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## **A hands-on framework for the design and implementation of plant-based food experiences**

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### **Abstract**

This chapter presents how to promote plant-based food consumption as both an ordinary and extraordinary experience. Studies on social, sustainability and experiential marketing are reviewed, and two cases in Arctic Norway are investigated that highlight the plant-based eating challenges of limited local production of vegetables and a dominant animal-based food culture. The cases concern a non-profit organisation promoting plant-based eating and a company that offers flexitarian luxury meals. A collaborative research approach is adopted, as two of this chapter's authors are key persons in such organisations' activities. The insights gleaned from the literature review and the cases are used to develop a hands-on framework for the design and implementation of ordinary and extraordinary plant-based food experiences for practitioners.

Keywords: plant-based food, social marketing, sustainability marketing, experiential marketing

## INTRODUCTION

A social marketing approach is useful for promoting changes in eating habits. Social marketing consists in the adaptation of commercial marketing principles and tools to influence the voluntary behaviour of individuals and communities and thereby improve personal and societal welfare (Andreasen, 1994; Henley et al., 2011; Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). An example of a social marketing campaign relevant to plant-based consumption is *Veganuary*, which challenges people to adopt a vegan diet through a 31-day pledge and provides them with relevant nutritional information and practical solutions such as recipes, lists of restaurants and celebrity cookbooks (Diaz et al., 2021). Bogueva et al. (2018) presented numerous international case studies on social marketing and meat consumption reduction. Similarly, Marinova and Bogueva (2022) described social marketing as a valuable way to address the food-related planetary emergency. Due to the emphasis of social marketing campaigns on information and education, they are particularly important in contexts where knowledge and skills related to plant-based food need to be updated.

While social marketing approaches tend to promote plant-based diets as ordinary experiences, framing such diets as extraordinary experiences can also be useful. Experiences such as dining out or eating while on vacation can be inspiring and can counter possible food scepticism and neophobia. Restaurants offering plant-based options in their menu and luxury restaurants exclusively serving plant-based cuisine are on the rise, as shown by the 11 meat-free restaurants with Michelin stars (Guide Michelin, 2022). Regarding tasting plant-based food while on vacation, recent studies have explored vegan food tourism (e.g., Fusté-Forné, 2021). Bertella (2020a) argued that plant-based food tourism experiences have the potential to promote more sustainable and healthy lifestyles. Extraordinary experiences at restaurants and/or during a vacation can make the plant-based food experience novel yet safe and make changing eating habits a more attractive choice.

This study argues that a major shift towards plant-based diets requires a focus on both ordinary food experiences, such as canteen meals, and extraordinary food experiences, such as dining out. The aim of this study is to develop a hands-on framework of how to design and implement ordinary and extraordinary plant-based food experiences. This framework is based on studies on social, sustainability and experiential marketing, which are presented in the following theoretical section, The framework is also based on empirical insights from two cases in the challenging

context of an Arctic town, Tromsø in Norway. The method used for the empirical investigation was based on collaboration between an academic and two practitioners. Such method is described after the theoretical section. Then the section that follows discusses the cases and closes with the presentation of the framework for the design and implementation of plant-based food experiences. The chapter ends by commenting on the study's contributions and indicating future research directions.

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

This section describes this study's theoretical perspective on plant-based food consumption. It starts with some reflections on the complexity of plant-based food consumption, namely, its main dimensions concerning engagement, well-being and realms. Then, the need for overarching strategies for promoting plant-based food experiences is presented and finally, marketing strategies and tactics are discussed.

### **Main dimensions of plant-based food consumption**

Eating is an activity that people engage in physically, emotionally and cognitively. Obviously, when people choose to eat a plant-based meal, they must engage in it physically. Beyond the physical, however, food consumption—whether ordinary or extraordinary—can have a strong emotional, symbolic, and social value, and therefore, is often depicted as an *experience* (i.e., a personal occurrence of significant relevance; Steffen & Doppler, 2020). Examples of food consumption as an experience can be family meals, meals at school canteens, restaurant visits, food festivals and dinner parties. Eating can also imply emotional and cognitive engagement due to possible feelings and reasoning concerning, for example, the consumer's personal health, the natural environment and animal welfare, which are among the main motivations for plant-based eating. Thus, plant-based food experiences are characterised by multidimensional engagement.

Plant-based eating is further considered complex because of its hedonic and eudaimonic dimensions (e.g., Bertella, 2020b; Jallinoja et al., 2020). *Hedonism* refers to well-being that is understood as immediate pleasure and personal fulfilment. Thus, it plays an important role in the food context. The more important determinants of food experiences as hedonic experiences are taste and sensory, aestheticism, symbolism, memory and nostalgia, socialisation, sharing and storytelling (Batat, 2019). Food experiences can also be related to *eudaemonia*, which refers to well-being as human fulfilment of the need to experience meaning for ourselves and others (Mugel et al., 2019). This is the case in ethical eating, which involves our selection of the food we eat based on our ethical position in relation to issues such as animal welfare and environmentalism.

