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Understanding values in summer farm tourism

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the main drivers behind summer farm tourism and the elements of summer farms and the summer farm experience that create value for tourists. The study contributes to the conceptualization of summer farm food consumption. By combining concepts used in the analysis of rural tourism, such as postmodernity and cultural heritage, with the hospitality-oriented Five Aspects Meal Model, we offer a new avenue to understand the drivers behind summer farm tourism. Empirically, the study contributes by bringing a hospitality perspective into research about rural tourism, thus offering new avenues for future research. The results show that intrinsic and extrinsic values (e.g. product-specific and non-product-specific characteristics) of summer farm products, along with a welcoming atmosphere, aspects related to the cultural and biological heritage of summer farms, the scenery, and the possibility of encountering real-life animals, are appreciated elements in creating consumer and tourist value. Tourists appreciate the simple rural experience and wish to preserve the cultural heritage embedded in summer farms. Furthermore, traditional elements of hospitality are highly conditioned by postmodern and cultural heritage values.

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Rural tourism; consumer preferences; summer farms; food heritage; consumer value

Introduction

Rural tourism is important for rural development (Wellton & Öström, 2022). The demand for nature experiences and activities detached from the stressful life of modern urban living has increased, leading to a rising interest in summer farm tourism. Summer farms offer the possibility of consuming heritage food, engaging in recreational opportunities, participating in cultural events, and experiencing knowledge transfer. Researchers and policymakers have established that summer farms are attractive tourism destinations that can therefore contribute to generating local income (Figuereido et al., 2022). However, knowledge about the drivers behind the consumption of summer farm products (hereafter SFP) and summer farm tourists' experiences is scarce (Rytkönen &

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Tunón, 2020). Why do tourists visit summer farms? What are the drivers behind the consumption of SFPs? How can farm tourism and the consumption of summer farm food be conceptualized?

Research about local food consumption has often focused on consumers' health and environmental drivers (Feagan, 2007; Sahin & Yilmaz, 2022; Sims, 2009). Some of the topics highlighted in previous research are consumer attitudes and concerns with the distance between where food is produced and where it is consumed and the relationship between consumers and sustainability from its widest perspective (Coelho et al., 2018); vulnerability and consumers' response to crises, such as food scares related to unsustainable animal husbandry (Sadilek, 2019); and responses to shortcomings in the global food system, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic or financial crises, which strengthened the links between low-income consumers and local food systems (Bené, 2020). Some studies have highlighted the relevance of product quality, such as intrinsic and extrinsic values and how they influence consumers' purchasing decisions regarding local food (Brečić et al., 2017; Espejel et al., 2007; Rytönen et al., 2018).

A discussion that links local food consumption to tourism has highlighted the role of local food in a recreational trip, either as the goal of the trip or as a component of the tourist's experience (Figuereido et al., 2022; Okumus, 2021). Recent research has underscored the need to further scrutinize and problematize the role of food aspects related to rural territories and food tourism (Figueiredo et al., 2021; Frisvoll et al., 2016). This study analyzes consumers' and tourists' drivers and problematizes consumers' motives and perceptions of SFPs, as well as tourists' experiences of summer farm tourism, through cases from Norway and Sweden.

After this introduction, it highlights concepts about Scandinavian summer farming and local and heritage food consumption. The methodology, results, and conclusions sections follow.

Scandinavian summer farming

Scandinavian summer farming is a form of transhumance pastoralism where summer grazing traditionally takes place in outlying lands away from the homestead, at a distance that necessitates one or several farm buildings for seasonal use. Summer farms are used during the summer to house animals and process milk into products that can be stored before transporting them to the homestead. Traditional summer farming practices are low-input agricultural practices commonly based on a high variety of semi-natural grasslands. This kind of local food production and consumption maintains biodiversity and other landscape values (Bele et al., 2018).

