



# Sustainability and culinary traditions? Understand the role of historical markets in the development of agri-food and local gastronomy from the perspective of behavioral economics

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## ABSTRACT

Food and gastronomic products are an integral part of a community. In fact, their diffusion on the territory is the result of history, tradition, and culture and they undoubtedly represent a significant part of the identity of the companies as an expression of the presence of man in the territory. The offer of food products takes place in the markets which represent a place of aggregation and exchange of ideas, and cultures, a place where the consumer socializes. For traditional food products, the consumer attributes a particular value to the place of purchase and to the food itself. The aim of this work is to discover the relationship between food and place as a "status symbol" of the supply and demand of the food markets, from the point of view of behavioral economics. Based on a case study in the city of Palermo in Sicily, in the center of the Mediterranean Sea, 30 food stands and 520 consumers (between city residents and tourists) were analyzed. Drawing on the availability of food products during the summer season, this document shows the diversity and uniqueness of local food landscapes and provides examples of the foods that are symbols or images and which constitute the Sicilian food identity. Based on the interviews, the results show the diversity of the food and gastronomic products offered, and the sales methods constitute the "quid" of differentiation of the historical Sicilian markets. On the demand side, the consumer buys according to the convenience of the price, the freshness of the product, and above all the social relationships that are established in the markets. The tourist declared that he visits the market as a "culinary heritage" of the city of Palermo. In summary, if the offer of a food market constitutes the culinary heritage of a given place, the demand for consumption (expressed by residents and non-residents) represents the expression of a response to the history of this heritage which over the years has been handed down from generation to generation up to the present day. So the historical markets are a distinctive trait of the city that it is necessary to enhance in order to promote strategies for the development and growth of the urban environment. The results highlight aspects that refer to the civil economy, which preceded the current market economy approach.

## 1. Introduction

A historical food market is a local site where people meet and immerse themselves in the historical tradition of a given territory (Foti and Timpanaro, 2021); a historic food market is also a monumental site that allows people to explore the food identity of a territory and where local pride is promoted through food (Di Liddo et al., 2023; Muñiz-Martinez and Florek, 2021; Okumus, 2021). The food markets in Italy have been analyzed from the point of view of farmers' markets, their origin, and their diffusion in rural contexts (Sgroi 2022); urban markets as the interaction between agriculture and the urban environment have been studied highlighting the peculiarities of today (Sgroi and Musso, 2022; London et al., 2021); and again urban markets as interactions between agriculture, tourism, and food have been analyzed through a survey in Sicily (Taverner, 2023; Fusté-Forné F. 2023a; Fusté-Forné et al., 2022). The present research goes further and tries to understand why the historical markets deriving from the Arab tradition continue to survive even in the era of globalization of the economy, a

time in which the Food Distribution industry intercepts most of the demand for food consumption. In fact, in 2023, 72% of food products are purchased from large-scale food distribution, especially in large cities such as Palermo (Sgroi and Salamone 2022). In particular, in the document, we ask ourselves how and why the availability of food products in an urban market continues to represent the identity of the place and research for consumers (residents and non-residents) of the city of Palermo. In particular, the document analyzes the products that build Palermo's food landscape and identifies the drivers of regional gastronomy based on the typical products sold in an urban food market. The study method is based on research through interviews with the owners of the food/gastronomic stands and consumers of the Ballarò Market, located in the heart of the city of Palermo. The novelty of this research is also based on the representation of a behavioral economic nature both on the demand side and on the supply side. A trait of the food economy of Palermo emerges which refers to the principles of the civil economy which represents the branch of economic theory that preceded the current political economy.

