

# Burgers for tourists who give a damn! Driving disruptive social change upstream and downstream in the tourist food supply chain

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# **Burgers for tourists who give a damn! Driving disruptive social change upstream and downstream in the tourist food supply chain**

## **Abstract**

Using the theoretical lens of social capital this paper examines the role of small tourist food businesses and their impact on the sustainability of the destination and local food supply chains. The paper analyses the experiences of small business owner-managers highlighting the complex and subtle nature of the socially responsible strategies used to progress sustainability in a tourist destination. The findings show that authentic lifestyles, motivated by intrinsic not just extrinsic rewards, are driving disruptive social change upstream and downstream in the tourist food supply chain. Small food business owner-managers are catalysts for ‘common’ good, and as supporters for ethical and sustainable food chains have considerable local tourism influence and impact. Social capital strengthens their sense of destination ownership and fuels an obligation to protect their fragile tourist resources. The intersection between social capital, authenticity and responsibility among small food businesses in the tourist industry is demonstrated.

**Keywords:** responsible/sustainable tourism, food businesses, social capital theory, SMEs

## **Burgers for tourists who give a damn! Driving disruptive social change upstream and downstream in the tourist food supply chain**

### **Introduction**

A growing stream of tourism research is studying responsible behaviour by tourist businesses (Garay & Font, 2013; Kang, Lee, & Huh, 2010; Wells, Gregory-Smith, Taheri, Manika, & McCowlen, 2016; Whitfield & Dioko, 2012). Small business owners are valued as catalysts for sustainability and social responsibility within their local communities (Carrigan, Moraes, & Leek, 2011; Spence, 2014). Although small business research within the management and business ethics literature acknowledges their positive economic and social impacts in communities (Roberts, Lawson, & Nicholas, 2006), and recognizes the interdependence of stakeholders in local business networks (Eklinder-Frick, Eriksson, & Hallen, 2011; Cova, Prevot, & Spencer, 2010; Lawrence et al., 2006), this is less documented within tourism research (Wells et al., 2016). Defined as taking “into account the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental performance” (Aguinis, 2011, p. 855), responsible business practices can add value to the tourism industry, particularly in reinforcing ties with community (Kasim, 2006), creating competitive advantage (Garay & Font, 2012), encouraging positive environmental behaviour (Wells et al., 2015) or increasing financial performance (Goncalves, Robinot, & Michel, 2015).

Food is increasingly taking centre stage within the tourist experience (Quan & Wang, 2004; Laing & Frost, 2015) including the aesthetic, sensory and gastronomic aspects (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Henderson, 2009; Sims, 2009). Recently the growing market of food explorers who seek authenticity, sustainability and prestige has emerged (Laing & Frost, 2015; Yeoman, McMahon-Beattie, Fields, Albrecht, & Meethan, 2015). Food explorers are attracted to businesses with philanthropic and green goals, that keep local food heritage alive, use locally

produced food, embrace slow food offerings and employ locals (Laing & Frost, 2015). These responsible food business practices are increasingly important in selling tourist experiences and this niche market represents challenges and opportunities for tourism. Food consumption as part of the tourism experience helps shape the image of a destination (Lin, Pearson, & Cai, 2011), and offers tourists new food experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004), yet the food industry is mainly overlooked in the responsible tourism literature (Boyd, 2015) (exceptions include: Inoue & Lee 2011; Lee & Heo 2009; Lee, Singal, & Kang 2013; Kasim & Ismail, 2012). Few studies investigate how suppliers of tourist food respond to the changing role of food in tourism, nor the motivations of food businesses to engage in responsible practices for tourism; previous research shows that environmentally friendly business practices in the restaurant sector are weak (Kasim & Ismail, 2012). Visitor expenditures for food services rank third (at 35 billion euros), after expenses for accommodation and transport (Eurostat, 2015). Local food consumption strengthens the local economy, represents a primary tourist attraction (Sims, 2009) and enhances the sustainability of the destination (du Rand, Heath, & Alberts, 2003). But Everett (2016, p. 417) also argues that sustainable food production requires investigation, and “not just focus on consumers and consumption” in the discussion of the concept of buying and consuming local food. Taking the tourist food sector as context, and the theoretical lens of social capital, this study examines the role of small food businesses as catalysts of social responsibility in a UK tourist destination, and their disruptive impact on the sustainability of the destination and local tourist food supply chains.

Hwang & Stewart (2016) argue that social capital provides a useful theoretical lens to understand the dynamics of a community’s collective action for tourism development; a stream of tourism research highlights the significance of social capital for sustainable community-based development (Jones, 2005; Macbeth, Carson, & Northcote, 2004). Drawing on the small

business literature this paper extends social capital theory beyond disciplinary boundaries and explores how this illuminates the role of small tourist food businesses in the processes that support the sustainability of tourist destinations and create sustainable local food supply chains.

The specific research questions are:

- Which dimensions of social capital observed within small tourist food businesses represent responsible practices?
- To what extent do different dimensions of capital contribute toward responsible tourism development and promoting the local identity and sustainability of a tourist destination?
- What challenges do small tourist food businesses face in their everyday responsible business practices?

### **Small tourist food businesses and responsible behaviour**

SMEs are fundamental to the tourism industry (Font, Garay, & Jones, 2014), yet studies of responsible behaviours and tourism SMEs are relatively scarce (Garay & Font, 2012), mainly limited to pro-environmental behaviour such as eco-savings (Kasim, 2009), and few studies which consider the idiosyncratic nature of SME operations (Tzschentke, Kirk, & Lynch, 2008). The importance of social and ethical motivations alongside economic ones is noted as are the values and beliefs of business owners (Sampaio, Thomas, & Font, 2012), with research demonstrating how lifestyle motivations predominate in tourism SMEs (Lashley & Rowson, 2009). The notion of a lifestyle business or the desire to “enact an authentic career-life” (O’Neil & Ucbasaran, 2010, p. 3) describes a counterintuitive business model of lifestyle entrepreneurship that Van de Ven, Sapienza & Villaneuva (2007) portray as seeking individual and collective interests. Ateljevic & Doorne (2000) find that tourist entrepreneurs’ often

conscious rejection of economic and business growth opportunities is an expression of their socio-political ideology and lifestyle choices such as concern for the environment and sense of community. More recently, King, Breen and Whitelaw (2014, p. 280) identify a group of 'lifestylers' among tourism SMEs, for whom doing business is about "enjoying interactions with visitors and feeling part of an extended family of tourism businesses, and not necessarily directing the longer-term business strategy". Furthermore, studies of responsible behaviour within tourism rely mainly upon empirical data drawn from secondary sources; few studies conduct primary research with organisations, key decision makers and other internal stakeholders (Wells et al., 2015) and engagement with theory and contemporary conceptualisations of responsible behaviour is limited. This means portrayals of responsible behaviour in tourism are inevitably selective.

