Magisteruppsats

Master’s thesis – one year

Turismvetenskap, 15 hp

Tourism Studies, 15 ECTS

Sustainable Food Tourism

A Case Study on the Åland Islands

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SUSTAINABLE FOOD TOURISM – A CASE STUDY ON THE ÅLAND ISLANDS

A Master’s Thesis

Presented to

Mid-Sweden University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science, Tourism Studies

By

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June 2016
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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, sustainable development has become a well-known concept to most people and considering the threats associated with climate change, most leaders throughout the world now agree that action must be taken to reduce the negative effects of uncoordinated development. Some areas have already implemented plans related to balanced growth. For example, the Åland Islands aim to become a role model concerning sustainability. The tourism industry is important for the region and in the tourism strategy of the Åland Islands, the local food and beverage sector is recognized as one with big development potential. However, in the absence of previous studies on this topic, this exploratory study focuses on investigating to what extent development of food tourism could serve as a realistic option for furthering the goals of sustainability on the islands. The primary aim of the thesis is to look at the opportunities and challenges connected to this option. The secondary aim is to find out to what extent the Åland Islands’ tourism and hospitality companies use local produce and what stops them from using more. To achieve the purpose of this thesis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with different stakeholders in the food and tourism industries on the Åland Islands. The result of these interviews reveals the restaurants’ use of local products and gives an understanding of opportunities and obstacles connected to this topic. The ambition is that this study is found useful for the local tourism industry especially as it may help lead to effective policies for the future. Hopefully, the result will help serve, not only the Åland Islands but also other destinations, in their quest to act sustainably.

KEYWORDS: sustainable tourism, food tourism, the Åland Islands, sustainable development, cold water islands
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June 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dimitri Ioannides, for his advice and feedback. I would also like to thank the staff at ETOUR and Mid Sweden University that has been helpful. I would like to express my appreciation to my fellow classmates for help and support during the process. Furthermore, I am also grateful for the support I have got from family and friends. Thanks to Strax Kommunikation too for letting me use their map. Finally, I want to thank the interviewees for their contribution to this study.
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Sustainable development is nowadays a familiar expression to most people (Weaver, 2006) and Brundtland’s definition of it, i.e. “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 41), is widely known. Despite this knowledge, the overuse of the earth’s natural resources is comprehensive (Adams, 2012, 19 November). At the same time, the global temperature on the earth keeps rising and impacts on the environment due to climate change can already be seen (NASA, 2016, 11 February). Fortunately, it seems like many of the world’s leaders finally agree on the fact that something needs to be done, and quickly, if not to stop this situation, but at least, slow it down and focus more on sustainable development (COP21, 2015, 16 December). One of the biggest causes of climate change is the greenhouse gas emissions. Today, the guiltiest sectors when it comes to these emissions are the factories, buildings, transportation systems, and various fossil fuel dependent electricity and heating supply infrastructure (WWF, 2015, 26 November).

Meanwhile, tourism is one of the industries accused of causing a significant negative impact (e.g. Baltscheffsky, 2007, 12 November; Strömbom, 2016, 15 January & Carlsen & Butler, 2011) and UNEP (n.d) admits that tourism is “closely linked to climate change”. Tourism is responsible for about 5% of global CO₂-emissions (UNEP/DTIE, 2014 & UNEP, n.d.), but the World Tourism Organisation emphasizes the importance of sustainable tourism development for minimizing the negative impacts and at the same time maximizing the positive impacts of tourism (UNWTO, 2015a & UNEP/DTIE, 2014). Among researchers and in the industry it is generally agreed that tourism development should be sustainable (Gössling, Peeters, Ceron, Dubois, Patterson & Richardson, 2005) and UNEP has included tourism in the list of the economic sectors that are best able to contribute to a sustainable and green economy (UNEP/DTIE, 2014, p. 1). However, tourism is one of the world’s largest and fastest growing industries (UNWTO, 2015b, p. 2) and if not developed sustainably, this rapid expansion may lead to negative impacts locally (Neto, 2003). It has also spread into more sensitive areas, for example, islands (Taylor, Dyer, Stewart, Yunez-Naude & Ardila, 2003), and if poorly managed it can cause a lot of damage (UNEP/DTIE, 2014).
Islands are one of the most visited categories of tourism destinations (Marin, cited in Sharpley, 2012) and many islands are such popular destinations that they often attract far more tourists on an annual basis than the population (Sharpley, 2012; Graci & Dodds, 2010 & Hall, 2010). Being an island, a clearly, often small, defined area with definite borders, makes the destination vulnerable due to limited access, resources and biodiversity. Additionally, it increases the sensitivity to impacts and changes in, for example, tourism patterns (Hall, 2010; Graci & Dodds, 2010; Holmberg-Anttila, 2004 & Carlsen & Butler, 2011). All islands, both warm and cold water islands, share a lot of characteristics, but there are some differences as well (Gössling & Wall, 2007). On cold water islands, the environment often consists of wide open spaces and low populations, if any. Nature is often harsh, pristine and fragile, even more sensitive than on warm water islands (Baldacchino, 2006a). On warm water islands, commonly, the tourists relax and enjoy the warm and sunny weather while on cold water islands most tourism activities are connected to outdoor, adventure or culture tourism (Gössling & Wall, 2007; Butler, 2006; Baldacchino, 2006a & b).

With all these challenges in mind, a more sustainable form of tourism compared to what is common on warm, tropical islands, is suggested for cold water islands (Baldacchino, 2006b). A good option recognized for destinations which do not offer the traditional 3S-tourism (i.e. sea, sun and sand), is food tourism (Kivela & Crotts, 2005). Still, food production itself can be a major contributor to greenhouse gas emission (Schneider et al., cited in Gössling & Hall, 2013) and “food and drinks” as well as “passenger transportation” are two of the categories with the biggest environmental impact (Tukker et al., 2006, p. 17). Hence, the connection between food and climate change is close and food products are increasingly being transported over long distances (Nilsson, 2013). To avoid dependence on imports from far-off regions, which leads to a greater carbon footprint arising from transportation, local food production and distribution might be a solution for a more sustainable product since it would lead to reduced food miles (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008). Local food and food tourism are found to be important in the process of achieving sustainable tourism and sustainability (Everett and Aitchison, 2008 & Sims, 2010). Some islands are already working to improve the opportunities for sustainable tourism (Lockhart, 1997).
1.1 Problem Statement

One destination which is working with implementing sustainability policies is the Åland Islands. There, sustainable tourism constitutes a central policy avenue (Holmberg-Anttila, 2004 & Ålands landskapsregering & Visit Åland, 2011) and officials aim for this destination to become a role model for other regions (Kommittén Omställning Åland, 2013). In their tourism strategy 2012-2022 Ålands Landskapsregering and Visit Åland (2011) aim for sustainability to be integrated into all parts of tourism development. The strategy contains seven themes that they want to focus their development contribution on and in their latest action plan connected to the tourism strategy, “food and beverage” is one of three themes regarded as more evolved and relevant (Ålands Landskapsregering & Visit Åland, 2014, p. 2). This topic has given the Åland Islands some attention lately thanks to, for example, the participation in artisan food competitions (Mynewsdesk, 2016, 27 January & Björkroos, 2015, 6 October), the delivery of Ålandic lemonade to the Finnish presidential ball (Holmlund, 2015, 27 November) and a few years ago, the discovery of the world’s oldest beer and champagne (Alfelt, 2014, 27 June & Stenquist, 2010, 16 July).

The above examples indicate that there is potential for the local food and beverage sector, but the question is if the development of food tourism can, in fact, contribute to a more sustainable tourism industry on the Åland Islands. The destination already faces challenges associated with the fact it constitutes a group of cold water islands (e.g. accessibility, seasonality and limited resources), but are these perceived challenges seen as insurmountable obstacles? Are there opportunities for the tourism industry to make decisions with sustainability aspects in mind? Is the supply of local food-related produce large and broad enough for the companies’ demand?

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to find out if food tourism can be the solution for the Åland Islands in their pursuit of sustainability. In order to be able to investigate this, knowledge about sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism development and food tourism is needed. Additionally, information about the Åland Islands as a region is going to be presented, together with relevant theory about challenges and
opportunities related to cold water islands. The research question and sub-questions are:

- In what way can food tourism lead to sustainable development on the Åland Islands?
- What are the opportunities and challenges for the development of food tourism on the Åland Islands?
- To what extent do local companies in the tourism industry use Ålandic products?
- What stops them from using more Ålandic products?

1.3 Relevance of Study
Some studies have focused on the Åland Islands, but none concern food tourism. There is also a need for studies identifying the barriers to using local food in the tourism industry and it is suggested that these studies could, for example, focus on perceived benefits, sacrifices and risks (Lange-Vik & Idsø, 2013). Since both the tourism organisation and the government of the Åland Islands recognize a potential for the food and beverage sector, the ambition is that the local tourism industry may find the outcome of this study useful especially as it may help lead to effective policies for the future.

1.4 Thesis Structure
This first chapter of the thesis has been introducing the problem and the background to the issue. Here the aim and the research questions have been presented. The second chapter is the literature review, which includes theory about sustainable tourism and sustainable tourism development, tourism impacts, cold water islands, archipelagos and food tourism. After that, the case study destination, the Åland Islands, is presented together with information about the tourism industry and food culture there. The fourth chapter describes the methods used for this research and ethical considerations are also included. In chapter five the results and findings are discussed and analysed. The final chapter concludes the thesis and, additionally, describes the limitations of the study and gives suggestions for further research.
2 SUSTAINABLE FOOD TOURISM ON ISLANDS

In this chapter relevant literature for the thesis will be presented. The chapter is divided into five subchapters which, respectively, present necessary information for answering the research questions. The sections tell about sustainability and tourism impacts specifically connected to food tourism and islands destinations, mainly cold water ones. At the end of the chapter a model with a summary of the theory can be found (Figure 1).

2.1 Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Tourism Development

Sustainable tourism is the application of sustainable development to the tourism industry and “involves the minimization of negative impacts and the maximization of positive impacts” (Weaver, 2006, p. 10). Sustainable tourism is commonly seen as tourism which does not exceed the carrying capacity of any of the dimensions of sustainability; environmental, socio-cultural or economic, at a particular destination (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). The term carrying capacity refers to a calculation of number of tourists that can visit a destination without causing too much harm. There are many factors to take into account when calculating this, such as average length of stay, type of activities, geographical concentration of tourists and so on (Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill, 2013).

Nevertheless, neither a generally accepted definition of sustainable tourism (Graci & Dodds, 2010) nor a “universally accepted theory” related to sustainable tourism development exist (McDonald, 2009, p. 456). According to Graci and Dodds’ (2010) findings, there are over 200 definitions of sustainable development and sustainable tourism. The many definitions can cause confusion and lead to a slow implementation of the concept. Since the focus of the definitions also differs, it makes it hard to know what the essence really is. The reason why sustainable tourism started to be discussed in the first place was due to the social and environmental impacts tourism has (Graci & Dodds, 2010). Ammenberg (2012) means that it is the environmental dimension that sets the frame since without a sustainable ecosystem the socio-cultural and economic questions are irrelevant. Lately, some researchers (e.g. Carlsen and Butler, 2011, p. 232), have started to claim that the “triple bottom-line”, with the socio-cultural, environmental and economic dimensions, is not enough. A fourth pillar, politics, is suggested. Without the political support nothing
can be done (Carlsen and Butler, 2011). On the contrary, other researchers (e.g. Sharpley, 2000) argue that these pillars do not all go together, that it, in reality, is impossible to achieve sustainability in all the dimensions at the same time. Additionally, Sharpley (2000) sees a contradiction between sustainability and development. Sörensson (2014), therefore, suggests that one should divide the elements and evaluate them separately in order to get a thorough analysis. Even though the dimensions differ a lot, of course, they are always dependent on each other. But for the concept of sustainable tourism to develop, she requests a separation (Sörensson, 2014). Development does also mean that change will certainly happen and that no destination is immune to (Aronsson, cited in Tao & Wall, 2009).

Anyway, sustainability should be important in the context of the whole industry and not only be considered in more niche segments, like ecotourism (Graci & Dodds, 2010), which per definition is responsible and “conserves the environment [and] sustains the well-being of the local people” (TIES, 2015).

For tourism development to be sustainable some principles are required: the involvement of the local people, a well-developed tourism plan and long-term strategies, consideration of carrying capacities, training for public officials and management in the destination, and infrastructure support (Graci & Dodds, 2010; Tao & Wall, 2009 & Butler, cited in Gössling and Wall, 2007). Many organisations in the tourism industry have set up guidelines for sustainable development and management. Garrod and Fyall (1998), for example, present the Tourism Concern and Worldwide Fund for Nature’s ten principles for sustainable tourism. Some of the principles are the same as mentioned above, but some are different. Among these we find the importance of supporting the local economies; maintaining and promoting diversity, both natural and socio-cultural; marketing tourism responsibly; and doing research (Garrod & Fyall, 1998). According to Butler (cited in Tao & Wall, 2009, p. 141) there are some questions that are important to ask when sustainable tourism development is proposed: “What is to be sustained, for whom, under what conditions, and by whose decision?”

When developing tourism, it is important to understand that many stakeholders are involved and sustainability is the responsibility of all (Graci & Dodds, 2010 & Butler, cited in Gössling and Wall, 2007). Knowledge about how to work with sustainable tourism is necessary at all levels; “the small tourist producers, the destinations and countries, and the global level” (Sörensson, 2014, p. 63). The key to
creating sustainable tourism is cooperation among all stakeholders at the various levels (Sörensson, 2014). Note also that “many traditional development models do not provide the necessary adaptation and dynamic elements which are required to meet the needs of all stakeholders” (Graci & Dodds, 2010, p. 177).

2.2 Tourism Impacts on Islands

Islands are, per definition, completely surrounded by water (Graci & Dodds, 2010). But EU has some additional criteria that territories need to meet in order to be counted as islands: the area needs to be at least 1 km², it has to be located more than 1 km from the mainland, it has to have more than 50 permanent inhabitants, it may not have a fixed link with the continent and may not contain an EU capital (EUR-Lex, 2012, 21 June).

Tourism has a lot of impacts on islands, both positive and negative ones, occurring in all dimensions of sustainability (Weaver & Lawton, 2006, Briguglio, Archer, Jafari & Wall, 1996 & Hall, 2010). There are several solutions for avoiding or minimizing negative impacts, for example, destinations could limit the number of arriving tourists or number of available beds; or restrict the number of new buildings, their size and dimensions (Briguglio et al., 1996). Another way of preventing damage might be to raise the prices in order to keep the visitor numbers down (Hanneberg, 1996 & Epler Wood, 2002). A particularly problematic issue that affects many islands today relates to the environmental threats due to climate change. It could affect the whole island society, including the tourism industry (Briguglio et al., 1996; Graci & Dodds, 2010 & Carlsen & Butler, 2011), which in its own right “both contributes to and is impacted by climate change” (Hall, 2010, p. 246). In this chapter, these impacts will be described in more detail.

