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Publication date:
2017

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link to publication from Aalborg University

Citation for published version (APA):
James, L., & Manniche, J. (2017). *Food tourism and gastronomic trends*. Institut for Kultur og Globale Studier, Aalborg Universitet.

ISBN: 978-87-92305-36-7

Food Tourism and Gastronomic Trends

Innocoast WP3 Report – March 2017

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Introduction

Food and drink play an important role in the tourism industry, not least because all tourists require sustenance, whether they are travelling for business or pleasure. Unsurprisingly, therefore, a significant proportion of tourist spending is related to eating and drinking. Tsai and Wang (2016) estimate that 40% of tourists' budget is spent on food and drink. Other researchers have estimated that up to 30% of total tourist expenditure is on food and beverage consumption (Kim et al, 2009). The ICTA (2012) suggest a figure of 36% of total expenditure for tourists to the USA and UK. Food is, moreover, a fundamental part of culture and heritage, which is an important attraction for tourists (UNWTO, 2015). Local food and drink products may enhance destination image (Ab Karim et al, 2010; Hjalager and Corigliano, 2000), support local economic development - especially in rural areas (Sims, 2009) - and encourage sustainable growth (Hall and Gössling, 2013). For these reasons, there is a growing interest among tourism management organisations and governmental agencies in developing the connections between food and drink and tourism (Everett, 2016; Gyimothy, 2017). Many writers have also indicated that there is an increasing interest among tourists themselves to experience different kinds of food and drink.

Food and drink tourism, culinary tourism, gastronomic tourism, gourmet tourism and foodways tourism are all terms which refer to travel and touristic experiences that are in some way related to eating, drinking, cooking, buying or even catching/producing different kinds of food and drink. There is no consensus on which of these terms are most appropriate when discussing the role of food and drink in the tourist experience, not least due to the range of activities that are included. Smith and Xiao (2008) for example, list a wide variety of 'food tourism' facilities, events, activities and organisations, such as markets and festivals, wine tours and trails, restaurants and cafes, cooking schools, foraging and hunting/fishing, tasting sessions and farm visits.

There is, however, a trend away from the general use of the terms gastronomy and gourmet, which imply fine dining and an intellectualised experience, as in Santich's (1996:115) definition of gastronomy as 'reflective eating, which, however, expands to reflective cooking and food preparation, maintaining the association with excellence and/or fancy food and drink'. In her introductory text on food tourism, Everett (2016: 16) argues for a much broader definition where 'food and drink tourism is not only about high-end gastronomic experiences, but encapsulates a growing interest in purchasing local produce, eating street food, meeting producers and enjoying culturally distinctive cuisines'.

There is also debate about whether food tourism should refer only to travel activities where food and/or drink was the primary motivation for the trip. One of the most widely cited definitions of food tourism, for example, is that of Hall and Mitchell (2001:308) which refers to 'visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production regions are the primary motivating factor for travel'. Smith and Xiao (2008: 289), by contrast, take a broader view suggesting that 'culinary tourism encompasses travel specifically motivated by culinary interests as well as travel in which culinary experiences occur but are not the primary motivation for the trip'. Everett (2016:11) also advocates a broader definition, describing food tourism as 'food and drink motivated travel, which reflects any level of desire to engage in an experience involving food and drink away from home (primary or secondary motivation)'. She also emphasises that other types and sectors of tourism also include elements of food and drink tourism, such as cultural tourism (attractions and local cuisines), festival and event tourism (food and drink festivals and events), and heritage tourism (museums and places of production).

A focus on how important food is in relation to motivation to travel is reflected in the many categorisations of 'food tourists' which are based on the strength of their interest in food and drink. These categorisations range from 'foodies', for whom fine wining and dining is central to their identity, and a key motivation for travel, to those for whom food simply represents functional 'fuel'. Cohen's (1972) classification of tourists as either introvert and anxious about new experiences, or extrovert and keen to experience the unknown, has also been adapted to the food tourism context. Thus, Cohen and Avieli (2004:759) argue that 'people could be classified in terms of their neophobic or neophilic tendencies. Neophobes actively avoid new or unfamiliar food while travelling and demand familiar dishes, while neophiles demand local food products (Therkelsen, 2015), or even 'scary food' with an exotic or even potentially dangerous character (Gyimothy and Mykletun, 2009).