Multidimensionality can also be related to the four experiential realms presented in the oft-cited book *The Experience Economy* by Pine and Gilmore: entertainment, education, aesthetics and escapism. These realms are commented on in relation to food in some studies, for example, on food authenticity, dining out and tourism (Beer, 2008; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019; Kim & Jang, 2016). Such experiential dimensions develop in the physical and social places where the food is consumed, sometimes referred to as *experiencescape* (Mossberg & Eide, 2017). They can weigh differently in terms of the overall satisfaction and willingness to repeat the plant-based experience to the extent that the plant-based diet becomes a regular diet. This study argues that plant-based eating can be promoted by framing it both as an ordinary experience and an extraordinary experience, and that to do so, an overarching strategy and marketing strategies and tactics can be adopted.

### **Overarching strategies**

To navigate the complex landscape of plant-based food consumption and promote a shift towards ‘greener’ diets, some overarching strategies are needed. International and national dietary guidelines (e.g., Willett et al., 2021; World Health Organization, 2019) inform, frame and give credibility to possible overarching strategies for the promotion of plant-based food consumption. An example of such overarching strategies is the 5 *O*s governance framework of Vinnari and Vinnari (2014), which comprises the fundamental steps towards change: setting achievable objectives; identifying obstacles, options and opportunities; and measuring outcomes. This framework implies the need for collaboration among

various actors, as exemplified in the establishment of a dedicated commission for dialogues among the government, market actors and civil society (Vinnari & Vinnari, 2014) and in the Dutch multi-stakeholder platform *Green Protein Alliance* (Tziva et al., 2020).

Graça et al. (2019) discussed overarching strategies such as that of Vinnari and Vinnari (2014) and commented on more operational initiatives. They based most of their considerations on the *Behaviour Change Wheel* (Michie et al. 2014). They also acknowledged the need for supportive policies by discussing possible interventions focused on capabilities, opportunities and motivations, such as building food knowledge and skills (for *capabilities*), and sociotechnical restructuring (e.g., change of food display), education and communication campaigns, and incentivisation (e.g., rewards; for *opportunities* and *motivations*). The considerations of Vinnari and Vinnari (2014) and Graça et al. (2019) resonated with the findings in other studies on how to face the challenges of adopting plant-based diets (e.g., Corrin & Papadopoulos, 2017; Lentz et al., 2018). In conclusion, many studies have argued for the need to approach dietary changes by applying a strategic systemic and integrated approach framed in a specific political and sociocultural environment.

### **Tactics identified in the social, sustainability and experiential marketing literature**

Expanding on the initiatives related to capabilities, opportunities and motivations that Graça et al. (2019) discussed, social marketing studies have identified various tactics for promoting behavioural change. Among the identified crucial tactics, three are particularly important: (1) the development of information materials and resources, (2) interventions in the environments where food choices occur and (3) framing the issue of changing eating habits in acceptable and attractive ways. The development of information materials and resources can serve both an educational purpose (e.g., by divulging nutritional values) and a practical purpose (e.g., by featuring recipes). Access to such information is important to build the capabilities of both professionals and laypeople, and to motivate them to choose and, most importantly, adopt maintain a plant-based diet. Some studies—for example, by de Visser et al. (2021)—observed that for behaviour changes beyond the usually limited time of a campaign,

it is essential to provide good information materials. The educational dimension and the practical aspect of food experience in plant-based diet campaigns are considered essential to achieving a long-term effect.

The key tactics concerning the environment where food choices occur and the framing of the plant-based food issue are related to the sociotechnical restructuring approaches discussed by Graça et al. (2019). They are often referred to as *nudging interventions* because they manipulate the food choice architecture, which is how food decisions are made in the specific environment where they occur (Bucher et al., 2016). Some recent review articles presented a comprehensive overview of possible nudges in various contexts (Bianchi et al., 2018a, 2018b; Harguess et al., 2020; Kwasny et al., 2022). All such nudges are meant to increase the ease and convenience of making the desired choice. The main types of such nudges are: (1) priming nudges (the use of subconscious cues); (2) ego nudges (e.g., public pledges); and (3) messenger nudges (the use of prominent people to communicate the desired choice) (Cesareo et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2016). Among the priming nudges is naming the food, as a name can provoke subconscious associations relevant to the proposed food (Faber et al., 2020; Westling et al., 2022). For example, Faber et al. (2020) observed that among young adults (18–30 years) from various countries, the term *plant-based* is preferred to *vegetarian* and *vegan*, which, especially *vegan*, are perceived as food that is *not tasty* and a person who is judgmental and extreme (e.g., Cole, 2008; Twine, 2014).

