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‘The Magic of Flowers’: An Explorative Study into the Ways Floral Decorations Influence the Experience of Guests in a Food Setting, in Contemporary Ireland

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‘The Magic of Flowers’: An Explorative Study into the Ways Floral Decorations Influence the Experience of Guests in a Food Setting, in Contemporary Ireland

A thesis submitted to the Technological University Dublin, School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of M.A. in Gastronomy and Food Studies

By
Johanna Banaditsch

May 2023

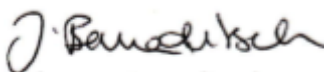
Supervisor: Margaret Connolly

Declaration of Authorship

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of *Masters in Gastronomy and Food Studies* is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Abstract

This research project explores the influence of floral decorations on the experience of a diner in a food setting in contemporary Ireland by examining what and how dining experiences are designed, where floral decorations are relevant in this context and how they specifically influence people in these settings.

The research was conducted using the philosophical worldview of interpretivism. In order to answer the five sub-research questions and thus achieve the research aim, the research draws on existing literature on hospitality experiences, literature on the influence of flowers and qualitative primary research conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews with flower providers and hospitality experience providers and a focus group with consumers/guests. The primary data was then analysed using thematic analysis and grouped into four themes.

The main findings were an increased awareness of the emotional components that shape the overall perceived experience. It was also shown how flowers in the eating out industry, as natural living beings, evoke positive emotions in people and which emotions, rooted in love, affection, care and appreciation, are evoked by the gesture of giving flowers. These positive emotions influence the guest's satisfaction with the dining experience and shape the perception of all other components of the dining scenario.

As flowers embody the core values of hospitality, they also influence the host's image and ability to provide hospitality and a scale on which guests assess it.

Acknowledgements

“Like wildflowers; You must allow yourself to grow in all the places people [or yourself] thought you never would.”

- E. V. Rogina

Firstly, I would like to thank all the members of the Food and Gastronomy Study master’s programme from whom I have learnt so much over the past two years, especially how to find my own path and voice in the field, and who have given me the confidence to put myself into my projects rather than trying to fit into a preconceived notion of academic research. I would especially like to thank my supervisor, Margaret Connolly, who has encouraged and supported this throughout the process of this thesis.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Flowers find their way into people's lives through many different scenarios, often going unnoticed while quietly changing the way people feel. In this way, they have been present in food scenarios for centuries without attracting too much attention by people to gain a further understanding of their effects.

This chapter provides the framework of this research project, a definition of the topic, the rationale, the main and secondary research objectives and an outline of the chapters that will further explore the role of floral decorations.

1.2 Definition of the Topic

1.2.1 Summary of the Research Project

The researcher's interest in the subject grew out of her involvement with floristry, combined with her academic background in hospitality. Two fields whose reactions to the idea of working on flowers for the dissertation could not be further apart. Those in the food industry did not quite understand why floral decorations, rather than other table settings, were being studied, while florists were delighted that the 'magic of flowers' was finally being given a scientific voice.

In essence, these two extremes already reflect the research problem: On the one hand, there is a lack of understanding of how flowers as decoration affect people and influence their experience of food; on the other hand, there is a conviction that flowers have a positive effect on people, but the phrase 'the magic of flowers' shows that many have no deeper explanation for it.

The main problem, then, is the lack of understanding of the effect of floral decorations on guests when they encounter them in a food setting. However, until the effect of flowers on people, especially in this scenario, is studied in more detail and demystified, there is little hope for a better understanding of their impact and what differentiates them from other decorative objects.

This research will be original as floral decorations in dining environments have been largely neglected in the academic world and therefore understanding their influence, especially in Western cultures, is under-researched. There is also limited scientific research on the

influence of floral decorations in non-food settings. This study is therefore the first to initiate a new discussion in the field of food and provide an initial understanding of how floral decorations influence a diner's experience in a food environment. This distinguishes floral decoration from other forms of decoration.

1.2.2 Definitions

In order to ensure a common understanding throughout this paper, two terms need to be defined.

1.2.2.1 Food Setting

In the context of this study, the term 'food setting', 'food experience' or 'food scenario' refers to all forms of dining where the provision of food is the central object of consumption, without the physical space being limited to a restaurant. The term can therefore encompass a variety of environments, such as outdoor dining, pop-up venues or marquees, as the aim of this study is to explore the impact of flowers in all types of dining environments, rather than specifically in restaurants as institutions.

1.2.2.2 Floral Decorations

Furthermore, the term 'floral decoration' or 'flower decoration' in this research context does not only refer to ornamental cut flowers, nor is it limited to flowers grown specifically for decorative purposes. Floral or flower decoration includes all types of natural and fresh plant parts used for decorative purposes, i.e., flowers, domesticated, cultivated or wild plants, weeds and foliage. The important distinction is that they are used for decorative purposes and not as part of food production.

1.2.2.3 Contemporary Ireland

Contemporary Ireland refers to the context in which the research was conducted, as the scope of the research project was geographically limited to Ireland.

1.3 Justification and Scope of Research

As mentioned earlier, the researcher has identified a lack of understanding of how and in what ways floral decorations in dining environments influence the diner's experience of their personal environment, and the same is true of its representation in the academic literature.

Studies on food and hospitality have shown that they are highly complex constructs made up of social, personal, economic and environmental influences (Andersson and

Mossberg, 2004; Gustafsson, et al., 2006). Flowers have played different roles in people's lives throughout history, in different cultures, on different occasions and in different places around the world, usually in one form or another to convey relational messages and express feelings of joy, celebration, care, worship, gratitude and love (Goody, 1993; Buchmann, 2016). To better understand how and, more importantly, why flowers have such an impact on people's lives, scholars such as Haviland-Jones and colleagues are exploring the field of environmental psychology and providing evidence of the positive emotional effects of flowers on humans, as well as theories to explain them (Haviland-Jones, et al., 2005; Guéguen, 2011; Haviland-Jones, et al., 2013). Although flowers have been associated with food throughout history, the literature does not go beyond their presence and a positive correlation between flowers and experiences (Chesire, 2002; Köhler, 2004; Vivaldo, 2010; Chen, et al., 2020). The literature provides limited insight into how the provision of flowers influences people's experiences, let alone their influence on diners in a food setting.

Although this study will not be able to fully fill the gap in the literature, it will contribute and draw attention to the gap and the need for further research.

At the start of the research, a combined methodology of semi-structured interviews with flower provider, food experience providers and a focus group with consumers was chosen to gain initial insights from the perspective of all key stakeholders. The semi-structured approach allows for the development of new ideas based on personal perceptions and emotions triggered by floral decorations. Due to the exploratory and qualitative nature of the research, the framework is limited both in terms of participants and geography and aims to provide a small-scale but in-depth information in an Irish setting.

1.4 Main Research Question and Sub-Research Questions

This section will point out the aim of this research as well as the research objectives, in the form of sub-research questions, milestones of things to find out, which together will ultimately achieve the research aim.

1.4.1 Research Aim

To explore in what way floral decorations, influence the experience of a guest in a food setting in contemporary Ireland.

1.4.2 Main Research Question

In what way do floral decorations influence the experience of a guest in a food setting, in contemporary Ireland?

1.4.3 Sub-research Questions

1. What is the origin, history and contemporary use of floral decorations and their purpose in the food experience?
2. What determines the quality of a food experience and where do flowers fit into these scenarios?
3. On what spectrum do flowers affect humans and their experiences, especially in food settings?
4. What thought and purpose goes into using flower decorations in food settings?
5. How do guests perceive floral decorations in the food scenario and how do these perceptions impact their experience?

1.5 Outline of Chapters

The main body of the thesis is divided into six chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces and defines the research topic. It sets out the research objectives of the thesis and provides an overview of the research method used and a rationale for why a study should be undertaken.

Chapter 2 analyses the main literature that addresses the question of what existing research says about floral decoration in food establishments from the past to the present. It draws on the literature on the food environment and the factors that determine the dining experience and places floral decoration within these factors. It concludes by looking at the existing literature on the influence of flowers on people and how this may be relevant to food design.

Chapter 3 outlines the philosophical worldview of the research project. It describes the research methodology chosen to investigate the research problem and how this was implemented in the primary research.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the primary research, which were initially obtained by coding the primary data sets, categorising the codes and identifying themes in the data relevant to the research objectives through the application of thematic analysis.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the primary research presented earlier in relation to the concepts in the existing literature and in itself.

Chapter 6 The final chapter draws conclusions by linking the two sets of data to the original objectives formulated in the first chapter and provides recommendations for further research and the applied scenario.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the subject of this thesis. Firstly, the overall research project is summarised, highlighting the main problem, namely the lack of understanding of the influence of floral decorations on diners in foodservice settings, the originality of this research and the contribution it will make. It then outlines the rationale for the project by identifying the research and knowledge gap, describing the research methods used to answer the main and sub-research questions in order to achieve the research objective, and finally provides an overview of the chapters of this research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As the following chapter will show, there is generally little academic research on flowers in the hospitality sector, so the literature review draws on a variety of disciplines to provide a basis for the primary research. As the discussion of floral decoration in gastronomy opens up a new conversation, drawing on general research on the dining environment and floral research, there is a risk of getting lost in the breadth of these disciplines. For this reason, the less conventional route has been taken, in which the first section of the literature review examines existing research on flowers in foodservice settings to first delineate the research framework in which flowers appear and where they are relevant. This will allow the following subsections on the factors influencing the eating experience and the overall impact of flowers to focus on and draw from relevant areas, or specifically look at existing research outside of this specific framework.

2.2 Decorative Flowers in Food Scenarios

2.2.1 Origin of Floral Design in European Table Culture

In general, the use of flowers as decoration in gastronomy and table culture is an omnipresent phenomenon, both in history and in the present day, which has its origins in the food culture of the rich and powerful rather than that of the common people. Culinary art is the result of all technological, social, economic and cultural processes. Sikorski (2013) divides it into eras based on changes in menus and serving methods. The first step in understanding the origins of flowers as table and restaurant decorations is to examine these changes, as table decorations are a result of them.

2.2.1.1 Table Culture in 14th and 15th century Europe – Tablescapes a Reflection of Power

In 14th and 15th century Europe, it was believed that the human body had four humours (warm, moist, cold and dry) that determined a person's health. The food consumed affected the balance of these humours. Health, therefore, was the determining factor in food choice, not taste. The extravagant presentation and abundance of the food served was meant to reflect the wealth and power of the rulers, so the presentation of the food was of paramount importance (e.g. empty baked pies that were then filled with live birds, birds skinned with feathers so that the skin could be put back around the cooked bird) (Sikorski, 2013, p. 25). Although flowers as

decoration are not relevant here, this shows how the presentation of food had symbolic meaning.

2.2.1.2 Introduction of the Service à la Française – Food Displays a Demonstration of Wealth and Power

With the rise of centralised courts and monarchies in the 16th century, the increasing political order was reflected in more refined table settings. Nations began to resemble today's geography, national cuisines emerged, and taste and culinary art replaced eating according to the four humours. This new way of serving was the *service à la française*, which consisted of three courses, each with a table plan. Each table plan consisted of a selection of different dishes, all served at the same time. As the abundance of food served filled the centre of the table, the dishes, the vessels in which they were served, the shape of the tables and the seating arrangements continued to play the decorative role. Although culinary art is slowly coming to the fore, the decorative aspect of a meal and the abundance of food served is still of great importance as it represents status, power and wealth (Eatwell, 2002; Sikorski, 2013; Mac Con Iomaire, 2015).

2.2.1.3 Transition from Service à la Française to Service à la Russe – Freeing Up the Centre of the Table

As the middle class grew, so did the number of people who could afford to dine out in style. This led to the emergence and proliferation of restaurants in the 19th century and a new, adapted service: *Service à la russe*. Each course was now served individually on the diner's plate, leaving the centre of the table free for table decorations. While decorations such as floral centrepieces adorned the centre of the table, the focus shifted to the food, its flavours and how it was prepared. This led to the separation of food and table decoration (Eatwell, 2002; Sikorski, 2013; Mac Con Iomaire, 2015). The decorative craft of floristry was also established during this period, suggesting a link (Köhler, 2004). The later transition to *à la carte service* did not have a particular impact on table decoration (Sikorski, 2013).

Focusing on European history, as the primary research will be limited to Ireland, two pertinent facts can be established about the changes in table culture which in turn influenced table decoration. Firstly, the style of dining was a means of demonstrating power among the ruling classes, and secondly, food was originally used as decoration, but with the establishment of the culinary arts over the centuries, food and decoration became two separate means of expression.

This gives a first glimpse of that the use of flowers as decorations is also a form of symbolic communication, that goes beyond its material appearance. Similar to flowers, the meaning of food goes beyond its nutritional/biological properties to include social and cultural aspects (Fischler, 1988; Valenze, 2013). It is worth noting that the nutritional side has been part of the academic conversation for much longer than the cultural and social side (Nestle and McIntosh, 2010). This is like flowers, where there is much research on the botanical and biological side, while studies on their role in cultures are limited (Goody, 1993, p. xii). On the social and cultural side, it is not only what is eaten that matters, but also how it is eaten (De Solier, 2013), including the rituals associated with its preparation and consumption, which also relate to aspects such as space, social context and presentation (Lugosi, 2013).

2.2.2 Evidence of Floral Decorations in Food Scenarios

While academic research on flowers in food is limited, the following section reviews both the applied and academic literature on ornamental flowers in food.

2.2.2.1 Evidence in Applied Research

Firstly, the applied literature shows a wealth of material that clearly demonstrates the relevance and presence of flowers in food experiences. Historical cookbooks, such as the *Epicurean* by Charles Ranhofer [2017(1893)], mention floral decorations as part of menu preparation. More recently, there is still applied literature on table design that mentions flowers as part of the decoration (Ellis, 1978; Mills, 1989; Vivaldo, 2010; Sikorski, 2013), complemented by a plethora of online and print articles and blog posts, e.g. in event design (Pubillones, 2020; Prince, 2022). These generally offer practical recommendations for the use of decoration, reflecting its presence and importance, but without questioning or elaborating on it.

2.2.2.2 Floral Decorations on Tables in History

Furthermore, Marcus Köhler (2004), in his book chapter 'Blumen auf der Tafel', provides a concise paper on the development of floral decoration, particularly in terms of style, on the dining table. It is one of the few scholarly works on the subject that demonstrates how closely floral decoration is linked to dining culture. It is based on numerous historical writings and illustrations. According to Köhler, scattered flowers were found on dining tables as early as the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In the Baroque period, however, real flowers were replaced mainly by flowers made of marzipan, sugar or carved root vegetables, as well as paper, wax, linen or silk (Köhler, 2004). The transition from *service à la française* to *service à la russe*, and with it the increasing recognition of floristry, initiated by competitions at garden shows,

influenced the use of floral decorations on the dining table. New railway connections in the second half of the 19th century made it possible to import flowers grown in greenhouses from Italy, making floral decorations available all year round in northern European cities. Although the focus of his research is on Germany, these developments had an impact on the whole of European floral culture, especially as new trends in table culture and monarchical decoration also influenced the courts of other European countries. In Germany, floral table decoration left the aristocracy at the beginning of the 20th century and became part of the middle classes. The arrangements of the first half of that century resemble those of today (Köhler, 2004).

2.2.2.3 Floral Decorations in Contemporary Gastronomy

Eventually, another rare scientific paper in this area looks at preferences for floral style in ethnic fine dining restaurants in Taiwan. The quantitative study found that the better the floral arrangement is perceived, the better the overall experience (Chen, *et al.*, 2020). This study confirms what the plethora of applied advice on restaurant design, particularly floral design, suggests, namely that floral design is relevant to creating restaurant environments that positively impact the customer experience. However, beyond this linear causal relationship, there is no deeper understanding of why this is the case, so qualitative research is needed to better understand such design decisions.

Mojet *et al.*, (2016), investigated the emotional impact of flowers by examining adults' emotional perceptions of unfamiliar people in a test restaurant. Although gastronomy was not the focus of the research, the location of the study provided relevant findings. Flowers have a positive emotional effect even when they are not consciously perceived. Furthermore, the flower's visual appearance has a more positive effect on food than their smell. Finally, they have a more positive effect on the perception of other guests than on the quality of the food. Although more research is needed, this suggests that the emotional impact of flowers is more on the social and atmospheric level than on the food level. Another observation suggests that flowers may stimulate appetite or thirst, possibly due to the livelier interaction with other people. Their recommendation to use floral decorations in an environment where people "meet and are dependent on each other's sympathy, mutual understanding and cooperation" (Mojet, *et al.*, 2016, p. 150), generalises the effect of flowers in spaces, not just on the table.

2.2.2.4 Flowers or No Flowers - A Conscious Decision

Although floral decoration is present in European table culture, there are periods when it was avoided. Goody (1993) and Buchmann (2016, p. 94) mention the decline of pleasure gardening

and the use of floral decorations at banquets or weddings. The basis for the use of flowers for decorative purposes lies in the development of agriculture and the surplus of food, with those who had enough, or even too much, at the top of society. Growing flowers for ornamental purposes rather than food production requires a luxury of time and space that was originally reserved for the upper classes of society. This means that the reason for the period of declining interest in excessive floral decoration was not indifference, but a political or ideological rejection of its luxurious nature (Goody, 1993, p. xii; Buchmann, 2016, p. 94; Hůla and Flegr, 2021, p. 15). Köhler (2004) also mentions that in the Baroque period natural flowers were avoided and replaced by flowers made of other materials. It is noteworthy that despite the avoidance of natural flowers, attempts were made to imitate their shapes, colours and scents for decorative purposes. This suggests a fascination with flowers and may be an example of how deeply embedded flowers as decoration are in culture.

In conclusion, an analysis of the literature specifically dedicated to flowers in European food scenes allows to trace their origins back to the changes in table culture, where the emergence of the culinary arts led to a more specific interest in food, cooking, flavours and aromas. This led to the separation of food and decoration, which had been one and the same until the 19th century. Flowers are a form of decoration that takes on the role of adornment after this process of separation. At the same time, this origin underlines that the purpose of decoration goes beyond its material presence and that it is a form of expression in a social context. Although decoration continues to play a dominant role in the applied field of the table setting, this area is still under-researched by scholars, as evidenced by the volume of scholarly literature shows. Moreover, the few contemporary studies are limited to establishing the positive correlation between the experience and floral decoration, without attempting to understand the causes of this phenomenon. This study attempts to fill this gap in the literature to provide a basis of understanding for this relatively new conversation. With this gap in the literature in mind, the following sections use the academic field of hospitality and flowers to inform the primary research but streamlines it to stay within the realm of what is relevant to fill this gap.

2.3 Food Settings

The next step is to better understand the factors that determine the dining experience, focusing on the environmental factors as they affect floral decoration. Therefore, after an initial brief look at the general determinants, this paper will quickly move into the relevant area of environmental factors, without going into detail about the other factors that influence the dining experience, as the aim is to understand how floral decorations affect people who are exposed to them in a dining environment. This is limited to the framework of the effect of flowers and not from the perspective of the overall eating experience.

2.3.1 Hospitality – Complex Multidimensional Experiences

Hospitality and, within it, eating out, are highly complex constructs, both characterised by the fact that they offer more than the core product.

2.3.1.1 *Hosting vs. Hospitality*

Elizabeth Telfer's (1996) theory of hosting distinguishes between the mere act of hosting, which includes the provision of food, drink and accommodation, and hospitality, which focuses on the host's intention and behaviour to genuinely meet the guest's needs and make them feel comfortable. This broadening definition opens the relevance of other aspects besides hosting through which hospitality can be conveyed. This is an indication of the complexity of needs that a dining experience can potentially satisfy, making it multi-dimensional.

2.3.1.2 *Influences on the Dining Experience*

For this reason, the next step is to identify the most important determinants of food scenarios from the existing literature and thus break down the multidimensionality.

Pine and Gilmore (1998) identify a variety of factors beyond the actual product being sold in an experience, such as the social environment, interaction with other participants and staff, and the physical environment surrounding the core consumer product (Pine and Gilmore, 1998).

In the field of hospitality, there are numerous studies that focus on the factors that influence the dining experience. Although the focus of these studies varies, the findings regarding these influencing factors are consistent with those of other researchers. The qualitative research by Gustafsson *et al.*, (2006, p. 84) shows that the most important factors that determine the quality of meals are “restaurant atmosphere, core items of consumption, restaurant scene, personal service encounter, staff quality, visitors, restaurant decision process

and individual circumstances”. The researchers divide these factors into five aspects: The place where the event takes place, the interaction with the staff and other guests, the products served, the management and control systems in the background and the overall atmosphere. The last factor, the atmosphere, is made up of all previous factors (Gustafsson, *et al.*, 2006). Kim, *et al.*, (2023, pp. 734, 736) come to a similar conclusion that food, as the core product of consumption, may be the most important criterion for evaluating a visit to a restaurant. However, both tangible and intangible aspects, such as the quality of interaction with staff and the physical environment, influence the overall experience and thus the perceived quality of the meal. The study by Edwards *et al.*, (2003), which focused on the importance of the place where food is consumed, also showed that the environment is crucial for food acceptance (Edwards, *et al.*, 2003).

In general, existing research agrees on the factors that determine the experience, although there are differences in scope, the factors can be grouped into the following categories. The core product of consumption (the food), the social environment (interaction with other diners and staff), the physical environment (furnishings and decor) and, in some cases, the management processes running in the background. All these processes occur simultaneously and have an impact on the perception of others. This underlines the need for a holistic approach to creating restaurant experiences, on which customer satisfaction depends according to Lin and Mattila (2010). Furthermore, the service landscape and experience should be aligned with the core product to enhance pleasure (Lin and Mattila, 2010, p. 833).

Although flowers are rarely mentioned specifically in this context, let alone attempts to explain their effects, they are clearly part of the physical environment. This literature shows a consensus that environmental factors are equally relevant to the overall experience. The lack of more specific research on flowers in this area, however, does not allow to draw any further conclusions, only to say that a better understanding of the individual aspects that influence the physical environment, such as flowers, has the potential to actively exert influence on creating environments.

2.3.1.3 Food Settings Beyond the Restaurant

There is another interesting observation to be made here, in addition to the primary results of this research already described. Most research into the influences on and satisfaction with the dining experience has been conducted in restaurants. However, the criteria identified are not tied to the physical space of a restaurant. Therefore, this research relates to all professional

forms of hospitality where the provision of food is the central object of consumption, without limiting the physical space to a restaurant. Thus, it can cover different environments, such as outdoor dining, pop-up venues or tents. The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of flowers on the dining experience, rather than specifically in restaurants as institutions.

2.3.1.4 Different Needs Demand Different Services

Finally, another comment on the previous information is that the multi-dimensionality comes from the different needs that are satisfied during the eating experience. Therefore, satisfaction with a dining experience depends on the needs and expectations of the diner. If the aim is to satisfy a purely physiological need (e.g., hunger), different factors are relevant than if the aim is to enjoy oneself. Atmospheric and environmental aspects become less important the more basic the consumer's need is (Andersson and Mossberg, 2004). As flowers are part of the atmospheric, physical and social environment, their influence on the dining experience is stronger when diners have more complex needs than just satisfying a physiological need. For this reason, this study focuses on dining experiences in the mid-to-high end of the dining sector, where dining out is a form of performative entertainment that offers intangible experiences beyond food. Visiting a particular restaurant is associated with pleasure, which is shaped by the environment provided, the provider and the company of other participants (Finkelstein, 1998; Warde and Martens, 2000).

2.3.1.5 The Social and Cultural Gesture of Providing Flowers

All of the above studies on atmosphere and on flowers specifically in the hospitality industry consider floral decoration only in its material culture as part of the physical environment that creates atmosphere.

Neither the studies in the restaurant sector nor the mention of flowers in academic research in the hospitality industry do provide insight into where the social and cultural gesture of providing floral decoration could be placed, let alone its influence on the staff.

2.4 Flowers

Flowers are often mentioned in the same breath as other decorative elements, such as napkins and tableware, in both academic and applied work. To understand the implications of using flowers as table decorations, the next step is to look at the biological, evolutionary and cultural research on flowers that classifies the relationship between humans and flowers. It is only by understanding the ways in which flowers and humans interact that it is possible to assess which of these influences play a role in the dining experience. Hence the next step is analysing the existing literature on flowers on these influential factors.

2.4.1 Biology of Flowers

For a common starting point, the first thing to look at is at what flowers actually are biologically, as it is the basis for their appearance and relevance in humans' lives. Flowers are the reproductive organs of plants. Their characteristics, such as their colours, shapes and scents, are the result of natural selection during evolution, as their immobility makes them dependent on other species for reproduction. With their appearance and scent, they attract suitable pollinators and reward them with pollen, the sweetness of their nectar, floral oils and edible tissues (Goody, 1993, p. 1; Buchmann, 2016, pp. 5-6, 9, 18; Dorin, 2021, p. 314).

2.4.1.1 Visual and Olfactory Stimulation

These two seemingly most obvious stimuli, the appearance and scent of a flower, which have their origin in the reproductive nature of a flower, will be examined in more detail as they are the most tangible aspect of a flower that humans experience and therefore interact with.

Among the visual characteristics, colour seems to be the most obvious characteristic of flowers and is mainly relevant for decorative purposes. Its main purpose is to distinguish the sexual organ from other parts of the plant and its environment. In addition, certain colours, as well as textures, attract different pollinators and are thus a selection tool to attract suitable pollinators and exclude unsuitable ones (Buchmann, 2016, pp. 5, 17-18). Furthermore, flower shape contributes to successful pollination by ensuring that pollen transported by pollinators is shed in the right place (Buchmann, 2016, pp. 45-46). Finally, flowers have symmetrical shapes, which naturally appear attractive to humans (Huss, *et al.*, 2017, pp. 142, 149, 151).

Huss *et al.*, (2018) suggest that the combination of these visual stimuli, such as colour, shape and symmetrical patterns of flowers growing close together, creates a perfect balance of

stimulation as well as a sense of familiarity through symmetry, that it is an “aesthetic experience that is able to move emotionally” (Huss, *et al.*, 2018, p. 2). The same result can be expected with arranged flowers in a more man-made environment.

The second stimulus, the scent of the flower, is also used to attract suitable pollinators and has the advantage over stationary characteristics such as colour and shape that it is airborne. The intensity of the scent reflects the fertility of the flower and decreases over time; the hours when the scent is strongest depend on the time of day when their pollinators are most active. However, the fact that the scent serves to attract pollinators also means that the scent is not always pleasant to the human nose, or that flowers are almost odourless whose pollinators, e.g. birds, have a weak sense of smell (Buchmann, 2016, pp. 9 ff., 13 ff.). Research suggests that scent has an impact on people, even if it is barely detectable olfactorily (Jo, *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, especially in the context of food consumption, certain odours can irritate taste, making the eating experience less enjoyable. Therefore, Mojet *et al.*, (2016) concluded that the visual appearance of the flower has a more positive influence on the eating experience than the smell.

The literature on creating the right environment for experiencing food often mentions factors such as shape, colour or scent to create atmosphere (Lin and Mattila, 2010; Kim, *et al.*, 2023). Usually, flowers are not mentioned in this academic context, but considering this subsection, it is worth noting that flowers embody all these stimuli and can therefore be used as facilitators.

2.4.1.2 The Original Connection between Food and Flowers

As Goody (1993) argues, the flowers sexuality is also central to the way they are integrated into people's lives, both from an agricultural perspective, as the basis for food production, and in the way they are embedded in culture. This work is mainly concerned with flowers grown for aesthetic rather than functional reasons. Therefore, this section tries to answer the question of how the domestication of flowers by humans came about. Firstly, looking what central role flowers play in food security and stemming from this which associations have established themselves in culture.

2.4.1.2.1 Wildflowers as Indicating Future Food Sources

As the sexual organ, the flower serves to reproduce the plant, which in turn provides food e.g., for humans. Much research, particularly in habitat selection theory, suggests that much of the appeal of flowers to humans is that they are a sign of fertile land and future food sources, and

indicate seasonal changes that were essential for the survival of hunter-gatherer communities (Goody, 1993; Buchmann, 2016; Huss, *et al.*, 2018; Hůla and Flegr, 2021). Hůla and Fleger (2021) argue that this appreciation of flowers is universal. In general, flowers and their aesthetics are present in most societies; a real indifference is only observed in some African countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Goody (1993), this is due to ecological and nutritional reasons, as, for example, wildflowers are less important as a food source than roots, tubers, bulbs, leaves and bark. In addition, the cultivation of flowers is part of more advanced forms of agriculture rather than the simple hoe farming that is more common in Africa (Goody, 1993, p. 20). Thus, the absence of flowers also indicates how closely floriculture is linked to agriculture in general.

2.4.1.2.2 *Cultivation of Flowers*

In drastic terms, Goody (1993, pp. 4-5) compares picking a flower with an “abortion of a birth”, as it interrupts the process of potential fruit/vegetable production and subsequent seed production, which secures future food resources. The original reasons for flower cultivation were medicinal and culinary. While these purposes are still functional today, the first reasons for cultivating ornamental flowers were as offerings for the worship of humans and gods (Goody, 1993, pp. 28-29). Their choice as offerings is probably due to their representation of fertility. The cultivation of flowers for purely aesthetic or ornamental reasons thus competes directly with plants grown for food production, historically making them a luxury good.

Since the origins of ornamental flowers, their cultivation has been decoupled from and developed alongside with the cultivation of food as food security has increased. This can be seen in the clear separation of flower and vegetable gardens in 19th century England or today, where the vegetable garden, if it still exists, is hidden behind the house, while the ornamental garden is usually in front of the house. Thus, there is a strong separation in people's minds between aesthetics and functionality (Goody, 1993, p. 4). Although the vegetable garden continues to flower, the first association of flowers with food nowadays are edible flowers, reflecting the increasing alienation from food production. Flowers are placed as decoration next to food on the table, without people necessarily realising how closely the two are linked biologically and evolutionarily, although this is one reason for their appeal to people.

This link to food may seem irrelevant given that today's floricultural industry has nothing to do with maintaining food safety, but it has shaped associations with flowers and is reflected in people's behaviour towards them, as the following sections will show. Moreover,

with the growing awareness of sustainability in consumers in general, it could be something that gastronomy concepts could draw on.

2.4.2 Impact of Flowers on Emotions, Happiness and Well-being

Having gained a general understanding of the biology of flowers and how this most tangible aspect of flowers affects people is the first step to understanding the effects flowers can have on people. To gain a deeper understanding of why or how they affect people, the next step is to look at how they affect people on a deeper, perhaps more subconscious level, their emotions, which is part of environmental psychology.

2.4.2.1 Human's Dependence on Nature for Health and Well-being

Researchers agree that humans are dependent on nature, which Kellert and Wilson (1993) explored in their book *The Biophilia Hypothesis*. In addition, research shows that looking out the window at nature has a positive effect on the recovery of hospital patients (Ulrich, 1984). Park and Mattson (2008) take the idea of interacting with nature further in their research and show that nature in the form of cut flowers has a similar healing effect on recovering patients. Various studies such as Mojet, *et al.*, (2016), Huss, *et al.*, (2018, p. 3) and Jo, *et al.*, (2019) have also found in their research that flowers induce feelings of happiness, relaxation and well-being.

In general, however, research on the psychological effects of flowers is limited. Fredrickson (2000, p. 4) has made the interesting observation that the “scientific literature on emotions includes far more publications on negative emotions, like fear, anger, and sadness, than on positive emotions, like joy, interest, and contentment”, which means that the potential to treat negative emotions with positive emotions, as well as resilience built through positive emotions, remains under researched. She sees the origin in cultures with Protestant ethics “which casts hard work and self-discipline as virtues and leisure and pleasures as sinful” (Fredrickson, 2000, p. 2). This may be one reason why research into the emotional effects of flowers on well-being has been neglected, but it also shows similarities to ideas in the past where the use of flowers for pleasure was rejected because of their pleasurable nature (Goody, 1993, p. xii).

2.4.2.2 Co-evolution of Flowers and Humans

As shown in the previous section, most research finds evidence of human dependence on nature and the positive influence of nature on emotions and well-being, including in the form of ornamental flowers. Haviland-Jones *et al.*, (2005) take their research a step further and try to

understand why this is so. They theorise a co-evolution of flowers and humans: Flowers occupy a positive emotional niche comparable to that of pets, Huss *et al.*, (2018) compares the care for flowers with tending to loved ones. Humans depend on them for their emotional well-being, and in turn, human care for flowers improves the flower's reproductive fitness.

Through further exploratory research, they also found that subliminal remnants of flower scents subconsciously improve people's mood even more than natural 'fresh' air. This sets flowers apart from nature in their positive influence (Haviland-Jones, *et al.*, 2013). Their research was conducted specifically with cut flowers but assumes a general affection for flowers through the interaction and care. This should make it applicable to potted and garden plants as well, since the basic requirement for co-evolution, namely care in exchange of improvement of reproductive fitness, also applies here.

Furthermore, Haviland *et al.*, (2005) challenged other researchers' reasoning that the attraction to flowers is only evolutionary by comparing the emotional response to flowers with that to a bowl of fruit (= food). The flowers elicited a more positive response than the food itself. Again, the researchers point out that more research is needed to elaborate on these findings. However, it is suggested that although the flower's past was so closely linked to food and therefore survival, which undoubtedly influenced people's attitudes towards them, evolutionary processes have evolved since with changing living conditions.

2.4.2.3 Improved Memory and Autobiographical Memory

These last points have shown how different flowers are from other decorative objects. The interaction that Huss *et al.*, (2018) call "aesthetic experience" goes beyond the perception of their aesthetic properties. During evolution, a deeper multisensory engagement with the care and appreciation of flowers has emerged that evokes emotions. This builds connections between these emotions and the interaction with flowers, shaping the autobiographical memory. Thus, future interactions with (the same) flowers stimulate long-term memory by evoking the emotions experienced during previous flower interactions, which leads to better memory (Huss, *et al.*, 2018, p. 142).

This research into the psychological effects of flowers mainly relates to practices in the field of psychology and not to experiences with food. However, this is again due to the lack of research, which does not allow further conclusions to be drawn. Overall, however, and this indeed could be relevant to the service sector, is that flowers have a positive effect on emotions and can reverse negative emotions.

2.4.3 Culture of flowers – A Culture of Love, Worship and Affection

As mentioned above, the emotions evoked by flowers are mostly positive and culturally often rooted in love. This is where the cultural aspect of ornamental flowers comes into play, and thus the learned behaviours and associations with flowers that influence the human experience with them (Huss, *et al.*, 2018, p. 142). The next step, therefore, is to consider what cultural significance is attributed to flowers and for what reasons, drawing from the biological, evolutionary and emotional aspects mentioned above.

2.4.3.1 Original Use of Ornamental Flowers in Culture

The oldest use, which is very similar to today's decorative purposes, is the use of flowers as “offerings to men and gods” (Goody, 1993, pp. 28-29), which draws attention to two important underlying themes that flowers have historically held in culture: The flower as an offering and the act of giving (Goody, 1993; Buchmann, 2016). The choice of flowers for this form of worship probably stems from their aesthetics and the biological function of fertility, which stands for securing future food.

2.4.3.2 Modern Role of Flowers and their Associations

This form of worship has morphed over time into all sorts of forms of “establishing, maintaining and terminating relationships” (Goody, 1993, p. 2), both with gods, superiors and each other (Goody, 1993; Buchmann, 2016; Huss, *et al.*, 2018). Social gatherings where flowers are presented are usually characterised by positive emotions based on some form of love or affection, of which romantic love is just one example. Even in the case of death, which is associated with negative emotions, the giving of flowers is based on love or care to both the deceased and the bereaved. Thus, for biological, developmental, aesthetic and emotional reasons, flowers have always been chosen as gifts and are therefore culturally embedded. Even if individuals are not aware of the impact on these different levels, most people are aware of the learned cultural dimension (Huss, *et al.*, 2017, p. 142).

While culturally ascribed meanings and associations may vary from culture to culture, Goody (1993), Buchmann (2016) and Huss *et al.*, (2018) provide examples of their presence across them. While the aforementioned emotion research suggests that flowers evoke feelings of happiness, Huss *et al.*, (2018) suggest that the cultural symbolism of the social relationships that flowers represent also generate these feelings of happiness.

Another specifically European example is that an entire language of flowers was invented in Europe in the 19th century to convey all sorts of relationship messages (Goody,

1993). Although this language is not directly relevant to the present study, it clearly reflects what has evolved from the cultural use of flowers: Giving flowers functions as a form of relational communication not only to gods (Buchmann, 2016; Goody, 1993) or the spiritual world in folklore (Schneidau, 2018).

Therefore, in addition to the aesthetics it adds to a space and the positive emotions it evokes, floral decoration at meals can also be part of the communication of relational messages.

2.4.3.3 *The Act of Giving*

Ultimately, this also requires a consideration of the act of gift-giving and thus the effect on the giver, not just the effect on the recipient/consumer which has been the case in the sections above. Although the study by Nicloas Guégen (2011) analyses the influence of flowers on dating behaviour and perceived attractiveness of the giver, it is still relevant in a gastronomic context due to the lack of further research. It shows that the act of giving flowers also positively influences the perception of the giver. This suggests that this might also be true to some extent in a non-dating scenario, especially given previous findings that flowers convey not only romantic love messages, but all kinds of love, caring and social relationships.

2.4.3.4 *Gender Issues*

Finally, gender issues related to flowers also need to be considered. Although not the focus of this study, they are deeply rooted in the associations of all flower-related content and therefore require attention on how they could influence research.

A common hypothesis is that there is a difference in the perception and appreciation of flowers by men and women. Hůla and Flegr (2021), focusing on habitat selection, suggest in their study that this gender difference is due to the division of labour between men as hunters and women as gatherers, who need to look out for (future) food sources. Although historically plausible, Ikei *et al.*, (2014) in their study on the positive effect of flowers indoors found that the positive effect was independent of gender, a similar finding to Haviland *et al.*, (2005) who showed that both genders have positive effects on emotions, moods, social behaviour and memory when exposed to flowers.

The association of flowers with fertility and reproduction is reflected in the language of different cultures. For example, the “blossoming” of a girl signifies the beginning of puberty or the phrasing of the “deflowering” a virgin (Goody, 1993, pp. 5, 18). Here, it is striking that the functional, symbolic and emotional qualities associated with flowers are predominantly perceived as feminine in contemporary Europe, although biologically there are both male and

female flowers. In addition, the care, arrangement and provision of flowers is often in the hands of women and can be classified to some extent as care work, which is also under-represented in the public sphere today (Goody, 1993, p. xv; Haviland-Jones, et al., 2005, p. 205). It would be interesting to explore whether its neglect in academia is related to it being seen as too feminine and therefore not serious enough.

Nevertheless, hospitality in its broadest sense, or the provision of a culinary experience, is very much about caring for and looking after others, building and maintaining relationships, and creating a pleasant and memorable atmosphere through direct and unconscious interactions.

2.5 Conclusion

In summary, this final section on flowers has analysed the existing literature on flowers in terms of the factors that influence humans. The reproductive characteristics of flowers, such as colour, scent and shape, have always attracted human interest, and our dependence on them and the resulting worship has led to their integration into cultures, expressed above all in the cultivation of relationships. At the same time, evolution is a continuous process that has not come to a standstill. As living conditions have changed, especially with the development of agriculture, man's relationship with flowers has also changed, so that man's physical dependence on flowers has become a psychologically supportive relationship that evokes various positive feelings, both when receiving and when giving.

This knowledge, combined with the previous section highlighting the importance of environmental components in the design of any food setting, suggests that flowers as decoration, with their positive attributes, could have a positive impact within these food experiences.

As the first section on the available research on flowers in food has shown, there is a lack of active discussion on the subject and a lack of understanding of the sporadic positive relationships that have been demonstrated in the little research that is available. Building on this literature review, the primary research of this thesis will hopefully open up this discussion and provide an initial insight and understanding of what components (cultural, emotional, biological/evolutionary, aesthetic/perceptual) affect people when exposed to decorative flowers during a food environment.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Following the extensive literature review, which identified existing research as well as research gaps, this chapter first identifies the most appropriate methodology to answer the research question and develops it to conduct the primary research. The next step is to outline and justify the chosen methodological approach, then to define the primary research in the applied process, and finally to consider and reflect on the justification, the ethics and limitations that accompanied the conduct of the research.

3.2 Research Question

The choice and definition of the research question comes first and determines how the researcher approaches the topic and which methods are best suited to answer the problem (Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 46; Nardi, 2018, p. 15). The research question of this dissertation is exploratory and explanatory in nature. It aims to initiate a new discussion in the field, while providing insights for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

In what way do floral decorations influence the experience of a guest in a food setting, in contemporary Ireland?

The following specific objectives/questions are to be answered to answer the main research question.

1. What is the origin, history and contemporary use of floral decorations and their purpose in the food experience?
2. What determines the quality of a food experience and where do flowers fit into these scenarios?
3. On what spectrum do flowers affect humans and their experiences, especially in food settings?
4. What thought and purpose goes into using flower decorations in food settings?
5. How do guests perceive floral decorations in the food scenario and how do these perceptions impact their experience?

For the previous secondary research, the literature review was compiled from books, journal articles, (online) newspaper and magazine articles, social media and online blogs. However, it was found that much of the existing material, if academic, does not specifically

address floral decoration and that non-academic material, while mentioning the applied use of floral decoration in the hospitality industry and showing its presence and relevance, does not evaluate or question where it comes from and at what levels the interactions work.

The literature review is therefore based on three main categories: Decorative flowers in food scenarios, relevant determinants of food scenarios (environmental factors) and research on flowers focusing on their effect on humans. The primary research will be enriched by this solid background knowledge and will bring the three areas together and provide a starting point for further research.

