“Cultural experiences and changes in consumption behaviour.”
The pizza case study.

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Abstract

This thesis aims to answer the following question: *What impacts does exposure to different cultural lifestyles have on one’s own consumption behaviour and what factors influence these changes?* Pizza, more specifically pizza consumption in Italy is used as a case study to answer this question. Here, the impacts exposure to this cultural lifestyle in Italy had on visitors is analysed. In order to model such behavioural implications, our research is first grounded on multiple theories: Sacred and Profane, Authenticity, Country of Origin, Subcultures of Consumption and Cultural Distance. Following this, a two-phased research is carried out, consisting of multiple interviews. Based on which, firstly after the first phase, the ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ in relation to pizza is defined. Then finally, based on the other theories and the findings from the interviews in the second phase, a model that seeks to answer the research question is created.
Introduction

Key words: Consumption behaviour; Authenticity; Sacred and profane; Country of origin; Cultural Exposure; Subcultures of Consumption; Cultural differences.

There are many theories about pizza and its origin, however there is only one that is unanimously believed to be true by Italians. It is said that the first pizza as we all know it today, was prepared for the first time in 1889 by Raffaele Esposito, chef of an important restaurant in Italy, who had been asked to prepare a special meal for queen Margherita, king Umberto I’s wife (Carnazzi, 2017). Esposito came up with a new combination made of tomato, basil and mozzarella that also had great success among the masses, making it destined to become an essential part of the Italian culture. This kind of pizza, the so-called Margherita, was then reproduced all across Naples, quickly followed by all around Italy and then all over the world becoming an emblem of Italy. With more than 130 years of history, pizza has become a symbol of Italy, and this was also recognised in 2010 by the European Union (Commission regulation (EU) No 97/2010, 2010), as one of the guaranteed traditional specialties. Pizza represents the Italian pride in the world and for this reason it is considered to be crucially important to Italians to respect the traditional way of consuming it.

Combining this with our exposure to many different cultures and therefore the different lifestyles in multiple different countries we have noticed various differences in social norms, perspectives and behaviour. As such a particular instance between us stands out; Perhaps unsurprisingly, that instance consists of pizza consumption; Kanva’s behaviour of placing pineapples and swirling sauces on pizza came as a shock to Manuel, who upon seeing this claimed that: “You cannot do this!” and “Even after experiencing the real pizza in Italy, you still do this?”. To which, in response Kanva simply said: “Yup, I still think that pizza tastes better with these toppings!”. Given that Manuel is Italian and that Kanva being from New Zealand has spent four months in Italy, this behaviour by Kanva, was totally unbelievable to Manuel. This led to further discussions on the topic with the conclusion that the fact that pizza originates from Italy is well known globally, however the authentic or the Italian way of consumption remains unknown to many who have never been to Italy. As such, Kanva was also unaware of the toppings that Italians did not use before having been to Italy. Nonetheless, even after having been to Italy and being aware of the toppings that Italians do not use, Kanva’s consumption behaviour seemed to remain unchanged. This then got us thinking of other such exposures and experiences, one of which contrastingly
consists of Manuel’s behaviour of only drinking espresso and thinking that it is the only true form of coffee, to now drinking long coffee here in Sweden after being exposed to it.

As a result, our curiosity led us to our research question of: *What impacts does exposure to different cultural lifestyles have on one’s own consumption behaviour and what factors influence these changes?* Using the pizza as an example case study to answer this question; From this we aim to be able to discern what role exposures to different cultural lifestyles have on one’s own lifestyle, whether or not a longer, more continuous exposure increases the trend of change in a consumption behaviour and finally what other factors motivate or hamper these changes if any.

Also, in order to answer our research question we have identified different literature theories that will be used to ground our study: Sacred and Profane (Belk et al. 1989; 2013), Authenticity (Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Leigh et al., 2006), Country of Origin (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999), Subcultures of Consumption (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995) and Cultural Distance (Imm Ng et al., 2007; Shenkar, 2001). Regarding the concepts of Sacred and Profane (Belk et al. 1989), these two concepts refer to the different personal, social and cultural meanings that are attributed to a specific consumption. Applying these two notions to our example, the consumption of pizza typical of the Italian culture would represent the “Sacred”, whereas that of a pizza which is not consumed in Italy such as that with pineapple would represent the “Profane”. Furthering on this, often the concepts of sacred and profane are subject to the country of origin perspective: Since pizza is from Italy, the Italian way of consumption is considered as the authentic way of consumption and therefore also the “Sacred” form of consumption in this thesis. As such, in order to better distinguish the notions of sacred and profane, we will also make use of theories concerning the country of origin (where applicable), authenticity, subcultures of consumption and cultural distance. Here the first three theories are closely interlinked, as the authentic consumption behaviour in the country of origin is seen as a subculture of consumption. In short, the consumption of pizza in its country of origin, Italy, is seen as authentic and a subculture within itself with regards to the consumption of pizza around the world. While the fourth, in cultural distance is used as one of the contributing factors in explaining the differences in consumer behaviour in different countries.

Research is then conducted to answer our research question, with regards to the pizza example and thus the transition from the profane to the sacred form of consumption. In order to achieve this, interviews were conducted in two steps. The first of these steps was more of a discussion,
with the aim being to develop more complete definitions of the sacred and the profane, along with also assisting in the formation of the second set of interview questions. As such, the second set of interviews actually acted as the vital and core component of the data collection aspect of this thesis. The findings from these are also then further analysed and used to draw conclusions to our research question. Here, respondents’ consumption behaviours before and after their time in Italy is analysed and thus also the changes from the profane to the sacred were then modelled. Further, theoretically we believe our findings based on this example can then be utilised to understand the broader theories that our question touches upon.

**Importance of Changes in Consumption Habits, Purpose, Managerial Implications and Problem Definition**

In today’s increasingly globalised and mobile world, people are travelling further and more than ever before. As a result, more homogenised products and experiences are becoming increasingly of common place (Levitt, 1993), while conversely exposure to authentic experiences is also reaching new heights (Paulauskaite, Powell, Coca-Stefaniak & Morrison, 2017). In marketing the importance of being global and local at the same time has also become an increasing focal point (Zhang & Khare, 2009). In all this, the role that authentic experiences in a foreign country play in a consumer’s behaviour in one’s own country is the niche we seek to better understand. While many studies have been carried out on the role of country of origin when purchasing a product and how it is affected by exposure to that country (De Nisco, Mainolfi, Marino, & Napolitano, 2015), very few actually target the changes in consumer behaviour itself. Going even further, we seek to analyse the currently unanswered niche in the role exposure to a different cultural lifestyle has on one’s own lifestyle. The results of which may then be broadened out to analyse the possible creation of a new market segment in the home country. For managers, this presents a unique opportunity, to create new markets and tap into currently untapped markets at home as a result.