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## 2. Theoretical context

Historical markets are born as a place of aggregation and concentration of goods (Bianco and Busutil, 2022). In them, consumers find a meeting place where they can find food products for their primary needs (Everts et al., 2021). In the city of Palermo, there are several historical markets: the "Ballarò" market, the "Capo" market, the "Vucciria", "Lattarini" and the "Pulci". In markets, the "Ballarò" market, the "Capo" market, and the "Vucciria", we find above all food products, ready-to-eat gastronomic products but also other non-food goods. "Lattarini" and the "Pulci" are only non-food products. Our attention is focused on the historic food markets of Palermo ("Ballarò", "Capo" and "Vucciria") (Balistreri and Pollaci, 2008). The characteristic of these markets is the stands outside the shop with the products on display. Entering these markets you are immersed in a mix of colors, scents, and people of different nationalities. A typical feature of historic markets in Palermo is the "abbanniata" which consists of promoting the product by enhancing its characteristics and price. This form of product promotion represents the first form of agri-food marketing where the owner of the business (food shop) enhances the freshness of the fruit, vegetables, fish, meat, and the competitive price. In other words, we can say that these are the two levers of the marketing mix: price and product communication. So in the historical market, perhaps we find the first form of marketing in history that was born as a strategy to promote one's own product compared to that of the competitors. In these markets, passing through the different streets, we find citizens of Palermo (residents), tourists who know the place through tourist guides, and consumers of other nationalities (Pavlidis and Markantonatou, 2020; Berno and Fusté-Forné, 2020; Nursanty et al., 2017). Hence the phenomenon known as "food tourism" is defined as the journey to a destination with a gastronomic motivation (Hall and Sharples, 2003; Hjalager and Richards, 2002), encompassing visits to restaurants, festivals, or markets, among other things (Sgroi, 2021a). In fact, in the historic markets, we find tourists who visit the market for a few hours, stop to take pictures, taste something like gastronomy ("sfincione", bread with "panelle", boiled fish, especially octopuses), and then go for lunch to restaurants or trattorias in the area and continue their visit to the city of Palermo to admire its artistic and monumental beauties. In a way, as recent research states, food and wine tourism is the management of the cultural resources of food (Ellis et al., 2018), which provides an authentic ingredient to the portfolios of food-based destinations. It should also be said that the development of food tourism, through historical food markets, contributes to the competitiveness of the tourist destination (Knollenberg et al., 2021) and to the seasonality (Fusté-Forné, 2022) of tourist destinations. In this sense, identified as a meeting place between food supply and food demand, but also as a place for relationships and social encounters, they contribute to identifying a distinctive feature of the city that hosts them. What has been said is confirmed by the fact that many tourists know the historic markets of Palermo and also what is found in them (food products, gastronomic products, etc.). The characteristics of historical markets are also cultural, in fact, they are "cultural, economic, historical, personal, political or social landscapes which, in one way or another, concern food" (Adema, 2007). Again, they are places and spaces in which food is manifested as a symbol of conviviality (Fusté-Forné and Berno, 2016). Historical markets are a place where "an affective concept is expressed that combines emotions, impressions, beliefs, memories and experiences with a place. An individual's sense of place is constructed by their personality, life stories, values, and interactions with that place" (Silver and Grek-Martin, 2015). The construction of a sense of place is a source of place identity, and these historic markets contribute to the creation of place identity where 'place is an amalgam of destination qualities, including landscape and architecture, history and heritage, and social structures and relationships' (Smith, 2015). Within the market, we find monumental beauties, churches, and historic fountains that shape the area, and with the stands form a unique and unrepeatable agri-food landscape. In this place,