SFPs are labeled as heritage or terroir food. They are central in the tourist experience through the act of eating local, non-standardized cuisine and taking the tourist into unknown culinary scapes (Frisvoll et al., 2016). SFPs are linked to their place of production, and the traditional practices used in their elaboration that have been passed down from generation to generation (Orría & Luise, 2017; Tunón & Bele, 2019). Heritage food can be conceptualized as departing from its connection to the legacy, inheritance, authenticity, people, culture, and place from which it originates (Almansouri et al., 2022; Gyimóthy, 2017).

Traditional SFPs are products such as butter, traditional cheese, whey butter, brown whey cheese, soured milk, and charcuteries. A key function of the summer farm has

been to secure the supply of winter fodder by harvesting meadows around the summer farm and homestead, while the animals graze in the forest and mountains. Summer farms have allowed farmers to optimize the number of animals.

Summer farmers can experience financial gains through rural tourism, establishing themselves as pivotal attractions in their respective municipalities (Rytkönen & Tunón, 2020). However, the number of summer farms is declining. In 2022, the summer farms in Norway were 742, which represents a 50% decline in recent decades (Statistics Norway, 2023); in Sweden, they are only 250, and only 50 have traditional dairy processing (Rytkönen & Tunón, 2020).

Literature review

Local and heritage food consumption

The rise of local and heritage food consumption is linked to consumers' desire to decrease the environmental impact of their food consumption, their reaction to alienation from the places where food is produced (Eriksson et al., 2023; Feldmann & Hamm, 2015), food nostalgia, the desire to consume healthy and authentic food, and a response to various episodes of food scares, such as mad cow disease. Additionally, it is driven by the search for authenticity, helping consumers feel a deeper connection to place, historical roots, and traditions (Barrionuevo et al., 2019; Feagan, 2007).

The rising interest in local heritage food is linked to postmodern values and sustainability doctrines related to consumer preferences (Rogala, 2015). The focus in this debate is local food – specifically, food that is consumed not far from where it is produced. Another discussion underscores the role of local heritage food in tourism, highlighting culinary, food, and gastronomic tourism and how food contributes to rural and regional development in various ways (Rachão et al., 2019).

Local and heritage food quality – intrinsic and extrinsic values

In traditional studies about consumer preferences, food quality has often been defined by the product's intrinsic attributes, namely its sensory (taste, color, texture, nutritional value) and physical (color and size) characteristics. Consumers' preferences are also influenced by extrinsic attributes such as brand name, brand image, stamp of quality, price, place of origin, store, staff at the selling point, packaging, production information, and consumer communication, which are external to the product and linked to the sale (Brečić et al., 2017; Petter Stræte, 2008; Rytkönen et al., 2018).

When studying local heritage food, it is essential to include parameters that together constitute "consumption value." This concept builds on the assumption that consumer preferences are influenced by "preconsumption cues" related to the functional, emotional, social, or epistemic value of a product and the services related to its consumption. Each preconsumption cue is dependent on several contextual aspects related to the product but also to the situation in which food is consumed (Soltani et al., 2021).

Previous research has highlighted the epistemic value of local heritage food related to sustainability values, food safety (Cvijanović et al., 2020), and food heritage (Wellton & Öström, 2022). A fruitful avenue in the local food tourism debate is to include concepts

to analyze the actual consumption and tourism experience from the hospitality debate. In this study, we highlight intrinsic and extrinsic values and hospitality aspects, with concepts offered by the Five Aspects of Meal Model (FAMM) (Gustafsson et al., 2006; Priyantina & Sarno, 2019).

The FAMM helps scholars organize the study of food experience. It includes the place in which consumption takes place – in this case, the summer farm and/or rural context; the meeting with people participating in the experience (company brought to the place, other visitors, and the staff) during the local heritage food consumption experience; the product or services and its characteristics – for example, intrinsic and extrinsic values of SFPs or services offered by the summer farm, local food store, or rural heritage food festival; and management, control system, and the atmosphere in which the local heritage food experience takes place (Priyantina & Sarno, 2019). We use the concepts offered by the FAMM as a taxonomy to help us organize results.

