

Zooming out — Local food at the border: the case of the Emsland and Veenland

Sarah Seidel

School of Leisure and Tourism Management, NHL-Stenden University, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands
Email: sarah.seidel@nhlstenden.com

ABSTRACT: Straddling the Dutch-German border, the regions Veenland and Emsland are geographically and partially historically the same, but have undergone a different kind of tourism development. While tourism tends to be small scale on both sides, the German Emsland welcomes significantly more tourists than the Dutch Veenland. In connection with a project to foster Veenland's tourism development respecting the local integrity and particularly the wish to integrate local food into the tourism value chain, this research was carried out for small to medium-sized enterprise (SME) entrepreneurs of the Veenland. The aim was to find out to what extent local products — defined as food from raw materials to dishes — contribute to the tourism motivation and the tourism product of the region in the perception of the tourists. A questionnaire was given to tourists (including day-trippers), which yielded 406 valid responses in the Emsland and 594 in the Veenland.

Outcomes show that regional food and dishes do not play a major role in the decision to travel to the regions and that the recognition of local products is low. In the Emsland, tourists identify local products more easily (despite coming from farther away) and are more likely to consume these. In the Veenland, either typical Dutch or products seen in the landscape were mentioned instead of the actual local products (defined by local experts). Comparing the results, however, it can be stated that local products as a supporting tourism resource are not used particularly much in the Veenland region and there is further potential to integrate them into the local value chain.

KEYWORDS: local food, local tourism development, tourist experience, tourism motivation

Introduction

The tourism product of a destination consists of various components (Freyer, 2005; Jansen-Verbeke, in Page, 1995). Food in the form of local products and dishes is one of these. Indeed, research has shown that tourists spend up to one third of their budget on food (Hall et al. 2003; Telfer & Wall, 2000; Skuras et al., 2006) which leads to the conclusion that if this budget is spent on local products and dishes, it can contribute significantly to the local economy (Bessière, 1998; Hjalager & Johansen, 2013) and in doing so — while the production and transport chain stays rather short (Pratt, 2013) — contribute to sustainable tourism (Medina, 2005; Sims, 2009).

For tourists, local products and dishes can contribute to both place attachment and an authentic experience (Long, 2004; Medina, 2005; Sims, 2009). Yet, the range that local products and dishes play in the tourism product of a region can vary from being the main attraction (in culinary tourism) to simply being a means to satisfy hunger (e.g. McIntosh et al., in Hjalager & Richards, 2002). The range and value of these products is significantly different on this scale. The aim of this research is therefore to analyse the perception of local products by the

tourists of the region and the contribution to their tourism experience.

The special focus in this research is that it concentrates on a border region, hence, a region that is split by a national border but has similar geographical characteristics. The Veenland/Emsland region is located in the west of Lower Saxony in Germany as well as in the southeast of Drenthe in the Netherlands and therefore extends over the Dutch/German border. Geographical characteristics of both parts of the region are similar, and, hence, so are the environmental conditions for flora and fauna and, accordingly, the local food products. However, tourism development has been different; specifically in the Dutch part, tourism tends to be more small-scale than in the Emsland.

The Veenland lies in southeast Drenthe and is mainly a destination for short trips in the form of active holidays, which include biking on the region's 500 km of biking routes and hiking in nature-protected areas with diverse wildlife (Het Drentse Veenland, n.d.). Most common target groups are "empty nesters" and families with children. Tourism development is rather scattered and there are mostly small and medium-sized enterprises. In the area, regional and sustainable developments

have been stimulated in recent years. Specifically concerning locally produced goods (which mainly includes regionally produced food) in the form of the label *DrentsGoed* ("Product of Drenthe"). The label is given to mainly organic products locally produced and is seen as an example of high quality of Drenth origin (DrentsGoed, 2012).

The Emsland was integrated in the research as it is geographically and — to a certain extent — historically the same region. Target groups and the type of tourism are rather similar to the Veenland. Yet, tourism development in the German region of the Emsland has been much more significant. Since 2000, tourism in Emsland has focused increasingly on family and bike tourism, and investments have been made in order to increase tourism in the region (Emsland, 2013). Considering the years 2005 to 2011, overnight stays increased by 40%, which resulted in an overall annual turnover of €360 million in 2011 (Emsland, 2012). Today, the Emsland has the highest bed occupancy rate of Lower Saxony (Germany), with more than two million overnight stays per year, with an increasing tendency (Emsland, 2018).