Moreover, naming contributes to the way in which the issue about changing eating habits is framed, which is the third key tactic in literature and is also related to the information aspect. Faber et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of providing adequate information on the personal, societal and environmental benefits of plant-based food choices. The emphasis put on one benefit instead of another influences whether the issue of food choices is viewed as primarily hedonic, driven by personal health, or ethically or politically motivated. Some studies suggested that emphasising the personal health benefits can be opportune, together with leveraging the environmental and ethical orientations, sensorial pleasure and possible feelings of social belonging (e.g., Graça et al., 2022; Parkinson et al., 2019). The latter, for example, can be encouraged through ego nudges such as social media pledges, as in the case of the *Veganuary* campaign mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. It is important to

specify that the use of some nudges does not exclude the use of others. Furthermore, it is recommended that each intervention be tailored to the specific context and combine the methods and tools that are more likely to be effective.

Many social marketing studies are undergone in the context of schools and universities, which are ordinary contexts where daily meals occur (e.g., Kurz, 2018; Spencer, 2021). As stated in Chapter 13 of this book (Dagevos et al., 2022), only recently did some studies (e.g., de Vaan et al., 2019) adopt an approach that can be related to social marketing for food consumption in extraordinary contexts, such as in restaurants and cafés. Such studies adopted often nudging interventions to study the promotion of specific food behaviour, such as the choice of healthy and/or sustainable plant-based diets with reduced food waste (e.g., Dolnicar, 2020; Filimonau et al., 2017; Kaljonen et al., 2020). In most cases, those approaches were referred to not as social marketing but as *sustainability marketing*, with strong emphasis on the consumption of plant-based food as a pro-environment behaviour.

To further explore extraordinary plant-based food consumption, consulting experiential marketing literature is particularly useful. In such literature, the framing aspect is broadly discussed, often with reference to one of the main design principles of Pine and Gilmore (1999), namely, the choice of a theme. Their other principles, which are the use of cues and sensorial stimulation, can be related to priming nudges, and the element of memorabilia can be related to the provision of educational and practical information materials. Focusing on food experiences, other relevant elements that are common to social and experiential marketing literature are taste, nutritional value and food appearance (e.g., Andersson & Mossberg, 2004; Gustafsson et al., 2006). Food appearance is particularly highlighted in food design studies, which, for example, use aesthetics, such as colours and balance of the elements on the plate, combined with taste, to create unique, sometimes artistic, coherent or surprising experiences (Michel et al., 2014; Velasco et al., 2016).

The latter example about food appearance shows the attention that some marketing studies on extraordinary food experiences give to aesthetics, which, as mentioned in the introduction, is one of the four realms identified by Pine and Gilmore (1999). In experiential marketing literature, in addition to the aesthetics of the food, the lighting, ambience, dining equipment, service quality, employees and customer–employee interactions are also identified as relevant characteristics (e.g., Andersson & Mossberg, 2004; Ryu & Jang, 2008). Regarding the social dimension of food

experiences, a trend observed in the last two decades concerns cooking classes, whether arranged for the generic public or for tourists (Levy & Auld, 2004; Yoo et al., 2022). Another trend that is influencing extraordinary food experiences is the use of high-profile and celebrity chefs, who are sometimes the main attractions of luxury restaurants or of fine dining experiences during a vacation (Chen et al., 2017; Morgan & Edwards, 2011). The chefs can have various functions across the experiential realms: they can be educators and entertainers, besides adding an aesthetic touch to the experience and, especially in the case of the celebrity chefs, also an element of escapism. Thus, although the social and experiential marketing literature have several commonalities, they differ in that the latter pays more attention to some elements that, although recognised in the former as important, are not particularly explored there.

While several studies from the social marketing literature concerned plant-based eating, few of the studies in the marketing literature that adopted an experiential perspective on food consumption were on plant-based food. Some studies suggested that the satisfaction with experiences at vegetarian and vegan restaurants depends on some of the same aspects that are central to generic dining-out experiences, particularly, food quality and the aesthetics of the food and the environment (Cagnina et al., 2017; Cheng et al., 2014). Among such studies, that of Bertella (2020c) used the framework of Pine and Gilmore to design a dining experience in a vegan café and found that the competence of the employees, including the educational role of the front-line employees and the chefs' competence, is important. Additionally, the vegan food experience at this specific café was found to have been framed in hedonic terms (taste, aesthetics and health), unlike at the restaurant that Gvion (2021) investigated where, in addition to health, environmentalism was the focus. This suggests that the theme that frames plant-based food experiences can vary. This was also confirmed by studies that linked plant-based food consumption to wellness and spirituality experiences in the tourism context (e.g., Dilletta et al., 2021). Within such thematic variety, it is important to note that some experiences, including those concerning plant-based food, target different dieters, which can be challenging. For example, Bertella (2018) reflected on the acceptability of some animal-derived food traditions to ethical vegans and vegetarians.

