The relationship between consumption and identity and the need for self identity has resulted from the increasing growth of individualism in society, (Bauman, 1988) a distinctive feature of the western person (Morris, 1972). Culture theory and particularly the theory of individualism and collectivism cast significant light on consumer behaviour (Kacen and Lee, 2002). Collectivism is a social pattern that comprises individuals who see themselves as an integral part of one or more collectives or in-groups, such as family (Triandis, 1995). Individualism on the other hand, comprises individuals who see themselves as autonomous and independent, motivated by their own preferences and needs (Triandis, 1994). The findings of this thesis seem to be relevant today as seen in the UK responses. Albanian data revealed a strong "family person" identity and the projection of self is strongly associated within the family group which plays a central role in their decision making. Thus, the projection of the Albanian "family person" self is consistent with the collectivism theory with the respondents feeling a strong sense of belonging within their family group.

On the other hand, UK data showed a more individualistic pattern projected towards decision making. While UK respondents would consult with family members in terms of what to buy it would be from a functional point of view. In both Albanian and UK cases, social norms were found to not have a major impact on the respondents. A strong presence of the self was evident during the interview process with social norms proving to not affect or influence respondents in any way. It was reported that ideas might be taken into consideration but would not have been applied had they not been beneficial. This finding is more in line with the personal norms theory where rules are

overseen by self-sanctioning or reward (feelings of guilt or pleasure) and are followed by an individual irrespectively of what peers of the social group might think (Kinzig et al., 2013). Data from this thesis suggest that self-sanctioning has a prominent place between the individual and the self when evaluating external influences, allowing the self to process these influences in order to adopt them or not. Both Albanian and UK data showed that there is a sense of assertiveness and low probability of allowing others outside the family to influence the respondents. The difference in mannerism and use of language should be highlighted once more. While both Albanian and UK respondents would use similar vocabulary to express how "strong minded" they are and how they "allow others to influence them", Albanians were more vivid in their descriptions using their hands to convey their message, and their body language took a supportive role towards the verbal communication. However, the problem that people do not always do what they say they do (Fellman, 1999) should be taken into consideration when considering the data. This quote from UK Respondent 15 confirms this as the interviewee realises that she feels a slight pressuring feeling over her choice of a supermarket brand despite initially stating the opposite: *I don' think so. I would like to make an informed decision, so I don't think I feel much the social pressure. Having said that though I don't like taking an Aldi bag into Marks and Spencer's but that is probably because I don't want people shopping there looking at me carrying an Aldi bag* (laughs). *I don't know maybe.. now that you said that maybe I do, oh* (laughs). Although the extent of differences between expressed and enacted practices cannot be determined, there is no reason to expect them to be different in the two groups of respondents, making the cross cultural comparisons remain meaningful.

7.1.1.4 Recognising personal attributes of the self and the multiple selves in action

Literature suggests that individuals understand their own identity through the narratives of personal stories (Giddens, 1991). Two aspects of selves should be investigated in order to examine the internal understanding of self: subjective personality traits such as considering oneself extrovert or caring, and an individual's

values and character, aspirations and desirable goals for life (Mittal, 2006). However, while Mittal (2006) agrees on a personality trait approach when investigating identity construction, there is no clear hierarchy of influencing factors, but each individual constructs identity by using a combination of traits that are more personally meaningful, without privileging one over the others. The findings of this study expand upon the existing identity literature by incorporating personality traits into the narrative identity construction. While studies show that narrative identity is a distinct trait of personality (McAdams, 2001) and an organising system of personalities (Singer and Blagov, 2004), little empirical research has investigated the relationships between personality traits and narrative (Bauer et al., 2005; McAdams et al., 2004) from a cross-cultural point of view in a food consumption context.

Collecting narrative accounts was a suitable technique that allowed the researcher to access issues and concepts of self as well as observe the respondents' reactions and body language while narrating personal stories about themselves. The findings of this thesis present the forms of the projection of the social self-image, and more specifically the projection of the "me" instead of the "I" (Mittal, 2006). As with previous sections of the discussion chapter, it is worth mentioning that by observing the body language and voice nuances, the UK respondents found it very difficult to identify characteristics of their personality or even to describe some of their personal traits. They made it clear that asking about one's self characteristics is very unexcepted and that such questions have never been asked of them before. Initially responses would focus on the description of external appearances, but once respondents began to feel more at ease, narratives would focus around personality traits. The main difference noted between the UK female and male data was the fact that female respondents would identify self in accordance with their family or educational status e.g. "married with children", or "a masters student". Male respondents on the other hand would focus on behavioural aspects of personality such "analytical", "sarcastic", "irritating" and "very quiet". Additionally, some UK respondents would describe themselves according to the country of provenance such as "I am Irish" (UK Respondent 28).

In contrast, Albanians seemed at ease with discussing their personality, family and personal values. Honesty, justice and respect were projected as important traits defining one's personality. According to Elliott (2004), identity is a social construction and the creation of an individual's self-identity is developed in parallel with the social identity creation. Jenkins (2014, p40) describes this relationship as the "internal-external dialectic of identification" and argues that self-identity should be validated through social interactions because self is embedded in such practices. This internal-external dialectic of self-identification constructed in parallel with social identity thus influenced by social factors such as others' opinions, may trigger Albanians' need to emphasise these personality traits. This may be due to the corruption levels in Albania, as also demonstrated in section 5.1.2.1 of the data analysis, that is apparent in many public and private organisations. Albanian respondents projected the traits of self-worthiness, truthfulness and self-justice because of the fact that perceived non-deserving individuals are favoured to get better jobs etc. or even the fact that there is a big gap between the high and the low-income earners. Research has shown that difficult experiences are identity challenging and play a unique role in narrative identity and personality development (Pals, 2006). Thus, in addition to the corruption element, the hardships that Albanians endured during the dictatorship and the transitional years after the regime collapsed, have shaped and emphasised these self dimensions with the respondents feeling the importance of highlighting them when talking about themselves "I am a very open and honest person and I like to have fun. I have been through a lot in my life and I always look at the bright side of the things" (AL Respondent 29).

Once more, data showed that Albanians place family at the centre of everything, they understand self and its multi dimensions within the family's entity "I have always strived to offer the best to my family" (AL Respondent 28), "I would do anything and everything for my family and go the extra mile if I need to" (AL Respondent 4). Data were also concentrated around valiant characteristics such as being good hearted, helping others, and being socially friendly with everyone of all backgrounds. A similar finding between Albanian and UK respondents, was the presentation of narratives related to their studies, their passions and special traits that make them more distinguished as individuals such as "careful", "lucky", "happy", "communicative".

Both Albanian and UK data showed that for some individuals there is a strong sense of self across situations where the self is enduring and continuous with individuals claiming to keep the same persona over time with little or no difference at all. Data from this thesis consists of individuals who claim to be remaining the same in various family or social occasions projecting a self that is more operational to the individual's needs than to compromise self on social requirements. Findings highlight the need for respondents to emphasise the projection of the real self which is dominant over the other multiple self concepts as presented in the earlier sections above. In relation to these multiple concepts of self, Gould (2010) suggests that there are multiple coexisting narratives and constructions of the self. He also continues that the core self is multi-dimensional where all dimensions of the self are linked to the core and should not be misinterpreted with the multiple self aspect where the multiple selves are satellites of the central self, for example private, the core self, versus the public self (2010). Gould's (2010, p.207) following example summarises this difference between these two aspects: "I have a funny personality" is not the same as saying, "My funny self comes out at certain times," the first example could be considered a dimension of the core self while the last one projects an aspect of the multiple self concept. In view of this, and taking into consideration cultural and background differences between the Albanian and UK respondents, the following Figures 14 and 15 summarise the multi dimensions and multiple aspects of self as derived from the findings of this thesis.

Figure 14: Albanian self multidimensional model

Figure 15: UK self multidimensional model

The figures above visually represent a summary of what Albanian and UK respondents consider to be part of their core self. Being a family person is important to both groups of respondents as well as having a quiet aspect of their core self. However, UK respondents focus on more practical aspects of the self, such as planning, being economically savvy and making an impression on others by pleasing them and being friendly. In contrast, Albanians focus more on how honest, helpful or compassionate they are with others. Communication seems to be important as well as projecting that they are educated. While there is a limitation of providing each individual's multidimensional and multiple selves maps, this thesis is presenting mappings of the findings that present a typical picture of the differences between Albanian and UK respondents. It is important to note that while each respondent of this study both in Albania and the UK is different, some commonalities were found within both countries' respondent groups that can be expressed as a "typical" map of a multi dimensional self for the purposes of this discussion.

7.2 Discussion of research question 2: How is food shopping and the cultural background of the individual perceived as part of self-identity by Albanian and British consumers

According to Bruner (1990), human beings create meanings and symbols to understand the world around them. He argues that humans get their meaning and interpretations of the world from culture which is a system where meaning is given to action by "situating its underlying intentional states in [this] interpretive system" (Bruner, 1990, p. 24). Cultural patterns or norms become embedded within each individual and enable anyone to receive, organise, rationalise, and understand personal experiences in the world (Saleebey, 1994). This section seeks to contribute to theory upon the significant role that cultural background plays on food shopping and how individuals perceive their identity within this food culture. Elliott's (2004) consumption practices and identity model suggests that the ability of individuals to escape the structures of culture is limited when creating consumption identities or make consumption decisions. This thesis is contributing to this theory by presenting the cultural influences on Albanian and UK respondents on food shopping. Data from this thesis can be separated into two main themes representing the social aspects

under which culture influences shopping and determines consumer identity as a farmers' market or supermarket shopper: every day and necessary vs novelty and special purchases - the cultural and structural differences of farmers' markets in Albania and the UK and, identifying self and others as a farmers' markets and supermarket consumers – who shops there.