gastronomy and food represent the engine and identity of the place and contribute to the modeling of images, smells, and unique and unrepeatable scenography. Food markets are a way to experience a sense of place (Britton, 1991) and are important tourist attractions in urban contexts (Dimitrovski and Crespi Vallbona, 2018). Coles and Crang (2011) state that "the market itself, made up of distinctive material textures and sensory experiences, plays an important role in the appreciation of the goods within it". In a certain way we can say that historical markets are sustainable markets, as they are resilient to the economic shocks that have arisen not verified over time. Crespi-Vallbona and Domínguez-Pérez (2015), identify sustainable markets as food markets with tourist attractions. In this sense, sustainable markets "are attractive for tourism but keep their traditional and historical customers in a balanced game that makes them as attractive as they are sustainable" (Crespi-Vallbona and Domínguez-Pérez, 2015). This is the case of Palermo's Mercato di Ballarò, which is a food market that attracts both locals and visitors and is promoted in tourist guides as a must-see in Palermo (London et al., 2021; Visit Sicily, 2023). Product strategy is part of the marketing mix of markets, where food is an important identity marker of the city and the region (Lum and Ferrière Le Vayer, 2016). Walking through Ballarò, one immerses oneself in the crowd of tourists and Palermitans who move among the mass of stalls, among wooden boxes full of fruit sold at a good price and the spice stalls that give off scents and colors, as if they were also an ornament among those dilapidated buildings. Starting from the assumption that markets are meeting places and places for establishing social relationships, a moment of daily life which through meeting others gives meaning to life from a social point of view (Fusté-Forné, 2021), this study aims to investigate the availability of food production, the availability of gastronomy, consumption, sales and marketing of the historic "Ballarò" market in the city of Palermo.

## 3. Materials and methods

In this article, we have examined food as availability for the need to eat, but we have not only understood it as a historical heritage but as a relational capacity between subjects who meet in a specific historical place. The working method was based on a case study (Yin, 2012), trying to grasp the salient aspects of "why" one goes to buy food products in a given place or "why" one goes to visit a certain place. The research was carried out from the point of view of behavioral economics: The first real development in behavioral economics comes with the Prospect Theory (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979) which highlights anomalies in the decision-making processes of individuals in economic choices. Behavioral economics deviates from that neoclassical theory in that in some respects. In fact, according to behavioral economics, experimental empirical evidence and studies by cognitive psychologists, show that human judgment in conditions of uncertainty follows certain heuristic rules (simple and efficient rules, based on intuition and contingent circumstances to solve complex problems) rather than the laws of probability as in standard economic theory. Furthermore, according to behavioral economics, men tend to give more weight to events that are close in time over those that are far away. Furthermore, according to standard economic theory, it is assumed that individuals are interested only in their own personal gain and are unwilling to sacrifice it to help or harm other people. Behavioral economics highlights that people are also interested in the processes that lead to given results (preference for honesty, sincerity), in what happens to others (grudge, altruism, reciprocity), and in social conditioning (shame, guilt, loyalty). That is, there are social preferences. Finally, behavioral economics shows that, even for given probabilities and preferences, individuals can make choices different from those predicted by standard economic theory. The choices can in fact be conditioned by the way in which the alternatives are presented, by the contingent situation in which the individual finds himself at the moment of making the decision, and by the presence of alternatives, even if they are not relevant, by social pressure, by the

strength of the persuasion of others and the emotional state of the person making the choice. The analysis focused on the offer of food and gastronomic products, on the analysis of the consumer and the tourist. The Ballarò Market is a place where residents and visitors experience “a mix of smells, aromas and flavors” (Sgroi et al., 2022). The rotisseries and the various stalls are the places where you discover the identity of Palermo and its people who enchant you with their sympathy and mastery of gastronomy which means that you cannot be quick in one of the greatest gastronomic capitals of the world (Sgroi and Modica, 2022). The case study is based on a method of interviewing consumers, tourists, and commercial operators (owners of food and gastronomic product stands). We asked consumers and tourists why they go to the Ballarò market and what they buy there. We asked the owners of the food and gastronomic product displays about the origin of the fruit and vegetables they resell in the market as well as information on the consumer and the method of sale (special offers, if the price is uniform throughout the day) and information about the classic “abbanniata” to promote their product. We asked the owners of the delicatessens for information on the products offered, the origin of the raw materials, the prices charged, and information on the customers (if they are residential citizens, if they are tourists, etc.). Data collection at the Ballarò market was conducted in June 2023. All 30 food/gastronomic stands open at the market were visited. As for consumers, 520 people (between Palermitans and tourists) were interviewed. Impressions and sensations both on the supply side and on the demand side were also noted. The data was collected through face-to-face interviews with both sellers, Palermitan consumers, and tourists.