## METHOD

To develop a framework for the promotion of plant-based food consumption as ordinary and extraordinary experiences, a case study strategy is adopted because plant-based diets are context-specific, as they depend heavily on environmental and socio-cultural aspects (Tuomisto, 2019; Willett et al., 2019). Undeniably, the feasibility of plant-based diets can be challenging in some contexts due to possible limitations in the local production of plant-based ingredients and, consequently, due to a gastronomical heritage that is heavily dependent on animal-derived ingredients. Considering that important lessons can be learned from particularly challenging and even extreme situations, this study focuses on plant-based food consumption in the Arctic town of Tromsø in Norway. Two cases within such context are investigated to gain insights on ordinary and extraordinary plant-based food experiences. The cases concern the non-profit organisation *Grønn Framtid* (Green Future) and the company *Vulkana*.

The academic author of this chapter contacted two individuals who were identified as key persons working in relevant projects in the selected organisations, *Grønn Framtid* and *Vulkana*. She invited them to collaborate with her on this study, asking for their availability to provide information and to co-author parts of this chapter. Such approach is a form of collaborative research that is suitable for bridging the academia–industry–community gaps and has the potential to link like-minded people belonging to different sectors to ultimately co-create actionable knowledge (Eikeland, 2012). This approach was chosen due to this study’s aim of developing a framework that is theoretically solid and practically useful.

Data relevant to plant-based food consumption in Norway and, more specifically, in Tromsø were collected through desk research. The main data sources were the website of the Norwegian Health Department, the report on a health survey conducted recently by the local university in Tromsø and three publications by relevant research institutes (Nibio, Nofima and SIFO). In addition to the authors’ own experience as a long-time residents of Tromsø, important sources of information on the diffusion and perception of plant-based food were a study on veganism in Tromsø (Bertella, 2020b), the food magazine *Smak* (Taste), two tourism-related websites (of a research project and of the regional tourism board) and the *HappyCow* website, which is dedicated to vegan- and vegetarian-friendly restaurants and cafés worldwide.

Information on *Grønn Framtid* and *Vulkana* were provided by the two authors who were directly involved in such organisations. The academic author conducted two semi-structured interviews on the organisations' activities relevant to plant-based food. More precisely, the data were collected on aspects that could be related to the discussed strategies and tactics: collaboration of various actors at different levels; the strategic plan, from the identification of objectives to the measurement of the outcomes of interventions; knowledge-building initiatives; interventions on the food and the experiencescape; nudging interventions; social interactions; and information and communication materials or memorabilia. This process resulted in the first version of the framework, which was further developed through discussion among the three authors.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

After a part dedicated to the description of the context, the two cases are described in this section, and lessons are discussed with reference to the theoretical contributions presented in the first part of the chapter. This section closes with the presentation of a hands-on framework for ordinary and extraordinary plant-based food experiences.

### **The northern Norwegian town of Tromsø**

It was only recently that a debate on plant-based food production and consumption emerged in Norway. In response to the climate change and food security challenges, some recent reports highlighted the potential and the need to redirect the national agricultural efforts from food for livestock to food for humans (Mittenzwei et al., 2020; Prexl & Gonera, 2020). Health concerns play an important role in the debate on animal-derived and plant-based food (Smak, 2021). The current Norwegian Dietary Guidelines by the Norwegian Directorate of Health (2015, p. 2) recommend adopting a diet 'with lots of vegetables, fruit and berries, whole-grain foods and fish, and limited amounts of processed meat, red meat (...)' and 'Eat[ing] at least five portions of vegetables, fruit and berries every day'. This emphasis on plant-based food can also be noted in

the still limited but increasing number of plant-based dieters who are mainly health-motivated flexitarians living in urban centres (Bugge & Alfnes, 2018).

