

Opportunities and challenges to using local products from the perspective of culinary chefs

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceptions of chefs regarding the use of local products and evaluates the opportunities and challenges encountered. The research was designed using a quantitative approach in accordance with the survey model. The study group consisted of chefs working in food and beverage establishments in Turkey. Data were obtained by administering a questionnaire to a total of 442 participants using a convenience sampling method. The findings showed that male employees were in the majority compared to female employees in the sector, while age and education levels varied. While no significant difference was found in perceptions of local products in terms of demographic characteristics and gender; various differences were observed according to age, education level, type of establishment, and service operation. It was determined that luxury and medium-sized establishments placed more importance on the use of local products. The main obstacles affecting chefs' purchasing decisions for local products were found to be lack of authority, limited product variety, lack of awareness, and supply problems. On the other hand, quality and taste were the most effective reasons for product preference, while delivery time and marketability were also important determinants. The importance-performance analysis (IPA) results show that the supply time, quality, availability, and menu applicability of local products are critical areas that need improvement. Consequently, strengthening the food supply chain for local products, ensuring quality standardization, increasing producer-consumer trust, and developing awareness-based policies are necessary. In this regard, determining strategic directions for sustainable local food systems is of great importance.

1. Introduction

In gastronomy literature, the concept of local products is considered not merely a category expressing geographical origin, but a holistic structure encompassing multi-dimensional elements such as production practices, cultural meanings, identity construction, authenticity, and experience design (Hjalager and Richards, 2003; Kivela and Crofts, 2006; Sims, 2013). This multi-dimensional structure plays a critical role in shaping tourist experiences and constitutes a significant portion of travel expenditures. It also directly affects consumers' experiential satisfaction (Jones and Jenkins, 2003).

When examining studies on local products, it is observed that the studies fall under four main headings. Firstly, the vast majority of these

studies examine local products within the context of consumer behavior and preferences. In this context; quality and health perceptions are focused on themes such as authenticity, purchasing and consumption motivations, and values (Feldmann and Hamm, 2015; Birch et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2019). These studies shows that consumers prefer local products not only for their nutritional needs but also considering their cultural and experiential value. A second research focus is on the importance of local products in terms of destination marketing and gastronomic tourism. Studies in this context reveal that local products strengthen destination image, create attractiveness and experiential value, and provide a competitive advantage (Aslan et al., 2014; Rinaldi, 2017; Chang et al., 2021; Ülker et al., 2024). At this point, local products are considered not only as a component of the gastronomic experience

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but also as a crucial resource at the heart of destination marketing and promotional strategies. A third research area examines local products from the perspective of sustainability and local development. In this context, local products are evaluated in the context of local food systems, short supply chains, rural economic development, environmental impacts, and their contributions to local economies (Marsden et al., 2000; Renting et al., 2003; Sims, 2013; Zhang et al., 2019). These studies emphasize the contributions of local products to economic and environmental sustainability, while also highlighting that these products generate various values in terms of social and cultural identity. The final area of study focuses on local products in the context of business and operational management. These studies highlight that local products are a decisive element in processes such as supply strategies, purchasing decisions, menu planning, and quality management for businesses (Inwood et al., 2009; Gün and Kılıç, 2024).

A similar trend exists in studies conducted in Türkiye. In this context, inventory studies that aim to reveal the potential of local cuisine are noteworthy (Şengül and Türkay, 2016). Following this, research examining consumer and tourist behavior focusing on the reasons for choosing local products and consumer motivations stands out (Zagralı and Akbaba, 2015; Toksöz and Aras, 2016). Another research focus is on examining the environmental and social dimensions of local products in the context of sustainability studies (Kuşat, 2012). Finally, studies on the use of local products in menus and promotional materials, from a business perspective in the context of destination and restaurant marketing, are also addressed (Kızılırmak et al., 2014). As stated in both national and international literature, the use of local products for food and beverage businesses presents both strategic opportunities and operational challenges. While sensory characteristics such as taste, flavor, and freshness, as well as advantages like traceability and contribution to the local economy, provide a competitive edge, factors such as seasonality, continuity of supply, and quality standardization make business operations more challenging (Karamustafa and Ülker, 2017; Gün and Kılıç, 2024; Ülker et al., 2024).

The relevant literature contains many studies explaining the shift of food and beverage businesses towards local products. These studies mostly focus on tourist-consumer behavior and destination marketing. However, it is noteworthy that evidence regarding internal decision-making mechanisms in food and beverage businesses, and especially the perceptions of cuisine chefs regarding opportunities and challenges, is relatively limited. In other words, studies focusing on the perceptions and obstacles/challenges faced by cuisine chefs, who are key decision-makers in food and beverage businesses, are limited. As is known, chefs are decisive actors in many managerial and operational decisions, from menu planning to supplier and product selection, from cost management to business policies. Therefore, this research aims to determine the opportunities and challenges perceived by chefs working in food and beverage businesses in Türkiye regarding the use of local products and to reveal the level of differentiation of these perceptions according to demographic and professional characteristics. In this context, the main questions of the research are structured as follows:

- Q1: What are the perceived opportunities and challenges of chefs regarding the use of local products?
- Q2: What is the importance and performance level of the opportunities and challenges perceived by chefs regarding the use of local products?
- Q3: Do chefs' perceptions of the opportunities and challenges related to the use of local products differ significantly according to demographic and professional characteristics?

The main questions of the research mentioned above were designed quantitatively in accordance with the descriptive survey model. The study group consisted of chefs working in food and beverage establishments in Türkiye. Data were collected by applying a convenience sampling technique and administering surveys to a total of 442 participants.

Therefore, the research aims to develop some strategic recommendations for the widespread use of local products, to increase awareness of local products in institutions providing education in the field of culinary arts, and to ensure that future chefs participate in the system as more sensitive employees in this regard.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1. Gastronomy and local products

Gastronomy is not limited to the preparation and presentation of food, but encompasses the entire process from the production to the consumption of a product or dish. It is a multidisciplinary science that examines this process from historical, cultural, environmental, sociological, and economic perspectives. Beyond being defined as "consuming good food" or "experiencing taste," gastronomy is a multi-layered approach that plays a significant role in building the identity of tourist destinations, preserving and transmitting cultural heritage from generation to generation, and in local development strategies. Local products are defined as products produced in a specific geographical area that reflect the cultural heritage and agricultural characteristics of that region. It can be stated that these products have a multi-layered structure shaped by local gastronomic practices such as climatic conditions, seasonal characteristics, soil structure, traditional production techniques, and storage methods. When evaluating local products within the framework of gastronomic tourism, the main factors considered are both their attractiveness for attracting tourists and their potential to provide socio-cultural and financial contributions specific to the region (Koufadakis and Manola, 2020).

Local food systems offer an advantage over non-local products in terms of both freshness and flavor through supply chains, from production to application and distribution to consumption (Rinaldi, 2017). Sims (2013) states that local products have strategic value in terms of sustainability philosophy and the formation of destination identity. In this context, the concept of locality encompasses cultural memory, recipe traditions, social interactions, and the region-specific gastronomic identity. In their study, Kovalenko et al. (2023) stated that the use of local products, traditional recipes and practices, and local preparation, cooking, and presentation techniques provides unique experiences for tourists visiting the destination and increases the competitiveness of destinations in the sector. Today, food and beverage service businesses such as restaurants and hotel kitchens gain a competitive advantage and offer authentic experiences by adapting local products to their menus (Gün and Kılıç, 2024). The preference for local products in the menus of these businesses not only meets consumer expectations but also increases the gastronomic value of the destination. Consumers tend to believe that a product is more authentic and reliable when it originates locally. This perception strengthens the product's identity, increases brand value, and reinforces consumer loyalty. The inclusion of elements such as taste, cultural experience, and social interaction in local cuisine strengthens tourists' perception of the destination and increases their intention to revisit. In this context, local products are considered a strategic element in the development of gastronomic tourism and play a significant role in enabling destinations to gain a competitive advantage. Therefore, the preservation, promotion, and sustainable management of local gastronomy contributes both to the protection of cultural heritage and to the development of the tourism economy (Carvache-Franco et al., 2025; Önem and Aydin, 2025).