2.2.1 Negative Impacts and Challenges

There are several challenges or threats to sustainable tourism development in island destinations. Many of these threats also occur in other places, for example, peripheral mainland areas have a lot in common with islands (Holmberg-Anttila, 2004; Carlsen & Butler, 2011 & Chaperon & Theuma, 2015). Islands are often seen as especially vulnerable (Graci & Dodds, 2010; Holmberg-Anttila, 2004; Carlsen & Butler 2011 & Hall, 2010), since the environment usually is sensitive and the ecosystems are fragile (Graci & Dodds, 2010). For example, in the Baltic Sea, one increasing problem during summer is the algal bloom (Holmberg-Anttila, 2004).
Tourism development could negatively affect geographical, marine, cultural and historical attractions, for instance, by making them more fragile (Graci & Dodds, 2010). Tourism is one of the major contributors to environmental change (Gössling & Wall, 2007). Some of the negative effects tourism might have are degradation of nature due to pollution, littering and deterioration; reduced biodiversity; increased use of resources, for example, energy and water; and competition for the scarce natural resources between tourism and traditional activities (Gössling & Wall, 2007 & Weaver & Lawton, 2006). Another environmental threat is a problem that currently gains more attention in the international media, the on-going climate change. Since islands are vulnerable, climate change is a big threat, also affecting the tourism industry (Hall, 2010). Threats that can occur due to the increased temperatures are, for example, rising sea levels, which in turn can lead to flooding, erosion, sanitary systems get knocked out and fresh water supplies getting destroyed (Briguglio et al., 1996; Graci & Dodds, 2010 & Carlsen & Butler, 2011). Being an island means that the destination has water on all sides (Graci & Dodds, 2010). Therefore, boat or airplane are the most common transport modes for tourists to arrive by, which both releases a lot of greenhouse gases (Gössling & Wall, 2007 & Baum 1997). As Gössling and Wall (2007) and Hall (2010), among others, state, tourism contributes to the climate change, but also suffers due to it. The negative impacts on the environment can deteriorate the nature so much that tourists no longer are attracted to the destination, leaving locals with both a degraded environment and a degraded tourism sector (Weaver & Lawton, 2006).

Another issue might be a lack of awareness of environmental and sustainability issues among people, both inhabitants and more official persons but also tourists (Graci & Dodds, 2010). There is an assumption that small, locally owned businesses contribute to sustainable tourism development (Roberts & Tribe, 2008). But the case is often that the entrepreneurs do not see the importance in implementing sustainability initiatives since they feel that their effect on the environment is much smaller than the cause of larger companies. Education, information and assistance are needed for these entrepreneurs (Graci & Dodds, 2010). Because of seasonality, the tourism business is often only their spare-time occupation and seen as a lifestyle. Not only do they lack knowledge, but also lack commitment, interest in productivity and willingness to improve competency (Holmberg-Anttila, 2004), which consequently leads to lower quality of service. Typical areas where improvements are necessary
are leadership, entrepreneurship and marketing (Holmberg-Anttila, 2004 & Twining-Ward & Baum, 1998). When it comes to officials, they often have too little knowledge about sustainability and no in-depth understanding of tourism (Graci & Dodds, 2010 & Carlsen & Butler, 2011). This lack of concern for the environment and also a lack of sustainable planning have in several island destinations led to mass tourism. Degradation of the resources has occurred due to the overdevelopment and an inevitable decline follows (Graci & Dodds, 2010).

A further challenge that can cause problems is the fact that many stakeholders are involved, who may have varying and even conflicting interests. It may also be the case that the local stakeholders are kept out from the development by international companies. Foreign ownership often decreases the benefits from tourism for the locals due to big leakage and also the loss of possibility to have control over the situation (Graci & Dodds, 2010). Additionally, as a result of unequal share, conflicts may arise between those who benefit from tourism and those who do not (Tao, 2006 & Epler Wood, 2002). A conflict between the tourists and the need of the locals might also derive because of tourism (Fletcher et al., 2013). There are examples where the local people have been pushed away and not allowed to visit certain areas, such as the beaches (Dielemans & Salehi, 2008 & Fletcher et al., 2013).

Development of tourism also brings a risk of the locals to lose their traditions and for their cultural assets and stories to be commercialized (Epler Wood, 2002 & Lockhart, 1997). Commodification of culture may arise from tourists’ expectations of the people at a certain destination (Mowforth and Munt, 2009). Tourism development can also lead to local people adapting to the tourists and change their habits and culture. At the same time, the rate of crimes, such as prostitution, gambling and drugs, often increases (Epler Wood, 2002 & Lockhart, 1997).

Another significant risk is that the destination might get too dependent on tourism and abandons other industries in the development process (Graci & Dodds, 2010 & Carlsen & Butler, 2011). Having a short-term vision on tourism development is risky. Too much focus on quick economic gain can also jeopardize the possibilities of future income from tourism (Graci & Dodds, 2010). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2016) in 2015 three island destinations had more than 90% of their GDP in total coming from tourism: Maldives (96.5%), Aruba (90.7%), and British Virgin Islands (90.4%).
2.2.2 Positive Impacts and Opportunities

One of the biggest advantages island destinations have is their island status. The fact that they are islands gives them a special feature above their mainland competitors (Twining-Ward & Baum, 1998). The image of islands is to offer an escape from routine and stress (Graci & Dodds, 2010). There is something idyllic, romantic and mystical about islands, having to cross the sea and the feeling of isolation (Twining-Ward & Baum, 1998 & Carlsen & Butler, 2011). Since islands, per definition, are completely surrounded by water, the accessibility could be seen as a challenge. On the other hand, it could help the local people to better control the tourism development (Graci & Dodds, 2010). The tourism development can also bring “benefits of modernization” and in that way reduce some of the isolation of the islands (Hall, 2010, p. 248).

Concerning the environment, tourism can also help to protect and preserve the nature, for instance, by increasing the amount of funding for conservation (Phillips, cited in Newsome, Moore & Dowling, 2002 & UNWTO, 2004). Furthermore, studies show that people who experience nature or visit a natural site are more likely to value and support the preservation of the destination (Weaver & Lawton, 2006 & Wolf-Watz, 2015). Thanks to the interest of tourists, local sites and assets with significant value might be preserved (Fletcher et al., 2013). Tourism has also been shown to be able to alleviate environmental problems (Gössling & Wall, 2007). From a socio-cultural point of view, tourism may increase the locals’ pride in their heritage. At the same time it can help tourists and locals to better understand each other and one another’s culture and in that way broaden their world view (Fletcher et al., 2013).

As mentioned above in section 2.2.1, the tourism companies on islands are often small businesses with a lack of professional knowledge, but the smallness could also be an advantage. If the enterprise is family-owned it reduces the risk of leakage and the locals will benefit (Holmberg-Anttila, 2004 & Twining-Ward & Baum, 1998). Tourism development could contribute to poverty alleviation and even economic welfare to the local people, but it needs to be balanced against the costs (Hall, 2010 & Graci & Dodds, 2010). It is also important that the development is done sustainably and with the involvement of the locals (Graci & Dodds, 2010). Done correctly it can provide employment and increase foreign exchange (Graci & Dodds, 2010 & Gössling, cited in Hall, 2010).
2.3 Cold Water Islands

All islands have a lot in common, but there are some differences as well, especially between warm water islands and cold water islands (Gössling & Wall, 2007). The reason why islands are so popular on the whole might be thanks to the image of being authentic; something there seems to be a shortage of on the mainland (Gillis, 2007). Several researchers (e.g. Sharpley, 2012; Graci & Dodds, 2010; Lockhart, 1997; Gössling & Wall, 2007) agree that islands are fascinating places attracting tourists with their exotic and romantic appearance. The image of islands is that they offer an adventure, a fantasy and an escape. Characteristics associated with islands include remoteness, geographical separateness, difference, otherness, exclusivity and socio-cultural insularity (Sharpley, 2012; Baum, 1997; Lockhart & Drakakis-Smith, 1997 & Gössling & Wall, 2007). At the same time as these attributes are considered their attraction, the factors are also connected to challenges for sustainable development (Sharpley, 2012).

Some of the differences between cold water islands and warm water islands are very obvious, such as the water temperature. In cold water islands, the water is usually too cold for swimming; its temperature could even be life-threatening (Baldacchino, 2006a). The environment on cold water islands often consists of wide open spaces and nature is harsh, pristine and fragile, which makes it even more vulnerable than the environment on warm water islands. The population is often low if there is one at all (Baldacchino, 2006b).

When it comes to tourism there are also some differences between the two groups of islands. Commonly the activities on cold water islands are connected to outdoor, adventure or culture and often include direct contact with nature, history and local culture. These activities invite exploration and usually require more energy than those offered on warm water islands, where you most likely lay on the beach or relax at the hotel; a hotel might not even exist on the cold water island (Gössling & Wall, 2007; Butler, 2006 & Baldacchino, 2006a & b). While warm water islands offer the commonly known 3S-tourism; activities offered at cold water islands could be called 3I-tourism, referring to ice, isolation and indigenous people (Kaae, 2006). Another difference is that the cold water island souvenirs are more indigenous and expensive, whereas the souvenirs on warm water islands tend to be of cheaper nature (Baldacchino, 2006a & b). On cold water islands, generally, they respect the
environment more and the locals agree that visitor numbers should remain low (Baldacchino, 2006b). The leakage is more considerable on warm water islands (Baldacchino, 2006a). On cold water islands the stakeholder participation is also, in most cases, higher in the development process, and the planning better. This reduces the risk of problems with “winners and losers” (Gössling & Wall, 2007, p. 438).

Tourism research and books concerning islands have focused a lot more on warm water islands than cold water ones (see e.g. Graci & Dodds, 2010; Briguglio et al., 1996; Lockhart & Drakakis-Smith, 1997 & Carlsen & Butler, 2011) (Baldacchino, 2006a). This neglect of cold water islands can be seen as a bit ironic since most of the islands “are located in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere”, the highest density of islands are “between latitude 50°N and 80°N” (Baldacchino, 2006a, p.187) and the destination with the highest density of all are found on 60°N, namely the Åland Archipelago (Depraetere & Dahl, 2007). Still warm water islands are more frequently presented in marketing and advertisement (Baldacchino, 2006a). A further explanation is that cold water islands have not yet been seen as a ‘group’ in the same way as warm water islands since they each have a distinct and differentiated product, and hence do not really compete with each other (Baldacchino, 2006a). Cold water islands attract fewer visitors than warm water islands. Few people are dreaming of travelling to cold water islands. Additionally, the significance of the tourism industry for the economy of the islands is usually not very big (Lockhart, 1997; Baldacchino, 2006a; Butler, 2006; Nilsson, 2008 & Gössling & Wall, 2007). Among warm water islands a rivalry is common (Baldacchino & Ferreira, 2013, 2015), but Ankre and Nilsson (2015) mean that cold water islands have no other choice than to stick together if they want any visitors at all. The tourism season is short, often only the two or three warmer months (Gössling & Wall, 2007). Hence, the tourism impacts are smaller on cold water islands, but the potential damage it can cause is huge due to the vulnerability of the islands (Baldacchino, 2006a). For the visiting tourist, the experience is often more satisfactory since the opportunity “to connect with nature or indigenous people” is higher (Baldacchino, 2006a, p. 189). The reasons why not many tourists visit cold water islands are, mainly, because of the cost and distance. The accessibility to islands is in some cases limited, and access may only be possible by vessels or small planes (Baldacchino, 2006a & Nilsson, 2007). The trip to the destination may be
expensive but is often seen as “an integral part of the journey” (Baldacchino, 2006a, p. 190).

2.4 Archipelagos and Their Internal Relations

There are also differences between islands and within archipelagos. All islands are not equal; some are, for example, more cut off than others. Apart from the obvious aspect of peripheral, the geographical remoteness, islands (and other areas) can also be considered peripheral because they are far from wealth and power. Furthermore, distance to main hubs and gateways can make a destination seem more peripheral (Nash & Martin, 2003). The smaller and often more remote islands are usually dependent on the main island(s) (Weaver, 1998). In most cases the airport and/or seaport are located on the dominant island; hence, it receives far more tourists than the subordinate islands (Baldacchino & Ferreira, 2015). Additionally, the main island is most certainly also the economic and political centre of the archipelago. The main islands often get more benefits than the smaller islands (Weaver, 1998). Bardolet and Sheldon (2008) mean that in order to achieve long term success it is necessary to listen to all islands’ communities. The islands could in a way be seen as stakeholders that all need to be involved in the development process.

2.5 Food Tourism, Local Food and Sustainability

Gastronomy, gastro-tourism, food tourism, culinary tourism and so on, all the terms have similar meanings and I will not make a big difference in my usage of them in this chapter either. There are several definitions of gastronomy and “culinaria” (which is a synonym to gastronomy), often describing “a country’s or a region’s dishes, foods, and food preparation techniques” (Kivela & Crott, 2005, p. 41). It was Long that in 1998 first used the term ‘culinary tourism’ as an explanation of “tourists’ experiencing other cultures through food” (Kivela & Crott, 2005, p. 41).

2.5.1 What is Food Tourism?

A commonly used definition for food tourism is Hall and Mitchell’s (2001, p. 308-309): “visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and special locations for… the desire to experience a particular type of food, the produce of a specific region…” (see also Hall, Sharple, Mitchell, Macionis & Cambourne, 2003; Everett & Aitchison, 2008; James & Halkier, 2014 & Everett & Slocum, 2013). For the tourist, food becomes much more than something to prevent
hunger with; it is an attraction in itself (Hall et al., 2003). Apart from just eating,
gastronomy involves activities such as food trails, events, cooking classes and food
and wine. Food is an important part of the culture (van Westering, 1999; Hall et al.,
2003 & Kivela & Crotts, 2005) and is closely connected to heritage. A destination’s
cuisine is shaped by its history, both environmentally and culturally (Povey, 2011).
Food tourism is a growing subset of culture tourism (Timothy & Ron, 2013 & Wolf,
2008). Tourists want to experience products that give them an insight into the culture
of the local people (Sims, 2009). Food tourism is connected to stories, local food and
purity (Havas, Adamsson, Sievers, Viljanen & Hook, 2014). James and Halkier
(2014) identify four central practices that food tourism consists of; producing food
and products, retailing, catering and promoting. Food is an essential part of a tourist
experience and it can contribute a lot to how tourists experience a destination. It has
also been recognized as an important travel motivator, either as a primary or
secondary reason to travel for more and more tourists, especially for tourists from
nearby (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Kivela and Crotts, 2005; van Westering, 1999;
Quan & Wang, 2004; Nilsson, 2013; Hall et al., 2003; Sims, 2009; Hall & Mitchell,
2001 & Povey, 2011). The typical food tourist has higher education, at least a
bachelor’s degree; travels without children, usually together with another adult; and
has a high income (Smith and Costello, 2009; James & Halkier, 2014 & Hall et al.,
2003).

2.5.2 Benefits of Food Tourism
While giving tourists an opportunity to learn about the local cuisine, food
tourism may also bring a lot of benefits for the destination. It can provide income for
producers and suppliers (Hall et al., 2003) and help diversify the economy, giving an
addition to, for example, the agricultural industry. Developing food tourism has been
shown to save struggling farms by making them into tourist attractions too. The
situation is similar for the fishing industry; increasing demand from tourists of local
fish has saved businesses in some places (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). Focusing on
food tourism can also lead to a new image for the destination and in that way attract
new tourists and lead to long-term economic sustainability. Promotion of local food
might lead to the survival of local food production (Quan & Wang, 2004; Everett &
Aitchison, 2008; Sims, 2010; Telfer & Hashimoto, 2013; Hall et al., 2003; Sims,
2009 & Scarpato, 2002). The economic benefits from food tourism may help
preserve the natural resources and can improve the quality of life for the community (Hall et al., 2003 & Hall & Sharples, 2008). Food can also be part of bigger events (Quan & Wang, 2004; Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Sims, 2010; Telfer & Hashimoto, 2013; Sims, 2009 & Scarpato, 2002), and food festivals and events can increase a community’s pride and self-value (Quan & Wang, 2004). Food tourism has proven to be able to strengthen a region’s identity, sustain its cultural heritage and help increase tourist consumption (Hall et al., 2003 & Everett & Aitchison, 2008). Food tourism could be a good option for destinations which cannot offer the 3S-tourism, areas without other natural or cultural attraction and tourism places in stagnation or decline (Butler, 1980 & Kivela & Crotts, 2005). Many food products, for example, meat, fish and cheese, are non-seasonal, allowing the restaurants to offer fresh, quality, local food all year round. While focusing on local food may help extend the season, the regional specialties might get a smaller role during the high season. The visitors during this time of the year tend to appreciate low prices and familiar dishes (Everett & Aitchison, 2008).