Tromsø is a town of approximately 77,000 inhabitants (Ssb, 2022) above the Arctic circle. Fish is the core element of the local gastronomic heritage, as shown in the information on the region by the national travel board and related research projects (Innovative Opplevelser, 2022; Visit Northern Norway, 2022). Although vegetarianism and veganism are uncommon (Bertella, 2020b), plant-based eating is gaining some popularity. The HappyCow website shows that in Tromsø, 24 restaurants and cafés offer vegetarian- or vegan-friendly options (HappyCow, 2022), of which a café and two street-food vendors serve only vegan food and beverages. Plant-based food events are arranged sporadically by local associations, such as the *Veggie Dinner and Music Meditation* event of Tromsø Meditation & Yoga (1 May 2022) and the annual *Vegetarian Festival* by the non-profit association *Grønn Framtid*. Despite this increasing interest in plant-based food, the level of plant-based eating among the Tromsø residents is far from satisfactory. A survey by the local university that involved 20,123 respondents showed that very few people (6%) ate five or more portions of fruits and vegetables, as suggested by the national guidelines (Hopstock et al., 2019). This points out the need to promote both plant-based food consumption in the town and its business potential.

### **Grønn Framtid**

*Grønn Framtid* is a non-profit organisation established in 2016 in Norway. Its vision is “A fair food system – for the people, the animals and the planet” (*GrønnFramtid* website, n.d.). *Grønn Framtid* collaborates with several organisations, such as the Norwegian division of the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Physicians Association for Nutrition, and it is part of the European Vegetarian Union. It does not collaborate with the public sector apart from its sporadic funding of projects. The core of *Grønn Framtid* is constituted by four people and it has more than 50 volunteers who help, regularly or sporadically, arrange and implement the organisation’s campaigns. These people’s backgrounds are highly varied and include knowledge and skills relevant to health, nutrition, cooking, marketing and event management. Its leader is a co-author of this

chapter and is among the main developers and coordinators of its five current campaigns, which are directed towards schools (*Green Canteens*), companies (*Green Companies*) and the public (*Tromsø VegFest*, *Plant Power Challenge* and *Compassion on Campus*). All the campaigns promote plant-based eating as a tasty, easily accessible and nutritionally valid option.

The campaigns directed towards schools and companies are focused on building relevant competences among canteen staff and can result in the certification of the canteens with the *Green Star* ecolabel. The usual procedure of the *Green Canteens* and *Green Companies* campaigns starts with *Grønn Framtid* contacting the schools or companies to propose a meeting, during which a possible collaboration is discussed for including plant-based options in these organisations' canteens. During such meetings, *Grønn Framtid* argues for the opportunity to introduce plant-based meals in the menus based on the potential of such meals in terms of sustainability (less greenhouse gas emissions), taste (delicious food), affordability (cost less than or equal to that of animal-based meals) and nutrition (health benefits). Another aspect that is highlighted by *Grønn Framtid* is that a plant-based diet is particularly inclusive as it offers most of the nutrition needs of dieters for religious purposes and, in some cases, to control allergies. Moreover, *Grønn Framtid* highlights that the adoption of plant-based meals is an opportunity for the canteen staff to update their knowledge, as interest in plant-based food is increasing.

The first activity in *Grønn Framtid*'s lineup is a training session conducted by its food professionals. During the training, canteen staff learn about the benefits of eating more plant-based foods and related communication and marketing, common pitfalls and how to avoid them, as well as plant-based cooking in a very practical setting. *Grønn Framtid*'s chefs and food experts present recipes that are tested together with the canteen personnel (Figure 1). The training is focused on teaching plant-based techniques such as the use of legumes in a tasty way and the use of plant-based alternatives and spices. Such trainings have revealed a low level of competences about plant-based food among the employees and, in some cases, an initial scepticism. Not all the employees are aware of or follow the national dietary guidelines, and several of them have little experience in preparing plant-based meals. In most cases, the scepticism, which often comes from the assumption that plant-based foods taste bland, is only initial; and at the end of the training, positive and even enthusiastic reactions are common.

**FIGURE 1** *Training session with Grønn Framtid*

Shortly after the trainings, the recipes are included in the menus and implemented. Based on experience and studies on food science, *Grønn Framtid* avoids naming the dishes with terms such as *vegetarian*, *vegan*, *plant-based* and *healthy*, and instead, chooses names that appeal explicitly to taste, novelty and fun. For example, a vegan dish based on rice and vegetables, if prepared with exotic spices, can be named *Indian Sweet Potato Curry* instead of *Meatless Alternative*. Regarding the manner of presentation of the plant-based meals, *Grønn Framtid* recommends that they be served with the other dishes. Once the meals are implemented, the results, in terms of how many people chose them and their feedback, are discussed, and *Grønn Framtid* follows up the canteens closely until the menu changes are implemented and well accepted by their customers. *Grønn Framtid*'s experience in the last years has shown that both among schools and within the same school, the attractiveness of a plant-based meal can change considerably depending on the students enrolled in the school/s that year.