There are no previous studies specifically on this topic. Chen, *et al.*, (2020), look specifically at flowers on dining tables, but do not offer many findings beyond a positive correlation of flowers and the dining experience. Markus Köhler (2004) traces the path of flowers on dining tables through European history, highlighting developments that have shaped trends. There is a large body of research on the determinants of dining environments that emphasises the importance of environmental factors to the overall experience; this paper draws primarily on Gustafsson *et al.*, (2006), Lin and Mattila (2010) and Kim, *et al.* (2023). Regarding the different components of flowers that affect humans, Stephen Buchmann (2016) and Hůla and Flegr (2021) present the biological-evolutionary factors; Goody (1993) contributes with Buchmann (2016) on the cultural influence components, Huss, *et al.*, (2017), also analyse the cultural effects of flowers on humans, but focus on Islamic culture. Finally, contemporary research on the psychological components is strongly influenced by the work of Haviland-Jones and colleagues.

3.3 Research Approach

The three main research philosophies or philosophical belief systems about what is known about social reality and research are positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism (Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017). For this research problem, the interpretivist view was chosen as the most appropriate.

Positivism, which has its origins in the natural sciences (Epstein, 2012, pp. 23-24), follows the belief that each individual is shaped by society and that there is a single truth that can be known and predicted, which in this case are facts about the social world. Understanding these defining facts, or laws, is supposed to explain human behaviour. As this belief system assumes that these underlying factors are the same for all people, its research aims to be valid,

reliable and representative, which is not the exploratory aim of this research question (Creswell, 2009, pp. 6-7; Denscombe, 2017, p. 8; Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 22).

Interpretivism has its roots in the hermeneutic social sciences, which aim to understand the social world through the “meaning of interactions, actions and objects within it” (Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 23), and thus looks at circumstances from a socio-cultural or anthropological perspective. This research philosophy is based on the belief that the social world is constantly constructed through social interactions between subjects of all kinds. In order to understand social reality, one must take the perspective of the subjects involved, which makes their experiences become a valuable source of information (Denscombe, 2017, p. 8). The real meaning is then found through the interpretation of these interactions (Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 6). This research from the perspective of the subject, and its interpretation in this philosophy, lends itself to qualitative research and research methods.

The aim of this research is to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of floral decorations in the food sector. Interviewing the subjects involved and then interpreting their findings is considered the most appropriate way to better understand the meaning it holds for the subjects, seeing them and their interactions as a part that shapes this social reality. This is not in line with the positivist world view where there is only one truth.

For the sake of completeness, the third philosophical belief system to be mentioned is **pragmatism**. It also assumes that social reality is an ongoing construction that results from actions and situations. This means that the focus is not on a particular research method (quantitative or qualitative), but on the problem, and that methods are chosen that are best suited to address the research problem (Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 279).

3.4 Research Methodology

Nagy Hesse-Biber (2017, p. 7) says that “methodology [...] is a strategy or plan for how a study will be executed [...] describ[ing] the rationale for choosing a specific method in [...] [a] study”, linked to the research philosophies.

Quantitative and qualitative methods for a research project seem to be opposing methods. The choice of one or the other method depends primarily on the research problem and is already predefined by the preliminary decision on the research approach. In addition, there are factors such as “whom and what we are studying, the financial and time limitations [...], and the amount of detail we desire” (Nardi, 2018, p. 15).

Quantitative research reflects the positivist belief system that “social phenomena can be systematically measured and scientifically assessed” (Nardi, 2018, pp. 21-22). It is usually more comprehensive and analyses specific statistical variables (Denscombe, 2017, p. 6), and provides objective data that describes “trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of this population” (Creswell, 2009, p. 145). The strength of this method lies in the validity and reliability of the results (Creswell, 2009, p. 145).

On the other hand, **qualitative methods**, which reflect the worldview of interpretivism, focus on gaining insights into the participants' attitudes towards specific problems or issues, so that the participants' perspective is the focus of the research interest (Creswell, 2009, p. 173; Nardi, 2018). They are seen as more holistic, analysing things in their natural context (Denscombe, 2017, pp. 6-7). The researcher then interprets the data to uncover the underlying meanings (Creswell, 2009, p. 4), which results in a more subjective approach to research, which is often smaller in scope, but whose strength lies in the depth of the findings (Denscombe, 2017, pp. 6-7; Nardi, 2018, p. 18.19). Examples include fieldwork, participant observation, ethnography, case studies, open-ended interviews and focus groups.

Choosing **mixed methods** means combining quantitative and qualitative methods, depending on what is most appropriate for the research problem, by using them together in a purposeful way (Creswell, 2009, pp. 204-205). Creswell (2009, p. 4) argues that this form is stronger than the others because it combines the strengths of both qualitative findings and quantitative evidence (Creswell, 2009, pp. 204-205).

In line with the interpretivist worldview, qualitative research methods are chosen for the primary research of this dissertation. Their aim is to find “social meaning people attribute to their experiences, circumstances, and situation, as well as meanings people embed into text, images, and other objects” (Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 4). They are often chosen when exploring new topics from the perspective of those affected. As this research is a new topic and a new aspect in the field of gastronomy and food science, it does not aim to verify, quantify or generalise phenomena that have already been researched, but explore this new area.

3.4.1 Phenomenology

There are different approaches within the interpretive strand. Nagy Hesse-Biber (2017) distinguishes between symbolic interactionism and Dramaturgy, and Ethnomethodology (Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, pp. 23-32).

Phenomenology, best suited for this research problem, is the study of the lived human experience. By examining in-depth the perceived experiences of a relatively small number of participants about a phenomenon and understanding consciousness, researchers gain an understanding of social reality (Creswell, 2009, p. 13; Usher and Jackson, 2014, pp. 181-182; Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 26).

3.5 Outline of Previous Studies

As mentioned earlier, existing research only provides background knowledge for primary research. Its findings, while generally relevant, are not sufficiently comparable to be overused in terms of research methodology. Research on dining and factors influencing the dining experience uses qualitative research tools in the case of Andersson and Mossberg (2004) and Lin and Mattila (2010) qualitative research instruments, while Chen *et al.*'s, (2020) research on the floral experience in restaurants is quantitative. Although thematically close, their quantitative nature only allows conclusions about positive correlations, not deeper understanding.

The most relevant papers in the field of the effect of flowers on people are Haviland-Jones, *et al.*, (2005), Guéguen, (2011), Haviland-Jones, *et al.*, (2013) and Mojet, *et al.*, (2016), all of which use experimental, i.e. quantitative, methods for their research. Although the interpretation of their results is certainly relevant to this dissertation, this type of method is not suitable for answering the research question.

The study by Huss *et al.*, (2018) on 'Humans' Relationship to Flowers as an Example of the Multiple Components of Embodied Aesthetics', is most similar in that it is a phenomenological qualitative study that uses qualitative descriptions to ask about preferred types of flowers, as well as thematic analysis and concept maps of the general term 'flower'. The aim of gaining an initial understanding of people's phenomenological experience of flowers, rather than testing specific hypotheses, is consistent with the aims of this dissertation, although in this case the focus is on gaining an initial understanding specifically of the experience in a food environment. However, it does not involve the testing of specific hypotheses and therefore takes a similar approach, albeit with different tools, as will be shown in the following sections.

3.6 Research Instruments

3.6.1 Instruments

From the range of qualitative research tools, the primary research will consist of two steps. First, semi-structured interviews will be conducted. These interviews will be conducted with

two of the main stakeholders of flowers in the food environment, namely food entrepreneurs and floral experience providers. Although the research question concerns the impact of flowers on the people in the food environment, who are usually neither the experience providers nor the florists, they are the ones who think about the supply and decide to what extent flowers are used, which provides a deeper understanding of their use in the food environment. In order to start a new discussion, it also seems useful to include the knowledge of all stakeholders in this discussion. The information from the secondary research is then combined with the findings from a focus group with consumers of dining experiences to understand how flowers influence the overall experience.

3.6.1.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The principle of the semi-structured interview is that the interviewer is guided by leading questions to keep the interview, just another form of conversation, within a specific and relevant framework. However, the questions are open-ended, allowing for personal responses with the possibility of exploring other relevant issues that arise during the interview (Mills, 2014, p. 37). Because the questions are open-ended and flexible, respondents are encouraged to be more reflective in their responses and are given access to their thoughts, which may themselves be subject to interpretation (Byrne, 2012, p. 209; Nardi, 2018, p. 79). Their flexibility brings with it a degree of unpredictability, but in terms of the information gathered for this research, this unpredictability is also where the potential lies, as there is currently little knowledge available in this area (Byrne, 2012, p. 207). Structured interviews, on the other hand, offer the possibility of comparability and even representativeness if the sample of respondents is properly selected (Byrne, 2012, p. 208), which is not the aim of this research. Here the aim is the opposite, to gain a detailed insight into people's knowledge and experiences, with the flexibility to be more specific about what respondents have to offer (Byrne, 2012, p. 209).

3.6.1.2 Focus Group

According to Byrne (2012, p. 209), focus groups can be considered part of qualitative interviews as they essentially “bring together a group of interviewees to discuss a particular topic or range of issues”. Those gathered as a group engage in a guided discussion on a particular topic and thus have a specific “focus” (Tonkiss, 2012, pp. 228-229; Denscombe, 2017, pp. 205-207). In recent years, the focus group instrument has gained popularity in social and cultural research and has proven useful in the “information gathering” phase of research (Tonkiss, 2012, p. 229; Acocella and Cataldi, 2021, p. 5). What distinguishes this tool from individual

interviews is the key factor of interaction. When individuals come together to discuss a particular topic, this encourages further exploration and development of their thoughts and can therefore increase the depth of information gained (Tonkiss, 2012; Acocella and Cataldi, 2021, pp. 15-16). This is expected to lead to more insights than individual interviews with the same number of participants.

Typically, the size of a focus group is between four and twelve participants. The lower range is often used by social researchers, as a smaller group size allows for more in-depth engagement with other participants, while larger group sizes are more popular in market research. It is important to find the right size for the research problem so that all participants are involved. The smaller the group, the more people can participate, but the larger the group, the more different perspectives will come together. The actual session should last about one to two hours, during which the researcher acts as a facilitator, engaging with the group and ensuring that the discussion stays on track through “fixed questions, a topic guide of themes for discussion, a group exercise or visuals” (Tonkiss, 2012, pp. 228-229).

3.6.2 Sampling

As it is usually almost impossible to talk to everyone in a relevant research population, the selection of a sample, which ultimately depends on the research object, is at the heart of most research projects (Seale, 2012, p. 135; Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 54). One of the predominant distinctions is whether a sample is representative or not, with a distinction made between the two main sampling methods, random and non-random, with random sampling tending to be more representative than non-random sampling due to the random selection of respondents from the population (Seale, 2012, p. 135). As the aim of qualitative research is to gain in-depth information, researchers usually work with small samples (Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 54). The aim of this research is to gain an initial insight into a topic that is not yet part of the academic discussion. In this sense, the aim is not to produce representative data, but above all to gain as many and varied insights as possible.

3.6.2.1 Sampling Interviews

In terms of the aim of this thesis, non-probability sampling is most appropriate for semi-structured interviews, as the focus is not on representativeness but on the quality of the information gathered. Snowball sampling is a form of sampling when either access to the population is difficult or the nature of the research problem makes sample selection difficult. The concept behind this form of sampling is to use a known network and referrals to find suitable participants (Seale, 2012, p. 145; Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 57).

In this research project, using the expertise of a known referral or reference network allows the identification of people with relevant expertise to increase the depth of information gathered in each interview. To this end, the researcher asked the second-year group of the Food and Gastronomy Masters programme at the University of Technology Dublin (TU Dublin) for recommendations as to who should be considered for the interviews. Jennie Moran and Miceal Murray were identified as suitable participants.

A second starting point for the snowball system was to ask a florist friend, Mélie Desbrosse of Détails Dublin, which experiential food providers she had worked for as a florist, which led to Cúán Greene and Keith Coleman. The general idea in selecting them was that they should work in the food industry, specialise in providing food experiences and be responsible for planning and management, as this is the background knowledge needed to provide information relevant to the research questions. Although it does not matter whether the experience comes from working in a restaurant or from other areas of the hospitality industry, the more diverse the background experience, the more beneficial it is. Miceal Murray, Jennie Moran and Cúán Greene agreed to be interviewed.

The search for interviewees for the florists' perspective was carried out in the same way as for the food suppliers, as was the internet search. From the Master's group, the snowball system produced no results. Mélie Desbrosse, herself a florist in Dublin, recommended Aiva Veinberga, Fionnula Fallon or others involved in the floristry at Kilruddery House and Gardens, as well as The Crate florist. Further internet research led to the floristry department at Shelbourne Dublin. In the end, only Aiva Veinberga and Mary O'Reilly, the Shelbourne's head florist, were available for interview.

Table 3.1 Interview Partners

Food provider	
Miceal Murray	Restaurant manager at Clanbrassil House Dublin, previous experience with pop-up dinners
Jennie Moran	Luncheonette Dublin
Cúán Greene	Chef and co-founder from Ómós
Flower provider	
Aiva Veinberga	Freelance florist and florist at The Garden Dublin
Mary O'Reilly	Head florist at The Shelbourne Dublin

3.6.2.2 Sampling focus groups

While the snowball system worked for the restaurant and flower suppliers, the criterion for the consumers to be interviewed (screener question) was essentially only whether they eat out comparatively often; no particular expertise is required, so recommendations from a particular network are not an advantage either. The selection of participants was therefore a convenience sample. A convenience sample essentially boils down to selecting the person “available, who has [...] specialized knowledge of the setting, and who is willing to serve in that role” (Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 56).

The main aim is to find people who are willing to talk about the topic, as the aim is not to generate representative data, but rather to have a conversation and gather ideas about the topic. When selecting participants for the focus group, care was taken to ensure an even distribution of age and gender in order to consider different perspectives. There were three female and two male participants from the age brackets of 20-40, 40-60, 60+. Another condition was that the participants had no professional involvement with food experiences or flowers, as their professional background would be likely to influence their personal views as consumers. Given that the focus group lasted one hour, the aim was to find four to five people so that everyone had the opportunity to contribute during the focus group.

Table 3.2 Focus Group Participants

Eliza Sullivan	Student and Barista	20-40 years
Ian Leavy	Civil Engineer	20-40 years
Lisa Davis	Cooking Instructor	40-60 years
Niall Toner	Journalist	40-60 years
Elizabeth Waters	Retired	60+ years

3.6.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Research Instruments

Having made clear in the previous sections why the choice of semi-structured interviews and focus groups were the most appropriate for the research topic of this thesis, and thus highlighting the advantages of these instruments, this subsection will highlight some further advantages but also disadvantages that can come with it.

3.6.3.1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Semi-structured Interviews

Firstly, the semi-structured interview was chosen because it has the advantage of encouraging the interviewee to express their views, thereby deepening their thoughts and insights, and because the flexibility to respond to the interviewee's contributions provides the opportunity to delve deeper into the individual's experiences and ideas. The advantages are that the interview is arranged in advance so you can be sure it will take place, the equipment required is relatively simple and manageable, the face-to-face interaction allows you to check areas covered and ask about misunderstandings, the transcription process is easier as there are only two people speaking, and the face-to-face contact can make the experience more enjoyable for the participant (Denscombe, 2017, pp. 220-221).

The disadvantages are that the information is based on what the person says, which is not guaranteed to match what they do, the identity of the interviewer can influence the way the respondent answers, consistency and generalisability are difficult to achieve due to the individual nature, it is a fairly time-consuming process that requires a lot of work, the presence of a recording device can cause discomfort, and face-to-face interaction can become an invasion of privacy (Denscombe, 2017, pp. 221-222)

3.6.3.2 *Advantages and Disadvantages of Focus Groups*

Many of the advantages and disadvantages of focus groups are similar to those of individual interviews, in that they require similar equipment and flexibility, and allow participants to develop their thoughts and express their opinions. However, the group scenario adds an extra layer. In terms of advantages, it is the interaction between participants that encourages discussion and reconsideration of ideas, leading to chain reactions; the diversity of people allows for the development of a variety of positions; interaction can bring to light forgotten things, leading people to reconsider and change their opinions or viewpoints and identify similarities/differences and strengths and weaknesses (Acocella and Cataldi, 2021, pp. 18-19).

Disadvantages include that the practical part becomes a bit more complicated as more people have to be navigated to find a suitable time and place, as more people will be speaking, that transcribing the data becomes more complicated, apart from the disadvantages of intimidation by a recording device, the personality of the researcher or other interviewees, invasion of people's privacy, and again that what is said may not reflect the lived reality of the participants. Like the advantages, the group context also adds to the disadvantages, as the dynamics between participants can influence the contributions of individuals or even lead to conflict or an imbalance between strong and weak language participants. Although the researcher's role is to mediate between them, the control he or she can exercise is less than in an individual interview, trains of thought or argumentation can be interrupted, and topics are constantly changing (Acocella and Cataldi, 2021, pp. 18-19).

3.6.4 Interview Question Formulation

In order to maintain the flexible form of the semi-structured interviews, a more casual approach to the preparation of the interviews was adopted, as best suited to the researcher. The first step was a focused list of random questions that came to the researcher's mind about themes that emerged during the literature review and factors that contributed to the sub-research questions. Focusing the process was achieved by asking what the interview with each group of respondents should contribute. The interviews with the food experience providers were about gaining insight into the thoughts and considerations involved in providing flowers in different food establishments, as well as their personal experiences of how this is perceived by or affects consumers. The next step was for the researcher to begin to make connections between these themes and create a mind map. The third step was to draw out larger themes within this mind map, resulting in an organised mind map with three main sections. The first section relates to

the interviewee and their experiences/workplace, leading to questions about the impact of flowers on people, and the third section looks more specifically at the provision of flowers in food establishments. While the personal information was the starting point for the interview, the form of the mind map allowed it to move in either direction, depending on where the first section with the personal information led. This gave the interviewer a page of clues, themes and sections to guide the interview, but also full flexibility to address anything that came up during the interview.

3.6.5 Focus Group Question Formulation

To formulate the questions for the focus group, the researcher used the mind maps from the interviews, which provided the semi-structured framework for the interviews. The first step was to put the questions into the perspective of a client, which already reduced the questions. However, as focus groups are about the researcher not getting too involved in the discussion, the form of a mind map containing various possible follow-up questions was not appropriate, unlike the interviews. Therefore, the process of mind mapping was reversed, using the main and sub research questions as a guide to bring the multitude of questions back to their origin. In this way, the consumer-centred mind map was refined until all the sub-questions were combined into four super-questions to guide the discussion. These questions were supplemented by an opening question as an icebreaker to introduce the participants and get them talking to each other. The number of questions also depended on the time available for the focus group, which was approximately one hour, and the number of participants, which was set at five.

3.6.6 Piloting the Interview Questions

The grouping of the interview questions during the creation of the mind maps already represented a refinement of the questions. The first interview with Miceal Murray was scheduled for 21.03.2023. He agreed to provide feedback after the interview so that it could be used as part of the data collection, but also as a pilot interview if changes were needed. This did not lead to any major changes in the overall interview process, but it was helpful for the researcher to know the extent to which parts of the interview related to the interviewee's personal background and prepared the researcher to adapt it to their personal background if necessary. Furthermore, in the interviews with the florists, the perspective was changed from that of a food experience provider to that of a florist, but the topics of the questions remained the same therefore it was merely a matter of reformulation.

In addition, the consent form was supplemented by a brief information sheet about the nature of the research, which was emailed to respondents the day before the interview, so that participants already had information about the research and were prepared for possible questions when the researcher again informed them verbally before the interview began. In addition, an error was found in the working title, which led to a rewording of the working title on the consent form for subsequent interviewees and focus group participants.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis is about making sense of the qualitative data you have collected. Qualitative data can come in different forms, such as words or pictures, and usually need to be put into a form that is suitable for analysis by the researcher. To do this, the data first needs to be catalogued and defined by indexes. In the case of the spoken word, this then involves transcribing the collected data into the written word, as this is much easier to work with than the audio version of interviews. Ultimately, the numbered transcripts provide a clear reference system that allows both the researcher and the reader to navigate and draw insights from the available data (Denscombe, 2017, p. 305).

Critics sometimes see qualitative research as weaker than quantitative research. However, for certain research questions, such as interpretive questions, they are best suited to finding meaning or understanding for specific problems. Using a “systematic formalised coding process” (Rivas, 2012, p. 367) such as thematic analysis, grounded theory or interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) in data analysis will improve the quality, validity and reliability of the work.

3.7.1 Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006), who have developed their own version of thematic analysis, have conducted research on thematic analysis to provide accessible information on how this often undervalued but widely used method of qualitative data analysis can be used in teaching. They define thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 6), as organising data into themes or patterns makes it easier to interpret. This makes the amount of data more manageable when looking at the data generated rather than individual cases (Rivas, 2012, p. 367). To this end, six steps have been identified for carrying out thematic analysis: **Familiarisation, Coding, Searching for Themes, Reviewing Themes, Defining and Naming Themes and Writing a Report** (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These steps are not to be understood as a linear model, but as processes that

can run in parallel and need to be repeated (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 13). Overall, it is a process of refining the available data through repetition, usually moving from description to interpretation and the development of abstract concepts (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 13; Rivas, 2012, p. 367)

According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 17), the first phase of **familiarisation** with the data forms the “bedrock for the rest of the analysis”. By familiarisation they mean a complete immersion in the data in order to understand the “depth and breadth of the content” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 16)

The second phase, **coding**, follows the first stage after initial ideas and notes have emerged from the familiarisation process. Coding is generally understood as assigning meaning to parts of the text (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 18; Creswell, 2009, p. 185; Rivas, 2012, p. 368; Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 315) and with that “organising [the] data into meaningful groups” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 18). This can range from individual words to entire paragraphs. Each sentence is read in isolation to ensure that each statement is treated equally to capture “new or unexpected themes” (Rivas, 2012, p. 370). Anything that is relevant after prior alignment with the research question is then coded. The coding process links the data to the research question (Rivas, 2012, p. 370). There are two types of coding: Inductive, where codes are developed from the information found, or deductive/theoretical, which is appropriate when the findings are not intended to fit into a pre-existing coding framework, while the deductive form involves searching for predetermined codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 12; Creswell, 2009, p. 167). Due to the exploratory nature of this study and the limited amount of existing research, the inductive form of coding was chosen.

In the third phase, the **search for themes**, the “interpretative analysis of [the] data occurs” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 18). In this phase the codes found need to be refined by looking for patterns within the codes that combine different codes into overarching themes relevant to the research question, and by mapping all codes to these main themes and sub-themes, exploring their relationship to each other and thus possible hierarchies (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pp. 19-20).

The aim of the fourth phase is to **redefine the themes** and ensure that each theme is sufficiently valid to be a topic. As a first step, this means ensuring that the assigned “coded data extracts” fit into a “a coherent pattern” within the themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 20). If this is not the case, either the codes need to be redistributed or the theme needs to be changed.

This requires further examination of the dataset to ensure that the overall story told by the themes is coherent, but also to ensure that nothing has been missed (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pp. 20-21).

Once a satisfactory thematic map of the data is in place, it is time for the fifth phase, the **definition and naming of themes**. Ultimately, this involves “identifying the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 22), described through a detailed analysis of the history of each theme and its role in the overall data, and naming them. Hierarchies between themes may also be established in this phase (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The final stage is **writing a report**. In this phase the researcher tells the story of the data in an understandable and convincing way. This is achieved through an “analytic narrative” and sufficient “data extracts”, that “make an argument in relation to [the] research question” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 23)

3.8 Ethical issues

Research ethics must be included in the considerations from the very beginning, as adherence to ethical standards is necessary for the validity and thus the usability of the results (Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 67). In order to protect the participants from exploitation and ultimately the results of this study, the researcher conducts this research according to high ethical standards. In doing so, the researcher adheres to the Code of Ethics of the Research Ethics Committee of Technological University Dublin (formerly Dublin Institute of Technology, DIT), which is “consistent with the principles of the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland, the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and with Irish law and policy, including licensing requirements, and with this and related policies of TU Dublin” (Technical University Dublin, n.d.). Adherence to these standards follows the principles of reliability, honesty, respect and accountability in line with the University guidelines (Technical University Dublin, n.d.).

Prior to the interview, all participants were informed about the research within the messages sent back and forth about planning an interview/focus group. This initial contact was individualised according to the level of familiarity. As part of this individualised process, from making contact to arranging the interview/focus group appointment, participants were informed about how the data would be recorded, stored and published, and about their rights if they wished to withdraw themselves or their data from the study at any time. Prior to the interview/focus group appointment, all participants were sent the consent form, which

described the nature of the study. On the day of the interview or focus group, the researcher distributed the consent form in paper and took sufficient time to reiterate verbally the nature of the research, the participant's role in it, and the process of data collection and storage and the fact that their participation or any data can be withdrawn at any stage. Before the interview or focus group began, the researcher received the signed consent form back from each participant. During this time the participants were given time to ask questions about any of these topics.

As the previous written contact and information was very elaborate and inconsistent, it would make sense for future research to generalise the process of contacting participants about the interview or the research group. Instead of the very individualised way of contacting and informing each participant about the research process, it would make sense to write a formalised information letter to send to all participants, and only from the attached message to find the right tone for the individual approach. This would make the process much more consistent and efficient.

In general, the issue of the impact of flowers in the food sector does not seem to be very sensitive. However, it should be borne in mind that flowers can have a very personal and emotional meaning in culture, often associated with relationships and even death, which requires a degree of sensitivity to navigate in an interview or focus group.

Transcripts of all interviews and the focus group can be found from Appendix A to Appendix E, and all signed consent forms can be found in Appendix F of this paper.

3.9 Justification

3.9.1 Validity, Reliability and Generalisability

In general, validity, reliability and generalisability differ slightly between quantitative and qualitative research. In qualitative research, validity means “that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (Creswell, 2009, p. 190).

Reliability in qualitative research refers to the degree of “stability and or consistency of responses” (Creswell, 2009, p. 190) and refers to the researcher's practice being consistent between different projects. In qualitative research, this is usually achieved through the validity strategies already mentioned in the research proposal as ways of ensuring validity and eventually the detailed documentation of the methods used and their suitability for answering the research question (Creswell, 2009, pp. 190-192).

Finally, generalisability refers to how well the findings can be transferred to other scenarios. As generalisable findings are not usually the aim of qualitative research, but rather findings within specific contexts, generalisability is not the aim of this qualitative research project (Creswell, 2009, pp. 192-193).

3.10 Limitations of study

As with any research, there are natural limitations, such as limited time and resources, which need to be considered at the beginning of the research and in the selection of methods and tools, and which, once established, require conscious time management to keep up with.

As this is a small research project, the time frame and the possibilities that can be achieved within this framework are limited. Given the novelty of this research question and the very limited amount of previous research that can be drawn upon, these findings relate to a very small sample, as the aim is to open up a new discussion and gain deeper insights. Furthermore, this is a topic that requires the participants to connect with their feelings and emotions about the topic, which is not always possible, as the literature review has shown that various processes in the perception of flowers occur at an unconscious level that may not be accessible to the participants. The limited scope of the research offers a first insight into the potential of the topic, even if it leads to deeper insights.

3.10.1 Sampling

Choosing a snowball or random sample in the case of a focus group can have the disadvantage that participants may come from one network and share their experiences, while people outside that network may be excluded (Seale, 2012, p. 145). This disadvantage was addressed by starting the sample at different ends and in different networks. Although the sample was selected to provide the deepest possible insight, it must be considered that one of the limitations of the sample is that it cannot be generalised for this reason (Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 58)

3.10.2 Interview Process Preparation

In preparing for the interviews and the focus group, the researcher always had to expect that people would not respond or cancel appointments. While not all people contacted the researcher, those who did were very accommodating and willing to reschedule if they were unavailable. However, the accessibility of people does have an impact on the sample.

Despite sampling and researching interviewees, it can happen that an interview does not take place as desired. This was the case with the interview with Jennie Moran, which was

informative in terms of the atmospheric factors of the dining experience, but where the researcher failed to steer the conversation towards the prepared interview questions based on the research question. On listening to the interview again before transcribing it and comparing the parameters of the research question with the interview, the researcher concluded that the interview did not provide any useful information about the use of flowers and, in particular, their effect on diners. Due to the lack of reference and insight into the research problem, it was decided not to include the interview in the analysis.

3.10.3 Unforeseen Circumstances

In addition, there are always unforeseen circumstances that need to be responded to as they arise. In the case of this study, recurring problems with the researcher's personal health required strategic planning for each step of this research.

3.11 Outline of Conducting and Analysing the Interviews and Focus Group

3.11.1 Conducting the Interviews and Focus Group

A total of five semi-structured interviews were conducted, either in locations suggested by the interviewees or by the interviewer, mostly in cafes, and one during a walk to accommodate the schedules and personal needs of both participants. The interview with Jennie Moran was conducted through Zoom as it was not possible to find a suitable place and time. However, as mentioned in the limitations of this research, the interview ultimately did not contribute to answering the research question and was therefore not included in the considerations of this thesis. Therefore, only four interviews will be discussed below. One focus group with five participants was conducted in the researcher's dining room, which provided a quiet but comfortable environment for discussion.

Both the interviews and the group discussions were recorded and transcribed using an iPhone 11.

For the focus group, the researcher prepared the table where the discussion took place with some bouquets of flowers in small ceramic vases. This was to acknowledge the time the participants had given this research project, but also to help centring the discussion and connect the participants to their feelings about flowers. The transcript (FG) shows that the participants kept returning to the flowers on the table, whether to compare or contrast them, or in an emotional way that had nothing to do with the questions but allowed them to participate in the discussion on a more personal level. Due to unforeseen circumstances, one participant could

not get to the researcher in time and was included in the discussion via Microsoft Teams. She 'sat' at the table with all the other participants and the calm atmosphere and very respectful interaction of all participants did not allow the other medium to become an obstacle to her participation. A picture of the focus group set-up can be found in Appendix G.

3.11.2 Overview and Codes of Interviews and Focus Group Participants

Table 3.3 Overview and Codes of Interview Partners and Focus Group Participants

Name & Initials	Title/Organisation	Interview Details	Interview Code
Miceal Murray (MM)	Manager at Clanbrassil house	Flower and Bean, on 21 st March 2023	MM1
Aiva Veinberga (AV)	Freelance Florist and Florist at the Garden (on Maternity leave)	A walk in Clontarf, on 29 th March 2023	AV2
Mary O'Reilly (MOR)	Headflorist at the Shelbourne	KC Peaches, on 29 th March 2023	MOR3
Cuan Greene (CG)	Founder at Ómós chef	One Kind A Folk, on 29 th March 2023	CG4
Focus Group	(FG + initials)	Private home, on 3 rd of April 2023	FG5
Elizabeth Waters (FGEZ)		See above	
Eliza Sullivan (FGES)		See above	
Lisa Davis (FGLD)		See above	
Niall Toner (FGNT)		See above	
Ian Leavy (FGIL)		See above	

3.11.3 Interview and Focus Group Questions

The type of questions asked in each interview was similar, as the researcher had prepared a similar sheet for each interview with themes and main and follow-up questions related to those themes. However, the first topic related to the interviewee's personal background and therefore varied slightly from interview to interview. Depending on the direction of these first personal questions, the researcher worked through the mind map. In doing so, the researcher made sure that all topics and their subcategories were covered, while being completely free to pick up, work around or expand on the interviewees' contributions.

The questions for the focus group were essentially a condensed version of these interviews, i.e. fewer questions focusing on the main themes. This was achieved through repeated steps of grouping all aspects into larger categories until they were reflected in themes relevant to answering the research and sub-research questions. These were then written on cards, one for each participant, to be asked to the group during the discussion to ensure that everyone had a chance to raise a point of discussion and to avoid individual participants being too strong or too weak. Sometimes the interviewer herself intervened in the discussion, not to introduce further questions, but to encourage participants to explore the 'why' of their statements further.

The opening question of the focus group, as an ice breaker, asked each participant to introduce themselves by name and to tell the other participants when they had last received or given flowers to someone and what the occasion was. This was followed by the first question about whether and how the participants perceived flowers in the food scenarios. This was followed by the second point of discussion, namely what makes flowers and their effect special for them or what distinguishes them from other decorations. This was followed by a question about when people usually give or receive flowers, echoing parts of the introductory question, developing the emotional and cultural side of flowers and finally asking how their thoughts on the previous two questions were specifically relevant to the eating out industry.

Appendix H contains a theme map for the semi-structured interviews with the food experience providers, interviews with the flower providers and the focus group.

3.11.4 Process of Thematic Analysis for Interview and Focus Group

3.11.4.1 Familiarisation

The first stage of the analysis was to listen to the interviews again. This was followed by the transcription process, where the researcher also included the notes she took during and after

the interviews/focus groups using the comment function of Microsoft Word, marking things that stood out to her or thoughts that went through her mind, so that they were all available in one place. The data set was read twice before coding.

3.11.4.2 Coding System

The transcript was then marked for coding with line numbers and a wide blank column to the right of the text for all codes. For repeated coding steps, the previously inserted notes from the comments were also inserted into the codes in the column and the comment function was used again, this time not for codes but to record more analytical thoughts or references to other interviews. In this way, these more abstract thoughts were not confused with the actual codes but were still noted for later use. The next step was to copy all the codes from the column - each interview was given a different text colour for ease of reference - into a large document to begin the categorisation which summarized into the following codes.

An example of the coding process is given in Appendix I.

Table 3.4 Codes

Flower engages with humans	Every detail makes experience	People remember how you made them feel	Impression of floral decorations influences perceived experience	Differing level of awareness	Sense of warmth and welcome
Improve feelings	Sense of luxury	Expression of Care and Love	Assigned meaning to flowers	Genuine hospitality	Value of aesthetic
Transform spaces	Nature	Life	Perishable	Image	

3.11.4.3 Finding Themes

These categories eventually lead to the elaboration of the first themes. To do this, the researcher first mapped the research question and sub-questions against the data, noting which data sets contributed to which questions and what they contributed. This further refined the findings and categories to what was relevant to the research problem. The next step was to develop a mind map to illustrate the relationships between the categories which, over time and refinement, worked out what was a theme, what were sub-themes and what were just codes underneath.

- i) Food environment
- ii) Nature of flowers
- iii) Effort
- iv) Image

3.11.4.4 Redefining Themes

The next phase of redefining the themes was also done in this format, following Braun and Clarke's approach to thematic analysis by testing the research questions, both main and sub, against the themes to make sure they worked, and then going through the full data sets to make sure they told the right story.

3.11.4.5 Naming and Defining Themes and Writing a Report

This was followed by naming and defining the themes and finally writing the report.

- i) **Atmosphere:** Emphasises on what determines the quality and memorability of a food experience (every detail, feeling).
- ii) **Natural attraction to flowers:** Details aspects related to the nature of flowers that attract people (nature, aesthetic value, life, sensory stimulation).
- iii) **Symbolic Meaning of flowers and the gesture of providing them:** Compromises various evoked feelings and meanings by the effort that goes into providing floral decorations and assigned meaning to flowers (welcome and warmth, care and love, luxury and feeling special)
- iv) **Image:** The use of floral decorations as a means of communicating what a place or person stands for, how it is perceived by guests and how it sets expectations.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter laid the foundation for the research project by discussing the different research philosophies, showing that this research emerged from the philosophical belief system of interpretivism. Furthermore, the different methodological approaches of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods were discussed and the qualitative approach was found to be the most appropriate for the research problem. In addition, the rationale behind the choice of instruments - literature review, semi-structured interviews and a focus group - for primary and secondary research was highlighted, both distinguishing and drawing on existing research and their methods chosen, and finally the choice of thematic analysis for data analysis was discussed. In addition, a comprehensive overview was given of how each step of the research

was carried out, the limitations associated with the process, what this meant for reliability, generalisability and validity, and how research ethics were ensured throughout the process of conducting this research.

4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

After analysing the primary data using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach, as described in the previous chapter 3.11.4, four main themes were identified. Each of these themes represents an area that contributes to answering the research question, some are more comprehensive than others, but all contribute to telling the story of the data. The aim of this chapter is to tell that story in an accessible way to present the findings of this qualitative research. To this end, the main findings of each theme are presented and illustrated with extracts from the original data.

4.2 Theme 1: Atmosphere

The first theme identified was atmosphere as a crucial factor in the quality and memorability of dining experiences. The critical importance of feeling in the experience, and the fact that it is not just one thing that makes the experience, but the sum and quality of the execution of all the little details, shows this very clearly.

4.2.1 Influencing Feelings

It is clear from the interviews and the focus group that the feeling conveyed to guests is crucial to how they experience and ultimately remember the catering scenario.

Interviewee Cúán Greene comments as follows:

[W]hat it is that makes people love certain spaces or places, is not necessarily the food, like the food, of course, plays an important role. But if you take the example of going to a high-end restaurant, or even a coffee shop, and then four months down the line, what do you remember about that experience? You don't necessarily remember the dish. You don't remember the dish you had in such and such restaurant, but you remember how people made you feel (CG4, lines 61-66),

which underlines the importance of the emotions triggered by a food scenario.

The most common feedback that Cúán and his team receive is that diners have “a new experience they haven't had before”, as well as the two words “thoughtfulness and kindness” (CG4, line 151) and that “[their] team are so nice” (CG4, line 151), all attributes that relate to how one feels which relates to the quality of an experience rather than pointing out specific products or services.

Restaurant manager Miceal Murray describes his intentions in providing a dining experience as “part of the creation of an atmosphere that is investigated in being warm, and inviting, and open, and comfortable” (MM1, lines 30-31), also emphasising the overarching aim of providing a feeling rather than individual products or services.

Niall Toner's comment in the focus group echoes this, saying that the feeling of connection with the restaurant operator is what is remembered, even if the overall experience is not satisfactory:

I mean, you, you know, when you see that [referring to flowers on table] on a restaurant table and you immediately warm to it. Like it's not, you know, you know, even if you have a terrible experience, you will still have that to remember. (FG5, lines 504-507).

This also raises a point that leads to the next relevant point in the context of this theme, namely the fact that despite liking one aspect - in this example, the provision of flower arrangements - the overall experience can be poor, and thus the fact that the experience is made up of the sum of all the details.

4.2.2 Every Detail Matters

The second point that emerges from the interviews and the focus group is that there is no one thing that alone determines how people feel, or that affects them more than others, because “everything [is] connected” (CG4, line 158).

While Aiva Veinberga's statement “[i]t's the whole experience” (AV2, lines 10-11), only implies that there is no single product or service that makes up the experience, interviewee Miceal Murray uses the term “holistic experience” (MM1, line 55) to express that it is determined by several factors, of which he cannot distinguish which are more important than others: “[A]ll those elements are of equal importance. There isn't one that I would say is more important than the other or less important, you know, in creating an overall event.” (MM1, lines 102-103).

Cúán Green goes a step further when talking about the practice in his own business:

I think that it is really important that we acknowledge [...] that like in hospitality, we have to constantly remind each other how special our [individual] job is all the time. [...] We thank each other for the work because it's enormously difficult. So, unless you do that, things can fade away, ‘Oh, you know, why do we do this? Why do we polish this? Why do we go to these lengths? Why do we make sure the flowers are perfect?’ It's like, all of these things are really important (CG4, lines 260-266),

emphasising that ultimately every little detail and its execution shapes the overall experience.

The same idea is expressed by Mary O'Reilly, who says:

[F]rom working in a hotel I will tell you, that everybody thinks the job they do is the most important thing to every guest enjoying their, anything they are going to. So, the doorman thinks that they did the best because of welcoming them in, and so on, and that's why it works well because everybody thinks they have the most important thing to do, so they have to do it really well (MOR3, lines 167-171).

Cúán Greene describes an example of this being perfectly realised:

I was in a place in Edinburgh the other day called Elliott's and it was like a very understated Cafe really, like small and [...] just beautiful, [...] everything was [...] effortlessly considered but you knew as well that she went to huge lengths to make everything, but it felt effortless, like everything from the tables, the chairs, like they weren't expensive, or they were beautiful. The cut flowers, the little post-its, the nicely cut tape, the linen, her outfit everything was beautiful. But it was done in a way that it just felt effortless you know. (CG4, lines 177-183).

4.2.3 Feeling vs. Awareness

This last section follows on in some ways from the first section about the emotional rather than the material nature of experience. There is a consensus that all the little things matter when it comes to how people feel and how they perceive their experiences. The details don't always seem to be consciously perceived, but the end result is what people feel:

[D]efinitely people do pick up on the whole atmosphere that's been created. They may not kind of, even maybe figure out the specifics all the particularities of it, [...] but for me, I know it makes a huge difference. It makes it a whole huge difference to what is being delivered (MM1, lines 110-115).

Those who know, feel it, not know it and appreciate it. I think those who don't, they won't notice unless you take it away. Do you know, I think that's [the] significant difference. [...] They won't necessarily see the difference, but they'll know if it wasn't there. They'll feel it, you know, there was something not so special about that (CG4, lines 356-260),

so being encouraged to engage with flowers increases emotional involvement and reaches a lot deeper level.

On a more flower-specific note, it was observed that the longer the conversation went on, the more emotional or joyful the participants or interviewees became about the flowers and what they represented:

Yeah, I think I think you could be right. I think it's I think that's really beautiful. What you said about them, I think that's almost made me like, remember the importance of them and what they signify on a table. I think that's really, really, really lovely (CG4, lines 212-218)

or

It's the creativity of it, I think there's a real element of creativity in the care people take you know, and it's just amazing. I'm going away from here. And I am saying, yeah, I'm going to find a little, you know, a little something. Because there's loads; I'm looking and I'm thinking if I walked around in the garden, you know, I'd be able to see and spot, so it inspires, that's the word. Yeah. It inspires as well (FG5, lines 507-511),

so that the involvement with the florals actually increases the emotional involvement and reaches a deeper level.

