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Developing a Theory of Surprise from Travelers Extraordinary Food Experiences

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to explore extraordinary experiences of food tourists and to develop a theory of surprise in relation to a typology of food cultural capital. We draw on phenomenological interviews with sixteen food tourists. We found that food tourists experienced surprise in different ways, depending on their food cultural capital. Food tourists who possessed a high level of cultural capital were surprised by the simplicity or complexity of the experience while those possessing a low level of cultural capital were surprised by the genuinity of the experience. Thus, we make an important theoretical contribution here as we learn that the resources food tourists possessed in the form of cultural capital conditioned the ways in which they conceived an extraordinary experience. More so, using the cultural capital perspective, we have also demonstrated the role of social context in contributing to creating an extraordinary experience.

Keywords: food tourists, extraordinary food experience, food cultural capital, surprise; phenomenology

INTRODUCTION

The World Food Travel Association (2014) estimates that food and drink accounts for 25 percent of global tourist spending. Tourists can enjoy new food at any time of the year and revenue from food spending can provide alternatives to those seasonal tourism activities that depend on temperature and climate (Kivela and Crotts, 2006). To understand this market, several research has been carried out on such areas as travelers' food preferences (e.g. Chang, Kivela and Mak, 2010; Khoo-Lattimore et al., in press; Sanchez-Canizares and Castillo-Canalejo, 2015), their satisfaction with culinary events and restaurants (Bowden and Dagger, 2011; Bowden-Everson et al, 2013), and their motivation to consume local foods (Canizares and Lopez-Guzman, 2012; Chang et al., 2010; Frash Jr. et al., 2015; Jacobs et al., in press; Kim and Eves, 2012; Lu and Gursoy, in press). With the rise of the experience economy, researchers have also endeavored to understand consumption of local foods as an experience (Walls et al., 2011). Such studies are driven by the need for destinations to focus on creating and managing experiences for their customers as a way to differentiate themselves from their competitors (Walls et al., 2011). As Poulsson and Kale (2004) argue "experiences are getting increasingly plentiful in their own right as a product offering and in conjunction with products and services as a means to provide added value to consumers" (p. 267).

In the postmodern culture, eating exotic food and global foodstuffs play a significant role in the overall tourists' experience, especially when food is the primary motivator for visiting a particular destination (Hall and Sharples, 2003). The food experience is no longer considered as an ad-hoc experience for travelers, but rather, it is rooted in the tourists' quest for novelty, uniqueness, sensation-seeking, and the unique culture of the host country (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016). Tourists' food experiences are instrumental in the overall tourist experience and are therefore important considerations in destination marketing (Cohen and Avieli, 2004; Kivela and Crotts, 2006). Consequently, a number of studies have been carried

out on the food experiences of travellers, many of which have focused on memorable food experiences (e.g. Adongo, Anuga and Dayour, 2015; Lashley, Morrison and Randall, 2004; Tsai, in press), leaving a gap in existing literature when it comes to understanding extraordinary food experiences.

Existing literature has often treated the term memorable and extraordinary experience as synonymous, leading to missed opportunities when it comes to understanding experiences of tourists (Knobloch, Robertson, and Aitken, 2014). The latter researchers demonstrated empirically that these two terms are indeed distinct. While memorable food experiences can be positive, negative or neutral (Adongo et al., 2015; Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick, 2012), following the consumer research literature, we conceptualize an extraordinary food experience as a special hedonic experience, which is positively more intense and intrinsically more enjoyable (Arnould and Price 1993) for food tourists, i.e. those primarily traveling for food experiences, are committed to food, and are explicitly searching for extraordinary food experiences (Björk and Kauppinen- Räsänen, 2016). Such experience is ‘totally different’ from the known and familiar and from one’s everyday life and is stronger than memorable ones (Knobloch et al., 2014). Food tourists, in particular, aspire to have extraordinary experiences that touch upon their sense of self and have the power to arouse an emotional response (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016).

The rationale for studying tourists’ extraordinary food experiences that elicit strong emotions is found in postmodernist scholarly work postulating that we live in a culture where identity is equated with the intensity of experience and whether something is real, depends on its power to arouse a strong emotional response (Campbell, 2004; Cherrier et al., 2012; Jantzen et al., 2012). An important aspect underlying extraordinary experiences is the elicitation of strong emotion and the element of surprise (Arnould and Price, 1993; Celsi,

Rose and Leigh, 1993; Knobloch et al., 2014; Tumbat and Belk, 2011). So far, surprise has predominantly been addressed in such recreational contexts as skydiving (e.g. Celsi et al., 1993), whitewater rafting (e.g. Arnould and Price, 1993), and high-altitude mountaineering (Tumbat and Belk, 2011). To the authors' knowledge, there is a dearth of studies on the element of surprise as it relates to food consumption of travelers. In this study, we ask what dimensions of surprise are contained in extraordinary food experiences of food tourists. We adopt an existential phenomenological approach to explore meanings of surprise in extraordinary food experience of food tourists and present the dimensions of surprise in relation to a typology of food cultural capital based on Bourdieu's (1986) notion of cultural capital. Existential-phenomenology is particularly useful in exploring "the lived experiences of tourists and visitors on the real-complex environment/world, shedding light to the exploration of the tourist experience" (Ziakas and Boukas, 2013, p. 13).