7.2.1 Every day and necessary vs novelty and special purchases - the cultural and structural differences of farmers' markets in Albania and the UK

Consumers' decision-making processes are subject to different cultural backgrounds (Perner, 2010; Miller, 2009). Central components of culture comprise of the food consumption habits and general consumption patterns, which contribute significantly to decision making when it comes to consuming or buying food (Tian and Wang, 2010; Wood and Muñoz, 2007; Mills, 2000). The cultural background of consumers strongly influences how and what they eat, how they handle and prepare food, as well as when it is suitable to eat (Miller, 2009). Identities are constructed through social practices and various forms of consumption; however, there is a limitation on how an individual can construct identity in free and random ways without retrieving memories from past experiences and recollecting the position the individuals have had in their previous social circles (Elliott, 2004). The concepts of ethnicity and the socially constructed nature of identity symbolised by food consumption cannot be reduced to simply a lifestyle (Caplan, 2013) but are deeply embedded factors in the identity creation of the individual. Individuals can choose identities at will from a variety of cultural identities that can be worn and then discarded (Belk and Costa, 1998). Data from this thesis showed that Albanians project this cultural identity through their shopping in farmers' markets. Findings highlight the cultural significance of the individual's choice of this food outlet rooted in family traditions which dated back many generations. Passing this cultural trait onto other family members highlights the importance of the "Albanian identity" to be carried out through the shopping in traditional food outlets. It has been previously stated that the identity of individuals is challenged during transition times (Schouten, 1991) which can lead to disruptions in consumption (Pavia and Mason, 2004).

However, the Albanian data from this study do not agree with these statements. Albanian consumers have gone through difficult periods of regime transition and turbulences after the dictatorship collapsed in 1989. Until this point the country was relying on its own resources and cultivated products. Once the system collapsed and the governmental cooperatives were dissolved there was no coordinated agricultural produce hence there was a limited or even absence of availability of food available for purchase. Also, in the mid-1990s the country faced a civil war leading to a mass emigration of Albanians to Europe and elsewhere in the world.

According to the studies conducted by Schouten (1991) and Pavia and Mason, (2004), all the disruption that took place in Albania in over a prolonged time, would mean that consumption patterns would have been disrupted or changed. However, data showed that despite other food outlets entering the country such as supermarkets, farmers' markets remain their first point for purchasing fruits and vegetables as AL Respondent 2 points out "I am Albanian, and I like to eat what is produced in Albania and tastes like the old times. [..] This is why I go to the farmers' market to remind me of the old times that I am used to".

While shopping in a farmers' market is considered by Albanians a traditional way of shopping every day for fruit and vegetables, for UK respondents this is considered a novelty shopping trip. UK findings revealed a sense of food adventure satisfied on a shopping trip to a farmers' markets outlet where unusual or speciality goods can be bought that are not available in a supermarket such as special meats served on special occasions like Christmas Day. This provides opportunities for UK respondents to develop a "food adventurer" identity that is not driven by cultural influences but personal impulses in search of "the new", "the different". Data also showed a need for UK respondents to connect with localness and the food produced in the region they come from. While findings project a positive feeling towards farmers' markets such as "enjoyment", "treat myself", "great day out", pricing is a determinant factor of this outlet becoming a more mainstream food shopping outlet. UK respondents treat farmers' markets as an alternative food outlet which provides the opportunity to purchase food for special occasions, novel goods to treat family and friends and source different varieties of novelty products that cannot be sourced in a

supermarket. No previous cultural factors were reported in influencing UK respondents to shop in farmers' markets, but data show that there is a new cultural trend developed considering this outlet special where families go to create positive family moments together and introduce children to fresh, locally produced food. This finding can be associated with how individuals enact family as highlighted in the assembling family work of Price and Epp (2015). Their work focuses on the role of consumption in becoming family drawing from assemblage theory and characterising family as an "unfolding and everchanging assortment of human and non-human actor interactions and future possibilities that in their synthesis form a distinctive consistency and expression that is a collective identity" (Price and Epp, 2015, p. 60). According to the authors, what modulates family are various processes of gathering that involve habits and practices, territories that provide a base where family gathers, with open spaces, smooth relations and stretching of the boundaries of the family assemblage, which depend on the expressive capability of the elements involved that provide the opportunity for boosting and improving relations (Price and Epp, 2015). The connection between the findings of this thesis and the assembling family theory is based on the territory that British respondents choose to enact family which in this case is the farmers' markets. As discussed earlier, respondents choose these food outlets to spend some time as a family and create some positive experiences for all family members which enables them to assemble and enact family in open spaces, outside the confinement of the house, which facilitates the family actors to boost their relationships. "The changing nature of family interaction highlights the dynamic nature of relations between components in the family assemblage and reveals the fluidity of shared practices" (Huff and Cotte, 2016, p. 905).

Structurally, while on the surface farmers' markets seem similar in both countries, with farmers for example selling foods on stalls on the street, they differ on many levels such as the price, food or craft offering, shopping environment (cleanliness, governmental control of standards and hygiene), novelty of products, the frequency, availability and proximity of the outlet. These findings can be complemented by another study which found that the lack or availability of supermarkets or local shops may play an influencing role on the individual's shopping and food behaviour (Piachhaud and Webb, 1996). These aforementioned factors set up the rationale for

the consumers' preferences of the shopping outlet but they impact decision making in conjunction with the historical and cultural backgrounds of the respondents of this thesis. Thus, this thesis contribution to the literature is attributed towards the presentation of the different structures of these food outlets in a Western and a Balkan country, how consumers of these countries build identity by shopping in these outlets and the cultural differences that define the structure and operations of the farmers' markets in Albania and the UK as perceived by the respondents of this study.

7.2.2 Identifying self and others as a farmers' markets and a supermarket's consumer – who really shops there

Farmers' markets

The contribution of the thesis in this section is the identification of the farmers' market and the supermarket consumer from the consumers' point of view. Previous studies researching this subject (Wolf et al, 2005, Lyon et al., 2009), have drawn the profile of the consumers' by taking into consideration variables such as socio-economic variables, derived from the respondents' demographic data, using qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods to find out the characteristics of these outlets' typical consumer by analysing personal preferences. Usually the results show that a typical farmers' market customer is middle aged with a good income, conscious about health issues and supportive towards sustainable initiatives (Spilková et al., 2013; Smithers and Joseph 2010; Alkon, 2008; Guthman, 2008; Moore, 2006; Sonnino and Marsden, 2006; Onianwa et al. 2005; Tregear, 2005; Feagan et al, 2004; Brown, 2002; Jekanowski et al. 2000; Eastwood et al., 1999; Lockeretz, 1986). As previously discussed, a great number of these studies have been undertaken in Westerns contexts.

This thesis is taking a different approach to investigating this subject for two reasons: one is to investigate the social stereotypes and see how they are embedded in the individuals' perceptions around this topic, and two to understand how the respondents of this study identify themselves in terms of farmers' markets and supermarkets. UK findings show that respondents consider a typical farmers' market

customer to be a home owner, middle aged, educated, high earner, health, environmentally and socially conscious individual who is a "foodie".

Many western studies also highlight the class provenance and location of the farmers' markets' consumers being urban and middle-class (Brown, 2002; Guthman, 2008; Tregear, 2005; Moore, 2006). The UK findings of this thesis agree with the literature on this with respondents emphasising the class status of the potential farmers' market customer, with the majority of respondents quoting middle class people residing in affluent areas. However, the demographic data showed that respondents who do not fall under the above described categories, shop in farmers' markets but do not identify themselves as such. For example, UK Respondent 23, is a female in her mid-40s, no higher education and with a household income between £41,000-50,000 and not residing in an affluent area. However, she is a frequent farmers' markets customer who is enjoying shopping there and spending a substantial amount of money: "I shop every two weeks in the farmers' market. I would say the price is a negative, as much as I enjoy it, but it doesn't put me off and I spend more money there. But that's me because you get carried away. The positive side of it is enjoyment. I enjoy it more than shopping for clothes". From this statement it can be understood that she is a frequent farmers' market customer however, she does not believe to be one because: "I think that here are people that got more money because there is a certain buy-in around farmers' market. I wouldn't put me in that category, but it is maybe people with more money than someone that shops every week in the local supermarket" (UK Respondent 23). This finding shows that respondents who are farmers' markets customers, do not identify themselves as such due to the wider association these markets have with "posher" (UK Respondent 4) and "foodie" (UK Respondent 3) people. Another reason may be the fact that the farmers' markets are not on frequently or located within a convenient distance from the respondents' residential areas thus shopping is planned in advance and considered to be a leisure pastime. Additionally, it may be due to the fact that respondents may associate grocery shopping with supermarkets where the frequency is higher, and the shopping experience is not as pleasant or interactive.

As literature indicates that typical farmers' market customers are middle aged people, the respondents of this study also agreed with this statement. However, taking into

consideration their narratives, this is not the case for these specific participants as they acknowledged that they visit the farmers' markets with the whole family comprising of partners and children. Thus, this study is adding to the literature another perspective on the farmers' market consumers. While it is generally accepted that middle aged, middle income people frequent these markets, literature should also consider the family factor and the family shopping experience that the farmers' markets offer. On the other hand, Albanian respondents would identify everyone in Albania as a farmers' markets customer, from poor to rich people. This is due to the fact that is customary for everyone to buy there depending on the household affordability. Price sensitive customers would also quote price and income as an influential factor for anyone shopping in a farmers' market, but it is not similar to the UK findings. The prices are related to the number of products bought and not the option of opting out of this outlet altogether. Farmers' markets have been around for many years and many generations of Albanians have grown up with this food outlet as a standard provider of fruits and vegetables. Many Albanian respondents would quote the people of higher classes would shop in a farmers' market but not from a point of affordability but from the point of buying more or the better quality from what is on offer. As mentioned in the data analysis chapter, social classification in Albania refers to the income of the individuals not the actual class as it is known in the UK. Data showed that income indicates class in Albania and this is how respondents perceive the society to be primarily classified, with the level of education following next.