And it is important that not only the effort made is perceived, but also the lack of it, which shapes the emotions and is thus remembered, as Lisa Davis' statement shows:

There were no flowers on the table. And that struck me. And it was everything was beautiful and very precise and its most gorgeous little candleholders and but it was everything was so precise and pristine, but I was, I remember being surprised that there, there was just no flowers on the table it was a bit, I noticed it, their absence, you know, but maybe it was because everything is so, it is so almost, not clinical, but precise. Didn't want something that felt a bit more sort of, you know, organic. (FG5, lines 193-199)

In this example, Cúán Greene sums up well that while it makes a positive difference when it is done well, it has just as big an impact when it is done badly, to the point of being “catastrophic... [as] it can throw something [...], like it can throw [the whole] experience” (CG4, lines 277-278)

In summary, atmosphere must be seen as something very emotional. While it is the totality of all the tangible and intangible details that contribute to the overall experience, it seems that it is not enough what these details are, but how they feel to the guest, i.e., what emotions they evoke, because this determines the lasting impression that an experience seems to leave on the guest. Even if the actual factors are not consciously perceived, one seems unable to escape the overall impression left by the whole experience. In this context, the food and the floral decoration are only one of many factors that together make up or influence the experience, without one detail being more important than the other.

4.3 Theme 2: Natural Attraction to Flowers

The second theme identified describes aspects of people's attraction or connection to flowers based on the flower as a being in itself. As the following sections will show, this is something that happens between the flower and the person, is mostly experienced unconsciously, and is difficult for people to define or put into words. Therefore, the following section will deal with aspects that were repeatedly mentioned by interviewees or participants, but mostly without any explanation of where they came from, other than the flower itself.

4.3.1 That Indescribable “Something”

The first thing that emerges from the data is a seemingly indescribable “something” or “some reason” that flowers have on people. While there are some attempts to explain some of the feelings evoked by the presence of flowers in terms of specific aspects of the flower, the recurrence across the data sets of the lack of words for some things is in itself remarkable.

In the focus group, phrases such as

I think they are certainly, there is something that, I mean, there's something that can be, that can change a place you know, in almost instantly (FG5, lines 249-250),

there is something about receiving flowers (FG5, lines 66-67)

or

[Amaryllis] always strikes me for some reason as being wonderfully made (FG5, line 71),

expresses this well.

Miceal Murray tries to explain this: “I don't know if there are case studies or anything like that, but they do affect your mood and they do affect your your, your, your, I don't know your something...” (MM1, lines 143-145), but counters that it's something people don't have full access to:

I think we pick up on something in them that is, is not quantifiable, or, or, or something that we have the ability to really, really describe in lots of ways, there's something else, there's something more primal in them, I think, as well. And I think that's part of the appeal as well. (MM1, lines 436-439).

Florist Aiva Veinberga, whose daily work revolves around the attraction of flowers, also finds it hard to find words to describe where this attraction comes from: “I don't sometimes know why they're attracting, actually, to be honest” (AV2, lines 131-132).

Coming from the natural side of the flower, Niall Toner mentions that, as he says, their “function in nature [is] [...] to communicate” and “that they somehow communicate with you. [...] they literally do communicate with you [...] in a different way” (FG5, lines 182-185). “I mean, they directly speak to you, they directly invoke if that's the right word, emotion, I mean, it's like it's un, it's un, it's undeniable, it's irresistible” (FG5, lines 293-294)

Although he is very expressive about the fact that they communicate with people and that this leads to emotions, there is still this indescribable “somehow” that he cannot explain.

The next sections reflect more what touches people about the flower in a literal sense, and in the next theme will offer insights at the messages that the flowers convey more symbolically, and perhaps they all contribute to this "indescribable something", but the fact that this lack of descriptors is so dominant and so present in the data, does not allow any further conclusions.

4.3.2 Life

One of the things that people found touching was the aspect that “there is something [about] real life, flowers are life giving” (FG5, line 119). While “life” or “life giving” may still be quite vague statements, it is something that comes up again and again, as something emotional and touching, as Elizabeth Waters calls it: “[T]hey give us life, they lift us up ...” (FG5, line 318-19), when she wonders why not more places use flowers to convey such messages. This comes up repeatedly in the focus group: “I think it's something to do with life at that being honest. [...] So, I just think there's something life giving” (FG5, lines 125-128) and Cúán Greene also says: “Life, life. It has to be [...], like if you were sitting in a room with mannequins, everywhere, you know, it's the same” (CG4, lines 244-245).

This aspect of life brought about by the freshness of the flowers distinguishes them from plastic or dried flowers in the way they are experienced by people and how they affect the overall experience: “But the dried ones sometimes, I mean, they just, they just don't have that same freshness” (FG5, line 139). It is interesting to note that although cut flowers are no longer alive, their freshness counteracts this.

4.3.3 Nature

The aspect of life leads to the next point, which refers to the flower as a being and thus to what it adds to a space: “[I]t's [...] connection also, with like, living matter” (CG4, lines 85), and thus with nature.

Aiva Veinberga's words sum it up: “[T]hat everybody, we're all like somehow are looking for a connection with nature and [floral decoration] probably gives us that” (AV2, lines 160-163). Also, her example that “we are primates, and somebody is paying us to go and gather flowers and put them on the table, it sounds ridiculous kind of if you really think about it. [...]. It's huge, I think the nature aspect is huge” (AV2, lines 106-109), highlighting how important the connection to nature is for humans, given the lengths to which they go to achieve it.

By mentioning that flowers bring not only their natural appearance but also their “natural smell” (MOR3, line 362), Mary O'Reilly addresses the multi-sensory experience that flowers bring, which in turn creates direct points of contact between people and flowers.

4.3.4 Multisensory Experience

After these initial, more immaterial experiences triggered by the presence of flowers in floral arrangements, the experience becomes more material in nature. Biological properties such as the visual appearance of the flower combined with its scent, bring into play a tangible component that people can physically interact with. Aiva Veinberga mentions that they are “textural” and make it a “tactile kind of experience” (AV2, lines 142-143), something that guests can interact with: “[Y]ou do touch them and you can smell them. Yeah, they [people] definitely do” (MOR3, line 359), as Mary O'Reilly confirms.

With “the flower, there's so much to look at” (FG5, line 532-533), it “adds that sort of colour and interest to something” (FG5, line 265). Cúán Green also emphasises the distinctive features:

I think it's more sensory. I think yeah, visual, I think, you know, you have colour, you have light, you have but also fragrance, you have aroma, your purifying qualities. But also in the, in the aesthetic and how they contribute to a room based on style (CG4, lines 103-105).

With his last sentence, he adds something else to the aesthetics that the flower as an entity brings, namely the style of its arrangement, which also contributes to the visual appearance.

Despite the flower's material contribution to aesthetics and scent, the reaction it evokes is usually “more an emotional thing. It's always more emotional” (FG5, line 497), as the following quotes show: “I think even visually they can be very calming in some way or they can be very focusing in some manner” (MM1, lines 147-148) and “I still think cut flowers bring such a, such a lightness to a room and a fragrance” (CG4, 99-100), combining the physical qualities of the flower with the feelings it evokes.

4.3.5 Value of Aesthetic

The final section moves from the individual aspects that flowers add to the broader concept of aesthetics, to the overall effect that flowers contribute aesthetically to a space and thus to an experience. Miceal Murray first addresses this issue by mentioning “the psychology of thinking some of the kind of, you know, the nature of aesthetic and selling, you know, to customers and all of that” (MM1, lines 299-300). Aiva Veinberga expresses it more strongly as

the whole presence of nature and aesthetics. It’s not just something that you can kind of disregard, I think, or kind of put aside, because therefore [...] we have experiences, things that, you know, or all these [...] kinds of stories (AV2, lines 246-249),

and because the overall aesthetic adds “kind of an ambience in the place and a talking point as well” (FG5, line 157).

This theme has shown that the mere presence of flowers, their life, their belonging to nature, the stimulation of human senses that makes them interact with flowers and the general influence of aesthetics are reasons why people are touched by flowers. Although these are all possible explanations for why flowers touch people, there remains a certain mystery as to why they touch people, which is reflected in the lack of descriptions in many cases that do not allow further conclusions.

4.4 Theme 3: Symbolic Meaning of Flowers and the Gesture of Giving Flowers

Following on from the previous theme of the natural components of flowers that affect guests, this theme looks at the more symbolic meaning of flowers and the gesture of providing them, and the emotions this evokes. Much of this is due to the effort involved in providing flowers and the culturally ascribed meanings.

4.4.1 Effort

Mary O'Reilly sums it up well when she says that the effort involved in providing floral decorations for such occasions is a huge part of the message it sends to the diner or recipient of a dining experience, emphasising that what makes them special is the freshness of the flowers and the work that goes into them.

[B]ecause you are given something that has been arranged especially for you now, that has been done right now because it’s fresh, you know, I just think there's something about it and it’s a surplus to requirements over the top, it’s an addition, an add-on, a luxury, you know that it’s not standard (MOR3, lines 150-153).

Firstly, the fact that flowers are “something that's **living** [...] so you have to, you have to be able to look after it and you [as a provider] have to be able to respect that” (MM1, lines 195-196), which reflects the care capacity that a provider can take on.

The aspect of the **perishable nature** of flowers heightens the care and affection involved in the gesture of giving flowers, as it requires continuity to maintain the same level of freshness and care, as this quote shows:

They just had a vase of cut daffodils in the, in the window like a lovely big stack of them. And the first thing I thought was like ‘these people care’, you know, these people that go to the effort every day, or every two days to cut these flowers. (CG4, lines 402-405).

Mary O'Reilly also expresses this by pointing out that

if somebody [...] puts fresh flowers in your room if just feels like it's just been tended to, [...] that it's just been set up especially for you. And I think that's what changes it, fresh flowers been arranged like that just for you (MOR3, lines 138-142).

Ultimately, it is the **luxurious nature** of the flowers that creates this sense of effort being put into the food scenario through the provision of flowers. Eliza Sullivan addresses this as well as their fleeting nature when she says that flowers are “almost pointless, and they are fleeting, [...] the season is such a blip in time” (FG5, lines 298-299). The fact that flowers seem to have no functional purpose, not only for cultivation but also for decoration, puts them “somewhere between the food and the decor. They kind of exist on their, they are their own thing on the table” (FG5, lines 593-595). Mary O'Reilly goes one step further, repeatedly emphasising that “flowers are over and above” (MOR3, line 217) or “above and beyond” (MOR3, line 303), so that it is not only the extraordinary effort that goes into something functional, but the effort that goes into something extra which further heightens the level of luxury.

It is clear from the data that this commitment to “wanting to give that little bit of an extra [...] to give that slight more than is expected of you” (MM1, lines 411-412), evokes a sense of care, affection and tenderness as well as a sense of celebration.

4.4.1.1 Care and Affection

The first and most common aspect in the data is that the flower arrangement shows the “extra bit of care” (MM1, line 123), that is put into a food scenario. “[I]t shows that somebody really they do care, if they're putting out fresh flowers. You notice that sort of attention to detail”

(FG5, lines 135-136), which Lisa Davis also points out a little later in the focus group (FG5, line 147).

Furthermore, the flowers are described as “the kind of personification of a, just care and affection” (FG5, lines 464-465), which extends the aspect of care with affection, as Mary O'Reilly aptly describes: “Like a little jar of flowers in a cafe on the table, I think gorgeous. It makes it look loved. [...] it gives that nice [sense that] [...] this place is loved” (MOR3, lines 203-206). Like Aiva Veinberga's description:

I suppose flowers show care. Also with the food, I would think that it shows somebody really thought out, it's not just plunked. Like, you could have, I don't know, roast dinner, and it will [be] just plunked on the table, maybe in a wrapping or something like that. But then somebody made an effort. There's flowers, there's, food and you know, I think it kind of shows respect and love and care and that sort of thing (AV2, lines 51-55),

it is the effort put into a dining experience, usually through the provision of flowers, that makes both the place and the guest feel loved and cared for.

And it seems that it's not just the guest and the place that are loved and cared for, but that this feeling of caring is transferred to the food.

I think it's really I do notice that places have them [flowers] [...] even just in like a small vase, even an old milk bottle or mason jar or something, it just says that they really care. And the food is usually I think better. It gets attention to detail. (FG5, lines 145-148).

4.4.1.1.1 Wide Margin to Exceed Expectations

While this suggests that giving flowers is generally an act that shows care and effort, this impression is also reinforced the more thought and effort is put into it, as the following two examples show:

I think there's something really special if somebody brings you a gift of flowers from their own garden, that to me now, you know, is just fabulous to get [...] Absolutely. The picking [...], I think that's a [...] really lovely, lovely gift. [...] [I]t's just such a lovely thing, to get something that somebody has really put the effort into growing [...] And also what makes it special is the time that people put into decorating [...] and I see that that's sort of, I think, gosh, there's somebody willing to take the time and put the energy and the care into (FG5, lines 430-444).

Here, the fact that energy was put into not only providing the floral decoration, but also growing and presenting it, is mentioned as something that makes the gesture even more special.

Similarly, Mary O'Reilly points to the different reaction to mediocre flowers compared to arrangements that have been thoughtfully created:

[Y]ou hand them a bouquet and they think 'that's lovely', but then if I hand them a bouquet where I've put a lot of thought into it, they are like 'Oh my god, it's gorgeous'. They didn't know that there was there was another step up of this (MOR3, lines 323-325).

4.4.1.1.2 *Special Occasion*

Furthermore, this level of care and effort

is to make people feel special, so you are making the flowers for the bride, you're making the flowers for the welcome [...] you want them to feel special. If the bride wants her guests to feel special, they are invited to the celebration and I think that is just the guts of it all (MOR3, lines 288-291).

And "the thing that transforms the room is the flowers. It's what makes it celebrational." (MOR3, lines 185-186), "it adds to that feeling of the dining experience being an event" (FG5, line 160).

Flower arrangements for diners also convey a sense of arrival, as exemplified by Mary O'Reilly's comment that the place

is expecting them. They're like, 'Oh this is lovely', you know, and that's what we get the most attention for, cause people who check in and we get their colours, obviously, just go really obvious. And it's supposed to just make them feel welcome (MOR3, lines 228-231).

4.4.1.1.3 *Lack of Care*

Finally, in terms of the overall impact that the care and thought that goes into the floral arrangements has on the experience, both interviewees and focus group participants mention the negative effect it can have if the gesture of floral arrangements is not done with due care:

The other thing that I really, really, really don't like is, is the [...] kind of sad sort of, you know, plastic orchid, [...] that gets put on the table, but like, [with the] least possible amount of ceremony (FG, lines 91-93).

Eliza Sullivan sums up this, which is also observed in other interviews, at the end of the focus group by pointing out the difference in the language used. "It's the word plunked. Placed versus plunked" (FG5, line 611), which distinguishes between the care put into the act of placing the flowers and the carelessness of something being plunked, that determines the feeling evoked by the guest.

Or as Miceal Murray brings it to the point:

I mean the other side of that is, but they also have to be in a restaurant [...], they have to be pristine, they have to be, you know, they have to be, they have to look really well that can't look off. Because if they look off, you walk into a restaurant, the first thing they see flowers that aren't at their prime, [...] that element of care was completely gone. They care but they don't care that much. Or they forgot to care (MM1, lines 159-163).

4.4.2 Traditionally Assigned Meaning

Finally, culturally and traditionally ascribed meanings were shown throughout the data set to influence perceptions of flowers and therefore perceptions of floral decorations in a dining scenario. The focus group points out that “flowers are part of big occasions, good and bad. And we still weirdly associate them with good things most of the time” (FG5, lines 333-334), that “giving flowers and receiving flowers and everything [is] [...] part of celebrations” (FG5, lines 341-342), that “it's a big part of all these celebrations for loads of cultures” (MOR3, line 264), and despite different levels of familiarity with these assigned meaning as “it is such a vast area of like meaning that we kind of just, you either know it or you don't” (FG5, lines 388-389), “we all kind of see relatively similar, you know, appreciation or gratitude or something else from them” (FG5, lines 350-351).

An example that reflects this is that

a lot of people take some of the [flowers], you know, especially the ones from the ceremony, to graves, you know, the parent or grandparent that has passed away, they like to have the flowers that were actually at the wedding but on the, at the grave, they like that kind of connection (MOR3, lines 373-376).

Cúán Greene is not sure if there is

a disassociation between flowers given to, you know, for your birthday, or for marked celebration or sentimental, sentimental purposes, as opposed to on the table. But then again, when there are flowers on the table, you always notice women [...] notice them, you, know, it's something that is always said and spoken about at a table (CG4, lines 215-128),

or whether this cultural significance is picked up by consumers.

Cúán Greene explains:

I think if you want to feed people you want to look after people, you want to nourish people, take care of people. So, you want to have a space where they feel welcome and comfortable, that just makes sense. (CG4, lines 303-306),

the focus group concludes that flowers and flower arrangements are “just signalling good hospitality” (FG5, line 538), or that carefully arranged flowers make a scenario “[feel] more hospitality-y” (FG5, line 461) and that

it's connected and into [...] hospitality, you know, that notion of really wanting to invite people in and show them something special, you know, whatever it is (FG5, lines 605-606).

These statements give the impression that the symbolic meaning of flowers, both through the effort involved in providing them and through the culturally and even historically ascribed meanings, reflects the core values of what distinguishes hospitality from mere hosting, so that floral decorations essentially embody the understanding of good hospitality.

4.5 Theme 4: Image

The final theme relates to the use of floral displays to convey a certain image as a host, but also what it means when this is perceived by guests and what expectations are associated with it. Although this is a separate theme, the findings from the previous themes help to clarify the image message that can be conveyed through the provision of flowers.

4.5.1 Communicating an Image

Aiva Veinberga sums it up when she says: “It’s image” (AV2, line 27),

I think it's the same like with clothes, it's people are building certain image. And when they have their wedding, or a big, big event, they probably want to display what they're all about. So, then the flowers and the food, maybe shows that (AV2, lines 28-30),

suggesting that “the type of people that would choose certain menus would also choose certain flowers, possibly?” (AV2, lines 23-25). This is reflected in the way she and Mary O'Reilly explain the process of preparing floral decorations for an event. Both refer to a wedding and show that

it has to kind of work together with everything [...] we always see what's the overall design kind of concept, what people try to achieve, it goes together, like with their clothing [...] what people are into, maybe we ask sometimes for sample pictures of what generally their aesthetics are too (AV2, lines 79-83).

Similarly, Mary O'Reilly

would definitely look at their wedding dress, the invitation, bridesmaids dress and I would say I know where you are going with it, you booked the Shelbourne, I have an

idea of what style they like [...], I can usually from them elements, pick... (MOR3, lines 108-111).

Here it becomes clear that the host is concerned with conveying an overall image that represents what he or she wants to stand for.

However, the person who wants to create and communicate a certain image that represents their values through their aesthetics does not necessarily have to be a person, but can also be a restaurant or a service provider as an institution, as Miceal Murray points out:

I think perhaps what you have in your flower arrangement is a pretty good indication of what [and]where you [as a food place] are, what you are really about (MM1, lines 239-241).

And differences in floral styles or the effort represented through the floral displays, show if someone “is more selling an idea and selling a theme [rather] than [...] wanting somebody to actually experience something that's really genuine” (MM1, lines 222-223).

An example given by Cúán Greene reflects the same idea:

[D]ifferent styles of how various florists are styling their flowers have an impact on the space, [...] I don't know, if you're aware of Mela foodart, kind of [...] a modern food stylist. Just the way that they're kind of are making the flowers is becoming a style and restaurants are coming or actually associating themselves now with that style (CG4, lines 107-111),

supporting the idea that certain floral styles, both in their aesthetics and in what they stand for, are what a person, brand or institution is associated with or wants to stand for. “[A] restaurant [that] is minimalist, [...] [wants] more of a minimal, lighter touch and that comes with a certain style of plants” (CG4, lines 294-295).

You know, and whether that is a very small cafe like the one I said Elliot, in Edinburgh, or these little spots that are just or big restaurants that do just do things, great. And I think they know who they are. Most importantly, they know what they stand for. And they know exactly what they're looking to achieve (CG4, lines 344-348),

which sums up that creating these atmospheres is a way of expressing what you stand for, and all the little details are part of that. The previous two themes of the nature of flowers and the symbolic meaning expressed through flowers have shown what flowers and floral decorations stand for, i.e. how they are used and suited to express these ideas of extraordinary effort, love, care, thoughtfulness, luxury, celebration and attention to detail.

Conversely, this also means that hosts who do not wish to express or represent these feelings have no reason to provide flowers: “[F]lowers in that scenario, are probably irrelevant. [...] [Y]ou're looking for a different [...] or you're presenting a different experience by having them there.” (MM1, lines 424-425).

4.5.2 Perception and Creating Expectations

Just as flowers are a way of expressing values and what you stand for as a host, there are also certain expectations in certain places about the expression of these values and therefore about the use and quality of the floral decoration. Aiva Veinberga gives an example in her interview:

[F]lowers generally, they are marker that people have extra money, and they have extra time. So, for example, go to a simple canteen, you probably don't expect anything like that. So, you don't probably wouldn't even notice to be honest with you. If you're paying like 100 euros per head, like, let's say, for a seven-meal taster menu like you probably, you know, want the whole thing to be kind of amazing (AV2, lines 225-229).

The focus group elaborates on other nuances, showing that different types of floral decoration send different messages to guests:

[A]ll those, those big, very, like, you know, a professional florist came in and did it [...] I almost like [...], ‘fine, you have money, I get it’. This [the flowers on the table] I'm like ‘you care’, I guess like smaller. I don't know, the human touch component versus the professional touch (FG5, lines 453-455).

[T]hese are the kind of personification of a, just care and affection I suppose. [...] When I sit down at this table, I definitely kind of I know [...] that what I want to get it's going to be [good] [...] I definitely would set the bar higher [...] if I saw those on the table. Rather than the big thing, you know, because [...] then [with the big thing] you know, what you kind of get, you know, you're gonna get some, [...], cheffy [...] maybe some lobster (FG5, lines 464-473).

So, the image conveyed by the flowers is taken up by the guest and shapes their expectations, both, as mentioned here, in terms of what they will get, and the conveyance of concepts such as care, effort and attention through the flower display. It also influences the expectations of the care, effort and attention that goes into the food:

They care to get fresh flowers in, and they probably have fresh food in the back as well. Like it's almost like an assurance of freshness now that I'm thinking about it, you know, like if someone's willing to put out, [...] money and extra things that you're gonna assume that the stuff in the back is probably doing that to a certain part as well, that it's part of it as well (FG5, lines 150-153).

Finally, the focus group notes that the effect of the flowers is emotional rather than purely visual because most of them are not aware of this purely design level (FG5, lines 490-500). Eliza Sullivan sums this up by saying that the floral decoration “matches an aesthetic and not colour” (FG5, line 520), so it is something that is felt more in the overall fit of the setting and what it is trying to stand for and deliver, rather than something that simply fits a colour palette.

In summary, the provision of flowers is a means for any type of host, be it an individual, a restaurant or a service provider, to convey both aesthetic and, more importantly, emotional values, which are reflected in the style of floral decoration and the genuineness of the effort put into it. In the same way that suppliers convey an image through floral decoration, these details are picked up by diners and shape both their expectations of a dining scenario and their perception of the overall experience.

4.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to tell the story of the primary data in an understandable way, to present all the data relevant to the research problem and to support it with meaningful quotations. In summary, the findings of this research problem suggest that it is extremely important to recognise the significance of the small details of an establishment, in this case a restaurant, as it is these details and the quality of their execution that make up the experience. Moreover, it is ultimately the feeling evoked by these details that determines the quality of the experience and what is remembered. The next two themes describe the effect that flowers, and therefore floral decorations, have on people because of their nature and their symbolic meaning. While the natural components have a positive effect by satisfying a general need for nature, the symbolic meanings revolve around care, attention, consideration and the feeling of being special. Providing these attributes is perceived as a core value of good hospitality. A recurring pattern is the use of floral decorations to convey an image, or the fact that guests perceive an image for a hospitality establishment that shapes their overall perception and expectations. This image is shaped by the aforementioned natural and symbolic attributes associated with floral decorations, and it also becomes clear that while flowers will always convey these perceptions to some extent, it is not the goal of every establishment to express this exceptional form of hospitality, and therefore floral decorations are only relevant to those establishments that aspire to do so.

The next chapter will discuss these findings in relation to the existing literature, discussing both the findings in their own right and in the wider context of existing research, which will allow for further conclusions, insights and explanations, and thus the contribution of this research.

5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to open up a new discussion about flowers and their role in the dining environment. More specifically, it is about gaining insight into the way in which floral decorations influence the diner's experience in a dining scenario. This is not only about whether this influence is positive or negative, but also about gaining a deeper understanding of what aspects of floral decoration trigger this influence. To this end, a comprehensive qualitative analysis of the primary data was conducted and the key findings are presented. This chapter discusses the main findings in the context of the existing literature on floral decoration in dining environments, as well as the literature on the influence on the dining experience in general and the influence of flowers on people. Due to the lack of specific research on flowers in food scenarios and the fact that the data obtained here is only a first step towards a better understanding, it works better to discuss the primary data in context. For this reason, the data has not been considered in isolation first, but has been discussed directly in the context of the existing literature and in the same step in itself.

5.2 Things Shaping the Experience in a Food Setting

The first step before investigating how floral decorations affect the overall experience in a dining scenario is to understand what influences can affect the dining experience, how they affect the scenario and where floral decorations can be found within it. The literature on the general determinants of the dining experience is more extensive than the literature on flowers in these settings, but starting with the general literature and then adding the primary research that specifically includes flowers allows for a comparison and to some extent an extension of the existing literature.

5.2.1 A Sum of All the Details

In terms of the factors that shape the dining experience, the literature emphasises that it is the sum of all the parts that make up the dining experience. Kim *et al.*, (2023, pp. 734, 736) point out that the food, as the core product, is still particularly important in determining the overall experience, but that all other aspects, such as the quality of the interaction with staff and the physical environment, also influence the experience, which in turn influences the perceived quality of the meal. The results of the present study are generally consistent with the literature, as they emphasise the importance of all the small details, and thus the experience can only be

considered as the sum of its parts (AV2, lines 10-11; CG4, lines 260-266; MM1, line 55; MOR3, lines 167-171). However, the results differ in that food as a core product is not considered more important than the other contributions (MM1, lines 102-103). This is more in line with the qualitative research of Gustafsson *et al.*, (2006), who grouped the factors they identified as influencing the experience into five main categories: The venue, the interaction with staff and other guests, the products served, the background management and control systems, and the general atmosphere. There is no ranking of these aspects in terms of influence. Atmosphere is seen here as an overarching theme that is influenced by all the other factors. This is consistent with the notion of atmosphere identified in the primary data and the repeated emphasis on the importance of the feeling conveyed to people as a crucial factor influencing their perception of the details.

5.2.2 Atmosphere Being Highly Emotional

These results also underline that atmosphere is something very emotional, determined by both tangible and intangible factors, but ultimately it is the emotional appeal that determines the quality of the experience for the guest. This is expressed in the primary data by both mentioning how important positive emotions are to the participants, to stating that these evoked emotions are what they remember and therefore significantly influence their attitudes towards the host and thus the service they provide (CG4, lines 61-66, 151, 356-260; FG5, lines 504-507; MM1, lines 30-31, 110-115). Therefore, it is impossible to assess the quality of these factors on a static scale, as it is not only the core product or service that is delivered, but also the emotional impact on the guest and these individual perceptions that influence the perceived quality of the products and services. This requires, as a starting point, consideration of the overall experience that is to be offered and knowledge of the guest and their expectations. Andersson and Mossberg (2004), for example, point out that satisfaction with a restaurant experience depends strongly on the needs and expectations of the guest at that moment, whether the focus is mainly on satisfying a biological need such as hunger or a pleasant stay, which suggests that social and environmental aspects are less relevant the more basic the needs and expectations are. To enhance enjoyment, a holistic approach is needed that does not neglect or underestimate the impact of the individual components, as also recommended by Lin and Mattila (2010).

The influence of the feeling triggered in the guest is also supported by the results, which indicate that guests are often not aware of the details of an experience, but these unconsciously influence the felt experience, so that the guest still feels the emotional impact even if they do not consciously perceive it (CG4, lines 356-260; FG, lines 490- 497; MM1, lines 110-115).

In summary, while the literature expresses the same core idea as the primary data, namely that the quality of a dining experience is the result of the execution of all factors such as service, food, environment, social interaction, the primary data puts much more emphasis on the emotional impact of these things on the guest. This also points the way for the entire research, as the products and services offered should not only be considered in their core function, but also in their emotional impact.

5.3 Impact of Flowers

For the study of the influence of floral decoration, the findings on emotional impact from the previous section mean that it should be considered not only as a material object, but also in terms of the emotions it evokes in people. The aim of this section is therefore to understand the different factors that influence people's perception of flowers, to discuss the existing literature with the primary data and thus to classify the relevance of the different aspects from the literature in the context of the food scenarios.

Before going deeper into the discussion, it is important to note that floral decorations in the hospitality industry are a common phenomenon, practiced and mentioned in the applied literature on table decoration (Ellis, 1978; Mills, 1989; Vivaldo, 2010; Sikorski, 2013; Pubillones, 2020; Prince, 2022). However, they are not further questioned or considered in either applied or academic work, even though they may consciously or unconsciously guide providers. For this reason, the following section discusses the general literature on the effects of flowers on humans, together with the primary data, as it places the existing research in the context of food scenarios.

5.3.1 Impact of the Nature of Flowers

The first thing to discuss are the factors that influence a guest's perception of flowers in a food scenario, based on the nature of the flowers and what they contribute simply by being there.

5.3.1.1 Aesthetics

This first part of the discussion already suggests that the emotions evoked are more important than the purely material components (FG, lines 490-497). Thus, the pure materiality of a flower due to its biological properties such as colours and scents, as a purely decorative aspect in a room, is only a small contribution to what floral decorations add to an experience. The study by Mojet *et al.*, (2016) concludes that the visual appearance of the flower has a more positive impact on the dining experience than the smell. This difference between the visual and

olfactory experience is also mentioned in the primary data, with the concern that the olfactory experience may be unpleasant (FG5, lines 79-81, 88-90). The primary data may minimise this concern from a florists' perspective, as someone who works with flowers is aware that unpleasant odours should be avoided and that they have the necessary knowledge to make the olfactory experience not unpleasant (MOR3, lines 361-363). Furthermore, the findings of Mojet *et al.*, (2016) seem to focus on this more decorative and thus material added value of floral decorations in a dining scenario, without considering the importance of the emotions evoked. The research findings of this project, on the other hand, suggest that it is primarily the way in which flowers add emotional value that determines how floral decorations influence an experience.

Huss *et al.*, (2018) took a deeper look at aesthetics as an emotional, rather than predominantly visual, stimulus. They concluded that the combination of visual stimuli of flowers such as colour, shape and symmetrical patterns creates a perfect balance of stimuli with a sense of familiarity, creating an “aesthetic experience that is able to move emotionally” (Huss, *et al.*, 2018, p. 2). This could be supported by the findings of this research, as they emphasise that the actual details, such as the visual stimuli, are not actively perceived by most guests, but they are emotionally stimulated by the aesthetic experience, which in turn determines the guest's perception (FG, lines 490-497, 520; MM1, lines 110-115). This is further supported by Aiva Veinberga’s reference to the “value of aesthetics” (AV2, line 238) as the reason for human experience, and Miceal Murray’s comment on the influence of the “psychology of thinking” and the “nature of aesthetics” (MM1, lines 297-299) on how flowers are perceived.

Huss *et al.*, (2018, p. 142) argue that this ‘aesthetic experience’ goes beyond the perception of flower aesthetics and, through multi-sensory engagement with the care and appreciation of flowers, establishes links between these emotions and interactions with flowers that shape autobiographical memory and lead to better recall. Interacting with flowers as decoration was also highlighted by participants in this research (FG5, lines 265, 532-533; CG4, lines 103-105; MOR3, line 359). Combining these findings with Cúán Greene’s comment about the importance of the evoked emotions during a food scenario as a determinant of the perceived quality of the experience and memory of a restaurant (CG4, lines 61-70), this may suggest that flowers are particularly likely to create positive long-term memories because of the unique aesthetic experience they provide.

5.3.1.2 Nature

Another aspect of floral decoration that is more related to its nature is that it adds something natural to the dining experience when presented in a food setting. This desire for a connection to nature runs throughout the data set (AV2, lines 106-109, 160-163; CG4, line 85; FG5, lines 119, 125-128). This is consistent with Kellert and Wilson's (1993) research on human dependence on nature. This research is complemented by other researchers who have analysed the effects of contact with nature in different scenarios, such as hospitals (Ulrich, 1984). Park and Mattson's (2008) study, which investigated whether cut flowers have the same effect as a view or contact with nature, suggests that cut flowers are sufficient to bring the feeling of nature indoors. These ideas are consistent with the findings of the present research, as participants and respondents explicitly refer to the longing for a connection with nature (AV2, lines 106-109, 160-163) and express that cut flowers help to satisfy this need (FG5, lines 119, 125-128).

5.3.1.3 Flowers as Living Beings

However, it is not always nature that is talked about, but also the connection and interaction with living beings that is described as life-giving (CG4, lines 244-245; FG5, lines 119, 125-128, 139, 318-19), although no participant elaborates on what this means or where this feeling comes from, except that it is a positive experience and seems to be quite strong. This is consistent with the findings of Haviland *et al.*, (2005), who theorise a co-evolution of flowers and humans, comparable to the co-evolution of humans and domestic animals. This means that flowers, like pets, occupy an emotional niche. Thus, caring for the flower or pet improves the emotional well-being of the human, perhaps even requires it, and in turn, the care invested in it improves the reproductive fitness of the flower or pet. Their research could explain these repeated comments about being life giving in the primary data, as the positive emotions are not evoked by the connection to nature, but specifically because flowers are seen as something living that needs to be cared for, which underlines the comparability with pets and thus fits with the theory developed by Haviland *et al.*, (2005).

5.3.1.4 Difficulty Explaining Positive Emotions

While Haviland *et al.*, (2005) attempt to explain the positive effects of flowers on emotional well-being, other studies such as Mojet, *et al.*, (2016), Huss, *et al.*, (2018, p. 3) and Jo, *et al.*, (2019) show that flowers generally evoke positive emotions such as happiness, relaxation and the maintenance of emotional and general well-being. This is consistent with several comments in the primary data indicating that flower decorations positively change spaces (CG4, lines 99-

100; FG5, lines 36-37, 155-157, 256-258; MOR3, lines 83-84, 129-130, 337-339) and feelings (FG5, lines 54-55, 116-118, 252, 256-258; MM1, lines 436-438). While the positive effects of floral decoration are directly described as transforming, uplifting, mood- changing, brightening things or bringing lightness to a place, to name but a few, the contributors do not mention any other source for the effect. This also applies to what is described in the findings as the ‘indescribable something’, that there is something about flowers that has a positive effect, but which the participants cannot put into words (AV2, lines 131-132; FG5, lines 66-67, 71, 182-185, 249-250, 293-294; MM1, lines 143-145). While the findings of specific studies such as Ulrich (1984), Kellert and Wilson (1993), Haviland *et al.*, (2005) and Park and Mattson (2008) may explain some of these emotions, the vagueness of these research findings does not allow them to be classified more precisely and therefore not explained further.

5.3.1.5 Evolutionary Link Between Flowers and Food

Finally, this section has shown that flowers in themselves evoke a variety of positive emotions in people for a variety of reasons. The fact that many of these emotions are experienced subconsciously makes it difficult to always pinpoint exactly what is responsible for the emotions. However, the available research suggests that this aspect of flowers, and therefore of floral jewellery, has an independent effect on people, as it is in the nature of flowers and people that they cannot escape. In addition, there is research that suggests some reasons or explanations for the triggering of these emotions, such as the dependence of humans on nature and the theory of co-evolution of flowers and humans, where flowers as living beings occupy an emotional niche for humans who, through the act of caring for them, ensure their well-being and in turn improve the reproductive capacity of the plants. Evidence for these theories can be found in the primary data. While previous research has analysed all of this in scenarios not related to food or eating experiences, their presentation in this primary research, which has focused on eating scenarios, shows that these factors have the same positive effect in eating environments. However, this is a fundamental positive influence of flowers on people that is independent of the environment in which it is experienced.

5.3.2 Impact of Assigned Meaning of Flowers

The following section explores how ascribed and learned meanings and perceptions of flowers affect the quality of food settings when flowers are presented. These are influenced by traditional, historical and cultural meanings and by what is expressed through the gesture of presenting flowers. While the previous section considered the impact of the nature of flowers

as a basis for positive emotions, this section refers to the extent to which the way flowers are presented determines their impact, which is associated with greater complexity.

5.3.2.1 Traditionally, Historically and Culturally Assigned Meanings

Goody (1993) and Buchmann (2016) provide a wealth of research on the cultural significance of flowers. The original purpose of floral decoration, reserved for “offerings to men and gods” (Goody, 1993, pp. 28-29), highlights two important elements that shape the cultural meanings of flowers: The flower as an offering to worship a person and the act of gift-giving (Goody, 1993; Buchmann, 2016), which is also reflected in the findings of this paper.

5.3.2.1.1 Worship

The choice of flowers for this form of worship probably has its origins in their aesthetics, which are closely linked to the biological function of fertility. The literature suggests that the importance of fertility in the past went hand in hand with a reference to secure future sources of food, with the sense of security also accompanied by a sense of luxury, as Goody puts it (1993, pp. 4-5). The ability to use flowers for decorative purposes thus symbolised a luxury originally reserved for the gods. Over time and with increasing food security, this has loosened somewhat, but the cultivation of flowers for ornamental purposes rather than food production requires and therefore represents a luxury of time and space historically reserved for the upper classes of society (Goody, 1993, p. xii; Buchmann, 2016, p. 94; Hůla and Flegr, 2021, p. 15).

Although flowers have become much more affordable, especially due to the industrialisation of the flower and food industry, they are still considered a luxury and an extra (MOR3, lines 151-152), as they cost extra time and money (AV2, lines 225-226). The fact that someone takes the trouble to offer such a luxury is perceived as a form of appreciation - a form of worship - towards the guest, which as a gesture increases the quality of the perceived experience (MOR3, lines 150-153). Even if the parameters for the accessibility of flowers have changed, such as the decreasing association and competition with food, they are part of the learned associations with floral decorations and even today the gesture of providing them in different scenarios, such as dining experiences, is an additional effort that is appreciated by guests. So, one could say that the feeling of luxury is still reflected in floral decorations, albeit in a much more accessible form, and whereas in the past the association of luxury came from nature, the way flowers were grown and their biological function of ensuring future food sources, today the feeling of luxury comes mainly from the extra effort (money, time, thought) someone is willing to invest in providing floral decorations for their guests.

5.3.2.1.2 Relationship Maintenance

As this sense of luxury, originally reserved for gods or elites, became more widely accessible, this form of worship evolved over time into a common gesture of “establishing, maintaining and terminating relationships” (Goody, 1993, p. 2), both with gods, superiors and each other (Goody, 1993; Buchmann, 2016; Huss, *et al.*, 2018). Social encounters in which flowers are presented are usually characterised by positive emotions based on some form of love or affection, of which romantic love is just one example. Even in the case of death, which is associated with negative emotions, the giving of flowers is based on love or care for both the deceased and the bereaved (Huss, *et al.*, 2017, p. 142). This is also expressed in the focus group, which states: “flowers are part of big occasions, good and bad. And we still weirdly associate them with good things most of the time” (FG5, lines 332-333). It points out that even on sad occasions, the purpose of flowers is to “celebrating someone’s life” (FG5, lines 337-339), and thus to express something positive. Furthermore, the focus group mentions that “giving and receiving [flowers is part of] [...] special occasions”, and therefore part of the expectations of certain food scenarios that are widespread in different cultures (MOR3, line 264). However, the primary research does not make clearer the extent to which this influences eating experiences, particularly the extent to which it influences eating scenarios that do not develop around special occasions, such as a regular restaurant visit. Niall Toner points out that floral decorations “are the kind of personification of [...] care and affection” (FG5, line 464), suggesting that this learned association with flowers may unconsciously influence diners’ perceptions of floral decorations in any dining scenario. At the same time Cúán Green is unsure whether this association with flowers for sentimental occasions persists in food scenarios:

[T]here could be a disassociation between flowers given to, you know, for your birthday, or for marked celebration or [...] sentimental purposes, as opposed to on the table. But then again, when there are flowers on the table, you always notice women like notice them, you know, it's something that is always said and spoken about at a table (CG4, lines 212-216).

However, the next section on the meaning attributed to the gesture of providing flowers shows that these feelings of care and affection are mainly perceived by the guests through the actual performance of the host (AV2, lines 51-55; FG5, lines 145-148, 430-444; MOR3, lines 203-206), suggesting that these learned associations with flowers are less influential than the experienced care and affection actively brought to a dining scenario.