2.5.3 Barriers to Food Tourism and Local Food

Some barriers to the development of food tourism have also been recognized, especially concerning usage of local products. One thing that can stop the suppliers, such as cafés and restaurants, from using local products is the price, which is often higher than on products from elsewhere. Another reason may be that the available local produce is too small for the demand, and the reliability of delivery becomes low. Seasonality also has a part in this. A further challenge can be the choice between local and organic, it is often hard to combine both (Sims, 2010 & Telfer & Wall, 1996). Another obstacle might be that the purchase routines in restaurants and supermarkets are centralised and, therefore, makes it hard to include more local products (James & Halkier, 2014). Still if local products are available, it does not necessary mean that they are accessible to tourists. This might be due to too high price, family status or lack of information (Sims, 2010). “Quality in relation to price” is an important factor in the consumers’ purchase decisions (Marenick, Gooch & Felfel, 2010, p. 7). There are also some things that can work as barriers preventing the tourist from enjoying a food experience; hygiene and health - the risk of getting ill; local eating habit and table manners – for Westerners, not using fork and knife or eating ‘weird’ food, such as rats or guinea pigs, after seeing them being killed;
communication gap – not being able to understand the menu or the staff at the restaurant (Cohen & Avieli, 2004).

2.5.4 Sustainability and Food

A niche of people is now asking for more quality food that is sustainable and ethically produced. They want to know where the food comes from (traceable), preferably close-by and that it is safe, healthy and clean (spray-free and non-genetically modified). The consumers also look for labels; the food should be organic and/or fairtrade. Furthermore, questions of animal welfare are important (Hall et al., 2003; Harvey, McMeekin & Warde, 2004; Hall, 2013 & Everett & Aitchison, 2008). In many countries, organic farming is showing a strong growth trend (Gössling & Hall, 2013). Tourists are not only concerned about the environment; they also want a cultural experience (Sims, 2010). Part of the rising interest of ‘local’ can be explained by consumers being more interested in knowledge-based experiences and nature-based activities (Cochrane, cited in Østrup Backe, 2013). The visitors want to be “good travellers” instead of “irresponsible tourists”, hence, feeling that they must engage with local products (Rojek, cited in Sims, 2009, p 328). Østrup Backe (2013, p. 60) note that “being local” and “being sustainable” seem to be perceived as almost the same, and even though they have some similarities, in reality, they are quite different.

Everett and Aitchison’s (2008, p. 157) study recognize that negative environmental impacts could be reduced by “reconnecting the tourist with the landscape via local food networks”. The environmental awareness, among both locals and tourists, was clearly shown to increase. In Sims’ (2010) research tourists showed a lot of support for sustainable tourism. Enteleca’s (n.d.) study of tourists’ attitudes towards local food, also confirmed this. It shows that holidaymakers believe buying local food helps the local economy (82%) and the local environment (65%). The appreciation of local food is also growing and people are willing to pay more for local quality food and drinks (Enteleca, n.d. & Everett & Aitchison, 2008).

Everett and Aitchison (2008) and Sims (2010) found that food tourism and local food are important in achieving sustainable tourism and sustainability in all of the three dimensions; economic, socio-cultural and environmental. Other findings suggest that production and consumption of food are “important aspects in the development of sustainable tourism and sustainable culinary systems” (Gössling &
Hall, 2013, p. 8) and according to Boniface (cited in Everett & Aitchison, 2008, p. 151) food tourism presents “a new approach to achieving sustainable tourism development”. Culinary networks are a practice that has been shown to be successful in promoting local food (Østrup Backe, 2013 & Lange-Vik & Idsø, 2013) and Østrup Backe (2013, p. 60) argue that the networks “can also be used as a tool for sustainable tourism development”. One reason for the success of the Norwegian network Rørosmat is thanks to large non-hierarchical networks that developed on both the producer and the consumer sides. Another is that they do not have a required minimum production quantity, which reduces the risk of economic losses due to less need of taking financial loans (Lange-Vik & Idsø, 2013). Even though local food is important for sustainable tourism, it is also important to note that sustainable tourism is about more than just the food (Sims, 2009, 2010). Local food is also often associated with the sustainability of food tourism, but non-local food can, in fact, be as sustainable as local (Scarpato, 2002).

Tourism can also have negative effects on the local culture (Epler Wood, 2002 & Lockhart, 1997, as seen in section 2.2.1) and Reynolds (cited in Everett & Aitchison, 2008, p. 152) means that the “erosion of cultures and traditional skills must be investigated” in case we want to be serious about sustainable tourism development. It is important to note that all stages, from farm to plate, have significant environmental and resource impacts and that each stage must try to minimize their use of non-renewable resources, such as fossil fuels (Gössling & Hall, 2013). Food production, including agriculture, has been recognized as one of the major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions (Schneider et al., cited in Gössling & Hall, 2013). Included in this calculation are also packing, retailing, transport and preparation of the products (Gössling & Hall, 2013). The categories “food and drinks” and “passenger transportation” are two of three areas that have the biggest environmental impact (Tukker et al., 2006, p. 17). There is also a close connection between food production and climate change. Food is increasingly being transported over long distances and, for example, the Scandinavian countries are heavily dependent on food that has been transported a long way (Nilsson, 2013).

2.5.5 Local

The perception of how far away products can be produced and still be called ‘local’ varies, in a survey from the Institute of Grocery Distribution (cited in
Edwards-Jones et al., 2008) the opinions include everything from within 50 km to whole countries. There is also a debate if ‘local products’ have to be grown in the area or if it is enough that they are manufactured there (Sims, 2010). The first view states that it should be rooted in people’s mind and be a part of the tradition and hence, the raw material needs to come from the region. The other view defends itself with the argument that even if they ‘only’ process the product in the area; it still contributes to added value to the product and support of the local economy by employing locals. Some might even go thus far as claiming using local supply companies make the final product local. One example of stretching ‘local’ is the locally made chocolate cake, baked with organic chocolate from a shop in the region, which gets the chocolate “directly from cocoa land” (Sims, 2010, p. 111). In the Ystad-Österlen area in Southern Sweden, they also considered olive oil from Crete as local, since a man living in the area has a second home in Crete and is part of an olive oil cooperative there (Østrup Backe, 2013). This view is also observed by Morris and Buller (2003) in the debate if ‘local’ means that the product, apart from being produced and processed, also needs to be purchased in the same area, or does the added value of being produced ‘locally’ remain if it is sold and consumed elsewhere. Since there is marketing potential in using ‘local’, this can, of course, be misused for staging products to make them seem authentic. Marketing is important for the tourists to find the products too (Sims, 2010).

Commonly, local is also seen as handmade, quality products from small-scale businesses. The food should be healthy, nourishing and consider animal welfare. So, it is obvious that ‘local’ is not only about the spatial area (Sims, 2010). Reasons to buy local food is, apart from the short distance, freshness, supporting local producers, environmental concern and taste (the Institute of Grocery Distribution, cited in Edwards-Jones et al., 2008 & Sims, 2010). Sims (2010) also found that café, pub and restaurant owners had a more flexible view on ‘local’ than the producers. Tourists tend to see ‘local’ as products made or purchased in the region or as something ‘typical’ for the area.

Despite the many benefits supporters for ‘local food’ enumerate: it reduces food miles and greenhouse gas emissions, improve food quality and safety, strengthen local economies and so on, Edward-Jones and his colleagues (2008) are a bit sceptical. Their investigation shows that there are some downsides to local food too. As already mentioned, the disagreement on what is ‘local’. The ways of
calculating the carbon footprint of a product also varies, making it hard to compare and determine what is good and what is not (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008). Furthermore, Hinrichs (2003) states that it is dangerous to see local as good and global as bad, just because a product is local does not mean that it automatically tastes better or is more beneficial, socially or environmentally.

2.5.6 Authenticity

High-end restaurants are increasingly starting to use local products in order to stand above the more average restaurants. For them, it is important to make it visible to the guests, for example, through the menus and by storytelling of the waiters (James & Halkier, 2014). It is the same for farm shops, as explained in Sims (2010), in order to buy the story of a product you have to go the farm shop. Even if the product is available in the supermarket, the story is not. The demand for local and traditional food can also be linked to the search for authenticity (Sims, 2009). In order to make a product seem unique and authentic, places and destinations often try to connect specific food, products or dishes, with local traditions to show that they are local (Sims, 2009). But sometimes tourists prefer if the dishes are somewhat staged in order to be more familiar. Some local food specialities can still be seen as authentic even though they are a bit adjusted, for example, Asian food, that may originally be very spicy food or contain ‘strange’ food like snake or dog (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). As with many other terms, no generally accepted definition of authenticity exist, Taylor (2000, p. 8) means that there are “at least as many definitions of authenticity as there are those who write about it”. The term is often connected to tradition and means that something is real or genuine (Taylor, 2000 & Sims, 2009).

2.5.7 Slow Food

Slow Food is a movement that was started in late 1980 in Italy by Carlo Petrini as a reaction against fast food. Today the movement involve people from over 160 countries. The aim of this movement is to “defend regional traditions, good food, gastronomic pleasure and a slow pace of life” (Slow Food, 2015a). They want to prevent local food cultures and traditions from disappearing (Slow Food, 2015b). The perspectives of Slow Food are somehow all connected to sustainability (Nilsson, 2013) and they seek to protect biodiversity (Slow Food, 2015c). Their vision is that everyone should have access to “good, clean and fair food” (Slow Food, 2015d).
‘Good’ refers to the taste of the food (Slow Food, n.d.) and the culinary heritage. The specialities and dishes have their root in the local traditions. The cuisine largely consists of indigenous ingredients, and traditional cooking and preservation methods are used, still there is not necessary a contradiction between innovation and tradition (Nilsson, 2013). Everett and Aitchison (2008) also argue that conserving the heritage it is not about ‘fossilising’ the local food traditions, but rather letting global culinary influences contribute to new products and skills, and still keeping the local distinctiveness. ‘Clean’ is about ecology and means that the environment should be respected and sustainable forms of farming used. Every stage in the food production chain should consider the health of both the consumer and the producer, and protect biodiversity (Slow Food, n.d. & Nilsson, 2013). Protection of animal rights is also important. If ‘clean’ was about food and nature, ‘fair’ is more about people (Nilsson, 2013). It does not only include social justice for the staff, but also aspects of solidarity, sympathy and respect for cultural diversities and traditions (Slow Food, n.d.). ‘Fair’ also includes fair and equal relationships between producers, suppliers and consumers; hence, fair trade is a natural thing. Another aspect considered here is the reduced food miles, as one benefit of local food. Promotion of local partners, for example, in the menu, on the internet page or elsewhere in the marketing material, could also be seen as ‘fair’ (Nilsson, 2013).
Figure 1. Summary of theory.

Benefits
- Diversified economy
- Marketing advantages
- Food festivals and events to increase pride and self-value
- Good option for destinations not offering 3S-tourism
- Non-seasonal products
- Important when achieving sustainability
- ...

Positive impacts and opportunities
- Island status/image
- Protect and preserve nature and culture
- Increase locals’ pride of their own heritage
- Better understanding of others and their culture
- More job opportunities
- Increased income
- ...

For tourism to be sustainable:
- Involvement of local people
- Support of local economies
- Well-developed plans and long-term strategies
- Consideration of carrying capacities
- Training for officials and management
- Infrastructure support
- Maintain and promote diversity
- Market tourism responsibly
- Do research
- All stakeholders responsible, involved and cooperating

Local food and food tourism

Tourism and tourism development on cold water islands

Barriers
- Higher price
- Too small supply
- Too low quality
- Quality in relation to price
- Seasonality
- Choice between local and organic
- Centralized purchase routines
- Misuse of ‘local’
- ...

Negative impacts and challenges
- Degradation of nature
- Lack of awareness of sustainability issues
- Seasonality
- Lack of knowledge about marketing
- Risk of conflicts due to involvement of many stakeholders
- Long distance, high cost
- Lost traditions
- ...
3 THE ÅLAND ISLANDS

This research was done as a case study and in this chapter, the study area will be presented. The chosen destination is the Åland Islands. Below basic facts about the islands will be presented together with information about the tourism industry and the food culture.

The Åland Islands are an autonomous, demilitarized region in the south of Finland (see Figure 1) with Swedish as their only official language (Visit Åland, n.d.a. & Ålands landskapsregering, n.d.). Apart from their own government (Landskapsregeringen) and parliament (Lagtinget), the islands also have their own flag, stamps, top-level domain and number plates. The archipelago consists of more than 6,700 islands, out of which 60 are inhabited. The population is about 28,500 people, whereof 11,000 live in the only town, Mariehamn, and the rest in the fifteen other municipalities. The most important industries are shipping, trade, banking, agriculture and food, but shipping has always been especially important and still is (Visit Åland, n.d.a).

There are relatively many companies on the Åland Islands, over 2,500, and the majority, about 85%, of them are small businesses with less than five employees. According to statistics most of the companies, 67%, are found in the service sector. The trade, hotel and restaurant sector counts for 24% (ÅSUB, 2015a, 31 December). On one hand, the geographical location might indicate that the Åland Islands are a peripheral region. On the other hand, the industries show that they are, at least, not a typical peripheral area. Agriculture is usually the biggest industry in these areas, not the service sector (Holmberg-Anttila, 2004).

One thing that makes the Åland Islands a bit special is the ‘hembygdsrätt’, the right of domicile. In order to own a company there, you need to have this right. This makes it harder for international and also Finnish companies and persons to act on the Ålandic market. The right also prevents the land from being owned by outlanders. Exceptions from the requirements can be granted if applied from the Ålandic government (The Nordic Council, n.d.). To get this right of domicile one needs to be Finnish citizen, who has 1) moved to the Åland Islands and, 2) without interruption had his/her home there for at least five years and, 3) have satisfactory knowledge in Swedish (Finlex 1991:1144, chapter 2 § 7). Also, the public right of
access that exists in the Nordic countries is slightly different on the Åland Islands (Ålands landskapsregering, 2015, 22 May).


3.1 The Tourism Industry

The Åland Islands have been a tourist destination since the late 1800s. Already during the 1930s ferries went regularly between Finland and the Åland Islands, as well as between Sweden and the Åland Islands (Korhonen, 2008). Though it was not until the 1960s and 1970s the tourists started to come in bigger numbers and tourism became an important industry. Arrival numbers continued to grow until the early 1990s and then 1994-95 a drop of tourist arrivals could be observed, due to a historically low level of the Swedish krona compared to the Finnish markka and the wreck of M/S Estonia (Holmberg-Anttila, 2004 & ÅSUB, 2014a). In 1998, Twining-Ward and Baum stated that the Åland Islands, among other islands in the Baltic Sea, were a mature tourism destination. However, if looked at it through the lenses of Butler’s Tourism Area Life Cycle, the destination reached stagnation already in the
early 1990s and after that started to decline (Butler, 1980 & Holmberg-Anttila, 2004).

