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# Food Quality and Preference

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## Impact of consumer global–local identity on attitude towards and intention to buy local foods

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### ABSTRACT

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) has profoundly affected the food systems, leading to consumer concerns about the lack of reliability and safety of global foods and a growing trend towards consuming local foods. Consumers have formed multicultural identities, such as global identity and local identity, under the influences of global and local consumer culture. This study develops a conceptual model to examine the impact of consumer global–local identity, locavorism, and consumer xenocentrism on consumer attitudes towards and intentions to buy local foods during Covid-19 crisis. We conducted an online survey in China that measured the constructs using established scales. Using structural equation modelling to test the proposed hypotheses, we find that: a higher degree of global identity will lead to a higher degree of consumer xenocentrism, whereas a higher degree of local identity will lead to a lower degree of consumer xenocentrism; local identity significantly and positively predicts locavorism; contrary to the prediction, the impact of global identity on locavorism is not significant; a higher degree of consumer xenocentrism will lead to a lower degree of attitude towards buying local foods. Theoretically, our findings contribute to the understanding of literature on local food consumption, consumer global–local identity, and consumer xenocentrism. Local food marketers can obtain practical insights based on our findings.

### 1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, the sudden outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) has become a global crisis presenting unprecedented negative impacts on people's health and lifestyles. One of the profoundly affected domains is the food system (Carolan, 2021). Considering the security and reliability of the food system, Covid-19 has changed people's confidence in global and local foods, leading to skepticism of global foods and an anticipated increase of consumer interest in local foods to support local business and satisfy the needs for food security (Hobbs, 2020). In particular, influenced by the policies *Belt and Road Initiative* and *A Community of Shared Future for Mankind*, and the rapid development of China's economy, Chinese consumers are becoming both more open toward the global culture and confident about their local culture (see Huang, He, & Zhu, 2021). According to the international marketing literature, consumers have formed multicultural identities under the influences of global and local consumer culture (Kipnis, Demangeot, Pullig, & Broderick, 2019). Specifically, Arnett

(2002) proposes consumer global identity and local identity as the psychological consequences of globalization. Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2016) proposed the concept consumer xenocentrism, which means consumers' preferences for foreign over domestic products, negatively linked to, although not completely opposed to consumer ethnocentrism, which has been studied for a long time as consumers' preferences for domestic as opposed to foreign products (Siamagka & Balabanis, 2015). Meanwhile, as an emerging consumer ideology towards local food, locavorism has increasingly attracted researchers' attention and been studied in predicting the growing trend of consumer interest in local food consumption (e.g., Kim & Huang, 2021; Reich, Beck, & Price, 2018).

Although there already exists ample research on consumer behavior in the context of Covid-19 (e.g., Kirk & Rifkin, 2020; Omar, Nazri, Ali, & Alam, 2021), existing research on food-related behaviors has emphasized the changes in eating behavior in the days of the Covid-19 (e.g., Coulthard, Sharps, Cunliffe, & van den Tol, 2021; Molina-Montes et al., 2021; Tribst, Tramontt, & Baraldi, 2021) and how they relate to

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demographic and situational factors. Little research (except for Choi, Park, Jeon, & Asperin, 2021; Kim & Huang, 2021; Salnikova & Grunert, 2020) has addressed how psychological constructs related to consumer culture (i.e., consumer global–local identity, locavorism, and consumer xenocentrism) affect food-related consumer behavior and specifically preference for local foods in the days of the Covid-19.

To this end, the purpose of the present research is to study the impact of consumer global–local identity, locavorism, and consumer xenocentrism on consumer attitudes towards and intentions to buy local foods during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our findings contribute to knowledge in three ways. First, we contribute to the local food consumption literature by developing and testing a conceptual model including consumer global–local identity, locavorism, consumer xenocentrism, and consumer attitude towards and intention to buy local foods, which contributes to the research on factors affecting consumer preferences for local foods. Second, we contribute to the literature on global and local identities in consumer behavior by investigating consumer xenocentrism and locavorism as consequences of consumer global–local identity in the local food context. Third, we increase the understanding of consumer xenocentrism by examining the predictive effects of consumer global and local identities and verifying its negative influence on consumer local food preferences.

## 2. Conceptual background and hypotheses development

This section presents a literature review on the concepts of local food, global identity, local identity, locavorism, and consumer xenocentrism. Then, based on the existing findings, we propose hypotheses regarding the relationships among the constructs and summarize them in a conceptual model.

### 2.1. Local food

Existing research has not reached consensus on the definition of local food. Researchers have defined local food based on spatial (e.g., food travel distance, Adams & Adams, 2011; Canadian Food Inspection Agency, 2019; driving hours, Zepeda & Leviten-Reid, 2004; geographic boundaries, Conner, Montri, Montir, & Hamm, 2009; marketing distribution channels, Bavorova, Unay-Gailhard, & Lehberger, 2016) and social (e.g., emotion- or relation-related foods, Feldmann & Hamm, 2015; regional specialties, Adams, 2018; sense of community; Schnell, 2013) elements. For example, in the study of Adams and Adams (2011), they define local by distance (within 100 miles) and ownership (local produce comes from locally owned farms). Conner et al. (2009) theorize that local food is food grown in given states, regions, and counties, with the quality of freshness, and reflecting a familiar relationship among growers, sellers, and consumers. Since consumers' perceptions of local food depend on their spatial and social context (Carroll & Fahy, 2014), here, we avoided defining local food for the consumer. Instead, we instructed participants to apply their own perceptions of "local", which could include distance (within 30 miles and within 100 miles), driving hours (within two driving hours), geographic boundaries (within a country/province/city, or within neighboring countries/provinces/cities), and region-specific food.