Local and heritage food in the tourism experience

Local heritage food tourism has been defined as tourists who visit primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants, and other places in which local heritage food and beverages can be consumed as the main goal of their trip. Local heritage food tourism can also be labeled culinary, gourmet, or gastronomic tourism (Okumus, 2021). It is driven by societal trends, improved economic conditions for several consumer segments, and food fashion. These new consumers are labeled “foodies” (e.g. people who love food and make their passion for culinary experiences a central reason for traveling; Santos et al., 2020).

Tourists’ expectations can, for example, be related to the will of learning something new, a wish to meet new people and experience certain social or natural contexts, the need to achieve certain personal goals, or the wish to perhaps even avoid all forms of stimulus or experiences. In a rural context, value in the tourist’s experience includes both expected and perceived value. Based on previous experiences, the tourist has certain expectations before visiting the destination. This includes the epistemic values, or personal interest leading to the visit, but also experiences related to planning, booking, and arriving at the destination. Experienced (or co-created) value is influenced by the visitor’s expectation, by the physical and social characteristics of the tourism experience, and by the quality of the product or service (An & Alarcón, 2020).

Conceptually, this article focuses on experienced value related to the consumption of SFPs, which means that other feasible theoretical perspectives have been overlooked. It thus focuses on *sustainability values*, *values related to cultural heritage and food nostalgia*, and *hospitality*. We link concepts proposed by the FAMM (*atmosphere*, *management control system*, *place*, *meeting*, and *product*) to concepts from the local heritage food debate. The results would be stronger if the analysis covered expected and experienced value; however, accessing data about expected value was not possible.

Materials and methods

This study aims to understand consumers’ and tourists’ different perceptions and definitions of the SFPs and experiences; thus, the design draws inspiration from the constructivist tradition.

We implement a comparative approach motivated by the common history of summer farming in both countries and current differences that emerged owing to differences in rural and agricultural policies in the last 100 years. In Norway, maintaining farming in the whole country has been a central policy goal, while in Sweden, the main goal has been to create agricultural production surplus through structural rationalization. Norway is, to a higher degree, a mountainous country, while Sweden has vast areas with plains that are more suited for industrial agriculture. The comparison has enabled researchers to understand, contextualize, and interpret research results. The comparative approach started with identifying the conditions for a comparison, delineating the units of analysis, and choosing a common theoretical ground (Esser & Vliegenthart, 2017). The study also draws support from netnography by studying people's digital traces in a temporary digital community as data (Kozinets, 2020). In this case, the researchers collected the data but were not involved in the creation of digital communication. Mixing the survey and observations in place with digital reviews strengthens the validity of the study. However, the number of summer farm tourists is limited. Most often, only a few people visit a summer farm per day; thus, collecting data is time-consuming, and the summer farm season is short and weather dependent. This has an impact on the generalizability of the study.

Sample and data

We used three types of data. The first was a survey (Rossi et al., 2013) conducted in Norway and Sweden using close-ended questions at two summer farms (one in each country), a food festival in Sweden, a food market in Sweden, and a local rural food store in Norway, where summer farm food is sold. The second source was interviews with 12 volunteers doing a few days of volunteer work on a Swedish summer farm. The questions asked to volunteers were the same as those asked in the survey, but they were formulated as open-ended questions. The third type included the Facebook reviews of eight summer farms (four in Norway and four in Sweden), which are available through their Facebook pages (see Table 1).

Informants are day tourists visiting the locality for recreational purposes, except for volunteers, who consider their volunteer work as part of their vacation. The survey is comprehensive, answering close-ended multiple-choice questions about the tourists and

Table 1. Type of data and number of observations.

Place where data were collected	Type of data	Number of observations
N1 (Summer farm)	Survey	25
N2 (Rural food store)	Survey	52
N3 (SFFR)	FR	58
N4 (SFFR)	FR	28
N5 (SFFR)	FR	49
N6 (SFFR)	FR	9
S1A (Summer farm)	Survey	64
S1B (Summer farm)	Interviews with volunteers	12
S2 (Food festival)	Survey	34
S3 (SFFR)	FR	74
S4 (SFFR)	FR	14
S5 (SFFR)	FR	25
S6 (SFFR)	FR	9

Source: Own elaboration. N = Norway, S = Sweden, SFFR = Summer farm Facebook review, FR = Facebook Reviews.

consumers' demography, educational level, current occupation, and geographical origin. The questions also asked how they found the place where their purchase took place and the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation behind the purchase or visit to the summer farm, including information about the sales point, advertising, motive behind the visit or purchase, relation to cultural heritage, and sustainability values. At the end of the survey, an open-ended question labeled "additional opinions" enabled the respondents to highlight the issues they thought were especially important to them. In this article, we use all sections of the survey except for the definitions of biocultural heritage, which are not relevant for this analysis.

