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Abstract

This paper investigated food development in the southern part of Rogaland County in south-western Norway. Food is considered a local development part in many municipalities in Norway in terms of new business, employment, etc. This region includes some of the more spectacular geographical structures openly visible in nature. The aim of the study was to investigate the development of food based on a broad understanding in this region. The method used was CurroCus® group interviews, or fast focus groups. Six CurroCus® groups were used, and they completed their participation in six hours. Altogether, 39 persons participated from different age groups consisting of both genders. They were asked to discuss different conditions concerning local food, food festivals, food offers, food producers, and different sales outlets in the region. All interviews were recorded, and two observers took notes during each interview. The empirical data were analysed using a grounded theory approach. According to the findings, some important areas indicate the need for an increased focus for development in the region. Six main categories represented the interpretation from the CurroCus® groups on local food. The main conclusions drawn highlight the region's several possibilities and challenges for food development as well as several areas that need further research in the future.

Keywords

Local Food, Grounded Theory, Knowledge Development

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Investigating Food Development in an Area of Norway: An Explorative Study Using a Grounded Theory Approach

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This paper investigated food development in the southern part of Rogaland County in south-western Norway. Food is considered a local development part in many municipalities in Norway in terms of new business, employment, etc. This region includes some of the more spectacular geographical structures openly visible in nature. The aim of the study was to investigate the development of food based on a broad understanding in this region. The method used was CurroCus® group interviews, or fast focus groups. Six CurroCus® groups were used, and they completed their participation in six hours. Altogether, 39 persons participated from different age groups consisting of both genders. They were asked to discuss different conditions concerning local food, food festivals, food offers, food producers, and different sales outlets in the region. All interviews were recorded, and two observers took notes during each interview. The empirical data were analysed using a grounded theory approach. According to the findings, some important areas indicate the need for an increased focus for development in the region. Six main categories represented the interpretation from the CurroCus® groups on local food. The main conclusions drawn highlight the region's several possibilities and challenges for food development as well as several areas that need further research in the future. Keywords: Local Food, Grounded Theory, Knowledge Development

This paper started with a request from Magma Geopark to the University of Stavanger, Norwegian School of Hotel Management. Magma Geopark, as an approved geopark, must be able to prove that it has geology of “European interest.” The Magma Geopark area is characterized by important geology, documented by the detailed scientific description of the application dossier to the European and Global Geoparks Network (Geopark, 2014b). They wanted an explorative study conducted to increase knowledge about food in the area, people interested in food and geology, food in combination with other industries, and topics related to the Dalane region of Rogaland County. This area, located in the south-western part of Norway, needed an investigation of their food offers in the area, possibilities, challenges, different types of food production in the area, and how food offers are related to geology tourists. Geoparks focus on, promote, and support the protection of geological heritage (Wójtowicz, Strachowka, & Strzyz, 2011). Therefore, restaurants, accommodations, and other sights the tourist have to find are outside the main scope of the geopark. The focus on tourism is very weak and on food or meals is absent in papers related to geoparks (Azman, Halim, Liu, Saidin, & Komoo, 2010; Booth & Brayson, 2011; Whiteley & Browne, 2012). Such articles mentioned that the focus was entirely on geoparks and geology, whereas mentions of restaurants or food were minimized.

Rogaland County considers itself the “Food County” of Norway (iRogaland, 2013). This statement is related to Norway’s biggest fish factory situated in Egersund. Rogaland County is the largest producer of tomatoes in Norway, with 80% of tomatoes being produced here. The county is considered a “20% county,” meaning it accounts for 20% of the food

production in Norway. This phrase is often used to describe areas in Norway with a large production of food.

The food industry in Rogaland County is spread into different sectors, including research and development on food, raw materials, and fish farming, especially salmon and halibut. House of Meals is a building housing different companies related to the food industry, from big companies such as Tine (a dairy company) and NOFIMA (a food research company) to small companies with a few employees, such as the GladMat Festival (Happy Food Festival) and Blue Planet (a fish market consultant company).

Food development directed towards tourism and geopark tourism can be understood as co-creation experiences in this paper (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Prebensen & Foss, 2011). The role of local food in tourism is scantily included or almost non-existent in papers dealing with geoparks. The aim of this paper is to report how local food is experienced in an area which includes a geopark. Magma Geopark is located in south-west Norway in Rogaland County. The municipality, Egersund, has approximately 14636 inhabitants (SSB, 2014). Food is seen as an interesting and important area for both tourism and local inhabitants in this region. Co-creation can be seen as the host and guests co-creating value together through their experiences (Prebensen & Foss, 2011). Prebensen and Foss's statement includes the concept from the co-creation theory that customers participating in the experience increase value and are willing to pay a higher amount for the service or product.