While food production and consumption for tourists has a range of sustainability implications, these are not extensively addressed in the tourism literature. Little is known about how small UK food tourist businesses navigate their business ethics and environmental complexities and tensions at a practical level. For example, food waste remains a key issue with waste from the hospitality sector estimated to cost the industry £2.5 billion annually (WRAP, 2013). Decisions by retailers and market traders to stock local produce can positively impact the sustainability of local food chains, as well as community and economic regeneration, nurturing social capital within a connected supply chain and sustainable economy (Everett & Slocum, 2013). These food spaces in tourist destinations may have a wider influence over enduring sustainable and ethical consumption (du Rand & Heath, 2006), transferring sustainable tourist behaviours into everyday routines (Barr, Gilg, & Shaw, 2011).

Buying local has potential social, economic and environmental returns within a tourism context. For example, the multiplier effect suggests that "money spent at locally owned

businesses circulates within the community longer than money spent on purchases at chain stores and other non-local firms” (McCaffrey & Kurland, 2015, p. 289), while environmental concerns linked to local production and consumption are linked to minimizing food miles (Weber & Mathews, 2008). These attributed collective benefits of buying local drives the trend for tourists in advanced consumer cultures, including food explorers, to prefer to obtain food at or near the location of production (Hjalager & Johansen, 2013). Reasons for this trend include sourcing superior food quality, freshness and lower prices (Hjalager & Johansen, 2013); distrust of large, dominant impersonal food institutions (Poppe & Kjærnes, 2003); personal and ethical beliefs (Han & Hansen, 2012) and the desire for authentic, sustainable food (Laing & Frost, 2015). Such factors advantage SME’s over large companies that operate in a same food tourism market and are disrupting dominant practices. Christensen, Raynor and Mcdonald (2015, p. 46) define disruption as “a process whereby a smaller company with fewer resources is able to successfully challenge established incumbent businesses”. Literature in sustainable supply chains argues that SMEs are able to pass CSR requirements from larger companies and are catalysts in diffusing sustainability standards (Ayusso, Roca, & Colome, 2013). Similarly, SMEs can facilitate behaviour change in whole communities and the individuals in them (Carrigan, et al., 2011). Therefore, we contend that in the local tourism setting, smaller companies, in their pursuit of sustainability, authenticity and their lifestyle choices, can disrupt the established way of doing business and change behaviours both upstream and downstream (Verplanken & Wood, 2006). Research on disruptive innovation in the tourism sector is limited (exceptions include Guttentag, 2015) and neglects the “processes in the private and public sectors and wider society leading to the implementation, or lack of implementation, of sustainable tourism measures” (Bramwell & Lane, 2012).

Critics of the assumption that local is more desirable argue that local food campaigners see localisation as an end in itself, whereas the primary concerns of food production and

consumption should be broader, for example ecological sustainability or social and economic justice (Pratt, 2013). This concept of more integrated tourism is gaining traction because of the all-round sustainability it delivers (Clark & Chabrel, 2007); buy-local food campaigns and pro-local organisations promote community cohesion and serve an important role in disseminating sustainability information through new tourism networks, potentially fostering social capital (McCaffrey & Kurland, 2015). Indeed, small organizations are important catalysts for societal change (Carrigan et al., 2011), and studies have recognised the potential for tourist businesses to influence greater responsibility at three levels: within the firm, at the destination and within the supply chain (Van de Mosselaer, van der Duim & van Wijk, 2012).

### **Social capital theory and tourism research**

Social capital has its roots in the understanding of community social relations and gained attention in the sociological and development literature (Jones, 2005), political science, sociology and economics (see Coleman 1990; Putnam, 2000; 1993), and business research (Russo & Perrini, 2010). Social capital, or the “aggregate of resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or organization” (Inkpen & Tsang, p. 151) has gained prominence as a concept that helps study interfirm relationships. Particularly in SMEs, social capital has been used extensively to describe and explain their responsible behavior (Sen & Cowley, 2013) due to their dependency on the networks they are embedded in (Murillo & Lozano 2006; Russo & Perrini 2010), their stronger relationships with stakeholders (Murillo & Lozano, 2006) and their relative weaknesses which social capital helps overcome through cooperation, access to resources, and information (Spence & Schmidpeter, 2003). Social capital is usually defined as a set of two dimensions (Harpham, Grand, & Thomas, 2002; Liu et al., 2014). *Structural* social capital addresses the composition, practices, and scope of formal and informal interactions, that help



facilitate mutually beneficial collective social relationships. It can be analyzed from the perspective of network ties, (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005) which are regulated by a set of rules that enhance collaborative behavior to exchange information, resources, and expectations (Coleman 1988; Aragon, Narvaiza, & Altuna, 2016). The *cognitive* dimension includes values, attitudes, norms and beliefs, perceptions of support, reciprocity, sharing, and trust among members of a specific population. It examines the shared common language, rules, values, goals and culture (Inkpen and Tsang, 2005; Aragon et al., 2016) which are necessary for the exchange of knowledge and information. In other words, structural social capital refers to what people do and cognitive social capital refers to what people feel (McGehee, Lee, O'Bannon & Perdue, 2010).