Consumers may have a preference for local food for many different reasons. On the one hand, consumers consume local food because they think it is fresh, wholesome, and tasty (Darby, Batte, Ernst, & Roe, 2008; Thomas & Mcintosh, 2013). On the other hand, research has shown that social reasons also drive consumers local food consumption, such as desires for tradition, belonging, and support of community (Feagan & Morris, 2009). For instance, Schnell (2013) argues that local eating means engagement with place with the desire to create a sense of belonging to and responsibility for the place. Research even finds that consumers buy local food more frequently in order to support local suppliers, retailers and communities rather than because of intrinsic functional benefits (Memery, Angell, Megicks, & Lindgreen, 2015).

Additionally, research shows that consuming local food is also linked to perceptions of cultural and personal identity (Ferguson & Thompson, 2020; Stolzenbach, Bredie, & Byrne, 2013). Our study builds on this last stream of research, arguing that preferences for local food may be connected to global/local consumer identities.

### 2.2. Global identity and local identity

The concepts of global and local identities are rooted in cultural identity theory (Balabanis, Stathopoulou, & Qiao, 2019). Cultural identity is defined as "a broad range of beliefs and behaviors that one shares with members of one's community" (Jensen, 2003, p.190). With increasing flows of people, technology, ideas, money, and media across borders (Griffith & Marion, 2020), communities can be understood as global communities, including worldwide and universal communities, the local communities, including the national and traditional communities, as well as the co-mingling of the global and local communities (Strizhakova & Coulter, 2019). Arnett (2002) discusses the psychological consequences of globalization on consumers' identity formation and development. Specifically, most people worldwide now develop a bicultural identity, in which they combine their identities rooted in their local culture (local identity) with an identity linked to the global culture (global identity) (Arnett, 2002). Being a local consumer means identifying with people in the local community, whereas being a global consumer means identifying with people worldwide (Zhang & Khare, 2009). According to Tu, Khare, and Zhang (2012), global and local identities can be understood as mental representations, that is, "A local identity consists of mental representations in which consumers have faith in and respect for local traditions and customs, recognize the uniqueness of local communities, and are interested in local events. A global identity consists of mental representations in which consumers believe in the positive effects of globalization, recognize the commonalities rather than dissimilarities among people around the world, and are interested in global events." (p.36). People can form their global identity either by direct or indirect experiences, such as travel across borders, consumption of products and brands, and information access through the media (Strizhakova & Coulter, 2019).

Prior research with regard to consumer global–local identity has mainly focused on the impact of global identity and local identity on preference for foreign and/or domestic brands (products). In this stream of research, the products investigated have mainly been digital or technical products (e.g., webcam - Gao, Zhang, & Mittal, 2017; technology usage, including banking ATM, online purchase of products which require shipping, and "self-checkout" at grocery stores - Westjohn et al., 2009; palm pilot - Zhang & Khare, 2009), household items (e.g., coffeemaker and rug - Gao, Zhang, & Mittal, 2017; toothpaste - Lin & Wang, 2016; alarm clock and microwave - Yang, Sun, Lalwani, & Janakiraman, 2019), or products generally without mentioning the specific categories. For example, Bartikowski and Walsh (2015) use products from foreign countries, domestic products, or a product from one's home nation in the measurement of reluctance to purchase foreign products.

As an old Chinese proverb says, "Hunger breeds discontent", food is essential to life. However, existing consumer global–local identity research has not yet addressed consumer food consumption (except for Salnikova & Grunert, 2020). Hence, this study will examine the impact of consumer global–local identity on consumer preference for local foods during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### 2.3. Locavorism

As an emergent consumer ideology, locavorism can be understood as the intersection of several cultural and economic phenomena (Reich, Beck, & Price, 2018). It is a set of intergroup normative beliefs related to food, which consists of three dimensions: lionisation (a belief in the superiority of local foods in taste and quality), opposition (a belief in

opposing long shipping of foods), and communalisation (pertains to a belief in building and supporting consumer's own community or local community in general) (Reich, Beck, & Price, 2018). Research also indicates that locavorism reflects beliefs about developing and supporting relationships between farmers and consumers and between humans and the nature (Fitzgerald, 2016). Hence, consumers with higher locavorism are more likely to develop and maintain relationships by believing that local foods are superior in terms of quality, opposing foods with long travel distance, and supporting the development of local community by purchasing local foods.

#### 2.4. Consumer xenocentrism

Researchers have defined certain consumers' consistent preferences for foreign products despite higher prices and lower quality as "xenocentrism" (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2016). Although consumer xenocentric orientations are common phenomena among certain consumers from developing countries, emergent economies, as well as developed countries (e.g., Diamantopoulos, Davydova, & Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, 2019; Mueller, Damacena, & Torres, 2020), compared to other tendencies towards foreign or local products, such as consumer ethnocentrism and consumer animosity, xenocentrism has only recently been considered by researchers in consumer behavior research (Cleveland & Balakrishnan, 2019). Consumer ethnocentrism is a classical construct in the literature on international marketing, defined as "the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign made products." (Shimp & Sharma, 1987, p. 280), suggesting a general consumer disposition regardless of the specific products or situations involved (Balabanis & Siamagka, 2017). Consumer xenocentrism is not simply the polar opposite of consumer ethnocentrism; it is moderately and negatively related to consumer ethnocentrism (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2016). While there have been heaps of research on the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and local food consumption (e.g., Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2018; Maksan, Kovacic, & Cerjak, 2019), little research considers the potential impact of consumer xenocentrism on consumer attitude towards and intention to buy local foods, which we address here.