Local food as part of tourism in an area is often researched from the destination marketer's perspective to enable the destination can develop effective strategies for gastronomic promotion in their area and as a basis for future and further research in food and meal development (Mak, Lumbers, & Eves, 2012). The literature divides food consumption into four main areas as described by Mak et al. (2012): "food as a tourist product/attraction, tourists' food consumption behaviour/pattern, tourists' dining experiences, and tourists' special interests in various food and beverages and related events/activities in destinations" (p. 176). In understanding local food and cuisine, Mak et al. (2012, p. 188) claimed that tourism can have a considerable impact on food production and consumption at a destination (Hall & Mitchell, 2002).

Customers' choices of products and services are growing day by day, and more customers are composing their own sets of experiences and must-see sites (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The interaction between the host and the guests becomes more and more important for the increased value creation and for creating a more direct dialogue with the consumer (Kotler, Kartajaya, Setiawan, & Knudsen, 2010). When consumers participate in creating their own meal experience, such as by choosing from a number of ingredients and thus creating their "own" twist for a dish, they might pay a higher price but be willing to do so because it is something they created. It also becomes a unique experience as they might have the opportunity to give their dish a name and be on the restaurant menu for the subsequent week as a signature course for the restaurant involved.

Co-creation includes a lot more than the experiences, services, and products offered by only one company, but include the environment in that area (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). This demands that companies need to have extended knowledge about their customers. From the customers' points of view, they need to be aware of their risk in the co-creation and also that they have responsibilities. Co-creation also involves creating something with other people in different situations, as explained by Prebensen and Foss (2011).

Value co-creation can be observed as customers helping and serving themselves (Meuter, Ostrom, Roundtree, & Bitner, 2000), cooperating with the company (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003; Vargo, 2008), and participating with company and other consumers (Prebensen & Foss, 2011).

The aim of the current study was to investigate the development of food to provide a broad understanding of this region and the potential for co-creation to increase value among different stakeholders in the region.

Method

The area of Dalane, in Norway, has been the context for a limited amount of research in terms of local food products and meals. A local innovative company wanted this area mapped with a focus on a wide range of local food products. Explorative approaches seem appropriate, and a form of fast focus group interviews were chosen to collect empirical data from people interested in food and meals who are already in the food industry or planning to join it in the near future. The CurroCus® group interview method was chosen for this study (Hansen & Kraggerud, 2011).

The reason for using an alternative type of group interviews was to gather empirical data in a shorter time than by traditional focus groups. Normally, traditional focus groups can be categorized as full focus groups, mini-focus groups, or telephone focus groups, with each lasting 90 to 120 minutes (Greenbaum, 1998). Using the CurroCus® method instead of traditional group interviews can also reduce the cost of conducting the interviews.

The data were collected on one day using the CurroCus® group interview method; this method represents an alternative way of collecting data from groups of participants and shares several similarities with traditional focus group interviews. The main difference is that the CurroCus® group interviews consist of two main parts: a questionnaire, where participants have a short time to write down answers (normally 1 minute per written question), and an interview part that must not be too widespread. Written data were collected from the first part of the interview, when the questionnaire was administered to each respondent to complete in a given time at the start of the CurroCus® group interview (Hansen & Kraggerud, 2011). A CurroCus® group interview lasts for a short time, between 15 and 45 minutes, and the average for questions that have to be answered in writing 10 minutes per question. A 30-minute CurroCus® group interview starts with a questionnaire of 3 written questions that need to be answered at the beginning of the interview. The rest of the interview follows a carefully developed moderator guide for the interview. Usually, two trained observers take notes and oversee the CurroCus® group interview. They are either in a separate room with one-way mirrors or discreetly placed in the same room. The CurroCus® group interview is also recorded with sound and/or video so that each interview can be examined later. In addition, the moderator makes his/her own notes during the interview.

The respondents in this specific research were informed via the newspaper advertisement that they would be treated with complete anonymity (Appendix A). Once they entered the interview premises, they were again asked if they agreed to voice recording; if they did not agree, they were free to leave the interview premises. All respondents agreed to these conditions, and the interviews were carried out as planned. No personal information about the respondents was stored or collected, neither on tape nor in written forms.