2.2. Chefs' use of and purchase intentions toward local products

Cuisine chefs play a central role in menu planning, product selection, and purchasing processes in food and beverage businesses. It can be stated that the perceptions of these chefs towards local products are shaped by multidimensional factors such as individual knowledge level, professional experience, business policy, and supply chain conditions

(Karamustafa and Ülker, 2017). For example, in their study based on interviews with cuisine chefs and business managers working in luxury restaurants in Kayhan and Arslan (2024) found that local products not only provide a competitive advantage but also have positive effects on destination branding and consumer loyalty. However, among the main obstacles frequently mentioned by cuisine chefs are lack of continuity in material supply, price differences, and logistical problems. These findings reveal that the use of local products should be evaluated not only from a supply perspective but also from an operational sustainability perspective. Similar trends are observed in the international literature as well. In Roy's (2016) doctoral study, conducted using examples from Canada and New Zealand, factors such as perceived quality, freshness, local loyalty, and sustainability stand out as motivations for restaurants and chefs to source local products. However, obstacles such as cost, supply chain problems, and lack of product variety were found to complicate the process. Furthermore, the study concluded that chefs view the use of local products not only as a gastronomic preference but also as a strategic tool to offer customers unique and authentic experiences, foster a sense of belonging to the region, and enhance brand value. Therefore, relevant studies reveal that chefs' perceptions of using local products are largely positive. This is because local products are valued for their quality, authenticity, local identity, and sustainability, and contribute to enriching the gastronomic experience for consumers. However, despite these positive perceptions, obstacles encountered in implementation (cost, supply continuity, logistical difficulties, seasonality, etc.) can limit chefs' decisions. This situation demonstrates that both businesses and policymakers need to develop strategies to strengthen local product supply chains and equip chefs with the structural and educational support necessary to overcome these obstacles.

It can be said that chefs' intentions to purchase local products are directly related to various factors such as product quality, brand awareness, marketability, and supply time. In the literature, quality perception, supply continuity, cost, and seasonality stand out among the main opportunities and obstacles shaping chefs' intentions to purchase local products. These findings reveal that purchasing intentions are shaped not only by personal or cultural preferences but also by economic and structural conditions (Roy, 2016). In particular, the use of local and seasonal products contributes to restaurants offering authentic gastronomic experiences in menu design and increases the gastronomic appeal of destinations. However, it is stated that factors such as supply chain structure, information about the origin of the product, and sustainable production characteristics also affect chefs' product evaluation and purchasing intentions. Viewing local products as an important component of gastronomic identity contributes to restaurant businesses establishing stronger collaborations with local producers and the development of the local gastronomy ecosystem (Almansouri et al., 2022; Bytçı et al., 2024). Various strategic interventions are needed to promote the use of local products. Digitalization of the supply chain, establishing direct communication channels between producers and chefs, and increasing awareness of local products in gastronomy education are among the prominent suggestions in this context. Sims (2013) emphasizes that certifying local products and establishing quality standards will facilitate chefs' decision-making processes. Such regulations both increase product reliability and support the operational planning of businesses. Consequently, chefs' intentions to purchase local products are critically important not only in terms of individual preferences but also in terms of consumer demands and business strategies. The integration of local products into menus strengthens the gastronomic identity of destinations. However, for this process to progress sustainably, structural problems such as improving supply chain infrastructure, optimizing cost management, and increasing government support need to be addressed.

2.3. Opportunities and challenges in local products

The use of local products offers significant opportunities for food and

beverage businesses, both economically and culturally. Including local products in menus reinforces consumers' perception of freshness, authenticity, and reliability. This directly contributes to the formation of the gastronomic identity of destinations (Sims, 2013). At the same time, preferring local products supports rural development, strengthens the relationship between producers and consumers, and lays the groundwork for the development of sustainable food systems. These multifaceted effects are considered a factor that increases the competitiveness of destinations, especially in the context of gastronomic tourism. Furthermore, it offers various benefits such as promoting sustainable agriculture, supporting the local economy, reducing carbon footprint, and promoting gastronomic destinations (Bessière, 1998). From a consumer perspective, these products reinforce the perception of reliability and authenticity, while for businesses they increase brand value and differentiation potential. Seasonal supply fluctuations and the higher cost of local products compared to industrial alternatives make cost management more difficult for businesses and affect their decision-making processes (Ülker and Karamustafa, 2023).

In the study by Karamustafa and Ülker (2017), the main obstacles chefs face in using local products are listed as seasonality, lack of product variety, supply chain problems, insufficient information, and limitations on authority. Centralized purchasing policies, especially in large-scale businesses, limit chefs' preference for local products. Inconsistencies in product quality and high costs threaten operational sustainability (Gün and Kılıç, 2024). Another challenge regarding the use of local products in gastronomy is quality control and standardization processes. The homogeneous quality achieved in industrial food products cannot always be guaranteed in local products; this makes it difficult for large-scale hotel and restaurant chains to integrate local products into their menus (Everett and Aitchison, 2008). In contrast, it is observed that local products can be adapted more flexibly in small-scale and boutique businesses, thus providing businesses with the advantage of originality and differentiation. In conclusion, the opportunities (authenticity, sustainability, rural development, brand value, etc.) and challenges (supply continuity, cost, standardization, seasonality, etc.) of using local products should be considered together.

3. Method

3.1. Research model

The main objective of this research is to determine the perceptions of chefs regarding the use of local foods and to examine the opportunities and challenges that arise in the process of using them. Accordingly, the main problem area of the research is the perceptions of chefs regarding the use of local foods. In this context, the research questions of the study are: i) What are the perceived opportunities and challenges of chefs regarding the use of local foods; ii) What is the importance and performance level of the perceived opportunities and challenges of chefs; iii) Whether the perceived opportunities and challenges differ according to demographic and professional characteristics. For this purpose, a descriptive survey model, which allows the determination of the current situation in a specific time period based on quantitative research methods and aims to obtain generalizable results on large samples, was used in the study (Creswell, 2014; Karasar, 2012).

3.2. Population and sample

The population of this study consists of chefs working in the cuisines of food and beverage establishments in Turkey. Due to the difficulty of reaching the entire population, convenience sampling, a non-probabilistic sampling method, was used in the study. Although convenience sampling has some statistical limitations, it is a frequently preferred method in field research because it allows for quick and practical access to a large number of participants (Creswell, 2014). It was also preferred in this study because it facilitates the data collection

process by allowing the researcher to create a sample from individuals accessible to them and who consented to the study (Etikan et al., 2016). The sample size, which will represent the population, was calculated as 384 for a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error (Cohen et al., 2002). This sample size is considered sufficient for reliability and validity analyses and statistical tests (Hair et al., 2010). For this purpose, it was decided to include 400-450 chefs in the sample for the study.

3.3. Data collection and process

In this research, the survey technique was applied as a data collection tool. The survey form was created based on a literature review on local products, purchasing behaviors, and barriers, utilizing the scientific study conducted by Roy (2016). To ensure the content validity of the survey, it was revised and finalized based on the opinions of field experts. The survey form consists of two main sections. The first section includes demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education level, and professional experience of the participants. The second section includes 7-point Likert-type items related to opportunities (quality, price, authenticity, accessibility) and perceived difficulties (cost, supply problems, lack of standardization) that influence the purchasing decisions of chefs regarding local products.

