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Food as an element in developing tourist experiences

A case study of the Finnmark region in Northern Norway

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Abstract

The focus on food as a significant element and topic in tourism and tourists' experiences has increased. How tourists experience food has changed together with tourists' motivation and needs. Current findings indicate that tourists seek and expect to find local food experiences while travelling to a new destination.

This thesis aims to build knowledge on how food as an element in tourism play a role for the tourism and hospitality industry, and their development of relevant tourist product concepts. The conceptual model of the push and pull factors, and the conceptual model of the tourist experience have been used as a tool of reflection, in order to analyze the topic studied. A case study of Finnmark, Northern Norway, was conducted in January 2017. In detail, this involved how general managers in the tourism industry experienced how food influenced the tourists' experiences, as a supporting or as part of the peak experience. The findings in this thesis indicate that general managers in the tourism industry, in Finnmark, view local food as important symbols of the region. Herein, the tourist industry is giving priority to the development of food as a potential tourist attraction that can enhance the destination experience of Finnmark, either as a supporting or as part of the peak experience.

Keywords: tourism and hospitality, Northern Norway, food, food tourism, tourist experiences, product development, promotion.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement.....	iii
Abstract	iv
Chapter 1 – Introduction	6
1.1 Studying food as an element in tourism.....	6
1.2 Research questions and objectives.....	7
1.3 Purpose of the research	8
1.4 Structure	9
Chapter 2. Theoretical Foundation.....	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 Theory of the tourist gaze.....	11
2.3 Beyond the tourist gaze – From gazing to tasting.....	12
2.4 The role of food as an escape	13
2.5 The role of food as an element to connect with others	14
2.6 The role of the researcher in tourism studies.....	14
2.7 My background as a hospitality and restaurant employee.....	15
Chapter 3. Research Method.....	19
3.1 Introduction	19
3.2 The Data Collection Process	19
3.3 Method #1 Interview as data	20
3.4 The interview guide	23
3.5 Method # 2 Literature as data.....	26
Chapter 4 Analysis.....	31
4.1 Introduction	31
4.2 Theoretical concepts	31
4.3 Theme #1 - Local food and travelling in Finnmark.....	35
4.4 Theme #2 -Food as an element in the promotion of Finnmark	44
4.5 Theme #3 - Food as a strategy to develop tourist products.....	50
Chapter 5. Discussions and conclusion.....	56
Reference List	60
APPENDIX: 1. Interview Guide	64
APPENDIX 2: Information letter	65
APPENDIX 3: Data sampling guide	67

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Studying food as an element in tourism

Using a case study of the Finnmark region in Norway, this thesis examines food as an element in tourism. Literature suggests that food tourism is an important element in visitor destination experiences, and for some tourists food experiences are their primary reason for visiting a destination (Getz, Robinson, Andersson & Vujicic, 2014; McKercher, Okumus, & Okumus, 2008). In this thesis, an analytical framework is presented to illustrate that this practice and the focus of food as an important element in tourists' expectations has gained increasing focus among all stakeholders in the industry. In addition, the literature and this study suggest that food as a supporting element in the production of tourist products and marketing of destinations, as well as tourist satisfaction, is also expanding (Henderson, 2009; Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Rand & Heath, 2006; McKercher, Okumus, & Okumus, 2008). I will, through this project investigate if the tourist companies in the region regard this expansion also to hold for what they learn in their encounters with different guests.

Although food may not be the primary attraction, food is an important element for visitors who have other main reasons to visit a destination. Increasingly, having access to high quality locally produced food is becoming part of the expectations of travellers. In the case of Finnmark, Northern Lights and the Arctic nature are elements that are often perceived as the primary reason for visitation by growing tourist groups. Besides the nutritional needs of all tourists, food can also function as a supporting element to the overall visitor experience. This study addresses the ongoing tendency of giving food priority in tourist marketing, products and destinations. In particular, the study focussed on the experiences and reflections done by a sample of local actors in food and tourism businesses.

A total of ten semi-structured interviews with company leaders was conducted in January 2017. The results from this case study indicate that local actors are experiencing growth in demand for food-related tourism activities from guests and customers visiting destination Finnmark. As already noted, while food experiences are not the main travel motivation factor, they have become a supporting argument that contributes to final travel decision-making. In addition, it is important that local traditions and industries of which food is a resource are acknowledged as an important element of the Finnmark destination experience. The shared

stories and reflections of participating actors also identified obstacles and challenges associated with the delivery of such food-related tourism activities in Finnmark.

1.2 Research questions and objectives

As presented in the above section, food as an element in tourism has gained increasing attention. Understanding why the interest in food is increasing, can help destination planners to design and develop relevant products and experiences, that meet this new demand and interest. In this thesis I argue, that the new motivation and perspective of tourists has changed the role of food and that it cannot longer be ignored.

My aim of this thesis was to analyze and discuss how food as an element in tourism play a role for the tourism and hospitality industry. In detail, this involved how food influence the tourists' experience, as a supporting or as part of the peak experience. It is important to understand tourists' motivations and how food as an element can impact on decisions to visit particular places and destinations in order to develop relevant product concepts. In previous tourism research, it has been identified that there are examples of perspective and motivations of tourists have been misunderstood by the industry, which resulted in the development of irrelevant product concepts (Hughes & Deutsch, 2010; Wentslaff, 2015). Thus, I hope the results of this study can be used to inspire and activate a local embeddedness of what has been called food tourism, as a supporting or peak experience. In addition, if this study can inspire a debate about if food tourism is a tourism strategy worth developing and investing in for a destination such as Finnmark.

I have narrowed down my study to build knowledge on how food are acknowledge as part of the products that are produced by the regional tourism industry. In particular, I map out how food may play a role in tourists' experience and how general managers in the tourism industry relate to these ongoing changes in their development of relevant products and concepts. In this study I describe how general managers in the industry talk about the changes taking place and how these changes can influence the production of products offered to the tourists, and in the branding of Finnmark. Three sub-questions I aim to answer are:

1. How do general managers in the tourism industry of Finnmark experience and describe the importance of food in enhancing the tourist experience and the tourism products?
2. What do the general managers describe as obstacles and challenges in creating and designing tourist products with food, and what are the success criterias in succeeding with food as part of the tourists' experience of the region?
3. How do the general managers in the tourism industry view the potential of implementing food as an element that can attract tourists to the region and/or enhance the tourist experience of the region?

1.3 Purpose of the research

Indeed, there are several reasons why food tourism should be studied. First, researchers have found that food tourism is linked to a new demand in the experience economy. Therefore, by exploring food tourism, the results can be used to determine if food tourism is a tourism strategy worth developing and investing in. Second, food tourism has been associated with identity, authenticity and cultural heritage. Thus, by determining the consequences of utilising food tourism in the tourism market, the findings can be used to understand the tourists demand for such a tourism attraction. Third, research has found that about a quarter of tourists' expenditure is food related. Hence, this study can reveal the importance of developing food tourism in order to increase the maximum potential of tourism revenue. Fourth, this study should be started due to the lack of systematic knowledge on food tourism in Norway. Thus, I hope this thesis will serve as a start to find useful and strategic guidelines to develop food tourism research in the regions of Norway.

To sum up this introduction, food engages new generations of tourists and seems to be an attraction co-created in the era of the experience-economy. Food tourism is a growing and recent concept in the tourism sector. In particular, for this study the term food tourism refers to "travel for the specific purpose of enjoying food experiences." This definition is adopted from the most recent food tourism publication, "Foodies and Food Tourism," (Getz, Robinson, Andersson, and Vujucic, 2014:6). However, it is important to note that this study do not explore travel for the specific purpose of enjoying food experiences, but explore how food can contribute to the tourist experience either as a supporting or peak experience, and

how the tourist industry can use food as an enhancing element in their tourist product development.

The limitations of this small-scale study are acknowledged. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this study may ignite a fresh approach to food as an experience in tourism.

1.4 Structure

The next chapters are structured in the following way.

- Chapter two first presents the theoretical framework, in order to go back and forth between theory and the empirical data analyzed. Second, chapter two provides an explanation of the theoretical foundation and how my background and role as a researcher has influenced this thesis project.
- Chapter three, is where I explain how my method of ten interviews with central actors in the tourism and food industry in Finnmark functioned addressing the research questions and objectives of this thesis. I further, explain the choice of research method, development of themes, and how I selected my data and sources and how I used my method throughout the study.
- Chapter four, is where I present my analysis of the data and the findings. In this chapter I argue that high quality local food can serve as a supporting experience as well as become a peak experience for some tourists. In addition, I argue that food as an element in the tourist product development and the development of Finnmark as a region is important to meet the new demand and tourist expectations. Furthermore, I identify common challenges and obstacles that the general managers in the tourism industry had experienced when it comes to developing tourist products and attractions where food is part of the tourist experience. Criteria for succeeding with food as a tourist attraction and part of the destination brand is also addressed.
- Chapter five, is where I sum up the most important parts of my research. Last, I present suggestions for further research, whereby I recommend that Finnmark has a future potential in utilizing and producing tourist products which is related to food.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Foundation

2.1 Introduction

The consumption of food awakes different senses. Visually, there are two components: visual presentation, and the visual environment of the meal. In addition, the sense of smell as well as the sense of taste are important. The multiple sensate experience recalls emotions and sensory memories, the sense of visual, smell and taste are compared to other meals enjoyed as well as the environment and/or circumstances in which those meals occurred. We do not really know much about how these senses guide our experience and evaluation. Still, this complexity makes food a powerful means in winning tourists and attracting them to a destination. Food can also connect consumers with the people and places that produce the food that they consume and that connection is a powerful part of an integrated tourism experience (Kneafsey et al 2004; Clark & Chabrel, 2007). According to Tikkanen (2007), Hall and Mitchell (2003; 2002) and Misiura, (2006), food in the tourism industry has been recognized as 1) a part of the local culture, which tourists consume; 2) a part of tourist promotions; 3) a potential component of local agricultural and economic development; and 4) a regional factor that is affected by the consumption patterns and perceived preferences of tourists. This section of this thesis discusses how food as an element in tourism has been approached by previous research as well as by the informants who participated in this research project.

In my review of previous research on food tourism, I found that food tourism has been approached in a variety of dimensions and perspectives. In particular, food tourism is most often described as special tourism (Getz, Robinson, Andersson, & Vujicic, 2014; Henderson, 2009; Everett, 2008; Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Henderson, 2004; Quan & Wang, 2003; Torres, 2002). In particular, special tourism is a niche market in tourism, which is a specialized market that we need to know better than we do today. There are, however, researchers who have questioned whether, or not, food tourism is a special interest or a mainstream tourism product. In fact, based on their research findings, McKercher, Okumus & Okumus (2007) stated that food tourism may not be representative of a specialist segment. In particular, they discussed the pitfalls of studying food tourism with a narrow-minded or shortsighted approach and how this myopic approach to food tourism could contribute to identifying false positive results. They argued that by focussing on proving a case rather than exploring a field in tourism with an open mind could result in conclusions that were not warranted.

As presented in Chapter one, I wanted to investigate how food as an element in tourism could influence a destination such as Finnmark. Thus, inspired by the studies of McKercher, Okumus and Okumus (2007), this thesis approaches food tourism from a holistic perspective, attempting to investigate the big picture of food tourism and how food and food-related tourism experiences in a broad term can influence a destination such as Finnmark. Based upon the data from 10 informants who work and have worked in the tourism industry in Finnmark, combined with data from an extended literature review of relevant food tourism studies, in this chapter, I will introduce classic tourism theory, which has the potential to provide useful tools for analyzing the data presented in the analysis section of this thesis. In particular, I will address theories concerning tourism in general, tourist typologies, tourist experiences and tourist travel motivation. The following sections essay to establish a common foundation that hopefully will assist you as a reader to move back and forth from basic tourism theory and the discussions and analysis of my collected data presented in Chapter 4.

2.2 Theory of the tourist gaze

According to Urry (2002), the theory of the tourist gaze is about consuming goods and services, which are in some sense unnecessary. They are consumed because they supposedly generate pleasurable experiences, which are different from those typically encountered in everyday life. When we travel, we go to a different destination other than “home” but in addition we enter into a different state that awakes the distinction between work and pleasure. Travelling to unfamiliar places, the gaze provides an organizing devise. Through the gaze, we sort and systematize experiences. There are in fact many professional experts supporting the organization of the gaze of tourists. The tourist gaze is multiple and dependent on factors such as culture, ethnicity, class, gender as well as the education of the senses. These depend upon different societies, within different social groups and different historical periods. The gaze is not one but, constructed and reinforced. Who or what authorizes it. There is no single tourist gaze as such. It varies by society, by social group, and by historical period. Such gazes are constructed through difference as in constructed in relationship to an opposite. What makes a particular tourist gaze depends upon with what it is contrasted; as well as what forms of non-tourist experiences are used to contrast non-tourist social-practices (home or paid work). Tourist social-practices involve limited breaking with established routines and practices of everyday life and allowing one’s senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the

everyday. Travel as leisure is the opposite of organised work. In the tourism gaze everything can be seen as a sign of itself. The gaze is constructed through signs.