The purpose of our thesis is to investigate the impacts that exposure to different cultural lifestyles has on one’s food consumption behaviour and what factors influence these changes. In order to do so, we will analyse the specific case of pizza consumption. Therefore, the pizza is used as a mere example which may then be used to first generalise the broader category of food consumption and then consumption in general.
To do so, we will identify two types of pizza devouring: the so-called “sacred” and the supposed “profane”. Consequently, the ambition is to identify changes (if any) in pizza consumption habits that follow from the interaction between these two. In particular, changes that people who have always adopted a profane consumption have had as a consequence of the sacred experience. As such, this thesis aims to draw links to the process of change that may occur from the ‘profane’ to the ‘sacred’, as a result of exposure to the sacred cultural lifestyle, by someone currently practising the profane. If there is a lack of change, reasonings as to why, may also be inferred from the final model.
Literature Review

The circumstances and characteristics of consumption described through the constructs of sacred and profane are observable through an accurate reading of a diverse literature set. In order to clearly define the concepts of sacred and profane, most of the previous studies review them in scholarly theories of religion, with associations to industries such as that of clothing and tourism (Wickens, 2002; Mills, 1984). However, the focus of this thesis is on the change between the sacred and profane, more specifically the change from the profane to the sacred and if any, how other factors such as the length of exposure to the sacred has an impact on this shift. Thus, in order to define what is sacred, it is important to start from knowing what religion is. Styers (2004) asserted “Religion has to do with a unique and extraordinary experience. The experience of the holy that is often called nonrational, for it is neither rational or irrational”. Applying his definition to the pizza example, we will see that pizza consumption is an extraordinary experience for Italians as it reminds to most of them where they come from, their culture and history. Indeed, pizza is what enables them to relive the good times spent with family and friends. A behavioural definition is instead given by Belk et al. (1989) and it is still useful to our understanding of sacred: “Religion shall mean for us the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine”. Translating to our topic these words related to religion, pizza is a mix of feelings and flavours that brings back to the mind of those who eat it memories about past consumption, about when they realised that pizza was more than just food. Ferrarotti (cited in Cohen 2004) contrasts these interpretations, which stress the particular quality of sacredness that makes something religious, with the assumption that religion includes precise deities- “It is not the idea of God that one finds over again in any religion, it is the idea of the sacred in general”. Durkheim (1953) and Eliade (1958; 1959), throughout their studies about religion, explained the sacred by contrasting it with the profane, adopting respectively a sociological and psychological perspective. Therefore, Durkheim’s notion focuses on societal consequences of the sacred, whereas Eliade pays more attention on the psychological aspects of it. It is possible to see the societal consequences of the sacred and profane consumption in the pizza market. In Italy, as pizza is considered to be sacred, it is very difficult to find a profane pizza (e.g. Hawaii pizza) and most of the restaurants have a standardised offer with classic authentic pizzas. Conversely, the prevalence of profane consumption in countries other than Italy leads restaurants and pizzerias to offer pizza with profane toppings such as fruits and chicken. Concerning the psychological consequences of the
sacred, Italians compare the respect of the sacred pizza consumption to the respect of their country, their origins and therefore, disrespecting the authentic pizza would mean being disrespectful to a tradition that their whole dynasty brought on for years and years.

Belk (1989; 2013), basing on both Durkheim’s and Eliade’s outlooks, defined the sacred by presenting twelve properties of sacredness: Hierophany, kratophany, opposition to the profane, contamination, sacrifice, commitment, objectification, ritual and mystery. However, in our thesis we will only use few concepts of those identified by Belk et al. For instance, “opposition to the profane”, which is a way of strengthening the idea of sacred as in opposition to that of profane; “contamination”, as evil things have the power to contaminate through contact; “commitment”, as an emotional attachment to which is sacred; “ritual”, which are rules of conduct about how a person should comport themselves in the presence of sacred objects; myths, which oftentimes surround the sacred and are historically used to document its status through repetition; ecstasy and flow, as a result of experiencing the sacred consumption. Belk et. al (1989) took the concepts of the Sacred and Profane and analysed how a specific consumption becomes sacred (the so-called “sacralisation processes”) and how sacredness perpetuates (explained by Belk et al. with “maintenance processes”). In our study, we will follow a slightly different path. First, we will define the concepts of Sacred and Profane in accordance with pizza consumption in various cultural lifestyles, where links to authenticity and country of origin are explained in relation to pizza consumption later. Secondly, we will focus on the interaction between Sacred and Profane and how this has an impact on consumption patterns, by taking the perspective of people who can be considered to belong to one of these categories based on their experiences and consumption behaviours. This second point of focus represents the gap in the literature that we want to address: the interaction between the sacred and the profane in food consumption and, more specifically, how one’s profane consumption might switch to the sacred. Indeed, as mentioned before, Belk et al. (1989) cantered their attention on how a specific consumption becomes sacred and how it maintains its sacred status. However, no previous research highlights the shift between the sacred and the profane, whether it is possible to switch from the sacred consumption to the profane one and vice versa. Finally, we will seek to find patterns or trends based on this.

The concept of sacred, however, might change depending on the perspective taken. For this study, we will consider the Hawaiian pizza as being “profane” because it generally contains pineapple, ham and sauces, while when addressing the “sacred” we will refer to the Margherita pizza, which simply has tomato sauce and mozzarella. Nonetheless, both Hawaiian pizza and
Margherita pizza consumers may argue that their consumption is sacred, as they may have a different judgment of authenticity. Grayson (2002) holds that consumers view authenticity in various ways, depending on what is being evaluated and under what circumstances. Grayson and Martinec (2004) identified two different kinds of authenticity. These two types are indexical authenticity and iconic authenticity. The first refers to the case when an object has a factual, spatiotemporal connection to history like pizza with the Italian culture and traditions, while the latter exists when an object is an accurate reproduction of the original, the one from Naples as it is the original kind of pizza. However, these two types of authenticity are not inevitably mutually exclusive, nor are they deeply-rooted in an object. As all signs, authenticity is just the result of the consumer perception that happens through a filter of one’s personal experiences (Leigh, Peters and Shelton, 2006). For our study, we will take into consideration the indexical authenticity, meaning that a certain dish/food consumption will be considered as authentic when it has a factual connection to history. For instance, the kind of pizza consumption that will be treated as the authentic is that from Italy, as that is where it had been invented. Moreover, we will also take into account the iconic authenticity, when the Italian way of consuming pizza is accurately reproduced somewhere else. For our study, we will consider the concept of authenticity in relation to that of cultural heritage (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999). Authenticity is thus equated with the transmission through time of a tradition, that is, an objectively definable essence or core of customs and beliefs (Handler 1986; Bendix 2009).