Both Emsland and Veenland promote their 60 km-long common state border as allowing a multifaceted economic and cultural relationship, benefiting the adjacent Dutch county of Drenthe, as well as the German county of Emsland. Indeed, there are even shared tourism sites, such as the nature park Emsland/Veenland. As stated, the terms Veenland and Emsland stand for the same geographical region, the term originating from the Dutch *Veen* ("swamp") and the river *Ems* ("dark river"). However, in this research both terms are mentioned in order to differentiate between the Dutch (Veenland) and German (Emsland) part.

Since the Emsland/Veenland is split up into the German and the Dutch parts, the use of local products and dishes for tourism purposes might differ and, therewith, the tourist perception and the role local foods play in the tourism product might differ as well. The Veenland entrepreneurs involved in this research project owned small-sized businesses related to both tourism and local food (e.g. bed and breakfast owners, farmers with holiday flats, or a small event location) and were striving for a better offer for tourists, like in the Emsland region. Therefore, an aim is to research if there are differences between the Dutch and the German parts of Veenland/Emsland in regard to the traveller's perception of local products.

The main questions this research intended to answer are:

- Which local food products are seen as characteristic of the region of the Emsland/Veenland by tourists?
- What role do local products play in the travel motivation and tourism experience of the tourists in the Veenland/Emsland?
- What are the differences between the Emsland and Veenland tourists concerning the image of the most characteristic food products and the role these play in the tourism product of the region?

To ensure the maximum value of local products for a region, the tourists must first and foremost be able to identify these as a characteristic product of the region. Otherwise the abovementioned connection to the destination, the sense of place and valuation of cultural/social heritage cannot take place. Hence, this article focuses specifically on the image of local products, contrasting two regions with similar conditions. The findings suggest a couple of issues. Despite the fact that the regions show geographical and partially historical similarities, there is a difference in image and knowledge about local food

products among the tourists and, consequently, in travel motivation and integration in the tourism experience of the local food products. As knowledge and recognition of local food products are significantly higher in the Emsland despite a more varied target group, so is the appreciation of these products.

After a literature review analysing the role local food can play in tourist motivation and experience as well as an analysis of what the concept of local food stands for, the methodological choices and the development of the research instrument, a questionnaire, are presented. The research questions are answered in the results section and some recommendations and further thoughts round off this article.

Literature review

The professional aim of this research is to support the tourism development of the Veenland region using local product and dishes. As stated, local products and dishes can be the main attraction of a region or a simple necessity to satisfy hunger during a trip. They can also express the culture of a region and therefore differentiate tourism regions in the eyes of the tourists. Hence, these and other important concepts of the interrelation of local products and dishes and the tourism product are elaborated in what follows. Firstly, food and tourism is presented, followed by a discussion of the connection of local food and tourist motivation and experience, followed by an analysis of the concept of local food and its economic value for a tourism destination. The former themes were used to analyse the tourist motivation and experience of the tourist in both regions, the latter was used to identify what tourist in the Emsland and Veenland perceive as characteristic and to conclude on all outcomes of the research and their meaning for the Veenland and the entrepreneurs involved.

In recent years, food tourism has grown significantly, becoming one of the most dynamic segments of tourism (United Nations World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO], 2012). Due to the culinary tourism growth, Harrington and Ottenbacher (2011), Mak et al. (2011) and Yeoman (2015) state that an increasing number of people are interested in visiting tourist destinations to taste the unique and authentic culinary products. According to the World Food Travel Association (WFTA, n.d., p. 21), food tourism can be defined as "the pursuit and enjoyment of unique and memorable food and drink experiences, both far and near". However, food is usually a supporting tourism resource in most destinations. This means that in most cases food is not a principle resource, and so not the main reason why people travel, but support the destinations attraction and is an additional motivation (Hjalager & Richards, 2002).

In addition, the definition of food tourism by Long (2004, p. 21) stated that it is about the "intentional participation in the foodways...of a culinary system" which differs from the one of the individual. Hence, it is not only about passive consumption like eating, but also about active engagement in other culinary systems, for example by preparing the dish. Moreover, she mentions that the extent of experience within food tourism is deeper as it involves different human senses (Long, 2004). Hall and Mitchell (2006) supported Long's statements by defining food tourism as travelling to restaurants, food growers, food events and other venues which can be related to gastronomy. According to them, the most important characteristic of food travel is that the individual is motivated by the chance to

experience and taste products typical of a particular destination (Hall & Mitchell, 2006). Hence, the motivation of the tourists to visit both regions is a focus in this research project.

