

Bachelor Thesis



The Achterhoek as an international food destination

An advice concerning the development of the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination where nature-inclusive is the core value

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Declaration of own work

I hereby declare that:

- I am fully informed about the Thesis C assessment criteria;
- all the work I have conducted to fulfill these criteria is entirely my own;
- I have not been assisted by any other person, except the coaching offered within HBS guidelines.

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Preface

In front of you is the thesis report: the Achterhoek as an international food destination. This report is written for Kenniscentrum Nelles and is the final report of my study Tourism Management at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. This report gives advice on the execution of a strategic food destination development programme, so that the Achterhoek will become known as 'the Italy of North-West Europe'.

I started this research in February 2020 and I am proud that, despite to the COVID-19 situation I managed to finish on time. First of all, I would like to thank my client Maurits Steverink for his support over the past months. His good ideas and critical feedback helped me a lot during the writing process. I would also like to thank Marcella Vos of Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme for her input and time. Both have ensured that the Achterhoek has secured a place in my heart. At this point, I would also like to thank my first examiner Bastienne Bernasco, who inspired and helped me during this research. In addition to that I would like to thank my second examiner, Mrs. Urdaneta as well as my research teacher Mr. van Marle, for their support during this thesis project.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who have always encouraged me to keep going. This has helped me to get the best out of myself and to never give. In particular I would like to thank Naomi Legin for her motivational support and feedback. I am going to miss our digital coffee moments!

Eline Nagelholt
Nunspeet, 15 June 2020

Management Summary

This thesis was written for Kenniscentrum Nelles. This company is an expertise centre for local food. Kenniscentrum Nelles focusses on bundling knowledge and experiences about local food in the Achterhoek. The company gains knowledge and insights about local food in practice and applies this in new and existing projects. Besides, Kenniscentrum Nelles also offers advice and guidance for new and existing food projects in the Achterhoek and Liemers. Since 2014, the Achterhoek is one of the nine shrinking areas in the Netherlands. This means that the younger generation is leaving, birth rates are decreasing, death rates are increasing and medium-small sized enterprises are experiencing pressure. The Achterhoek would like to become a vital, economically powerful and future-proof region again. The facts show that 78% of the Achterhoek is used by agriculture and that the food industry contributes 17.7% to the total employment and 13.6% to the total income. Therefore, there is a promising connection between the tourism sector and the food chains in the Achterhoek. The development of the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination can contribute to the vitality of the region in the future. However, a strategic plan to develop as a food destination is still missing.

The following management question was developed and answered for this thesis: *How can Kenniscentrum Nelles contribute to the development of the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination where nature-inclusive is the core value?*

To be able to answer the management question and give advice to the company literature research was conducted. The literature review elaborated on destination development, food destination development and on the core value nature-inclusive. Literature showed that the DNA of a destination forms the foundation of tourism experiences offered at a food destination. Literature also concluded that an internal and external analysis are the first steps that have to be taken to develop as a food destination. After the literature review, secondary data analysis and field research in the form of open interviews were conducted. The analysis of secondary data focussed on the analysis of the Achterhoek as a tourism destination and the identification of food resources of differential value. In addition to this, best practices were analysed and trends and development further research. For the field research, eight open interviews were conducted. During these interviews, the topic nature-inclusive was further discussed. The outcome of the internal and external analysis was that the Achterhoek possess all assets that are needed to develop as a food destination. It has a rich gastronomic heritage and culture and offers a variety of activities, food and beverage and accommodation facilities for tourists. The interviews confirmed that the stakeholders also think that the development of the Achterhoek is an opportunity. However, they also mentioned attention points that should be taken into consideration. These points are amongst others: time and money investment, knowledge of people about nature-inclusive, cooperation between stakeholders and the characteristics of people in the Achterhoek. In addition to this, they confirmed the importance of having a specific plan with steps that need to be taken for this development.

The advice that is given is in the form of a strategic food destination development plan. This includes an advice on which stakeholders should be involved and what steps need to be taken in the development process. The best possible advice option revealed that there should be multiple stakeholders from various economic sectors involved in the development process. By doing this it can be ensured that there will be enough offer for the tourists with regards to nature-inclusive food experiences but also that the entire destination propagate the same message everywhere. Elements that are discussed in the strategic plan are the vision, mission, values, desired gastronomic plan, challenges and goals, and the competitive strategies. The competitive strategies focus on two steps that need to be taken within this development process. The first step is the creation of internal support. Within this development process eleven municipalities as well as the province have to work together. This involves many different policy areas and often cooperation between these areas is difficult. It is recommended that a food destination manifest will be created. This manifest will be signed by the municipalities as well as various stakeholders in order to ensure cooperation and commitment for the development of the Achterhoek as a food destination. The second step is about the conversion of the opportunity into reality. This means

the development and execution of nature-inclusive food experiences. In this step, it is important that the profile is continuously strengthened and innovative food experiences are created with the aim of achieving the strategic goals. An advice on which nature-inclusive food experiences can be developed in the Achterhoek are given in the category 1) farmers, 2) vineyards, 3) culture, art and heritage, and 4) food and beverage. The execution of the strategic food destination development programme is a continuous cycle of planning, doing, monitoring, evaluating and starting again. The ultimate goal is to achieve the vision 'in 2030, the Achterhoek is known as the Italy of North-West Europe'. The total investment for the execution of the strategic food destination development programme is estimated at €50.000 per year. This includes the coordination of the project, a marketing plan, and monitoring and evaluation. Extra costs that need to be further researched are costs for the execution of the marketing plan. Existing budget in the different policy areas will be used as much as possible for this plan and therefore little extra money is needed.

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1. Introduction

This chapter starts with an introduction of the bachelor thesis. The organisation of the client is introduced and the reasons for this project and management problem are explained. After this, the management question, advice objective, research objectives and research questions are stated. Finally, a reading guide is provided for the remaining part of this thesis.

1.1 Kenniscentrum Nelles

Kenniscentrum Nelles is an expertise centre for local food that is situated at the farm 'Nelles' in Silvolde, the Achterhoek. 'Nelles' exists since 1709 and is owned by family Steverink for the last four generations. In 2008 the farm was rebuilt as a knowledge centre, including a library, conference room, kitchen and an office. The centre bases their operation around sourcing and consuming locally and sustainably based products.

Kenniscentrum Nelles focusses on bundling knowledge and experiences about local food in the Achterhoek. Their desire is to examine what local food is as well as its added value for inhabitants and for the region. Knowledge and insights about local food are gained in practice, applied in new and existing projects and shared with others. Kenniscentrum Nelles also offers advice and guidance for existing and new projects that focus on the eco-gastronomy in the Achterhoek and Liemers. In addition to offering knowledge about local food, they are familiar with the latest trends in the food industry and offer an active network of companies and educational institutions that work on 'local food'. The team consists of three persons, namely: Maurits Steverink founder of Kenniscentrum Nelles, office manager Petra Boesveld and project officer communication Joris Steverink. In addition to this, students are working on various projects throughout the year (Kenniscentrum Nelles, 2020b).

The working area of the company is in the Achterhoek. The Achterhoek is situated in the eastern part of the province of Gelderland. The region is bordered by the river IJssel in the west, the border of Germany in the east and south, and Twente and Salland in the north (Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme, 2020f). There is still much to discover about the food industry in the Achterhoek where tradition and innovation are the main strengths. Lastly, Kenniscentrum Nelles publishes their own books. Several books have been published over the years. These books are 'Achterhoeks Fruit', 'Everything from the Soil' and 'Everything from the Animal' (Kenniscentrum Nelles, 2020a).

1.2 Reasons for this Project

Since 2014, the Achterhoek is one of the nine shrinking areas in the Netherlands (Rijksoverheid, 2019). A shrinking area is an area that deals with a shrinking population and households. The younger generation is leaving, birth rates are low and death rates are high. Besides, the medium-small sized enterprises are under pressure and the number of jobs decline considerably (RTLnieuws, 2017). In the coming years, a vital, economically powerful and future-proof Achterhoek is being sought. The strategic goal is an attractive and healthy living environment and a beautiful landscape (Regio Achterhoek, 2015). Developing as an international distinctive food destination can contribute to the vitality of the region in the future (M. Steverink, personal communication, February 28, 2020).

Looking at the facts, 78% of the area in the Achterhoek is used for agriculture. The food industry contributes 17.7% to the total employment and 13.6% to the total income. A total of 19.4% of all companies are part of the regional food chains in the Achterhoek, which is significantly higher than the province Gelderland (13.6%) and the Netherlands (12.8%). Based on these facts, it can be concluded that the importance of the food chains in the Achterhoek is relatively large. Additionally, it is an important part of the economic activity and is linked to the employment in the Achterhoek. By investing the value of food chains in the region, the Achterhoek can become a vital region. A promising connection is, for example, between the tourism sector and the food chains (Fontein, Linderhof, Stuiver, Michels and Tackens, 2013).

Research argues that the interest in food from one's own environment is increasing. Local food is in the spotlight and is a worldwide trend. However, the knowledge about what local food is, the importance and the added value for people and the region itself is underexposed or perceived as unimportant. The world behind our food is complex, challenging and goes further than attention for regional products. The Achterhoek wants to combine forces with stakeholders of food supply chains and become internationally known as 'the Italy of North-West Europe' (Kenniscentrum Nelles, 2020b). As mentioned above the Achterhoek possesses all the assets to profile itself as a distinctive food destination, national as well as international. The various regional markets, farm shops, vineyards and breweries can contribute to a distinctive destination profile (Menting, 2019). Becoming 'the Italy of North-West Europe' means that the right decisions have to be made in order to jointly propagate this. Because of the current trends in the food industry and the possible combination with tourism, this project is of high relevance for the Achterhoek. Becoming a food destination will not only attract new visitors, but will also contribute to the quality of life in the region.

1.3 Management Problem

Although it is known that the Achterhoek possesses all the assets to profile itself as an international distinctive food destination, an implementation plan for this is still missing. Many different initiatives are taking place but a joint plan of action is not available. The management problem resulting from this is that a plan of approach to develop the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination is missing. With the help of a specific plan of approach, the Achterhoek hopes to become 'the Italy of North-West Europe'. The overall goal of this development is that it will contribute to the vitality of the region.

With the help of Kenniscentrum Nelles and this thesis project a strategic food destination development programme is created for the Achterhoek. The goal of this plan is to give a meaning to food, discover the food potentials of the Achterhoek and inspire and help all stakeholders involved on how they can contribute to this development. Kenniscentrum Nelles has a facilitating role while developing as a food destination, Achterhoek Toerisme and platform Achterhoek Food are the parties that will implement and execute the strategic food destination development programme.

To be able to give advice, the following management question has been formulated:

How can Kenniscentrum Nelles contribute to the development of the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination where nature-inclusive is the core value?

To provide an answer to the management question, the objective of the advice is:

To create a strategic food destination development programme which can be executed by Platform Achterhoek Food and Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme in order to develop the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination. This programme elaborates on the steps that need to be taken and the contribution of the stakeholders involved.

1.4 Research Objective and Research Questions

Research has to be conducted to be able to answer the management question and to provide the company with appropriate advice. To reach the advice objective, and with that answer the management question, a research objective and research questions have been formulated:

The objective of the research is:

To provide an analysis of the Achterhoek as a food destination in order to create a strategic food destination development programme. This analysis contains the characteristics of the Achterhoek as a tourism destination, the inventory of food resources, the perception of stakeholders on a nature-inclusive destination, insights into best practices from other food destinations, and trends and developments related to food tourism.

In relation to this objective the following research questions (RQ) have been formulated:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of the Achterhoek as a tourism destination?

RQ2: What food tourism products, locations and venues of differential value can be identified in the Achterhoek?

RQ3: What is the perception of stakeholders in the Achterhoek on a nature-inclusive food destination?

RQ4: What are best practices from other destinations regarding food destination development?

RQ5: What are trends and developments related to food tourism?

The research questions are related to three different topics, namely: the destination, food destinations and the core value nature-inclusive. These topics are also the core concepts which are elaborated on in the literature review. The literature review leads to a better understanding of each core concept, the definitions and the corresponding operationalisation. The results from the research questions are needed to develop a strategic food destination development programme. The elements needed for this programme are based on the guidelines recommended by the World Tourism Organisation and Basque Culinary Center. According to these guidelines it is required to execute an internal and external analysis of the destination (World Tourism Organization and Basque Culinary Center, 2019). Research questions one, two and three analyse the internal environment of the Achterhoek, whereas research questions four and five analyse the external environment. Within the internal analysis, stakeholders will be interviewed to investigate their perception on a nature-inclusive destination. Literature review already elaborated on the meaning of the core value nature-inclusive and with the help of research question 3 it will become clearer if stakeholders are familiar with the core value nature-inclusive and if they are willing to contribute to this. The results of the research questions will provide an overview of the important elements needed for the strategic food destination development programme. This programme describes which developments are promising for the Achterhoek and provides a plan of approach for the execution to become an international distinctive food destination. Within this plan of approach, the needed contribution of stakeholders to different projects will be described and the implementation and execution phase is further elaborated on.

1.5 Reading Guide

This thesis started with a general introduction (chapter 1). In this chapter the company is introduced, the reason behind the project is explained and the management problem is described. Furthermore, the management question, research questions and objectives are stated. After this, the thesis continues with the theoretical framework (chapter 2). This chapter elaborates on the core concepts and operationalisation of these concepts for this thesis. Following this chapter, the research methods are described (chapter 3). This chapter describes the chosen research strategy, chosen method(s) of data collection, selection of data sources, and the methods of data analysis for each research question. Chapter 4 discusses the research results of each research question. After this the research conclusions based on the research results are presented (chapter 5). Chapter 6 elaborates on the validity and the reliability of the research. In chapter 7 the advice is presented. This chapter entails the advice options, evaluation of the advice options, the strategic food destination development programme, the implementation plan and the financial implications. The chapter ends with the conclusion in which the management question is answered. Finally, an afterword is provided which reflects on the day-to-day practices and the value of this thesis for the tourism industry.

2. Theoretical Framework

The following chapter starts with an elaboration on the search methods used. This is followed by a literature review in which the definitions of the core concepts are elaborated on. After this, a conceptual model based on the core concepts is shown. The chapter ends with the operationalisation of the core concepts.

2.1 Search Methods

To collect suitable literature several databases were used. The main search engines used were: Google Scholar and Saxion Library. This has led to the following databases: Emerald Insights, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and UNWTO. The following different search terms were used to find appropriate sources:

Core concept Destination Development:

Destination Development, Tourist Destination Development and Tourism Development.

Core concept Food Destination Development:

Food Destination Development, Food Destination, Culinary Destination, Food Tourism Development, Culinary Tourism Development, Gastronomic Destination, Gastronomic Tourism Development.

Core concept Nature-Inclusive:

Nature-Inclusive, Nature-Inclusive Destination, Nature-Inclusive Food, Nature-Inclusive Food Destination, Nature-Inclusive Practices.

In addition to this, the snowball method was used to help find more appropriate sources. Appendix I shows the search terms and number of hits per term for each core concept. All literature used is evaluated based on the AAOCC criteria. The five critical criteria that were evaluated, for each source, are authority, accuracy, objectivity, currency, and coverage. Evaluating all sources made sure that only reliable and qualitative information was used in this thesis assignment. (Rasmuson Library, 2018) Appendix II shows the evaluation of sources based on the AAOCC criteria.

2.2 Literature Review

The theoretical framework discusses the core concepts for this thesis. The core concepts are: (1) destination development, (2) food destination development and (3) nature-inclusive. The theoretical framework serves as a foundation for the field research and the advice. For each core concept, existing definitions and models coming from literature are presented and discussed. Furthermore, existing views and insights from various authors are analysed and definitions that apply in this thesis are described. The coherence between the core concepts is shown with the help of a conceptual model. Additionally, an operationalisation for each core concept was created to provide an overview of the most important aspects retrieved from literature relevant for this thesis.

2.2.1 Destination Development

The tourism industry is developing fast. This fast development requires changes in tourism destinations, tourism products as well as a growing interest in new and different destinations (Coban & Yildiz, 2019). Before further elaborating on the meaning of destination development, it is useful to examine what a tourism destination is. According to Metelka (1990) a tourism destination can be described as a “geographical location to which a person is traveling” (as cited in Manhas, Manrai & Manrai, 2016, p. 26). WTO (2007) defines a ‘local’ destination as a physical space with both physical and administrative boundaries, including a mixture of services, products, and attractions (as cited in Coban & Yildiz, 2019, p. 118). Hu and Ritchie (1993) agree with this by stating that “a tourism destination is a package of tourism facilities and services, which, like any other consumer product or service, is composed of a number of multidimensional attributes that together determine its attractiveness to a particular individual in a given choice situation” (as cited in Coban & Yildiz, 2019, p. 118). According to Buhalis (2000) the integrated experience to consumers are also part of a destination. He argues that “destinations offer an

amalgam of tourism products and services, which are consumed under the brand name of a destination” (p. 98). Although there are many different definitions on what a tourism destination is, many similarities can be found. Therefore, in this thesis a tourism destination is defined as: *a combination of all products, facilities, services, and the experiences offered at the geographical location to which a person is travelling.*

Being a tourism destination or developing as a tourism destination requires destination development. Godfrey and Clarke (2000) argue that “tourism development planning at destination level is a step-by-step process of resource and market evaluation, action and review” (p. 6). The purpose of destination development is to recognise gaps in the local product or market, to identify new projects to fill the gaps, and to recommend actions to put projects in place. The basic components of a tourism development strategy according to Godfrey and Clarke (2000) are “tourism policy and committee structure, tourism resources audit, tourism market analysis, tourism opportunities and constraints, development goals and objectives, tourism market plan, and monitoring and review procedures” (p. 10). Additionally, Godfrey and Clarke (2000) argue that for tourism development to succeed “it must be sustainable economically, socially and environmentally” (p. 2). According to the World Tourism Organisation (2007) a framework for developing a tourism strategy consists of (1) a situation analysis regarding the tourism competitiveness of a destination, (2) a strategic framework for future tourism growth based on the findings of the situation analysis, (3) an integrated multi-year implementation plan, and (4) institutional and performance management arrangements.

Research has shown that destinations are interested in developing competitive advantage. This competitive advantage varies per type of competition, product market and the product mix. A destination should create a competitive advantage by attracting new tourists and developing memorable experience as good as or even better than competitive destinations (Kozak and Baloglu, 2011). Elements that should be taken into consideration while creating competitive advantage are divided into internal and external components. The internal component consists of an analysis of the tourism destination and the branding image of the destination. Buhalis (2000) developed the Six A’s framework for the analysis of a tourism destination which is illustrated Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Six A’s framework for the analysis of tourism destinations according to Buhalis (2000)

Attractions (natural, man-made, artificial, purpose built, heritage, special events)
Accessibility (entire transportation system comprising of routes, terminals and vehicles)
Amenities (accommodation and catering facilities, retailing, other tourist services)
Available packages (pre-arranged packages by intermediaries and principals)
Activities (all activities available at the destination and what consumers will do during their visit)
Ancillary services (services used by tourists such as banks, telecommunications, post, newsagents, hospitals, etc.

The external component considers the trends and developments in the tourism industry and a benchmark concerning competitive destinations. Once the characteristics of a destination are analysed, the distinctive elements are identified and the external influences are taken into account a destination development plan can be established (Kozak and Baloglu, 2011).

The definition of destination development that is chosen for this thesis is a combination of features mentioned by the authors above:

Destination development should create competitive advantage for a tourism destination. It is a step-by-step approach that takes the internal and external environment into account. Tourism resources are analysed, distinctive elements are identified and tourism trends and development as well as best practices are taken into consideration while developing as a competitive tourism destination.