Due to the lack of a suitable and available data repository, a thorough description of the close-ended questions data was published in report form and made available for research in 2020 (Bele et al., 2020). In this article, we only use data about consumers' and tourists' perceptions of cultural heritage and sustainability values, as well as the results from the open-ended questions and Facebook reviews.

Summer farms only operate in the summer, and the majority have a remote location. It is therefore difficult to obtain many answers, even when data are collected for several days. The survey was conducted between 2017 and 2019, and Facebook reviews included data between 2016 and 2023. The summer farms in question have been anonymized. Table 1 presents the number of observations from each data source.

Results

An overview of the results showed that while some differences existed in the answers obtained in the survey between Norway and Sweden, most gaps in the data tend to decrease when results from the survey are compared with customer reviews.

Consumers' experienced value and sustainability

The analysis generated seven categories related to sustainability. Most previous studies have defined environmentally friendly food as "food that responds to the needs of consumers, while minimizing the environmental impact of production and distribution" (Vermier et al., 2020). Most informants described summer farm food by linking it to their belief that no chemical inputs are used, that animals graze in a natural environment, and that the production methods are artisanal. A clear relation also exists between what they considered to be high quality and animals that are "free of stress," and they referred to limited production scale as an indicator of environmental friendliness. Some informants described this in the following way: "The cheese is produced with the milk of animals that graze freely in the forest"; "It is better if 10 farmers have 10 cows each, than for one to have a hundred"; and "Previously the cow was named 'Star', but now it is 1243."

The second value highlights rural policies by including summer farms run by the municipality, which enable low-income visitors to access a summer farm for free. However, most informants argued that summer farmers should receive financial support or have other benefits that allow them to continue running their farms in the future. They mentioned, in their free comments, interviews, and Facebook reviews, that summer farming contributes to rural development. Some highlighted

the following: "Of course, such wonderful places must be preserved to 100 percent. All credit to the people who fight with authorities that do not understand that this is a heritage for our children."

The category "rural policies and rural development" is linked to "populated countryside." Summer farmers are seen as the vehicle behind rural development: they conduct economic activities and contribute to creating jobs, reproducing beautiful landscapes, and making the local community attractive. The positive spillover effect benefits the entire local community; this is in line with previous studies, which have highlighted that food artisans, summer farmers, and local food entrepreneurs are celebrated for their contribution to the economic activities of their respective communities (Rytkönen et al., 2018). These individuals are also recognized for their knowledge: "It takes both knowledge, patience and financial resources to run a summer farm."

Furthermore, arguments concerned with "small-scale production" and "local production" are related. Consumers and tourists express their appreciation for food produced at the summer farm and made from raw materials from the summer farm. The same applies for products such as cheese, butter, and charcuteries and honey, and for meals such as for breakfast omelets made with fresh summer farm eggs or sour cream porridge. One highlighted food-quality attribute is that products are manufactured on the farm and at a limited scale.

The category "Possibility to experience animals in real life and pet animals" was also highlighted. The interaction with animals includes comments about the preservation of land races but also on how seeing and interacting with animals gives rise to great well-being. One example of this is the following: "I liked hearing the cow bells and looking out over lovely untouched nature with the [name of a mountain top] in the background. Quiet and relaxed, far from the traffic."

Some comments referred to animals in connection to activities, such as riding the farm's horses in the forest or on the mountain or enabling the children to learn how to milk a cow. Some highlighted how the informants had petted animals such as kittens, rabbits, and chickens or been responsible for feeding some animals for a few hours or a day as part of their summer farm experience.