An example is when talking about the symbols of Finnmark, typical Finnmark behavior, Finnmark scenes and typical Finnmark characteristics. It is a matter of social patterning, and tourists often hold a greater sensitivity to symbols or actively look and search for signs of “local” behavior and characteristics. Visual elements, such as photo, postcards, film etc, enable the gaze to be endlessly reproduced and recaptured. Places gazed upon offer some distinctive contrast. Food can be considered one of the markers of identity, and the consumption of food as part of the construction of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984).

Everything can be the object of the tourist gaze. The development of the constructed tourist attraction results from how those who are subject to the tourist gaze respond, both to protect themselves from intrusions into their lives backstage and to take advantage of the opportunities it presents for profitable investment. There is a sense in which all culture is “staged” and authentic (Crick 1988).

2.3 Beyond the tourist gaze – From gazing to tasting

Understanding why food tourists are increasing in numbers can partly be explained by the recent shift in economy as well as cultural changes in general in many of the countries that are the main Norwegian markets. The economic changes taking place are conceptualized as a growing *experience economy*. This concept adds the experience to conventional economic models and adds travel motivation as well as tourist expectation of participating in a rank of different experiences in the destination (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

Past studies on tourism have explained tourists as viewers. Specifically, tourism is often linked to the category of the visual such as sightseeing or the gaze (MacCannel, 1976; Urry, 1990; Richards, 2002). However, tourists in general are becoming more active in the tourist role. Tourists no longer just look for products and sightseeing opportunities, in fact an increasing number of tourists want to experience and sense different destinations and places. Urry (2002) argued that the body had been ignored in the theories and research of tourists. In fact, he stated that the focus on the visual in tourism had long been a pattern in tourism research, and that the body and senses had been ignored. Indeed, many surveys and research

have proven that tourists quest for sensescapes such as taste and smell and experiences where they can actively engage and not only view or gaze (Torres, 2002; Quan and Wang, 2003).

In this research project, I have identified that the push factor and need for many tourists has changed, and in particular for food tourists, gazing is often not fulfilling their needs. Food tourists want to taste. Thus, for this research project it is important to understand how food as an attraction is connected to these sensescapes that address reasons for visitation as more complex and associated with embodied reasons.

2.4 The role of food as an escape

Going on a holiday and escaping ordinary life, increasingly includes several aspects of “escaping.” Tourists “escape” from everyday living by vacationing and travelling from their ordinary life to see something new or experience something opposite to their ordinary life. Similarly, the way I understand it, food tourists are trying new things and “tastescapes” from ordinary dining habits to new or different food experiences to which they are used. Indeed, several researchers have also discussed how the search for tastescapes has become a new motivation for tourists (Hjalager & Richard, 2002).

In contrast with non-tourist social-practices (home or paid work). Limited breaking with established routines and practices of everyday life and allowing one’s senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the everyday. Leisure is the opposite of organised work. In the tourism gaze everything can be seen as a sign of itself. The gaze is constructed through signs. An example is when talking about the symbols of Finnmark, such as typical Finnmark behavior, typical Finnmark scenes and typical Finnmark characteristics, and typical Finnmark food. It is a matter of social patterning, and tourists are often in hold of a greater sensitivity to signs or is actively looking and searching for signs of «local» behavior and characteristics. Visual elements, such as photo, postcards, film etc, enable the gaze to be endlessly reproduced and recaptured. Places gazed upon offer some distinctive contrast.

According to Cohen (72, 79,85, 88) to be a tourist is one of the characteristics of the “modern” experience and a necessity, or marker of status. In addition to describing the act of being a tourist, another important contribution of Cohen is the descriptions of tourist types or tourist experiences. In fact, Cohen stated that “*there is no single tourist as such but a variety*

of tourist types or modes of tourist experiences". In fact, everything can be the object of the tourist gaze - backstage and real life. Consequently, local tourist entrepreneurs gradually come to construct attractions and experiences in a contrived and artificial manner. "Tourist escapes" are thus organized around what MacCannel calls "staged authenticity" (1973).

2.5 The role of food as an element to connect with others

Besides the aspect of the tourists' motivation to escape ordinary life, food and food habits is a good way for tourists to understand and get to know each other and a different culture (Cohen, 1988; Bell & Valentine, 1997; Hegarty and O'Mahoney, 2001; Williams, 1997; Henderson, 2009). As an illustration, food, which is a universal nutritional need, can vary among cultures in matters of taste, presentation, customs and historical traditions. Yet food has become a way to experience the other, and is no longer just a means to satisfy nutritional needs. In particular, food or dining habits can serve as a way to connect tourists and locals and serve as an element in sharing ways of living. To sum up, the increase of food tourists can also be explained by the human need to identify themselves and also differentiate themselves from others. By escaping the ordinary, tourists can on the one hand learn the differences between cultures, and on the other hand, the similarities among them.

2.6 The role of the researcher in tourism studies

In addition to theories of the other in tourism, understanding the role of the researcher can be useful to follow this qualitative study and this thesis. Galani-Moutafi (2000) has contributed with her studies to outline the understanding of the self of the researcher and the other in tourism research. She argued that the role of the researcher in qualitative studies has influenced the results in tourism research. In particular, it is not only the tourist, who experiences the other while travelling, but researchers too as the researched construct their own reality. According to Goodson & Phillimore (2004), we need to consider the ways in which tourism researchers are active in the construction of interpretations of such experiences into text. Reflexivity is one of the ways in which these issues can be explored. Thus, acknowledging the background and approach of the researcher in this thesis is included in this thesis. Galani-Moutafi (2000) refers to reflexivity as 'the conscious use of the self as a resource for making sense of others,' which requires researchers to acknowledge and question their own culture and identity in order to provide some insight into their understanding of themselves in the context of their interactions with others.

2.7 My background as a hospitality and restaurant employee

Research interests are often embedded in the experience and passion of the researcher. Research questions and interests do not come from no-where (Haraway 1991). They stem from and are inspired by connections between embodied experience, academic texts, empirical materials produced in the course of research such as interviews and other contributions and visions for a different future. A researcher's understanding of a study topic is influenced by the previous experiences of researchers (Thagaard, 2009). For me, my fascination in food tourism was inspired by what I learned working in the hospitality industry at four different hotels during the time period 2011 to 2016. In particular, I worked at three different destinations in the county of Finnmark. One, I worked in Alta, which is branded as a salmon and northern light city in the international market. Two, I have worked as a waitress in Kirkenes, which brands itself as a Crab Kingdom and entrance to Russia. Three, I have worked in Guovdageaidnu (in the native Sami language) or Kautokeino in Norwegian, which brand themselves as the kingdom of reindeer as well as the capital for traditional Sami Culture. In Guovdageaidnu, I worked at the local hotel during the Easter festival.

In 2011, I started working for Sorrisoniva in Alta, a tourism company with an ice hotel as its main attraction. My role at this ice hotel was as a host, waitress, guide and receptionist. Tourists from all around the world would visit and stay overnight at Sorrisoniva in order to have an embodied encounter with the frozen landscape of the Arctic. This is for many a once in a lifetime experience, and noted on their bucket list 'to do'. From 2011 to 2014, I experienced the restaurant of Sorrisoniva, as it built its reputation with a focus on local honest food. During those years, I learned that the visitors and tourists had an unspoken influence on the directions and choices made in the restaurant. Even though, the main attraction was the ice hotel itself, for all of the tourists, it was clear that the food situation influenced their total experience in some sort of way. As the hotel did not engage in systematic evaluation at that time; it relied heavily on face-to-face everyday conversation and feedback from travelers as well as tour-organizers who were hosted by the hotel. During my time at Sorrisoniva, I witnessed slow changes taking place. Further, based on past experience and observations in Guovdageidno and Kirkenes working as a waitress at the local Thon Hotel restaurants, I became aware of other influences.

In fact, tourists who mainly were visiting the Easter festival in Guovdageidno, or had travelled with Hurtigruten to Kirkenes, drew attention towards the importance of food while travelling, not only as nutrition, but experience-wise with regard to the stories of food, places and people tourists encountered as well as the ongoing feedback given to hotels and restaurants along the route. For instance, I met tourists who for safety, price and other reasons would bring food from their homeland. In particular, such tourists, who had food concerns while travelling, were mostly from China, India and Germany. In addition, I met tourists from Great Britain, Netherlands, USA, and other parts of Scandinavia, including Norway, who were surprised that Northern Norway had food tourism attractions of high quality to offer and yet they expressed a surprise that it was not utilized better. In Kirkenes, most tourists I met were interested in facts and information about the king crab and sea food, not only addressing where to eat or what to eat, but what attractions and what activities related to these local artefacts were available. In Kautokeino, the same questions about reindeer and traditional natural resources and costumes were sought. Thus, my interest for the natural edible resources and emerging interest of food tourism originated from my work in the tourism sector.

Over the course of six years, I have met many tourists who would share and discuss the role of food while travelling. The interactions between the tourists and me were mainly work-related, and during recent years, I have continued to follow the development of food tourism in the industry. In particular, topics related to Norwegian cuisine and its role in tourism, its availability, facts and knowledge, history, value, cost and the experience and significance of it. Thus, my connection to food tourism in the tourism industry has been from the perspective of the supply side, in trying to understand the demand side, the tourists.

My research project grew from my personal experience in the travel industry. Working in restaurants where local food was both a pull factor wherein the tourism industry used food images to attract people, and second, as a push factor, wherein the need for and the idea of how food as an element in tourism has changed with regard to tourist travel motivations. Primarily, I have experienced more and more people being influenced by the changing position of food as one of many motivations to travel to a new destination. Also, I have personally experienced a similar change in my own networks as well as in my travel preferences. Of course, working in a restaurant changes my perspective, however, I have experienced a shift or change in the media and a growing interest in food in general. This made me wonder how such changes were discussed amongst local business partners, and what

effect it had upon strategic choices and future plans. Consequently, in studying tourism at the Arctic University of Norway, UIT, I wanted to know how food as an element in tourism was playing its part and how food as an element could operate as an attraction by itself or as a supporting attraction in the big picture of experiencing a destination like Finnmark.

In January 2017, one of Norway's largest cruise ship companies, Hurtigruten, revealed that the new focus of their onboard experiences was related to food. In fact, they released a new product and promoted their new focus in February 2017, bringing food to the table was to become one of the main onboard attractions. In particular, their onboard food attractions were inspired by all the areas the ship sailed through as well as local goods and traditions (DB, 2017). Their new attraction was named "Norway's coastal kitchen" and they proudly promoted that 80% of their food is produced in Norway and that most of the food onboard is delivered locally from providers along the ships' routes. In addition to the focus on food in general, there was also a specific focus on green food, such as vegan and vegetarian food in tourism. However, that being said, I recognise that there are many sub-branches in the food sector and tourism segment. The study I conducted that informs this thesis focused on getting an overview of food as an element in tourism and how it impacts on the tourism industry in Finnmark.

In the following chapters, I consider food-tourism and how the ten participating general managers from different communities in Finnmark approach and reflect upon on the changing importance of food for tourists travelling to these destinations. Is there a global change taking place, in regard to awareness of, and demand for high quality locally produced food, as the managing director, Thomas Westergaard, of Hurtigruten argues and has operationalized in their tourist products and promotion?

Working close with chefs and getting to know the resources of the region gave me greater insight into how rich the food resources and traditions of this region were. Meeting tourists and observing the demand for food-related activities and attractions, made me curious about how food tourism is implemented in other tourism destinations. Thus, I started to explore destinations that were succeeding with food-related food initiatives. Although Finnmark is a small destination compared to food and wine regions in France and South Africa who have succeeded in food tourism, it may be possible to include food tourism in the overall package of the Finnmark experience. In other words, I believe implementing food tourism as part of

the main attractions can contribute to strengthening a destination's attractiveness. The chefs and restaurateurs working with local food have a unique insight and knowledge of the regional food culture and cuisine. Thus, exploring their reflections and perspectives of food as a tourist attraction is appropriate in conjunction with an extended literature study of food tourism.

As presented above, I had a role in the hospitality industry before and while doing this thesis, I acknowledge that my background in the tourism and hospitality industry and that my connection to food tourism working as a waiter in restaurants visited by international and domestic tourists has impacted my approach to the design and approach of this study. In the next chapter, Chapter Three, research method, I will outline how the qualitative data sampling process worked for this thesis in order to answer how food as an element in tourism can influence and contribute to the tourist experience development in a destination such as Finnmark.