EXTRAORDINARY FOOD EXPERIENCE

Bhattacharjee and Mogilner (2014) defined experience as being either ordinary or extraordinary. Ordinary experiences are those that are common, frequent, and within the realm of everyday life. Extraordinary experiences, by contrast, are uncommon, infrequent, and go beyond the realm of everyday life. They are emotionally intense experiences, perceived as magical, intrinsically enjoyable, surprising, and transformative, and often yield a feeling of personal triumph and sense of achievement (Arnould and Price, 1993; Bhattacharjee and Mogilner, 2012; Schmitt et al., 2015). Extraordinary consumer experiences can be characterized by collaborative interactions, common goals, and a sense of community (Arnould and Price, 1993; Kozinet, 2002) or as highly individualist and competitive, comprising of minimal camaraderie and encompassing signs of struggle and conflict (Lindberg and Eide 2016; Lindberg and Østergaard 2015; Tumbat and Belk, 2011). However, regardless of the characteristics, deriving pleasure remains the foundation of extraordinary experiences. In consumer research, pleasure is conceptualized as hedonic and experiential consumption in which emotional response is connected to consumption encounters (Goulding, Shankar, Elliot and Canniford, 2008; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Therefore, our interest in tourists' extraordinary food experience as surprising, builds on pleasure as one important dimension of extraordinary consumer experience (Arnould and Price, 1993; Celsi et al., 1993). Tiger (2000) identified four distinct types of pleasure; socio-pleasure, psycho-pleasures, physio-pleasures, and ideo-pleasures. Particularly pertinent to this study is socio-pleasure, derived from relationship with others and psycho-pleasure, related to people's cognitive and emotional reaction to the usage of a product or to an experience. Both psycho-pleasure and socio-pleasure are link theoretically to the element of surprise as we discuss below.

Pleasure and Surprising Experiences

An important element of tourists' extraordinary food experience is the surprise elicited in rare and exceptional food encounters, followed by intense pleasure, derived from relationship with others (socio-pleasure) or related to people's cognitive and emotional reaction to the usage of a product or to an experience (psycho-pleasures). The phenomenological perspective used in this article implies that cognition and emotion form an indissoluble unity, based on the rejection of a mind-body dualism (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Thompson et al., 1989, 1990). From this position "captivating consumer experiences have the phenomenological characteristic of directness, in which the perceiver is immersed in the perceptual world: the experience is one of unity with the perceived object" (Thomson et al., 1989, p. 357). Thus emotional reactions are intimately connected to cognition through our perceptual worlds, what phenomenologists call the life-world (Thompson et al, 1989; Valle and King, 1978).

Despite historic academic controversies over the status of surprise as an emotion (Gyung and Mattila, 2013), consensus is found in studies on surprise as a short-lived neutral emotion (Reisenzein and Studtmann, 2007; Schützwohl, 1998; Vanhamme and Snelders, 2001). Neutral emotions are valenced by the emotions that closely follow. Hence, surprise becomes pleasant when a positive emotion follows and it becomes unpleasant when a negative emotion follows. If it is not valenced by pleasant or unpleasant emotions, surprise is neutral (Ekman and Friesen, 1975; Meyer et al., 1991; Vanhamme and Snelders, 2003). Surprise is also intimately connected to the unexpected and the emotion of surprise is elicited when there is cognitive "schema discrepancy". Schemas represent individuals' theories or understandings of the nature of objects and reality, and when events or situations deviate from schema, surprise is elicited (Meyer et al., 1994; Schützwohl, 1998; Vanhamme and Snelders, 2003). In consumer delight studies, surprise is conceptualized in a similar manner, i.e., as exceeding expectations (Arnold et al., 2005; Crofts and Magini, 2011; Oliver et al., 1997;

Rust and Oliver, 2000). The relationship between unexpectedness and surprise has been empirically investigated (e.g. Schützwohl, 1998), with evidence for a positive relationship between the degree of unexpectedness and the intensity of surprise found in different experimental settings (Reisenzein, 2000).

Studies on food experience provide evidence that psycho-pleasure connected to food ranges from “intense and primitive feelings to complex, intellectual evaluations” (Ben Zeev, 2000, p. 50). Such emotions are not only of a brief duration, but they are highly contextual and dependent and can change with different situations within which the self is implicated (Illouz, 2009). For example, research demonstrates that food experiences are intensified when people share them with their loved ones, friends, and colleagues or with like-minded individuals. This aspect can be related to what Tiger (2000) conceptualized as socio-pleasures. The socio-pleasure relates mostly to the fun people have when they are with other people. The sharing of experience offers what Ritzer (1999) called temporal enchantment, magic, and mystery that supersede individuality. Studies on food experience have portrayed food as a mean of socializing and one which creates a sense of community (e.g. Ignatov and Smith 2006; Kim et al. 2009; Mynttinen et al., 2015). Hence, given that food is a communal experience, it does not only connect people, but also brings together those having similar goals and preferences. Therefore, we argue that for travelers’ food experiences to be perceived as extraordinary, an element of surprise must be elicited, followed by pleasure, which can be derived from relationships with others or from food. We also understand the surprise elicited in tourist food experiences as a reflection of their cultural capital. Under this perspective, the cultural capital the tourists have acquired through prior food experiences, provide the context for understanding the extent to which food experiences exceed the tourist expectations and are perceived as surprising or unexpected.

Food Cultural Capital

Our food experiences are sub-consciously ingrained in what Bourdieu (1984) termed as our 'habitus', as the way of doing things in a particular way or preferring something as a result of being immersed in a particular social milieu (Seymour, 2004). Hence, food consumption practices are embodied in one's socio-economic standing and reflect the socialization process that works directly on the body (Bardhi et al., 2010). Habitus vary, depending on the basis of the various types of capital (cultural, economic and social) available to an individual in a social space (Bourdieu, 1984). We have a specific interest in Bourdieu's thinking on cultural capital and taste. Cultural capital consists of the formal and informal cultural resources acquired and cultural affinities, which are mostly inherited from the family of origin. It includes the accumulation of knowledge acquired through immersion in habitus (Seymour, 2004). Food cultural capital can exist in three forms: (1) embodied food cultural capital as disposition of taste; (2) objectified food cultural capital as cookbooks, cutlery etc; and (3) institutionalized food capital as objectified educational qualifications such as certificates, titles and diplomas (Bourdieu, 1986). Food cultural capital results from prior experience, learning, and cultural origin, embedded in the body. Hence, food cultural capital is indicative of the food we prefer as tourists and reflects what is considered 'palatable' in a particular group.