2.2.2 Food Destination Development

As elaborated on in the previous core concept destinations should create competitive advantage to attract new tourists. Developing as a food destination can support to become a competitive destination. The right type of product mix will help to distinguish one food destination from another (Kozak & Baloglu, 2011). Okumus and Cetin (2018) agree with this by stating that “culinary products, services and food culture at a destination can be seen as unique strategic resources, with few substitutes that cannot be easily imitated by other destination” (p. 341). When tourists travel to a destination to experience food related activities it can be referred to as food tourism. Hall and Mitchel (2005) define food tourism as “visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production region are the primary motivating factors for travel” (as cited in Guzel & Apaydin, 2015, p. 3). In literature, food tourism is also referred to as culinary tourism or gastronomy tourism. According to World Tourism Organisation and Basque Culinary Center (2019):

Gastronomy tourism is based on a concept of knowing and learning, eating, tasting and enjoying the gastronomic culture that is identified with a territory. It is not possible to talk of gastronomy tourism without also talking about the culinary identity of the *terroir* as distinguishing feature. The territory is the backbone of gastronomy because a destination’s landscapes, culture, products, techniques and dishes define its culinary identity and are the foundation of, and part of the DNA of the tourism experiences offered to visitors. (p. 8)

Ignatov and Smith (2006) point out that culinary tourism can be defined as:

Trips during which the purchase or consumption of regional food (including beverages), or the observation and study of food production (from agriculture to cooking schools), represent a significant motivation or activity. (p. 238)

It can be said that culinary tourism means more than just consuming food during a holiday. It is also described as the direct experience of a given area’s unique “local knowledge” and culinary culture. Not only the flavour of a dish but the special ‘flavour’ of locality can make the destination a popular culinary destination (Horng and Tsai, 2010). Viljoen, Kruger, & Saayman (2017) agree with this and argue that food associated with a particular region can attract tourists to a destination if strategically marketed at periodical events, festivals or on the right social media platforms.

The variety of terms expressed above all concern a linkage between food and tourism. All definitions mention that the culinary identity of a destination is a distinguishing feature. This identity is translated into unique tourism experiences, including locality at the destination. A combination of the definitions of the different authors has been made and the following definition for food destination applies in the context of this thesis:

A food destination offers experiences based on the concept of knowing, learning, eating, tasting and enjoying the culinary identity. The local knowledge, destination’s DNA, landscapes, culture, products, techniques and dishes can be seen as unique strategic resources and are the foundation of tourism experiences offered at the food destination.

The World Tourism Organisation and Basque Culinary Center (2019) established guidelines for the development of a food destination. The suggested framework for strategic food destination development can be defined as:

A planning tool which, starting from understanding of the initial situation and a diagnosis, transfers to reality the perceptions and needs of the sector involved and serves to define and lay down the main strategic lines of action that will allow the destination to become a destination for gastronomy tourism. (p. 12)

The strategic programme consists of different phases and various activities related to each phase. Phase one is the analysis and diagnosis of the situation, phase two is the strategic drafting of the plan, phase three the operational planning, and phase four is the communication and dissemination of the plan. Appendix III, shows the methodological process for drafting a strategic plan for gastronomy tourism.

Du Rand and Heath (2006) proposed a framework to promote a culinary destination which show similarities with the World Tourism Organisation and Basque Culinary Center framework. This framework suggests that a destination should identify its culinary resources and images and focus on such food tourism enhancers. The main tasks for this framework include: (1) prioritizing culinary products and markets, (2) positioning and branding the destination, (3) theming, packaging and routing, and (4) promoting the culinary destination.

It becomes obvious that several phases and activities are critical in food destination development. Based on a combination of aspects mentioned by the different authors, the following definition for food destination development applies in this thesis assignment:

Food destination development requires an ongoing internal and external analysis of the destination. Crucial activities for the internal analysis are the inventory of food resources, the identification of food tourism products of differential value and the perceptions and needs of the stakeholders involved. For the external analysis, crucial activities are the analysis of trends and developments in the tourism industry and a benchmark comparing to other food destinations. Additionally, the initial situation and the unique strategic resources that form the foundation of tourism experiences offered at a destination should be analysed.

2.2.3 Nature-inclusive

“The Dutch government recently adopted the new policy concept of ‘nature-inclusive’ farming, which aims at promoting more sustainable agricultural practices that minimizes negative ecological impacts, maximizes positive ones and at the same time benefits from natural processes” (Runhaar, 2017, p. 340). According to Van Haaster-de Winter, Taufik and Hovens (2018) nature-inclusive agriculture starts with a healthy soil, produces food within the boundaries of nature, the environment and living environment and has positive effects on the biodiversity and the climate.

Motivated by the fact that the development towards nature-inclusive agriculture is still young and much remains to be invented the following passage elaborates on the story behind a nature-inclusive product:

Nature-inclusive production is taking into account everything that grows. Not only using nature optimally, but also to save and care for it. It is another way of farming, with extra attention to nature. Nature-inclusive agriculture is making use of everything nature offers on the farm, it enhances the biodiversity and burdens nature as little as possible. Examples are mowing grass later so that meadow birds can breed, make flower-field margins, keep soil fertile by means of natural processes and aim for less CO₂ emissions. Just like other farmers, the goal is to make food and an income for the farmer. (Van Haaster- de Winter, et al., 2018, p. 7)

The definitions from the authors stated above mention important aspects of nature-inclusive. It can be said that the core value nature-inclusive can be seen as a cooperation between nature, local environment and soil. A nature-inclusive product or service therefore has an added value for nature. There are no adverse effects on the nature, biodiversity and surrounding landscape, it is about being circular and the soil forms the basis. Less pesticides are used and the soil is not contaminated. Positive results amongst other things are more butterflies, bees, flora and fauna. Nature-inclusive produced food takes care of this by, in addition to legislation, paying extra attention to, for example: chickens being outside, agriculture with less or no pesticides, flowery field margins along grain fields, energy neutral, less or no fertiliser, herb-rich grassland for meadow birds, cows in the pasture with room for meadow birds, beef cattle that maintain nature through grazing, pigs in the landscape and restoring planting from hedges and landscape elements (M. Steverink, personal communication, March 27, 2020).

As mentioned in the introduction, 78% of the area in the Achterhoek is used for agriculture. For this reason, it is promising to use the core value nature-inclusive in combination with developing as food destination. Nature-inclusive should be taken into consideration for each project while establishing the strategic food destination development programme. Based on the definitions presented by the authors, a list of criteria for nature-inclusive is defined. The criteria for the core value nature-inclusive are healthy soil, respect for the environment, respect for the living environment, respect for nature, positive effect on the biodiversity, and a positive effect on the climate.

2.3 Conceptual Model based on the Core Concepts

To be able to develop the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination a conceptual model is needed. A conceptual model is a framework that is initially used in research to outline the possible courses of action or to present an idea or thought. When a conceptual model is developed in a logical manner, it will provide a rigor to the research process (Elangovan & Rajendran, 2015). The conceptual model that is used during the research process of this thesis, combines several aspects from each core concept that were identified in the literature review. It starts with the aspects and sub-aspects needed for destination development, then specifies towards food destination development and ends with the criteria necessary for the core value nature-inclusive.

The conceptual model, as shown in Appendix IV, visualizes the steps that need to be completed to successfully create a strategic food destination development programme for the Achterhoek.

2.4 Operationalisation of the Core Concepts

The literature review of each core concept provided a basis for the field research and therefore an operationalisation of each core concept was made. The operationalisation of each core concept is presented in Appendix V, VI and VII. The tree diagrams show a full overview of the most important aspects retrieved from literature. As already mentioned the aim of this thesis is to provide the Achterhoek with a strategic food destination development programme. The following steps must be taken to develop the strategic program for the Achterhoek:

- 1: Internal analysis: the current characteristics of the Achterhoek as a destination and the identification of food tourism products, locations and venues of differential venue, analysis of stakeholders' perception on a nature-inclusive food destination.
- 2: External analysis: learning from best practices regarding food destination development at other destinations and analysing trends and developments in the food tourism industry.
- 3: Elaborates on the vision, mission, goals, values and strategies for the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination.
- 4: Strategic food destination development programme: development of the programme by using the conceptual model: Strategic Food Destination Development Programme Achterhoek.

Step 1 and 2 are presented in the research part of this thesis and an elaboration of step 3 and 4 can be found in the advisory chapter of this thesis. All elements needed for the advice are based on literature as described in the theoretical framework.

3. Research Methodology

This chapter elaborates on the research methodology. It starts with an overview of the research objective and the research questions. After this the research strategy is discussed and the sampling methods and methods of data analysis are described.

3.1 Overview Research Objective and Research Questions

To be able to provide the client with an advice that regards the management problem, research has been conducted. Field research and desk research were used to gain more knowledge on all elements needed to develop a strategic food destination development programme. The research strategy, methods of data collection, selection of data sources, and methods of data analysis for this research are explained below. In Appendix VIII, a systematic overview of the research methodology for each research question can be found. The objective of the research is:

To provide an analysis of the Achterhoek as a food destination in order to create a strategic food destination development programme. This analysis contains the characteristics of the Achterhoek as a tourism destination, the inventory of food resources, the perception of stakeholders on a nature-inclusive destination, insights into best practices from other food destinations, and trends and developments related to food tourism.

The research questions (RQ) that arose from this objective were as follows:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of the Achterhoek as a tourism destination?

RQ2: What food tourism products, locations and venues of differential value can be identified in the Achterhoek?

RQ3: What is the perception of stakeholders in the Achterhoek on a nature-inclusive food destination?

RQ4: What are best practices from other destinations regarding food destination development?

RQ5: What are trends and developments related to food tourism?

3.2 Research Strategy

To answer the research questions, as formulated above, qualitative research was used. In qualitative research the researcher is mainly interested in the meaning that a person attaches to an experience or situation. The information that is gathered is not recorded in numbers, but in everyday language (Verhoeven, 2015). For quantitative research, the information is based on numbers, figures that represent objects, people and, organisations. Statistics are used to describe the results but also to test the assumptions that figures represent (Verhoeven, 2015). In this thesis, it was not about collecting numerical information but about discovering the potential to develop the Achterhoek as a distinctive international food destination. For this reason, a qualitative research was chosen. Within qualitative research a number of research strategies can be used, such as observation research, interviews, case study, literature research, and content and secondary analysis of qualitative material (Verhoeven, 2015). In this thesis assignment, a case study is used as a research strategy. A case study uses a combination of data collection methods and is a qualitative approach.

3.3 Methods of Data Collection

In a case study, researchers are not restricted to one method of data collection. For this thesis assignment, several methods of data collection were used to answer the research questions. In this research, a combination of desk and field research is used. Desk research has been done in the form of a secondary analysis. Verhoeven (2015) argues that: "literature research and content analysis, which involve collecting textual information, are also qualitative in nature. This kind of research analyses the meaning conveyed in written texts" (p. 135). The field research made use of open interviews. The following paragraphs substantiate on the choice for the specific methods of data collection.

3.3.1 Qualitative Desk Research

"In desk research, the researcher does not go 'into the field' to carry out the investigation; sometimes it literally involves sitting at a desk" (Verhoeven, 2015, p. 144) Time savings is an advantage of using desk research. The researcher does not have to collect the data in the field first, but can quickly access a large amount of data and use this for a new analysis. Research questions 1, 2, 4, and 5 were answered through secondary analysis of existing qualitative information. "Secondary qualitative analysis uses existing information that was collected previously. This information is analysed using a different central question compared to the original research purpose, i.e., from a new perspective" (Verhoeven, 2015, p. 150). The internal analysis of the Achterhoek as a tourism destination was already executed by Achterhoek Toerisme and thesis students. These reports and additional reports/articles were collected used for the secondary analysis of this thesis. For the secondary analysis of research question 4 and 5 food destinations development reports/articles and food trend reports/articles were used.

3.3.2 Qualitative Field Research

To answer research question 3 information from different stakeholders was required. This means that the researcher has to go into the field to investigate the situation. The research elements are studied in their normal surroundings, this is also known as holistic research (Verhoeven, 2015). To retrieve information from different stakeholders the method of data collection used during the field research was open interviews. The aim of an interview is to gather information about a particular subject, a conversation in which the interviewee's perceptions are paramount. During open interviews, the interviewer has a list of questions or a topic list. Interviewees have a great deal of freedom to contribute what they feel is relevant to answer. The interviewer is flexible and goes with the flow of the conversation (Verhoeven, 2015).

The topic that was central during the interviews was the perception of stakeholders in the Achterhoek on a nature-inclusive food destination. Verhoeven (2015) argues that when the perception of the respondent is important, open interviews are best suited. During these interviews, the interviewer is looking for new information, also called an interpretative research design (Verhoeven, 2015). As already mentioned, to answer the third research question the perception of stakeholders was needed. For this reason, open interviews were the chosen method of data collection. The interview structure used during the open interviews was as follows:

- Introduction: personal introduction, the objective of the interview, the structure, estimated time, appreciation for participation, importance of contribution, processing of data, and that the information will be treated with confidence.
- Heart of the interview: introduction of aspects of the main subject
- Closure: summarize the information, give the respondent the opportunity to add information or comments, and thank them again.

Additionally, a topic list was used to structure the interview. The topic list was put in to logical order, however during some interviews this changed. In addition to this, the topic list consisted of example questions that were used when needed during the interview. Appendix IX shows the topic list that was used during the interviews. Topics that were discussed during these interviews were centred around the theme nature-inclusive food destination. In order to process and analyse the information, the interviews were recorded (permission was asked). During the interview, different interviewing techniques such as nodding, intonation, volume and the tell-me-more probe were used (Verhoeven, 2015). Due to the coronavirus, most interviews were conducted via telephone.

3.4 Sampling Methods

For this research, non-probability sampling was used. Non-probability samples are samples that are not drawn randomly (Verhoeven, 2015). The reason that non-probability sampling was used is because the client already presented a list of experts that could be interviewed. These interviewees were chosen by the client based on their expertise or organisation where they work. The mixture of knowledge during the interviews had led to diverse information and new insights in what is going on in the industry. A total of eight interviews have been conducted during the field research. For qualitative research the size of the group is irrelevant, what counts is the usability of the information (Verhoeven, 2015). Through those eight interviews enough information was obtained to draw the conclusions needed for the advice. In Appendix X, a list of experts that were interviewed can be found.

3.5 Methods of Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis is broad in its scope and uses a wide range of methods. It usually does not happen that there is one answer to the research question. In qualitative research the interpretation that the researcher gives to the analysis is the main thing (Verhoeven, 2015). To be able to analyse the interview results different steps were taken.

The first step was transcribing each interview. To be able to transcribe the interviews they were recorded with permission of the interviewee. A transcript makes sure that the research stays close to reality, since everything that has been said is written out in a document. This increases the reliability of a research because it is possible to check what exactly had been said during the interviews. Additionally, another researcher can listen to the interviews again and check the transcripts on the reliability (Tubbing, 2019). The interview transcripts in the separate PDF file: interview transcripts. After all interviews were written out they were coded. A code, one word, was used to describe a piece of information. This kind of coding is called open coding and means that text is being unravelled. The next step was to apply axial coding, main groups and subgroups were made by checking which open codes belong together and how they could be best sorted. After this, selective coding was done. Selective coding is known as the process of structuring the concept and looking for relationships between the answers. The relationship and rankings were brought together in a code tree (Verhoeven, 2015). The first topic of each interview, the meaning of nature-inclusive, was coded according to a deductive approach. This approach involves a top-down approach and uses a pre-set coding scheme according to literature review in the coding process (Asher Consult, 2014). However, the interviews also led to new insight and some codes were not part of the theory found in the literature review. These codes were added in the coding process and are highlighted yellow in the structuring of the codes. All other topics were coded according to an inductive approach. This approach is a bottom-up approach and the codes are coming from the interview data (Asher Consult, 2014). The open coding, including fragment numbers, can be found in the separate PDF file: open coding process. The axial coding can be found in Appendix XI and the structuring of the codes in Appendix XII.

For the desk research, the secondary analysis of qualitative information, the method of summarizing, coding and structuring was used (Verhoeven, 2015). Each document was read critically and important information was highlighted and summarized. After this, the information was structured and used to answer the research questions. Appendix XIII shows the criteria that was used to analyse the secondary qualitative data per research question.

4. Research Results

This chapter discusses the research results from the collected data during field and desk research. Research questions 1, 2, 4, and 5 were answered with the help of secondary data analysis. Research question 3 was answered with the help of 8 open interviews with different stakeholders.

4.1 The Achterhoek as a Tourism Destination

To develop the Achterhoek as a food destination, it is important to first analyse the current situation of the Achterhoek as a tourism destination. *'The Achterhoek where nature-inclusive working, living and eating is normal'* (M. Steverink, personal communication, April 20, 2020). The region Achterhoek is situated in the eastern part of the province of Gelderland. It is bordered by the river IJssel in the west, the border of Germany in the east and south, and Twente and Salland in the north (Plaatsengids, 2020). The region consists of 11 municipalities and has a population of approx. 390.000 residents (CBS, 2019). Doetinchem is known as the capital of the Achterhoek (Gemeente Doetinchem, 2015). The regional language of the Achterhoek is Achterhooks, a dialect of Low Saxon. Nowadays the dialect is mostly spoken at home and Dutch is the official spoken language (Plaatsengids, 2020). The economic value of day and overnight tourism has grown significantly over the past years. In 2017 there were 3.040.700 tourist overnight stays and 5.844.300 day visitors in the Achterhoek. 78% of the overnights visitors were domestic visitors and 22% foreign visitors. Most of the foreign visitors originate from Germany and Belgium (Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme, 2018). The Achterhoek has not one unique selling point but it is a combination of multiple attractive features. These features are: castles and estates, hospitality, modest and idiosyncratic, border region, local products and gastronomy, and historical cities with attractive city centres (Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme, 2017).

As defined in the theoretical framework, a tourism destination is *a combination of all products, facilities, services, and the experiences offered at the geographical location to which a person is travelling*. To analyse the characteristics of the Achterhoek as a tourism destination the six A's framework of Buhalis is used. This framework focusses on the elements: Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities, Available Packages, Activities and Ancillary Services (Buhalis, 2000). The first element of the framework is attractions. Key attractions in the Achterhoek are the landscape with its beautiful nature reserves. The nature reserves are grouped into three sub-areas: the Graafschap, Montferland and Winterswijk. The Graafschap is a small-scale landscape with authentic farms, a medieval castle and country houses surrounded by park gardens. Montferland is known for its forest that stretches over the lateral moraine. In the area of Winterswijk rare raised bogs can be found, but also picturesque streams that wind their way through the small-scale landscape (Natuurmonumenten, n.d.). Other attractions that the Achterhoek is known for are the many castles and estates such as: Castle Hackfort, Castle Vorden, Castle Wildenborch, and Huize Ruurlo. Besides this, there are two hanseatic cities which are Zuthpen and Doesburg and there is a rich heritage including 1485 national monuments (Bureau BUITEN, 2017). Special events that attract many visitors to the Achterhoek are the Zwarte Cross and the yearly flowerparades. Additionally, DRU Industriepark, Villa Mondriaan and Museum More can also be seen as key attractions (Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme, 2017).

The second element of the framework is accessibility. First of all, depending on your nationality, you might have to obtain a visa to enter the Netherlands. This visa is called a short-stay Schengen visa and allows travellers to stay for a maximum of 90 days (Kingdom of the Netherlands, n.d.). The Achterhoek does not have its own airport. This region of the Netherlands is accessible by train, bus, and car. Arriva is the main provider of bus and train transportation in the Achterhoek. Other providers involved are NS, Breng, and Keolis (Achterhoek Nieuws, 2019). Unfortunately, the current bus and train services are not optimal and many places are hard to reach with public transportation. After 8 p.m. and during the weekends public transportation usually operates only once per hour and there are no night services available (Hofs, 2019). Because of this, the best and fastest way to visit and get around in the Achterhoek is by car.

The third A of the framework is amenities. Within amenities Buhalis (2000) focusses accommodation and catering facilities, retailing, and other tourist services. Table 4.1 shows an overview of the accommodation facilities in the Achterhoek, all figures refer to the year 2015 (ZKA, 2016).

Table 4.1

Accommodation facilities Achterhoek (ZKA, 2016)

Category	Number of accommodations	Capacity
Bed & Breakfast	299	1.100 beds
Hotels	96	2.679 beds
Bungalows (incl. apartments)	1.240	Unknown
Holiday homes (not on a park)	254	2.000 beds
Mini campsites (until 25/30 places)	115	2.400 pitches
Regular campsites	78	7.100 permanent sites
Camper locations	24	100 camper places
Group accommodations	70	2.900 beds
Marinas	6	742 berths

As shown in Table 4.1, the Achterhoek offers a wide variety of accommodation facilities. There is a suitable accommodation for each type of visitor. From quiet campsites to large child friendly campsites, luxurious hotels, unique bed & breakfasts, and special accommodations such as lodge tents, sleeping barrels and gypsy wagons (Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme, 2020b). In addition to this the Achterhoek also has many different catering facilities. During Autumn and winter season many visitors come to the Achterhoek to eat game dishes, in spring it is all about asparagus. There are many different restaurants from simple and fast dinning to luxurious dinning. Other catering facilities are tea gardens, beer breweries and vineyards. The Achterhoek has approximately 20 vineyards and is therefore one of the largest wine regions in the Netherlands (Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme, 2020c). Recreational shopping, which makes use of the retail industry, mostly takes place in the city centres and at the furniture boulevard. Doetinchem, Zutphen and Winterswijk are popular municipalities when it comes to retailing (ZKA, 2016). Other tourist services in the Achterhoek are the VVV/TIP offices. These are tourist information points which tourist can visit for information about for example attractions, events and activities (VVV, 2020).