Before applying the measurement tool, a pilot study with 50 participants was conducted to perform validity and reliability analyses (Hair et al., 2010). According to the pilot test results, the scales were found to have a high degree of reliability. In this context, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the perceived opportunities scale (14 items) regarding the use of local food was calculated as .990, and for the perceived challenges scale (9 items) as .985. The results of the exploratory factor analysis, conducted to test the construct validity of the scales, also indicate the presence of a strong factor structure. In this framework, the KMO value for the perceived opportunities scale was calculated as .900, while the Bartlett Sphericity Test was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 1556.756$; $df = 91$; $p < .001$). The factor loadings of the relevant scale ranged from .865 to .973, while the eigenvalue was 12.352 and the total variance explained was 88.23%. Similarly, the KMO value on the perceived difficulties scale was .900, and the Bartlett Sphericity Test was also found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 806.689$; $df = 36$; $p < .001$). The factor loadings for the scale ranged from .905 to .973, the eigenvalue was 8.029, and the total explained variance was 89.21%. These findings indicate that the scales validly and reliably measure chefs' perceptions regarding the use of local foods.

The data for this research was collected with ethical approval from the Akdeniz University Rectorate Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board, meeting number 24, decision number 431, dated July 23, 2025. Therefore, the data collection process was initiated, and the research data was collected through online platforms and face-to-face applications. A total of 704 people were given survey forms between August and September 2025, of which 463 returned, resulting in a response rate of 65.7%. The collected data underwent preliminary review; incomplete or erroneous forms were eliminated, and analyses were performed on 442 valid surveys.

3.4. Data analysis

According to the results of the normality test conducted before the analysis; the skewness values of the items in the scales ranged from -1.80 to .42; and the kurtosis values ranged from -.84 to 2.24. It was observed that the obtained results did not show a significant deviation from normal distribution. The fact that the Shapiro-Wilk test was found to be statistically significant ($p < .001$) is an expected result in large sample groups. The fact that the skewness and kurtosis values are in the ± 3 range supports the assumption of approximately normal distribution, and it is stated in the social sciences literature that values in the range of ± 2 to ± 3 are acceptable for parametric analyses (George and Mallery, 1999; Hair et al., 2019; Kline, 2023; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013).

The data obtained within the scope of the study were analyzed using SPSS 25.0 (Data set creation and descriptive statistics generation), Jamovi 2.6.4.4 (Factor analysis and difference tests), and R programming language 4.5 (Integrity performance analysis (IPA) and intergroup differences and comparative analyses). IPA (Integrated Analysis of Foods) is a two-dimensional analysis technique developed by Martilla and James (1977) that simultaneously assesses the importance of products or services to stakeholders and their current performance (Azzopardi and Nash, 2013; Bacon, 2003). In the study, the perceived opportunities for chefs to use local foods were defined as the importance dimension with 14 items, and the perceived difficulties related to the use of local foods were defined as the performance dimension with 9 items. Performance scores were transformed using the 8-row score formula to reverse the high level of difficulties, thus indicating better performance (fewer obstacles). Seven pairs of items included in the IPA (quality-inconsistency in product quality, lead time-delivery/supply process, availability-availability/marketability, cost-high costs, menu feasibility-menu feasibility, ease of preparation-difficulty of preparation, and organic certification-insufficient organic variety) were selected using logical matching.

As a result of the analyses, importance and performance averages were calculated for each item, and the overall averages of all items were determined as the intersection point in the matrix. Four quadrants were created in the matrix, with the vertical axis representing importance and the horizontal axis representing performance. Accordingly, the first quadrant is called "Focus Required" and represents items with high importance but low performance. The second quadrant is defined as "Good Work" and represents elements with both high importance and high performance levels. The third quadrant is called "Low Priority" and includes units with both low importance and low performance levels. The fourth quadrant is described as "Potential Overuse of Resources" and represents elements with low importance but high performance. Then, the importance-performance gap (gap = importance - performance) was calculated for each item, and improvement priorities were ranked according to this gap. Here, positive and high gap values indicate areas requiring urgent intervention. Furthermore, intergroup comparisons were made according to demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, and business category. IPA results were visualized using two-dimensional scatter plot graphs with ggplot2 (Wickham, 2016) and ggrepel (Slowikowski, 2021) packages, and each quadrant was color-coded. This method allows for the identification of critical problem areas in the use of local foods, as well as the identification of strengths and the strategic allocation of resources.

4. Findings

The findings of the research are presented in two stages. In the first stage, the demographic characteristics, job descriptions, professional experience durations, and business categories of the participants were examined. Furthermore, the businesses' purchasing habits regarding local food, the reasons for not purchasing local food, the perceived opportunities in the local food procurement process, and the obstacles or difficulties encountered in this process were also included. In the second stage, the results of difference tests and significance-performance analysis (IPA) showing whether perceived opportunities or difficulties varied according to demographic and professional characteristics are presented. The findings regarding the demographic and professional information of the 442 participants in the research are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that the vast majority of participants are male (72.6%), with a lower proportion of female participants (27.4%). Regarding age groups, the highest proportion was found in the 26-32 age range (25.8%), and the lowest in the 61 years and older range (.7%). In terms of education, the majority of participants were high school graduates (37.3%), while those with only primary school education were relatively few (1.8%). Regarding years of employment, the highest

Table 1

Demographic information of participants.

Gender	n	%	Business type	n	%
Female	121	%27,4	Luxury	168	%38,0
Male	321	%72,6	Mid-Scale	101	%22,9
Age			Fine Dining	133	%30,1
19-25	94	%21,3	Economy	40	%9,1
26-32	114	%25,8	Time spent in current position		
33-39	105	%23,8	1-5	282	%63,8
40-46	71	%16,1	6-10	112	%25,3
47-53	39	%8,8	11-15	34	%7,7
54-60	16	%3,6	16-20	7	%1,6
61 and over	3	%0,7	21-25	7	%1,6
Educational status			Service operation type		
Elementary School	8	%1,8	Fine Dining	171	%38,7
Middle School	31	%7,0	Cafe & Bar	55	%12,4
High School	165	%37,3	Casual Dining	89	%20,1
Associate Degree	92	%20,8	Fast Food Restaurant	36	%8,1
Undergraduate Degree	122	%27,6	Other	91	%20,6
Postgraduate Degree	24	%5,4	Job description		
Length of time spent in the profession			Owner	37	%8,4
1-5	107	%24,2	General Manager	5	%1,1
6-10	119	%26,9	F&B Director	45	%10,2
11-15	65	%14,7	F&B Manager	7	%1,6
16-20	75	%17,0	Manager	72	%16,3
21-25	56	%12,7	Full- Time Employee	275	%62,2
25 and over	20	%4,5	Part-Time Employee	1	%0,2

number of participants worked in the 6-10 year range (26.9%). The most frequent time spent in a current position was concentrated in the 1-5 year range (63.8%). According to business categories, participants most frequently worked in the luxury (38%) and high-end luxury (30.1%) categories. Examining job descriptions, the highest proportion of full-time employees was observed (62.2%). Furthermore, the most common category among business service operations was fine dining restaurants (38.7%). This data provides a comprehensive overview of the study's participant profile and forms an important basis for understanding businesses' purchasing behavior regarding local foods. In this context, Table 2 shows businesses' purchasing habits regarding local foods and the reasons influencing these purchasing habits.

An examination of the data in Table 2 reveals that a large majority of participants (78.3%) continue their habits of purchasing local food. This indicates a high demand for and importance of local products. However, some participants (17.4%) stated that they have never purchased local food, while a smaller group (4.3%) indicated that they had previously purchased local food but later abandoned this habit. These results suggest a closer examination of potential barriers to purchasing local food and the reasons why these products are not preferred. In this context, the most common reason for chefs in food and beverage businesses not purchasing local food is the lack of decision-making authority in the purchasing process (36.4%). The findings show that many chefs do not have control over their decisions regarding local food preferences; purchasing processes are mostly determined by business management, purchasing departments, or corporate procurement policies. Therefore, it appears that even if chefs have a desire to use local products, business policies and organizational structure can limit this process. The second

Table 2

Purchasing of local foods and the factors influencing their purchasing decisions.