In subcultures of consumption, the concept of authenticity is extremely important, and the adoption of the authentic consumption is what allows new members to take part to the group. Different kinds of subcultures have been identified by existing literature, but for this study we will consider the subculture of consumption, which comes into existence as people identify with certain consumption activities and through these identify with other people (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). Therefore, each country’s cultural lifestyle can also be said to be a subculture of its own. The ideas of the sacred and authenticity are extremely recurring in the theoretical framework of subcultures, which Bourdieu, Broady and Palme (1993) define also as a “field”. A field emerges when people sharing attitudes and beliefs argue about the ideas they have in common. They may argue about what is right or wrong, good or bad, but never about the importance of the issue as it is the element that keeps the field together. Therefore, in this case, what is the right way to eat pizza or what may be put on the pizza is argued, but the core concept of why pizza is eaten is never discussed within the subculture. As such, what an authentic and sacred pizza looks like is also discussed but not why such a pizza is sacred. Previous research
also discussing subcultures such as that about the hip hop culture (Chalmers, Tandy and Arthur, 2008) and gambling culture (Gordon, Gurrieri and Chapman, 2015) have revealed strong hierarchical social structures based on the individual members’ status. However, when taking into consideration the subculture of food consumption, no importance is given to this hierarchy as highlighted by previous studies on other subcultures. Therefore, the “transformation of self” as identified by Schouten & Alexander (1995), is a process through which individuals become members of a subculture of consumption by entering at the bottom of a status hierarchy and socialising. This does not apply to our case, as within the subculture of pizza consumption from the sacred perspective, members are seen as being either in or out, but if they are considered to be in, there are no differing levels or hierarchy within the subculture itself. Nonetheless, within-group status is a function of an individual’s commitment to the group’s ideology of consumption (Schouten and Alexander, 1995). Accordingly, it is safe to say that since there are differences in individuals’ statuses within a subculture of consumption, there must also be differences in commitment. Indeed, divergences in engagement towards the ideology have been highlighted, defining two main kind of groups: Hard core (HC), which is composed of people who are absolutely committed to the authentic philosophy of consumption; Softcore (SC), composed of people who relatively tend to it. Differences in commitment have also been found in other subcultures (Kates, 2002), where different people have a different level of devotion towards a specific consumption. As such individuals who absolutely believe in the sacred or profane way of consumption can be said to fall into the ‘Hard Core’ group, while those who perhaps don’t have such strong feelings but exhibit consumption behaviours in line with the sacred or profane way, can be said to be ‘Soft Core’ followers. However, even if there is no variation in status within the subculture of food consumption, it is possible to find similar differences in commitment towards the authentic devouring. The differences in commitment between the Hard Core and Soft Core groups often times lead to tension between them. In studying the case of Harley Davidson, Schouten and Alexander (1995) demonstrate that it is not uncommon that bikers from the HC snub those from the SC by not saluting them even if it is very typical, among bikers to wave each other when meeting in the roads. In the subculture of food consumption, the tension in not so strong, but it is still present. Indeed, an Italian might refuse to consume their pizza with somebody who is eating pizza with profane ingredients being irritated and offended, like the profane consumption is a personal attack. Another particularity within this context is the amount of information that is shared with the new members of the subculture of consumption. In fact, those people who have taken part in the subculture for a long time explain to the new members or aspirants the importance of adopting the authentic consumption and its history (Leigh et al., 2006).
Therefore, old members act like promoters when relating to new entrants, defining and clarifying the meaning attributed to a specific consumption. Grounding this general feature of subcultures of consumption to our specific example, when consuming pizza with foreigners, Italians act like pizza advocates, suggesting to them what kind of pizza to go for and why it is vital to consume the authentic one. Moreover, foreigners are also explained in great detail the history of pizza, from its origins to the reasons why it is considered as sacred.

However, consumption practices, both within and out of subcultures of consumption, might vary depending on cultural differences (CD), which indicate the degree to which one nation’s culture is diverse or similar from that of another nation (Imm Ng, Anne Lee and Soutar, 2007; Shenkar, 2001). The topic of cultural distances has caught the attention of various International Business researchers and efforts have been put in place to try and measure culture in a quantitative manner. Probably due to its theoretical appeal, CD has been linked to a variety of important constructs. They have been used to explain entry modes (Agarwal, 1994), control over export channels (Bello and Gilliland, 1997), firm performance (Evans and Mavondo, 2002), performance in export ventures (Sousa and Lengler, 2009) and the degree of adaptation of the international marketing strategy (Sousa and Filipe Lages, 2011). We will use the concept of cultural distance and we will try to explain what its impacts on consumption behaviours are. In particular, the important role that cultural distance plays in explaining the diverse perceptions of people from different countries about pizza consumption. Therefore, the further away a country is culturally from Italy, the lower the influence and awareness is regarding the authentic/ sacred pizza consumption. Consequently, we will also analyse how these different perceptions and habits in a completely dissimilar kind of pizza consumption, the profane one, impacts the probabilities of a shift towards the sacred consumption behaviour. When discussing about distances among countries, Ghemawatt (2001) identified four determining factors: cultural distance, administrative and political distance, geographic distance and economic distance. For our analysis, only the cultural and geographic distances are deemed to be relevant. The former of which is stated to increase with the lack of social networks and it mostly affects industries related to national identity such as food. For the latter, it is stated to increase with physical remoteness and it influences industries where products are perishable. As the pizza can be identified to fit into both these categories, cultural and geographic distances are deemed to play a vital role in the understanding of pizza consumption around the world.
Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative research methodology was used for this thesis, as it is often associated with an interpretive philosophy (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This was seen as being important in this area of study, because sense was needed to be made of the findings and their meanings personally and socially constructed. As such, this thesis seeks to do so by using two different qualitative approaches, in two phases. Firstly, the different interpretations of sacred and profane that may be associated to the consumption of pizza are explored. This was achieved through the conduction of informal, semi-structured interviews, which are further explained later and formed the first set of interviews. These were simply used to better define profane and sacred, along with assisting in better shaping our second set of interview questions for the second phase. However, they did not play a major role, if any in the answering our research question, but rather simply assisted in answering it, thus were not the main focus of this thesis, rather just a side add-on. Later, to answer our research question and thus actually conduct research, a set of structured questions were asked to respondents, more details on which are also covered later. Here, the experiences of the respondents were first studied to analyse the interaction between the sacred and profane. From which, patterns with regards to the results of these interactions were analysed to better understand the effects that these interactions have on people and therefore consumers in their consumption lifestyles and behaviours.

Firstly, in order to gain more well-rounded definitions of profane and sacred, ‘pizzate’ (plural of pizzata) were carried out with two focus groups. The main reason why we used the focus group technique in this phase of the methodology is because of the kind of interaction that emerges during the debate, as it allows a better understanding of the meanings attributed to a specific consumption (Acocella, 2012). Pizzata, is a term generally used by Italians to indicate a pizza-based dinner. Firstly, a pizzata was conducted with a focus group of Italians, as they can generally be referred to as following what can be considered to be the “sacred” form of the consumption of pizza. Therefore, the insights into what may be accepted as being “sacred” in terms of both ingredients used and how it is consumed, along with what pizza means to them was discussed. This allowed us to get a more universal Italian view on the pizza consumption lifestyle in Italy, in addition to Manuel’s point of view, although there were many overlapping views. However, this
may actually be considered to be positive as it gave further assurances to our definition of “sacred” in this context. Secondly, a pizzata was also conducted with the second focus group of non-Italians, therefore people from various countries, as according to the definition set by this thesis, they may be considered to be following a “profane” form of the consumption of pizza, as it is not authentic. This allowed us to also get further insights into how pizza is consumed differently, not simply as with-in Italy and outside Italy, but also the variations across other countries around the world. It was not possible to cover every single other country or rather many other countries at all given the large number of countries in our planet. Nonetheless, this was not an issue or rather not the point, as all we were trying to achieve from this, was a greater number of non-authentic behaviours, which we may ask respondents about in the second set of interviews, where we aim to answer the research question. This helped us by providing examples of toppings which are considered non-authentic by the sacred and traditional sub-cultural consumer group in Italians. Conversely, the group of consumers who consumed pizza in the profane way provided some interesting versions of pizza which do not exist in Italy to act as references to the profane and thus shape its definition. This was done, as from Kanva’s personal experience and many people from outside of Italy. This was interesting as people, especially those from outside of Europe were simply unaware that certain behaviours that they follow regarding the consumption of pizza is unauthentic. Thus, we believe that this exercise helped us in formulating questions such as, ‘...did you realise that Italians don’t put such toppings on their pizza?’.