The fourth A of the framework is available packages. Sharpley (2006) points out that “a package holiday is simply defined as the pre-arranged combination of two or more components of a holiday, such as transport, accommodation and other services (for example, local sightseeing tours)” (p. 72). The website ‘Hotel in de Achterhoek’ offers packages for tourists. There are different types of packages to choose from. Examples of these packages are: cycling packages, culinary packages, cultural packages, sport packages, relaxation packages, and walking packages (Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme, 2020e). Travel packages can also be booked at travel operators such as Beleef de Achterhoek, Kras, ANWB, Bakreizen, Betuwe Express.

The fifth A of the framework is activities. According to Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme (2018) the top 10 activities for Dutch overnight tourists are walking, going out for dinner, leisure shopping, cycling, visiting a nature reserve, swimming, visiting a monument or landmark, visiting a museum, visiting the sauna, and going out. The top 5 activities for day visitors are walking, cycling, going out for dinner, swimming, and shopping (Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme, 2018). Besides the most popular activities the Achterhoek offers many different leisure activities. These activities range from museums to a play paradise and from a go-kart track to a climbing forest (Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme, 2020a). Because there is a wide range of both indoor and outdoor activities, the Achterhoek is an attractive destination to visit all year round.

Hospitality sector

As described in chapter 4.1, there are many different catering facilities in the Achterhoek. These are restaurants from simple dining to luxurious dining. Besides, there are tea gardens, beer breweries and vineyards. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis the Achterhoek wants to become a distinctive food destination where nature-inclusive is the core value. For the hospitality sector, it is important to identify those companies that already do something that is nature-inclusive since they are of value for this development. However, they can also be used to inspire others to incorporate nature-inclusive practices into their business. Examples of companies in the hospitality sector that are of differential value are (M. Steverink, personal communication, March 12, 2020):

- De Heikamp, Ruurlo
- Hotel Villa Ruimzicht, Doetinchem
- Het Keunenhuis, Winterswijk
- Op de Pol, Doetinchem
- Camping & Geitenkaas Boerderij de Brömmels
- Ijsboerderij De Steenoven, Hummelo

Firms providing gastronomic activities

The companies mentioned at the sub section hospitality sector are also examples of companies that offer gastronomic activities. De Heikamp offers a 'strooptocht' meaning that you walk past all the ingredients you need for pancakes. During the route, the chef will tell everything about the needed ingredients (Heikamp, n.d.). Het Keunenhuis offers a culinary garden where 0% waste and 100% taste stands central. It is a place where people can get inspired to make well-considered choices around nutrition. Besides this, there is a tasting room and a theatre which serves as inspiration room. Schellekens does workshops which are all centred around short food supply chains and zero waste (Schellekens, 2020). There are many more companies providing gastronomic activities. The DMO Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme made a 'smaakkaart'. The 'smaakkaart' is a map with regional producers which tourists can visit. The map includes vineyards, breweries and shops offering local products (Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme, 2020g). The map including the gastronomic companies can be found in Appendix XIV.

Specialist trade

This element analyses traditional markets, street markets, local products, delicatessens, and wine cellars. Almost all municipalities have their traditional week markets. These markets sell fruit, vegetables, cheeses, meat, flowers, clothes etc. Mons (2018) outlines that the market of Dinxperlo is the best in the Netherlands. Local products and delicatessens can often be bought at little farmer shops and specialist local product shops (Stichting Achterhoek, 2020g). Wine cellars can be found at the vineyards. Examples of vineyards with wine cellars that can be visited are Wijngaard Doetinchem, Wijngaard De Reeborghesch, and Wijngoed de Hennepe.

Venues for gastronomic education

In the Achterhoek there are not that many venues for gastronomic education. A venue that has a connection with gastronomic education is the Bees Education Center located in Vorden. The Bee Education Center offers different workshops such as 'bee-picture', recognizing bumblebees and learning about the lifestyle of a bee, what role bees have played in our history, how important they are to people and what we can do to help bees. In addition to this, they have an orchard with fruit trees, demonstration fields and flower borders with bee-friendly plants. In the garden are also bee hotels, insect walls and other bee-friendly facilities (Bijenstichting, 2019). Another venue for gastronomic education is Graafschap College. Graafschap College is a college that offers education to become a baker, chef, manager or host/hostess within the gastronomic field (Graafschap College, 2020). Lastly, Keunenhuis from Schellekens is also a venue for gastronomic education. This venue is all about 0% waste and 100% taste. The gastronomic education focusses on making well-considered choices regarding food. Short food chains, local products and no waste are central at this venue (Schellekens, 2020).

Trade fairs, festivals and gastronomic events

In the Achterhoek there are some markets that focus on selling local products. An example is the Achterhoekse Streekproducten Markt in Lieveelde. This market is at a cheese farm and in cooperation with 'Vereniging Streekproducten Achterhoek' and has grown into the largest local product event in the region. Visitors can find a combination of local products, gardens, nature, entertainment, good food, drinks and live music (Kaasboerderij Weenink, 2020). The Achterhoek has many festivals and events. Some are more gastronomic related than others but all of them have a gastronomic relation one way or another. Examples of events and festivals are de Zwarte Cross, Achterhoek Berkelland Rally, Farm & Country Fair, Reurpop, Huttenpop, Spektakel Tour and Mañana Mañana (Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme, 2020d). Every summer in the Achterhoek it is all about a cultural summer. During Cultural summer tourists can visit events related to the local culture. These events are devoted to old crafts, traditional flower parades and local products (Cultuurzomer Achterhoek, n.d.).

Research and training centres

The last element of the model is research and training centres. One of the research/training centres for food is Kenniscentrum Nelles situated in Silvolde. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the introduction, Nelles focusses on bundling knowledge and experiences about local food in the Achterhoek. They also offer advice and guidance for existing and new projects that focus on eco-gastronomy. An organisation that can also be seen as a training centre is Slow Food Achterhoek. Although this is an organisation the members of Slow Food Achterhoek are also exchanging knowledge, doing excursions and tasting sessions and are building on a future proof regional food supply together (Slow Food, n.d.). Stadsboerin Doetinchem can also be seen as a training centre. This center is an urban farming project with a vegetable garden, an orchard, a greenhouse, and a flower picking garden. They also have free-range chickens and free-range pigs that supply eggs meat and also eat the residual flows. Besides this, several workshops can be followed. Examples of these are baking bread, making sausages, cooking from the vegetable garden, and looking for edible mushrooms (Stichting Stadsboerin Doetinchem, n.d.).

4.3 Stakeholders' perception on a Nature-Inclusive Food Destination

Stakeholders are important parties which should be involved in the tourism destination development process. Without the stakeholders, there won't be a combination of products, facilities, and experiences offered at a destination. Eight different stakeholders have been interviewed in order to discover their perception on a nature-inclusive food destination. More information about the research methodology has been described in chapter 3. Each interview examined six topics of which the results can be found in the following paragraphs.

Meaning nature-inclusive

In the literature review the meaning and criteria for the core value nature-inclusive has been defined. The operationalisation of this core concept (Appendix VI) was used to examine whether the knowledge of the stakeholders corresponds to the meaning and criteria emerging from desk research. Some of the interviewees knew exactly what nature-inclusive means whereas for others the meaning was unclear. According to van R. den Broek (Interview 4) nature-inclusive means that you work with products, taking into account how nature and its production come together. Meaning that you also see the use of your products in the nature around you. R. Pelgrom (Interview 7) points out: I think that nature-inclusive is that we make optimal use of the possibilities that nature offers us to optimize our company. So, maximum application of possibilities that nature offers us, we are part of the nature. N. Wissing (Interview 6) argues that nature-inclusive means that the landscape remains beautiful and intact, it also serves the flora and fauna, but that we can also live from it. That you can reap the benefits of the landscape, that you get the natural cycle going again, that you can bring back taste sensations, and that you are aware of the region and its own products, vegetables, fruits, and nuts.

Interviewees that were not familiar with the meaning nature-inclusive said that the term is not clear or that it can mean something different to everyone. B. Massop (Interview 5) argues: I don't know if I understand it sufficiently nature-inclusive. R. Pelgrom (Interview 7) supports this by saying: I think the danger with concepts is that we all understand it, but we interpret it all differently. N. Schellekens (Interview 3) agrees with this and outlines: I find that a bit of an annoying word nature-inclusive, because it does not work with many farmers. You are simply responsible for your own area and you do not always have to look at the common. I have trouble with organisations that together paint one picture. At some point, no one feels at home anymore.

While comparing the operationalisation of the core concept (Appendix VI) with the diagram structuring of the interview codes (Appendix XII) some changes have been noticed. The meaning and criteria found in theory corresponded with the answers of the interviewees. However, some aspects mentioned by multiple interviewees were not found during the theoretical research. For the meaning of nature-inclusive the following aspects were added: 1) making use of everything nature offers, 2) using/buying local products, 3) seasonality, 4) making conscious choices, 5) people are guests in the landscape, 6) living from/eating from the environment, and 7) using the whole product. Especially the first three aspects were mentioned most by the interviewees. B. Kots (Interview 1) refers to seasonality by pointing out: one year you have a lot, the next year everything freezes. We are quite east. That is also nature-inclusive you don't always have it. K. Hensen (Interview 2) refers to seasonality and locality by stating: you have to eat from the season and from the region. R. van den Broek (Interview 4) supports this and says: one has to try the seasonal vegetables, as many varieties as possible, and that you find this back in the nature around you. Furthermore, N. Schellekens (Interview 3) claims that you have to make use of everything nature offers by stating: so, if I have walnuts I process them from head to butt. So, I use the topper for the amuse, stiffeners for the tea, the oil to make my things because I don't work with olive oil because there are no olives in the Achterhoek. I don't work with lemons because lemons don't grow in the Achterhoek.

For the criteria of nature-inclusive, the important additional aspects that came out of the interviews were: 1) positive effect on the health of people and 2) agriculture with less or no pesticides. R. van den Broek (Interview 4) argues: I think if you organize nature in such a way that it is very diverse and that you would feed all people in that area with the diverse landscape, that is good for nature but also that it is good for the people. N. Wissing (Interview 6) points out: you should not pollute groundwater, you should not use fertilisers. Soils must remain alive, there must be a balance between man and what he wants to get from the landscape. B. Kots (Interview 1) supports this by stating: we work without fertilizers, we work without pesticides. The grassland is fertilized with only the rough manure from the goat shed. That happens once a year, preferably after the season, and slowly that old-fashioned way of spreading manure is seen a bit more as normal again.

Opportunities for the development of a nature-inclusive food destination

One interviewee claims that the Achterhoek is already a food destination and that this doesn't need to be developed (N. Schellekens, Interview 3). Other interviewees did not mention that the Achterhoek is already a food destination. However, they did mention that developing a food destination is an opportunity. R. van den Broek (Interview 4) suggests: this is certainly an opportunity, because I read in one of the articles that the Achterhoek is in the top 5 of most famous regions in the Netherlands, I can imagine that. N. Wissing (Interview 6) supports this by saying: I think that this time is very favourable, also for you to tell this story. I am almost certain that, I am not saying that everyone will soon flee into the economic model again, I don't know. But something has changed in people's mindset. All day long I notice that people are talking about it, that they feel that there is a different wind blowing. R. Pelgrom (Interview 7) agrees with this and states: nowadays you see that this movement is getting very strong, people want more from the region, more from their own environment and want to support the local entrepreneurs and thus come in contact with local products and product locations. In addition to this, the development of a nature-inclusive food destination is also an opportunity to increase working and awareness for craftsmen and farmers that dare to work in a different way (B. Massop, Interview 5).

Lastly, stakeholders should work more together to make this development successful. K. Hensen (Interview 2) suggests: it is the small farmers who make something fun together and you need to have some, maybe chefs or whatever, that can take that to the next level. R. Pelgrom (Interview 7) agrees with this and expresses: you should start with the right stakeholders otherwise it will not go any further.

Points of attention

Even though all interviewees said that it is an opportunity to develop the Achterhoek as a nature-inclusive food destination they did mention several points of attention that should be taken into account in the development process. A point of attention that was mentioned by multiple interviewees are the characteristics of people in the Achterhoek. K. Hensen (Interview 2) argues: the disadvantage of the Achterhoek is that people are far too modest. Sometimes they don't realize what kind of fun things can be done and therefore they do not tackle it. N. Schellekens (Interview 3) agrees with this and says: an Achterhoeker is very modest. N. Wissing (Interview 6) also mentions this and said that therefore the story should be told in the language of the Achterhoek. Most people do not have enough understanding about the concept of nature-inclusive and have no idea what this entails. By telling the story and creating awareness, knowledge expands and more and more stakeholders are able to participate in this development. Besides this, stakeholders mentioned that the time and money investment is a point of attention as well. B. van Zijtveld (Interview 8) argues: I suspect that there is still little conversion on this development. R. Pelgrom (Interview 7) agrees with this and mentions that this is already an industry with little conversion and that stakeholders are less motivated to invest time and money in this development if there is too little conversion. Another important point of attention is the participation of stakeholders. The interviewees mentioned that they find it important that this development starts with parties that are already familiar/doing something related to nature-inclusive experiences. B. van Zijtveld (Interview 8) summarizes this by saying: you should use parties where there is traffic or where there is strength so that you have a strong starting point or pilot to start with. Which will also create an effect on others, that they want to participate as well. N. Schellekens (Interview 3) adds to this that others should be also given the opportunity to change and that everyone has the chance to participate and the space to give his or her own interpretation on nature-inclusive experiences.

Desired support

The desired support can be divided into the categories marketing & promotion, strategic plan and recognition. For marketing and promotion, the desired support is in the form of a marketing- and communication plan. K. Hensen (Interview 2) outlines: a good marketing plan must be made. Because we have it all but we do not tell it enough. He also argued that food bloggers or influencers can be used for marketing and promotion purposes. B. van Zijtveld (Interview 8) supports this by telling that the marketing and communication is still very difficult. There needs to be a good plan to attract the right target group. Another form of desired support is a strategic plan. R. van den Broek (Interview 4) states that it would be of added value to have a clear road map available where stakeholders only have to say yes or no if they would like to participate. B. van Zijtveld (Interview 8) agrees with this and says that there should be a clear plan with the contribution of different stakeholders. K. Hensen (Interview 2) adds that recognition is also very important. He suggests that a quality label or using the Achterhoekse flag can help to create more recognition.

Current nature-inclusive experiences & ideas for nature-inclusive experiences

All interviewees were asked if they offer nature-inclusive experiences or if they have ideas for experiences. Appendix XII shows an overview of the current experiences and ideas for nature-inclusive experiences. The current nature-inclusive experiences mostly relate to biking and walking. Besides this, most of the stakeholders offer an experience which is related to eating food and specifically nature-inclusive food. An example of this is a 7-course menu where you travel through the Achterhoek including matching wines coming from the Achterhoek (B. Massop, Interview 5). Another example from B. Kots (Interview 1) is that children help him to make jam from plums. They help pick the plums, clean them and make jam from it. Other ideas for nature-inclusive experiences varied from educational to sport to food. K. Hensen (Interview 2) suggests 'the Week of Achterhoek Food'. He argued that recently there was the vegetarian week and that this can be easily done with Achterhoek food as well.

4.4 Best Practices from other Food Destinations

Internationally seen there are already some famous food destinations that attract many visitors each year. Best practices that will be analysed for this research question are the food destinations Piedmont, Malmo, Bristol, and Canada's Food Island. While analysing these food destinations, there will be a closer look at the strategic planning and food experiences offered. This can be used to learn which steps are important in this development process and which experiences are appealing for visitors while visiting a food destination.

Destination: Piedmont, Italy

"Piedmont is home to some of the best food in Italy, but it's still off the radar" (Lippe-McGraw, 2018). Italy is famous because of its food and wines. Examples are drinking wine in Tuscany or eating pizza in Naples. However, the Piedmont region is a less famous food destination. Piedmont is all about taking it slow. This is the region where the 'slow food' movement was born. The inventor was Carlo Petrini and the word slow says it all. It is not only about eating slow to have a better digestion but also about how animals, fruit, vegetables, etc. should grow. Slow is the secret to enjoy food to the fullest (Lippe-McGraw, 2018). The Slow Food movement recognizes the strong connections between plate, planet, people, politics, and culture (Slow Food, 2015a) Although tourism in Piedmont is less off the radar than other Italian regions, due to the sustainable tourism development there has been a steady increase in visitor numbers over the past years. In the report of Regione Piemonte (2009) it has been argued that to attract tourists, a particular focus should be on the food & wine sector. Italy has 4.396 agricultural and food typical products with over 25 years of tradition (p. 13). The strategic programme includes steps such as offering visitors the possibility to get in contact with food and wine production, restaurants giving more visibility to local products. This can be done with open cellars, oil mills and gardens. This way visitors can discover traditions and innovative techniques which nowadays allow farms to keep a millenary culture still alive (Regione Piemonte, 2009, p. 13). To achieve this, structural changes were required such as changes from companies closely linked with the tourism sector and the system of infrastructures.

The tourism vision that had been established by Regione Piemonte (2009) for the future was: "to become a region accessible to everyone, which is worth a trip throughout the year, for pleasure, study and work, where it is possible to visit cultural and natural attractions, to attend special events, practice sports, taste delicious food and wine, purchase Made in Italy items, representing local craftsmanship and excellence, with a sustainable and socially responsible approach" (p. 51). It can be said that Piedmont has been successful in achieving its vision related to food tourism. Lonely Planet (2020) describes Piedmont as one of the most elegant regions of Italy, "a purveyor of Slow Food and fine wine, regal palazzi and an atmosphere that is superficially more François than Italiano. But dig deeper and you will discover that Piedmont has 'Made in Italy' stamped all over it" (para. 1). Famous food experiences in Piedmont are: exclusive Italian food and wine tours, traditional Piemontese cookery classes, and 'real' truffle hunts (Piedmont Food and Wine, 2017).

Destination: Malmö, Sweden

"Malmö is a sprawling, multicultural city, which can offer a surprising number of different food cultures for its size" (Renntun, n.d., para. 1). Malmö is located on Sweden's southern coastline and is the third largest city in the country with 330,00 residents. It is the most diverse city with an influx of migrants and refugees from 177 different countries, which enriches the culinary landscape of the city (Akinmade Akerstrom, 2017). Since 2010 the city of Malmö's policy for sustainable development of food has been in place and forms part of a broader drive to achieve 100% sustainable purchases by 2020 (Innocat, n.d.). Innocat (n.d.) states that the document outlines that by 2020 all food served by the City of Malmö shall be 100% organic and a 40% reduction of food-related greenhouse gases by 2020, compared to 2002 levels (p. 1).

The government of Sweden does not have a specific ministry for tourism and therefore no strategic planning available (Government Offices of Sweden, n.d.). But it can be said that the policy for the sustainable development of food has a direct influence on food tourism in the city of Malmö. The policy document states that it is relevant to those that offer catering services including public hospitality, social and leisure clubs and events arranged by the City of Malmö (Malmö Stad, 2010). To ensure that the procurement of food is better for people's health, the economy, and the environment, the S.M.A.R.T. model is introduced and should be followed as much as possible. The Smart model stands for Smaller amount of meat, Minimise intake of junk food/empty calories, An increase in organic, Right sort of meat and vegetables, and Transport efficient (Malmö Stad, 2010). Malmö Stad (2010) argues that "the farming landscape is important for recreation and for creating strong bonds between the city and the countryside" (p. 25). In future plans farming landscapes will be preserved and food production in and around the city is encouraged. Besides, initiatives such as farmers markets are encouraged to increase contact between producers and consumers (Malmö Stad, 2010). Visiting Malmö city in itself is already an experience since the entire city is about S.M.A.R.T. food. Other food experiences are seductive "no menu" food, culinary tours, Malmö Saluhall food market, and the Disgusting Food Museum (Visit Sweden, 2020).