Overall, the evidence presented in international research literatures suggests that a growing minority of tourists travel solely or primarily for food-based experiences (Tikkanen 2007; Bessiere and Tibere 2013). A study by Deloitte and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (2012:9), for example, found that approximately 35% of Canadian travellers reported that they would travel primarily for a food experience, such as a food and wine festival. There are, moreover, some gastronomic tourism hotspots where 'the food element is the centre of the experience and it elevates the notion of dining to a much higher level of production, experience and theatre' (Tresidder 2014: 355). Tresidder (2014) explores the Noma restaurant in Copenhagen as an example

ISBN: 978-87-92305-36-7

of a ‘terroir restaurant’, which is held in such high esteem internationally that it attracts tourists to the city purely for the purpose of dining there.

There are also empirical studies from Denmark, specifically regarding tourists travelling for nature- and coastal tourism, conducted by the Danish tourism marketing and development organization, VisitDenmark. These clearly indicate that the opportunity of visiting “good eating places” very rarely is a decisive travelling motive for tourists in Denmark (Visitdenmark, 2016b). In fact, among Danish domestic tourists, only 5% mention this opportunity as one of the three most important motives for travelling, while only 2% of foreign tourists mention it as a “top three” motive (Visitdenmark, 2016b).

While the proportion of tourists who travel specifically for food experiences may not be large, a much larger proportion have at least some interest in food, even though it does not determine their choice of destination. The above survey of Visitdenmark tells, that 38% of Danish nature and coastal tourists and 39% of foreign tourists are interested in discovering “good eating places”. Thus, many tourists want to sample local food, and many engage in food-related activities whilst on holiday, such as visiting restaurants, buying food as souvenirs, tasting local wine or cheese. Bessiere and Tibere’s (2013) study of tourists in the south west of France, for example, found that while only 19% of visitors in their sample cited ‘discovery of local specialities’ as a purpose of the trip, 96.5% said that compared to their normal habits they ate more products from the terroir. Furthermore, 44% had visited a restaurant or food market during their trip. Everett (2016) reports similar findings from a Visit Scotland visitor survey which found that 52% of visitors wanted to try local foods. In addition 50% considered food and drink offerings when narrowing down their choice of destination.

Such figures also are clearly observable in Denmark. According to the survey by Visitdenmark (2016b), 79% of Danish domestic nature and coastal tourists and 80% of foreign tourists visit a restaurant, café or similar during their stay. Actually, according to a study on tourists’ consumption during their holiday stay in Denmark (Visitdenmark, 2016a) tourists spend around 14% of their total holiday spending (including transportation, accommodation etc.) in restaurants and cafes. Interestingly, 85% of the foreign nature and coastal tourist prepare their own meals during their holiday in Denmark (Visitdenmark, 2016b), reflecting the fact that the main form of accommodation in Danish nature and coastal tourism is summerhouses with kitchen and cooking facilities. Thus, besides the mentioned 14% spending on eating in restaurants and cafes, other 12% of total holiday spending relate to shopping of foods and drinks in supermarkets and other retailing outlets (Visitdenmark, 20016a). In North Jutland, this share is as high as 17%.

Although only a smaller part of this consumption goes to local food and drinks producers, this indicates that the commercial opportunities of gastronomic tourism in Denmark not only are exploitable by the hotel and restaurant sectors but certainly also

ISBN: 978-87-92305-36-7

may be considerable for food producers, distributors and retailers in a tourist destination. In fact, there might be unexploited commercial potentials in developing business models and product offerings, specifically targeted deliveries of local food supplies to home-cooking summerhouse tourists.

What then has driven the increasing interest in local food and drink as a touristic experience and which gastronomic trends are relevant for food tourism in Denmark?

Local food

One of the most important recent gastronomic trends is the growing interest in local food and drink, which combines a particular set of positive associations, such as freshness, traceability, non-industrial production, tradition and culinary heritage (Bessiere, 1998; Sims 2010; Halkier et al, forthcoming). The concept of 'local food' is central for understanding the changes of the production as well as the consumption of food in Western societies during recent decades. Food products increasingly became 'food from nowhere due to the globalisation of markets and supply chains, and the industrialization and standardization of production methods. During the last decades, consumers have expressed growing dissatisfaction with this development and leading to increasing demand for 'food from somewhere'. In a Danish market context with limited supplies of foods and drinks with a distinct local/regional profile, emerging demand in the 'first wave' in the 1980s and 90s was mainly expressed in increased uptake of food specialties and dishes from distant places such as Italy, France, Thailand, and Mexico, i.e. everything but 'local' food, leading to a trend of fusion cuisine.