This particular phenomenon has been supported by various scholars (Ahmad 2014; Chang et al., 2010; Cohen and Avieli 2004; Hjalager, 2003). Applying Bourdieu notion of cultural capital within the context of United States, Holt (1998) found that informants with low cultural capital preferred restaurants serving buffet style, where meals were plentiful and where they had the freedom of eating as much as they want, while at the same time seeking comfort in familiar food. On the other hand, informants with high cultural capital had a preference for cuisines from other countries and visited restaurant offering a casual

atmospherics rather than status oriented cuisine. However, Turner and Edmunds (2002) found that the Australian elite consumers have a taste for cuisine, which are not only highbrow (unusual/sophisticated), but are lowbrow in context (fast food/popular restaurant).

Implicit within some studies, rests the evidence that the cultural capital of individuals, in the forms of cultural background and prior knowledge and learning, influence the ways in which they experience surprise. For example, in their research on the psychology of surprise, Choi and Nisbett (2000) demonstrated that culture impacted on the ways in which participants experienced surprise. They found that Korean participants displayed less surprise and greater hindsight bias than American participants did when an outcome contradicted their expectations. Likewise, Nisbett et al. (2001) concluded that cognitive processes such as experiencing surprise are highly susceptible to cultural influence. A similar conclusion has been reached in a study by Valenzuela et al. (2010) on consumers' pleasurable surprises in response to unexpected incentives. An individual current state of knowledge has also been found to influence epistemic curiosity, which in turn influences how people experience surprise (Berlyne, 1960; Choi and Nisbett, 2000). As Choi and Nisbett (2000) argue "when people realize that the new information is incompatible with their own knowledge and therefore could not have been predicted, they experience....surprise" (p. 902), suggesting that prior knowledge influences surprising experiences. Thus, one could reasonably extrapolate that the cultural capital may influence surprising food experiences of travelers and such typologies of food tourists developed in existing literature.

For example, using a phenomenological approach, Hjalager's (2003) came up with four categories of gastronomy tourists: existential, experimental, recreational, and diversionary. Whilst the recreational and diversionary tourists do not travel explicitly for food experiences and are pretty much conservative in their food choices and preferences, food experience is an

important part for the existential and experimental gastronomy tourists. Hjalager (2003) further emphasized that the existential gastronomy tourists prefer to eat where the local does and perceive their food experiences as a way to foster gastronomy learning. On the other hand, the experimental gastronomy tourists prefer visiting restaurants which serve innovative menus and chic service, perceiving such types of experiences as part of the staging of their personality. Implicit within Hjalager's (2003) study, the typology might be a reflection of the cultural capital the gastronomy tourists possessed, which may also influence the ways in which such individuals experience consumption of food.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We used a phenomenological approach to explore meanings of surprise in extraordinary food experiences of food tourists. We follow existential-phenomenology, a well-established methodology in consumer research, originally developed in psychology and relatively recently used in tourism (e.g. Caton and Santos, 2007; Kavoura, 2007; Lindberg, 2009; Lindberg et al 2014; Morrison and O’Gorman, 2008; Zikiakas and Boukas, 2013, 2014). This phenomenological approach is particularly useful for exploring “multifaceted phenomena from a first-person perspective” (Ziakas and Boukas, 2013, p. 13). The plurality of phenomenological approaches in tourism research is discussed by Pernecky and Jamal (2010) who make a clear ontological and epistemological distinction between Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology. Primarily drawing on studies on nursing (Koch, 1995; Laverty, 2003), they emphasize historically distinct differences between a hermeneutic phenomenology (Heideggerian phenomenology) and Husserlian phenomenological descriptions of the essence of phenomena based on the technique of “bracketing” (Pernecky and Jamal, 2010). Existential-phenomenology as research method represents a merger of existentialism as a philosophy and the method of phenomenology (Goulding, 2003; Thompson et al, 1989).

The concept of intentionality (Husserl, 1962) guides existential-phenomenological research. Intentionality implies that: (1) human experience is always directed towards something specific, hence experience is contextualized (Goulding, 2005; Thomson et al 1989); (2) experience as an intentional phenomena has a specific focus, as our consciousness is always directed toward something specific (Thompson et al, 1989); and (3) “that the researcher's conceptual categories are secondary to the participant's experiential ones” (Thomson et al., 1990, p. 347). Thus the goal of existential-phenomenology in tourism research is to study tourists’ being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962), i.e. to describe tourists’

experiences as “lived”. The existential-phenomenological interview method thus focuses on tourists’ subjective experiences of specific phenomena, i.e. the meaning these experiences have for tourists (Goulding, 2005; Thomson et al., 1989). The proposed division between a Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology advocated by Pernecky and Jamal (2010) is contested as “phenomenologists seek guidance from existential philosophers in the interpretation of their data” (Goulding, 2005, p. 303). Such a position is supported by accounts of how Heidegger’s development of hermeneutic thought is intertwined with phenomenological ontology (van Manen, 1990). An existential-phenomenological description of an individual’s experience of a given phenomenon always entails interpretation in the sense that in order to describe experience, something specific must be pointed at (van Manen, 1990). Thus in opposition to Pernecky and Jamal (2010), an existential-phenomenological perspective on bracketing refers to an analytical process that aims to describe individual experience as truthful as possible without predefined theoretical categories (van Manen, 1990; Thompson et al. 1989). In this sense, bracketing means an acknowledgment that the participants interpret his/her lived experience of a specific phenomenon and the researcher interprets their narratives (Goulding, 2005; Thompson, 1998). The process of bracketing thus requires a high degree of reflexive work for both participant and researcher. We discuss the methodological implications of such a position below.

Sampling and Interviewing

In line with our existential-phenomenological approach, we collected data through personal interviews and selected participants based on their experiences of extraordinary food while traveling (Patton, 2002; Ziakas and Boukas, 2013). Besides, given our argument that food tourists aspire to experience food in an extraordinary manner in a way that arouse a strong positive response and touch their sense of self (Campbell 2004), purposive sampling in our study meant recruiting such tourists. Hence, only tourists traveling uniquely for food, are

committed to food, and are explicitly searching for extraordinary food experiences were included in this study (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016).

