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Sustainable Restaurants:

How consumers choose where to eat

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Dissertation written under the supervision of professor Laure Leglise

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Abstract – English

This dissertation aims to understand how consumers choose a sustainable restaurant. Previous studies have researched the role of social media in influencing the consumer on restaurant selection and the effect of environmental concern for choosing sustainable restaurants. Therefore, this research contributes to finding the drivers that affect the consumer the most in the restaurant sector.

To answer the research question, I carried out a qualitative research approach and conducted twenty-three in-depth interviews with consumers of sustainable restaurants between 19 and 65 years. The findings show that social media are the driving force influencing the consumer's decision-making process, with Instagram proving to be the leading social media app. Other online channels can affect the consumers, however, the impact on the respondents of this study was not sufficient to reach a conclusion. Additionally, consumers are highly influenced by the recommendations and suggestions of other individuals, mainly friends. Lastly, discounts and promotions have a considerate impact on the consumer's choice of sustainable restaurants and proved highly relevant to some individuals. The theoretical contribution of this research is that social media is the primary source where consumers collect information and the decisive factor to how they choose sustainable restaurants.

Title: Sustainable Restaurants: How consumers choose where to eat

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Keywords: sustainability, food industry, restaurants, sustainable restaurants, decision-making, influences, social media

Abstract – Portuguese

A presente tese visa explorar e identificar como é que os consumidores escolhem restaurantes sustentáveis. Estudos anteriores investigaram o papel das redes sociais e a sua influência na escolha de restaurantes, assim como o efeito da preocupação ambiental para escolher restaurantes sustentáveis. Por conseguinte, esta investigação contribui para encontrar os fatores que mais afetam o consumidor, mais especificamente no sector da restauração.

Para responder à questão de investigação, conduzi uma pesquisa quantitativa e realizei vinte e três entrevistas em profundidade com consumidores de restaurantes sustentáveis entre os 19 e os 65 anos. Os resultados mostram que as redes sociais são o fator principal que influencia o processo de decisão do consumidor, em que o Instagram foi considerado a rede social mais relevante. Outros canais *online* podem afetar a escolha do consumidor, contudo, o impacto sobre os inquiridos neste estudo não foi suficiente para chegar a uma conclusão. Para além disso, os consumidores são altamente influenciados pelas recomendações e sugestões de outros indivíduos, particularmente amigos. Finalmente, os descontos e as promoções têm alguma influência na escolha de restaurantes sustentáveis por parte de alguns consumidores. A contribuição teórica desta dissertação é que as redes sociais são a principal fonte onde os consumidores recolhem informação e o fator decisivo de como escolhem restaurantes sustentáveis.

Título: Restaurantes Sustentáveis: Como os consumidores escolhem onde comer

Autor: Rita de Sousa Raimundo Villas-Boas

Palavras-chave: sustentabilidade, indústria alimentar, restaurantes, restaurantes sustentáveis, tomada de decisão, influências, redes sociais

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“You, as a food buyer, have the distinct privilege of proactively participating in shaping the world your children will inherit.”¹

Joel Salatin – American farmer, lecturer, and author

Throughout the last years, sustainability has gained awareness (Birdsall, 2013), especially for individuals who are and have been concerned about the environment (Zanella, 2020). The rise of sustainable alternatives in the food industry is undeniable (Jacobs & Klosse, 2016), and consumers want to decrease their contribution to environmental degradation and global climate change (Salzberg et al., 2019). However, communicating correctly is essential for consumers to understand the benefits of consuming or purchasing a product or service (Mihart, 2012). Recently, social media has been developing a crucial role in how consumers obtain information and the impact on decision-making (Power & Phillips-Wren, 2011). To reach the consumer, it is fundamental to understand their behavior towards sustainable alternatives since they directly influence the food chain and the amount of food production (Grunert, 2011). Therefore, in this dissertation, I will research how consumers choose sustainable restaurants and the crucial factors and elements that influence the decision-making process (Stankevich, 2017).

The service and product information search phenomenon dominates much of the existing study on social media use (Amaro & Duarte, 2017; Huang, 2011; Kaperonis, 2018; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Existing literature has researched the role of social media in restaurant decisions, and Richards and Tiwari (2014) and Cornejo (2017) have shown that social media impacts restaurant selection. However, the specificities of this decision-making process for choosing sustainable restaurants remain unstudied. The negative effect of restaurants on the environment has become a broad spread concern for the public (Gössling et al., 2009), and therefore, it is becoming an extremely subject to research. Xu and Jeong (2019) and Raab et al. (2018) find that serving sustainable food as the main product attracts niche customers, whereas secondary green practices do not influence

¹ Quote from Joel Salatin's book *“Holy Cows and Hog Heaven: The Food Buyer's Guide to Farm Friendly Food”* from 2005.

customer segmentation. Moreover, several studies have shown that attitudes, subjective norms, food quality, service quality, and balance of nature are the most important factors affecting consumer intention to dine at green restaurants (Chen 2017). Previous studies have not yet researched the primary source that will influence the decision-making process of sustainable consumers when choosing a restaurant.

As such, this dissertation aims to explore the elements that influence the consumer when deciding on a sustainable restaurant. It is essential to understand the different sources that can impact the consumers' interactions and reactions across their daily lives (Grinstein & Riefler, 2015), and to meet this objective; this dissertation addresses the following research question:

“How do consumers choose sustainable restaurants?”

Considering the research question mentioned above, this dissertation will be relevant primarily to restaurants. Not only to understand what tools and methods can impact the consumer but to gain relevant knowledge on how to communicate and persuade the consumer to buy their food ((Hu et al., 2009; Reynolds and Biel, 2007). Moreover, with restaurants embracing sustainability and the latest regulations to protect the environment (Charter, 2006), it will be relevant to evaluate how individuals can be persuaded to choose sustainable restaurants.

To answer the research question, I adopted a qualitative approach and conducted twenty-three semi-structured interviews with consumers of sustainable restaurants. The analysis will provide insights into how consumers decide what restaurant to go to and what sources influence the consumer the most.

Lastly, this thesis is structured in six chapters. Chapter one constitutes the present introduction. Chapter two portrays a review of the literature of diverse topics related to the three main topics of this study: sustainability awareness and the link between restaurants and sustainability. Furthermore, it elucidates what previous research concluded about influences on consumers' choices regarding eco-friendly restaurants, divided into four sub-sections. In the methodology, I present why the qualitative approach was preferred over other methods to answer the research question of this study. The data collection and subsequent analysis are also described, followed by a practical illustration of how the coding process was performed. Chapter four discloses the findings collected, answering the research question. Then, chapter five involves a reflective discussion, in which the contribution of this research to scientific knowledge is put into perspective. Finally, chapter six ends the thesis by highlighting the prominent aspects that meet the research goal. In addition, it also describes limitations faced and provides suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review shows that sustainability is becoming an aspect of consideration for consumers regarding restaurants, and by adopting eco-friendlier practices, more success will come for the restaurant. The literature review shows that social media plays an active and vital role in decision-making and consumer behavior. However, the existing literature did not conclude how social media can affect the consumer when choosing sustainable restaurants. In addition, social influences and the individual self impact the consumer and the likeliness of going to sustainable restaurants.

The literature review highlights sustainability by defining the concept and the current significance for multiple industries (2.1). This resulted in researching the connection between sustainability and restaurants (2.2) by understanding principles and guidelines for defining eco-friendly restaurants. After analyzing the previous ideas, (2.3) focuses on existing information about influences on consumers' decisions. This section is divided into four sub-sections: (2.3.1) focuses on the role of social influences, (2.3.2) on the individual self, (2.3.3) will provide insights on how and to what extent social media can influence consumer's decisions, and lastly, (2.3.4) is dedicated to understanding the consumer decision-making process.

2.1. Sustainability awareness

Many definitions have been proposed for sustainability. However, one of the most widely accepted and referenced in other studies is from the United Nations Brundtland Commission in 1987 that defines sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). In Garbie (2015), this definition is extended to see how the three pillars of sustainability (economy, society, and environment) are studied to understand their importance and acceptance across several industries. This includes hospitality, which plays a critical role in the current Portuguese economy. In Graph 1, from Garbie (2015, p. 68), we can see that the social dimension of sustainability awareness is the most highlighted. Social media will inevitably have an essential role in developing sustained societies in the internet age.