In this paper, the data collection followed the CurroCus® group interview principles. Altogether, 37 participants participated, and their ages ranged from 18 to 60. The participants were selected after they responded to a newspaper notice or a notice on the Magma Geopark website (Geopark, 2014a). The newspaper notice was published once. The data collection was conducted in one day, requiring six hours total. Each group consisted of five to nine participants. All participants were welcomed to the CurroCus® group interview room, and thereafter they answered four written questions on one sheet of paper. Four minutes later, they handed in the questionnaires to the moderator. Each group used between 45 and 48 minutes for the entire process. Respondents were asked to discuss different circumstances

regarding local food, food festivals, food supply, food producers, and food outlets in the Dalane region in Rogaland County. For each group, two trained observers were present in the same room; they took notes and made their own reflections. They were handed to the moderator after the end of the interview day. Empirical data were collected from four different sources: questionnaires, observers' notes, moderator notes, and recordings of interviews.

Analysing the Interviews

The grounded theory analysis process can be divided into the following stages: collection of raw data, open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and research findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 1997). Grounded theory is an inductive method that can help discover new aspects that have not previously been revealed. During the coding process, different findings are labelled and integrated into new categories on continuously higher abstraction levels (see Figure 1). Grounded theory procedures make it possible to handle the qualitative data from focus group interviews. Grounded theory can be used in various situations and adjusted to fit in each personal style (Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 1997).

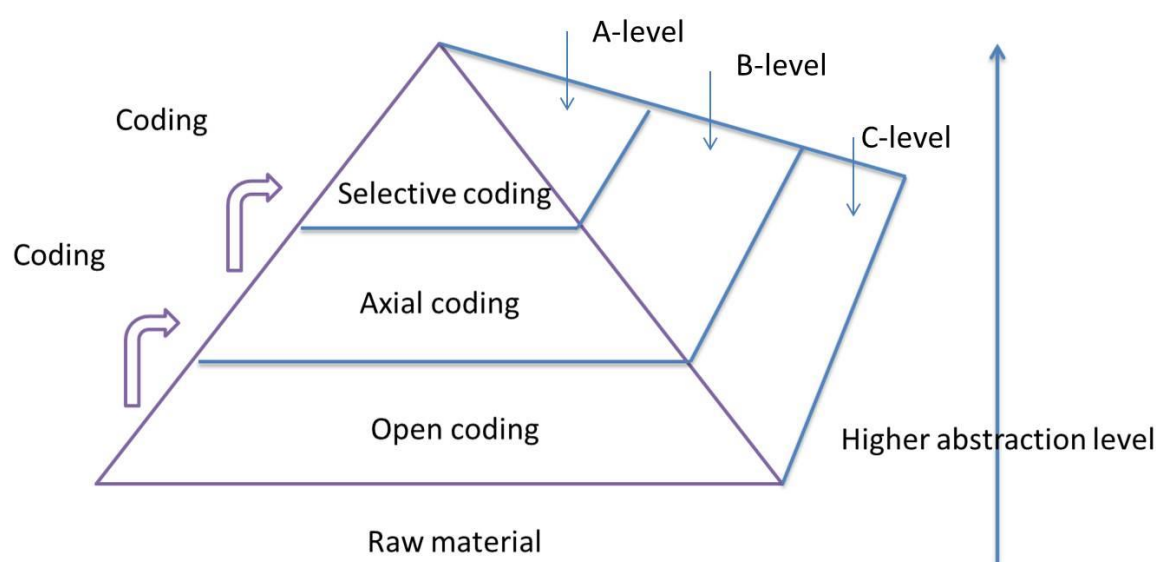


Figure 1. Illustrative model of coding and abstraction levels in grounded theory

The coding followed a grounded theory approach (Hansen, 2005; Hansen, Jensen, & Gustafsson, 2005) that includes the forming of codes by analysing the empirical data from the raw material. Coding started with open coding, categorising the different codes into groups on a higher abstraction level for each level as the categories surfaced from each level. In this particular research, different words, phrases, statements, and sentences were analysed, resulting in new labels that were found and derived from open and axial coding (Hansen, Jensen, & Gustafsson, 2004). Selective coding was based on the selection of the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating the identified relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development.

Findings

The findings were based on the categories and codes from the analyses of the CurroCus® group interview data and the three other sources of empirical data, as previously described in the method section. The findings are from the participants' interpretations of local foods, food festivals, food supply, food producers, and food outlets in the Dalane region in Rogaland County. The findings are reported on B-level categories and A-level categories.

The A-level categories are the main findings and equal the selective coding in Figure 1 and the highest abstraction level of the B-level categories. The C-level equals the open codes in the grounded theory (GT) coding in Figure 1. Then the B-level categories follow on a higher abstraction level and equal axial coding in GT. The last stage is the A-level categories which also represent the main finding and equal selective coding in GT (Figure 1). The long, straight arrow indicates the increasingly higher abstraction levels.

Sub-categories on B-level

Twenty-two categories surfaced at the B-level in this analysis. They are consecutively numbered, from 1 to 22. All are discussed consecutively, and they are not ranged. When necessary, the B-level categories are supported by C-level categories, but they are not the focus in this paper.