#### 4. Results and discussions

The case study examined is the “Ballarò” market in Palermo, which is located in the heart of the city, and was analyzed in order to understand why, despite the presence of large-scale retail trade in the city of Palermo, it continues to operate very well due to the fact that several thousand consumers and tourists go to the Ballarò market every day. Ballarò is the largest food market in Palermo and also the oldest. Although more than a thousand years have passed since its foundation, it is still one of the liveliest centers of the city where food products from all over the world are sold. Ballarò is also a must for those who want to try Palermo street food and for street art enthusiasts. In the evening it becomes one of the main centers of Palermo nightlife where young people meet to spend the evenings, drink wine and other alcoholic and non-alcoholic products, eat, and chat. This aspect is a recent fact, due to the changing lifestyles of young people and the new needs they express. The birth of the market probably dates back to the 10th century, during the Arab domination in Sicily, and extended in the southern part of Palermo and outside the city walls. The reason why it was born outside the walls is due to the fact that duties were not paid outside the walls. The name Ballarò perhaps derives from the Arabic suk-al-Bahlarà, the name of the village of Monreale from which the Islamic gardeners came to sell their wares. The current layout of the market dates back to 1468 while the arcades and doors were built during the Bourbon government. Ballarò has still maintained its predominantly food market character today. The presence of numerous sellers, coming from Maghreb, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Central Africa, means that a great variety of products, even the most exotic, are present in the stalls. In addition to fruit and vegetables, it is also possible to buy meat, fish, and cooked foods.

##### 4.1. The point of view of the fruit and vegetable and gastronomic offer

We therefore interviewed the stand owners on the supply side who are all Palermitans with a low level of education and who dedicate themselves full-time to retail sales from 6.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. In reality, their day begins earlier at 3.00 when they go to the fruit and vegetable market in Palermo to buy fruit and vegetables and then transport them