Consumer xenocentrism is defined both at the general disposition level and the consumption-specific level. As a general dispositional construct, xenocentrism refers to a mentality of admiration for a specific cultural outgroup or outgroups, and detachment or disregard of one's own group (Cleveland & Balakrishnan, 2019; Kent & Burnight, 1951; Prince, Davies, Cleveland, & Palihawadana, 2016). A consumption-specific xenocentrism emphasizes the preferences for foreign products and disregard of domestic products (e.g., Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2016; Rojas-Méndez & Chapa, 2020). In this study, we follow Balabanis and Diamantopoulos's (2016) definition, i.e., consumer xenocentrism refers to "a consumer's internalized belief of the inferiority of domestic products and a corresponding propensity to prefer foreign products for social aggrandizement purposes" (p. 61). The construct consists of two dimensions: perceived inferiority and social aggrandizement. The former means a tendency to perceive domestic products and brands as inferior and the latter refers to the admiration for foreign products as a way of signaling enhanced social status. In the local food consumption context, xenocentric consumers might undervalue the quality of local foods.

#### 2.5. Hypotheses

The existing global-local identity research has investigated the effect of global and local identities on consumer attitude towards and evaluation of global versus local brands or products. For example, Zhang and Khare (2009) find that consumers high in global identity prefer global (more than local) products and consumers with an accessible local identity perceive local (more than global) products to be more attractive, suggesting the desire to remain consistent in the enactment of the

adopted identity. In Tu, Khare, and Zhang (2012)'s study, they find the same effects that global identity predicts preference for global products, and local identity predicts preference for local products. Therefore, we argue that global identity is negatively related to consumer preference for local foods. Additionally, consumers with global identity believe in the positive effects of globalization, and are interested in global events (Tu, Khare, & Zhang, 2012), while according to the definition of locavorism, consumers with higher locavorism should have a stronger belief in the superiority of local foods, in opposing foods with long travel distance, and greater support of local community. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H1. A higher degree of global identity will lead to a lower degree of locavorism.

Xenocentrism involves an openness to cultural diversity (Cleveland & Balakrishnan, 2019). Researchers have demonstrated that high global identity is associated with openness to other cultures. For instance, Bartikowski and Walsh (2015) find that global identity is positively related to openness to cultural diversity. Guo (2013) find that global identity has positive influences on consumer attitude toward global brands from developed countries. Consumers who have direct or indirect exposure to foreign cultures or dissimilar groups are found to be more xenocentric (Kent & Burnight, 1951). Hence, we predict that the stronger the global identity the higher the consumer xenocentrism. We hypothesize that:

H2. A higher degree of global identity will lead to a higher degree of consumer xenocentrism.

Consumers prefer self-schema matching messages to hold a desired self-view, therefore identity matching messages result in more favourable consumer brand attitudes, cognitive responses, and behavioural intentions than identity mismatched messages (Wheeler, Petty, & Bizer, 2005). From the perspective of social identity theory, in-group favouritism is a widely observed feature in intergroup behaviour; mere feelings of belonging to a group can trigger favourable attitudes and behaviour toward the ingroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Hence, local identity can produce favouritism towards beliefs that are consistent with local identification. Based on these arguments, we propose that consumers with stronger local identity are more likely to embrace normative beliefs on the superiority of local foods. Therefore, we predict that consumers with stronger local identity are more likely to exhibit higher locavorism. We hypothesize that:

H3. A higher degree of local identity will lead to a higher degree of locavorism.

Bartikowski and Walsh (2015) find that local identity is negatively related to a positive disposition to cultural diversity, and positively associated with a negative disposition to cultural diversity leading to decreases of consumers' openness to and interest in foreign cultures. Additionally, consumers with local identity feel that they belong to their local community, identify with their local traditions and lifestyles, and show more preference for local products (Tu, Khare, & Zhang, 2012). Researchers have also shown that consumers' confidences towards local culture reduces xenocentric social aggrandizement (Huang, He, & Zhu, 2021). Hence, we propose that consumers with stronger local identity are less likely to identify with the belief about the inferiority of local foods and less likely to admire foreign foods for social aggrandizement purposes. Therefore, we predict that consumers with stronger local identity are more likely to exhibit lower consumer xenocentrism. We hypothesize that:

H4. A higher degree of local identity will lead to a lower degree of consumer xenocentrism.

In Zhang, Grunert, and Zhou (2020)'s study, it was shown that locavorism is positively related to attitude towards buying local foods. In addition, consumers define local foods as a business belonging to one's community suggesting that consuming local foods is a support of local businesses to generate community (Lang & Lemmerer, 2019). From the perspective of embeddedness, which refers to the social components of economic activities (Hinrichs, 2000), i.e., non-economic values



motivating consumer local food purchase in the local food context (Skal-lerud & Wien, 2019), Feagan and Morris (2009) indicate that social embeddedness including social interaction and knowledge of retailers, and spatial embeddedness including support of local farms and communities are core forces motivating consumer local food purchase. According to Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2016), consumer xenocentrism is negatively related to consumers' willingness to purchase domestic products, such as wines, beer, and clothing. Rojas-Méndez and Chapa (2020) find that low-xenocentric consumers exhibit more intention to buy domestic products. Thus, based on these findings, we hypothesize that:

H5. A higher degree of locavorism will lead to a higher degree of attitude towards buying local foods.