Chapter 3. Research Method

3.1 Introduction

Research Design

In Latin, «case» means occasion, in Norwegian we can call it a «tilfelle». In particular, this thesis is a case study of the tourism industry in the particular geographical location of Finnmark. Finnmark is the location of this case study. I grew up in Finnmark, the northernmost county of Norway, and the development of tourism in Finnmark is of personal interest to me. Choosing the case study in Finnmark was due to practical geographical reasons and personal interest and engagement. This research project is inspired by my own experience in the tourism industry working at four different restaurants and hotels between 2011 and 2017 as presented in chapter two. The many meetings with guests, their feedback, and the stories from my colleagues inspired an interest to learn more about the importance of food as an element in tourism in Finnmark.

According to Yin (1994), a researcher can find it useful to combine different methods to gain a large sample of data and detailed data. Short said, the characteristics of a case study include a defined focus on a particular case and a description from the inside. I chose to do a case study to gain as much data as possible and to investigate my chosen topic, thoroughly and in detail. As a method, a case study seemed to be the right approach in order to sample as much data as possible. Quantitative data does not necessarily reveal how food impact the tourism industry, thus by sampling qualitative data from general managers in the tourism industry and by reviewing recent research, I aimed to build knowledge on how the changes in tourists' motivations has influenced the development of tourist experiences and product concepts. The next sections will describe and explain the choice of research method, development of themes, and how I selected my data and sources, and how I used my method throughout the study.

3.2 The Data Collection Process

A qualitative mixed-methodology approach.

To answer the research questions and objectives of this thesis, I chose a mixed-methodology research design where a total of ten semi-structured interviews with company leaders conducted in January 2017 was the primary method, combined with an extended literature review. Thus, this research was based on empirical- and ethnographic data, whereby I chose

to examine recent research combined with in-depth interviews with central actors who work with food and have experience with food and tourism in the region. The data collection process was conducted by the traditional method of interviews, in particular semi-structured interviews. The reason why I call it a mixed-methodology is the combination of using a literature review as data as a secondary source. Using literature as data is a non-traditional method, however, I chose to use this mix-method, combining an interview and a literature review to gain as much data as possible to find answers to my research question and problem statement. Prior to this case study, I did not have enough insight to food as an element in tourism. In fact, insights to food experiences as a supporting enhancement to total tourist experience of a destination is quite new in the tourism field. Thus, finding as much data as possible by combining both interviews and an extended literature review, seemed to be the most useful method for my case. The next paragraph will describe interview as data and describe my data collection process in detail.

3.3 Method #1 Interview as data

According to Thagaard (2009) an interview or a conversation between a researcher and an informant can bring about new knowledge. It is through interviews with informants and the analysis of interviews wherein I was able to identify categories and incidents to be explored. I found this method the most useful. Thus, the primary method for my research project was to sample data from 10 interviews conducted in Finnmark during January 2017. It is with this empirical material combined with theory that I aimed to answer my research questions and objectives. In addition, as a sub-category I wanted to explore if the recent findings and framework in other destinations where food tourism is aspiring can be relevant to the development and utilizing of food as a supporting or peak experience in the production of tourist product concepts and branding of Finnmark. Thus, an extended literature review served as a supporting method, and a description of using literature as data will follow later in this chapter.

Sample and choice of informants

In this paragraph, I outline the criteria I made for my sample of informants. First, informants for this case study of Finnmark were chosen due to their geographical location. I aimed to find informants who would represent various places of Finnmark, such as informants residing in locations by the coast or by the mountains, in cities and in villages. Second, I searched for

informants that have leading positions working for or with local food production companies, or hotels or restaurants. My reason for this second criterion was to find informants that most likely would have experiences with Finnmark visitors associated with local food. A third criterion, was the availability of the informant to be able to participate during January 2017. To sum up, the criteria for my informants was their connection to local food related to their work in the food or tourist industry in Finnmark.

Sample size and interview characteristics

A sample of ten relevant informants was sourced from five locations, and a variety of towns and cities in the region of Finnmark. Table 1 displays the characteristics of the final interview sample.

Table 1 Background of the interviewees and their respective businesses.

Location	Respondent	Type of business	Years in the hospitality, restaurant and tourism industry
Alta	AM	Hotel/restaurant/activities	7 years
Alta	BM	Hotel/restaurant/activities	1.5 years
Alta	CK	Guest house/restaurant/activities	10 years
Alta	DK	Food Production	Always been part of the respondent's way of living
Hammerfest	EM	Restaurant/Pub	3 years
Karasjok	FM	Hotel/restaurant/activities	27 years
Kautokeino	GM	Hotel/restaurant/activities	16 years
Varanger, Vadsø	HM	Food production	56 years
Varanger, Vardø	IM	Hotel/restaurant	Always been part of the respondent's way of living
Sør-Varanger	JM	Hotel/restaurant/activities	12 years

Sampling technique

After establishing the criteria, I researched the industry to find relevant informants. I found a number of possible informants and made a contact list. I approached each potential informant regarding willingness to participate in the time period I had chosen for the conduct of interviews. My list of possible informants was long and I decided to book interviews with the informants that accepted my inquiry. I had twenty possible informants I wanted to ask, and I was surprised that the ones I contacted all were positively willing to participate. I presented my objectives by contacting them directly and informed them about my research project and the goal and problem statement. Due to the time frame and size of this thesis, I decided to interview the first 10 informants who were willing to participate and available to participate in the time period. I believed that interviews with these informants would give me research material I could use to answer my research question. In particular, by analyzing the data and combining them with theory of food tourism I hoped this method would generate new knowledge.

The setting of the interviews

The first two interviews were conducted face-to-face with the respondents at their own working area. The other interviews were conducted by telephone. The informants were spread across the Finnmark region, a region 48.618km² large. Although face-to-face interviews are perceived as a method that gives better connection between the informant and the researcher, I actually experienced that some of the informants who were offered face-to-face interviews, instead wanted to conduct the interview by phone due to greater convenience. In particular, I offered some of my informants the option that I could drop by and meet them face-to-face if telephone was unsuitable or if they would feel more comfortable meeting me in person. However, most of the informants wanted to participate by phone. It was more efficient and practical for them. I arranged interviews so that the informant could choose the date and time and I would call them. The first step of the interview was to schedule the interviews with my respective informants. In advance, I also recommended them to find a place for themselves where they be comfortable or where ever suited them best, so that the interviews would be done in their area or where they felt comfortable and safe. Some of the informants preferred to be called during their lunch break, while others preferred to be called during their afternoon tea. Another informant was working or going from one place to another and seemed very stressed, yet professionally engaged in the interview with well thought reflections and thorough answers. Another informant preferred to be called while visiting someone and

waiting in the hospital. In fact, the main pattern for all the informants was that they took charge of the time and date when it was suitable for them to give me 60 minutes of their time.

Another observation was that the informants chosen from the tourist industry always seemed to be “on the go and on to something”, but still willing to contribute with their service. The last and 10th interview was conducted nearby in Gargoluopal, not so far from Karasjok. On several occasions, one of the informants had been asked to participate in the research project. The final 3rd conversation with this informant happened to be when I was driving from Alta towards Kirkenes through Karasjok. I have included these various aspects of the interview settings, because this may have influenced the outcome and data sampling, which I will address in more indepth in the limitations, bias and problem section of this chapter.

3.4 The interview guide

The way I arranged the interviews was first to inform informants about the length of the interview and what categories I would address. All interviews were conducted with the interview-guide and everything the informant said was written down as accurately as possible. Later on all interviews were transcribed digitally into a word document. I informed all the informants that I would attempt to write down all their answers in their exact wording. However, I acknowledge that it is possible that I might have missed some words. I ran the interview session and took notes, by telephone I felt the flow of this partly organized partly open way of addressing topics of interests both for them as well as me, worked very well. The informants seemed to be comfortable. The two first interviews included both body language and eye contact and which probably influenced how I perceived the conversations. However, for my research project, I believe that since I did not use a recorder, my informants were less concerned about the interview and felt more comfortable participating when they were not being recorded. Still this is only hypothetical, since I did not use a recorder in any of the situations. In addition, as a researcher, I experienced that I was fully listening and participating in the conversation by actually trying to understand what they described and told, and that it was easier to establish a dialogue instead of relying on a tape recorder for later data collecting. I knew that the notes were the key to the later transcriptions, but at the same time some of the analysis was easy because as a researcher, I was intensively listening and participating instead of relying on the tape.

Bias, problems, limitations

As described in the previous section, settings of the interviews, the interviews were conducted by face-to-face and telephone. My experience was that both methods were suitable for this sort of project. Informant reflections and shared stories were what I wanted to use as the ground from where a more thorough analysis could be done. The physical attributes such as tone or facial expressions or body language did not go into my field notes, nor have these observations been part of what I have analyzed. I chose to limit my method to what was said and told, and not the way it was told. This might have influenced my empirical and analytical outcome. However, I acknowledge that data on tone, expressions, and body language could have informed my thesis. Another aspect of possible problems with my method is that the interviews were conducted in different settings. As stated in the previous section, the informants chose when and where they wanted to be interviewed. Thus, I had no impact on how their chosen environment could possibly influence their behavior, thoughts and answers. Although I used the interview guide on all interviews, what the informants would decide to talk about and share, and how they understood the questions impacted on the data they shared. There is a probability that the informants would associate different stories to different questions, and in that way also influence the outcome of the data. Although I wrote direct notes in my field diary, I had to interrupt some of my participants or ask them to specify their thoughts or stories, by asking them to describe more in-depth what they meant or if they could illustrate what they were thinking. This might have influenced the process of sharing stories and reflections. As for the last interview that was conducted in the car while interviewing the last respondent, the last interview did not go as well as the first nine and I decided to not use the data. Specifically, the transcript of the interview was hard to complete in the middle of the mountains. In addition, the interview was quite short, we did not manage to really connect in ways that I did with others. This could be due to different factors, time among the most important.

Another aspect of problems or limitations is the possibility of the answers being constructed. However, I felt that the established roles as researcher and informant were present and that none of the informants said what they thought was particularly right to say, but actually contributed with stories and answers that were right for them and not necessarily right for the industry, the research or field of study. However, this is an aspect that many researchers must include as a possible aspect that can impact on the outcome of the research project.

It could be argued that another limitation to this project was that not all relevant and possible participants in Finnmark were contacted. Thus, the research is not a total representation of how companies relate to and address food, but still it points in the direction of some tendencies – so I will argue that a humble generalization can be done. There are several destinations in the Finnmark region that were not represented in this case study, thus this project does not include all parts of Finnmark, nor all possible informants that are connected to the hospitality industry in Finnmark who work with local food. I acknowledge that a project that included a larger sample of informants and a larger sample of villages and cities would be a better picture of the current state. However, due to the time limit and size of a Master thesis, I had to limit my sample size to these representatives, while acknowledging that a larger sample and variation of places would be better.

Coding and conceptualizing my data from the interview

My method for analyzing the empirical data was performed in several steps. First, the field notes were transcribed digitally. This was a heavy task, transcribing word for word what was said and told. I rushed into transcribing the field notes, so that the interviews would be collected in a full digital document short after the interviews were done. After the full transcription document was completed and I had a document of all the nine informants' word-for-word stories and answers. I waited a couple of days and again read the transcription as a whole. It was intimidating to have such a large document and to find relevant pieces of data in it. After a couple of days, I read the transcriptions again, but this time line by line and I started the second step of the coding and that was to find relevant parts of data in my fresh empirical material. My third step in the coding was to find codes or categories by indexing and labeling relevant pieces of data in the transcriptions. In fact, I read the transcriptions several times. At first, I counted about 52 codes. After reading the selected codes and pieces of stories again I ended up with 32 codes, and in the end of the process I ended up with 12 codes, and finally five overarching categories. To specify how I found these codes I was looking for anything I found relevant in what the informants said, or anything I found that was repeated, or anything I found that surprised me in what they told or described, or anything that reminded me of any theory related to food tourism.

Last in the process of coding and conceptualizing my data I looked for commonalities in order to make sense of my empirical material. In order to answer my research project, I classified the five overarching categories and included the sub-categories that emerged while reading

the transcripts over and over again. The five sub-categories that emerged from my coding was 1) Local food resources as an element in tourism, 2) Storytelling and branding in using food in promotion of the destination, 3) Designing tourist products by using local food as an attraction, 4) Using local food to differentiate a destination as a mean to win the top of mind, 5) The actual local food resources, the pull factors that exist within the destination. These five categories emerged while I examined the transcripts, however, to define this case study I have arranged the analysis section in three themes that actually emerged from using the literature as data. These three themes will be presented in the next paragraph below.