Liu et al. (2014) and Zhao, Ritchie & Echtner (2011) note that social capital theory is not extensively used in tourism research (for synthesised reviews see Adler & Kwon, 2002 and Okazaki, 2008). Social capital in tourism is recognised in studies examining the environment (Pretty & Ward 2001), community-based tourism development (Hwang & Stewart, 2016); tourism and regional development (Zhao, Ritchie, & Echtner, 2011; McGehee, et al., 2010; MacBeth et al., 2004), hotel network performance (Grangsjö & Gummesson, 2006); ecotourism (Liu et al., 2014; Okazaki, 2008; Jones, 2005), local festivals (Stevenson, 2016) and food tourism (Everett & Slocum, 2013). For this study, taking a social capital perspective assumes that the resources embedded in one's social relationships can be drawn upon to support small tourist food business activities and its potential to contribute to social responsibility and destination sustainability. Within tourism research the significance of social capital is noted in studies that highlight the importance of strong ties and trusting relationships in maintaining community support for tourism (Hwang & Stewart, 2016; Jones, 2005). For tourism businesses, trust is a key driver of responsibility as it reduces conflict and risk by creating goodwill, and enhances what Czernek & Czakon (2016) call co-opetition- cooperation among competitors.

Trust building processes are based on *calculation* (e.g. when individual benefits increase), *reputation* (good reputation of one rubs off to others) on *emotional bonds* (knowing each other and having good relations), and on embeddedness in *social networks* (Czernek & Czakon, 2016).

SMEs often have strong stakeholder relationships and can be more willing than large firms to invest in the intangible assets (such as reputation, trust, legitimacy) that constitute their social capital (Perrini, 2006). Fuller & Tian (2006, p. 288) suggest that the construction of social capital by SMEs is likely to be “constituted through the inherent values” of the business owner and key stakeholders such as customers and the community. When developed effectively across a tourist business community social capital can lower transaction costs, increase collective actions, support cooperation and coordination and facilitate the diffusion of information (Liu et al., 2014). Based on this extant literature, there is reason to believe that the concept of social capital might provide an explanation for responsible behaviour by small food businesses in the tourism industry and answer the research questions.

## **Methodology**

Our study is located in St Ives, Cornwall, England (see figure 1), an area with a distinctive regional identity (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). St Ives has a population of 12,000 people and receives 1.5 million visitors each year (Local Government Association, 2013). Fishing and farming declines mean tourism is crucial to the local economy, but there are concerns that Cornwall is exploited by mass tourism, rather than sustained for local communities (Hale, 2001). Food is strongly associated with Cornwall’s character. St Ives has a high concentration of primarily small, independent food businesses, and local food business owners are strategic in the local tourist food networks. They act as ‘structural holes’ between local producers and visitors, connecting social groups, ‘reconnecting’ tourists with the people and places that

produce their food (Kneafsey et al., 2004) and effectively bridging forms of social capital.

FIGURE 1 HERE

The empirical data for this project was collected in May 2015 through 17 interviews with tourist food business owners or managers in St Ives, including retailers, restaurants, hotels, bed and breakfasts and tourist promotion organisations, primarily micro-businesses (with 0-9 employees) and representative of the sector (Sims, 2009). A mixed and emergent sampling strategy, incorporating both purposive and snowball approaches, generated a varied, but non-probability sample. St Ives represents a contextual microcosm of the wider UK tourist destination landscape, with food as one of its attractions; our participants present an informed snapshot of the trade and its operations (Guthey, Whitemen, & Elmes, 2014). Table 1 anonymously profiles the participants.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Interviews were in-depth and open-ended (Kvale, 1996) allowing participants to introduce and reflect on tourist food issues they perceive as relevant, and develop a personal narrative (Cochran, 1990). Pre-ordained boundaries were not set on the topics that could be explored, but broad themes informed the conversations, including the nature of the business; aspects of food procurement and production; understanding of sustainable/responsible tourism and tourists. Participants could freely discuss their experiences of the local tourist industry, tell their business story, decisions and influences, their experiences of enablement and constraint, and the challenges of managing a small tourist food business. A flexible interview prompt sheet was utilized which was augmented and amended as interviews progressed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to address issues of credibility and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Three stages of thematic analysis

were conducted to analyse the transcripts: descriptive and interpretive coding and identifying overarching themes (King & Horrocks, 2010). Table 2 demonstrates the coding at three levels.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

In coding the data, the authors focused on quotes that demonstrate the two dimensions of social capital and how such statements represent contributions to sustainable practices within the businesses. Nvivo10 software supported this iterative process, which led to the emergence of a coding template including thematic categories (King, 2004). As the analysis progressed, more detailed codes emerged and findings are presented next, using ellipses to signal omissions within narrative excerpts.

## **Findings**

### ***Cognitive social capital and responsible tourist food businesses***

The data reveals that cognitive dimensions of social capital drive social responsibility in St Ives. Small tourist food business owner-managers' values are integral to their responsible business practices, a significant influence for the principles or culture of the company (Jenkins, 2006) and an important source of social capital. For example, local sourcing and ethical animal welfare are fundamental principles for most (i.e. thirteen) businesses:

*...it was just purely on ethical [reasons] that I was diametrically opposed to factory farming and so I was particularly the driver behind the ethical stance so that we would be very strong on provenance. Any meat we had would be free range, preferably organic, but certainly free range and ...local ...so our strap line is burgers for people who give a damn. We're completely the antithesis of McDonald's...Never compromise on suppliers.[B02, Restaurant]*

Authentic and sustainable values (Font et al., 2014) are predominant themes in the narratives of the business owners:

*. ...we didn't open a guest house on the basis of creating wealth. We opened the guest house on the basis of a lifestyle choice... If we wanted to make money we'd go back to the jobs we were doing. [B01, Guesthouse]*

*...We keep saying we will always be happier... if 10 customers are happy customers rather than having 25 sort of satisfied...so we will never be millionaires.. [B16, Cafe]*

The quotes are indicative of the counterintuitive business model Van de Ven et al. (2007) describe that prioritizes individual socio-political ideologies over business growth opportunities. For [B16] service and profit aspirations mean a 'delighted' tourist where food exceeds expectations. Personal beliefs and values guide their practices, sometimes disrupting guests' requirements and demands:

