Understanding Tourists’ Complex Food Relations

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The basic idea: Tourists’ relations to food

But hardly any detailed studies of tourists’ *actual* eating habits
Extant knowledge on tourists and food

- Needs for strangeness vs familiarity (Cohen)
- Neophobic vs neophylic tendencies (Cohen & Avieli)
- Allocentric vs. psychocentric tendencies (Plog, Hjalager)

Dichotomous categorisation suggesting stable and static relations to food
Challenged by...

**Consumer hybridity**
- food relations vary across /within holiday(s)
- supporting food experiences turn into peak experience and vice versa

**Consumption-based identity construction**
- Tourists’ food relations not just object-oriented
  - food as cultural mediator & quality experience
- Tourists’ food relations also subject-oriented
  - personal insight & social positioning
Methods & Data

• exploratory, qualitative study
• 25 in-depth interviews (1-3 hours)
• 48 Danish interviewees:
  ▫ adults: 24-62, children: 3-17
  ▫ 4 singles, 7 DINKs, 12 full-nesters, 2 empty nesters
• Interviewed at home – food & tourism in hindsight
Tourists eating to live... but living to dine out

• "No, it is not like food at home. You don’t need to clear the table and you don’t need to cook yourself. You just have to sit and relax and enjoy yourself and be excited about what you are going to get". (Fanny, 37, full nester)

• Grocery shopping and preparing domestic dinner - a push factors

• Food - a supporting experience

• But dining out - a peak experience
Tourists eating to be together

• “When we’re on holiday, we’re often cooking everyone together. It gives something else to the family that we’re all together when cooking”. (Mary, 42, full nester).

• Everyday segregated family life – a push factor

• Food – a supporting experience

• Cooking – a peak experience, but only as a means to family togetherness
Tourists living to eat... sometimes

• "It has to vary. I mean, if you have gourmet food every night for 2 weeks, then it isn’t ‘gourmet’ anymore, then it becomes as boring as everything else. It has to vary [...] a boring sandwich one night, that isn’t anything special and is rather cheap [...] Now and then, you have to eat boring, otherwise the other stuff doesn’t taste exiting”. (Ben, 40, DINK)

• Food – a pull factor & peak experience

• Food as cultural insight/quality experience & personal insight

• Hybrid food behaviour:
  ▫ neophylic/allocentric traits & neophobic/psychocentric traits
Preliminary conclusions

Tourists use food in a variety of ways:
  ▪ as an end goal – quality / cultural experience
  ▪ as a means of self-understanding & positioning
  ▪ as a means of relaxation & social bonding

No one is a ’foodie’ all the time
  – it has to vary