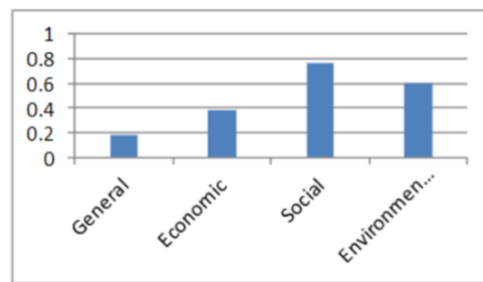


Figure 1 - Public sustainability awareness

For an organization to practice environmental sustainability, they “actively seek to preserve natural resources, minimize the harmful effects of their actions on the environment, and contribute to enhancing the overall quality of human life” (Jang & Zheng, 2019). Additionally, it is essential to consider the relevance of sustainability for companies since it is becoming an indispensable requirement (Charter, 2006). Since various laws and regulations were established to protect the environment, organizations must create an environmental management system to ensure their practices meet the rules (Garbie, 2015). Starik and Kanashiro defined sustainability management “as the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of both environmental and socioeconomic sustainability-related decisions and actions.” (2013, p.12). Finally, Danciu concluded that “companies that manage their environmental and social performance have superior financial

results and create more value for their stakeholders, attract and have more loyal customers.” (2013, p.26).

After determining the presence of sustainability in overall companies, it is crucial to evaluate sustainable expectations in the food industry. These are particularly important in this sector, apparent in the following section.

2.2. Food industry and sustainability

In terms of food consumption, there has been a consistent tendency toward dining out (Smith et al., 2013). From the perspective of restaurant owners, understanding clients' preferences are critical to delivering a service that meets their needs, and restaurant consumers are increasingly difficult to satisfy (Hu et al., 2009; Reynolds and Biel, 2007). They have evolved, are more conscious of the value and expense of items and ingredients, and are more demanding (Kaplan and Norton, 2001). Furthermore, they increasingly request higher quality cuisine (Koys, 2003) and service (Quan and Wang, 2004). Medeiros and Salay (2013) revealed that the main drivers to go to a restaurant are food quality, price, atmosphere, and location.

Reducing the environmental impact has been a challenge for many sectors, including the food industry. The concept of “food system sustainability” is precisely the link between sustainability and actions related to food businesses (Zanella, 2020). Consumers are more and more concerned about the origins and integrity of their food (Zanella, 2020), and restaurants are urged to make operational changes in “areas of food procurement, service provision, waste management, energy efficiency, and water conservation” (Salzberg et al., 2019, p.169). Higgins-Desbiolles & Wijesinghe (2018) concluded that adopting sustainable food practices has a decisive role in addressing sustainability concerns and making the customer more environmentally aware. Moreover, some authors defend that it is an opportunity for businesses to increase the efficiency and quality of their establishment and, consequently, improve their performance (Cantele & Cassia, 2020).

Considering that consumers are increasingly dedicated to knowing companies' origin, production process, quality, and recycling habits (Cantele & Cassia, 2020), ten principles were defined by Zanella (2020) that can serve as indicators for the best environmentally friendly practices of restaurants. Those principles are highlighted in the table below and can be considered valuable to indicate sustainable practices from food establishments.

1. Embrace diversity and seasonality
2. Cook natural and fresh food
3. Prioritize local food
4. Prefer organic food
5. Have a vegetable-oriented diet
6. Choose small producers
7. Reduce, reuse, recycle
8. Be creative
9. Implement change gradually
10. Innovate your recipes

Table 1 - 10 principles for food sustainability

Besides adopting these sustainable practices, implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs and messages effectively can increase a restaurant's reputation with the consumers (Line et al., 2016).

The restaurant industry analysis in sustainability is relevant in this research, considering that those are the main fields that constitute the research question. While we know how restaurants can be more sustainable, we do not have information on how consumers will choose among the different available restaurants. Therefore, I propose to answer the following RQ: "How do consumers choose sustainable restaurants?". Furthermore, the following is dedicated to understanding what we know influences consumers' choices regarding sustainable options in general and the decision process behind their choices, which will be extremely valuable in the discussion chapter.

2.3. What we know about influences on consumer's choices regarding sustainable restaurants

This section highlights the existing information on influences affecting consumers' choices. Therefore, the section is divided into four main factors that impact individuals: social influences, the individual self, social media, and the decision-making process.

2.3.1. The role of social influences

Social influences are the first driver to affect consumer behavior regarding sustainability by often impacting consumers' actions, behaviors, and expectations (White et al., 2019). Tsai and Baozzi (2014) refer to three perspectives of inter-personal influence. First, compliance points up the influence based on reward and punishment aversion, which can be specified to the need for approval. Internalization occurs when the individual acts according to others' beliefs, and finally, identification describes behaviors influenced by respect and commitment to the group identity. Staub (1978) stated that prosocial behavior refers to the welfare of a social group and can be divided into two moral values: proscriptive and prescriptive. Proscriptive principles are the prohibition of engaging in activities that could prejudice others. On the contrary, prescriptive values are when individuals act to benefit others.

Another means that influences eco-friendlier behaviors are through social desirability, where consumers tend to choose sustainable alternatives to cause a positive effect on others (White et al., 2019). Salazar et al. (2012) concluded that social groups with a high degree of social proximity have a vital role in the buying behavior of sustainable products. Additionally, the study revealed that individuals given information about their peers' opinions would increase the probability of choosing sustainable products.

Although social influences play an essential role in the consumer's behavior, factors linked to the individual self can strongly impact sustainable practices, which will be the next topic highlighted in this literature review.

2.3.2. The role of the individual self

One of the best-documented findings in psychology is that people need to think of themselves as “good” and “appropriate” (Steele, 1988). Back in 1988, comprising the self was defined by one’s: social roles (e.g., parent, student, spouse), values (e.g., humor, religion), group identities (e.g., culture, nation), central beliefs (i.e., ideology, political beliefs), goals (e.g., health, economic success), and relationships (e.g., family, friends). However, a new dimension has risen on social networking profiles in the last decade. SNS profiles appear to restore users’ sense of self-worth by reminding them of the essential aspects of their lives: their connections with friends, identities, and group membership. Therefore, this new factor acts as a comprisal of the previously defined notions of the self, as seen in Toma (2010).

One essential factor in increasing sustainability practices is individuals changing their behaviors and lifestyles (Hakio & Mattelmäki, 2019). However, White and Simpson (2013) state that consumers tend to resist actions that will negatively affect them, such as modifying behaviors and activities that will require additional effort and time. On the other side, consumers consider sustainable choices based on their self-interest, considering the economic benefit of that decision (Hamid et al., 2017). Consumers are more likely to engage in eco-friendlier actions when “rewarded” with a self-benefit from their behavior (Corral-Verdugo, 2009). Diamond & Loewy (1991) state that monetary incentives, such as discounts and gifts, encourage consumers to engage in sustainable behaviors.

For the individualist approach to sustainability, it is relevant to understand the role of the ecological self. Van der Werff et al. (2013) define environmental self-identity as “the extent to which you see yourself as a type of person who acts environmentally-friendly.” Furthermore, they state that this environmental self-identity reflects the sense of connection to the environment and nature of the consumer. Bragg (1996) considers this sense of connection to other beings by identifying themselves and viewing them as part of us as “spontaneous” ecological behavior.

The evaluation of social influences and the individualist perspective are relevant to recognizing how that will affect the consumer's choices. Furthermore, the next section will provide an in-depth understanding of the role of social media on the consumer’s decision.

2.3.3. The role of social media

The evolution of social media has been fueled by the human drive to mass communication and the rapid development of electronic devices, such as smartphones, tablets, and computers (Carr & Hayes, 2015). According to Merriam-Webster, social media comprehends all “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Nonetheless, it’s essential to understand how users perceive social media. Rhee (2021) analyzed if the perception of the four main social networking sites (SNS), where users were allowed to explain why they use each type of these four SNS. While social interaction was the top reason users used Facebook, entertainment was the top category for Twitter, and photo/video was the top category for Instagram and Snapchat. These findings are crucial to understanding the utility of each of the leading social networks used nowadays.