5.3.2.1.3 *Language of Flowers and Folklore*

In the literature, the European example of the language of flowers, invented in Europe in the 19th century, highlights how flowers convey all kinds of relational messages (Goody, 1993), as well as examples of the attribution of meaning to flowers in folklore (Schneidau, 2018). Although neither is directly relevant to this study, they reflect what is at the heart of the cultural use of flowers: giving, receiving and interacting with flowers as a form of relational communication, not just with deities or the spiritual world (Goody, 1993; Buchmann, 2016; Schneidau, 2018). These examples of flower language and folklore were also mentioned in the primary data, but with the conclusion that the average person today is too far removed from being aware of, and therefore not actively using, the language or various folklore about flowers and floral decorations (FG, lines 355-394; MM1, lines 385-391). Therefore, these meanings usually do not influence the dining experience.

5.3.2.1.4 *Shared Meaning Across Cultures*

According to Goody (1993), Buchmann (2016) and Huss *et al.*, (2018), the culturally ascribed meanings of ornamental flowers and decorations vary from culture to culture, but are historically present and embedded in most cultures, suggesting that certain meanings are associated with them, albeit unconsciously. While individual meanings may vary, Huss *et al.*, (2018) suggest that the cultural symbolism of social relationships that flowers represent generally evoke feelings of happiness, which is consistent with statements from the focus group suggesting that the general understanding of flowers “transcends [...] culture and religion and [...] where we all [...] see relatively similar [...] gratitude or something else [in] them” (FG5, lines 349-351).

This last paragraph, and in particular the last sentence, sums up this section on traditional, historical and culturally ascribed meanings. While both the literature and the primary data agree that people's associations over time have been overwhelmingly positive, based on reverence and love, and a means of maintaining relationships, the deeper understanding of where this came from has largely been lost. However, the overarching aspect is that the culturally learned associations with flowers are generally positive and evoke positive feelings. Moreover, this is not mentioned in the literature or in the results of this research project as a crucial influence in the context of food scenarios. While the reason for this in the literature may be that the topic of floral decoration in dining scenarios has not yet been sufficiently researched, the lack of mention in the primary data suggests that flowers do not

have a major influence on the perception of a dining experience, except maybe at a subconscious level.

5.3.2.2 The Meaning of the Gesture of Providing Flowers

Rather than the cultural or learned meanings of floral decoration that influence the experience of eating situations, the things that the gesture of floral decoration expresses were addressed.

5.3.2.2.1 Positive Attributions About the Giver

The act of giving or offering flowers is underrepresented in research, so there is little literature with which to discuss the findings of this research project, and therefore they are mainly discussed in isolation. Nicolas Guégen (2011) found that giving flowers has a positive effect on dating behaviour and the perceived attractiveness of the giver. Although the context of this work is quite different, this is also reflected in the primary data, where the effort put into presenting the flower arrangement demonstrates qualities such as caring, concern, love or sincerity on the part of the giver, which is positively received by the guest and portrays the giver in a positive light (AV2, line 51; CG4, lines 401-402; FG5, lines 135-136, 147, 149; MM1, lines 222-223; MOR3, lines 203-206). In this case, the provider may be an individual organising a dinner or an institution such as a restaurant. Although the different scenarios in this research and Guégen's experiment do not allow to conclude that the positive effect on the giver in a dating scenario has the same origin as on the provider in a dinner scenario, the results of this research suggest that floral decorations in dinner scenarios allow positive inferences to be made about the giver.

5.3.2.2.2 Attributes Represented by Giving Flowers

The nature of the flower, as a **living thing**, requires on the one hand the ability of the giver to deal with a living, delicate creature (MM1, lines 195-196), and on the other hand it is a **perishable** commodity with a relatively short shelf-life, so that maintaining a good-looking arrangement forces the giver to make an effort (MM1, lines 195-196). It also means that it is something that cannot be prepared in advance, but is essentially prepared just for the occasion, and this freshness makes the person to whom it is given feel valued and special (MOR3, lines 138-142). Finally, the **luxurious**, some would even say lavish, nature creates a sense of specialness, considering how much effort is put into something seemingly useless (FG5, lines 593-595; MOR3, lines 217, 303).

Based on the findings of the present study, it is these qualities that determine what gives meaning to the provision of flowers and floral decorations. This is because the gesture of

providing them requires and thus reflects the level of care, effort and consideration that a host is willing and able to invest in the experience (AV2, lines 51-55; FG5, lines 135-136, 145-148, 160, 430-444; MM1, line 123; MOR3, lines 185-186, 203-206, 288-291, 323-325).

Thus, unlike the previous aspects of how floral decoration affects people's perceptions, such as the nature of the flowers and the culturally ascribed or learned associations with floral decoration, this is not positive per se, but depends on the quality of the execution. That is, if these gestures of care or effort are not performed in a way that expresses a willingness to provide exceptional service, or if they do not meet the guest's expectations of the quality and sincerity of the service offered, then the lack of care is also perceived and has a negative impact on the experience in a dining scenario (FG, lines 91-93, 611; MM1, lines 159-163), by conveying the opposite emotions, e.g. that the host does not care enough about the guests and the service provided, that he does not intend to make his guests feel special or that he does not care that they have a good time. This underlines the importance of the host offering a service from a sincere motivation and not just copying others, as the guest will notice the difference.

This also shows that the core function of providing flowers is primarily to evoke emotions, which distinguishes floral decorations from other decorations. The focus group brings candles into the conversation in this regard, as they evoke emotions through warmth and light, in addition to their visual contribution as decoration (FG5, line 606). While any choice of decorative item can express that someone has put thought and effort into creating a dining scenario, all material goods lack the aspect of life and nature, through which floral decorations can provide an enhanced experience. This is underlined by the fact that participants and interviewees in all data sets agree that even well-made plastic or dried flowers do not have the same impact on guests because they lack the characteristic features of a fresh flower and thus the care and effort that went into providing them (CG4, lines 242-250; FG5, lines 91-93, 106, 108-114, 118-119, 137-139; MM1, lines 202-224).

Consumer items such as cutlery and crockery also have the potential to express care through choices of style, quality, etc. that express care. However, the fact that they are needed and expected in a dining scenario makes it more difficult and possibly more expensive not only to meet expectations but to exceed them (FG5, lines 596-605). Flowers whose core function is to create a positive feeling therefore have a higher potential to exceed expectations. However, this also means that the main expectation of them, the reflection and transmission of positive feelings, is not sufficiently fulfilled and the disappointed expectations also have a negative impact on the overall experience.

5.3.2.2.3 *Why Are Flowers Considered Meaningless?*

Finally, Frederickson (2000, p. 4) makes an interesting point when she states that “scientific literature on emotions includes far more publications on negative emotions, like fear, anger, and sadness, than on positive emotions, such as joy, interest, and contentment”. She sees the reason for this in cultures with a Protestant ethic “which casts hard work and self-discipline as virtues and leisure and pleasures as sinful” (Fredrickson, 2000, p. 2). This may explain why research into the emotional effects of flowers on well-being has been neglected. Although the findings of this thesis do not provide evidence to support her thesis, there is one observation that points in this direction: In the interviews and focus group where participants were asked to explore in more detail the effect of flowers on people in dining situations, there was a general consensus that both the flowers themselves and the gesture of giving flowers to guests have the purpose of making people feel better, special, welcome and cared for, which overall evokes positive emotions and makes people feel good and comfortable (AV2, lines 51-55; FG5, lines 135-136, 147, 430-444, 464-465; MOR3, lines 203-206, 288-291).

The gesture of giving flowers is therefore repeatedly summarised by research participants as an expression of the core values of good hospitality (CG4, lines 303-306; FG5, lines 461, 538, 605-606), namely the intention to genuinely meet, perhaps even exceed, the guest’s needs so that they feel comfortable, as suggested by Elizabeth Telfer’s (1996) theory of hospitality. Flowers, then, are a way of embodying this as a host, insofar as they start from an honest point of view.

At the same time, however, floral decorations in the context of the meal are described as “pointless” and “purely [...] not functional” (FG5, lines 298, 602). It is interesting that the evocation of positive emotions and the intention to make people feel good is not seen as a function in itself, which may be due to the Protestant ethic that Frederickson (2000) describes as the origin of why positive emotions and their evocation are still neglected in research, but possibly also in the business world. Particularly in the context of hospitality, where flowers are quick to be cut to save money (AV2, 229-232; CG4, lines 94-96; FG5, lines 133-135, MM1, lines 178-180), the question arises as to “[w]here in a restaurant budget do flowers land?” (FG5, line 563), whether they are seen as a reflection of core hospitality values or simply as a decorative object, and whether a better understanding of their impact relative to their effort and cost would influence this.

This last section has shown that the effect conveyed by the provision of floral decorations, the perception of the gesture of floral decorations compared to the learned meanings that have little or no subconscious influence on the dining experience, massively influences the perceived quality of a dining scenario. This is because they reflect the care and effort a host is willing and able to invest in providing a service to a guest. This care is not inherently positive but is highly dependent on the way it is delivered, as only the successful delivery of this care generates positive emotions, while a lack of care generates negative emotions.

5.3.2.2.4 Conclusion on the Impact of Flowers

In terms of the overall impact of flowers on diners in a food setting, both in terms of the flower as a natural entity and in terms of the meanings attributed to it, floral decorations prove to be powerful tools for enhancing the quality of a diner's experience in a dining scenario, as both their nature and learned associations create and represent positive and emotionally touching feelings. It seems that the gesture of providing flowers has a direct impact on the perception of the rest of the meal as a measure of the care, love and effort put into a service. This is an opportunity to exceed the guest's expectations and thus reflect good hospitality, as long as the execution is good and comes from an authentic point of view. However, if this is not the case and the execution is poor, it also has the potential to negatively impact on an experience.

5.4 Image

It has already been suggested that the gesture of presenting flowers allows the guest to make positive inferences about the provider and their service, which in turn determines expectations and thus influences satisfaction with the dining scenario. This section explores what influences the host's gesture and how it affects the overall experience.

5.4.1 The Image of Floral Decorations

It is worth noting that already in history, eating places have been places where an image was demonstrated and communicated that depended strongly on the social and cultural characteristics of the food and not only on its nutritional/biological properties (Fischler, 1988; Valenze, 2013), but as well as by the way it is consumed (De Solier, 2013). That is, through the rituals associated with its preparation and consumption, as well as through the space, social context and presentation (Lugosi, 2013; AV2, lines 28-30; MOR3, lines 288-291). However, what is communicated about these aspects has changed over the course of the development of table culture.

Originally, they were seen as expressions of wealth and power (Sikorski, 2013). Flower decorations were a suitable medium to express luxury due to their limited seasonal availability in northern Europe (Köhler, 2004) and the fact that flower gardening was a sign of luxury as one could spare the space to grow them for pure pleasure (Goody, 1993, p. xii; Buchmann, 2016, p. 94; Hůla and Flegr, 2021, p. 15). With the rise of the middle class, the luxury of food became accessible to more and more people from most social classes (Eatwell, 2002; Sikorski, 2013; Mac Con Iomaire, 2015). The focus on expressions of wealth or power has diminished, yet food scenarios communicate statements about the identity of the eater as well as the identity of the host (Fischler, 1988).

In terms of what is expressed through floral decoration in food scenarios, the data set repeatedly reveals the communication of closeness to nature, seasonality, freshness and sustainability (AV2, lines 6-8, 13-14, 108-110; CG4, lines 85, 242; FG5, lines 140-148, 149-152, MM1, lines 241-251), luxury, celebration, warmth and welcome (AV2, line 226; CG4, 303; FG5, lines 142, 163-166, 169, 498-499, MM1, lines 25, 34; MOR3, lines 152-153, 217, 230-231, 288-291, 303;) and care (AC2, lines 51-55; CG4, lines 301-305, 399-403; FG5, lines 145-147, 149-152, 439-443, 450-454, 457-460, 463-464, 507). Their origin, as mentioned above, lies in the nature of flowers, how it influences the associations with floral decorations, and the message embodied in the provision of floral decorations.

5.4.2 Consistency of Style with the Host's Philosophy

Chen *et al.*, (2020) refer to style preference in their research to determine the impact of floral decorations on the overall experience. They found that their study sample preferred the European style. However, as the research in this paper has shown, floral decorations have far more emotional impact on guests than just their style and needs to be looked at more closely. Style here cannot be reduced to the visual or aesthetic, e.g., European, but requires consistency with an overall image that the provider aspires to create or express, and thus the feeling and level of hospitality that it wants to convey, as well as the expectations that guests have of a restaurant or food provider in this regard.

Lin and Mattila (2010) emphasise that the coordination of all factors, including floral decoration, that contribute to the dining experience so that they are in line with a provider's philosophy is also regularly emphasised in the findings of the primary research of this study (AV2, lines 23-25, 28-30, 79-83; CG4, lines 106-111; MM1, lines 239-241; MOR3, lines 108-111).

Style, then, refers much more to the coherence of a flower style with the overall philosophy of the host. If the flowers clash with the philosophy, this leads to tension and a loss of credibility: “[Y]ou've got a restaurant that's like, it's ticked all the boxes there and you know, they are seasonal they're local. But then they have tulips from Nigeria on the table. I'm like, 'Wait, but where did it end?'" (MM1, lines 284-286).

5.4.3 Influence of Guest Expectations

In addition, expectations of floral decoration are strongly related to the image of the provider, with expectations of luxury being much higher in an upscale restaurant (AV2, lines 228-229) than in a canteen or fast-food restaurant (AV2, lines 226-227; MM1, lines 424-426). This is in line with Andersson and Mossberg's (2004) research, which suggests that satisfaction with a dining experience is strongly dependent on the diner's needs and expectations at the time, and also suggests that the more basic the needs and expectations, the less relevant social and atmospheric aspects are. However, it should be noted that even when floral decorations are not necessarily expected, but are provided anyway, they are still expected to evoke positive emotions in diners by their very nature, and are therefore more likely to exceed expectations, compared to a luxury restaurant where expectations are already very high.

In summary, food environments are places where an image is conveyed, both in the past and in the present. Different forms of catering aim to satisfy different needs and communicate this, as the fulfilment of expectations contributes significantly to the satisfaction with a service. Floral decorations in dining scenarios convey a very specific image of sincere hospitality that goes the extra mile for the guest. As these communicated attributes are directly dependent on the flowers, they are always communicated, only the degree to which they are perceived or expected by the guest varies. Knowing what floral decorations express, they become an important means of communicating these attributes. Depending on the desired identity of the host, floral decorations are therefore expected to a greater or lesser extent and different demands are placed on their quality and style.

5.5 Floral Decorations in Dining Scenarios

Within the limited research available specifically on floral decorations in restaurants, Chen *et al.*, (2020) make an important contribution with their study of preferences for floral decorations in ethical gourmet restaurants in Taiwan. The two conclusions of this quantitative study are the better the arrangement is perceived, the better the perception of the overall tourist experience, and that stimulating all five senses can trigger emotional responses that enhance the overall

experience. Although the geography of this study is not comparable to that of this research project, the conclusions are generalisable and broadly consistent with the findings of this research: The better the floral decoration is perceived, the more positively it influences the restaurant experience (FG5, lines 145-148; 430-444, MOR3, lines 323-325), mainly through the emotional impact it has on the diner (FG5, line 160, MOR3, lines 185-186). However, the results of this dissertation, as shown in the previous parts of the discussion, suggest that the emotional impact is only to a small extent due to aesthetics, but rather to the influence that flowers have on people due to their nature, as well as to the cognitive process through which the provision of floral decorations evokes positive emotions.

Considering this last section, it can be said that due to the limited research on the effect and influence of floral decorations on the perception of food scenarios, the results of the literature are not very comprehensive and only indicate that there is a positive correlation between floral decorations and the quality of a food scenario. This was complemented by the results of this research project, which show that the influence that flowers have on people due to their nature, as well as how the gesture of floral decoration evokes positive emotions, seem to be the most influential factors.

5.6 Conclusion

This discussion chapter places the findings of this research project in the context of the literature on the impact of floral decorations on guests in food scenarios. For the most part, the findings support and extend existing research, while sometimes shifting the focus or importance of elements mentioned in the literature.

Firstly, there is a consensus in the dining experience literature that an experience is the result of all the components and that the quality of their execution determines the overall satisfaction of the guest. While atmosphere is mentioned as a contributing factor in the literature, the primary data from this study extends the existing research by highlighting the importance of the emotional aspect of atmosphere to the overall experience, and thus the importance of the emotions evoked by the individual components that shape an experience.

Furthermore, when the general way in which floral decorations affect people is compared with the factors described in the primary data that influence their effect specifically in a food environment, it is apparent that the nature of flowers as such exerts a positive influence on people regardless of the environment in which they are experienced, and thus influences, sometimes rather unconsciously, the perceived quality of an experience. As shown

in the previous section, in the primary data the emotional impact of flowers, both through their appearance and through the meanings attributed to them, is considered much more important than their contribution as a mere decorative object. In terms of attributions of meaning, a comparison of the existing literature with the primary data suggests that learned associations may subconsciously guide a person's perception of flowers, but this is not mentioned as being particularly influential on the eating experience. Here, the emotions and feelings evoked, and the attributes expressed, which revolve around caring, affection, effort and sincerity, and which were summarised by the participants as the core values of hospitality, have the greatest influence on how people experience food overall. As an embodiment of these values, poor execution can send the opposite message of a lack of hospitality and thus negatively impact the perceived quality of the experience.

This embodiment or reflection of values and attributes leads to the final point discussed, that food settings are places that convey an image about the provider and the consumer, so floral displays add the attributes described above to the image. The existing literature agrees with this finding and, similar to the findings from the primary data, emphasises that the image created must be consistent with the identity of the host, implying different expectations for the use of floral displays.

Overall, the impact of floral displays in foodservice scenarios is predominantly positive, evoking positive emotions in the diner for a variety of reasons. These positive emotions increase the diner's happiness and well-being and reflect positive attributes towards the host and the experience they provide, shaping the perception of all other components of the experience as a measure of the hospitality provided.

Finally, applying all the findings from the literature to the specific scenario of the food setting, it adds all the factors and influences previously discussed to the very limited research in this area providing deeper insight and understanding.

The next chapter will summarise the work of the thesis, outlining how the objectives have been achieved and what insights this provides.

6 Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter aims to summarise the findings of this research project in a concise and understandable manner by first presenting the overall result, which consists of a brief summary of the original findings, followed by the research objectives and how they were addressed, thus answering the main research question. Finally, the contribution of this thesis to the overall body of research is presented.

In a second step, this chapter will provide realistic recommendations arising from this contribution to the existing research, both for the applied world of flower providers and food scenarios providers and for future research in this area.

6.2 Conclusions

This section first summarises the main findings of the research.

6.2.1 Summary

The first conclusion relates to the importance of the emotional component that each detail of the dining environment contributes to the perceived quality of a meal. The importance of these factors, as well as the influence of the atmosphere on the perception and influence of these individual components, has been demonstrated in previous research. The results of this study shifted the focus to the emotions evoked by each component, as the emotional aspect appeared to be critical to the perceived quality of the overall experience. This set the direction for further research, and it was found that the effect of flowers on diners in a restaurant setting is not only based on their material nature, but also on their emotional impact on people.

The first finding in relation to the impact of flowers on diners in a restaurant setting was that the purely decorative contribution in terms of how they influence diners is relatively small or subconscious, often not even noticed. Rather, it is the way in which the floral decoration touches people emotionally that has an impact on their perception of the overall experience. This evocation of emotion happens through different components that a flower contributes. Some are based on its presence as a creature, others on the attributes and values associated with it when it is provided.

Aspects rooted in the nature of flowers that influence the eating experience are, firstly, that they are natural and therefore satisfy a human longing for nature when exposed to them,

regardless of the environment. This leads to an overall improvement in mood and evokes positive feelings which, when offered in a gastronomic setting, also influence the mood of the diner. Furthermore, the results suggest that flowers, as living things, are described as life-giving and therefore evoke positive emotions in people. Combined with the research by Haviland *et al.*, (2005), this suggests that flowers improve people's general well-being, which in turn, when offered in conjunction with a meal, improves the overall mood and emotions of diners. Although the reason for this cannot always be described in detail, flowers generally evoke positive emotions that make people feel better, which in turn has a positive effect on the diner's well-being.

In terms of the meanings attributed to floral decorations, two aspects were distinguished: Firstly, the culturally learned associations with flowers, and secondly, the values or attributes expressed using flowers. The results show that the first of the learned cultural associations does not seem to have a strong influence on the diner's perception of the dining scenario. However, this does not allow any further conclusions as to whether it is an unconscious influence. But even as the results show that these learned associations are about relationship care, love, affection, gratitude and celebration, they will still only evoke positive emotions.

What has been shown to be highly influential are the values and qualities expressed through the gesture of giving flowers. Due to the natural quality of flowers to be fragile, perishable and luxurious, giving flowers shows that the host is willing to go the extra mile for their guests, to make them feel special, appreciated, cared for, loved and welcomed.

Because of its meaning and reflection, floral decoration is used to express (by the host) or evaluate (by the guest) the identity of a dining scenario and its provider. Furthermore, these attributes are considered core values of hospitality and, when present, are seen as a reference to the ability of the host to provide hospitality, thus influencing the perceived quality of a hospitality environment. As this last aspect of how floral decoration can improve the emotional well-being of guests is highly dependent on the actual execution of providing floral decoration, it should be noted that if the floral decoration is poorly executed, the lack of care and ultimately hospitality will also affect the guests' mood and thus their perception of the overall experience.

The research project has shown that the nature of flowers evokes positive emotions. But the meanings attributed to them, both learned and actively experienced, are equally rooted in their nature as living, perishable and luxurious. This distinguishes floral decoration from

other decorative objects that can be used to show effort in gastronomy, even compared to dried or artificial flowers.

6.2.2 Answer Research Objectives

The next step is to go back to the beginning and review the research aims to see how they have been addressed and how they have been met, so that together they answer the main research question.

Main research question: *In what way do floral decorations influence the experience of a guest in a food setting, in contemporary Ireland?*

Sub-research question 1: What is the origin, history and present of floral decorations and their purpose in the food experience?

The origins of floral decoration in gastronomy lie in the fact that table decoration was a way for the elite to express their power and wealth. The use of table decorations is closely linked to trends and developments in table culture. With the advent of cooking and cuisine, the decorative aspect shifted from the presentation of food to a separate table decoration alongside the food. Flowers, on the other hand, were a welcome expression of power and wealth at the time, being luxury items due to their cultivation, perishability and seasonal availability.

With the increasing accessibility of restaurants, food safety and modern, industrial methods of growing flowers, they have lost their exclusivity and associations. Today, however, what is associated with floral arrangements depends primarily on the effort and care with which they are arranged and reflects the level of hospitality a host is willing and able to offer.

Sub-research question 2: What determines the quality of a food experience and where do flowers fit into these scenarios?

The quality of a dining experience is determined by all the factors that contribute to it, such as the location, the social interaction with staff and other diners, the products served, the management and control systems in the background and the general atmosphere, with the atmosphere both determining and being influenced by all the other factors.

However, it is important to realise that atmosphere is a very emotional thing and that the other factors contribute not only to a service, process or product, but also to the emotions they evoke, because ultimately it is how they felt that the guest remembers.

In this context, floral decoration is part of the location and environmental factors, but it is a mistake to think that its contribution is purely material. On the contrary, their purely

decorative contribution is almost insignificant in terms of how they influence the guest in a dining environment, but it is the different ways in which flowers affect people emotionally that shape the experience through the positive emotions evoked.

Sub-research question 3: On what spectrum do flowers affect humans and their experiences, especially in food settings?

There are different ways in which flowers affect people, which can be divided into two categories. The first is determined by the nature of the flower as a being, and the second is based on the meaning people attach to flowers and the act of providing decorative flowers.

Because of their nature, flowers have a positive influence on people's mood and well-being and evoke positive feelings. Some explanations, which appear in both the literature and the primary data, are based on the physical aesthetic experience of flowers, others on the fact that flowers, when displayed, satisfy people's longing for nature.

In terms of the meanings attributed to flowers and the giving of flowers, there are learned associations rooted in love, nurturing relationships, celebration, caring and worship. Culturally, such messages, mentioned in both literature and primary data, are expected to influence people's moods, but it is not clear how present these associations are when exposed to floral decorations in food settings. Finally, there is the influence of floral decorations in the moment that they are offered. Because of the effort that goes into providing a living, delicate and perishable object, the gesture reflects attributes such as attention, love, care, effort, the intention to make people feel special, celebrated and appreciated. However, if it is not done in a satisfactory way, it can also have the opposite effect, as it fails to convey these feelings.

Sub-research question 4: What thought and purpose goes into using flower decorations in food settings?

The main idea and purpose of floral decoration in hospitality is to really take care of the guest, to make them feel special and appreciated so that they have a great restaurant experience. This expresses the aim of providing exceptional hospitality and even more so the intention and ability to communicate this, as the act of giving expresses attributes such as consideration, love, care, effort, the intention to make people feel special, celebration, adoration and appreciation.

Sub-research question 5: How does the way floral decorations impact guests in food scenarios shape the guests' perception and how does it impact their experience?

In the third sub-research question, the different ways in which floral decorations affect guests in dining scenarios have already been presented in detail. To answer this sub-question, this can be summarised that on the one hand it increases people's general well-being and evokes positive emotions, and on the other hand it evokes positive emotions by conveying a genuine form of exceptional hospitality.

The first makes guests feel better about themselves throughout the experience, increasing their enjoyment and satisfaction with the experience as they are in a positive frame of mind. The second influences the overall experience mainly through the guest's judgement of the host's willingness and ability to provide excellent service and ensure that the guest has a good time. It is therefore more about the image that the host can project. Research has shown that when done well, the positive associations with the host and his or her skills created by floral decoration have a direct impact on the perceived quality of the food and service, as well as other factors that contribute to the overall experience. However, if done poorly, this image is equally transferred to the other factors and the perceived quality of all the other factors deteriorates. In summary, in the hospitality industry, flowers serve as a benchmark for evaluating or expressing the expected quality of an experience.

6.2.3 Contribution

The starting point of this study was to open a new discussion on the role of flowers in the hospitality industry, based on the lack of research conducted on the topic. Furthermore, this new discussion aims to provide an initial understanding of how floral decorations influence a guest's experience in a gastronomic setting, thus setting the scene for this discussion.

The first contribution is therefore to start the discussion and draw attention to the role of flowers in gastronomy, which has so far been neglected by academics.

Furthermore, it contributes to a better understanding of the scope of this phenomenon by providing a better insight into the matter and thus stimulating a more informed assessment and reflection in this field.

Specifically, the contribution of this work is to highlight, in the more commercially oriented hospitality industry, the importance of the intangible and difficult-to-quantify elements that each component of a dining experience contributes, namely the emotions it evokes.

It has also shown that flowers, although tangible and part of the environmental factors, influence the dining experience mainly through the emotions and feelings they evoke. The way

flowers influence people in general was transferred to the food sector to find out how flowers are relevant to the effect on people in this scenario.

The result showed that what is conveyed by the immediate act of floral decoration in food service seems to have the greatest impact on the overall experience. The impact of this gesture in general, let alone in the dining environment, has been little considered and studied in academic research.

6.3 Recommendations

The aim of this chapter section is to provide recommendations for both further research and the application scenario resulting from the conclusions.

6.3.1 Further Research

The recommendations for further research are somewhat more extensive than those for the applied scenario, for the simple reason that this exploratory study is only a beginning and a first contribution to the discussion on floral decorations in the food sector. Therefore, further research is needed in several directions.

Firstly, the small scale of this project, which is geographically very limited, only allows insights into a very limited sample. Therefore, further research beyond this scope is needed to gain broader insights that will eventually provide a generalisable understanding and insight into this phenomenon in different geographical regions, especially when these include different cultural backgrounds, as flowers are closely linked to culture.

Secondly, a common thread running through the data set is that part of the effect of floral decorations on people in food environments is perceived subconsciously and therefore cannot be directly explained. Therefore, further research is needed whose methodology would allow us to tap into the more subconscious effects of floral decorations. This also means that more research is needed on the effects of flowers on people in general.

Finally, in terms of hotel management research rather than food and gastronomy studies, the extent to which the positive impact of flowers on dining scenarios influences the actual experience should be explored, which would allow for better consideration of cost-benefit analysis.

6.3.2 Applied

While further research is needed to substantiate these findings and to better understand what they might mean for management, the recommendations of this research project for the applied sector are to re-evaluate the role of floral decoration with the understanding that this work provides: “Where in a restaurant budget do flowers land?” (FG, line 563). The question is whether they are seen as merely decorative or whether they convey a much more important message about hospitality, about how well one is able and willing to look after one’s guests, and whether they are appropriate, perhaps even expected, to communicate the values and qualities of a food experience provider.

These findings are relevant not only to professional food providers, but more generally to all situations where food is shared. Although this research has shown that the provision of flowers, and therefore the understanding of their importance, is declining, the impact of flowers in communicating caring relationship messages and evoking a range of positive emotions remains unchanged. With this better understanding of the role of flowers in the hospitality industry, it is recommended that all are encouraged to consider and provide floral decorations to enhance their own well-being and that of their guests.

6.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to summarise the findings of the research project and to show how they answered the sub-research questions and thus achieved the research objective. Finally, the contributions were listed and applied in the section on recommendations to further research and in the applied scenario of food settings.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview 1

1 Interview 1: Miceal Murray (MM) 21.03.2023

Interview Code: MM1

2 in Flower and Bean Dublin

pp. 1-14

3

4 JB: To start that conversation, would you mind introducing yourself a little bit in terms of what you're
5 working what you've done in the past? Obviously, we're talking about flower decorations in food
6 settings, so whatever kind of is maybe more or less irrelevant for us. But just like, I don't even know
7 foraging to get a bit of a background understanding about who you are.

8 MM: Alright. Okay. Well, my name is Miceal Murray. I'm a restaurant manager. I've been working in
9 the restaurant industry for 25, 30 years. I also work, I don't work [laugh] I am also a forager. And I have
10 done some pop-up food events, which would definitely incorporate seasonal flowers, so that might be
11 of interest to you.

12 JB: And how did you get into like - that's a bit of a background thing maybe - how did you get into
13 gastronomy? What do you, I think, what I kind of where I want to go with that is, what do you feel like
14 you deliver in gastronomy? Are you, like, I'm delivering food, and I'm serving that to people or like, you
15 know, where lies your passion, if you have one, where does it come into the whole food scene/setting?

16 MM: I don't, yeah, I don't know if I go as far as calling as a gastronomic passion, in workwise, the, the,
17 the fun there, or the joy or the passion, there is more about meeting people and that kind of interaction.
18 It's also it's often it's about creating mood as well, with music and lighting. And flowers will be part of
19 that as well, at times. And, obviously, the delivering of food is a massive part of it. But if I was to think
20 about the passion part of it, yeah, I don't know what I could really answer more specifically for that.

21 JB: But would you say this creating a, you know, a scene or more so a setting for this interaction with
22 people - I can relate to that - when I look back at how I approached hospitality. I didn't come from
23 providing the food as such, but I liked the space that you're in, in that moment, the way you interact and
24 how you make that good.

25 MM: Yeah well, it's to me, it's all about warmth, and making it inviting and making it comfortable and
26 convivial. And, and I like to approach it in a way that you think that people are coming into your own
27 home, and you're giving something back to people and the food is an element of it, it's not the whole I
28 feel, It's just part a part of that, you know, if you were to talk to a chef, or even a chef that works with
29 me that would say it differently, you know, but for me, and it's what I like to instill in other people, that
30 work with me as well, that you are creating, you're part of the creation of an atmosphere that is
31 investigated in being warm, and inviting, and open, and comfortable.

32 JB: And what, what would you say are your tools for doing that? Like, if you look at your, I don't know,
33 if it's in your everyday restaurant work or even if you did pop-up things, what are like the things that
34 you know, you start thinking about when you want to create that warmth.

35 MM: Ah okay, so music, lighting, definitely, flowers would be...

36 JB: ... also just I don't know why I didn't, I should have said that earlier flowers, can be whatever, what
37 you put on a flat table, it's just as fine, it's more like this last space. MM: Yeah, exactly. JB: Like I am

38 not that specific that it needs to be an ornamental flower. It can be a weed, it can be a herb or it can be
39 anything.

40 MM: Well, yeah, I mean, for me, if I'm doing it the way I like to do it or the way I
41 want to do it the way I've done it before on my part of events, it's definitely foraged, it's definitely what's
42 available. And it's reflecting that back through the food and the time of year and all of that. So, it creates
43 a very specific kind of atmosphere that is in tune with the season in tune with whatever is actually
44 growing at the time. And that would interest me a lot more than just going out and buying flowers which is
45 nice, cut flowers are really lovely on the table. But to me they are not...

46 JB: ... there is it more the concept behind it then for you?

47 MM: Exactly, it's not like a philosophy, but it's definitely, there's definitely a consideration and maybe
48 something sympathetic towards the time of year and the season.

49 JB: and it matches the rest, like it's kind of in tune with whatever else you are providing, it's not just put
50 flowers on the tables for colour? MM: Exactly JB: Whatever it's like an overall story you're telling with
51 the event?

52 MM: Exactly. No, sometimes I don't know whether those specific little ingredients that go into creating
53 those arts are perceived by the customer, it's probably more for me than it is for them. In a way. I don't
54 get a huge amount of feedback about that kind of stuff, because it's different in a pop-up situation,
55 because yes, people will take in all of those, because they're open to a holistic experience,

56 JB: Do you mind saying a little bit more about the pop-up things you did, like, what they were for and
57 so on?

58 MM: I did, I did a series of events in, in in harmony with the Celtic Wheel of the Year. So you've got
59 the different festivals, starting with *Samhain*, which is Halloween at the end of October. And then I did
60 one for *Imbolc*, which is at the beginning of February, and then the *Bealtaine*, at the beginning of May,
61 and then finishing at *Lughnasa* at the beginning of August. So they're the old kind of quarter days of the
62 Celtic cycle, they signify the different seasons, they're kind of saying goodbye to one season and saying
63 kind of hello to the next season, kind of, it's kind of, you know, kind of, in between liminal space, so the
64 food and the decor, I'd sync up with that, so with whatever was available from the immediate and I was
65 very specific about the distance travelled for foraging and on that. And then I would also ask of people
66 who are coming to maybe attune their conversation to that kind of thing as well, if they had anything to
67 talk about Halloween or about *Lughnasa* or *Imbolc*, to bring that with them as well as so that the
68 conversation, you know and the food and everything, we're all kind of attuned to a specific place on the
69 calendar and theme.

70 JB: Okay, and how would you like to... how would people get to your event, like people, how did they
71 sign up? I guess, just through that they're already more involved with the theme. Would you say they're
72 more involved with the theme than, for example, going to a cafe restaurant? Or like I mean, do they
73 already sign up for...

74 MM: Yeah, I mean, the idea was less, it wasn't even less about the food, the food is a component of the
75 whole of the experience, it was really just to deliver a more..., it was to deliver a message about
76 connecting with the seasons, really were you connect with.

77 JB: Like is centered around the food, but the food is not the one thing, it is what brings people together.

78 MM: Exactly it [the food] draws people in and brings them together, so there was that kind of
79 conviviality and the the commensality of it being together. But I didn't really want it [the food] to be the
80 whole focus, I wanted the focus to be drawing people in at this time to celebrate the specific time and to
81 converse about it as well. And then all the elements of that would, in some way, trigger that as well. So
82 you've got, you know, foraged goods on the table flowers and greenery and all of that, so that becomes
83 part of that as well.

84 JB: And did you then do then the flowers yourself, or would you still give it to somebody else, to to
85 arrange?

86 MM: No, I am a control freak, I did it all myself [laughing] JB: Ah, yeah it's the fun part. MM: Exactly.

87 JB: If you want the detail, why... MM: Exactly.

88 JB: You'd have to trust somebody, to put it in. But like that, essentially, also, the table decor, could start
89 conversation around that [the seasons] topic? Because, it's aligned.

90 MM: Yeah, and often... I mean, I'm using plants that people would consider to be weeds, or they were
91 considered to be of not as great significance or importance, but they each individually have all their own
92 stories, and they have whatever to offer as well, you know, they've been used ethically and medicinally
93 in the past, do people do talk about that kind of thing, or would maybe bring back a memory for
94 somebody, people be like, oh, I remember my mom used to do this, or my dad used to, my granny used
95 to do this. So that was kind of the idea as well, that even the arrangements on the table would bring
96 people into a conversation. Now it worked to a certain degree, but it did this completely. Not that it
97 didn't work. It wasn't it wasn't. I wasn't, you know, I wasn't like bringing people in for them only to talk
98 about this. Because you know, it was more...maybe a gentle...

99 JB: ...it's more like having stimulation from all the things you are providing, so that essentially starts or
100 like can start off [conversation], but somebody might connect more to music than to the flower or...

101 MM: Well yeah, yes exactly.

102 But to me, all those elements are of equal importance. There isn't one that I would say is more important
103 than the other or less important, you know, in creating an overall event.

104 JB: You did say earlier that you don't know for sure if people perceive it. Do you have experience where
105 you hear like people pointing things out like, especially I guess, in such a scenario, you might be in
106 touch more with the guests that you would pick things up? Or like do you have, I don't know if that's
107 super academic here talking about feelings, do you have a feeling it makes a difference? You know, not
108 specifically the flowers, but the fact that you have, like, all around the stimulation that is kind of going
109 the same direction? So holistically, essentially, that you are in it...

110 MM: I think in for specific events, that yes, definitely people do pick up on the whole atmosphere that's
111 been created. They may not kind of, even maybe figure out all the specifics on the particularities of it,
112 but way more so than in a restaurant environment. You know, in a restaurant environment, I think
113 probably one in every 200 People will notice the details, you know, and in, people occasionally will say
114 things, but I don't know if it really if people figure it or or look for it or, but for me, I know it makes a
115 huge difference. It makes it a whole huge difference to what is being delivered, you know, but I mean, I
116 remember I've like I've worked in one job and I used to, every Saturday, I used to go down to a local
117 market, there was a woman there. I don't know if this is kind of going off on a [tangine] or... JB: That's
118 ok, go off... MM: But she had an amazing garden in county Wicklow, so all she, she just gathers stuff
119 from her own garden bring it in and sell it every Saturday, so she had the most incredible plants and
120 flowers and greenery. And it was always it was always beautifully seasonal as well. So, I you know, pick
121 it something, make arrangements out of that. And I don't know if anyone ever actually noticed. But it
122 gave me such immense joy to do it. I really loved it. I just loved that kind of..., because it's that just, it's,
123 it's, it's that extra bit of care. I think, you know.
124 JB: that's like one of the things..., because I feel like..., I find it hard and I'm not fully sure how this is
125 going with the thesis..., because they do... I feel like, are my yeah or how do I say it, so what I would
126 expect is a lot happens subconsciously, rather than in your face. Like, you they [consumers] don't walk
127 in and are like, oh, yeah, there's a lot, maybe even noticing flowers, but [the consumer] not being aware
128 of how this might affect their overall experience when sitting down for dinner and having dinner. So
129 how do you really like, get to the core of that. I think hopefully talking to consumers and having them,
130 dig a little bit deeper their own perception, ...
131 MM: ... perhaps I mean, if you're if you're going to if you're going out with a group of friends, for
132 dinner, you're you're you're, you're looking to have a good night out, you're looking to have, you know,
133 lovely food, but you're looking just to have that conversation, possibly to your friend as well. If there's
134 a bunch of flowers on the counter, or on the table, I honestly don't think you're gonna notice. And I am
135 not thinking about myself.
136 JB: Yeah, but do you think it would make the conversation more - I don't know-, I think, like one of the
137 things you said, and I think that's what almost brings me back to my next cloud [interview mindmap]
138 now, is in terms of how flowers can affect [people]. Because I like the most obvious thing is to hear their
139 flower colours they might smell, I think that is what you associate most with them. But then what you
140 said that extra amount of care that you put into the environment. Do you think such things like the one
141 question would be what you think, on which level or what else can a flower contribute to the setting?
142 You know, what goes beyond maybe the visual...
143 MM: Alright okay, well, I think, you know, colour and scent can trigger memory and nostalgia, but they
144 also I mean, I don't know if there are case studies or anything like that, but they do affect your mood
145 and they do affect your your, your your, I don't know your something...
146 JB: ... just your emotional well being.

147 MM: Exactly. In some way, I really feel they do. And I think even visually they can be very calming in
148 some way or they can be very focusing in some manner that maybe they're not things you are looking
149 for in your night out, but they do contribute to the overall feel. But I think that they contribute more to
150 the atmosphere that you are offering in your establishment as well. I mean, for me, they're, can't they' are
151 vitally important, but they're very important to me.

152 JB: Yeah, I'm there with you. I am also arguing that I am talking to people who are/might be passionate
153 about flowers, as I want to get the knowledge. Like, I like the fact that you have a personal interest that
154 that makes you aware when you go out. But at the same time, you have a managerial perspective,
155 essentially, because you're also on the other end, when you do deliver it [the food experience]. MM:
156 Totally, totally. JB: I feel like I don't need to talk to somebody who says that I [the person] don't care
157 about flowers, cause, I know that they're out there but like [for the thesis], I need information you know
158 not...

159 MM: I mean the other side of that is, but they also have to be in a restaurant or market, they have to be
160 pristine, they have to be, you know, they have to be, they have to look really well that can't look off.
161 Because if they look off, you walk into a restaurant, the first thing they see flowers that aren't at their
162 prime, I know that I would lose it immediately because they that element of care was completely gone.
163 They care but they don't care that much. Or they forgot to care. You know?