*..I think we just hoped that the guests would go along with it... we could undoubtedly do a cheaper breakfast without the sourcing... we would never do it, so even if the guests didn't want it...that doesn't make any difference to us....because this is the way that we want to do it... These are our ethics...this is the way that we live our life...[B01, Guesthouse]*

These findings confirm the importance of lifestyle motivations and an authentic career-life (O'Neil & Ucbasaran, 2010) for small tourist food business owners in St Ives. Ateljevic & Doorne (2000) label these companies LOST (Lifestyle Oriented Small Tourist) firms and their ethos is illustrated by the quotes below. The first captures their concerns for the environment and community, while the second demonstrates the risks and rewards that are exchanged with a LOST approach:

*I don't think I'm doing it for the good of the world. I kind of feel like I'm doing it for the good of the people buying this lovely local produce ...getting the local economy to support itself and keep people employed and working. ....[B08, Cafe]*

*I worked for a \$10 billion American company and you're guaranteed a job... you have security ... I was at the top of my career, but when you work for yourself, you lose all that, no security, you work for nothing...12/13 hours a day, seven days a week...but enjoy it ... I live and die by my own efforts, not somebody else's. That's the reward. It's not financial [B04, Cafe]*

Unduly pressurising suppliers financially was also avoided:

*...we don't take any commission at all from any of our suppliers and we don't take any discounts at all for promoting their businesses within our business. So you may consider that to be commercially naïve, to us that's just ethically correct [B01, Guesthouse]*

Emerging from the narratives is a shared sense of environmental responsibility and stewardship for the destination. Social capital is manifest in common standards and values regarding responsible tourism and are highly regarded assets to be protected (Noy, 2008). The quotes below explain the ‘rules of engagement’ and the operational norms upon which everyone’s livelihood, reputation and the tourist industry depends:

*I don't think there's anybody in St Ives goes out to pillage St Ives or is irresponsible... I don't think there's anybody ...sets up a business here making a fast buck at the expense of everybody else... I think you would get caught out. Somebody would be out of business pretty quickly if they were being irresponsible... those people who ... aren't prepared to be responsible don't last very long. ... people look out for each other [B07, Hotel]*

*they definitely should not rest on their laurels and think that this will last for ever ...You have to keep promoting the town otherwise ... nobody survives. [B11, Shop]*

Aligned to social capital theory, the findings show “the connections among individuals –social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam,

1993, p. 167). In St Ives, social capital stems from trust and reciprocity between tourist community members and is derived from obligations, threat of censure and exchange. Most of the owners and managers interviewed have strong supplier connections and express empathy rather than rivalry with their competitors. The following quotes illustrate the co-opetition in St Ives and the embeddedness within local tourism social networks (Czerneck & Czakon, 2016):

*John Smith (a pseudonym) ...one of the biggest fishmongers in the South West. He went to school with the owner...a lot of the businesses are owned by local people, who all went to school together, know each other, so they don't compete, they work together [B10, Restaurant]*

Even those not born locally suggest that forging strong relationships and friendships (Perrini & Minoja, 2008) is fundamental to sustaining a resilient tourist food business:

*We're proud of the people we use....people who have stood the test of time...contacts that are built into relationships....the fish man ..[I]... built a friendship with him in '97 we're still together and that's comes through understanding each other's businesses. He knows how we tick and the same with the dairy, the same with the bread... they would know what we want and they come up with new ideas and bring it to us...so yes, we pride ourselves...[B07, Hotel]*

In St Ives social capital is built from both formal and informal connections between tourist businesses, delivering mutual benefits and shared values. This mirrors Czernek & Czakon's (2016) analysis of the trust building that stems from the calculation, reputation and emotional bonds that sustain the tourist community.

### ***Structural social capital and responsible tourist food businesses***

Food is an important aspect of the holistic and hedonic experience of visitors to St Ives and

sourcing food locally is important to attract tourists, especially food explorers. Local suppliers are intertwined in the business model of sustainable sourcing that firms operate:

*It's all locally sourced primarily seafood and steaks... we'd be silly not to.... It makes more sense ...you have to compete well. You have to make sure your food's good quality. You have to make sure it's fresh. You've got to make sure it's sourced locally because everyone's doing the same. [B10, Restaurant]*

The social capital derived from the connections between tourist food retail businesses and the food producers facilitates a robust, sustainable supply chain, despite the informality of interactions. Disrupting the traditional formal third party certification system, personal contact with suppliers is how food assurance and authenticity is determined, relying on shared values and trust:

*...when I started out...I went to farms and visited them and met them and met the animals and saw who we were going to be working with, tested lots of things and tasted lots of things... certification, it's not high on my list of priorities...[B08, Cafe]*

*...so our menu starts with sourcing the right suppliers so, before we opened, we spent months trying different products... Sausage, bacon, black pudding, eggs... We try to keep it as Cornish as possible... the butcher. We know where his animals come from. We know how they are slaughtered. We know where they're slaughtered and we go to the shop and we know what he's doing with it. [B01, Guesthouse]*

While disregarding formal guarantees of food provenance might potentially lead to over-attribution of ethical practice, delivering sustainable, local food to tourists in St Ives depends on this embedded social capital. There is also evidence of the multiplier effect (McCaffrey & Kurland, 2015) of buying and sourcing local, with the positive impacts of these practices cascading upstream and downstream, disrupting the normalized practice of assessing



the quality of food via certification. Food miles are reduced by buying locally and sometimes foraging, and contributes to the unique local food identity of St Ives that appeals to tourists:

*I went out this morning and collected those strawberries from five miles away, that were picked at 5 o'clock, as opposed to, for example, in a supermarket ...and the people know as well it's going directly from the farmer in a way that you know that they appreciate...[B09, Shop]*

*... But we are really known for our foraging, so the chefs go out just before service along the coastal path, and will go and get different ingredients...leeks and common sorrel that we use on quite a lot of our dishes. ..[B13, Restaurant]*