Destination: Bristol, United Kingdom

Bristol named among the best food destinations in the World (Baker, 2019). Bristol is a city located in the Southwest of England. The city has always been in the shadow of London but since their focus on the food and beverage scene the destination attracts more and more visitors. Over the last two years Bristol has been developing tourism programmes around food and drinks with success (World Food Travel Association, n.d.). To develop as a food destination the World Food Travel Association wrote a food and beverage tourism strategy for the next five years. The plan includes strategic steps that have to be taken to develop as a food destination. The first step is a clear focus. As a destination, it is important to know what the destination's food and beverage offering is, what the area does best, what the unique assets are, and what the future potential is to attract food- and drink visitors (World Food Travel Association, n.d.). The second step is more consistency. This step is about working on a consistent food and beverage narrative across all food experiences. This can be from travel trade and cooperative marketing to product development in other niches (World Food Travel Association, n.d.). The third step is increase confidence. This step is about bringing stakeholders together. Stakeholders might not see the benefit of getting involved but you have to increase their confidence. This can be done by letting them participate in food and beverage product development and marketing activity sessions organized by the DMO (World Food Travel Association, n.d.). The last step is a unified vision. Within this step stakeholders begin to find ways to expand their food and beverage offering and start making sure that their products and services meet the wishes and needs of the visitors. This step can also lead to community inspiration to contribute to food experience development by for example organising a food event (World Food Travel Association, n.d.).

Food experiences offered in Bristol are cookery classes, chocolate workshops, tasting sessions in wine cellars, food tours, brewery, distillery or vineyard tours, world-class street food markets, and Bristol Beer Factory tap room (Destination Bristol, 2020a). In addition to this, Bristol is fast becoming recognised as the food festival Capital of the United Kingdom. Throughout the year there are many food festivals to visit around the city and in the surrounding areas. Examples of festivals are the Bristol Craft Beer Festival and Valleyfest (Destination Bristol, 2020b).

Destination: Prince Edward Island (PEI), Canada's Food Island, Canada

"Canada's food Island (PEI) is a foodie's dream" (Canada's Food Island, 2018, para. 1). Prince Edward Island is a small Island in Canada. The islands land is rich, producing plenty of fruits, meat, vegetables, and dairy products. The waters off the island are teeming with fish, oysters, mussels, lobsters and other shellfish. On this food island the fishermen and farmers are the providers of the ingredients and the award-winning chefs turn the fresh ingredients into culinary masterpieces (Canada's Food Islands, 2018). In 2011 the Tourism Advisory Council of PEI created a new strategic planning where over 150

tourism industry operators and stakeholders participated in the strategic development process (Tourism Advisory Council of PEI, 2015). While developing as a tourism destination the Island identified the demand generators. Meaning they first looked for those products that are true to the qualities of the destination. Five key demand generators were identified and one of them was culinary. After this, they looked at the strategy for product, brand, marketing, and demand (Tourism Advisory Council of PEI, 2015). The next step was to set out a strategic vision, strategic mission and strategic goal for the island. Besides this they established multiple strategic objectives. The objective related to food tourism: "Become famous in North America for PEI indigenous foods and food experiences" (Tourism Advisory Council of PEI, 2015, p. 30). To ensure success the Culinary Alliance was founded. The alliance had to ensure that multi-industry stakeholders were going to work together for mutual benefits. This partnership is seen as one of the most unique partnerships in Canada. It brings together partners from provincial and federal government, from various departments, sectors, industry associations and operators from agriculture, food services, tourism and business development, fisheries and aquaculture. The role of the alliance has been successful since they facilitated the development of innovative and sustainable food industry partnerships (Tourism Advisory Council of PEI, 2015).

The culinary experiences that are part of the strategy are the formation of the Culinary Trail, the PEI flavours branding and promotions and the Fall Flavours Festival. These strategies made sure that it would benefit the whole island across all sectors. In addition to this, the Island has a culinary brand ambassadorship which has enabled much greater market reach and brand awareness (Tourism Advisory Council of PEI, 2005). Other food experiences are deep sea fishing excursions, wineries and distilleries tours, breweries and cideries tours, and customize your own "Taste the Island" tour (Prince Edward Island Tourism, 2020).

4.5 Trends and Developments related to Food Tourism

To develop the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination, it is important to look at the current trends and developments related to food tourism. These trends and developments will be applied in the strategic programme in order to respond to the current demands of the visitors. According to Berbel-Pineda, Palacios-Florencio, Ramírez-Hurtado and Santos-Roldán (2019) "gastronomy had become one of the fundamental elements in the choice of a tourism destination (15% of tourists have, among their main motivations in choosing their tourist destination, the place's gastronomy)" (p. 1). Within the one of the aspects which is of high importance in the choice of the tourist destination is the local gastronomy. This trend is also visible in the Netherlands, 1 in 6 Dutch people already undertook a holiday in the theme of culinary activities. That the local gastronomy is important can be seen back in the top 3 culinary activities that visitors undertake; 1) eating local dishes, 2) visiting local markets with local products and 3) buying local products in a shop (Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme, 2019).

The World Food Travel Association (2020) argues that visitors want to learn more about local food and drinks while visiting a destination. Besides, locals also want to know more about their local food history and heritage (p. 28). In addition to this, teaching residents contributes to the social-cultural sustainability of the area through preservation of heritage (World Food Travel Association, 2020). Education can be done in several ways. Nowadays restaurants focus more on service and knowledge, this knowledge is then passed on to the visitors. Another example is that visitors enjoy going to local markets. These markets are great opportunities to teach visitors more about their food and drinks (World Food Travel Association, 2020). By combining travel with local food and drink, food tourism offers locals as well as visitors an authentic experience while contributing to a sustainable economy and economic development (Travel with a Challenge, n.d.).

An organisation that is committed to prevent the disappearance of local food cultures and traditions is the Slow Food organisation. Slow food believes that "food is tied to many other aspects of life, including culture, politics, agriculture and the environment. Through our food choices we can collectively influence how food is cultivated, produced and distributed, and change the world as a result" (Slow Food, 2015a,

para. 3). They envision a world in which everyone can access and enjoy food that is good for them, good for those who grow it and good for the planet (Slow Food, 2015b). The ambitions of the Slow Food organisation are in line with most of the trends and developments related to food tourism. Food tourism trends for 2020 that relate to this are for example 1) that travellers want to know the backstory of their food and beverage products. They want to know the history, how customs at the dining table evolved etc. Just serving up a meal is not enough anymore. 2) that sustainability is a concern. Travellers care about the ethics of livestock welfare, food waste, package waste etc. (Wolf, 2020).

Besides the major food tourism trends such as sustainability and local food, Table 4.3 shows other ongoing trends related to food tourism. These trends can be used as inspiration and should be taken into consideration while developing the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination.

Table 4.3

Trends related to food tourism

Trend	Explanation	Source
Sharable Elements	Picture perfect food. This is about beautiful dishes, served at stunning locations in combination with sharable experiences. This is a trend that continues to influence travellers on social media to visit a destination.	The Travel Team, 2020
Hands on Meals	This trend is about cooking classes and food tours led by locals. This experience introduces local ingredients and regional techniques which visitors won't learn while dining in a restaurant. This trend is also known as gastronomy tours.	The Travel Team, 2020
Home cooking and meal sharing	This trend is about dining at the house of a local. Visitors can experience how a family interacts while cooking and eating together. It is an authentic travel experience since visitors witness traditions surrounding food culture first-hand.	GlobalData, 2018
Street food and markets	Street food and markets have undergone substantial transformations. It is a trend again to visit those places. The reason for this is because markets allow visitors to discover different aspects of social history such as folklore and pop culture. Many markets have become must-see attractions, such as Camden Market London, Grand Bazaar Istanbul and Chatuckat Weekend Market Bangkok.	GlobalData, 2018
Active combination experiences	This trend is all about combining food with an active experience. Examples of these are culinary bike tours or food trails.	World Food Travel Association, 2020

5. Research Conclusions

In this chapter, the research results are analysed and used to answer the different research questions. A link is made between the theoretical framework, desk research and field research.

What are the characteristics of the Achterhoek as a tourism destination?

The literature review showed that it is important to first analyse a destination at the starting point of the development process. It is important to look at all the aspects that a destination currently offers for tourists. The 6 A's framework of Buhalis (2000) was used to analyse the characteristics of the Achterhoek as a tourism destination. This model analyses the attractions, accessibility, amenities, available packages, activities, and ancillary services at a tourism destination. It can be concluded that the Achterhoek has a lot to offer for different types of tourists. The main attractions are the landscape, castles and estates and the rich heritage. These distinctive features can help to establish the right profile for the Achterhoek. Unfortunately, not all places in the Achterhoek are easily accessible. The bus and train services are not optimal and it is recommended to plan a visit by car. For this reason, it can be said that the accessibility should be improved. On the other hand, the amenities such as accommodation and catering facilities are well represented. Because of the already existing wide choice in amenities this does not have to be a focus point in the development process. However, this can help to distinguish the destination from other tourism destinations. The variety in available packages as well as activities show again that the Achterhoek is a versatile destination. Popular activities are cycling, walking and visiting a museum. For the children, there is a go-kart track, a climbing forest and various play paradises. Due to the range of indoor and outdoor facilities the destination is attractive to visit all year round. Lastly, the ancillary services are a point of attention. Since the Achterhoek is a shrinking area, many facilities disappear which makes the region less attractive for tourists. Literature review concluded that tourism facilities and services determine the attractiveness of a destination. Based on this it can be said that it is important to improve this and thus further develop the tourism destination.

What food tourism products, locations and venues of differential value can be identified in the Achterhoek?

To be able to develop as a food destination it is important to analyse what the current offer related to food tourism products, locations and venues is. The World Tourism Organisation and Basque Culinary Center (2019) developed a tool which was used to analyse different elements which are of importance for a food destination. The research results identified the food offer that is present in the Achterhoek. First of all, the Achterhoek has a rich gastronomic heritage. Culinary crafts such as millers, master distillers, bakers, cheesemakers, fruit growers and beekeepers still exist in the Achterhoek. According to literature this can be seen as a unique strategic resource and therefore important in this development process. Local produce such as meat like Naegelholt are unique resources as well. Besides, the local knowledge should be persevered since it contributes to the popularity of a food destination. Based on the activities, events, festivals and markets it can be concluded that there are food related initiatives but they are not necessarily of differential value. A few initiatives are distinctive but others can be found elsewhere in the country as well. In the hospitality sector six companies of differential value were identified. Taking the size of the Achterhoek into consideration these are not that many companies. For the activities, events, festivals, markets as well as the hospitality sector it can be concluded that this is a point of attention. There should be an improvement of locations and activities that are specifically focused on the values of food in the Achterhoek resulting in a distinctive food destination. As already mentioned the local knowledge should be preserved. In the Achterhoek there are venues that focus on preserving knowledge, raising awareness and education to the new generations. Venues such as 'Stadsboerin Doetinchem' and 'Keunenhuis' are of added value. To ensure future success, developing more venues like this can contribute to a distinctive food destination. Finally, the analysis showed that there is no common value that differentiates the Achterhoek in the area of food. It can be said that everyone makes their own plan but that a shared value is missing. Having a shared value can help stakeholders to be able to differentiate themselves and to contribute to the joint development of the Achterhoek as a food destination.

What is the perception of stakeholders in the Achterhoek on a nature-inclusive food destination?

All of the stakeholders are positive about the development of the Achterhoek as a nature-inclusive food destination. First of all, the perception on nature-inclusive differs per stakeholder. The exact meaning of nature-inclusive is not clear for everyone and the stakeholders also mentioned that nature-inclusive is a difficult concept to understand for a large part of the population. From this the conclusion can be made that knowledge is an important point of attention. During the development process a clear description has to be defined for nature-inclusive which is easily understandable for any person who hears about it. The stakeholders also mentioned that this development is promising due to the ongoing trends such as buying local, taking care of the environment and having a healthy lifestyle. In addition to this, incorporating the gastronomic heritage is seen as an opportunity as well. Both the trends and the gastronomic heritage came back in the desk research as important as well, therefore these aspects are important to incorporate in the development programme. The stakeholders also mentioned different points of attention which should be taken into consideration. These points of attention are amongst others time and money investment, cooperation between stakeholders and participation of stakeholders. The wish for desired support is in the form of marketing and promotion plan, a strategic plan and recognition. Strategic planning came out as very important. The stakeholders all mentioned that they would like to have a plan with the goals and desired contribution, so that every stakeholder contributes to the same development. Overall, it can be concluded that stakeholders are positive about developing a nature-inclusive food destination. However, the points of attention should be carefully taken into consideration and the desired support is needed to make it a successful development.

What are best practices from other destinations regarding food destination development?

Desk research elaborated on destination development of four already well-known food destinations. These destinations are Piedmont, Malmö, Bristol, Prince Edward Island. Conclusions that can be drawn from the best practises are that it is important to analyse the current resources at a destination and to use these while developing as a distinctive food destination. In addition to this, creating a strategic programme helps to achieve goals faster and to determine the position of the destination on the market. Important steps that needs to be taken in the development process are the analysis of food resources, creating consistency which can be found back in all food experiences offered, bringing stakeholders together and letting them participate, and creating a unified vision. While looking at the food experiences offered at these destinations they all take into consideration the current trends and developments that are related to food tourism. From this it can be concluded that having the right offer available helps to become an attractive destination for visitors.

What are trends and developments related to food tourism?

Current trends and developments related to food tourism are local gastronomy and sustainability. Literature review and desk research already concluded that local knowledge is a unique feature that can be used in the development process. Since this is also a trend, and trends are proven to influence the popularity of a destination, incorporating this in the Achterhoek would be a logical step. The literature review on the core concept of nature-inclusive shows that this value contributes to sustainability. It can be concluded that the development of a nature-inclusive destination is in line with the trends that are related to sustainability. Because of this, a nature-inclusive food destination can be a very promising development. Stakeholders also agreed with this during the interviews as they mentioned that they noticed these trends amongst their visitors as well. Other ongoing trends in the industry that can be used as inspiration for food experiences are picture perfect food, cooking classes with locals, food tours led by locals, home cooking, street food and markets, and combining food with an active experience. Some of these trends can already be seen back in the current offer of food experiences, for example: culinary bike tours, food tours and cooking classes.

6. Discussion Validity and Reliability of the Research

This chapter discusses the validity and reliability of the research. The reliability of the research determines to which degree a research is free of random errors and the validity assesses the extent to which the research is free of systematic errors (Verhoeven, 2015). The validity is split up into construct, internal and external validity. For both topics, the strengths and weaknesses of the research are elaborated on.

6.1 Construct Validity

Construct validity is about assessing whether you measured what you intended to measure (Verhoeven, 2015). To ensure the construct validity, the core concepts of the thesis were analysed and defined using scientific literature. The scientific articles that were used were evaluated based on the AAOCC criteria in order to guarantee reliable desk research. After this, the concepts were operationalised in order to use them as a measurement instrument. The construct validity also played a role in the open interviews. For the topic nature-inclusive the definition coming from literature and the operationalisation was used to formulate questions for the interviews. For the other topics exploring and defining the concepts was the focus of attention. While reading back the transcripts the questions during the interview were sometimes not correctly formulated which effects the construct validity of the research. However, a strength is that each topic was discussed separately which has a positive effect on the construct validity. In addition to this, interview techniques such as asking follow up questions and summarizing were applied when the interviewee noticed that the question was not understood in the correct way. Overall, it can be concluded that the construct validity of this research is sufficient.

6.2 Internal Validity

Internal validity means checking if the researcher has answered the questions properly. In other words, the conclusions can be upheld and withstand the criticism of other researchers (Verhoeven, 2015). To increase the internal validity of this research the same topic list in the same order was used for each interview. During the interviews, the researcher asked open questions and the researcher ensured that their own opinion and background did not influence the research. This contributed positively to the internal validity. One aspect that decreased the internal validity was that one interview did not discuss all topics. The time period to conduct the interview was rather short and therefore not all topics were discussed and others only briefly. Planning the interview better would have avoided that not all topics were discussed. In addition to this, the internal validity was increased by selecting the right participants. In this research, interviewees were not randomly selected. They have been chosen based on their knowledge and expertise in different industries. The findings of the different interviews were compared and analysed to see if the opinions of the different interviewees also counted beyond the group itself. The interview analysis showed that the stakeholders broadly share the same opinion, meaning that the internal validity was not jeopardized. To conclude, a high internal validity was ensured for this research.

6.3 External Validity

External validity is related to the generalization of the research. For qualitative research generalization has a different place than in quantitative research. For qualitative research, it involves comparable situations and not extrapolating quantitatively, to a population (Verhoeven, 2015). This is also called theoretical generalization, in other words: to what extent do the conclusions apply to similar situations (Verhoeven, 2015). In this research, the perception of the stakeholders on a nature-inclusive destination is paramount. Kenniscentrum Nelles wants to know more about this topic to be able to incorporate the interview results into the advice. The external validity for this research is low since the results are not generalizable. This is because of the fact that the results are specifically for the client and the Achterhoek.

6.4 Reliability

The reliability of a research is determined by the extent to which a research is free of random errors. A reliable research means that if you carry out the research under different circumstances, and at some other point in time, that it leads to the same results (Verhoeven, 2015). The reliability of qualitative research is hard to measure because the criteria is less obvious. The reason for this is that there is much debate about the scope and application of the criteria, and because various yardsticks apply to qualitative research (Verhoeven, 2015). To enhance the reliability of this research, the following criteria has been applied: 1) Triangulation. This means that you check if the research results are the same if you use another method (Verhoeven, 2015). Literature research, secondary qualitative analysis and open interview were used during this research. The findings of the desk research were checked during the open interviews. Because multiple research methods have been used, the reliability of the research has increased. 2) Peer feedback. Peer feedback means that you ask someone else to check the results and read through the findings (Verhoeven, 2015). During the thesis semester, feedback was given by the client, colleague's students and friends several times. This feedback was then incorporated, which increases the reliability of the research. 3) Recoding equipment (Verhoeven, 2015). To ensure that all interviews could be written out in a transcript the interviews were recorded. Other researchers can listen to the recordings and check the transcripts which increases the reliability. 4) Reporting and justification. Keeping a logbook means that you make notes of all your decisions, the progress, changes that were made, things that went wrong etc (Verhoeven, 2015). During the research, comments of the client were noted in a small logbook. A weakness is that this was not done consistently and therefore when repeating the research, the same problems might occur again which does not improve the reliability of the results next time. Overall, it can be concluded that the reliability of the research is high.

7. Advice

This chapter focusses on providing appropriate advice to Kenniscentrum Nelles and the related management problem. It starts with the different advice options and the evaluation of the advice options based on set criteria. After this, the elements of the strategic food destination development programme are discussed and the implementation plan is further elaborated on. Next, the financial implications of the strategic plan are described. Finally, in the conclusion the management question *‘How can Kenniscentrum Nelles contribute to the development of the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination where nature-inclusive is the core value?’* is answered.

7.1 Advice Options

The objective of the advice is *to create a strategic food destination development programme which can be executed by Platform Achterhoek Food and Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme in order to develop the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination. This programme elaborates on the steps that need to be taken and the contribution of the stakeholders involved.* Literature review concluded that there are two phases that need to be completed to create a strategic food destination development programme. Phase 1: the analysis and diagnosis of the initial situation and phase 2: the drafting of the strategy. The analysis and diagnosis of the initial situation was elaborated on during the desk and field research. The second phase, the creation of the strategic programme is the main focus of the advice. According to the literature review and the operationalisation the following elements should be included in a strategic food destination development programme: 1) vision, 2) mission, 3) desired gastronomy tourism model, 4) values, 5) challenges and strategic goals, and 6) competitive strategies. In addition to this, the stakeholders’ contribution to the strategic programme needs to be elaborated on. The alternative advice options focus on which stakeholders should be involved in the development of a nature-inclusive food destination. The advice options are the results coming from the interviews as well as from best practises from other destinations regarding food destination development.

7.1.1 Advice Option 1

Only stakeholders that already contribute to nature-inclusive experiences in the tourism industry will be involved in the development process.

For this advice option, the strategic food destination development programme focusses on involving the stakeholders that already contribute to nature-inclusive practises. The steps that need to be taken and the explanation of who can contribute to what activity only concentrates on stakeholders who already offer food experiences in the tourism industry. Field research revealed that the focus of the development programme should be on involving stakeholders that already do this in their business. By implementing this it can be ensured that the development starts strong and that the involved stakeholders know what they are doing. In addition to this, they already have knowledge about the meaning of nature-inclusive and how this can be combined with tourism experiences. The interviews revealed that stakeholders see it as an opportunity to start with the strong parties first. By starting strongly, they think that other stakeholders want to join later because they also see a revenue model in this and would like to contribute as well.

7.1.2 Advice Option 2

A mixture of stakeholders, from various economic sectors, will be involved in the development process.