3.5 Method # 2 Literature as data

For my literature review method, I decided to collect secondary data from academic journals and publications. This is a non-ordinary way of using academic publication, still, one I found really useful. I chose to organize and sample research studies done by other academics, such as peer-reviewed recent publication. The topic of food tourism is quite new in tourism. Thus, to establish a broad understanding of the topic I found the secondary data method practical and useful. The secondary data collected for this study was to review literature. In fact, for my supporting method, my population was literature and together with my own field notes, code notes and memos, the literature became part of my empirical data. However, a literature based literature methodology can be misinterpreted as a common literature review. In fact, it can be problematic that within the research field on the one hand, the difference between a literature review and the utilization in the process of empirical research and on the other hand a literature based literature methodology in its own right can be blurry. In particular, the understanding of those two may confuse. To define this alternative method, using literature as data was a way to collect as much data as possible. I believed that an examination of peer-reviewed academic research articles would strengthen and contribute to find answers to my research question. In addition, I believed that an extended literature review would contribute with thoughtfully detailed data on the current state of food tourism, and thus, I hoped this combined with the interviews would help me to answer how food as an element in tourism has influenced tourists' motivation and experiences, and how this change possibly has changed the way central actors in the tourism and hospitality industry use and perceive local food as a strategy to attract tourists to their destination.

Due to the complexity of food tourism as a topic, I believe a mixed-methodology where existing literature is part of the data would work for my research project in combination with the interview, and as a second part of this mixed-methodology approach. The literature review and the relevant data sampled from this process provided an outline or introduction to the current state of food tourism. This overview was important to establish a common understanding of the travel motivation aspects that were present in food tourists and visitors experiencing food while travelling. In addition, the analysis of this data was also able to help to answer how food as an element in tourism can influence a destination such as Finnmark?

To sum up, the extended literature review will help you as a reader understand the topic of food tourism and the increased interest of this tourist segment, and how this is relevant to a destination such as Finnmark. In particular, it outlines how recent research of food tourism in other destinations is useful to a destination such as Finnmark. Specifically, the literature review presents an outline of why peoples' travel motivation in relationship with food has changed drastically in contemporary times and why it is relevant for destination marketing organizations, destination planners, regional managers, and local businesses in the tourist industry. Thus, the supporting method for my research project was to sample data from the latest research on food tourism. In particular, I explored 12 research projects and research articles from which I sampled relevant data. I chose peer reviewed journals articles, where reliability and validity of the research was already peer-reviewed, which meant that the secondary data I chose had been controlled and reviewed by academics and experts in the field of tourism. I assume it is recognized journals and publications. In addition, the sources I chose were those that were the most cited and reviewed articles on the topic of food tourism related to my research project.

Bias, limitations and problems

More and more research is being conducted on the topic of food tourism and how it has developed in various destinations. However, due to the limited time frame and size of a Master thesis, I had to limit my sources to the 12 research articles that I found most relevant for my research project. Table 2 (next page) presents the twelve research articles whereby I sampled my second data.

Table 2. Sources of research articles reviewed

	Source		Title
1.	Current Issues in Tourism (Academic Journal) (Peer reviewed)	G.E. du Rand & E. Heath (2006)	Towards a Framework for Food Tourism as an Element of Destination Marketing
2.	British Food Journal (Academic Journal) (Peer reviewed)	Joan C. Henderson (2009)	Food tourism reviewed.
3.	Journal of Sustainable Tourism (Academic Journal) (Peer reviewed)	Sally Everett & Cara Aitchison (2008).	The Role of Food tourism in sustaining regional identity: A case study of Cornwall, South West England.
4.	Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing (Academic Journal) (Peer reviewed)	Gerrie E. Du Rand, Ernie Heath & Nic Alberts, (2003).	The Role of Local and Regional Food in Destination Marketing.
5.	Innovasjon Norge	Innovasjon Norge (2015)	Håndbok for reisemålsutvikling.
6.	British Food Journal (Academic Journal) (Peer reviewed)	Irma Tikkanen (2007)	Maslow's hierarchy and food tourism in Finland: Five Cases.
7.	Tourism Recreation Research (Academic Journal) (Peer reviewed)	Joan C. Henderson (2004)	Food as a Tourism Resource: A view from Singapore.
8.	Good fellow publishers.	Donald Getz, Richard Robinson, Tommy	Foodies & Food Tourism.

	(Book)	Andersson & Sanja Vujicic (2014)	
9.	A thesis presented to the graduate school of Clemson university. Parks, recreation and tourism management. (Doctoral dissertation)	Shenoy, 2005.	Food tourism and the culinary tourist.
10.	Tourism Management (Academic Journal) (Peer reviewed)	Shuai Quan & Ning Wang (2004).	Towards a structural model of the tourist experience: an illustration from food experiences in tourism
11.	Journal of Sustainable Tourism (Academic Journal) (Peer reviewed)	Rebecca Sims (2009)	Food, place and authenticity: local food and the sustainable tourism experience
12.	Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing (Academic Journal) (Peer reviewed)	Bob McKercher , Fevzi Okumus & Bendegul Okumu (2008)	Food Tourism as a Viable Market Segment: It's All How You Cook the Numbers
13.	Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing (Academic Journal) (Peer reviewed)	Steven Boyne , Derek Hall & Fiona Williams (2003)	Policy, Support and Promotion for Food-Related Tourism Initiatives
14.	Journal of Culinary Science & Technology (Academic Journal) (Peer reviewed)	Young H. Kim , Jingxue (Jessica) Yuan , Ben K. Goh & John M. Antun (2009)	Web Marketing in Food Tourism: A Content Analysis of Web Sites in West Texas

15.	Tourism Management (Academic Journal) (Peer reviewed)	Michael J. Enright, & James Newton, (2004)	Tourism Destination competitiveness: A quantitative approach.
16.	Tourism Geographies (Academic Journal) (Peer reviewed)	Rebecca Torres, (2002)	Toward a better understanding of tourism and agriculture linkages in the Yucatan: Tourist food consumption and preferences

Coding and conceptualizing my data from the literature review

In order to code and categorize the data from the research articles, I constructed a coding scheme to outline the essence of the food tourism topics. I was inspired by the work of Strauss (Hjalhult, Giske, Satinovic, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and over a long period of time, I wrote extensive memos and notes during the whole research process, as well as found incidents and categories in my data material. Every time, I read the notes and memos, and the articles again and again, some new ideas would emerge and new relationships between the many variables would emerge. To make sense of all these chunks of data, I used an inductive/deductive approach. Which means that I explored the data from top down and down up. First, I made three themes into which I categorized all the codes, and then I let the codes determine the overarching themes. This sounds spaced out, but the process made sense towards the end of this research project. After the process, I ended up with the following three themes: 1) Food as an element that can enhance the total tourist experience of a destination, 2) Food in promoting a destination as an attractive tourist destination, 3) Food as a strategy and a source to develop and sustain districts and regions. The results of this method are presented in the analysis chapter.

It is the three themes emerging from the literature review, as presented above that has structured my analysis chapter. Combining a mixed-method, with the interviews as a primary method and the literature review as a supporting method was surprisingly effectively and the results of the patterns and ideas that emerged from my data is presented in chapter four in this thesis.

Chapter 4 Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I address how different companies conceptualize the importance of food both for their visitors as well as for destinations. I present my research findings and argue that high quality local food is not the main reason tourists are attracted to the region, instead food experiences are very much part of the total destination experience and visitor satisfaction, to which companies relate in their product-profile as well as marketing. This chapter include three parts, part 1. Local food and travelling in Finnmark, part 2. Food as an element in the promotion of Finnmark, and part 3. Food as a strategy to develop tourist products, attractions and activities.

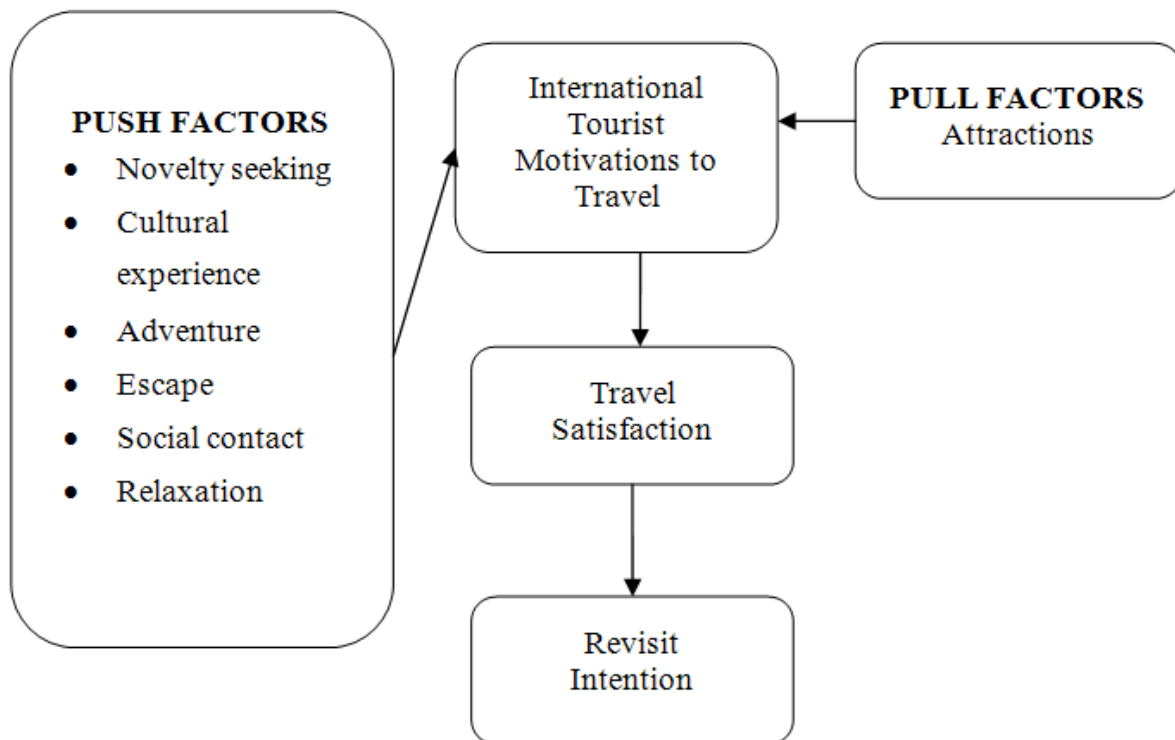
This section presents the ethnographic empirical data upon which this thesis is grounded. Based on interpretations of interviews, I argue that there is unreleased potential in utilizing food as a product as well as in creating experiences based on food-related attractions and activities in a destination such as Finnmark. Based on my interpretations, I also identify challenges and obstacles associated with a commitment to developing food-related attractions and activities as tourism products in Finnmark. Furthermore, I argue that there has been an increased focus on food as a supporting attraction to the overall destination experience, and that the motivation among tourist businesses to develop and improve food-related activities has changed in more recent times.

4.2 Theoretical concepts

Included in this chapter is the two theoretical conceptual models of, one, the push factors and pull factors (see Figure 1) by Yoon and Uysal (2005), and second, the conceptual model of tourist experiences (see Figure 2) by Quan and Wang (2004).

On the next page, an illustration of the conceptual model by Yoon and Uysal (2005) is included, I have chosen to present this theoretical framework as a guide to show how the push and pull factors can influence a tourists' decision to go somewhere and how a particular destination is chosen.