Today, the tourism industry at the Åland Islands has recovered and is highly important for the economy of the island destination. ÅSUB’s (2014b) studies show, depending on the definition, that the income from tourism counts for as much as almost 20% of GDP. Even though the total income has decreased in the last years due to a decline in the shipping business, the land-based tourism, on the contrary, has experienced an exceptional rise. The estimated value of the onshore tourism industry was in 2013 about 4.1%, almost 44 million euro, of the Åland Islands’ GDP. While the whole sector at its widest definition, including, for instance, shipping, is estimated to be 19.9%, almost 213 million euros (ÅSUB, 2014b). The seasonality is very high at the Åland Islands, as many as 75% of the tourists visit during high season, the summer (Korhonen, 2008 & Ålands landskapsregering, 2004). Therefore, the tourism is often only a spare-time occupation and does not bring enough income all year round (Ålands landskapsregering, 2004). The tourism businesses are in many cases micro to small, family owned and only employing a few people (Baum, cited in Baum, 2006). The onshore tourism employs about 5.5% of the Ålandic labour, but the effects can be seen in most other industries as well (Ålands landskapsregering, 2004). In 2015, the Åland Islands had just over 2,108,900 arrivals, which was an almost 3% increase since the year before (ÅSUB, 2016, 1 February). Though, in this number cruise passengers who do not get off the ship and visitors who only stay maximum one day, are included. They count for almost half of the arrivals (Korhonen, 2008 & ÅSUB, 2014b). The number of stays overnight was about 393,400 in 2014 (ÅSUB, 2015b).

The tourism organisation on the Åland Islands is called Visit Åland. It is a member organisation with about 250 members (Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016). Their main tasks include to market the Åland Islands as a destination and to develop tourism in the islands together with the local stakeholders. Additionally, they maintain the tourist information and also represent the industry before authorities (Visit Åland, 2016).

3.2 The Food Culture

Food culture can be defined as “food traditions and culinary habits of individuals in their collective context, including a variety of dimensions such as
identity, morality, politics, economy, the market, or language” (Bergflødt, Amilien & Skuland, 2012, p. 5). The Nordic countries have not been seen as culinary destinations and, for a long time, Nordic food has been considered as heavy, uninteresting and expensive (Østrup Backe, 2013). But this is about to change since the interest for Nordic food culture has risen lately. Several cooperation projects, which work with improving the image of Nordic food, exist between the countries. In an effort to raise the interest for Nordic food, attributes that are highlighted are purity, freshness, simplicity and ethics (New Nordic Food, n.d. & Havas et al., 2014).

Included in Nordic food culture are not only the beliefs, norms, habits and actual food and dishes, but also the entire food system, everything from production to consumption (Bergflødt et al., 2012). There is a debate if the Nordic food culture should be seen as one, or if it, in fact, is several cultures. On one hand, there are similarities, for example, meatballs are found in all countries. On the other hand, there are also huge differences in climate, language and lifestyle; compare, for instance, Copenhagen and Kiruna. We can agree that the food cultures of all the countries are somewhat similar and that they have all been shaped by European influences. However, the directions have varied slightly due to various historical events of the different countries; the identity of Finland has been shaped by Swedish and Russian reign (Bergflødt et al., 2012). Today two different views exist in Europe of how to interpret food quality; the southern parts connect quality with origin, culture, and taste while in Northern Europe quality is defined by health, nutrition, hygiene, animal welfare and technique (Barjolle & Sylvander, 2000). The Nordic food culture has been affected by the fact that hunting and angling are important leisure activities, and eating outdoors is also an important part of the culture. The bond between food and nature is strong in Nordic food culture and that might partly be explained by the vulnerability that comes with the short season (Bergflødt et al., 2012). Since the growing season is so short, there is also a big risk of getting the harvest destroyed by frost, therefore, resistant plants like rye, roots and cabbage are common. Food storage and preservation also become a major issue due to the long winters. Hence, many of the traditional dishes are smoked, dried or fermented; the famous, or infamous, fermented Baltic herring is a good example. In most parts of the Nordic countries the soil is relatively bad, resulting in a mainly animal husbandry. Additionally, fish is an important source of food (Nilsson, 2013).
When it comes to the food culture on the Åland Islands, there is not much difference. In fact, in the sustainable food strategy (ÅPF, 2015) that the industry is working on now, it is stated that there is a need for Ålandic food products to be distinguished from those of its nearby neighbours. As a part of this attempt the aim is to establish a common brand for the Ålandic products, making it easier for customers to choose these products, both locally on the islands, but also abroad. Today about 80% of the Ålandic products are sold outside of the Åland Islands (ÅPF, 2015). The situation is similar to that in the Norwegian town of Røros, where only 10% of the local products are sold locally (Lange-Vik & Idsø, 2013). Lange-Vik and Idsø’s study also reveals the unexploited potential in creating connections between local food and tourism. On Bornholm, the Food Ambassador worked hard to get their products into the menu at the Royal Wedding, and it gave them an enormous branding effect (Manniche and Larsen, 2012). Whether or not the delivery of Ålandic lemonade to the Finnish presidential ball had the same effects, is an issue that has not yet been investigated (Holmlund, 2015, 27 November).

ÅPF (2015) means that it is important for the Åland Islands to adjust to the demand of the customers of tomorrow, just as their neighbours are doing. As mentioned earlier (see section 2.4.4), more people are asking for sustainable and traceable products, and studies show that the customers are willing to buy products that are environmentally friendly. A study done on the Åland Islands also indicates that tourists are willing to pay more to get the opportunity to have a breakfast consisting of local products (Ahlqvist & Snällström, 2013). However, in reality, the average customer is not willing to pay the additional costs that are implied in sustainable production. To be successful you need to target the groups that are willing to pay extra (ÅPF, 2015). In the national food tourism strategy (Havas et al., 2014), a couple of Ålandic ‘food tourism products’, Skördefesten and Smakbyn, are given as good examples.
4 METHODS

This thesis aims to find out if food tourism can help leading to sustainable development on the Åland Islands. The study is done by using a qualitative research method. Significant characteristics for qualitative methods are that they do not rely on numbers but rather depend on text and images (Creswell, 2009). The main thing with this type of research is not to be able to make generalizations, but to understand phenomena more in-depth. By gaining information about the issue from participants in the study, the researcher can be able to draw conclusions. It is important that the researcher, during the process, focuses on what the participants know about the issue rather than his/her own knowledge or what is expressed in literature. When collecting the data, the researcher is often close-up, face-to-face and talking directly to people (Creswell, 2009). This gives the researcher the opportunity to not only listen to what the participant has to say, but also to see and read his/her body language and facial expressions (Starrin & Renck, 1996). The data collection usually takes place in the natural setting where the problem or issue is experienced, and not in a laboratory. The researcher collects his/her own data and does not use ‘instruments’, such as interview guides, developed by other researchers (Creswell, 2009). There are several ways to collect the qualitative data, for example, interviews, observations and analysis of documents, images or videos (Creswell, 2009 & Finn, Elliott-White & Walton, 2000). It is not uncommon to use multiple sources of data (Creswell, 2009 & Maxwell, 2013). After collecting and reviewing the data, the researcher needs to try to understand the information and organise it into themes. Thereafter, the data needs to be analysed and from that, the researcher draws conclusions (Creswell, 2009).

In this study, I chose to conduct interviews. Interviews can be done in a number of ways. The interviews could be structured, semi-structured or unstructured, depending on how many questions you have and how strict the order of the questions is (Creswell, 2009; Finn et al., 2000 & Starrin & Renck, 1996). There are also different ways the interviews can be made, for example, individually, face-to-face, on the telephone, in focus groups and via e-mail or on the internet. The advantages of interviews are that they are useful when it is not enough to observe the participants and when the researcher needs to know the respondents’ opinion or experience. In this method, the participant can provide information (Creswell, 2009). This can, on the contrary, also be seen as a limitation or disadvantage, since the information
provided is indirect and “filtered through the views of the interviewees” (Creswell, 2009, p. 179). Additionally, the presence of the researcher may cause biased responses. It is important that the researcher carefully selects the participants in order to best help him/her to understand the problem or issue and achieve the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2009). In qualitative method approaches random samples are normally not used. Rather, Miles and Huberman (cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 178) mean that there are four aspects that the researcher needs to think about when selecting participants: “the setting (where the research will take place), the actors (who will be observed or interviewed), the events (what the actors will be observed or interviewed doing), and the process (the evolving nature of events undertaken by the actors within the setting)”.

The interviews in this study were done in a semi-structured way. This means that an interview guide was prepared with some questions, but at the same time, the interviewees were given the opportunity to talk freely. The order of the questions was not strict either (Creswell, 2009; Finn et al., 2000 & Starrin & Renck, 1996).

4.1 The Research Process

To undertake this study, the first step was to learn more about the phenomena and to find suitable theory. I started to review literature and articles in order to find themes to focus on. The topics chosen were sustainable tourism and sustainable tourism development, tourism impacts, cold water islands, archipelagos and food tourism. Sustainable tourism, its development and the impacts of tourism are all topics that connect to the on-going discussions about sustainable development. Theory about cold water islands is included because the focus area in this research is a group of islands situated in cold water. The Åland Islands were selected since not too many studies have been done there connected to tourism. Additionally, I am from the region, therefore, it felt natural to locate the study there. The last topic, food tourism, was chosen because it is one of the themes the tourism industry on the Åland Islands themselves, see as a big opportunity for development and no studies have been done there on this topic. Furthermore, there is a need for more research about perceived benefits from and barriers to the use of local food in tourism (Lange-Vik & Idsø, 2013). All these areas I read more about to get a deeper understanding. Originating from the literature I tried to find a gap in knowledge and determine my research problem. The exact questions I have used have changed over time. When I
had enough theoretical background information, interview guides were developed. The reason why I chose to do interviews was in order to get a better understanding of the situation and reality for the stakeholders. This cannot be achieved by using quantitative research methods, or by using other qualitative methods, such as observation or text analysis. The interviews were done in a semi-structured way. I met with seven different stakeholders that in some way have a connection to tourism and/or food. Additionally, I had an email interview with a representative from the tourism organisation Visit Åland. See Table 1 for more information about the interviewees.

Table 1. List of interviewees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Type of company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smakbyn</td>
<td>Michael Björklund</td>
<td>Restaurant, distillery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marskogens lamm</td>
<td>Ann Sundberg</td>
<td>Lamb meat producer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattas gårdsmejeri</td>
<td>Jennifer Sundman, Lars-Johan Mattsson</td>
<td>Small-scale organic dairy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ålands landsbygdscenrum</td>
<td>Lena Brenner</td>
<td>Rural developer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skördefesten</td>
<td>Liz Mattsson</td>
<td>Harvest festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Hotel</td>
<td>Anna Karlsson</td>
<td>Hotel, restaurant*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viking Line</td>
<td>Bengt Mattsson</td>
<td>Ferry company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit Åland</td>
<td>Camilla Sommarström</td>
<td>Tourism organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = the names have been changed due to anonymity reasons
I wanted to get a broad understanding of the issue, therefore, I chose interviewees from different levels in the food chain, from producers to suppliers. The seven oral interviews were held face-to-face with representatives of the companies, at their workplace. All interviews, both face-to-face and email, were held in Swedish. The approximate time of the interviews was 10-60 minutes. The interviews were all conducted between 11 April and 19 April 2016, apart from the email interview which was held 4 May 2016. Since the interviewed companies had different roles in the food chain, some of the questions in the interview guides differed too (see appendices for interview guides in English). The interviews were recorded with my mobile phone and transcribed within a couple of days after they were held.

After that, the result was analysed. I began by reading through the transcripts and then I started with the coding. I gave codes to the important comments and continued with organising the codes into themes according to the research questions. These steps can be seen in Appendix 3. In the analysis process, all the codes and themes were in Swedish, but the themes were then translated into English and they also became titles in the analysis and discussion chapter. After that, I connected the result with the theory found in the literature review. And, finally, concluding remarks were drawn based on that.

4.2 Ethics and Validity

When doing a study, it is important for the researcher to consider ethical issues that may arise in his/her research. It is important that the outcome of the study also benefit the participants and is meaningful to others beyond the researcher. The researcher also needs to inform the participants of the aim of the research (Creswell, 2009). All interviewees in this thesis were informed about the aim and that the recorded material would be used for this purpose only. All participants gave their consent to be interviewed and recorded. All interviewees were offered anonymity, but almost everyone waived it and agreed to let me present them and their company, together with their opinions and experiences. The one who wanted to be anonymous is marked with a star in Table 1; both the names of the interviewee and the company have been changed for the sake of anonymity. The interviewees were also informed about their right to not answer the questions and to discontinue at any time.

As a researcher, it is also necessary to reflect upon possible reasons for bias and try to eliminate them. Depending on the researcher’s values and personal
background, such as gender, culture and socio-economic status, the result can be biased (Creswell, 2009). As already mentioned in section 4.1, I am originally from the Åland Islands and have lived there the major part of my life. There is a big risk that this may influence the findings in this thesis. I know a lot about the places, companies and community, and this is hard to completely put aside. But I do not know everything and have, for example, not visited all 16 municipalities. This may have influenced the choice of companies to interview, decreasing the opportunity for unfamiliar businesses to be chosen. However, I think that this might have given me an advantage in the interview situations, partly because I knew about local phenomena and events discussed, so no extra explanation was needed, and I, therefore, assume I might have been able to apprehend information that may have been missed by others. And partly, also, the interviewees might have seen me as an equal. Additionally, I have worked in the industry myself, on the supplier side; in cafés, restaurants, bars and grocery stores. There is a risk that my experiences affect the interpretation of the result, making me more observant for aspects that I have also come across. A further challenge for me was to stay objective concerning the attitude towards local and sustainable products. For me, this is the obvious choice to make and I have long been interested in sustainability issues. All these opinions and experiences are necessary to put aside in order to avoid bias and for the result to be as valid as possible.

In order to determine if the research is reliable, the researcher is suggested to document as many of the steps in the procedure as possible. It can also be good to have others checking the steps, for instance, the transcripts and codes. To ensure that the result of the research is valid, different ‘validity strategies’ can be used. It is recommended to use more than one of these strategies. To make sure my results are accurate I used ‘member checking’, meaning that the participants got the chance to read the analysis and discussion before the finalization of the thesis. This gave them the opportunity to comment on this section and enabled me to do corrections if needed. Furthermore, as mentioned above, I clarify the bias I might bring to the study. It is good to be open and reflect on how the interpretation of the findings can be shaped by my background (Creswell, 2009).
5 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the result of the interviews will be presented. The titles of the subchapter derive from the analysis process; it is the themes that emerged and which all are connected to the research questions. Since all the interviews were held in Swedish, all quotes and comments are translated from Swedish to English. At the end of the chapter a model displaying a summary of the findings can be found (Figure 3).

5.1 Challenges

As already pointed out, being a cold water island may have its challenges; the climate is cold (Baldacchino, 2006a & b), the tourism season is short (Gössling & Wall, 2007) and accessibility is often limited (Baldacchino, 2006a & Nilsson, 2007). All these aspects affect all parts of the tourism industry, but some are even more challenging for the food tourism sector. In this chapter, the main challenges on the Åland Islands will be discussed, some due to the fact that they are a group of islands situated up North and some due to other things.

5.1.1 Seasonality

One of the biggest challenges for many cold water islands, including the Åland Islands, is seasonality. Since up to 75% of the tourists visit the islands during the summer, the industry is heavily dependent on a good summer (Korhonen, 2008 & Ålands landskapsregering, 2004). A really bad summer would increase the risk of economic problems for many companies (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016), making it hard to run a restaurant on the Åland Islands today. But the seasonality is something that is experienced in the whole food chain, not only at the restaurants. There are a lot more people on the Åland Islands in the summer; hence, the demand for products is higher also for the producers, regardless of the size of the company (L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April 2016). In the summer, there are more cafés and restaurants open, which further increase the demand for products (J. Sundman & L-J. Mattsson, personal communication, 12 April 2016).

Attempts have been done in order to try to spread the tourist arrivals and to extend the season, for example, events like the Harvest Festival have been successful even though it takes place in late September. But they too face the challenge of evening out the visitor numbers of the three days. Since most people now visit the
participants on Saturday, the organisers try to schedule most activities on Friday and Sunday. Additionally, plans for an “industry day” exist for Thursday (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016). M. Björklund (personal communication, 11 April 2016) also thinks it would be good to try to spread visitors of the Harvest Festival more evenly throughout the whole year as a way of avoiding the “chaos” often occurring on roads and parking lots during the weekend. A spring event connected to the Harvest Festival is actually planned for 2017 (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016).