In order to analyse the importance of local products in tourist motivation, McIntosh et al. (in Hjalager & Richards, 2002) developed a conceptual framework on the basis of Maslow's hierarchy of needs which presents the basic needs which have to be satisfied for all people. The framework can be split into four categories. The first category consists of the physical motivators which address our basic need to nourish oneself (Kim & Eves, 2012). Physical motivators not only refer to the need to satisfy hunger, but also to the need for recreation and the opportunity for new tastes (Fields, 2003; Everett, 2008). This also implies that gastronomy at the destination does not have to be of a high standard, only different (Mak et al., 2011; Kim & Eves, 2012). The second category has the cultural motivators, which result from the wish to explore new cultures and destinations and actually learn from them. The tourist here sees food consumption as a way to experience cultural nuances and traditions. If tourists are going on holiday and discover local products, they at the same time experience a new culture as food is an important part of culture (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Mak et al., 2011; McIntosh et al., 1995). The third category is formed by the interpersonal motivators which describe the need for people to build relationships and get to know the host community of a holiday destination (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Kim & Eves, 2012). Hjalager and Richards (2002; see also Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009) argued that gastronomy also plays an important role in this topic as eating together strengthens relationships as well as create a feeling of "community", even with unknown people. Finally, the fourth category has the status and prestige motivators. Through the knowledge of geography and different cultures, people can earn respect and esteem, and the consumption of some foods (e.g. expensive wines) can be a status expression. However, as food in the researched regions is expected to be a supporting resource, the former categories are more likely to be applicable. (Hjalager & Richards, 2002).

Moreover, according to Haven-Tang and Jones (2005), local products and food cannot be underestimated when it comes to developing a sense of place, offering a unique tourist experience and distinguishing a tourism destination. Sims (2009) agrees that local foods can be very famous among tourists as they are regarded as special products which sum up the typical nature of a certain place. Furthermore, the consumer demand for "traditional" and/or "local" products and dishes can also be viewed as a search for authenticity (Sims, 2009). This corresponds with the framework by McIntosh et al. (in Hjalager & Richards, 2002) summarised above.

Defining local food in more detail, we find that local foods, drinks and dishes are related to "the distance between food producers and consumers" (Martinez et al., 2010, p. 3). Simply stated, local products are defined as being produced in the area (Long, 2004). Other components are also often related to local products. One component is sustainability, as well as ethics when producing and distributing local products. Another component is a short supply chain (Martinez et al., 2010; Pratt, 2013). Another viewpoint on local food is given by Bell and Valentine (in Mitchell & Hall, 2003) who mention that a food region always defines itself by the ways of preparing and consuming the dish, not necessarily by the basic product itself. Accordingly, this research considered local food from basic product to specific dishes.

Taking regions and locality into account, Long (2004) stated that a region can be seen as a cultural landscape which is formed by a certain natural environment and the specific cultures living in it. Those areas can also be characterised by special and unique food and beverages that have arisen out of the culture and availability of products and resources. Mitchell and Hall (2003, p. 166), however, argue that it can be difficult to limit the scope of such an area, especially in regard to food, "unique differences within nations are lost".

Perception also plays a role in some definitions. VLAM (*Vlaams Centrum voor Agro- en Visserijmarketing* [the Flemish Association for Agriculture and Fishing], 2012) stated that regional products need to shape a region for at least 25 years before being called a regional product. Regional products are products which are perceived to be typical and traditional for the region by the region itself and other groups of people (VLAM, 2012). All in all, the result for tourism is that the region can be distinguished from other areas, hence, enhancing the brand image (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2011). This definition, based on the perception of locals and other groups, seems, however, to be rather abstract but important, as local products might only have a value for the tourists if they are considered local. Therefore, no detailed attention will be given in this study to the location origin of the products, instead products are considered local if they are perceived as characteristic by locals and tourists.

To elaborate on the economic value of food and its value to the regional tourism value creation, let us look at research conducted by Ab Karim (1994) which shows that tourists spend almost 40% of their budget on food, whereas Eves et al. (n.d.) revealed that tourists' spending on food is up to one third of the total tourist expenditure. More recent (though not very recent) studies support the statement that tourists spend up to one third of their total spending on food (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Skuras et al., 2006; Telfer & Wall, 2000).

