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**Nutrition information and dietary requirement perspectives  
at ‘The Food Show’ Auckland.**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Science, Nutrition and Dietetics**

**Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa, Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa  
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# Abstract

**Background:** Food events can be a source of product discovery for consumers and an opportunity to engage with food companies, learning more about their products. Using The Food Show Auckland (2024) as a case study, this research investigated the influence of nutritional information present at these events and its effect on consumer behaviours. Despite extensive research on food events, limited studies focus on how nutrition information provided at these food events can influence consumer behaviours, especially in the New Zealand environment.

**Methods:** This research incorporated an exploratory case study that utilised an online survey sent to attendees of The Food Show Auckland (2024), who had registered their details while attending the event. The survey consisted of 40 questions, seeking a mix of quantitative and qualitative responses.

**Results:** There were 572 viable responses to the survey, with only the survey question responses about dietary needs and requirements being the primary focus of this thesis. The majority of survey respondents valued the nutritional information provided at The Food Show Auckland (2024). Key findings of this study included attendees actively engaged with nutrition information, specifically relating to dietary needs and/or requirements, and this was largely influential in their decision-making processes. As well as this, attendees who had specific dietary requirements were more likely to place value on and utilise the nutrition information available to make informed decisions.

**Conclusion:** This research concluded nutrition information presented at The Food Show Auckland (2024) had a large influence on consumer behaviours of attendees at this event. This research also found that those who had specific dietary needs or requirements were more likely to utilise this information in their consumer behaviours.

**Keywords:** consumption; consumer behaviours; nutritional information; dietary needs; health.

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# Definitions

*The Food Show  
Auckland (2024)*

An annual immersive food event occurring in Auckland, showcasing a wide variety of New Zealand based food companies and brands. Coupled with interactive experiences such as masterclasses from professional chefs and opportunities to sample and purchase food products at a discounted price (The Food Show, 2023).

*Food Event*

This thesis utilises the definition proffered by Organ et al., 2015 and Ossowska et al., 2023, noting that a food event is a collective of planned and organised events, focusing on food and food products, attracting a large groups of exhibitors, promoting locally sourced foods.

*Dietary Needs*

Dietary considerations due to exclusion of certain ingredients of food products based on personal preference or ethical/cultural beliefs. For example, being vegan/vegetarian, gluten or dairy free or Halal.

*Dietary  
Requirements*

Specific dietary considerations due to a medical condition, allergen or intolerance. Often meaning the exclusion of specific ingredients or food products that would cause a severe or fatal reaction. For example, being gluten free for coeliac disease or reduced sugar for type 1 or 2 diabetes.

*Respondents*

For the purpose of this thesis, this term refers to those who participated in the study and were included in the 572 viable survey responses.

# 1.0 Introduction

Food consumption behaviours are shaped by a multitude of complex individual and environmental factors (Henriques et al., 2022). Internal drivers, such as personal preferences, habits and motivations, can largely influence consumer choices. External factors, such as marketing and promotional activities as well as environmental stimuli, have also been shown to significantly impact consumer behaviours (Bojkovska et al., 2014; Henriques et. al., 2022).

Food-related environments, such as food events or festivals, are valuable settings in which we can examine what factors directly influence food consumer behaviour and to what extent. Previous research suggests that food events can influence dietary behaviours (Organ et al., 2015). Capitalising on these events can provide an opportunity to understand how consumers interact in these settings and the extent of influence they may have on their subsequent consumer behaviours.

For this thesis, a food event can be defined as a planned and organised event, focusing on food and food products, attracting large groups of exhibitors promoting locally sourced foods (Organ et al., 2015; Ossowska et al., 2023). By taking place in an environment that is directly designed to showcase food products, food events deliver an opportunity for consumers to explore and engage with food brands on a deeper level. Food events facilitate interactions between producers and consumers, which help build relationships, foster a sense of community and encourage brand loyalty (Janiszeweska & Ossowska, 2021; Ossowska et al., 2023). These events can also play key roles in community development, offering chances for local businesses and brands to present their products directly to their target consumers (Ossowska et al., 2023). Finally, food events can also act as an influential tool to shape consumer behaviours using their experiences at events, which may subsequently affect their behaviours going forward (Organ et al., 2015).

With these considerations in mind, this thesis presents the results of a study that explored how varying forms of nutrition information influence consumer perceptions of food and beverage products and consumer purchase decisions. The results of this study focus on the influence of nutrition information, with a specific focus on dietary requirements and how information pertaining to this may influence the consumer behaviours of attendees. The research was

conducted in the context of a commercial food event, namely The Food Show, Auckland (2024).

### 1.1 Background

Consumer behaviour, in terms of food-related decisions, is multi-faceted. Factors that may influence such decision-making may include nutrition knowledge, habits, skills, environmental factors, taste or price (Koch et al., 2021). In the past, consumers have developed a larger preference towards shifting their lifestyles to become more health-conscious, including adopting dietary habits that prefer healthy food consumption (Ali & Ali, 2020). Consumers are increasingly becoming more aware of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle with aspects such as health information/claims and the need for products that align with their health goals influencing their consumer behaviours (Ali & Ali, 2020; Czczotko et al., 2022). The concept of a healthy lifestyle has expanded past nutritional adequacy of food products and now encompasses personalised dietary choices, influenced by medical conditions, ethical considerations and individual preferences. Because of this, a growth has been seen in the market for these health and wellness food products, with an increase in demand for products that align with their dietary requirements, due to consumers becoming more aware of the benefits of food products (Boinwad & Shinde, 2024). Nutrition claims such as “free from”, “low in” have a large effect on dietary choices and often, consumers will choose a product with these over a similar product that does not (Kaur et al., 2017; Neale & Tapsell, 2022). Consumers who are generally more interested in leading these types of lifestyles have a good understanding of nutrition, and their purchase intentions often align with products that display these claims (Steinhauser & Hamm, 2018). Food products that promote health benefits or contribute to shaping a healthy lifestyle have become more important in consumers’ daily lives, where they take a product – centric approach, focusing on quality and health attributes, which are often key determinants for consumers when choosing food products to purchase (Ali & Ali, 2020). Finally, consumers are more likely to choose products that are deemed ‘healthier’ if they have existing knowledge of the processes involved in the creation of the product (Firoozzare et al., 2024).

With the increasing demand for healthier food products comes a further demand for products that highlight exclusions or inclusions of specific ingredients, aligning with individuals’ allergies, intolerances and health preferences. Food intolerances have increased in recent years,

with an estimated one-fifth of the Western population having symptomatic reactions to a food product (Savarese et al., 2021). Because of this, awareness about the importance of healthy diets and products, specifically products that are labelled as “free – from” has also grown, generating the demand for products (Savarese et al., 2021). As well as this, the prevalence of other health preferences and particular diets (such as vegetarianism, veganism, low fat, low calorie and low sugar) has also grown, which also has a large influence on the products consumers purchase. Finally, the visibility of food claims currently in the market reflects the overall growing interest in health and wellbeing for consumers (Andre et al., 2019)

Nutritional information is vital to a consumer, especially in terms of their product choices and purchases. Nutrition information sources can include food labels, health claims, product descriptions and in some cases, information directly from vendors or companies (Meijer et al., 2023). Information can have a large influence on consumer choices and can often be key when choosing what products to purchase (Miller & Cassaday, 2015). Providing precise, detailed information about ingredients, nutritional values and health benefits can positively influence consumers when buying food products (Wang, 2024; Nazzaro et al., 2025). With this in mind, nutritional information can lead consumers to make more informed decisions about their food choices, aligning with their own personal dietary needs.

The marketing and promotion of food products can directly influence consumers’ purchasing decisions, which ultimately impact their health (da Silva et al., 2022; Finlay et al., 2022). Marketing and promotion strategies that focus solely on promoting food or beverage products have been linked to influencing the decision-making capabilities of consumers, ultimately impacting their nutrition (Henriques et al. 2022). Food marketing and promotion impact consumer behaviour based on two key strategies, exposure and power (Finlay et al., 2022). Exposure is the amount to which the consumer sees the marketing and how far it may travel, the people it reaches, and power is the content and the strategies that are used to market the product (Finlay et al., 2022). Overall, food events can be seen as a form of marketing to consumers due to their nature of exposing consumers to their products towards their target audience.

Commercialised food events provide an opportunity for companies to showcase their products to a wide range of consumers, promoting themselves and their brands. These types of events allow consumers to not only discover new products that are unknown to them, especially for

those who have specific dietary requirements that are often unmet in their local supermarkets or food shops. Not only do stallholders have an opportunity to promote their products, but they can also engage with consumers, providing the consumer a chance to understand the product, the process and form a relationship with the company itself, leading to subsequent brand loyalty once the event is over (Organ et al., 2015; Janiszeweska & Ossowska, 2021).

The majority of the literature, in reference to food marketing and promotion, discusses the effects on children and adolescents (Scully et al., 2012; Nieto et al., 2022; Sato et al., 2022; Meyer, 2024). While there is also significant literature that focuses on evaluating the importance and the impact of marketing of food and beverage products to consumers (Boyland et al., 2024; Boyland et al., 2025), there are limited studies that have examined the specific factors that influence people to buy products that are promoted within food events, especially in the New Zealand context. Furthermore, there is little research done on commercialised food events themselves and the impact that they have on consumers' dietary decisions and consumption habits.

Current literature on food events largely focuses on the motivations behind why consumers attend the events and how they engage with stallholders (Nicholson & Pearce, 2001; Park et al., 2008; Organ et al., 2015; Krajickova & Sauer, 2018), tourism aspects of food events (Lefrid & Torres, 2021; Tran et al., 2022) and how food events can be linked to sustainability (de Jong & Varley, 2018; Torrejón-Ramos & Medina-Salgado, 2024; Thelen & Kim, 2024). But there are limited studies investigating how consumers interact with information provided to them at events and how this may influence their consumption habits. Whilst motivations behind attendance are important to consider, there is still a large gap in the discourse of this topic as to how consumers engage with nutritional information provided to them at these events, as well as how dietary needs and requirements may influence their behaviours. Therefore, this study aims to add a perspective, focusing on consumer behaviours in reference to nutritional information and dietary needs in the context of a food event.

### 1.2 Research Focus

The research results presented in this thesis are part of a wider exploratory study that focused on The Food Show Auckland (2024). The Food Show provides an opportunity for food and beverage producers to comprehensively market to consumers, create brand loyalty, promote

repeat business for traders, whilst offering the opportunity for such food and beverage producers to engage with the general public (The Food Show, 2025). Food events, such as The Food Show Auckland (2024), can be seen as a way to instil behaviour changes in the population and influence consumers to purchase products they may not have seen or heard of previously (Organ et al., 2015).

The research findings will assist in pinpointing factors that influence people to purchase and consume food and beverage products, and what marketing and promotion strategies may be the most influential. This study is relevant in a broader public health context, as it aims to connect the role of commercialised food events with the dietary decisions (and requirements) of the attendees, and subsequently impact decisions about their health.

Therefore, the focus of this thesis is to address how the presentation of nutritional information at food events, like The Food Show Auckland (2024), influences consumer perceptions, engagement and purchasing behaviours regarding food and beverage choices. In conjunction with this research question, this thesis also focuses on specific dietary requirements and how these can influence what a consumer engages with and what they interact with.

### 1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

Through the use of an exploratory case study, this study aimed to better understand how nutritional information, presented in the context of food events, influences consumer behaviour and decisions to consume and/or purchase certain types of food and beverages. The study also investigated the value placed on ingredients, health claims and dietary behaviours that may significantly influence consumption behaviour.

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Evaluate consumer perceptions of the information disseminated at The Food Show Auckland and investigate how attendees engage with this information, with particular focus on dietary needs and requirements.
2. Analyse the different types of information that were presented at The Food Show Auckland and how the attendees interpreted it, including but not limited to promotional

materials, product demonstrations and talks by experts to understand which mode of dissemination was the most influential.

3. Identify any specific influential factors that have a significant impact on the consumer's choices (and subsequently, their purchasing habits), with particular focus on dietary needs and requirements.

#### 1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis is presented in a traditional format. It is divided into six chapters. Following this introduction, the six chapters are outlined as follows;

- Chapter Two presents a detailed literature review, covering the multiple aspects relevant to this study. For example, consumer behaviours, nutrition information sources, food environments, food marketing and food events/festivals, and highlighting these factors in the New Zealand context. The literature review explores these topics in the context of food products and the impact that they may have on consumer decisions and identifies existing gaps that this specific research may fill.
- Chapter Three outlines the methodology adopted for the study. It summarises the study design and data collection process, as well as the data analysis techniques
- Chapter Four presents the results, highlighting how consumer engagement with nutritional information impacts their decision-making in relation to sampling and purchasing a product.
- Chapter Five proffers a detailed discussion, linking the results with the objectives of the study.
- Chapter Six presents a conclusion that confirms how the aims and objectives of the study have been met and how the findings can be applied. Study limitations are outlined, along with suggestions for future research.

#### 1.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the study conducted for the purpose of this thesis, including the presentation of the study's aims and objectives. It has presented initial insight into why there is a need to investigate the factors that contribute to certain dietary decisions of individuals, in the context of events such as the Food Show. The following chapter will offer a

deeper overview of the various factors pertaining to food marketing, consumer decisions, nutrition values, ingredient considerations, and the context of food events. The information from this study will help fill the gap surrounding commercialised food events and their impacts on the dietary decisions of attendees and their behaviour. It will also contribute to further research that may seek to identify and explore additional factors that influence consumption decisions pertaining to food and beverage products, while factoring in the effects on overall health and well-being.