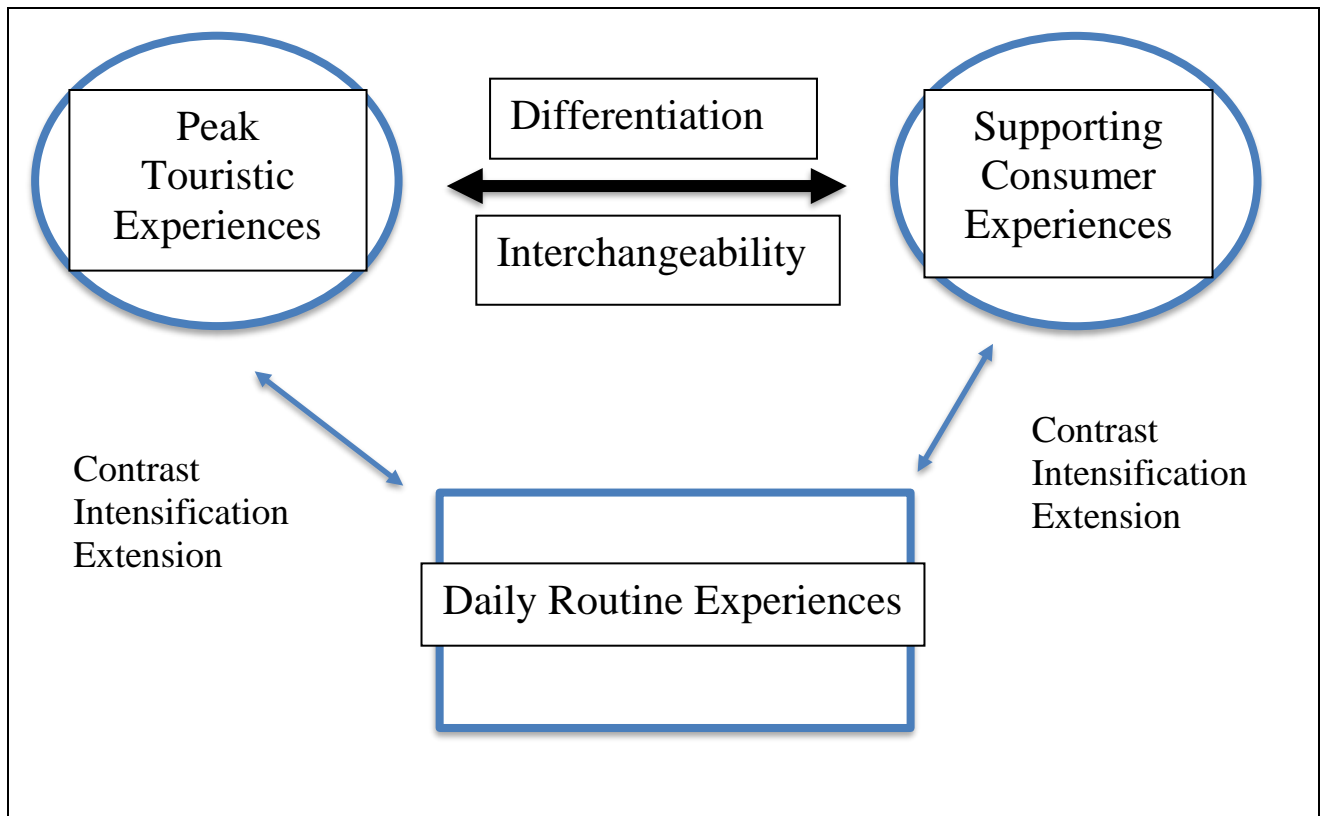
Figure 1. The conceptual model of the push and pull factors



The two generic factors explain why a person would want to embark on travel and where he or she would go to satisfy this need and is a model that researchers' often turn to in order to provide some key variables that can help understand the tourists' behavior (Dayor & Adongo, 2015). The basic argument is that tourist visitation to a particular destination is a function of the push and pull factors. Accordingly, the push forces constitute the internal emotional desires of the tourist including novelty seeking, culture experience, adventure, escape, and relaxation among others whereas the pull factors are those forces that define the tourist choice of a destination (e.g. scenery, cities, climate, wildlife, historical and local cultural attractions).

Below is an illustration of an integral conceptual model borrowed and modified from the theoretical framework developed by Quan and Wang (see figure 3). This theoretical framework developed by Quan and Wang (2003) has been used to interpret and discuss how food as a supporting consumer experience can influence the tourists' experiences and evaluations.

Figure 3. The conceptual model of the tourist experience



As the figure above illustrates, there is two dimensions of experiences in tourism. One, the peak touristic experiences, and two, the supporting consumer experiences. As a suitable illustration, the northern lights in Finnmark can be the peak tourist experience and the experience of sami traditional food can be a supporting consumer experience. However, although a supporting consumer experience is not the peak tourist experience, it is important to acknowledge the strength of the supporting consumer experience and how it can contribute to influence the total tourist experience, both negatively and/ or positively. As Quan and Wang (2003) described and concluded in their research,

The total tourist experience might be spoiled if the supporting consumer experience went sour, even if the peak touristic experience of attractions is good. Therefore, the total quality of the tourist experience relies on the mutual support and reinforcement between these dimensions.

Similar to the findings in Quan and Wang's research, one of the interviewed general managers in this case study had experienced that bad food experiences while travelling would influence the total tourist experience of a destination. As she described it:

If you get a bad food experience that will be the only thing you will remember from that holiday (General manager #3).

Reflecting upon these similarities, I got closer to answer how food can influence the total experience of a destination both in a negative and positive way. To include, how food in some cases also can turn into a peak experience, I will include an example presented by Quan and Wang (2003) that illustrates a good example for this particular case study. As Quan and Wang described:

Some components of the supporting consumer experience can turn to be peak experience. For example, a tourist with the original motivation of sightseeing may find that local foods are so attractive that she or he goes to a food festival instead of a famous sightseeing. Here, vernacular foods come out as a peak rather than supporting experience, and hence help enhance the level of overall satisfaction on the journey (p. 300)

As discussed and described above, food consumption, as part of tourist experiences can have two dimensions, either as a peak experience or as a supporting experience. A perspective that is also acknowledged by several researchers (Henderson, 2009, Quan & Wang, 2003, Okumus & Okumus, 2008). In my case study, I have identified that the most common in tourism is food consumption as a supporting tourist experience. In the following three themes I will present, how food as a tourist experience in Finnmark has been experienced by the tourism industry and how it can influence the production of such a destination.

4.3 Theme #1 - Local food and travelling in Finnmark

From gazing to tasting

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) purports that the tourism industry has moved from a product-driven approach to a market-led one. In other words, the industry has moved from creating experiences based on seeing to one based on doing. Although food tourism is not a new field in tourism, I dare to state that there has been a paradigm shift with regard to the field of food tourism. The historical background of food tourism must be as old as humanity, however, food tourism research and acknowledgment of it as a niche market is quite new. Just like other tourism research, studies from the western world dominate the literature. Besides western academic dominance, the dominance of quantitative studies also prevails. Thus, today's researchers recommend that more studies with qualitative approaches and indepth interviews should be conducted. Qualitative studies can give a broader picture of the current status and can reveal different findings than quantitative studies. In particular, qualitative studies can provide a broader picture of the topic and provide a different indepth overview of the field, such as this case study might contribute to a small part of the broader picture of food as part of the tourist experience. The next sections will offer insights into a broader picture of how food as an element in the experiences and evaluations of tourists can influence the ongoing production of a destination such as Finnmark, in particular the next sections will move back and forth between the theorertical concepts presented and the data analyzed.

The informants from the industry of food and tourism in Finnmark were asked about their relationship to food and how they got their inspiration to work with local food as an important part of the products they offered to tourists. In addition, the respondents were asked to describe key aspects of the innovative work that they had performed as well as the obstacles and challenges they had encountered. The following statement from one of the interview informants described his motivation to work with food as part of the tourist product:

We have to work with the tourists' reasons for going to a destination. The reason to go and visit this part of the region. We have to create important and spectacular experiences and attractions in order to make tourists choose us instead of choosing Svolvær, Tromsø or other destinations. We have to meet the competition and that is what we do with the king crab excursions. (General manager #1)

According to the general manager #1, the reason for working with local food was linked to responding to the experienced increased market demand. As he stated in his reflection, local food is one among a variety of other experiences and attractions to which tourists paid attention before visiting a destination. In order to compete with other regions and attract tourists to the destination, he indicated that offering a product such as king crab excursions instilled a reason to go for tourists—a direct pull-factor although not the only one. He also identified that offering local food experiences directly contributed to making the destination stand out as more attractive for tourists. Reflecting upon his experience, it seems that the king crab excursions for some of his tourists indeed was part of the peak tourist experience. In my literature review, I found that food as a supporting consumer experience is the extension of the daily dining experience (Quan & Wang, 2003). In contrast, food consumption only becomes part of the peak experience, when it is a contrast to the regular daily experience of the tourist. This can be seen as a type of variety-seeking behavior, also called “novelty-seeking.” It refers to the situation in which people may eat some foods that they have never tried before, such as the exclusive king crab, the wild-caught salmon or the unique reindeer herded by the sami people.



Figure 3. Photo illustration. Catching Arctic King Crab in Sør-Varanger and performing the obligatory trophy pose.

The following explains the pull factor of the king crab activity. The king crab excursion includes catching fresh king crab by the sea (see Figure 3), learning how to prepare and cook the creature and most importantly eat it. During the summer of 2016, I took a field trip with the king crab excursions along with other tourists in order to explore this food tourist product in Kirkenes. The activity was well organized and the way the product was promoted was as a king crab excursion including dinner (with as much king crab as you could eat). The tourist product revolved around the king crab as a delicacy and a unique tasting experience, which is perceived as a top-quality meal that is quite exclusive due to price and availability.

The motivation to work with local food and provide food related tourism activities was described by another respondent as something his business really did not choose itself. He intimated that working with local food was not really an option, indeed it was something that was demanded and asked for, and more importantly he highlighted that it was a matter of local pride and local integrity to use and provide the finest and closest resources available. He primarily worked with larger groups of tourists visiting the Sami village Karasjok and explained that the local food was an important part of their product and destination experience. As he described it:

This place has always had local food on the agenda. It is obvious that there exist no other alternatives than to deliver and offer tourists food from this district. It has always been like this and both the tour operators and the tourist groups want this. It would be wrong to serve any other food than local food. Food without local affiliation does not work. However, it is always a matter of willingness to pay for it. (General manager #2)

The way I interpret it, the general manager indirectly described in our conversation, that the pull factors were highly influenced by the push factors. In particular, he stated that the tour operators and the tourist groups he had met during his 27 years in the hospitality industry, experienced the local food as a crucial element that gave them the cultural experience and novelty seeking they wanted. In order to experience his district and the sami village, he was convinced that it was no other way to give the tourists satisfaction than to provide dishes and food experiences with local affiliation. However, he had also experienced that several visitors that might wanted the total experience and the local food, sometimes would not have the

budget or the willingness to pay for such offered experiences. As he described, many guests would not acknowledge or accept the value of the food. This was an incident and category I found particular interesting to discuss in the next theme, theme #2 Food as an element in the promotion of Finnmark, that I will present later in this chapter.

Continuing on theme #1, local food and traveling in Finnmark, the next paragraph will describe how one of the respondents had experienced that food was a supporting experience to their peak tourist experience offered. The below illustration can serve as a useful example of how push and pull factors are operating and help us understand how local food and local activities can contribute in the production of a total experience and a stronger tourist product.

A local guesthouse, which offers dogsledding as a main activity in its tourism product and attraction, argued that the inclusion of food as an element in their product (see Figure 4) had strengthened their total package. She stated:

Our visitors find it very exciting that we combine activities and food that is genuinely symbolic as typically from Finnmark. Without us providing the particular local food from Finnmark in combination with our activities, I can imagine that our guests could easily choose any other provider of outdoor activities. The feedback from our guests is that eating outside by the fireplace is spectacular and that eating at our guesthouse is very cozy, intimate and personal. In fact, many guests have stated that it feels like being at our personal home and that it is particularly special to have this close encounter with nature and locals as part of their local experience.

(General manager #3)



Figure 4. Photo illustration. Eating traditional stew outdoors around the campfire combined with dogsledding in Finnmark. Combining food consumption, outdoor food experience and dogsledding activity.

During the winter of 2015, I took a field trip along with other tourists in order to explore dogsledding in Alta combined with experiencing traditional stew outdoors around the fireplace after the dogsledding activity. Being together with the other guests and with the dogs and guides with us, consuming a meal together in minus degrees after the dogsledding activity was a personal and social experience. In fact, to me it seemed that the tourist company had succeed in making food consumption part of the peak tourist experience. In particular, by combining food and activity outdoors, the food consumption was not only an extension of the daily dining experience, but the food consumption actually became part of the peak tourist experience. As a contrast to the daily experience of eating food to stop hunger, the stew combined with the setting of eating outdoors in minus degrees and together with the local guides and the dogs surrounding them, I interpreted that the consumption of the local traditional stew became part of the peak tourist experience.

A general manager from Varanger, who had years of experience in working with local food, considered that working with food from the region was a way of being sustainable and part of the community's responsibility. Indeed, choosing local food from this particular part of the region could bring about positive repercussions for the local community. He described it thus:

I have experienced an increased focus on local food lately. Of course, the focus on food where it actually comes from has always been present, because if you are in a particular place, you will seek to experience what is specifically particular for that place. The local fresh food is something we all are proud of, we are proud of our local products and available natural resources in our region. (General manager #4)

Putting local food on the plate for tourists not only produces income for the company, but also satisfaction for the client. Local food, presented in ways inspired by the traditions of the region, is a way of communicating the valuing of the local culture to the tourist, in addition to producing pride within the community. With a growing global interest for sustainability; what locally produced food communicates has become more complex. I asked the general manager #4, who had been working in the hospitality industry for 56 years and now was retired, how he perceived the importance of working with local food in his community. He described:

To utilize these resources, is what is sustainable for the local society, this is to help the neighbour by using those resources and food products that are offered here. We have a responsibility and it has to be acknowledged, because that will bring about positive outcomes for the region and the local community. (General manager #4)

Many tourists seek to taste and experience what they cannot get in their ordinary everydaylife. Seeking new experiences and new tastes becomes part of their motivation to travel or visit a destination. One of the informants commented that in his experience, visitors to Finnmark were not interested in eating what they normally would eat in their respective homes or regions from which they came. Specifically, he said:

No tourists want to eat what they eat at their own home when they are travelling to new destinations or are going to dine out. When dining out or abroad most tourists

want it to be something special and exciting, something different than normal. We, locals, as an example eats a lot of fish at home, but our visitors do not, at least not of the same species and sort that are traditional to us, thus they want those particular types of fish that are common to us and not them. Tourists seek what is particularly typical of our region and what is associated with our nationality and culture.