However, in the last 10-15 years or so and consumers also have shown growing interest in Danish food products that are marketed with emphasis on their specific geographical (local or regional) origin. This new demand goes hand in hand with trends at producer side through which growing supplies of a variety of local produces has been created. An important role in the break-through of this trend has been the launching in 2004 of an 'New Nordic Cuisine' manifest, aiming at developing (or rediscovering) of produce with distinct territorial/geographical qualities, which provided an inspirational basis for the emergence of a new and internationally recognised gourmet restaurant sector for 'Nordic Food'. Other evidence of the trend is the more than 25 local and regional network organizations for small-scale food producers that have been established throughout Denmark since the 1990s. There has also been growth in direct sales of locally produced meat, vegetables and dairy products via the growing number of farm shops, and the newly launched campaign for local food the large supermarket chain, COOP, providing small-scale producers market access through their supermarket shops.

Yet, recent surveys among tourists in Danish coastal destinations clearly indicate that although both Danish and foreign tourists demand and search for experiences related to place-specific food, they often have difficulties in observing any local specificities and distinctiveness of the foods and drinks offered in Denmark, and generally evaluate the supplies in restaurants, cafes and other eating places as anonymous and standardized (Therkelsen and Halkier, 2015).

Food cultures and identity

The consumption of food and drink is a biological necessity but it is also a highly symbolic act, central to the construction of collective and personal identities. Thus, differences in culinary practices act as religious, national, ethnic and social 'markers' (Jansen 2001). Bessiere (1998), for example, describes a variety of symbolic functions performed by food and drink, such as indicating social class distinctions (caviar, champagne), as a sign of communion (family celebrations), or as an emblem of the culinary heritage of a particular community or place.

The growing appreciation of 'local food' among consumers and producers is a complex phenomenon with many different causes and implications and is part of a broader 'quality turn' on food markets involving many different 'alternative' qualities, distinguishing products from standardized, mainstream food such as 'organic', 'health', 'green', 'fair trade', 'artisan' and 'animal welfare' (Harvey et al. 2004; Goodman 2003). As Getz et al (2015) note, the symbolic qualities of food and drink become more important as consumers become increasingly affluent and more likely to form part of self-identity in terms of values and attitudes; for example, buying organic food or free range meat.

New consumer cultures have emerged by which consumption is closely linked to personal (or group) identity formation and social positioning, i.e. consumption has become imbued with symbolic meanings and interpretations at the expense of more functional, practical purposes such as satisfaction of hunger. As noted by Lash and Urry (1994), competition increasingly shifts from the 'use-value' of tangible products to the 'sign-value' of intangible brands. Essentially this development has laid the path towards the emerging 'experience economy' (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) in which the provision of memorable, intrinsic experiences to consumers rather than the production of physical goods and practical services are the critical goals and value-adding activities of producers (Sundbo and Sørensen 2013; Anderson and Mosberg 2004; Manniche and Larsen 2013). These cultural and economic change processes go hand in hand with the introduction of new types of electronic social medias such as Facebook and Instagram, which are highly appropriate for consumers' positioning in relation to other individuals (Munar et al. 2013). In such consumption contexts, 'standardisedl' food is considered anonymous, conventional, ordinary, ubiquitous and without the distinctive qualities required for forming and staging of high-profiled personal identities, while 'local' food in contrast entails strong and distinct qualities and values appropriate for personal positioning, for instance via the new social medias.

One important food 'quality' relates to sustainability and preservation of nature and the environment and to the bad reputation in this regard of the efficiency-oriented, large-scale model of conventional farming, processing and retailing. The idea that 'local food' connects well to sustainability certainly is powerful. It is linked not only to the (not always documented) environment-friendly producing/processing methods of individual artisanal, small-scale farmers and processors but also to the lower transport requirements connected with local supply chains and short(er) distance between producers and consumers (Ilbery and Maye, 2005; Renting et al. 2003). However, some of these transport gains at producer side might be lost at the consumer side due to the increasing sales via farm shops in the countryside where each individual consumer travels in his/her car. Nonetheless, as noted by Sims (2009), in contrast to other fields of industrial activities where trade-offs frequently are involved, 'local' food products promise the kind of all-round social, economic and environmental benefits that are aimed at in development policies and strategies for sustainability.