### 1.6 Research Contributors

<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Contributors</b>
Chloe Beech	<b>MSc Nutrition &amp; Dietetic Student</b> Primary author of this thesis. Contributed to; ethics application and question development for survey, qualitative analysis and interpretation of results.
Dr Rachel Batty	<b>Primary supervisor</b> Co-creator of this study.
Assoc Prof Andrew Foskett	<b>Co-supervisor</b> Co-creator of this study.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Consumer Behaviour

#### 2.1.1 Consumers and consumer behaviour

In noting that there is an array of consumption patterns aligned with how people purchase and consume goods over time, it is important to appreciate the intricacies of consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour can be defined in many ways, depending on perspective. For example, Galbete (2017) and Agarwala et al., (2019) describe consumer behaviour as the attitudes and values that can influence a person's actions when purchasing a product. Researchers such as Nasse (2021) and Mokhlis (2009) view consumer behaviour as a choice that consumers make when deciding on which product best suits them and their needs. In turn, consumers evaluate and examine before making their decision. Consumer behaviour is also said to be a learned behaviour. This is because consumers often trial different products to find the one they like the most and are constantly learning over time (Lichev, 2017). Furthermore, context is important when defining consumer behaviour. Kokkoris and Stavrova's (2021) definition of consumer behaviour has been identified to best suit the context of this thesis project. This is because their definition highlights that there is a wide range of factors that influence a consumer's decision to purchase a food product. This project highlights the influence of nutrition information and the impact it can have on the consumer and their ideals. Kokkoris and Stavrova (2021) proffer that consumer behaviour within the food industry extends well beyond nutrition and hunger. They note that values and ideals (that may be of a personal, religious and/or cultural nature) can also influence consumer behaviour. Ultimately, consumer behaviour encompasses a broad range of considerations in relation to the decision-making process and actions of individuals when it comes to consumerism.

#### 2.1.2 Influences on consumer behaviours

Consumer behaviour can be directly influenced by personal, psychological, cultural and/or social factors (Jisana, 2014; Anisha & Kalaivani, 2016; Duralia, 2023). When placing these factors within the context of food consumption, these categories largely remain the same. However, food properties would also be an addition to these existing categories, having a large influence on what a consumer may choose to purchase. Food properties may include the physical, chemical and nutritional properties of food products. Examples such as the aesthetics

of a product, the amount of a specific ingredient it may contain, or a health claim it proclaims can be influential on consumers' purchasing decisions (Steenkamp, 1993).

Personal factors that can influence consumer behaviour tend to include the likes of gender, age, personality, and biological characteristics (Wardle et al., 2004; Feraco et al., 2024). For example, men tend to choose higher-protein and higher-calorie foods, whereas women choose foods that have a lower caloric value but are higher in fibre (Feraco et al., 2024). A person's age can also influence their consumer choices. For example, research conducted by Ogundijo et al. (2022) showed that those aged over 75 years are more likely to purchase foods that they are familiar with and are not too concerned with nutrition labels and ingredients. In comparison, the same study confirmed that those aged 18 – 55 were more concerned with nutrition labels and the composition of the food products, for example, protein content (Ogundijo et al., 2022).

Psychological factors that can influence consumer behaviour tend to focus on an emotive connection. Motivation has a strong influence over consumers and helps guide them in their decision-making process (Lichev, 2017). This is because consumer motivation is the connection between the need, the interest, the value and the activity. In this case, the activity is the physical purchase. Motivation serves as justification for taking actions leading to a purchase. Consumer motivation is also linked with the satisfaction of purchasing a product, via the need it has met (Lichev, 2017). Understanding consumer motivation can aid in connecting consumer needs, interests and values. This motivation prompts a buying action (Lichev, 2017). Other psychological factors that can influence a consumer are convenience, timing of the purchase, and the perceived level of risk.

Convenience in the context of the food environment can be defined as a “time cost of obtaining, preparing and consuming a food item” (Bogard et al., 2024, p.2). Convenience is also an important driver of food choices amongst society in both a positive and negative way, providing benefits to consumers such as saving time and effort to acquire food products, or the word itself has negative connotations, being linked to fast and ultra-processed foods (Bogard et al., 2024). The timing of the purchase of a product is also an important consideration. When an individual is purchasing a product, factors such as the environment, the people who are present, the time it is purchased, and the place it is purchased from may influence their purchase (Lichev, 2017). The decision to purchase a product or service is an important part of consumer behaviour, especially unplanned versus planned buying. The experience of buying a product is dependent

on how an individual interacts with the product at the time of sale, as well as any environmental stimuli. However, product features such as existing knowledge and brand loyalty often end up overriding any environmental factors (Platania et al., 2016). Unplanned purchases can occur because a consumer finds a need to purchase a product, but the need for the product has not been thought about before the moment of first interaction (Sohn & Ko, 2021). On the other hand, impulse buying can be a result of purchasing an item due to a sensory experience, such as the store or the product layout or due to an emotional desire to satisfy a need (Moreira et al., 2017; Meena, 2018). In relation to impulse buying in settings such as supermarkets, factors such as product displays, the variety of products on offer and also discounts can influence purchases, as well as situational factors such as an individual's mood or their financial situation (Tinne, 2010; Sheoran, 2024). Therefore, these factors can contribute to the decision-making process of consumers.

There are also several contextual risks associated with the purchase of food products. Biological risks can incorporate consideration of the presence of bacteria. Chemical risks bring consideration of any additives or chemical processes involved in the production of the product. Risks associated with potential allergens such as gluten, dairy, soy and tree nuts can also pose serious consequences for consumers and fall under chemical risks (Food Safety Good Governance Guide for Directors, 2025). Technological risks may include consideration of things like genetic modification. (Yeung & Morris, 2001).

Cultural factors can also play a significant role in influencing behaviour. Culture is one of the most important underlying determinants in consumer behaviour (Nayeem, 2012; Fernqvist et al., 2024; Gaur et al., 2024). This is because each culture has a different set of behaviour patterns and knowledge that they share, influencing the purchasing behaviours of others. For example, kai (food) in Māori culture is tapu (sacred) and is linked to nourishment for all aspects of wellbeing (Renall & Te Morenga, 2025). The cultural practices and concepts that are associated with kai largely influence how Māori engage with kai, including gathering, preparing, sharing, and even eating (Renall & Te Morenga, 2025). These traditional practices and knowledge have been passed down through generations and establish how a connection can be formed between the kai, the environment and ancestors, linking back to the importance in Māori culture (Smith & Hutchings, 2025). As well as this, kai is also a means to connect with others through shared values and cultural identity (King et al., 2012; Moeke-Pickering et al., 2015). Nayeem et al., (2012) found that there was a difference in purchasing behaviours of

individualistic and collectivist cultures, where collectivist cultures may involve others in the family or social group when deciding on a purchase, whereas an individualist culture is more independent, relying on their own personal knowledge or experiences when making a consumer decision.

Finally, demographics can be an influential part in where individuals obtain their information and how this can impact their overall consumer behaviours. Age, education level and location influence the sources people choose to get their information. For example, younger adults tend to obtain and trust nutritional information from online sources (Heuberger and Ivanitskaya, 2011; Quaidoo et al., 2018; Peša Pavlović et al., 2023), whereas older adults rely on sources such as health professionals and print sources (McKay et al., 2006; Heuberger and Ivanitskaya., 2011). As well as education level can have a direct influence on where people obtain their nutritional information, where higher educated adults tend to favour print sources or friends/family members, whereas less educated adults tend to use health professionals and the television for their information sources (McKay et al., 2006; Heuberger and Ivanitskaya., 2011).

## **2.2 Food and Nutrition Information Sources**

Finding, understanding and using health-based information can be a critical process that can impact the development of a healthy lifestyle (Chen et al., 2018). Information gathered through media platforms (such as television, books, social media, magazines) plays an important role in marketing different ideas and products and consequent consumer behaviours (Quaidoo et al., 2018). Reliable food and nutrition information is extremely important when influencing dietary decisions and providing key nutrients for a healthy lifestyle (Peša Pavlović et al., 2023). Health literacy, including food and nutrition knowledge, can be developed using a wide variety of sources, ranging from professional, factual and clinical sources to non-professional sources such as personal experience and online forums (Yates, 2015; Hirvonen et al., 2018).

### **2.2.1 Food and nutrition information sources**

Trust between the consumer and the entity disseminating the information is crucial in developing health-related habits. Ruani et al., (2023, p.14) state in their article that “the stronger the trust in the source, the more likely it is to influence dietary behaviours”. In an early 2002 study, nutrition information was noted as being primarily sourced from traditional media

platforms such as television, books and magazines (Ayoob et al., 2002). In such instances, individuals were noted as being more likely to use information from these sources, as opposed to information provided by health care professionals (due to lesser engagement with the latter). A similar study by Worsley and Lea (2003) found that the most common food information sources were food labels, books and articles. The least common food information sources were internet sources and specialist media sources, such as science journals. However, almost 20 years later, Adamski et al., (2020) found that people tended to obtain their nutrition information from online sources such as the internet and social media, showing the change in how people obtain their information. Ruani et al., (2023) found that nutrition/health websites were the most popular, followed by internet searches, and then diet or health books. Interestingly, even though the participants were more likely to obtain their information from these sources, they were not necessarily the most trusted sources of information. Instead, more trust was placed in those who had a nutrition science background or those who were healthcare professionals. (Ruani et al., 2023). Vlontzos et al. (2018) conducted a study on young Europeans to determine what influenced their buying behaviours of traditional food products. They found that food safety, media and environmental influences were the strongest influences, whereas cost and availability were not as important.

Information found on food products is also another way consumers can access nutrition information. Ingredient lists, health claims and nutrition-related information are key factors when consumers are making their food choices, with products that clearly state this information often being chosen over ones that do not (Fernqvist et al., 2024). Specifically, for those who have personal dietary preferences and requirements, nutrition information can be vital, and they are often more aware of the ingredient makeup of products (Lewis et al., 2009). Those who possess these dietary requirements and needs are also more likely to intentionally seek out nutritional information and utilise it to inform their purchases (Soós & Lugasi, 2024; Dana et al., 2019; Giro-Candanedo et al., 2022). As well as this, consumers with these specific dietary needs and requirements are more likely to purchase food products that align with their needs (Rosenfield & Burrows, 2017; Dean et al., 2024), therefore proving that information specifically stating the nutrition and ingredients of a product is essential to consumers.

### 2.2.2 Food Events as Nutrition Information Sources

Food events can also act as information sources for attendees at these events. To the best of the author's knowledge, there are limited studies that explicitly discuss food events as a source of nutrition information; however, there are studies that discuss how experiences at these events can influence attendees' food behaviours. Organ et al., (2015) discuss several points that highlight how food events could be a source of information for attendees. For example, they suggest that engagement with the festival itself may contribute to memories that can influence their future purchasing behaviours. This is because emotions and memories created during events may be triggered in later buying situations and influence consumer behaviour. Another example mentioned is that the experiences that attendees may have at these events may also have an influence on future buying behaviours because they are able to learn about the food in a holistic way, where the experience is a sensory one. This, again, may be triggered in future food decisions, causing the consumer to purchase foods they trialled at a food event. Finally, Organ et al., (2015) discuss how knowledge of the food products on offer can be generated through tasting and interactions. They highlight that engaging with the food itself (sampling of products, demonstrations by experts and interaction with producers) may also expose attendees to new information about the food itself, and this can increase awareness, which can later influence food purchase decisions. Ulman et al., (2025) also highlight that food events can offer a platform for learning. They discuss how education is an important factor in creating a successful food event, where they serve a purpose to educate attendees. This allows attendees to obtain new knowledge about the food products, the processes and the companies behind them. Ulman et al., (2025) also state how engagement with stallholders and producers can be a beneficial information source to attendees, as these interactions add to the experience, and they may be prone to remembering these interactions in the future, influencing buying behaviours. This engagement between stallholders and consumers has been proven to have a positive effect on purchasing intentions because of the opportunity to create personal connections with the products (Hall & Mitchell, 2004; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010; Organ et al., 2015).

Overall, although there are no direct studies that reference food events as a source of nutritional information, the studies mentioned above outline that aspects of food events can contribute to the development of knowledge about food products.

### 2.2.3 Health literacy

Health literacy is an important part of obtaining and understanding nutrition information. Carbone and Zoellner (2012, p.254) define health literacy as “the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions”. Their research also noted that higher levels of health literacy correlated with a positive influence on dietary behaviours. Correspondingly, Chen et al (2018) found that individuals with lower levels of health literacy tended to obtain their health information from television, social media or celebrities. Possessing health literacy skills can prevent poorer health outcomes, where poor health literacy levels are often linked to poor outcomes for individuals with the likelihood of developing preventable illnesses (Coughlin et al., 2021; Sudirman, 2022). Health literacy is an important skill for individuals to obtain to not only understand information in relation to their health and wellbeing, but also to possess the skills to acquire, understand and utilise the information to live a healthier life (Bello et al., 2024). Communicating credible and reliable health information to the public is an important public health strategy, however, individuals must possess the skills needed to understand and differentiate factual and non-factual information sources (Niederdeppe et al., 2025).

Health literacy levels can also have an impact on food and nutrition knowledge, where lower health literacy can be linked to unhealthy eating patterns and poor adherence to nutritional advice (Silva et al., 2023). Nutrition and food literacy are important concepts that provide skills that lead to healthy and responsible eating behaviours, encompassing the knowledge required to make decisions leading to better health, as well as the understanding of basic nutritional information (Silva et al., 2023)

## **2.3 Food Environments**

Food and nutrition environments are an important factor when discussing dietary behaviours of a population. Swinburn et al., (2013, p.2) define food environments as being “the collective physical, economic, policy and sociocultural surroundings, opportunities and conditions that influence people’s food and beverage choices and nutritional status”. Examples of food environments may include supermarkets, schools, restaurants and the home environment (Zaleskiewicz et al., 2024). Food environments can create conditions that are supportive or unsupportive of healthy eating, and improving these environments has the potential to promote

healthy eating (Pulker et al., 2018). Food environments can also be used to implement public health initiatives that, in turn, create healthier lifestyles for individuals (Nguyen et al., 2021). The consideration of the different elements that make up food environments is important to consider in this research, because they can impact the dietary decisions of individuals.

### 2.3.1 Types of food environments

Glanz et al., (2005) established an ecological model of health to define food environments, outlining four key types: community nutrition environment, organisational nutrition environment, consumer nutrition environment and information environment. Community nutrition environments are defined as the location and accessibility of food outlets in proximity to the individual, the type of the outlet and its accessibility. Organisational nutrition environment is defined as places like schools, universities, hospitals and food centres, places in which food is sold and distributed to people in institutions and organisations (Glanz et al., 2005). The consumer nutrition environment includes the availability of food products, the variety and type, as well as the branding, the price of the product, the placement in food stores and the promotion of the product, for example, the health messages and promotions. Finally, the information environment is the last domain in Glanz's (2005) model, which encompasses the media and advertising surrounding food and drink products. Glanz (2005) also highlights that psychosocial factors and perceived nutrition environment, alongside the environmental variables, have an overall impact on eating patterns and behaviours. Downs et al., (2020) proffer an alternative description of food environments where they can be either a natural food environment or a built food environment. Natural food environments encompass the wild and cultivated food environments or the built food environments, where food environments consist of informal and formal markets. Natural food environments describe wild and cultivated environments such as forests, gardens and oceans, whereas built food environments include formal and informal markets. These are made up of things such as markets, supermarkets or street vendors. Both authors present conceptual frameworks that emphasise the multifaceted nature of food environments and how the different types of food environments may affect food choices and eating behaviours.