Upstream benefits accrue as tourist food businesses share their knowledge and skills with suppliers to extend the value of the food supply chain and meet emerging tourist demands. One business discussed how working with their suppliers allowed a chef to start a business, and an organic farmer to extend the growing season:

*..Kathy's Choice, jams and chutneys ...we...asked her for a stockist in town, and now she's almost in a position where she can actually stop ...being a chef and doing that full time...And there's an organic farmer...I've worked with him and I've helped him in terms of...his planting and seasonality to extend his season and I basically take all he can produce... that's a really strong partnership...[B09, Shop]*

Symbiotic relationships of mutual dependence are embedded in the local sourcing arrangements, as well as co-creation of food supplies. The owner explained the competitive benefits and differentiation that come from being connected to a strong local food network, and how their size and flexibility give operational advantages that help sustain the community in ways national organisations cannot:

*...it differentiates me from the three Co-ops that are here...they aren't able to deal with some of the suppliers that I would deal with, for example, there's a guy with*

*honey hives five miles away... I'm now waiting two weeks for him to bring some more in... but because of the nature, I am happy to do that... I've got the flexibility.... [B09, Shop]*

Food producers can leverage their social capital when problems arise, especially given the importance tourists such as food explorers place on high quality, authentic local food. This puts the independent businesses in St Ives in an innovative position, accessing the local social capital available in a disruptive entrepreneurial way to collectively encourage more sustainable competences of food provision (Hjalager, 2010). Tourist business practices support macro community benefits that avoid decimating stocks and support seasonal production. Long term investment in the local food producers is integral to the survival of responsible food business communities in St Ives, as one owner commented:

*...there's an empathy, because we're in a small proximity of one other, rather than saying, right, okay, I'm going to bring my meat in from Exeter and going to bring my fish in from Bristol. So there is an understanding...[B07, Hotel]*

Similar local added value takes place in other emerging food tourism towns such as Castle Douglas, Scotland or Skibbereen, Ireland (Everett, 2016). The depth and the quality of relationships are critical factors in sustainable supply chains (Touboulic & Walker, 2015), and power influences how players manage their relationships and the sharing of sustainability-related risks and value between supply chain partners (Touboulic, Chicksand & Walker, 2014). The study of power and suppliers within the tourist industry is not explored extensively and less so within small firm networks. The ethical and moral dynamics of the social capital within this community seem to create fewer power imbalances or exploitative relationships between buyer and supplier. This leads to less conflict and stronger community relationships, greater risk and value sharing among the local tourist food businesses and resilient social capital.

Responsible food business practices can encourage sustainable consumption behavior by tourists (du Rand & Heath, 2006) as tourists increasingly seek sustainable food as part of their experience. Telling the sustainable food story connects tourists to the food production of St Ives, constructs their image of the destination and signals authenticity of their food experience in the area. Encouraging repeat custom from tourists in St Ives is challenging, so promoting ethical credentials is a point of differentiation that enhances the tourist encounter, for example:

*...we'll go like, that is Cornish, 'it's local, it is made there...and it just changes everything, just a little bit of information, just changes everything, will taste it probably in a different way, talk to them about it, and will appreciate it even more. [B16, Cafe]*

One business actively campaigns about sustainable food and encourages staff to educate tourists:

*...one of the guys who works for us now.. He's a major sort of green activist and he's brilliant at communicating the message... he really knows his stuff and he can just... wax lyrical about you know what we're doing, about what he's doing... there definitely is an element of education [B02, Restaurant]*

Thus small food businesses are conduits for sustainable behavior upstream, through their sourcing and cooperation with suppliers, and also downstream through the delivery of sustainable tourist food (Kneafsey et al., 2004). These practices are disruptive in that they go against operational trends in reducing supplier numbers for increased efficiency, competitiveness, cost and time saving (Crotts, Coppage, & Andibo, 2001), shaping new ways of working within the supply chain. Further, by raising awareness of local food and educating tourists about the social, ethical and environmental issues that underpin the long term sustainability of those products, small businesses invest in the collective wellbeing of their community, appeal to groups like food explorers and encourage tourists to adopt more sustainable behaviors when they visit. Disseminating this knowledge through new networks

(McCaffrey & Kurland, 2015) is part of the aggregate of resources which underpin the social capital operating within St Ives' tourist food business community.

Tourism impacts directly on local communities, and the involvement and participation of locals is crucial to St Ives' sustainable tourism development. Tourist businesses also rely on their community's health, stability and prosperity to provide staff. As well as enacting co-opetition, the businesses in the study invest in the concept of a more integrated 'coastal' tourism (Pratt 2013). Some undertake innovative practices that support long term sustainable benefits for the community as well as tourists (Clark & Chabrel, 2007):

*We are passionate about the town. ...I certainly want to support local industry, local people... I have nine waitresses...they're all local ...we give young chefs the opportunity to showcase their talents ...to do a night of their own... and cook what they want to cook... That's my gift to them... but also it teaches them other things... this is the fourth year we've been doing this and we've had people that have gone on to do other things, own their own restaurants and so it's hopefully.. I'm putting back in to the community something that I take out [B04, Cafe]*

The role that food plays within local tourism in sustaining the social and economic viability of the area is recognised, and how important it is for small businesses to contribute to that process:

*I believe tourism is a tool, it's a geographical feature...It's almost like an industrial sector unlike any other because it does impact on lots of things and therefore should be used ...can be a force for bad, can be a force for good... My view is we should develop Cornwall so it's a better place for everybody in Cornwall to live and enjoy [B15, Tourist organisation]*

Behind the tourist facade, St Ives, like many seaside towns faces challenges to the sustainability of its tourist trade since seasonal, low wages and high housing costs price workers out of the vicinity:

*...Wages down here are very poor. Working conditions are very poor...because you're living in a town that's gone from being an incredibly poor fishing village to London housing prices...so you've got like a really weird sort of dichotomy between the haves and the have not's and St Ives, the bit you see down here, is like a kind of little chocolate box town and they've brushed away all the homelessness and drug problems and they've got them all up in to the estates on the outside, so you don't really see [B03, Cafe]*

