Exploring the Use of Local Ingredients and Sustainability Practices in Farm-To-Table Restaurants: A Case Study of AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre

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ABSTRACT

The research studies the sustainable practices and use of local ingredients within farm-to-table restaurants at AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre. The research study investigates the implementation challenges and advantages of these practices which aim to develop local economies through partnerships with local agricultural farms and producers. The research studies how economical and profitable it is to use local ingredients and sustainable practices while also studying consumer preferences about restaurants that implement these practices. The research identifies the challenges and supporting factors that farm-to-table restaurants encounter when they try to use local ingredients and sustainable methods. The study used a cross-sectional research design with 40% of 150 employees as participants. The study discovered that 60% of participants were male 80% of participants belonged to the 18-35 age group and 60% of participants had completed college education. Most respondents remained neutral about whether farm-to-table restaurants helped local producers but 60% of respondents agreed that these practices brought economic advantages and 60% of respondents showed high recommendation probability and 60% of respondents experienced no significant problems accessing treatment. The study discovered that a mostly young and educated workforce showed different opinions about farm-to-table support but the majority agreed with the economic advantages. The study suggests that restaurants should use their economic advantages and high customer recommendation rates to enhance their farm-to-table operations while they work to solve their small challenges in obtaining local ingredients.

Keywords: Farm-to-table, local ingredients, sustainability practices, economic feasibility, consumer attitudes

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, specific objectives, research questions, significance of the study, and its scope.

Background Of The Study

The popularity of farm-to-table restaurants has increased a bit, partly because they stress the use of local ingredients and sustainable practices, while also making sure people get fresh, seasonal produce. At the same time, they support local farmers and suppliers (Jang & Kim, 2020). When people talk about farm-to-table operations, they are usually referring to a food production and service model that makes a kind of direct thread between food producers and consumers, by sourcing food items as close as possible to where they will actually be eaten. Basically, this model tries to shrink the travel distance between farms and food service spots, it also helps local food systems hold together better, and it pushes environmentally plus economically sustainable food habits (Smith & Jones, 2021). In this study, local ingredients means food products, like fruits, vegetables, cereals, herbs, livestock products and other agricultural produce, that are grown reared, harvested or even processed within the nearby geographical area around the AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre and the neighboring communities. Using these local ingredients helps the Centre get fresher and season-appropriate meals, and it also creates market opportunities for local producers, in a way that feels more grounded to the region.

Sustainable practices in food kind of mean the way food-production happens, then procurement and preparation, and even how waste-management is done, so it can cover food-service needs without causing too many negative environmental effects and still conserve resources for later. In general, it might involve sourcing food from local farmers, buying seasonal produce, cutting down food miles, and also minimizing food waste. People may also conserve water along with energy, use packaging that is more environmentally friendly, compost organic waste, and apply more efficient methods for food preparation and storage. Economic benefits here, sort of refer to the money and livelihood wins that come from the procurement and use of locally produced food, for the AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre, local farmers, suppliers, employees, and the wider community. Those benefits can include higher income for farmers, employment opportunities being created, lower procurement and transportation costs, keeping more of the money inside the local economy, and helping build stronger relationships between the Centre and local suppliers.

Farm-to-table dining forms a sort of direct tie between producers and diners while also supporting a more resilient food system, mainly by trimming how far food travels, reducing the related environmental load, and nudging people toward fresh, seasonal items (Smith & Jones, 2021). In addition, when the Centre buys from small-scale farmers, it can create a dependable trading chance, raise household earnings, energize local business activity and improve community well-being. It also makes it easier to lean into fresh in-season produce, which may improve the sensory appeal, the level of freshness, nutritional strength, and the overall authenticity of the dishes served. Therefore, if farm-to-table operations are adopted effectively at AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre, it could support at the same time environmental sustainability, better food experiences, stronger agricultural connections locally, and wider economic gains for the surrounding communities.

Statement Of The Problem

The AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre encounters particular difficulties because there exists no systematic evaluation of how local ingredients and sustainable methods are used there. The primary challenge centers on the need to discover and develop trustworthy methods for obtaining local food products. The centre needs to develop partnerships with local farmers, suppliers, and distributors to ensure a consistent and diverse supply of fresh seasonal produce which requires addressing logistical issues and negotiating fair pricing while maintaining rigorous quality standards (Onyango & Korir 2022). The successful implementation of these practices cannot be achieved until this examination takes place.