164 JB: Exactly. And also like do you think, I guess it [flower decoration] need less explanation, if you do it
165 in those settings like for like for your pop up dinners. MM: Yeah. JB: But like that's, that's kind of the
166 point, would you say the flower needs to work on it's own, the moment you start having to explain, that
167 [positive effect] kind of passes, or like, especially in then comparing maybe the restaurant with those
168 pop-up experiences, that that's the difference or a difference. Because in the pop-up, it's like, maybe
169 more the whole story and theme is being sold, whereas in the restaurant, the food might be more at the
170 core [of the experience]. MM: Yeah. JB: And so essentially, like, you know, you could put fancy flowers
171 or like weeds there, because you have a wild menu - I don't know like I am just making this up - but the
172 person actually needs to connect that and not just be like 'oh they are just left over weeds'. I don't know
173 if you can get where I am going?

174 MM: I mean, you can present them in a way that it's really, really accessive. Yeah, I mean, that's kind of
175 the idea, that you that you are presenting something that is very, maybe you're going to see it every
176 single day, but when you see it in a different setting, it kind of gives a different, a different kind of mood.
177 It is all about presentation, and I realize that it's probably something that you, unless you put a lot of
178 effort into it, you couldn't really get away with in most restaurant environments. Although I have seen
179 it done and I've seen it done very, very like, you know, really lovely results in a restaurant. Yeah.. you
180 might not have as much margin to play with something, you know, is definitely its contributing and its
181 contributing, you know, in a positive kind of way, but the, with the creativity, although I see I mean I
182 see all sorts of amazing things with dried flowers hanging from the ceiling as I was such a big kind of
183 vibe in the last couple of years. That kind of bunches of dried, I mean it's become a bit of a cliché, but

184 it's you know, it was it was such a big kind of thing, kind of just after the pandemic, kind of coming in
185 because when restaurants were opening first. I feel like there was; people were exploring lots of more
186 creative parts of the restaurant in lots of different ways.

187 JB: You know, I think like dry flowers so had a bit of a [big moment] because you could send [via post],
188 them so during COVID, I think that helped them thrive in becoming more popular. So just for that setting
189 the trend essentially not specifically in the restaurant but, yes, it's less maintenance. MM: Absolutely

190 JB: Is it generally accepted kind of?

191 MM: Yeah. But you know, you begin to see it in a really diluted kind of way that doesn't work at all
192 where people who could the elements were using plants and flowers in a restaurant environment you
193 can really tell if it's if it's real or if it's just an affected play on a current theme.

194 JB: Yeah, ..., like if there's a heart in it or if it's just a Pinterest board copy past.

195 MM: Exactly. Basically you're talking about something that's living as well, so you have to you have to
196 be able to look after it and you have to be able to respect that and if you don't you just, you might as
197 well have plastic.

198 JB: Yeah, exactly. How would you feel about plastic flowers? Do you feel like? What do you feel? What
199 are in your eyes the differences between them and real flowers? Because you do hear people more saying
200 for example, that they're more sustainable because they don't go off and you don't kill a plant.

201 MM: Well, I mean plants can be harvested very sustainably and in a manner that doesn't kill the plant.

202 JB: Just grow... MM: Exactly, you know, I don't like plastic flowers and that kind of thing. I really don't,
203 now I've seen them done beautifully Like they're really good ones. Totally, but but like I was in
204 Wagamama the other night, coming into that, you know Japanese cherry blossom season, they've
205 covered everything in pink cherry blossoms, but they're all plastic. So, I was like, 'oh, I understand what
206 you're doing. But I'm kind of annoyed by that'. Because plastic things get really dusty and dirty as well.
207 So very kind of they can take from your experience, rather than adding to us. I feel like, you know?

208 JB: Yeah, I mean -I don't know - I feel like if I'm... or one of my worries is that I do bring too many of
209 my own ideas in it, but like, I feel like what I thought when I looked at or like thoughts generally, in
210 general about plastic flowers compared to real flower; like, I think one of the things I would like to find
211 out is if they affect us differently. While I can't do the psychology, psychological study about that, yeah,
212 just getting more what people feel about them, I guess. But, like, if you take the plastic flower, what you
213 said, they're not alive, it takes away from a lot of characteristics that are very specific for the actual
214 flower. And that's where I feel like plastic flower can turn into [something else], it could also just be a
215 candle, you know, it's a dead colourful [item] which still covers the aesthetics [side of things], but it
216 doesn't cover what makes the flower of like, you know, what makes the flower a real flower. It's that's
217 the way I feel like. Or would you think that could be a sign for the fact the [real] flower contributes more
218 [thank just the aesthetic], because of all those aspects? And maybe you can even distinguish between
219 different levels [where the flower contributes], you know, that you would provide in the food scenario,

220 like, if you have the flowers, you're playing on an aesthetic colour, it's almost seasonality, with your
221 plastic cherry blossom, but it's not the care part, it's not that you're able to pay attention to detail part...

222 MM: Yeah, I mean, it is more selling an idea and selling a theme than it is, like, wanting somebody to
223 actually experience something that's really genuine, you know, it's just, it's kind of overlaying something
224 with a notion or an idea. But it's not the, it's not giving, I mean, in fairness, the real experience is going
225 to Japan and so you know, it's, it's obviously not going to be that. It's touching on it. And it's, you know,
226 it's kind of, I suppose it's kind of it's not the real thing, you know, it's just a nod to something, but it's
227 also a nod that's, like, fast, you know? And, I don't know, maybe in some scenarios, in some situations
228 that can actually work in a way as well, you know.

229 JB: So it's a little bit like and I like the way you say they [real flowers] show that being genuine about it
230 more. And then essentially, of course, it depends on what you want to deliver as of foods, place, What
231 would you say would be the difference, for example, like, maybe a cafe like here, where they have
232 seasonal hours? MM: I really liked what they have here. It's really different. JB: What would you expect,
233 also, for customers perception and maybe the difference of how it is perceived in more of a high end
234 food place, a cafe in place, but also like, maybe, I don't know if I want to put McDonald's in there, like
235 somewhere where it's really just about food, you know? What do you think it's like? Is it different, does
236 it come more from the restaurant and what they are trying to sell or is it more like the kinds of people
237 that come into it [the food place]?

238 MM: I don't know if one attracts the other in a way, you know, I mean, it's like... JB: ...if you're genuine
239 about what you sell... MM: Exactly, and maybe, I think perhaps what you have in your flower
240 arrangement is a pretty good indication of what and where you [as a food place] are what you are really
241 about, as well, as you know, you know. If you're, if you're, like, if I look at some of the places that I
242 would really, like think they tick all the boxes of what I like a restaurant to be. And it also shows in the
243 arrangements that they have, I think about someplace like Rochelle canteen in London, Michael
244 Henderson's place, which is kind of it's in the centre of the city, but they have their own garden, so their
245 arrangements are always straight out of that, and beautiful. And they're not always flowers, they can be
246 vegetables, they could be branches, they could be you know, and I, I find that really invigorating to see
247 that kind of realness and that kind of beauty in a place. And, and, you know, they didn't even have to try
248 that hard. They just wander out and gather them and bring them in, you know, there's a place called the
249 Ard Bia in Galway that the kind of is similar in a way, they would always have flowers that are very
250 local, very beautiful and very, but again, they're not, they're not guided by a specific, you know, they're
251 kind of they're in tune, but whatever is there, they're not. They're not trying to be something else. You
252 know, I try to do that a little bit in Clanbrassil house, but it's not my own place. So it's not always keeping
253 up what the restaurant does.

254 JB: Would you generally have something on tables there, or..

255 MM: No not, less so on tables now, over over over time, yes. And there's been times where I've forged
256 stuff and brought it in. But it's not always it's not always appropriate.

257 JB: Okay, quite appropriate for the menu or what?

258 MM: For the restaurant, because it's very, very small and because, you know, just because I'm going
259 foraging the stuff myself, I don't always have time, to kind of like, keep going all the time. But when I
260 do I really enjoy it.

261 JB: What do you have the flexibility of doing that? Or do you have to talk to somebody else about it?

262 MM: There was a period of about 18 months where I was kind of given carte blanche for that kind of
263 stuff. But then we started to rein it in, because I just didn't have the time. And I think the owners probably
264 weren't as keen on it as either, either, you know, so...

265 JB: Keen, or like just not keen or would you know people, that are against it. That have also a firm
266 believe in that, 'we don't need the flowers' in the sense that the food speaks for itself, for example.
267 Maybe more high-end...

268 MM: Yeah. I feel there's definitely an aesthetic towards this kind of stuff in very high-end places where
269 everything is just completely stripped back, and there's nothing except the food. That to me is very
270 unappealing. You know, it's very, it's almost using another bar to learn, you know, a very clinical
271 environment. But that's just my personal feeling. And, I mean, I've never sat down and discussed it with
272 the, with the owners of the restaurant, but I kind of they never said that to me directly, but I feel that
273 they thought it was a hygiene issue as well with foraged flowers.

274 JB: Compared to bought ones...

275 MM: Exactly. Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

276 JB: That's the other part like yeah, I don't know. Just like what that made me think of the fact that so
277 many people know very little about plants and flowers. So, it like as you say it goes towards you put so
278 much detail and thought into it, people might not get it. Whereas on the other hand, maybe it might not
279 fit the overall [thing] you're selling, but it is a good Instagram picture.

280 MM: Well this is it, total marketing.

281 JB: Like word of mouth, essentially, that it comes down to the aesthetic and being good on a photograph.
282 Do you think it's a big thing?

283 MM: Totally. That so there's probably not too many people that would think about it in lots of ways, but
284 for me, it's the difference between, okay, so you've got a restaurant that's like, it's ticked all the boxes
285 there and you know, they are seasonal they're local. But then they have tulips from Nigeria on the table.
286 I'm like, 'Wait, but where did it end? Where is your border? Was the point where you thought all of this
287 stuff is okay, we'll do everything. But, but it's fine to have this [imported tulips]', you know? Yeah, I
288 would find that kind of baffling. And I'm not saying it's a specific place. But I know it happens you
289 know.

290 JB: Would you say now from a feeling I'm having now who talked with like, they're the ones that are
291 aware of it, and they care about it and they think in to it but then there's also the level where it does
292 affect people. Maybe more in a scenario when you want this whole experience, rather than there was
293 first fast food, and that's all you want. It's not the quick fix for your hunger where you go to McDonald's,

294 kind of but you want this atmospheric aspect. Where it might not be the flower and the colours, but it's
295 there, the way they [the flowers] just are. And then there's like, the one field/area, where it's like, it's
296 purely decorative, in the sense of aesthetic, but not in a genuine [holistic] way. But like you could also
297 put a colourful picture there, it doesn't need to be the flower.

298 MM: I don't even know if most people would even think about those kinds of things in a way. You know,
299 it's kind of like goes into the psychology of thinking some of the kind of, you know, the nature of
300 aesthetic and selling, you know to customers and all of that. But yeah, I don't know, I just personally
301 think you could tell a lot. It's still It signifies so many different things. I think.

302 JB: One thing, I'm not sure how relevant again, specifically is for the thesis, but it's something interesting
303 one girl brought up and call it ultimately saying that dry flowers are coming from the top - So technically,
304 the fact that flowers established themselves on my restaurant tables, whatever it comes with the whole
305 table style from sort of service a francaise to service a la russe, because up until then there was no space
306 on the table and essentially, food was the decorative part because there wasn't anything else there. Or
307 you would combine both - Do you feel like there's also a certain trend, going back to maybe more shared
308 platter or, you know, that that essentially that has more of an impact on them being still on tables and
309 stuff, Because maybe small plates are more popular [at the moment]? So, I'm not that much into it, I
310 don't dine out enough but do you feel like that this also a bit of a thing, a changing thing?

311 MM: Yeah, I know where you're coming from that kind of sharing experience of having lots of different
312 things and tasting. I kind of feel like a little bit on the way out again. It's it seems to be more about lots
313 of food, but in in more courses now, so smaller things.

314 JB: You don't have to reach across the table for it.

315 MM: Exactly. Yeah, it's a bit more refined. It's similar. And it's definitely related to the opposite of, but
316 it's giving it to you in a more refined kind of, like, slower way rather than, like, 'Let's fill every space
317 with food' JB: And you help yourself. MM: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I kind of feel. JB: Okay, so there's hope
318 for flowers staying at a table and not just stuck to the wall. MM: Yeah.

319 JB: One of the things I've been also thinking about, so if it does affect mood and overall perception, do
320 you think it also makes a difference for people working in a restaurant because that's like not mentioned
321 anywhere, like flowers in restaurant or food settings are barely ever mentioned at all, other than they are
322 positive, but nobody knows how or questions how, but as also I'm thinking,

323 MM: That's a really interesting question.

324 JB: Because I guess they're also working, they are also kind of creating the atmosphere but also, yeah,
325 you know...

326 MM: I would, I would hope that they would elevate everyone's mood. But I've worked in places where
327 I put a lot of effort into things and staff won't notice at all. Like it's like, whatever, like, yeah where's
328 the menu. Whereas currently, the staff that I'm working with right now they do, they'll always notice if
329 I do even a small little thing is even if I grab a bunch of daffodils on the way into work, they're like 'Oh,
330 my God, it's lovely', and so I think it's individual.

331 JB: It depends on the people or do you think it depends on time, like you know maybe the past has
332 changed people, like Covid maybe making us more aware of things coming out of it or whatever.

333 MM: Possibly, I don't know, it's expectation, it's busyness, it's, you know, it's, it's focus. It's lots of
334 different things. But I would hope to think that yes, you know it would have an overall effect on
335 everybody really, you know, wouldn't be excluding staff from that at all.

336 JB: Like the specifics of plants. You can, you know, because that's like the thing you read about in
337 research about flowers, and there are you have to biologically, psychological or whatever reasons that
338 they positively influence so technically shouldn't stop in front of... for the staff compared to the
339 consumers, they all there?

340 MM: Well, I mean, like, we've, we've gotten into the habit before service of burning incense in the
341 restaurant, as well, just to kind of, it breaks the time between preparation and service. And it kind of
342 changes the atmosphere slightly as well. I know the staff love that as well, like, yeah, like...

343 JB: Would you just let it burn or whatever you like, take a break and walk around with it. It's not part of
344 the preparation or?

345 MM: No, it is, I always have it on the list of things to do at the beginning of the night. Again, I don't
346 know if anyone has ever noticed coming into the restaurant. You want to be quite perceptive. But but
347 for me, it breaks that time and that space. Also, it really refocuses the energy, I don't know maybe that's
348 just personal. That's another thing I do and it's not flowers, an not arrangement, but it is part of the whole
349 thing.

350 JB: Yes. Yeah. The question, was perceived also, that's extra efforts and part important into it. Do you
351 think generally, like you say, it's the atmosphere, but would you think there's a more direct correlation
352 between how you perceive your food? Like, you know, specifically with the food or if you have flowers?

353 MM: Yes and no, yes and no. JB: I don't know, like, literally a feeling like, you don't have like, you don't
354 really serve it as such but am but would you say like the incentive of putting it there is to improve the
355 overall thing not specifically [having flowers there]?

356 MM: I think, if you think like this time of year, you know, you've got so many beautiful flowers, like
357 tulips, just all of a sudden, you can see restaurants have really, you know, probably put that little bit of
358 extra effort. And they've got because, you know, to the grey part of the winter, so now we're brightening
359 everything up. So, I think definitely would affect the whole eating experience and the experience, you
360 know, if you're having that food or to say you're having eaten some lamb or you're eating something
361 that's also of that time, I think it could create that memory for you as well. You know, have you if you
362 recall last time that you're in that restaurant, or wherever, it could be triggered by looking at a flower or
363 or...

364 JB: Even both ways you're in the restaurant and the flower triggers some memory outside of it that brings
365 you I feel like I don't know, do you think that's also because when I did the reading, it's very wholesome
366 and happy and positive reading because even if you're like thinking of funerals, they're still in a good,
367 like flowers are still there in a positive come from a positive source. It's like I don't know, I always

368 thought is it maybe an easy thing to add to a restaurant because it most likely will start positive emotions,
369 the likeliness that that's a bunch of flowers you got when you broke up is a lot less you know. It's like if
370 you put maybe some other décor, the assumptions or things people connect to that item might be a lot
371 more diverse than with flowers [which are usually positive]. And a little bit of a fool proof thing [to add]
372 as a positive thing.

373 MM: Yeah. I don't know. I mean, there's it has the visual appeal it has the signifiers of different things it
374 has all the memory associated... I don't know, I don't know.

375 JB: I am almost coming to an end but I'm feeling okay about that. I feel like one of the things that kind
376 of comes together from all corners of my sheet [questionnaire] is like, how do you feel about the act of
377 giving, therefore providing flowers, when you come from like being in your restaurant, but also maybe
378 even in your private thing [pop-up dinners]. Do you think that is plays a big role in it? Because like, I
379 don't know, occasions where you would otherwise give flowers, what they'd be like, is it similar? Like,
380 if you provide it in the food setting, that this intent that goes into, like, you know, let's say somebody's
381 sick, you give them flowers, somebody has something great coming up, you would give them flowers,
382 like, you know MM: Never thought of that. JB: The way this cultural side of flowers essentially, it might
383 be learned, it's probably rooted in what flowers, historically, evolutionary meant to humans. But that this
384 tool that you have, like this thing to contribute to this [food experience], what might the culturally
385 learned around flowers, through providing flowers in a food setting? That that adds to it?

386 MM: Yeah, yeah. I don't know if I could specifically answer that to you. Because I think as much as
387 much as you know, the, you know, there's different flowers have different symbols and different specifics
388 about them, which I think comes from Victorian times where people would give.

389 JB: This language of flowers...

390 MM: I don't know if it has any more relevance of that in some ways, but it's also individual, I think as
391 well, I think it's all down to how individual people see that. But it's definitely a it's an interesting concept
392 that it's about giving, is that what you mean?

393 JB: Yes I was thinking like, so of course, in the thesis, I want to go back to consumers. So it's the person
394 that receives the flower, you're not taking it [the flowers] home, when you go to a restaurant, usually
395 you won't do that, I think it would be a good idea. But, essentially, the way we give flowers, it's for a
396 good thing, would I and I feel like I can't answer that anymore, because I'm too much in the whole thing
397 anyway, is like giving somebody or providing the flowers in that setting [food setting], a similar way
398 off giving somebody flowers for their birthday, giving flowers for an achievement or when they're sick
399 to get better, you know? Like this caring, being attentive, appreciative, like,...

400 MM: Nurturing... Yeah.

401 JB: And would you expect that a consumer/customer in a restaurant or food thing, would you feel like ...

402 MM: ... Could pick up on that?

403 JB: Again, probably more subconscious than consciously. What do you think? Or do you think there's a
404 difference if a person comes into your restaurant and sees the flowers, that it [food scenario] is a different
405 context, essentially, and you don't get the same...

406 MM: I think it can all fit in the same place or feed into the same place or be of the same thing without it
407 being triggering that specific emotion. But so somehow, it's kind of in there. Definitely, yeah.

408 JB: Because from what you said earlier, almost of it comes from the same incentive, it is the fact of
409 being genuine about what you deliver, being, putting effort in for the person that comes that you're doing
410 it for them.

411 MM: Exactly, you're wanting to give that little bit of an extra as well, that you want to give that slight
412 more than is expected of you maybe JB: The extra mile. MM: And then you are creating something in a
413 way, in a way. But it's such a personal thing as well, you know, it's like, if you're going to dig into it
414 and... I don't know, I think I think like my experience would say it works with some people, some people
415 really pick up on us on there, they're there, they're delighted by it, but some people just aren't they don't
416 really find it to be appealing in one way or the other, that it doesn't really matter if they [the flowers] are
417 there or not.

418 JB: Like if the pick up on it essentially.

419 MM: They're not looking for it, they're not they're not they're not attuned to it maybe you know.

420 JB: And then maybe even again, then it works better in a restaurant when you, when you with your
421 restaurant or foods and a food setting, because it can be anything essentially, attract people who want or
422 like who approach it with that consciousness maybe more than the person who is just hungry MM:
423 Possibly. Yeah, possibly. JB: Someone who just specifically wants to satisfy this one specific need.

424 MM: Well, I mean, I think flowers in that scenario, are probably irrelevant. You know, it's you're looking
425 for a different it's or you're presenting a different experience by having them there. You know, you're
426 saying, well, this is something else to be looking for a quick fix that, possibly they'll just get in the way.

427 JB: Or like, you don't know what it is, because you're only in and out, and we're talking. Yes, yeah. Yeah.

428 Like, I am almost finding it hard to get an understanding, because I do feel like there are these all these
429 layers of flowers be like how they can attract your humans, aesthetically, emotionally, culturally learned.

430 And I don't know, I'm always thinking, it's hard to know how much like, you know, you also kind of
431 need research on how much it's learned how much... You know. all those, you kind of know from
432 existing research that they affect us, but you kind of get it in the, in this setting, you're like, how much
433 is it that is learned, is that, you didn't learn as much as everybody kind of has, because the way it is, or
434 is it something, you need to have a personal connection to?

435 MM: Well if you think about what flowers actually, actually are rather than what we perceive them as
436 being, then you know, then I think that's the interesting part, because I think we pick up on something
437 in them that is, is not quantifiable, or, or, or something that we have the ability to really, really describe
438 in lots of ways, there's something else, there's something more primal in them, I think, as well. And I
439 think that's part of the appeal as well. But, I mean, cut flowers are essentially very wasteful and very,

440 you know, certainly probably not a great idea in in, in the bigger picture of things, probably not,
441 particularly if you're looking at something that's been farmed and brought here from... JB: All over the
442 world. MM: Exactly, exactly, it's probably, not.

443 JB: It's like they very [most] far away from what they originally were, but people are not aware of it.
444 Often, like, it's exactly, it's, I found that interesting. Do you think people are aware of the connection
445 between food and flowers? You know, that's a lot of your food, if it's not meat has flowered or will
446 flower?

447 MM: No, no, no. Not at all. I mean, I think people's level of awareness in general, would definitely be
448 with plants on a very low level, about their awareness towards, you know, although I mean, you know,
449 science is changing all the time, and that kind of what nothing. But, you know, there's, there's new studies
450 being done all the time about how we interact with them, and how they interact with one another. And
451 they, you know, they, they connect, you know, when about intelligence and intelligence around plants
452 and plant intelligence and all of that, because there's, it's becoming a much bigger area. And and maybe
453 there's something in that as well, maybe there, maybe they are speaking to us on another level that we're
454 not aware of, you know.

455 JB: Are they like, I don't know, that's one of the studies that are like, fairly new, it was from 2005, I
456 think, but it's only those researchers that look into it, so it's very slow progress, I'd say, for saying like,
457 considering the facts, how long, we're not relying on them anymore, whatever. But although that
458 evolution has moved on, and we don't rely on them as a food source, or like indicator of food sources,
459 for example, but still they, essentially, they were comparing flowers to dogs or like pats, you know, that
460 are good for your personal well-being in terms of, you take care of it, you get something back from it.
461 And more like, how it's even, like they suggest over centuries has changed from being something that
462 nourishes you, in a way, like, previous to flowering or afterwards but even found that very interesting
463 but again, because who is really aware to consider that, but they actually say, although it's seriously
464 might like, we don't assume that food and flowers are that close. But also, although that used to be their
465 original purpose, it is actually withdrawn from that by now, like, in how we interact with [them] because
466 evolutionary it is more for our well-being and happiness, emotional well-being and stuff rather than
467 nutritional well-being. It's actually like the purpose has properly shifted.

468 MM: Yeah, yeah, absolutely and I mean, if you consider how much processed food you eat, as well, it's
469 completely denatured, it's completely denatured, then that I mean, the connection between what's
470 actually on your plate and what's in the vase beside you is like so distant an remote from one another
471 anyway, so I don't I don't know. I don't know what it means in that sense to have it even, because it's it
472 seems almost like a joke or, you know, it's such an afterthought of... of. Yeah, yeah, no that's way too
473 big.

474 Interesting stuff.

475 JB: Yeah, kind of. Okay, one final, final thing. Do you think, what would be your perception of the
476 difference on flowers on the plate as edible flowers? And do you think flowers then are still flowers, you

477 know, like if it... I don't know, would you find the decorative flowers comparable to them? Like if
478 they're on the plate, are they still mostly decorative and whatever or is there more the exoticism maybe
479 that you eat flowers that kind of captures you?

480 MM: It's a very exotic kind of notion. I mean, we've always eaten flowers, you know, it's like, it's very
481 old. But it is still very much an exotic concept. I think, although it kind of comes and goes, I've seen a
482 lot more of it recently. But it kind of peaked around 2005, 2006 I think it was definitely a flurry of that
483 kind of stuff going on, where it seemed to be very, very popular. And, you know, I used in hope, Wu Chi
484 Minh City, there was I went to a restaurant there that had a whole section on flowers. And you could
485 have them cooked in different ways, which was really, really mind blowing. But I think mostly when it's
486 done, it comes from a similar place that that it's really an aesthetic thing. It's not a nourishing thing, I
487 think, it's not... it has other... they could be extremely nourishing, but...

488 JB: But that is not where it comes from, the incentive comes from somewhere else?

489 MM: It's an aesthetic. Yeah, definitely, definitely.

490 JB: So might be less about affecting the atmosphere because it's eaten at some point but... Because it's
491 funny, like when you mention food and flowers, everybody hints me towards that were I am like, no,
492 no, no, not on the plate next to the plate. MM: Oh, ok. JB: How similar I feel like it's more of an
493 assumption that people would have with food or flowers kind of were like, oh, you should look into that
494 from like, I didn't know, I kind of saw them always very different.

495 MM: Yes or no, no.

496 JB: There's the creational part of these ones, scene and setting

497 MM: There's definitely artifice in both, you know. There's definitely symbol, and sort of in both of them.

498 And somehow I kind of feel like they come from the same place in a way. But I can see where you're
499 coming from.

500 JB: Yeah, I'm like, I don't know if that's just what I'm thinking about. Okay, you are into [the topic], like
501 you would know, like an abundance of flowers to eat potentially. But I also feel like it's almost as if the
502 decorative part or the arrangements can be more like, that you have more intention in how you put it
503 together and how he's displayed. Because you probably don't have a vast array of edible flowers that
504 you really use. Like I was thinking like it's more the again Pinterest and doing what other people do
505 because you just put in on top essentially. It's not a massive part of meal... it's just a garnish.

506 MM: No, it's just a decorative, garnish, exactly, sometimes flavour impact.

507 JB: And you don't tell a story with the flower, if you want to, on you plate. You can. MM: You can but
508 you have options as long as they are outside of what's available. How it's yeah. Okay, are you happy to
509 have any questions? Anything you would love to contribute? What else?

510 MM: No, I think okay. Do you have any other questions?

511 JB: No, not on my plate [paper].

Appendix B

Interview 2

1 Interview 2 Aiva Veinberga (AV) 29.03.2023 Interview Code: AV2
2 During a walk in Clontarf pp. 1-8
3
4 AV: Nobody ever has, like, for example, when they come for a consultation, nobody ever says
5 like, oh, I'm just gonna have beef, would you compliment my beef with flowers or something
6 like that? I think it's more really, I had once like, where we really kind of worked, it was a
7 specific dinner, which was more like, seasonal foods, and they really wanted something that
8 complements that, you know. So then it's really, I think it's called that [food] scene with seasonal
9 local foods that you would probably find.
10 JB: But it even be less the meal itself, it'd be like the concept of the... AV: It's the whole
11 experience. JB: Yeah the, food experience they are kind of providing.
12 AV: And then of course, like, then the flowers, everything like the taste the smells, everything
13 kind of marries together. But wedding wise, it's really, it's once again, it's the category of people
14 that will be interested, like, in local and seasonal and then but otherwise, I can't I can't see like,
15 what's really would be...
16 JB: So, you don't feel like it - I guess - I think it's not really what I'd be expecting like that it's
17 has something to do with the foods served, I suppose essentially...
18 AV: ...if you had old flowers on the tables, then probably your food also would look crappy,
19 even though the food would be delicious. People would suspect there's something fishy about
20 this, like something is not good. You know, I think the whole thing has to kind of work together.
21 JB: So, the flowers are just part of the overall image you're creating or like the feeling?
22 AV: Definitely, yeah.
23 JB: It sets the scene in a way.
24 AV: Definitely. And probably also, I would imagine, the type of people that would choose
25 certain menus would also choose certain flowers, possibly? Quite possibly, I'm just guessing.
26 JB: But what's that for? What do you think makes the difference in the people? Like, would it
27 be more the mindfulness? AV: It's image. JB: Or would it be more than display?
28 AV: I think it's the same like with clothes, it's people are building certain image. And when they
29 have their wedding, or a big, big event, they probably want to display what they're all about.
30 So, then the flowers and the food, maybe shows that.
31 JB: So it's kind of the photographability of it. Like not necessarily, but like also to towards your
32 guests. But yeah, it kind of it is quite interesting, because historically, that foods and like flowers
33 in restaurants and stuff have established themselves. It's really like one of those things where
34 you kind of try to show yourself off. Yeah, and just to make the overall like earlier it used to be

35 only the foods to be aesthetically pleasing and like arranged to make it [suitable] for them, then
36 over time, when the center of the table kind of freed off, because of the beginning of food was
37 just thrown on there. You kind of had the blank space.

38 AV: For flowers

39 JB: What difference would you say? Like I guess you are doing both weddings, but also would
40 you also just have like, you know, normal bouquets and somebody comes [saying] 'I want a
41 bouquet for my mom'? Would you think there's a difference in [the] approach the people that
42 come towards you, you know, what you feel what you just said with the imagery is more
43 [related] with the environment, or is it like the emotional part? Maybe why you want flowers
44 for somebody could be similar?

45 AV: I think there's just people who care about flowers. And there are people who don't. So,
46 people who don't they, they know maybe their mom likes flowers, and they'll just buy
47 something, but there will be very specific people who will want to choose all the possible stems
48 being controlled what's in there, you know, and I would imagine that those people also, once
49 again would be very particular...

50 JB: In detail planning things.

51 AV: And then again, like, what is it? I suppose flowers show care. Also with the food, I would
52 think that it shows somebody really thought out, it's not just plunked. Like, you could have, I
53 don't know, roast dinner, and it will just plunked on the table, maybe in a wrapping or something
54 like that. But then somebody made an effort. There's flowers, there's, food and you know, I
55 think it kind of shows respect and love and care and that sort of thing.

56 JB: And would you say even people who don't specifically care about flowers would get that,
57 like I'm wondering, it's like the hard thing. I'm talking mostly to people who are passionate
58 about flowers and then you're like 'yes, of course I notice it if I walk into it [a place]', but I
59 guess it's more of a learned thing you know, we know flowers are an act of kindness from
60 somebody to somebody that just makes us feel better although we're might not even be aware
61 like what flower is this flower... like do you think they have this more subconscious effect
62 maybe on people?

63 AV: Yeah, definitely. Because even with some some friends or even with my partner I think in
64 the beginning maybe he also wouldn't have cared so much about flowers always appreciate if
65 if everything is set and everything is prepared, like he possibly would not do something like
66 that himself, but he always appreciates [it], so I think it goes for everybody you know?

67 JB: And then kind of, to what detail you can enjoy depends on how into the flowers you are.

68 AV: Yeah, exactly. Like my dad, for example, he doesn't see the point in flowers because you
69 just go, you know, what's the point? For me, that's the whole point. Like, it's nice that they don't
70 last. It's nice that, you know,

71 JB: What is it about that? That's like, what would you say is the difference, or maybe that is the
72 difference, because I had lots of lecturers of mine suggesting why don't you do in general table
73 decorations? Like chandeliers, napkins,...? It's like, no flowers are so different. I couldn't really
74 pinpoint in the first moment, like, what makes them different. Would you say they're like,
75 because I guess with a candle, it's an object and it's, it's there... I don't know it still has warmth,
76 but is a flower, just the object kind of that you're delivering? Or even if you supply somebody
77 with flowers? What's your thought process? Kind of what are you putting into those flowers,
78 just the harmonious,...

79 AV: I think it has to kind of work together with everything. Like, has to be always from loop to
80 wedding, and we always see what's the overall design kind of concept, what people try to
81 achieve, it goes together, like with their clothing. Also, through the interview, you sort of gauge
82 what, what people are into, maybe we ask sometimes for sample pictures of what generally their
83 aesthetics are, too, then we try to find out. So that's, I know, that's the kind of obvious, answer
84 that probably. That's, that's what kind of goes into it. And then of course, it's possibly if
85 somebody maybe has come particularly to you, they might like something that you do, you
86 know, and then then even though they don't ask for certain things you still put them there and
87 they are happy. And they're kind of excited about it, because they come to you because they
88 like certain things. So and then you just help to, yes, help to bring that whole thing together.
89 Because sometimes people don't know really that much. And then they just kind of need help
90 choosing stuff. I don't know if any of this actually helps you.

91 JB: I will put it all together, it will help, it does, just keep going. Would people be very precise
92 or is that again...

93 AV: Once again, depends there is some people that are really particular they want this particular
94 flower they want together with this particular plant, like they are really, they want to be in
95 control. What happens. And the whole theme as well, they have very clear ideas before they
96 come to you. And then you just have to kind of go with whatever they want, and maybe guide
97 them a little bit if if they veer off the, you know, veer off the road, because ...

98 JB: Maybe that flower is not available,

99 AV: Not available, or maybe we can, maybe we can create different kind a look. Yeah, well, I
100 like to work with seasonal flowers, and then I do my personal kind of thing. And of course in
101 The Garden as well.

102 JB: To an extent you have to even if they're like imported, there is a seasonality to it. Do you
103 think that like bringing this form of nature into inside spaces, like do you see something of that
104 in flowers, or... not even if it's not related to the restaurant, maybe just in general, us humans
105 liking nature?

106 AV: Yeah, for sure. Like that's, what I think is big, like, why would like if you really think about
107 it, we are primates, and somebody is paying us to go and gather flowers and put them on the
108 table, it sounds ridiculous kind of if you really think about it. Yeah, yeah, definitely. It's huge, I
109 think the nature aspect is huge. And that's also one of the parts like sometimes people really
110 want to show, I think with their seasonal foods, and those flowers that they're all about nature,
111 you know, and that that can be reflected in the arrangements as well, you know.

112 JB: And you've mentioned that earlier also, like, if the flowers don't look nice, the danger that
113 it actually has a bad impact, because I feel like I've been really focusing when I'd started reading,
114 the flowers are just good. So like, you can't really go wrong with them. And even with previous
115 interviews that I did, now, it's like it keeps coming up. But if they're done badly, would you
116 say...? Influences kind of, as you said, like it kind of reflects on the rest of it. So it's like, yeah,
117 when done badly, it can actually have a worse impact than not at all and when done good...

118 AV: I think so for sure. Wouldn't you feel like if you go in or even in a cafe or restaurant, like
119 if you see a bunch of old flowers, you don't really particularly want to sit next to it an eat fresh
120 like somehow, maybe you feel like maybe there's something also dodgy with the food or I don't
121 know like...

122 JB: It's like the lack of care a little bit like somebody didn't follow it through so it depends how
123 it fits in somewhere else.

124 AV: What else can I give you, what else I can tell you...

125 JB: In general, like that's maybe more basic, but what would you say, like just flowers
126 specifically, not necessarily in food settings, how would you think or like, why do you think
127 people are attracted to them? I feel like people often said, there's 'the magic of flowers'. Yes,
128 you're talking about that, but I can't really use that. Like, you know, what makes it magical for
129 us?

130 AV: Well, maybe I started with myself, why I'm attracted to flowers, and then I can extend it.
131 Yeah, but I think other people, because for me, I don't sometimes know why they're attracting,
132 actually, to be honest. But...

133 JB: How did you get into flowers? Just taking it off a bit...

134 AV: I studied horticulture. I grew up on a farm. So, I kind of, I like growing, I like the... I was
135 initially thinking of doing food, food kind of production studies and all this kind of stuff. But

136 then I studied the nursery stock. And then yeah, just I don't know, it just the gardening kind of
137 really didn't work for me. And I did creative things before like, and yeah, just came to floristry,
138 I got a job in a ... I actually volunteered first with my friend and then I got a job in a florist and
139 then just started. And I have my allotment I grow stuff there and I just love the whole process,
140 like for me, it's like I used to paint a little bit so flowers to me seem a bit exactly the same kind
141 of thing. I sometimes just don't have the patience for painting, or anything like that, but flowers
142 give you instant, kind of... JB: It's more haptic. AV: Yeah, I love them the textural, that the
143 tactile kind of experience. Just just yeah, you instantly create something, and it vanishes and
144 that's fine. Like, you know, but it's just that as well. And I'm not saying 'ohhh my flowers art'
145 it's not like that. But yeah, for me, it's, it's, I love them. Like for that reason, like, I feel a
146 necessity to, to work with them. But why other people would love...?
147 JB: How does it make you feel working with them?
148 AV: It's the same like, yeah, it's the same kind of creation, it is like play with something. Play
149 basically. Yeah.
150 JB: Would you know, what you ... like, do you go with a fixed thing if you start arranging? I
151 mean, of course, if you have a brief of course, but like for yourself, would it be more of a
152 creative process, it just happens in the flow, and you're just in it, or would you be like...?
153 AV: It's always dependent on the material that you have available, as well. And, of course, like
154 if you do it by the professionally, you you throughout the years, you kind of get to know what
155 works. So you work on that package as well. Like, you know, and then for me what helped like
156 that experience in Killruddery, just kind of like a year just working on what's available foraging
157 and what's from the garden, so it kind of makes you more creative, because sometimes the
158 reduced amount of stuff actually makes you think a little bit and how you can make the colour
159 still work, how it could still look not bitty but good. You know, like that kind of thing. I think
160 it's the same it's the connection with nature. Let's see what other people would love with flowers.
161 Even, even if they maybe their choices are not so educated, you know, or it's still exactly the
162 same kind of thing that everybody we're all like somehow are looking for a connection with
163 nature and that probably gives us that and for some people that connection is more remote and
164 some maybe it's kind of closer, I don't know.
165 JB: No, I do think there is the thing it's like you can't really withdraw from it essentially as is
166 such a thing. It's hard for some people to maybe be aware of it kind of and then there's like the
167 degrees like somebody might be put off by flowers that came from Africa in a place the other
168 one doesn't know that they're just happy about the flower as the flower kind of then they're the
169 ones that might be more informed who know the backgrounds and then that could influence

170 itself, but the flower as such it's still the thing that's kind of gets you. It's more of the backstory
171 that could destroy for you kind of [the experience] but the flower has the same effect on either
172 of them. Yeah. What did you do in Killruddery? Growing more like or like same like floristry
173 and arranging.

174 AV: You know Fionnulla Fallon, she's the Irish Flower Farmer

175 JB: Yeah, from Instagram. You hear about her, when you're into flowers here in Ireland.

176 AV: So she was she was doing the growing and I was supposed to be, I was so basically, they
177 wanted to start like, a florist kind of working there with weddings and stuff like that. That place
178 is like... run a mile if you get there. No, it's, you know, it was very good, like, that ways, you
179 know, Fionnulla Fallon is amazing, like, just brilliant, so we kind of get to work throughout the
180 seasons, you know, it just what's there at that time. Yeah, that was good.

181 JB: And if you grow yourself now, do you also grow food? Do you feel like there's a competition
182 between flowers and food? Or? Yeah,

183 AV: Yeah. For me, all the time. Because I have limited space, yeah, so then it's like, okay...

184 JB: How do you make those decisions? Because I feel like I get that a lot. [People asking] 'Why
185 would you waste the space and grow? Like, I have a garden here now too and it's like, 'why
186 don't you grow vegetables?' but it's like, because then I don't have flowers.

187 AV: For me, it's also the utility like I, I kind of allotment I kind of try to grow everything that I
188 can cut, you know, if it can't be cut it goes. So it's kind of like, and food as well. And then I can
189 try to use the flowers if I get to have an event or if I... to space between, Mélie used to bring
190 flowers there, so I am bringing there now.

191 JB: Is it like a co-working space or what?

192 AV: It's a yoga studio, so there's just a flower display, for example.

193 JB: So like, the weekly, daily, no not daily probably,

194 AV: Yeah, like in summer. Yeah, that kind of thing. And then I have now couple of weddings as
195 well. Hopefully, something that I grow can be used for that as well. What else I can tell you

196 JB: I am just going through my notes, I feel like you said a lot of things that I have put there,
197 it's kind of interesting, I guess, doing interviews, like, I did interviews with people working in
198 food. AV: And what did they say? JB: I'd say it's similar, it's like, it's the flower itself is a minor
199 part in creating the atmosphere. But if it's there, like an influential one, like, you know, it's just
200 one single thing, and it's hard for them to look at it [the flowers], maybe specifically because
201 it's not, it doesn't seem to be that big. But when you then go deeper, it's like, but everybody
202 engages with it. It's like of really, I don't know, it grounds, you in the experience a little bit. And
203 so if it sounds like it's important, but it's really hard for people to think how it influences or like

204 has an impact. And I think I don't know, actually think that's kind of going maybe where my
205 findings go, just this way of actually getting in touch on why, like you saying all those things
206 with care. And we asked barely like, if I hint, people are like, you know, bring them towards
207 that they would come up with that, but it's not really the first association. And so I feel there's
208 more research needed, not by me to, you know, be actually like how you get in touch with that?
209 AV: But it's funny, sometimes, sorry, sometimes I have noticed, like if restaurants get flowers
210 sometimes it really depends on who asks to get the flowers in the restaurant, you know, there
211 could be a person who doesn't know anything. They just want one hydrangea we want like
212 whatever, and there's people who are really specific, again, that they will have really like, they're
213 very demanding as if the flowers are very important. You know, it's not really like ...
214 JB: And it's like, I guess also, if it's like placed on the table, for example, it is very central like,
215 you know, it's, it's not just on the wall, maybe, so it's more people agree on the fact on their
216 impact. It's hard to really take it apart where it comes from.
217 [AV checking in with her baby]
218 JB: Maybe one more thing like, do you think the food setting makes a difference? Like you
219 know, if you go to a cafe, and there's a little flower there, compared to a fine dining place, and
220 wedding might be entirely out of it? Because maybe the way how important food is in the place
221 you think a restaurant could feel like food and flowers compete for your life. I'm here for a good
222 time to experience and it's more the feel where flowers matter more than in a food restaurant,
223 like in a fine dining when you're like no one can focus on the food [with flowers there], although
224 the overall experience should still be influenced by them?
225 AV: Yeah because like I'm pretty sure it's like flowers generally they are marker that people
226 have extra money, and they have extra time. So, for example, go to a simple canteen, you
227 probably don't expect anything like that. So you don't probably wouldn't even notice to be
228 honest with you. If you're paying like 100 euros per head, like, let's say, for a seven meal taster
229 menu like you probably, you know, want the whole thing to be kind of amazing. So I think it is
230 the same as well, like, in a financial crisis, the first thing that people drop, restaurants drop are
231 flowers. Yeah, because it's an extra, you know, so. But if they have the means, and if they can
232 afford that, they'll immediately bring them back. Because there is added value. You know, so in
233 that kind of way.
234 Maybe let's walk a little bit. Are you? Are you working yourself with flowers? Are you just
235 JB: No, no. AV: But you are growing? Yeah, but only for myself? I don't know. Do you have
236 anything? Like, I actually don't have any open questions there. there anything you don't really
237 feel like I asked, maybe something what you would have expected?