Everett (2016) documents several cases, such as Castle Douglas, Scotland or Abergavenny, Wales where food is used to leverage tourism and raise income and employment, and alleviate poverty locally. This is reflected in St Ives where many of the owners leverage their social capital for the common good (Spence & Schmidpeter, 2003). One restaurant provides jobs for less advantaged young people:

*But although we shut every winter, our staff will stay with us for five, six, seven years and we... have a policy of taking on young people who've probably got a shed load of issues...we really try and give it a bit of a social firm type edge to it. [B02, Restaurant]*

Some tourist food businesses feel that a tourism business model that is entirely committed to sustainability is too niche for them to survive, but they still pursue practices that serve both self and collective interests. Many SMEs must be selective with their sustainability efforts, depending upon resources, capacity, needs and ethos (Shaw, 2012), something that emerged in St Ives:

*... I want to make it an ethical shop... well neither I nor my staff would survive. That's not ethical in itself... So I have to find a balance between the two...I have to feed my family, and have five staff that have to feed their families too. [B11, Shop]*

While some firms balance economic survival with ethics, others have found a way to deliver both. Participants commented on the many struggles to achieve their sustainable ambitions while navigating the structural constraints of the town as a tourist destination:

*Yes, I mean, the Green Tourism Business Scheme was tough... We tried to compost our waste...our friends grew salad for us and they would take our food waste to compost, but then all this legislation came in about waste transfer licences, and it just made it really really difficult...we obviously couldn't keep food waste here ...because St Ives is full of rats...especially high tide... So we had a lot of things against us... we do the best we can and that's all we can do because of the limitations of the building. [B02, Restaurant]*

*Yes, the town was built as a fishing town. It wasn't really built for the modern day as we know it as St Ives.....Cornwall Council does struggle with the amount of food bins, recycling bins...it is difficult recycling in St Ives [B05, Tourist organisation]*

Their experiences highlight tensions and conflicts in sustainable tourism when located in an environment that is inherently unsustainable for modern tourist trade. This paradox is apparent when businesses experience the negative impacts of tourism, and may partly explain why St Ives does not strongly market itself as a food tourism destination, despite food being a main attraction. One restaurant suggested that Cornwall is “killing the goose that laid the golden egg” [B02] with the volume of tourism it encourages. As one participant stated:

*The ideal sustainable tourism for Cornwall is to send the money and we'll send you some pictures of the holiday you would have had and you don't bother coming [B15, Tourist organisation]*

Despite improving the local economy, regional identity and alleviating poverty (Everett, 2016) the economic success of food businesses contributes to a tourist flow that environmentally harms the area and decreases its long term comparative advantage. This tension also leads many participants to play down their ethical credentials fearing that they might be perceived as frauds under the scrutiny of green tourists:

*...we're not part of the green scheme.....the danger....of promoting ourselves as a green environment is, if you are extremely green, you will find issues with staying here... [B01, Guesthouse]*

The concerns that not everything they do is 'ethical' often holds back small businesses and leads them to overlook or avoid commercial opportunities attached to their sustainable activity (Carrigan, McEachern, Moraes, & Bosangit, 2016). The problem is exacerbated when little structural support exists to help firms improve and communicate their sustainability. St Ives tourist businesses are mainly self-reliant or share knowledge within informal business networks, engaging little with tourism promotion agencies. Operational constraints also undermine the shared promotion of sustainable food businesses to tourists:

*It's very hard to do that. Because. ..for us...to keep ourselves open, we have to promote our members, so members have to pay to advertise with us, and so it is unfair for us to mention another restaurant who hasn't advertised but we know they're doing a good job with sustainability, so our hands are quite tied... [B05, Tourist organisation]*

Tourist food entrepreneurs are helped by the local farmers market. It operates a 30 mile rule as a metric for local produce, and stallholders can develop into established businesses supplying the tourists and local population:

*...the traders here, they started off, because they've got a passion about food...and they want to give it a go... markets are really important ...first-rungs for new businesses opportunity to start selling... It's interesting because some of our traders*

*have moved on to become shopkeepers... the chocolate shop, I Should Coco, she started off trading at the market and she grew her business to the extent that she could then move in to permanent premises... [B14, Trade organisation]*

The format of the market allowed a greater degree of interaction between supplier and customer and was a rich form of structural social capital that tests out food business models and produce. An important value underpinning the market when it was established was not to undermine local food stores, but rather enrich their trade contributing to the general wellbeing of the overall tourist destination through capacity enhancement (McGehee et al., 2010).

#### INSERT FIGURE 2

Social capital exists in St Ives in terms of trust, reciprocity and cooperation (Flora, 2004). The cognitive and structural dimensions of social capital, suggested by the literature and evidenced in the data are summarized in Figure 2. This shows how communities can take advantage of “economic, community building and capacity-enhancing opportunities” (McGehee et al. 2010, p. 487). Restaurants B02 and B13 were facilitating voices in the sustainable tourist community, and display the characteristics of pro-environmental mavens (Carrigan et al., 2011). Acting as important ‘catalytic individuals’ (Fell, Austin, Kivinen, & Wilkins, 2009) these influential businesses display two key attributes: they have detailed or specialist knowledge about sustainability, and they are perceived as trusted and reliable sources of information by others in their network (Fell et al., 2009). By setting and normalizing standards in their supply chain, mavens help establish responsible business as socially acceptable. To date, few studies have addressed the concept of small tourist business pro-environmental mavens, or the diffusion of sustainable behaviours within the tourism literature. When it comes to changing people’s behaviour, engaging diverse groups of community members and a broad range of community organizations - for example, traders in a supply chain - can assist the diffusion process across different sectors of the community. Echoing emerging evidence from other local studies (see



Everett, 2016) this paper shows that when studying responsibility and food businesses in the tourist industry it is important to study these location specific aspects of business and supply chain networks, as well as the industry specific and small business specific characteristics.