### 2.3.2 Food environments and links to food choice

#### *2.3.2.1 Price and affordability*

Shaw et al., (2023) found that adolescents tend to buy more affordable and cheaper food items. In this study, they found that the adolescents placed a greater social value on food and that the interaction they got while eating with their peers was more important than the food itself. As mentioned in the previous section, adolescents in this study tended to choose fast food outlets because of the affordability of the food and the ability to socially interact with their peers. Byker Shanks et al., (2016) found that price in the population of adults in Western USA was a determining factor in what foods they chose to buy. The study found that both the availability and price of products, such as fresh produce, were among the main driving factors behind which products the participants of the study were purchasing. The study also found that participants often would buy the 'budget', less attractive, higher-energy and nutrient-poor products to save money. Limited financial resources can play a big part in dietary decisions, which can ultimately lead to worse health outcomes.

#### *2.3.2.2 Availability and Accessibility*

Availability and accessibility are key factors to consider when examining the food choices of individuals. This is because what is available and accessible to different individuals has a direct influence on consumer choices and can be linked to food-related disease risks. Caspi et al., (2012, p. 1173) define availability as the adequacy of the supply of healthy food. Availability of food can encompass the proximity of food outlets in the food environment, but also the types of foods that are available in these locations. In a systematic review conducted by Pitt et al., (2017), the authors found that the availability of both healthy and unhealthy foods was a key driver in the food purchasing decisions and food consumption of individuals. The availability of food products is what is consumed, and the supply of food to individuals reflects their diets. Herforth and Ahmed (2015) state that there is enough food available for people to consume the calories and energy they need, but the diets may not be nutritional. They concluded that the availability of foods that can construct a healthy diet has decreased over time, and coupled with that, there has been an increase in demand for fast and ultra-processed foods. Herforth and Ahmed (2015) concluded that the lack of availability of food products in the food environment affects the dietary choices of individuals. Proximity can also drive food choices, where

consumers that lived in closer to fast food outlets and convenience stores are more likely to purchase food items from those stores (He et al., 2012).

### 2.3.2.3 Convenience

The convenience of food products can be both a positive and a negative driver of food choices. Convenient food products can save time and effort, especially for those who live busy lifestyles, which is attractive to a consumer. On the other hand, convenient food products are often described as ultra-processed or fast food, which can contribute to worse health outcomes (Bogard et al., 2024). In relation to food environments, convenience can be described as “the time cost of obtaining, preparing and consuming a food item” (Bogard et al., 2024, p.2). Not only do individuals have to purchase food items, but they also must spend the time to prepare and consume the items, which can be hard to achieve when they live busy lifestyles. Convenience is also closely linked to the accessibility of food items. For example, where they get the food items from, what transport they take and how long it takes them all correlate with convenience and the choices that people make when purchasing food items.

Food events can be seen as a consumer nutrition food environment, as per Glanz (2005) and Downs et al., (2020)’s descriptions. Therefore, factors such as the convenience of food products, their price and affordability, as well as how easily they are available and accessible to the consumer, could also have a large influence on their behaviours and determine what products individuals choose to purchase and consume. These concepts may help explain why food event attendees make their choices and how these factors may have an influence into explaining why they do so.

### 2.3.3 The New Zealand Food Environment

The New Zealand food environment has been defined as “highly accessible and heavily promoted energy – dense, nutrient-poor food and drinks” (Mackay et al., 2022, p. 1). Food environments in New Zealand have been suggested to be one of the key factors of high energy consumption and unhealthy diets, which can lead to worse health outcomes, especially obesity. The Benchmarking Food Environments report (University of Auckland, 2017) states that 32 per cent of New Zealand adults in have obesity, reflecting the current food environment. Many factors influence the New Zealand food environment, for example, the food industry, health

system, education system and society can influence the day-to-day interactions that people have with their local environment, such as workplaces or schools (Chote et al., 2022).

#### 2.3.4 Food environments and public health

Food environments are said to be one of the main drivers of food choices and have the ability to instigate change in the dietary habits of consumers. Food environments have become a target for public health initiatives as the impact of food environments on dietary choices has led to the creation of public health initiatives that ultimately target the food environment to make it healthier for consumers (Shaw et al., 2023). Through these initiatives, the eating habits of consumers can be changed with a goal to reduce and prevent non-communicable diseases (Pulker et al., 2018).

MacKay et al., (2022) state that the two main forces that can improve food environments, especially in New Zealand, are the food industry and the government. Food environments can be greatly impacted by government policies to improve health, but also reduce the prevalence of non-communicable diseases. By instilling effective policies to address the problems that are in food environments and improve the overall nutritional status of the population. As well as this, Pineda et al., (2022) stated that by improving food environments, there can be an improvement in socioeconomic inequalities in diets.

Therefore, food environments are a key target in instilling change when looking at improving the health of individuals as well as preventing the development of diet-related, non – communicable diseases. As well as this, because food events, like The Food Show Auckland, (2024), can also be described as a food environment, they can therefore be utilised as environments to conduct research on factors that may influence dietary decisions, ultimately contributing to the health of individuals.

## **2.4 Food marketing and its influence on the consumer decision process**

Food marketing is an essential way for brands and businesses to promote their products to the public. Garde et al., (2012, p.9) define food marketing as “any form of commercial communication or message that is designed to increase the recognition, appeal and consumption of a particular food product”. There is a distinct relationship between a brand’s

marketing strategies and consumer food choices (Martinho, 2020). Chandon and Wansik (2012) state that food marketers can influence how much food is consumed through pricing, marketing communications, the product and the eating environment.

#### 2.4.1 Marketing Approaches

Marketing techniques are powerful approaches used by companies to connect with consumers and showcase their products. The most popular marketing technique can be labelled as “The Four Ps”: product, place, promotion and price. Xia (2023) outlines definitions for all aspects of the technique. The Place of the product can relate to the location where the product is sold, virtually or physically, increasing its availability to consumers. Promotion explains the communications used to promote a product, a brand or even an event to the target consumers. Promotion is an important element for marketing as it is a useful tactic to build a brand for long-term success, attracting consumers and providing knowledge about their products. Promotion strategies can include using loyalty programs, social media engagement, brand image and incorporating celebrities that align with brand values to promote their products. Price is the monetary amount that customers want to pay for a product or a service. Price is an important factor in marketing as it requires a total understanding of the market, customers’ needs and also the competitors in the same field. Using price as a marketing tactic affects the companies’ ability to make a profit, but it is also needed to meet customer demand. Finally, product refers to the attributes of the product itself, the design, the benefits and the branding. The goal of using a product as a marketing strategy is to create a product that can fill a gap in the existing market and provide an advantage for the company. The four Ps are all interconnected and will influence each other at all points and are essential in creating a successful marketing strategy, ensuring the success of a product in the market (Singh., 2012).

Food marketing is an essential tool for food companies to build trust with consumers and develop brand loyalty (Martinho, 2020). Using strategies like *The Four Ps*, it allows food companies to market their products successfully to consumers. Companies can use pricing strategies, such as reducing or taxing food products, to promote or discourage consumers from purchasing certain food or beverages (French, 2003; Forde et al., 2023). Promotion strategies, specifically through advertisements, are another way food companies can establish a presence with consumers. Food companies can capitalise on things such as trends, public opinions and events to showcase their products, especially to meet certain needs of the consumer (Wang &

Karia, 2024). Place can also be used in food marketing, through both advertising of products in-store and online, meaning that there is a variety of options for the consumer, such as supermarkets vs online food stores. As well as this, consumers can use a combination of both offline and online platforms to find information and place a direct order, as well as be able to purchase fresh foods from stores (Wang & Karia, 2024). Finally, using a product strategy is also transferable into food marketing, where companies can market both the types of products and the variety they are selling to consumers (Wang & Karia, 2024).

#### 2.4.2 Advertising

Advertising can have a persuasive effect on individuals, which can influence their dietary decisions greatly. Food advertising can take on many different forms, including (but not necessarily limited to) television, radio, print media, signage, online and social media (Boyland et al., 2025)

Advertising strategies can differ depending on the target audience. Age considerations are often at the forefront of the minds of marketers, especially when it comes to targeting children vs adults. Food advertising can shape children's dietary preferences from a young age (Meyer, 2024). Children are also very influential factors on a family's purchasing behaviours, and through their exposure to advertising (Meyer, 2024). Advertising often targets the emotional appeal of products to children and their persuasion power, ultimately influencing their parents to buy food products based on what is attractive to the child (Meyer, 2024). Therefore, many advertisements regarding food products are often targeted towards children. However, most of the products advertised to children are often nutrient-poor and energy-dense, which can cause the development of negative food behaviours such as consumption and preferences, leading to worse health outcomes (Sato et al., 2022). There is limited evidence on the influence that advertising has on adult food choices. Nieto et al., (2022) found that adults in Australia, Mexico, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom are exposed to a high amount of unhealthy food and beverage marketing through a variety of different forms of media, and there was a subsequent influence on their food choices. It is important to understand what influences adult food choices, as they are primarily responsible for making the food choices for other individuals in their households, for example, their children (Nieto et al., 2022).

Advertising through television is a common tactic used by the food industry. Nieto et al., (2022) found that television is the most frequently used media source to display unhealthy food marketing to consumers. Scully et al., (2012) found that adolescents who are exposed to food marketing via television and other media have a higher consumption rate of foods that are nutrient-poor and energy-dense. Similarly, Zimmerman et al., (2014) found that adults who were exposed to television advertising were also more likely to choose more unhealthy foods that had a higher caloric value than those who were not. Television advertisements can have a profound effect on young children, and the food industry uses this to further market its products. Boyland and Halford (2013) found that extensive television marketing can influence children's dietary preferences and brand loyalty even into adulthood. Although this study does not inherently focus on children and did not include any insights from tamariki and rangatahi, it is important to note that there were many respondents who noted that they did attend The Food Show Auckland (2024) with their families and children.

#### 2.4.3 Food packaging and labelling

Food packaging and labels are often used to market the product to the public (Saavedra - Garcia, 2022; Sato et al., 2022). Packaging can be a way to capture attention and convey a message to the consumer through visual cues and text, which, in turn, may influence a consumer's choice to purchase (Hallez et al., 2020; Saavedra - Garcia, 2022). Visual cues can include colour, illustrations, images and the shape of the packaging, anything that can target the emotional side of the consumer. Informational cues such as the labels, nutrition and health claims and any other source of written information can have a cognitive effect on consumers (Hallez et al., 2020). The current literature states that children are very influenced by marketing that appears on packaging (Sato et al., 2022; Tsochantaridou, 2023). In this sense, food brands target children in the hope that they will influence their parents to buy the food products (Hallez et al., 2020). Hallez et al., (2020) concluded that children are more influenced by visual cues on packaging, whereas adults are more influenced by informational cues. As well as this, they found that the size of the packaging also contributes to adults' food choices, where they often chose food products with bigger packaging.

#### 2.4.4 Digital Marketing

Digital marketing, such as advertisements through mediums like social media, can also have an influence on food choices. Digital marketing can be defined as “promotional material delivered through a digital medium such as a smartphone or a tablet that seeks to maximise impact through targeted content” (Nieto et al., 2022). Social media can have a large influence on the eating habits of individuals, especially those in younger age groups. Many young adults have more than one social media account on multiple platforms and spend a lot of time on these platforms; therefore, being exposed to food marketing than through any other source (Alijefree & Alhotahli, 2022). Food companies have recognised that social media is a fast-growing platform and thus, increased their advertising and social media presence (Bragg et al., 2021).

#### 2.4.5 Using health and nutrition messages to enhance marketing approaches

Health and nutritional claims are frequently utilised in marketing to attract a consumer to a product by promoting the health aspects of foods (Steinheisser et al., 2019). Customers rely on these health and nutrition claims to determine if a product has associated health benefits (Aschemann-Witzel & Grunert, 2015). Nutrient claims and labels allow companies to highlight aspects of products that may provide health benefits to the consumer, increasing purchases (Holtrop, 2024). If a product has a nutrition claim, then consumers generally perceive the product as being healthier, leading to an increase in consumption (Geyskens et al., 2007). Nutrition and health claims may provide a “health halo” effect around products. Because there is a nutrition claim on the product, people believe that the product has health benefits, even if the claims are misleading (Saavedra -Garcia et al., 2022). For example Vidal and Castellano (2022) found that using nutritional claims such as low fat or low calorie or highlighting macronutrient content largely influenced consumers into buying said products. Oostenbach et al., (2019) also found that nutrition claims (such as ones relating to fat, energy, salt and sugar) did have an influence on food purchases, with nutrition knowledge impacting the perceptions of the products themselves. As well as this, health-conscious consumers are more likely to intentionally seek out food products that contain health claims that align with their preferences and ultimately purchase them (Qi & Ploegger, 2021; Escobar-Farfán et al., 2025; Nazzaro et al., 2025).

Holtrop et al., (2024) found that consumers were more likely to purchase products that contained positive nutrition claims over products that contained negative nutrition claims.

Products that stated they contained ingredients that aligned with healthier lifestyles and foods were chosen over products that stated they were absent from an ingredient. However, contradictory, Andre et al., (2019) found that products that described removing negative attributes of food (such as low sugar or low fat) were chosen more often over products that had other nutritional claims. Tonneson et al., (2022) found that nutrition claims have a positive effect on purchasing behaviours, albeit they were dependent on the type of product and also the claim itself. Steinheisser et al., (2019) found that those who had higher nutrition knowledge and higher health motivation were more likely to be influenced by nutritional claims. Contrastingly, Stuthridge et al., (2022) found that most consumers recognised nutrition and health labels as being just a marketing tool and had no impact on their purchasing decisions.