Cultural heritage and food nostalgia

The comparison shows that cultural heritage is slightly more important in the Swedish answers, while nature, good food, and a healthy lifestyle are more prominent in the Norwegian answers.

We identified six categories under the theme "Cultural heritage and food nostalgia": Categories (1) *Actively practiced and genuine cultural heritage*, (2) *Culture, history, and knowledge transfer*, and (3) *Heritage site overlap*. Previous research has linked Category (1) to culinary heritage, gastronomy, and food trends. Informants describe values labeled this category as a museum experience. Summer farms are described through the historical features of buildings that escaped modernization. For example, old out-houses and the lack of electricity are positive features in the summer farm experience. Informants link this feature to tranquility, well-being, and stress relief.

Practices and activities were highlighted in relation to Category (4) *Cultural heritage* and (6) *Genuine artisan food products*. Consumers described how products are elaborated

by hand and how animals are cared for “as it was done before.” The reproduction of old practices adds value to the tourist’s experience.

Many informants highlighted how vital it is that traditional knowledge be passed on to children and sometimes to themselves; some examples are “milking a cow” or “see, experience and learn about summer farming.” Knowledge is mediated through guided tours of the summer farms or through summer-farm courses, and in some courses, children or adults can practice “being a summer farmer for a day.” Some summer farmers accept volunteers who help with all farm chores and who might stay for a day or a week. All interviewed volunteers highlighted their appreciation for learning old practices, and they linked the acquired knowledge to preserving culture and tradition. Some saw this knowledge as crucial to meet climate change challenges, expecting traditional practices to become relevant for food security.

Most informants showed awareness about where they are and which type of products they are consuming. The majority related the quality of their visit and food to the features of summer farms. They used the concepts “summer farm visit,” “homemade summer farm product,” “traditional charcuteries,” and “locally produced summer farm food.” Summer farmers were described using traditional Swedish and Norwegian words to refer to the people and farm. The informants highlighted summer farmers as the embodiment of the cultural heritage carried by summer farming. A representative description is the following: “To see and hear about summer farming from talented and nice milkmaids was a real climax ... and really delicious to try their own churned butter.”

Many informants highlighted how visiting a summer farm or consuming summer farm food is something that they do every year, and many have consumed summer farm food since childhood. Thus, summer farm tourism and consumption of summer farm food are traditions carried by the summer farm, summer farmer, and consumer.

In the survey, most informants highlighted Category (5) *My birthplace and childhood*. Many of them are locals or live in big cities, but they are “returning home during their holiday.” They visited summer farms in their childhood, and some have relatives who, in the past, worked on summer farms. Most informants were also familiar with SFPs as these were part of their life when they were children. This is in line with previous studies that have highlighted how food artisans, summer farmers, and local food entrepreneurs are considered a living link to history and the place. This was identified as a driver behind the consumption decision (Rytkönen et al., 2018).

Informants linked the food attributes “locally” and “manually” – that is, “home-made” and produced without the use of modern technology – to food quality. Products were denominated as artisanal, which indicates superior quality; moreover, the use of inputs from the farm was linked to products being genuine.

FAMM

In traditional FAMM studies, “the room” represents a restaurant where food is consumed and its physical characteristics, such as decorations, colors, smells, lightnings, size, and everything that composes it (Priyantina & Sarno, 2019). Informants in this study related the room to the features of summer farms. The survey asked no questions about “the room”; however, in the open answers, the informants stated that they appreciated, during their visit, the historical features of summer farms, their picturesque appearance,

gray (unpainted wood) buildings, and surrounding landscape. The buildings were referred to as mediators of history and heritage. The physical aspects of summer farms are even more frequently highlighted in the Facebook reviews, where they are described as “magical places,” “wonderful environment in the middle of the forest,” “traditional cabin with a hint of how life was in the past,” “cozy summer farm in a fantastic landscape,” and “a very beautiful place where you could see all the animals. This is the way a summer farm is supposed to look like when the animals can graze freely.”