The cognitive and structural dimensions of social capital (see Figure 2) evident in St Ives may be replicated in other tourist destinations, or possibly manifest itself in other ways. Both positive and negative features related to sustainability emerged that are closely tied to the needs of local tourism. So, reducing food waste and recycling is problematic for tourist businesses in St Ives because of weak local infrastructure and building limitations. There is no collective, joined up effort to promote St Ives as a sustainable food destination using local tourism organisations. This leads to individually creative solutions at the micro level, but businesses can learn from one another to implement (sometimes collective) solutions that benefit all. St Ives tourist food businesses operate on a spectrum of sustainability (Henninger, Oates & McDonald, 2016), but find that by focusing on specific aspects of sustainable practice they can create a competitive advantage that is financially viable and ultimately sustainable. Capitalising on the abundance of high quality local, ethically farmed produce is a location specific tourist asset, but future resilience requires the community to manage it sustainably and collectively.

St Ives small tourist food businesses influence responsibility at three levels, and social capital is evident in all (Van de Mosselaer et al. 2012). Within the firm, owners address youth unemployment, train 'pop up' chefs or educate consumers; at the destination enterprise provides catalysts for new businesses, leverages sustainability to address economic and social problems and promotes St Ives as a food destination; and finally within the supply chain co-created inventiveness helps growers to extend seasonality and increases power sharing and collaboration.

INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE

The nature of small tourist business is up close and personal, and their responsibility cascades to customers and the host community. Figure 3 highlights the downstream and upstream implications of social capital amongst food tourism businesses. Working collectively has allowed businesses to build resilient supply chains through friendly competition expressing preference for local, sustainable and more direct sourcing. The lifestyle ethos driving many of these businesses enables innovative practices (Getz & Petersen, 2005), and has positive implications both downstream and upstream in the supply chain to disrupt and allow local and informal connections.

## **Conclusion**

Although the links between sustainability and food tourism (Everett and Aitchison, 2008), and between sustainability and small tourism enterprises (Font et al., 2014) are well documented, this paper extends that discussion by explaining the underlying mechanisms mediating this relationship. Three research questions frame this study: which dimensions of social capital observed within small tourist food businesses represent responsible practices? To what extent do different dimensions of capital contribute toward responsible tourism development and promoting the local identity and sustainability of a tourist destination? What challenges do small tourist food businesses face in their everyday responsible business practices? In answering these questions, the paper examines the role of small food business owner-managers as catalysts of social responsibility in St Ives, Cornwall, and their impact upon the sustainability of the destination and local tourist food supply chains. The application of two dimensions of social capital (cognitive and structural) generates an understanding of the process of creating responsible tourism as well as sustainable local food supply chains. Although the findings reveal an imbalance between cognitive and structural social capital

within the local food network, they highlight the intersection between social capital, authenticity and responsibility among small food businesses in the tourist industry and the positive impact that has on destination sustainability.

This paper argues that authentic lifestyles drive disruptive social change upstream and downstream in the tourist food supply chain across St Ives. Businesses are disruptive in implementing personally driven sustainable and ethical operational practices that differentiate their local level engagement with the supply chain. Small business owner-managers are catalysts for local change and common good, underpinned by motives such as embedded sustainability, personal ethos, community regeneration or economic necessity. They are fundamental to ethical and sustainable food chains, with significant local influence and impact. While pursuing business goals that support their own agenda, they often prioritise the collective interests of the community through their actions (Van de Ven et al., 2007). Findings show that small tourist food businesses seek intrinsic not just extrinsic rewards; strong connections and social obligations to their suppliers, competitors, customers and community are apparent and maximizing economic gain is not their primary goal. Social capital is built upon long term friendships that spill over into business arrangements. However, this social capital is not excluding, and new food entrepreneurs that engage with the same tourism business model, values and ethos can also benefit. So while ‘incomers’ do sometimes displace local ownership, social capital within the town remains strong as new entrants recognize the critical value of upstream and downstream local food engagement for success. Thus, disruptive businesses with new skills, knowledge and experience have contributed to the uplifting of food quality in St Ives while others introduce innovative business models. Narrative evidence shows social capital strengthens their sense of destination ownership and stewardship (Kay, 2006), and fuels an obligation to protect fragile local resources and unique location. Embedded social capital also acts to filter out rogue traders who might exploit those resources and thriving tourist trade.

These findings call for policymakers and academics to place more value on the role of SMEs as catalysts for sustainable tourism. Small food firms are interdependent and co-dependent on a buoyant tourist trade and accessing local suppliers; therefore social capital exists in the common good (Spence & Schmidpeter, 2003). Their networks and norms of business and community reciprocity and co-operation trigger mutual gains (Habisch, 1999). A destination would benefit by attracting sustainable tourists who spend more money and stay longer than other visitors (Nickerson, Jorgensen, & Boley, 2016), contributing further to the triple bottom line of many businesses. By their actions, small food businesses are positioning St Ives for this market, while negotiating the constraints that inhibit broader engagement with sustainable tourism such as a lack of structural support from local tourist organizations, and the problem of impending ‘peak’ tourism caused by visitor numbers that increasingly stretch environmental, social and economic resources. Many of the participants in the study understand these challenges so practice food tourism that aligns to the principles and opportunities that sustainable tourism represents and food explorers seek, rather than prioritising merely maximizing profit and visitor numbers.

We recognise that this study is limited by the fact that it is cross-sectional, reflecting a snapshot of a particular community at a single point in time (during the Spring tourist season) and representative of only one context (food business). Therefore this paper’s limitations open up opportunities for research into responsible business and tourism, including examining small business supply chains in different tourist sectors and locations that may present alternative forms of social capital. We acknowledge the potential limitation that the findings from this study may be context specific to St Ives, a close-knit, small town where strong personal relationships are especially conducive to the creation of social capital. A debate is emerging particularly among social enterprise practitioners, policy makers and academics around the

‘dilemma of scale’ (Seyfang & Smith, 2007), and whether successful local sustainable food initiatives can be scaled up (Gismond & Connelly, 2016; Vickers & Lyon, 2013), or whether capabilities exist elsewhere for more informal replication of ideas that successfully operate in one community. To what extent the social capital demonstrated in St Ives might be discovered or created in larger towns and cities merits further investigation to ascertain whether this represents a paradigmatic case (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Studies that investigate the impact of authentic tourist firms within a location over time and their potential to diffuse practice beyond their local area would be fruitful, as would longitudinal research to study the resilience of the authentic/sustainable tourist business model. Future studies of the imbalance found between cognitive and structural social capital within local food networks might assist policy driven interventions to support small tourist food businesses.