The internet has brought the possibility for customers to purchase items around the world (Vinerean et al., 2013). Consumers include digital communication technologies – the internet, social media, mobile apps – to search for information about services and products, how to purchase them and where, and later, share their experiences with others (Stephen, 2016). Social media is changing how businesses and consumers communicate (Fondevilla-Gascón et al., 2020). Social media allows companies to interact and engage with consumers and, more importantly, build and fortify the relationship with the customers (Vinerean et al., 2013).

The use of social media to communicate content about environmental sustainability is a catalyst to increase awareness and engagement with this matter (Sogari et al., 2017). In Miranda et al. (2015), it was proven that social networks like Facebook, Twitter, etc., can be considered one of the most powerful marketing tools on the internet for the restaurant sector. Social media features such as photos (Oliveira & Casais, 2019), physical evidence (Yang et al., 2017), comments (Kumar et al., 2020), the popularity of restaurants on social media (Mhlanga & Tichaawa, 2017; Ramos et al., 2020), and social media ads (Kumar et al., 2020; Saura et al., 2019) have a more significant influence on the consumer. Furthermore, marketers’ success in influencing purchase behavior depends on understanding consumer behavior. Marketers need to know the specific customers’ needs and turn them into purchase attributes. They need to understand how consumers gather

information about different alternatives and use this information to compete with other brands. (Stankevich, 2017).

To further access the application of this research in the sustainable restaurant industry, Martínez-Navalón (2019) conducted a study to analyze the impact of social media marketing on environmental sustainability in food and beverage service companies in Spain. The main drawn conclusions are as follows:

- Restaurants that satisfy their followers using social media will generate trust in the latter
- Organizations that want to increase the levels of satisfaction, trust, and continuance intention, must generate publications that create value for their followers
- Users who followed the restaurant were followers who intended to continue following the restaurant
- A follower who intended to continue following the restaurant on social media was a follower who, to some extent, saw positive environmental sustainability campaigns and collaborated with them.

Given the noticeable impact of social media on the consumer, the last section of this literature review will focus on individuals' decision-making processes. Consequently, this research will be necessary to comprehend how consumers choose to embrace sustainable alternatives.

2.3.4. The decision-making process

This research is relevant to better understand the motivations, considerations, and ultimately the factors and moments that affect the buying decision-making process in the case of sustainable restaurants (Stankevich, 2017). To identify the decisive moments and aspects that will lead to the consumer's choice, decision-making models are often used to determine this behavior (Erasmus et al., 2010).

A study was conducted by Nishino (2007) to evaluate environmentally conscious decision-making problems in resource consumption. Based on game theory, two types of games were created in this

model: one with degraded resources and another with limited resources. These findings show that self-interested behavior may cease when humans become aware of a scarcity of natural resources. Similarly, various research comparing the thought process of sustainable versus non-sustainable consumption have been conducted. Diverging decision-making reasons can be identified between these two lifestyles on Hüttel (2018). Individuals who express an environmental concern tend to avoid negative consequences, such as purchasing unnecessary or unaffordable products that will lead to momentary happiness and future well-being. As a result, this study advocated for the promotion of gaining freedom and autonomy through sustainability, a value that is also critical when considering economically unsustainable options. This factor is crucially important as in 2021, the Earth Overshoot Day (the day in which humanity has exhausted Earth's budget for the year) was earlier than ever. This year, this day was on the 29th of July (Earth Overshoot Day). This could mean that sustainable awareness and consequently behavior-changing might start occurring more often in the masses.

After analyzing different decision-making models, I concluded that the Panwar et al. (2019) model is the most succinct model to evaluate the consumer's purchase process. The model indicates five stages; where the first stage is where the consumer recognizes and gains awareness of a specific need. If the product that the consumer is interested in does not meet the basic expectations, the next stage is the information search. The consumer will obtain information from different sources and then move to the third stage of evaluating possible alternatives. After deciding what product to buy, the final output is to assess the level of satisfaction, which can be essential for future purchases.

In this dissertation, I hope to explain the primary source that will lead to the consumer's decision of a sustainable restaurant. Bearing this in mind, the following research question was designed to assist with the research purpose: "How do consumers choose sustainable restaurants?". Due to the lack of previous research in determining the primary influence of the consumer in choosing an eco-friendly restaurant, the present study will answer the question mentioned above to identify the decisive component.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The methodology chapter is divided into four parts: the research approach will be explained first. The second part describes the strategy used to ensure a precise and relevant sample, followed by part three that specifies the process of gathering the data and the reasoning behind this choice. Lastly, part four details how the collected data was organized and structured to obtain valuable insights.

3.1 Research approach

The research question of this study is how consumers choose sustainable restaurants. Qualitative research was the most appropriate for several reasons given this research question.

First, qualitative research “addresses questions about how social experience is created and given meaning and produces representations of the world that make the world visible” (Gephart, 2004, p.455). Considering the research question mentioned above, the study of how the consumer behaves and the influences that affect that behavior suits the previous description. Second, this approach can better understand the topic under research (Birkinshaw et al., 2011). Interviewees can answer questions based on their life experiences and respond freely and opinionative on each topic (Graebner et al., 2012). Additionally, the interviewer can adjust the quality of the information that is being collected. If the information provided begins to disperse, the interviewer can alter the questions smoothly and collect data in the intended direction (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Finally, according to Bryman & Bell (2011), this qualitative approach is applicable when the topics under research have a controversial and sensitive nature. This is the case in this research, where interviewees were confronted with questions about their level of concern about the environment and how likely they are to be influenced by other people and other factors. As such, the interviewees might have felt somehow constrained from responding transparently and spontaneously.

3.2. Sample strategy

The present research intended to analyze the methods that can affect the consumer the most when choosing a sustainable restaurant.

For this sample, inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to obtain a concrete result to answer the research question. Inclusion criteria have the objective to “specify an attribute that cases must possess to qualify for the study” (Robinson, 2013). Hence, the sample only considered interviewees that go to sustainable restaurants at least once a month. Although no previous study researched the relevant consumer frequency to go to restaurants, the sample considers individuals with a frequency of at least one month since this study would not be possible without any consumption. Thus, the consumers were asked about the frequency of consuming sustainable food in restaurants, as seen in table 3. Furthermore, the sample was collected according to geographical homogeneity (Robinson, 2013) interviewees from Portugal's exact location.

Regarding the sampling strategy, I used a sampling technique based on purposive and convenience criteria to efficiently target a sample of sufficient interest for the research (Etikan et al., 2016). The following criteria were determined to efficiently gather a sample of enough interest for the study: (1) A similar number of men and women to avoid having a gender discrepancy of the sample – 10 male, 13 female; (2) The age of the interviewees ranged between 19 and 65 years, leveraging the likelihood of being consumers of sustainable restaurants along with being familiarized with social media strategies; (3) The place of residence to be Portugal to have a more sustained knowledge of eco-friendly restaurants in this country; (4) As the last criterion - consumers of sustainable alternatives with different frequencies of going to eco-friendly restaurants.

The pursuit of adequate interviewees was conducted through “snowball sampling” (Noy, 2008). The recruitment process began with six initial participants in my network of contacts, frequent consumers of sustainable restaurants. Later, these respondents were invited to approach further contacts and check availability to carry out an interview. With the snowball technique, I gathered ten other participants from previous interviewees that had the criteria required for the sample.

In the next step, I recruited seven respondents from Instagram, explicitly targeting lovers and enthusiasts of the world of sustainable food. The method chosen was by searching #sustainablefood, #sustainableeating, and #sustainablealternatives on Instagram and investigating if that person was actively engaged in sustainable behaviors or not. After this prior investigation, private messages were sent to schedule an interview. The hashtag search was conducted in Portuguese to comply with Robinson's (2013) geographical homogeneity.