This advice option concentrates on the involvement of all kind of stakeholders in the strategic food destination development programme. The steps that need to be taken and the needed contribution to various activities concentrates on the involvement of stakeholders from different policy fields, organisations and companies. The reason for this is that the food destination development process goes further than only using the already existing experiences. The research results from the development process of other food destinations showed that the development is successful when a mixture of stakeholders is involved. The success of Canada’s Food Island for example was ensured by letting

multi-industry stakeholders work together for mutual benefits. Stakeholders involved were from the provincial and federal government, agriculture industry, tourism industry, food and beverage industry, fisheries, and aquaculture. The same counted for Bristol, stakeholders from the tourism industry but also other niches were brought together in order to let them participate in the development process. This leads to new and innovative ideas according to the wishes and needs of the visitors. According to literature, *A food destination offers experiences based on the concept of knowing, learning, eating, tasting and enjoying the culinary identity. The local knowledge, destination's DNA, landscapes, culture, products, techniques and dishes can be seen as unique strategic resources and are the foundation of tourism experiences offered at the food destination.* This definition emphasizes which resources are part of the foundation of experiences offered at a tourism destination. These resources do not only involve stakeholders from the tourism industry but are related to stakeholders from other economic sectors. During the interviews, it was said that everyone should have a chance to participate and contribute to this development. Because of these reasons, the development process should be in the hands of various stakeholders coming from different economic sectors in order to develop a distinctive food destination.

7.2 Comparison and Evaluation of Advice Options

In order to recommend the best possible advice option, it is important to weigh up the options according to a number of set criteria. By doing this, it is ensured that client is advised on the best option. The criteria have been drawn up based on the wishes of the client and the operationalisation of the core concepts. This has led to the following criteria:

Criteria 1 - Leading to new innovative experiences: the strategic food destination development programme has to include new innovative experiences to distinguish the destination.

Criteria 2 - Cooperation between stakeholders: more cooperation is needed between stakeholders from different economic sectors in order to become an international distinctive food destination.

Criteria 3 - Contribution to the vision of the Achterhoek: 'In 2030 the Achterhoek is known as the Italy of North-West Europe'.

Criteria 4 - Organisational feasibility: is there sufficient expertise, organizational competence, and resources to successfully execute the strategic programme.

To compare and assess the advice options, a five-point scale was used, the ranking was as follows:

1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = good, 5 = excellent

For the client, it is important that the strategic programme leads to new innovative ideas and that it contributes to the vision of the Achterhoek. For this reason, these criteria have been given a weighting factor of 2. Table 7.1 shows the assessment of the advice options using the criteria that has been set.

Table 7.1

Assessment of the advice options

Criteria	Factor	Option 1		Option 2	
		Score	Total	Score	Total
1. Leading to new innovative experiences	2	3	6 (2*3)	4	8 (2*4)
2. Cooperation between stakeholder	1	2	2	5	5
3. Contribution to vision of the Achterhoek	2	4	8 (2*4)	5	10 (2*5)
4. Organisational feasibility	1	5	5	3	3
	6	21 / 6 =		26 / 6 =	
Total score		3.5		4.3	

Looking at Table 7.1, there is a difference in the scoring for the different options. The following paragraph substantiates on the assessment of the advice options.

Option 1 - Only stakeholders that already contribute to nature-inclusive experiences in the tourism industry will be involved in the development process. The first criteria, leading to new innovative experiences, scored a six (weighting factor 2). It can be said that these stakeholders already offer nature-inclusive experiences. Some might be more innovative than others already. Depending on the willingness of the stakeholders they might change their current offer but they might just keep offering what they already offer. Involvement of these stakeholders does not mean that this will lead to new innovative experiences in the future. The second criteria, cooperation, scored a two. By choosing stakeholders who are already working on this, cooperation is not fostered. This option focusses on stakeholders that are active in the tourism industry and therefore does not include other economic sectors. To develop a destination successfully one should look further than just the tourism industry and cooperation with other sectors should be stimulated. The next criteria, contribution to the vision, scored an eight (weighting factor 2). These stakeholders know what they are doing and their nature-inclusive experiences contribute to the vision of the Achterhoek. However, since the group is relatively small it cannot be ensured that entire Achterhoek will become known as 'the Italy of North-West Europe by 2030'. The fourth criteria, the organisation feasibility, scored a five. These stakeholders have sufficient expertise and resources available to be involved in the strategic programme. In addition to this, it can be assumed that the organisational competence is sufficient to successfully execute the strategic programme.

Option 2 - A mixture of stakeholders, from various economic sectors, will be involved in the development process. The first criteria, leading to new innovative experiences, scored an eight (weighting factor 2). Including a mixture of stakeholders coming from various economic sectors contributes positively to create new innovative experiences. By doing this, ideas from all different kinds of persons can be brought together. Out-of-the-box thinking can positively contribute to the development of experiences. In addition to this, most of these stakeholders do not offer any experiences yet. Because of this, there is more room to implement new innovative experiences. The second criteria, cooperation, scored five. This criterion, is all about the cooperation between the stakeholder in different economic sectors. Literature review has already revealed that cooperation between sectors contributes successfully to becoming a distinctive food destination. The more stakeholders work together, the more variety in experiences can be offered. This also leads to the scoring of the next criteria, the contribution to the vision which scored a ten (weighting factor 2). To achieve the vision: 'In 2030 the Achterhoek is known as the Italy of North-West Europe' it is important that the entire destination is known for food. The last criteria, the organisation feasibility, scored a three. The reason for this is that the knowledge of these stakeholders on creating experiences, nature-inclusive and tourism needs investment. Besides, the organisational competence is less sufficient if various economic sectors are involved in the execution of the strategic programme.

As shown in Table 7.1, the assessment of the advice options, the total score of the advice options is different. Both options show that there are pros and cons. Advice option 1 scored an average of 3.5 and advice option 2 scored an average of 4.3. The second option is the best option and a total of average score of 4.3 means that this option is between good and excellent on the five-point scale.

As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter the objective of the advice is to create a strategic food destination development programme. Desk and field research elaborated on the elements that are part of the strategic programme whereas the alternative advice options concluded which stakeholders should be involved in the development process. The best possible advice option concluded that Kenniscentrum Nelles should involve a mixture of stakeholders, from various economic sectors, in the development process in order to become an internal distinctive food destination. The next sub-chapter elaborates on the different elements of the strategic food destination development programme including all steps that need to be taken and the expected contribution from the stakeholders involved.

7.3 Strategic Food Destination Development Programme

Desk and field research has shown that the Achterhoek possess all assets to develop itself as an international distinctive food destination. According to the current trends and developments in the tourism industry the interest of tourists in the origin of food, drinks and local products related to this are expected to gain more and more popularity in the coming years. Tourists are looking for authentic, as well as sustainable experiences to undertake during their holidays (Businesswire, 2019). The Achterhoek responds to this by developing the destination into an international distinctive food destination where nature-inclusive is the core value. Nature-inclusive means that a product or a service has an added value for the nature, for example: it has a positive effect on the soil, biodiversity and the landscape. Besides this, the availability of the products is depended on the season. In addition to legislation, food production pays special attention to: agriculture with fewer or no pesticides, flower-field margins, herb-rich grassland for meadow birds, and free-range chickens (M. Steverink, personal communication, March 27, 2020). Moreover, food can be seen as a connector between the economy, tourism, recreation, housing, nature, landscape, culture, health, and education. By focusing on the development as a food destination, the Achterhoek hopes to become an attractive and vital region in the Netherlands.

Literature revealed the following definition of a food destination: *a food destination offers experiences based on the concept of knowing, learning, eating, tasting and enjoying the culinary identity. The local knowledge, destination's DNA, landscapes, culture, products, techniques and dishes can be seen as unique strategic resources and are the foundation of tourism experiences offered at the food destination.* In order to actually become a food destination, activities as well as products and experiences related to food have to be developed. Besides, awareness needs to be raised about the opportunities amongst residents and stakeholders. Knowledge needs to be spread on what a nature-inclusive destination means and a marketing plan will have to be created to promote the food destination and to attract the right target group. To conclude, this development requires conscious policy and coordination between stakeholders involved.

This strategic food destination development programme is especially created for the Achterhoek to become an international distinctive food destination where nature-inclusive is the core value. The programme elaborates on various elements of the model designed by the World Tourism Organisation and Basque Culinary Center for drafting a strategic plan to become a gastronomic destination. First of all, the vision, mission and desired gastronomy tourism model are further elaborated on. After this, the core value nature-inclusive is explained in more detail and the challenges as well as strategic goals are discussed. The last element focusses on the competitive strategies. This element discusses the steps that need to be taken and the expected contribution of the stakeholders, from multiple economic sectors, involved. In addition to this, the different elements are placed into the PDCA cycle to help with the implementation of the strategic food destination development programme. Finally, the financial implications related to the execution of this strategic plan are discussed.

The basis of this strategic food destination development programme results from literature review and an internal and external analysis of the Achterhoek as a tourism destination as well as a potential food destination. For the internal analysis, the current DNA was investigated and food resources of differential value were identified. Besides, stakeholders were interviewed to learn more about their perception on a nature-inclusive food destination. The value nature-inclusive was further analysed with the help of academic sources in the literature review. For the external analysis, best practises from other food destination regarding food destination development were examined and ongoing trends and developments related to food tourism were researched. The theory, as well as the internal and external analyses ensure a strong starting point to create this strategic food destination development programme. The programme focusses on the involvement of multiple stakeholders in various economic sectors to ensure that the entire Achterhoek will become a food destination.

7.3.1 Vision, Mission and Desired Gastronomy Tourism Model

Figure 7.1 summarises the vision, mission and values for the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination. The vision is as follows: 'in 2030, the Achterhoek is known as the Italy of North-West Europe'. Research identified that the Achterhoek possess all assets to profile the destination as the Italy of North-West Europe. The region is one of the largest wine regions in the Netherlands with award-winning wines of excellent quality. Besides, their local food products such as Naegelholt and ham from pork meat are as good as the Parma ham from Italy. The mission is: 'to create an international distinctive food destination where nature-inclusive working, living and eating is the new normal'. The development as a food destination should not only be seen back in the tourism industry but in the entire region of the Achterhoek. Food is used as a connection between all sectors. Nature-inclusive will be seen back in the way of working, living as well as eating in the Achterhoek. The values of the destination are centred around nature-inclusive. Sub-chapter 7.3.2 elaborates on the meaning of core value nature-inclusive.

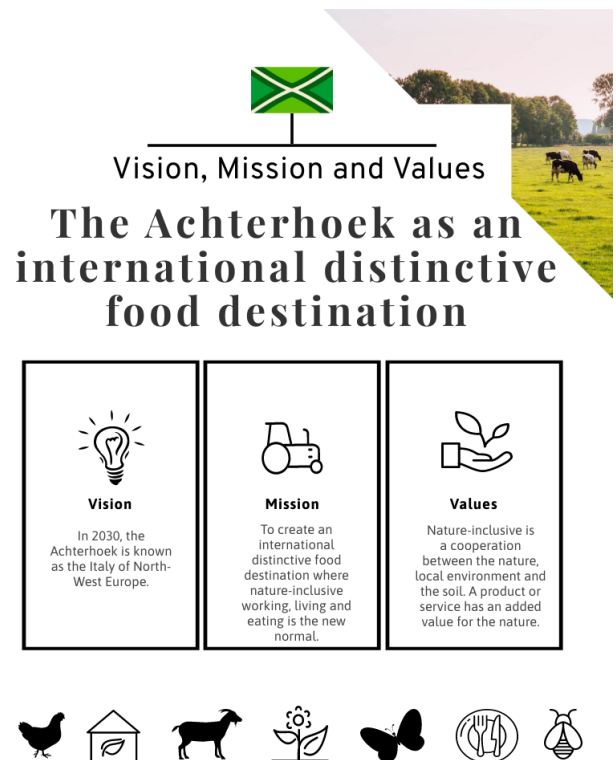


Figure 7.1 Vision, Mission and Values

Desired gastronomy tourism model

If the mission is achieved, and with that the vision, the Achterhoek is known as the Italy of North-West Europe in 2030. In 2030, the main focus of the destination is offering nature-inclusive food experiences in the tourism industry. Besides, the Achterhoek is an attractive and vital region where nature-inclusive working, living and eating is normal. The following reviews (see Figure 7.2) on TripAdvisor and Booking.com reflect how stakeholders have responded to the provision of nature-inclusive experiences in 2030.

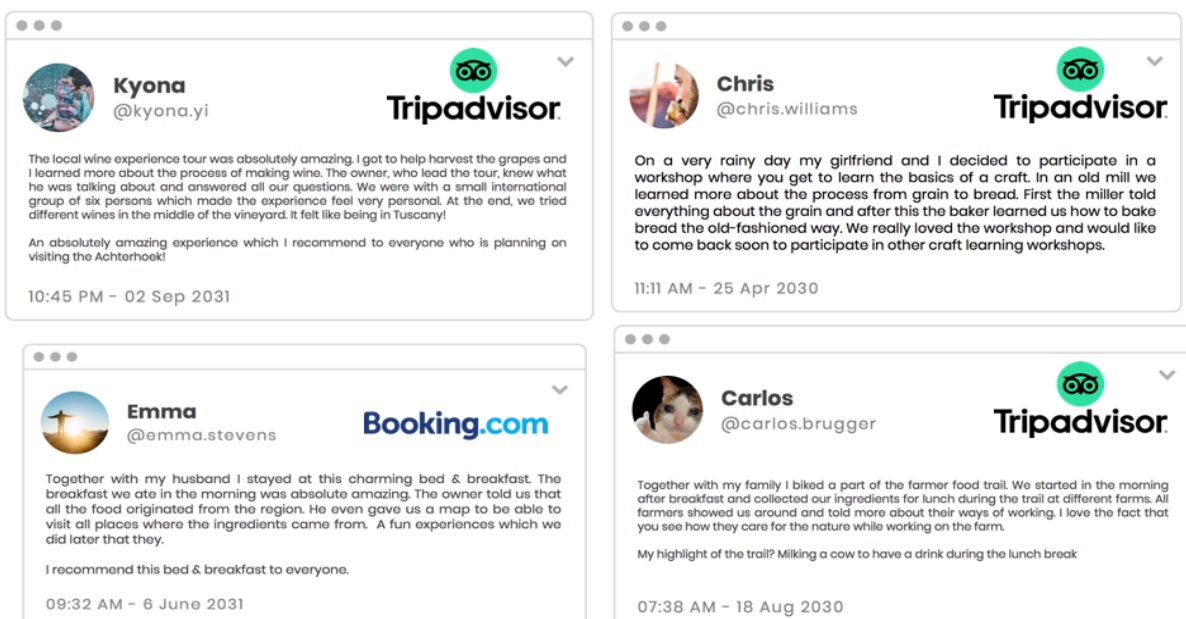


Figure 7.2 Reviews nature-inclusive tourism experiences in the Achterhoek in 2030

7.3.2 Values of Nature-inclusive

The values of the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination are centred around the core value nature-inclusive. Figure 7.1 already summarised this by stating: 'nature-inclusive is a cooperation between the nature, local environment and the soil. A product or service has an added value for the nature'. With the help of academic sources and personal communication with M. Steverink the core value is further analysed and the following explanation describes this in more details and what this means for the future food experiences offered in the Achterhoek.

According to the literature review, the core value nature-inclusive means that a product or service has an added value for nature. This could include a positive effect on the soil, ground water, biodiversity and the landscape. Less poison is used and the soil is not contaminated. More butterflies, bees, flora and fauna are a positive result from this. The food that is produced takes care of this by, in addition to legislation, paying extra attention to, for example:

- Cows in the pasture, where there is also room for meadow birds
- Meat cattle that maintain nature through grazing
- Pigs in the landscape
- Free range chickens
- Agriculture with fewer or no pesticides (organic)
- Flowery field margins along grain fields or market gardens
- Restore planting of hedges and landscape elements
- Less or no fertilizer (climate and soil)
- Energy neutral
- Herb-rich grassland for meadow birds
- Cut grass later in order to let meadow birds breed
- Buying/using local products
- Using the entire product

Food that is produced with an added value of nature-inclusive also fits well with products and services that stakeholders offer as a total package where nature, landscape and the soil play a role. The ultimate goal is to link the positive values that nature-inclusive has on the landscape, nature, soil, groundwater, and biodiversity to nature-inclusive tourism experiences. Meaning that nature-inclusive food production will be sold as an experience or as part of an experience.

7.3.3 Challenges and Strategic Goals

During the field research interviews were conducted to discover the perception of stakeholders on a nature-inclusive food destination. Interviewees were asked what they think are points of attention during this development process. Certain points of attention were seen as challenges by the interviewees. According to the interviewed stakeholders the main challenges (see Figure 7.3) during this process are: 1) cooperation between stakeholders, 2) knowledge, 3) time investment, 4) money investment, and 5) the characteristics of people in the Achterhoek. The stakeholders are worried that the cooperation between certain stakeholders might be difficult. In addition to this, not all stakeholders have enough knowledge about this topic to be able to contribute to the development. Besides, it might be necessary to convince stakeholders to invest their time and money. Their characteristics such as modesty might get in the way. These challenges should therefore have to be taken into account in the strategic food destination development programme.

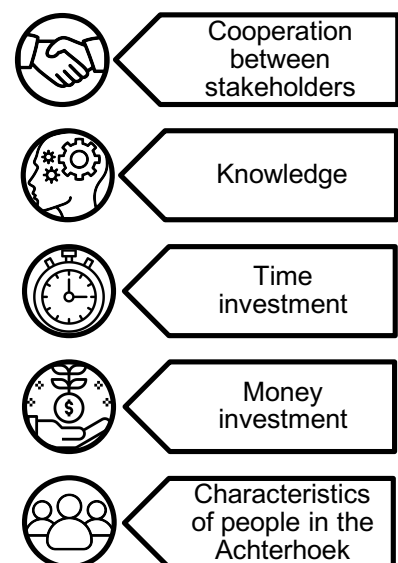


Figure 7.3 Challenges

Within strategic planning, it is important to set strategic goals. According to Schreiner (2017) “strategic goals are goals created to identify the intended accomplishments of a business strategy” (para. 2). The goals, as formulated in Figure 7.4, identify the intended results of the strategic food destination development programme. The strategic goals are based on the results of the desk and field research. The first goal: an increase in the number of tourists coming for food related experiences is the desired result of this development. Trends showed that food tourism is expected to grow in the coming years. This in combination with the development as a food destination should lead to more food tourism in the Achterhoek. The third goal: create and launch new innovative experiences relates to the first goal. Best practises from other food destinations revealed that part of the success is related to the creation of new and innovative food experiences. Innovative ideas also help to distinguish the destination from other food destinations.



Figure 7.4 Strategic Goals

The goals related to cooperation and learning, goal two and six, are based on the challenges mentioned above. Besides this, it is important to strengthen the profile as a nature-inclusive food destination by means of different campaigns which is where the fourth goal concentrates on. The stakeholders that were interviewed mentioned that a good marketing and promotion plan is a key element to become a successful and well-known food destination. K. Hensen (Interview 2) argues that food bloggers or influencers should be incorporated in the marketing and promotion plan to make this development a success. Goal five concentrates on the two aspects, offering promotional budget and offering subsidy schemes. The promotional budget is related to the fourth goal, strengthening the profile of the destination, without a promotional budget, campaigns cannot be executed. The second aspect, offering subsidy schemes, is needed to stimulate participation of stakeholders and to create innovative experiences to create a distinctive food destination.

7.3.4 Competitive strategies

The competitive strategies are a plan of action which should be executed to gain competitive advantage and with that become an international distinctive food destination. The competitive strategies for the Achterhoek focusses on two steps that need to be taken. The first step is to create internal support and the second step is to take advantage of the opportunity to develop as a food destination.

Step 1 – Creating internal support

This step means that it is important made sure that support and approval is given for plans and decisions in advance. For the development of the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination all municipalities in the region and the province are part of this plan and with that have influences on the development process. Each municipality has different policy areas which they have to manage and these policy areas can have a stimulating or restrictive effect to reach the goal of becoming a distinctive food destination where nature-inclusive is the core value. Based on the policy areas from the municipality of Doetinchem (Gemeente Doetinchem, 2019) and Winterswijk (Gemeente Winterswijk, 2019), the following six policy areas are further explained on the stimulating or restrictive effects that policy areas can have: 1) spatial development, nature and landscape 2) art, culture and heritage, 3) leisure economy, 4) education, and 5) economy.

1. Policy area: spatial development, nature and landscape

This policy area includes rural development, (national) landscape, agriculture, and nature. If the policy does not provide room for innovative activities, this could cause nuisance in the process. For example, a company would like to start a small self-sufficient campsite with sustainable lodges but the policy does not allow this then this could hinder the development process. On the other hand, being a bit more flexible and providing room for nature-inclusive innovative activities would have a stimulating effect.