1. Products

Products include a number of local products produced in the region investigated. The span is great and includes products such as juice from different berries, berries, meat, food writing, food blogging, and the sale of fishing licenses. Different types of fish and shellfish are found in the area and a substantial amount is locally produced, but the availability is not satisfactory as there is no fishmonger in the area. The overall knowledge about local food products is good, but according to the interview, the knowledge between the first and the last interview varies to a great degree, and the knowledge is distributed differently among the groups.

2. Customers

The client base is scattered, and the customers are located in the district, nearby regions, the rest of the country, and abroad. Many of the companies are related to local and regional customers, but some have customers from other parts of Norway and abroad. Some of the companies sell to the meeting and conference market. In some cases, the production method or rules and regulations for sales, such as for livestock or honey, that regulate the number of customers. Foreign customers came especially from France, Germany, and Switzerland. Some customers are described as campers, salmon fishermen, or those who just shop for local food products. Not only tourists stay overnight; some workers in the region use local inns. The biggest fish factory in the district exports 95% of its production abroad. Nortura SA, one of the leading suppliers of meat and eggs in Norway (Nortura, 2014), acts as both a customer buying meat and egg from farmers and a collaborator, working with the farmers to raise the best animals.

3. Companies

The respondents mentioned approximately 25 companies by their full names; some were mentioned several times. This shows that several local companies in the food business are located in this area. Many are small companies with few employees, and a few have a high number of employees compared to Norwegian standards regarding the number of employees and turnover. The companies work in different businesses, such as camping, accommodations, feeding, and farming as well as the processing of raw materials such as juice, fish, berries, honey, and Christmas rolls.

4. Production of Different Goods

The production of different goods can be divided into two sections: the production of food or other local products that was already ongoing in the companies and participants with plans to start production in the near future. Here were found berry production, the sale of accommodations, restaurants, the sale of fishing licenses, and different types of local products, such as bread, fish, ice cream, honey, and soap.

5. Meeting Points

Meeting points for existing companies and people who wish to start new companies differ a bit, but in general there are several meeting points for both groups. The work done by the community development representative was pointed out as being extremely important for many entrepreneurs and companies and was mentioned very positively. One meeting point often used was Farmer Company (Felleskjøpet), where they could meet and have coffee breaks while engaging in fresh discussions. There they could discuss different challenges in their daily work, giving and receiving information. They see themselves as independent “general managers” with limited time to meet other farmers in the same situation; therefore, the meeting point at Farmer Company becomes a place for like-minded people. There are several meeting points for people working with local food and festivals. Some other meeting points for local producers are the farmers market, Christmas City, Culture Festival, the Earls Market, and Bjerkreims Market. In addition, the local gas station—ESSO (Exxon)—and the local grocery store were pointed out as important meeting points like the one at Farmer Company. There they learn from each other, such as how to write applications for different purposes.

6. Outlet Points

Local food outlet points were described by the respondents both orally and in the written questionnaires. Local food outlet points include eating establishments, production sites, hotels, cafes, and farm outlets. Several national and local supermarket chains sell local food products or locally produced food products, including—among others—COOP, KIWI, REMA 1000, and Helgø. The Helgø supermarket was positively mentioned by the respondents, especially for their kindness towards local food products and from small producers. Other sales outlets for local food that were mentioned are Grand Hotel Egersund, Sogndalstand Culture Hotel, Grøsfjeld Meat, Fon Egersund (fish factory), Moi Hotel, Egersund Chocolate Factory, Dybing Farm, Fjermestad Farm, Veen Farm Camping, and Røysland Farm. The list of local companies is not complete. The outlet points and grocery shops offer a large range of local foods and are not complete in any of them. Respondents in

all groups wished for outlets that sold local food products in the area with an extensive range of products primarily produced locally.

7. Future Outlet Sale Points

The respondents have several spots for future outlets for local food in the region. Several respondents point out that an outlet for local products should be located close to Highway E39 to give easier access to customers. Other respondents suggested at least two smaller local farmer outlets that sell locally produced food in the region. Another recommendation is a wish for increased visibility for local food products in local supermarkets, either as a dedicated area in the supermarket or a shelf devoted to local food products. The Helgø supermarket was again mentioned in a positive manner as a place where local food products are welcomed and as a natural place to offer local food products in the future.

8. Paradox

Several paradoxes were presented by the respondents in this study. At least three main paradoxes were emphasised. First, Egersund (the biggest city in the region), located along the sea and home to Norway's biggest fish factory, does not have a good sales outlet for fish and shellfish. Second, the willingness of residents in the area to pay for a decent meal or food differs from their willingness to pay in the nearby big city, Stavanger, according to the respondents. Finally, local food shops are closed during the main tourist season (i.e., summertime).