Purpose Of The Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the utilization of local ingredients and sustainability practices in farm-to-table restaurants at AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre.

Specific Objectives

1. To promote the local economy by using local ingredients, enabling farm-to-table restaurants to support local farms, growers, and producers.
2. To investigate the economic feasibility and profitability of incorporating local ingredients and sustainability practices.
3. To investigate consumer attitudes, perceptions, and preferences regarding farm-to-table restaurants that emphasize local ingredients and sustainability practices.
4. To identify the barriers and enablers faced by farm-to-table restaurants in implementing local ingredient sourcing and sustainability practices.

Research Questions

1. What is the current availability of local ingredients in the vicinity of AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre?
2. What are the potential benefits of utilizing local ingredients in terms of freshness, flavor, nutritional value, and supporting the local economy?

3. What sustainability practices can be implemented at AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre to reduce environmental impact, such as energy efficiency, water conservation, waste management, and organic farming?
4. How can menu planning be adapted to incorporate local ingredients while maintaining diversity, seasonality, and guest satisfaction?

Significance Of The Study

The research at AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre examines local ingredient usage and sustainable practices because it helps communities and dining operations which will support their drive towards sustainable development. The findings will serve as a valuable resource for the establishment and contribute to the broader sustainability goals of the farm-to-table dining industry in Kenya (Mwangi, 2023).

Scope Of The Study

The research examines the effects of local ingredient usage and sustainable practices which farm-to-table restaurants in AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre implement to support their operational needs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter reviews literature related to each objective, identifies literature gaps, and provides a summary of the review.

Supporting The Local Economy By Using Local Ingredients

The farm-to-table movement has experienced a new wave of popularity which provides essential support to local economies according to Curtis Cowee and Ha 2020. Farm-to-table restaurants provide essential support to local farmers who need fresh local products because these restaurants create ongoing customer demand for these goods which enables farmers to sell directly to customers at higher profit margins than they would receive from traditional wholesale markets. Farmers use long-term partnerships to create better production schedules because these relationships help them reduce waste while increasing their profitability according to Low and Vogel 2021. The economic benefits of agriculture create positive economic effects that extend beyond the agricultural sector. Thilmany Sullins and Bond 2018 demonstrated that these restaurants create economic benefits for local communities by retaining food spending within the community which supports various local businesses and creates job opportunities. People now prefer to buy food products which use sustainable sourcing methods. The National Restaurant Association 2022 reports that many diners are willing to pay extra for meals prepared with locally sourced ingredients because they want to protect the environment and choose healthier food options according to Williams 2020. Restaurants face two main challenges which include seasonal menu changes and increased operational costs but they must create adaptable menu systems to handle these obstacles according to Knorr and Watkins 2021.

Economic Feasibility And Profitability

The current trend of using local ingredients together with sustainable practices needs assessment of its economic viability. Local sourcing enables companies to decrease their transportation expenses and minimize product losses, yet this approach requires them to pay more for their essential materials. The costs of production can be reduced through the implementation of seasonal menus and development of direct partnerships with farmers which enable companies to establish their pricing agreements (Sharma & Kumar, 2022). The adoption of these practices provides businesses with a way to create unique market presence. Customers are ready to spend extra money for sustainable dining options which results in greater profit margins for restaurants. Businesses can decrease their operating expenses through sustainability initiatives that include waste reduction and energy efficiency and water conservation, which research demonstrates will lead

to an average 15% cost decrease (Parker & Scrinis, 2022). The profitability of this business depends on consumer preferences because young people (Millennials and Gen Z) choose sustainable products which they showcase on social media platforms (Mintel, 2022). Two main problems exist for businesses, including unpredictable inventory and increased expenses, but Sweetgreen demonstrates that proper management practices with adaptable supply systems and customer knowledge programs make these methods successful and profitable (Lee, 2021).