Supermarkets

The priority of supermarkets' segmentation strategies is to initially target the upper-income consumers and then move to consumers with lower incomes (Reardon et al., 2003). Literature states that typically, a supermarket customer is of young age, educated, a family person with children, and of a higher income compared to other retail-format customers (Home, 2002). Data gathered from UK respondents showed a symbolic hierarchy towards supermarket shopping and brand. While everyone agreed that all people shop in a supermarket, class and income define the brand of the chosen supermarket. The following quote summarises the perceptions towards

the class, income and supermarket choice: "This depends on the supermarket, as there are different budgets for people coming from different incomes, low, middle and high. Supermarkets have different prices and depending on the job that people do differentiates the shopping behaviour. Manual workers usually buy food with lower prices but higher calories to cope in their working environment" (UK Respondent 20). Supermarket shopping also plays an identification role in terms of an individual's self, based on the class they believe they belong that is represented by the supermarket chain: "In Sainsbury's and Waitrose, you meet more middle class people, with higher income" (UK Respondent 14). Literature indicates that symbolic consumption is used to create a social connections that expresses and individual's self identity within the social group they belong to (Cova, 1997). A survey about shoppers in the UK showed that they judge each other by the supermarket brand they frequent, and that the supermarket choice shows the social class of the individual (Mintel, 2007). UK data showed that there is a recognition on the symbolism of the supermarket choice associated with the social class and the residential area to which the individuals belong. Data made it clear that social stereotypes are persisting in today's society with consumers projecting their social class identity through their supermarket choices.

Another study showed that shopping in supermarkets is also associated with the socio-economic status of the individual, because supermarkets offer the middle-class consumer the opportunity "to differentiate themselves from the lower classes and to express a sense of belonging and a unique social identity" (Amine and Lazzaoui, 2011, p.570). Albanian findings of this thesis validate this. Supermarket shopping, as with the UK data, seems to reflect the different layers of society which in the case of Albania is dictated by the household income. The difference with Albanian data lies not only on the supermarket brand but also on the frequency and bulk of shopping highly impacted by the individual's income. Like the UK, there is a hierarchy of supermarket brands that projects social status and contributes towards Albanian individual's social identity creation. This study also casts some light on the different perceptions UK and Albanian respondents have towards the transparency of the supermarket operations. Albanian data showed that another reason for choosing to shop in a supermarket instead of an alternative outlet is the fact that supermarkets

pay taxes which contribute towards the wider social wellbeing and infrastructure of the country. It was argued that they shop in supermarkets to support local community because the taxes paid by the supermarkets are collected and returned to society in the form of education or other public services. This is contrary to the literature and the UK data, expressing mistrust towards the transparency that supermarkets display (Barrientos and Smith, 2007), their Fairtrade practices and the way they treat their suppliers (Spence and Rinaldi, 2012).

7.3 Discussion of research question 3: What is the impact of the social experiences on self identity while shaping the individual's choice of food outlet

Personal possessions project people's extended self, facilitate the construction of personal identity and create a culture of consumption (Belk, 1988). This becomes more relevant when hedonic consumption is involved where symbolic meanings play a crucial role in the decision-making processes (Perez et al., 2010). That said, Mittal (2006) argues that other things apart from possessions contribute towards self identity and this thesis theorises that any item within material culture could facilitate self creation with food being a more specific example. The maintenance of self identity is possible through the construction of coherent narratives of self, monitored and tested under different circumstances which makes the choices of the individual critical to self identity (Giddens, 1991). These choices and small decisions that individuals make such as what to eat, contribute towards every day routines that build self identity, consequently all choices not only affect individuals' actions but who they are (Giddens, 1991). Giddens (1991) also analyses the difficulties individuals face in sustaining self identity because individuals are confronted with a complex diversity of choices in a modern society. Individuals are called to make food choices almost on a daily basis which not only affects them but their family around them. Elliott's (2004) consumption practices and identity model considers how individuals understand the socially constructed sources for the self, such as popular culture and life stories, in two contexts between the social integration of the individual and the influences dominated by other sources familial or external. This thesis is contributing to this theory by presenting findings that demonstrate how the social experiences of

Albanian and UK respondents shape consumption practices in farmer's markets and supermarkets.

Albanian findings present a confident type of consumer when selecting fresh products in farmers' markets. This confidence is built on the shopping environment and cultural and social surrounding of Albanians' upbringing. Personal narratives were recalled during the interview process to justify this confidence in selecting the best quality of fruit and vegetables because as AL Respondent 17 states "we have been consuming such products all our lives and we can tell whether what we eat is bio or not". This knowledge has also been built on information gathered by observing farmers and family members. In contrast, UK respondents did not demonstrate the same level of direct quality awareness. Previous studies show that UK consumers prefer to shop in farmers' markets because they offer fresh, quality food (Youngs, 2003; La Trobe, 2001; Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000), however UK findings of this thesis identified a gap between good quality products and the ability of the UK respondent to identify it with their own senses, relying instead on the supermarket to filter their choices or certifications. In this occasion the social experiences of the consumer with the stall vendor assist the former to make food decisions relying on the information provided to him or her by the farmer. While this experience is embedded in Albanian's shopping behaviour, to UK consumers it is important that a socialisation factor occurs for the them to be able to make good food purchases by getting to know the farmer and the provenance of the food. This interaction also gives the consumers the opportunity to make a personal judgement on the farmer's trustworthiness (Kirwan, 2004). While it seems that trust is important to both Albanian and UK respondents when they make food choices, they are manifested differently in each country. To the British it is important to trust the farmers about the quality of the food they are buying from them. On the other hand, Albanians trust their own senses on recognising good quality food and their previous experiences that have contributed towards them becoming an expert on the matter.

There is a plethora of studies investigating consumers' perceptions of organic food farming (Huguchi, 2017; Burch et al., 2001; Cunningham, 2001; Davies et al., 1995; Lakin and Shannon 1999; Makatouni 2002; Seyfang, 2006) offered in farmers' markets (Trobe, 2001; Youngs, 2003; Guthrie at al., 2006). If a stall holder wishes

to sell produce labelled organic at any market they must be registered as organic sellers and provide proof of certification (Guthrie at al., 2006). There are only three recently official bodies founded in Albania, (BioAdria (founded in 2006), Institute of Organic Agriculture (founded in 2010) and Albinspekt (founded in 2006) (Bernet and Kazazi, 2011), providing certificates and appropriately labelling to organic products, however findings show an unfamiliarity with the labelling and certification process. Albanian findings showed that there is a general awareness of the certified bodies existing in the country however, there was a strong belief that Albanian respondents did not need any certification to identify organic food. Their previous experiences with food shopping and their knowledge of the farmer and how naturally the goods have been produced, shape Albanian confidence recognising organic food without the presence of certification. This might be due to the fact that Albania has been mainly an agricultural country with the majority of people understanding and having direct experience of the cultivation process of foods and vegetables and the ingredients and processes needed for "naturally" produced products. On the other hand, for many consumers in the UK there is a knowledge gap between them and the food production (Kneafsey et al., 2007). This is due to the fact that agriculture is undertaken by few people and remotely from urban areas and food has been increasingly retailed to consumers via supermarkets which contribute towards the distance between consumers and food production and farming (Kneafsey et al., 2007).

UK findings also showed that the social factor is very important in making purchases in farmers' markets. Despite that fact that the UK market is full of official organisations controlling and labelling organic food, findings showed that UK respondents rely on the social interaction they have with the farmers and the information provided on the quality of the food that is sold to them. The social experiences would influence their beliefs about the products being organic, based solely on the trust put on the farmer claiming the products are organic. This is contrary to their purchasing of organic products in supermarkets where respondents would spend some time reading the labels to identify the organic and regional origin of foods on the shelves. This finding contributes to the literature in highlighting that the social factor and the interaction with the farmer claiming to have produced the food on sale, plays a more important role than labels on supermarket shelves when

making organic food purchases. This theorisation could also be extended to other non organic products where the trust put on the vendor is more important than the certification of the food.

The social experiences of both Albanian and UK respondents contribute towards the creation of self dimensions that makes the appropriate food choices for the individuals and their family. Taking into consideration that social experiences play an important role in food decision making, this thesis contributes to the literature by providing information on the hedonistic and utilitarian aspects of shopping and the experiences gained in both supermarkets and farmers' markets as well as the actual shopping experience whether that is done with others or alone.

7.3.1 Hedonistic vs utilitarian shopping experience

It has been argued that store atmosphere comprising colours, displays, decorative features, ease of movement, smell, condition of the air, music, and lighting, is to encourage a positive consumer response (Theodoridis and Chatzipanagiotou, 2009; Babin and Darden, 1996) towards spending more time in the store (Babin et al., 2003). UK findings from this thesis do not agree with the above, as supermarkets were found to have a completely functional role for grocery shopping in a sheltered environment. The shopping experience was reported as being a chore with no interaction with the staff members. During the interview process the UK respondents would recall the feelings they develop while shopping in a supermarket store and compare it to how they felt shopping in a farmers' market. It was reported that getting in and out as soon as possible from the supermarket is what respondents seek so as not to waste any time due to the "clinical and more faceless" (UK Respondent 5) nature of the supermarket. On the other hand, contrary to the utilitarian UK shopping experience, Albanian data presented a more positive, hedonistic shopping experience in supermarkets because it usually involves other family members or friends. Factors contributing towards this are the cleanliness of the supermarket stores, the well organised shelves and the packaging which is more in line with previous studies' findings. While UK findings indicate that shopping in a farmers' market is seen as an outing for the whole family, Albanian findings on the

other hand showed that respondents see supermarkets "as an activity together. We really like it because if we get tired, we can pause for a coffee before we go home which makes the whole experience very nice" (AL Respondent 6). Jenkins (2014) argues that self-identity should be validated through social interactions because self is embedded in such practices. Data from this thesis agree with the literature with Albanians appreciating the social acceptance by the supermarket staff and the recognition they get as a valued customer which highlights the self-perception of an elevated status in a social group which shows the importance of establishing status and social acceptance through their food shopping. This finding depicts opposite trends of a hedonistic shopping experience which is impacted by the social interactions individuals have in a farmers' market and supermarket. This also shows how these two food outlets are socially structured in Albania and the UK. The farmer's market is a relatively new concept in the UK with the first one opening in Bath in September 1997 (FARMA, 2006), with consumers recently turning their attention towards the farmers' markets (Tong et al., 2012). While this is a recent and exciting way of shopping to UK consumers, for Albanians farmers' markets have always been part of society with consumers showing preferences for specific outlets or farmers due to the social interactions they have exchanged with each other. On the other hand, supermarkets remain the main retail outlets for food and grocery shopping in Western countries (Wrigley et al., 2009) and are so embedded in the shopping experiences of the UK consumers that is no longer considered a place where individuals can have a positive interaction with staff or other customers. Whereas in Albania for example, the first supermarket chain, Euromax opened its doors in 2005 (Likmeta, 2013) and then rapidly the country was introduced to hypermarkets where individuals could experience an extraordinary shopping trip with a variety of products such as food, clothes and electronic devices. Additionally, supermarkets offer resting places offering coffees and pastries where customers can catch up with family or friends. This whole experience provides a sense of achievement by doing the task of shopping but also adds a hedonistic aspect to it by enjoying a coffee after the shopping is done.