H6. A higher degree of consumer xenocentrism will lead to a lower degree of attitude towards buying local foods.

Attitudes guide consumers' thoughts, emotions, and actions, therefore, attitudes are centrally important in any analysis of consumer behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). In this study, we define attitude towards buying local foods as an evaluative construct, which is different from attitude towards local product quality, food safety, consumers' personal health, and societal benefits (Feldmann & Hamm, 2015). Prior research has provided evidence that attitude towards buying local foods has a positive impact on intention to purchase local foods (e.g., Skal-lerud & Wien, 2019; Zhang, Grunert, & Zhou, 2020). Thus, we hypothesize that:

H7. A higher degree of consumer attitude towards buying local foods will lead to a higher degree of intention to purchase local foods.

Our conceptual framework is summarized in Fig. 1.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Measures

We used pre-developed scales to measure the constructs. All the constructs were measured by 7-point scales. The eight-item scale measuring global identity and local identity was taken from Tu, Khare, and Zhang (2012) (1 = "strongly disagree", 7 = "strongly agree"). We measured locavorism with 11 items from Reich, Beck, and Price (2018) (1 = "strongly disagree", 7 = "strongly agree"). We measured consumer xenocentrism with 10 items from Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2016) (1 = "strongly disagree", 7 = "strongly agree"). Four semantic differential items (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) were used to measure consumer attitudes towards buying local foods. For example, buying local food is (1 = Harmful, 2,3,4,5,6,7 = Beneficial). Three items adapted from Reich, Kupor, and Smith (2017) and Reich, Beck, and Price (2018) were used to measure consumers' intentions to purchase local foods. We list all the items in the Appendix.

#### 3.2. Data collection and sample

##### 3.2.1. Pretest

To ensure that the chosen scales best reflected the constructs in the

conceptual framework and to secure the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments, we conducted a pretest in China (N = 166) in March 2020. The questionnaire was originally developed in English. The first author translated it into Chinese, then a language expert and an overseas Chinese PhD student checked the translation. At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were informed that their information would be kept confidential and anonymous, that they should answer each question based on their own perceptions and view, and that there were no "right" or "wrong" answers. The most popular online survey platform (Wenjuanxing) was used to program the questionnaire and generate an anonymous link. We used convenience sampling to collect the data: we recruited participants by personal contact and sent the anonymous link to participants via Wechat-a social media application with more than one billion users. We had 161 valid respondents and each participant received ¥2.5 as rewards. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the constructs (global identity, local identity, locavorism, consumer xenocentrism, attitude towards local foods, and intention to buy local foods) fitted the data well, i.e., Chi-square = 691.253, 443 df. CMIN/DF = 1.560, CFI = 0.917. TLI = 0.907. RMSEA = 0.059 (LO 90 = 0.051, HI 90 = 0.068); all constructs, except for global identity, construct reliability (CR) = 0.649 closing to 0.7, average variance extracted (AVE) = 0.489 closing to 0.5, possessed acceptable CR (ranging from 0.722 to 0.947) and AVE (ranging from 0.566 to 0.900) thresholds. Hence, we did not make any changes for the measurement items of each construct.

##### 3.2.2. Main survey

The same measures for the constructs in the conceptual framework as in the pretest were used for the main survey. When conducting the survey, participants firstly read the instruction for the questionnaire, answered one question on the informed consent with agree or disagree, selected their understanding of the definition of local food, and then evaluated the items for measuring global identity, local identity, locavorism, consumer xenocentrism, attitude towards buying local foods, and intention to buy local foods. The items for each construct were presented in random order. We had an attention check question following the measure for consumer xenocentrism to screen for inattentive participants. Finally, participants were asked to fill out the demographic information. We conducted the data collection online using an online panel (Credamo) in China in June 2020. Consistent with Balabanis, Stathopoulou, and Qiao (2019), we selected to conduct the survey in China for its huge market size and the complicated process of Chinese identity development in the context of globalization and the uniqueness of the sociohistorical background of China (Cheng & Berman, 2012). In order to get more variation in our variables, we selected two locations for the study because of expected differences in the local and global identity. According to Wang, Fan, and Hu (2019), Eastern regions of China ranked the highest for the general marketization index scores calculated by regions in 2016, while that of the Western regions ranked the lowest. Hence, we targeted the participants from Shaanxi province located in the western part of China and Shanghai located in the eastern part of China to respond to the questionnaire. The online