Consequently, Ab Karim (1994) stated that a greater focus should be placed on food as being the core product of a destination, while Lin et al. (2011) said that food can also be used in branding a destination. Indeed, food is an important element in constructing or supporting a destination's brand because food is entangled with the social, cultural and natural characteristics of a region (Ab Karim, 1994; Long, 2004). Hence, when discussing food consumption, one must not only look at the direct economic impact (tourist spending), but also at indirect and induced effects in indirectly tourism-related industries, such as the economic benefits of prior steps in the value-creation chain (e.g. agriculture), or the value of contributing to the unique place identity (Freyer, 2005; Page & Connell, 2009).

Method

The method chosen for the research was a quantitative one to reach large sample sizes at different times of the year, and to get a generalisable picture of the tourists visiting the Emsland or the Veenland. The research was conducted in several time frames during the period 2014–2017, from early March until December, in different places in the Emsland and the Veenland. Tourists were those — according to the WTO definition — who stayed at least one night in the region and were over 18 years old. As day-trippers represent an important contribution to the leisure spending in both regions, and indeed, international

day-tripping so close to the Dutch/German border is rather common, day-trippers were also treated as tourists.

Due to the fact that tourism in both regions, specifically in the Veenland, is scattered and small scale, it was a significant point to consider how to sample the tourists. In the end, it was decided to hand out the questionnaire at different tourist spots or tourist facilities during the year. Hence, the questionnaire was displayed at tourist information, hotels, bed and breakfasts, museums and other sites such as the city centres of the biggest cities in the regions and other important tourist spots, such as the Castle Dankern and the Zoo Emmen, or at events in the region. The questionnaire was administered by either Dutch or German native-speaker students so that as far as possible tourists could be addressed in their own languages. In total, 406 questionnaires were filled in in the Emsland, and 594 in the Veenland.

Questionnaire development

The questionnaire was developed on the basis of the literature, but also from interviews that were first conducted.

To discover which local products are most characteristic for each region, the question about which local products first came to mind was asked. The definition that local products only referred to food from raw crops to specific specialties and dishes was included in the introduction to the questionnaire. Later in the questionnaire, an overview of the most characteristic products of each region was given where respondents marked which ones they associated most with the region. To ensure the validity of particularly this list, but also the other questions, expert interviews with the tourism offices or regional heritage funds were conducted because little information on local products from the Emsland/Veenland could be found or referred to in the bigger area (northern Germany/Drenthe), or the information in secondary sources was partially contradictory. However, even the interviews did not always bring clarity as tourism experts of the region had difficulties in naming local products. For example, the tourism board of the Emsland stated that there are no local products for the Emsland, only typical northern German ones, whereas the chairman of the Local Conservation Society of Lingener ("Heimatverein Lingener") was able to name specific local products of the Emsland. The tourism boards in Veenland and Drenthe even denied the existence of local food, which upset the stakeholders of this research who put together the list for Veenland. In addition to the Emmen and Lingener conservation society interviews, a cook of a restaurant for local specialties in Emsland as well as six small-scale entrepreneurs and cooks in the Veenland were also interviewed. Finally, a list for both regions was prepared, taking different interviews into consideration.

In addition to the most characteristic products, the tourists were asked when they got into contact with local products and if they had tried any or planned to consume/buy them. They were also asked if these had played a role in the decision to visit a region in general, to visit the region specifically or to choose a specific site. These questions were based in the literature review to figure out on which side of the spectrum — from culinary or heritage product to simple necessity — local products and dishes are valued.

While product-specific questions were different for the Veenland and the Emsland questionnaire and based on the products named by the experts, the other questions were the same. The questionnaire for both regions was prepared in three different languages (Dutch, German, and English) to ensure

that all local but also international tourists could complete the questionnaire in their own languages. Respondents were informed about the aim and the stakeholders of the research in an introduction to the questionnaire. In relation to ethical considerations, all respondents were over 18 years old and confidentiality and anonymity were respected.

Results and discussion

Description of the respondents

Checking the questionnaire respondent's characteristics against the target tourist groups of both regions, it was found that mainly families and elderly people were among the respondents for both regions. However, it seems that the cities, events and tourist spots also attract younger people in their twenties and early thirties. It is remarkable that almost all tourists in the Veenland region live relatively close to the region. Hence, some of them came from Drenthe, but most of them live in one of the surrounding provinces. However, in the Emsland, the tourists come from greater distances, almost none from the same state. More importantly, more than every eighth visitor to the Emsland was an international visitor (almost three in four a Dutch one, others tourists came from Denmark and the UK), only six international visitors (four Germans, one Belgian and one British citizen) were found among the almost six hundred respondents in the Veenland.