Our study is based on interviews with sixteen tourists who had a deep interest in food and who had traveled for food experiences. A snowball sampling technique was used to recruit food tourists, a suitable method to find and approach tourists having the relevant experience for our study (Ziakias and Boukas, 2013). We started with the one participant who helped in identifying other food tourists such as Jesper, Sara, Fiona, Kim, and Johanna. Anna, our first interview participant, is a passionate home cook who also works as a freelance journalist. She was considered an ideal participant because she knew about a number of food tourists in the region by having read about them in the local newspaper which has a weekly food section. The other participants were identified by the first author when taking part in food-related academic conferences or through the help of other participants. One of the participants, Andy, is the only one known of who has eaten in all three star Michelin restaurants in the world. He is considered as a foodie icon. The snowball “chain”, thus included eight out of 16 Swedish participants from the Western part of Sweden. The number of interviewees in our study is in line with the notion of theoretical saturation (Guest et al., 2006; Kvale, 1983; Morse 1995). In a review and empirical study on theoretical saturation in an interview setting, Guest et al. (2006) suggest “if the goal is to describe a shared perception, belief, or behavior among a relatively homogeneous group, then a sample of twelve will likely be sufficient” (p. 75). Our sample of sixteen food tourists fulfill the criteria suggested by Guest et al. (2006) and Kvale (1983) as we reached a point where additional interviews added little new knowledge to the dimension of surprise in extraordinary food experiences.

As presented in table 1, the informants comprised of six men and ten women, representing different nationalities such as Swedish (8), German (2), Tanzanian (2), Australian (1), British (1), Mexican (1) and Danish (1) and aged between 28 to 69 years old. The range of

occupations also spanned from retired person to the Chief Executive Officer of a multinational company, and several PhD students (see Table 1). The demographic and socio-economic profile of our participants are in line with prior studies portraying food tourists as having a high socioeconomic profile compared to other categories of tourists (e.g., Robinson and Getz, 2014).

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The interviews focused on participants' reflections of their extraordinary food experiences in the tourism context as well as their interest in and knowledge of food. All the interviews were conducted after their trip and face-to-face, particularly if they were situated in regions/places easily accessible to the researchers, with a few conducted through Skype if they were in a different region or country. As the aim of the phenomenological interview is to attain "a first-person description of some specified domain of experience" (Thompson et al 1989, p. 138), the opening question of the interview is particularly important (Thompson et al., 1990; Thompson et al., 1989). Hence, the very goal of the interview is to gain an understanding of how the interviewees experience extraordinary food as meaningful. In order to do that, the phenomenon under study, in this case extraordinary food experiences, must be described as lived by the interview participants. In the present study, the opening question was as follows: *'Can you describe in as much details as possible an extraordinary food experience you have had while travelling?'* Follow-up descriptive questions and probes beginning with "How" and "What" were asked to bring about descriptions of, not explanations for, extraordinary experiences (Thomson et al, 1989). We asked follow-up questions such as *'What was it like to eat at...?'*, *'How did you feel when...'* which allowed further reflection on behalf of the interviewee regarding the extraordinary food experience in question and further probing by the researcher. In addition we asked when and how

participants developed an interest in food, the importance of food in their life, and in the ways they express their interests in food to enable us to understand their food cultural capital. Each interview lasted one to one and a half hour and was recorded and transcribed.

Analysis

The transcripts were interpreted following an iterative process based on the principles of phenomenological analysis relating meanings in parts of the transcripts to the meanings of the whole of transcripts (Goulding, 2005; Thompson; 1997). The interpretation of the interview transcripts aimed to describe common patterns in the interviewees' experiences of extraordinary food, so-called 'themes', was undertaken by the first author. First, individuals transcripts were read by considering "each transcript as a whole and relating separate passage of the transcript to its overall content" (Thompson et al., 1989, p. 141). Then, transcripts were read across interviews aiming for the identification of themes capturing the figural aspects of experience, i.e., the direction or focus of experience (Kvale, 1983; Thompson et al., 1989). The concept perspective was used to denote how an individual understands an extraordinary food experience given the direction or focus of the experience. The focus of experience following certain aspects of lived experience that stands out and others that form a background imply that the meaning of extraordinary food experience is "situated in the current experiential context and is coherently related to the ongoing project of the life-world" (Thompson et al. 1989, p. 136). The concept of perspective thus highlights that the same situation can be experienced in different ways, or that different situations can be experienced as similar, from a third-person perspective (Thompson et al, 1989). The researcher's interpretation of transcripts and subsequent perspectives was evaluated and verified by constantly referring back to transcripts, to allow the perspectives to be supported by interviewees' description of experience (Thompson et al., 1989). The perspectives were

discussed with other two researchers using common way to verify interpretations in hermeneutic/phenomenological research was used (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009; Sandberg, 1994).

Once perspectives were distinguished across interviews, interpretations and thus the validity of the suggested perspectives were tested by reading interview transcripts from alternative /competing perspectives. If the interpretation of the alternative/ competing perspective(s) did not make sense (as when the specific transcript did not contain statements that contradicted the suggested perspective(s)), this was taken as evidence for suggested perspectives to be trustworthy. If, on the other hand alternative/ competing perspective (s) did make sense (as when the specific transcript contained statements that contradicted the suggested perspective (s)), trustworthiness was not gained and the analytical process continued. For three interviewees, one predominant perspective on experiencing extraordinary food as surprising based on interview narratives evoked by the introductory question (*Can you describe in as much details as possible an extraordinary food experience you have had while travelling?*) and related probes was accompanied by a second perspective when the interviewer asked if more such extraordinary food had been experienced. Given our claim that the surprise dimension in extraordinary experience of food tourist is dependent on their food cultural, this is not surprising. It is also worth noting that food tourists' food capital is expected to change given their great interest in food. In the descriptions of the perspectives on extraordinary food experiences below, the predominant perspectives in each of these interviews are described.