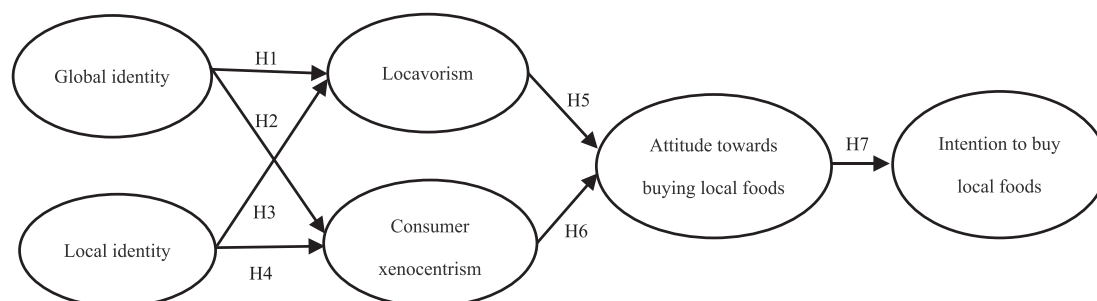


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

panel was a probability sample. Because participants in the panel were not recruited for this particular survey, and participants from the two regions followed the same standards agreed by the platform, this should not contribute to observed differences between the regions studied. Twelve participants failed the attention check question. We had 418 valid participants from the two provinces, with 209 participants for each place. Each of the valid participants received a ¥5 reward. Among the 418 participants, 39.7% of them had never travelled abroad, and only 0.7% of them had travelled abroad frequently. Table 1 shows the detailed information for the participants. As is the case for the Communiqué of the Seventh National Population Census released by National Bureau of Statistics of China, the percentage of males (51.5%) is a little bit higher than that of females (48.5%) and which are both close to 50%. Consistent with the case for the city population in China in general (cf., e.g., Lin & Wu, 2018; Wang & Somogyi, 2020), the sample is relatively young and well-educated.

### 3.3. Statistical method

All analyses were conducted by means of SPSS 25 and AMOS 25. The descriptive analyses and analyses of bivariate relationships between the constructs were conducted by using SPSS 25. Relationships between the constructs were estimated using Maximum Likelihood (ML) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM). We used structural equation modeling to test the hypotheses because it allows to test all hypotheses simultaneously and has the ability to assess model fit.

## 4. Results

We report the means and standard deviations for the constructs in the conceptual framework in Table 2. Table 2 shows that global identity, consumer xenocentrism, attitude towards buying local foods, and intention to buy local foods differ significantly between the two subsamples. Specifically, participants from Shanghai had a stronger global identity, stronger consumer xenocentrism, and lower attitude towards and intention to buy local foods than participants from Shaanxi, confirming the expected variation in our data.

**Table 1**  
Participants' sociodemographic information (N = 418).

Gender (%)	
Male	50.7
Female	49.3
Age (years) (%)	
18–25	35.6
26–30	30.1
31–40	28.5
41–50	5.0
51–60	0.7
Education (%)	
Middle school	2.2
High school	6.0
Vocational school	13.4
Bachelor	66.3
Master	11.2
PhD	1.0
Financial situation (%)	
Not very good	31.1
Difficult	4.3
Modest	47.4
Reasonable	16.5
Well-off	0.7
Your average number of trips outside your residential city per year:	
0	8.4
1–2 times	54.8
3–4 times	29.4
5–6 times	4.8
7 and more	2.6

### 4.1. Validity and reliability of measures

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) including global identity, local identity, locavorism, consumer xenocentrism, attitude towards local foods, and intention to buy local foods. Locavorism and consumer xenocentrism are multi-dimensional constructs. Hence, second-order measurement models were used for the two constructs in the CFA analysis, in which a second-order factor, locavorism, was indirectly connected to manifest variables (measures) through its three dimensions (i.e., lionization, opposition, and communalization), and a second-order factor, consumer xenocentrism, was indirectly connected to manifest variables through its two dimensions (i.e., perceived inferiority and social aggrandizement). Construct reliabilities (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct as well as correlations between constructs are reported in Table 3. Fit indices show that the CFA model has a good fit to the data. Table 3 indicates that all the constructs have an acceptable CR (ranging from 0.736 to 0.948) and AVE (ranging from 0.523 to 0.901), the normally acceptable thresholds being 0.7 and 0.5 (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012), suggesting adequate convergent validity for the constructs. In Table 3, the values on the diagonal are the square roots of the AVE of constructs; the values below the diagonal are the correlations between constructs. Table 3 shows that global identity, local identity, locavorism, consumer xenocentrism, attitude towards buying local foods, and intention to buy local foods are positively related to each other, except for three negative correlations, which are correlation between local identity and consumer xenocentrism, consumer xenocentrism and attitude towards buying local foods, consumer xenocentrism and intention to buy local foods. The square root of the AVE of multi-item constructs is consistently larger than the correlation between the construct and all other constructs, suggesting the valid discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Thus, no item was deleted as a result of the reliability and validity tests.

### 4.2. Estimation of structural models

We built an integrated model including measurement and structure models of all the latent constructs and their indicators to test the model outlined in Fig. 1 (see Fig. 2 in the Appendix). Because locavorism and consumer xenocentrism are multi-dimensional constructs, we used second-order measurement models for these two constructs in the process of building the structural model. Global identity, local identity, attitude towards buying local foods, and intention to buy local foods were directly connected to their manifest variables (measures), respectively. The fit indices show that the integrated model has a good fit to the data (Chi-square = 1279.376, 581 df; CMIN/DF = 2.202; CFI = 0.917; TLI = 0.909; RMSEA = 0.054). The parameter estimates for the relationship between the constructs are reported in Table 4.