Overall, marketing strategies can have a large influence on consumer behaviour through a variety of channels. There are many ways that food companies can communicate product information to their target customers.

## **2.5 Food Events**

Food events are described as a place in which people come together to experience new food products and a chance to interact with businesses to learn more about their products. Food events provide an experience to consumers, where they are immersed in sampling new products, interacting with producers and other people and experiencing the culture of a new place positively (Organ et al., 2015). Food events can also be a vehicle for behaviour change, with the formation of new positive experiences and memories, encouraging consumers to make different dietary choices (Organ et al., 2015). Existing food event research is mainly tied to food tourism, with many studies exploring how food events can increase culinary tourism and how these festivals can impact consumer views on the destination where the event is held (Chang et al., 2018; de Jong & Varley, 2018).

### *2.5.1 Motives for attending food events and supporting attendee engagement*

Understanding a person's motives is key for brands to be able to target them as a consumer and create an experience for them that they will remember. Managers for these events can utilise this information to be able to market their event to consumers, and in order to do so effectively, they must understand the motivations of potential patrons (Krajickova & Sauer, 2018). There

are a variety of reasons why people attend food festivals. Examples of these may include cultural exploration, socialisation, spending time with family, experiencing the event and wanting to expand their knowledge on food and beverages (Weiler et al., 2004; Dodd et al., 2006; Hattingh & Swart, 2016; Krajicjova & Saue, 2018; Topole et al., 2021).

Food events provide a unique experience for customers where they can engage directly with the brands and their promoters. By having this as a feature of the food events, it allows for people to understand more about the product and ask specific questions or queries they may have regarding the nutrition, the creation process, the manufacturing process or the business itself (Janiszeweska & Ossowska, 2021). This level of interaction allows consumers to fully understand the product, the brand and the experience that they are buying into. Encouraging event attendee engagement, whilst at the event, is important, so as to provide an enhanced and unique experience (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010; O'mara-Eves et al., 2015). Engagement initiatives at food events can empower attendees to reconnect with their food, resulting in transformative food choices and leading to subsequent buying behaviour (Hall & Mitchell, 2005; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010; Organ et al., 2015) and intention to return to the event in the future (Hsu, 2021). Pettinger et al., (2019) study of food events found that attendee engagement is positive when there are interactive activities available, such as cooking classes. Folgado-Fernández et al. (2016) conducted a study looking at event attendees' emotional and rational engagement. Similar to the study by Pettinger et al., (2019), Folgado-Fernández et al., (2016) found that events that provided opportunities for patrons to have an active experience (rather than a passive one) could enhance emotional engagement and create a more unique experience. In this light, Getz and Page (2016) note that the provision of opportunities for emotional engagement can influence a patron's overall experiences.

### 2.5.2 Food events and consumer behaviours

To the best of the authors' knowledge, there are limited studies examining how food events can contribute to consumer behaviours. Kanapathipillai et al. (2024) found that food festivals do have a direct link to consumer purchasing behaviours due to the sensory and cultural involvement an attendee may have at the event. They highlight that memorable, immersive experiences can enhance a consumer's understanding of food products and ultimately influence their buying behaviours. Organ et al., (2015) also discuss that food events have the potential to influence future buying behaviours through engagement and positive emotions. Food event

experiences such as interactive activities, sampling food products and engaging with stallholders have also been linked to purchasing behaviours of consumers (Organ et al., 2015; Folgado–Fernández et al., 2016; Pettinger et al., 2019). Overall, there appears to be a gap in existing literature investigating how food events have the potential power to influence consumer buying behaviours both during the event and afterwards.

### 2.5.3 Food Events in New Zealand

Food events and festivals are popular in New Zealand, with several occurring each year. These festivals can include The Food Show, Wellington on a Plate, Hawke’s Bay Food and Wine Classic and many others. Food is a part of the New Zealand identity, with food experiences, like food events, allowing for connections and community building as well as for entertainment and learning, with food tourism reflecting what New Zealand has to offer (Meikle, 2021). There is limited existing literature discussing food events in New Zealand, and the studies that do exist highlight the motivations behind why New Zealanders and tourists attend these events. For example, Fountain (2016) and R. Nicholson and D. Pearce (2001) both discuss the motivations behind attendees at food events, with Nicholson & Pearce (2001) examining the characteristics of those who attend and Fountain (2016) examining the motivations behind why they attend. These studies identified that the main reasons why attendees participated in these events were that they were interested in experiencing local products, providing attendees with an opportunity to socialise with other community members and to experience new environments. Other studies that discuss food events in New Zealand are Meikle (2021) and Yeomen et al., (2021). Meikle (2021) references the importance of food events as a form of food tourism in New Zealand, having the ability to connect individuals, highlighting the destination’s community, culture and society. Yeomen et al., (2021) discuss ways that festivals can ensure success in the long-term, using Wellington on a Plate as a case study. Their study identified 20 drivers for change that can be used to improve food events and help maintain their role in the tourism field.

Therefore, there are limited studies looking at food events in New Zealand, and the ones that do exist focus largely on tourism aspects of those festivals. This proves that there is a gap existing within the current discourse on how the influence of these events on consumer dietary habits, as well as the extent of their engagement with food events.

## 2.6 Chapter summary and conclusion

There is a plethora of research on consumer behaviour and marketing approaches. Existing research on consumer behaviour tends to focus on broad consumption habits (Mokhhlis, 2008; Kokkoris & Stavrova, 2021; Nasse, 2021) and fails to consider specific factors that may influence consumer purchasing (Lichev, 2017). In this sense, there is limited literature that aligns consumer behaviour with a food event context. Organ et al., (2015) discuss consumer behaviours in a broader sense. With regard to food and nutrition sources of information, multiple studies found that consumers obtain their information from a wide variety of sources; however, the most popular sources are online and internet sources (Adamski, 2020). As well as this, Peša Pavlović et al. (2023) found that reliable information influences dietary decisions and ultimately consumer behaviours. To the best of the authors' knowledge, there are no studies directly referencing food events or festivals as direct sources of information. However, both Organ et al., (2015) and Ulman et al., (2025) proffer an argument that demonstrates that through engagement and interaction at these events, knowledge can be acquired, which in turn, may influence future food consumption behaviours.

In turning to look at the literature pertaining to food event studies, the majority of the existing literature focuses on the impact food festivals may have on tourism. Other studies range from discussing the motivations behind why individuals attend (Hattingh & Swart., 2016; Krajicjova & Saue, 2018; Topole et al., 2021), to engagement levels of attendees with the event (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010; Organ et al., 2015; Hall & Mitchell, 2005), and experiences of those who attended (Leer & Juel-Jacobsen, 2022). To the best of the author's knowledge, only two studies directly focus on food events and their link to consumer behaviours (Organ et al., 2015; Kanapathipillai et al., 2024). The majority of the studies and articles identified, whilst collating the literature for this literature review, were conducted in European countries (Organ et al., 2015; Topp et al., 2021). European sample populations from these studies may not accurately reflect how food events align with New Zealand culture (including the diverse nature of New Zealand's population), and similar patterns of food event expectations, experiences and the processing of information on offer.

To the author's knowledge, there have only been several studies conducted in New Zealand that relate to food events. The majority of the literature focuses largely on food events as a source of tourism (Meikle, 2021), specifically looking at the motivations of attendance. These

studies did conclude that there are a variety of motivators that draw individuals to food events, such as the opportunity to socialise with others, experience New Zealand culture and discover and learn about food products (Nicholson & Pearce, 2001; Fountain, 2016). However, these studies looked at food events quite broadly and how individuals valued the overall experience, rather than how they interacted with food and food products available at these events. As well as this, to the best of the authors' knowledge, there was minimal literature outlining how attendees engaged with information supplied to them at these events, and also, if this informed any decision-making when it came to trying/buying certain food products.

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the extent of influence of nutritional information on attendees' consumption behaviours at The Food Show Auckland (2024), with a specific focus on how consumers with dietary needs and requirements utilise this information to make informed decisions. As mentioned, existing literature focuses on the motivations behind attendance at food events, but there is a gap in further investigating how attendees interact with products at these events, as well as any factors that are present that may influence their consumer behaviours. Finally, there are no studies that directly discuss how food events can be a source of nutritional information for attendees. Therefore, this research aimed to provide an insight into how nutrition information is used by attendees and the extent of influence it had on their consumption behaviours. This research aimed to help add to the existing discourse on studies on food events; however, focusing more on consumers at the event and what drove them to purchase or sample different products on offer.

This chapter reviewed the existing literature available in relation to the influences of consumers' behaviours in the context of food product purchasing. It has presented initial insights into the existing research on this topic, but also highlighted potential gaps that this thesis aims to address, specifically regarding the influences of consumer behaviour at food events. The following chapter will offer an overview of the methodology used in this study, providing the rationale behind using The Food Show Auckland, (2024) as a case study, as well as describing the steps taken to obtain and analyse the collected data.

## 3.0 Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology undertaken to perform this study. Firstly, this chapter outlines the rationale behind using an exploratory case study approach. It then details the advantages of using a survey research tool to generate qualitative and quantitative responses. A description of the procurement of the participants follows, along with an overview of the process undertaken to obtain the data. Lastly, this chapter presents a summary of the data analysis that took place and the reasoning behind the process.

N.B. An ethics application was lodged ahead of any data collection taking place (Reference Number 4000029468). The project was deemed low risk by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

### *3.1 Research Approach*

This section outlines the approach taken for this research project. It describes the type of research undertaken as well as the rationale behind conducting an exploratory case study. This section also describes the benefits of using a mixed method study, highlighting the beneficial elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches and interpreting the data from the data collection.

#### *3.1.1 An exploratory case study*

The research conducted for this thesis utilised The Food Show, Auckland (2024) as an exploratory case study. Exploratory research can be defined as an intent to explore a potential research question without resulting in a conclusive result, and can result in a better understanding of the research question (Ngwiate Mbaka, 2021). Exploratory research is necessary when investigating problems that may be more extensive and have not been explained in any way, assessing what is happening in the larger picture. Exploratory research can be looked at in two different ways. Firstly, it can serve as an identification of significant variables in a particular situation or context, and secondly, it can identify the relationships between those variables (Festinger & Katz, 1953).

The case study research approach is a useful way to understand an issue within a real-life context (Crowe et al., 2011). Case study research is often centred around an event, a

phenomenon or a population through observation, which can then be explored and explained in its own context to provide an understanding of connections between variables (Ragin & Becker, 1992; Yin, 2009). Case study research is more confined; it uses a specific event or issue in its real-life context (Crowe et al., 2011). This research can also be labelled as a single, intrinsic case study, meaning that there is one case that is being investigated (The Food Show, Auckland, 2024), and investigating the behaviours of the participants at this one event (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018). In case study research, a mixed methods approach is often adopted to provide a complete understanding of the case as a whole (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018) and combining both case study and mixed method research approaches, it allows for a broader research question to be investigated compared to using each study individually (Yin, 2014).

The rationale behind using an exploratory case study approach for this research is that the aim is to investigate the influences on dietary decisions of participants at food events, specifically at The Food Show, Auckland (2024). As well as this, exploratory case study research is often used when there has been minimal research conducted on a topic in a certain area and is often labelled as the first step when exploring a new area of research and can be used as a starting point to develop future research in that same area (Mills et al., 2010). Using The Food Show, Auckland (2024) as a case study, an insight can be gained into participants' dietary decisions in the context of a promotional event, looking at factors that may influence consumers in the moment compared to their everyday habits. Using an exploratory case study allows us to investigate a wide range of factors that may influence consumers, but only in the context of a food event like The Food Show. It also provides an opportunity to research the elements of these events that may have an influence on consumers and why this may be, which can provide a further avenue to be investigated in the future.

### *3.1.2 Balancing the benefits of qualitative and quantitative data*

To align with the aims, this study relied on participant responses to address the research questions. A mixed methods approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the research question and the data obtained as a whole. The survey (see Section 3.3) incorporated a mix of questions seeking quantitative and qualitative responses.

Qualitative research allows researchers to explore and understand the complexities of the responses from research participants (Lim, 2025). As well as this, qualitative research encompasses the voice, personal experience, perspectives and context of social behaviours (Lim, 2025). A benefit of using a qualitative approach is that the questioning style allows for information about personal factors such as beliefs, values and feelings that subsequently can influence a person's behaviour (Creswell et al., 2011; Oranga, 2023). This allows researchers to understand a person's experience and the social context around any decisions they may make (Agius, 2013; Cleland, 2017). Qualitative research also allows for data to be grouped by themes and common answers instead of a numerical system. Qualitative data focuses on conceptual ideas, focusing on different categories that data points may relate to (Cleland, 2017). Using an approach that analyses data based on themes, common ideas, understandings and patterns allows for context and a deeper understanding of the narrative being provided by that participant (Cleland, 2017). Therefore, given the aims outlined for this study, a qualitative approach would best suit the research question and understanding participants' key motivators when purchasing food and beverage products in an environment such as The Food Show, Auckland (2024). In this study, a qualitative approach was best suited to resolve gaps in the literature, especially relevant to the New Zealand context. This is because there is limited research surrounding the impact of nutrition information and dietary preferences on their purchasing behaviours. A qualitative approach allows for further insight into the direct reasons why a person may be more or less inclined to purchase specific products and their reasoning behind this.

Quantitative research allows for data collection on a larger scale, resulting in the ability to apply the findings to a wider population, whereas using a qualitative method allows for a greater understanding of what is being researched and what participants have to say (Dawadi et al., 2021). In terms of a quantitative approach, this allows for the identification of trends or patterns amongst the participants, highlighting what they are looking for in a food product or any specific factors that may draw them to sample/purchase.

### 3.2 Data set identification

As the purpose of this study was to collate an understanding of the factors that The Food Show, Auckland (2024) attendees considered important, a broad sampling of event attendees across the days the event took place was deemed necessary. The inclusion criteria for this study were

as follows: must be over the age of 18, must have attended The Food Show, Auckland in 2024 and must have access to an internet device. Although The Food Show welcomed those of all ages to their event, for the purpose of this study, only those over the age of 18 were included, especially because there was alcohol on display and available for purchase at the event.