Most characteristic products per region: image and knowledge

In order to obtain an insight into tourists' perception of the major product and/or dish of the Emsland, the respondent were first asked to name a product and/or dish that came to mind when thinking about the Emsland or Veenland. Here, no answer options were given to examine the cognitive associations. This question remained unanswered by more than 60% of Veenland visitors and a bit less than 40% of the Emsland visitors.

Twenty-five per cent of all the respondents in the Veenland indicated that coarse rye bread is a product which they attribute to the region in northern Germany. Furthermore, about 15% of the tourists mentioned *Korn* schnapps and buckwheat pancakes as a typical product of the region, but also potatoes, green cabbage and sweet raisin bread were named.

In the research in the Veenland, that same open question delivered rather non-specific answers such as corn, sausage, honey, cheese, pancakes and only products from the regional sheep, the so-called *Heideschapen*, and the *Hunebed* wine were named as specifically regional specialties. The most mentioned products are corn, *Knipertjes Drenthe* (a sweet waffle), *Heideschapen*, pancakes, *Drentse Koek* (a type of biscuit), *Hunebedden* (which literally refers to a dolmen, but relates to the regional wine of the region), *Krentenwegge* (a kind of sweet bread), cheese and mustard, bread and Drentse milk. Interesting here is that by far the most mentioned product (38% of answers) refers to corn, which is not produced for human consumption but for feeding animals or producing biogas.

Choosing the most typical local products from a given list, *Korn* schnapps, coarse rye bread, buckwheat pancakes, potato meals and also cabbages, and sweet raisin bread were ticked by most participants in the Emsland. However, most of these products were also already mentioned when leaving the question as an open question at the beginning of the questionnaire. Hence, people knew these products straight away. The only product

not named much in the open question but ticked by a quarter of all respondents as being typical for the region is *Korn* (a strong schnapps), which might be due to the fact that they did not think of beverages when being asked about food products in the first questions.

When tourists in the Veenland had to choose local food products from a given list, the *Knipertjes* (waffles) and the local sheep (*heideschapen*) especially stood out. The local *Hunebed* wine is the first common product mentioned by less than 15% of the respondents. However, in opposition to the Emsland, here a difference is recognisable between the respondents living close by or in the same region and to the ones coming from non-neighbouring provinces ($\chi^2 = 44.65$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.013$). Such differences could not be detected in the Emsland region, not even between international visitors and national ones ($\chi^2 = 2.43$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.84$).

An additional question was whether tourists had tried or were planning to try any local products and dishes. The answers were different. In the Emsland, just above 50 per cent of the respondents had tried at least one of the characteristic products of the region. This number was considerably lower in the Veenland, yet, when adding the percentages of the tourists who still plan to try a local dish, the Emsland scores were only about eight per cent higher. However, as the ability to actually name products is relatively low, it is quite likely that tourists consume local products and dishes without being aware of it. This, however, would most likely not have any place attachment or authenticity effect as described in the literature. To use the theory of McIntosh et al. (in Hjalager & Richards, 2002), only physical motivators (and maybe interpersonal ones) are satisfied by this process, whereas cultural (and likely status and prestige) motivators remain rather unimportant.

Regional food products as travel motivator and their contribution to the experience

The main motivation factors for tourists visiting the Emsland was mainly for its landscape, cycle paths (15%) and recreational opportunities (21%). Another pull factor was attractions. Only about five per cent named local products as a pull factor to the Emsland, while twice as many considered local products and dishes as a pull factor in general when making a holiday decision. This shows all the more that while local products may play a role as a motivator in general, even for the target groups present, it is not relevant for the Emsland region. The results for the Veenland region were a little different in that the extent. The tourists estimated the importance of local products as a travel motivator on average lower, yet, the importance of local products in their decision-making process to visit the Veenland was higher. Hence, the general importance of local products for the decision for a destination is only about 30% higher than the influence of local products for the decision to travel to the Veenland. In addition, when ranking the importance of local products for their Emsland or Veenland holiday on a scale from unimportant (1) to important (5), the averages stay below 2, however. In general, the importance of local products in Emsland and Veenland for the tourists is low in their decision-making for a holiday in the region, even lower than the general influence of these ($t = 4.7$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.032$). However, for a small sub-group of the sample, local products play a significant role.