Also, a list of things that may be considered unauthentic was compiled and then when interviewing people, it was of good use in asking them “do you do put toppings such as... on your pizza or not?”, just in case certain pizza consumption behaviours, didn’t come to the interviewee’s minds. Further, this also allowed us to capture the different understandings of pizza consumption, with the uniting factor from the others being that they were all indeed different to the Italian one. Finally, we also sought to better understand the different meanings given to the consumption of pizza by groups on both on a personal and social level.

Based on the findings from the pizzate and also keeping in mind the important aspects needing to be answered in order to figure out what impacts exposure to different cultural lifestyles has on one’s own consumption behaviour, a set of interview questions were developed to be asked to respondents, as shown in the Appendix. We decided to carry out structured interviews as the responses to these allowed us to carry out the analysis aiming at finding patterns, common themes in the responses and most importantly the changes in consumption behaviours if any (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016).
Further, along with looking at the change in behaviour and absolute change it is also important to consider the time spent in Italy, thus the exposure time to this authentic cultural lifestyle. Therefore, when considering the evolution of habits and how these change, the length of exposure is one of the key factors which influence the degree of change in a consumption habit. As studied by Oreg (2003) that individuals are resistant to change due to four key factors in routine seeking, emotional reaction to imposed change, cognitive rigidity, and short-term focus. Therefore, it was decided that before analysing the collected data, the respondents would be grouped into two different categories: people with limited exposure (1 day to 3 months) and people with extended exposure (more than 3 months). As such given that a short duration of exposure to this different cultural lifestyle may not have the same impact as a longer one. Comparisons are also then drawn between the two groups to make and strengthen the link between exposure time and changes in behaviour. Three months was chosen as the dividing mark, as for travellers from visa-waiver countries, stays up to three months are considered as short term/touristic and no additional visas are required. Whereas, for stays longer than three months, some form of visa is required, thus given the extra layer of effort required for this processing, we have similarly considered them as being long term stays.

Finally, our interview protocol was designed as to not influence key aspects of our interviewees sensemaking or impose our preordained understandings on their experience (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). In this sense, in order to avoid bias, we have not used the words “sacred” and “profane” in our interviews and we have let our respondents free to saying whatever they wanted in the way they wanted.

**Assumptions**

Once the two opposites in sacred and profane had been defined, particular attention was given to the interaction between them and how this could lead to changes in consumption habits. From this study, three different results were expected:

1. No changes in consumption, where the exposure to a different lifestyle has had no impact on one’s consumption behaviour.
2. Rearrangements, where only part of the consumption culture has been assimilated.
3. Total change, where the individual’s consumption behaviour has radically changed due to cultural influence.
Sampling and Target Group

For the sampling of the pizzata, so the initial assisting research, purposive sampling was used, which relies on the researchers' judgements when choosing who to ask to participate. We thus choose a representative sample of two groups that allowed us to better understand the different meanings given to the consumption of pizza. For the pizzate, around 7-8 people were included; one group consisted of solely Italians who had and have always consumed pizza in the traditional, authentic and sacred way, while the other consisted of non-Italians who had always consumed pizza the profane way. The pizzate were informal semi-structured interviews/ discussions lasting around one hour in total.

For the main questions in this second set of interviews that sought to answer our research question, a requirement for our interviewees was that they have had to have been to Italy, consumed pizza while in Italy, along with also having had consumed pizza at some point before visiting Italy, in their home country too. Therefore, our research did not consist of people with no exposure to the different cultural lifestyles, more specifically the Italian one with regards to pizza consumption, as the aim was to observe their change in behaviour. Thus, the respondents were questioned on their consumption behaviours pre and post their visit to Italy. Finally, our target group consisted of people within the 18-30 age group. These group of people were chosen, as due to globalisation they have already been more exposed to different cultural lifestyles and thus are also more adaptive to different cultures growing up, making them the ideal group to target. Otherwise, the age of the respondents was not seen to be an important factor in our analysis. With the structured interviews, we had 21 respondents in total, which we used as representative samples for our research.

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview format was followed during the pizzate (first phase), as a small set of key questions needing to be answered were used as guidelines to ensure vital aspects were covered, otherwise an open and free discussion took place. A semi-structured format was chosen here as an interpretivist philosophy was needed to be followed, in order to understand the meanings that participants escribe to various phenomena (Chowdhury, 2014). As such, as we wished to understand the meanings each group gave to a pizza this methodology was chosen.
Since this part of the study focused on the meanings given to pizza, the semi-structured interview format seemed to be appropriate as it allowed us to ask follow-up questions (Lee, 1999). Other than questions about the interpretation of pizza in general, interviewees were asked about their habits, what kind of pizza they generally eat and their thoughts about people who have a different type of consumption from theirs. The findings from this were then analysed and utilised to modify and better define our questions that were then used to conduct the structured interviews later. Examples of these changes and additions made to the questions include the added example of profane ingredients and the questioning of whether differences in pizza between their home countries was even noticed. Additionally, this information was also used to present to the reader a better, clearer and more universal definition of the “sacred” and “profane” with regards to pizza consumption, along with the interactions between the two.