to the market and then arrange them for sale. Even the delicatessen owners dedicate themselves full time (all day) and their day starts early to prepare the various products which they then sell for consumption (panelle, sfincione, etc.). After data collection, they were processed in order to demonstrate the research hypotheses. After data collection, the researcher organized the collected data through the organization of the sales stands fishmongers, butchers, greengrocers, spice/olive and dried fruit sellers, delicatessens, and delicatessens. Within each stand, we have selected the products sold. For the fishmongers we have blue fish very present with tuna, swordfish, sardines, anchovies, cod, scabbard fish, mackerel, herring, amberjack, whitebait, anchovies, garfish, sard, and dolphin fish; we also find shellfish with clams, mussels, sea truffles, squid, octopus, and cuttlefish; and again the shellfish with Mazara del Vallo prawns and Sciacca prawns. All these seafood products bear witness to the great seafaring tradition of Sicily in the center of the Mediterranean Sea which has a long tradition of fishing and fish-based products are part of the gastronomic tradition of the Palermitans. Next, we looked into the butcher shops. In them, we have found beef, sheep, pork, and poultry. Ready-to-eat products are very present (meat rolls, Palermo “brociolone”, “polpetta”, breaded Palermo-style meat) these products, according to the information collected from the owners of the butchers, have undergone an increase in the quantities requested in the last twenty years (Figs. 1–8). This aspect relates to other studies (Sgroi, 2021b; Fusté-Forné, 2023b) where the consumer in the post-modern era increasingly seeks service combined with the food product. As for the sellers of spices/olives and dried fruit in these stands we find black and green olives in brine and in oil, almonds, walnuts, peanuts, capers (in oil and/or with salt) pepper, hot pepper, basil, coriander, mint which are also widely used in Sicilian cuisine, for example in pasta; always in these stands we find many products of the canning fish industry such as canned tuna (natural and in oil) mackerel, salted and in oil anchovies; we still find eggs, dried legumes (chickpeas, lentils, broad beans). For the fruit and vegetable stands there is an explosion of colors. In particular, considering the period of data collection (June 2023) we find all summer fruit: peaches, apricots, plums, watermelons, courgettes, tenderizers, courgettes for frying, tomatoes, onions, carrots, potatoes, lettuce, red pumpkin, apples, pears, table grapes, oranges, lemons. The market also includes the presence of tropical fruits such as bananas, pineapples, avocados, and mangoes, as well as the delivery of fresh-cut fruit as healthy snacks to eat on the go. Even though tropical fruits also come from abroad, there is a growing relevance of these fruits growing on the island (Sgroi et al., 2023). In this sense, climate change has favored the atmospheric and soil conditions for the cultivation of tropical fruits in Sicily, challenging and modifying the agricultural landscapes and local diets. On closer inspection, this fruit is largely of local origin, but there are also many Italian and foreign imported products. For delicatessens, we have found products of the Sicilian gastronomic tradition such as pecorino, caciocavallo from Palermo, ricotta, mortadella, salami, ham, “provaola dei Nebrodi”, “Piacentino from Enna”, caciocavallo from Ragusa. In delicatessens, we also find various food-stuffs (pasta, tomato puree, etc.). A particular trait in delicatessens is the durum wheat bread from Monreale or Piana degli Albanesi, a product of renowned excellence that we do not find in the large-scale retail trade in the city of Palermo. In addition to the food itself and the sale of a Sicilian sense of place through raw food, the market also emerges as a space for tourist experiences where visitors can sample local culinary preparations. Some marketplaces offer sitting rooms to taste fried food, especially fish, and delicacies such as swordfish fritters, a type of fish widely represented in Sicilian cuisine. These are the delicatessens/takeaways present in the market and are that extra something that makes the market special and which unites it with the other historical markets of the city of Palermo (Capo and Vucciria). In delicatessens, we find the possibility of being able to eat boiled octopus served at tables located in front of the delicatessen. We find the seller of bread and “panelle”, bread with spleen and the sfincione from Palermo, but also “arancine”, baked and fried calzones, and in general all the Palermitan rotisserie. Surely





Fig. 1. Stand of fruit and vegetables sold at the Ballarò market.



Fig. 2. Stand of fruit and vegetables sold at the Ballarò market.



Fig. 3. Stand of fruit and vegetables sold at the Ballarò market.

the Ballarò market, as well as the other historic markets of Palermo (Capo and Vucciria) represent an identity of place and culture based on its own characteristics that make it unique. One thing that amazed us walking among the stands is seeing the arrangement ability of food products from other cultivation areas both in Italy and in the world. If we thought we would only find local products in terms of fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, spices, and olives, we changed our minds. In the availability of the market, we have products that come from other European locations (Spain for lemons and oranges) but also from outside Europe (Morocco, Tunisia for watermelons, tomatoes, carrots, and other vegetables). It should be noted that all the fruit and vegetable sellers of

Ballarò stock up at the Palermo fruit and vegetable market. Most of the vegetables also come from Campania, Emilia Romagna, and Apuglia. This observation confirms the globalization process that has also affected the agri-food world where the products are grown in one part of the world and made available in other parts. We wonder if this makes any sense. To answer this question we can refer to economic theory. Surely the availability of fruit and vegetables from other locations shows the presence in these Italian and foreign locations of more competitive companies where economies of scale and scope are achieved and allow the entrepreneur to arrive on the market at a lower price than their competitors. But scrolling through the literature on the subject with





Fig. 4. Meat sales stand at the Ballarò market.



Fig. 5. Cheese sales stand at the Ballarò market.