Now an interesting discovery happened when asking tourists to state to what extent local food products were relevant for

their experience of the regions Veenland and Emsland (on the same scale from unimportant (1) to important (5)). This was much higher in the Emsland, with more than 73 per cent assigning importance, compared to only 32% in Veenland. Hence, if tourists recognised and consumed the products, this contributed to their experience ($t = 7.8$, $df = 8$, $p < 0.001$). This mainly happened in the Emsland.

Differences between Veenland and Emsland

The outcome of the research shows that local products do not play an important role in choosing a holiday destination. This applies when tourists to the Emsland or Veenland select a holiday destination in general as well as when referring to the Emsland/Veenland as a tourist destination, while the general motivation coming from local products as a tourism attraction is higher than the one specifically for the region. Therefore, local products function neither as push nor as pull factors (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). Nevertheless, the landscape and nature, the cycle paths as well as the recreational opportunities offered in the Emsland/Veenland serve as pull factors and principal resources since these are the main motivators for the respondents to chose this location. Local products and/or dishes are part of supporting resources as they enhance the attractiveness of the destination, but do not represent the primary motivation factor to decide on a specific holiday destination (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). However, it seems that even this is less applicable in the Emsland/Veenland, as discussed above. Thus, participation in food tourism, according to the definitions is not intentional in the Veenland and Emsland, but rather passive, as a form to satisfy the basic needs of the tourists (Kim, Eves & Scarles, 2009).

Tourists have knowledge about local products of the region, however, they cannot link them well to the region, in many cases only when given a list with the products. Recognition was significantly less in the Veenland than in the Emsland. This also resulted in enormous differences in the extent to which local food was relevant to their experience, which mainly happened in the Emsland. Hence, the Veenland tourists, in their perception, do not benefit much from the local food products.

Moreover, the participants' cognitive associations of local products and/or dishes match most of the findings revealed in expert interviews. Thus, in the Emsland, coarse rye bread, *Korn* schnapps and buckwheat pancakes are perceived to be the most important products or dishes. Nonetheless, some products such as potatoes or green cabbage were named which have not been identified as typical for only the Emsland region, but is more so for northern Germany.

Surprisingly, the most named products for the Veenland region were neither specifically from Veenland nor regional, but were either landscape integrated (corn) or Dutch (e.g. cheese) in general. However, a significant number of respondents are able to name products mentioned also by the experts. While it seemed to be more difficult for the tourists in the Veenland than in the Emsland to identify local products, when given a list of local products, items were recognised more easily in both regions. In Emsland, where tourists were in generally better at naming the same local products also identified by the experts, these products were recognised more often after the list was offered too. Therefore it can be assumed that participants are more likely to recognise a typical product and/or dish if provided with a list of items.

Only in the Emsland region, the perception of local food has consequences for further benefits of the region such as a regional multiplier effect. Respondents, for example, specifically mentioned visiting restaurants to eat buckwheat pancakes. Visiting restaurants or shops where local food is bought was not overly common in both regions, yet, in the Emsland (19.8%) almost three times higher than in the Veenland (7.4%). However, to draw further conclusions on this, more research is needed. In general, half of the respondents indicated that they had already experienced products and/or dishes of the Emsland (buckwheat pancake, *Korn* schnapps and coarse rye bread). However, it can be assumed that several who answered in the negative with this question might have experienced the products unwittingly. Most likely this is all the more applicable for the Veenland, where the identification of local products was more difficult.

An interesting outcome concerning the Veenland occurred where tourists had difficulties naming specific local products, and where not only general Dutch products (e.g. cheese) were named, but that corn was most often. Obviously, the research was conducted during the visits of the tourists and corn fields might stand out as a sight in the landscape. A possible explanation might here be that tourists automatically link the site to a product, hence as the corn fields shape the landscape, corn must be a characteristic local product.

Conclusion

The research has shown that local products and/or dishes do not play an important role in the decision-making process to visit the Emsland or the Veenland. However, there seems to be potential to be used in both areas, as food plays a more significant role for destinations in general than for the specific destination of Emsland/Veenland. Accordingly, when recognition of local products as local is missing, the chain to contribute to the experience breaks. Hence, particularly in the Veenland, where local food products are barely recognised, they cannot contribute to the experience. A resulting outcome is that tourists do not actively search for or consume local food, which accordingly results in less income due to the missing multiplier in the region.