7.3.2 Shopping alone or with company

In the postmodern school of thought, it has been argued that friendships tend to be the new families of choice with the traditional social structure family influencing less than friends (Pahl and Pevalin, 2005). However, data from this thesis showed that Albanian respondents do not tend to get influenced by friends or other people due to their strong sense of understanding what is best for them. Exceptions are the members of the core family group where influences are allowed for the greater wellbeing of the group. This has also been found to be typically the case for the UK respondents, however they were more susceptible to friend influences than Albanians. Thus, this finding adds to existing theory by suggesting that family and friends are perceived as different influencing factors for UK respondents rather than one party being a stronger influencer than the other. Albanian data is contrary to existing literature with family influences being stronger than the friendships when it comes to general influence occasions and more specifically to making food choices. This derives from how Albanian and UK respondents choose to do their shopping and more specifically who they go with when they shop in farmers' markets or supermarkets. As demonstrated earlier, the shopping experience between the farmers' markets and the supermarkets is very different for the Albanian and the UK respondents. UK findings indicate that farmers' markets shopping is done in the company of someone else. Findings highlighted the association of food with family moments thus a connotation with family, happy moments are also connected with a visit to the farmers' markets. Supermarkets on the other hand, for various reasons such as budget, time or convenience constraints, were reported as places where shopping is done quickly, without the company of someone else, but if another family member is present this is for auxiliary purposes to help with transport. The opposite trend is relevant for Albanian findings. Farmers' markets involve quick trips often on the way to/from some other destination, without the company of a family member or a friend but if they are, they serve an auxiliary purpose to help with the bags. Although food purchasing, and cooking may involve both genders it is still a predominately female task in shared households (Lake at al., 2006). However, the study found that rather than accepting the food-related tasks as being "a woman's job", it was found that women had taken this responsibility because they were more

skilled in doing the job (Lake at al., 2006). Albanian data agree with the literature, but it was more applicable to older respondents "I go with my wife; she is the one that usually does the shopping though I mostly buy what she tells me to buy" (AL Respondent 13). For supermarket shopping data showed that this was considered a shared responsibility due to transportation needs and the use of a car "I usually go with my husband to the supermarket because I don't drive, and we usually do the supermarket shopping once a week to stock food for the following week" (AL Respondent 6). For UK data this was not found to be the case for either food outlet. Both genders were using the supermarkets equally. However, it was found that when the visit to the farmers' markets do not involve the whole family or friends, then women were more likely to shop there alone which agrees with previous studies.

7.4 Discussion of research question 4: Can common shopping experiences create neo-tribes of consumers with different cultural backgrounds?

Neo-tribes are small-scale groups, not created by any of the conventional parameters of modern society, are kept together via shared feelings, lifestyles, moral beliefs and consumption practices (Cova and Cova, 2001). Their core existence involve shared feelings and beliefs, consumption and lifestyles practices (Cova and Cova, 2001). Literature suggests that when individuals of a group act together and engage with each other, this becomes a central factor of any consumption community which develops over time into a community that shares rituals and traditions (Schau et al., 2009). This means that by existing literature standards, neo-tribe members are known to each other and engage in various forms, either online or in person, when it comes to conducting consumption practices or expressing consumption views. The findings of this thesis are taking a different approach to what previous studies have researched to date. Data from this study were analysed to identify traits and patterns that are common in a cross-cultural setting and examine the possibility of neo-tribe creation without the conscious realisation of the consumers. Data revealed two groups of consumers that presented similar consumption traits relevant to cooking food and searching for information about the benefits of food as well as new ways of preparing family meals.

The first neo-tribe group that emerged from the data applies to UK respondents and is relevant to the new perspective individuals have on food and the need to purchase fresh ingredients so as to prepare food from scratch. This outcome was related to the feelings of the respondents to take on the same approach on food their parents had, when individuals were growing up. Maffesoli (1996) provides a sociological theory of modern society in terms of formation of tribes described as postmodern neo-tribes noting how shared ethical consciousness can create a tribe which may surpass the importance of the individual. He also suggests that a tribe refers to a specific environment or atmosphere, a state of mind, mainly expressed through individuals' lifestyles (1996). Data agrees with this as respondents expressed their willingness to start a new family tradition on food and pass on this new rediscovered lifestyle to their children "my husband is obsessed with fresh homemade food. With the exception of pizza, he refuses to have anything that is pre-packed. So, it is incredibly important, and we are growing our children with that" (UK Respondent 3). However, respondents showed no identification within an established "fresh ingredients for cooking at home" tribe and respondents did not use a tribalism language to communicate this new lifestyle. The notable element of the food behaviour exhibited by the UK respondents was the need to leave convenience food outside the daily diet for health and wellbeing reasons. Thus, looking out for fresh ingredients and educating other family members about healthy food, enhances the individual's family self and adds to their social identity by taking a more leading role in the family wellbeing. It is worth mentioning at this point as a comparative note that Albanian respondents demonstrated this need for fresh food throughout the interview process and their need to pass this on to their children as their parents had done before. This shows that while this food behaviour is embedded in their social and cultural structures, to UK respondents this seems like a new trend which urges individuals to go back to their grandparents' practices, rather than continue their parents' approaches probably due to the rise in purchasing processed food available in the UK during the 70s, 80s and 90s.

The second neo-tribe group that emerged from both the Albanian and the UK data is relevant to information seeking around food with the internet being the primary source overcoming 'formal' cultural authorities (Cova and Cova, 2002). Findings show

that respondents present similar traits in terms of their shopping and information gathering behaviour that consists of those behaviours demonstrated by tribe members as indicated in the literature. However this assumption is made purely on the data analysis and the responses received that identified the similarities and the common information seeking patterns without respondents considering themselves to be members of a specific tribe. While literature indicates that neotribe members are part of the same group also sharing friendship links, common values and similar activities (Maffesoli 1996; Cova and Cova, 2002; Schau et al., 2009), this thesis finds that consumers of different cultural backgrounds develop common traits and consumption patterns without necessarily identifying as part of these groups. According to neo-tribalism theory, consumer tribes are built through a learning process that involves engagement, imagination and alignment (Wenger, 2000). Supporting this theory, this thesis finds that Albanian and UK respondents consider the internet to be an influencing factor around food shopping, with food and cooking blogs being sources of information, as well as virtual places were individuals with different backgrounds find common ground around food cooking. Cova and Cova (2002) investigate the tribalisation of society and how this is affecting marketing conduct. In their research they find that individuals like to gather in tribes where social communities are more affective and influential on the tribe members' behaviours than marketing institutions or other 'formal' cultural authorities (Cova and Cova, 2002). The online platforms used by Albanian and UK respondents in order to gather information around food, defy cultural and social boundaries and are places where information around food attributes and health agents associated with specific food products can be found. This also allows individuals to access new recipes and enrich their daily diet with food from all around the world enhancing the individual's culinary experiences as part of their social identities. It is also worth mentioning that data highlighted a shift in the younger generations of Albania towards searching for information online and away from the familial influence demonstrated in the previous sections of this chapter. The theoretical and marketing contribution of this thesis is the identification of various individuals across nations that develop similar traits and consumption patterns without understanding that they are part of a wider group of people projecting the same traits that contribute towards their various social selves.

This suggests that marketing managers can break national barriers by reaching these tribes via online media platforms such as blogs, social media etc.

From the above it can be seen that in both groups there is a focal point where all respondents access information, either through the farmer when searching for fresh ingredients or from the blogger when retrieving online information. The vendors in the farmers' market that provide details about the food they sell and the blogger that shares recipes, nutritious information about food etc, are the centre of influence in what consumers buy in a farmers' market or how they cook. This behavioural pattern shows that consumers are in direct communication with the vendors and the bloggers, taking their advice on what to buy or how to cook their food, but do not communicate with each or have knowledge that others are following the same patterns as the neo-tribe theory suggests. Thus, it could be considered that in both Albanian and UK cases, the vendors and bloggers network with their customers, using direct and similar communication approaches enabling them to create neo-tribes that follow their instructions.

This finding is different from the traditional approach studies have had so far on the neo-tribe creation. According to existing theory consumer tribes are built through a learning process that involves engagement, imagination and alignment (Wenger, 2000). Through engagement, individuals act together and is a central component of any consumption community developing over time into community rituals and traditions (Schau et al., 2009). All individuals of a tribe act together in a way that they impact within and beyond the boundaries of the group in order to achieve a greater goal (Goulding et al., 2013). The neo-tribe members share between them moral values, opinions, consumption values and preferences, providing the opportunity for marketers to access consumers that connect with each other by sharing consumption preferences (Mitchell and Imrie, 2011). Mitchell and Imrie (2011) suggest that tribal members are very passionate in their involvement with the tribe and very knowledgeable of the tribe structure. However, although this thesis finds that some of the participants of this study displayed all that is highlighted in theory in terms of shared traits such cooking lifestyles (fresh ingredients, cook from scratch for the benefit of the family) or retrieving information from the internet on how to cook their food, respondents did not have the knowledge that they may form