Another important set of drivers for local food sales, are discourses about (lagging) rural development and the concentration of economic, social and cultural capitals in main cities. The emergence of businesses and supply chains of high-profiled, trendy specialty foods, attractive to modern urban consumers, constitutes one of the few promising opportunities for economic and social development in rural areas. Thus, the emerging local food sector, although basically market-driven, has been promoted by local and regional policy initiatives, in particular through the so-called Local Action Groups as part of EU rural development programmes (Eriksen and Sundbo 2015; Thuesen et al. 2014).

Defining local food

Despite the apparent simplicity of the term 'local', as opposed to 'global', the definition of local food in an exact and meaningful way in practice poses big difficulties, especially when the definition is supposed to encompass different product categories.

Local food may be defined in terms of a bounded region within which a particular foodstuff is grown or processed, the distance that food travels between production and consumption, or the relational proximity between producers and consumers (Bowen and Mutersbaugh 2014; Eriksen, 2014). It might also be defined in terms of 'specialty' or 'traditional' products or recipes that are associated with a particular place (Sims

ISBN: 978-87-92305-36-7

2009; Halkier et al, forthcoming). Eriksen (2013: 51) helpfully categorises these dimensions of localness as different 'domains of proximity'. *Geographical proximity* refers to an explicit geographical locality, such as a town or region, and the distance or radius within which food is produced, retailed, consumed and/or distributed. *Relational proximity* refers to direct relations between local actors such as producers, retailers and consumers who are reconnected through alternative production or distribution practices such as farmers' markets, vegetable box schemes, farm shops, etc. *Values of proximity* refers to the different values (e.g., place of origin, authenticity, quality, freshness) that different actors attribute to local food.

In relation to tourism, research shows that food and drink products form an important part of destination image, often linked to the traditional, rural landscapes and farming methods that tourists 'gaze' upon during their travels (Enteleca Research and Consultancy 2001, quoted in Sims 2009: 333). Some research on local food and tourism has shown, however, that different actors are likely to interpret localness differently. In her study of the Lake District and Exeter in the UK, for example, Sims (2010) found that producers' definitions of localness reflected normative judgements about how food should be produced. Cafe, restaurant and pub owners were more flexible and pragmatic, trading off localness against other values such as serving organic or vegetarian food. Tourists, meanwhile, tended to interpret local food as typical for a particular place or culture. As Sims argues in an earlier article (2009:330), 'it appears that tourists value local foods, not just because they are perceived to be local but also because they are seen to be traditional products with a long history of production in that location'.

Terroir

The notion of an intrinsic and unique relationship between produce and place is captured in the concept of *terroir*, a French term which indicates a close association between particular foodstuffs and distinct geographical locations where the natural environment is combined with 'localised culinary histories to produce a rich map of food custom, habit and practice…' (Bell and Valentine 1997: 156). Terroir incorporates a number of different characteristics:

1. use of geographically unique natural produce (e.g. special herbs or animal races);

2. provision of tangible product qualities (e.g. taste or healthy substances) connected with an areas' natural and geographical conditions (the prime example being wine);

3. exploitation of place-specific knowledge and cultural traditions (e.g. special production methods, dishes or ways of consuming); and

4. the physical production processes, the ownership and the reinvestment of profits are linked to a specific location.