(General Manager #5)

Reflecting on informants' experiences with tourists in Finnmark, combined with tourism theory, going on a holiday as a way to escape ordinary life and to see and experience new or opposite encounters from their ordinary life resonates with the experiences shared by this study's informants. These informants indicated that tourists in Finnmark sought to experience an escape from everyday living by visiting the region. In particular, identifying what is special to Finnmark or associated as different in Finnmark should be explored further, specifically when it comes to food symbols of the region. Understanding how tourists' perceive the food plate metaphor and the nature of Finnmark as a source of wild and pure food could be of crucial interest in the ongoing production of a destination such as Finnmark. Reflecting on that, further studies on the topic of food as an element in tourists' experience and evaluation of Finnmark should be conducted in order to guide the ongoing production of a destination such as Finnmark.

According to a general manager when asked about the significance of food for tourists' experiences, he argued that food was an integrated part of the experience of a place. As proffered that:

You cannot experience any place without experiencing the food, the food and the specific tastes is part of the place and its identity ... Our local food is an important part of the Finnmark package. It would be boring for a tourist to go to Peppes (a pizza chain with an American profile) and eat their usual everyday food while visiting Norway. (General manager #7)

The respondent ended the discussion by stating "You have to experience local food to experience the local culture". Implicit in his text is that local food is a marker of culture. We can assume that the experience of a destination is an experience of culture, and if food is the strongest marker of culture, in which food activates all senses, experiencing food is

experiencing the culture. Some would even go as far as to state that if you do not experience the food you do not really experience the place. As one respondent argued:

Food is one of the most important elements a tourist can experience, it is through food you experience the culture of a place. France, Italy, and Japan, every nation has its own twist of food ... To experience what a place can offer, and to experience the culture, food is rich in history and the place's traditional culture ... It is not possible to experience Norway or Finnmark without the local food. (General manager #6)

Reflecting upon the above statement, I asked what kind of experience a tourist in Finnmark would have if they experienced the Northern Lights, but did not experience local food? The respondents replied: "without the local food you only experience parts of the region" (General manager # 2); "You have to experience the local food to get the total experience and the total package of our region" (General manager #7), or as another informant replied:

Food related activities and attractions can help strengthen and lift up the region, there are many independent small tourist companies that can help each other out by working closer together in order to create a total package of a Finnmark experience (...) The challenge is that most companies and owners prefer to do everything in their own way and do everything themselves instead of cooperating. (General manager #8)

In a manner, the food consumed at a place, either local or not, will represent the experience of place wherever tourists are. For many tourists, it is quite unique to go into nature and have live food resources so close, and this is particularly unique to Finnmark where the reindeer, which is an important symbol for Finnmark and as a food resource, can be seen up close. As one of the informants described when sharing stories of feedback from tourists encounters, he said:

People find it interesting and exciting, and sometimes even funny, that the reindeer live so close to us. Being in the same location where the reindeer actually live and to see them alive, combined with experiencing the animals' home give the tourists' such a close encounter with the food before they are actually going to eat it. (General Manager #8)

In contrast to city life, in regions and districts you can experience and see natural resources in the raw landscape. Natural resources are available to experience and gaze upon. Giving the tourists a sneakpeak of where the food comes from and being able to get to know where the food originates from is actually not common for everyone. In Norway, experiencing nature in the raw is often mentioned as a reason to visiting by tourists, and this is one trait that is used to brand Norway as a destination. As seen at Visit Norway's digital platforms, nature as an attraction is a key component in their marketing strategies (Visit Norway, 2017). In fact, nature can be seen as one of Norway's main attractions, the fjords, the mountains and the untouched landscapes—nature is one of Norway's key strengths. If you follow my thoughts, nature is from where food naturally comes. In today's society, most food is already processed and packed, and in many cases ready to be served when consumers find it in stores. It is not common to get too close to nature and hunting and harvesting is not an everyday part of modern everyday life. Wild and raw nature is a unique resource and the food that can be harvested from such wild and raw landscapes is even more unique. Finnmark, which is Norway's largest county, also has the largest acres of untouched nature. As I grew up in Finnmark, we knew from where our food came. In fact, many locals refer to nature as «our food plate», I interpreted that nature is where we historically used to sample our food. During my interviews with company leaders, I was reminded about the local methaphor «our food plate» as referring to nature. While reflecting on the resources of Finnmark being rich one respondents commented that:

We have the largest food plate in both inland and coastal Norway. Our nature is wild and that is what makes it really unique. We have practically grown up in a food plate. It is important that this is communicated to visitors (...) We have to tell them what really lives here. Otherwise they won't know what is from here or not (...) Tourists do not know that ox and chicken are not part of our original culture or natural fauna.

(General manager #3)

With regard to communicating about resources and talking about knowledge and information of Finnmark's symbols, the next section addresses food as an element in the promotion of Finnmark.

4.4 Theme #2 -Food as an element in the promotion of Finnmark

According to a study by Henderson (2009), food tourism is a common theme in marketing conducted by businesses and destination authorities. Henderson found that food plays a primary or supporting role, and pinpointed that food tourism is both popular and has good prospects (2009). Going back to the incident presented in theme #1, where one of the respondent stated that experiencing high quality local food as part of the tourist experience could be a matter of willingness to pay and a matter of provided knowledge prior to the destination visit. Herein, this section will address and discuss food as an element in the promotion of Finnmark.

In my conversation with the general manager #2, it became clearer that many tourists to Finnmark do not expect or know that much about the high expenses and availability of Norwegian local food. In particular, the expenses of and the availability to experience high quality local food. Thus, the food experiences in Finnmark often becomes a matter of who can afford it and who which acknowledge the value and price of such high quality local food. In contrast to mass-produced food, such as for instance chicken, reindeer is in particular not by any mean to be measured or seen as mass-produced, however, the tourists might not be aware of how precious or special this product is. In several of the conversations conducted for this case study, it was identified that several of the informants had experienced tourists' lack of knowledge and awareness of the price for high local quality food. Information and knowledge of price and availability for instance for products such as reindeer or king crab, might influence the way tourist accept or acknowledge their willingness to pay for such tourist experiences.

Reflecting upon the value, the availability and the price of the local food being undercommunicated, a question that emerged during the interviews was how the lack of information could influence the tourist experience? In particular, I reflected upon if food is used in general promotion of Finnmark, but while on site tourists find the products to be too expensive to experience or not available at all due to geographical or seasonal reasons, how could this lack of information influence the tourist experience of the destination? This was a concern that emerged when analyzing the data.

In fact, I found that several of the respondents had experienced that not all tourists understand or know that some typical Finnmark food is not available everywhere in the region at all time (General Manager #7, General Manager #2, General Manager #8, General Manager #4, and General Manager #5).

Continuing the above analysis, I will include what the General Manager #2 described:

I have experienced tourists that believe and expect that all kinds of typical Finnmark food is available all year long and everywhere in the region. I mean, we have inland and coastal parts of the region, which is quite widespread. King crab and cod is not available at "Vidda" (Norwegian for far inland mountains in the sami region), yet tourists have asked for this here. Can you imagine? (General Manager #2)

Promoting image

With the increasing sophistication of digital technologies, the image of a destination is no longer communicated and perceived in the same ways as before. Destination marketers no longer have control on to which content potential tourists are exposed (Karim, Geng-Qing Chi, 2013; Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). Although specific content can be produced and published, tourist destination programs compete against non-officials in pursuing travelers as to what is the "correct" image of a destination. Such processes are becoming difficult to control, and a multitude of actors, such as bloggers, trip-advisor reviews, advertising campaigns and local fliers engage in the same co-creation of a profile of a region. Still, food initiatives and the promotion of them can be seen as a direct result of the growing focus on food, which has expanded in recent years. Attention on local sustainability and the need for local and authentic produce have long been part of the discourse of food and tourism. With the expanded information of food and the fact that everyone can share information, defining the image of Finnmark and what food experiences are available and where can be challenging. The many providers of tourist products in Finnmark have their own product development strategies and branding ideas, and as one of the respondents described:

We should be more generous with eachother in the region and allow certain main attractions represent our region internationally. Instead of competing

against each other within the region, we should compete together in order to promote Finnmark as one defined destination. (General Manager #2)

Reflecting upon the above statement, I interpret that a closer cooperation in the tourism business is experienced missing. Although tourism business networks in the region exist, the outcome and results of these networks should be researched in depth in order to identify the significance of them, and how the networks projects can contribute to strengthen and define the region's image when it comes to promoting Finnmark's food tourist experiences.

Comparison and differentiation

When asked about stories and feedback from tourists, informants commented that tourists in Finnmark do not compare experiences while they are at the destination, or at least the informants had not experienced that tourists would share those thoughts during the time period they were at the destination. Reflecting on the many resources Finnmark has in connection to food and tourism, and how food in Finnmark is perceived or compared to other food destinations, I asked the respondents if they had encountered any conversations where food in Finnmark was compared to other destinations by tourists. I perceived this as relevant due to the belief that tourists seek to explore what is not ordinary and asked if food in Finnmark was compared to other destinations. A respondent, who had worked in the hospitality and tourism industry for 7 years, shared his experience with me and stated:

I have not experienced that tourists compare our products with other destinations while they are here. When they are here, they are here, and they are experiencing the encounter and the products provided in the present now (...) When the tourists are in Finnmark they seek to experience the taste of Finnmark. They ask for the particular food products that are associated with Finnmark and what we have available such as elk and reindeer. I have not experienced that tourists are focused on comparing our food with others while they are here. (General Manager #7)

According to his experience, the tourists who he had met were particularly present in the moment, place, and time, and did not reveal any associations or comparisons while visiting the destination. This can mean many things, and there is not enough data to tell if Finnmark's food plate is not compared due to its uniqueness, or if tourists in Finnmark are in a state of

presence in the moment when they are experiencing the destination with mindfulness. The only way to find out is to ask tourists or follow up with tourists with surveys after their visit. However, that is a different aim than this thesis. However, it would be interesting to explore later, in order to identify the status of Finnmark's food experiences and its relevance as Finnmark symbols. Returning to the informant's interpretations, I noticed that the food plate metaphor was repeated in a number of ways.

As a general manager working in the hospitality and tourism industry for 16 years told me, he had experienced guests being particularly fascinated by the reindeer in their natural setting and that the distance from nature's food plate to the tourists' food plate was extraordinarily short and that this was something that provided the guests with an extraordinary experience. He said:

People find it interesting and exciting, and sometimes even funny, that the reindeer live so close to us. Being in the same location where the reindeer actually live and to see it alive, combined with experiencing the animals' home give the tourists' such a close encounter with the food before they are actually going to eat it. (General Manager #8)

Reflection on Urry's theories of the tourist gaze and change to an experience economy where tourists seek to do and participate, and not only see, watch or gaze at something, the stories and experiences of tourists finding themselves in the food plate and then later actually tasting the food plate of the place, indicates that the food experience in Finnmark has potential to influence tourists' experiences. Contrary to positive, and extraordinary, food experiences, negative food experiences also exist, and these can also influence tourists experiences. Some state that negative experiences generate stronger emotions than positive experiences.

According to scientists, the body and mind react stronger to negative experiences than positive ones, a common saying in marketing and sales for instance is: "it takes twelve to make a positive one," or as stated in business research "It takes 12 positive experiences to make up for one unresolved negative experienc" (Shaw & Hamilton, 2016), which indicates that one negative experience requires more effort to forget than it takes for positive ones to be remembered. When reflecting on negative food experiences, one can imagine how negative food experiences will influence a tourists' holiday or destination experience. In discussing the

significance and importance of high quality food and safe food while travelling, an informant noted, "Food is part of the trip's wholeness. If you get a bad food experience that will be the only thing you will remember from that holiday" (General manager #3).