Consumer Attitudes And Preferences

Recent research shows that consumers generally prefer the dining experience offered by farm-to-table restaurants. According to the National Restaurant Association (2022), 65% of consumers view sustainability as an important factor when choosing a restaurant. The positive perception exists because people believe that local sourcing helps to protect the environment while bringing benefits to local communities and creating healthier food choices (Hartman Group, 2021). Millennials and Gen Z have brought about major changes to consumer preferences. A survey by Mintel (2022) indicated that 73% of Millennials prefer dining at restaurants that source locally, a finding that underscores how this demographic is more health-conscious and environmentally aware than previous generations (Sustainable Restaurant Association, 2023). Consumers show their preferences through three main drivers, which include health and nutrition because people believe local foods offer better freshness and lower preservative content and environmental concerns, which drive people to seek carbon footprint reductions and local economy support, which shows how people want to help their communities thrive and food quality and taste, which people believe comes from using local ingredients (Kim, Lee, & Park, 2020). The high expenses of farm-to-table dining create major challenges for people who want to embrace this dining style. Restaurants like Blue Hill in New York demonstrate that effective communication about sourcing methods with transparency about these practices can help restaurants establish trust with their customers while handling this problem (Knorr & Watkins, 2021).

Barriers And Enablers

Farm-to-table restaurants encounter multiple obstacles that hinder their operations. The main obstaclesto the restaurant industry stem from supply chain problems which produce seasonal changes that force restaurants to change their menus multiple times (Knorr & Watkins, 2021; Bloom & Hinrichs, 2021). Restaurants face a major obstacle because they must pay higher prices for ingredients that local suppliers provide. The adoption of sustainable practices requires organizations to spend money on both advanced technologies and employee education programs (DeLind & Howard, 2020). The distribution process suffers from two major problems which include poor infrastructure that smaller suppliers use for distribution and the need for special storage spaces to keep fresh products safe (Thilmany et al., 2018; Onyango & Korir, 2022). There exist various factors which support progress. The restaurant industry experiences strong customer demand for ethical dining options because Millennials and Gen Z customers are willing to pay higher prices (Mintel, 2022). The establishment of strong partnerships with local farmers enables restaurants to obtain better pricing agreements and dependable product delivery (DeLind & Howard, 2020). The organization establishes its reputation through community involvement which includes participation in farmers' markets and various events. The combination of menu adaptability and waste reduction enables organizations to achieve operational efficiencies which result in financial benefits (Parker & Scrinis, 2022). The combination of effective marketing strategies and strong brand building which uses transparent ingredient storytelling leads to increased brand loyalty (Hartman Group, 2021).

Literature Gaps

Research has identified several critical gaps. First, the studies show short-term economic advantages but the assessment should include complete evaluation of all long-term effects which will impact both small to mid-sized farms and their surrounding communities (DeLind & Howard, 2020). Second, economic feasibility requires additional longitudinal studies which will monitor financial results during extended timeframes to assess ongoing profitability and business growth potentials (Parker & Scrinis, 2022). Third, understanding consumer attitudes toward different generations requires research because current studies only focus on

Millennials and Gen Z which need to include detailed psychographic profiling of older demographic groups (Mintel, 2022). Fourth, detailed case studies are needed to overcome specific barriers like seasonal variability and supply chain complexities in different geographical contexts, such as rural Kenya (Mwangi, 2023). The organization recognizes the immediate environmental advantages but they have not conducted comprehensive evaluations of all long-term environmental effects through complete lifecycle assessments (Sustainable Restaurant Association, 2023).

Summary Of Literature Review

Farm-to-table restaurants support local economies through their economic activities, but researchers need to conduct extended studies about their financial sustainability. The business achieves higher profits because it decreases expenses, but the organization needs to maintain financial records over time. Young people show positive consumer attitudes, but researchers have not studied their older counterparts yet. The organization faces obstacles from supply chain challenges and expensive operations, but consumer demand and local partnerships and operational efficiencies and successful marketing efforts function as its growth drivers. The research needs to address three critical areas which include establishing permanent economic assessments and developing comprehensive consumer profiles and analyzing particular regional areas.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology section of this chapter describes all research methods used in the study which includes research design study area research population sampling methods sample dimensions and both data gathering methods and data processing methods and ethical research methods. The study used a cross-sectional research design to collect research data from study participants at one particular time through the use of primary and secondary research data (Bryman 2016). The research team used structured questionnaires to collect primary data while they obtained secondary data from existing literature and institutional records. The research took place at AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre located in Elgeyo Marakwet County Kenya because the facility demonstrated real commitment to farm-to-table practices and its site selection occurred within an area that produced agricultural goods. The study population consisted of all center employees whose numbers ranged between 100 and 150 who worked in food production and service and sales and management and support services. The researchers used simple random sampling to choose study participants from the employee database because this method guaranteed equal selection chances for all employees while it reduced research bias (Saunders Lewis Thornhill 2019). The sample size was determined by taking 20 percent of the total population which resulted in 30 participants ($20/100 \times 150 = 30$) who met the requirements because they provided reliable estimates from 10 percent to 30 percent of the total population (Bryman 2016).