Local purchasing status	n	%	Reasons why cannot purchase	n	%
Yes, we continue to buy.	346	%78,3	Lack of knowledge and awareness	65	%14,7
We have in the past, but not now.	19	%4,3	Insufficient availability and variety	74	%16,7
I have never bought local products.	77	%17,4	Lack of decision-making authority	161	%36,4
			Other (feature, cost, supply, etc.)	142	%32,1

most common reason is related to product characteristics, cost, and supply, which are classified as other factors (32.1%). In this context, it is considered that factors such as the high cost of local products, the inability to ensure continuity of supply, variability in quality standardization, or the products not fully meeting the expectations of professional kitchens influence chefs' preferences. This situation reveals the need for local producers to strengthen the supply of products suitable for professional kitchens and for supply chains to be made more stable. The third most common reason is insufficient availability and variety (16.7%). This shows that chefs cannot regularly and adequately obtain the local products they need. In particular, production dependent on seasonal conditions, limited distribution channels, and low production capacity create obstacles to sustainable use in professional kitchens. This finding points to the importance of increasing local production capacity to ensure the continuity of the local product supply. Finally, although at the lowest level with a rate of 14.7%, lack of information and awareness stands out as a noteworthy factor. This shows that some chefs do not have sufficient knowledge about the health, economic, and sustainability benefits of local products. In this context, the need to increase awareness campaigns for the promotion of local products emerges.

According to the findings presented in Table 3, chefs perceive opportunities related to the use of local products as high, while challenges are considered moderate. The average scores for perceived opportunities range from 5.23 to 6.12. This indicates that chefs generally view the use of local products positively and that their use can offer significant advantages for food and beverage businesses. The variables with the highest average scores among perceived opportunities are "Taste" ($\bar{x} = 6.12$) and "Quality" ($\bar{x} = 6.09$). The findings show that chefs primarily focus on sensory satisfaction when evaluating local products, and that flavor and quality are the most decisive factors in their preference for local products. Similarly, the relatively high averages for criteria such as lead time ($\bar{x} = 5.88$), menu feasibility, and "Availability/Marketability" ($\bar{x} = 5.76$) indicate that local products have the potential to contribute to businesses operationally, while also revealing that chefs prioritize operational factors after sensory characteristics. In addition, the high ranking of "Brand Awareness" ($\bar{x} = 5.67$) and "Known Producer" factors indicates that chefs prioritize trust when choosing local products. The

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of chefs' perceived opportunities and challenges in the use of local products (n = 442).

Items	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
OPPORTUNITIES				
Quality	6.09	1.61	1	7
Taste	6.12	1.53	1	7
Supply Time	5.88	1.64	1	7
Marketability/Availability	5.76	1.58	1	7
Cost	5.63	1.58	1	7
Menu Applicability	5.76	1.51	1	7
Nutritional	5.63	1.65	1	7
Environmental/Humane	5.63	1.60	1	7
Growing Process	5.49	1.60	1	7
Knowledge				
Ease of Preparation	5.59	1.62	1	7
Brand Awareness	5.67	1.84	1	7
Known Grower	5.65	1.76	1	7
Organic Certification	5.34	1.68	1	7
Local (In This City)	5.23	1.69	1	7
CHALLENGES				
Insufficient Quantity/Volume	4.75	1.96	1	7
Inconsistency in Product Quality				
Lack of Knowledge/Awareness	4.70	1.88	1	7
High Costs	4.94	1.87	1	7
Availability/Marketability	5.04	1.79	1	7
Delivery/Sourcing Process	5.28	1.77	1	7
Insufficient Organic Variety	4.61	1.93	1	7
Menu Applicability	4.95	1.80	1	7
Difficulty in Preparation	4.49	1.88	1	7

Table 4

Factor analysis results for the measurement scale.

Scale	Number of Items	KMO	Bartlett χ^2 (df)	p	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance (%)	Cronbach α	Range of Factor Loadings
Perceived Opportunities	14	.953	7468 (91)	<.001	10.38	72.2	.973	.792–.899
Perceived Challenges	9	.905	2847 (36)	<.001	5.77	59.8	.929	.679–.842

tendency of chefs to gravitate towards familiar brands and producers highlights the importance of reliability, recognition, and strengthening producer-consumer relationships in local product supply chains. Furthermore, the "Nutritional" ($\bar{x} = 5.63$) factor shows that chefs make health-oriented choices and evaluate local products not only in terms of sensory and operational characteristics but also in terms of nutritional value. The high average of the "Environmental/Humanitarian" ($\bar{x} = 5.63$) production factor reveals that chefs also value environmental awareness and ethical production practices. Apart from these, the criteria with relatively lower average scores among the opportunities were found to be "Knowledge of the growing process" ($\bar{x} = 5.49$), "Organic certification" ($\bar{x} = 5.34$), and "Local/local grower" ($\bar{x} = 5.23$). This indicates that chefs consider transparency and traceability in their preference for local products, and that the locality factor alone does not constitute a strong purchasing motivation. When these findings are evaluated generally, it reveals that chefs' preferences for local products have a holistic structure encompassing multiple dimensions such as sensory characteristics and quality, operational elements (supply time and menu feasibility), trust (brand and known grower), health (nutrition), and ethics and sustainability (environmental/humane production). These findings show that local food producers should focus not only on the emphasis of "locality" but also on factors such as product quality, producer transparency, sustainability, and brand reliability (see Table 4).

In terms of challenges, the average values were observed to range between 4.49 and 5.28. While the results indicate that chefs face some operational or supply-related challenges in using local products, it suggests that these factors are not perceived as very high by the chefs. The highest average challenge was observed in "Supply and delivery time" ($\bar{x} = 5.28$). This finding suggests that logistical and supply chain-related problems in the procurement process of local products constitute a significant obstacle for businesses. Similarly, factors such as "Availability/marketability" ($\bar{x} = 5.04$), "Inconsistency in product quality" ($\bar{x} = 4.95$), and "Insufficient quantity/volume" ($\bar{x} = 4.75$) are considered significant problem areas by the chefs. The findings indicate that standardization, consistency, and accessibility are critical factors in chefs' preference for local products. The inability of local producers to produce at the quality, scale, and consistency required to meet demand makes it difficult for businesses to regularly procure local products, leading to stability problems in local supply chains. This, in turn, causes chefs to perceive supply reliability as the most limiting factor in their preference for local products. The relatively low scores on criteria such as "lack of knowledge and awareness" ($\bar{x} = 4.70$) and "insufficient organic variety" ($\bar{x} = 4.61$) suggest that chefs and businesses lack sufficient knowledge about the advantages, variety, supply channels, and reliability of local products. This finding points to the importance of promotion, education, and awareness campaigns to increase the market share of local products. The criterion with the lowest average score among the difficulties was found to be preparation difficulty ($\bar{x} = 4.49$). This finding indicates that chefs do not experience significant difficulties in preparing and adapting local products to menu/kitchen processes. The findings suggest that chefs perceive opportunities related to the use of local products as higher than difficulties. While this situation offers advantages such as taste, quality, and menu variety for food and beverage businesses, it also highlights the need for significant improvements in areas such as supply processes, product continuity, and standardization.

The results of the exploratory factor analysis regarding perceived opportunities show that the scale has strong construct validity. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sample adequacy was found to be .953, and

the Bartlett's Sphericity Test was significant ($\chi^2 = 7468$, $df = 91$, $p < .001$), indicating the suitability of the dataset for factor analysis. Factor loadings ranged from .792 (local/local grower) to .899 (taste), with an eigenvalue of 10.38 and a total explained variance of 72.2%. Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha value was .973, indicating high internal consistency. These findings demonstrate that the scale reliably and validly measures perceived opportunities related to the use of local food. The results of the exploratory factor analysis regarding perceived challenges support the structural validity of the scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sample adequacy was found to be .905, and the Bartlett's Sphericity Test was significant ($\chi^2 = 2847$, $df = 36$, $p < .001$), indicating that the data are suitable for factor analysis. Factor loadings ranged from .679 (menu applicability) to .842 (availability/marketability), with an eigenvalue of 5.77 and a total explained variance of 59.8%. Cronbach's Alpha was .929, revealing high internal consistency of the scale. These findings demonstrate that the scale reliably and validly measures perceived challenges related to the use of local food.