The first paradox relates to customers' difficulties to get fresh fish and shellfish, even though the fish is caught in Egersund. The respondents reported that the fish is at least 2 days old when it reaches consumers in Egersund and the Dalane region. Several restaurants and cafes in the region serve fish and shellfish, but insist on having even fresher seafood products. Both consumers and companies would like to have the possibility to buy fresh seafood products from a fishmonger and/or seafood directly from fishermen and their boats.

The respondents experience the paradox that inhabitants in the region consider it expensive to buy local food products in the region, but their willingness to pay more for the same in Stavanger or other places outside the region is acceptable. According to them, food should cost as little as possible locally, whereas they are willing to pay more for local food products when they travel.

The last paradox is the local shops selling regional food products that are closed during summertime. During that time of the year, many tourists and others visit the region, but they have a harder time finding local food products because the shops are closed in the summer.

9. Create Network

Several networks are available, such as farmers associations and Visit Dalane (a regional tourism organisation); another way of getting one's own network is by participating in courses arranged by Innovation Norway. The farmers' representatives play an important role in the region. Their main job is to help farmers develop their farms and create specialised networks for them. All respondents thought that their work is very important and gives them confidence in established companies as well as other company founders planning to start a company.

10. Resignation

Among some respondents, resignation can be experienced as a number of meetings about local food and the like have not resulted in any meaningful outcomes. Hence, some reluctance can be experienced related to the outcome of this research paper. However, they look forward to reading the findings in this investigation.

11. Norwegian Food Safety Authority

The Norwegian Food Safety Authority was mentioned based on respondents' different experiences. The number of laws, rules, regulations, and directives as companies is affected by whether companies are small or big. The requirements for a small company—1 or 2 employees—are the same as for a bigger company in terms of the size of production facilities, as reported by the respondents. A big company has employees to oversee different requirements, but that can be limited for a small company. This has led to a closing down for some small producers if they cannot invest in necessary production facilities. On the positive side, the respondents reported that, if the Norwegian Food Safety Authority is contacted early on, they can be very helpful in the start-up process for a local food production facility.

12. Local Food Concept

Respondents did not have a common agreement about the local food concept definition or description. The disagreement encompasses the distance regarding what can be defined as local food from the region versus from other parts of Norway. It can also refer to where the food is produced and varies if the raw materials can be produced in the area or are growing naturally in the region compared to plants or animals not naturally found in the area, but are instead imported into the region.

13. Wish for the Future

Respondents in the different CurroCus® groups expressed different wishes for the future, including a fishmonger shop in Egersund that is open all year around as well as a fishing boat selling fish and seafood in the harbour. Another wish that several of the respondents mentioned was the desire to process the food in some form so it can be resold at a higher price. In this case, the national food authority can be perceived as an impediment. Freshwater fish also holds a quantified potential as a resource; if it could be processed locally, it could offer great potential in terms of tax, employment, and development locally.

14. A Preferred Dialog

A preferred dialog represents the respondents' response that encompasses a wish for more contact among suppliers, manufacturers, and local outlets for local food. Today, the production of local food is not adjusted for demand, and season variations create more challenges for the receivers of locally produced food. A closer dialog between the manufacturers and receivers of local food would ensure steadier production. The desire for this dialog was voiced by all parts and should be organized by the parts.

15. Fish

Fresh fish is perceived to be goods in short supply. The respondents demand fresh fish and shellfish, but they are surprised that it is not possible to get these products in Norway's biggest fishing harbour. A truck sells fish in the town square in Egersund a few days each month, and historically another one drove around in the region selling fish and other seafood. The Fon fish factory exports almost its entire production of fish abroad, delivering only a small amount of fish to local companies and consumers in the region despite the clear demand for a fish sales outlet in Egersund.

16. Knowledge Collection

The collection of knowledge is important for increased understanding about local food and food production. Several of the respondents stated a desire to increase their knowledge about local food. There is a great attention to local food in the region. Different networks assist in spreading knowledge, such as the farmers' representative, The Norwegian University College for Agriculture and Rural Development at Nærbø, Innovation Norway, and the Culinary Institute of Norway. These and many others assist in increasing knowledge in the region.

17. Revitalization

Respondents considered the collection and revitalization of old recipes to be important because they recognize the need to preserve knowledge before it disappears with the old people who possess it and because the revitalization has an opportunity to communicate this knowledge with younger generations. The variation in recipes is high and can vary from farm to farm, such as how they make *lefse*, a type of Norwegian griddle cake.