Fig. 6. Sales stand of olives, anchovies, and dried tomatoes, dried fruit (long-life products) at the Ballarò market.

other studies (Sgroi and Musso, 2022) it should be highlighted that the malfunctioning of public policies leads to the abandonment of the land and the lack of generational turnover. Also for fishing products, there is the presence of a lot of products coming from the Tunisian and Moroccan fishing fleets. Some vendors have told us that the business has been handed down for three generations. Others have told us that they do their work because it represents their life, their story. Work that has been handed down from father to son, from generation to generation, and being the owner of the stand at the Ballarò market is a symbol. In reality, it is an intangible aspect that is part of the intangible heritage of the commercial activity. These answers make it clear how important

their work and their company are for these people and that they know how to manage it economically and profitably. In fact, prices change during the day according to demand.

#### 4.2. The point of view of consumer demand

On the demand side, we interviewed consumers (from Palermo and tourists) who are the people who characterize the flow of buyers in the market. The interviewees are 300 men and 220 women (Table 1). We asked consumers why they came to shop at the Ballarò market. Some have answered us for the freshness of the products (450 consumers),



Fig. 7. One of the streets with the stands of the Ballarò market.



Fig. 8. Fresh fish sales stand at the Ballarò market.

**Table 1**  
Why consumers go to the Ballarò market.

Respondents n.	Gender
300	men
220	women
<b>Respondents n.</b>	<b>Reasons for visiting Ballarò market</b>
450	freshness of products
250	socialization and recreation
70	find vegetables only here
50	(tourist) the market is a historical part of Palermo
150	low food prices

Source: Our elaborations on collected data.

others (150) have replied that the prices are much lower than in large-scale retail trade and therefore there is a convenience on the price. Many come from other neighborhoods on the Palermo city bus. Furthermore, many consumers (250) stated that coming to the Ballarò Market represents for them a moment of leisure and socialization (they are housewives and pensioners). Others (70 consumers) still replied that some vegetables are found only in this market (especially winter vegetables such as kohlrabi). We asked the tourists (the tourists interviewed were 50 of different nationalities both European and non-European) why they visit the Ballarò market, and almost all of them answered because it represents a part of the history of the city of Palermo. Furthermore, they want to photograph and eat the gastronomy of the Palermo cuisine tradition. Another aspect that we have highlighted is the offers on prices. The market is open from morning to evening. For fruit and vegetables and fish, we have observed that prices in the morning are higher than in the afternoon for the same product. This aspect is due to the shelf-life of fresh fruit vegetables and fish; all of the

interviewees stated that after 12:00 they prefer to lower prices and increase sales to eliminate the quantity of goods they have on their stands. From a microeconomic point of view, the situation described appears as a market with multiple prices during the day, where the entrepreneur applies different prices according to the moment of sale, in particular, he will lower the price to eliminate all the stocks he has in his warehouse. Some consumers have reported that they go to this place "because their fathers did". Also they find varieties of local vegetables that are not found elsewhere ("cavolo rapa").

## 5. Conclusions

Markets are born as places in the center of cities where consumers buy goods to satisfy their needs. In particular, the food markets of the historical tradition of the city of Palermo are born and remain alive in our circles precisely because they represent a place of sale and social relations between those who sell and those who compare; they represent almost a historical monument to visit like the other historical monuments of the city of Palermo. A particular feature of the historical market of Ballarò that we have examined, but which also unites the other historical markets of Palermo, is the classic "abbanniata" which represents a first form of marketing where the seller promotes his products for quality and competitive price. We all have this form of marketing (fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, gastronomy, etc.). Voices with smells form a mix that makes the Ballarò market unique. In the food market, food values are observed and the most requested products are those that represent the basis for the preparation of the dishes of the Sicilian culinary tradition. We can say that history and food culture represent the distinctive feature of the Ballarò Market. Through consumer interviews