We hypothesized that a higher degree of global identity will lead to a lower degree of locavorism in H1. It appears from Table 4 that the impact of global identity on locavorism is positive and not significant. Thus, H1 is not supported. The results show that global identity significantly and positively affects consumer xenocentrism, suggesting that the stronger the global identity, the higher consumer xenocentrism. Thus, H2 is supported. As predicted, a higher degree of local identity will lead to a higher degree of locavorism, supporting H3. The results show that the influence of local identity on consumer xenocentrism is negative, that is consumers with stronger local identity will be less likely to identify with the belief about the inferiority of local foods and less likely to admire foreign foods for social aggrandizement purposes, in support of H4. The impact of locavorism on consumer attitude towards buying local foods is significant and positive, supporting H5. Consistent with predictions (H6), consumer xenocentrism negatively affects attitude towards buying local foods. Hence, consumers with lower consumer xenocentrism will show a more favourable attitude towards buying local foods. Consumer attitude towards buying local foods significantly and positively impacts consumer intention to purchase local foods. Thus, H7

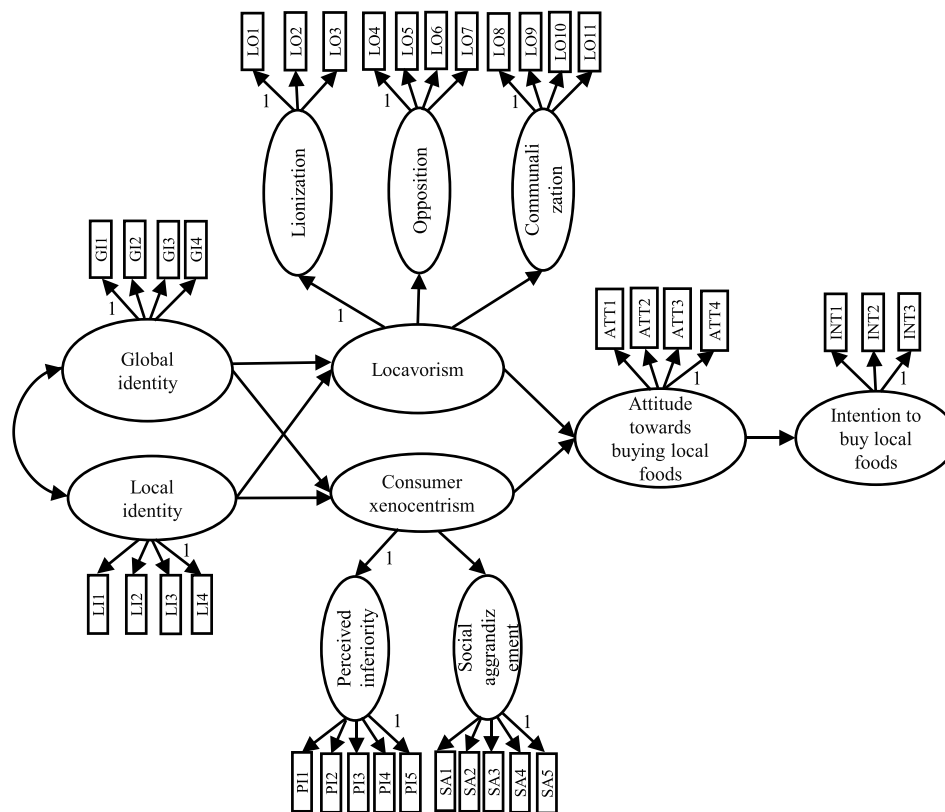
**Table 2**  
Means and standard deviations for constructs.

	Total sample N = 418		Shaanxi (N = 209)		Shanghai (N = 209)		T-test for the two subsamples	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
Global identity	5.057	1.111	4.901	1.148	5.201	1.054	-2.763	<0.01
Local identity	5.909	0.972	5.903	1.059	5.914	0.879	-0.113	0.91
Locavorism	4.358	0.818	4.405	0.956	4.324	0.818	0.925	0.356
Consumer xenocentrism	2.472	1.234	2.236	1.175	2.708	1.248	-3.977	<0.001
Attitude	5.914	0.961	6.042	0.929	5.786	0.976	2.745	<0.01
Intention	6.162	0.829	6.25	0.813	6.073	0.839	2.191	<0.05

**Table 3**  
Validity and reliability of measures: Correlations between latent variables, construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE).

	CR	AVE	Global identity	Local identity	Locavorism	Consumer xenocentrism	Attitude	Intention
Global identity	0.763	0.627	0.792					
Local identity	0.776	0.537	0.413**	0.733				
Locavorism	0.736	0.523	0.35**	0.516**	0.723			
Consumer xenocentrism	0.948	0.901	0.037	-0.194**	0.093	0.949		
Attitude	0.919	0.739	0.149**	0.418**	0.457**	-0.24**	0.860	
Intention	0.867	0.685	0.150**	0.354**	0.269**	-0.242**	0.665**	0.828

Note: \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Fit, Chi-square = 1017.291, 475 df. CMIN/DF = 2.142, CFI = 0.931. TLI = 0.924. RMSEA = 0.052 (LO 90 = 0.048, HI 90 = 0.057).



**Fig. 2.** The SEM model of the conceptual framework Note: Variables in the ellipse are latent variables. Indicators in the orthogon are observed variables.

is supported.

**5. Discussion**

The present research has introduced the constructs global identity, local identity, and consumer xenocentrism into local food research, and studied the impact of consumer global and local identities on consumers' attitudes towards and intentions to buy local foods. The results have

provided empirical evidence for the proposed hypotheses, except for H1. H1 suggests that global identity is negatively related to locavorism. We think there are two reasons to explain why this hypothesis is not supported. First, existing findings on the effect of global identity on consumer attitude towards and evaluation of global versus local brands or products has been mixed. For example, in spite of the positive association between global identity and consumer preference for global products (e.g., Zhang & Khare, 2009; Tu, Khare, & Zhang, 2012), researchers

Table 4

Path analysis of the relationship between the constructs.