The research team collected data through a structured questionnaire which contained closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items. The researchers conducted their analysis of quantitative data by using descriptive statistics which included frequencies and percentages. The results were presented through tables and bar charts and pie charts which were created using Excel and SPSS version 26.0. The research team followed strict ethical guidelines throughout the study process by obtaining informed consent from all participants and maintaining their confidentiality and anonymity and receiving center management approval and conducting their research without disrupting regular operations and storing data in secure facilities. The research integrity and respect for all participants were maintained through these measures.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents the findings from the 30 questionnaires distributed. A 100% response rate was achieved.

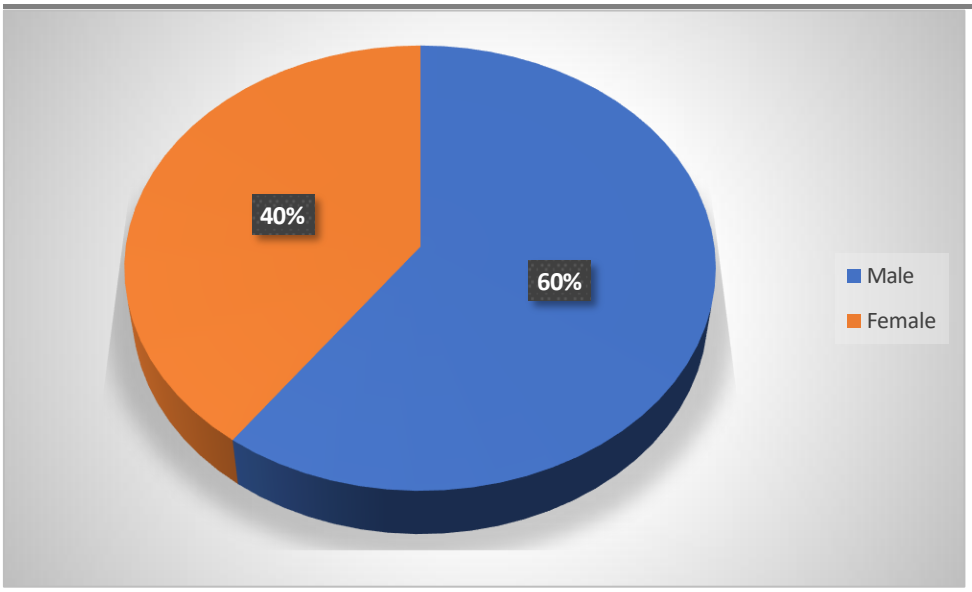


Figure 1:Gender of Respondents

Interpretation: The industry at the centre is male-dominated, possibly due to the technical nature of some food production roles.