238 AV: I think, I mean, you can't, in some ways, you can't underestimate the value of aesthetics as
239 well. But that's like a huge part. Like what...you know, even though that extra bits that you
240 might think that I don't know, what to say...

241 JB: ...would you say aesthetic, unrelated of the flower as the flower, like, you know, not the
242 living view, but also just the fact, what it adds aesthetically to the room?

243 AV: Can you repeat what you just said?

244 JB: What do you mean by the aesthetic? Like the fact that it also adds colour and like, you
245 know, those things? Or is it still the flower as a being, rather than,

246 AV: Yeah, like the whole presence of nature and aesthetics. It's not just something that you can
247 kind of disregard, I think, or kind of put aside, because therefore, like, I don't know, therefore
248 we have experiences, things that, you know, or all these all these kinds of stories. It's not, it's
249 not just aesthetics, in some ways, you know, it's just it's a very important thing. I think so and I
250 think maybe, in a small way that's what flowers kind of bring to...

251 JB: ...kind of it's a small tool for creating, like giving that to a space.

252 AV: Yeah, like to enhance and to kind of, it's like pepper as well. Like, it's a small, tiny thing,
253 but if you don't have it JB: it makes a difference AV: It makes a massive difference. Yeah. I
254 think maybe something like that.

255 JB: Yeah, and that's kind of the universal thing that like, you don't need to be aware of flowers
256 and such but if you visit the space, you make that, you see the difference, like you you feel the
257 difference maybe more than seeing the difference, you know, you experience it.

258 AV: Maybe you can't pinpoint what it is, or maybe wouldn't be able to pinpoint but they
259 somehow maybe feel better or they feel welcomed, they feel kind of JB: Valued for being
260 appreciated

Appendix C

Interview 3

1 29.03.2023 Mary O'Reilly Interview Code: MOR3
2 In KC Peaches pp. 1-12
3
4 JB: Are you ok to start? Or any questions before I dive into it? MOR: Yes. JB: So, I guess I've
5 been doing a few interviews now already and I don't know, I don't know exactly where it's
6 going which I guess is normal for the process. MOR: So first, and then see. JB: Exactly. So
7 just it's like a few ideas that I have here maybe we go off on entirely other tangents. The first
8 thing would be for to be able to just introduce yourself a little bit with what you do as a job,
9 maybe how you got there, like what you have previous experiences or hobbies, passions that
10 led you to that?
11 MOR: It's all very random. So currently I am the head florist at the Shelbourne, I have three
12 girls, three lovely amazing florists that work with me. So, we dress the hotel, put flowers in
13 the suites and we do all the weddings and events. Not all of those, most of the wedding and
14 events in the hotel..
15 JB: Is it like an add on from the hotel that like, are you I don't know what side really, like part
16 of the hotel or is it more like you're in the hotel and it's like this would you also supply
17 anything outside the hotel essentially?
18 MOR: People do think that we are a standalone, like in depth we aren't, we are Shelbourne
19 staff, and it is part of it. It would be more kind of all Four Seasons used to have a florist and
20 very high end hotels, so George V (five) in Paris, so the Shelbourne had a notion, as like we
21 want our own florist. So it used to outsource and then ten years ago they decided to have their
22 own head-florist and I applied for the job, just me and now there is four of us.
23 JB: So you are making it for 10 years?
24 MOR: 10 years, I know. I can't believe it. Before that, I was in the Four Seasons in
25 Donnybrook which is now an Intercontinental, I worked in the floristry team in there, before
26 that I had nothing to do with floristry. I did a degree first when I left school in Geography and
27 ancient Greek civilizations, I did a PR diploma, PR and events and then I went on to rule out
28 all the jobs I could want to do. I worked in the bank, I worked in retail management, I was a
29 dental nurse for two years, and then I said, now I am gonna become a florist and everybody
30 was like 'Oh here she goes again'. And yeah, this one worked out quite well. So, sorry before
31 that, like I was always kind of creative but can't draw with paint, you know, that one of them
32 things, I had a good eye but what could I do with it. And I don't know why but floristry kept
33 coming back, all the time. But I've never wanted to work in a flower shop. I had worked in
34 hotels when I was younger, all the way through school so I loved hotels and I thought about

35 hotel management a lot, doing that. And then I decided maybe I would do flowers for events
36 and it kind of worked over and it crossed over beautifully now.

37 JB: I know these thoughts from somewhere...

38 MOR: I know, I kind of feel like I manifested this job, you know like it wasn't even there
39 before, and thinking about being a hotel manager with flowers...and here I am.

40 JB: So where did you learn it [floristry] then on the job or did you have any training in the
41 four seasons at the time to get you into it?

42 MOR: I did a course, Sallynoggin College because it was a full time course it was three days
43 work experience and I did my work experience at the Four Seasons, but because I was like 'I
44 would like to work here' I actually got a part time job there, I worked like in the banquet
45 department and then commenced my work experience, I took a two weeks block and worked
46 my ass off basically, and then they just offered me the job, because I was already staff so I just
47 moved from the banquet I was in to there and there I was. And then two years later I applied
48 here. Absolutely underqualified, totally winging it, just interview went well, did not florist
49 well at the time, barely made a bouquet in my life and I got the job.

50 JB: You did say you didn't want to go [work] in a flower shop. Why is that? Like, why did
51 you go for that event side of things?

52 MOR: I don't think, I've done retail and just thought that I didn't want to make just, you
53 know, small bouquets and walk-ins all day long, it's not overly creative. Do you know, what
54 you have there and you can choose ...

55 JB: It's more of a delivery, somebody comes in and says what they want and yeah, there
56 you go.

57 MOR: Exactly a big part of our job is dressing the hotel as well as the weddings. The
58 wedding, you still have a bride and you still have, obviously they're taking your advice if it's
59 your style or whatever like you still have 'I want this' but with the lobby, we can do whatever
60 we want, you see we have, these big displays every week where we just make it up as we go
61 along.

62 JB: And are you like the one that works out the concepts or how does this work?

63 MOR: Yeah, like a lot of it would have been like a certain style and a certain standard and
64 then all four of us together go like, this is now in season you know, or like on Instagram, I've
65 seen these flowers together, what about these but it has to be certain style and standards that
66 we kind of...

67 JB: Would you say, I don't know, would also be dressing restaurants as such. I don't know too
68 much about the topic, as a hotel institution?

69 MOR: There is a restaurant. So, there is a main lobby area, so they have one table there and
70 we do a big display, and then in the lounge we have afternoon tea, there's a round table, we
71 put a decent display in there, then around the hotel, there's like bouquets on every table
72 there's loads, we counted it up once before Covid, and I think we did like 650 vases around
73 the hotel every week, and sometimes we would double them, you know if they were dead or
74 whatever. Now it is slightly paired down, and we only have a couple bunches in the bigger
75 areas. Yes, so we are dressing all different kind of areas, but they're the two big ones and the
76 with smaller vases.

77 JB: Would that also be the main thing you said, you mentioned weddings and things? Where
78 is

79 MOR: private dinners

80 JB: Okay.

81 MOR: You know, we have one gorgeous room, the Constitution room, where the Irish
82 constitution was drafted. It still has the same table and the same chairs, that they had back
83 then and that table, for dinners is my favourite thing to dress. And you can transform it in any
84 kind of way with the flowers. It's a green room, it's just takes flowers so well and we've done
85 many different looks in just one room, you know depending on the occasion.

86 JB: You did say before what's in season, what you see, maybe more, I don't know, maybe
87 there is like, I guess because like, I think one thing I found with talking to people is, a lot of it
88 is gut feeling. It's very hard to detangle that part. So, I don't know how deep that actually
89 goes, but like, what would guide you for making those displays for those rooms? Like, what's
90 kind of your goal with it, does it come more from the creative part where you want to, you
91 know, it's a bit of like painting with flowers, or is it more like you...

92 MOR: I am more mathematical as well about things. It is, so, when it comes to actually
93 designing the arrangements, you know like you go to a flower shop 'well, I've seen some you
94 know, little displays, and just let the flower go this way whatever it hangs to, maybe I'll add
95 two then... I have 50 tables to dress, you know and I know, and I have this round thing, that I
96 use 4 of them and 5 of that and then I use 12345 gap, 12345. JB: So, you have like a system.

97 MOR: All of my arrangements are like that, long tables, three candelabras, we have two big
98 gaps, chandelier over here and here to gaps, two small gaps, so setup wise, that's how we do
99 it. And then when it comes to the actual flowers, you know, you make it prettier if it's a
100 wedding, if it's more corporate you're gonna stick to maybe more orchids, corporate colours,
101 or you know, you might be often asked to make logos and that kind of things.

102 JB: Would you generally be rather free in how you display it or what people come in with.
103 MOR: Yes. JB: Well, of course high expectations in how it turns out probably and but exact
104 expectations on what they want?
105 MOR: They do come in with some exact expectations but I suppose maybe it's just the place
106 that we have, that people do trust our judgement, so they, ok, because if you are a florist and
107 you dress a hotel maybe the odd time, but we dress them rooms every week, so I'm saying like
108 if they dress these spaces all the time, like if it's a wedding say I would definitely look at their
109 wedding dress, the invitation, bridesmaids dress and I would say I know where you are going
110 with it, you booked the Shelbourne, I have an idea of what style they like and then usually I'd
111 like 'Have you any colours in mind', and if they don't, I can usually from them elements, pick
112 if its a very structured classic dress, is it the kind of boho quirky dress...
113 JB: So I think that's going kind of towards the next direction. Obviously, I'm also trying to see
114 how people are affected by the flowers and also, like, if you put this much thought into it, how
115 much because I feel like that's again a thing that came up. How much are people aware of it?
116 Like even just what you said was the texture of the dress, like I could think of things but I
117 didn't really go that far, colours is kind of the obvious part, I guess, but like drawing from
118 that, do you think like the first question would people pick up on it like that they're aware of
119 it? Or do we have a feeling it's more subconscious?
120 MOR: It depends on the people, I find with the man they walk into the room and say 'this
121 room looks great', and they're not fully sure why it looks great, and I know that's being quite
122 generalising, but that is my experience, that you know, if I show a couple the ballroom, and
123 she'll go like 'Oh god it looks like a conference room' because it does without the different
124 flowers in it, you know and she can see the flowers in it there. And he's like "oh, what do we
125 need the flowers for". If I show him the room with the flowers, he's like this room looks
126 great, we want it to look like this. The women, like a lot of people see the flowers but if they
127 are not into flowers, they'll only know they like the room, but they don't know why.
128 JB: But as you say like, it makes the massive difference between a conference room...
129 MOR: Yeah it totally transforms it, is it a celebration or just a meeting. And that's really
130 where it's at.
131 JB: And would you think that comes more from the aesthetical part that flowers contribute in
132 terms of texture, colours, shapes? Or would you also say, I don't know, I think one of the
133 things that I've been thinking of, is what makes the flower different, for example, from
134 candles on the table or whatever, like, does the flower have something specific to itself, you
135 know, for being a flower, and a plant...

136 MOR: I think it does, and it's because it's perishable good, you know, like, if you have a
137 candelabra, you just pop them down on the table. They're just there. They're just standard and
138 everybody knows that you can take it in and out, but if somebody has put fresh flowers, or
139 flowers in your own hotel room, if there is a nice ornament there it is a nice ornament but if
140 somebody puts fresh flowers in your room if just feels like it's just been tended to, do you
141 know, that it's just been set up especially for you. And I think that's what changes it, fresh
142 flowers been arranged like that just for you. It's not gonna do to anybody else.

143 JB: And in two days, it might not look that fresh anymore, so it's like, you know that it's for
144 you.

145 MOR: Yes, this is specially because, this day warrants this kind of, celebration, you know, it
146 warrants something special.

147 JB: Yeah, kind of like, would you then also say, for example, when we give flowers, like it's
148 for weddings, it's for birthdays, when somebody is sick or whatever, that this gesture kind of
149 comes through in that setting?

150 MOR: I think so, I think so, because you are given something that has been arranged
151 especially for you now, that has been done right now because it's fresh, you know, I just think
152 there's something about it and it's a surplus to requirements over the top, it's an addition, an
153 add-on, a luxury, you know that it's not standard and that for me... JB: ...makes you feel
154 special.

155 JB: It's so interesting to, florists go there other people don't go there, well not yet, I have
156 another one to interview, but it's interesting. I must...

157 MOR: What do food people think of flowers?

158 JB: No, they do, I think they are aware of the atmosphere, so they want to create this
159 experience, this overall thing and for that they see flowers to contribute. But they wouldn't
160 necessarily go on this... I guess the freshness, yes, in the sense that if you have dead flowers
161 on the table, you might question your food as well, because they are like...

162 MOR: But if you think of flowers, you could just throw them out. They are not made for you
163 especially, just rolled out they haven't been made for you especially.

164 JB: Yeah exactly. And then like how much like kind of the care you put into this fresh thing
165 reflects on the care you put into service, food whatever, but not this act, I don't feel like this
166 giving, it's not giving a thing it's giving a feeling or like how they feel welcomed.

167 MOR: Yeah, now from working in a hotel I will tell you, that everybody thinks the job they
168 do is the most important thing to every guest enjoying their, anything they are going to. So,
169 the doorman thinks that they did the best because of welcoming them in, and so on, and that's

170 why it works well because everybody thinks they have the most important thing to do, so they
171 have to do it really well, but nobody thinks anybody else's job is probably more important.
172 That's just, even though it is just flowers in a vase or food on a plate.
173 JB: Would you think, I mean, I guess the Shelbourne in itself it's like a name for itself, so like
174 what you serve fits the expectations and standards are very high in there, would you say
175 flowers also make a difference in how it makes people feel, if it's in a café or a fine dining
176 restaurant, like you know, or anything in between?
177 MOR: Yeah I think people want to feel the luxury of the whole thing, don't they and the
178 rooms, like that every room in the hotel is set up so you can have a business meeting in it or
179 that you can have a wedding. What you do with the room is what makes it one or the other.
180 The flowers are the obvious choice, you know to change a feeling to sitting there eating a
181 meal, dim lights up and ...
182 JB: Would that be the main thing that you change like literally or would there be other things
183 around that like lighting that can be changed, or furniture...
184 MOR: No, the main thing is the flowers. Like lightning would be changed, not really the
185 furniture, but it's mainly, the thing that transforms the room is the flowers. It's what makes it
186 celebrational.
187 JB: And do you think people care maybe more in this kind of setting then for it than like, I see
188 plastic flowers behind you, you know, than in a café for example?
189 MOR: Yeah, I think so, it matches the, you know, like, I just think them rooms (in the
190 Shelbourne) lend themselves to flowers. If you are in them, they are like the kind of rooms,
191 like if you go into a Marquee, you know do you want the rustic jars, all them kind of things,
192 you know like, it looks, the tables look like they need flowers.
193 JB: And you're unrelaxed if they are not there, you see them missing? Would there, I don't
194 know, that's like off the Shelbourne I guess now, would you say the flowers could compete or
195 like not compete in like with food, for example? Because I feel like that's also one of when
196 you go, maybe not, it is not part of my interviews, just personal experience talking to chefs or
197 something? Because they think part is the most important part. Like probably really your
198 personal feeling, would we need the flower in all kinds of restaurants because of what they
199 add or would there be moments where you feel like the flower might....
200 MOR: They might be wasted in some. So, like, if you're just going for a normal dinner, do
201 you need flowers on the table? No, not really. I do think that.
202 JB: But if they're there?

203 MOR: If they're there, I'd be delighted. Like a little jar of flowers in a cafe on the table, I
204 think gorgeous. It makes it look loved. Do you know like you'll find in a cafe where it's an
205 owner that runs it rather than a chain. It's where you'll find a little jar of flowers, so it gives
206 that nice... JB: extra spot of attention. MOR: This place is loved.
207 JB: That's a ... nice. It's it's weird it's too easy with a florist, because now I'm like, all those
208 ideas where I can go of, you just say them, like this love part, it's all the same thing, not all
209 but I guess my interest comes more form the flower side than the food side.
210 MOR: And also I think the food is more scrutinised. Is what I would say. Like if you put
211 flowers down, people seem to be happy with anything. Although I keep a high standard, you
212 see other people put flowers on a table and everybody 'oh look do you see those flowers'
213 whereas the food doesn't get that kind of praise, it's more scrutinized you know.
214 JB: Maybe just because it is the expectation. You go there for food. It's like it can be good or
215 not good. But it will be there. MOR: Yeah, exactly. JB: You are not surprised, it's not this
216 what makes you feel special. Because that's what you go there, you pay for realistically.
217 MOR: Not over and above, flowers are over and above.
218 JB: How would you say like, just from the flower specifically, what, I don't know, if you
219 again, take your part, what would be things that you feel a flower can transport, like you
220 mentioned this care/love part. And like attention towards the people. How do you feel
221 aesthetically? Because that's like, obviously, seems like the first thing that a flower delivers
222 adding like the colours, is there anything else that you feel flowers contribute when they're in
223 a space. Is there like, Is it a big thing, for example, that people would have an association with
224 flowers. And then it's like, either you accidentally hit the spot there and then they're overly
225 delighted or they come even with that...
226 MOR: Like, say, we have that main display at the lobby and say we might have you know,
227 400 people of Coca Cola coming in, and I make that all Coke Cola red. Like they feel like
228 they're they've arrived now, like the hotel is expecting them. They're like, 'Oh this is lovely',
229 you know, and that's what we get the most attention for, cause people who check in and we
230 get their colours, obviously, just go really obvious. And it's supposed to just make them feel
231 welcome. You know, it's there, it's done for them.
232 JB: It kind of sounds like people are very aware of, like what you're doing and how you like
233 display it. Would you say generally people like pick that up, or is it more like a matter of how
234 much you're...
235 MOR: A lot of friends or mine, that come into the hotel, saying like, oh you know, 'Oh I never
236 even looked at your flowers' they are in the lobby and have to walk past them, and they know

237 me and didn't bother to look. So no, it doesn't catch everybody, you know, no, definitely
238 doesn't,
239 JB: But I guess with brands, if you're like coming there with a brand, the whole scene is, or
240 like they are aware of why they're [the flowers] there.
241 MOR: There are 400 people here and there's only 200 of us and they this just for us, you
242 know like
243 JB: Would you be in touch much with people like, you know, would you get feedback from
244 guests about that stuff or would you...
245 MOR: Yeah we get a lot of feedback from guests
246 JB: Would it just be like, I don't know where you're just like in the place obviously, I don't
247 know where in the hotel you are, would that just be afterwards in terms of
248 MOR: We're in the basement so people don't actually... get to us, but we get a lot of you
249 know, like bride emails or even like bride's parents coming after and being like 'Oh my god,
250 thanks so much like we had a bride last week, thanks so much, they were gorgeous. Can I
251 order a bunch of flowers', you know, in them same colours now for an anniversary or
252 whatever, you know? That kind of thing. Okay. People do have that emotional connection
253 then you know, they did my flowers, I'll get that for the anniversary you know?
254 JB: So like it like does work, as a like, you, I think that's one of the things I also thought:
255 Culturally flowers are used to build relationships like earlier you know, with Gods and
256 whatever, which gives you this kind of honouring somebody, I guess with it and building
257 relationships. Which I also feel like I wonder how much part restaurateurs would be aware
258 of it or like people... Would you you actually would say like, you kind of build a relationship
259 with these flowers to your, like the guests like they keep coming back to you for occasions.
260 MOR: Yeah they keep coming back.
261 And we have a lot of, like we had a few Indian weddings, they use flowers totally differently,
262 because they like wear the flowers, they wear these Varmala [flower garland] made, and you
263 know, they have all they have ceremonies to do with some and tea drinking and they use
264 flower petals and you know, it's a big part of all these celebrations for loads of cultures.
265 JB: How would you, would they tell you about like, how did you would that then be your
266 research part, kind of like how'd you get there? That sounds interesting...
267 MOR: Yeah we had like, banquets be like 'have you ever made a Varmala?' And I am like
268 what's a Varlama? I this is like a garland they present the bride and groom and they wear it
269 through the meal or whatever. And, yeah, so things like that, of course, you know, that

270 different cultures or you know, Chinese, they don't want you to use certain Orchid's because
271 they're a bad luck and you know, there's loads of...

272 JB: And that could be like, kind of up to you then if to get the brief of what you're supplying,
273 kinda to find out which one is bad, to not go there.

274 MOR: Sure, we also have like celebrities, that come in and they are like don't like this flower
275 don't like that flower you know. Lot's of that.

276 JB: Just going through my notes. I'm getting lost in there.

277 MOR: Yes, sorry, we need to keep bringing it back to food, don't we? But I'm going off on
278 tangents.

279 JB: No, it's like, it's more or less the food setting? Like, I guess it's not like it's both. Would
280 there, I don't know, we're talking about weddings, obviously, there is the ceremony where
281 there is no food involved but you also have tables? Yes. But it kind of goes into each other.

282 MOR: Same event.

283 JB: Yeah, like the flowers match each other and it's part of it. And yeah, I kind of covered
284 most of it. MOR: That's fine.

285 JB: What is met like, that's maybe again, more personal, what do you feel you deliver with
286 your flowers? Like, if you have, say a company coming, or like, like, what is your, I mean
287 there is the thought process, like you have to fill so many vases, but...

288 MOR: Yeah well it depends, like for a wedding, all I would have just think, is to make people
289 feel special, so you are making the flowers for the bride, you're making the flowers for the
290 welcome for the thing, you want them to feel special. If the bride wants her guests to feel
291 special, they are invited to the celebration and I think that is just the guts of it all.

292 JB: It's like the extra mile that you want, like, the cherry on top.

293 MOR: Exactly. Again, because we're in the hotel, you know, we meet the brides, they come in
294 again, we talk to Cathy the wedding planner, organize together, like on the day of their
295 wedding, then I'm up in their bedroom, when I give them the flowers. I go and find the guys,
296 and pin on the button hole you know, you know, you are very involved, you know, like,
297 people will often send me pictures from their like photographer with me being on them.

298 JB: How many weddings you are featured in.

299 MOR: So you're, you're in there in it and they love that, do you know because I suppose
300 you're not only the florist but also a Shelbourne staff member, so they just want the whole
301 Shelbourne experience? If that's the florist in your room, and then salon, they are doing the
302 hair, the wedding coordinators, people just want the whole thing you know, and the florist just
303 feels like to all hotels and beyond just as absolute luxury thing. Like I remember the old GM

304 here saying, it was his idea to have the florist here, 'I was just down to some like conference
305 for GMs, and they were saying we are doing, this we're doing this and I was just like well I
306 have florist. Just to have an in house florist, was this like again, just like not needed, just to...
307 JB: ...because you can. MOR: luxury.
308 JB: And would you say, I mean, for weddings. It's a one time one time, maybe few days event
309 but, still like how much would you think flowers could also have a bad impact on this overall
310 experience? If they're done not well, if it'd be like, looking sad. MOR: If they are dead, then
311 they'd rather have no flowers JB: Yeah. Because then rather no...
312 MOR: then rather no flowers. And that's what happens sometimes if florists would go in the
313 night before and set up, because they are not in house and sometimes the next day things have
314 just died, there was too much said, aircon on, too little, the heating went on whatever. We
315 have fixed loads of weddings with that, because the bride's been crying in the morning, you
316 know where it was full on with her dress, like you're gonna hold your bouquet in front of your
317 dress in all the pictures. You know what I mean, you've gone to all the pains to pick your
318 dress to do your hair, you know like whatever, and then you hold your bouquet you don't like
319 in front, and you don't like it, you know? So...
320 JB: So it's like, as much as it can make it better. Would you think it's maybe...
321 MOR: It hasn't go the same impact to take it away because people aren't as fussy as you think
322 they are, because you hand them a bouquet and they think 'that's lovely', but then if I hand
323 them a bouquet where I've put a lot of thought into it, they are like 'Oh my god, it's
324 gorgeous'. They didn't know that there was there was another step up of this.
325 JB: It's already always making it better kind of in way. It's just limit, limitless on how much
326 you exceed the whole thing.
327 MOR: It is, people are not overly fussy, most of them. They just want what they think is nice
328 flowers but then if we do the way we do, then they think they are amazing.
329 JB: But equally if they would be bad, this extra thing, like, would it maybe be because it is
330 such an extra thing that the disappointment is also bigger than having just no flowers,
331 essentially, because you're like, that's the point you, maybe where people put a little bit of
332 hope and excitement in.
333 MOR: Yeah it's very emotional. If, people come to weddings and something's not right, you
334 can't fix it, you can't re-do it, you know...
335 JB: And even if we say it's a display of love and affection, you kind of, if you take that away
336 or like, make it bad. It's kind of worse.

337 MOR: Yeah exactly, well I do think the atmosphere that you eat food in changes the food that
338 you are eating, like if you'd go to eat a gourmet meal sitting here, or to eat it in the
339 constitution suite, the flowers everywhere, its gonna feel different.

340 JB: And would you say flowers are like, just a tiny part of it all, you know, making up this
341 atmosphere, like other people mention music and lightning, of course furniture, I guess, but
342 that's like less easy to change the whole time.

343 MOR: Yeah. But they definitely do. Like, especially sometimes on the table we were doing
344 full on. Like, I could send you some photographs, if you want them like, if we do like
345 wedding showcases so we've just full on dressed the table. The room is transformed. It looks
346 totally different.

347 JB: Maybe also because with flowers, you can, you have more flexibility than with lightning
348 and music. You can put a vase on it and you can put...

349 MOR: Yes, I have never done the same table arrangement twice in the constitution room in
350 ten years. And you can go like, you can, we home once in the ballroom, we dressed the whole
351 ceiling, two 40 meters squared frames full of flowers. So instead of sitting in a big open
352 ballroom where you can have conferences in, now they are here and the greenery is almost
353 hanging down around your head. You totally forget, totally different room, it's a totally
354 different experience for the guest.

355 JB: Do think also like the fact that it's like it's something you can touch, makes like, adds to
356 that and I don't know if you have people going around touching everything MOR: They do.

357 JB: But again, it's like something you do interact with, like physically ...

358 MOR: Yeah you do touch them and you can smell them. Yeah, they definitely do.

359 JB: And the smell like, usually I had some people bring up for like that the smell could deter
360 from the food. They don't usually smell that much now though...

361 MOR: Yeah, and like it's a natural smell. It's not like if they..., it's a natural smell 100% you
362 know. We wouldn't use scented flowers, like we wouldn't use anything inside of the room, so
363 you just like get the like foliage eucalyptus or whatever ...

364 JB: And yeah, you can interact with it, whereas with like music is just that's like a weird thing,
365 because I feel like I keep saying, it seems like people it's a lot subconsciously, but it's almost
366 like it's two pieces. Yeah. Because then again, the music's probably even more subconscious
367 than a flower because you don't have this interactive part.

368 MOR: Oh, yes it is. No, you don't.

369 JB: Would then people also take flowers home as well, then after events and like, is it also like
370 that kind of, I don't know, what, what's the idea behind, just you to get rid of them with that or
371 to extend [the experience]...

372 MOR: Yeah they would. Yeah maybe they'll have a next day thing in their house or whatever,
373 a lot of people take some of the, you know, especially the ones from the ceremony, to graves,
374 you know, the parent or grandparent that has passed away, they like to have the flowers that
375 were actually at the wedding but on the, at the grave, they like that kind of connection
376 between you know, they weren't there but they got this.

377 JB: I don't know I love talking about flowers, it just makes me happy that flowers are so
378 good.

379 MOR: It's all I do all day.

380 JB: I am going through it [my paper], but I don't really see anything that I haven't really
381 touched on or see anything that I really haven't touched on. MOR: Yeah perfect. JB: I don't
382 know if you have anything that you have thought about before and you're disappointed that I
383 didn't mention it yet.

384 MOR: No, no that's all great.

Appendix D

Interview 4

1 Interview 4: Cúán Greene (CG) 29.03.2023 Interview Code: CG4
2 in One Kinda Folk, Leeson Street pp. 1-14
3
4 JB: You're ok to start? It's [the mind-map] messy and I don't know where we're going but...
5 CG: Yeah, yes that's ok. It's not messy, it's great I love it JB: Maybe just for your like what you
6 work, what your background is, how you got there, to give a little bit of a background, who you
7 are and what you're interested in passionate about.
8 CG: Sure. So my name is Cúán, Cúán Greene. I'm a chef from Ireland. I've been cooking in
9 restaurants for the past 15 years. So, since I was 15. And I have experience in high end
10 restaurants, predominantly trained in Michelin style, in Ireland initially and then moved to the
11 Nordics in, working in Geranium and Noma in Copenhagen. I came back in 2019, was working
12 in Bastible restaurant, and then set up my own company called Ómós, which means, it's an Irish
13 word, that means homage, duty and respect. So yeah, we're building a restaurant at the moment,
14 So that's where we are.
15 JB: And what did you, like, got you into the field of food? And I guess, I don't know, I ask
16 people what they're passionate about in the field itself. How did you get there, what fascinates
17 you in that sphere that you are in?
18 CG: Well, I moved to France when I was 12, with my family, and that was like a direct
19 immersion into food and culture, you know, it was just the French live and breathe food. And
20 that's, it's not really a cliché, it's true. That's kind of where I got kind of the bug for. So I really
21 saw for the first time the importance of food and lifestyle. And from that moment on, I was
22 really hooked. But to be honest, from as a kid, I was also very, very interested, my parents are
23 both artists, my mom's a glassblower, my dad's graphic designer, and they both have a big
24 passion in food and cooking. So that really had a big impact on me as a kid, and kind of how I
25 look at life as...
26 JB: Would you say the artistry has also has shaped the way you interacted with food?
27 CG: Definitely, oh yeah, massively, hugely, hugely. JB: In what way. JB: In the sense that for
28 me, you know, food is an art form. And I look at food in a way, I perceive food in an artistic
29 way, I guess. Not, not to the sense of I bring artistry to food all the time more so that I look at
30 food, or I look at ingredients, or I look at nature, and I do see ways of manipulating or working
31 with nature to create something as a; that's kind of like a natural thing that goes on in my mind.
32 So yeah, the artistry has always had a heavy, heavy influence on it and you know, what I do is,
33 it's a passion and it's a vocation. And, you know, it feels like a lifestyle more than anything. It's
34 something that I'm, it's within me, and life kind of surrounds food for me in a way.

35 JB: And would it be very centered, this whole ... like what you just described around the food
36 that you're delivering? Would it be more the overall experience?

37 CG: Yeah, this is a good question. I think I'm very much drawn; one, I'm very much drawn to
38 food, I'm also very much drawn to hospitality. And there's a reason why I'm still a chef today,
39 and not, I don't know another food related job, because I actually love looking after people. And
40 everything that surrounds hospitality is very important to me. So, I love cooking. I know, as I
41 said, looking after guests, well. But I also know, the craft around food, I love the pottery the
42 makers, the interactions, creating kitchen, creating a dining room, small things like you know
43 the flowers.

44 JB: So, like it is the overall theme that's around the food or whatever it was some people kept
45 saying that like food brings it together, but it's a lot more than just food and the moment that's
46 being passed on to your guest.

47 CG: For sure. Yeah, no, honestly, every single element of hospitality I'm interested in, they're
48 really like I go into a restaurant and analyse every single aspect of it, you know, from capacity
49 to cost to, to location, to wear, to materials to the menu, like everything I just automatically
50 analyse.

51 JB: And how much would you say those factors as more atmospheric and more environmental
52 factors, how much importance would you attribute to them in the overall food experience?
53 Because, like is it the food, the main thing and the rest comes around it and helps to set the
54 scene in a way. Or would it be they're kind of almost all, I think... CG: Interlinked. JB: Also
55 maybe also more what your thought is, because like, if you've been working in high end
56 restaurants, there might be different focuses, again, to the food, where the food might more be,
57 you know, the main actor but the rest is the scene, would you say it's the same in different
58 places, maybe you don't say that at all cause it is just me now who said that. What would be
59 you're...

60 CG: I think, I think they're very much interlinked. But the more more I think about it, and try
61 to break down hospitality and understand what it is that makes people love certain spaces or
62 places, is not necessarily the food, like the food, of course, plays an important role. But if you
63 take the example of going to a high-end restaurant, or even a coffee shop, and then four months
64 down the line, what do you remember about that experience? You don't necessarily remember
65 the dish. You don't remember the dish you had in such and such restaurant, but you remember
66 how people made you feel. And it's that it's that connection with people that is so important,
67 and that can be done. [Short Interruption by a guest in the restaurant] So, I think when when
68 you think about how, how we make people feel, places and spaces can make people feel

69 differently. I think we can't underlook that and so I think they're just as important as the food
70 itself.

71 JB: And then I guess I'm just moving a little bit towards my flowers. What do you, in places
72 you worked for, or like even in your own business then, would you have flowers, would flowers
73 be, also 'flower decorations' is my topic, but I'm like, I'm not saying [only] ornamental flowers,
74 if it's vegetables, it's its kind of, I guess, the main focus is that it's the natural part, it's something
75 the alive flower on the table. It's not a candle but it can be a weed, it can be a leaf, foliage,
76 whatever. But would that be a thing in places you've worked before, something if you made or
77 create food scenarios yourself.

78 CG: Definitely. Well, I mean, I was telling you about the connection with Noma and their
79 obvious relationship with nature, you know, that was always so such a focal point for me, with
80 what they did, a lot of their, their food felt soulful, it felt like it had an energy it had life to it.
81 And the environment did as well. And I think that's like, paying homage to their connectivity
82 with nature, as opposed to say, another restaurant, with Geranium where it felt, not so... just
83 didn't have that same feeling of soul. And...

84 JB: Would you say that soul aspect comes from that connection with back [with nature].

85 CG: It could do it, but it's a it's a connection also, with like, living matter, you know, in so many
86 spaces, so many buildings, so many, I always talk about natural light being a huge importance
87 to me as a working environment and then plants and then also good artificial lighting, it's
88 something we don't appreciate enough. And that falls also into into plants. You know, if plants
89 don't have natural light, they can't live, so putting humans into a space without natural light,
90 how does that have an impact on their self esteem on their, on their behaviour and on their
91 feelings? So, I went when I went to work in Bastible, where I was head chef for a year we didn't
92 have any plants in the space, when I started there was none the only living things in the actual
93 building were humans you know, there was nothing else so that was a very quick change we
94 made. And a lot of it you know, I think you'll find this interesting was down to cost. So cut
95 flowers the reason why cut flowers were essentially taken away from the, from the space and
96 as well as handmade ceramics were taken away, because they, they have a short shelf life. The
97 ceramics will break, the flowers will die. And it was kind of seen as an expense that wasn't, that
98 they couldn't justify. So, instead what they did was, they met they met me 50/50 and we've got
99 like big plans in place and they look lovely, but I still think cut flowers brings such a such a
100 lightness to a room and a fragrance and yeah.

101 JB: Why do you think that, like, even, where do you think the lightness comes from? Is it more
102 the nature? Is it more the visual appeal of them? Like, is it purely aesthetic?

103 CG: I think it's more sensory. I think yeah, visual, I think, you know, you have colour, you have
104 light, you have but also fragrance, you have aroma, your purifying qualities. But also in the, in
105 the aesthetic and how they contribute to a room based on style. I mean, you can put, you could
106 put tulips in a room, and they might look terrible. You could put something much more much
107 lighter, and it will look great or then, you know, different styles of how various florists are
108 styling their flowers have an impact on the space, like we're seeing in a kind of like, I don't
109 know, if you're aware of Mela foodart, kind of a modern, she is kind of like a modern, a modern
110 food stylist. Just the way that they're kind of are making the flowers is becoming a style and
111 restaurants are coming or actually associating themselves now with that style. Yeah.

112 JB: Like, would you say. Sorry. CG: You are grand. Oh, would you, like you said that you were
113 the one initiating putting plants for example into Bastible. Just generally be would you be very
114 involved in what you use, and how like you use it [flowers/plants]. Would you have florists that
115 you have chosen? You know, like, I don't know how you met Mélie in the end? But I guess she
116 was doing flowers for you, whatever. Like, you know, is it, do you have a vision when you want
117 that, or is it more like the flowers as such is already contribution enough or is there more to it?

118 CG: Well, I think maybe, you know, the way I met Mélie was that she had done flowers for a
119 wedding I was asked and I really liked her style. And I think her style really matched what we
120 were looking for. And she did a couple of events with us. And we were almost, we allowed her,
121 we let her kind of take the initiative on it. And maybe we guided her with a couple of mood
122 boards and images, I love I work a lot with mood boards. So, I use an application called arena,
123 A, R dot NA. It's like just a great mood board saving, you can even right click from Instagram
124 and save and it's just a great way. So, we use that for reference points when we work with our
125 collaborators. Like a lot of our, you know, people we work with we call collaborators, because
126 we do want to collaborate with them. You know, and I think that's, that's really important and
127 giving that feeling of ownership to people rather than, you know, just being a paid service.

128 JB: Like they are contributing something of themselves, not just deliberately...

129 CG: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Like you're doing something that is actually having a direct
130 impact on what we're doing. And we want you to feel a part of it. So that's kind of how we,
131 that's almost is the word means homage, duty and respect. And that's kind of how we try to
132 carry out everything that we do, to that feeling you know, and always think about how the other
133 person feels.

134 JB: And when you say that she matched your style, would it be what what what is your style?
135 Would it be the style of the food that you're delivering? Is it the style of again, does it match the
136 menu? Like, would you feel like there needs to be a different connection between the food and

137 the display? Or is it more the display is how it makes, or the scene is how it makes people feel?
138 It doesn't need to be, I don't know, I guess kind of connected. You know, it's like having a
139 holistic approach, it kind of just happens

140 CG: For sure. And I'm in my mind, you know, once the moment people walk through our doors
141 or walk or even first email engagement is the opportunity to begin a relationship and start an
142 experience. So, from that moment on, everything is connected and important. Whether that's
143 the first email or the closing, thank you for coming email, everything is connected.

144 JB: Would you get a lot of feedback also from people of, I don't know, or if you get feedback,
145 what will be maybe the main focus, do you get a lot, would they refer to things like you know,
146 environmental factors or things like the interaction with you that just like, you know, would you
147 get feedback on what makes the experience and the overall thing for them, or is it more, they're
148 happy, they're like, you know, it's kind of, but they they're not fully aware of what got them, it's
149 more like,...

150 CG: Often, it's usually like a new experience they haven't had before, is probably our feedback,
151 thoughtfulness and kindness is probably the ones that we usually get there, our team are so nice.
152 And there was lots of unexpected things, and that the flavours were very unexpected. Because
153 we like to have fun, we're constantly playing. And actually, a lot of my food has very floral
154 notes. So, I use like a lot of wild herbs, a lot of like, foraging is in, like, in how I cook, and then
155 a lot of floral flavours like rose or Woodruff or Bergamot, or often flavours that are associated
156 with perfume, so not so much with food anymore, even though they are food derivatives.

157 And I think I think your last question was very good. I don't think I totally answered it in terms
158 of the overall experience, you know, is everything connected...

159 JB: One of the thoughts I think you said is also like, the people, thank you for the kindness, but
160 how do people experience kindness, you know, is it just through your interaction? Or maybe
161 isn't the thoughtful table display, is it the thoughtful? Because you kind of go that extra step for
162 them, or like, and it's like, but people have basic expectations, what what are the factors that
163 you know, exceed it then?

164 CG: I think, I don't think everyone registers like there's, of course, there's super creative people.
165 And I have some very creative friends who will notice every single detail of everything in a
166 restaurant. They'll also criticize the heck out of it, they will know everything, and they won't notice
167 everything in the food, because that's not their skill department, a chef might. But regardless of
168 whether they acknowledge it or not, I think everyone will appreciate the overall experience.

169 JB: Even if they're not fully in touch what gives them that feeling.

170 CG: Yeah, I do believe so and I think that's really, really important in what we do. And that's
171 why I guess that kind of perfectionism is connected with our, with our industry and stuff. You
172 have an opportunity, and it's why I love the, why I love what I do is, because we have a little,
173 we can do a little bit of everything. You know, you're not you're not a florist, you're not a
174 ceramist, you're not a food maker, you're not a designer, you're a bit of everything, you know,
175 and that's, it's exhausting, but it's also amazing.