From this, next in the second phase a structured set of questions were then used to interview people, face-to-face as well as phone and video interviews were also used. All three formats were used to enable interviews to be performed without geographical restrictions (Opdenakker, 2006). A structured questioning format was used to ensure all the required information were gathered, while with the usage of open questions, deeper insights could also be obtained (Saunders et al., 2016). In order to overcome the limitation of not being able to conduct face to face interviews with people outside Uppsala; Different formats of interviews such as face to face, video and voice were used in order to gain access to a wider range of people from different countries (Opdenakker, 2006). Here, due to the structured format of the interviews, where each interviewee is presented with exactly the same questions in the same order, we believe the responses would be the same regardless of the format of the interview itself. Further, in order to avoid interviewees feeling confused by the terms “sacred” and “profane”, the use of these words have been omitted from the interview questions. However, by simply asking questions about their consumption habits with regards to pizza, based on their answers we were able to infer and categorise their consumption behaviour into one of the two groups.
Data Analysis

The interviews were all coded in word, and then used for the analysis of our findings. The analysis consisted of an abductive research process for both the informal pizzate and structured interviews, in order to logically analyse the language used by people when defining their thoughts and thus being able to extract the key points from these interviews in order to understand the meanings that participants ascribe to various phenomena with regards to pizza consumption and the cultural lifestyle surrounding it. The data were then grounded to the theory that has been reviewed. Therefore, we moved backwards and forwards between the data we gathered and the literature, which served as a guide to analyse the empirical data (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012).
Findings

In this section we will explain our findings, dividing them into two sections, “findings from the pizzate” and “findings from the interviews”. This distinction has been made because the aim of the pizzate was different from that of the interviews: for the pizzate it was to get a more general overview of the meanings attributed to pizza by Italians and non-Italians, in order to better define and relate the concepts of sacred and profane, authenticity and country of origin to pizza; for the later interviews it was to gather data, which had to be analysed in order to draw conclusions about how exposure to a different lifestyle impacts consumption behaviours. For the findings from the pizzate, we have only reported what our interviewees said because our goal was simply that of giving an idea about the different interpretations of pizza and not to compare or analyse what they said. Conversely, for the findings for the interviews, we have also elaborated the data that we have gathered as they are essential to address the gap in the literature and our research question.

Findings from the Pizzate

Sacred Pizzata

In order to better define what pizza means to Italians, a first pizzata was carried out with a group of six Italians.

In Italy, pizza is not considered to just be food but much more. Pizza, according to Italians, is happiness, a set of positive emotions, a mix of smell and flavour that brings to mind ecstatic moments. It is a perfect dish, which could be enjoyed at any time of the day and night, both alone and in company. Pizza is treated as a sacred element not only on a personal level but also on a professional level. “It is a hymn to freedom for all those Italians who run a business abroad, who started from scratch and made it to the top achieving great success, everything thanks to Pizza” stated one participant.

However, Italians have different thoughts about what kind of pizza tastes better: “I like having a Margherita pizza, it is even better if it comes with buffalo mozzarella”, “I love Quattro Formaggi pizza, it has a fantastic taste”, and so on. Nonetheless, they all agree that toppings such as fish, sauces, fruit and partly meat (ham is an exception) should not even be close to a pizza. When a
respondent said he likes his pizza with potatoes and sausages, other participants commented sarcastically “You should have your citizenship revoked, you are not a real Italian!” When asked to point at the most real and authentic kind of pizza, they all agreed that it was the Margherita pizza: it is the original one from Naples, it is part of the tradition. Indeed, in Naples, it is the most requested kind of pizza as it allows those who eat it to taste the goodness of the ingredients. In fact, when going to a new pizzeria, Margherita pizza is what constitutes the factor of assessment for Italians, an interviewee indeed said, “Simple is better, with a Margherita pizza it is easier to distinguish the flavours and understand whether it is actually good or just eatable”. Another interviewee shared his thought that “It is also about colours, tomato sauce is red, mozzarella is white and basil is green: the Italian flag wants the Margherita pizza to be the authentic”. Therefore, what makes the Margherita pizza the authentic one is tradition, history and colours.

Introducing the Hawaiian pizza to the conversation led to a few seconds of dead silence... “You mean pizza with pineapple and ham on the top?! Ew” said a respondent, followed by some swear words. Mostly everyone was speaking with disgust, they said they would not even taste it and a participant stated, “I do not get mad if somebody wants to put pineapple on the top of their pizza, they just do not have to do it in front of me or I would give a very bad look and maybe say something”. Some other participants, however, were a little more open-minded. “I do not mind if somebody wants to add fruit, sauces or whatever. I might refuse to have these things myself, but at the end of the day who cares about what other people eat, I would even taste it” stated a respondent.

Italians are so reluctant to Hawaiian pizza, they feel like their history and culture are disrespected. However, not all of them are extremely close-minded, indeed, few people do not see Hawaiian pizza as bad as the others and they are even keen on trying it. Finally, as such the sacred consumption behaviour in this thesis will be defined as one, where only authentic ingredients are ever used.

**Profane Pizzata**

To better understand outside of Italy, people’s idea of pizza and what it means to them, a second pizzata was conducted consisting of eight participants from various countries, including the following: India, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, France, Austria, Turkey and Singapore was carried out. To begin everyone basically expressed their desire for pizza and used
words such as “Yum”, “Delicious” and “Tasty” to describe it. However, beyond taste there was little or no other personal or cultural significance shown.

Moving on, when asked to describe their favourite pizza, a whole diaspora of answers were received; consisting of chicken, berry, vegetable, ham, Hawaiian, four cheeses, mushrooms and margarita. When asked specifically about the Margherita pizza, most said it was fine, but that it was “Too plain and simple” and also that “it lacked flavour”; therefore, they would prefer to have more toppings and flavours on their pizza. A couple of people however did say that they did like it that way. Those two people were then asked about what they thought of having more toppings and sauces on their pizza, to which they said that “It’s ok” but that they prefer the simple one with just cheese, where one person even proclaimed “I only eat pizza for the cheese, I love cheese, so the other toppings don’t really matter to me”.

Next, among similar lines when asked about what they thought of the authentic Italian pizzas, many, especially those from outside of Europe and had never been to Italy, had a very unclear view of this. A few made statements and asked back questions among the lines of: “What’s the difference?” and “They are just made in a woodfired oven, right?”. Then, when notified of the practises of not putting certain ingredients and sauces on the pizza for those who were not aware, reactions included: “Oh, what do they put then?” and “Oh, really?”. After this, when asked about what they thought of Italians not using such ingredients and what they thought of themselves doing so, some of recorded responses consisted of: “They are missing out”, “That sounds boring”, “I don’t care, I like my sauces, it would be so bland and hard to swallow otherwise”, “Berry pizza is the best! Everyone needs to try it!”, “I don’t mind what you all put on your pizza, but I do like the simple pizza with just cheese, so I prefer the authentic Italian one’s” and “It’s just food, you can put whatever you want I don’t see the problem or what the big deal is”.

Based on this, it is clear that many non-Italians do not even know how Italians consume their pizza and that the use of certain ingredients are almost seen as crime. The few that were aware and even preferred the authentic Italian pizza, also did not see the use of other ingredients as a no-no and put it down to personal preferences. In summary, for non-Italians, pizza is seen as a delicious treat, which many be made however one prefers and although non-Italians may also have different preferences, they are however tolerant to different people eating their food differently, where pizza is simply seen as another food item. Finally, that is how we will define the
profane consumption behaviour in this thesis, as one in which any non-authentic ingredient is used, even if only occasionally.