Accordingly, a total of twenty-three respondents that go to sustainable restaurants were selected. Twenty-three respondents are more than the optimum size of six to eight suggested by Gill et al. (2008). As a remark, the initial concern was finding interviewees who were at least occasional consumers of sustainable restaurants. However, that was unexpectedly effortless. The main difficulty was finding interviewees that were willing to conduct interviews.

To ethically ensure the privacy of those involved, only the respondent's first name will be revealed. Each interviewee profile is presented in Table 2 by displaying the first name, gender, age, place of residence, occupational background, frequency of going to sustainable restaurants, and the time per interview of each respondent.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Place of residence</i>	<i>Occupational background</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Time per interview</i>
Tomás	Male	19	Portugal	Student	1 time/ month	22
Marta	Female	21	Portugal	Student/Technical Sales	2 times/ month	23
António	Male	22	Portugal	Student/Business Analyst	5 times/ month	30
Henrique	Male	22	Portugal	Student	7 times/ month	28
Ana Rita	Female	24	Portugal	Account Manager	4 times/ month	31
Francisco	Male	24	Portugal	Student/ Junior Consultant	5 times/ month	28

Catarina	Female	25	Portugal	Marketing Intern	6 times/ month	25
Maria	Female	27	Portugal	Business Developer	5 times/ month	28
Ana	Female	28	Portugal	Head of Operations	2 times/ month	22
João Pedro	Male	30	Portugal	Senior Consultant	1 time/ month	24
Marta G.	Female	31	Portugal	Sales & Commercial	4 times/ month	25
Miguel	Male	33	Portugal	Engineer	3 times/ month	31
Tiago	Male	35	Portugal	Businessman	9 times/ month	31
Filipa	Female	39	Portugal	Dentist	4 times/ month	26
Rita	Female	40	Portugal	Digital Marketeer	6 times/ month	29
Pedro	Male	43	Portugal	Head of Department	5 times/ month	27
Cláudia	Female	47	Portugal	Financial Controller	2 times/ month	22
João	Male	48	Portugal	Entrepreneur	2 times/ month	29
Olga	Female	52	Portugal	Accountant	4 times/ month	27
Ana S.	Female	53	Portugal	Head of Section	3 times/ month	23
Cristina	Female	54	Portugal	Real Estate Agent	2 times/ month	25
Joaquim	Male	62	Portugal	Retired	1 time/ month	31
Maria C.	Female	65	Portugal	Real Estate Agent	3 times/ month	28

Table 2 - Overview of the interviewees' profile (ordered by age)

3.3. Data collection

The data collection was gathered by conducting in-depth interviews. Most of the twenty-three interviews were conducted face-to-face, with nine exceptions. The interviewees in question were not comfortable answering questions on-site due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore, the interviews were accomplished through the online platform Zoom.

I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews by defining key questions that are essential to answer the research question of this dissertation: “How do consumers choose sustainable restaurants.” First, semi-structured interviews allow the possibility to explore the interviewee’s idea or response in more detail (Gill et al., 2008). The interviewees were allowed to explain their thought and generally felt free to express their feelings (Humphrey & Lee, 2004, p. 340).

The in-depth semi-structured interviews were approached with an interview guide, subdivided into two main sections by the two topics emerging from the research question – “Sustainable food consumption” and “Influences on decision-making” (see Appendix 1). All interviews were recorded with the respective permission of all twenty-three participants before the beginning of the interview. The interviews took approximately twenty to thirty minutes with all participants (see Table 2).

3.4. Data analysis

To analyze the data, I chose the coding method. While there are several ways of coding, thematic analysis seemed to be the most appropriate method to answer the research question “How do consumers choose sustainable restaurants?”. Thematic analysis has been broadly used in qualitative research. It focuses on examining themes or patterns of meaning within data, generating a detailed description of the data set and theoretically based interpretation of meaning (Guest et al., 2021). However, I carried out a hybrid approach within the thematic analysis, mixing deductive and inductive data analysis processes. The deductive approach included a set of priori codes that emerged from the research question (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). These themes were expected to be reflected in the interviews and were later integrated into the coding book (see Appendix 2). Then, after reading and interpreting the raw textual data, it has surfaced new

inductive themes as a result of the participant's responses, which were not covered by the initial code templates. In addition, a codebook was developed to reflect a narrative of the empirical data, changing permanently as new codes were added and categories reorganized (See Appendix 2).

The first stage of the data analysis was listening to the recorded interviews and transcribing the responses word-for-word from the tape (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). During this process, the information was attributed to a preliminary code that highlighted the general topic of the response content. A considerable amount of data was disregarded from the data collection since it was repeated, unrelated, or not significant, which was a consequence of the open questions asked to the participants. The transcription process of the twenty-three interviews took around 18 hours, resulting in around 150 pages of information. The transcription process included translating some of the interviewee's responses that were answered in Portuguese due to a lack of comfort in the English language.

This lengthy process resulted in a list of twelve codes based on their frequency and relatedness to the research question. The codes were grouped into two broad categories identified as the two main themes that compose the research question. As such, considering the deductive approach of this study, these categories were consistently assigned to the two pre-conceived themes, being "sustainable restaurants" and "influences on decision-making" (see Appendix 2).

In conclusion, we present below an example of the transcribed data's process - starting as codes, grouping later into categories, and, finally, attached to the pre-conceived themes (see Table 3 and Table 4). The complete codes and development list are in Appendix 2 - Coding Book.

Code	Quote
Environment	<i>“I know that a lot of sustainable restaurants have the policy to reuse and recycle the packaging and materials. That is something that I care about, and I like to reinforce others for doing it” - Miguel</i>
Health	<i>“I have been going to sustainable restaurants more often and I like the effect it was on my daily routine and on my health. I feel more energetic and honestly, being healthy gives me an overall positivity” - Maria</i>

Table 3 - Codes from the data. Quote source from Interview n° 12 and Interview n° 23, respectively

Code	Category	Theme
Environment	Concern	Sustainable Restaurants
Health		

Table 4 - Codes, corresponding category, and theme (From the Coding Book – Appendix 2)

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, I answer the research question, “How do consumers choose sustainable restaurants?”. The findings and subsequent analysis are structured according to the second theme constructed in the Coding Book (see Appendix 2). This section of findings is dedicated to understanding the different influences that make consumers choose a specific eco-friendly restaurant. The categories from this theme were online channels, people’s opinions, and rewards.

4.1. The use of online channels

4.1.1. Social media

When asked about what influences them to choose a sustainable restaurant, a substantial number of interviewees considered social media to be one of the primary sources of influence, with fifteen interviewees out of twenty-three. Moreover, almost all respondents revealed that the social media of election is *Instagram*, and four examples are displayed in Table 5.

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Quote</i>
Henrique	<i>“Instagram is where I can see how restaurants communicate with the consumers. I like an Instagram page that showcases the product but in an interesting and funny way”</i>
Francisco	<i>“Before choosing a restaurant, I go to Instagram and see their page. Usually, when the product is not well displayed, especially good images, I tend not to try that particular restaurant”</i>
Catarina	<i>“On Instagram, people show their meals, talk about them, show the menu and explain some interesting facts about the place, which gives me a very real notion of how my mealtime is going to be enjoyed”</i>
Rita	<i>“Yes, I like to follow sustainable businesses in general on Instagram. The most important for me is the content. More than images, I like to read how they speak about what they do and read the comments of other people on the publications”</i>

Table 5 - Social media (*Instagram*) influence on the consumer, perceived by each interviewee

The number of respondents who rely on social media demonstrates a decisive role in decision-making. The content exposed on social media can determine whether a consumer will trust a

specific restaurant or not. Moreover, when deciding where to go, consumers rely mainly on the content exposed on *Instagram*, more specifically, the photos of the meals and the publications related to eco-friendly behavior.

4.1.2. Other online channels

Although the interviewees disclosed that checking the restaurant’s page on Instagram can highly influence their decision, others considered different online channels to be the first drivers to help to choose a sustainable restaurant. Table 6 provides an overview of some responses containing the different channels identified by the interviewees.