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Table 1. Participants and Small Business Type

<b>Business Owner-Manager</b>	<b>Business Type</b>	<b>Number of employees*</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Number of years in business</b>	<b>Born in Cornwall?</b>
B01	Guest House	Less than 9	Owner	0-5 years	No
B02	Restaurant	Less than 9	Owner	5-10 years	No
B03	Café	Less than 9	Owner	0-5 years	Yes
B04	Café	Less than 9	Owner	0-5 years	No
B05	Industry	Less than 9	Chief Executive	Not applicable	Not known
B06	Hotel/ B&B	10-49	Manager	Not known	No
B07	Hotel/ B&B	50-249	Manager	More than 10 years	No
B08	Café	Less than 9	Owner	5-10 years	No
B09	Shop	Less than 9	Owner	Not known	No
B10	Restaurant	10-49	Manager	More than 10 years	No
B11	Shop	Less than 9	Owner	0-5 years	No
B12	Shop	Less than 9	Owner	More than 10 years	Yes
B13	Restaurant	10-49	Employee	More than 10 years	No
B14	Market	Less than 9		Not applicable	Yes
B15	Industry	Less than 9	Chief Executive	Not applicable	No
B16	Café	Less than 9	Owner-Manager	0-5 years	No
B17	Guest House	Less than 9	Manager		No

\* UK government classifies SMEs as micro firms (0-9 employees); small firms (10-49), and medium (50-249 employees) (Ward & Rhodes, 2014)

Table 2. Example of coding at three levels

Interview Extract	Descriptive Codes	Interpretive Codes	Overarching Theme
<p>..Kathy's Choice, jams and chutneys ...we...asked her for a stockist in town, and now she's almost in a position where she can actually stop ...being a chef and doing that full time...And there's an organic farmer...I've worked with him and I've helped him in terms of...his planting and seasonality to extend his season and I basically take all he can produce... that's a really strong partnership... differentiates me from the three Co-ops that are here...they aren't able to deal with some of the suppliers that I would deal with, for example, there's a guy with honey hives five miles away... I'm now waiting two weeks for him to bring some more in... but because of the nature, I am happy to do that... I've got the flexibility.... [B09, Shop]</p>	Interaction with suppliers	Practices	Structural social capital
<p>.....so our menu starts with sourcing the right suppliers so, before we opened, we spent months trying different products... Sausage, bacon, black pudding, eggs...We try to keep it as Cornish as possible... the butcher. We know where his animals come from. We know how they are slaughtered. We know where they're slaughtered and we go to the shop and we know what he's doing with it. [B01, Guesthouse]</p>			
<p>...it was just purely on ethical [reasons] that I was diametrically opposed to factory farming and so I was particularly the driver behind the ethical stance so that we would be very strong on provenance. Any meat we had would be free range, preferably organic, but certainly free range and ...local ...so our strap line is burgers for people who give a damn. We're completely the antithesis of McDonald's...Never compromise on suppliers.[B02, Restaurant]</p>	Sustainable Values	Shared values, norms	Cognitive social capital
<p>... I think we just hoped that the guests would go along with it... we could undoubtedly do a cheaper breakfast without the sourcing... we would never do it, so even if the guests didn't want it...that doesn't make any difference to us....because this is the way that we want to do it... These are our ethics...this is the way that we live our life...[B01, Guesthouse]</p>			

Figure 1. Map to show the location of St Ives in the UK



Figure 2. Cognitive and structural social capital amongst responsible SME tourist food businesses

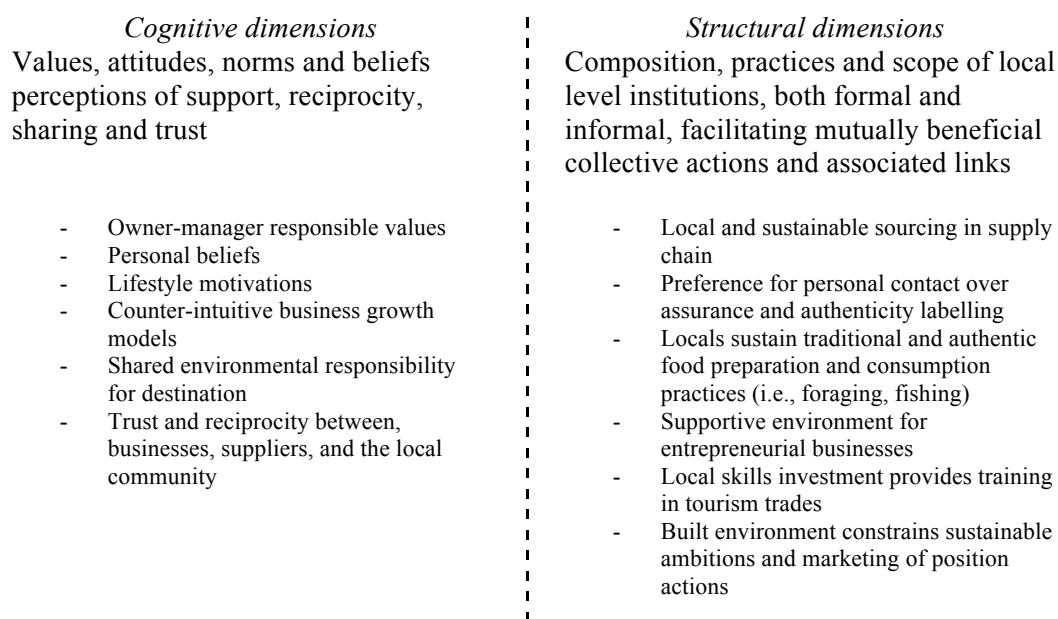


Figure 3. Downstream and Upstream implications of social capital amongst responsible SME tourist food businesses