Findings from the Interviews

Based on the findings of our interviews, many different patterns and common themes were spotted. Firstly, when considering, previous consumption behaviours of our interviewees, it can be asserted that barring one respondent, all others at-least sometimes followed a profane consumption behaviour as defined earlier, although aspects such as the extent and frequency of such behaviours varied. Given the earlier definition of the subcultures of consumption and their applicability and relevance to our research, even if someone only occasionally follows the profane consumption, their consumption behaviour is still seen as profane in this research, as such you are either fully sacred or you are not. However, as explained further later, the profane behaviour is broken down further into ‘mildly profane’ and simply ‘profane’ to show distinction of grave differences in behaviour within this group of consumers. Thus, to begin with all our interviewees, excluding some, can be grouped into the category of people who followed some form of the profane consumption behaviour of pizza, before having been to Italy. Here, it must also be noted that the one respondent, Silvana whose consumption behaviour can be described as sacred to start with, comes from a country which also has an Italian part to it, Switzerland. As such, and as also claimed by Silvana, it could very well be that in Switzerland an authentic consumption pattern is also followed generally, much like in Italy. This may be further explained by the cultural differences between the countries being small, as covered by Shenkar (2001) and Imm Ng et al. (2007) in their articles.

Secondly, regarding the differences in pizza between the interviewee’s own countries and Italy, after having been to Italy, many different answers were seen. Once again, a respondent saw no differences and others from countries like Germany and Austria saw very little differences. Similarly, the respondents from other culturally and geographically close-by countries to Italy, such as Spain and France, mentioned the vast availability of pizza’s much like in Italy, but also noted the equal presence of other types of pizzas with other ingredients too. Moving on to respondents from countries further afield, the differences between pizza at home versus in Italy were more evident. As many mentioned that generally pizza’s in their home countries are dominated by big pizza chains such as Pizza Hut and Dominos, who do a different style of pizza
versus that of pizzeria’s in Italy. As such, the difference was also starker and more widespread, although many did mention that if one really goes out of their way and searches, pizza’s like that in Italy can also be found in their home countries. This can be explained using the cultural and geographic distances as analysed by Ghemawatt (2001). Additionally, when asked whether they had realised when in Italy that Italians don’t use certain ingredients on their pizza, for the most part (with regards to most of the ingredients) the answer was basically a ‘yes’. With regards to this, for many especially those from Europe (particularly those from geographically closer countries) seemed to already either have a clear or at least some understanding and idea of what an authentic Italian pizza was and what it looked like beforehand. However, for many, before visiting Italy, especially for the most part those from outside of Europe, seemed to have very little idea and understanding of what an authentic Italian pizza even looked like, how it was made, what it consisted of or just simply how it was even different to the other pizzas which they were used to eating. Therefore, from this it can also be drawn that for many the type of pizza’s which they have grown up eating and thus are used to consuming can be very different to start with and thus affect their consumption behaviour and perception of pizza. Much of this may again be put down the cultural and geographic distances between the countries.

Thirdly, all the interviewees, at least for the most part after their visit to Italy and experiencing the Italian cultural lifestyle in the consumption of pizza, seemed to pick-up on knowledge of what authentic Italian pizza are like and the Italian concept of pizza. From this a few common points of difference where mentioned: The most standout being the base of the pizza, where many said it was thinner and of different texture than at home. The minimalist nature of pizzas in Italy was also picked upon by many, with statements such as ‘I noticed that they put very few toppings, on their pizza.’ and ‘they like to keep it simple and pure’. In addition, the differences in quality and taste of the ingredients were also picked upon by many with many stating that the Italian tomato sauce had more flavour and that the mozzarella tasted different from that they have always had. For one respondent, the difference in lifestyle and the concept around the consumption of pizza was also noticed between Italy and her home country, China. For instance, ‘In China, pizzas are generally very big in size and therefore, two or three people share one pizza. In Italy, instead, everyone consumed one pizza and that it was not common to see people sharing their pizza.’.

Finally, regarding the changes in the respondent’s consumption as a result of the exposure to an authentic cultural lifestyle of pizza consumption in Italy a few common changes were stated. For many, their idea and preference regarding the number of toppings placed onto a pizza changed,
with many now claiming to place and preferring to usually place less toppings on their pizzas after having been to Italy. Another common theme of change comes in the form of the respondent’s knowledge of pizza being broadened and also their consumptions to some extent. As many now distinguish the two types of pizza, the authentic and non-authentic, with statements such as: ‘I still prefer my Indianised pizzas, but now I do like to have an authentic Italian one once in a while’ and ‘My consumption behaviour changed in the sense that I order much lighter pizza (pizza with less toppings) more often, 1 out of 3 times I would say now, before it was like 1 out of 6-7 times’. This change however cannot always be generalised to be towards a more sacred consumption, as although the number of toppings placed on average may have decreased for people, the usage of the toppings defined to be profane may remain unchanged, for example: ‘I now prefer pizzas that are more minimalist, but regardless of topping, I still put whatever topping I like, but just less now.’. This was also a common response from many respondents, where even if they expressed the earlier change, very little if any change was usually made with regards to the usage and consumption of profane ingredients. There was also a small group of people, who basically saw no change or almost no change in their consumption behaviour of pizza after their exposure to the authentic cultural lifestyle of pizza consumption in Italy. As such, when it came to a complete change in consumption from the profane to the sacred, only one respondent can be said to have done so. Only one respondent, before having stayed in Italy for some months used to eat pizza which could be considered as being profane, but now has completely stopped practising any form of the profane consumption and has completely shifted to the authentic form of consumption and cultural lifestyle surrounding pizza.

Discussion

Consumption Behaviour

As many already followed a more sacred consumption behaviour than others to start with, we will seek to visualise and understand these changes. In order to achieve this and understand the degree of change, the actual consumption behaviour before visiting Italy and after visiting will be compared. Here as such the respondents are also grouped into three categories of absolute behaviour of before and after:
1. Profane consumption behaviour. As based on our earlier definitions of sacred and profane, any regular consumption of one or many of the stated profane ingredients would place a respondent in this group.

2. Mild profane consumption behaviour, which in the grand scheme of things is also considered as being profane. However, it has been shown as such to account for cases such as the occasional use of a single profane ingredient, but otherwise mostly following a sacred consumption behaviour at most times. This category was decided to be created in order to create a difference with respondents who always or mostly consume profane pizza’s to those who either try to avoid profane pizza’s or actually prefer the sacred and therefore the vast majority of times consume the sacred pizza, with rare occurrences where they may consume a profane pizza, usually with just a single profane ingredient.

3. Sacred consumption behaviour. In this category, the respondent is said to follow a fully sacred pizza consumption, in line with the authentic pizza consumption in Italy and like Italians in this category. Additionally, they must hold onto the sacred consumption behaviour at all times and never drift into having the profane, not even occasionally.

Furthermore, the consumption behaviours were grouped into three categories, rather than a more technical and stricter two category system, to show a path to the sacred consumption behaviour from the profane consumption behaviour.
Figure 2: Respondents' consumption behaviour before their visit to Italy.
As shown in figures 2 and 3 above, nearly half of the respondents had some change in behaviour, more on which will be analysed later.