The problem today is that the demand is too little during the rest of the year, simply because there are too few people. M. Björklund (personal communication, 11 April 2016) compared the Åland Islands, which have fewer than 30,000 inhabitants, with Nice, which is a city of 3 million people and lies within close proximity to Monaco, which in turn has more tourists and wealthy people. In Nice the restaurant owners also notice the problems with seasonality, leaving M. Björklund wondering how we on the Åland Islands will succeed in changing these problems when they also exist in places like Nice. B. Mattsson (personal communication, 19 April 2016) also notes the advantages of close access for more people. He tells about how far the Åland Islands neighbouring region in Sweden, Roslagen, has come concerning food tourism and local food; and that they benefit from their close proximity to Stockholm. During off-season it is also fewer products available and it can be hard to get supply from the Åland Islands all year round (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016), just as Sims (2010) and Telfer and Wall (1996) noted in their studies, the local supply cannot always match the demand because of seasonality issues.

5.1.2 Competition

ÅPF (2015) noted in the sustainable food strategy that the Ålandic products are not distinguished from the products that come from nearby regions. Concerning local food and food tourism the competition is hard; Roslagen was mentioned above in section 5.1.1. Another region that has come far is Ostrobothnia, in Finland; there they have really good quality products, for example, meat (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). Since food has been recognized as an important travel motivator, especially for tourists from nearby (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Kivela and Crotts, 2005; van Westering, 1999; Quan & Wang, 2004; Nilsson, 2013;
Hall et al., 2003; Sims, 2009; Hall & Mitchell, 2001 & Povey, 2011), a clear image and better products than the neighbouring regions are needed.

Ålanders are proud people and of course we think “everything from the Åland Islands is so fantastic”, but when comparing with products from other places, not all Ålandic products live up to the reputation today (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). Improved quality, quality assessments and refining methods are necessary to reach the same standards as, for example, Sweden (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016 & B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016). One thing on the Åland Islands that is problematic concerning meat production is the fact that the more fat the meat contains, the lesser paid the farmer is. While in Japan the situation is the opposite with the famous wagyu-meat, the more marbled the meat, the more money the farmer gets (B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016). The case was similar with pork, the wholesaler who tried to sell local pork, were struggling to get it sold, it was too fat for the Ålanders (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). To stand out in the competition the product needs to be “real”, that all can agree upon the definition of local and not leaving customers disappointed when, for example, the raw material might be originating from somewhere else (B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016).

But after all, it seems like at least part of the marketing of Ålandic products has succeeded, now there have to be products available too (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016). According to Sims (2010) available products can be inaccessible due to, for example, too high price or lack of information of where to find them. There is a niche of people asking for more local, sustainable and quality products and studies show that people are willing to pay more for local quality food (Enteleca, n.d. & Everett & Aitchison, 2008). To be successful it is this group you need to target (ÅPF, 2015) and the more visitors you attract that are not very price sensitive, the better are the opportunities for survival and development of the companies (Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016). The challenge is to find the right target group; can the Åland Islands attract food tourists, the ones that ask for local products, often younger people with money; or do the companies need to adjust to the visitors that are coming to the islands now (B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016; L-J. Mattsson, personal communication, 12 April 2016 & M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016).
A further challenge is the constant demand for new products and experiences, customers want to try new things, leading to, for instance, everyone visiting a specific restaurant one year, and next year they want to go somewhere else (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016 & L-J. Mattsson, personal communication, 12 April 2016).

5.1.3 Cooperation

Another issue that some of the interviewees saw as a challenge when it comes to developing the tourism business on the Åland Islands, was cooperation. Ålanders tend to see each other more as competition than as complements, some have a hard time to not be envious of others (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016 & B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016). But the more products and events offered, the higher the quality of the tourist experience. As mentioned above in section 5.1.2, the tourists want to experience new things; here cooperation between the different businesses, such as producers and tourism facilities, would be desirable (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). It would also decrease the risk of producers getting dependent of wholesalers, dairies, slaughterhouses and other businesses that raise the price along the way to the customers; and instead, give them the ability to sell directly to the consumers. This would help producers to earn more money, money that the wholesalers otherwise would have taken (B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016 & M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). M. Björklund (personal communication, 11 April 2016) thinks that a lot of the problems we have could be solved by better cooperation, just as Sörensson (2014) points out, the key to creating sustainable tourism is cooperation among all stakeholders. Cooperation is also needed in order to avoid conflicts that may arise due to different interests among the stakeholders and unequal share of benefits from tourism (Graci & Dodds, 2010; Tao, 2006 & Epler Wood, 2002). Generally, the stakeholder participation is higher on cold water islands than warm water ones, reducing the risk of “winners and losers” (Gössling & Wall, 2007, p. 438). This aspect is taken into consideration when working with the development of the sustainable food strategy. Close cooperation with the different stakeholders in the industry and a common goal is needed in order to avoid the strategy to become just another report where no real action is taken (L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April 2016). It is important that the strategies
and models “meet the needs of all stakeholders” (Graci & Dodds, 2010, p. 177) and as the principles for sustainable tourism suggest: involvement of local people and well-developed long-term strategies, are also significant factors for success (Graci & Dodds, 2010; Tao & Wall, 2009 & Butler, cited in Gößling and Wall, 2007).

5.1.4 Education and Change of Attitudes

Graci and Dodds (2010) noted that there exist no generally accepted definition of sustainable tourism and that the many different definitions can lead to confusion and slow implementation of the concept. Additionally, lack of awareness of sustainability issues might be a problem. This was also noticed by some of the interviewees on the Åland Islands. L-J. Mattsson (personal communication, 12 April 2016) thinks that there is a lot of talk about sustainability nowadays, but yet no one really knows what it actually means. Then it eventually gets hackneyed and you do not lay stress on it. L. Brenner (personal communication, 13 April 2016) also sees this problem with lack of knowledge about the concept. Therefore, a major issue with the work to implement the sustainable food strategy is to firmly establish the idea and to give a better understanding of it. The producers need to see the advantages in working sustainably. The task is about trying to change the attitudes of, not only the producers but also the customers. They need to get a better understanding of benefits of locally produced food. More people have started to care about what they eat, just as many researchers have noted (e.g. Hall et al., 2003; Harvey et al., 2004; Hall, 2013 & Everett & Aitchison, 2008). Still, a lot of the customers do not know about, for example, farming methods used and get appalled when finding out (L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April 2016). Part of this challenge is to get people to actually buy local products. There is a lot of talk about how good it is with local produce and how you want to use local products, but in reality “we do not sell as much as we talk”, the price is still decisive. It is still mostly the niche of people asking for quality products buying it, not yet the average people (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016 & ÂPF, 2015). It is important to get the customers to ask for Ålandic products (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016). Another ‘attitude’ that needs to be changed is the one that we are “fillet people”, to broaden the customers’ view on meat and fish beyond the ‘best’ parts, in order to be able to use all (or at least more) parts of the animals (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). This uneven demand leads to a shortage of
some products or parts while others might be hard to get sold (A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016). One of the attempts in preventing this is the awarded ‘fiskbräda’ (fish board) (Mynewsdesk, 2016, 27 January), which consist of ‘garbage fish’ and parts you normally would not use, such as tails and bones (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016).

Another problematic thing is the increased use of processed semi-manufactured products and fast food. With all its additives and artificial flavours, it is changing people’s perception of how food is supposed to taste. There is also an enlarged lack of awareness considering knowledge about where the food comes from, for example, milk from cows and pork chops from pigs. Additionally, many newly educated chefs lack basic skills, such as how to make a stock or how to cut up meat. All becoming more of fine dining chefs and there is also a shortage of chefs generally (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016).

A lot has changed considering the food chain, earlier the farmer produced a product and then someone else bought it and did all the marketing in order to sell it to the customers. But today the farmers themselves need to be able to promote them and put a face on their products. This is a big step for many and it is not always so easy (L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April 2016). L-J. Mattsson (personal communication, 12 April 2016) agree, admitting that the promotion part is the part he is most uncomfortable with, at the same time, realising how important it is. But once you have got the start of it, it gets easier to sell to other companies too. This confirms what Holmberg-Anttila (2004) and Twining-Ward and Baum (1998) found, that there is a need for improvement in marketing skills among the entrepreneurs. In order to give a good experience to the customers, it is also important that the farmers want to open up their farm and be service minded (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016).

5.1.5 Small-Scale Businesses

A majority of the companies on the Åland Islands are small-scale (ÂSUB, 2015a, 31 December) and being small-scale has its challenges. A couple of these challenges is already mentioned above; the lack of marketing skills (see section 5.1.4) and the risk of getting dependent of wholesalers, dairies and slaughterhouses (see section 5.1.3), but there are other challenges too. Being small-scale often means that the produce is small and, therefore, it might sometimes be hard to match the
supply with the demand (Sims, 2010 & Telfer & Wall, 1996). At Marskogens lamm, for example, they need to buy meat from other farms to be able to cope with the demand (A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016). It is not either easy to expand, you have a certain amount of land or size of barn. Expanding also increases the workload, but the question is if it brings enough income to be able to hire someone (A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016; L-J. Mattsson & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016 & Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016). Therefore, it is important to charge enough for your products and services (A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016) and find the right target group, as mentioned in section 5.1.2. It can be a struggle to get the business to be profitable; finding the right level to match the demand is vital (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016; L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016; L-J. Mattsson & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016 & Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016). For example, if the restaurant is too fancy, it might be hard to get enough customers; at least on the Åland Islands, the restaurant needs to be appealing to everyone. For small-scale companies it might be a solution to try to have more than one business or product to rely on, for example, a milk producer could make their own cheese too and maybe have cheese tastings, instead of only delivering milk (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016; L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016 & L-J. Mattsson & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016). If done correctly the development can provide additional income and help diversify the economy (Hall et al., 2003). This would be good since, especially dairy farmers, have had a tuff time lately (J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016). Development of food tourism has been shown to help struggling farms in some places (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). When looking more at food tourism, it might be that it is more suitable for smaller companies. On one hand, A. Karlsson (personal communication, 15 April 2016) thinks it can be hard for bigger businesses to fully implement the more crafted food and products because of the amount of food needed. On the other hand, not all producers see themselves as food tourism either, since they do not focus so much on attracting tourists specifically. The challenge, though, for smaller companies is to be able to handle the big amount of people that sometimes visit, for example, during the Harvest Festival. The bigger farms can have up to 10,000 visitors during the
weekend. Some have learned a lot and become professional organisers, but not all are used to these masses of people. The Harvest Festival tries to “grow with quality” (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016) and consideration of carrying capacities is a key for tourism development to be sustainable (Graci & Dodds, 2010; Tao & Wall, 2009 & Butler, cited in Gössling and Wall, 2007).

Few of the small companies have any employees; the owners or farmers run the companies all by themselves. There is often a lot of work to do, making the lack of time a challenge. Apart from the production itself, there is also a lot of paperwork to be done, for example, there are several permits you need to get in order to be able to sell your products. If you are organic too, there are even more authorities you need to stay in contact with. According to Mattas Gårdsmejeri, it is the sum of the papers from all authorities that make up the challenge, but the authorities have been helpful too (L.-J. Mattsson & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016).

Since many older farmers are quitting, it would be important that younger people find interest in agriculture, as L. Mattsson (personal communication, 13 April 2016) says “we need many new entrepreneurs on the countryside for it to survive”. An increase in interest can be seen, but it is significant for the organisations to keep working with these issues.

5.2 Opportunities

Being a cold water island does not only bring challenges, some opportunities can also be found. One example is that the opportunity for tourists “to connect with nature or indigenous people” is higher than on warm water islands; which in turn leads to increased levels of satisfaction among the visitors (Baldacchino, 2006a, p. 189). This gives excellent possibilities for development of food tourism, more about the opportunities found on the Åland Islands in this section.

5.2.1 Brand and Reputation

The Åland Islands have a good reputation in Finland when it comes to local food products (L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April 2016 & L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016). One of the goals in the sustainable food strategy was to create a brand for Ålandic food in order to distinguish from products from neighbouring regions. The brand would not be a logo that you print on the products, but more of a perception or image that is created in the customers’ minds. The aim is that Ålandic products would be associated with quality and purity, taking
inspiration from Jämtland and their work to promote artisan food. By focusing on improving sustainability in all three dimensions, the industry wants the Åland Islands to stand out from its neighbours. Additionally, this effort could help strengthen the brand (L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April 2016). Focusing on food tourism can lead to a new image for a destination (Quan & Wang, 2004; Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Sims, 2010; Telfer & Hashimoto, 2013; Hall et al., 2003; Sims, 2009 & Scarpato, 2002). Another expressed goal was set by the group ‘Ny Nordisk Mat Åland’ (‘New Nordic Food Åland’ in English). They aim to make the Åland Islands the best food region in the Nordic countries (L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April 2016). It is important to adjust to the demand of the customers of tomorrow, to find a way to attract the niche of people who are asking for local quality products (ÅPF, 2015).

Being a small-scale business can have its branding advantages too, the smallness can give products the image of being unique, for example, where you can tell even from which cow’s milk the product has been made (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016; J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016 & Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016). This increases the perception of products being authentic and gives the product a story. The demand for local products can be linked to the search for authenticity (Sims, 2009). Storytelling could also be a possibility to develop and improve the experiences at the different companies (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). Havas et al. (2014) mean that food tourism is connected to stories and local food. Local and sustainable food can be used as sales promotion (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016 & A. Karlsson, personal communication, 15 April 2016) and Visit Åland (Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016) does a lot of marketing, for example, distributing printed material, promoting at fairs and events, and having online campaigns, also highlighting local products. According to A. Karlsson (personal communication, 15 April 2016), having an ecolabel can also be a marketing advantage and increase your income thanks to the demand for it among guests.

5.2.2 Cooperation and Selling

Cooperation was recognized as one of the biggest challenges for the Åland Islands in the development of food tourism, but if or when the cooperation works it
brings a lot of opportunities too. There exist already several networks, but there is also room for more. One opportunity is to try to find more direct cooperation between the producers and the tourism facilities. Another would be to open up the farms more for customers to come and see and experience what life is like there. This could increase the interest and also give more income to the farmers (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). There are already a lot of good producers and A. Karlsson (personal communication, 15 April 2016) thinks they all push each other to develop and be even better. All tourism and food companies have a significant role in the development of food tourism (Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016). But networks like ‘Ny Nordisk Mat’, Skördefesten, ÅPF and all these organisations are also important in helping and supporting (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016 & Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016). Additionally, as mentioned above in section 5.1.5, the authorities are usually helpful with all permits and paperwork (L-J. Mattsson & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016). It cannot be stressed enough; the key to sustainable tourism lays in cooperation among all stakeholders (Sörensson, 2014). Some cooperation between the producers does also exist, for example, Marskogens lamm sells other producers’ goods too in their farm shop, and the other way around (A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016). Apart from your own and others’ farm shops, the products are usually sold in delicatessen shops, grocery stores and sometimes also to restaurants and cafés (L-J. Mattsson & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016 & A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016). For many of the producers the network REKO (where the consumers buy the products directly from the producers (Brenner, n.d.)) is a very important forum where much of the produce is sold (L-J. Mattsson & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016). Because many tourists are asking for Ålandic products, the local products are easily sold (A. Karlsson, personal communication, 15 April 2016). This is something the interviewed producers (Marskogens lamm and Mattas gårdsmejeri) agree upon, so far, it has been relatively easy to get the products sold (L-J. Mattsson & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016 & A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016). People are really starting to see through the mass produced food and ask for clean products. This opens up for networks like REKO while the big low price grocery stores are starting to struggle (L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April).
For the tourist it also gets more interesting the more products there are available, therefore, it is important to see the other producers as a complement and try to cooperate and help each other (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). For the producers, as mentioned in section 5.1.5, it could be good to have something additional to offer, more than just the produce. This can be anything from refined products to tastings and café (A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016; M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016 & L-J. Mattsson & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016). Getting too dependent on one industry is risky (Graci & Dodds, 2010 & Carlsen & Butler, 2011), here developing food tourism can be a way to diversify and it has been shown to be a successful method for struggling farms (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). It is also easier for small producers to try new things and experiment, compared to bigger companies (L-J. Mattsson & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016).