According to the independent samples *t*-test results given in Table 5, it was determined that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of opportunities and challenges of using local products among chefs based on gender. There was no statistically significant difference in any of the items in the opportunities dimension ($p > .05$). Similarly, no significant difference was found in the majority of items in the challenges dimension. Although a significant difference was observed only in the "delivery and supply process" item ($t(440) = 2.28$, $p = .023$), the effect size of this difference was low (Cohen's $d = .24$), indicating a

Table 5Independent samples *t*-test results for opportunities and challenges by gender.

Items		t (df)	p	Cohen's d
OPPORTUNITIES	Quality	.18 (440)	.854	.02
	Taste	1.48 (440)	.140	.16
	Supply Time	1.20 (440)	.230	.13
	Marketability/ Availability*	.76 (440)	.447	.08
	Cost	1.35 (440)	.179	.14
	Menu Applicability**	1.26 (440)	.209	.13
	Nutritional	.99 (440)	.322	.11
	Environmental/Humane	.97 (440)	.331	.10
	Growing Process	.81 (440)	.420	.09
	Knowledge			
	Ease of Preparation*	1.72 (440)	.086	.18
	Brand Awareness	1.37 (440)	.173	.15
	Known Grower*	1.48 (440)	.139	.16
	Organic Certification	.87 (440)	.386	.09
	Local (In This City)	1.31 (440)	.190	.14
CHALLENGES	Insufficient Quantity/ Volume	.32 (440)	.751	.03
	Inconsistency in Product Quality	1.20 (440)	.230	.13
	Lack of Knowledge/ Awareness	.65 (440)	.518	.07
	High Costs*	1.50 (440)	.135	.16
	Availability/Marketability	-.67 (440)	.506	-.07
	Delivery/Sourcing Process*	2.28 (440)	.023	.24
	Insufficient Organic Variety	-.49 (440)	.623	-.05
	Menu Applicability	.86 (440)	.391	.09
	Difficulty in Preparation	1.68 (440)	.093	.18

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; Brown-Forsythe test indicates violation of homogeneity of variances.

Table 6
Differences in perceptions of local products by age and educational status.

	Items	Age	p	Educational Status	p
OPPORTUNITIES	Quality	3.61	.002	.976	.432
	Taste	2.27	.037	1.555	.171
	Supply Time	2.63	.016	.937	.456
	Marketability/Availability	2.32	.032	2.661	.022
	Cost	1.40	.215	2.010	.076
	Menu	1.38	.223	2.303	.044
	Applicability				
	Nutritional Value	1.94	.073	2.950	.012
	Environmental/Humane	1.78	.101	2.975	.012
	Growing Process	1.32	.247	3.119	.009
	Knowledge				
	Ease of Preparation	1.59	.148	2.807	.017
	Brand Awareness	3.02	.007	1.609	.156
	Known Grower	2.34	.031	1.422	.215
	Organic	1.88	.083	5.871	<.001
	Certification				
	Local (In This City)	1.37	.225	6.036	<.001
CHALLENGES	Insufficient Quantity/Volume	3.94	<.001	3.725	.003
	Inconsistent Product Quality	4.22	<.001	7.248	<.001
	Lack of Knowledge/Awareness	2.86	.010	2.153	.058
	High Costs	1.01	.416	2.595	.025
	Availability/Marketability	2.44	.025	2.647	.023
	Delivery/Sourcing Process	1.63	.137	4.407	<.001
	Insufficient Organic Variety	3.49	.002	2.879	.014
	Menu	3.41	.003	3.373	.005
	Applicability				
	Difficulty in Preparation	.56	.765	1.072	.375

Note: F values are reported from one-way ANOVA analyses. Post-hoc comparisons (Tukey HSD) were conducted; however, detailed pairwise results are omitted for clarity and can be provided upon request.

limited effect in practical terms. The findings reveal that the perceptions of opportunities and challenges of using local products among chefs are shaped independently of gender. These results suggest that these perceptions may be influenced by more structural elements such as business, supply chain structure, and operational processes, in addition to demographic characteristics (see Table 6).

The one-way ANOVA results on the items of opportunities and challenges according to age groups show that there are significant age-related differences in some items. Within the scope of opportunities, significant differences were found for the following items: quality ($F(6, 435) = 3.61, p = .002$); taste ($F(6, 435) = 2.27, p = .037$); supply time ($F(6, 435) = 2.63, p = .016$); marketability/availability ($F(6, 435) = 2.32, p = .032$); brand ($F(6, 435) = 3.02, p = .007$); and known grower ($F(6, 435) = 2.34, p = .031$). According to the Tukey HSD post-hoc test, the 19–25 age group scored higher in terms of quality, lead time and marketability/availability compared to the 47–53 and 54–60 age groups; while in the brand item, the 33–39 age group scored higher than the 54–60 age group. In the known grower item, the 19–25, 33–39 and 40–46 age groups showed higher scores than the 54–60 age group. In the challenges section, insufficient quantity and volume $F(6, 435) = 3.94, p < .001$; inconsistency in product quality $F(6, 435) = 4.22, p < .001$; lack of information and awareness $F(6, 435) = 2.86, p = .010$; The items insufficient organic diversity $F(6, 435) = 3.49, p = .002$ and menu feasibility $F(6, 435) = 3.41, p = .003$ showed significant differences.

Post-hoc analyses reveal that younger age groups (19–25, 26–32, 33–39) perceived these opportunity and challenge items more highly than older age groups (54–60) and some intermediate age groups. No significant differences were observed in other items ($p > .05$). These results show that age-related perceptual differences are significant in the context of both opportunities and challenges, and that younger participants have a higher level of awareness and perception.

Similarly, one-way ANOVA results show that education level is a statistically significant differentiator on some perceptions in both the opportunities and challenges dimensions. In the opportunities dimension, no significant difference was found in the variables of quality, taste, lead time, cost, brand, and known grower ($p > .05$). In contrast, significant differences were determined in the variables of marketability/availability ($F = 2.661, p = .022$), menu applicability ($F = 2.303, p = .044$), nutritional value ($F = 2.950, p = .012$), environmental/human characteristics ($F = 2.975, p = .012$), knowledge of the growing process ($F = 3.119, p = .009$), and ease of preparation ($F = 2.807, p = .017$). Tukey post-hoc results show that these differences are largely concentrated between postgraduate education levels and lower education groups (especially primary, secondary, and associate degree). The strongest divergence was observed in the variables of organic certification ($F = 5.871, p < .001$) and local (local) grower ($F = 6.036, p < .001$); in these items, the postgraduate group differed significantly from other education levels. This finding suggests that as the level of education increases, the importance given to sustainability and certification-based criteria also increases. In terms of challenges, significant differences were found in the variables of insufficient quantity and volume ($F = 3.725, p = .003$), inconsistency in product quality ($F = 7.248, p < .001$), high costs ($F = 2.595, p = .025$), delivery and supply process ($F = 4.407, p < .001$), and menu feasibility ($F = 3.373, p = .005$). Specifically, the item of inconsistency in product quality had the highest F value, and the difference was concentrated primarily between the undergraduate group and lower education levels. In contrast, no significant difference was found in the variables of lack of knowledge and awareness and difficulty of preparation ($p > .05$). Overall, it can be said that education level is a determining factor in the perception of strategic elements such as sustainability indicators and quality consistency; however, some operational challenges are evaluated similarly regardless of education level.