A Typology of the Tourists' Food Cultural Capital

Building on the three forms of cultural capital elaborated by Bourdieu (1984), we categorized respondents based on their food knowledge and food interests as evidenced by cooking gear, books and blogs, and traveling food preferences and practices. A typology

distinguishing three types of food cultural capital was developed. We named these as cultivated food tourists, enthusiast food tourists, and cultural food tourists (see Table 2).

Cultivated food tourists were those who possessed high levels of food cultural capital. All cultivated food tourists except two had an average of ten years of experience traveling exclusively for food experiences (on average 4 times per year). They frequently visited fine dining/Michelin star restaurants. They rarely visited food markets or food festivals. Most of them had a large collection of cookery, wine books, subscriptions to a number of food magazines, and some fancy cooking equipment. Those who had a blog posted their food experiences while traveling. For this group of food tourists, their interests in food started either from extensive traveling experiences in which they had the opportunity to learn about different food cultures, from family members who were passionate about food and cooking or from a previous interest in wine. Cultivated food tourists were engaged actively in increasing their food knowledge by reading about food history, restaurants, and food preparation techniques using both online resources as well as food-related books. This category of food tourist is closely related to what Hjalager (2003) called the ‘experimental gastronomy tourists’. The cultivated food tourists are also indicative of the highbrow aesthetic taste that they possess.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The *enthusiast food tourists* possessed a relatively lower level of food cultural capital than the cultivated food tourists. They had four to five years traveling for food experiences, which constituted a major component of their overall experience. The enthusiast food tourists were frequent visitors to food markets and food festivals and rarely visited fine dining or Michelin Star restaurants. They developed an interest in food during the past four to five years of their travels or since their childhood as a result of their passionate home cook families. They were

all passionate about cooking at home and had a few collections of cookbooks and subscriptions to food magazines. However, the enthusiast food tourists who had a food blog wrote mostly about recipes they tried at home rather than their food experiences while traveling.

The *cultural food tourists* had low levels of food cultural capital. They had an average of two years of travelling for food experiences. They were interested in learning about the food culture of the local people, and engaging in food experiences was an equally important part of their holidays. They represented the youngest food tourists segment, frequently visited street food vendors, cooking classes or eateries that the local people usually visit. Unlike the other two groups, they sought simple and unsophisticated foods that were prepared with care and respect to traditions and were frequent visitors to food markets and food festivals. The cultural food tourists developed their interests in food either through their family influence or by traveling to other countries. This group kept themselves up-to-date with online resources on issues related to food and potential places to eat, but did not possess food-related books. None of the cultural food tourists had a food blog. The cultural food tourists are closely related to Hjalager's (2003) 'existential gastronomy tourists' and to Chang et al.'s (2010) notion of 'participators tourists'.

The cultivated, enthusiast, and cultural food tourists all related to food experiences as being their main motivation for traveling. The different groups of food tourists were reflective of the different types of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). No major differences in embodied food cultural capital were detected across the three groups. This form of food cultural capital was acquired by being raised in a family passionate about food and cooking or through extensive travelling experiences. However, we noted some differences in the food tourists' possession of objectified cultural capital. The cultivated food tourists had the most

objectified materials while the cultural food tourists had the least in comparison to the two other groups. Finally, none of our participants were appropriated with the institutionalized state of cultural capital such as an academic qualification related to food. In comparison with the other two groups of food tourists, the cultivated food tourists possessed the highest level of food cultural capital and can be categorized as having what Holt (1998) conceptualized as high cultural capital. However, both the cultural and enthusiast food tourists seemed to possess lower levels of cultural capital, a finding in line with Holt's (1998) notion of low cultural capital. The typology presented in Table 2 is also indicative of the different competencies that the food tourists possessed and that are likely to evolve as they become more involved in such types of experiences and enhance their food cultural capital through the possession of both formal and informal knowledge.

Tourists' Perspectives on the Surprise of Extraordinary Food Experiences

The interview participants' experienced extraordinary food as surprising in three different ways: (1) as surprisingly simple; (2) as surprisingly complex; and (3) as surprisingly genuine (see table 3). The three perspectives on extraordinary food experience as surprising denote that these experiences are understood in a specific way given the direction or focus of experience (Thomson et al, 1989). The meaning of surprise in extraordinary food experience as "situated in the current experiential context and is coherently related to the ongoing project of the life-world" (Thompson et al. 1989, p. 136) implies that the experience of extraordinary food as surprising is an intentional act directing consciousness toward something specific. The perspectives on extraordinary food experience as surprising are commonalities in terms of focus of intentional acts. Thus, we suggest that perspectives are independent of type of trips (trip undertaken for the sole purpose of visiting a Michelin star restaurant or just any holiday/business trip). The interview narratives of extraordinary food experiences represent visits to restaurants planned well in advance (i.e. Michelin star/and or fine dining restaurants)

as well as unplanned meals. Both highly rated restaurants (Michelin star) and less fine-cuisine restaurants were experienced as surprisingly simple and complex. Restaurants experiences that are surprisingly genuine were predominantly street foods, food festivals, cooking classes or meals with local.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Extraordinary Food Experiences as Surprisingly Simple: One unanimous theme reported by the majority of enthusiast food tourists and some cultivated food tourists is the surprise they experienced in terms of simplicity of the dish. Their psycho-pleasures were expressed in terms of amazement that foods made with simple cooking techniques and few ingredients could also be full of flavor. Kim, for instance, best exemplified how simple dishes provided her with the possibility to taste each and every ingredient.

Interviewer: Can you describe an extraordinary food experiences you have had while travelling?

Kim: My boyfriend and I were driving in Italy, and it was in a small city. We wanted to eat something, so we went to this little place, which was not remarkable at all. The menu was very short, they had only three dishes on the menu. I ordered pomodoro, which I know is tomato, and we had this really great pasta dish that had like three or four ingredients. It was a very simple dish, but that was tastier, and it was so unexpected as well. The dish was so simple and easy...

Interviewer: What was extraordinary about the food experience you just described to me?