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Online Channels</i>	<i>Quote</i>
Ana Rita	App	<i>“Especially when I am going out with friends, I resort to The Fork to choose the restaurant. They have discounts when you book a table with their app, and I can see the menu, pictures, and customer’s opinions”</i>
Maria	Website	<i>“I choose the restaurant by looking at the menu, pictures, and in some cases the philosophy of that restaurant. The best way to see this is through the website”</i>
Ana	App	<i>“Zomato shows me the score of the restaurant, pictures, and reviews people give, which helps me decide if I intend on going there or not”</i>
Tiago	TV Program	<i>“Boa Cama, Boa Mesa makes me want to try restaurants out. They show the best restaurants in the most envious spots”</i>
Pedro	Website	<i>“Since I’m a vegetarian, I like to read about the history and background of the restaurant before trying it out. Of course, that I am aware that a lot of sustainable restaurants are new and might not have a detailed website yet”</i>

Table 6 - Influence of apps, TV programs, and the website, on decision-making, expressed by each interviewee

As noted, interviewees showed that they are familiar with other online channels and rely on those methods to make a more informed decision on where to go to eat sustainable alternatives. Out of the distinct online channels, the respondents rely mostly on *Zomato*, *The Fork*, and the restaurant’s

website. The code TV Programs proved to be the minor factor influencing the consumer’s decision-making process, with only four respondents using this means.

Furthermore, some interviewees usually go through two online channels before deciding on the restaurant. Maria expressed that *“If the Instagram page doesn’t have a lot of content, I go to the restaurant’s website to know more about their products and sustainable cause,”* while Ana Rita expressed that *“Sometimes when I’m still deciding if I really want to go, I tend to read TripAdvisor reviews.”*

4.2. Listening to people’s opinions

To understand all the possible factors that can influence the consumer to go to sustainable restaurants, the interviewees were questioned about the influences of other people on their decisions. Three groups emerged after conducting the interviews: friends, family, and influencers. Most interviewees revealed that friends’ recommendations can be crucial to experiment a new restaurant, highlighted by five examples in Table 7.

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Quote</i>	<i>Influence of friends</i>
António	<i>“Yes, since I care a lot about my friends’ feedback. Given that, if I get feedback from sustainable restaurants, I will definitely go to that restaurant”</i>	✓
Henrique	<i>“I have a close group of friends and we are all vegetarians. We like to go to different restaurants and then let the group know about our experience. If the feedback is not good, I will definitely not go to that restaurant”</i>	✓
Catarina	<i>“My friends are the people that influence me the most and recommending restaurants is not an exception”</i>	✓
João Pedro	<i>“Most of the sustainable restaurants that I have been to, was through a friend’s positive feedback. I rely on them to show me good quality restaurants at an affordable price”</i>	✓
Filipa	<i>“My friends influence me every day and in different aspects of my life. Restaurants and food are one of the many topics of our conversations and they can influence me to try a restaurant if the recommend it”</i>	✓

Table 7 - Influence of friends on decision-making, expressed by each interviewee

Although these are only a few examples that accentuate the effect of friends’ opinions on the consumer, almost half of the respondents considered easily influenced by friends. Nonetheless, Maria and Rita were two of the four interviewees that considered influencers to help in the decision-making process by sharing their experience online:

“Influencer’s opinions can also make me try a new restaurant out. They share their experience in real-time, and if I see an establishment or a picture of a meal that really gets to me, I will give that restaurant an opportunity” – Maria

“I’m influenced by other Instagram users/influencers in the field of sustainability. I can learn more quickly about new restaurants, and I don’t have to do the research myself” – Rita

Although family influences were a code that emerged from the interviews, the impact of these individuals on the consumer is considered highly reduced. Table 8 illustrates the three interviewees that consider family to influence their sustainable consumption.

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Quote</i>	<i>Influence of family</i>
Tomás	<i>“My mother influences me to go to sustainable restaurants, especially because she is vegetarian”</i>	✓
Cláudia	<i>“Environmental issues are the new order of the day. Me and my family talk about it regularly and we influence each other to be more sustainable”</i>	✓
Joaquim	<i>“I don’t consider myself to be easily influenced, but nowadays my children have been pushing me to eat more healthy food, and when we go out, we try to go to sustainable restaurants whenever we can”</i>	✓

Table 8 – Influence of family on the consumer, perceived by each interviewee

To conclude, the results of this section are exceptionally unequivocal. Consumers are influenced mainly by friends’ suggestions and opinions when deciding what restaurant to go to. Individuals show that if a friend’s positive recommendation, they are likely to follow that opinion. Both family and influencers have a low impact on sustainable consumers and do not significantly influence decision-making.

4.3. Identifying rewards at restaurants

One of the questions from the interview was related to the influence of discounts and promotions on the decision-making process of the consumers. This analysis had the purpose of exploring other possible influences on individuals that could strongly affect their actions towards restaurants. Table 9 elucidates some of the interviewee’s responses that affirmed the positive effect of rewards.

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Quote</i>	<i>Influence of rewards</i>
Francisco	<i>“I am usually influenced by promotions, especially when it comes to food. For the right price, I will be tempted to try that product or restaurant out. If it is not according to my expectations, there is not a huge loss because I didn’t pay that much”</i>	✓
Rita	<i>“Promotions always catch my eyes, I’m a bargain seeker, and sustainable businesses are not an exception. But I want to be sure that the discount will not be “paid” by employees or lower food quality. If promotions and discounts have a cost on the work environment and the supply chain, it’s a no-go. It’s difficult to know and to control everything, but yes, I will respond to a promotion”</i>	✓
João Pedro	<i>“One of the discounts that get to me the most is by making a reservation of a table on The Fork. They have multiple discounts for different restaurants that will be applied to the entire meal”</i>	✓
Olga	<i>“I’m highly influenced by promotions. Not only with food, but with clothes and overall purchases. It pleases me to know that I’m spending less money on a meal, but I’m still satisfied and happy about what I’m eating”</i>	✓

Table 9 - Influence of rewards on the consumer, perceived by each interviewee

Even though many participants revealed being influenced by rewards, ten stated that discounts would not determine the choice of restaurant or at least will not be convinced immediately. João stated that *“It is not the rewards, other than the quality of the offer and the service, that serve as motivation for my choices.”* This opinion regarding promotions is shared by Ana Rita as well by referring that *“Special offers in restaurants are certainly attractive to me, but I don’t rely on them. If it’s a place I enjoy going to frequently, I will do so if they have discounts/promotions or not”*. Moreover, two of the respondents did not respond to this question and did not have a formulated

opinion on the impact of discounts and promotions. In summary, despite the interviewees who are more reluctant to rewards, the ones who do not respond to promotions, and the respondents who did not answer, less than half of the respondents are influenced by discounts. This aspect could have an unexpected impact on the decision-making process and could be more important than anticipated. However, as mentioned by many interviewees, the influence of rewards is dependent on how attractive that promotion is to different consumers with different opinions and tastes.

After analyzing the results, there is a predominant influence of social media on the consumer's decision-making process, considering that fifteen respondents of a total number of twenty-three expressed this to be the main factor of consideration before choosing a specific sustainable restaurant. Friend's recommendations are the second element that affects the consumer's decision, while influencers and family showed little influence on the consumer's choice. The appeal of rewards has been demonstrated to be an essential component for restaurants to consider since promotions and discounts can be highly beneficial to some consumers and can lead to consumption.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Diving into the context of sustainable restaurants and the consumer, I designed a research question, “How do consumers choose sustainable restaurants?” for the research purpose. To provide empirical results addressing this subject, I conducted a qualitative approach and twenty-three semi-structured interviews with sustainable consumers. Indeed, Table 10 presents an overview of the findings obtained:

<i>Key takeaways from findings:</i>	
<i>Social media</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Social media is the main source to discover sustainable restaurants.(2) Instagram is the chosen social media of individuals (content, pictures, comments, shares, and likes).
<i>Other online channels</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Zomato and The Fork are valuable apps(2) A restaurant’s website is a tool for information and is useful in the decision-making process.(3) TV Programs have a small impact on consumer behavior.
<i>People’s opinions</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Very pronounced influence of friends and their recommendations.(2) Influencers play a moderate role in younger individuals.(3) Family members have a low influence on the consumer.
<i>Rewards</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Promoting discounts will affect the consumer positively and can increase the number of consumers of a restaurant.