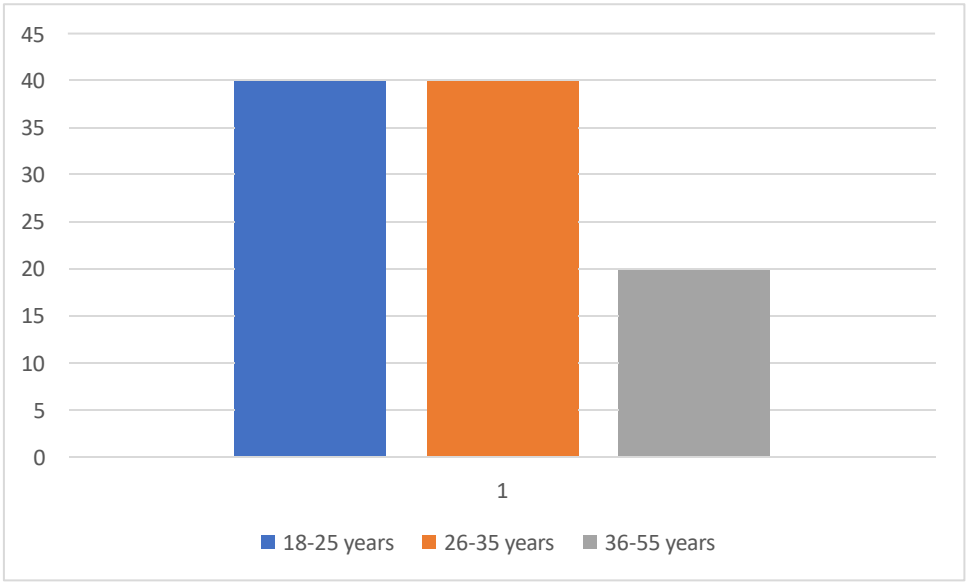


Figure 2:Age of Respondents

Interpretation: The workforce is predominantly young (80% under 35), suggesting adaptability to new practices like sustainability initiatives.

Table 1: Educational Background

Level	Frequency	Percent
Secondary	12	40.0
College	18	60.0
Total	30	100.0

Interpretation: A majority (60%) are college graduates, indicating a skilled workforce capable of understanding and implementing complex sustainability practices.

Figure 3:

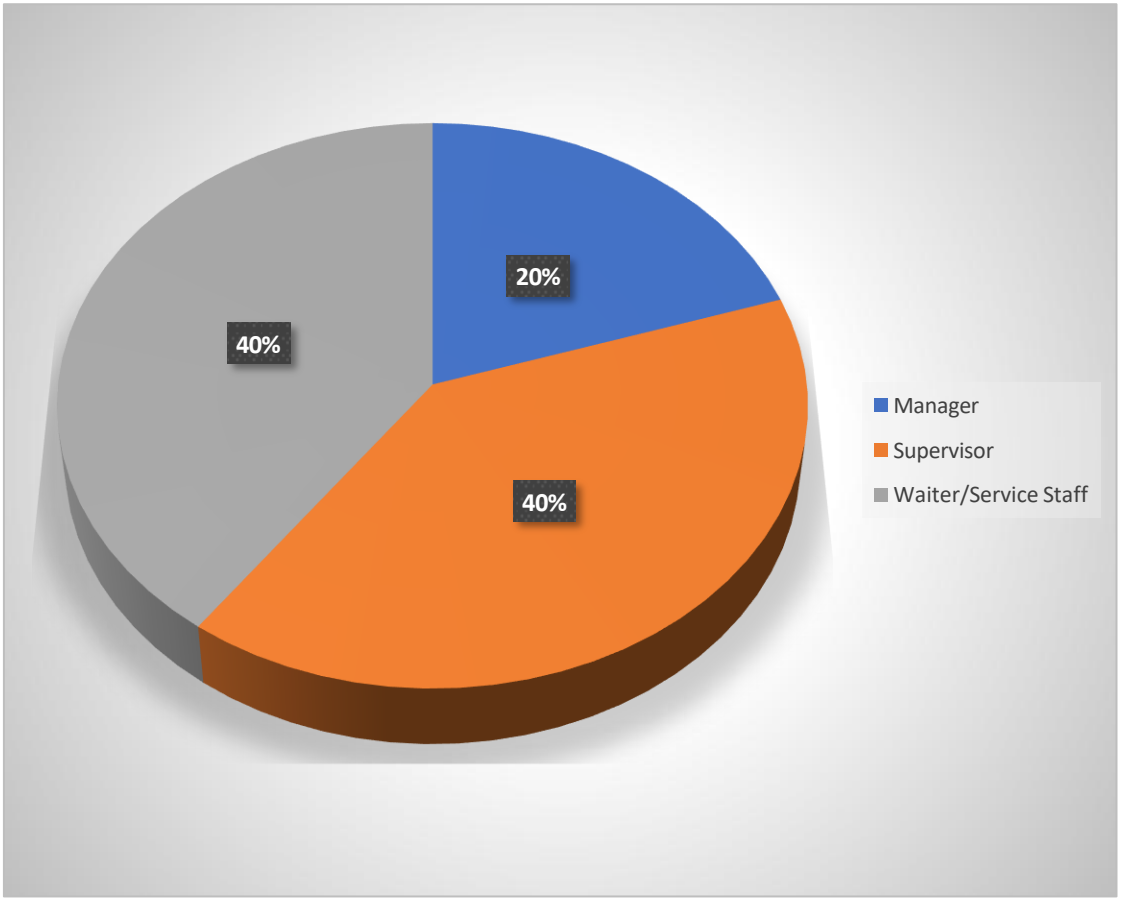


Figure 3:Job Designation

Interpretation: The establishment has a strong supervisory and service staff presence.