176 But yea, no I am very much in the opinion it's all very very connected. I think that's what
177 probably defines it great restaurants and the great cafes from the others. I was in a place in
178 Edinburgh the other day called Elliott's and it was like a very understated Cafe really, like small
179 and it just beautiful it was everything was like effort, effortlessly considered but you knew as
180 well that she went to huge lengths to make everything, but it felt effortless, like everything from
181 the tables, the chairs, like they weren't expensive, or they were beautiful. The cut flowers, the
182 little post-its, the nicely cut tape, the linen, her outfit everything was beautiful. But it was done
183 in a way that it just felt effortless you know.

184 JB: Coming back to flowers and I think that's kind of, I don't know if I steer up the interviews
185 too much, but that's like I get the feeling of what made me start this whole research, like the
186 first association with flowers is smell and then maybe visuals essentially and then going beyond.
187 And I get this feeling of hospitality, for me that's like flowers are kind of my my tool that I like
188 to use for hospitality. I guess. That's where I came from. If you look at how we usually are like
189 when we give flowers, what we associate me with flowers, do you feel like that they might have
190 maybe more for like, like for example, you know, you give it to people when they're sick, you
191 give it people for happy occasions, birthdays, weddings, whatever it's like, it's a very
192 honouring, like showing appreciation. Do you feel like it's the same if you supply them in the
193 restaurant environment, for example. And that may be making them a little bit more
194 emotionally/culturally, like that they get people more than just a candle or, you know, in the
195 sense of this cultural background of how you use flowers, like back in the past, honouring the
196 gods because like, I would assume from their fertile nature, like, you know, if you can give
197 flowers to somebody that's abundance, that's luxury, because you kind of take away from food
198 if you pick the flower. So, I don't know for sure it's like very mixed into the restaurant field.
199 But you know, in that sense, flowers come from fruit, that's what I find very interesting, nobody
200 really goes back there, nobody is really aware their fruit flowers or might flower at some point,
201 like if it wouldn't be harvested and used. But that's where its luxurious nature comes from, I
202 guess culturally, it is reflected in like, honouring people. And do you feel like, yeah, in the

203 restaurant environment, you think they might be an easier tool or like, you know, the way there
204 are thoughts that are associated with them, are coded kind of that they're easier tool to use?
205 CG: That they're an easier tool?
206 JB: Or like, not easy?
207 CG: Do you feel like people don't appreciate them in a restaurant as much as they might if they
208 were given them for sentimental purposes?
209 JB: I don't know, that's like, what I question. And I find it hard being in the flower world, like
210 if I see flowers, you know, with flowers you can win me, with good made flowers. Yeah but I
211 wonder if that's like, does it have the same effect on people, because it is this...
212 But I think you could be right, I think there could be a disassociation between flowers given to,
213 you know, for your birthday, or for marked celebration or sentimental, sentimental purposes, as
214 opposed to on the table. But then again, when there are flowers on the table, you always notice
215 women like notice them, you know, it's something that is always said and spoken about at a
216 table.
217 JB: Like I think one nice quote I read somewhere was like flowers are used to build, maintain
218 and end relationships, like I think towards death. And it's like, but it's it's very, very rooted in
219 love. And like, this really doesn't have to be romantic love of like, that's we then think of red
220 roses, but just any kind of love between humans, gods, anything. Because like do they have the
221 same effect in a restaurant, because you are like, or lots of hospitality places, they are about
222 building relationships, even if it's just for that encounter.
223 CG: Yeah, that's true. I think kind of going back to what we were saying in terms of the impact
224 that they have almost subconsciously, on our being, is shouldn't be on overlooked. You know,
225 maybe they aren't as revered as they should be. By the customer circle, but subconsciously they
226 are. Without them.
227 JB: Yeah, I feel like that's the one point where I'm like, I wish I would find out more with my
228 research. CG: You what? JB: I wish I would find out more with research. Like, I think if...
229 CG: Like you could do like, like, examples, like actually, propose to a restaurant, to, you know,
230 for customers to go into a restaurant with flowers and customers without flowers.. JB: And
231 compare the experience... CG: It could be really fun to do that.
232 JB: Because they like that thing, you can talk to people and even I feel like, I will be talking to
233 just focus groups with like, anyone who goes into restaurants but I'm really not sure how much
234 you can get in touch with that subconscious part. Where almost like this experiment way would
235 be, you know more informative.

236 CG: Without question though, plants enlighten the experience and you know an also when you
237 make the comparison to fake plants.

238 JB: Yeah, I wanted to ask that too, I just come from a café with fake plants, hanging down and
239 it was all plastic.

240 CG: These are all new a few months ago they weren't here and its's...

241 JB: What do you think that realness means? What difference does it make?

242 CG: Life, life. It has to be, it has to be, like if you were sitting in a room with mannequins,
243 everywhere, you know, it's the same. I just don't understand them. And then there's also the
244 dried flower culture. So a lot of restaurants are veered to dry flowers and that's a cost reason,
245 but they also have a bit of a shelf life, but I think you could just keep with them as well. And
246 it's understandable, I mean, the question there is...

247 JB: It's still a natural product that...

248 CG: They are natural, and again it's like, it's the difference between getting like getting, you
249 know, Dunnes Stores, you know, plate as opposed to a handmade plate or it's the difference
250 between industrial glassware or hand blown glassware, you can feel the craft, feel, you feel that.

251 JB: How much do you think people feel it though?

252 CG: Subconsciously.

253 JB: Okay.

254 CG: Those who know, feel it, not know it and appreciate it. I think those who don't, they won't
255 notice unless you take it away. Do you know, I think that's significant difference.

256 JB: They see the difference but again, not, because...

257 CG: They won't necessarily see the difference, but they'll know if it wasn't there. They'll feel
258 it, you know, there was something not so special about that, and you know, I think that it is
259 really important that we acknowledge that and also, that like in hospitality, we have to
260 constantly remind each other how special our [individual] job is all the time. That's something
261 in meetings that we do, do. We thank each other for the work because it's enormously difficult.
262 So, unless you do that things can fade away, oh, you know, why do we do this? Why do we
263 polish this? Why do we go to these lengths? Why do we make sure the flowers are perfect? It's
264 like, all of these things are really important.

265 JB: Like, how, what impact to they have if they are done badly? Like, you know, because I was
266 like talking to florists just before that [this interview] and like, a lot of it seems like, kind of,
267 they're always good, and you have a lot of room for making it better like, you know, how they
268 can enhance an experience, but for example, I don't know, it's like, I'm saying a more informed
269 flower consumer in that sense, if I see in a sustainable local restaurant tulips from Africa, that's

270 going to kill [the experience] like, you know, no matter how good the food was, okay, here it
271 stopped, kind of where it's like, the flower itself probably would still give me a good feeling
272 but just the knowledge doesn't. But just in general, like, they are this form of showing affection,
273 and like, you know, they have all these positive associations but how big do you think the impact
274 is if that's done bad.

275 CG: Yeah, I think it's pretty catastrophic... it can throw something it's like, it's like, the wrong
276 tone of paint in a room or, you know, the wrong cushions or, like it can throw your experience,
277 I feel like, touching on your passion with the style of flowers and how they relate, I think, you
278 know, there is a real style and kind of association that's required with our pairing that's required,
279 you know, not every, every type of flowers does suit every room.

280 JB: And what difference would you say like, I don't know, like, I feel like the more I talk I used
281 to ask about the different flowers would make or the impact they have in for example, a simple
282 cafe compared to a fine dining place, or anything in between, now I'm kind of shifting a little
283 bit because even the cafe, like, you know, not the size of hospitality space does defines what
284 they want to transport. So I feel like the question is, maybe it's more of the intend to what you
285 deliver with the, with the flowers? Would you say they have different roles? Or like, levels of
286 impact in the different spaces in which you pinpoint the kind of like that kind of restaurant or
287 form of hospitality or do you think it's maybe tied to something else, concepts, awareness,
288 mindfulness, ...?

289 CG: I think trends, obviously, play a big part in everything that we do and choose to do or it's
290 like, we, from seeing things, especially online, we associate certain brands, and assume plants
291 with some environments. But with ever restaurant design, like every design, to create a feeling
292 and an emotion and if you say the restaurant is minimalist, and you want more of a minimal,
293 lighter touch and that comes with a certain style of plants they assume, you know, so, yeah,
294 yeah, I think it is directly related. And I think there are certain potentially certain plants for
295 different spaces.

296 JB: But essentially, you'd still expect them to have an impact, like, you know, it's more it has to
297 fit the concept of you know. [Interruption by staff and other guests as the place was slowly
298 closing.] But yeah, it's, it's kind of what you want to deliver as a place, rather than if you just
299 want to feed the people, then you don't need the environment as much, you know, if it's purely
300 want to satisfy that physiological need, ...

301 CG: I don't think any space is like, or I think every space can benefit from it, and I think if you
302 want to feed people you want to look after people, you want to nourish people, take care of
303 people. So, you want to have a space where they feel welcome and comfortable, that just makes

304 sense. You know, even if it's not somewhere where you're actually serving guests, like, flowers,
305 or plants in kitchens, you know, in an office space, it's like, they are so important.

306 JB: Maybe even from your experience, because like, that's your thing, what's not mentioned
307 anywhere, there's not a lot of literature going that direction anyway. We're talking about guests
308 and exactly, and what influence they have on them.

309 CG: Oh it has a direct impact.

310 JB: But it's, it's nowhere kind of like, all the environments they are like, I guess it's coming
311 from the management side, the research that you're doing it in is business, like the business
312 studies, so it's more of the money, kind of way, you know, 'how can I create the space to make
313 more money'? But what are your thoughts on the employees side and to make it a good
314 workplace essentially.

315 CG: Well, when it comes to restaurants in Ireland, a lot of restaurants kitchens are in either
316 basements or back spaces, without natural light, without really, with horrible kind of awful
317 lighting, and poor airflow, and it's due to both, both to space and investment, you know, and
318 restaurants don't have a lot of investments. It's low margins ever increasing costs, so it becomes
319 an issue. However, I think if you really want to look after your team and your staff, and if you
320 have the means to do so, you really should focus on their well-being by providing a kitchen
321 space that matters, you know, I think it's they will have, it's become...

322 JB: Because you don't just want the appreciation towards the guests like.

323 CG: No, it doesn't make sense. Have lightning, have lightning, if you can afford of good quality,
324 front of house and back of house? You know, I hate seeing that and beaming lighting. I hate
325 seeing these like plastic walls, you know, inside the kitchen, where it's just absolutely, like
326 people are spending 14 hours a day there. You know. And then if you actually put a plant in
327 those spaces, the plant dies, it does. I've seen that and it does, and the people are dying within
328 you know so. So, I couldn't be more of an advocate of that type of, that type of working
329 environment really is important, important to me. And it's something that I'm looking to do.

330 JB: Right, maybe one last thing is like, because you were talking about social media and all
331 these things. Do you think that's also motivation, where it goes wrong with using flowers and
332 plants, you know, sometimes you kind of see it on Instagram, everybody does it so you do it.
333 And there is a factor maybe, it takes, it makes a good picture, it will be posted, it is mouth to
334 mouth [marketing] on social media. Would you think it's a big thing or like a big reason why
335 places would do it [provide flowers]? Which is I think it's a ... like is the effect more if you do
336 it genuinely in terms of influencing the atmosphere, and what you get from that? Because I do
337 feel like lots of places probably also just put the flower there because they should. Like do you

338 think it makes a difference in experience for the people attending and working if there's like,
339 the thought in it, or just the copy, copying trends?

340 CG: Yeah, well, look, hospitality, it's a very accessible industry. Like you don't need a degree
341 to enter a or to open a cafe or a restaurant. So, anyone can do it. And that means that you know,
342 unfortunately, there are a very small amount of people that do it very, very, very well. You know,
343 and whether that is a very small cafe like the one I said Elliot, in Edinburgh, or these little spots
344 that are just or big restaurants that do just do things, great. And I think they know who they are.
345 Most importantly, they know what they stand for. And they know exactly what they're looking
346 to achieve. And think they're the innovators, they're the ones that essentially, get ... they're the
347 ones who get imitated. And, you know, there's positives and negatives to social media, we're all
348 aware of that, things have been able to grow exponentially and in very good ways, but also
349 there's a lot of copying, and I think that's natural, and we're human beings we're born to copy.
350 But the downside is that everything begins to look the same and often, out of context. So...

351 JB: Do you think the consumer notices that? Like, you know...

352 CG: Well, I don't know if every consumer notices it, but ... JB: They feel it. CG: Well, some
353 people feel it. People will automatically recognize a space that is, you know, special and not
354 and I think that's the difference between the really remarkable little gems in hospitality that we
355 all get sent on our phones when traveling to a city or those that are just simply generic, you
356 know, just kind of breeze by so, yeah.

357 JB: It's like the ones that are copied. They're the ones that do it genuinely. And they're copied
358 because it's good.

359 CG: Yeah, exactly. And I think...

360 JB: ... people might miss out on the fact that maybe what's good for them, it's not like you have
361 to find your good for the customer to enjoy it [food experience] rather than...

362 CG: Yeah, and leaders in our industry will always, you know, be copied. And I guess, rather
363 than taken as a, you know, someone's stealing your work, maybe it's more of a compliment, you
364 know, because you're doing good work. So, it's very hard to be original, to just know your
365 environment and understand...

366 JB: An it makes a difference. Like, if you make it good, you know, you don't feel necessarily
367 threatened by those copies, because it kind of just tells you, you're doing good. And it works
368 for you. Like it's not as if that's the competition, it's more like, ...

369 CG: Well, those people always create more. That's what I feel, you know, and not being afraid
370 to share, because, you know, who cares, you can just always do more. And at the beginning, it's
371 always it's difficult to create and be innovative and original, but those people aren't good enough

372 to do it, I think, and they know about themselves. So yeah, there's always going to be innovators
373 in that context.

374 JB: And from the look on my mind-map, I don't have anything nice, big open. Do you have any
375 anything question or whatever? Do I have any big questions? I would have asked that didn't ask
376 anything final to add?

377 CG: I think it's really interesting. I think it's an important I'd like it's the type of thing I'd love
378 to write a newsletter on. I write, I write a weekly newsletter called the Ómós Digest, and it
379 explores all types of things surrounding foods, culture, and community. But it is very much I
380 think it's a great topic, I think it'd be really interesting to open up to the public in terms of what
381 they see what they think, appreciate. And also, you know, make people understand the value,
382 the value in it, you know, because I think there is value, and it's probably, like, it's not...

383 JB: If I look at my undergrad, you know, studying hospitality management, nowhere would
384 there be mentioned that. You don't really talk about what environmental factors and like, you
385 know the overall experience? I don't know, I think that's what's kind of disappointed me in the
386 in the, like, studying that thing. If you do it, maybe from a practical side, you are more into it,
387 because you're just seeing it on an everyday basis, but it's not really part of your considerations.
388 And even if it's consideration, it's part of the money side of considerations, not really off the
389 concept/feel like; this psychological emotional, I don't know, not on this level that it would be
390 considered. CG: Really. JB: I mean, that's one university in Germany but, I don't know, it's not
391 really, a part. It's like the cherry on top. And if you're not thinking of that, it's okay. Like, you
392 know, it's not, not part of the normal considerations. You know, that environmental factors are
393 important but that's it and same with the research, now in [academic] literature, it's like, yeah,
394 environment factors are important, and maybe sometimes get as detailed as that light, colour,
395 smell and music. But that's it not 'how do I create that'? 'How do I create that' and 'how do I
396 create that well or badly'.

397 CG: Especially in a time where, you know, there's such a lack of staff and it's so difficult to
398 keep them that by looking after people and creating the right environment, it is actually a
399 massive, massive way in ensuring their happiness. One thing, just that when I went to that
400 restaurant that place Elliott's that I mentioned, they just had a vase of cut daffodils in the, in the
401 window like a lovely big stack of them. And the first thing I thought was like 'these people
402 care', you know, these people that go to the effort every day, or every two days to cut these
403 flowers. You know.

404 JB: That's like, I think you mentioned the perishable part earlier, which is considered something
405 bad often. But it's also a bit of a value, because it's something where you have to keep putting

406 effort in to maintain it. Same with the pottery work like what you said, like, yes, but it's also
407 telling your customer or the person that's there that you care, and you make an effort. Yeah.

408 CG: And what's interesting is I, I did a dinner last week for clients. And they were, they'd never
409 heard of lots of the herbs that I use and flowers and stuff like that. And I was explaining a little
410 bit about foraging and wildflowers and things like that. And they were like, 'So how'd you get
411 them', and I was like, 'I go out and get them, go pick them. And they were like, like, 'When,
412 or, how' 'I developed knowledge and kind of over time, and it's actually a bit of a passion. And
413 they could not believe the flavours of the food. But they also couldn't understand how I did it.
414 So how would I go and collect them. Like, how is that sustainable? How is that? How do you
415 have time? How do you have energy? How why, you know, even though they were totally blown
416 away, I've never had guests that blown away by food before. But still, there was a direct, not
417 lack of understanding, it was an ignorance.

418 JB: Oh, I kind of started worried, like, unbelievable, because it's so extraordinary. But in a bad
419 like, if you say ignorance. Like 'Why would you do that?', more like...

420 CG: No, not so not ignorant in the kind of 'why would you do that'? Is 'how and how is that
421 economically viable? It was it was a little bit if they were so confused by it. Okay. But also so
422 understanding of the result it gave, because...

423 JB: And that's necessary for that.

424 CG: Yeah. Whereas they couldn't create that connection. And perhaps like those wildflowers
425 and those flavours that were attributed through the wildflowers, like wild being the first true
426 flavours of cooking food. That could have been the magic that actually gave them that feeling
427 of wonder at the end of the meal. So, it was just really, I didn't really know there was people in
428 the world anymore that don't understand what foraging is, or don't know that wild food is still
429 out there. You know.

430 JB: Sure, they're not necessarily in my environment but there are a lot.

431 CG: Do you know what I mean though?

432 JB: It's as I said earlier, and I mean, though, it's just the connection between flowers and food.
433 And how people are 'oh edible flowers', like, 'you know, that's how food grows [by
434 flowering]' and it's like... But there's just no connection to the natural part of food in that sense.
435 And I see it with my housemates. But it's also lovely to see if you bring it into it [the
436 conversations]. People are very open. It's more like, I feel like often people have not been in
437 touch with it. And it's the way where they grew up and how they grew up, maybe, but you kind
438 of can positively you know, give them something easily, because the moment they're blown
439 away, they're kind of also fairly open, just to discover more depths. And then...

440 CG: Definitely. I agree.

441 JB: It's more like they didn't know they could think of it.

442 CG: Yeah, it's a good point.

443 JB: It's like you have to open up their thinking, and then they are willing to absorb.

444 CG: And that's why those foraging, I sometimes do foraging walks and thinks like that, and

445 they're really great for that reason, you know, just to give people that knowledge, you know,

446 again, as you said, open open them up to the world that surrounds them, essentially.

447 JB: And food wise bring it back to where the food comes, not just what's on the plate.

448 CG: Yeah, no, exactly. Yeah. All good. Excellent. I thought it was brilliant.

Appendix E

Focus Group

1 Focus group 03.04.2023 (FG5) pp. 1-19
2 299 Blackhorse Avenue
3 Elizabeth Waters (FGEZ); Eliza Sullivan (FGES); Lisa Davis (FGLD); Niall Toner (FGNT);
4 Ian Leavy FG(IL); Johanna Banaditsch (JB)
5
6 FGNT: Okay, so I'm Niall Toner and I am afraid I can't remember the last time I received or
7 gave, somebody flowers. But it was a while ago, but, but I do like both giving and receiving
8 flowers though. I have a problem with flowers. I don't like buying them. That's, because I am
9 very mean [joking], no, I don't like buying because I feel I don't really like the way that they're
10 produced generally like, they tend to be kind of very industrial. And I mean, I think that if you're
11 going to give somebody flowers, I think you need to give them flowers that are, you know, a
12 little bit more meaningful than that. So, I like wildflowers of and if I can get hands on my hands
13 on what is a couple of people who grow wildflowers or, or if I could pick some. But I'd rather
14 that I'm...buy flowers in a petrol station.
15 JB: Do you mind reading out the question also for everybody else that like each in the group
16 will just get answer.
17 FGNT: So the question is, when was the last time or occasion you received or gave somebody
18 flowers?
19 FGEW: I did on Mother's Day, I recieved beautiful flowers. So that was but, I do receive
20 flowers, because I love flowers. I buy them in the market every Saturday. And they really,
21 they're grown by this lady. And they're beautiful. And we have allotments, so we have a lot of
22 flowers growing there. So, I love and I agree with you that you know a lot of the flowers that
23 are industrial, industrialized, but that sorts available to most people. The bouquets obviously,
24 were made up from flowers like that, but they were delivered with great care. And so that's the
25 last time I got them, last Sunday or Sunday week was it.
26 FGNT: Now, yeah, now that now that you mention it actually it's coming back to me, I do, I did
27 buy a bunch of flowers recently and I did buy them in Marks and Spencer and they were, they're
28 just so attractive when you go in there and see those. In M&S in particularly where they have
29 their a way of presenting these and I did buy a bunch of flowers in there for my mother in law.
30 Yeah, that, that wasn't Mother's Day but that was very recently.
31 JB: How about you Eliza?
32 FGES: I'm Eliza. Um, I guess I sort of bought flowers for my roommate recently, but they were
33 from a Spar. [hesitation] JB: You don't have to say where you bought them from, this is just to
34 start the conversation, nobody is judging. ES: I am just noticing, you know I, I would prefer

35 yeah to buy them somewhere more ethical, I suppose, but I bought them for her in the sense
36 that she asked me to buy them for the house because we have people coming over and the house
37 look sad. So I bought tulips which I tend to buy I think there are certain seasons that I find that
38 I'll be more inclined to buy myself and other people flowers because whatever flowers and
39 season like if peonies happened to be in season at home when I was living in New York you
40 would find the street sellers would start selling them so they're probably not most ethically
41 sourced either but I felt like I was supporting an individual who was getting cash in hand who
42 probably was doing it because they didn't have another way to work at the time during like
43 locked down and stuff that was something they did a lot of; buy street flowers that were
44 probably and they would go terrible in like a day and a half because they were definitely like
45 yeah anyway felt good about giving someone money who seemed like they maybe needing it
46 in that sense I guess so.

47 JB: How about you Ian?

48 FGIL: So, my name is Ian, for everyone who didn't grab it to begin with, the last time I bought
49 flowers was today for Johanna coming over here because she likes tulips. So and I get flowers
50 quite often as well, because she grows all the time getting flowers, sometimes giving flowers
51 not as ethically grown as she grows either.

52 JB: How about you Lisa?

53 FGLD: I gave flowers to my mum on Mother's Day, I just there is a florist in the small town
54 they live in Wales, so always use them but just give them a call and, they just really brighten
55 up, like my mom, would always be like, 'Oh, don't be wasting money'. The reaction you get
56 from giving them is so great that you can't not do it, I think, particularly like for my mother and
57 my mother in law. And then I was given just a bunch, just a bunch of white roses for Mother's
58 Day from my girls, but, I mean, they were nice. They were nothing really special. But it was
59 the fact that they've actually gone out and got them themselves without my husband having to
60 do it was really sweet. And they brought them up to me in bed that morning, a tray with the
61 white roses on there. It's lovely. So I buy flowers quite a bit for myself as well. It's better to get
62 them for other people.

63 JB: Okay, then we move on. Or like no, you Niall...jump in that's what you are here for.

64 FGNT: I was just say that. You mentioned buying on the market -yeah- in the market I used to
65 go to each Saturday, and I used to buy them all the time, and then they they stopped coming.
66 So I didn't but yeah, that was it. No, I mean, I just wanted to say that they kind of there is
67 something about receiving flowers, and I know I think it's interesting as a man, I really like

68 getting flowers. No, I just I've always liked it. No, I've always thought it's a lovely thing to
69 give anybody you know.

70 FGEW: I always give my husband Amaryllis because I just think they're a fabulous flower that
71 always strikes me for some reason as being wonderfully made. He grows Amaryllis now, we
72 have them every Christmas.

73 JB: Do you want to jump in with the next question? Question or thoughts?

74 FGES: So the question is, if you eat out, do you notice the flowers? And what stands out to
75 you? Or what are your expectations? And what do you notice them for? I noticed that you said,
76 the things that immediately come to mind are not good things necessarily. But I you know, if
77 you go to a restaurant, and there's like a big centerpiece on the table, and it just makes it hard
78 to see, or like, the other thing is if they have a very strong smell, I worked in a place that would
79 get the flowers brought in. And the owner was always very specific about what kind of flowers
80 they were allowed to use, because he didn't want the smell of the flowers to overpower the smell
81 of the baked goods. So, I would say like the things that I noticed, cuz I expect flowers, I think
82 in a lot of restaurants now I think it's so common. But I would notice if they are really
83 overpowering. Like if there's Lily's or something and it kind of smells like Lily's or something.
84 I would definitely that was something that I would notice.

85 JB: Also, like when we're talking about eating out, it can be pretty much any form of eating out
86 like be it a wedding, be it just a restaurant, if you walk into a cafe, picking up your coffee,
87 whatever. How about the others? Would you notice?

88 FGNT: Yeah I would well, particularly if there were Lily's, because it really is actually actually
89 create physical pain for me, I can't I can't actually be in a room with Lilys, so but no I think
90 what's, yeah, there's two things that you said one of the things that you can't see people over.
91 The other thing that I really, really, really don't like is, is the is the kind of sad sort of, you know,
92 plastic orchid, you know, that gets put on that gets put on the table, but like, least possible
93 amount of ceremony. It's like ewww, you know, this thing. And the other, I suppose the other
94 thing worth mentioning is that in recent, particularly in Ireland in recent years, like the last five
95 years is that we're all eating flowers now, you know, so it's a whole different kind of approach
96 to flowers and, and, and dining out. And you don't see that in restaurants you see less and less
97 floral. You know, like I can't I can't remember the last time I've seen a really nice sort of posy
98 like that on the table.

99 FGES: Or you feel like sometimes you'll see like small kind of vases but one single [stem] it's
100 usually very sad and droopy, by the end of the day and also I think like the trend is for kind of

101 dried florals but not on the table. I've seen them on rest in some restaurants like up on the walls
102 or on the ceiling or ...

103 JB: Would it make a difference if you see dried or like plastic flowers? In terms of how I don't
104 know, what like just does it send you a different message or gives you a different feeling for
105 being a guest there?

106 FGES: The plastic plunked Orchid is pretty depressing. Yeah.

107 FGEB: Why? What's the depressing ...

108 FGNT: You're immediately not expecting, you know, you're immediately expecting, you know,
109 the kind of vague whiff of kind of old cooking oil. You know, when the kitchen door opens,
110 and, you know, something that's, that's not going to be, you know, an exciting, satisfying
111 experience, I guess. No, whereas I think when you see some nice draped dried flowers, it gives
112 you, I guess the the, at least the notion that whoever is there might actually care, you know,
113 might actually care what what happens to that to the, to the customer when they when they
114 come in?

115 JB: How about you?

116 FGEW: Yeah, I always notice love just, I love to see fresh flowers. And that's what I
117 immediately look for. And you know, something small, but that is, and that'll always sort of lift
118 my heart. Sometimes you can get like, exquisite dried flower arrangements and that, they don't
119 touch me in the same way. I just think there is something real life, flowers are life giving, I
120 mean, I'm just looking at that [posies on the table] and thinking how beautiful that is and what
121 it is, you know, it does. I always notice the types of flowers and for their and I it brings
122 somewhere up in my estimation, if they're, if they're fresh and not dying, you know or half dead.

123 JB: Would, you know why it lifts up? Like, is it just, you know, a feeling you get from it? Or
124 can you pin it on to,...

125 FGEW: I think it's something to do with life at that being honest. I mean, one of the things I do
126 every spring is, and I know I know, you get them in Dunnes Stores or whatever, it's a little
127 basket with the bulbs, and to watch them grow and I absolutely love that and I plant the bulbs
128 out then after that. So, I just think there's something life giving. But I've always had that as a
129 child. I couldn't wait for the crocus's to come up in St. Anne's Estate, or the bluebells in St.
130 Anne's Estate plucked off, which was near where I lived and I'd be gathering them, you know?

131 So yeah.

132 JB: How about you, Lisa?

133 FGLD: Definitely notice them. But I don't think I mean, I don't eat out a massive amount. But
134 I don't know if it's just a cost cutting thing at the moment but I can't remember seeing flowers

135 for a long time anyway, even just like little ones. But I think to me, it shows that somebody
136 really they do care, if they're putting out fresh flowers. You notice that sort of attention to detail.
137 And I agree about the dried flowers, they don't really have the same effect that we now know,
138 they're trendy at the moment. And I get why people do them because it's better than no flower
139 to me. But then just thinking back to I guess, spectacular flowers in restaurants. In New York,
140 there's a place called Gramercy Tavern, and also the River Café, they both had the most
141 incredible floral displays as you walk in, and it just hits you and they're both really high end,
142 they are both expensive, but you just know that you're there for, you know, a bit of a celebration
143 that smell the colour and they both change them seasonally, and very, very regularly as well. So
144 you could go with in the autumn, and then the beautiful golds and yellows and oranges and
145 spring it's very, you know, just colorful, and gorgeous and more pastels. So I think it's really I
146 do notice that places have them and again, even just in like a small vase, even an old milk bottle
147 or mason jar or something, it just says that they really care. And the food is usually I think
148 better. It gets attention to detail.

149 ES: They care to get fresh flowers in, and they probably have fresh food in the back as well.
150 Like it's almost like an assurance of freshness now that I'm thinking about it, you know, like if
151 someone's willing to put out, and money and extra things that you're gonna assume that the stuff
152 in the back is probably doing that to a certain part as well, that it's part of it as well.

153 FGIL: Taking away from that though, from a restaurant point of view, we go to a café in
154 Stoneybatter that do it's just called The Little Cactus that sell cactuses and it's kind of give, you
155 go walk in and have all the cactuses there in front, Fresh flowers as you'd find elsewhere, but
156 you walk in it's kind of an ambience in the place and a talking point as well, if you're having
157 sitting there enjoying the coffee, which I think is nice.

158 FGNT: Yeah, I think, in fact, that was thinking they were talking and looking at the flowers,
159 and actually, you know, although these are absolutely stunning, but like, it doesn't even have to
160 be flowers in some kind of vegetation, even even like a, you know, if it's like small pot of herbs,
161 it's something that, you know, you know, or even display with, you know, make the

162 FGIL: It takes away from a bland wall or white wall...

163 FGES: And I think also what Lisa said about the idea that the flowers they're on the way in, it
164 adds to the sense of arrival as well. So, taking the flowers off the table, maybe, and putting them
165 in the entryway of a restaurant or on the, you know, the stand with the host kind of or the maitre
166 d', like, it adds this level of like, arrival, and you think of like, even my mom always put the
167 flowers on the front table, not like on the kitchen table, like, you know, you open the door, and
168 the flowers were plunked there, not with much ceremony, but they were just there. So, I don't

169 know what maybe it adds to that feeling of the dining experience being an event, maybe in a
170 place like that, whereas in like a cafe, it becomes part of the decor and stuff in a different way.
171 JB: What do you think? Like, that's not in your questions, that's why I am jumping in. Is it like
172 flowers have to be related to, because you kept saying the thing that if it's fresh in the on the
173 table, or like they put this extra effort in it kind of or like you would assume they also put the
174 same effort, and maybe they're cooking maybe how they source ingredients. Is that? Or like, is
175 that the only connection to the food? Or what do you think it also has to, like a seasonal
176 restaurant needs seasonal flowers? Or would it also.... Would you have specific expectations
177 as a guest to that.

178 FGNT: I think there's something in that.

179 I think, I think when I mentioned the thing about the fact that we're now eating flowers, you
180 know, I guess people always did, but but there's something about that as well. It's something
181 about the fact that that flowers are always, or is there, I don't know, I mean, like as well as being
182 something like extremely pretty to look at and something that they somehow communicate with
183 you. I don't know, you know, because obviously their function in nature is to communicate. But
184 they literally do communicate with you as well for different in a different way. But it but it's
185 there's something about that connection to, to food and that they are, you know, the most I think
186 most flowers, it's very few flowers that aren't edible, as far as I know.

187 JB: There are really bad ones, but there are really poisonous,

188 FGNT: As far as I know there are a few poisonous ones, there are like, you know, I think literally
189 most of this [flowers on the table] is probably apart from the daffodils are maybe not everything
190 else on the table is. So I don't know if there's something in that, you know.

191 FGLD: I remember being surprised, I'm not name dropping here. But last year, after the
192 pandemic, we went to Chapter One, as a friend got a table there, and there were no flowers on
193 the table. And that struck me. And it was everything was beautiful and very precise and its most
194 gorgeous little candleholders and but it was everything was so precise and pristine, but I was I
195 remember being surprised that there, there was just no flowers on the table it was a bit, I noticed
196 it, their absence, you know, but maybe it was because everything is so it is so almost not clinical,
197 but precise. Didn't want something that felt a bit more sort of, you know, organic. And I don't
198 know, it's interesting,

199 FGES: I think, to your question about sourcing and stuff. There's, I think, a knowledge gap with
200 flowers. Like I think people know more about what's in season maybe the average person or
201 maybe I'm thinking of people who care about food. But there's this knowledge of what kind of
202 food might be in season. So it holds the restaurant accountable. Whereas I don't think quite as

203 many people have the knowledge of flowers to know when they're in season or know when
204 they're in season in different locations. Like I might think, Oh, like this is in season right now
205 because I can get it in the shops. But that might mean it's in season in Spain, and it's not really
206 sustainable or back home, it's probably in New York would be coming from Mexico like or
207 something you know, so that's just something I think, as much as like, you know, like I know a
208 lot of people like know a lot about flowers in the sense of like, what grows in their area. But
209 what we see growing in our area is often not although in Ireland, there's lots of wildflowers, it's
210 often not what people have on their table or have in their bouquets I feel like there's a separation
211 between like what you buy as a bouquet of flowers. So maybe what you would expect to see on
212 a restaurant table and what you would see growing has a wild flower in some areas? Yeah. So I
213 don't know about like,

214 FGEW: Even the notion like the flowers are so absolutely seasonal. Like, I just love the way
215 each different thing comes in just for a very and they are all a such, such a short period, you
216 know, it's it's a couple of weeks. And I think that notion that you were saying about using
217 seasonal flowers is great. Like, I really do. I just know, at home, I have a bunch of wild garlic
218 on my table with the flowers there. And you know, what's funny, because I've made pesto with
219 it as well. And it's lovely, it's lovely to see it sorry, the daffodils that were growing and the
220 Nasturtiums that were growing, on the table. I think there is a way of matching your seasons
221 with flowers and with vegetables and flowers that you can eat as well.

222 FGES: And then you would put the but I think, maybe from a restaurant perspective, they would
223 need someone with the knowledge of the flowers to do that and, well, chefs, they're going to
224 have a chef obviously, anyway, because someone needs to cook the food and in theory the chef
225 should know about seasonality. EW: Sorry [interruption of her phone] ES: There's less of an
226 obligation for some, like front of house. Like it's all the skill that's maybe expected from front
227 of house staff.

228 JB: And the question how much is actually being perceived? Yeah, then like, what do you said
229 about the knowledge gap? It's probably like it depends how far you can actually not trace back
230 or like make sense of what's on the table in terms of how it's grown or whatever.

231 FGES: Even though I was at a restaurant that was just talking about how local everything was
232 but they served coffee at the end of the meal and I was kind of like yeah, okay, that's like from
233 Brazil, so you know, I think there's certain things that we're more willing to like or not even
234 willing to even just don't think about as products that it initially is growing I mean, obviously
235 flowers like it was growing at some point but I think we all just, it's like they talk about you
236 know, like, because especially we see them in such quantities that it's hard to think of them

237 growing in some ways sometimes they think you know, IL: They just arrived there. ES: Yeah,
238 you just see like this big wall of roses around you know, Mother's Day and Valentine's Day and
239 you're like 'flowers are magic'. They just spontaneously appear like obviously that's not it but
240 anytime it's even like you know like people talk about it with like, cases of chicken breasts and
241 the supermarket people like because you have like 15 of them in a value pack and you're like,
242 don't think about like that's like seven chickens or whatever you know like anyway I digress.
243 JB: And from what like you you've been mentioning it before Liz and I think it came off with
244 you Lisa now as well. Do you mind introducing or like bringing in your question in terms of...
245 FGLD: I haven't got a beautifully designed one [card with question on it], I am not an artis.
246 Okay, so the question is what makes in your eyes flowers special compared to other decor?
247 JB: Like you mentioned chapter one now and stuff there like...
248 FGNT: I think they are certainly, there is something that, I mean, there's something that can be
249 that can change a place you know, in almost instantly and for you know, for not a lot of financial
250 investment. You know, ...
251 JB: How would it change a thing like what are the things...?
252 FGNT: You can immediately change the mood in a place and I think like you were saying that
253 somebody send you to get flowers because the place was looking a bit you know, meah, and
254 flowers are something that can do that immediately. You know, I mean, there are other ways
255 you can either buy buckets of paint but that take three days and a lot of money. You can pretty
256 much do it with flowers, and you know, Hoover the place and put some flowers on. And maybe,
257 it makes an enormous difference to anywhere. And immediately your your your state of mind
258 is like is altered, you know, when you are in the presence of these.
259 FGIL: Would you, if you add flowers, you were saying for changing a place with flowers. If
260 you've a restaurant and it's like falling down nearly, paint falling down off the walls, whatever
261 add a few flowers an automatically it becomes like a rustic setting.
262 FGNT: Yeah you don't care like it become something else.
263 FGEW: And you know if you think about the way flowers can be used to decorate a salad or
264 you know it adds that sort of colour and interest to something. I was at a wedding there and the
265 wedding cake was a chocolate but it was with the most beautiful violets and that on it and it
266 really lift, I think flowers lift things into another, another dimension and, probably because I
267 love them, but it's always just it always does. And I love flowers on food, you know, in salads.
268 JB: For what reason? Are they then more like a ingredient thing or are they more a decorative
269 thing?

270 FGEW: Well, I think, are they an ingredient, well they are an ingredient because they're there,
271 they're there to be eaten, but they're also they also add something to to it. You know, I think
272 they can certainly lift a salad when you, when you see things in it or on a desert so that I just
273 think the and I think you were saying that earlier on that we don't know enough about, You
274 know, when you [NT] said there most of these flowers can be eaten except for the daffodil.
275 Now, I know daffodils are toxic, but I'd look around and it's really can you eat all of them. And
276 I wouldn't really know.

277 FGNT: I'm pretty sure most most flowers are edible. And even

278 JB: Like they are daisies and violets they are grand, but all the rest...

279 FGNT: Even tulips are edible.

280 FGEW: Gosh, you see now I didn't know that. Rose petals. Yes, I know, that and lavender. I
281 know like there's lots of flower that I do know are edible. But gosh, they're gorgeous.

282 FGNT: Pansies. I remember seeing pansies on you can actually eat them. You can. I mean, I
283 don't think they're, you know they are delicious. I think you can live without them.

284 But, I think the thing with flowers and stuff is, you know, even, you know, the, the most talented
285 artist, you know, all they can hope to do is to make something that's almost as, you know, perfect
286 and as that mean, and that's, and that's what the thing is about these things is, we can introduce
287 them all of a sudden, and we're, we're they take you to a different place. Definitely, you know,

288 JB: Do you have a feeling for why, like, again, NT: Why is that? JB: Yeah, you know again, it's
289 because I think that's a big thing in the thesis generally, a lot of it is feeling and people have a
290 feeling but it's hard to..

291 FGNT: I think that somehow they're, they directly you know, like, something around that
292 communication thing. I mean, they directly speak to you, they directly invoke if that's the right
293 word, emotion, I mean, it's like it's un, it's un, it's undeniable, it's irresistible. It's not, you know,

294 FGES: I think there might be something to that point, of too. I was saying there might be
295 something to the idea of like a point to them, and like part of what makes them beautiful is like
296 Yeah, yeah, like apple blossoms and cherry like those turn into the fruit or whatever else. But a
297 lot of these flowers, we don't eat maybe the thing that they turn into. So, nature creates these
298 like beautiful, unbelievable things, and they're almost pointless, and they are fleeting, when you
299 were saying the season is such a blip in time. And I think we as humans, there's this like desire
300 to like capture things and there is no mean you can dry them, you can press them, but you can't
301 really capture a living, breathing, flower breathing.

302 FGLD: I was just going to say, I think if you, you know, compare, there are some pretty good
303 artificial flowers now. I mean, it looked good from a distance there were some at my hairdresser

304 a few weeks ago, and I actually went to double check. But then as soon as I looked closer, and
305 they were artificial, they lost some of their beauty. I don't know what it was, I mean, it's just
306 and then when they looked good from a distance, but there's something about the fact that
307 they're living in there just to texture and feel and not you're gonna feel them but the artificial
308 ones just don't. Yeah, it's just not the same even if they look fantastic.

309 FGNT: I mean if we see insects landing on them and like you can see the reaction of the insect.
310 And you've got like, you can imagine putting yourself in a position you know, and you know,
311 walking into it like, you know, the grocery shop on the corner, and like, you know, there's
312 nothing in here.