ISBN: 978-87-92305-36-7

According to Trubek (2008:9), the meaning of terroir is somewhere between soil, locality and "part of the country" and is an important cultural category which celebrates the 'goût de terroir' of particular regions, understood as the unique tastes of food and drink which are intrinsically linked to their place of origin. This is reflected in the naming of products with the name of the region of origin, and the conflicts over attempts by producers of similar foodstuffs in other parts of the world to use these names (for example, the right to call sparkling white wine 'champagne'). Hermansen (2012) uses the example of Roquefort cheese which has been protected since the 15th century, and is now covered by the Appellation d'Origine Controlée (A.O.C). This legal protection also serves as a marker of particular qualities as well as indicating the origin of a product. While terroir can be defined in environmental terms, indicating, for example, the way that topography, soil and climate impart a special character to wines (Mason and Mahony, 2007) it also implies particular cultural and social relations. Lopez-Guzman and Sanchez-Canizares (2012: 64), for example, argue that:

> *"Food and wine form an integral part of a social life, and the history, the culture, the economy and the society of a given are, and have been shaped by history by local lifestyles. This intensifies the contrast between one locality and another, and between rural tradition and urban modernity".*

This interpretation of terroir implies an attempt to create an authentic link to the past and an attempt to escape modern, urban lifestyles; 'a conceptual and symbolic refuge form modern production systems' (Tresidder, 2014:349).

In a Danish food context characterized by relatively weak local/regional culinary traditions and relatively similar geographical/natural conditions in most parts of the country (Hermansen 2012; Mørch 1996; Hjalager & Corigliano 2000), the possibilities of claiming genuine, place-specific, 'terroir' related product qualities are often very limited, as reflected in the very few producers in Northern Europe including Denmark, which have been granted certification via the diverse EU trademark schemes for protected origin (PDO, PGI, TSG). Although producers often tend to claim certain tangible product qualities (taste, freshness) related to the place, the emphasized factors are usually very general and not constrainable to specific places (the evening sun, the salty rain, the fat soil).

Hence, while this does not necessarily describe the future qualities of Danish local food, the 'local' dimension of the vast majority of small-scale high-profiled specialty products in Denmark today is mainly connected to the above fourth type of criteria, i.e. that production and ownership is linked to a certain place. For instance, the many newly established micro-breweries producing specialized lager beers or Indian pale ales by use of local water added malt, hops, and yeast sourced from global supply chains, can hardly claim that their products are 'local' except in the sense that they are processed/manufactured in a specific place and that – if this is the case - the brewery is owned by persons in the area and the profit reinvested locally. Besides, as

ISBN: 978-87-92305-36-7

shown in studies from Bornholm (Manniche and Larsen 2009; Manniche et al. 2009), the technologies and product knowledge applied in production/processing of food marketed as 'local/regional', are also usually sourced from much larger geographical areas than the specific place, village or region in which the producers are located.

However, the lack of classical terroir dimensions to local food is not necessarily a problem for tourism development in Denmark. According to a study by Therkelsen (2016), German family tourists' (not foodies) demands of foods during vacations mainly are connected to authentic experiences of 'sense of place' and to food as a means to social/cultural bonding to locals, i.e. demands regards the food context rather than the food qualities. This indicate the great potentials for producers and producer network organizations of emphasizing not merely the place of production *per se* but the personal relation of the entrepreneur to this place, and the beauty, calmness, and people characterizing the locality.

Gyimóthy (2017) confirms the relevance and widespread use among Danish food producers and tourist destinations of this type of personalized food commodification strategies. Gyimóthy opposes the "transformational" Nordic commodification strategies to the "conservationist" approaches prevailing in Southern Europe (see also Parrott et al, 2002):

> *"The New Nordic Cuisine movement has given a new impetus and rationale to reinvent the gastronomic sense of place, paving the way for commodification strategies that are fundamentally different from the Southern European and Mediterranean food destination branding. It is positioned along hybrid ethics, claiming to unite gourmet taste with responsibility and reflexivity. Instead of conforming to canonized terroir constructions fixed in accredited provenance labels or signature heritage dishes, Danish food place promoters employ narrative strategies in which terroir is more dynamic and nebulous (..) Destinations subscribe to the transformational ideology of the New Nordic Cuisine manifesto, which reiterates narratives about authenticity, simplicity and locally-sourced produce, as well as moral imperatives about purity and freshness, ecology, health and well-being. Seen from this perspective, provenance is more ideological than cartographical and ethics and passion are replacing tradition and history as qualifiers." (Gyimóthy, 2017).*

Notwithstanding the current success of such new terroir constructions in which the story-motifs of playful and innovative Nordic gastronomic entrepreneurs have replaced the clichés of agricultural traditions and romantic countryside idyll exploited in South Europe, Gyimóthy also warns that they may fall into a conformity trap and fail to single out a distinct identity against more established culinary destinations.