5.2.3 Demand and Supply

Both L. Brenner (personal communication, 13 April 2016) and M. Björklund (personal communication, 11 April 2016) note what Enteleca (n.d) and Everett and Aitchison (2008) have found out; people are increasingly appreciating local food and are willing to pay more for quality food. Therefore, this is what the Ålandic producers need to focus on, to compete with quality instead of price. After all, it is often “handicraft”, artisan food, and this can be used as a marketing advantage to target this niche of people (L-J. Mattsson & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016). All interviewees agreed on that there is a demand for Ålandic products, both among tourists and locals; additionally, the interest is high in mainland Finland. The big interest makes it easy to get the products sold and just as many researchers (e.g. Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Kivela and Crotts, 2005; van Westering, 1999; Quan & Wang, 2004; Nilsson, 2013; Hall et al., 2003; Sims, 2009; Hall & Mitchell, 2001 & Povey, 2011) recognize, food is a travel motivator, attracting tourists to the Åland Islands too; this all interviewees agree upon. M. Björklund (personal communication, 11 April 2016) sees food tourism as the “only development” for the Åland Islands. Tourists are nowadays expecting to get to taste local food when visiting a new place; it is an important part of the tourism experience (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016 & Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016). They want to experience local products in
order to give them an insight into the local culture (Sims, 2009 & Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016). It is important that the Åland Islands keep up and adjust to the demand (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016).

There are many good producers and quality products on the Åland Islands, for example, dairy, apple and asparagus (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016; L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016; A. Karlsson, personal communication, 15 April 2016 & B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016). During some parts of the year, it is easier to get local products; the supply and also the demand are bigger during the summer (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016 & L-J. Mattsson & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016). A further advantage on the Åland Islands is the closeness to nature; this makes it easy to get pure local produce and there is a lot to take advantage of in forest and nature, such as herbs, berries and mushrooms (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). The good thing also is that a lot of the products are non-seasonal, for example, meat, fish and dairy (Everett & Aitchison, 2008), and all these you can find on the Åland Islands. This allows the restaurants to offer fresh local food all year round (Everett & Aitchison, 2008), and gives the opportunity for development of food tourism, as was recognized as a good option for destinations without 3S-tourism (Kivela & Crotts, 2005). This, in turn, also develops and diversifies the industries on the countryside and in the archipelago (Everett & Aitchison, 2008 & L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April 2016). For producers it is not only the summer that is high season, often there is a lot of demand around the different holidays too, for instance, Christmas and Easter. It is not either uncommon that farms are open some weekends during the off-season (A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016).

5.2.4 Events

One way to develop food tourism and to increase income is to organise different events and happenings. If arranged outside of high season it can help extend the season or create new seasons (Twining-Ward & Baum, 1998). The biggest food-related event on the Åland Islands is the Harvest Festival, but it has also inspired farmers to organise their own events, example of events are: ‘lammklappardag’ (lamb patting day) and ‘kosläpp’ (cow release) (L. Mattsson, personal
communication, 13 April 2016; L-J. Mattsson & J: Sunland, personal communication, 12 April 2016 & M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). By participating in the Harvest festival, many of the farmers have learned a lot and become professional organisers (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016). Some suppliers are also working with this theme in different campaigns, for example, themed cruises and ‘Sätt Åland på tallriken’ (put Åland on the plate) (B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016 & L-J. Mattsson & J. Sunland, personal communication, 12 April 2016). Since the trip to cold water islands often is seen as an “integral part of the journey” (Baldacchino, 2006a, p. 190), one possibility could be to offer the opportunity for tourists to try and taste Ålandic food already on the way to the destination. B. Mattsson (personal communication, 19 April 2016) says that they on Viking Line use to have as many local products as possible, when the supply is big enough, especially on M/S Rosella (going between Kapellskär, Sweden and Mariehamn, the Åland Islands), for example, they also have harvest themed cruises in the autumn.

The Harvest Festival is really important for many of the companies and producers. Some farms get a big part of their turnover during that weekend and it might be necessary to stock up on products months ahead to be able to match the demand (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016 & A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016). It also gives an incredible opportunity to sell products; this can be decisive for entrepreneurs to dare to start up a business, when they know they have a chance at least once a year to sell the products (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016). The event also gives the companies marketing advantages, both connected to the Harvest Festival itself, but the businesses can also benefit from it the rest of the year too (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016 & L-J. Mattsson & J. Sunland, personal communication, 12 April 2016). One of the aims with the festival is to increase sales throughout the year (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016). In addition to this, a new event connected to the brand and concept of the Harvest Festival will be organised during spring, 2017 will be the first year for this event. This is a way to try to both increase interest and sales, and also to spread the visitors and take some pressure of the autumn festival (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016). The Harvest Festival is a good example of how good the result can be with cooperation among the stakeholders (M. Björklund,
personal communication, 11 April 2016). A lot of people are involved; some even unpaid (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016).

5.3 Local Products

Just as in the research of Sims (2010), the view on what is local varies among the interviewees. At the Harvest Festival, only products that are grown, produced or refined on the Åland Islands are welcome. For L. Mattsson (personal communication, 13 April 2016) it is easy to define what is local, since the region is surrounded by water local is the same as Ålandic. For Viking Line locally produced does not only mean from the Åland Islands, because apart from Långnäs and Mariehamn, the ferries also go to Kapellskär and Stockholm in Sweden, Turku and Helsinki in Finland and Tallinn in Estonia. Hence, products from all these areas are locally produced to the company. But whether the origin area is close by or not, Viking Line works closely with the producers and visits them locally for quality controls, even if it is on the other side of the world (B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016). The other interviewees agree with L. Mattsson in the reasoning that locally is Ålandic.

5.3.1 Usage of Local Products and Advantages of Using Local Products

More and more local businesses are using Ålandic products and many accommodation companies are offering breakfast consisting of local products (Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016). All of the companies that I have interviewed use local products in varying degree. There are a lot of good quality local products and producers on the Åland Islands. Some are available all year round, like potato, and some are more seasonal, like salad, asparagus and other vegetables (B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016 & M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). Even though the price often is a bit higher on Ålandic products, A. Karlsson (personal communication, 15 April 2016) thinks it is worth it considering the added value and marketing advantages it brings. She has also noticed the interest among the guests in wanting to taste something “typical Ålandic”. This confirms Sims’ (2009) findings that tourists want to try products in order to learn about the local culture. Additionally, the interest indicates that food actually is an important part of the tourism experience, just as many researcher (e.g. Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Kivela
Another advantage that comes with using local products is the close contact you as a buyer can have with the producer. Above in section 5.2.2, REKO was mentioned, a network that brings the producer closer to the consumers, but companies, such as restaurants, can also benefit from having direct contact with the producers. You could, for example, get really good quality meat if you have direct contact with the farmer or the slaughterhouse, knowing exactly which animal it comes from (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). At Viking Line, they always try to work closely together with the producers. This makes it easier for them to get what they want. If for example, there is something wrong with the product, it is easier to fix it if you can talk directly to the producer without any middlemen. However, this is of course not always possible, it is probably easier for bigger companies that order a big amount of produce, than for smaller businesses (B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016).

As mentioned in section 5.2.1, Ålandic products have a good reputation, not only when it comes to quality and taste, but also considering safety. There are no issues with diseases, such as salmonella, foot-and-mouth disease and tuberculosis, that are common in other countries in the world, and even within the EU (B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016 & Brenner, 2014, 7 March). This significantly reduces the risk of one of the barriers Cohen & Avieli (2004) found preventing tourists from enjoying a local food experience, namely the risk of getting ill. Additionally, little chemicals and antibiotics are used and the animal welfare is good (Brenner, 2014, 7 March).

5.3.2 Hindrance to Using Local Products

Even though Visit Åland (Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016) does not see any disadvantages with using local food products there are still some obstacles to overcome. One of the biggest obstacles to using local products has already been mentioned several times, it is the price. Just as Sims (2010) and Telfer and Wall (1996) noticed, products from elsewhere are often cheaper. The local products need to be of higher quality since “quality in relation to price” is an important factor in the consumers’ purchase decisions (Marenick et al., 2010, p. 7). This was also something that was recognized by many of the interviewees (B.
Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016; M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016; A. Karlsson, personal communication, 15 April 2016; A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016 & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016). All of the suppliers admit that there have been cases where they had to deselect Ålandic products due to quality reasons (A. Karlsson, personal communication, 15 April 2016; M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016 & B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016). The quality control and requirements are not as good as in some other countries, for example, Sweden and Finland. Both B. Mattsson (personal communication, 19 April 2016) and M. Björklund (personal communication, 11 April 2016) request better beef aging on the Åland Islands. When talking about quality, it is also important that the products are real, B. Mattsson (personal communication, 19 April 2016) gives an example of a ham called ’archipelago ham’ even though the meat comes mainly from the mainland.

The other big reason to not use local products, even this one noticed earlier by Sims (2010) and Telfer and Wall (1996), is that the available produce is too small; the producers cannot match the demand of the suppliers. Even if you sometimes get Ålandic products, such as meat, it is often still too little to be able to state in the menu that it is local (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). Hence, they are missing out on this marketing advantage to make them stand above average restaurants (James and Halkier, 2014). For Viking Line, with over 6 million passengers a year, it is hard to get enough local products to all of the seven ferries, but they try to get more Ålandic products to M/S Rosella (see section 5.2.4) (Viking Line, n.d. & B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016).

The supply of local products does also vary depending on the season (Sims, 2010 & Telfer & Wall, 1996); it can be hard to get some products all year round (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016 & A. Karlsson, personal communication, 15 April 2016). Since the climate is so harsh and cold, not only is the tourism season short, but also the growing season, leading to cultivation of resistant plants (Nilsson, 2013). The short season also leads to later harvest, this was noted by B. Mattsson (personal communication, 19 April 2016), having to order asparagus from Southern Sweden while waiting for the Ålandic to be ready for harvest. Some products are not even possible to grow or produce on the Åland Islands; therefore, you need to decide if you can skip these products or if you need to
buy them from somewhere else, for example, because of demand from guests (A. Karlsson, personal communication, 15 April 2016). Buying directly from the producers often means added workload, instead of calling one wholesaler you have to call several different producers (A. Karlsson, personal communication, 15 April 2016 & B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016). Earlier there was a wholesaler that used to distribute locally produced goods, but they quit and after that, it has been harder to get local products (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). Due to globalisation, competition has increased; nowadays you can get almost any product you want from all over the world (B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016).

As mentioned in section 5.2.3, on the Åland Islands you also have access to what the forest offers. But there are some problems with that too. M. Björklund (personal communication, 11 April 2016) tells about the issue with funnel chanterelles. They use to get a lot of these mushrooms delivered to them, but there is a poisonous mushroom that looks similar to the funnel chanterelles and also grows close to them. It would take too much time to go through and double check all mushrooms, so they cannot use them.

5.4 Sustainability

It has already been established that there exist no generally accepted definition of sustainable tourism (Graci & Dodds, 2010) and there is a debate about how good the “triple bottom-line” is; if it is enough with the three dimension or if a fourth is needed, if the dimensions at all go together, the order of importance and so on (Carlsen and Butler, 2011, p. 232; Sharpley, 2000; Ammenberg, 2012 & Sörensson, 2014). Nevertheless, L. Brenner (personal communication, 13 April 2016) and L. Mattsson (personal communication, 13 April 2016) both agree that all three today existing dimensions are equally important. In the work with the sustainable food strategy all three dimensions are also taken into consideration. Concerning the environmental aspects, the focus is on both the conventional and the organic farming (ÄPF, 2015 & L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April 2016). There is a debate between these two forms of farming and it is often supposed that organic farming is sustainable and conventional is not, “but it is not that easy” (L-J. Mattsson, personal communication, 12 April 2016). Looking, for example, on the nutrient discharges, they are equal or organic might even be worse (L. Brenner,
personal communication, 13 April 2016). Therefore, the project group works with improving the whole industry and just as Graci and Dodds (2010) point out concerning tourism, it should be the same in all industries. They also underline the responsibility of all stakeholders; therefore, the project group behind the strategy emphasizes the need to work closely together with the industries. The close cooperation with the industries, apart from taking everyone’s interests into account, it also helps to firmly establish the plan and hopefully eliminates the risk of the strategy to just get filed (Graci & Dodds, 2010 & L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April 2016). Also in the tourism industry sustainability issues will be included in the next strategy (Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016). Visit Åland thinks that “food tourism could be a way of showing a sustainable Åland in combination with other products and experiences”.

All interviewees have noted the increased interest in local and sustainable products and they already, to some extent, work with sustainability issues in their businesses. One way of working with this is to try to minimize the waste. M. Björklund (personal communication, 11 April 2016) and A. Sundberg (personal communication, 12 April 2016) both see the potential in all animals and the whole of the animals, not just the fillets. One attempt is the already mentioned (in section 5.2.4), the ‘fiskbräda’ (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). At Marskogens lamm they use everything from the animals, but the bones. Since they make sausages, they can use all meat (A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016). The quality of food is not only important to that niche of people, for example, animal welfare is an important issue for restaurants when it comes to choosing which meat to serve (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016 & B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016). Although in order to become more sustainable we should also eat less meat and more vegetables instead. The concept of, for example, serving smaller steaks might work in Stockholm, but on the Åland Islands people would get upset if they got a small steak. According to M. Björklund (personal communication, 11 April 2016) people need to change their attitude and start to think more about sustainability issues, or frankly, start to do something. “It might already be too late… we have only been talking for too long”.

Sustainability is something you need to consider in the whole of your business, not only concerning food. When building new facilities sustainability is something you should think about and you easily can affect; everything from water and energy
to building materials. The aim should be to be as environmentally friendly as possible and to think long-term (Gössling & Wall, 2007; Weaver & Lawton, 2006 & M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). If you do it right from the beginning it may not even be so expensive (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). Starting a business from scratch can also be easier if you want to make it organic. L-J. Mattsson and J. Sundman (personal communication, 12 April 2016) say that it can take years to go from conventional dairy production to organic.

Certification or ecolabelling is a way of working with sustainability and some of the interviewed companies have an ecolabel. Visit Åland (Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016) is part of a cooperation which is working with establishing the international ecolabel the Green Key on Åland. Earlier it was only for hotels and conference centres, but from this year (2016) they are expanding to also certify restaurants and cafés. There is an interest among the local tourism companies (Camilla Sommarström, personal communication, 4 May 2016) and A. Karlsson (personal communication, 15 April 2016) has noticed an increased demand for ecolabels from the guests and means that investing in a certification can be profitable for a business. Profitability is also important when talking about economic sustainability. Many of the producers on the Åland Islands are small-scale and it can be an issue to find products that are profitable (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016). Here we come back to the risk for small businesses to get dependent on wholesalers, dairies and so on and the benefit of selling directly to the consumers and to dare to have a higher price (B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016 & A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016). And it is almost necessary to do something else than only produce, for example, refine or open the farm for visitors (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016).

It can also be a challenge for the buyers if they have to choose between organic and local, some prefer organic while others want to support local businesses (Sims, 2010). The request for local products does still seem to be higher than the request for organic and sustainable products (L-J. Mattsson & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016). The supply of organic food is also smaller (A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016). According to M. Björklund (personal communication, 11 April 2016), in order to get a cleaner community we need to buy more locally produced goods. Nilsson (2013) noted that Scandinavian
countries are heavily dependent on food that has been transported over long distances, and the situation is not better on the Åland Islands. But still local does not, per se, mean that it is sustainable (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008; Østrup Backe, 2013 & Hinrichs, 2003).