### Consumption Changes

Based on the earlier sections, it is already evident that a vast majority of people were influenced in at-least some way by their exposure to the authentic cultural lifestyle of pizza consumption in Italy. However, these changes are to varying scales, many of which can simply be categorised as being simple changes in perception of pizza, rather than significant changes in consumption. As such, for this thesis we have decided to group the respondents into four categories of change:

1. No change in consumption behaviour, here awareness and perception of the authentic may have increased, but with no real change in consumption behaviour. Further, regardless of the sacred and profane, the respondent’s behaviour here can be said to have had no change with regards to their own consumption of pizza, before and after their visit to Italy.
2. Some change in consumption behaviour, here certain behaviours may have changed or consumption as a whole may have changed. Thus, for example, the consumption behaviour for the most part may have remained the same as before, but now there may be instances where the sacred is consumed or sought after, which may have not been the case before.

3. Moderate change in consumption behaviour, here the changes could be much larger and perhaps barring an ingredient or two, here and there, they may be following a sacred consumption most of the time, where-as they did not before.

4. Complete change in consumption behaviour, here the change has to have been form a profane consumption behaviour to what can now be classified as a sacred consumption behaviour.

These changes are based on the respondents answers and the absolute behaviours before and after their visit to Italy, as shown in the above section. From these behavioural graphs, the following degrees of change were observed, as shown in Figure 4 below.

![Figure 4: Changes in consumption behaviour.](image)
Additionally, based on our interviews and as also already used to present our findings, one important factor identified was geographic and cultural distance from Italy as it seemed to play a striking role in the respondent’s starting positions in both behaviour and knowledge. As from our findings, an element of sacredness identified by Belk that could be related to pizza consumption is ritual. Indeed, conversely to consumption rituals typical of some countries such as China, where a respondent said that pizza is shared among friends; in Italy everyone eats their own pizza and are not usually willing to share it with anyone else. Another element of the pizza ritual is the usage of hands: a respondent has indeed mentioned that the real consumption of pizza happens with hands, and all the other participants at the pizzata strongly agreed with them. Furthermore, based on our findings from both the pizzate and interviews, we have seen that the authentic kind of pizza is that without profane ingredients such as the Margherita. Even if Grayson (2002) claimed that consumers view authenticity in different ways as its assessment depends the perspective taken, our results show that when somebody who used to consume pizza in a profane way experiences the sacred way of consumption, they recognise what the authentic pizza is. In regard to this, one of the interviewees when talking about how their experience in Italy had an impact on his pizza consumption behaviour said “I'm more interested in looking for authentic Italian pizza than before”. By using these words, they are clearly showing that they recognise what the authentic pizza is and that their comprehension of it has changed. Therefore, there is quite a common understanding of the differences between general pizzas found elsewhere, and the Italian ones. Here the Italian variants are generally recognised to be the authentic versions, as they represent the transmission through time of a tradition and it is what Italians describe as the essence or core of their customs (Handler, 1986).
Given that the respondents, had different amounts of time that they spent in Italy as shown in figure 5, on a closer look at the findings, the role of time spent in Italy on behaviour changes also becomes more apparent and clearer. As such two out of three respondents who changed to the sacred consumption behaviour stayed in Italy for longer than 3 months. Additionally, the third respondent spent two and a half months in Italy, also fringing on the separation. Further, the third respondent also came from a very culturally and geographically close country to Italy in France. Finally, the other two respondents who made a complete change, did not come from a culturally or geographically close country, however in addition to their longer times spent in Italy, it can be inferred from their responses that they had a greater exposure to local customs through Italians who practise the sacred form of pizza consumption. Therefore, time alone is not the only influencing factor and other factors mentioned before led us to the four key factors that influence this change from the profane to the sacred as a result of exposure to a different cultural lifestyle and thus help answer our research question and as modelled in figure 6 below, they are: time spent in Italy (thus exposure time to the new cultural lifestyle), the degree of cultural immersion, the starting position and awareness of the sacred.
Figure 6: The key identified factors influencing the change from the profane to the sacred.

Figure 6 shows the four factors that influence changes in consumption habits: Time, starting point, awareness of the sacred, and degree of cultural immersion. For what concerns time, it means that the longer the person who adopts a profane consumption is exposed to the sacred one, the higher the probabilities of a shift in consumption behaviour. Nonetheless, this does not refer to the degree of change but simply to changes in consumption behaviour. Indeed, our results showed that almost everyone who “lived Italy” for more than three months had changes in their consumption behaviour, even if slightly, whereas those people who experienced Italy for less than three months appeared to be more reluctant to change. However, experiencing for a long time the country where the sacred consumption is common is not enough to have changes in consumption behaviour. The degree of cultural immersion, which regards how the experience has been lived, plays an extremely important role too. Many respondents have said that people who they were surrounded by have significantly influenced their consumption behaviour; “I used to go for a pizza almost every week and he was really insisting in making me eat the authentic pizza, explaining to me the story and the tradition behind it” said a respondent, demonstrating the importance of her boyfriend’s influence in her change in consumption behaviour. In regards to this, mostly partners and friends, by explaining the importance of respecting the authentic pizza consumption, acted as promoters of the sacred pizza embodying the Italian culture and tradition. Moreover, the starting point, which refers to the perception of pizza before visiting Italy, influences
the shift in consumption behaviour. The closer it is to the sacred consumption behaviour, the higher the chances of any change and the change to the sacred consumption behaviour. Among the respondents, those who considered pizza more than just a food before visiting Italy experienced more changes than those who did not. Nonetheless, it is not only about the actual starting point in terms of perception, but also the awareness of the sacred. Indeed, it can be concluded that people from countries that are further away from Italy are less likely to be aware of the authentic Italian pizza and in this sense, cultural distance affects the awareness of the sacred. Having been used to a very different kind of pizza consumption for a very long time and not being aware of what the sacred consumption is, are factors that negatively impact the probabilities of a shift in behaviour.

Therefore, this model explains the factors that lead/ hinder changes in consumption behaviour, thus filling the gap in the literature that we wanted to address. Indeed, no previous research has analysed the interaction between the two kinds of consumption, the sacred and the profane, along with what factors in a cultural experience may lead to changes in consumption behaviour. Specifically, as in this case the shift from the sacred behaviour to the profane one. Finally, four factors have been identified as determinants of changes in consumption behaviour, which pave the way to the formation of new niche markets. Indeed, different interviewees who switched consumption behaviour from the profane to the mild-profane stated that the reason why they have not had a total shift to the sacred consumption behaviour was the lack of availability of authentic ingredients in their home countries’ markets. This further highlights, the great potential demand for such products in other countries, thus a great gap in the market waiting to be tapped. More broadly this also leaves room for other such markets gaps to be identified, that may have arisen due to exposures to different cultural lifestyles, across countries and industries.