Survey participation was voluntary, and the respondents could choose how much information they shared about their nutrition and dietary habits and choices. They had the option of not answering a survey question if they did not feel comfortable doing so. Survey respondents were offered an optional opportunity to go into the draw to win one of two \$50 Prezi vouchers. Data reporting is anonymous, in that it does not identify respondents by name or any other identifying features.

### 3.3 Survey design and distribution

This section outlines the rationale behind the decision to use a survey as a data collection tool. It also explains how the survey was designed and distributed, and the types of questions used to obtain the data.

#### *3.3.1 Using an online survey as a data collection tool*

Discussions with The Food Show, Auckland (2024) event manager aided in establishing that an online survey, distributed to attendees (who were registered on the event's database) the week following the event, would be more appropriate than engaging with attendees in person while at the event. There were two main reasons behind this decision. Firstly, during the event, the venue was often at capacity and minimal space was left to take attendees aside and ask them to complete the survey. Secondly, by asking attendees to complete the survey whilst at The Food Show, there may be a risk that they could be distracted from their overall event experience.

An online survey was designed, developed, and pre-approved by The Food Show Auckland (2024)'s event organiser. The survey consisted of both qualitative and quantitative questions. The use of a mixed-method survey provides a clear understanding of the problem as a whole and provides a deeper and richer understanding of the research topic (Wasti et al., 2022). The choice to use this type of survey for this project allows us to quantify, identify patterns and trends amongst the responses from participants, but also to account for the participants' own

experiences and viewpoints when answering these questions. The use of qualitative questions allowed for a wide range of questions to be asked that gave access to people's practices, experiences and views, providing an overview of our topic of interest (Braun et al., 2021). Advantages of using this method include being able to collect data from a large population of participants, but simultaneously, being able to explore the responses in relation to the problem at hand (Dawadi et al., 2021). The rationale for using a survey to obtain data is that surveys offer a way to collect data using both quantitative and qualitative methods, exploring all variables of interest in relation to the research question (Ponto, 2015).

### *3.3.2 Survey design*

The survey was designed and developed using Qualtrics Online Survey software (*Qualtrics Xm*, 2025). The survey was divided into four categories: demographic questions, event attendees and expectations, food and beverage consumption habits and choices, and questions about products and dietary requirements. Each section had approximately three to five questions that related to each of the headings, asking participants to choose the answer most relevant to them and subsequently explain their reasoning. There were a variety of ways the participants could respond to the questions provided in the survey, for example, rating options in response to a statement, selecting a predefined answer option that best resonated with them and an opportunity to comment on different aspects. Including a variety of questions resulted in retrieving a well-rounded understanding of the participants, their dietary habits, what influenced them to buy products and if any specific factors contributed to their consumption. The survey comprised a range of questions that related to food information from consumers, including questions surrounding dietary requirements and engagement with the experience of the event. However, this thesis presents data that focuses directly on the information relating to attendees' dietary requirements.

A list of the survey questions can be located in the appendices of this thesis (Appendix A).

### *3.3.3 Survey distribution*

An email with an accompanying online survey link was sent to all Auckland Food Show event attendees registered on the event database. The email was drafted by the researcher and

distributed by the event manager on their behalf (to ensure the organisation's privacy policies were maintained).

The survey was initially distributed on the 26th of August, 2024 and was closed on the 13th of September. 600 participants responded to the survey. The survey was open for a total of three weeks, allowing respondents to answer within their own time. The rationale behind leaving the survey open for this time period was to ensure that the respondents were able to recall their responses accurately. Both Bhandari & Wagner (2006) and Stull et al., (2009) have identified that the longer the recall period is, the less accurate responses may be from participants in a survey context. As well as this, during the three weeks, a sufficient number of responses were collected to justify proceeding with the analysis of the data.

### 3.4 Data analysis

This section offers an explanation of the process that was used to analyse and consolidate the data used for this research project. It describes how the data was sorted and also the criteria for which it was deemed viable to be used in the study. This section also describes briefly the qualitative and quantitative methods used to analyse the data coding processes used to analyse the data.

Once the data had been collected, it was then converted into an Excel spreadsheet with all 600 responses. From there, the data was sorted based on its viability to be included in this study. To conduct this, a counting process was assumed in which each participant's response was read and subsequently categorised. The categories included: those who answered/commented on at least one question; those who had selected predefined answer options and had not left any comments; and those who did not complete the survey, leaving it blank. Those who had answered at least one question in relation to this research were included in the final data set.

Firstly, the demographic data was collected and sorted, resulting in a quantitative count for each variable. This included questions describing the age, gender and ethnicity of the participants who attended The Food Show. Questions that comprised tick-box answers were sorted into counts, for example, questions about any specific dietary requirements, the influence of nutrition information on purchases, and other yes/no questions. For the qualitative responses, an open coding process was used to code the comments that were left by the

participants. This process included reviewing participant comments and categorising them into themes. All qualitative responses were then able to be categorised more broadly using an axial coding process. A reflective coding process was used to identify any continuity with previous answers left by a participant in the survey. This included looking at specific answers to questions and then tracing them back through the survey to see if the same participant had continuity with their answers or if they had changed, for example, if they mentioned they were attending the Food Show for one specific thing and ended up purchasing something different.

Using this process allowed for the discovery of overarching themes within one or more participants and provided an opportunity to link common answers with each other to provide an overall summary of the question. The rationale behind using this process is that by coding the responses in this way, it allows for the identification of common themes within the participants' responses, resulting in links between the answers to find overarching trends. As well as this, this coding process summarised the answers from the participants in a concise way, highlighting the main influences on their decision-making when it came to products available at The Food Show, Auckland, 2024. This process is similar to that recommended by Ahmed et al., (2025), where they describe a six-step process for thematic analysis of qualitative data. They argue that this type of analysis is essential to ensure that the richness and complexity of qualitative responses are captured and to identify patterns amongst the respondents' answers in order to generate insight into their experiences.

### 3.5 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to provide a concise overview of the methodology used to obtain and analyse the data for this thesis. It has outlined the research approach adopted for this study, presenting a justification for using an exploratory study at The Auckland Food Show, 2024. The data was collected through a mixed-methods approach to capture the qualitative trends from the respondents as well as the quantitative trends. An online survey was used to obtain the data for this research, which was distributed to the respondents after the event occurred. The qualitative data was then analysed through a thematic analysis to identify patterns across the respondents' answers. The following chapter details the key findings generated from the data collection in relation to the research objectives outlined in Chapter One. It discusses the main themes and patterns identified from the analysis and highlights the key comments pertaining to these research objectives to contribute to answering the research question.

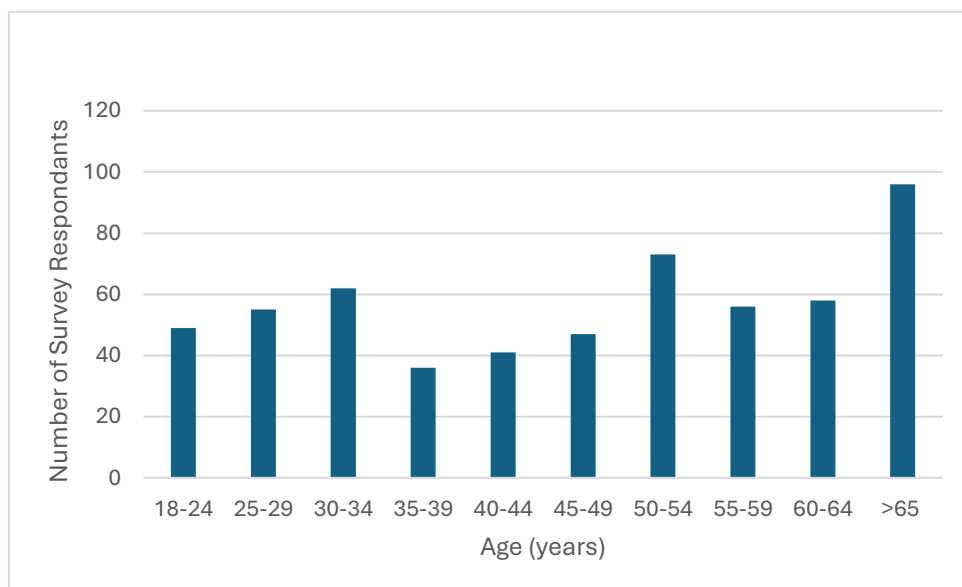
## 4.0 Results

This chapter presents the results gathered from the data collection stage of the study. The chapter comprises eight sections highlighting the key data points derived from each section of the survey (and aligning with the research question and aims of this thesis). That is; to explore how nutritional information can impact a consumer’s engagement with products, specifically looking at the information provided to them pertaining to dietary needs or requirements.

### 4.1 Demographics

The demographics collected for this project included gender, age and ethnicity. Gender wise, out of the 572 viable responses, 461 survey respondents identified as female and 106 identified as male. Four preferred not to state their gender, and one respondent identified as being non-binary/third gender. Respondent ages were also recorded as part of the survey. Figure 4.1 shows the age range of the respondents, with the highest proportion being over the age of 65 years. In terms of ethnicity, 397 respondents identified as European or NZ European, 21 Māori, 103 Asian, 15 Pacific Peoples, 3 MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American and African) and 33 noted their ethnicity as ‘other’.

**Figure 4.1:** Survey respondent age range



Source: The Food Show (Auckland) Attendee Survey, 2024

#### 4.2 Survey Respondent attendance at previous food events

To gain an understanding of the survey respondents' attendance at events like The Food Show Auckland, 2024, respondents were asked if they had previously visited another food event. Only 59 per cent of respondents acknowledged that they had visited another similar event, while 41 per cent of respondents said they hadn't attended a food show/event before. Out of the 59 per cent of respondents who acknowledged previous attendance at a food show/event; 80 per cent had previously attended The Food Show (Auckland) in previous years; five per cent had attended another type of food show or event (such as The Fine Food Show, World of Flavors, Coffee and Chocolate Festival); three per cent attended the Go Green Expo; eight per cent attended food shows outside of Auckland; three per cent attended food shows outside of New Zealand; and less than one per cent three couldn't remember what they had attended.

#### 4.3 The provision/availability of nutritional information and its influence on food and beverage consumption

Out of the total respondents, 39 per cent of participants agreed that the provision/availability of nutritional information directly influenced their food and beverage consumption choices. Additionally, 22 per cent identified that the provision of such information *sometimes* influenced their choices. Furthermore, 25 per cent of respondents did not believe the provision of nutritional information influenced their food and beverage consumption choices in any way. Ten per cent of survey respondents left this question blank. Example comments pertaining to this survey question are presented in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1:** Example quotes related to the provision/availability of nutritional information by respondents

<b>Respondents who always depend on the provision of nutritional information</b>	<b>Respondents who sometimes depend on the provision of nutritional information</b>
My focus is protein and fibre so products that indicate they are high in either of those are appealing to me. If nutritional info isn't stated I am more cautious about the product. (Respondent 30)	If it's a choice between two similar products, nutritional information does play a role in helping me make my final choice. (Respondent 5)
With type 1 diabetes, I need to know the sugar content and carbs of the food to decide if it is suitable for me to consume. (Respondent 225)	I like to be aware of the nutritional content but it doesn't always influence my purchase or me trying it (Respondent 101)
I want to know all the ingredients to be able to make a proper choice (Respondent 229)	Depends. General everyday eating, nutrition information is important. If it's more of a treat food, or indulgent food, I don't really want/need to know the nutritional information.(Respondent 41)
No nutritional info means no sale - I didn't buy a number of products because they lacked these. Healthy food choices require that information (Respondent 195)	When choosing between brands, the nutritional information helps me decide which brand to buy based on things like fat content, sodium content, carbohydrate content etc. (Respondent 391)

All qualitative responses made by survey respondents, in relation to the provision/availability of nutritional information, were coded into nine themes, based on the type of nutritional information they wished to see. These themes are presented in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2:** Themes generated from comments regarding the influence of nutritional information on their consumption choices

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
<b><i>Specific ingredients</i></b>	Answers in this category included examples where a respondent listed a specific ingredient they were looking for in a product, whether that be included or excluded. For example, products that may be low in sugar or low in fat.	96
<b><i>General ingredients</i></b>	Respondents stated that they looked at the ingredients, or the types of products as a whole rather than individually.	46
<b><i>Knowledge</i></b>	Respondents that stated that knowledge was an important factor when informing their choices. For example, knowledge of the product itself, the brand or what they are consuming.	25
<b><i>Dietary needs</i></b>	Those who stated that their dietary needs predominantly influence their food choices.	33
<b><i>Medical health needs</i></b>	Respondents who stated that their consumption was dependent on health conditions. For example, those with type one diabetes or those who were coeliac.	15
<b><i>Health conscious</i></b>	Respondents who noted that they were concerned with their overall health and how products align with their personal beliefs.	43
<b><i>Agroecology</i></b>	Respondents who stated they preferred products which were made locally, organic or naturally.	8
<b><i>Food show experience</i></b>	Respondents who stated that they enjoy the environment of the food show and this influences their consumption	8
<b><i>Nutritional information</i></b>	Respondents who stated that nutrition information of products were important when informing their choices.	47

#### 4.4 Value placed on nutritional, health and/or product information provided by stall holders

Survey respondents were asked to outline the value they placed on their interactions with stallholders and the information they may receive. By asking this question, it allowed for an insight to be gained on how respondents who attended the event viewed the importance of the stallholders and the impact that they may have when speaking to them about their products. There were 338 responses to this question. Qualitative responses were coded into four categories that best described how much value the respondents placed on the information provided by the stallholders. These categories were high value, somewhat value, little value and no value. Interestingly, 40 per cent of respondents stated that they placed a very high value on the information provided to them by stallholders, whereas 27 per cent stated that they placed some value. Additionally, 20 per cent stated they place little value, and 13 per cent placed no value. The broad range of qualitative responses received is summarised in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3:** Examples of quotes related to the value respondents placed on information provided to them by stallholders

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Example 1</b>	<b>Example 2</b>	<b>Example 3</b>
<b>High Value</b>	A lot, as a customer, I trust that the information that is given to me by the store is true and realistic. I take my health seriously and therefore wish to continue to find new and fun products to support my health goals but that are also delicious and nutritious. (Respondent 15)	I expect stall holders to know their products very well and be able to discuss nutritional aspects. (Respondent 131)	I find a knowledgeable stallholder very valuable. I found that I became uninterested in the stalls where holders were unengaged or lacking in knowledge of their product and company. On the other hand, I feel attracted to stay and engaged with the holders who knew what they were talking about and could give me a comprehensive view of the companies ethics. As this is an important topic for me, I felt personally aligned to these holders and more inclined to consider their products. (Respondent 279)
<b>Some Value</b>	Depends on the product. If it's just junk/treat food e.g. chocolate, I don't care. If it's more of a healthy food I place high value on it. (Respondent 295)	You do take what they say with good faith, but I tend to read labels too. (Respondent 76)	It was helpful to decide which products were healthier. (Respondent 311)
<b>Little Value</b>	I check the labels... if the stall-holder's commentary doesn't match... it's not any use to be talking to them!!! (Respondent 69)	I listened to their information but at the end of the day they are mostly sales pitches – (Respondent 101)	Not too much but it is good to see the information, which could also be made simple instead of always using scientific names. (Respondent 105)
<b>No Value</b>	Not much, it's about unique flavours there and finding something different. (Respondent 49)	I didn't really engage with nutritional information I don't think. (Respondent 160)	I prefer to read the package information for myself to see if it is suitable. (Respondent 458)

4.5 Description of new products attendees came across at The Food Show Auckland (2024) that supported their nutritional requirements.