For a society to be sustainable it is also significant to involve the local people, make sure they benefit and get jobs. If the tourism development is done in a good way it can provide employment (Graci & Dodds, 2010 & Gössling, cited in Hall, 2010), and it is important that the jobs offered in a community suits the whole population and not only, for example, more administratively oriented. There is a need for different industries and in order to be sustainable, jobs need to be created for the Ålanders (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016).

5.5 Can Food Tourism Lead to Sustainable Development on the Åland Islands?

To summarize, this section will sum up the factors concerning food tourism that may affect the sustainable development on the Åland Islands (see Figure 3 below). Here I will also try to answer the main research question of the thesis: In what way can food tourism lead to sustainable development on the Åland Islands?

There are several challenges and obstacles that the Åland Islands face concerning the development of a sustainable tourism industry, but there are also many opportunities. The Ålandic food products already have a good reputation and many restaurants use local products to some extent (L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April 2016; L. Mattsson, personal communication 13 April 2016; A. Karlsson, personal communication, 15 April 2016; M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016; A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016; J. Sundman & L-J. Mattsson, personal communication, 12 April 2016 & B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016). But for food tourism to be successfully developed, some aspects need to be taken into account. First of all, there need to be products available (Sims, 2010; Telfer & Wall, 1996; M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016 & L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016). Some of the interviewees (L. Mattsson, personal communication 13 April 2016; A. Karlsson, personal communication, 15 April 2016; M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016 & B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016) mean that the supply of local products is not big enough, especially not
all year round. Additionally, the quality of the products needs to be higher and, above all, more consistent. Since the price on local products is higher than on products from elsewhere, the quality must increase to match the price (Marenick et al., 2010; B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016; M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016; A. Karlsson, personal communication, 15 April 2016; A. Sundberg, personal communication, 12 April 2016 & J. Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016). A group interested in local quality products that also are willing to pay more for it has been recognized (Enteleca, n.d. & Everett & Aitchison, 2008). If one target this group and succeed in attracting them, the higher price on local products should not be an issue for restaurants and cafés. This group of people is requesting sustainable, clean and healthy food (Hall et al., 2003; Harvey et al., 2004; Hall, 2013 & Everett & Aitchison, 2008). All these attributes match the Ålandic food, which gives it an advantage compared to major parts of Europe, and the whole world (B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016 & Brenner, 2014, 7 March).

One of the biggest challenges for both tourism and food production is the short season. Like on other cold water islands, the high season is only the two or three summer months (Korhonen, 2008; Ålands landskapsregering, 2004; Gössling & Wall, 2007 & Nilsson, 2013). On one hand, the short season limits which plants can be cultivated, and hence, limits the available supply of local products (Nilsson, 2013). On the other hand, a lot of the food products are non-seasonal, for example, meat, fish and dairy (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). Food tourism is suggested as an option for destinations without 3S-tourism, and it can also help extending the season (Kivela & Crotts, 2005 & Everett & Aitchison, 2008). There is a lot of potential on the Åland Islands; there are already many good producers and products (M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016; L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016; A. Karlsson, personal communication, 15 April 2016 & B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016). Another way of developing food tourism is events (Twining-Ward & Baum, 1998). Some well-attended events already exist, and more are planned for next year (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016; L-J. Mattsson & J: Sundman, personal communication, 12 April 2016 & M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). Another thing that is important to consider in order to become sustainable is the carrying capacities (Graci & Dodds, 2010; Tao & Wall, 2009 & Butler, cited in
Gössling and Wall, 2007), just like the Harvest Festival – “grow with quality” (L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016).

Even though food tourism and local food have been found to be important in achieving sustainable tourism, we need to remember that being local and being sustainable is not the same thing (Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Sims, 2010 & Østrup Backe, 2013). But if the food industry succeeds in their aim to be more sustainable and if the tourism companies in their attempt to develop food tourism focus on local food products; chances are high that food tourism can lead to sustainable development on the Åland Islands. By using these sustainable local products, the environment will benefit, and if food tourism actually helps to extend the season; the industry can expect more income and more job opportunities as a result (Graci & Dodds, 2010 & Gössling, cited in Hall, 2010). Sustainability is about more than food and for the Åland Islands to be sustainable; it is not only the tourists and the tourism industry that needs to focus on sustainability issues (Sims, 2009, 2010; Graci and Dodds, 2010 & M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). The attitude among locals also needs to change and lead to more sustainable actions (L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April 2016 & M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016). But for this opportunity to become reality, cooperation between all stakeholders is necessary (Sörensson, 2014; M. Björklund, personal communication, 11 April 2016; B. Mattsson, personal communication, 19 April 2016; L. Mattsson, personal communication, 13 April 2016 & L. Brenner, personal communication, 13 April 2016).
Challenges - Overcome the obstacles that hinders usage of local products
- Price
- Quality
- Supply - Seasonality
- Competition from neighbours
- Cooperation between local stakeholders
- Education and change of attitudes
- Producers
- Consumers
- Small-scale business
- Attract the right target group

Can food tourism lead to sustainable development?
- Food and tourism industries need to be thinking about sustainability issues
  - Focus on local products
  - Information to change attitudes to get people to buy more local products
  - Quality instead of price
  - Sell directly to the customers
  - Events
  - Consider carrying capacities
  - Marketing
    - On trip to destination
    - In target areas
    - Clear image
    - Cooperation between all stakeholders
6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to explore in what way food tourism can lead to sustainable development on the Åland Islands. The officials of the destination aim for it to become a role model for other regions concerning sustainability and the local government and the tourism organisation have recognized development potential for the theme “food and beverage”. Some studies have been done in the destination, but none concern food tourism (Kommittén Omställning Åland, 2013 & Ålands Landskapsregering & Visit Åland, 2014, p. 2). There is also a need for studies identifying the barriers to using local food in the tourism industry (Lange-Vik & Idsø, 2013, p. 96). To reach the aim of this thesis I looked at what opportunities and challenges there might be for the development of food tourism, and I tried to find out how much Ålandic products the local companies use and what stops them from using more local products.

In order to get a better understanding of the issue, a review of the literature was necessary. Themes relevant for this study were sustainable tourism and sustainable tourism development, tourism impacts, cold water islands and food tourism. To get a better overview of the case, information about the Åland Islands were reviewed, together with opportunities and challenges commonly faced by cold water islands.

The study was done by using a qualitative research method, namely interviews. I conducted seven semi-structured interviews face-to-face with stakeholders who are somehow connected to food and/or tourism. In order to get a broad understanding of the issue, I chose interviewees from different levels in the food chain, from producers to suppliers. Furthermore, I did an email interview with the tourism organisation, Visit Åland. By connecting the result from the interviews to findings in the literature, concluding remarks could be drawn.

The result shows that many local companies use local products, at least to some extent. The most common obstacles to using Ålandic products were that the supply is not big enough or there exist no local option. And also, that the price is too high compared to the quality, which sometimes is not consistent. These aspects, of course, also influence the possibilities for successful development of food tourism. Furthermore, the seasonality is a major challenge, not only for food tourism and food producers but for the whole tourism industry. The short season limits which plants
that can be cultivated and, therefore, limits the available supply of local produce (Nilsson, 2013). But luckily, some of the food products are non-seasonal, hence, giving the restaurants possibilities to serve fresh local food all year round. Events including local food products, such as the Harvest Festival, have shown to be successful and can be used in order to extend the season. The Ålandic products also have a good reputation, for example, in mainland Finland, and are considered to be of high quality. There is a group of people that are interested in local quality food and they are also willing to pay extra for it (Enteleca, n.d. & Everett & Aitchison, 2008). A lot can be won if succeeding in attracting this group of people.

For food tourism to be able to lead to sustainable development on the Åland Islands, both the tourism and the food industries themselves need to become more sustainable. The companies need to consider sustainability issues in their daily work and try to make the final products as sustainable as possible, according to the ‘triple bottom-line’. Examples of these aspects could be, for instance, to minimize waste and to use more parts of the animals or to get an ecolabel. A significant part of the process to become more sustainable is to try to reduce food miles and, hence, focus on local products. Information, to both consumers and producers, is necessary in order to change their attitudes towards sustainable products and to make them realize the benefits of locally produced food. The higher price on local products could be a challenge, but the Ålandic producers ought to compete with quality instead of price. To reach economic sustainability and to be profitable the producers could aim to sell the products directly to the customers, without middlemen. A further step in achieving sustainability is to try to extend the short high season. Here, events outside of the summer season could be a solution. It is also important to consider the carrying capacities and to ‘grow with quality’.

For food tourism to succeed marketing is also significant. There are several ways local food can be highlighted. One way is to promote it to visitors already on the way to the destination, for example, on the ferries. This could maybe even lure more passengers to go ashore and explore the islands. Another way could be to participate in food events and festivals in the neighbouring regions in, for example, Sweden and Finland, where the main markets for the Ålands Islands are. A further option could be to take advantage of the rising interest in Nordic food and to cooperate more with the other regions too, and in that way hopefully benefit due to the fact that culinary networks are shown to be good for the promotion of local food.
A clear image is favourable, but if the Åland Islands want to distinguish with an image of being sustainable, they need to hurry up because soon sustainable will not be something extraordinary, it will be the ordinary. The tourist of tomorrow will be more connected, therefore, the tourism management also needs to adjust. For example, online campaigns and social media marketing need to be included in the marketing strategies, also when it comes to local food and food tourism. These tools could not only be used to market the destination, but also to spread information about the producers and their products.

However, sustainability is about more than food and ‘local’ does not always means that it is sustainable. The whole society needs to consider sustainability issues and let their actions be determined by sustainable choices. It is important to remember that cooperation between all stakeholders is necessary in order to reach sustainability.

6.1 Limitations

When doing this study the timeframe was limited and due to this shortage of time only a small amount of interviews could be conducted. In order to get a more valid and somewhat generalizable result, more interviews would have been needed. In this study, only a couple of companies at each level of the food chain were given the possibility to talk about their experiences. The selection of interviewees was not either representative for their level in the food chain. For example, all interviewed companies are all open all year round and they are all located on mainland Åland.

The issue of bias was mentioned in section 4.2. There is a risk that I have contributed to some bias due to my background in the industry and due to the fact that I am from the region. Additionally, the result might be biased because the interviewees would want to appear better than they are. In our culture, it is also not uncommon that you do not want to talk about all struggles you have had.

The ambition of this study was that the result would be found useful for the local stakeholders, but also to help other destinations to be able to act more sustainably. Comparisons have been made with other regions and destinations, but more studies in more places need to be done in order to be able to draw valid conclusions that apply to most cases.
6.2 Further Research

As mentioned above, more studies need to be done in order to be able to draw valid, somewhat generalizable conclusions. There are other areas too where more research would be needed. One example is to see if there is a difference between seasonal and all year round restaurants and cafés in the usage of local products. Another aspect that needs more investigation is if food tourism could be a solution for more cut off islands too, or if only main islands with better connections would benefit from the tourism development. A further example could be connected to warm water islands. Food tourism was suggested as an option for destinations not offering the 3S-tourism, but could it also be an option for warmer destinations to be more sustainable?


APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Interview Guides

For everyone:
- Thanks for taking the time to meet me.
- The reason why I wanted to meet you is because I would like to hear your opinions and experiences of food tourism/production and especially about local (ÅLANDIC) food, in order to find out more about what possibilities and challenges there are, and that you have come across.
- The interview will take maybe half an hour to an hour.
- I will record the interview, so I do not miss any of the comments, but I will probably also do some small notes. Are you still okay with me recording the interview? It is only me who will use.
- Would you like to be completely anonymous, so that no one can trace the answers back to you? Or is it okay to mention more detailed information, e.g. what type of company you have or maybe even the name of the company + a short description?
- Would you want me to send the analysis before the finalization of the thesis in order for you to check that I have interpreted your answers correctly? (It is in English)
- If there are some questions you do not want to answer, that is fine and also, if you want to end the interview, then you just say.
- Do you have any questions?
- So, are you willing to participate in this interview? Let’s get started!
For the producers: (Mattas gårdsmøjeri, Marskogens lamm)

Opening questions:

- How long have you had the company?
- Did you set up the company from scratch or did you take it over from someone else?
- What factors led you to begin this?
- What products and services do you offer? (Own? Local? Organic? Why/Why not?)
- Where do you sell them? (On the farm, REKO, groceries, abroad?)
- Do you have any employees? If yes, how many?

Products:

1. What is the interest for your products like and who are interested in them? (Local) restaurants/private persons/tourists?)
2. How has the process been? Has it been easy to get your products sold or have there been some struggles? (If struggles; what are these and how have you worked to overcome them?)
3. Do you sell the same amount all year round, or is it more depending on the season? (E.g. the Harvest Festival?)
4. Do you think there is a demand for Ålandic products?

Food tourism:

5. What do you think about the opportunities to develop food tourism [{“visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and special locations... the desire to experience a particular type of food or the produce of a specific region...”}] on the Åland Islands? What do you think about the opportunity for your business? Have you thought about that as a possible development to do?
6. Do you see any obstacles to the development of food tourism? If yes, what? (Both generally and your own business)
For the restaurants: (Smakbyn, Star Hotel)

Opening questions:

- How long has the company existed?
- SMAKBYN: Why did you start it? What factors lead you to begin this?
- How many employees do you have?
- Is the summer very important for your business or do you have quite a lot of guests also during the rest of the year?
- STAR HOTEL: Since you have an ecolabel, I assume that work with sustainability is important for you, why?

Products:

1. Who is it that orders, or decides what ingredients to use? (Criteria?)
2. How much Ålandic products do you use? Does it vary depending on the season?
3. Do you have some sort of deal or cooperation with any specific farm?
4. Why do you use Ålandic products? What benefits do you see in using Ålandic products? Do you see any disadvantages? If yes, what?
5. Would you like to use more Ålandic products? If yes, what stops you?
6. Have you had any struggles? If yes, how have you worked to overcome them?

Food tourism:

7. What do you think about the opportunities to develop food tourism [“visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and special locations... the desire to experience a particular type of food or the produce of a specific region...”] on the Åland Islands? What do you think about the opportunity for your business? Can you see an increased interest among your guests?
8. Do you see any obstacles to the development of food tourism? If yes, what? (Both generally and your business)
For Skördefesten/the Harvest Festival:

Opening questions:

- How many years have the festival existed?
- How many years have you been working with it?
- How many are work with the festival, is it just you?
- I have understood that there are quite a lot of tourists visiting the festival; do you have any estimation on how the distribution is between tourists and locals?

Products:

1. Is the interest for Ålandic produce the same all year round or would you say that it is a "once a year"-thing during the festival?
2. Do you have any idea why the visitors participate in the festival; is it mainly to get to see the farms, to be able to buy the products or something else?
3. What is your goal with the event?
4. Have you had any struggles? If yes, what and how have you overcome them?

Food tourism:

5. There seems to be a big interest in local, quality products. What do you think about the opportunities to develop food tourism ["visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and special locations... the desire to experience a particular type of food or the produce of a specific region..."] on the Åland Islands?
6. Do you see any obstacles/challenges to the development of food tourism? If yes, what?
7. How do you work to develop the festival?
For Viking Line:

Opening questions:

- What is your role here at the company?

Products:

1. So how does it work with ordering the food, is it all centralized, that there is a list of products that the ferries then order from, that it is about the same on all ferries? Or do Rosella have different (more Ålandic?) If yes, who decides and how?
2. How much Ålandic products do you use? Does it vary depending on the season?
3. Why do you use Ålandic products? What benefits do you see in using Ålandic products? Do you see any disadvantages? If yes, what?
4. Would you like to use more Ålandic products? If yes, what stops you?
5. Have you had any struggles? If yes, what and how have you overcome them?