Table 2: Perception: Do farm-to-table restaurants support local farms, growers, and producers?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	6	20.0
Neutral	18	60.0
Agree	6	20.0
Total	30	100.0

Interpretation: A neutral perception (60%) indicates a need for more education on the direct economic impact of farm-to-table practices on local producers.

Incorporating local ingredients and sustainability practices enhances economic feasibility and profitability.

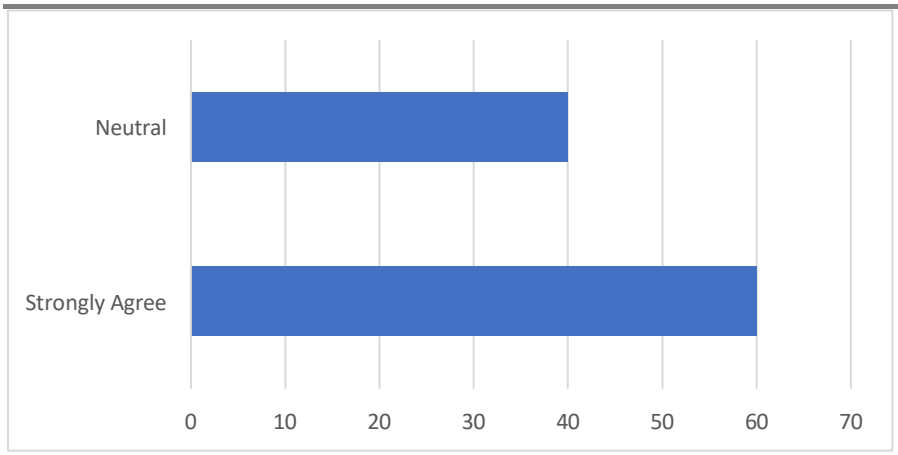


Figure 4:Incorporating local ingredients and sustainability practices enhances economic feasibility and profitability

Interpretation: There is strong agreement (60%) on the profitability benefits, supporting the literature by Parker and Scrinis (2022). The neutral 40% warrant further investigation into their specific concerns.

How likely are you to recommend a farm-to-table restaurant based on local sourcing and sustainability?

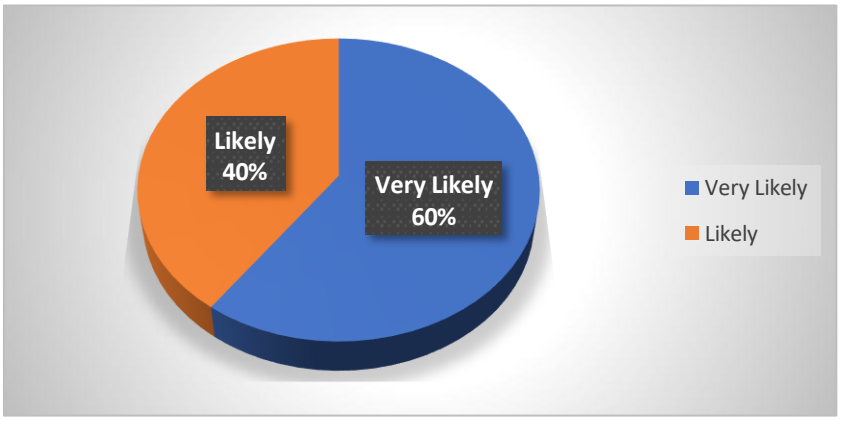
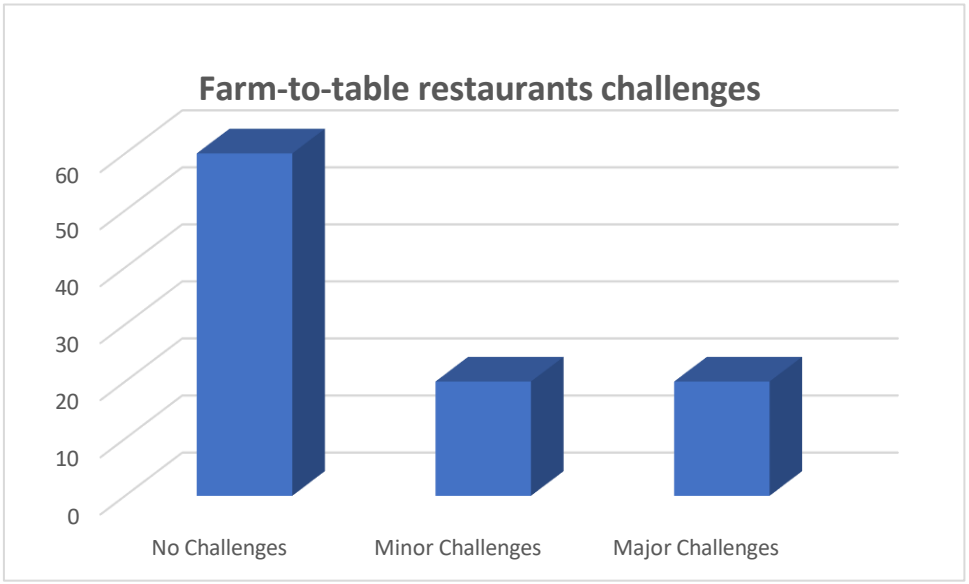