One remarkable outcome is that despite tourists coming from further away in the Emsland than in the Veenland, tourists are better and more specific at naming local products. The products named by the tourists correspond more with the products given by the experts and were named more specifically (e.g. "buckwheat pancakes" at the Emsland region instead of just "pancakes" in the Veenland region). The products mentioned in the Veenland are also more characteristic for a bigger region or even the Netherlands itself than only for the Veenland region. If tourists were not able to mention any products from the Veenland region, they mentioned products they saw in the surrounding landscape such as corn. To conclude: Tourists had a better picture of the local products of the Emsland and therewith these can be easily integrated into the tourism product of the region as being a characteristic. This also means, that place attachment, authenticity and the heritage function as mentioned in the theoretical functions of local food is less applicable for the Veenland than the Emsland.

Hence, the issue remains: tourists spend on and consume local products, most likely without knowing or appreciating these as local products. Hence, important functions of local products and

food in tourism are not yet used. Relating this outcome to the motivators of tourists stated in the literature, it implies that while local products might not become a principal resource for the region, the potential as supporting resource has not been fully realised either. Considering trends and buzzwords in tourism such as sustainability, authenticity and sense of place, there seems to be more potential in using the local products of the Emsland and the Veenland for tourism purposes, especially as more tourists have indicated being generally interested in local products than the ones where the local food of the Emsland/Veenland actually played a motivator role in visiting the region.

Recommendations for further research

The research specifically focused on the most characteristic products of the Emsland/Veenland and to what extent these played a role in the decision-making process or the tourism experience. However, as stated in the literature, integrating the tourists into the production processes and background might be a significant tourism experience, increasing place attachment and a feeling of authenticity, with the tourist even more as a participant. To include the relationship between the production or the integration of the product and its backgrounds into the tourism product and the place attachment and experience of the product plus resulting economic effects seems an interesting option for further research and, indeed, an interesting possibility to integrate a production chain stage of a single local product or dish into the tourism product of a region. All the more since literature stated that — in an increasingly international world — products are getting more similar, while the production process stays more characteristic for a region.

A remarkable outcome of the research was that tourists — when they are not able to name characteristic products of the region — do not only name products and dishes which are typical for the bigger region or country they visit, but start to link regional characteristics of the landscape like the corn fields shaping the land and therewith leaving corn as a local product in the opinion of the tourist. It seems that this point might need further attention to see to what extent this statement is generalisable and if or how this can be used in the integration of (the production process of) local products into the tourism product and the promotion of these for tourism purposes.

References

- Ab Karim, S. (1994). *Culinary Tourism as a Destination attraction: an empirical examination of the destination's food image and information sources*. <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/etd/umi-okstate-1962.pdf>
- Bessière, J. (1998). Local development and Heritage: Traditional food and cuisine as a tourist attractions in rural areas. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 38(1), 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9523.00061>
- DrentsGoed. (2012). *Streekproducten*. [Product of Drenthe]. http://www.drentsgoedstreekproducten.nl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=12&Itemid=26
- Emsland. (2012). *Emsland bei Übernachtungen im Spitzenfeld* [Emsland at the very top with overnight stays]. http://www.emsland.de/aktuell/pressemitteilungen/emsland_bei_uebernachtungen_im_spitzenfeld.html
- Emsland. (2013). *Kreisbeschreibung* [Description of the district]. http://www.emsland.de/das_emsland/kreisbeschreibung/kreisbeschreibung/kreisbeschreibung.html
- Emsland. (2018). *Pressemitteilungen* [Press releases]. http://www.emsland.de/aktuell/pressemitteilungen/emsland_zaeht_zu_den_grossen_gewinnern.html