Food tourism:

6. What do you think about the opportunities to develop food tourism [“visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and special locations... the desire to experience a particular type of food or the produce of a specific region...”] on the Åland Islands? What do you think about the opportunity for your business? Do you already do something, e.g. themed cruises? Can you see an increased interest among your guests?
7. Do you see any obstacles to the development of food tourism? If yes, what? (Both generally and your business)
For Lena Brenner:

Opening questions:

- I know that you are involved in a lot of different “projects”, could you tell a bit more about what you do and what the aim of the work is?

Products:

1. Is the interest for Ålandic produce the same all year round or would you say that it varies, e.g. gets a boost in autumn when it is the harvest festival?
2. How have the different networks affected to the interest of Ålandic products? (In the document you sent me it is stated that about 80% of the Ålandic products are sold elsewhere)
3. In the document it is also stated that the Ålandic products do not differ from the same type of products in Sweden and Finland, and that the goal is to create an Ålandic brand, how are you working with this?

Food tourism

4. There seems to be a big interest in local, quality products. What do you think about the opportunities to develop food tourism [“visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and special locations... the desire to experience a particular type of food or the produce of a specific region...”] on the Åland Islands?
5. Do you see any obstacles to the development of food tourism? If yes, what?
For everyone:

- Would you like to add something?
- Is it okay if I get back to you in case some additional questions come up later?
- Would you want me to send the thesis when it is done?

- Thanks for your time!
Appendix 2 - Interview Questions to Visit Åland

- Would you like to be completely anonymous or is it okay if I write your name and the name of the organisation + short information, in the thesis?
- Would you want me to send you the analysis before the finalization of the thesis in order for you to check that I have interpreted your answers correctly?
- If there is some question that you do not want to answer, you just skip it; or if you feel that you do not want to answer any questions, that is also okay, just tell me.

Food tourism:

1. In your action plan for 2015-16, connected to the tourism strategy, you recognize food and beverage as a sector with development potential. Why? And what companies and activities do you include, where do we find the potential?
2. It is about food tourism right, but how would you define food tourism?
3. You also mention in the tourism strategy, that the tourism development should be sustainable, how are you working with this connected to food tourism?
4. Have you started working on a sustainability strategy for the tourism industry, connected to “Omställning Åland 2013-2051”, as, for example, the food industry has?
5. Do you see food tourism as an opportunity to make the tourism industry on Åland more sustainable? Do you see any obstacles or challenges with it?

Products:

6. Do many companies use Ålandic products? Do you in any way work with highlighting the use of Ålandic produce among your members? (How many members do you have? There is different information on the web page…)
7. Are Ålandic products something you consider highlighting in the advertisement? Why/Why not?
8. What benefits do you see with using Ålandic products? Do you see any disadvantages?
9. Would you like to add something?
Appendix 3 – Coding Process

THEME: Opportunities for food production/food tourism

Category: Brand and reputation

Codes:
- Sustainable and local as sales pitch (MB)
- Storytelling (MB)
- Elements of education (MB)
- Small-scale, unique -> can tell exactly from which cow’s milk the product is produced (MB, MA, CS)
- Starred restaurant for marketing, environment available (but maybe not demand/customer base?) (MB)
- Ålanders are ambassadors -> tell good stuff about the islands (MB)
- Ecolabel, there is demand (AK)
- Earn more thanks to ecolabel (AK)
- Only organic dairy farmers on the Åland Islands (still) (MA)
- Compete with quality instead of price, focus on a niche, “handicraft” (MA)
- The Åland Islands have a good as reputation as a food region (LB, LM)
- Free marketing via bloggers (LM)
- Building a brand for Ålandic food, compare with Jämtland (pure, quality…) (LB)
- More sustainable food industry (all three dimensions) -> distinguish the Åland Islands -> brand? (LB)
- “Paradise Åland”, close to nature and clean local products (MB)
- Starting to be trendy with agriculture again, increased interest for educational programmes (agriculture, artisan food and so on) (LM)

Category: Cooperation and selling

Codes:
- See others as a complement, cooperation, networks (CS, MB)
- Help and cooperation, e.g. between producers and tourism facilities, organisations (MB, AK, AS, LM), helpful organisations and authorities, family and friends (MA)
- Big opportunities to increased income for the producers (MB, AS)
- Guided tours (e.g. with ‘celebrities’) (MB), cheese tasting, study visits, summer cafés (MA, AS)
- Relatively easy to get products sold, there are several forums and buyers: e.g. own farm shops, grocery stores, delicatessen shops, restaurants, REKO (AS, MA)
- Offer the farm’s products at the farm (apart from just selling the product), e.g. café, ‘taste plate’ (AS)
- Develop own products, e.g. seasoning to the meat (AS)
- Plan B, deliver milk to ÅCA in case you do not have time to refine all (MA)
- Social media to spread information and to sell products (LB)
- Develop industries/businesses in the countryside and the archipelago (LB)
- Much getting exported, potential to produce and sell more on the Åland Islands (LB, LM)
- Get inspiration from others (e.g. Scania, Jämtland) and improve (LB)
- Many start to see through processed food and want pure/clean products -> harder times for the big low price stores (LB)
- See that you make a difference for the Åland Islands (LM)
- All companies, the networks – all important in the development of food tourism (CS)
- Investment subsidy for new companies (MA)
- Easier for small-scale producers to try new thing, compared to bigger, e.g. ÅCA (MA)
- Food tourism – “the only development” (MB)

Category: Demand and supply

Codes:
- More products -> more interesting (MB)
- People are starting to appreciate quality and pay for it, e.g. some “artisan bread” 6-8€ (MB)
- Demand for Ålandic products (both among tourists and locals (loyal), also on the mainland) -> easy to get sold (MB, AK, AS, MA, LB, LM, BM), attracts tourists!
- Some of the seasons (e.g. summer) have more/better supply and it is easy to get it sold (MB, MA)
- A lot of things in forest and nature to use (MB)
- A lot of quality products, e.g. ÅCA (butter, cream, cheese…) and producers (e.g. connected to the Harvest Festival), apple, asparagus, mussels (MB, AK, LM, BM, CS)
- Use all/new parts of the animals to refine, e.g. fish board (MB)
- Big interest and demand around holidays (AS)
- Open in weekends during off-season (AS)
- Buy from produce from others and refine it (AS)
- People are expecting to get to eat local food while coming to the Åland Islands (part of the tourism experience to try local food) (LM, CS)
- Good conditions for a lot, e.g. pig farming (MB)
- Need to do more than to produce/have a restaurant, come up with more activities for it to be profitable (MB)
- “Cooking classes”/school (MB)

Category: Events

Codes:
- Different events/happenings to increase sales (preferably outside of high season) e.g. lammklappardag/lamb patting day, ”åktur med bonden”/take a ride with a farmer, harvest festival, spring festival, industry day, themed cruises (MB, MA, LM, BM)
- HARVEST FESTIVAL: produce a lot – sell a lot (AS, LM), marketing (via the festival + take advantage of the brand in other contexts – e.g. the spring event) (MA), increased sales (all year round) and strengthen the trust in Ålandic products, an opportunity that make entrepreneurs dare to invest and start a business – knowing that they have at least on sales opportunity (LM)
- Many producers have become professional thanks to the Harvest Festival (LM)
- Many are getting involved, even voluntary/for free (LM)
THEME: Challenges for food production/food tourism

Category: Seasonality

Codes:
- Hard not easy to run a restaurant on the Åland Islands today (MB)
- Seasonality, bad summer -> risk of economic problems (MB, AK, MA, LB)
- Difficult to get supply all year round (MB)
- Try to spread/distribute the visitors more evenly, e.g. summer, the Harvest Festival (-> spring event, industry day, not too many activities on Saturday) (MB, LM)
- Not enough people/demand all year round (outside of summer), compare to Roslagen and Nice (MA, BM)

Category: Competition

Codes:
- Ålanders tend to see each other as competition -> cooperation is needed (MB, BM), ‘jante’, get envious of others (MB)
- Get the products to live up to ‘the reputation’ – Ålanders are very proud but should maybe be more realistic…? (MB)
- Competition from nearby regions (e.g. Sweden, Roslagen and Finland, Ostrobothnia) (MB, BM) (e.g. about products, like meat)
- Better quality and quality assessment/requirements (MB)
- Needs to be real (e.g. Ålandic/archipelago ham even though the meat is from the mainland) (BM)
- The ‘Ålandsfår’, not really for meat production, but good meat, texel lamb has better meat (MB)
- Shortage of chefs (MB)
- Curiosity of the new, all go to one place and then next year to another place… same concerning products (MB, MA)
- Attract the right target group or adjust according to the ones who are coming already? Find the niche (younger seem to care more, maybe older couples – people that are not price sensitive) (MB, MA, BM, CS)
- Have broad enough assortment, something for all groups (MB)
- Bigger demand on local than on organic (MA)
- Have succeeded with the marketing of Ålandic food, now we need to make sure it is available (LM)

Category: Cooperation

Codes:
- Hard to make money on only producing, raised price along the way (need to do something else too), dependent of the wholesalers, dairies, slaughterhouses and so on (MB, BM)
- Who does, who invests? (MB)

Category: Education and change of attitude

Codes:
- Difficult to get people to buy Ålandic products, “we do not sell as much as we talk”, get them to ask for Ålandic products (MB, LM)
- Better knowledge about refining, e.g. beef aging (MB, BM)
- Get less paid the more fat the meat contains (see obstacles about pork), compare with Japan where you get more money the more fat/marbled the meat (BM)
- Broaden the view of the customers, change attitudes, we are fillet people, meat people… (MB)
- The widespread processed food, fast food and artificial flavours (make you think this is how it is supposed to taste) (MB)
- Education, show where the food comes from, e.g. pork chops from pigs (show picture of pigs -> cry) (MB)
- Impoverishment of the food culture since we do not cook as much anymore/do not spend as much time on cooking (MB)
- Variation and basic knowledge, mostly fine dining chefs nowadays (MB)
- Willingness, e.g. to open up and be service minded (otherwise not a good experience) (MB)
- Uneven demand (e.g. lamb racks, but not sirloin) -> shortage of some products (AS)
- How to develop? Ideas? (AS)
- Producer does see itself as food tourism (?) (AS)
- Do people want to have appetizers (e.g. taste plates) or a big steak? -> what to offer? (AS)
- Not comfortable with the selling part, new for the producers to market themselves (MA, LB)
- Change attitudes, get consumers to realize the benefits of locally produced food, and for producers – the benefits of sustainability (LB)
- Firmly establish the food strategy, not just get it filed (LB)
- To get more young people interested in agriculture (many older farmers are quitting, keeping their fields…) (LM)

**Category: Small-scale business**

**Codes:**
- Increased volume? (MB)
- Get it profitable (too fancy restaurant -> difficult (MB), small-scale, necessary with other business? (MA, LM, CS))
- More suitable for small-scale – how to include bigger companies? (AK)
- A lot of small-scale products – how to match supply with demand? (AS)
- Dare to charge enough for your products (applies to producers) (AS)
- Bad times for dairy farmers (MA)
- Be able to cope with the many visitors it sometimes might come on the event (the maximum limit reached for the Harvest Festival?) (MA, LM)
- To have enough time (MA)
- Paperwork, a lot in total from all authorities (MA)
- Quite hard job, and a lot to do as a small producer (MA)
- Difficult to grow, e.g. due to small facilities, more job -> hard to have time to do everything/make use of everything (AS, MA)
- Need permits to sell/produce (MA)
- Grow with quality due to big demand and interest (the Harvest Festival, not in English) (LM)
THEME: Local products

Categories: Obstacles for using local products
Codes:
- The price, expensive (quality in relation to price) (MB, AK, AS, MA, BM)
- Bad/not enough supply -> cannot say that it is Ålandic (MB, AK, BM), sold the whole production to others (cucumbers/pickles) (BM)
- Supply varies depending on the season (MB, AK)
- ÅTH quit -> more difficult to get Ålandic products (MB)
- Worse, inconsistent quality, too fat pork (no Ålanders bought it -> Smakbyn had to buy a lot due to deal); too “dry”, colourless salmon (MB, AK, BM) (do not have the same requirements/quality controls e.g. beef aging (MB, BM))
- Could not accept/use the funnel chanterelles because of similar-looking poisonous mushroom, do not have the time to check every mushroom (MB)
- Attitude (see above, + realize the importance of buying locally produced) (MB)
- Some things cannot be produced here (AK)
- More job to order from many producers instead of from one wholesaler, the logistics (AK, BM)
- Extra work with export, a lot with paper and packages (AS)
- Local ≠ Ålandic (see VL) (BM)
- Later harvest than e.g. southern Sweden and Gotland (asparagus) (BM)
- Increased competition due to globalisation -> easy to get any product you want from anywhere in the world (BM)
- Need to be real (e.g. Ålandic/archipelago ham even though the meat was from the mainland) (BM)
- What is local? (BM)

Category: Reasons/opportunities to use local products
Codes:
- Get meat from a specific animal (e.g. via Dahlmans or a local farmer) -> good quality (MB)
- Good supply of some products, and sometimes: e.g. potato (all the time), salad, tomato, cucumber (especially summer) (MB), asparagus (BM)
- A lot of quality products, e.g. ÅCA (butter, cream, cheese…) (MB), asparagus (BM)
- Bag of food (?) (MB)
- Gives added value even though it is more expensive (AK)
- Marketing advantages (AK)
- Requirements for the investment subsidies to export (MA)
- Easy to define, you know where the borders for Ålandic goes thanks to the sea (LM)
- Work closely/direct with the producers -> easier to get what you want (develop the products, texture, packages, correct mistakes and so on, cannot take any risk with the customers (bad food) (BM)
- Big company – big volume -> easier to make deals directly with the producers (BM)
- Ålandic products have a good reputation and are safe (compare to Ireland, England – salmonella, mouth-and-foot-disease and so on, the animal
husbandry/welfare) (BM) (See the brochure “Närproducerat. Varför är det så himla bra?”)

THEME/Category: Sustainability

Codes:
- Good conditions for the animals: ”perfect” slaughterhouse in Scotland, Uruguay, where the cows can walk freely; good pig farmers in Ostrobothnia (MB, BM)
- Use all/new parts of the animals, e.g. fish board and sausage (MB, AS)
- The industry has “refined” it too good -> higher demand for that (Norwegian) than the original (salmon from the Baltic Sea) (MB)
- Need to buy more locally produced in order to get a cleaner society (MB)
- Change the way of thinking -> more sustainable (MB)
- Should eat less meat (MB) (Ålanders reaction on a small steak)
- Think about it when building new facilities (water, energy, building materials and so on) (MB)
- MUST do something! (MB)
- There has to be interest (MB)
- There seems to be an interest for it (CS)
- Certification, Green Key (now also cafés and restaurants) (MB, AK, CS)
- Holistic approach (MB)
- If you do it right from the beginning it might not be so expensive (MB)
- Workplaces, that suits the whole population, hire locals (MB)
- Do something active for the environment and not “just sit and have a bad conscience” (AK)
- Ecolabel, there is demand for it (AK)
- Earn more money thanks to ecolabel (AK)
- Reduced usage of papers and printed material (AK)
- Higher demand for local than organic products (MA)
- Sustainability strategies (food) (MA, CS, LB?)
- Unclearness about the meaning of the concept, hackneyed… (MA, LB)
- The debate organic vs. conventional farming (MA, LB)
- All three parts are important (LB, LM)
- Food tourism could be a way of showing a sustainable Åland (CS)
- Highlight the vegetables and let them take more space and in that way try to reduce consumption of meat (MB)
- Less supply of organic products -> “only” locally produced (AS)
- Take a lot of time to change from conventional to organic farming (MA)