The second category in FAMM is “the meeting,” which includes all types of interpersonal relations and social interactions occurring in relation to the consumption of food. A meal is generally surrounded by various types of social interaction. It can include the interaction with the waiter, with the person or persons brought to the establishment, or with other guests (Gustafsson et al., 2006). The results indicate that the visit to the summer farm fulfills a social function in which “the meeting” fulfills a function for how the visitor values the experience and consumption of SFPs. The meeting was often described as an intergenerational family activity during which “grandparents, or parents and grandchildren can do something together.” Summer farms also offer opportunities for friends and families to meet, eat food that is connected to memories and different values, and engage in different types of activities.

Another prominent meeting is between summer farmers and tourists. Most informants highlighted that meeting summer farmers adds value to their visit. Summer farmers mediate knowledge; they are “friendly and hospitable” and “always welcome people with a smile.” Some informants highlighted that “the summer farmer told us stories about the place and nature,” while others found value in how the summer farmer shows visitors around the place, sometimes wearing traditional clothing and preserving history and tradition. Thus, the summer farmer plays a key role fulfilling expectations related to hospitality; however, hospitality is also linked to authenticity, tradition, nature, and cultural heritage.

The third “meeting” includes animals. Seeing farm animals in real life was mentioned as essential. Some informants highlighted that for children, seeing animals and petting them mediates memorable life experiences. Meeting animals is also related to personal comfort and well-being. Informants responsible for feeding animals during their stay mentioned interaction with animals as enriching and enlightening – a “happy laughter over the evening coffee and the calf kisses ...” or “a wonderful place, the animals are so nice, full of harmony.”

The next category of the FAMM is product. In this case, we differentiate between the product (e.g. food) and service (e.g. the tourist’s visit to the summer farm). Products are linked to intrinsic properties such as taste, color, smell, and content (or absence of some content). Most informants, in all data, highlighted the gastronomic characteristics of products as a value indicator. They especially valued that SFPs taste good and described summer farm food as “high-quality” and rich in flavors. Conversely, they highlighted hygiene and nutritional content to a lesser extent. The absence of additives was mostly highlighted in interviews with volunteers and in Facebook reviews. Some of the adjectives used to describe products were “good,” “fantastic,” “authentic,” and “the best sour cream porridge I have ever tasted” (a Norwegian specialty). However, products without a traditional connection to summer farming were also highlighted; for example, drinking a good cup of coffee, or services such as music concerts, theater, or poetry

readings. Furthermore, informants linked intrinsic quality to sustainability, cultural heritage, and food nostalgia by associating flavor with traditional recipes and raw materials produced using summer farm resources.

The tourism experience is linked to traditional summer farming activities, such as milking, feeding animals, taking a horse ride, or traditional music concerts. Activities can also include the arrangement of a birthday dinner or an Easter activity with a chocolate egg hunt for children. The quality of the visit is evaluated in relation to having a nice vacation and to being able to rest and relax.

Not all comments were positive. In some comments related to the price, a few respondents argued that the entrance fee was too high. In the survey, a few respondents explained that they wanted the entry to the summer farm to remain free of charge. No comments were made about summer farm food being too expensive, which, in theory, is related to extrinsic values (Brečić et al., 2017). Another isolated comment highlighted how visitors felt that their pet dog was being attacked by the farm dogs. To the best of our knowledge, most summer farms prohibit guests from bringing dogs as foreign dogs cause stress to farm animals.

Hosting, organization, and the level of service are pivotal aspects of the visit as good hospitality is essential for visitors. Not many people work on a summer farm; therefore, the summer farmer is often the person in charge of receiving the visitor, serving the food, taking care of animals, supervising the cleaning, churning butter, and making cheese, waffles, and coffee. Most comments highlighted the level of service as positive. Management control is, in theory, often defined as “the backstage work,” such as setting up and following financial goals, working with labor issues, and promoting an employer’s skills, knowledge, and marketing. Summer farmers seem to have a pragmatic approach to the backstage function, which differs from that of other tourism operations. This is not noted in the answers as the informants highlighted, again and again, that they found summer farms well kept, tidy, and nice, and that the animals are cared for. They did not mention how the activities are organized but only that the farmers are nice and charming. A few responses in the survey highlighted the lack of road signs or car-parking information. Furthermore, several informants found the summer farm or were informed about its opening hours through social media as most summer farmers answered to Facebook reviews. Communicating with consumers is a central backstage function of summer farmers before, during, and after the visit and consumption opportunity.