This question provides insight into understanding if the respondents had found any products at The Food Show (Auckland) that supported their dietary or nutritional needs, and identifying which products they found. The survey found that 61 per cent of respondents stated that they had found products that met their dietary needs and were asked to describe what these products were. These comments were then coded into themes that aligned with the different dietary requirements, as outlined in Table 4.4.

*Table 4.4: Examples of Products Respondents Discovered that Aligned with their Specific Dietary Requirements*

<b>Dietary Requirement Category</b>	<b>Respondent Example/s</b>
<i>Gluten Free</i>	Pancakes, hashbrowns, slices
<i>Vegan/Vegetarian</i>	Dumplings, plant-based chicken nuggets, veggie chips, cookies
<i>High Protein</i>	Protein water, cereal, yoghurt
<i>Low sugar/low calorie/low carb</i>	Sparkling water, sauces, jams, keto chips, water drops. Granola
<i>Supportive of gut health</i>	Kimchi, kombucha, kiwifruit powder/crush, FODMAP relief supplements
<i>Dairy free</i>	Gelato, ice cream, cheesecake, dairy free cheese

4.6 Specific Dietary Requirements

Section six presents the data collected from a series of questions that asked about the dietary requirements of the survey respondents. The respondents were asked to tick the dietary requirement that most suited them out of seven options and were also allowed to state their dietary requirements if they were different from the ones we had suggested. Out of the total respondents, 50 per cent acknowledged that they had at least one dietary requirement that was influential when it came to choosing food and beverage products to consume. These requirements included gluten-free, dairy-free, sugar-free, allergy-free, keto and FODMAP. Across the 310 responses to these questions, 21% were gluten-free, 17% were dairy-free, 33% were sugar-free, 21% were allergy-free, 5% were paleo, 14% were keto, and 5% were on FODMAP.

For those who opted to comment on their own dietary requirements, the responses were coded into four main categories: 1) Personal beliefs; 2) Nutrient Rich; 3) Medical/Health Needs; and 4) “Low In ...”. *Personal beliefs* included responses that mentioned cultural or religious

factors, diets such as vegetarian or vegan or those who followed organic or natural diets, this comprised of 30 per cent of the respondents. *Nutrient-rich* responses included responses that mentioned the following diets that included being “high” in certain ingredients, such as high sodium or high energy, which comprised 23 per cent of responses. *Medical/health needs* included respondents who mentioned they followed a certain diet that was a result of having a medical condition, such as following a low sugar diet for diabetes; this comprised ten per cent of the responses. Lastly, the *Low In* category included responses that mentioned that they followed a diet that was lower in one ingredient or food product, such as low sugar, low calorie, low fat; this comprised 37 per cent of the responses.

#### 4.7 Respondents’ Additional Comments

The final question of the survey asked respondents if they had any other comments they would like to leave regarding what they had answered previously or if they had anything else to add. There were 189 responses to this question; however, there were only 69 responses that were relevant to this study. Those responses were coded into eight themes and are detailed in Table 4.5.

*Table 4.5: Themes generated from additional comments left by respondents*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Product discovery and trial</i>	Trying and buying new products with the opportunity to sample new foods that they may not have come across. Also, an opportunity to discover products that they may not purchase usually.
<i>Nutritional information and label visibility</i>	Comments pertaining to how easily nutrition information of the product could be accessed. Transparency and clarity in the labelling as well as the knowledge from the stallholders were essential for informing decisions.
<i>Nutrition and health</i>	Interest in health-conscious eating as well as looking at certain ingredients and wanting healthier food options
<i>Stallholder engagement</i>	Interactions with knowledgeable stallholders with deepened trust, enhanced the overall experience and product understanding
<i>Sampling and purchasing drivers</i>	Sampling of products often leads to purchases as taste overrides other factors such as nutrition and health claims. Sampling also plays a critical role in present and future behaviors.
<i>Dietary needs and gaps</i>	Unmet demand for more inclusive products.
<i>Availability and accessibility</i>	Availability and accessibility of products outside The Food Show environment.
<i>Product type preference</i>	Overrepresentation of some stores and lack of others.

Example qualitative comments pertaining to the themes outlined in Table 4.5 are detailed below.

***Product discovery and trial example quotes:***

- “As a family, we walk around the food show and try everything on offer. It's a good place to find and taste things we'd never usually buy. So, we get a lot of extravagant things that we wouldn't buy normally. We often buy them on the day, but never buy them again” (Respondent 11)
- “Generally speaking, the food show is about going to experience and try new foods and products while also making use of any sales and multi-buys. Decisions to purchase are based on impulse and personal preference spurred by sample tasting. You tend to purchase items that you don't normally buy from the supermarket” (Respondent 75)
- “The food show offered me a chance to try products I would not normally buy due to price and availability; however, I did not feel that even if I were to purchase any of the products I sampled, they would make a significant contribution to my nutrition” (Respondent 379)

***“Information and label visibility” example quotes:***

- I would also prefer seeing detailed displays of the products in the store areas in case the stall holders are busy. I can read them myself and ask for the right questions when the stall holders are available to answer (Respondent 276)
- Overall, I was very impressed with the Food Show. I just wish that perhaps there was a rule to have packaging on display without needing to ask every time. (Respondent 34)

***“Stall holder engagement” example quotes:***

- I thought all stallholders were well-equipped with all the information necessary regarding their products. (Respondent 147)
- It was lovely to be able to talk to suppliers and find out what stores carry their products, or whether I can order online. (Respondent 253)
- Great show and chance to talk to the bespoke food companies (Respondent 46)

***“Nutrition and health” example quotes:***

- I was selective about what I tasted and didn't taste many items that had low nutritional value/were unhealthy (Respondent 43)

- I would mainly just look at everything that was in the product, and make an informed decision as to how I thought I would feel consuming that product. I would also look at a few of the nutrients, like energy (kj), carbs and sugar content. (Respondent 41)

***“Dietary needs and gaps” example quotes:***

- I was sad that there were not many people offering more gluten-free food, i.e., bread, cake, biscuits. There were more of them a few years ago. Also, Heller’s meats weren't there. I like to try their gluten-free meat products (Respondent 232)
- I felt there were not as many vegan/plant-based choices this year (Respondent 55)
- I often cook for GF and dairy-free friends, so I like new ideas. I check ingredients when cooking for them. (Respondent 234)

***“Product type and preferences” example quotes:***

- Thought this year was very alternative, healthy, and biased. Not really into all the plant-based stuff. Will go again next year but may lose interest in it. (Respondent 157)
- This time around not many innovative food product stalls. Many more hard drinks stalls. Will be good to have some stalls where people are shown how to preserve the nutrients while cooking, and make home cooking an enjoyable option with the availability of ingredients and methods for busy lifestyles. (Respondent 187)

***“Availability and Accessibility” example quotes:***

- Food show connects us with products not available at mainstream supermarkets. (Respondent 192)
- Found there were not as many new foods at the show as there had been on the past. The food show historically was used to launch new products that were then available in mainstream stores. (Respondent 580)

**4.8 Continuity of responses**

When looking at the data, it was notable that respondents initially stated that they had a particular interest or intention for attending The Food Show, Auckland (2024) and sampling or purchasing particular products.

The final stages of data analysis compared the initial interests and intentions noted by survey respondents with their actual consumption patterns and engagement with the wide array of food

and beverage products available at the event. Data showed that even though respondents may have specific needs, The Food Show, Auckland (2024) may have substantial effects on what they actioned. Summary comparisons are presented in Table 4.6 and Table 4.7.

**Table 4.6:** Respondents whose intentions or interests did not align with what they sampled or purchased

<b>Intention/Interest</b>	<b>Sampled/Purchased</b>
<i>Low calorie</i>	Sausages, chips, drinks
<i>Low sugar/low fat</i>	Oil, cheeses, alcohol, biscuits, chocolate
<i>Avoids processed foods and artificial products</i>	Seafood, deli meats, cheeses
<i>Low sugar and low fat</i>	Alcohol, sweets, bubble tea, drinks
<i>Fat and sugar content</i>	Pasta, cheese, beverages, pre-prepared meals, cereal, salmon, spreads, olive oil
<i>Less additives, no proinflammatory, low oil/sugar/carbs</i>	Siracha, frozen fruit, salt, salami, prosciutto
<i>Avoids sugar/fats/chemicals</i>	Meats, cheeses, drinks, chocolates, crackers, peanut butter

Table 4.7 details examples of respondents who stated specific intentions and interests at the beginning of the survey, who ended up purchasing and/or sampling products that did align with their previous statements.

**Table 4.7:** Respondents whose intentions or interests did align with what they sampled or purchased

<b>Intention/Interest</b>	<b>Sampled/Purchased</b>
<i>Vegetarian/Low FODMAP</i>	Vegetarian foods, yoghurt, sweets, beverages
<i>Keto</i>	Pesto, keto chips, no sugar chocolate
<i>Organic, free range, Gluten Free, Dairy Free, Toxic additives free</i>	Oysters, GF pancakes
<i>Low Sugar</i>	Blue Frog cereal
<i>Low sugar</i>	No sugar sparkling water, sausages, fruit, vegetables, curries, ice cream
<i>Gluten Free</i>	Gluten free cheesecake and slices
<i>Calorie/sugar/protein content</i>	Protein drinks, crackers, cheese, Korean snacks

Overall, the data presented in this chapter highlights the importance of nutrition information for consumers and how they may use it to ultimately make decisions regarding products they want to purchase. This data supports the research objectives identified in chapter one, ultimately forming a basis of understanding on how nutrition information is perceived by consumers and the benefits that may come alongside it. These results will be discussed in further detail in the succeeding chapter, highlighting the correlation between what was found in this research study in comparison to existing literature, as well as how these results may contribute to answering the overarching research question for this project.

#### 4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results of this study, aiming to address the research objectives outlined in Chapter One. Overall, these results did indicate that nutritional information, to an extent, did influence consumer choices at The Food Show Auckland, (2024). In addition, these results highlighted that specific factors, such as specific dietary needs or requirements, were also influential in shaping consumer decisions regarding the products respondents purchased or sampled at this event. The following chapter interprets and discusses these findings, exploring how they relate to the initial research objectives and linking them to existing literature.

## 5.0 Discussion

This chapter presents an extended discussion pertaining to the results outlined in the previous chapter. In showcasing the research findings, this chapter draws on existing research and acknowledges the existing research gap, whilst also placing particular focus on the research aims and objectives detailed in Chapter One.

### 5.1 Demographic reflections and relevance

Firstly, 80 per cent of the respondents who completed the survey for this study identified as female. This gender-based statistic proved to be similar to those of other studies. For example, Lefrid & Torres (2021) and Organ et al., (2015) both conducted studies on food festival attendees, and noted a significantly higher proportion of participants as female. The one exception to this was a study by Carvache - Franco et al., (2025) , which reviewed attendees of the *Bahrain Food Festival*. In this case, there was a prominent male representation. It is purported that cultural practices within the region in which this study was conducted could account for this exception. The significance of gender identification in a study such as the one conducted for the purpose of this thesis is that gender has been proven to have an outstanding impact on a person's eating behaviours, food choices and ultimately their consumption habits. Females have a reportedly greater nutritional knowledge, awareness and relationship with food compared to males, who often approach nutrition-related decisions from a pleasure-oriented view (Matalas et al., 2023).

Participant age representation for this study incorporated a broad range of ages (i.e. from 18 years of age to over 65 years of age), with many respondents belonging to the 65+ years category. Comparatively, previous studies of food event attendees tend to be predominantly comprised of participants in the 20 – 50 years age bracket (Hsu et al., 2021; Lefrid & Torres, 2021; Carvache-Franco et al., 2025). In appreciating the higher age bracket for this study, it is noted that the Food Show (Auckland) runs over four days (including two weekdays and the weekend). No data on the respondent's income was collected; however, it is stipulated that those attendees in the 65+ years age category are of average New Zealand retirement age and potentially have a higher discretionary income (Le & Richardson, 2023). This age group could potentially afford the event entry fee (\$35 NZD) and have the flexibility of attending the event across any of the four days.

It is important to acknowledge that the demographic make-up of the respondents who participated in this study doesn't necessarily present an accurate representation of the wider Auckland population. According to the 2023 New Zealand census (Stats NZ, 2023), 44 per cent of Auckland residents stated that they were of New Zealand European descent. This figure is considerably lower than the 69 per cent of study participants who identified as New Zealand European. Regarding gender, 80 per cent of study participants identified as female. In comparison to the census population data (Stats NZ, 2023), only 50 per cent of the Auckland population identifies as female. The only demographics that did appear to align (i.e., between study participants and the Auckland population) were age. The 2023 census figures (Stats NZ, 2023) also confirmed that the highest proportion of residents were over the age of 65 (13 per cent).