Table 10 - Summary of the findings

The findings obtained in this study on how consumers choose sustainable restaurants and the influences on decision-making are supported by the literature review in Chapter 2. After examining all relevant publications, the reduced amount of academic research on this topic made collecting relevant information for this dissertation particularly complex. Few studies have analyzed the impact of social media on the consumer’s decision when connected to sustainability. First, social media study is relatively new, and its evolution has only been growing exponentially in the last years (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019; Sheth, 2020). Moreover, following Nishino’s (2007) publication, with the recent alerts on the scarcity of resources on the planet, sustainable lifestyle alternatives have been gaining massive importance. The results collected from this study are consistent with the findings previously found in Martínez-Navalón (2019) in Spain. The respondents mentioned that

the social media Instagram is indeed a forceful source of information and a critical decision-maker when choosing sustainable restaurants. Francisco (Interview 6) is one of the examples that state this fact by expressing that “Before choosing a restaurant, I go to Instagram and see their page. Usually, when the product is not well displayed, especially good images, I will not go to that particular restaurant” (see Appendix 2). In a later analysis, I checked the respondent’s answers on which Instagram page they consider the best, and they were indeed active on social media.

The findings found in Rhee (2021) suggest that Instagram is the leading social networking site (SNS) for photos and videos. This conclusion matches different quotes from the interviewees, such as Francisco’s statement above and for instance Marta (Interview 2) that highlighted, “Usually, I find restaurants through social media, especially Instagram, and when the food looks nice in the pictures, I will want to try” (see Appendix 2). A valuable reason for Instagram’s success in influencing consumers’ decisions and the aspiration to choose those restaurants through this online channel can be found in Buşan (2014). In this research, there is a recognition of three profiles of learners: visual learners (those who need to see pictures and graphs to visualize), auditory learners (those who need to hear information), and kinesthetics learners (those who need to engage in an activity to grasp a concept). The results show that 65% of the population are visual learners, which supports the reasoning behind Instagram being the key to this success.

On the one side, the social influence research conducted by Tsai and Baozzi (2014) reinforces the findings obtained about other people’s influences. The second perspective of inter-personal influence mentioned in the previously mentioned study, defined as internalization, results from individuals acting according to others’ beliefs. The influence of friends on consumer choice is evident and is one of the dominant sources of impact on the decision-making process. On the other side, the research of the individual self suggests that individuals tend to resist actions that require a modification of behaviors that will require more effort (White and Simpson, 2013). Interestingly, the findings do not support the perspective of the individual lack of motivation. In fact, interviewees revealed a precise determination in engaging in sustainable practices without showing concerns with changing behaviors.

The literature review supports the findings regarding the influence of rewards. Diamond & Loewy (1991) concluded that individuals are more likely to embrace sustainable practices by receiving

monetary incentives, such as promotions. Engaging in sustainable actions is more inclined through rewards (Corral-Verdugo, 2009). Almost half of the individuals are more prompt to choose a restaurant when a promotion is offered, which can be confirmed in the overview of interviewees' responses displayed in Table 9.

Furthermore, one of the prominent results that emerged from the interviews, exposed in the Coding Book (Appendix 2), is the environmental concern that most interviewees revealed in their answers. This outcome from the interview is reinforced by Nishino (2007). Based on game theory, Nishino concluded through two types of games that individuals are more likely to reduce self-interested behavior when environmentally conscious.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis aimed to understand in-depth how consumers choose sustainable restaurants and what is the crucial element that influences the decision-making process. This research was conducted to answer the following question: “How do consumers choose sustainable restaurants?”. A qualitative approach was conducted using twenty-three semi-structured interviews with individuals between 19 and 65 who go to sustainable restaurants at least once a month.

The top insights from the present research are as follows: first, social media proved to be the driving force in the decision-making process. In fact, Instagram stood out among other online channels that consumers use to collect more information about restaurants. Nonetheless, it is relevant to mention that two apps, “Zomato” and “The Fork,” along with the restaurant’s website, have a moderate role in the consumer's final decision. Second, individuals have proven to be highly influenced consumers, seeking eco-friendly experiences from the suggestions of others. Individuals pursue mostly friends’ recommendations, and they are more likely to define the decision-making process than other individuals’ opinions – influencers and family. Third, discounts and promotions are a consideration point for individuals and can lead to more consumers of sustainable restaurants. Lastly, individuals revealed a solid environmental concern as a motive to prefer sustainable alternatives instead of other restaurants, along with a self-awareness of their health and the benefits of embracing these green options.

The primary limitations faced by this research must be illustrated. First, the sample is limited to Portuguese consumers. Therefore, the results of this research would not apply if other nationalities were included, which can mean that different motivations for sustainable consumption occur in different countries. Second, as a qualitative approach was performed, it is impossible to generalize the findings to the population of interest due to the small sample size. Third, the consumers were asked about their frequency of going to sustainable restaurants, and this study considered individuals who go to sustainable restaurants at least once a month. As a result, I faced minor difficulties finding respondents who regularly consume eco-friendly alternatives in restaurants.

Future research based on online channels is strongly recommended for applied social science researchers once its knowledge contributes to the modeling of the consumer's decision-making process and predicts the main factor that influences the consumer choice. Three recommendations emerged from this research, based on three eye-catching but still underestimated aspects. First, the respondents revealed that Zomato and The Fork applications serve as a powerful tool to receive information about restaurants. In addition, the restaurant's website had an active role of some of the individuals in this sample, more than expected. As such, it is worth scrutinizing the extent to which these applications influence the consumer and if, at some point, these online channels can superimpose social media. Second, further analysis should include a closer understanding of the impact of promotions and discounts on the consumer and how much that can influence the consumer's decision. This research can be highly beneficial for food businesses as that is a factor that can be more easily controlled and explored by restaurants. Finally, the present sample is composed of individuals aged 19 to 65 years to guarantee the study of sustainable consumption at different ages. An expected pattern among younger respondents (less than 40 years) revealed that social media is the powerful tool behind consumers' decisions, particularly Instagram. However, future research may consider a sample composed merely of older individuals between 40 and 60 years old to reveal the dominant factor influencing their decision when choosing a sustainable restaurant.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

Respondent's Information:

- *Name*
- *Age*
- *Gender*
- *Place of Residence*
- *Occupational Background*
- *Frequency of going to sustainable restaurants (per month)*

Interview Guide

Theme 1 – Sustainable food consumption

Why do you like sustainable food alternatives?

What do you look for in sustainable restaurants?

How often do you go to sustainable restaurants per month?

How long have you been going to sustainable restaurants?

What are your favorite sustainable restaurants?

Why are those your favorite sustainable restaurants?

How did you get to know those restaurants?

Do you do prior “investigation” to the restaurant you are going to? What methods do you use?

Why do you rely on those methods?

Theme 2 – Influences on decision-making

What motivates you to go to sustainable restaurants?

Do you feel that you are influenced by others to be more sustainable and, consequently, to go to more sustainable restaurants? Why do think so?

Are you influenced by promotions, discounts, or any other kind of reward?

(Author's note: The next line of questioning will be exclusively dedicated to social media)

Do you have social media?

How often do you go to social media?

Does social media influence your decision on sustainable food restaurants?

What social media?

Why do you go to that social media?

What type of content makes you think that the restaurant is good/worth trying? (Number of followers, number of publications, good photos, good eco-friendly content?)

What restaurants did you go to based on that social media?

What are the restaurants with the most engaging social media (Instagram) pages?