Kim: It was extraordinary in the sense that you didn't expect the taste for such a simple dish. The food was so good. It was like you could taste all the ingredients and it was just a couple of them, and you make such good food out of nothing. The dish was kind of magic, it was full of flavor but yet so simple. It was a kind of pasta I never had before, when we make pasta at home or what we ate in other restaurants, it is always like pasta Bolognese with 15 different types of ingredients.

The psycho-pleasures of surprisingly simple extraordinary food experiences were also related to the simplicity of the eatery. Although the place was not the main focus, most of the participants were surprised that small, unpopular, and simple-looking restaurants could

provide an extraordinary food experience. As an example, Jesper was pleasantly surprised that a restaurant without any Michelin star had provided the best fish dish he ever had.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about how the restaurant Ibai looks?

Jesper: It was in the basement of a tapas bar, and there was no sign saying that there is a restaurant here. Actually, it was very simple, a restaurant with just eight tables and no menu, and it is opened only for weekday lunches. It is inside a cellar, with no window. There were some wooden tables, with white cloth. It was very plain, it has no website, they don't accept credit cards, and they only speak Basque or Spanish.... I have visited all the high-class and Michelin star restaurants in that region, but this one beats everyone in terms of quality of ingredients, and it doesn't have any Michelin star.

In the descriptions of their extraordinary food experiences, one prevalent aspect of the socio-pleasures of surprising simplicity was being with like-minded people. The importance of being with other people who are equally enthusiastic about the pleasures of being surprised by simplicity represented an opportunity to not only bond, but also discuss food and share knowledge. In the words of Bourdieu (1986), this symbolizes a way for the food tourists to further enhance their cultural capital. Elizabeth's comments epitomized this:

Interviewer: What does it mean for you to be part of the extraordinary experience you had at Ibai?

Elizabeth: I think it is also about sharing a good time with other food lovers... being with Jesper at Ibai was amazing, he is an extreme food lover. If I were with someone else who didn't appreciate good food, it would have ruined my experience. Throughout the lunch, we have been talking about the grilled fish and the ingredients they have used. You know, since I have always enjoyed eating good food and enjoying good wine, it is always good to be with people who are same. I have one of my best friends, she also enjoys good wine, but she is too picky and at times it can get a bit irritating. She is always finding something to complain about. And this definitely drags the experience down.

Extraordinary Food Experiences as Surprisingly Complex: A second theme highlighted by majority of the cultivated food tourists and a few enthusiast food tourists is the surprise they experienced in terms of the quality, combination, and complexity of the dish in extraordinary food experience. Unlike the other participants, this group related their extraordinary food experiences to fine dining. In particular, while describing their experiences, they largely emphasized the presentation of the dish, flavor, texture, quality of

ingredients, the technique used, and innovativeness of the dish. Andy and Johnny eloquently described this aspect.

Interviewer: In what way was the food experience you had at Guy Lassausaie extraordinary for you?

Andy: I did not have much expectation about this restaurant before. However, all the way through, the food was superb, with dazzling technique, one of the finest presentations and the highest grade of ingredients you can have. The dishes were a piece of art, with lots of combinations and extremely innovative in terms of the taste.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about the food you ate?

Andy: I had a five course-tasting menu. I remember very well, having quail with foie gras, and it was served with onion compote and apricot, providing just the right level of acidity, that adds to the richness of the liver. Another stunning dish was the sole fillet with black truffle and served with tiny langoustines and crayfish cream. It was a dish that was very well presented and nicely flavored. However, the star dish was the bacon bread, which had very good texture.

Interviewer: Do you remember what type of food you ate there?

Johnny: It was a tasting menu. I think we had like 5 to 6 different types of dishes. It was fine cuisine and it was a bit French inspired dishes. I don't remember exactly what we ate but they had those amazing dishes with unusual ingredients. What I remembered very well was this dish with the black ink of squid. It was mixed with other ingredients in an innovative way and had excellent blend of textures and flavors.

Similar to those experiencing extraordinary food encounters as surprisingly simple, food tourists understanding of extraordinary food experiences as surprisingly complex also related these psycho-pleasurable food encounters to socio-pleasure, i.e., to the opportunity to share and bond with people who share their food interests. However, for some, their extraordinary food experiences occurred when they traveled alone. For instance, Andy described how he prefers to travel on his own when he cannot find someone who shares his interest:

Interviewer: Is it common for you to travel for food experiences on your own?

Andy: From time to time, yes! Actually, I prefer to travel with people who have the same interest as me. However, it is not often that you will find people who will want to go to such types of restaurant, enjoy the experience. For them it is not worth the money, and they don't want to sit for hours to eat. Last time, I made a reservation in one restaurant and I talked to one particular person, he said, oh should we go to this restaurant, can't we just go to a bar, then I say no, I don't go to such places. In such cases, I prefer to be on my own.

Extraordinary Food Experiences as Surprisingly Genuine: A majority of the cultural food tourists and a few of the home cook enthusiast food tourists conceived their extraordinary food experiences as surprisingly genuine. In comparison to those who conceived their extraordinary food experiences as surprisingly simple or complex, they related mostly to street food experiences, culinary courses or food experiences they had with the local people. In particular, they define their genuine food experience as being mostly simple dishes. Klara clearly corroborated this contention when she described how a cooking class provided her with the feeling of being part of a genuine experience:

Interviewer: What was extraordinary about the cooking classes you had in Bali?

Klara: The whole environment was extraordinary because she took us from this hotel into a real world, into the traditional way of doing Balinese cuisine. I didn't feel like a tourist anymore, I was feeling more like I was part of her world. She kind of shows me something through that food. It was quite nice to see how they prepare their food. It was not in a super crystal clean kitchen, as I said it was between the chicken and animal selling stalls. We had to go through mud towards the kitchen in her house... It was also an extraordinary experience because of the smell of the exotic vegetables and fruits and the Balinese air, which is very distinct, the way we took to the market, going there with someone who is local. The cooking class for me was something that was very local and a very native experience. The kitchen was in the backyard, and I was having the feeling that I was out of the tourism things to a local kitchen.

