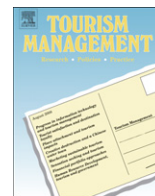




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Tourism Management

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/tourman

Case Study

Beyond the renaissance of the traditional Voss sheep's-head meal: Tradition, culinary art, scariness and entrepreneurship

Reidar J. Mykletun^{a,*}, Szilvia Gyimóthy^b^aNorwegian School of Hotel Management, University of Stavanger, 4036 Stavanger, Norway^bService Management, Lund University, Campus Helsingborg, Box 882, 25108 Helsingborg, Sweden

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 9 August 2006

Accepted 17 April 2009

Keywords:

Food tourism

Traditional food

Scary food

Food adventure

Sheep's-head meal

Entrepreneurship

Voss

Norway

ABSTRACT

Attempts have been made to make traditional local foods a part of the tourists' experiences, but few have caught great interest among the tourist and leisure consumers. An exception is the Norwegian traditional Sheep's-head meal. This article focuses on driving factors behind this success. Sheep's heads have been continuously available and used at private meals, albeit the status of the meals has changed from everyday food to party food, and a festival and commercial meals with unique ceremonies have developed. Participation in these may give a sense of symbolic proximity to traditions and historical "roots". The culinary qualities of the product are important especially for the experienced sheep's-head meal participants. The scariness of the product itself and the measures taken to make the meal an enjoyable adventures trigger the feelings of courage, mastery and inclusion in the "in-group" of sheep's-head eaters. Most important for the success were the individual entrepreneurships and entrepreneurial networks which were the number one drivers behind the rejuvenation of these unique meal experiences. This case illustrates the significance of the individual and network entrepreneurial processes in the branding and development of tourism destinations.

© 2009 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Food and meals have been recognised as a research topic by tourism scholars (e.g. Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Hall & Sharples, 2003; Hansen, Jensen, & Gustafsson, 2005; Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000; Hjalager & Richards, 2002). This new interest can be attributed to the fact that cooking and culinary consumption has gained a more prominent place in tourists' experience and leisure consumption, and far beyond their nutritional importance. The functions added have been understood in terms of symbolic meanings like lifestyle and social identity creation and expression (Miele & Murdoch, 2002). This applies both to global gourmet and local traditional products becoming "sensory windows" (Telfer & Hashimoto, 2003) into the region's context and culture. However, their roles may differ as only local traditional products may be claimed to position the visitor to get a glimpse into the culture and closer to the history and people of a place.

Culinary practices and arts have subsequently changed by responding to these new trends. First, an increased focus on food

traditions and traditional food has been observed. However, traditions may be seen as constructions invented by the modernity looking back into the past (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), and they are dynamic processes created over time. Traditions establish cultural meaning and identities and they communicate knowledge of the past when everyday living undergoes major changes. They were less useful in the Medieval Ages even though people in those times were surrounded by customs and "old ways" of living (Giddens, 1999). In Norway food traditions and traditional foods became topics of discussion among chefs and researchers within food cultures (Amilien, 2007) as recently as in the 1970s, as earlier traditional food had been conceived of mainly as just everyday meals, Sunday meals, or as meals for celebrations. From the 1970s, however, new dishes imported from abroad, new ways of cooking, and the disappearance of the traditional full-time housewife made the more time-consuming cooking of the past obsolete and also introduced fascinating developments of tastes and flavours (Amilien, 2007; Fossgard, 2007).

A second and more recent change observable from the 1990s is the linking of the traditional dishes and meals to certain places (Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000). Being anchored in local traditions local food is supposed to be produced by simple technologies and remains a produce of handicraft implying high quality standards,

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +47 95 77 62 55; fax: +47 51 83 37 50.

E-mail addresses: reimykle@gmail.com (R.J. Mykletun), szilvia.gyimothy@msm.lu.se (S. Gyimóthy).

often home-made, and related to celebrations and perceived as genuineness for the place (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). In this way local food has tended to express local cultures and signify regional and local identities and values (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Rusher, 2003). Today, traditional food may be presented as a) regional or local of origin; b) authentic; c) having been commercially available for the public for at least 50 years, and d) containing a “culinary heritage” (Amilien, 2007, p. 142). The growing interest in culinary products and traditions implies that food is also becoming a more important factor in trying to influence tourists’ motivations for travelling to a particular destination. Today, food tourism has differentiated into several forms, ranging from gourmet tourism to rural tourism (Hall & Mitchell, 2002). The political, cultural and economic significance of these developments is indicated by EU-regulations on local food; the opening for protection of local food products; and their marketing with origin labels signifying quality and typicality (cf. European Union, 2002).

Researchers have hitherto mainly focused on the role of local food as a fascinating attraction for additional consumption by tourists (Amilien, 2007; Fossgard, 2007; Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009; Hjalager & Richards, 2002). Several studies of food tourism focus on the promotion of local food and local attempts to revitalise traditional food and food traditions. Authenticity is considered to be a central theme to such an extent that other symbolic interpretations of local meals may have been overlooked. We know little about alternative ways of creating meal experiences that balance the authenticity aspects against needs for modern production techniques and/or how consumers search for new dining experiences as well as a chance to meet with past culinary cultures. Nevertheless, this is an important issue for entrepreneurs embarking on an innovative process, i.e. when attempting to turn traditional food items into a commercially viable meal experiences. In many cases, the renaissance of culinary heritage is dependent on an entrepreneur or an entrepreneurial network carrying forward local product development.