Conclusions

ISBN: 978-87-92305-36-7

Food and drink have always played an important role in the tourism industry, not least because all tourists require sustenance, whether they are travelling for business or pleasure. However, in recent decades food production and catering in Denmark (in most other Western societies) have undergone thorough processes of change due to a number of factors such as new consumer demands. The concept of 'local food' is central for understanding the changes of the production as well as the consumption of food. During recent decades, consumers have expressed growing dissatisfaction with the 'food from nowhere' supplied by the mainstream, efficiency-orientated model of farming, processing, and retailing and thus have rising demands for 'food from somewhere'.

The growing appreciation of 'local food' among consumers and producers is a complex phenomenon with many different causes and implications and is part of a broader 'quality turn' on food markets involving many different 'alternative' qualities, distinguishing products from standardized, mainstream food such as 'organic', 'health', and 'animal welfare'. The symbolic value-laden qualities of food and drink become more important as consumers become increasingly affluent and more likely to form part of self-identity in terms of values and attitudes.

An important role in the break-through of this trend in Denmark has been the launching in 2004 of a 'New Nordic Cuisine' manifest, aiming at developing (or rediscovering) of produces with distinct territorial/geographical qualities. The New Nordic Cuisine manifest provided an inspirational basis for the emergence of a new and internationally recognised gourmet restaurant sector for 'Nordic Food' which today has developed into an important attraction factor for international tourists to Copenhagen and other major cities in Norden.

Notwithstanding the important inspirational top-down effects of the Nordic Cuisine manifest and its founding by esteemed restaurant chefs and entrepreneurs, the food change processes started decades before the introduction of the concept of New Nordic Cuisine and entails a fundamental entrepreneurial bottom-up element. From a starting point with the almost complete absence of supplies of foods and drinks with a distinct local/regional profile, food entrepreneurs throughout the country have created a supply of regional/local high-quality products, among them organic food and products based on more localised supply and distribution chains. The emergence of these new food supplies and the local networks of producers and distributors behind could be described as the first phase of transition of food markets (Spaargaren et al., 2012) and they have become an important identity marker for many rural areas. Thus, local/regional supplies of high-quality food have become an important part of place-branding activities of coastal and nature based tourism destinations in Denmark and an inspirational basis for re-inventing regional 'terroir' qualities of food which is new in a Danish context. Interestingly, compared to the conservationist place-branding food strategies that prevail in South Europe and rely on clichés of agricultural traditions and romantic countryside idyll, the Danish place-branding food approaches seem more transformational and based on story-motifs of playful and innovative Nordic gastronomic entrepreneurs (Gyimóthy, 2017; Manniche and Testa, 2010).

However, recent surveys among Danish and foreign tourists at Danish coastal destinations clearly indicate that they demand and search for experiences related to place-specific food but often have difficulties in observing any local specificities and distinctiveness of the foods and drinks offered and generally evaluate the supplies in restaurants, cafes and other eating places as anonymous and standardized (Therkelsen and Halkier, 2015). However, the lack of classical terroir dimensions of local food is not necessarily a problem for tourism development in Denmark, since tourists' demands of local foods also connect to authentic experiences of 'sense of place' and to food as a means to social/cultural bonding to locals. In other words, there is a greater interest in food context rather than the food qualities. This indicates the great potential for producers and producer network organizations to emphasise not merely the place of production *per se* but the personal relation of the entrepreneur to this place. Such personalized terroir constructions, however, certainly also hold limits as they may fall into a conformity trap (Gyimóthy, 2017) and – as emphasized by the tourists in the above survey of Therkelsen and Halkier, 2015) - fail to single out a distinct identity against more established culinary destinations.

In conclusion, there is still a way to go for food producers and caterers at coastal destinations in Denmark. In next phase of development, consumers/tourists will be more knowledgeable about how to evaluate qualities of food and it will be increasingly difficult to sell premium-priced products that are not genuinely authentic. For instance, producers and destinations need to define the distinctiveness of their special version of "local food". Besides, trends may take new directions. While innovation and development activities on gastro markets in recent years have focussed on gourmet, up-market, dedicated "memorable experiences" approaches, there may be a need in the coming years to focus on the creation of large-scale food offerings for the standard gastro markets (green, healthy, cheap food for the ordinary tourists).

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