As we already stated in the literature review, within the subcultures of consumption it is typical of experienced members to explain the origins, history and importance of the consumption to new members. The meaning attributed to the consumption of pizza is therefore clarified and pointed out, the authentic way of consuming it is considered as sacred because it represents the authentic pizza from its place of origin, Naples, the city where pizza is from and thus, more broadly the country of origin in Italy. Analysing the results from our interviews, almost every person who reported to have a tight relationship with Italians (hence, the experienced members of the subculture of consumption) had at least a small change in consumption behaviour and they seem to have better understood the Italian perspective on pizza. "My Italian friends stressed to me so
much the mozzarella, tomato and basil combination, that I ended up loving it and I understood their perspective” have been the words said by an interviewee, where he clearly showed his change in perspective due to his Italian friends’ influence. In some other cases, even if there has not been a concrete change in consumption behaviour, the perception did shift. For instance, when asked whether the consumption behaviour has somehow changed, a respondent stated “I keep putting chorizo and chicken. However, it’s only because often times I don’t have other choices”. Therefore, this interviewee’s attitude towards pizza has changed and his behaviour would change too if authentic offering were available in his home country. The stress on the concepts of authenticity of the pizza and country of origin is extremely recurrent within the subculture of pizza consumption and it is one of the main factors that leads to shifts in consumption behaviour.

Finally, to sum up, these four factors are interlinked and they all have an impact on the changes or the lack of changes that occur in consumption behaviour. In different cases, the time of cultural exposure has been the main factor influencing consumption patterns, but this was not always the case. As indeed, two interviewees who lived in Italy for more than three months did not change their consumption behaviour nor their perception. In these two cases, the lower degree of cultural immersion, the lower acceptance of the sacred and a very different initial perception of pizza acted as constraints for a change in consumption behaviour, thus highlighting the importance of the varying factors in such a shift. Moreover, from our results, four people who stayed in Italy for less than three months had an ending sacred consumption behaviour. The reason for this lies in the higher awareness of the sacred and an initial perception of pizza that was extremely close to the Italian one, due to the low cultural distance between their home country and Italy. As in most of these cases, the initial consumption behaviour could already be regarded as being sacred. Conversely, in two cases, people with low awareness of the sacred and initial perception of pizza that was the exact opposite of that of the Italian culture had a complete shift towards the sacred consumption. This huge change happened thanks to a prolonged period of time spent in Italy and a high degree of cultural immersion, indeed both of them spent more than three months in Italy and were surrounded by Italians, friends on one hand and a partner on the other, who acted as promoters.
Limitations and Future Research

Our research has many limitations due to various reasons and thus here we seek to highlight them as a means for providing a pathway for future research into the area. Firstly, due to the difficulty in finding diverse respondents who have lived in Italy while just sitting in Uppsala and due to time constraints for this thesis, only 20 people were interview for our research. This leaves much room for conducting a much larger global study.

Secondly, in our research only two timespans have been considered: zero to three months and three months plus. However, as already demonstrated that time is a crucial factor when analysing changes in consumption habits, much room is left for further research consisting of respondents with more varying time spans of stay. Along with the big gap of much longer-term visitors to Italy, such as those who stayed there for some years.

Thirdly, while in Italy, the social groups people stayed around and how often they had pizza, along with where in Italy they stayed are all also perhaps influencing factors in their behaviour and change in behaviour when it comes to pizza consumption. As such, they may also be accounted for and analysed in future research.

Fourthly, our research was conducted using the specific example of pizza consumption as part of food consumption in general. However, it was only an example and further research exploring other food items can also be conducted. For instance, coffee consumption is considered as sacred in different countries such as Sweden and Greece and in this case, an analysis concerning how consumption habits change after experiencing the Swedish/Greek coffee could also be of interest. Additionally, research utilising many of the analysis from this thesis may also be used and expanded upon in other areas not related to food consumption too.

Fifthly, as our research focuses on the transition from profane to the sacred, the converse may also be researched into.

Sixthly, more research with a bigger sample may be conducted to look deeper in the effects of psychic and geographic distance.
Conclusion

In order to answer our research question of the impacts on consumer behaviour as a result of exposure to different cultural lifestyles, the example of pizza was taken as a case study. From here, the research was grounded on the theories of the sacred and profane (Belk et al. 1989; 2013), authenticity (Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Leigh et al., 2006), country of origin (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999), the subcultures of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995) and cultural distance (Imm Ng et al., 2007; Shenkar, 2001). Many of these theories can be said to be interlinked, as something, pizza in this case, from the country of origin can be said to be authentic and then based on our definition the authentic can said to be sacred. Further, the authentic way of doing things, in this case, the consumption of pizza in the country of origin can be defined as being a subculture of the sacred consumption. From all this, a gap in the literature in relation to our research was identified, as many previous works spoke of the concepts of the sacred and profane, along with relating it to various other products and services. However, research into the transition from the sacred to the profane or vice versa was found to be lacking, as was research into these concepts in relation to food items. Therefore, our thesis sought to add to the research in these areas, with the focus on the transition from the profane to the sacred and not vice versa due to time constraints. Here, the theories of cultural distance were used to ground theoretical aspects of this change and as potential factors influencing this transition. Some of which were then also used to answer or rather explain the key components of our research question, in providing factors that played a role on the impacts on consumer behaviour as a result of exposure to a different cultural lifestyle regarding pizza consumption in Italy.

In order to achieve this, a two phased research was carried out, consisting of semi-structured discussions during the pizzate, followed by structured interviews. The findings from the pizzate, helped address the first research gap in the formation of the definitions of the sacred and the profane with regards to our case study of pizza consumption. Next, based on the interviews, the impacts of exposure to a different cultural lifestyle for the respondents were simply laid out to us. However, in order to turn this information into valuable insights, the other research gap in the transition from the profane to the sacred was centralised in our analysis. Therefore, based on this, four key factors were identified and modelled as impacting this change from the profane to the sacred consumption behaviour. These can be noted down as being: Time spent in the alternate cultural lifestyle, Italy in this case; Starting point, the initial consumption behaviour of pizza;
Awareness of the sacred, therefore awareness of the authentic style of pizza; Degree of cultural immersion, how involved was the person in the subculture of consumption of pizza in Italy during their time there. Finally, based on our final model, assistance may be provided in explaining the factors that impacted change or lack of in consumer behaviour after exposure to a different cultural lifestyle.
References


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Appendix

Pizzata Questions

1. What is pizza to you?
3. Show a picture*. what do you think of this pizza? → What do you think of those who consume it? Have you tried it? If not, would you ever consume it? If yes, what do you think?

*A picture of the Margherita pizza will be shown to the group of profane pizza consumers; A picture of the Hawaii pizza will be shown to the group of sacred pizza consumers.

Interview Questions

Note: The interviewees will first be asked whether they have ever been to Italy or not and if they consumed pizza while they were there and also beforehand in their home country. If the answer is no to any of these parts, the interview does not go ahead and therefore it is also not recorded.

1. How long were you in Italy for?
2. Where do you come from?
3. What sorts of pizza did you eat before going to Italy? Did you put toppings such as fruit, chicken, shrimps, fish, spices and sauces?
4. Do you think that there were differences in the pizza in Italy versus your home country? If so what and how?
5. Did you realise that Italians didn’t put the toppings mentioned before on their pizza?
6. Considering that you have experienced the authentic version of pizza, now after leaving Italy do you still put such toppings on your pizza?
7. Following up on the earlier question, did your consumption behaviour change in any way after visiting Italy? If yes, how and why?