## 5.2 Provision of nutritional information and the influence on consumption

### *5.2.1 Availability of information*

The results from this study showed that nutrition information did influence consumers when purchasing or sampling food products at The Food Show, Auckland (2024). In accordance with results section three, question one, 39 per cent of the respondents chose "yes", and 22 per cent chose "sometimes". This finding is consistent with Nazzaro et al., (2025), who found that providing consumers with precise nutritional information about products positively influenced their attitudes and increased their likelihood of purchasing. Similarly, Barreiro et al., (2010) found that information provided on nutrition may lead to healthier food choices made by consumers. In alignment with research objective three, this result pinpoints the availability of nutrition information as one of the key factors that can influence a consumer when they are making decisions on products they may want to purchase or sample. As well as this, having the information available to respondents was also important in terms of looking at specific dietary requirements or needs that they may possess, as discussed in the succeeding paragraph. For example, Respondent 195 commented that "No nutritional info means no sale - I didn't buy a number of products because they lacked this. Healthy food choices require that information". Another example can be seen in Respondent 9's comment, "If it's a choice between two similar products, nutritional information does play a role in helping me make my final choice."

### *5.2.2 Impact of specific ingredients on attendees' choices*

Consumer food choices can be shaped by a variety of factors, ranging from product-related, individual and environmental factors. Product attributes, such as ingredients and health claims, as well as nutrition-related information, can be key determinants in consumer food choices (Fernqvist et al., 2024). Products that also clearly state their health and nutritional information are more likely to be chosen over products that either do not have these claims (Fernqvist et al., 2024). Respondents to the survey stated that nutritional information was important when choosing products to consume, especially when it came to looking at specific needs that they may have. For example, most of the respondents stated they were looking for (or at) specific ingredients that aligned with their own needs, including medical dietary requirements, health consciousness and dietary needs. Overall, these findings highlight the central role of having clear nutritional information for consumers at events like The Food Show Auckland, (2024). This information can help guide consumers, especially those with specific dietary needs, to make informed decisions surrounding their food products.

#### *5.2.2.1 Medical Dietary Requirements*

Medical conditions (such as coeliac disease, allergies and diabetes) require consumers to be vigilant about the food products they are consuming, and these requirements ultimately drive their purchasing behaviours (Cochrane et al., 2013; Thapaliya et al., 2017). In this study, a proportion of respondents stated that dietary requirements did influence their purchasing behaviours at The Food Show Auckland (2024). For example, Respondent 255 commented, “With type 1 diabetes, I need to know the sugar content and carbs of the food to decide if it is suitable for me to consume”. These results highlight the importance of having nutritional information available to consumers to help aid in ensuring they are purchasing products that are safe for them to consume. As well as this, existing literature highlights that those who have chronic illnesses and subsequently dietary requirements are more aware of ingredients in their food products and use information sources such as nutrition labels when making food-related choices (Lewis et al., 2009). In relation to food events, those who have medical dietary requirements and attend food events have limited flexibility in their decision-making when purchasing food products (Pompurova et al., 2025). Therefore, the availability of nutritional information for food products at events like The Food Show Auckland (2024) has a large influence on the products this specific population group intends to purchase due to their specific dietary requirements and its impacts on their overall health.

#### *5.2.2.2 Health consciousness*

There is a growing demand for health and wellness foods that are beneficial for disease prevention, encouraging a healthier lifestyle (Pan et al., 2025). As a result, health and wellness food products are becoming increasingly popular, with ingredient composition becoming influential in consumers' purchasing decisions. Those who are concerned about their health, what they are putting into their bodies and how food can aid them in health journeys tend to purchase food products that align with these values (Müller – Perez et al., 2025). In this study, respondents who were health-conscious identified that ingredients relating to their overall health were important when choosing what they purchased and/or sampled. For example, Respondent 280 commented that “I am health conscious and look at ingredients and fat contents as main consumption choices”. Existing literature supports this statement, with health-conscious consumers being more likely to intentionally seek out and use ingredient and nutrition information when choosing food products (Qi & Ploegger, 2021; Escobar-Farfán et al., 2025; Nazzaro et al., 2025). As well as this, the desire to engage with health-based products can be a motivator for consumers to attend food events (Bi et al., 2020). Overall, the growing demand for health and wellness-related products has a strong influence on consumers' purchasing intentions, especially in the context of food events like The Auckland Food Show (2024). This study highlights that health-conscious consumers prioritise ingredient composition as well as nutritional information when engaging with and selecting products to purchase.

#### *5.2.3.3 Dietary needs*

Alongside medical dietary requirements, dietary needs are also influential for consumers' dietary choices. Dietary needs may pertain to personal beliefs, cultural reasons or excluding/including specific ingredients such as being gluten or dairy free. Results from this study support the conclusion that a large portion of respondents identified that information relating to specific dietary needs was important when selecting food products. For example, this can be seen in participant responses where Respondent 355 commented: “We try and eat mostly a plant-based diet, and wherever possible food that is balanced, varied and minimally processed”. Existing literature supports these findings, as studies demonstrate that consumers who possess these dietary requirements needs are more likely to seek out and utilise nutritional information when purchasing food products (Soós & Lugasi, 2024; Dana et al., 2019; Giro-Candanedo et al., 2022). Overall, those who have these specific dietary needs are more likely

to use and engage with nutritional information to help inform their purchasing decisions, which aligns with the results from this study. However, to the best of the author's knowledge, there is limited supporting research linking the influence of nutritional information about dietary needs and the impact on consumers' food choices in the context of food events, especially in New Zealand.

In summary, the majority of the respondents to this survey identified that specific needs, albeit related to diet or their overall health, did influence their consumer choices and purchasing behaviours at The Food Show Auckland (2024). For this study, these results confirm that consumers' dietary needs do have a large influence on consumer purchasing habits and that the nutritional information available is beneficial for consumers to make these decisions. This information may be useful for future events like The Food Show Auckland (2024) because it highlights the importance of having nutritional information readily available for consumers to help inform their dietary decisions. Consumers who have specific dietary needs or interests may be drawn to information that highlights benefits or specific ingredients of products.

In alignment with the research objectives outlined in Chapter One of this study, these results show that attendees at The Food Show Auckland (2024) do find nutrition information influential when making decisions surrounding their food product purchases. As well as this, these results identify that attendees actively seek out nutritional information to ensure the suitability of products for their personal dietary needs or preferences. These results directly identify that dietary needs and requirements have a significant influence on consumer purchasing behaviour and can shape how consumers choose their food product, overall confirming that these needs are central drivers of purchasing intentions at events like The Food Show Auckland, (2024).

### 5.3 Value placed on stallholders as a source of nutrition information

Value of information from stallholders can also influence how an attendee interacts and engages with products at events like The Food Show Auckland (2024). Typically, nutrition information can be found on the food products themselves; however, at an event like The Food Show Auckland (2024), there is an added benefit of being able to talk directly to the food companies. This allows the consumer to find out about the products they are looking to purchase and, specifically, if they align with any dietary needs or preferences. In this study, the

majority of respondents stated they placed high or some value on the information provided to them by the stallholders. For example, Respondent 131 commented, “I expect stall holders to know their products very well and be able to discuss nutritional aspects”. As well as this, those who had specific dietary needs or requirements often placed a higher value on the information from stallholders about products compared to those who did not. For example, Respondent 156 commented, “I placed high value on them as I am suffering from chronic illness and would look for natural products”.

The findings presented from these results highlight that stallholder engagement can be a factor when attendees are choosing products to sample and/or purchase. Studies, such as Dana et al., (2019), highlight the value that consumers place on nutritional information, specifically on the physical packet and labels, but to the best of the author’s knowledge, limited studies are addressing how nutritional information directly from companies or food brands is valued amongst consumers. In the context of a food event, there have been conclusions that engagement between stallholders and consumers can have a positive effect on purchasing intentions (Yang et al., 2020) and learning about products by talking to producers can also create personal connections, therefore, contributing to the purchasing habits of the consumer (Hall & Mitchell, 2004; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010; Organ et al., 2015).

There was a portion of the respondents who stated that they placed either little or no value on the information from stallholders for a variety of reasons, such as wanting to look at the labels on the product, being cautious that they are just trying to sell something or being more concerned with the taste/flavours of the products instead of the nutritional information. For example, Respondent 101 stated, “I listened to their information, but at the end of the day, they are mostly sales pitches”. To the best of the author’s knowledge, there have been minimal studies on why consumers might not value the information provided to them by the stallholders and the extent of this information on decision-making.

In summary, the majority of the respondents to this survey did place some value on the information being provided to them by the stallholders at The Food Show Auckland (2024). For this study, this result confirms that nutritional information is important when influencing the decision-making of attendees at such events. In alignment with the research objectives for this study, these results highlight that respondents expected stallholders to have detailed knowledge about the nutritional aspects of their products, which was subsequently used as an

information source to inform dietary choices. These results also identified that stallholder engagement can be an influential factor on consumer choices through the information provided by the stallholder to the consumer. Finally, these results confirm that information from stallholders regarding their products is most influential when informing decisions.

#### 5.4 Description of new products aligning with dietary requirements

The findings presented from these results, outlined in Table 4, indicate that environments like The Food Show Auckland (2024) can serve as a way for attendees to explore and find new products that support their dietary requirements or needs. These results do indicate that dietary requirements/needs have a substantial influence on the choices of consumers and their purchasing habits. Most of the respondents to this question stated that they did purchase or sample a product because they were looking for products in those realms. For example, Respondent 45 noted that they were interested in products that were higher in protein and subsequently sampled/purchased a high- protein yoghurt. Respondents also mentioned that The Food Show Auckland (2024) had more on offer that supported their dietary needs/requirements compared to their local supermarkets, further supporting that The Food Show Auckland (2024) is an opportunity for consumers to explore and discover a range of products that meet their everyday dietary needs.

To the best of the authors' knowledge, there is little existing research that describes food events as an avenue for product discovery that aligns with consumers' existing dietary requirements. However, as summarised above, these findings highlight that there is an importance for these events for consumers with dietary requirements to be able to find products that they may not usually find in their local food outlets. These results demonstrate that attendees at The Food Show Auckland (2024) did place value on ingredients and health claims to support their current dietary behaviours.

#### 5.5 Additional Comments from Respondents

To conclude the survey, respondents were asked if they had any additional comments that they would like to share with the event organisers. These additional comments offered a deeper insight into respondents' experiences at The Food Show Auckland (2024). The responses were categorised into seven themes reflecting nutritional considerations, information accessibility,

stallholder and product engagement and structural influences on food choices. The findings reiterated the same conclusions found from previous questions. For example, the comments that reflected consumer/stallholder engagement, the need for nutritional information to be accessible and the availability of products that meet dietary requirements or needs were of top concerns for attendees at The Food Show Auckland (2024), as discussed in sections 5.3 and 5.4 of this chapter. For example, Respondent 276 commented about the availability of nutritional information: “I would also prefer seeing detailed displays of the products in the store areas in case the stall holders are busy. I can read them myself and ask for the right questions when the stall holders are available to answer.”

Interestingly, there were several comments that reflected that The Food Show Auckland (2024) experience was a key factor influencing their dietary decisions. Multiple respondents commented on this. For example, Respondent 75 commented, “Generally speaking, the food show is about going to experience and try new foods and products while also making use of any sales and multi-buys. Decisions to purchase are based on impulse and personal preference spurred by sample tasting. You tend to purchase items that you don't normally from the supermarket”. Another example can be seen by Respondent 242’s comment “The presentation, taste and price were the main factors in whether I chose to try and then purchase a product”, Alternatively, respondent 438 also commented “I am always interested in new products and enjoy the cooking classes, often purchasing ingredients after the show...”. All three of these comments reflect that there was some element in the event, whether it be sampling, engagement with interactive activities or the presentation of the product that ultimately influenced their consumer behaviours. These findings align with studies such as Organ et al., (2015) and Folgado–Fernández et al., (2016), who also highlighted that engagement with interactive activities at these events can subsequently influence buying behaviours. These studies suggested that the more the attendee interacts with the experience, the larger the influence will be. Finally, these results also highlight that interacting with food products through activities such as sampling can also have a large influence on the buying behaviours of the attendees. This confirms Organ et al., (2015)’s finding that sensory engagement is a key determinant in consumer purchasing behaviours and intentions. Overall, the additional comments left by attendees support that not only is nutritional information an important factor when choosing their food products, but also levels of engagement contribute a significant amount when a consumer is deciding on what products to purchase.

Overall, the responses left in the additional comments section can contribute to answering the research objectives for this study. These results highlight the importance of engagement between the consumer and the stall, demonstrating that information obtained through interactive experiences can be influential on consumers' purchasing decisions. These results also confirm that these interactive experiences may be the most influential mode of information dissemination at events like The Food Show Auckland, (2024).

#### 5.6 Continuity between attendees' initial purchasing intentions and their subsequent purchasing behaviours at The Food Show Auckland, (2024).

This study showed that there was a proportion of respondents who purchased or sampled products from The Food Show, Auckland (2024), that aligned with their original intentions (as stated in the survey). However, there was a percentage of respondents whose purchasing behaviours did not align with their original intentions. For example, Respondent 8 noted that they entered The Food Show Auckland (2024) looking for food products that were low in calories but mentioned that they had sampled and/or purchased sausages, chips and drinks.

The findings from this result indicate that the original intentions of attendees, in relation to purchasing specific products, are not always reflected in their actual behaviours. In a food event environment, there can be a variety of factors that influence attendees to change their intentions. For example, attributes such as taste, cost, convenience and even stallholder engagement may influence a consumer to diverge from their original intentions and purchase other products (Glanz et al., 2005; Organ et al., 2015).

There were also several respondents whose behaviours did reflect their stated intentions. Those who primarily followed through with their intentions stated that they possessed specific dietary needs such as being gluten free, dairy free or following a Ketogenic diet. For example, Respondent 80 stated that they were interested in keto products and purchased products such as "no-sugar chocolate and keto chips". Existing literature shows that food purchases can be linked to 'diet identity', meaning those who have specific dietary needs are more likely to purchase food products that align with these needs, with more dietary compliance for those who have stricter dietary requirements (Rosenfield & Burrows, 2017; Dean et al., 2024). In terms of intentions and behaviours occurring in a food event context, to the best of the author's knowledge, there are no previous studies that have investigated this area.

In summary, these results highlight that there are factors present within environments like The Food Show Auckland (2024) that may have an influence on attendees' consumption behaviours. Specifically, these factors can persuade an attendee from purchasing products they originally intended to except in the case where a specific diet is followed. In alignment with the research objectives outlined in Chapter One, these results were able to conclude that specific factors such as dietary needs and requirements did influence the consumption habits of the attendees. This can be seen where those who had specific dietary needs often ended up purchasing food products that aligned with their needs. These results can also conclude that other factors, such as taste or price, may have a larger influence on consumers, leading them to purchase products that they may not have originally intended to.