When the one-way ANOVA results given in Table 7 are examined, it is seen that the chefs' perceptions of opportunities and challenges regarding the use of local products differ significantly in some items according to both service operation and business type. When the data in question were evaluated in terms of perceived opportunities and service operation, significant differences were found especially in the variables of "quality" ($F(4,437) = 11.01, p < .001$), "taste" ($F(4,437) = 7.06, p < .001$), "lead time" ($F(4,437) = 7.71, p < .001$) and "marketability/availability" ($F(4,437) = 5.97, p < .001$), "cost" ($F(4,437) = 4.35, p < .05$). The Tukey HSD test results reveal that these observed differences largely stem from comparisons between quality food restaurants, cafe & bar businesses, and other business types. Similarly, significant differences were found in service operations in variables such as menu feasibility, environmental/human characteristics, and brand and known grower. In contrast, significant differences were found in variables such as nutritional value, knowledge of the growing process, organic certification, and local grower. No significant difference was found in the context of service operations in variables such as ($p > .05$). When the results obtained were examined in terms of business type, it was seen that significant differences emerged in many variables, especially in terms of business type, such as "quality" ($F(3,438) = 7.53, p < .001$), "taste" ($F(3,438) = 4.69, p = .003$), "marketability/availability" ($F(3,438) = 5.90, p < .001$), "cost" ($F(3,438) = 6.62, p < .001$), "menu applicability" ($F(3,438) = 7.34, p < .001$). When the Tukey HSD test results were examined, it was seen that these differences mostly stemmed from comparisons between high-end luxury businesses and other business types. When the challenges dimension was examined in terms

Table 7

Differences in perceptions of local products by service operation and business type.

	Items	Service Op. F	p	Business Type F	p
OPPORTUNITIES	Quality	11.01	<.001	7.53	<.001
	Taste	7.06	<.001	4.69	.003
	Supply Time	7.71	<.001	3.32	.020
	Marketability/ Availability	5.97	<.001	5.90	<.001
	Cost	4.35	.002	6.62	<.001
	Menu	2.77	.027	7.34	<.001
	Applicability				
	Nutritional Value	1.29	.275	7.86	<.001
	Environmental/ Humane	2.45	.046	5.64	<.001
	Growing Process Knowledge	1.75	.139	6.83	<.001
	Ease of Preparation	2.44	.046	7.71	<.001
	Brand	5.66	<.001	5.54	<.001
	Awareness				
	Known Grower	4.06	.003	7.62	<.001
	Organic	1.60	.174	8.41	<.001
	Certification				
	Local (In This City)	1.11	.350	7.60	<.001
CHALLENGES	Insufficient Quantity/ Volume	6.27	<.001	1.79	.149
	Inconsistent Product Quality	13.91	<.001	1.10	.348
	Lack of Knowledge/ Awareness	4.48	.001	2.69	.046
	High Costs	2.43	.047	1.92	.125
	Availability/ Marketability	5.10	<.001	3.63	.013
	Delivery/ Sourcing Process	3.99	.003	1.10	.350
	Insufficient Organic Variety	4.26	.002	1.07	.362
	Menu	.93	.444	6.08	<.001
	Applicability				
	Difficulty in Preparation	.26	.904	2.10	.100

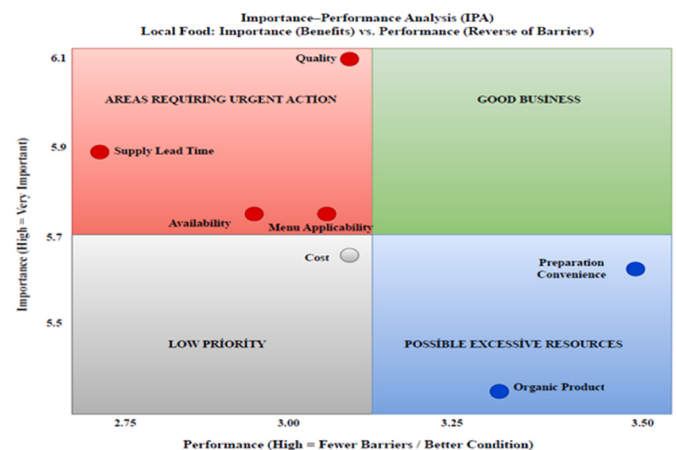
Note: F values are reported from one-way ANOVA analyses. Post-hoc comparisons (Tukey HSD) were conducted; however, detailed pairwise results are omitted for clarity and can be provided upon request.

of service operations, significant differences were found in variables such as “insufficient quantity and volume” ($F(4,437) = 6.27, p < .001$), “inconsistencies in product quality” ($F(4,437) = 13.91, p < .001$), “knowledge and awareness” ($F(4,437) = 4.48, p = .001$), “availability/marketability” ($F(4,437) = 5.10, p < .001$), and “delivery process” ($F(4,437) = 3.99, p = .003$). In contrast, no significant difference was found in variables such as “high cost”, “menu feasibility”, and “difficulty of preparation”. When the obtained data was examined in terms of business type, significant differences were found in “availability/marketability” ($F(3,438) = 3.63, p = .013$) and “menu feasibility”. ($F(3,438) = 6.08, p < .001$) Statistically significant differences were found

in the variables. Tukey test results show that the difference in the marketability variable stems from comparisons between luxury businesses and F&B mid-sized businesses; while the difference in the menu feasibility variable stems from comparisons between high-end luxury and other business categories. Overall, the results show that chefs' perceptions of opportunity regarding the use of local products differ significantly according to the type of business, while their perceptions of difficulty differ more according to the type or structure of the service operation.

Table 8 presents the results of the importance-performance analysis (IPA) of seven items directly correlated with opportunity and challenge factors. Lead time, quality, availability, and menu feasibility variables are found to be in the “should be focused on” quadrant, representing the most critical areas for improvement. Particularly noteworthy are the low performance values despite high importance scores for lead time (Gap = 3.16), quality (Gap = 3.05), and availability (Gap = 2.80). These results indicate that chefs are significantly dissatisfied with these criteria and that strategic priority should be given to these elements. Menu feasibility (Gap = 2.71) similarly points to practical constraints in operational processes for chefs. In contrast, the cost (Gap = 2.57) variable is in the “low priority” quadrant, defined as an area requiring less intervention. This result highlights that cost is not considered a priority area for chefs. Ease of preparation (Gap = 2.08) and organic product (Gap = 1.95) variables are located in the “potentially excess resource” quadrant. This indicates that the performance level is higher in importance compared to other criteria, and resources should be shifted to more efficient areas. The IPA results show that focusing on areas such as supply chain continuity, product quality, and menu feasibility in the chefs' use of local products within the framework of a systematic improvement plan is critical for the success of food and beverage businesses. The graph resulting from the IPA is given in Fig. 1. The graph visualizes strategic priorities by dividing the seven main items into four quadrants. The intersection points of the axes represent the importance and performance averages of all items.

The quadrant-based evaluation of the IPA analysis provides a

**Fig. 1.** Importance performance analysis (IPA) graph.**Table 8**

Importance-performance analysis (IPA) results.