The final category of the FAMM is atmosphere. In general, the atmosphere is related to the consumers and the tourists’ relation to nature. Having “peace and quiet” and a “silent environment” with the opportunity to relax in majestic nature environments are recurring comments. In sum, the atmosphere is framed and characterized by the summer farm, its features, and surrounding nature during a recreational experience.

Discussion and conclusions

This study links the two academic debates on tourism and hospitality with local heritage food consumption. It reveals what creates value in the consumption of SFPs and summer farm tourism by combining sustainability cues and cultural heritage aspects with hospitality concepts, enhancing scholarly discourse and managerial resources.

Products are experienced through the lens of intrinsic and extrinsic values – for example, based on how they taste, smell, and look and on how they are served, but surprisingly not because of their price. The most substantial value behind summer farm product consumption is the sensory and gastronomic quality of the products. At the same time, the perception of intrinsic and extrinsic values is highly influenced by how consumers and tourists link food and their experience to cultural heritage and sustainability values. SFPs embody personal perceptions of heritage, nature, and traditional production methods. However, how the quality of products is perceived is also influenced by the atmosphere in the summer farm and the place itself, with buildings that carry historical traces and are surrounded by the specific landscapes reproduced by summer farming practices. Consuming SFPs is also valued outside summer farms, in a context linked to vacations and recreation, such as local rural stores and in a local rural food festival.

Implications for summer farmers

Many summer farmers struggle with the seasonal character of summer farming. Exploring what consumers value is a powerful tool to strengthen and contribute to their long-term economic sustainability. Consumers value products that taste well and experiences that embody the cultural heritage on which summer farming is based. However, consumers and tourists also value a quiet environment, well-kept animals, nice scenery, and good information about opening hours and how to find the summer farm, much of which is related to management. While searching for data on social media, we realized that only a few summer farmers use the review function. By not using it, they miss out on a good opportunity to improve their value proposition and communicate with their market.

Implications for policy

Summer farm consumers and tourists appreciate knowledge transfer, the specific nature and sceneries replicated by summer farms, and various expressions of cultural heritage. Summer farms are places in which knowledge about cultural heritage, preservation of open landscapes, traditions, and animals can be transferred to society. They are also appreciated as pedagogical examples of “low-tech,” low-energy, and environmentally friendly animal production sites, with extensive, old-fashioned grazing that contributes to preserving cultural landscapes and biodiversity. Supporting knowledge transfer can fill a knowledge gap in today’s urban society and help maintain summer farming.

Summer farms contribute to the preservation of some landraces, which is highly appreciated by consumers and tourists. Therefore, summer farm tourism can contribute to the preservation of landraces, while the preservation of landraces can contribute to the positive spillover effect of summer farming. Studies from other countries have confirmed that this is a fruitful avenue (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021; Zielinski et al., 2020).

Supporting summer farm tourism can contribute to local development by mediating a positive image of the local community, while supporting summer farming can help preserve cultural and biological heritage.

Implications for future research

As argued above, it is necessary to develop concepts that can help us understand what creates value in the tourism, vacation, and consumption experience in summer farms (Madanaguli et al., 2022). One strategy is to bring aspects of hospitality into the study of consumers and tourists' experience (Tirado Ballesteros & Hernández Hernández, 2021). New tools, concepts (especially with a management perspective), and novel studies contribute to understanding the process of value creation and shed light on expected and experienced value.

This study briefly touched upon the experience of volunteers, a specific category of tourists and consumers who are co-creators of their experience. Focusing on value co-creation can be a valuable future avenue to understand the drivers of consumers and tourists but also to deepen our insights on the value proposition of summer farms. Furthermore, the study of summer farms risks being highly contextual; therefore, it is necessary to study additional summer farms in different locations and reflect additional empirical cases.

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