- Everett, S. (2008). Beyond the visual gaze?: The pursuit of an embodied experience through food tourism. *Tourist Studies*, 8(3), 337-358. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797608100594>
- Eves, A., Lumbers, M., & Mak, A. H. N. (n.d.). *Globalization and food consumption in tourism*. http://eprints.surrey.ac.uk/202037/3/EVES_Globalisation_Food_Consumption_2012.pdf
- Fields, K. (2003). Demand for the gastronomy tourism product: motivational factors. In A. M. Hjalager & G. Richards (eds), *Tourism and gastronomy* (pp. 50-64). London: Routledge.
- Freyer, W. (2005). *Tourismus: Einführung in die Fremdenverkehrsökonomie* [Tourism: An introduction into the business of tourism]. Dresden: Oldenbourg.
- Hall, M., & Mitchell, R. (2003). Tourism as a force for gastronomic globalization and localization. In A. M. Hjalager & G. Richards (eds), *Tourism and gastronomy* (pp. 85-102). London: Routledge.
- Hall, C. M., Sharples, L., Mitchell, R., Macionis, N., & Cambourne, B. (2003). *Food tourism around the world: Development, Management and Markets*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Harrington, R. J., & Ottenbacher, M. C. (2011). A case study of a culinary tourism campaign in Germany: Implications for strategy making and successful implementation. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* (Washington, D.C.), 37(1), 3-28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348011>
- Haven-Tang, C., & Jones, E. (2012). Local leadership for rural tourism development: A case study of Adventa, Monmouthshire, UK. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 4(1), 28-35.
- Het Drentse Veenland. (n.d.). *Genieten in het Drentse Veenland* [Enjoy the Veenland of Drenthe]. <http://www.gastvrijveenland.nl/>
- Hjalager, A. M., & Johansen, P. H. (2013). Food tourism in protected areas - sustainability for producers, environment and tourism? *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 21(3), 417-433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2012.708041>
- Hjalager, A.M. & Richards, G. (eds). (2002). *Tourism and Gastronomy*. London: Routledge.
- Kim, Y. G. & Eves, A. (2012). Construction and validation of a scale to measure tourist motivation to consume local food. *Tourism Management*, 33(6), 1458-1476.
- Kim, Y. G., Eves, A., & Scarles, C. (2009). Building a model of local food consumption on trips and holidays: A grounded theory approach. *International journal of hospitality management*, 28(3), 423-431.
- Lin, Y.-C., Pearson, T. E., & Cai, L. A. (2011). Food as a form of destination identity: A tourism destination brand perspective. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 11(1), 30-48. <https://doi.org/10.1057/thr.2010.22>
- Long, L. M. (2004). *Culinary tourism*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.
- López-Guzmán, T., Sánchez-Cañizares, S., & Pavón, V. (2011). Community-based tourism in developing countries: a case study. *Tourismos*, 6(1), 69-84.
- Mak, A. H., Lumbers, M., Eves, A., & Chang, R. C. (2012). Factors influencing tourist food consumption. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31(3), 928-936.
- Martinez, S. Hand, M., Da Pra, M., Pollack, S., Ralston, K., Smith, T., & Newman, C. (2010). *Local food systems: Concepts, impacts, and issues*. ERR 97. US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 5.
- McIntosh, R. W., Goeldner, C. R., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (1995). *Tourism: principles, practices, philosophies*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Medina, L. K. (2005). Ecotourism and certification: Confronting the principles and pragmatics of socially responsible tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 13(3), 281-295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434630508668557>
- Mitchell, R., & Hall, C. M. (2006). Wine tourism research: the state of play. *Tourism Review International*, 9(4), 307-332.
- Natuurpark Veenland. (n.d.). *Hartelijk welkom in het Internationale Natuurpark Veenland* [Welcome to the International nature park of Veenland]. <http://www.natuurpark-veenland.nl/nl/natuurpark/index.php>
- Page, S. (1995). *Urban tourism*. London: Routledge.
- Page, S., & Connell, J. (2009). *Tourism - a modern synthesis*. Hampshire: Cengage Learning.
- Pratt, S. (2013). Minimising food miles: Issues and outcomes in an ecotourism venture in Fiji. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 21(8), 1148-1165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2013.776060>
- Sims, R. (2009). Food, place and authenticity: Local food and the sustainable tourism experience. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 17(3), 321-336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669580802359293>
- Skuras, D., Dimara, E., & Petrou, A. (2006). Rural tourism and visitors' expenditures for local food products. *Regional Studies*, 40(7), 769-779. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343400600660771>
- Telfer, D. J., & Wall, G. (2000). Strengthening backward economic linkages: Local food purchasing by three Indonesian hotels. *Tourism Geographies: An International Journal of Tourism Space, Place and Environment*, 2(4), 421-447.
- VLAM (Vlaams Centrum voor Agro- en Visserijmarketing). (2012). *Traditionele streekproducten definitie*. [Definition of traditional local (food) products] <http://www.streekproduct.be/steunpunt/detail.phtml?id=14>
- World Food Travel Association. (n.d.). Food travel. Masterclass handout. Unpublished.
- World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). (2012). *Global Report on Food Tourism*. AM Reports: vol. 4. Spain: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). http://dtxqtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/food_tourism_ok.pdf
- Yeoman, I. (2015). *The Future of Food Tourism*. Bristol: Channel View.