(residents and non-residents) we discovered a strong territorial connection where the Ballarò Market supports and promotes the historical identity of the tradition of Palermo located in Sicily, which as we know has been crossed by various dominations (Arabs, Normans, etc.), in Italy and in the center of the Mediterranean, the cradle of the Mediterranean diet which is a UNESCO heritage site. Tradition, culture, and the Mediterranean diet represent a distinctive trait that creates a glue between production and consumption in the food value chain. The present fills the gap in the economic, commercial, and motivational aspects of the Ballarò Market. In fact, in the past, the Ballarò market was studied from a historical point of view. In some respects, the choreography of the Ballarò market identifies a food landscape that we can call "animated" which differs from agricultural landscapes in that the crops almost represent a static form of colors and modeling of the environment. The food landscape of the Ballarò market is animated as the various food products (fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, gastronomy, etc.) as well as representing the distinctive feature of landscape color is amalgamated by the flow of movement of consumers (residents and non-residents) as well as by the voices of the classic "abandoned" sellers. A living food landscape that pulsates in the heart of the city. The results show the availability of fruit and vegetables typical of Sicily. However, as we have seen, some products no longer come from the local peasant tradition but from other Italian and non-Italian territories. On this aspect we should reflect on why, despite the demand for food products, there is a lack of supply from local farms. In this case, it would be necessary to address the problem from the macroeconomic point of view of territorial policy which is beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, based on other studies (Sgroi, 2022), we can say that it is a cost/opportunity problem in primary production based on the high cost of labor and free trade policies in the Mediterranean. These free trade policies make food products available in the Sicilian markets at relatively lower prices than the production costs of regional agricultural products. All of this has resulted in many farms abandoning the production of these products which historically found their destination in the Ballarò market (vegetables, dried tomatoes, aubergines, peppers, etc.). The scenario just described can also be replicated for meat and fishery products. We have seen that the meat comes, for the most part, from farms in Northern Italy and the fish products from the fishing fleet of the other countries bordering the Mediterranean. Therefore, based on what has been highlighted, we can say that the Ballarò Market represents a historical monument that remains over time despite the changing production strategies of farms, livestock, and fisheries. And this is an important aspect that makes the Ballarò market even more special, which represents a tangible feature but is also made up of intangible values that help create value in the food supply chain but where the starting point of the supply chain is very often not represented by local companies. In the Ballarò market, as we have seen, the prices of the various products are relatively lower than in large-scale retail trade. All this also allows consumers who have a more limited spending power to be able to buy food and gastronomy products. A characteristic feature of the Ballarò market is the seasonality of agricultural production. Another characteristic trait is represented by products with a service content: from fruit cut into pieces, ready meals, main courses based on meat and fish, and street food, products that a tourist can easily consume during his visit. The study conducted through the principles of behavioral economics has highlighted that two very important aspects. On the supply side, the levers of the marketing mix, even if unconsciously, are applied by the sellers. This aspect highlights how attentive the ancient generations were to marketing policies even without knowing it. On the demand side, empirical research through behavioral economics highlights that the consumer and also the tourist do not necessarily seek "maximum profit with minimum cost" but also seek sensations and experiences which are the basis of social relations and of the "civil economy". Perhaps unknowingly, the consumers of the Ballarò market belong to that sphere of consumers who consider the economy and the market not only as a measure of effectiveness and efficiency but also as a place for

participatory meetings and economic democracy. It should be emphasized that what has been highlighted refers to the civil economy of Genovesi (2013) and is valid only in these "particular" contexts which certainly cannot be generalized to the large food markets that dominate consumer choices. The prospects for future studies should be to seek that union between production and consumption in order to reorient the strategies of many farms. All this requires careful public policy to start with the creation of competitive contexts where farms and agri-food can grow and develop competitively. The Ballarò Market has demonstrated a strong territorial commitment, which is a successful aspect of the food market and could also inspire other urban markets in defining their product marketing and promotion strategies that contribute to sustainable food and wine development.

### Credit author statement

I do studies and research on food and agri-food systems as you can see on my Scopus science webpage and ISI through my publications.

### Declaration of competing interest

I declare not to be in a conflict of interest International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science.

We hope that this manuscript can be taken into consideration for publication in the International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science.

### Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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