2. Policy area: art, culture and history

The Achterhoek has many cultural and gastronomic heritage potentials that can be used in the development process. However, if the policy does not focus on food projects related to this then this gives a fragmented picture. If all policies in the different municipalities are not willing to focus on projects specifically for this development then this is hindering the desired profile. Precisely because there is so much, attention should also be paid to this. This contributes to strengthening the image as a nature-inclusive food destination.

3. Policy area: leisure economy

The policy should stimulate and provide inspiration for activities that are related to the core value nature-inclusive. Besides, the policy should also focus on increasing knowledge on the core value nature-inclusive. By doing this, the same picture is sketched everywhere, instead of only focussing on projects that are of interest for the municipality only. It is an opportunity to draw attention to nature-inclusive tourism experiences and to ensure that other tourism stakeholders will incorporate this in their business as well. It can also be a hindrance if there are stakeholders who do not want to contribute to this.

4. Policy area: education

Education looks at different types of education, namely: MBO institutions, HBO institutions, primary school, and high school. Firstly, sustainability is not structurally offered at MBO-institutions (Lenferink, 2018). This has a limiting effect on the developments because the new generation is not being trained to contribute to the way of working for a generation where nature-inclusive is the core value. Offering lessons about nature-inclusive food at primary and high school can have a stimulating effect on the development of the destination. By creating awareness at a young age, they are already familiar with nature-inclusive food and what this means for the destination and are able to contribute to this better in the future. Lastly, it can be stimulating to work with students from MBO and HBO institutions. These students can often think innovatively which can contribute to the development of distinctive food experiences.

5. Policy area: economy

If the economic policy has not drawn up a profile for companies that would like to establish themselves in the Achterhoek, this means that a wide variety of companies can come and do business in the Achterhoek. This could be a hindrance in the process. This means that not everyone radiates the desired profile and it does not necessarily lead to new businesses that contribute to the development of a nature-inclusive destination. Setting up a profile can actually stimulate the development process in the Achterhoek. By focussing on attracting companies that contribute to this profile, a distinctive destination can be established. The fifth strategic goal, subsidies schemes, also relates to the policy area economy. The policy could have a stimulating effect by accelerating the implementation of changes and investments by companies. There are already, for example, subsidy schemes for sustainable energy and the laying of solar panels, but this could be extended further to subsidy schemes for nature-inclusive innovations.

As already mentioned the province, as well as the municipalities all have their own policies in the various policy fields. Within one municipality it is often already difficult to cooperate within the various policy fields. For the development of the Achterhoek 11 municipalities and the province are involved which makes the process even more complex. Creating internal support for this development is therefore a crucial activity. Good coordination must be achieved in order to use all policy domains optimally and to

stimulate cooperation for the common goal: an international distinctive food destination where nature-inclusive is the core value. Hospers also emphasizes the importance of municipal policies. He explains that at a destination it should not only be about attracting new residents and companies. There should also be a focus on concrete actions that benefits the target groups, such as good childcare, opportunities for business expansions and simple procedures for starters (Adformatie, 2009).

To ensure that the goal is achieved and that the policy fields cooperate with each other but also stimulate the right activities to become a food destination it is recommended to create a *food destination manifest*. The best practise of Malmö had a similar approach by creating a policy document, which included various stakeholder, and the introduction of the S.M.A.R.T. model which has to be follow by everyone involved (Malmö Stad, 2010). A food destination manifest can be introduced as a transparent, public document which elaborates on the joint focus points. The manifest can be signed by aldermen and municipal officials from all twelve parties and means that they support the content and commit to contribute as much as possible to the realisation of the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination (M. Steverink, personal communication, June 8, 2020). Since this a public document the manifest can also be signed by other interested stakeholders. This means that they, too, will make an effort to achieve the goal. The contribution can vary from, for example, carrying out a nature-inclusive food experience or being involved in the development of nature-inclusive food experiences.

Step 2 – take advantage of the opportunity to develop as a food destination

When internal support has been created, it is time to convert the opportunity of becoming a food destination into reality. In this step, it is important to continuously strengthen the profile as a food destination and to innovate food experiences with the aim of achieving the strategic goals (see figure 7.4). To put the region on the map as ‘the Italy of North-West Europe’ and to create international exposure, a good marketing plan is needed. Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme can contribute to the development of this plan. In addition to this, there are multiple stakeholders in various economic sectors who can contribute as well.

The following figures, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, and 7.8, show examples of nature-inclusive food experiences and activities that can be developed in the Achterhoek in the categories farmers, vineyards, culture, art and heritage, and food and beverage. The first example in figure 7.5, focusses on sharing knowledge, since this came out of the research as one of the attention points. The other examples are based on trends and developments as well as best practises researched in this thesis. Based on this, possible nature-inclusive experiences are tailor-made for the Achterhoek. Most examples involve more than one stakeholder which enhances the cooperation between stakeholders from various economic sectors. These examples can be used as inspiration for stakeholders that would like to contribute to this development. In addition to this, a suggestion is given which stakeholders/organisation could be approached for the execution of the experiences (M. Steverink, personal communication, June 8, 2020).

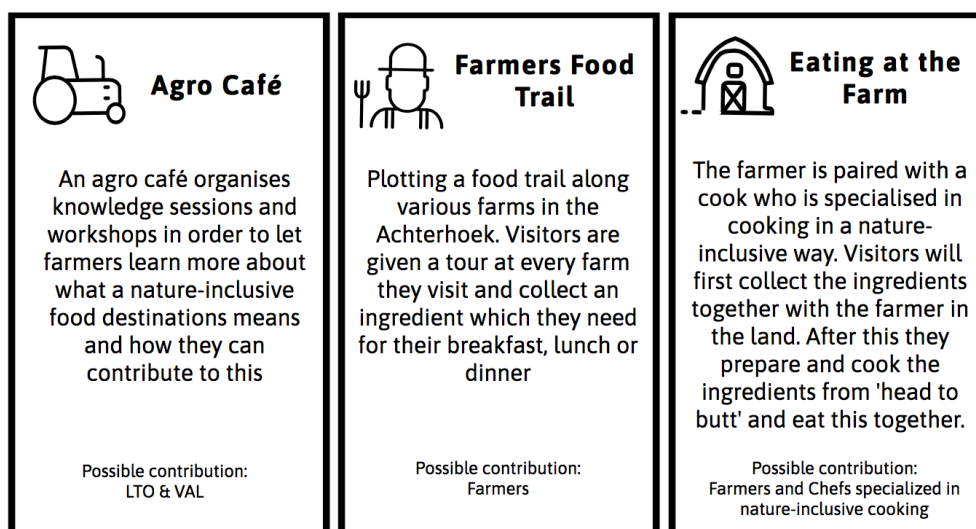


Figure 7.5 Examples of nature-inclusive food experiences farmers

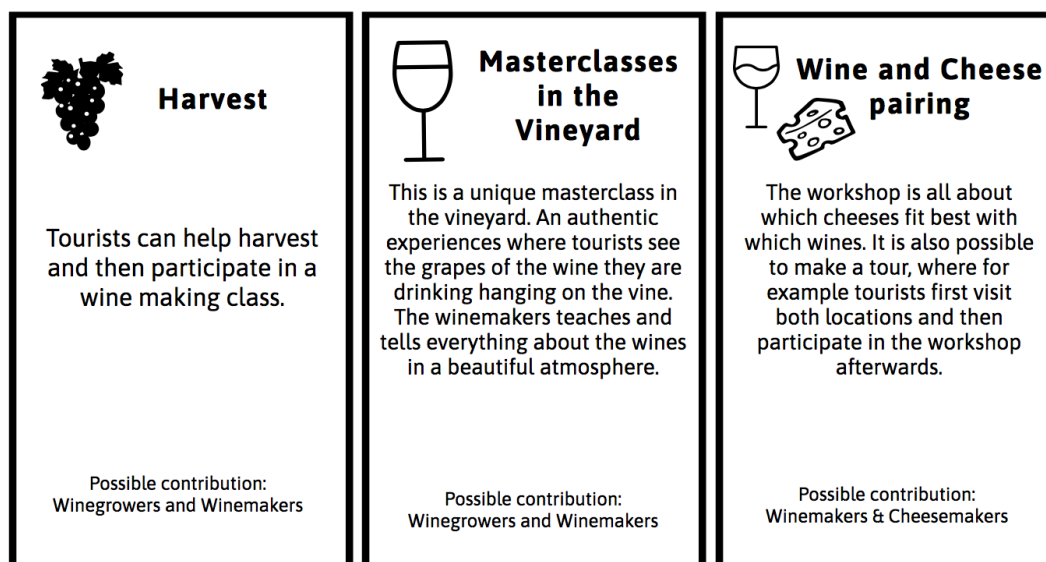


Figure 7.6 Examples of nature-inclusive food experiences vineyards

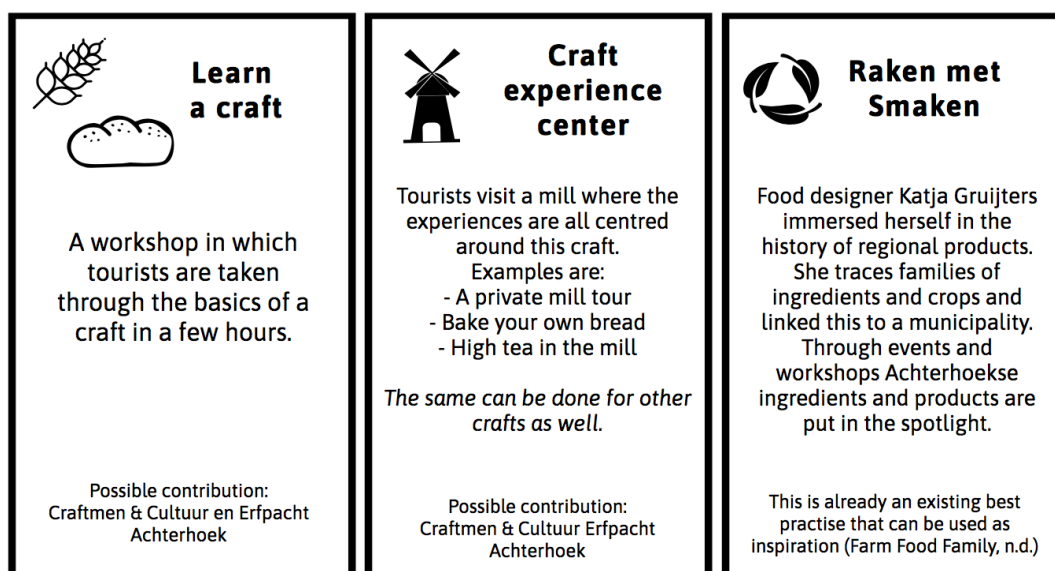


Figure 7.7 Examples of nature-inclusive food experiences culture, art and heritage

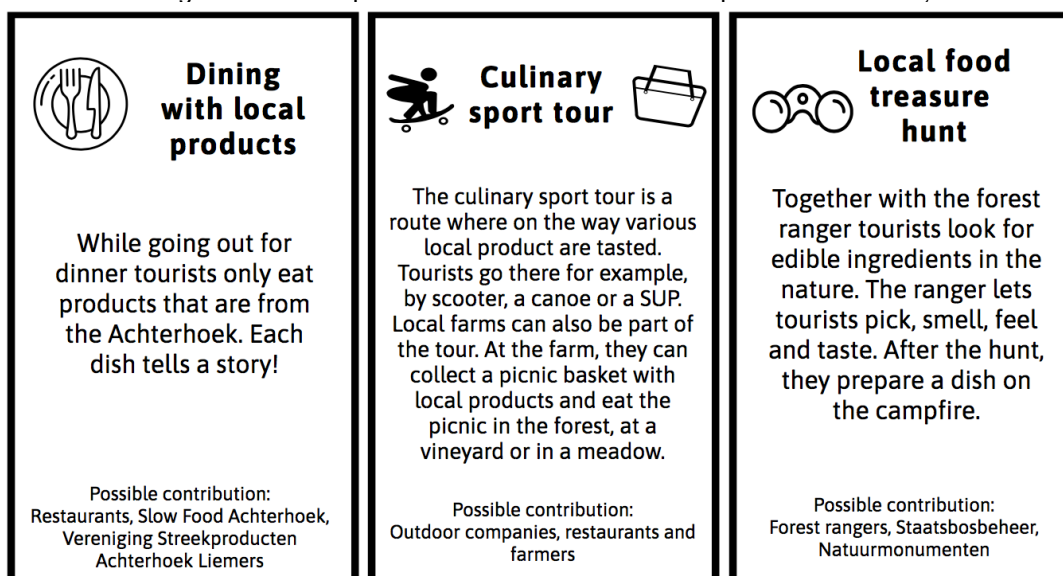


Figure 7.8 Examples of nature-inclusive food experiences food and beverage

7.4 Implementation of the Advice

The PDCA cycle is a four step-model for implementing changes. This model can be used for starting a new improvement projects, developing new or improved designs, defining a repetitive work process, planning data collection and analysis, implementing any change, and for working towards continuous improvement (ASQ, 2020). For the strategic food destination development programme the cycle is used for the implementation of a new project, becoming an international distinctive food destination. The cycle, as shown in figure 7.9, follows four procedures: plan, do, check, and act. It is repeated again and again for continuous improvement and has no end. Step one means recognizing an opportunity and planning a change. In step two the change is tested and during step three, check, the changes are reviewed and analysed. In step four, adjustments and improvements are made where needed (ASQ, 2020). The PDCA cycle is further discussed for execution of the strategic food destination programme.

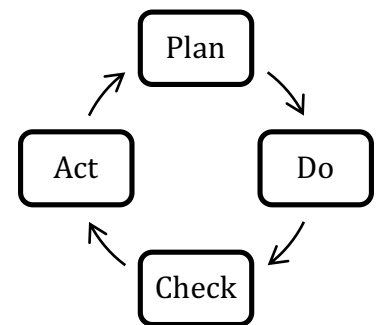


Figure 7.9 PDCA cycle

Plan

During the field and desk research, it was discovered that the development of the Achterhoek as an international distinctive food destination is an opportunity. To develop this, a plan in the form of a strategic food destination development programme is needed. The vision, mission, values, challenges, and strategic goals are fixed components in the strategic programme. However, the competitive strategies are not fixed and can be seen as the changes that need to be implemented to become a food destination. Secondary data on best practices and food trends and development were analysed. Additionally, interviews were conducted to come up with the competitive strategies. In the coming years, in the plan phase ideas should be created that contribute to the development of a food destination. Every year trends and developments should be researched and taken into consideration as well. During this research, it took 20 weeks to establish the competitive strategies. While repeating the cycle, this phase is expected to last approximately 10 weeks. This is because the fixed components of the plan remain the same, only the competitive strategies change. During these 10 weeks, the main focus is on researching trends and developments and translating these into competitive strategies for the Achterhoek. In addition to this, Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme and platform Achterhoek Food need to look at who can contribute to which development and try to involve more and more stakeholders in this development. This needs to be done in order to ensure that stakeholders from different sectors work together towards the same goal.

Do

In the do phase, the strategic food destination development plan has to be executed by Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme and platform Achterhoek Food. The first step of the do phase is the creation of internal support. It is hard to determine how long this phase will last since this involves eleven municipalities and the province. The second step, converting the opportunity into action is a continuous process of developing new activities and experiences. It can be recommended that connecting different stakeholders and brainstorming sessions for the creation of new food experiences are done during off season (November through March). The execution of the food experiences mainly take place during shoulder and peak season (April through September). The most crucial step is to first create internal support and design a food destination manifest. This step should be started as soon as possible. After this, it is important to connect the stakeholders that can work together and encourage participation in this development process. In addition to this, it is important that Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme starts making a marketing plan. For the marketing plan, further research is needed on which tourists the Achterhoek should attract and what the objective of the message should be. Finally, the invented food experiences will be executed in the do phase as well. As said this will mainly be in shoulder and peak season but depending on the type of activity this could be done all year round.

Check

The check phase focuses on the monitoring and evaluation. This phase checks if the implementation of the strategic food destination development programme is successful. First of all, food experiences will be monitored if they are distinctive and contribute to a nature-inclusive food destination. Based on this, it can also be checked whether stakeholders understood what is expected of them if they are involved in this development. The following questions can be asked to determine whether the experiences offered is a distinctive nature-inclusive food experience:

- Are all ingredients used coming from the Achterhoek?
- Does it help the local economy?
- Is it a new or innovative experience?
- Is it distinctive from other food experiences?
- Does it contribute to sustainability?
- Is nature taken into account?
- Is the environment taken into account?
- Is animal welfare taken into account?

In addition to this, visitors of food experiences can also be asked to participate in a short questionnaire. The following questions may be asked:

- What did you think of the experience?
- Have you ever done this activity elsewhere?
- What was the main reason to participate in this experience?
- What made this experience different from others?
- Would you come back to the Achterhoek for a food experience?

Besides this, indicators related to food tourism should be monitored as well. In 2019, Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme published a factsheet about Food Tourism in the Achterhoek. This research can be repeated yearly to see if the execution of this plan is successful. To be able to monitor and evaluate, it is necessary to further investigate which monitoring and evaluation tool can be best implemented. It is recommended to execute the monitoring and evaluation every year during off season.

Act

As described earlier, in the act phase adjustment and improvements are made. In case all the strategic goals have been achieved, new goals can be defined in this phase as well (ASQ, 2020). During the check phase the points of improvement were discovered and these points should now be improved. After the improvements are made, the PDCA cycle will be repeated.

7.5 Financial Implications

The development of the Achterhoek as a food destination relates to all municipalities in the Achterhoek and the province of Gelderland. For finance, it is recommended to use the budgets that already exists within each policy field. This way, a little extra money is needed. However, to use the existing budgets as optimal as possible a coordinator and secretarial support are needed (M. Steverink, personal communication, June 8, 2020). The extra costs for this are then labour costs. The coordinator and secretary each work one day per week on this project, eight hours a day. According to Intermediair (2018) the average salary of a municipal official is 3.900 euros on a monthly basis, based on 36 hours a week. This has to be recalculated to 8 hours a week: $3900/36*8 = 866,66$ euro per week; $866,66*12 = 10.400$ euro per year. This has to be multiplied by two which means that the minimum labour cost per year for this project are 20.800 euro. In addition to this, extra hours and travel expenses should be taken into consideration as well. Therefore, the minimum labour cost per year will increase to 25.000 euros.

Other extra costs that have to be taken into account are monitoring and evaluation costs and marketing costs. These costs are based on the execution programme of 'het Groene Hart'. This region executed a similar tourism development programme with the involvement of 20 municipalities (Oosterman Vrijetijdszaken, 2019) Therefore, these costs are taken as the minimum yearly costs in the Achterhoek. The minimal costs for writing a marketing plan are **15.000 euro per year**. The execution of the marketing plan is not yet included. The costs related to the execution of the marketing plan should be further researched once the plan is finished. The yearly costs for monitoring and evaluation are **10.000 euro per year**.

Table 7.2

Overview of the expected yearly costs

Development of a marketing plan	€ 15.000 per year
Monitoring and evaluation	€ 10.000 per year
Labour costs (coordinator + secretary)	€ 25.000 per year
Total execution costs per year	€ 50.000

As shown in Table 7.2, the minimum costs to execute the strategic food destination development plan are approximately **€ 50.000 per year**.

7.6 Conclusion

Taking the best possible advice option and the strategic food destination development programme into consideration, the following management question can be answered:

How can Kenniscentrum Nelles contribute to the development of the Achterhoek as international distinctive food destination where nature-inclusive is the core value?

Kenniscentrum Nelles can contribute to this development by the creation of a strategic food destination development programme for the Achterhoek. The strategic programme will be offered to Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme and platform Achterhoek Food. Together these two parties are responsible for the execution of this programme. The best possible advice option revealed that multiple stakeholders from various economic sectors should be involved in the development process. These are also governmental companies such as the eleven municipalities and the province. Other stakeholders in this programme are organisations or companies that can possibly contribute to the creation and/or execution of food experiences. By focussing on the involvement of multiple stakeholders, the Achterhoek can ensure that the vision 'In 2030, the Achterhoek is known as the Italy of North-West Europe' will be achieved.