The increase in general welfare, the restructuring of the agricultural production, the social reconstruction and migration, and the access to modern food technologies along with changes in meal habits have led to the unfortunate abandoning of several traditional dishes in Norway. Contrary to the general trend, however, the sheep’s-head meal which is the subject of this study, never completely disappeared from everyday life in Voss. But, its actual use and the social status changed dramatically over the last 40 years, as did the ways of preparing, preserving and distributing the food. This article aims at exploring how this unique Norwegian culinary heritage from the Voss area – the traditional sheep’s-head meal – has become a successful tourism product. The success of this traditional and locally anchored meal will be analysed from the perspective of entrepreneurship, exploiting the commercial potential of a local and possibly adventurous culinary heritage. As claimed by Russel and Faulkner (1999), there is still paucity with regards to published studies on entrepreneurial processes in relation to tourism development. Ten years later, this is still true, in particular when it comes to the ways that food tradition, food adventures, culinary arts and entrepreneurial endeavours interact when creating business successes. Except for the anatomy of entrepreneurship presented by Russel and Faulkner (1999, 2004), the few articles that have appeared are generally lacking theoretical substance, especially with regards to understanding the roles of entrepreneurial networks (e.g. Johannisson & Mønsted, 1997; Johannisson, Ramirez-Pasillas, & Karlsson, 2002). The contribution of the present paper is, hopefully, to add to the closing of these gaps. However, while the focus is on entrepreneurship, attention will also be paid to the role of food traditions and the meal as a food adventure along with its culinary qualities.

2. The sheep’s-head meal experience between food adventure and culinary arts

Food away from home can be fabulous, fun and frightening at the same time (Rozin, 1999). Traditional meals fit well into this conception and may be an ambivalent attraction: not only fascinating, but also strangely unfamiliar and even repulsive or anxiety-provoking (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Eating is an intimate act (Fishler, 1988), as something external is inserted into the organism through the mouth, indeed a sensitive organ. Meals are often social undertakings with strong implications of learning outcomes for its participants, and appreciation of a sheep’s-head meal is indeed an acquired taste. Aversive reactions to unknown food and strange meals may be seen as habitual and learned generalisations of risk awareness and dislikes, triggered at distances by sight and smell, and on tastes and tactile sensations when taking in the dish. As for the sheep’s-head meal, its bouquet reminds the guest of smoked lamb’s meat, but is “sharper” and stronger in intensity. The mere sight of it may be alarming for the first-time consumer while eliciting positive expectations on the culinary side among the experienced meal participant. The meal is served with a half of a sheep’s-head on the plate along with potatoes and “mashed swedes” as in olden days, and decorated with parsley. The brown skin is in place and the head still has an open eye with eyelids “glaring at the guest,” as well as an ear, the nose, lips, half a tongue and its teeth. It is obviously the head of a living creature that used to graze and eat hay. Anticipating consuming this part of the animal is an unfamiliar experience to most people, and may also elicit associations with food taboos.¹ Eating animal heads reminds us of the fact that animals are killed in order to serve as human food (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997), about death and dying, and the fact that man is on the top of the nutrition chain, exploiting the rest of it for his enjoyment. On a rational note it must be acknowledged that the head is also the part of the animal that is most heavily contaminated with bacteria, and thus poses an objective health risk for the consumer if the production process is not well managed and the quality of the food not assured.

Food or meals may thus for some people elicit emotional reactions like fear or disgust, while others experience thrill and enjoyment. The different reactions to unfamiliar meals have been dichotomised by the concepts of neophilia (appreciation of the unfamiliar as such) and neophobia (avoidance of the unfamiliar as such) (Fishler, 1988), depending upon factors like experience, personality, and especially motivation for travel (Bello & Etzel, 1985; Crompton, 1979; Lee & Crompton, 1992; Plog, 1974). The range of driving forces motivating the individual in food tourism may resemble those of adventure tourism in general, including novelty-seeking, enjoyment of moderate fear, thrill and playfulness (Cater, 2006; Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2004; Mykletun & Gyimóthy, 2007), and travel involves food neophilia as an important motivator (Bell & Valentine, 1997). A meal that is ‘looking at you’ may appeal to the neophilic guest as a “...sportive and cultural challenge...an important feature of the process of establishing prestige for the dish... and as a way for modern man to establish meaning by active use of the past” (Fossgard & Notaker, 2007, p. 160, authors’ translation). In spite of it appearing as rather bizarre to many people, the

¹ Another taboo in Western societies is the consumption of pets. The avoidance of eating cats and dogs is mostly dominated by emotional aspects as is the case of the sheep’s-head meal. The remoteness of Asian cultures is often illustrated by “exotic” scary meals like snakes or insects, which often feature as thrilling anecdotes in Western backpacker folklore (Lonely Planet Special). However, there also exist a number of scary and extreme dishes in Europe, such as “half-rotten” sharks in Iceland, Spanish squid and, French frogs, sea slugs and cucumbers, snails, beetles and cicadas.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1012853>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1012853>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)