Yeomen et al., (2021) identified twenty drivers that would aid in future-proofing future food events and gave suggestions as to how to ensure their success. In this study, examples such as accessibility and food identity were amongst the several drivers that can be related to the present research. For example, accessibility to nutritional information pertaining to dietary needs and requirements is important to meet the needs of their target audiences in a food event context. Throughout the results, respondents highlighted that it was important that they have access to nutritional information that pertained to their specific dietary needs to make informed decisions about their product choices. Having access to products that met their dietary needs was also highlighted as being important to consumers at events like The Food Show Auckland, (2024). Overall, Yeomen et al., (2021) highlight what is needed to ensure the long-term success of food events. Encompassing these factors would mean event managers could design an inclusive and accessible experience for a diverse range of attendees to enhance their satisfaction.

### 5.7 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has provided a discussion pertaining to how nutritional information may influence consumer decision-making at The Food Show Auckland (2024). This study aimed to identify how nutritional information may influence consumer behaviours and decisions around the purchasing and consumption of food and beverages. From the results stated above, this research can conclude that nutritional information can be a key influential factor for consumers in terms of informing their consumer decisions. This research concluded that information disseminated

by stallholders through engagement is also valuable to consumers to ensure they make informed decisions about the products that they want to purchase. Finally, this study identified that factors such as specific ingredients in relation to dietary needs, requirements or preferences have the largest influence on a consumer when making consumer decisions.

The following chapter draws this thesis to a close, presenting a summary of the research aims, research limitations and implications for future research.

## 6.0 Conclusion

This thesis has presented an exploratory case study, aimed at investigating how nutritional information presented in the context of The Food Show, Auckland (2024), influenced consumers' behaviours and purchasing decisions and behaviours in relation to consuming and/or purchasing different types of food products. Specific focus was placed on the influence of dietary needs and requirements, and how these determined different types of consumer behaviour.

This study aids in filling the gaps and adding to the limited existing research on how nutritional information in the context of food events has an influence on consumer behaviours. Conducting this research on The Food Show Auckland (2024) allowed for insights into how consumers interact and engage with stallholders and information provided to them about food products in the context of food events. As well as this, it highlights the importance of catering to dietary needs and preferences at food events, whilst also providing conclusions as to how consumers use the information given to them to make purchasing decisions. Finally, there are limited studies looking at consumer behaviours at food events that are based in the New Zealand context. Since this study is based on The Food Show Auckland (2024), it provides a perspective that is lacking within the current discourse.

The findings indicated that attendees at The Food Show Auckland (2024) engaged with a range of nutritional information on offer at the event, specifically information about ingredients, health claims and specific dietary needs. The study concludes that consumers who had specific dietary requirements, such as being dairy-free or gluten-free, are more likely to seek and utilise nutritional information, thus highlighting the need to ensure information about specific dietary requirements is accurate and readily available at events like The Food Show Auckland (2024).

The research question and objectives highlighted in Chapter One were referenced accordingly throughout the Discussion Chapter of this thesis. This study aimed to understand the extent of influence nutritional information may have on consumer behaviours. As well as this, this study wanted to understand the value that consumers placed on both ingredients and health claims in relation to dietary behaviours. In summary, the findings discussed in this thesis do demonstrate that nutritional information can influence consumer behaviours of those who attended The Food Show Auckland (2024), especially in shaping the decision-making process for

consumption and purchasing of products. These results also conclude that those with specific dietary needs, requirements or preferences placed a high value on ingredient information to inform their dietary choices. Finally, this study also concluded that information that pertained to dietary needs and requirements, through examples such as health claims, was also largely influential in consumer behaviour and decisions.

**Objective 1:** *Evaluate consumer perceptions of the information disseminated at The Food Show Auckland and investigate how attendees engage with this information, with particular focus on dietary needs and requirements.*

This study concluded that most respondents to this survey valued information that was disseminated by stallholders. Attendees at The Food Show, Auckland (2024) actively engaged with the nutritional information provided to them by both stallholders and their products, leading to an influence on their purchasing behaviours. Specifically, those with dietary needs and/or requirements were more likely to engage with nutritional information to ensure that their consumer behaviours aligned with their dietary needs. These results demonstrate how Objective One of this thesis has been met and confirm that consumer perceptions of nutritional information can be shaped by a consumer's personal dietary needs or requirements.

**Objective 2:** *Analyse the different types of information that were presented at The Food Show Auckland and how the attendees interpreted it, including but not limited to promotional materials, product demonstrations and talks by experts to understand which mode of dissemination was the most influential.*

The findings from this study address Objective 2, indicating that nutritional information did have a significant influence on attendees' consumer behaviours. Responses to the survey demonstrated that information derived through interaction and engagement, such as through talking to stallholders, sampling products or information present on packaging, was the most impactful to consumer decisions. These results also highlighted the value that was placed on stallholder knowledge and how this information can be a large determinant for a consumer, with some respondents stating that this was a vital part of their decision-making process.

**Objective 3:** *Identify any specific influential factors that have a significant impact on the consumer's choices (and subsequently, their purchasing habits), with particular focus on dietary needs and requirements.*

This study also identified several key factors that influenced consumers' purchasing habits and their choices at The Food Show Auckland (2024). From the results, medical dietary requirements, dietary needs, specific ingredients and products in relation to health benefits appeared to be the most influential, with many respondents stating at least one of them impacted their purchasing decisions. Additionally, the availability of nutritional information, from sources such as stallholders, engagement with the product or the experience itself, also had a significant influence on the consumer behaviours of attendees, enabling them to make informed decisions regarding their purchases. Overall, these results were able to identify that these specific factors did have a significant impact on consumer choices at The Food Show Auckland (2024).

### 6.1 Recommendations for food event management

Using the results from this study, two key recommendations can be made to support the sustainable management of future Food Show events.

#### **Recommendation 1:**

For future events, this information provides an understanding of the importance of catering towards specific dietary requirements. The majority of the respondents to the survey sought out products that aligned with their existing dietary needs, requirements and preferences at The Food Show Auckland, (2024). The responses also highlighted that nutritional information about these requirements was important for consumers to inform their choices. Therefore, a recommendation can be made to ensure that nutrition information relating to dietary needs and requirements is accessible to attendees at events like The Food Show Auckland, (2024). Highlighting this kind of nutrition information may attract consumers and provide them with the necessary information they may need to make an informed decision regarding their purchases. This could be done by ensuring clear information is available through an event program, ensuring that stallholders are educated on their products, or even having resources available at stalls for consumers. Nazzaro et al., (2025) found that providing consumers with accurate nutritional information can largely influence their purchasing habits in a positive way. Ensuring that this information is readily available to consumers may support informed purchasing decisions, enhance event experience and attract a wider audience who have specific dietary needs.

## **Recommendation 2:**

For The Food Show Auckland (2024), the importance of highlighting dietary requirements across showcased products and vendors appears to have been overlooked. The findings of this study emphasise the importance of including this information for future events to enhance consumer experiences. A recommendation can be made towards the structure of the event, whereby grouping stalls that are advertising products that align with popular dietary requirements or needs, to allow attendees to easily locate products that meet their needs. Incorporating this feature into the event would improve accessibility to these products for consumers with specific dietary requirements or needs. Yeomen et al., (2021) highlight that accessibility is a key factor to enhance food events and ensure their long-term success. Even though in their article they discuss accessibility in the context of food events, the same principle can be applied when ensuring that products at food events are accessible to consumers. Ensuring that attendees can easily access products that meet their needs can result in a more positive event experience for consumers and can encourage future attendance. Therefore, ensuring that products that meet consumer needs are visible and accessible to consumers would contribute to helping them make informed decisions about their product choices.

### 6.2 Study Strengths and Limitations

A key strength of this research was the sample size and the number of participants who completed the survey. The large number of study participants (i.e., over 500) allowed for a wider variety of attendees' experiences to be collated and analysed, whilst also ensuring the data was both rich and comprehensive. The wide range of responses also helped construct a narrative of the event, generating common themes related to the attendees' experiences at the event, which resulted in a richer analysis. Another strength of this study was the mode of delivery for data collection. Using an online survey meant a larger number of attendees were able to be reached, allowing an adequate time for them to respond. Sending out the survey after The Food Show Auckland (2024) had commenced allowed participants to take their time and answer the questions in a detailed way. It also meant that the data collection process was streamlined using Qualtrics, and participants were able to answer with as much or as little detail as they pleased, enriching the data pool with a variety of comments. As well as this, opting for a survey that was distributed after the event was completed instead of conducting one at the event meant that the attendees were not distracted during the event and could fully enjoy the experience. Finally, using a qualitative method to approach this research was also a key

strength. Using a qualitative approach to collect and analyse the data meant that there were clear relationships and trends that could be identified between the responses. Qualitative methods also allowed for a more in – depth understanding of the data and how it could be applied going forward. The qualitative results from this study also proved to be a key strength. This is because the results were detailed enough to provide insight into the influences of consumer behaviours at The Food Show Auckland (2024) and contributed to helping answer the research objectives for this study. The results demonstrated a deeper understanding of the consumer’s experiences of the event and provided precise details of how consumers engaged and interacted with the information disseminated at the event.

A limitation for this research was that it was based on an exploratory case study on The Food Show Auckland (2024), providing insights specific to that event. Therefore, the data collected was only based on the experiences that attendees had at that specific event, at that specific time and place. As well as this, the findings would also not accurately reflect the wider population of New Zealanders who attend food events, due to the focus on the Auckland-specific event. Secondly, only attendees who had access to a device with internet were able to participate in the survey, again meaning that only a specific group of people who possessed these items were able to respond. Another limitation of this research was that the survey was distributed after the event had finished. This meant that there was a risk that respondents would not be able to accurately recall their experiences at the event. As well as this, having the survey only available after the event meant that there was also a risk that respondents would not complete the survey due to the event being finished. Finally, because this study was conducted on The Auckland Food Show (2024), the questions were specific to the event, so this exact study and methodology would be difficult to replicate in another event that was not The Food Show Auckland.

### 6.3 Implications for future research

The findings from this research suggest further research avenues related to this topic. Firstly, since this topic was only performed at The Food Show Auckland (2024), there could be an opportunity to repeat this study at a similar event in another city in New Zealand to compare the influence of nutritional information on other New Zealanders. This would subsequently conclude if there were any differences in the extent of influence nutritional information may have on individuals who live in other parts of the country. Another area for future research

could be looking more closely at why attendees may be diverted from purchasing products that they originally intended to. This research touched on the topic briefly; however, it could be beneficial to investigate the specific factors that caused these attendees to change their minds to understand the features of products that may have a larger pull over others. The results from this study only focus on the buying behaviours of consumers at the event itself and how their engagement and interaction with products and stallholders influenced what they purchased and/or sampled. There could be an avenue to research how the knowledge acquired from The Food Show Auckland (and other food events) impacts consumers' buying behaviours post-event (i.e., their purchasing behaviours in their everyday lives). As well as this, more research could be conducted regarding intentions and subsequent buying behaviours at food events, with a focus on the specific reasons why consumers may purchase food products that they did not originally intend to purchase. Lastly, this research opens the door for companies to expand their health promotion and marketing strategies to better appeal to those with specific dietary needs and requirements - both at events like The Food Show Auckland (2024), as well as in everyday environments such as supermarkets.

## 7.0 References

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## 8.0 Appendices

### Appendix A: Survey Questions

N.B. These survey questions reflect the questions analysed for the purpose of this thesis and are not a full representation of the complete survey.

1. Does the provision/availability of nutritional information usually influence your food and beverage consumption choices? - Selected Choice - Yes (If so, please explain how)
2. How does the information available at the Auckland Food Show support your prior knowledge of particular food and beverage products? Please select the best option from the list below. N.B. There is also an additional text box should you wish to add a comment. - Selected Choice - The information obtained at the event was new to me and enough to inform a decision to purchase
3. Did you come across any new products at the event that support your nutritional requirements? If so, please describe.
4. How much value do you place on the nutritional, health, and/or product information provided by the store holders (relating to the food and beverage products on offer)?
5. Were you looking for products aligned with any specific dietary requirements, such as: (please select as many as apply) - Selected Choice - Gluten Free
6. Were you looking for products aligned with any specific dietary requirements, such as: (please select as many as apply) - Selected Choice - Dairy Free
7. Were you looking for products aligned with any specific dietary requirements, such as: (please select as many as apply) - Selected Choice - Sugar Free
8. Were you looking for products aligned with any specific dietary requirements, such as: (please select as many as apply) - Selected Choice - Allergy Free
9. Were you looking for products aligned with any specific dietary requirements, such as: (please select as many as apply) - Selected Choice - A Paleo Diet
10. Were you looking for products aligned with any specific dietary requirements, such as: (please select as many as apply) - Selected Choice - A Keto Diet

11. Were you looking for products aligned with any specific dietary requirements, such as:  
(please select as many as apply) - Selected Choice - A FODMAP Diet
  
12. Were you looking for products aligned with any specific dietary requirements, such as:  
(please select as many as apply) - Other (Please specify) - Text
  
13. Please add any additional comments in the text box below.

*Appendix B: Poster emailed to participants for recruitment*



TE KURA  
HAUORA  
TANGATA  
COLLEGE OF HEALTH



## Did you attend the 2024 Auckland Food Show?



**Thank you to those who have already completed the survey! We are still seeking a few more responses. The link is open for one more week!**

**Are you interested in entering the draw to win one of two \$50 Prezzy vouchers?**



**We're conducting a study to determine the role commercialised food events play in informing the nutrition and dietary decisions of event attendees. We're using the Auckland Food Show as an initial case study!**



**We are looking for people (over the age of 18) who would be willing to complete a short online survey. The survey includes a mix of multi-choice and short answer questions relating to your event experience, consumption choices and nutrition interests.**

**The survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time to complete.**

**Interested? To complete the survey, simply click on the survey link provided.**

**Questions? Please contact the primary researcher, Chloe Beech, [c.beech@massey.ac.nz](mailto:c.beech@massey.ac.nz)**