part of a tribe. Hence they were not actively engaging within the tribe with other tribe memebrs. For ease of understanding the argument presented in this thesis, Figure 16 represents the neo-tribe relationships as depicted in the literature (where M stands for neo-tribe member) and Figures 17 and 18 the behaviours displayed by the respondents of this thesis.
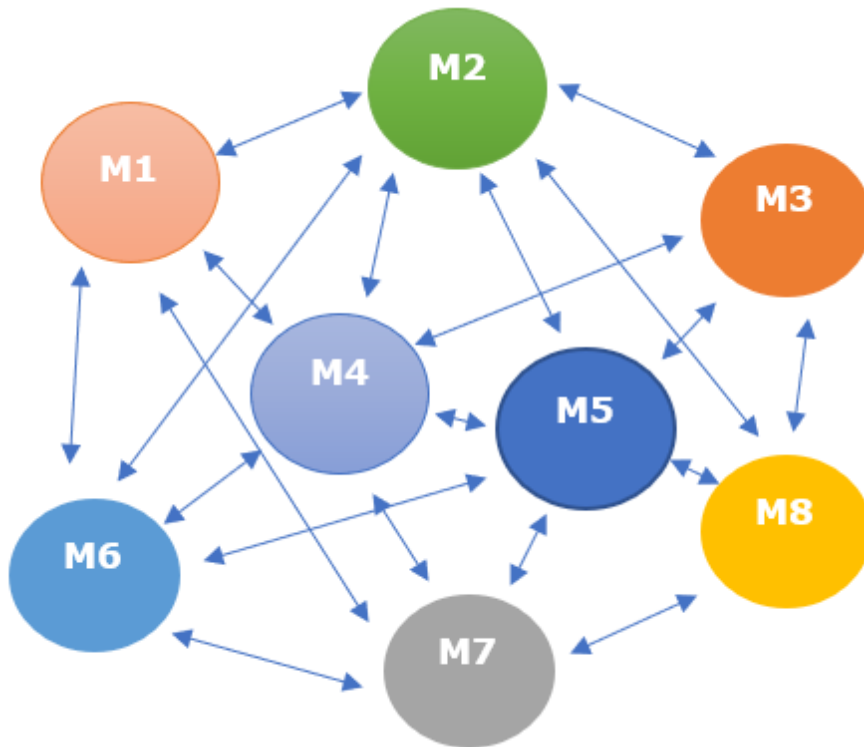
Figure 16: Relationship and communication representation of neo-tribe theory

As figure 16 shows above, neo-tribe members recognise each other as members of the tribe they belong too. They communicate with each other in terms of the products or services that the tribe is related to and acknowledge that each tribe member displays similar behavioural traits with each other towards a product or services and that they share similar lifestyles. Whereas, this study finds that individuals taking advice from farmers on using fresh ingredients and cooking from scratch while using similar practices indicated to them by the farmer, and while they form a tribe theoretical terms, they do not acknowledge themselves or other tribe members, or realise that they are part of a wider group of people who follow the same advice. The same can be said about consumers retrieving information online by visiting various

blog platforms in search of new recipes and nutritional information about the food they consume. As represented in Figures 17 and 18, we see the farmer and the blogger in direct communication with the consumer, but consumers are not communicating directly with each other.
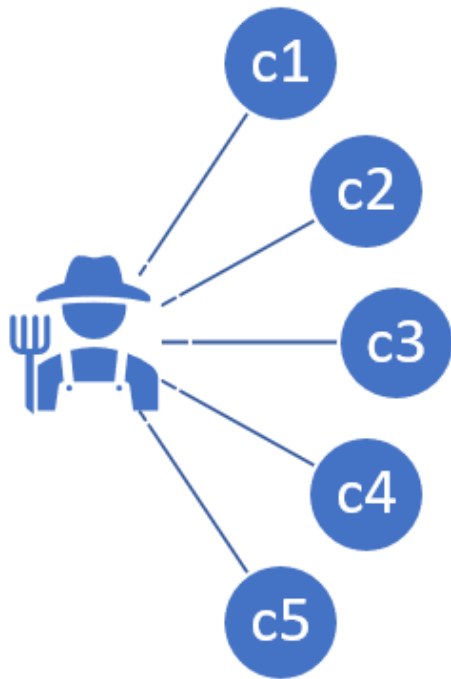
Figure 17: Farmers creating neo-tribes **Figure 18: Bloggers creating neo-tribes**
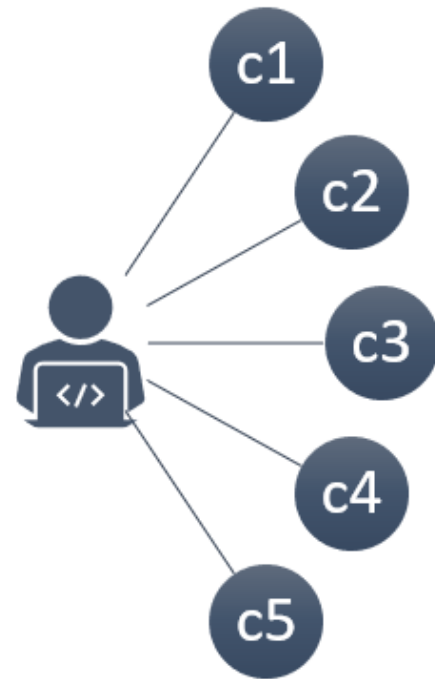
This finding could possibly stretch the existing theory of neo-tribes dictating that members of the tribes acknowledge the existence of other members who follow the same lifestyle, providing the basis for future research in investigating neo-tribes from the point of their creation and how communication is done from a central source of information towards the wider members of the groups in addition to investigating patterns, similar lifestyles, behaviours and personal traits.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the contributions of this thesis to the literature on how self-identity is understood by individuals and presented in various actions by considering the theorisation of these perspectives across the UK and Albanian informants. The

findings were discussed in conjunction with Elliott's (2004) model of consumption practices and building identity and with other self-identity theories highlighted in the literature review chapters.

The chapter also considered how individuals understand the socially constructed sources of the self, such as popular culture and life stories, in two contexts between the social integration of the individual and the influences dominated by family, friends, social norms and the social groups under which each individual places themselves. This is also reflected in the relations of the social structures and social positions in influencing UK and Albanian individuals' food shopping experiences and the individuals' interpretations of these influences in action (for example what to shop for in which food outlet). From the data discussion and the literature debated in this chapter, identity creation seems to be developed through some paradoxes presented in Figure 19. The arrows of the figure of paradoxes represent the tension of esoteric forces consumers experience when deciding which food outlet to choose. This esoteric journey contributes towards the development of several identities that consumers project interchangeably depending on the situation they are in.
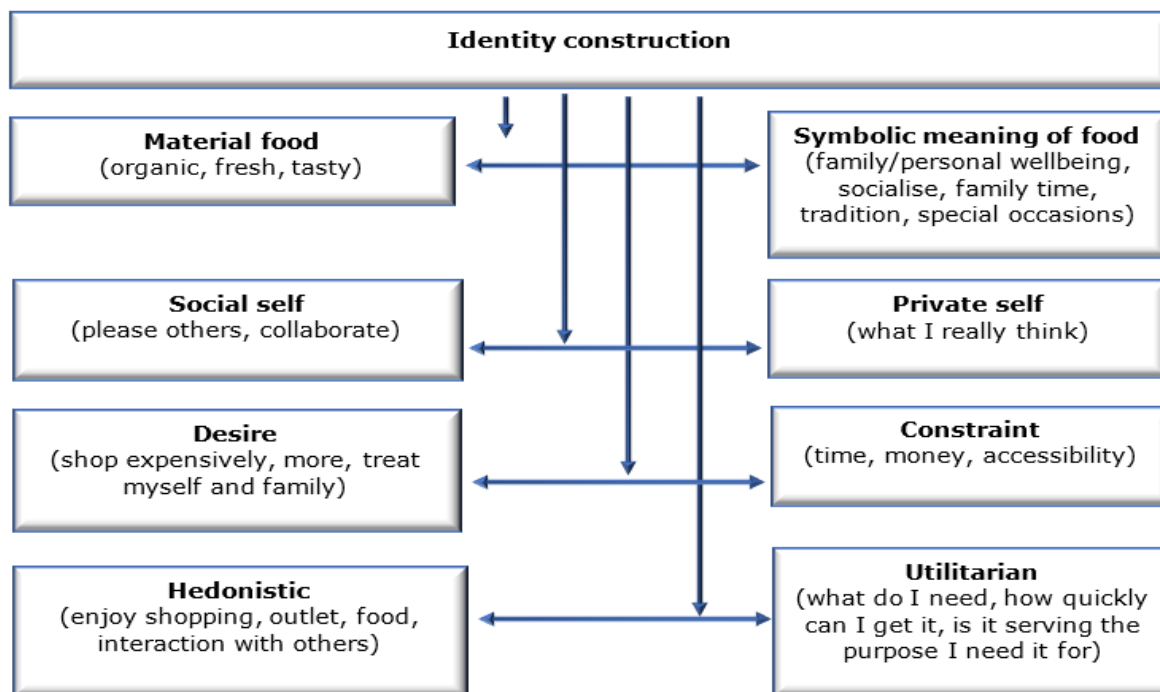
Figure 19: identity creation paradoxes

The food culture aspects were also discussed as being part of the informants' identity and the differences between the UK and Albanian were highlighted. The chapter also considered shopping experiences as part of the same interpretive community that create neo-tribes sharing common shopping experiences in a cross-cultural shoppers' community. The findings showed that neo-tribes communities are created by individuals projecting similar behavioural traits when searching for further information around food with the individuals not realising they are being part of these new groups.

Finally, the overall contribution of this thesis was presented in this chapter highlighting the findings that extend literature on two main subjects: self identity creation and Albanian and UK consumers' perceptions of supermarkets and farmers' markets food outlets providing a comparison between these two consumer groups.

Chapter 8: Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

8.0 Introduction

This final chapter concludes the purpose of this study by highlighting the contributions this thesis to theory and practice. The chapter also discusses the limitations of the research, managerial implications and considerations for future research.