Figure 5:Recommendation of a farm-to-table restaurant based on local sourcing and sustainability

A 100% likelihood of recommendation (very likely or likely) is a powerful indicator of positive employee perception and potential for word-of-mouth marketing.



Interpretation: Most (60%) report no access challenges, contradicting some literature. However, 40% face some level of challenge, highlighting an area for infrastructure and logistical support.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the data analysis.

Summary Of Findings

The study participants were predominantly male (60%) and young (80% aged 18-35). Educationally, 60% were college graduates. Job roles included 20% managers, 40% supervisors, and 40% service staff. While 60% were neutral on whether farm-to-table restaurants support local producers, 60% strongly agreed that incorporating local ingredients and sustainability practices enhances profitability. Furthermore, 60% were very likely and 40% likely to recommend such restaurants. Regarding accessibility to local ingredients, 60% reported no challenges, while 20% faced minor and 20% major challenges.

Conclusions

The study concludes that AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre employs a young, educated workforce. While the direct link between farm-to-table practices and support for local producers is not strongly perceived, there is a robust recognition of the economic benefits and profitability associated with these practices. This positive economic perception translates into a high likelihood of employees recommending such establishments. Notably, access to local produce is not considered a major challenge for the majority, suggesting a favorable environment for implementing farm-to-table principles.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and literature review, the following recommendations are made for AIC Cheptebo Conference Centre and similar establishments:

1. Enhance Communication on Local Economic Impact: To address the neutral perception regarding support for local producers (Objective 1), management should implement educational programs and transparent communication (e.g., menu stories, staff training) that explicitly show how sourcing local ingredients directly benefits nearby farms and the local economy (Hartman Group, 2021).
2. Leverage Profitability Beliefs for Investment: Given the strong agreement on enhanced profitability (Objective 2), the centre should confidently invest in sustainability infrastructure, such as energy-efficient equipment and water recycling systems, knowing that staff believe in the long-term economic return (Parker & Scrinis, 2022).
3. Capitalize on High Recommendation Likelihood: With 100% of respondents likely to recommend the restaurant based on its sustainability commitment (Objective 3), management should launch a customer-facing marketing campaign featuring staff testimonials. Encourage employees to be brand ambassadors on social media to attract environmentally conscious customers (Mintel, 2022).
4. Address Minor Access Challenges Proactively: While 60% face no challenges, the 40% who face minor or major challenges (Objective 4) need support. The centre should formalize partnerships with a diverse network of local suppliers, including those using technology for logistics, and consider investing in on-site storage solutions like cold rooms to buffer against supply fluctuations (Onyango & Korir, 2022; Knorr & Watkins, 2021).
5. Implement Continuous Training: Develop regular training workshops for all staff on seasonal menu planning, waste reduction techniques such as composting, nose-to-tail cooking, and the centre's specific sustainability goals to maintain high performance and employee engagement.

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