The campaigns directed towards the public are a pledge and a festival. The pledge, *Plant Power Challenge*, is similar to the *Veganuary* campaign and disseminates relevant information on plant-based food to people. Such information includes ethical aspects, such as sustainability and animal welfare, as well as the health aspect. An important aspect is practical advice such as recipes, how to prepare tasty plant-based food and where to dine out. The festival, *Tromsø VegFest*, was launched in 2019; and after a break of two years due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the second edition is now being planned. The first edition included various activities, such as a stage program with a presentation on health and nutrition, a talk about environmental choices from a behaviour change perspective, a cooking class with a famous Norwegian vegan blogger, a kid's corner, stands selling food, products and NGOs informing the public about their cause connected to food choices. Unlike the campaigns directed towards schools and companies, the festival included some activities on animal welfare, such as the use of virtual reality devices to allow people to experience the conditions of the animals used in the industrial food system.

Some lessons on the promotion of plant-based eating, particularly, as an ordinary food experience, can be gleaned from the case of *Grønn Framtid*. Such lessons concern mainly communication and collaboration. This case showed that, as suggested by Graça et al. (2019), capability-building initiatives are essential. Also, in line with the Graça et al.'s study, this case highlights the importance of increasing the opportunities and motivation for plant-based consumption. To do so, various nudging strategies are applied (Cesareo et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2016), including

framing and naming (Faber et al., 2020; Westling et al. 2022). Both framing and naming concern communication, and the strategy adopted by *Grønn Framtid* aims to emphasise those aspects considered priorities by the campaigns' target groups (i.e., the canteen personnel and final consumers), which are taste, the economic aspect and the health aspect. It is worth noting that although the animal welfare aspect is particularly important for many of the members of *Grønn Framtid*, most of whom are ethically motivated vegetarians or vegans, such aspect is excluded in campaigns that target companies and canteens. This is done intentionally, as ethical issues can be controversial.

Interestingly, the *Grønn Framtid* case showed that both opportunities and motivations interventions, including the taste aspect, can vary considerably from year to year, especially in schools. Consequently, no intervention can be considered definitive: periodically, new recipes must be developed and tested, and the menus need to be revised and adjusted. This implies a strong commitment by *Grønn Framtid* to conduct follow-ups of its training sessions. As *Grønn Framtid* is a non-profit, there is a risk that its limited resources (finance and time) will hinder its activities and, ultimately, compromise the outcome of its interventions. A solution to such a challenge is a closer collaboration with the public sector. While *Grønn Framtid* does not yet have an overarching strategy to achieve this, as recommended by Vinnari and Vinnari (2014), this might change soon, as it is considering a collaboration with the Tromsø municipality to reduce the town's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, which is in accord with the town's plan, with the explicit move to promote greener meals in public canteens (Tromsø Kommune, 2018: 28). Still on collaboration, the *Grønn Framtid* case can be viewed as a best practice in relation to the engagement of organisations and people with expertise in cooking, nutrition and health. Such collaboration reinsures the eaters about possible health concerns and, in the case of schools, those responsible for them, and gives credibility to the organisation and its activities.

### ***Vulkana***

*Vulkana* is a boat built in 1957 for fishing and whaling along the coasts of northern Norway, the island of Bjørnøya and the Svalbard archipelago. In 2007, the boat was redesigned by the Finnish architect Sami Rintala, who kept some of the traditional features of the boat and included some

modern ones. Among the latter are an outdoor spa, a well-equipped kitchen and an elegant dining area. *Vulkana* has attracted both national and international attention as a unique luxury travel experience (e.g., CNN, 2010); and since 2020, it has been staging a project consisting of a food experience inspired by the British Supper Club formula (i.e., gourmet food for a restricted number of guests). The *Vulkana* Supper Club project (VulkanaSupperClub website, n.d.) focuses on luxury meals prepared with respect for sustainability principles, particularly, upholding food waste reduction, use of local ingredients and limitation of animal-derived food. Within the plant-based landscape, such company's food offerings can be placed close to the pescetarian diet.

To guarantee a quality experience, *Vulkana* engages high-profile chefs selected through the personal and job-related contacts of the project leader, who, besides collaborating with *Vulkana*, is an entrepreneur of a Tromsø-based company that produces *bottarga* using roe sacs of fish that is usually discarded as waste. The engagement of high-profile chefs is essential not only due to their expertise but also because the Tromsø residents feel privileged to meet and interact with internationally acclaimed chefs. Moreover, giving the Tromsø residents the possibility of experiencing such meals is viewed positively from a sustainability perspective due to the reduced carbon footprint of fewer people travelling. On the side of the chefs, they appreciate the opportunity to visit an Arctic town and welcome the challenges of partly reinventing their recipes by prioritising the use of local ingredients.