Priority Order	Item	Average Importance	Average Performance	Gap	Quadrant	Strategic Meaning
1	Supply Time	5.88	2.72	3.16	Must be concentrated	Most Urgent and Critical Problem
2	Quality	06.09	03.05	03.05	Must be concentrated	High Importance, Low Performance
3	Availability	5.76	2.96	2.80	Must be concentrated	High Importance, Low Performance
4	Menu Applicability	5.76	03.05	2.71	Must be concentrated	High Importance, Low Performance
5	Cost	5.63	03.06	2.57	Low Priority	Secondary Importance Problem
6	Ease of Preparation	5.59	3.51	02.08	Possible Resource Overload	Low Importance, High Performance
7	Organic Product	5.34	3.39	1.95	Possible Resource Overload	Low Importance, High Performance

valuable guide for determining strategic priorities related to local products. Quadrant 1: Areas Requiring Focus (Urgent Action) represents areas of high importance to stakeholders but where current performance is low. The most critical element in this quadrant is lead time (Gap = 3.16); stakeholders place great importance on fast and reliable supply processes, while the inadequacy of current practices prevents local products from consistently appearing on menus. The following item, quality (Gap = 3.05), indicates that inconsistencies in product quality are perceived as a serious problem; the lack of standards reduces the trust of chefs and businesses in local products. The availability factor (Gap = 2.80) reveals the difficulty in ensuring easy access to necessary products, while the menu feasibility factor (Gap = 2.72) highlights the difficulties in integrating local products into menus and related problems such as production and quantity shortages. Quadrant 2: Good Work (Maintain Current Status) indicates that the absence of items included in the analysis shows that stakeholders are not completely satisfied with the current situation in any area they consider important and expect improvement in every significant area. Quadrant 3: Low Priority (No Need to Worry) encompasses areas that are not prioritized in terms of either importance or performance. For example, cost is considered a lower priority by stakeholders compared to other factors and is not seen as a problem requiring urgent intervention despite low performance. Finally, Quadrant 4: Potentially Excessive Resources (Excessive Effort May Be Being Expended) represents areas of relatively low importance but high performance. The ease of preparation item in this quadrant shows that the preparation of products is currently easy, but it is not critically important for chefs. Similarly, the organic product factor, although performance is at an acceptable level, is not as strategically important as other critical elements. These findings highlight the importance of directing resources to areas where they should be concentrated and show that a focus should be placed on the sustainability of local product systems and the improvement of quality standards.

The findings in Table 9 indicate differences in the perceptions of importance, performance, and challenges related to local products among chefs based on their demographic characteristics and business categories. When the data is examined in terms of the gender variable, it is seen that female chefs both attach more importance to local products ($\bar{x} = 5.82$) and perceive a higher level of obstacles ($\bar{x} = 4.98$); this shows that women have a high awareness of the quality and sustainability of local products, but feel more difficulties in the supply process. Men's perception of performance ($\bar{x} = 3.19$) is slightly higher than women's, and the current situation is evaluated more positively. According to the age variable, it is noteworthy that the importance level of local products is quite high ($\bar{x} = 6.06$ – 6.58) in older age groups (especially 47 years and

older), but the perception of performance is low ($\bar{x} = 2.24$ – 2.68). This situation shows that the value given to local products increases with age, but expectations are not met in practice. Young chefs (19–25 years old), on the other hand, evaluate the performance of local products more positively ($\bar{x} = 3.44$). When evaluated according to education level, it is observed that primary school graduates attach more importance to local products ($\bar{x} = 6.68$), but as the education level increases, the level of importance decreases and the perception of performance increases (postgraduate $\bar{x} = 3.68$); this indicates that educated individuals evaluate local products more critically but more rationally. In the examination according to business category, it is seen that chefs working in high-end luxury establishments attach the highest level of importance to local products ($\bar{x} = 6.14$), but have a low perception of performance ($\bar{x} = 2.93$). When this result is evaluated together with the other findings, it shows that although there is a high expectation of quality, there are limitations in terms of supply or implementation. In contrast, while the perception of importance is lower in economic enterprises compared to other business types ($\bar{x} = 4.71$), the perception of performance is relatively higher ($\bar{x} = 3.81$). This result suggests that economic enterprises with limited resources or a price-focused customer base, while not prioritizing the use of local products, find the current processes satisfactory. Overall, women, older age groups, and high-end luxury businesses place greater emphasis on local products, while young people, men, and chefs in economic enterprises rate the current performance more positively. These findings highlight the need to consider demographic and institutional differences in the development of local food systems, particularly by developing strategic policies that address the expectations of highly aware groups.

5. Conclusion and discussion

This research aims to examine, within a multidimensional framework, the perceived opportunities and challenges faced by chefs working in food and beverage businesses regarding the use of local products. The findings show that the sector is predominantly male, the age distribution varies widely, and the education level is generally high. Furthermore, the continued preference for local products by a large majority of businesses highlights the importance, reliability, and demand for these products within the sector. Conversely, the fact that some businesses do not prefer or have abandoned the use of local products points to structural problems such as limited decision-making authority, insufficient product variety, and lack of information/awareness. Overall, the findings reveal that chefs' perceptions of opportunities for using local products are higher than their perceptions of challenges. This indicates that chefs consider local products to have significant potential in

Table 9
General average values according to demographic characteristics.

	Group	Average Importance	Average Obstacle	Average Performance	Number of Participants (n)
Gender	Female	5.82	4.98	03.02	121
	Male	5.62	4.81	3.19	321
Age	19-25	5.56	4.56	3.44	94
	26-32	5.70	4.83	3.17	114
	33-39	5.50	4.89	3.11	105
	40-46	5.67	4.83	3.17	71
	47-53	06.06	5.32	2.68	39
	54-60	6.58	5.76	2.24	16
	61 and over	4.67	4.15	3.85	3
Education	Elementary School	6.68	4.86	3.14	8
	Middle School	5.60	4.59	3.41	31
	High School	5.69	4.62	3.38	165
	Associate Degree	5.82	05.02	2.98	92
	Undergraduate Degree	5.67	5.23	2.77	122
	Postgraduate Degree	4.90	4.32	3.68	24
Business Category	Luxury	5.48	4.68	3.32	168
	Mid-Scale	5.78	5.14	2.86	101
	Fine Dining	6.14	05.07	2.93	133
	Economy	4.71	4.19	3.81	40

terms of gastronomic value, flavor, and quality; however, they encounter various structural and operational constraints during the implementation phase. This finding suggests that factors such as product quality, authenticity, and gastronomic identity support the preference for local products. This aligns with the literature which indicates that supply continuity, availability, and logistics processes are significant constraints (Murphy and Smith, 2009; Sharma et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2019; Roy, 2024). Furthermore, factors such as cost, resource scarcity, seasonality, and limited supply quantities are also cited as significant obstacles in the purchasing process (Kang and Rajagopal, 2014).

Assessments regarding the opportunity dimension show that chefs focus particularly on flavor and quality elements. This reveals that the sensory characteristics of local products are decisive in terms of gastronomic experience and play a fundamental role in purchasing decisions. Indeed, the perception of local products as fresh, natural, and high-quality (Gün and Kılıç, 2024; Inwood et al., 2009; Sharma et al., 2014) is considered an important element that enhances the menu quality of businesses and strengthens destination identity in the context of gastronomic tourism (Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Sims, 2013; Mak et al., 2012). However, the literature emphasizes that local and seasonal foods make significant contributions to sustainable food systems; but it is stated that factors such as infrastructure deficiencies, production instability, and low consumer awareness limit this process (Vargas et al., 2026). This situation also points to the divergence between the quality and flavor-oriented approach of chefs and the sustainability and supply chain-oriented perspectives of other stakeholders. From an operational perspective, the high-level evaluation of factors such as supply time, menu feasibility, and availability indicates significant potential for integrating local products into professional kitchens. However, the findings reveal that the use of local products is often based on factors such as taste, freshness, and business concept rather than sustainability awareness (Öztürk and Akoğlu, 2020). This is noteworthy as it shows that sustainability-based approaches have not yet been sufficiently internalized in the sector. However, despite positive perceptions, chefs appear to face various challenges in practice. In particular, supply and delivery processes, product availability, and quality inconsistencies are prominent problem areas. These findings parallel studies highlighting the decisive role of logistics processes, delivery times, and standardization issues in local product sourcing (Murphy and Smith, 2009; Sharma et al., 2014; Roy, 2024). In this context, strengthening the local food supply chain, ensuring quality standardization, and increasing producer-consumer trust emerge as important requirements. Furthermore, reducing costs and facilitating menu integration are among the key strategies to encourage the use of local products. This reveals that preferences for local products are shaped not only by sensory characteristics but also by perceptions of trust, health, and production processes, aligning with Tregear's (2011) findings which emphasize the multi-actor nature of local food networks.