Hence, it can be argued that the experience of new local cuisines was related to the unexpected feeling they had of 'going local', being close to the tradition of the local people and the unexpected knowledge they gained regarding why the food was cooked in a particular way and understanding the importance of the dish to the local people. Fiona provided further support of this aspect when she described how local food experience enabled her to increase her knowledge.

Interviewer: What does it mean for you to be part of the three-day long feast you had in China Guizhou?

Fiona: It is very fulfilling ...I guess it is fulfilling in lots of ways not just because it makes your stomach full but you know you feel enriched in some way that you learn something and you have experienced something that you never experienced before.

Interviewer: When you say learning, can you elaborate a bit more on that?

Fiona: Because I am always interested in learning about food, how it is made or the meaning of this dish or what is the context for this dish? Why are we having duck feast? Why are we having 16 different kinds of dishes with pork? I wouldn't really say the academic aspect, but I can say just thinking about what you are eating rather than just putting it in your mouth. The meaning behind it, why is this dish special or why is this dish meaningful? I'm just going to say, for me, it is not enough to just eat a dish; I want to learn something as I am eating. I want to educate myself.'

This is a form of acquiring new food knowledge, allowing them to enrich their cultural capital, which according to Bourdieu (1984), enables an individual to interpret various cultural codes. Unlike the previous groups (in which the psycho-pleasures of extraordinary food experiences partly depended on the socio-pleasures of the experience), sharing the food experiences was seen less as related to the pleasurable surprise of taste and environment and more as a form of socializing and strengthening the bond with their friends and/or relatives. This particular aspect was also supported by Arnould and Price (1993) and Celsi et al., (1993) who acknowledged the importance of collective experience and camaraderie. This aspect was eloquently described by one of the participants:

Interviewer: What was extraordinary about the food experiences you just described to me?

Jessica: ...It was also an opportunity to be together as a family; we hardly get time to meet each other. So even though it was only for a couple of hours, it makes a big difference because having all of us together, we do some crazy games and eat together and it is something that we can't do in our daily life. It kinds of bring us together and ties us. It was a very special moment.

Surprise Elicited by Extraordinary Food Experiences

As outlined above and summarized in Table 3, our findings clearly showed that elements of surprise in extraordinary food experiences were connected to tourists' food cultural capital, i.e., to tourists' experiential context - their life-world (Heidegger, 162/1927; Thompson et al, 1989). Those food tourists who possessed the highest levels of food cultural capital in our study – the cultivated food tourists - experienced extraordinary food encounters as

surprisingly complex to the largest extent. Given their objectified food cultural capital in terms of gastronomy-oriented fine food, wine books/ magazines and fancy cooking equipment (e.g., equipment used in fine dining restaurants), it follows that for them, the unexpected and, thus, surprising, related to their understanding of food as framed by and focused on innovative menus and the chic service of fine dining and Michelin star restaurants (see also Hjalager, 2003).

In a similar manner, there was also a match between the majority of food tourists with relatively lower levels of food capital such as the enthusiast food tourists and their experience of extraordinary food experience as surprisingly simple. Their objectified food cultural capital is less gastronomy oriented and the unexpected element of extraordinary food experience is less framed by fine dining. Instead, their understanding of food is framed by home cooking, which in the traveling context, is expressed as a focus on food experiences that can be transferred and tested at home. For them, surprisingly simple food experiences were an important element of the extraordinary. The majority of tourists in our study with the lowest levels of food cultural capital – the cultural food tourists- conceived of their extraordinary food experiences as surprisingly genuine. Their experiences of extraordinary food encounters as surprisingly genuine was a reflection of their low objectified food cultural capital (which in a sense, imply experiences of food that are less colored by gastronomic or home cooking interests) and subsequent understanding of food in the traveling context with a focus on local and traditional food.

Our findings indicated that the surprise experienced by tourists during extraordinary food encounters – as a reflection of their food cultural capital - was conditioned by the social context of specific experiences. Previous studies on extraordinary experiences have described social contexts as encouraging either communality (e.g., Arnould and Price 1993; Celsi et al.,

1993; Kozinet, 2002) or individualism (Tumbat and Belk, 2011). By differentiating between the psycho-pleasures and the socio-pleasures of surprise in extraordinary food experiences, we conclude that for tourists with high and moderate levels of food cultural capital, pleasurable surprise related to their cognitive and emotional reactions when experiencing extraordinary food encounters (psycho-pleasures). More so, their reactions were also dependent on pleasure derived from the social context (i.e. relationship with others), commonly referred to as socio-pleasure. Research on food experience in the tourism context supports the notion that pleasure is intensified when food is shared with loved ones, friends, and colleagues or with like-minded people. Such socio-pleasures connected to food are connected to socializing as part of a meal and the sense of community created by sharing a meal (Ignatov and Smith, 2006; Kim et al., 2009; Mynttinen et al., 2015). Our results indicated that the function of socio-pleasure within pleasurable surprise differed according to tourists' food cultural capital. For the majority of our participants with high and medium levels of food cultural capital, who experienced extraordinary food as surprisingly simple or complex, the psycho-pleasure elicited by surprise was dependent on who shared in the experience, i.e., the socio-pleasure of this experience. For those with low levels of food cultural capital, who experienced extraordinary food as surprisingly genuine, the psycho-pleasures and socio-pleasures constituted separate dimensions of extraordinary food encounters.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to understand extraordinary food experiences of food tourists, part of which is the element of surprise. While earlier studies have proposed a link between extraordinary experience and the element of surprise (Arnould and Price, 1993; Celsi et al. 1993; Tumbat and Belk, 2011), limited attention has been paid to how food tourists experience surprises. This article contributes to the existing literature on food experience by positioning food as an extraordinary experience. We conducted sixteen interviews with tourists who had traveled for food experiences and/or had a deep interest in food. We describe their extraordinary food experience, emphasizing on the elements of surprise, using a typology of food cultural capital.