Additionally, Informant #5 told me that his biggest fear was incidents with bad food quality. In order, to create a strong brand of high quality food in the region the level and standards of food experiences provided in the region are crucial to maintain among all tourist companies in the region. The fear that not all companies acknowledge the significance of a high level of standards could be challenging. In particular, because the region can be experienced by its total associations, securing good experiences in the whole region is important, due to the high risk of negative experiences creating pitfalls. Not only will it be something a guest will remember, but it will also be something about which tourists will talk. In marketing and sales, it is known that customers who are dissatisfied are more likely to talk about the incidents than satisfied customers. In fact, it has been found that a dissatisfied customer will tell between 9-15 people about their experience. Around 13% of dissatisfied customers tell more than 20 people. On the contrary, satisfied customers tell about 4-6 people about their experience. Thus, the importance of providing good experiences for tourists is crucial to attract tourists; besides, providing memorable experiences that tourists seek.

During one interview, an informant stated that local food always had been part of her way of living, she told me that it can be challenging to create Norwegian food experiences that will be memorable as well as something that will draw specific attention in a competitive and homogenous market. I asked her how she perceived the potential of typical Norwegian food as a tourist attraction and she replied:

We (Norwegians) have such a bad confident when it comes to Norwegian food. We sit on these fantastic and rich resources with pure food, but we do not acknowledge that it has value. It would be helpful if we worked with people's attitude towards food (...) Norwegians are very careful and what I call «bakstreversk». (General Manager #9)

When I asked her what she meant by «bakstreversk» and how its role played out in terms of Norwegian food tourism development, she replied:

It is not in our culture to be patriotic, Norwegians seek to be international and it seems like we do not favor what is from our own homeland. Look at Italy and their pasta, pasta is simple and maybe not be as good everywhere, but there is no doubt that it originates from Italy. Pasta defines Italy. They have such a strong food culture. Italians are very nationalistic and we could for sure be a bit nationalistic in terms of food to protect our food culture.

(General Manager #9)

As the interview progressed, I mentioned that I found it fascinating that she was so passionate about homegrown and wild locally harvested food. And I wondered how she perceived the potential of implementing food as a stronger product in the profile of Finnmark. After my statement and question, she enthusiastically continued to share her ideas and added:

We should not be so afraid to go all the way in our promoting and narrating of our culture. We should be more daring and open. We should use the mystic and combine nature and myths. Not only because of its exoticness to tourists, but because it is part of our culture. We are afraid to talk loud about the old cultures and traditions and how for instance the moon is influencing the way we harvest and the way we live (...) Modern western perspectives have made us embarrassed to talk about how the moon is influencing our hunting, harvesting and fishing traditions(...) These stories are probably interesting for others, but we do not talk loud about these traditions, eventhough we follow them (...) We work with nature and not against nature.

(General manager #9)

Reflecting on this discussion, there may be ambivalence regarding what is accepted in society as the norm, and what is perceived as exotic and attractive with regard to a destination symbol. General manager #9 shared that she was eager to utilize the connection between myth and nature as she believed that these traits and characteristics would interest others with regard to how such characteristics were part of the way of living for the locals. Specifically, myths have the potential to build attention and define a place as special, however, this may not be societally accepted by the residents or the societal norm.

An alternative approach to nature could be misunderstood as something done to construct products to consume and entertain or amuse people. At same time, it could be seen as an intrusion into the private life of residents and their accepted ways of living and beliefs which some residents may not be not confident in sharing. Although Informant #9 was open to an alternative approach to nature and its potential aspects in developing food related attractions in the region. She indicated she was concerned that the region as a whole might find it unacceptable to be branded with myths and alternative narrates to create or provide tourism products. Such ambivalence or similar reflections regarding alternate approaches that the region could take as a destination was something that was repeated as a concern among all informants.

4.5 Theme #3 - Food as a strategy to develop tourist products

Practices and framework

During the examination of the empirical material, I found that food tourism within tourism literature was quite a new topic. In fact, processes for the marketing and development of food tourism have only been recently researched at popular food tourism destinations. In South Africa for instance, food tourism has had a shift and is now recognized as a well-developed region when it comes to food tourism offerings. Other instances appear in Italy, France, Singapore, Vietnam and Turkey, where food tourism has long been utilized and managed well when it comes to attracting food tourists, who for the sake of enjoying food have chosen those destinations. Best practices and frameworks for implementing food tourism as a strategy have been examined by several researchers, and the recommendations are many. Descriptions of food tourists and how they best ought to be attracted has been discussed from the perspective of the demand side and the supply side. However, due to the complex dimensions of food tourism in matters such as economy, marketing, sustainability, agricultural, identity, heritage and so on, managing food tourism is not yet that simple. In addition, research has revealed that food tourists are various when it comes to preferences, motivation and needs, thus, aiming to target a food tourism target group can be quite difficult. Understanding the food tourist profiles and the various dimensions is thus crucial in order to manage food tourism as a strategy in future tourism development.

One perception of a food tourism destination concept has been formulated: “*Resources become attractions only when the tourist can find out about them, get to them, and find a way to enjoy them.*” (Rand & Heath, 2006). Moreover, it is argued that the key to planning, developing and marketing food tourist experiences is to understand tourists’ motivation and to place their needs and preferences. With this finding, I argue that more research upon different segments of travelers to Finnmark should be conducted in order to map the specificities of their particular needs. Without knowing or understanding the tourist profiles and preferences of the tourists, who decide to visit Finnmark, it can be difficult to produce relevant food tourist experiences in the region.

As one respondent who had 56 years experience in the industry described:

Our local food represents Finnmark. In the seventies, one could believe that prune was a Northern Norwegian culinary experience and that it was locally grown in Finnmark, indeed, it was present in all menus everywhere. Just like aioli, not so long ago, it was polluting our local products. Now it is different. Tourists expect local traditional food from bottom to top. Previous people would go out to eat because they were hungry, now going out is an experience. Particular for tourists, they seek to experience what we have that originates from our history and culture. General Manager #4

As described in the above quotation, the tourists’ motivation and expectations has changed, and thus, I interpret that what is offered as tourist products and attractions has to change or to be modified. However, as far as I know, there has not been conducted any research on how tourists in Finnmark perceive the food experiences in the region. Neither, do I know of a systematic evaluation of the food preferences of tourists in Finnmark, reflecting upon this, what can the production and promoting of food tourist experiences rely on at this current state?

This identification calls for further research and suggest that more indepth and systematic evaluation has to be done in order to produce relevant tourist products that are related to food and in order to use food in promotion properly. Without knowing the tourists’ motivation and needs when it comes to food while in Finnmark, it will be difficult to develop relevant food tourist products.

The two dimensions of food tourism – promotion and development

The more I examined the data about food tourism and recent practices, I realized that it is necessary to differentiate food tourism management into development and food tourism promotion. Attempting to manage food tourism as one element can be blurry and confusing. Food tourism management is about understanding heritage and the resources available. In addition, food tourism management requires a close relationship to local and regional producers at agricultural and business levels. In addition, I found that food tourism is part of a community's identity and history, thus, it is also about managing the local inhabitants and preserving the community's identity. As described by Rand and Heath (2006) food tourism management and development is not about creating or changing food offerings to suit tourists' preferences, but it is more a means to preserve a destination's traditional-, agricultural-, natural- and historical- resources.

One way to preserve the resources is to develop sustainable tourism. An example of this is found in Cornwall, South West England, where farming and fishing traditions have been strengthening by developing food tourism and promoting food tourism as a tourist attraction in this region (Everett and Aitchison, 2010). In the case study of Cornwall, it was described that "farming represents one of the strongest forces in creating areas with great local character and identity."

In my examination of the research data, I found that in order to develop and preserve the regional resources and develop food experiences as a tourism strategy, a framework for the production of food experiences in tourism were necessary. As found in the analysis of the literature review data, I found that other researchers suggested that it could be useful to map out the historical and cultural capital of a destination. In particular, a specific framework and procedure for developing and implementing food as a tourist experience in a destination was suggested. Rand and Heath (2006) suggested:

The first step is to perform a situational analysis entailing three components: firstly performing an evaluation of the environment, the current and potential markets and the resources and attractions in the destination; secondly reviewing the tourism attraction status in the

destination; and finally performing a general assessment of the food tourism potential in the destination (p.222).

Conducting a situational analysis such as described above could be highly relevant for a destination such as Finnmark. However, it requires resources and acknowledgement of food experiences as significant to the destination development. As described by Rand and Heath (2006) South Africa as a food tourist destination has found it useful to identify and develop a database comprising information reflecting the various tourism resources and food tourism data. In detail, they refer to the agriculture, culture in general, infrastructure, tourism infrastructure and attractions, such as tourism routes, food and wine attractions, events and facilities. All these elements can contribute to give an overview of what is available in a destination.

I find the research of Rand and Heath, highly relevant for this study. Herein, I believe that by exploring best practices of development of food tourist experiences, I can compare the best practices in current tourism research with my analysis of the experiences the general managers in Finnmark has shared with me.

Experienced obstacles and challenges

Together with an extensive natural resource examination such as creating a common database of food resources linked to a region, it is also important to include stakeholders and community in the processes of establishing food as a local or regional destination marker (Rand and Heath, 2008).

When it comes to conceptualizing food tourism, it is necessary to add value through quality, moreover, it is necessary to generate authentic food tourism experiences for all visitors, not only self-claimed food tourists. The national food brand also needs to be reinforced. When it comes to quality and standards there is a common pattern that these variables play the most important part in relationship between food and tourism; even for visitors who mainly are not travelling for the sake of food tourism. Thus, continuously improving quality is crucial. While research has informed us of what food tourists and potential food tourists want in a destination experience; Getz, Robinson, Andersson & Vujicic (2014) advocate that all stakeholders should be brought together in order to create a common understanding associated with the development of food tourism.

The lack of knowledge on what Norway can offer tourists, such as for instance what can be experienced and what tourists can do is one of the issues revealed by Innovasjon Norge (2015). There is indeed a communication challenge and the need to build knowledge and communicate that knowledge to tourists visiting Norway. Although Innovasjon Norge was addressing a national challenge, this challenge is also apparent to local and regional tourism developers in destinations such as Finnmark. A short analysis of national tourism reviewed, identified both barriers and opportunities outlined by visitors to Norway in 2015. New research and how Norway and Norway's destinations, such as Finnmark, can reach out should be studied. In order to find out how the Norwegian tourism industry can succeed in their communication with potential visitors. In particular, to provide tourists with relevant information on the available tourists experiences that exist in the various destinations in Norway, and in particular in the destination of Finnmark.

Developing relevant tourist experiences

Overall, tourists spend up to one quarter of their expenditure on food while travelling, however, not all tourists are food tourists (Getz, Robinson, Andersson, & Vujcic, 2014). Food tourism is defined as “travel for the specific purpose of enjoying food experiences.” Being a food tourist is not about over-indulging in food and beverages, or about gluttony. Nor is it only about fine dining and luxury meals, being a food tourist is not necessarily about eating healthy either, although many food tourism initiatives reflect that local food is healthy and sustainable. Aspects of food tourism can involve various needs and motivations, in order to target food tourists and managing food tourism as a strategy, it is crucial for both destination planners and marketers to understand these aspects and dimensions. Tourists need to be informed and presented with opportunities of relevant tourist experiences in the respective destinations, and in order to do so general managers in the tourism industry need to understand how tourists are motivated.

To sum up this chapter, I want to share that in the beginning of this research project, I visited the rock carving museum in Alta and had a personal revelation. At this location, I started this “food in tourism” project whereby I reflected upon the local heritage of my hometown. By studying the rock carvings and with hands-on examinations of the symbols I identified and imagined various food tales at the location. I imagined that thousands of years of hunting and food stories were carved in the stone, and I imagined that they represented the early «food

tourists» to our region. Herein, I started to reflect upon the growing food tourism interest and how the cultural heritage in the region of Finnmark is presented to tourists today. Of particular interest was the domination of local tourism focusing on Northern Lights and winter products, and how the regions' rich connection to agricultural and cultural tourist experiences was partly ignored in particular in the connection to food history. Anyhow, I include this little paragraph to illustrate how this revelation inspired me to study food as a potential tourist experience in Finnmark. The next chapter will present the discussions and conclusion for this research project.

Chapter 5. Discussions and conclusion

The general aim of this thesis was to build knowledge on how food impact the tourism industry. In particular, I wanted to map out how food may play a role in tourists' experience and how general managers in the tourism industry relate to these ongoing changes in their development of food related products and concepts. In this thesis, I described how general managers in the industry talk about the ongoing changes and how they experienced that these changes influenced the production of the products they offered to tourists as well as the overall branding of Finnmark.