The strategic programme advises on two steps that need to be taken. The first step that needs to be executed is a crucial step in the process. This step focusses on the creation of internal support. Because of the fact that all municipalities in the region and the province have influence on the development process, good cooperation between policy areas is needed. The programme recommends to create a food destination manifest. This document is signed and ensures that the content of the plan is supported and that the stakeholders will contribute as much as possible to reach the desired goal. The second step focusses on the creation and execution of food experiences. Advice is given on what kind of experiences can be created and which stakeholders can contribute. With the contribution of Kenniscentrum Nelles in the form of a strategic food development programme the management problem of this thesis, the missing plan of approach to develop the Achterhoek as a food destination, is solved. In addition to this, Kenniscentrum Nelles recommends platform Achterhoek Food and Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme to further investigate which monitoring and evaluation tool can be best implemented and what the best marketing strategy is, including the related costs to execute this.

Afterword

After 4 months of working on this thesis project, the report is finished. This chapter reflects on my own actions during this time period. It contains an overview of learning points and things I would do similarly or differently if I would repeat the thesis project. In addition to this, a reflection on the value of this thesis for the tourism industry is described.

Looking back at the start of my thesis I was very excited and motivated to work four days a week, eight hours a day on this thesis project. One day a week I went to Silvolde to work at the office of Kenniscentrum Nelles and the other days I worked from home. During the first two weeks, I noticed that I found it difficult to work at home and therefore decided to work at school in order to be more productive. It also helped a lot to be able to talk to other thesis students at school and discuss our projects and difficulties that occurred. Working at the client's office every Friday was very pleasant. Talking about the project and getting a feeling with the region is very important to me. Then there was that one day in March, I remember it like yesterday. Together with Naomi and Mrs. Bernasco I watch Rutte saying: schools will be closed immediately due to the COVID-19 situation. I got scared what this meant for my thesis project and how the virus would develop in the coming months. Unfortunately, the situation got worse and Nunspeet is one of the municipalities where the virus spread fast. I could not go to school, not to the office of the client and not even leave my own house anymore. I found this very difficult and struggled to get used to this new situation. Fortunately, I got used to it and the working from home situation began to feel normal. I had digital coffee session with other students, called with my client every week and was looking forward to continue working again.

In week six I did my thesis proposal defence. I was very nervous but managed to answer all the questions that were asked. As a result, I got a nine which gave a confidence boost and the right amount of motivation to continue. I learned from previous situations, that planning is not my strongest point. Because of this I made a very detailed planning for the remaining part of the thesis period. However, I did not stick to my own planning. I got bored sitting at home the entire day and decided to do fun things as well. When I got behind I decided to set a deadline to hand in the research results and communicated this with my client as well. Doing this helped me a lot to get parts finished on time and therefore I decided to apply the same method to finish the advice on time as well. From this I learned that setting deadlines in between and communicating this with the client works best for me.

Taking a look at the communication with my client, I can say that this went very well. Because I had worked at the office four times before the COVID-19 situation, I got to know him in person. We called almost every week to discuss the process and emailed each other often with suggestions and inspiration that could be useful for the advice. Towards the end of my thesis I got a bit stressed about the quality of the advice I was writing and this influenced my communication with the client. I noticed that I did not want to bother him all the time with my questions and rather tried to figure out things by myself first. Then my client expressed that I could always call him for any questions I had. After he said this I decided to do this as well and this helped me to be able to write a better advice. From this I learned that I should not be afraid to ask questions. Overall, from my point of view I think the communication during the thesis process was sufficient with my client. Looking back at the communication with my first examiner I can say that this went really well. Mrs. Bernasco and I already knew each other from the Good Food semester and have a good connection with each other. I could always call her and she supported and helped me during this process. In my opinion, our communication was good and I would do this the same again if I would have to repeat this thesis. Or if we will ever work together on a future project, who knows.

What I learned most about myself during this thesis is that I am a person that wants to deliver quality and does not want to let anyone down. In my future career this can have a positive as well as a negative influence. The positive aspect from this is that I work very detailed and make sure that I deliver what is asked from me in the best way possible. On the other hand, I get so much into the project that I find it difficult to stop. This results in me thinking that there is always room for improvement and I could have done a better job. Something I can take with me as a learning point is that I can be proud of what I have made or achieved and that I do not always have to defend myself that I could have done a better job. For this reason, I see my thesis report as the crown of my school career and the start of my future career.

Lastly, I would like to reflect on the value of this thesis report for the industry. Research revealed that food tourism is on the rise. According to eHotelier (2008):

Tourism players that tap into this cohort must capitalise on the rise of culinary tourism by combining gastronomy with other activities such as cultural tours and wellness activities, tailoring products that meet the demands of travellers wanting to experiment with food during their trips. (para 4)

The research methodology that was applied in this thesis is based on a new model of the World Tourism Organisation and Basque Culinary Center developed in 2019. Therefore, this approach seems to be rather new to follow in food destination tourism development. This thesis project provides a good example of how this model can be applied in food destination development which can be of added value for other destinations. The thesis project shows which steps have to be taken in the development process. In addition to this, it also shows that it is important to take the current trends and developments into account in order to achieve success. If this development turns out to be successful in the Achterhoek this of added value for the tourism sector. Other destinations can also use the Achterhoek as a best practise example. They could follow the same process by conducting internal and external research and create their own strategic development plan based on their unique destination resources. By taking into account the qualities of a destination and translating this to a plan, it is possible to ensure that there will be more distinctive tourism destinations in the future to visit.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Search process – number of hits

Core concept Destination Development

Search Term	Database	Hits
Destination Development	Emerald Insights	18,546
“”	ScienceDirect	112,861
“”	SpringerLink	40,573
“”	UNWTO	1,317
“”	Google Scholar	3,540,000
“”	Saxion Library	8
Tourism Destination Development	Emerald Insights	7,576
“”	ScienceDirect	19,314
“”	SpringerLink	4,368
“”	UNWTO	1,312
“”	Google Scholar	667,000
“”	Saxion Library	8
Tourism Development	Emerald Insights	22,284
“”	ScienceDirect	68,911
“”	SpringerLink	25,985
“”	UNWTO	1,910
“”	Google Scholar	2,530,000
“”	Saxion Library	45

Core concept Food Destination Development

Search Term	Database	Hits
Food Destination Development	Emerald Insights	6,891
“”	ScienceDirect	27,891
“”	SpringerLink	8,850
“”	UNWTO	719
“”	Google Scholar	1,050,000
“”	Saxion Library	0
Food Destination	Emerald Insights	7,493
“”	ScienceDirect	35,328
“”	SpringerLink	11,199
“”	UNWTO	727
“”	Google Scholar	1,290,000
“”	Saxion Library	0
Culinary Destination	Emerald Insights	648
“”	ScienceDirect	904
“”	SpringerLink	196
“”	UNWTO	112
“”	Google Scholar	37,500
“”	Saxion Library	0
Food Tourism Development	Emerald Insights	9,475
“”	ScienceDirect	29,297
“”	SpringerLink	10,418
“”	UNWTO	839
“”	Google Scholar	2,330,000
“”	Saxion Library	1
Culinary Tourism Development	Emerald Insights	873
“”	ScienceDirect	1,098
“”	SpringerLink	227
“”	UNWTO	113
“”	Google Scholar	47,100
“”	Saxion Library	1
Gastronomic Destination	Emerald Insights	268
“”	ScienceDirect	896
“”	SpringerLink	54
“”	UNWTO	229
“”	Google Scholar	13,300
“”	Saxion Library	0
Gastronomic Tourism Development	Emerald Insights	327
“”	ScienceDirect	1,075
“”	SpringerLink	106
“”	UNWTO	246
“”	Google Scholar	18,400
“”	Saxion Library	0

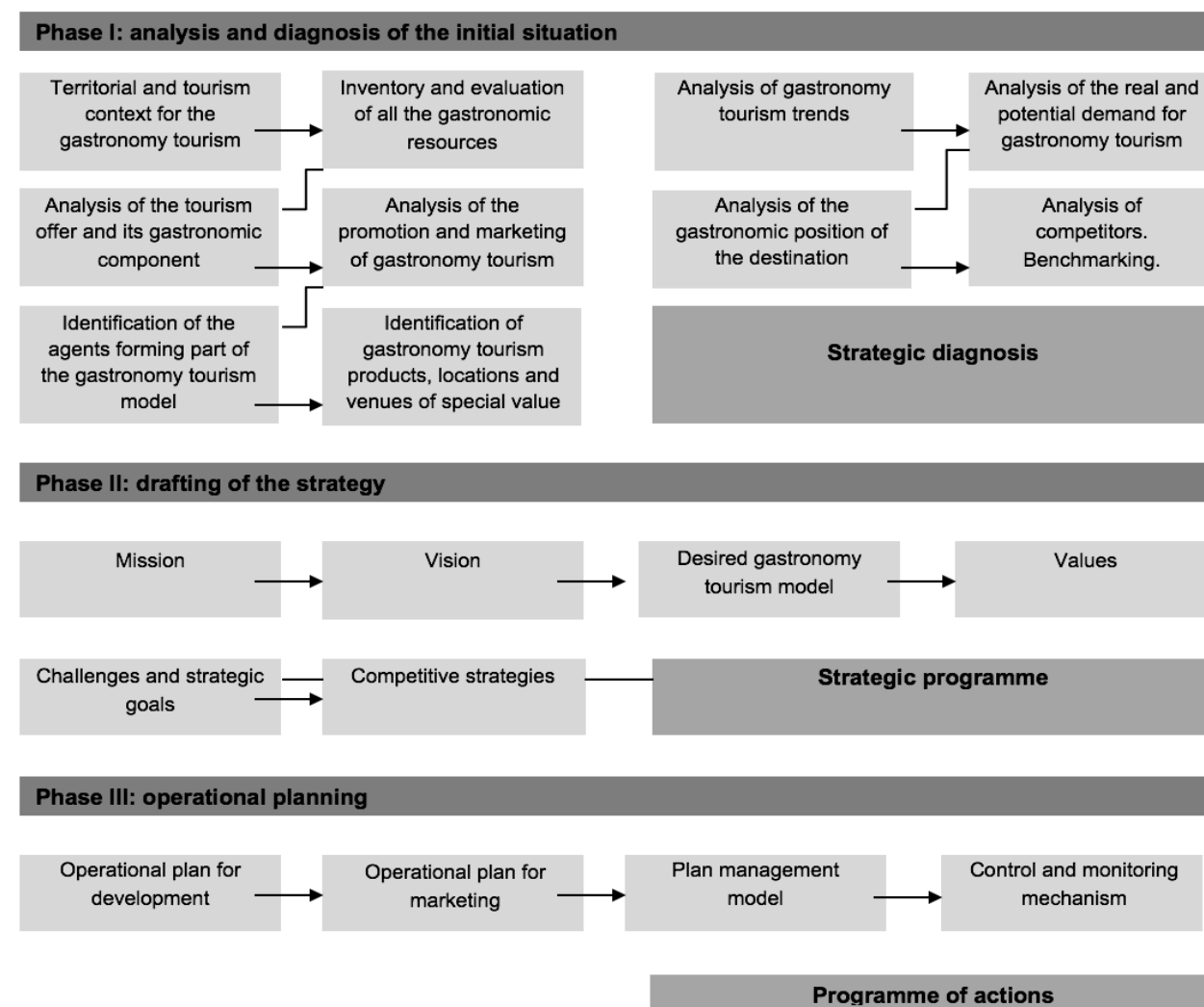
Core concept Nature Inclusive

Search Term	Database	Hits
Nature-inclusive	Emerald Insights	15,489
“”	ScienceDirect	89,906
“”	SpringerLink	58,323
“”	UNWTO	815
“”	Google Scholar	3,250,000
“”	Saxion Library	0
Nature-inclusive Destination	Emerald Insights	1,669
“”	ScienceDirect	5,448
“”	SpringerLink	2,241
“”	UNWTO	747
“”	Google Scholar	171,000
“”	Saxion Library	0
Nature-inclusive Food	Emerald Insights	4,351
“”	ScienceDirect	23,713
“”	SpringerLink	13,908
“”	UNWTO	579
“”	Google Scholar	987,000
“”	Saxion Library	0
Nature-inclusive Food Destination	Emerald Insights	773
“”	ScienceDirect	2,280
“”	SpringerLink	820
“”	UNWTO	551
“”	Google Scholar	81,5000
“”	Saxion Library	0
Nature-inclusive Practices	Emerald Insights	13,928
“”	ScienceDirect	53,060
“”	SpringerLink	35,467
“”	UNWTO	695
“”	Google Scholar	2,210,000
“”	Saxion Library	0
Nature-inclusive Region	Emerald Insights	5,888
“”	ScienceDirect	36,773
“”	SpringerLink	72,874
“”	UNWTO	776
“”	Google Scholar	1,280,000
“”	Saxion Library	0

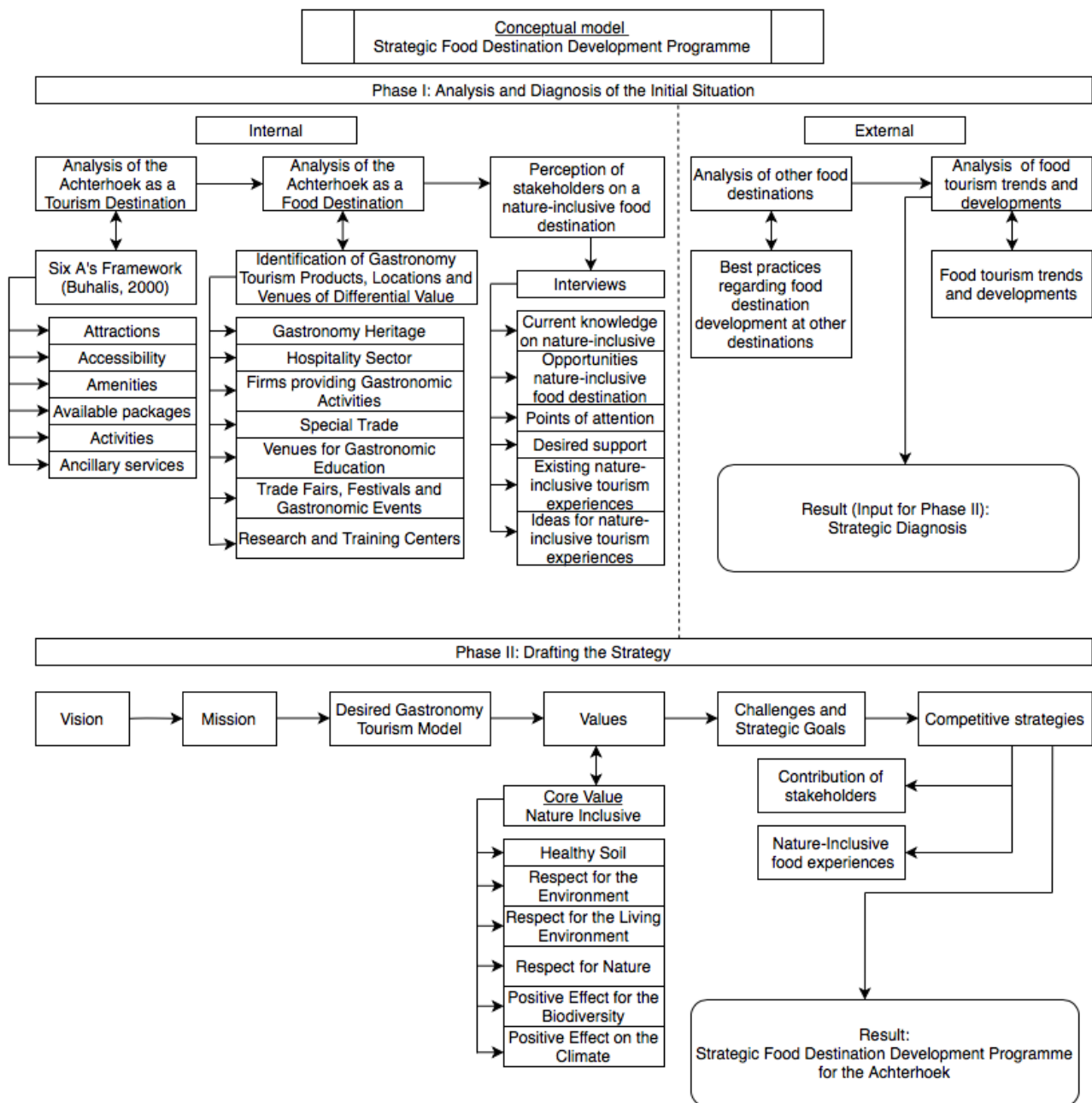
Appendix II: Search process – AAOCC criteria

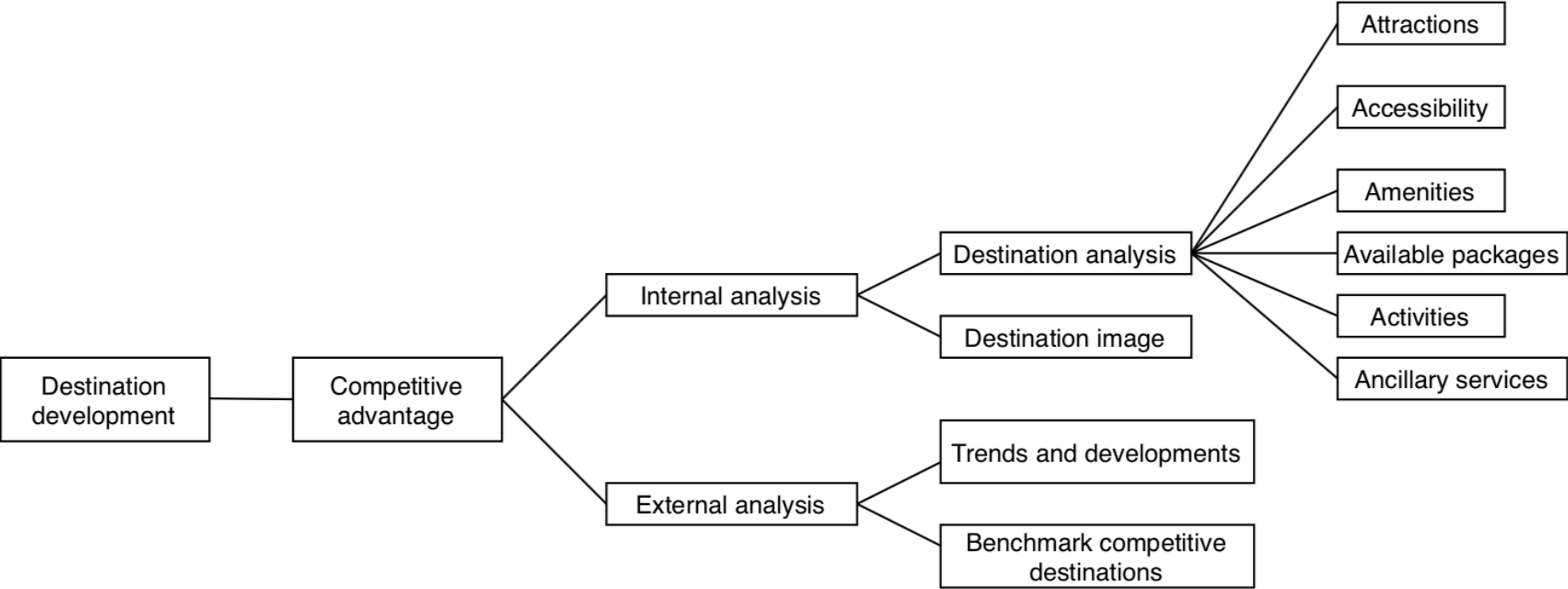
	WTO and Basque Culinary Center (2019)	Horng & Tsai (2010)	Runhaar (2017)	Van Haaster- de Winter, Taufik & Hovens (2018)
Authority	Written with the help of experts who are all professors in the Master of Gastronomic Tourism of BCC. Developed by UNWTO and Basque Culinary Center (BCC). UNWTO is a leading international organisation in tourism, BCC is an affiliate member of UNWTO.	Both authors are professional in hospitality management	Associate Professor of Governance of Nature and Biodiversity at the Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development and professor of Governance and Biodiversity in Agricultural Landscapes. Published over 75 scientific papers	Authors are part of the research team of Wageningen Economic Research
Accuracy	Specific, lots of examples, specific and sources/references are mentioned	Many other scientific articles are used in the research. The information is specific and complete	Many references and scientific articles are used.	Only one reference is used. Article is based on interviews and a survey. In-depth research on the topic
Objective	Objectively written and specific information is included	The authors use an objective way of writing in the article	Author writes objectively	Biased because it is based on the opinions of interviewees and respondents of the survey
Currency	2019: current article	Article from 2010; still current but might be updated	2017: current article	2018: current article
Coverage	The subject of gastronomy tourism development is covered and extensively elaborated on	Very extensive article and the topic is covered	Insight into topic is given. Lots of information	Covers the topic of this research but there is more to research on this topic
Overall	Reliable source of good quality	A source of good quality. General information on culinary tourism can be used. Information about marketing strategies less useful for this theoretical framework	Publication of good quality. Includes many insights related to the core value nature-inclusive	The conclusions of the article is based the opinions of people. It is an in-depth research that can be used to gain insights into the perspective of the consumer on nature-inclusive