18. Motivation

Motivation refers to local residents appreciating locally produced food and believing in the products. Local people also need to be proud of their local food products and use their word of mouth to let others know about their products. The people who work with producing local food need to be very dedicated to their projects and almost be "dying" to ensure success.

19. Nature

The region has a lot of nature to offer visitors and inhabitants. Freshwater fishing has been going on for several years, fishing for salmon and the sales of fishing licenses often occur in combination with accommodations and services. Another area for developing more business is in the cutting and polishing of stone. The nature is also in a geologically interesting area; indeed, this is one of the reasons for establishing the Magma Geopark in this area.

20. Homepage

All respondents indicated the need to have a homepage on the internet to provide an overview of local food offers, festivals, and other information. Such a homepage will also need all types of necessary information about the products or services and where visitors can

order the products. The respondents often find it hard to find information about local food, including what is produced and when. The marketing of local food has been limited, and a home page could give increased attention and transfer knowledge between companies and consumers.

21. Quality

The respondents have experienced the delivery of quality for those producing something. The producers of local food are proud of their products, but they are not as good as others are in promoting and marketing their products, such as advertising the “world’s best” potatoes. The quality has to be perceived and experienced by the customers in the way the products are branded and marketed. Increased information and knowledge transfer for how the products can be used by the consumers. A marketing campaign would give the consumers more information about the different products and illuminate the regions offer.

22. Price

The respondents’ understanding of price is connected with what they expect their products to be worth and what they get from the buyers. They also experience a higher willingness to pay for the same products when they travel. When the consumers travel to other regions, such as Stavanger, their understanding of price is different. It is important to communicate the benefits of local food products and thereby enhance the value added local food and increase the sales of local food in the region.

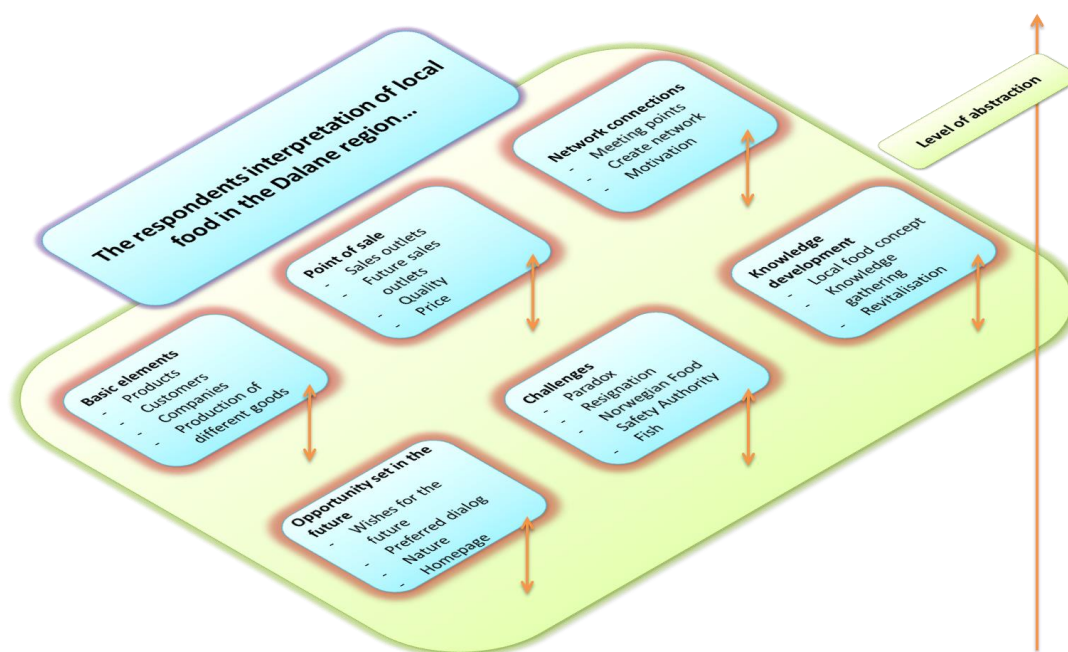


Figure 2 Conceptual model of the respondents’ interpretation of local food in the Dalane region

Main Categories in the A-level

The 22 B-level categories are gathered into six main categories in the A-level based on the interpretation of respondents’ experiences in the Dalane region in terms of local food, sales outlets, and festivals.

1) *Basic Elements*

The category *Basic elements* includes the following sub-categories in the B-level: products, customers, companies, and production of goods. The production of local products is varied and versatile, with few big production facilities. Some of the production is done by workers employed half- or part-time in different seasons. A few produce throughout the entire year whereas some produce goods only as a hobby. Customers are mainly from the region, although others come from nearby regions in the north and south. There is also client base from other parts of Norway.