Appendix 2 – Coding Book

Theme	Category	Code	Interview 1 – Tomás (19)	Interview 2 – Marta (21)	Interview 3 – António (22)	Interview 4 – Henrique (22)	Interview 5 – Ana Rita (24)	Interview 6 – Francisco (24)
Sustainable Restaurant	Concern	Environment			“Allows to believe that I am making the world better, less polluted, and at the same time I am decreasing my ecological footprint”		“I’ve always enjoyed different foods. I’ve never been a picky eater and sustainability is an issue that I relate to due to the environmental crisis we are currently living”	
		Health		“Biologic options allow me to make sure that the product is healthy”				
	Food characteristics	Ingredients Traits	“When I go to sustainable restaurants, I know that the quality will correspond to my expectations”			“I like knowing that I’m eating organic and biologic food”		” Sustainable restaurants provide nourishing foods, vegetarian/vegan alternatives, which I am interested in because I enjoy different kinds of foods that are tasty and delicious”
		Diet		“I’m gluten intolerant and most of the restaurants that I have been to, have a disclaimer on the menu of the meals that are gluten-free”		“Two years ago, I became a vegan and that is the main reason why I go to sustainable restaurants”		

Theme	Category	Code	Interview 7 – Catarina (25)	Interview 8 – Maria (27)	Interview 9 – Ana (28)	Interview 10 – João Pedro (30)	Interview 11 – Marta G. (31)	Interview 12 – Miguel (33)
Sustainable Restaurant	Concern	Environment		“Green restaurants are concerned about their environmental footprint. I know that I will contributing and paying a bit more for fresh meals but also for ecological equipment”		“The best part of going to sustainable restaurants is knowing that I’m helping the environment. I know that the food I’m eating is natural, and no harm was done to animals”	“More and more we hear about environmental issues, and I believe that eating greener food is one of the easiest steps we can take”	“I know that a lot of sustainable restaurants have the policy to reuse and recycle the packaging and materials. That is something that I care about, and I like to reinforce others for doing it”
		Health	“I have some health problems and changing my diet was one of the compromises. In the beginning, it was hard, but now I love green food”					
	Food characteristics	Ingredients Traits		“In my mind, I think that these restaurants will give me higher food quality. “There is a mix of ingredients that are rare and tasty, and I just feel like that is a different experience”	“I look for restaurants that value seasonal organic and regional products (farm-to-table)”		“I like going to sustainable restaurants because of the big variety of vegetables and fruits that they have on the menu”	
		Diet	“I go to sustainable restaurants because I’m vegetarian and even though lately more and more restaurants have vegetarian options, I like green restaurants the most”					“I motivate myself to go to sustainable restaurants because I’m eating tasty food while losing extra weigh at the same time. It’s a win-win!”

Theme	Category	Code	Interview 13 – Tiago (35)	Interview 14 – Filipa (39)	Interview 15 – Rita (40)	Interview 16 – Pedro (43)	Interview 17 – Cláudia (47)	Interview 18 – João (48)
Sustainable Restaurant	Concern	Environment	“If we want something our world to be as good as possible, we need to do something about it. If we raise sustainability awareness, we will be able to reduce our impact on the environment”			“Reducing my environmental footprint is extremely important to me. I value my life and the life of the ones that surround me, and I want to improve the world I’m living in”		
		Health		“The most important part for me is to have healthy nutrition. The sustainable restaurants that I know balance carbon hydrates with a high level of protein”				“I’m not a fan of going to the gym and that is why I prefer to change my nutrition habits. I take my health seriously and I like that I’m becoming more sustainable”
	Food characteristics	Ingredients Traits	“My friends and I are big fans of going out to dinner. We try have different experiences and in green restaurants different ingredients are mixed and they do match!”		“Quality is extremely important to me. I know that fresh and natural ingredients can be more expensive, considering that they are less common, but for that, I don’t mind paying a little extra”		“Most eco-friendly restaurants have the objective to use local products and ingredients. I believe that that is a strong and positive differentiation factor”	
		Diet		“I’m still during the process, but I’m trying to stop eating meat. That way, I need to rely on meals with vegetables”				

Theme	Category	Code	Interview 19 – Olga (52)	Interview 20 – Ana S. (53)	Interview 21 – Cristina (54)	Interview 22 – Joaquim (62)	Interview 23 – Maria C. (65)
Sustainable Restaurant	Concern	Environment	“I want my child to have the best future and for that, we need to preserve the world we have. Going to sustainable restaurants allows me to protect the planet and have different food experiences”		“Eco-friendly restaurants also engage in an eco-friendly compromise”		“Carbon footprint and food waste are real problems that we are facing. I have noticed several times on green restaurants there is a no-plastic rule and reusable and recycled packages whenever possible”
		Health		“At my age, I try to eat healthy food as many times as possible. I like going to restaurants and my latest experiences have let me believe that I can have delicious meals without being too caloric”	“Although I go to eco-friendly restaurants to help the environment, I also care about my health, and I know that the ingredients will not be processed or with refined sugars”	“I try to go to sustainable restaurants frequently, but I believe that most of the times I’m still stuck on the old version of our world. However, every time that I go, I do it for me and for my body”	“I have been going to sustainable restaurants more often and I like the effect it was on my daily routine and on my health. I feel more energetic and honestly, being healthy gives me an overall positivity”
	Food characteristics	Ingredients Traits			“I know that the products I’m eating are fresh and without additives”		
		Diet		“A couple of years ago I gained a special appetite to plant-based dishes”			

Theme	Category	Code	Interview 1 – Tomás (19)	Interview 2 – Marta (21)	Interview 3 –António (22)	Interview 4 – Henrique (22)	Interview 5 – Ana Rita (24)	Interview 6 – Francisco (24)	
Influence on decision-making	Online channels	Social Media	"I go to social media to see the pictures of meals and to read comments of other people on the restaurants page"	"Usually, I find restaurants through social media, especially Instagram, and when the food looks nice in the pictures, I will want to try it."	"Before going to a restaurant, I go to their Instagram page. There I can see the options that I have and it's the best way to understand the quality and mindset of the restaurant"	"Instagram is where I can see how restaurants communicate with the consumers. I like an Instagram page that showcases the product but in an interesting and funny way"	"Social media are made out of trends and since sustainable food restaurants are a trend at the moment it does have an impact on what we see and hence what we want to try."	"Before choosing a restaurant, I go to Instagram and see their page. Usually, when the product is not well displayed, especially good images, I will not go to that particular restaurant"	
		Apps		"After seeing the Instagram page, I like to take a look at the menu on Zomato"				"Especially when I'm going out with friends, I resort to The Fork to choose the restaurant. They have discounts when you book a table with their app and I can see the menu, pictures, and customer's opinions"	
		Website							
		TV Programs							"My parents usually see the Portuguese program called Mesa Portuguesa and actually, I get to know different restaurants that I want to try"
	People's Opinions	Influencers		"Influencer's opinions can also make me try a new restaurant out. They share their experience in real-time and if I see an establishment or a picture of a meal that really gets to me, I will give that restaurant an opportunity"					
		Friends		"Yes! I think that if we influence each other we are driven to the ultimate goal that is being sustainable while eating good food"	"Yes, since I care a lot about people's feedback. Given that, if I get feedback from sustainable restaurants, I will go to that restaurant"	"I have a close group of friends and we are all vegetarians. We like to go to different restaurants and then let the group know about our experience. If the feedback is not good, I will definitely not go to that restaurant"	"Friends influence me to be more sustainable and choose more eco-friendly restaurants. Especially when we are trying to decide where to eat"	"If a friend recommends a sustainable restaurant, I will take him up on his word and I will go to the restaurant. Since me and my friends have similar tastes and routines, I will probably like the restaurant"	
		Family	"My mother influences me to go to sustainable restaurants, especially because she is vegetarian"						
	Rewards	Discounts	"When a restaurant has a discount, I'm more likely to try it out. I don't work so whenever I can spare money I do so."	"It is extremely likely for me to get influenced by discounts. My past experiences were positive and for me, it makes a lot of sense to have a good meal for a cheaper price"	"I am extremely driven by any kind of consumption incentive"	"Promotions attract me just as much as anyone else. I like knowing that I'm paying less for a quality meal. If I don't have a good experience, I will probably not return to that restaurant"	"Special offers in restaurants are certainly attractive to me, but I don't rely on them. If it's a place I enjoy going to frequently, I will do so if they have discounts/promotions or not"	"I am usually influenced by promotions, especially when it comes to food. For the right price, I will be tempted to try that product or restaurant out. If it is not according to my expectations, there is not a huge loss because I didn't pay that much"	