On the website dedicated to the *Vulkana* Supper Club, the experience is described as follows:

Luxury dining reimagined. The *Vulkana* Supper Club hosts the best of the Nordics and Europe's culinary talents on a monthly basis. Only 12 guests around one single table in the setting of a renovated 1957 old whaling vessel converted into the state-of-the-art of a spa boat. This is not a restaurant ... [it] is a space for conversation, relaxation and cuisine. [It is] a place for people to come together in the intimate environment of a dinner party, create memories and experience unforgettable culinary moments. After dinner, enjoy *Vulkana*'s spa facilities. The sauna, the hot tub and [the] Turkish[-] inspired hamam will be at your complete disposal. Our bar will be open all night long. Relax and enjoy your drink in the zen lounge knowing that you are one of the few people on the planet [who have had] this particular experience. (VulkanaSupperClub website)

The experiential dimensions of the sensorial stimulation, hedonism, sociality and memorability are clearly highlighted, together with the exotic aspects of the Turkish-inspired hamam and the zen lounge.

In Tromsø, many plant-based ingredients are imported, creating some challenges in light of the environmental costs of importing food from abroad, the limited economic benefits to the local communities of the use of imported goods and food security issues. Nonetheless, vegetables have an important role in most of the meals served at the *Vulkana* Supper Club, and foraging is among the activities that the company aims to develop to show the chefs and customers the possibility of relying more on local ingredients. Vegetables contribute to the meals not only in terms of taste but also in relation to the aesthetics, which is a crucial aspect of luxury meals. Some of the chefs explicitly comment on the role of plant-based food in their meals. For example, the two chefs from the *Terra* Restaurant in Copenhagen who were engaged for the June 2022 *Vulkana* Supper Club, Valerio Serio and Lucia De Luca (Figure 2), described their cuisine as tasteful and ‘made of few ingredients, animal proteins reduced to a minimum, conservation techniques and an aesthetic appearance devoted to minimalism’ (VulkanaSupperClub Facebook page, n.d.). Their restaurant is described in the YesWeFood website as an emerging ‘world of sustainable, plant-forward cuisine’ (YesWeFood, n.d.). The chef in charge of the February 2023 *Vulkana* Supper Club is Toni Kostian, executive head chef of the Gron restaurant in Helsinki. This restaurant operates with two menus, one of which consists of 13 courses, all of them entirely plant-based (TheBestChefsAwards, 2021).

**FIGURE 2** *The chefs from the Terra restaurant at Vulkana Supper Club*

The lessons that can be learned from the *Vulkana* case concern plant-based eating as an extraordinary and exclusive experience. The *Vulkana* case confirms the central role played by hedonism, as noted in the broader literature on food experiences (Batat, 2019), and, particularly, the importance of taste, quality and aesthetics, as noted by some previous studies on plant-based dining-out experiences and food design (Bertella, 2020c; Cagnina et al., 2017; Cheng et al., 2014; Michel et al., 2014; Velasco et al., 2016). Particularly important are some aspects of the experiencescape (Mossberg & Eide, 2017), which align with some of the elements indicated in the literature on fine dining and luxury travel (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004; Chen et al., 2017; Morgan & Edwards, 2011; Ryu & Jang, 2008). These elements include a relaxing atmosphere and an elegant environment. The *Vulkana* elegant experiencescape is enriched by the combination of aspects from the traditional local culture

and exotic cultures. The social interactions dimension of the experience can be described as conviviality, both among the eaters and across the roles of the guests and chefs. About this element, the *Vulkana* case is a good example of how collaborative relations among various networks are essential in designing and implementing complex food experiences.

### **A hands-on framework for practitioners**

This final section presents the hands-on framework that the authors developed based on the reviewed scholarly contributions and the empirical cases. Such framework is meant to be used by practitioners in the design and implementation of ordinary and extraordinary plant-based food experiences. As shown in Table 1, the framework highlights the main actors (in bold letters) and their responsibilities tasks and required expertise (in italics). The relevant actors belong to the public, non-profit and private sectors and include, for example, chefs, food suppliers, nutritionists and marketers. The primary role is ascribed to the public authorities (second column), such as the municipalities. The main responsibility of such actors is the development of a strategy; their other main tasks are described in the table. Such strategy should be included in and/or linked to strategies concerning sustainability and health, be elaborated in cooperation with organisations that have relevant expertise and experience, and have measurable goals. Municipalities could also support plant-based food promotion by coordinating activities concerning public canteens, such as, for example, assigning substitutes for kitchen personnel who are participating in the training courses.