We found that food tourists experienced surprise in different ways, depending on their food cultural capital. Food tourists who possessed high level of cultural capital were surprised by the simplicity or complexity of the experience. On the other hand, those possessing a low level of cultural capital were surprised by the genuinity of the experience rather than anything else. Thus, we make an important theoretical contribution here as we learn that the resources food tourists possessed in the form of cultural capital conditioned the ways in which they conceived an extraordinary experience. To a certain extent, our findings are also line with Lindberg and Østergaard (2015) who emphasized on the role of the consumers' resources as being important in facilitating the experience of extraordinariness. Thus, practitioners and experience designers should have an understanding of the cultural capital or resources of the tourists as it can provide insights on how food tourists are likely to be surprised and experience the extraordinariness. Such information can be obtained by measuring empirically the level of cultural capital food tourists possess and the surprise elicited during food encounters. Existing literature provides established scales to measure cultural capital (e.g. Gaddis, 2013) and surprise (e.g. Wu et al., 2015). Data collected can be utilized to segment

tourists based on their level of food cultural capital so as to understand the ways in which these different segments experience surprise. Such information will have valuable implications for destination marketing.

Previous research has widely acknowledged the importance of food as a social activity, capable of creating the feeling of togetherness and sense of community (e.g. Kimet al. 2009; Canizares and Lopez-Guzman, 2012; Mynttinen et al. 2015). Adding to this body of literature, using the cultural capital perspective, we have demonstrated the role of social context in creating an extraordinary experience. In particular, we have shown that the social context is considered as extraordinary and meaningful only when it is shared with companions having more or less similar cultural capital. Food tourists who possessed a high level of cultural capital were more likely to travel with companions who shared similar interests. For such tourists, discussing about local foods, learning from each other, and further developing their knowledge formed part of the food experience. Those possessing a low level of cultural capital were more likely to perceive experience as a way to bond and have a good time with their loves one. Therefore, we conclude that by applying a cultural capital typology in our analysis of how the food tourists conceive their extraordinary food experiences and how they are likely to be surprised, we have provided a much more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon than existing literature allows us to do.

The contributions of this study to the existing literature have to be understood taking into account its limitations, which nevertheless, open-up avenues for future research. First, the snowball sampling procedure applied in this article entails by default that participants are similar in terms of a shared interest in food (Heckatorn, 2011). Given this foodie convenience sample, there is a risk that variation among the participants regarding food cultural capital is minimal with consequences for their experiences of surprise. However, our findings

following our purpose, i.e. to explore extraordinary experiences of food tourists and to develop a theory of surprise in relation to a typology of food cultural capital, does not exclude additional ways to experience extraordinary food as surprising in the case of a greater diversity of participants' food cultural capital. Second, the study has considered only the food cultural capital of the sample participants. Future research can also look at the influence of other forms of capital such as economic, social, and symbolic on the extraordinary experience of the food tourists. Finally, because food experiences have been found to satisfy travelers' quest for novelty (Fields, 2002; Long, 2004; Saayman and van der Merwe, 2015), how novelty relates to surprise in extraordinary food experiences seems to be a laudable future research initiative. As well, researchers should test empirically the theory of surprise in extraordinary food experiences we developed in this study and validate it using cross-cultural samples of food tourists. There is also potential to investigate the influence of surprising experiences in food consumption on tourist satisfaction and loyalty behaviors.

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Table 1. Socio-demographic descriptions of participants

Interviewees	Gender	Age	Nationality	Profession	Country of Residence
Jesper	Male	47	Swedish	Owner of a consulting firm	Sweden
Sara	Female	33	Swedish	Medical Doctor	Sweden
Fiona	Female	45	Australian	Medical Specialist	Australia
Kim	Female	32	Swedish	Project Manager	Sweden
Andy	Male	52	British	ChiefExecutive Officer	United Kingdom
Jim	Male	33	Tanzanian	PhD student/Lecturer	Tanzania
Jessica	Female	37	Tanzanian	PhD student/Lecturer	Tanzania
Maria	Female	49	Swedish	Freelance Journalist	Sweden
Johnny	Male	69	German	RetiredDoctor	Germany
Johanna	Female	28	Swedish	Disability Rehabilitator	Sweden
Klara	Female	29	German	Researcher	United Kingdom
Esteban	Male	36	Mexican	Student	Sweden
Elizabeth	Female	47	Swedish	Owner of an antique shop	Sweden
Anna	Female	54	Swedish	Freelance Journalist	Sweden
Oscar	Male	35	Swedish	Researcher	Sweden
Kira	Female	33	Danish	Researcher	Denmark

Table 2. A typology of food cultural capital

Typology	Forms of food cultural capital		
	Embodied	Objectified	Institutionalized state
Cultivated food Tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hereditary Transmission • Knowledge gained through intense travelling (average 10 years of travelling exclusively for food experience) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge collection of cookery and wine books • Subscription to more than 2 food magazines • Possess fancy cooking equipment 	No possession
Enthusiast food tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hereditary Transmission • Knowledge gained through travelling (average 4 to 5 years of travelling for food experience) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A collection of cook books • Subscription to 1 or 2 food magazines 	No possession
Cultural food tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hereditary Transmission • Knowledge gained through travelling (average 2 years of travelling for food experience) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free online resources 	No possession

Table 3. Conceptions of extraordinary food experience and food cultural capital

Extraordinary food encounter as surprisingly simple	Extraordinary food encounter as surprisingly complex	Extraordinary food encounter as surprisingly genuine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesper: cultivated food tourist • Elizabeth: cultivated food tourist • Sara: enthusiast food tourist • Maria: enthusiast food tourist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andy: cultivated food tourist • Oscar: cultivated food tourist • Johnny: cultivated food tourist • Kira: cultivated food tourist • Anna: enthusiast food tourist • Kira: enthusiast food tourist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiona: cultivated food tourist • Johanna: enthusiast food tourist • Jim: cultural food tourist • Jessica: cultural food tourist • Esteban: cultural food tourist • Klara: cultural food tourist