Hypotheses	Paths		Standardized coefficients	B	S.E.	C.R.	P	
H1	Global identity	→	Locavorism	0.097	0.107	0.066	1.628	0.103
H2	Global identity	→	Consumer xenocentrism	0.276	0.420	0.116	3.631	<0.001
H3	Local identity	→	Locavorism	0.775	0.825	0.090	9.188	<0.001
H4	Local identity	→	Consumer xenocentrism	-0.385	-0.562	0.109	-5.175	<0.001
H5	Locavorism	→	Attitude	0.567	0.572	0.059	9.739	<0.001
H6	Consumer xenocentrism	→	Attitude	-0.230	-0.169	0.033	-5.156	<0.001
H7	Attitude	→	Intention	0.769	0.655	0.039	16.584	<0.001

show that consumers high in global identity turn out to have a more positive attitude towards domestic brands than to foreign brands (e.g., Balabanis, Stathopoulou, & Qiao, 2019; Ng, Faraji-Rad, & Batra, 2020). Second, our data collection was during the Covid-19 crisis. Research has indicated that the Covid-19 pandemic may have shaken consumer confidence in the security and reliability of the cross-border food supply chains (Hobbs, 2020). Hence, consumers with global identity may turn to a positive attitude towards local foods.

Reich, Beck, and Price (2018) have suggested future research on locavorism to explore whether group identity would shape locavorism. We find that local identity is significantly and positively related to locavorism, which suggests that consumer local identities play an important role in shaping locavorism. Consistent with Zhang, Grunert, and Zhou (2020), we find that locavorism is positively related to attitude towards buying local foods, and consumer attitude towards buying local foods is significantly and positively related to intention to purchase local foods.

Furthermore, we find that global identity and local identity are related to consumer xenocentrism, which in turn has a negative influence on attitude towards buying local foods. This contributes to the still limited amount of existing research on the predictors and consequences of consumer xenocentrism.

### 5.1. Theoretical implications

The findings of this research contribute to our understanding of three streams of literature: local food consumption, consumers' global–local identity, and consumer xenocentrism. First, we contribute to the literature on local food consumption by testing the impact of psychological constructs related to consumer culture (i.e., consumer global–local identity, locavorism, and consumer xenocentrism) on consumer attitude towards and intention to buy local foods. In response to the call for research on the predictors of locavorism- an ideological factor influencing consumer local food preference, Zhang, Grunert, and Zhou (2020) have examined the antecedent effects of values (collectivistic values and individualistic values) and long-term orientation on locavorism in two different cultural contexts, i.e., collectivistic-dominated China and individualistic-dominated Denmark. In addition to the individualism–collectivism dimension, the role of global and local identity is a fresh perspective to the cross-cultural literature (Yang, Sun, Lalwani, & Janakiraman, 2019). However, no research has empirically investigated the impacts of consumer global and local identities on consumer attitude towards buying local foods in the context of the covid-19 pandemic. The present study finds that a higher degree of local identity will lead to a higher (lower) degree of locavorism (consumer xenocentrism), locavorism positively affects attitude towards buying local foods, and a higher degree of consumer xenocentrism will lead to a less favourable attitude towards buying local foods, which increases our understanding of the predictors of consumer attitude towards and intention to buy local foods.

Second, we contribute to the literature on global and local identities in consumer behavior. Researchers have only started to investigate the role of global and local identities in consumer behavior (Yang, Sun, Lalwani, & Janakiraman, 2019). Previous research has mainly examined the effect of global and local identities on consumer price sensitivity (e.

g., Gao, Zhang, & Mittal, 2017; Gao, Mittal, & Zhang, 2020), suggesting the need for broader research on the potential outcomes of global and local identities. In the present study, we have examined the influences of global and local identities on consumer xenocentrism and locavorism in the local food context. The findings also support consumer xenocentrism and locavorism as potential consequences of global and local identities.

Third, this study contributes to the literature on consumer xenocentrism by examining the predictive effects of consumer global and local identities, and by substantiating the negative influence of consumer xenocentrism on consumer attitude towards buying local foods. As a construct, consumer xenocentrism is still in its infancy. It has been neglected in international marketing research and previous research has revealed very little knowledge with regard to the extent to which consumer xenocentrism will effectively predict any consumer responses (Bartsch, Riefler, & Diamantopoulos, 2016). Although researchers have responded to the call for expanding the understanding of antecedents of xenocentrism by examining the effects of basic psychological needs in predicting consumer xenocentrism (Cleveland & Balakrishnan, 2019), and investigated the impact of consumer xenocentrism on consumer preferences for domestic and foreign shoe brands (Diamantopoulos, Davydova, & Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, 2019), no research has studied the antecedent effects of global–local identity on consumer xenocentrism in the local food context. The present study found a positive (negative) impact of global (local) identity on consumer xenocentrism, and the predictive effect of consumer xenocentrism on consumer attitude towards buying local foods, which is helpful to expand the consumer xenocentrism literature.