The importance-performance analysis results offer a more structured assessment that supports previous findings. Elements such as lead time, quality, and availability stand out as "areas to focus on," consistent with the literature showing that product quality and supply reliability play a critical role in decision-making processes (Zhang et al., 2019). In contrast, the placement of elements such as ease of preparation and organic products in lower priority areas indicates that these factors, despite having sufficient performance, were not considered among the priority areas for improvement. These findings point to the importance of coordination at all stages of the supply chain for the sustainability of local product use. Indeed, it is known that local supply chains have shown fragility, particularly in recent years, due to structural, economic, and environmental reasons (Kayhan and Arslan, 2024). This fragility is related to multidimensional factors such as logistics infrastructure, storage capacity, standardization, and market stability (Güneş, 2023). Therefore, the sustainability of local food systems depends on the institutionalization of coordination between producers, suppliers, and businesses (Tregear, 2011; Renting et al., 2003).

In terms of demographic variables, it is observed that chefs' perceptions of local products can differ according to specific groups. While no significant difference was found based on gender, the age variable presented a significant divergence. It was found that younger chefs had higher perceptions of opportunity and challenge; conversely, more experienced chefs, while attaching more importance to local products, had lower performance evaluations. This suggests that experienced chefs are more aware of structural problems. Furthermore, it can be stated that the interest of older chefs in local products may be related to the preservation of cultural identity and gastronomic heritage (Sage, 2011). The more positive performance perceptions of young chefs can be associated with innovative approaches and new gastronomic trends (Schnell, 2013). In terms of education level, it is observed that awareness, especially regarding sustainability, organic certification, and production processes, increases with education level. This is consistent with the literature showing that the level of knowledge strengthens product evaluation processes (Marchesini et al., 2007; Kan and Belveren, 2022). Findings regarding business type and service structure indicate that local product perception can vary depending on business characteristics. It has been determined that chefs working in upper-segment establishments place more emphasis on local products; however, performance perception is relatively low in these establishments. This indicates that high quality expectations are not fully met by existing supply systems. In contrast, performance perception is more positive in middle and lower-segment establishments. These findings are consistent with studies showing that upper-segment restaurants are more inclined towards local products in terms of gastronomic authenticity and experience delivery, but also perceive more problems due to higher quality standards (Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Murphy and Smith, 2009). Overall, it is clear that local products have significant potential in the food and beverage sector. However, structural and operational improvements are needed, particularly in areas such as supply and distribution processes, production continuity, and quality standardization, in order to effectively utilize this potential. Such improvements will significantly contribute to the sustainability of the use of local products in professional kitchens.

When the findings of this study are evaluated together, it is seen that the opportunities and challenges regarding the use of local products are empirically revealed from the perspective of chefs, a stakeholder group that has been relatively understudied in the gastronomy literature. The combined use of descriptive and inferential analyses contributes to the development of a more holistic and in-depth understanding of chefs' decision-making processes. In this respect, the study fills one of the gaps in the existing literature and offers a unique contribution to the field. From a theoretical perspective, the findings show that the use of local products cannot be explained solely through perceived benefits, but that structural and operational constraints are also decisive. This indicates that behaviors towards the use of local products should be addressed within a multidimensional framework, and that future studies need to develop more holistic models that include sectoral dynamics as well as attitudinal variables. Furthermore, the practical implications are also noteworthy. The findings reveal that in order to increase the use of local products, supply chain coordination should be strengthened, product standardization should be ensured, and accessibility and cost-related barriers should be reduced. In this context, it is crucial for policy-makers and industry stakeholders to develop strategies to enhance collaboration between local producers and food and beverage businesses. In conclusion, while the potential of local products is clearly recognized by chefs, effectively leveraging this potential within the food and beverage sector requires a multi-stakeholder and coordinated approach.

5.1. Limitations and future research

This study provides important insights into chefs' perceptions of the use of local products in food and beverage businesses; however, some

limitations must be considered. First, the use of non-probability sampling and the focus on a specific sample group in the data collection process limit the external validity and generalizability of the findings. Although the sample size is relatively large, the results reflect the opinions of chefs in a specific context and may not be directly generalizable to different regions, cultures, or different segments of the food and beverage industry. Second, the research was conducted with a cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to test causal relationships between variables, and the findings represent relationships at a single point in time. Therefore, it may not account for possible changes in perceptions or practices over time; this constitutes a limitation in terms of the internal validity of the results. Third, the use of self-report measures such as surveys can introduce risks of bias such as social desirability and subjective evaluation. In addition, the exclusion of actual purchasing data or operational performance indicators related to supply processes from the analysis creates a limitation in terms of the extent to which the findings reflect real behavioral practices. Considering these limitations together, it can be said that the findings should be interpreted carefully, especially in terms of generalizability and causal inference. Future research with larger and more diverse samples in different geographic contexts will help overcome these limitations. Furthermore, the inclusion of different stakeholder groups such as restaurant managers, suppliers, and local producers in the research will allow for a more holistic understanding of the local supply chain. Moreover, the use of longitudinal, qualitative, and mixed-methods research designs, and the application of alternative analytical approaches such as Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA), will enable a more comprehensive assessment of the impact of using local products on business performance and the gastronomic experience.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Özkan Erdem: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Resources, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Adem Arman:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Vedat Kayış:** Writing – original draft, Supervision, Software, Project administration, Methodology, Formal analysis. **Yener Oğan:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Conceptualization.

Research and publication ethics statement

This study was prepared in accordance with the Ethics Committee Approval Document of the Akdeniz University Rectorate, Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board Decision No. 24, dated July 23, 2025, and the rules of scientific research and publication ethics.

Implication of gastronomy

This study aimed to determine the identified opportunities and challenges faced by chefs regarding the use of local products. The research was designed quantitatively, using a descriptive survey model. The study group comprised chefs working in food and beverage establishments in Turkey. Data were collected by administering a survey to a total of 442 participants using a convenience sampling technique.

Local food systems, through their supply chains extending from production to application and distribution to consumption, provide superiority over non-local products in terms of both freshness and flavor. The states that local products hold strategic value in terms of sustainability philosophy and the formation of destination identity. Within this framework, the concept of locality encompasses cultural memory, recipe traditions, social interactions, and a region-specific gastronomic identity.

Cuisine chefs play a crucial role in menu planning, product selection, and purchasing processes in food and beverage establishments. It can be

noted that these chefs' perceptions of local products are shaped by multidimensional factors such as individual knowledge, professional experience, business policy, and supply chain conditions. Chefs' intentions to purchase local products are directly related to various factors such as product quality, brand awareness, marketability, and lead time. Literature highlights perception of quality, supply continuity, cost, and seasonality as key opportunities and barriers shaping chefs' intentions to purchase local products.

Findings revealed that male employees in the sector predominate over female employees, while age and education levels vary. Demographic differences revealed that female chefs are more sensitive to sustainability, while experienced chefs are more committed to local food. It was determined that luxury and medium-sized businesses place greater importance on the use of local products.

The main obstacles affecting chefs' decisions to purchase local products are lack of authority, limited product variety, lack of awareness, and supply issues. While quality and taste are the most influential factors in choosing local products, lead time and marketability are also important factors. The results of the importance-performance analysis (IPA) indicate that the supply time, quality, availability, and menu applicability of local products are critical areas requiring improvement. Consequently, the food supply chain for local products must be strengthened, quality standardization ensured, producer-consumer trust increased, and awareness-based policies developed. Furthermore, strategic directions for sustainable local food systems should be presented.

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Declaration of competing interest

No potential conflict of interest to disclose.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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