313 FGEW: They are very unexploited the flowers in terms of restaurants and dining. All of that, it
314 strikes me, I you know, just looking at those [flowers on the table]. Now I know it's because
315 you're growing flowers you have, but they are, it would be so easy to almost forage something,
316 do you know for your easily for tables and that and it just, you know why? Why don't more
317 places do it because look at what they do, we're sitting here saying oh, they give us life, they
318 lift us up they...

319 FGIL: It's interesting. You said about the artists designing, say a tulip or something, you go into
320 restaurants, and you may get a dessert or something in the restaurant, but it's the flowers made
321 out of sugar or something. And the chef goes into all the intricacies of designing this flower for
322 someone to just eat through it, whether could use a normal flower to probably get the same.

323 FGES: It's like the wedding cakes, you were saying. I mean, there's such a culture of like
324 sugarpaste flowers for wedding cakes and things like why don't you just stick actual flowers on
325 them? FGIL: That are edible... FGES: Those are not actual flowers.

326 JB: Although, I don't know, I found that when reading is. But it's also interesting that we imitate
327 it so much, which I thought is that also a sign for the attraction in a way that we try to like with
328 whatever form trying to replicate them. And then going back to Lisa where it might not have
329 the same effect or whatever but like this. I don't know, being intrigued.

330 FGES: I think part of the feeling to is also the assigned meanings that we give them. Like
331 obviously, I suppose I don't know about, you know, global culture, but Western cultures, you
332 know, flowers are part of big occasions, good and bad. And we still weirdly associate them with
333 good things most of the time, like, you know, like bad funerals.

334 JB: But why do you give them, the flower on the funeral. It kind of like actually leads us now
335 to your [FGEW] question. Do you mind? Take a minute? It is interesting, like with the good
336 and the bad, but what is it in the bad that you give the flower for?

337 FGES: For celebrating...

338 FGIL: I guess someone's life.

339 FGES: Someone's life. Yeah. There's also differences, like between Irish culture and American
340 culture, with funerals, obviously, but but I just do think it's, you know, there, we today are still
341 giving flowers and receiving flowers and everything as part of celebrations. Let's just keep to
342 that side for now. But were detached maybe from like the language of flowers that like, you
343 know, like, in like, certain eras of history, like everyone would have known there had been so
344 much meaning to which flower you gave someone all this kind of parts of life and like, we don't
345 have that part anymore. But that doesn't mean that, it's a tradition of like, they're just part of it.
346 And so we have this assigned meaning. And I always think it's very interesting to overthink,
347 kind of the assigned meanings that we give to things in life, you know, like words don't even
348 mean anything we give them meaning, you know, like, it's all of these things. So there's this
349 part of like, flowers that I think is such an interesting part of that. It's like habit and ritual that
350 transcends kind of culture and religion and all these other things where we all kind of see
351 relatively similar, you know, appreciation or gratitude or something else from them.

352 FGEW: So, question is here now, now that I can speak. Where do we usually, when do we
353 usually give flowers? What do you give? What do you receive?

354 JB: So like, yeah, you just started there...

355 FGES: yeah, oh, I mean, yeah. I think it's interesting to think about that. And like, how we're
356 today removed from it, like, I think that it's not, not such a language that we're all kind of fluent
357 in, but like, my grandmother would know so much even like, you know, not even looking back
358 that far about, like, what different flowers mean, in culture and like, I would be like, what, you
359 know, the different colours roses have different meanings. I would just be like, Oh, I just thought
360 they're pretty and someone's like, those are for death. And I'm like, oh you know, I don't know,
361 I think that's it's funny to think about it too. Like, as something like that we have kind of lost,
362 but the fact of them remains like the specifics of it have kind of like gone by the wayside, maybe
363 but we were made kind of giving flowers for different occasions. And I just think, you know,
364 roses are for like, you know, especially a really special occasion. But is that just because they're
365 expensive? You know...

366 FGNT: Including death. I mean, I mean, I don't know if there is a death rose.

367 FGEW: I don't know if I should just throw this out I know, you know, easter lilies. They are
368 absolutely associated with funerals. And that's although you don't see much of them in funerals,
369 and I probably see more funerals than you do.

370 FGNT: With this kind of it. There's a sort of a movement against flowers a funeral now or there
371 seems to be anyway where people request other things other than flowers just like a donation
372 to give to some charity. Flower just for the family, yeah..

373 FGEW: I don't know, there's a lot of ritual, a lot of folklore around flowers like, we were never
374 allowed to bring Whitehorn into the house. Because it should bring bad luck, I'm just looking
375 at these [a flower that looks like whitethorn on the table]...

376 JB: To be honest, I, when I picked them, that could be, they where they were thorny.

377 FGEW: I don't think that's, that's... Anyway, like I do now. You know, it's remembering the old
378 I'd say there must be lots of other types of folklore. You don't pick anything that you find
379 growing on a fairy fort or a fairy Hill. FGEW&FGIL: That will bring you back luck. EW: Yeah,
380 yeah. So it will be interesting to know what is the Irish folklore around flowers? It just strikes
381 me as being you know? I'm sure there's lots. Yeah,

382 FGNT: I know. There is definitely, fortunately, I don't know what they are. But there's a thing
383 around different colours of roses, there's red roses and yeah, white roses and yellow roses, they
384 all mean different things. And I don't know if that's American culture, either. It may well be I...

385 FGES: ... I don't know, I know that we assigned like sort of like yellow roses or I just looked
386 up a symbol of friendship. And like, I remember I worked at my website [former job] and we
387 did a lot of like, you know, birthstones and you zodiac signs and all that stuff, but there's birth
388 flowers as well which I never knew and there's all I just think it's it there's just so much to it
389 like it is such a vast area of like meaning that we kind of just, you either know it or you don't
390 and I don't know it.

391 FGNT: I think an American I don't know this isn't a song 'I just received today a bouquet of
392 yellow roses' so yeah, yellow roses, this kind of like I'm not I'm only interested in being a friend.
393 Like you don't want to get these, means you know it's not gonna happen you know? It's like I
394 don't know.

395 FGES: Let's see if I can find an overall list.

396 FGIL: I think traditionally like your go back to the question flowers have been given for
397 weddings, funerals of parties etc. But I think in the last couple of years I think it is kind of
398 drawn away, from people turn up to the party with a bunch of flowers and I know at home
399 certainly is, back home my mum would always turn up with a bunch of flowers but in the last
400 couple of years she just stopped, has stopped doing it. Maybe it's become too expensive or
401 sourcing of them etc. But it's just interesting to see the change over time.

402 FGEW: It's definitely certain season though. I had the Mayo was playing yesterday and I had a
403 crowd coming after the match. And my daughter in law's mum was coming and she brought not

404 fresh but a beautiful rose tree from me plant. She thought this would be lovely, give you flowers
405 all all year round, you know? Yeah, I think it is. I wonder is it getting less less popular?
406 FGLD: I think people are more concerned with sustainability as well. You know, when you see
407 those slight vast areas in the Netherlands, for example, which are just also chemically grown.
408 But having said that, I mean, I do like to give flowers for birthdays, thank yous, pick some up
409 when you go to somebody's house and they have you over for dinner. I always I always like to
410 take flowers as well as wine and I just think it just makes more of especially if someone's gone
411 to the effort of cooking something for you. It's just adds to the occasion a bit more. As well as
412 taking wine. I never give Gypsophilia. I hate that stuff. Was it it was white, fine...
413 FGES: Baby's breath.
414 FGNT: Which?
415 JB: Very fine... ES: Baby's breath... NT: Oh, yeah.
416 FGLD: Yeah, I just don't give that I just think, ...
417 FGES: It's becoming very trendy now though.
418 It's well, like it was always like part of bouquets but you're seeing, I'm planning a wedding and
419 people are like, that's the whole bouquets now or just the little white. Like I don't know if it's
420 just inexpensive and everyone, no one has money for anything right now, but I feel like it's
421 funny. Because I remember they were always like the little flowers tucked in the side of the gas,
422 you know, the petrol station roses like...
423 FGEW: Gyp-solphia, it's it.
424 FGES: I don't know the exact name of it but, just when she said the little white ones I was like
425 we I know what it is. That's what we would buy in college if we wanted flowers for the
426 apartment because it was cheap, and it dries really well. So we just leave it and it would just
427 dry and look pretty weak, like you say there, that and eucalyptus branches, which are definitely
428 really bad for the world and all that kind of thing. But...
429 FGEW: I think there's something really special if somebody brings you a gift of flowers from
430 their own garden, that to me now, you know, is just fabulous to get...
431 JB: Is it for the extra effort that went into it, or?
432 FGEW: Absolutely. The picking the you know, I think that's a that's a really lovely, lovely gift.
433 We have allotments. And there is a lady who in the allotments, who grows flowers, for to make
434 bouquets and things like that. But very often, at the end of a Sunday, she gives me a beautiful
435 bunch of the flowers that she's grown, because she has you know, she has too many or whatever.
436 And it's just such a lovely thing, to get something that somebody has really put the effort into
437 growing, whatever where whatever far either from their garden or their allotment, I think it

438 makes it quite special. And also what makes it special is the time that people put into decorating.
439 I'm just looking at those. And I'm just thinking, How special it was the time you [JB] took to
440 prepare those beautiful little blossoms or whatever you want to call it that and bouquets there.
441 That says an awful lot about you. And I think that's lovely. And I'm not saying that to be nice.
442 I'm saying that because that's, you know, if I sit at somebody's table, and I see that that's sort of,
443 I think, gosh, there's somebody willing to take the time and put the energy and the care into.
444 JB: It, we maybe just like starting then with your question Ian, because it does like, bringing
445 that into the food context. And again, if you are invited or in hospitality setting.
446 FGIL: So how are these aspects or components relevant in the food setting?
447 JB: So, like the things you just mentioned, what you deliver, or what you feel like you receive
448 when you get the flowers? Does that affect, to the same extent, I guess in a food setting? Or do
449 you feel like in a food setting, it's different things that are being communicated with the flowers?
450 FGES: I think if I saw little ones like this, it would mean more than almost seeing one of those
451 really big like, I know what your what Lisa was saying about you know, those places. Tavern
452 on the Green and all those, those big, very, like, you know, a professional florist came in and
453 did it. Yes, I almost like that. I'm like, 'fine, you have money, I get it'. This I'm like 'you care',
454 I guess like smaller. I don't know, the human touch component versus the professional touch,
455 which is maybe bad now that I'm saying it out loud. Because like there is good reason to be a
456 professional florist. But there's just something more kind of touching about. Like the something,
457 these are more organic. Actually, we're coming back to that word organic, maybe there's nothing
458 actually really different probably about the care that goes into these and the care that goes into
459 the big kind of I'm thinking conventional, like corporate floral kinds of places. But this feels
460 more hospitality-y. For lack of a better word to me then, yeah, the really structured kind of stiff
461 looking arrangements.
462 FGEW: Yeah, yeah...agreed.
463 FGNT: Yeah. Yeah, I'd have to agree with that. And it's like, it's just they're just these are the
464 kind of personification of a, just care and affection I suppose. You know, it's it's, um, you know,
465 that's what they're saying. That's literally what they're saying. Yeah that's what I think. So, so
466 yeah, I mean, definitely. When I sit down at this table, I definitely kind of I know that I actually
467 know that what I want to get it's going to be... JB: Nothing [in a joking kind of way as there
468 was no food provided other than little chocolates], sorry.
469 FGNT: The chocolates are delicious. But you definitely, you definitely would, I definitely
470 would set the bar higher when I when I saw if I saw those on the table. Rather than the big

471 thing, you know, because because then you know, what you kind of get, you know, you're gonna
472 get some, you know, cheffy you know, maybe some lobster.

473 FGES: I just don't really care for that really cheffy kind of food, you know, maybe this is me
474 having you know...

475 FGNT: ...what I think if you see something like this, you know, .. FGES: artisan. FGNT: But
476 it's put together with literally, with for its own sake. Yeah. You know, ...

477 FGIL: Even if you went to a restaurant and saw small, bouquets or like a small set up like this,
478 and you had high hopes of it being a really good meal or whatever. And what came out was just
479 kind of ordinary or whatever, I think your opinion wouldn't be swayed of it in a sense.

480 FGNT: Like, yeah, no, that's true. Yeah.

481 FGIL: Or even if it's just simple food or whatever,

482 FGNT: Yeah. Oh, yeah. It doesn't really matter. Yeah. Yeah.

483 JB: So would you say from what like, I think I'm slowly rounding things up. So if you come up
484 with major things, now's the time to bring them in. But like, from what you said, would you say
485 the - like, it's what affects the person in the scenario like, in a food setting, whatever more is
486 more this both cultural assigned meaning to the flower, and the care that goes into it, rather than
487 aesthetics, for example, being like, the colours match the loss or whatever? Like, would? Would
488 you be able to distinguish between that? Or would it be like, just a bit of everything?

489 FGES: I mean, I'm just thinking.

490 FGNT: I may or may not notice that, like, like, because, or I may not be aware that notice this,
491 that's, you know, because because often when that happens, you know, I got something
492 delivered to the house this morning. And I hadn't realized that the reason I picked it out was
493 because the legs on it matched the legs on my kitchen table. And that's not why I picked it, I
494 just kind of liked the piece, it was a bench, or like a bench, obviously was going up and had the
495 same not the same legs, but the legs were definitely in the same sort of aesthetic, as like the legs
496 of the kitchen table. But I didn't notice at the time, so I'm not sure if I would notice that was
497 more for me, it's more an emotional thing. It's always more emotional. And it's and it's, it's
498 literally that it's, it's it's like somebody's hands you a bunch of flowers, it's like immediately like
499 you warm to them. I mean, it's not, you know, you can't really be not nice to somebody who
500 hands you a bunch of flowers, so you know it's nearly like that.

501 FGLD: I always appreciate why men give them when they are in the wrong...

502 FGNT: What? Good point, unless you get a bunch of Lily's notice that it means, you're going...

503 But obviously, you know, something like this is different. I mean, you, you know, when you see
504 that [referring to flowers on table] on a restaurant table and you immediately warm to it. Like

505 it's not, you know, you know, even if you have a terrible experience, you will still have that to
506 remember.

507 FGEW: It's the creativity of it, I think there's a real element of creativity in the care people take
508 you know, and it's just amazing. I'm going away from here. And I am saying, yeah, I'm going
509 to find a little, you know, a little something. Because there's loads I'm looking and I'm thinking
510 if I walked around in the garden, you know, I'd be able to see and spot, so it inspires, that's the
511 word. Yeah. It inspires as well.

512 FGES: Yeah, I think thing about matching and everything to, you know, not to oversimplify it.
513 But so many restaurants of the type that might have flowers like this, that I'm thinking of the
514 colour scheme is pretty bland. You know, it's a lot of my mom is visiting, and she keeps
515 commenting on all the places I'm taking her, have cement walls or floors. Why? Why is it like
516 this? Or I feel like even we're in an era of very stripped back restaurant decor. I do think, you
517 know, it's a lot of natural components. So these types of flowers seem very at home in a space
518 that's a lot of woods and maybe a bit of leather or kind of that like industrial Scandi, whatever
519 style that people are decorating restaurants in right now. So I think I wouldn't notice if it didn't
520 match, but I also don't know if that's because it matches an aesthetic and not colour. And the
521 fact that there's no real colour on the walls and a lot of the restaurants that I'm thinking of is
522 maybe a part of that.

523 JB: It's [the walls/rooms] is like a blank canvas?

524 FGES: And so like having like these sort of very carefree kind of gorgeous wildflowerly style
525 arrangements is what fits that kind of setting. IL: Makes the setting. ES: Yeah, and exactly. And
526 yeah, it probably makes it like you were saying about somewhere with the walls with the paint
527 flaking and just turns it into shabby chic. If you put nice flowers in the middle. It's not just
528 rundown, it's shabby chic now.

529 FGIL: Or even a nice vase, not even the nice flowers in general.

530 FGES: One point even, the kind of containers that they're in have such a part to play, I think as
531 well, in certain cases like here, I would bet you most it's not that you don't notice them. But the
532 flower, there's so much to look at too, like when you have an arrangement, that's many different
533 small bits of flowers versus like, you know, 12 roses in a jar or something, it's more dynamic
534 for the eye.

535 JB: So any major contributions, something you feel like you wanted to say today, and I haven't
536 asked you yet, or anything that comes to my mind, because otherwise...

537 FGLD: I think we kind of said it, I think it really is just signalling good hospitality. And actually,
538 sadly, we're not seeing that much if at the moment, you don't get free bread anywhere. I know

539 there's a cost. But when you go to somebody that does make their own bread, and you are given,
540 you know, a bit of bread, and you will give me water when you sit down it's kind of that basic
541 hospitality. And flowers, are part of that it automatically puts you in a mood. It makes it feel
542 even though it is transactional, but it makes it feel less transactional, I think.

543 FGNT: Yeah. Would you pay for them? I because because I don't even mind nobody sit down
544 somewhere in you know, Italy or Portugal. And then they give you the bread, and then it's a
545 euro or something on the bill. I mean and I don't mind that actually. Yes, would you do that for
546 flowers?

547 FGES: It's an interesting question. Yeah, you know, or, like, add it to the...

548 JB: Would it change though how you feel about the flowers, because you mentioned a lot of
549 emotional aspects in terms of, you know, giving affection like, is it, do you still have the same
550 feeling if you pay for it? Or the other thing maybe you treat yourself maybe don't request the
551 rest of it...

552 FGNT: Because bread has a similar kind of emotional layer as well. Because, you know, it's
553 like, you know. The Group: The sharing. NT: It's the, you know, you can share...

554 FGES: The activity of making bread is very hands driven and I think, just like foraging,

555 FGIL: It's funny you say that, like we used to go away on holidays and my family. You get to
556 the table, you get the bread? And because you pay for it, and we're getting food later on. My
557 mom would almost hand back the bread. If there was flowers on the table, I wonder would she
558 hand back like the flowers...

559 FGES: I do think, were we're seeing an increasing amount of restaurants adding a kind of a
560 discretionary charge for service or for hospitality. Why wouldn't I mean, it's everywhere at home
561 does it now, it's 10% or whatever, and it's just a blank. And usually it's going mostly to the
562 kitchen staff at home, which is fair enough, because they're working really hard and getting
563 paid pennies, but you know, it's like, weird. Where in a restaurant budget do flowers land? Does
564 it land with the food and supplies or does it the land with the, I don't know, like the washing up
565 materials. Like it's a weird one. So maybe that's also part of why it's also not as much as common
566 as restaurants become. So like, I mean, like restaurants have always been businesses, but I just
567 feel like everything is being businessdefined. And I don't know,

568 FGIL: But all it takes is one, employee or restaurant to come in at 10 min earlier every day and
569 put the flowers out there, well obviously get the flowers...

570 FGNT: I think it's interesting that you're doing this study in this particular school because it's,
571 it's, you know, because I feel that there may be you know, there may be some resistance to it or

572 it's or there may have been some, at least on it on a psychological psychological level some
573 resistance to it

574 JB: What do you mean with resistance, like what, what sort.

575 FGNT: Yeah, because I don't think it's a natural, you know, given the given that I suppose, given
576 the given the nature of the school and its and its origins that is it's maybe it's just something
577 that, you know, just didn't think of, you know, it's like

578 JB: I feel like even with the question that I asked you about like you know, what makes flowers
579 different to deor. That was exactly the first question I got the moment I mentioned flowers, why
580 don't do general stuff or like sugar figures or napkins. You find so many books on napkins in
581 our library like it's shocking, and I was like, But are these [flowers and other décor] the same,
582 I think you know, that's my silent mission, as you know, like, I don't? Yeah, I wonder how much
583 they are? What theirs ...

584 FGNT: I wonder if you had, you know, spoons would it have been going 'Oh, yes spoons, great,
585 let's do it. But flowers...

586 FGEW: Gosh, I think it's such a. I am bit taken aback that there was a bit of resistance.

587 FGNT: I'm not saying there was...

588 JB: Not resistance just ideas that didn't align with my idea.

589 FGNT: It feels like there might have been. I am not saying there was, it's like...

590 JB: Not resistance but like confusion.

591 FGGroup: Yeah.

592 FGNT: Ambivalence is probably the word.

593 FGES: And I think we've kind of come to this place. We're kind of saying, yeah, the flowers are
594 somewhere between the food and the decor. They kind of exist on their, they are their own thing
595 on the table. I don't know.

596 FGIL: They're also taken for granted nearly in some senses, sometimes it's like, always have
597 the napkin you always have the spoon essentially always have the tablecloth on the table. Before
598 you always had the flowers, now you don't have the flowers and it's kind of taken away from..

599 JB: But do you think the difference between functional because obviously you use your napkin
600 you use your spoon and flowers is also what makes flowers more like or like gives you more,
601 or like flowers are something where you can add more to a thing because they are actually not...

602 FGEW: Just purely, they are not functional.

603 JB: You don't, you can perfectly have a meal without the flowers on the table.

604 FGEW: Yeah, it's connected and into that hospitality, you know, that notion of really wanting
605 to invite people in and show them something special, you know, whatever it is.

606 FGNT: Possibly the candlelight is related somewhere as well you know, because over time. And
607 you know, because over time in restaurants you know, by the by the kind of by the 1980s it was
608 like these kind of plastic things that like you switch the switch on again, and plunked, like the
609 plastic orchid again plunked on the table.

610 FGES: It's the word plunked. Placed versus plunked are becoming.

611 FGEW: And that happens nowadays at some sort of a particular time. Yeah, they're
612 putting them out and...

613 FGES: But more and more places again, they use proper candles.

614 FGEW: Yes, they are. Yeah, at least.

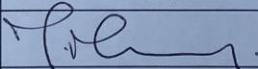
615 FGES: Which is nice, like yeah, there were some of this morning and there were
616 candles lit up like eight in the morning. We were like weird, anyway. So yeah, it does add
617 something.

618 JB: Everybody happy? Group: Yeah. JB: I am gonna stop the recording. FGEW: Thank you.

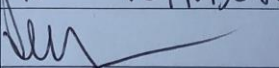
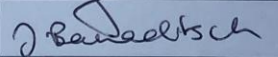
Appendix F

Interviewees Signed Consent Forms

Interview Consent Form

Researcher's Name	JOHANNA BANADITSCH		
Academic Unit	TU Dublin Grangegorman Lower, Dublin 7		
Working title of Study	Which components of flowers (e.g., cultural, emotional, biological/evolutionary, aesthetics/perceptual) ^{and how} affect people when they are exposed to flower decorations in a food setting?		
The following section should be completed by the research participant			
	Yes	No	
Have you been informed of the nature of this study by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about this research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you been informed of your ability to withdraw participation and/or data from the research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you been told of what will happen to data generated by your participation in the study and how it will be kept safe?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you agree to take part in this study, the result which may be disseminated in academic publications, books or conference proceedings?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Were you informed that this consent form shall be kept securely and in confidence by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Name of participant	Miceal Murray. <small>Please use block letters</small>		
Signature of Participant		Date	21/03/23.
Signature of Researcher	J. Banaditsch	Date	21/03/23

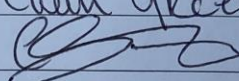
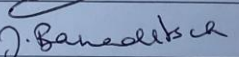
Interview Consent Form

Researcher's Name	JOHANNA BANADITSCH		
Academic Unit	TU Dublin Grangegorman Lower, Dublin 7		
Working title of Study	<i>What impact have floral decorations on people when they are exposed to them in food environments?</i>		
The following section should be completed by the research participant			
	Yes	No	
Have you been informed of the nature of this study by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about this research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you been informed of your ability to withdraw participation and/or data from the research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you been told of what will happen to data generated by your participation in the study and how it will be kept safe?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you agree to take part in this study, the result which may be disseminated in academic publications, books or conference proceedings?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Were you informed that this consent form shall be kept securely and in confidence by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Name of participant	AIVA VEINBERGA <small>Please use black letters</small>		
Signature of Participant		Date	29.03.2023
Signature of Researcher		Date	29/03/2023

Interview Consent Form

Researcher's Name	JOHANNA BANADITSCH		
Academic Unit	TU Dublin Grangegorman Lower, Dublin 7		
Working title of Study	<i>What impact have floral decorations on people when they are exposed to them in food environments?</i>		
The following section should be completed by the research participant			
	Yes	No	
Have you been informed of the nature of this study by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about this research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you been informed of your ability to withdraw participation and/or data from the research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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Do you agree to take part in this study, the result which may be disseminated in academic publications, books or conference proceedings?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Were you informed that this consent form shall be kept securely and in confidence by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Name of participant	Mary O'REILLY <small>Please use black letters</small>		
Signature of Participant	<i>Mary O'Reilly</i>	Date	28/03/23
Signature of Researcher	<i>J. Banaditsch</i>	Date	28/03/23

Interview Consent Form

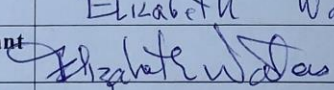
Researcher's Name	JOHANNA BANADITSCH		
Academic Unit	TU Dublin Grangegorman Lower, Dublin 7		
Working title of Study	<i>What impact have floral decorations on people when they are exposed to them in food environments?</i>		
The following section should be completed by the research participant			
	Yes	No	
Have you been informed of the nature of this study by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about this research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you been informed of your ability to withdraw participation and/or data from the research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you been told of what will happen to data generated by your participation in the study and how it will be kept safe?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you agree to take part in this study, the result which may be disseminated in academic publications, books or conference proceedings?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Were you informed that this consent form shall be kept securely and in confidence by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Name of participant	Cúimín Greene <small>Please use black letters</small>		
Signature of Participant		Date	24.3.23
Signature of Researcher		Date	29.03.2023

Focus Group Participants Signed Consent Forms

Interview Consent Form

Researcher's Name	JOHANNA BANADITSCH		
Academic Unit	TU Dublin Grangegorman Lower, Dublin 7		
Working title of Study	<i>What impact have floral decorations on people when they are exposed to them in food environments?</i>		
The following section should be completed by the research participant			
	Yes	No	
Have you been informed of the nature of this study by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about this research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you been informed of your ability to withdraw participation and/or data from the research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you been told of what will happen to data generated by your participation in the study and how it will be kept safe?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you agree to take part in this study, the result which may be disseminated in academic publications, books or conference proceedings?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Were you informed that this consent form shall be kept securely and in confidence by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Name of participant	ELIZA SULLIVAN		
Signature of Participant	<i>Eliza Sullivan</i>	Date	3/4/2023
Signature of Researcher	<i>J. Banaditsch</i>	Date	03/04/2023

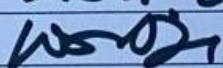
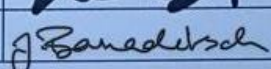
Interview Consent Form

Researcher's Name	JOHANNA BANADITSCH		
Academic Unit	TU Dublin Grangegorman Lower, Dublin 7		
Working title of Study	<i>What impact have floral decorations on people when they are exposed to them in food environments?</i>		
The following section should be completed by the research participant			
	Yes	No	
Have you been informed of the nature of this study by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about this research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you been informed of your ability to withdraw participation and/or data from the research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you been told of what will happen to data generated by your participation in the study and how it will be kept safe?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you agree to take part in this study, the result which may be disseminated in academic publications, books or conference proceedings?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Were you informed that this consent form shall be kept securely and in confidence by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Name of participant			
	Elizabeth Waters <small>Please use block letters</small>		
Signature of Participant		Date	April 3, 2023
Signature of Researcher	J. Banaditsch	Date	03/04/2023

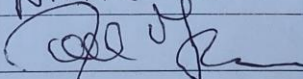
Interview Consent Form

Researcher's Name	JOHANNA BANADITSCH		
Academic Unit	TU Dublin Grangegorman Lower, Dublin 7		
Working title of Study	<i>What impact have floral decorations on people when they are exposed to them in food environments?</i>		
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Do you agree to take part in this study, the result which may be disseminated in academic publications, books or conference proceedings?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Were you informed that this consent form shall be kept securely and in confidence by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Name of participant	IAN LEAVY <small>Please use block letters</small>		
Signature of Participant	<i>Ian Levy</i>	Date	03/04/2023
Signature of Researcher	<i>J. Banaditsch</i>	Date	03/04/2023

Interview Consent Form

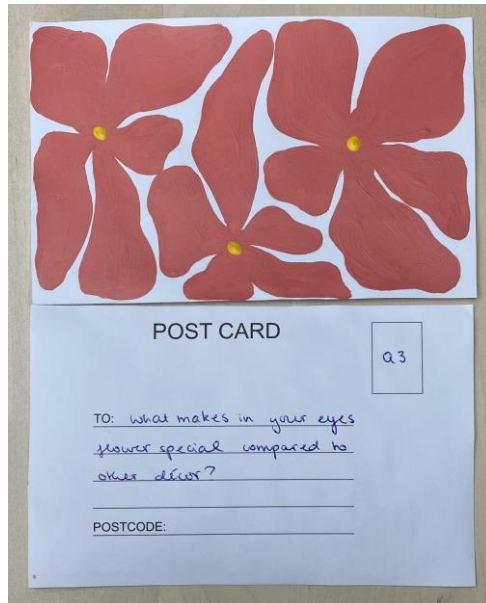
Researcher's Name	JOHANNA BANADITSCH		
Academic Unit	TU Dublin Grangegorman Lower, Dublin 7		
Working title of Study	<i>What impact have floral decorations on people when they are exposed to them in food environments?</i>		
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	Yes	No	
Have you been informed of the nature of this study by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about this research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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Do you agree to take part in this study, the result which may be disseminated in academic publications, books or conference proceedings?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Were you informed that this consent form shall be kept securely and in confidence by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Name of participant	LISA DAVIES <small>please use block letters</small>		
Signature of Participant		Date	3 rd April 2023
Signature of Researcher		Date	03/04/2023

Interview Consent Form

Researcher's Name	JOHANNA BANADITSCH		
Academic Unit	TU Dublin Grangegorman Lower, Dublin 7		
Working title of Study	<i>What impact have floral decorations on people when they are exposed to them in food environments?</i>		
The following section should be completed by the research participant			
	Yes	No	
Have you been informed of the nature of this study by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about this research?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Have you been informed of your ability to withdraw participation and/or data from the research?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Have you been told of what will happen to data generated by your participation in the study and how it will be kept safe?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Do you agree to take part in this study, the result which may be disseminated in academic publications, books or conference proceedings?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Were you informed that this consent form shall be kept securely and in confidence by the researcher?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Name of participant	NIALL POWER <small>Please use black felt tip</small>		
Signature of Participant		Date	28/04/2023
Signature of Researcher	J. Banaditsch	Date	03/04/2023

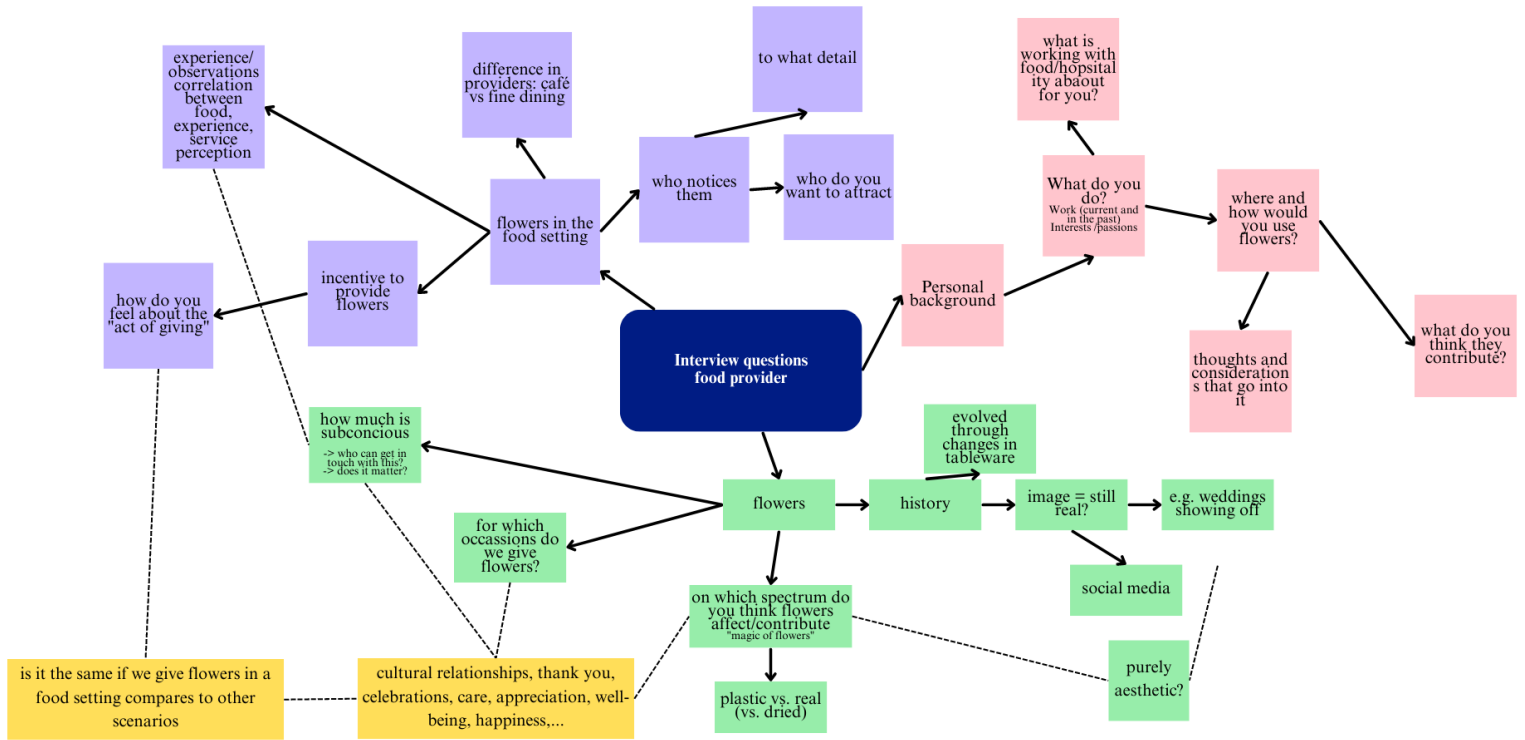
Appendix G

Focus Group Set Up

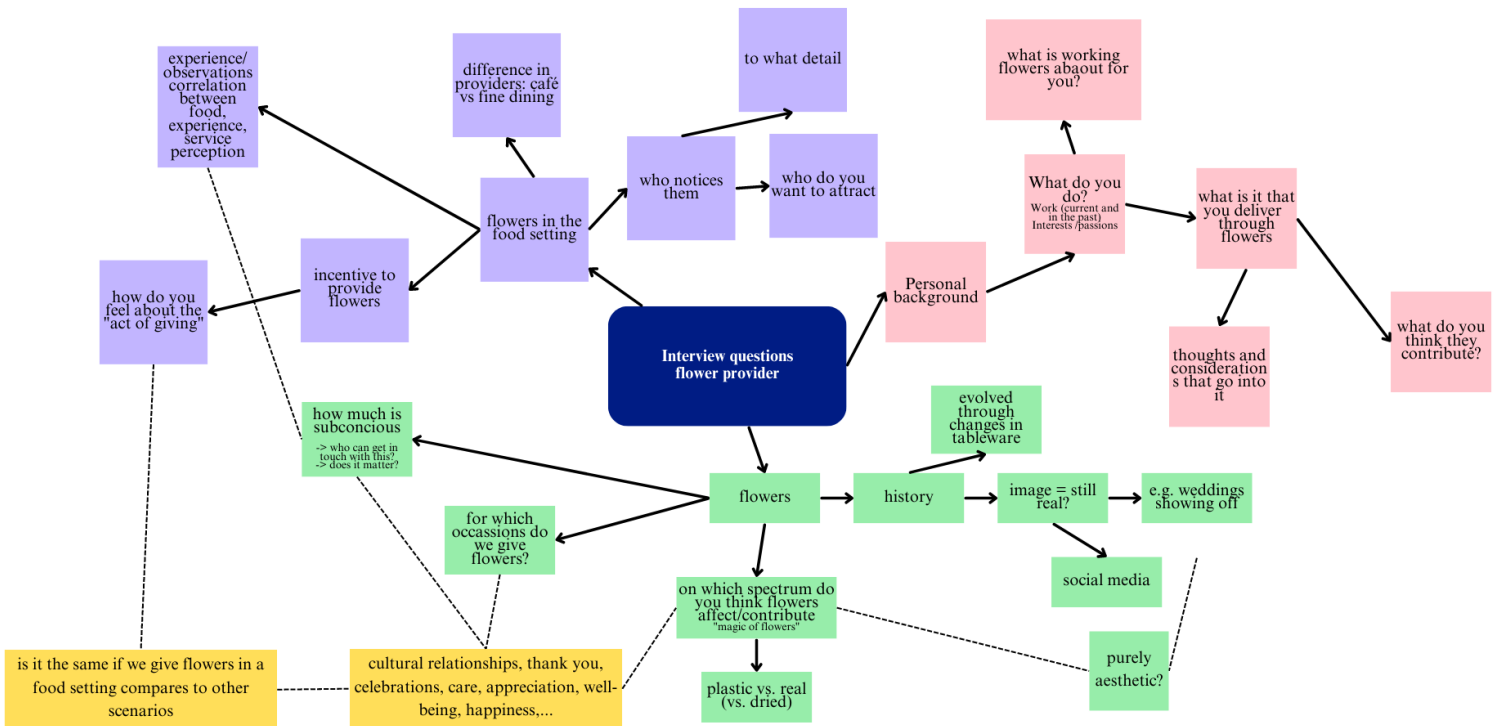


Appendix H

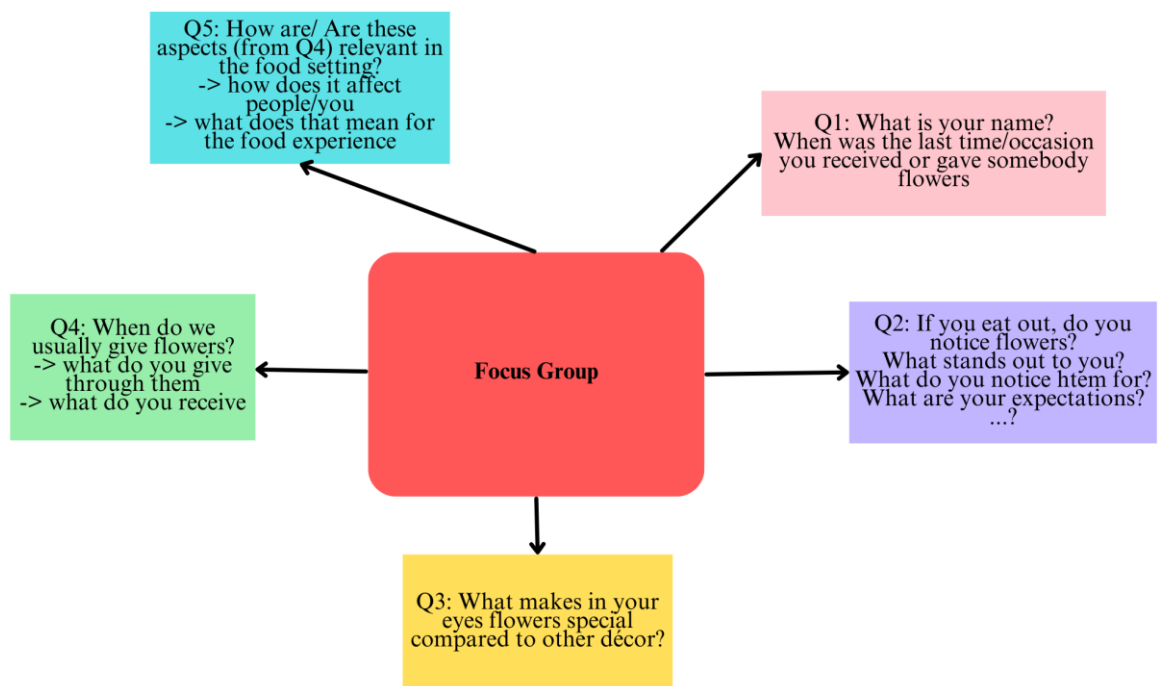
Theme- Map for Interview Questions Food Experience Provider



Theme-Map for Interview Questions Flower Providers



Theme-Map for Focus Group Questions



Appendix I

Coding Process

43 described around the food that you're delivering? Would it be more
44 the **overall experience**?

45 CG: Yeah, this is a good question. I think I'm very much drawn; one,
46 I'm very much drawn to food, I'm also very much drawn to **hospitality**,
47 And there's a reason why I'm still a chef today, and not, I don't know
48 another food related job, because I **actually love looking after people**.
49 And everything that surrounds hospitality is very important to me. So,
50 I love cooking. I know, as I said, **looking after** guests, well. But I also
51 know, the craft around food, I love the pottery the makers, the
52 interactions, **creating** kitchen, **creating** a dining room, small things
53 like you the flowers.

54 JB: So, like it is the **overall theme** that's around the food or whatever
55 it was some people kept saying that like food brings it together, but
56 it's a lot more than just food and the moment that's being passed on to
57 your guest.

58 CG: For sure. Yeah, no, honestly, every **single element of hospitality**
59 I'm interested in, they're really like I go into a restaurant and analyse
60 every single aspect of it, you know, from capacity to cost to, to
61 location, to wear, to materials to the menu, like everything I just
62 automatically analyse.

63 JB: And how much would you say those factors as more atmospheric
64 and more environmental factors, how much importance would you
65 attribute to them in the overall food experience? Because, like is it the

hospitality
food as an area to look after
people
creating
hospitality made up of lots of
small things to be an
experience