### 5.2. Practical implications

Our findings provide important implications for local food marketing. First, local food marketers can appeal to consumers based on identity. According to our findings, consumer local identity is a significant predictor of consumer local food preference. Consuming local food may protect consumer cultural and personal identities (Ferguson & Thompson, 2020). Hence, marketers of local food could concentrate on consumers with a stronger local identity, imbue their local foods with associations of confidence in the local culture, use elements of local traditions, and follow local events in local food marketing. Another practical implication is that local food marketers can emphasize the superiority of local foods in their marketing communications, emphasize the cultivation of consumer locavorism, and concentrate on consumers with higher locavorism. The findings reveal that consumers with higher xenocentrism are less likely to have a favorable attitude towards buying local foods; locavorism plays a positive role in predicting consumer attitude towards buying local foods. Therefore, local food marketers can diminish the negative influence of consumer xenocentrism, for example, by using advertisements with the message that consuming local foods could gain good quality, nutrition, and belongingness to and responsibility for the local community to guide the consumers to recognize the benefits of local foods.

### 5.3. Limitations and further research

The present research is based on cross-sectional survey data from



China. As such, this research suffers from the usual limitations of this kind of study, especially that the data are mute about the direction of causality. Previous research showed that global identity and local identity could be manipulated. For example, in the study of [Gao, Zhang, and Mittal \(2017, p76\)](#), local identity was primed by promoting a “Think Local Movement” to ask participants to support the local community and local businesses, focus on local news, and preserve the local traditions. Global identity was primed by promoting a “Think Global Movement”. Hence, future research should use experimental methods to build stronger confidence in the causality assumptions regarding the predictive effect of consumer global and local identities. Furthermore, as this study has examined the antecedents and consequences of locavorism in local food research, future research should study the predictors, outcomes, and functional conditions of locavorism in more contexts, such as consumer travel behavior, city branding research, and so on. In addition, future research should replicate the findings in more countries. Finally, this research has only investigated the impacts of consumer xenocentrism on consumer local food consumption. Researchers indicate that it is possible for consumer xenocentrism and consumer ethnocentrism to coexist ([Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2016](#)). For example, [Klein, Ettenson, and Krishnan \(2006\)](#) find that the construct of consumer

ethnocentrism can be extended to countries where consumers generally prefer foreign products to domestic products. Hence, future research should study the influences of the two constructs simultaneously in the same contexts (i.e., countries or theoretical frameworks), e.g., in the transition economies of China and Russia ([Klein, Ettenson, & Krishnan, 2006](#)) in predicting consumer local food consumption.

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## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Ting Zhang:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Project administration, Funding acquisition. **Jing Chen:** Investigation, Resources, Writing – review & editing. **Klaus G. Grunert:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Resources, Writing – review & editing, Supervision.

## Appendix

### Measurement instruments

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#### *Global identity*

GI1: My heart mostly belongs to the whole world. GI2: I believe that people should be made aware of how connected we are to the rest of the world. GI3: I identify that I am a global citizen. GI4: I care about knowing global events.

#### *Local identity*

LI1: My heart mostly belongs to my local community.

LI2: I respect my local tradition.

LI3: I identify that I am a local citizen.

LI4: I care about knowing local events.

#### *Locavorism*

##### *Lionization*

LO1: Locally produced foods just taste better.

LO2: All else equal, there is no taste difference between a locally produced food and one that was shipped from somewhere else (reverse-coded).

LO3: Locally produced foods are more nutritious than foods that have been shipped from somewhere else.

##### *Opposition*

LO4: I don't trust foods that have been produced by large, multinational corporations.

LO5: Large, global food systems are destined to fail.

LO6: I would go out of my way to avoid buying food from a large retail grocery chain.

LO7: I feel uneasy eating something unless I know exactly where it was produced.

##### *Communalization*

LO8: Buying locally produced foods supports sustainable farming practices.

LO9: Buying local foods helps build a more prosperous community.

LO10: I like to support local farmers whenever possible.

LO11: Supporting the local food economy is important to me.

#### *Consumer xenocentrism*

##### *Perceived inferiority*

PI1: There are very few domestic products that are of equal quality to foreign products.

PI2: I cannot think of any domestic brands that are as good as the foreign ones I purchase.

PI3: I trust more foreign than domestic companies, because they are more experienced and have more resources.

PI4: In most product categories, foreign brands outperform domestic ones.

PI5: I trust foreign products more than the domestic ones.

##### *Social Aggrandizement*

SA1: Using foreign products enhances my self-esteem.

SA2: People that buy domestic products are less regarded by others.

SA3: I prefer foreign to domestic brands as most of my acquaintances buy foreign brands.

SA4: Buying foreign products makes me trendier.

SA5: I purchase foreign brands to differentiate myself from others.

#### *Attitude towards buying local food*

ATT1: Buying local food is (1 = Harmful, 7 = Beneficial)

ATT2: Buying local food is (1 = Foolish, 7 = Wise)

ATT3: Buying local food would make me feel (1 = Bad, 7 = Good)

ATT4: Buying local food would make me feel (1 = Displeased, 7 = Pleased)

#### *Intention to purchase local foods*

(continued on next page)

(continued)

Global identity
INT1: How likely is it that you will purchase local foods? (Not likely at all, Extremely likely)
INT2: How likely is it that you will buy your basic food items from a neighbourhood grocery store that offers locally produced food items? (Not likely at all, Extremely likely)
INT3: Next time when you buy a food, you will take local foods into consideration. (Strongly disagree, Strongly agree)

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