8.1 Key contributions of the thesis

The aim of this study is to understand how British and UK individuals create self-identity through food consumption in farmers' markets and supermarkets and it is important to see how effectively this research aim has been met. Elliott's (2004) consumption practices and identity model provided the research framework for this study and was considered appropriate in gathering and adding rich data to existing findings within the consumer culture theory school of research. In conjunction with the use of self-identity theories, this model also allowed the consideration of structural, cultural and social sources of self, such as family friends, social and cultural norms, personal experiences built in shopping outlets, feelings developed through the use of certain products and shopping habits, textures, tastes and sense of adventure around food to be incorporated into the British and Albanians' narratives of self-identity. It has also assisted in conceptualising the under-explored subject of the Albanian consumer for the first time. The examination of relationships developed from social experiences and family traditions and food consumption have led to making a theoretical contribution towards Albanian food shoppers' identity and interaction with their environment. Additionally, this study provided a comparison of this customer with a British one in terms of experiences, self-identity creation, shopping patterns and behaviours around food bought in supermarkets and farmers' markets and the ways in which each consumer type is influenced by social and cultural antecedents. This allows a cross-cultural comparison of food shopping practices in these contexts which is a novel research design in itself and specifically within the CCT literature. Moreover, the methodological approach used in order to

meet the research aim of this study, has ensured a richness of data maintained throughout the research process providing a deep understanding of the personal narratives presented within Albanian and British consumer culture experiences, which allowed the findings to be presented in a detailed and considerate way. For ease of reading and in no particular order of significance, but following the layout of previous chapters beginning with the comparison of farmers' markets and supermarkets, the contributions made by this study are listed as following:

1. The first contribution of this thesis is the opportunity to compare supermarkets and farmers' markets as food outlets considering the experiences, purchases and social interactions that consumers make in both outlets. To the author's best knowledge this is the first time such comparison has been made as extant literature presents arguments and investigations about each outlet separately. Secondly, this comparison is conducted in a cross-cultural setting providing in-depth information about two different consumer groups in Albania and the UK. Again, this element of the research design represents a novel empirical contribution. Further, the theory used to build the research framework is Consumer Culture Theory which has only been previously applied in a single culture/country such as the USA (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; McGrath et al., 1993), whereas this study adds to this school of thought a cross-cultural dimension.

2. Albanians term for farmers' markets is the villagers' markets. This reflects the social structure determined during the communist era. Farmers and all sorts of food producers were situated in the villages around the urban cities, working in the governmental cooperatives who were also selling their produce in the big cities via street markets. Citizens of the big cities called the street markets the villagers' markets to distinguish the provenance and the social status of the producer. To this day, despite the fact that vendors of these markets might not come from or reside, in villages, the street markets are still called villagers' markets. To Albanians they are considered to be functional shopping places to get fresh products as part of a daily routine at affordable prices. In contrast to these findings, to British people farmers' markets are places where hedonistic

experiences are to be had. They were shown to be sites for 'doing family' (Price and Epp ,2015). This study takes this further suggesting that, given the UK findings about food norms skipping a generation and the loss of knowledge about buying direct from producers, UK consumers are using farmers' markets and the food they purchase there as a means of 'recreating family' by reinstating skills and norms from previous generations.

Moreover, there is a lack of critique in the literature around Western farmers markets by not presenting any negative aspects of these outlets. The health and hedonistic attributes of the fresh, tasty and organic products has been the main characteristics discussed in various studies (Youngs, 2003; La Trobe, 2001; Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000), leading to an assumption that farmers' markets literature is presenting only a positive image of these outlets. This study finds that in Albania there are concerns around the lack of cleanliness, governmental control and hygiene whereas in the UK arguments were presented around the infrequency, the exposure to natural elements and the fact that these outlets are treated as special places where consumers treat themselves and family but are not considered mainstream food outlets. Another difference this study finds between Albania and UK is the type of products displayed in the farmers' markets: in Albania they only provide food products whereas in the UK there is a combination of food, novelty and craft goods.

3. The supermarket literature argues that store atmosphere comprising colours, displays, decorative features, ease of movement, smell, condition of the air, music, and lighting will encourage a positive consumer response (Theodoridis and Chatzipanagiotou, 2009; Babin and Darden, 1996) towards spending more time in the store (Babin et al., 2003). The UK findings of this thesis do not agree with these findings because supermarkets are culturally understood as having a functional role for grocery shopping in a sheltered environment. The shopping experience was reported as being a chore with no interaction resulting in respondents not spending more time in the store than is necessary. In contrast, supermarkets were considered to be more pleasant places to shop

for Albanians due to the beautifully displayed shelves, staff treatment, cleanliness and store ambience which is more consistent with existing literature. This finding depicts opposite trends of a hedonistic shopping experience which is impacted by the social interactions individuals have in a farmers' market and supermarket. This also shows how differently these two food outlets are socially structured in Albania and the UK.

4. Another contribution this thesis makes is around the importance of social factors and the interaction of the British consumer with the farmer that claims the food sold is organic instead of asking to see a certification as they would do in a supermarket. The social experiences contribute towards the creation of self dimensions that makes the appropriate food choices for the individuals and their family. This shows that the rapport built with the vendor is stronger than the label on a product displayed on a supermarket shelf, and is more likely to influence and encourage a sale. Thus, the trust placed in the vendor is more likely to trigger sales in a farmers' market than the display of an organic certificate would do. Moreover, this study also contributes in that Albanian and UK respondents were not asked directly about their perceptions and shopping behaviours towards organic food. Questions were formed in a way to trigger discussions an let respondents bring unmediated answers around purchasing organic food. The subject of buying organic food was more prominent among Albanian respondents who refer to it as "bio" food.

5. This study contributes knowledge to existing neo-tribe literature in two ways: a) it investigates neo-tribes created by a single source usually being a focal point such as food blogger or food vendor, with neo-tribe members not realising they are part of the group, and b) uses a cross-cultural sample of consumers that display similar traits when searching information around food. The first contribution is about the online platforms used by Albanian and UK consumers administered by bloggers, and the vendors in farmers' markets that interact about the food with each consumer separately. We see here that the vendor or the blogger is in communication with the consumers who adopt the suggested practices but are not in communication with each other although

they share the shopping experience (the other consumers using the same advice given by the blogger and the vendor) or recognise these traits in each other as theory suggests. In both Albanian and UK cases, the vendors and bloggers network with their customers using similar communication patterns stretching the existing theory of neo-tribes. The second contribution to the neo-tribe discussion is that to the author's best knowledge, this is the first study that investigates neo-tribe patterns in a cross-cultural setting. The theoretical and marketing contribution of this thesis is the identification of various individuals across nations that develop similar traits and consumption patterns without understanding that they are part of a wider group of people projecting the same traits that contribute towards their various social selves. This means that marketing managers can break national barriers by reaching these tribes via online media platforms such as blogs, social media etc. that defy cultural and social boundaries, and are places where information around food attributes and health agents associated with specific food products can be found.

6. A further contribution of this thesis is the attempt to summarise the paradoxes derived from the data showing how individuals create identity. As shown in Figure 25 above these paradoxes represent the tension of the esoteric forces consumers experience when deciding which food outlet to choose. This esoteric journey contributes towards the development of several identities that consumers project interchangeably depending on the situation they are in.

7. The final contribution of this thesis is that the use of two different shopping contexts within two different cultural settings has demonstrated that Elliott's model can be used to compare consumer experiences in both these ways. In order to operationalise this it is suggested that the term 'popular culture' can be applied in a more nuanced way to take account of national levels (e.g. UK or Albania) and/or supra-national levels (e.g. Northern European or post-communist) of cultural norms. Within the model these could be distinguished separately for cross cultural research designs. A further narrative around

cultural norms should be added to deepen the understanding of future researchers aiming to apply this model in practice.

8.2 Managerial implications

The findings of this thesis can be of assistance to both farmers' markets and supermarket management. To begin with, UK findings show a lack of social element when shopping in a supermarket which has a negative impact on the shopping behaviour or experience which may result in less spending. The music, colours, ambience and general stimuli of the store do not seem to impress British consumers who wish to exit the store as soon as possible after buying what they need. Supermarket store managers could use the findings of this study to adjust their future client facing strategies. Previous studies have focused on the training of the supermarket staff in order to meet customer needs, maximise loyalty and bring the customer back to the store to shop again (Quinn, 1996; Cook, 2010). The findings of this study identified the farmers as tribe initiators which can also be recreated in a supermarket store. All supermarket brands offer loyalty card point systems with each supermarket operating it in different ways creating loyal neo-tribes to their respective stores. By creating these neo-tribes, supermarkets can use various communications towards their card holders in order to benefit the customers, leading to them spending more time and money in store.

An alternative solution to meeting customer needs would be the retraining of the supermarket staff to better engage with customers and provide a more farmers' market service that will enhance customer experience in store and make the trips more enjoyable. This could be achieved by offering samples of the food and train staff about the food provenance so as to engage with customers.

For farmers' markets, the main theme that stood out from the data is the fact that they are scarce and usually customers randomly find them when on their way to a different location. This could be rectified with the help of councils that could provide an overseeing of these markets, organise them more frequently and help promote their occurrence more actively via social media or other means of promotions. Marketing could feature the leisure aspects, hedonistic experiences and family

moments provided by the markets, in order to tap into what is valued by the UK customer, as well as the artisan food angle usually provided.

For Albanian respondents the main issue that derived from the interviews was the lack of governmental control and hygiene in farmers' markets which puts customers into a negative mood when shopping there. These could be addressed by the various regional councils that could work with their citizens in order to put pressure on the Albanian government to impose more robust control to ensure public health.

8.3 Research limitations

The data collection for this thesis was conducted within specific time frames both in Albania and the UK. As such, this is a cross-sectional study: a snapshot in time. This means that the emerging trends described in this study might have continued to evolve and develop into something else. Especially with regards to the neo-tribe section as new technologies are emerging and online platforms such as social media and virtual words where individuals replicate real life patterns.

Another limitation is that the sample of this study was collected in Albania's capital of Tirana. While this is a city with the largest population in the country, other views of the countryside have not been represented in the findings of this thesis which might have given a glimpse of consumer behaviour outside the capital.

8.4 Further research

As mentioned in the limitations section, data for this thesis was collected at a specific point in time. A longitudinal approach would allow the provision of information about the changes in behaviours and trends around the shopping patterns in supermarkets and farmers' markets. A longitudinal study would give insights on how everyday life influences identity matters and would provide a clearer image of how the neo-tribes identified in this study would be shaped in the course of a few continuous years. Also, this study incorporates findings from Albania and the UK. Adding another country with a rich tradition in farmers' markets such as Greece or Italy could provide a thorough understanding of perceptions and self-identity creation in a wider context

and identify whether there are any similarities or differences with neighbouring countries.

Future studies could take into account online supermarket shopping and investigate how this new modern way of shopping is influencing the core self and its dimensions.