**TABLE 1** *A Hands-on framework for ordinary and extraordinary plant-based food experiences: actors, responsibilities, tasks and expertise*

Importantly, in this study, the municipalities were identified as delaying funds for relevant activities implemented by other actors, which can be non-profit organisations (third column) or private companies (fourth column). The table shows some differences and some commonalities in the implementation of ordinary, extraordinary and exclusive food experiences. The themes differ in these cases, as emphasis on health varies considerably from emphasis on hedonism, whether the promoted meals are part of the daily routine or are exceptions. Other differences concern the role of capability-building initiatives (training courses), the quality of the ingredients and the profile of the chefs. Among the common aspects

is the recognised key role of marketers and their willingness and capacity to collaborate with other professional figures, particularly, nutritionists, chefs and food suppliers.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter used an experiential approach to plant-based food consumption and reflected on how plant-based food experiences can be designed and implemented as ordinary and extraordinary experiences. Literature on social, sustainability and experiential marketing studies were reviewed, and two cases in the challenging context of an Arctic town were investigated based on close collaboration among the authors (one academic and two practitioners directly involved in the cases). The cases were discussed and used in the development of a hands-on framework for ordinary and extraordinary plant-based food experiences.

This chapter's contributions concern the experiential approach to the consumption of plant-based food and the development of a hands-on framework for practitioners. Approaching food consumption from an experiential perspective helps to focus the discussion of plant-based eating on crucial marketing strategies. Such strategies—nudging, experience and food design—can be used to facilitate the transition towards greener and healthier diets. Importantly, this chapter argued that the premise for these strategies' success, especially in terms of broad societal changes, is the collaboration among actors across various sectors. Here, the public sector is recognised as having a central role in planning and supporting plant-based food initiatives of various organisations, such as non-profit organisations, schools, workplaces and companies. At the individual level, collaboration also plays a crucial role, with marketers working side by side with nutritionists, chefs and food suppliers.

From a practical point of view, this chapter presented two cases that can be considered best practices. Moreover, through discussion among the authors, it developed a framework that provides an overview of who to involve in the promotion of plant-based food, what to do and what expertise is needed. The model can be considered indicative of some main guidelines that should then be adapted to the specific context. Future studies could explore how to combine the various marketing strategies identified in the framework (nudging, experience, and food design) in different socio-cultural contexts. For example, this study associated food design strategies to exclusive experiences, and future studies across socio-cultural contexts could investigate the potential of such strategies in more ordinary contexts. Another possible topic for future studies is the

promotion of plant-based food initiatives to public actors. Considering that such actors have a crucial role, it can be opportune to better understand how to engage them in a strategic approach to increase plant-based consumption.

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		Plant-based meals as ordinary experiences (canteens, cafes, etc.)	Plant-based meals as extraordinary experiences (festivals, restaurants, etc.)
Main actors / responsibility	<b>Local public authorities</b> (e.g., municipality) / Strategy	<b>Project leader organisation (non-profit organisation, school, etc.)</b> / Implementation	<b>Project leader organisation (restaurant, tourism, hospitality company, etc.)</b> / Implementation
Tasks	<p>Distribution of international and national dietary guidelines to relevant eating venues, especially canteens at schools and workplaces.</p> <p>Inclusion of the promotion of plant-based food consumption strategic plans as part of the sustainability and health initiatives. Cooperation with relevant organisations.</p> <p>Inclusion in the strategic plan of measurable goals, monitoring and control system and follow-up activities for plant-based food promotion and consumption. Coordination of activities in public canteens. Availability of funds directed to organisations (non-profit organisations, schools and restaurants) that can develop and implement projects aimed at promoting plant-based food consumption as an ordinary and extraordinary experience.</p>	<p>Thematising the experience with emphasis on taste, affordability, accessibility, inclusiveness and nutritional value. This task requires <i>expertise in communication, promotion, product development and experience design (marketers)</i>.</p> <p>Development of collaborative relations with <b>suppliers of plant-based ingredients</b>. This task requires <i>networking capacities</i> and courses aimed at increasing food knowledge and cooking skills and counteracting possible prejudices about plant-based food being tasteless (<b>chefs/trainers</b>).</p> <p>Especially at canteens: capacity-building activities and courses require <i>expertise in nutrition (nutritionists)</i>. Nudging interventions and experience design (<b>marketers, social, sustainability and experiential marketing</b>).</p>	<p>Thematising the experience with emphasis on hedonism, taste, quality, exclusivity and conviviality. This task requires <i>expertise in communication, promotion, product development and experience design (marketers)</i>.</p> <p><u>For exclusive experiences</u>, as luxury restaurants: selection of <b>suppliers of high-quality ingredients</b> and recruitment of <b>high-profiled chefs</b> who can play the role of attractions. <i>Experience design (marketers and food designers)</i></p> <p><u>For extraordinary experiences</u>, as festivals: development of collaborative relations with <b>organisations and individuals that can provide food-related experiences</b> (tasting sections, cooking classes and talks) that can entertain and educate. <i>Experience design (marketers)</i></p>