2) *Points of Sale*

Points of sale encompasses the following sub-categories in the B-level: sales outlets, future sales outlets, quality, and price. Few sales outlets provide locally produced food, either directly from the manufacturer or from supermarkets. None has a complete selection of local food. Respondents suggested the need for at least two points of sale in the region for local food. The focus on the quality of local food products is high according to respondents, but producers seems to lack the ability to market their products. Price level is perceived as being acceptable by the manufacturers, but in the high end by the receivers.

3) *Network Connections*

The category *Network Connections* includes the following B-level sub-categories: meeting points, create networks, and motivation. Several meeting points exist for different manufacturers of local food. One of the most highlighted is the representative for farmers that seems to hold an important and main position for the farmers' development in the region, mainly because the representative is available and helpful for the farmers in terms of business development and agricultural questions related to forming networks. Some respondents create their own networks, and participation in courses is an important source of inspiration for them, especially networks that give the respondents increased competency in product development, the start-up of a new business, or the pursuit of new business ideas.

4) *Opportunity Set in the Future*

The category *Opportunity set in the future* has the following B-level categories: wishes for the future, preferred dialog, nature, and homepage. A homepage that covers the entire region of Dalane offers great potential it according to the respondents, although it is not clear who will run it, when, or where. Shops that sell fishing licences and fishing opportunities are important for the region. A closer dialog between suppliers and manufacturers of local food would ensure more stable delivery and predictability for the consumers. The nature in the area gives room for several opportunities, like for recreation purposes, knowledge transfer, and fishing for freshwater fish or hunting on a commercial basis.

5) *Challenges*

The *Challenges* category encompasses the following B-level categories: paradoxes, resignation, the Norwegian Food Safety Authority, and fish. Respondents focused on several paradoxes. First, the supply of fresh fish from the sea is low compared to that in Egersund,

the biggest fishing harbour in Norway. One challenge is the price level that should be in the region compared to other surrounding regions. It is also important to visualize what comes out of research, meetings, and workshops in terms of tourism and local food in the region. The Norwegian Food Safety Authority is in charge of laws and regulations, and respondents indicated that they have a big potential to approach new small food businesses.

6) Knowledge Development

Knowledge development includes the following B-level categories: local food concepts, knowledge gathering, and revitalization. Respondents interpret the local food concept in several ways, and the explanations vary a great deal. Knowledge gathering from different sources enhances the competence around the local food concept, and there is a need for close cooperation with different organizations related to food, colleges, and universities. The revitalization and collection of old recipes might be one initiative to save old food treasures for future generations.

Discussion

The focus in geoparks is of course directed towards different geological issues. In some articles, tourism is discussed and has been researched to a minor degree (Azman et al., 2010; Cheng, Hu, Fox, & Zhang, 2012; Newsome, Dowling, & Leung, 2012). Local food is only mentioned briefly in the articles, and in Magma Geopark the investigations have been directed towards local food as an advantage for tourism in a geopark area. As local food production is rarely investigated, it has to be discussed in terms of similar areas with the same challenges. There is room for co-creation to increase the total value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) for customers and companies by increasing cooperation, especially when network connections and meeting sites are included.

Knowledge development was a main category that respondents focused on. The importance of knowledge development among local stakeholders was also identified by Azman (2010) as local communities that were more positive when knowledge was given in advance. In Dalane (the region), there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about what Magma Geopark is and how local food should function together with the geopark. The awareness program and workshops that Azman (2010) highlighted would help local food producers promote local food initiatives. The similarity is not so farfetched as several respondents in this study were into tourism in different ways and stated similar needs for knowledge. A close cooperation among local stakeholders centred on co-creating different types of experiences together with customers would increase the chain value, as stated by different authors (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Prebensen & Foss, 2011).

Basic elements need to be included in an area so that the entire region can benefit and grow through tourism. This of course includes food. Tourism is one of the main sources and drivers for enhancing local food, food production, and dishes. Hall and Mitchell (2002) explained that tourism has a considerable impact on food production and consumption at a destination. The basic elements need to be in place in the Dalane region if tourism and geotourism are to have a positive impact on jobs and development. The interviewees stated that basic elements such as products, customers, and companies are evident in the region, but tourists lack information about what the region can offer, and a limited number of sales points of local products can describe some of the situation. Tourist development and geopark development have congruent interests (Azman et al., 2010). Hence, cooperation in a region should be valuable for both businesses and customers enjoying products offered by local

stakeholders to increase their value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) by customers creating their own set of experiences adjusted to their needs and beliefs.