8.5 Conclusion

This final chapter of the thesis highlighted the contributions of this study to existing literature and the implications they have. Special consideration was given to the limitations of the study and the recommendations and managerial implications the findings of this thesis make for the supermarket and farmers' markets customer experience. Recommendations were also provided for future research.

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Appendixes

Appendix I: Demographic data

Demographic data of Albanian respondents

Gender	Age Range	Number of Adults in Household	Number of Children in Household	Education	Occupation	Household Income range	GBP equivalent of LEK*
F	60-69	2	0	BSc Pharmacy	Pharmacists	over 80,000LEK	£585
F	40-49	3	1	High School	Housewife	over 80,000LEK	£585
F	40-49	3	2	High School	Shop Owner	41-50,000LEK	£300-366
F	60-69	2	0	BSc Agricultural Economy	Pensioner	21-30,000LEK	£154-219
M	70+	2	0	BSc Agricultural Economy	Pensioner	61-70,000LEK	£446-512
F	30-39	2	2	BSc Information Management	Secretary	21-30,000LEK	£154-219
F	40-49	3	2	High School	Shop Owner	61-70,000LEK	£446-512
F	50-59	2	0	BSc Economy	Economist	31-40,000LEK	£227-292.5
F	50-59	2	2	University	Book Binder	31-40,000LEK	£227-292.5
F	50-59	4	2	High School	Hairdresser	51-60,000LEK	£373-439
F	40-49	4	0	High School	Shop Assistant	51-60,000LEK	£373-439
F	30-39	2	1	BSc Finance	Financial Analyst	over 80,000LEK	£585
M	50-59	4	1	High School	Mechanic	71-80,000LEK	£520-585
F	21-29	1	1	MSc in Science	Unemployed	51-60,000LEK	£373-439
F	30-39	3	1	BSc Finance	Economist	over 80,000LEK	£585
M	30-39	3	0	MSc Finance	Accountant Assistant	61-70,000LEK	£446-512
M	50-59	3	0	MSc Law	Manager in a training centre	over 80,000LEK	£585
F	-20	3	1	Student in BSc German	Student	71-80,000LEK	£520-585
F	30-39	2	2	High School	Housewife	31-40,000LEK	£227-292.5
F	30-39	2	3	BSc Language and Literature	HR Manager	over 80,000LEK	£585

						over 80,000LEK	£585
M	50-59	3	0	High School	Radio Relations	over 80,000LEK	£585
M	20-29	2	0	Student in BSc Nursery	Waiter	21-30,000LEK	£154-219
M	40-49	3	1	High School	Mechanic Engineer	31-40,000LEK	£227-292.5
M	60-69	3	1	BSc Conductor	Prof of Music/Conductor	61-70,000LEK	£446-512
M	40-49	2	2	High School	Seamster	41-50,000LEK	£300-366
F	21-29	5	0	BSc Law	Lawyer	over 80,000LEK	£585
M	30-39	3	0	BSc Agricultural Engineer	Bar Owner	over 80,000LEK	£585
F	30-39	3	0	High School	Sale Rep	41-50,000LEK	£300-366
F	50-59	5	0	High School	Housewife	41-50,000LEK	£300-366
F	21-29	2	1	College for Secretaries	Receptionist	41-50,000LEK	£300-366

*currency exchange as extracted from www.xe.com [accessed on 25/7/2019]

Demographics data of UK respondents

Gender	Age Range	Number of Adults in Household	Number of Children in Household	Education	Occupation	Household Income range
F	40-49	2	1	Postgraduate Qualification	Marketing	£41-50,000
M	40-49	3	0	High School	Risk Manager	£51-60,000
F	50-59	2	3	ACIOBS	Business Manager	£31-40,000
M	50-59	3	0	PhD Physics	Reader	£51-60,000
F	30-39	2	0	Professional Qualifications	Corporate Service Officer	£41-50,000
M	50-59	2	0	MSc Electronics	Engineer	£61-70,000
M	21-29	2	0	University Graduate	Mechanical Engineer	£31-40,000
F	21-29	2	0	University Graduate	Library Assistant	£21-30,000
M	30-39	1	0	Masters graduate	Advertising	over £70,000
F	30-39	2	0	BSc Theatre Studies	PA	£51-60,000
F	40-49	2	2	BSc Electronic and Electrical Engineering	Housewife	over £70,000
M	40-49	2	1	BSc Geology	Senior Operations Geologist	over £70,000
M	40-49	2	0	BSc Geology	Corporate Sales	over £70,000
F	50-59	1	0	PhD Accountancy	Professor	£61-70,000

F	30-39	3	0	MSc Marketing Management	Student	£51-60,000
M	40-49	2	2	University Graduate	Project Engineer	over £70,000
F	40-49	2	2	High School	State Registered Paramedic	over £70,000
F	30-39	2	1	MSc in Diplomacy	HR	over £70,000
F	40-49	2	2	Doctorate	Learning Teaching Management	£61-70,000
M	30-39	2	1	MSc Corporate Risk Management	Contractor	over £70,000
F	21-29	1	0	BSC Nursing	Nursing Assistant	£15-20,000
F	50-59	3	0	University Graduate	Accountant	over £70,000
F	40-49	2	0	High School	Administrator	£41-50,000
F	40-49	2	2	PhD in Marketing	Lecturer	over £70,000
F	30-39	2	0	University Graduate	Operations Manager	£51-60,000
F	30-39	2	0	BSc Education	Research Coordinator	£21-30,000
M	30-39	2	0	High School	Office Administrator	£21-30,000

Appendix II: Respondents' consent form

Participant Information Sheet

Project Title

British and Albanian consumers' perceptions of farmers' markets and supermarkets as food outlets

Purpose

This research project is conducted as part of the primary research for Athina-Evera Qendro of her PhD programme in Marketing.

What is this research project about?

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the difference of perceptions of Albanian consumers of shopping in farmers' markets and supermarkets as food outlets and compare the responses from the Albanian findings to consumers in Britain, in order to identify whether culture plays an important role in the decision making process when purchasing food goods .

What will you have to do and how long will it take?

The researcher will want to interview you. This should take no longer than 40 minutes. The researcher may ask for relevant documents or sources accessible for this research. The interview may be recorded. You will be asked to give consent prior to the interview, and maybe asked to also give consent at a later stage.

What will happen to the information collected?

The information collected will be used by the researcher to write a dissertation for her PhD thesis. Only the researcher *and her supervisor Professor Seonaidh McDonald* will be privy to the notes, documents, recordings and the paper written. Afterwards, notes and documents will be destroyed and recordings erased. The researcher will keep transcriptions of the recordings and a copy of the paper but will treat them with the strictest confidentiality. No participants will be identified in the publications and every effort will be made to disguise their identity.

Declaration to participants

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study at any time (including after the interview or questionnaire has been completed).
- Ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation.
- Be given access to a summary of findings from the study when it is concluded.

Who's responsible?

If you have any questions or concerns about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Researcher:

Athina-Evera Qendro

e.a.qendro@rgu.ac.uk

Supervisor:

Seonaidh McDonald

s.mcdonald@rgu.ac.uk

Consent Form for Participants

(Insert title of project)

Consent Form for Participants

I have read the **Participant Information Sheet** for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I understand I can withdraw any information I have provided up until the researcher has commenced analysis on my data. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the **Participant Information Sheet**.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the **Participant Information Sheet**.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Additional Consent as Required – delete if not appropriate to your research

Examples:

I agree / do not agree to my responses to be recorded.

I agree / do nor agree to my images being used

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name and RGU contact information:

Supervisor's Name and RGU contact information: (if applicable)

Appendix III: UK interview sample

<u>Part 1: The role of social experiences in shaping an individual's choice of food outlet – common shopping experiences creating neo-tribes</u>

1. Is food important in your family?

   Absolutely, it is a very social thing. I am a rubbish cook but husband is a good cook so I like to buy nice things so he can cook.

2. Is it important where you buy food from?

   More so as I get older.

   - Can you tell why that is?

   When I was younger I used to eat a lot of convenience food whereas as I get older I enjoy fresher ingredients, diverse ingredients.

   - So where do you source that kind of food then?

     I go to the farmers' markets around here somewhere, specifically we like to try different meats so we use farmers' markets to source different meats such as ostrich burgers, like that (laughs) and it always feels like things are of better quality. You also get a broad range of vegetables there. They might not look as pretty as they are in the supermarkets but they feel like they are more wholesome.

3. Do you go shopping with a family member or friend to a farmers' market?

   I go by myself because probably the supermarket is a speedy activity for me but in farmers' markets I like to browse and take my time because I normally spend more money on items there , I like to take my time to choose whatever I think is best.

4. Do you see any similarities with them in the shopping habits and the things you buy in a farmers' market? N/A

5. Do you go shopping with a family member or friend to a supermarket?

Probably with family members. Often I'll have my son with me so I don't have the time before he starts grabbing everything. I don't have the time to select or even consider what to buy, I normally go with a list and throw things in the trolley. But when I go to farmers' markets or a grocery store I go with a vague list or I know what I want to cook and search for the ingredients.

6. Do you see any similarities with them in the shopping habits and the things you buy in a supermarket?

   Is it in what we buy?

   - Yes similarities with friends or social circles in the way you buy food from the supermarket.

     I normally do see similarities. Everybody is dragging their child around the supermarket, or rushing to buy a few things and they tend to be consistent with the same items such as breakfast items, coffee that kind of things people buy quickly without thinking. And yes most of my friends are like me in this way.

Part 2: Self-identity in action – food culture elements impacting consumers' identity

1. Is buying food from a farmer's market or a supermarket private or a social matter?

   I think it is quite private for me because it doesn't feel like shopping it feels more like an experience. It feels more like an outing (in a farmers' market) because you consider more what you purchase. I think because the items are pricier you consider more what you buy whereas in a supermarket, obviously as a marketer (laughs) I am used to a deal. With the lower cost

items you are thinking oh I will throw one of those and one of the others in. Whereas I don't do that when I am somewhere with a higher price.