In the research for this thesis I aimed to answer the following three sub-questions:

1. How do general managers in the tourism industry of Finnmark experience and describe the importance of food in enhancing the tourist experience and the tourism products?
2. What do the general managers describe as obstacles and challenges in creating and designing tourist products with food, and what are the success criterias in succeeding with food as part of the tourists' experience of the region?
3. How do the general managers in the tourism industry view the potential of implementing food as an element that can attract tourists to the region and/or enhance the tourist experience of the region?

Importance of local food while experiencing destination Finnmark

The findings show that the general managers in this study view food as an important contributor to the total tourist experience of the destination. In fact, several of the general managers had experienced how food and food related activities and experiences had influenced and enhanced their customers' tourist experience. In particular, some of the general managers had experienced that the food related tourist experiences that they offered played an important role in the customers decision making prior to them visiting destination Finnmark. As presented in the analysis chapter, general manager #1 described that his company had to create important and spectacular experiences and attractions in the region in order to make tourists choose Finnmark as a destination instead of choosing other destinations, such as Svolvær and Tromsø. As he believed that the king crab as a tourist experience and activity could help Finnmark as a region differentiate from other destinations. In our conversation, he described that he had experienced that the king crab excursions,

together with consuming the king crab, was such an important tourist experience that it actually influenced the tourists' choice of destination. In this case the company have been successful in building king crab as branding of the East part of Finnmark. Herein, the tourist product concept is in fact based on a food related tourist activity and attraction.

This study also found that food combined with local activities, such as dogsledding, was experienced to enhance the tourism product offered by as the company of general manager #3. In particular, the general manager #3 believed that by combining high quality local food combined with local activity such as dogsledding, they actually influenced their customers to choose them instead of other local and regional providers of dogsledding.

Another example that describes the importance of local food while experiencing destination Finnmark, is how a general manager in the Sami village Karasjok highlighted that local food was demanded and asked for. In particular, he explained that local food experiences were tourist products that tour operators and tourist groups expected to be provided in the destination of Finnmark. Herein, I interpreted that their tourist products, wherein food was part of the tourist experience, was a direct push factor that influenced the way they designed and developed tourist experiences.

To sum up, I found that several of the general managers viewed local food as important events and a multi-sensitive taste of a destination in addition of using food as expanding or building new symbols of Finnmark, that can be used in branding. Not only did the food experiences enhance and boost the total experience of the destination, but it represented the local culture, heritage and identities of the destination. Thus, providing tourist product concepts such as local food is highly relevant, specifically as a supporting experience, which for that matter also sometimes can end up as part of the tourists' peak experiences as discussed and described in this study. However, there is also identified obstacles and challenges in developing and providing tourist products such as food experiences. The next section will discuss this matter further.

Identified obstacles and challenges

The findings in this study indicates that the general managers had experienced a lack of knowledge among the tourists in Finnmark. The knowledge of local food and its history, its availability, and its value, is not well communicated to the tourists. Several of the general

managers shared stories whereby I identified that many tourists are not aware of or know where local food and food related experiences is offered or when it is offered and to what price the tourists can expect to pay. As described in the analysis chapter, a defined food plate of Finnmark is not branded or communicated well enough. With an undefined strategy or brand, the many food symbols that are representing Finnmark can contribute to confuse or mislead the tourists. Herein, this confusion or misleading can result in poor tourist experiences where tourists will find that what they expect is not met.

Criteria for succeeding with food as part of the tourist product concept

This study also identified that a challenge among the tourist companies' development of tourist products and branding, is that Finnmark as a tourist destination includes many mini-destinations. In detail, herein I interpret that the many mini-destinations in a large geographical region such as Finnmark impacts how tourists define and experience Finnmark. Which again influences how the tourism industry can succeed in their product development and branding of destination Finnmark. In particular, the general managers had experienced that to succeed with food as part of the tourist product concept, a regional brand and product cooperation would be crucial. In addition, the involvement from officials in regard of coordinating and lead the process was perceived as a criterion to succeed.

Present status and future potential for food as an enhancing tourist product in Finnmark

The changes in tourists' motivation and expectations need to be acknowledged in order to design and develop relevant food experience products in Finnmark. In order to develop food as a future tourist experience, it is important that the way the food products and attractions are promoted, is guided by professionals. By professionals I refer to professionals from the fields of marketing, hospitality and tourism, and professionals from the field of regional agriculture and development. As found in tourism research conducted in the destination of South Africa, with its nine provinces and 55 tourism regions, and in South West England, with the case study of Cornwall, Finnmark is also in need of a framework in the production of tourist experiences where food is the supporting or peak experience.

Suggestions for further studies

In order to produce relevant tourist products that are related to food, and in order to use food in promotion properly, further research on tourists' motivation and needs when it comes to food tourist experiences while travelling in Finnmark need a systematic evaluation. Without knowing the tourists' motivation and needs, it will be difficult to develop relevant food tourist products. In addition, I suggest that the specific framework and procedure for developing and implementing food as a tourist experience in a destination, as presented in the analysis, should be conducted as a future research project. In particular, by following the three steps suggested by Rand and Heath (2006), where the first step was to perform a situational analysis entailing three components: firstly performing an evaluation of the environment, the current and potential markets and the resources and attractions in the destination; secondly reviewing the tourism attraction status in the destination; and finally performing a general assessment of the food tourism potential in the destination.

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APPENDIX: 1. Interview Guide

Intervjuguide

Generell introduksjon: Kan du fortelle litt om din bedrift, antall ansatte, omsetning – produktprofil – og hva som er de viktigste markedssegmentene?

Matopplevelser

1. Hvor var det din inspirasjon og motivasjon for å legge vekt på lokal mat oppstod? Kan du og beskrive noen sentrale hendelser i det innovative arbeidet som har vært gjennomført, og hva de største utfordringer har bestått av.
2. Hvilke erfaringer gjør du deg i møte med turister, og deres vektlegging av mat, som konkrete eksempler – på fortellinger som de har formidlet om betydningen av lokale matopplevelse?
3. Hvilket av regionens matressurser/retter/tradisjoner opplever du har størst potensiale for å styrke matturisme?
4. Hvilke matopplevelser er det turistene forteller deg om, og hva sammenligner de den opplevelsen de får her – med?
5. Hvilke matopplevelser/matattraksjoner vil du trekke fram som sentrale elementer i Finnmark og hvordan kan man styrke samhandlingen mellom disse?

Markedsføring

6. Hvordan mener du at man må kommunisere for å sette mat på kartet for turister på reise i Finnmark?
7. Syns du det er viktig at Finnmark posisjonerer seg som matregion eller at mat er en del av total opplevelsen?
8. Hvilken betydning mener du lokal mat og tradisjonelle matopplevelser har for markedsføringen av Alta, og hvilken betydning har den i markedsføringen av Finnmark?
9. Hvilke utviklingstrekk har du sett som aktør med lang reiselivserfaring, i måten lokal mat og matopplevelser har eller ikke har vært tatt i bruk i det markedsføringsmateriell som utvikles til spesifikke markedssegmenter? Har du noen eksempler på viktige hendelser ift næringens endrede oppmerksomhet og profil ift mat?
10. Hvilken rolle hadde lokal mat og matopplevelser i tidligere destinasjonsutvikling

Utvikling og ansvar

11. Hva ser du som sentrale utviklingstrekk i dine hovedmarkeder? Og hvilke tilpasninger gjøres for å møte disse? Har det skjedd noen endringer
12. Hvilke mål og strategier må utvikles for å realisere potensiale som matdestinasjon?
13. Hvilke aktører er viktige for at Finnmark skal utvikle seg som matregion?
14. hvilken rolle har det offentlige i å konservere og innovere ift råvarer, mattradisjoner og matkultur?
15. Hvor viktig er utdanning eller læring om mat i nord for å skape matturisme?
16. Motiveres du selv av matopplevelser når du velger hvor du skal reise, har du noen eksempler på hva du vurderer eller prioriterer?

APPENDIX 2: Information letter

Forespørsel om deltagelse i forskningsprosjektet

Matturisme i Finnmark. En analyse av refleksjoner og perspektiver av aktører som jobber med regional- og lokal mat og drikke, samt matopplevelser.

Bakgrunn og formål

De siste 20 årene har mat som kulturell markør og mat som opplevelse fått mer fokus som en selvstendig attraksjon og ikke bare en nødvendighet. Flere reisende vurderer mat aspektet når de planlegger sine reiser og mye av feriebudsjettet går direkte til mat og matopplevelser. Mat har alltid vært en essensiell del av reisen, og er av ernæringsmessige årsaker en stor del av alle ferier og besøk, uansett destinasjon. Matturisme er ikke kun fine-dining, men også folkelige matopplevelser. Med nye digitale kanaler har også mat som trend og opplevelse gjort nordisk gastronomi mer synlig. Matprogrammer og økt bevissthet rundt mat gjør mat til et attraktivt element som turister og forbrukere blir mer og mer opptatt av som opplevelse og ikke bare en nødvendighet.

Til tross for at Norge er et småskala land ift matturisme har Norge de siste årene fått mer synlighet som en potensiell matdestinasjon hvor en kan oppleve mat som en større del av den totale reiseopplevelsen. I 2016 fikk en norsk restaurant for første gang hele 3 Michelin stjerner, i tillegg er det flere restauranter i Norge som har 1 stjerne, og det har vært flere norske kokker som har utmerket seg i det uoffisielle verdensmesterskapet i kokkekunst som avgjøres i Frankrike. Tradisjonelle mattradisjoner og folkelig mat er også noe turister generelt etterspør og ønsker å oppleve. Finnmark har en rik matkultur og tilgang til unike råvarer, formålet med prosjektet er å finne ut potensialet til matturisme i Finnmark, enten som del av total opplevelsen eller som en selvstendig opplevelse i seg selv.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Forskningen i dette prosjektet vil bidra til en bedre forståelse av fenomenet matturisme, og basert på det informantene i prosjektet forteller om mat og matkultur, vil prosjektet identifisere hvordan matopplevelser kan brukes som en strategi for å skape en helhetlig profil for småskala destinasjoner som nettopp Finnmark.

Forskningsprosjektet ønsker også å skape en bedre forståelse av hvilken rolle destinasjonens mattilbud og matkultur kan ha for total opplevelsen av en destinasjon. Uavhengig om turistene er her i hovedsak for maten eller for andre attraksjoner. Hensikten med forskningen er å bidra til en bedre forståelse av potensiale matturisme kan ha som strategi.

Tilsammen blir det valgt ut 10 informanter som skal intervjues. Hvorav 1 vil være fra Kautokeino, 1 fra Karasjok, 1 fra Hammerfest, 4 fra Alta, 3 fra Varanger; Vardø og Vadsø og Sør-Varanger. Intervjuene vil vare i cirka 60 minutter. Noen vil vare kortere og noen litt lenger, avhengig av hvor mye informantene har å fortelle.

Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?

Alle opplysninger som kommer fram vil bli behandlet konfidensielt: Personer kommer ikke til å bli identifisert i den endelige avhandlingen/publikasjonen. Alt av datamateriell anonymiseres og alle lydopptak vil bli oppbevart bak UiT server og bak passordsikret servere og vil bli slettet ved prosjektslutt 01.03.2017.

Frivillig deltakelse

Deltakelse i undersøkelsen er frivillig og alle som har blitt intervjuet kan når som helst velge å trekke sin besvarelse uten noen begrunnelse.

Prosjektet er meldt til Personvernforbundet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

Vennlig hilsen

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Samtykke til deltakelse i studien*

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Jeg samtykker til å delta i intervju *Samtykke kan innhentes skriftlig eller muntlig.

APPENDIX 3: Data sampling guide

Data sampling guide

How to understand food tourism as a topic in the context of tourism.

Category 1	Food tourists
1a How did food tourism as we know it today start?	1. What is a 'food tourist'? 2. When did tourists become 'food tourists'? 3. Why did tourists become interested in the phenomenon?
1b What do food tourists do?	4. What do food tourists do? 5. Where do food tourists go? 6. How is it to be a 'food tourist'? 7. Why do tourists become 'food tourist'?
1c What is a typical 'food tourist typology'?	8. What is a typical 'food tourist typology'?

Category 2	Food tourism management culture, perspectives and aspects
2a Actors of food tourism	9. How do people take part in food tourism?
2b Perspectives and approaches to food tourism	10. How do researchers take part in food tourism? 11. Demand – versus supply side 12. Quantitative versus qualitative 13. Hospitality, tourism, food. 14. Socially and economically
2c Utilization of food tourism in destination branding and attractiveness	15. How do cities, countries, regions take part in food tourism?

Category 3	Food tourism as a strategy
(Mintzberg)	How do researchers describe food tourism destinations? How do researchers define food tourism?
	How was F.T organized? How was F.T utilized? How was F.T marketed? How was F.T managed?
	What was the core motivation for a destination to choose food tourism as a strategy? What gaps or limitations do researchers point out? What do researchers recommend for future studies?