Points of sale were found to be important based on empirical data related to local stakeholders in terms of not only food production, but also different types of local products. This will be of interest for the geopark in the sense of tourists' development of local tourism and infrastructure and socio-economics in the area where the geopark is located (Azman et al., 2010). Close contact and cooperation between the local food stakeholders and the geopark will lead to a better effect in the area's development for tourists because geotourists want to participate in other features the region can offer (Newsome et al., 2012). This outcome is similar to co-creation in different ways, such as variety in experiences, innovative experiences, and customers' ability to co-construct personalized experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 8).

Network connections include places for local stakeholders to meet, create networks, and get motivation from that. In developing local food further, the local food initiative can benefit from a close cooperation with the geopark, especially when they are in the early stages of developing the geopark. The networks that acquire knowledge from workshops, mentors, or other ways might experience better development in their businesses. A network will also help spread information among participants and others, thereby sharing valuable knowledge among the participants in the network.

Opportunity set in the future as recognized by the respondents focused on future improvements in dialog between producers and receivers in the region as well as a continuous dialogue with their customers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). A natural improvement for the future is one or more internet webpages that could offer the different products to broader customer groups. This approach gives potential tourists and other customers a chance to plan in advance before they get to the region. Newsome et al. (2012) illuminated that the geotourists can be both individual and group travellers looking not only for geological experiences, but also the opportunity to use other facilities that the region can provide.

Challenges are connected with visibility for local food production not only for tourists, but also for local inhabitants. In addition, the challenges have to be seen in connection to local authorities and how they can develop together to give customers an enhanced experience through co-creation.

Concluding Remarks

Some important remarks emerged in the empirical data from the groups once they were analyzed. These concluding remarks come as a result of analyzing the different empirical data sources. It is important to note that this investigation is based solely on respondents who participated in the group interview to get a better understanding of their opinion about the region investigated.

The region faces several challenges, but they are manageable. The first challenge is to establish an internet website that can be used and represent all stakeholders and their products and services in the region. A webpage gives potential customers as well as companies the possibility to create personalized and adjusted experiences. The respondents demonstrated consensus in their understanding that such a webpage will be very helpful as the expressed that they did not have an overview of the products offered and available to them.

Another area is the lack of fresh fish in the region. A regional effort should be made from different stakeholders to co-create an experience of fresh fish together with customers. Egersund is one of the biggest fishing industry harbours in Norway, and visitors expect to be able to get fresh fish and seafood in the city throughout the year.

The Norwegian Food Safety Authority plays an important role in the production of local food. A majority of the respondents perceived the authority's rules and regulations as not being flexible and not adjusting to small producers of local food especially, but adjusting only to bigger companies. If major differences in the rules and regulations are found between the different companies depending on their size, they should be investigated.

The continuous dialog between the different stakeholders and customers indicates a huge potential that should result in an adjusted production of local food products according to the demand. Increased marketing efforts might also have a good effect and are closely connected to an internet webpage. Selling points for local food in the region should be located close to Highway E39 so that the majority of people have easy access to the shops.

Meeting points are important for all that are involved in local food, festivals, food offers and sales plans. There are some meeting points, but none of them have the purpose of bringing them together with the local food producers. A majority of the local producers participate relatively often. The local farmers' representative is an important person with whom to cooperate as he has knowledge about practical, theoretical, and challenges that local farmers will encounter sooner or later.

The main findings are six main categories that indicated respondents' interpretation of local food in the Dalane region: basic elements, points of sale, network connections, and opportunity set in the future, challenges, and knowledge development. These should be further investigated in future research.

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Appendix A



PÅ JAKT ETTER MAT!

Vi har fått penger av Vestlandforskning til å foreta et forstudium om lokal mat i Magma Geopark dvs. Dalane og Flekkesjord.

Forstudiets mål er å undersøke hva vi har, hva som ønskes av turister og lokalbefolkning og hva som er mulig å produsere og selge av lokal mat i regionen.

Vi ønsker å komme i kontakt med alle som er interessert i lokal mat, produsenter, utsalgssteder, restauranter, overnattingssteder, eller du som har en god ide rundt lokal mat!

Vi håper du kan sette av en time tirsdag 22. mars.

Vi starter diskusjonsgrupper klokken: 0900, 1000, 1100, 1230, 1330 og 1430 på landbrukskontoret på Helleland.

Ta kontakt med Visit Dalane på telefon 51 20 70 49 eller på post@visitdalane.no og meld deg på en av gruppene!

Gruppene og diskusjonen blir styrt av møteleder Kai Hansen fra Stavanger universitet.
 Alle som deltar i forskningsprosjektet er garantert a copymøte.
 Det blir enkel servering og en liten overraskelse.
VELKOMMEN ALLE SOM ER GLADE I LOKAL MAT!



Dalane Bygdeutvikling, Stavanger Universitet, Visit Dalane og Magma Geopark

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