Part 2.1 Farmers' markets

1. Can you tell me about the last time you bought food in a farmers' market? Were you alone?

That would have been again the butchery I visited this weekend, I managed to escape for an hour and I run around with a coffee on my hand. it is normally traditional goods that the butcher stores there but we have friends coming for dinner and I wanted to serve something different and so I spent an hour kind of wondering and picking ingredients for this meal. I guess it felt more like an event, more of a special occasion but I always end up buying myself some nice cheese (laughs) but yeah it is an hour on my own with a vague list of things that I needed. But I probably end up trying more things through that shopping than I do through supermarket.

2. You mentioned quality and diversity reasons from buying a farmers' market, is there anything else that makes you buy there?

I guess, in a supermarket you have tones of choices and brands, this may sound silly, but you don't really understand anything about the producer. So for me it is important to know how the meat was reared or this family business makes the cheese or maybe hear a recommendation from a stallholder for a particular way to cook something to pear an item with. For example the other week I bought some mango and ginger stilton which it would be never something I would pick up in a supermarket because often at farmers' markets they frequently encourage you to try something and it would never be something I would pick up in a supermarket because I

wouldn't think like that. So I guess is more of a personal connection with the seller.

3. So I suppose these are the positive aspects of shopping in a farmers' market, are there any negatives?

The price obviously is higher and I see it from a marketing perspective that the cost to the producer is higher than selling it to the supermarkets. Sometimes, this is a terrible thing to say, but when you buy organic you feel is not so pretty so again you get an organic produce at a higher price point. And also there are limited quantities so if I know there is something specific I need to buy I will go at the beginning of the market or find out that I can't get what I want.

- You mentioned organic just now, what does that mean to you?

   To me it is when you are visiting the stallholder and they tell you their exact views on what's in their products so if somebody says we've not put any pesticides or we have not grown this with any supplements but again it comes down to the personal connection you have with the seller. I guess I maybe occasionally do buy organic in a supermarket. The personal connection you have though with the seller it feels that it justifies the organic price tag which is always more.

- In supermarkets where you said you buy organic food, you can see that food there is certified and there are logos to show this, in farmers' market you say buy organic but this is not shown, so how do you know it actually is?

   (She laughs) that actually is very true! I guess again is being able to have the one to one conversation and actually the person behind the counter is not actually the person who is farming or you know but I

guess probably I am more trusting of a person telling me than I am of a label. Huh you've ruined it for me now (she laughs).

4. How frequently do you shop from farmers' markets?

Twice a month because the farmers' markets are not available every day so it would be weekends.

5. What kind of people shop from a farmers' market? Could you possibly describe a typical farmers' market customer?

I see a lot of women there, generally my age and older, maybe I guess that's to do with disposable income. Actually now I come to think about it not many children. Because it is traditional food specific at the one I go I see lots of tourists but it tends to be more mature ladies like myself (laughs). But I think it is frequented by 40 over and older age group and I guess in the supermarket is younger.

- Do you see men at all?

  Yes but they seem to be tasting and not shopping. My husband would occasionally go and do the same thing as me. If we're planning a meal he would say I'll go to the farmers' market to see if I can find anything good which you probably would find in a supermarket but.. people have preferred sellers and they look that they are on a mission but you definitely see a lot of women there.

Part 2.2 Supermarkets

1. Can you tell me about the last time you bought food in a supermarket?

Yesterday I went to buy ingredients for dinner. I follow a specific diet so I tend to buy specific ingredients but I just go through the same things all the time. I bought fruit, meat, vegetables and cake. There wasn't any brand

loyalty there it was whatever was on offer, quickly stick in the trolley, buy it get out.

- So the reason you shop in a supermarket is convenience then?

   Yes, definitely.

2. Who do you go with when shopping in a supermarket?

3. What do you usually buy when visiting a supermarket?

4. Why would you shop in a supermarket?

5. How frequently do you shop in supermarkets?

   Probably frequently, as I said my husband and I follow a particular diet that involves fresh vegetables and we are terrible at letting things getting mouldy so we go regularly to make sure we have fresher ingredients.

6. Positive/negative aspects of shopping in a supermarket?

7. What kind of people shop from a supermarket? Could you possibly describe a typical supermarket customer?

   I think often it is younger mothers nearly always with children, or office workers who run in to get something home. I guess is everyone but I am more conscious that is younger people with their children. I guess people who do not have so much time to shop.

Part 2.3: Shopping decision

1. How do you decide where to go shopping?

   Family time is quite important to us in the weekend and like I said food is quite a social thing so at least once a week we try to cook something nice and be all together around the table that normally prompt to me to go and buy at farmers' markets. It does feel more of an event. The supermarket tends to be on the way home from work or shortly after I've gone home

from work because I've run out of something and I need to replace it quickly and that tends to be whichever outlet is the closest.

2. What are the most important differences for you between farmers' markets and supermarkets apart from the outlets themselves?

It feels like the additional conversation with the shop owner or the grower, obviously I cannot do this at Morrisons (she laughs) or the producer, whichever, they can tell you lots about the food that you cannot access in a supermarket. So when I want something of a particular quality or I want a recommendation of something that is quite important to me. You can try new things before you buy them but also you can discover new things in a farmers' market.

3. What are your top priorities for making a decision on which food outlet to shop from (prices, brands, packaging, convenience of outlet, environment)?

Time is one, if I was in a position of having people coming to eat, it would be food because it is more of an event at the weekends because we have family coming to stay with us. If I have time I always choose to go to the market. If I don't have time I will go to the supermarket. Price is not always a problem because I often feel that if I want to enjoy something I will probably have to pay more.

4. Which would be your favourite food outlet if there weren't any constraints on your shopping process, why?

I think probably the market because I often get to go by myself (laughs). I have associated feelings with it! Price wise it doesn't always make sense for me to go there but if I didn't have any constraint on time or price I would choose to go there.

1. Can you tell me a few words about yourself?

    I am a quite loud and social person. I am a giving person because I work for a charity but I also have done a lot of non-profit activities for other places I have worked for. I am a trained masseuse. I have a postgraduate marketing qualification so I am a bit of a mixed bag. I like films, I like to learn and I am a bit of an older parent that is still learning.

2. What would you say makes you distinctive from the others?

    Woo!! – see I am making you think! Yes! I guess I am a bit of conflicting because I like quietness but I like a bit of loud as well. I think normally people are one or the other not both. I don't know what makes me distinctive. I can be quite a risk taker, I've never got any money. I don't know how to answer that question!

3. Looking back into your life, do you think you have changed much?

    Yes, I grew up in a poor family, never much money available and so I work quite hard throughout my life to change how my life would roll out. Education was not part of my younger life but I made part of my life as I grew up. Also moving to Scotland was a big thing I am from the South of England and I come from a little village where people don't move, don't leave. It's like hotel California they stay forever (laughs). And I think your experiences are changing you and I have experienced a lot of things and I think that has changed me.

4. Do you keep the same persona across different situations/events?

I think so, most people who meet me would probably agree that I am the same character, I obviously moderate loudness at work but I would say I am probably the same.

5. How easily can other people approach you and get to know you?

   I think easily, I hope my loudness doesn't put people off. I normally make quite an effort with people to engage them.

6. How, do you think, would others see/describe you?

   I don't think am particularly scary but people sometimes tell me that I can be. I think that is with a particular type of person. If a person is quite introverted and they see qualities in me that are quite the opposite I think sometimes they cringe around me, wow she is really loud. I would try and engage them and try and moderate to suit them.

Part 4: Social experiences of self

1. Talk to me about your family, who is it consisted of?

   I have been married for 8 years, my husband works in a tattoo shop and he also is a musician. My son is 4, crazy very active makes me learn something every day, yeah that's us.

2. Do you have a close relationship with them?

   Yes.

3. Do you feel they influence your decision making? Like where to shop your food from for example (farmers' market or supermarket)? How?

   Yes, my husband has no concept of what things cost so he very much will pursue something because he wants it regardless the cost so I couldn't take him to the market with me every time I go because I would spend a fortune. My son is actually non-verbal so he indicates with his hands what he wants. So in the supermarket this is what happens (shows with hands picking

things around) for the recording I am waving my hands to indicate places (she laughs) at the market he would do the same thing. However in a supermarket they are more linear if you knock things or disrupt a display. People at the markets have quite a small display so you can tell they don't like it when you disrupt it.

4. Do you think that the food shopping habits that are important to your parents have become important to you too?

Probably the opposite in my case. Because there was not much money when I grew up food was very functional so what we bought was what we needed and was affordable. It made me quite nervous of new foods. When I started earning my own money the freedom went with that. My mom still buys a lot of the things that we were younger because she got used to buy affordable items whereas I buy food with different selection criteria. My mom would choose something if it was cheap, if it was lot of it to feed lots of people. I would walk past of that because I know it would be of rubbish quality. I have not had good food habits growing up and I want my son to get good food habits so I want to pass quality to my child.

5. Does classification mean anything to you in terms of nationality, education, income class or religion?

No, I feel very lucky to have spent large proportion of my life living and working in London with lots of people of different social backgrounds and class, I am also a sociology student at university so I would probably say strongly no to that.

6. Do you think the above have an impact as per where people buy their food from? Like supermarkets or farmers' markets? How?

I think so yes. So my friends who have a low income would never consider a farmers' market because they would be thinking it is too exclusive for posh people and they wouldn't spend their money there because they would get a lesser quantity than they can buy in a supermarket. My friends who are of different cultures would tend less to frequent the supermarket because they even can't get the goods they want or feel that the goods are of lesser quality or they would want to support local suppliers.

7. Do you think these have influence upon your choice of food outlet?

Probably what part of the month it is, how close to pay day (laughs) think it is when I have more money available I do a bigger shop at the market.

8. Where would you classify yourself, your family and your friends?

I guess we are a working class family with some middle class habits.

9. Do you feel pressure from social norms on how to behave, where to buy food for example from a supermarket or farmers' market, and how to act in among other people?

Definitely. There is a lot of different sources telling you how to act and where to buy. I am thankful to take a note of them but the pressure around people to be a certain way is everywhere. As a marketer you sense it in every advertising that other people probably can't see it. If you drink this or buy this or have this you will be this.. I don't really buy into this sort of thing but I am aware of it.

Supermarket is branded around family, you buy more for you money so families are their audiences. Some suppliers at the markets positon themselves as premier brands and being very high quality and traditional so they would get a lot of people looking for this. I would just buy because I like the taste.