Appendix III: Methodological process for drafting a strategic plan for gastronomy tourism
(World Tourism Organisation and Basque Culinary Center, 2019)

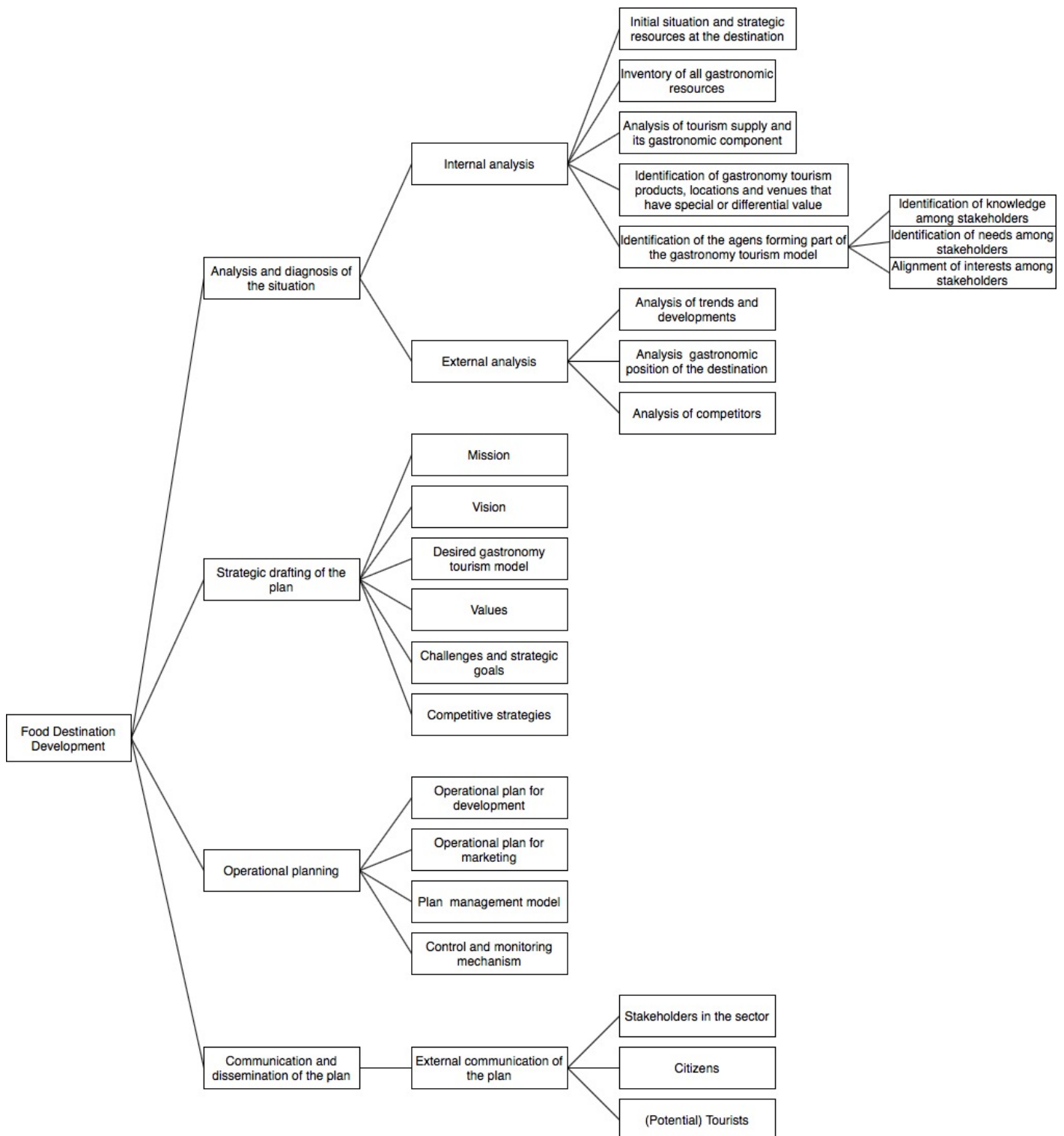


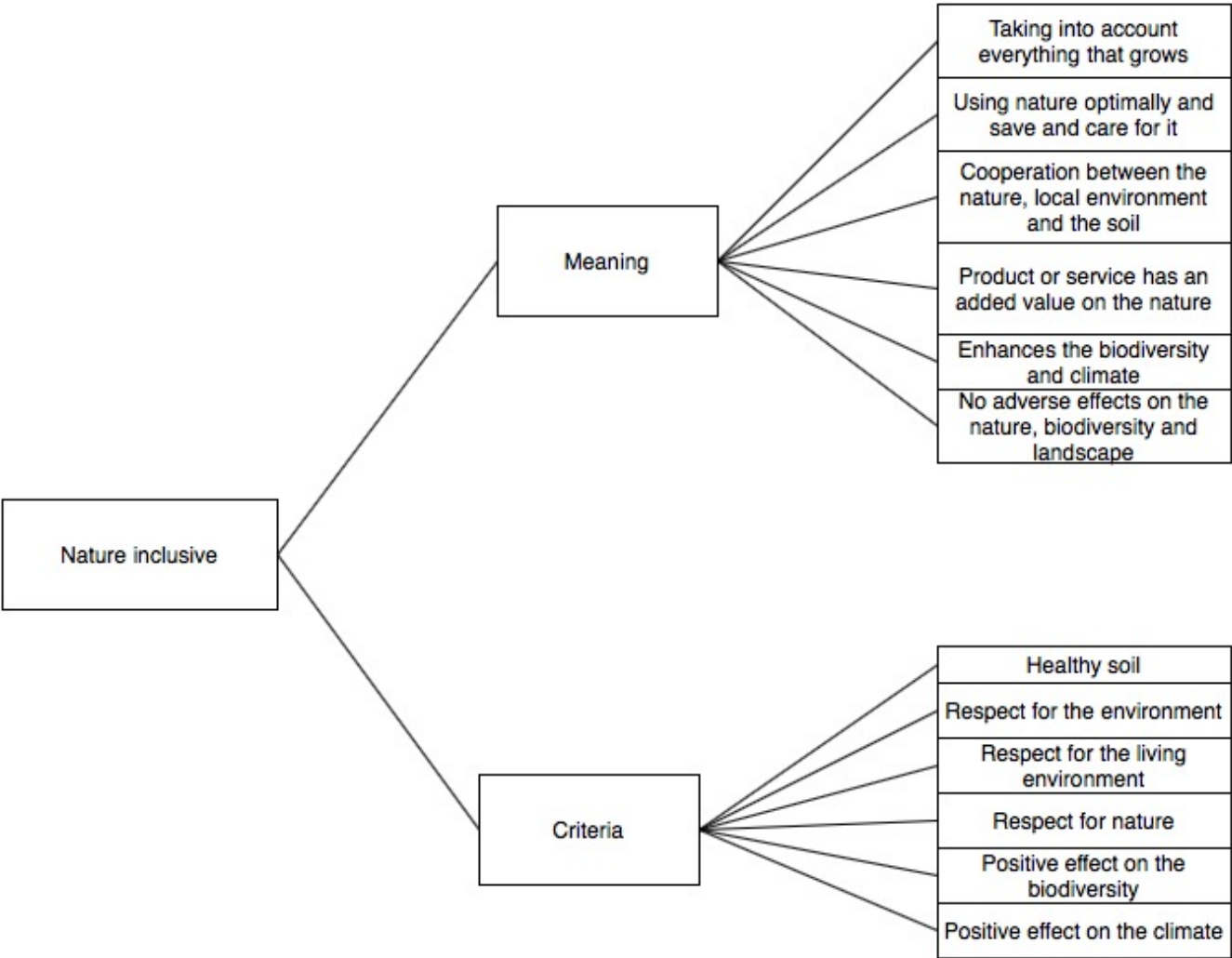
Appendix IV: Conceptual model strategic food destination development programme





Appendix VI: Operationalisation food destination development





Appendix VIII: Research methodology - systematic overview

Research Question	Research Strategy	Method of Data Collection	Sampling Methods	Method of Data Analysis	Result
<i>1. What are the characteristics of the Achterhoek as a tourism destination?</i>	Qualitative Case Study	Desk Research Secondary Analysis	Reports and articles related to the Achterhoek	Summarizing, coding and structuring the information	List of the characteristics of tourism destination the Achterhoek
<i>2. What food tourism products, locations and venues of differential value can be identified in the Achterhoek?</i>	Qualitative Case Study	Desk Research Secondary Analysis	Reports and articles related to the Achterhoek specifically on food	Summarizing, coding and structuring the information	List of food tourism products, location and venues of differential value in the Achterhoek
<i>3. What is the perception of stakeholders in the Achterhoek on a nature-inclusive destination?</i>	Qualitative Case Study	Field Research Open Interviews	Nonprobability sampling	Transcripts of the interview, open coding axial coding, and selective coding	Perception of stakeholders on a nature-inclusive destination
<i>4. What are best practices from other destinations regarding food destination development?</i>	Qualitative Case Study	Desk Research Secondary Analysis	Food destination reports	Summarizing, coding and structuring the information	Insights into best practices regarding food destination development at other destinations
<i>5. What are trends and developments related to food tourism?</i>	Qualitative Case Study	Desk Research Secondary Analysis	Trend reports	Summarizing, coding and structuring the information	Insights into current trends and developments related to food tourism

Appendix IX: Topic list open interviews

Topics	Example questions
Definition: nature-inclusive	- Could you explain to me what you think nature-inclusive is?
	In case the interviewee does not have any idea what nature-inclusive is, this will be explained. By doing this the interview can be continued.
Opportunities for the development of a nature-inclusive food destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you think developing the Achterhoek as a nature-inclusive food destination is an opportunity? And why? - How should this be further developed? - As a company do you do anything in the business that is related to nature-inclusive? - Would you be willing to incorporate nature-inclusive into your business operations? - If yes -> how would you do this? - If no -> Why would you not be willing to do this? - Could you think of examples on how your business could contribute to a nature-inclusive food destination?
Points of attention	- What are points of attention while developing the Achterhoek as a nature-inclusive destination?
Desired Support	What kind of support do you need to contribute to this development? -> From whom?
Existing nature-inclusive tourism experiences	- Do you offer any tourism activities that take nature-inclusive into account? If yes, what kind of activities?
Ideas for nature-inclusive tourism experiences	- Do you have other ideas for nature-inclusive tourism experiences that you could develop in your business?

Appendix X: List of experts that were interviewed

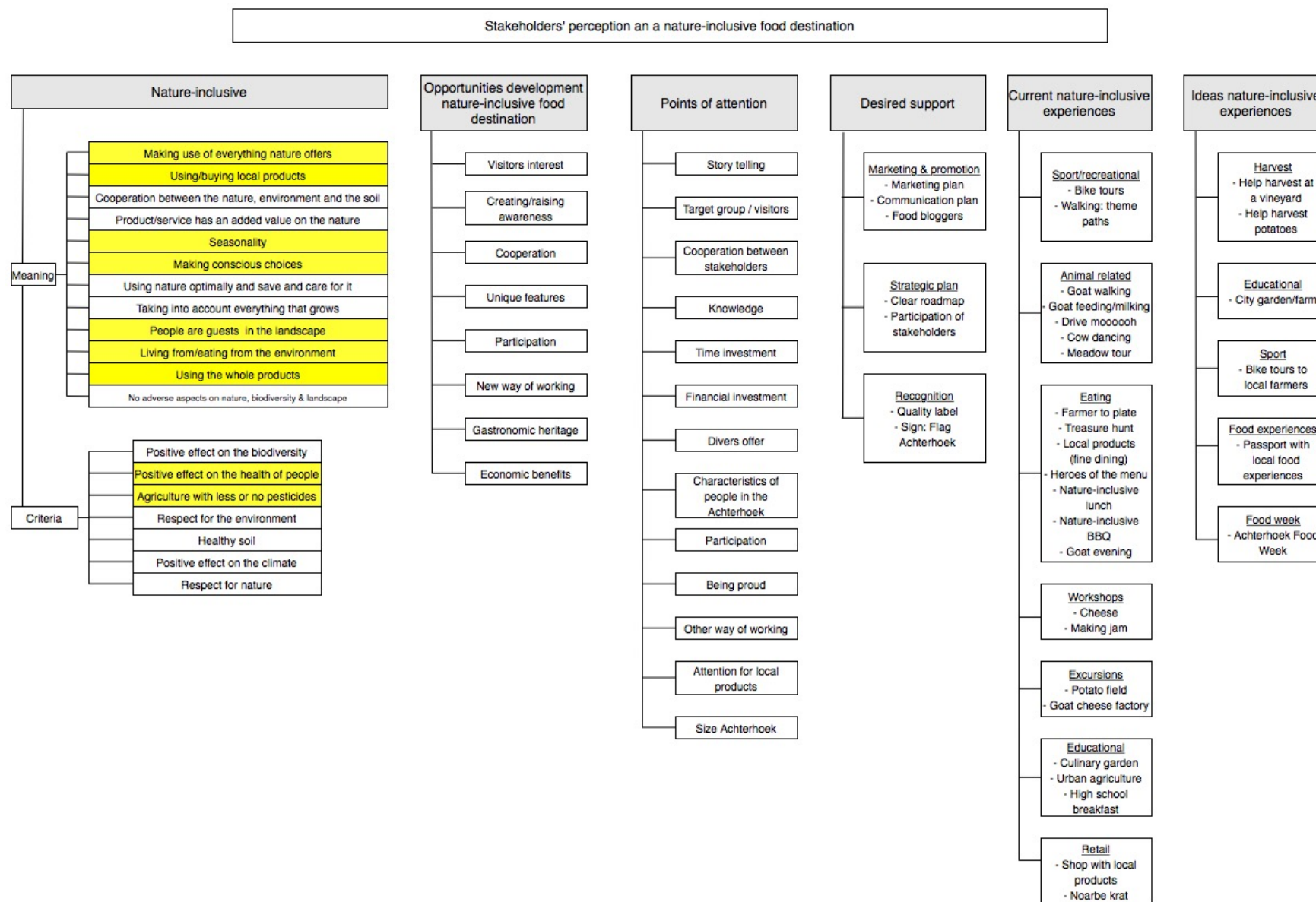
Company	Contact person
De Brommels	B. Kots
Villa Ruimzicht	K. Hensen
Nel Schellekens / Keunenhuis	N. Schellekens
Op de Pol	R. van den Broek
Villa Ruimzicht	B. Massop (chef)
NL Greenlabel	N. Wissing
Ijsboerderij de Steenoven	R. Pelgrom
De Heikamp	B. Zijtveld

Appendix XI: Axial coding

Main category	Sub category	Fragment (Open codes)
Nature inclusive		
Meaning	Product/service has an added value on the nature	7.4, 1.1, 1.2, 8.4
	No adverse aspects on nature, biodiversity & landscape	6.6
	Making use of everything nature offers	1.3, 1.5, 4.1, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 5.5
	Seasonality	1.6, 2.13, 3.11, 4.5
	Using/buying local products	2.4, 2.13, 3.11, 4.2, 5.9, 8.5
	Using the whole product	2.4, 3.11
	Making conscious choices	3.12, 6.1, 7.5
	Cooperation between the nature, local environment, the soil and people	3.13, 3.37, 4.8, 6.1, 6.7, 8.3
	Using nature optimally and save and care for it	3.22, 5.10, 7.2
	Taking into account everything that grows	4.6, 8.2
	People are guests in the landscape	6.1, 7.2
	Living from/eating from the environment	3.37, 6.2
Criteria	Healthy soil	1.7, 6.7
	Positive effect on the biodiversity	1.8, 3.16, 4.6, 6.4, 6.9, 7.5, 8.4
	Agriculture with less or no pesticides	1.7, 6.7
	Respect for the environment	3.16, 3.36
	Positive effect on the health of people	4.6, 4.7, 6.9
	Positive effect on the climate	5.8, 6.1
	Respect for nature	6.1, 8.6
Opportunities development nature-inclusive food destination		
	Visitors interest	2.5, 2.6, 2.30, 3.25, 3.28, 4.4, 6.10, 6.19, 7.6, 7.7
	Gastronomic heritage	5.1, 5.6, 6.3
	Unique features	2.31, 2.33, 3.4, 4.9, 6.11, 8.10
	Creating/raising awareness	1.10, 2.26, 3.1, 4.2, 5.10, 6.10, 7.7, 7.18, 8.10
	Economic benefits	5.2, 5.3, 6.15
	Cooperation	2.27, 2.32, 3.32, 3.7, 5.10
	Participation	3.24, 3.32, 3.33, 3.34
	New way of working	5.6, 6.16, 6.17
Points of attentions		
	Storytelling	1.13, 1.16, 2.9, 3.10, 6.12, 6.13, 6.14
	Knowledge	2.2, 3.8, 6.12, 7.8, 7.9, 7.10
	Characteristics of the people in the Achterhoek	2.1, 2.2, 2.30, 3.6
	Time investment	1.11, 3.21, 4.20, 5.16, 7.10
	Target group / visitors	1.18, 5.11, 8.11, 8.12, 8.13, 8.16, 8.19
	Cooperation between stakeholders	3.15, 3.18, 3.19, 5.14, 4.15, 5.17, 7.11
	Participation	3.7, 3.18, 3.20, 5.21

	Financial investment	7.12, 7.13. 8.9, 8.15, 8.16
	Being proud	2.12, 5.18, 5.19
	Divers offer	3.17, 4.10, 4.12, 4.13, 4.14
	Size Achterhoek	3.25
	Other way of working	1.12, 3.9, 5.2
	Attention for local products	2.8, 2.29
Desired Support		
Marketing and promotion	Communication plan	2.9
	Marketing plan	2.31
	Food bloggers	2.33, 3.2
Strategic plan	Clear roadmap	4.21
	Participation of stakeholders	4.22, 8.20, 8.21, 8.23
Recognition	Quality label	2.11, 2.22, 2.24
	Sign flag Achterhoek	2.25
Current nature-inclusive (tourist) experiences		
Animal related experiences	Goat walking	1.17
	Goat feeding/milking	1.21, 1.24
	Drive moooh	7.15
	Cow dancing	7.16
	Meadow tour	7.17
Sport/recreational experiences	Bike tours	2.20, 4.18, 5.27, 8.1
	Walking / theme paths	8.1, 8.17, 8.18
Eating experiences	Farmer to plate	2.17, 8.8
	Treasure hunt	4.19
	Local products fine dining	5.11, 5.12
	Heroes of the menu	2.15
	Nature inclusive lunch	2.19
	Nature inclusive BBQ	2.21
	Goat evening	1.22
Workshops	Cheese	3.30, 3.31
	Making jam	1.4
Excursions	Potato field	3.37
	Goat cheese factory	1.20
Educational	Culinary garden	3.39
	Urban agriculture	2.16
	High school breakfast	3.38
Retail	Shop with local products	2.7
	Noarbe krat	5.14
Ideas nature-inclusive (tourist) experiences		
Harvest	Help harvest at a vineyard	1.25
	Help harvest potatoes	1.26
Educational	City garden / farm	1.27
Sport	Bike tours to local farmers	2.10
Food experiences	Passport with local food experiences	2.23
Food week	Achterhoek food week	2.36

Appendix XII: Structuring the interview codes



Appendix XIII: Criteria to analyse secondary qualitative information

Research Question	Criteria
1: Achterhoek as a tourism destination	Geographical location, Municipality Achterhoek, Visitor profile Visitor numbers, Attractions, Accessibility, Visa requirements, Amenities, Accommodations, Catering, Travel packages, Activities, Services, Facilities.
2: Achterhoek as a food destination	Culinary image, Gastronomic heritage, Crafts, Traditional food, Hospitality sector, Gastronomic activities, Markets, Wine cellars, Vineyards, Education, College, Gastronomic events, Festivals, Research and training centres.
4: Best practices other food destinations	Food destinations, Famous food destinations, Strategic tourism development programme, Tourism development, Food destination development
5: Trends & developments	Popular culinary activities, Food trends and developments, Popular food activities, Trends food tourism, Trends in culinary tourism.

Appendix XIV: Smaakkaart Achterhoek (Stichting Achterhoek Toerisme, 2020g)