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Interview 7 – Catarina (25)</i>	<i>Interview 8 – Maria (27)</i>	<i>Interview 9 – Ana (28)</i>	<i>Interview 10 – João Pedro (30)</i>	<i>Interview 11 – Marta G. (31)</i>	<i>Interview 12 – Miguel (33)</i>	
<i>Influence on decision-making</i>	<i>Online channels</i>	<i>Social Media</i>	“On Instagram, people show their meals, talk about them, show the menu and explain some interesting facts about the place, which gives me a very real notion of how my mealtime is going to be enjoyed”	“Social media is my first choice when I want to decide where to go to dinner or lunch. I go to Instagram and see their publications and then I decide if it seems like a good choice or not”	“Most restaurants have an Instagram page and I have the habit of checking it out. If a restaurant doesn’t have appealing and tempting images, I will be reluctant to go there”		“Social media is where I go to see the content of the restaurant. I like to read comments of other people and see if it is positive or not”	“Instagram is the social media that I use the most. When I want to go to a sustainable restaurant, I see their publications and the professional pictures of the food make me want to go there”	
		<i>Apps</i>				“The Fork is one of the best apps for choosing a restaurant. I can see pictures, the menu, reviews, and even reserve a table for that restaurant”			
		<i>Website</i>		“If the Instagram page doesn’t have a lot of content, I go to that restaurant’s website to know more about their products and their sustainable cause”					
		<i>TV Programs</i>						“TV programs like Mesa Portuguesa allows me to discover new restaurants. The program gives me detailed information about the restaurant and that influences me to try them out”	
	<i>People’s opinions</i>	<i>Influencers</i>		“Since I care a lot about social media content, influencers have a clear impact on what I think, do and choose. There are incredible suggestions on Instagram”				“I follow a couple of influencers on Instagram, and they have a routine of going to different restaurants. They share videos and pictures of their meals and I get tempted to go to that same place”	
		<i>Friends</i>	“My friends are the people that influence me the most and recommending restaurants is not an exception”		“Where I work, there are different sustainable options, and my friends and I influence each other to vary in the places where we eat”		“Most of the sustainable restaurants that I have been to, was through a friend’s positive feedback. I rely on them to show me good quality restaurants at an affordable price”		
		<i>Family</i>							
	<i>Rewards</i>	<i>Discounts</i>		“It will draw my attention, but it will then depend on whether this is something I am interested in or not”	“Promotions can lead me to try a new restaurant. It makes me more enthusiastic about my meal when I know that I will be saving money for other activities”		“One of the discounts that get to me the most is by making a reservation of a table on The Fork. They have multiple discounts for different restaurants that it will be applied to the entire meal”	“At first, promotions seem interesting for me, but then I associate them with lower food quality. I prefer to pay in total for the food that I order”	“Discounts don’t influence my decision when choosing a sustainable restaurant. They can influence me if I have been to that restaurant before that I know for a fact has great food”

Theme	Category	Code	Interview 13 – Tiago (35)	Interview 14 – Filipa (39)	Interview 15 – Rita (40)	Interview 16 – Pedro (43)	Interview 17 – Cláudia (47)	Interview 18 – João (48)
Influence on decision-making	Online channels	Social Media	“Social media is the main source from where I get information about restaurants. I like to be informed and keep up with the latest news from my favorite restaurants. I also like to explore new options and I believe that there is no better place to do that other than Instagram”	“On Instagram I have access to pages like NIT and Casal Mistérios that introduce me to different restaurants that I will definitely want to try”	“I like to follow sustainable businesses in general on Instagram. The most important for me is the content. More than images, I like to read how they speak about what they do and read the comments of other people on the publications”			“I use Facebook to get information about restaurants. It is the only social media that I use and most of the restaurants have pictures and information about the restaurant online”
		Apps			“Sometimes, when I’m still deciding if I really want to go, I tend to read TripAdvisor reviews.”	“I use Zomato and The Fork to get to know good restaurants near me. I can see how far away the restaurant is and all kinds of other relevant information”	“Zomato shows me the score of the restaurant, pictures, and reviews people give, which helps me decide if I intend on going there or not”	
		Website				“Since I am a vegetarian, I like to read about the history and background of the restaurant before trying it out. Of course, that I am aware that a lot of sustainable restaurants are new and might not have a detailed website yet”		
		TV Programs	“Boa Cama Boa Mesa makes me want to try restaurants out. They show the best restaurants in the most envious spots”					
	People’s opinions	Influencers			“I’m influenced by other Instagram users/influencers in the field of sustainability. I can learn more quickly about new restaurants and I don’t have to do the research myself”			
		Friends	“Me and my group of friends are often influenced by a vegetarian friend of ours. We usually choose sustainable restaurants because of her”	“My friends influence me every day and in different aspects of my life. Restaurants and food are one of the many topics of our conversations and they can influence me to try a restaurants if they recommend it”				
		Family					“Environmental issues are the new order of the day. Me and my family talk about it regularly and we influence each other to be more sustainable”	
	Rewards	Discounts		“It depends on the promotion and if it makes sense for me to try. Otherwise, I have other relevant factors, like the location and ambiance of the restaurant, that influences me the most”	“Promotions always catch my eyes, I’m a bargain seeker, and sustainable businesses are not an exception. But I want to be sure that the discount will not be “paid” by employees or lower food quality. If promotions and discounts have a cost on the work environment and the supply chain, it’s a no-go. It’s difficult to know and to control everything, but yes, I will respond to a promotion”	“I have been in a situation where I chose a restaurant for the discounts and it wasn’t the right decision. I feel that since then, I will not be influenced by discounts anymore”	“Discounts can be a strong indicator that the quality is not the best. I like to know that the price I’m paying is equal to the quality of the food I’m eating”	“It is not the rewards, other than the quality of the offer and the service, that serve as motivation for my choices”

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Interview 19 – Olga (52)</i>	<i>Interview 20 – Ana S. (53)</i>	<i>Interview 21 – Cristina (54)</i>	<i>Interview 22 – Joaquim (62)</i>	<i>Interview 23 – Maria C. (65)</i>	
Influence on decision-making	Online channels	Social Media		“My Instagram is mostly pages of news, clothes, and restaurants. I like to see the pictures and videos of the restaurants and that can get me to try a new one”				
		Apps	“Ever since I installed Zomato, it has been my go-to for choosing restaurants. All the information that I need, and more is inside that app”					
		Website		“I choose the restaurant by looking at the menu, pictures, and in some cases the philosophy of that restaurant. The best way to see this is through the website”		“I don’t have social media and that is why I go to the restaurant’s website to know more about it, sometimes”	“The restaurant’s website is the place where I can get more information. I can see the menu, the locations of the restaurants (if there are more than one), and contacts if I want to reserve a table”	
		TV Programs			“The TV program Boa Cama Boa Mesa has good restaurant suggestions. I have tried at least three restaurants and I have been positively surprised by them.			
	People’s opinions	Influencers						
		Friends	“My colleagues at work are engaging in more sustainable alternatives every day. I have been going to more eco-friendly restaurants because of them”		“Other than the TV programs that I mentioned, I am influenced by word of mouth from my friends. I have a few vegetarian friends that go regularly to restaurants, and I would go based on their opinion”			
		Family				“I don’t consider myself to be easily influenced, but I nowadays my children have been pushing me to eat more healthy food, and when we go out, we try to go to sustainable restaurants whenever we can”		
	Rewards	Discounts	“I’m highly influenced by promotions. Not only with food, but with clothes and overall purchases. It pleases me to know that I’m spending less money on a meal, but I’m still satisfied and happy about what I’m eating”	“I can be influenced by a discount if I feel that it makes sense for me, but I would not choose a discount over a healthy delicious meal”	“If I recognize that the promotion is extremely beneficial to me, I will weigh the pros and cons and see if it is worth trying”	“A discount won’t change my mind when I’m choosing a restaurant, especially one that I don’t know”	“I will not be influenced by a discount”	